



ANNEX 3-72 NUCLEAR OPERATIONS

DEFEAT

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To convince an adversary to surrender or to end a war on terms favorable to the United States, the President may authorize defeat of an enemy using nuclear weapons. Defeat is an objective (and thus technically an effect) that may be achieved using nuclear weapons, by themselves or in conjunction with other forces, should the decisive and culminating nature of their effects be required to resolve a conflict. Operations seeking outright defeat of an enemy using nuclear weapons will likely use other effects of nuclear operations (any or all of the other nuclear operations effects) simultaneously to influence the decision making process of all parties involved.

Defeat may entail prevailing over the enemy's armed forces, destroying their war-making capacity, seizing territory, thwarting their strategies, or other measures in order to force a change in the enemy's behavior, policies, or government. Escalation control is a major consideration for this effect. Escalation control entails the ability to increase the enemy's cost of defiance, while denying them the opportunity to neutralize those costs. In addition, the high level of commitment required for the use of nuclear weapons by the United States is a tangible demonstration of our resolve and likely to affect our ability to defeat the will of an enemy.

Nuclear weapons have been used in combat only twice, of course: at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, culminating World War II in the Pacific:

The atomic bombings considerably speeded up [the] political maneuvering within the [Japanese] government. This in itself was partly a morale effect, since there is ample evidence that members of the Cabinet were worried by the prospect of further atomic bombings, especially on the remains of Tokyo. The bombs did not convince the military that defense of the home islands was impossible.... It did permit the Government to say, however, that no army without the weapon could possibly resist an enemy who had it, thus saving "face" for the Army leaders and not reflecting on the competence of Japanese industrialists or the valor of the Japanese soldier. In the Supreme War Guidance Council voting remained divided, with the War Minister and the two Chiefs of Staff unwilling to accept unconditional surrender. There seems little doubt, however, that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki weakened their inclination to oppose the peace group.

A quip was current in high government circles at this time that the atomic bomb was the real Kamakaze, since it saved Japan from further useless slaughter and destruction.

-- [U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Effects of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 19 June 1946](#)

For additional discussion on effects, see “[Practical Design: The Coercion Continuum](#)” in Annex 3-0, *Operations and Planning*.
