

The 2nd Annual Joint Threat Anticipation Center Workshop Conference Report

April 3-5, 2006 - What Are National Security Threats?

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Day 3- April 5, 2006

Counterforce Revisited - Charles Glaser, Professor, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago

Glaser provided an overview of current US nuclear doctrine and its purpose in assuring, dissuading, deterring, and defeating proliferators. He then offered several critiques of the Nonproliferation Review (NPR) in the area of force size, the notion of no first use, ballistic missile defense, and counter WMD missions. He highlighted some of the, in his opinion, suspect arguments on the use, utility, dangers, and benefits of nuclear counterforce against nuclear targets, mobile targets, and chemical and biological (CB) targets. Glaser also provided an overview of the potential benefits of the counter-nuclear mission: the difference in logic of Cold War arguments (nuclear use against a small arsenal differs from the logic of MAD); deterrence of limited attacks (destroying adversary's weapons- US has the overwhelming capability); damage limitation in a crisis with future uncertainty (move from a conventional war to a nuclear one) because one can't deter everyone and deterrence can fail; and protection of US foreign policy. He also provided a discussion of the potential costs of the counter-nuclear mission: it can fuel proliferation (acquisition of nuclear weapons by adversaries); it can weaken barriers to proliferation and the nuclear taboo (incentives to proliferate); and it can increase force structure requirements. To conclude, Glaser reminded the audience that we need to consider the cost implications of this mission but also recognize that deterrence will mostly work.