

Deterrence

President Chirac of France, under pressure to justify the expense of the French nuclear deterrent, today **revealed** that French strategic missiles have been reconfigured to allow less-than-devastating retaliatory strikes. He also declared that the use of these weapons will be among France's options if "regional powers" should sponsor terrorist attacks against France.

On the face of it, this is a robust announcement and a sensible increase in France's military flexibility. But its underlying philosophy nevertheless dates back to the Cold War, and may be completely useless against the "regional power" against which it is primarily directed: Iran. Solomania recently invited us to consider the **500,000 plastic keys** that Iran imported from Taiwan in the 1980s, and what they were used for. Thus it may be that all Chirac has done is inform the criminally insane leadership of Iran that (1) no action will be taken until *after* any devastating terrorist attack; (2) 'deniable' attacks will provoke no response; and (3) any response will be strictly limited and therefore ultimately survivable (by the regime).

With Iran, there is no substitute for prevention. However, France is unlikely to suffer any consequences for this logical defect in their defence posture, because of the strategic ace of trumps that Chirac did not mention because he did not need to: *France will not be the first target* of any mega-attack, nuclear or otherwise. By consistently distancing itself from the United States' and its allies' war on terror, and from Israel's self defence, France hides behind those countries.

Thu, 01/19/2006 - 13:35 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permlink](#)

Explain Please

France is making a mistake by being unwilling to join Britain, the US, Israel, and other countries in advocating military action to preempt nuclear attack.

But how does making weapons with "less than devastating" effects, in addition to having weapons with "devastating effects", prevent France from being willing to preempt nuclear attack?

Isn't the issue that French leaders seem not to have the moral fiber

to aggressively attack terrorism. Flexible military responses are good. Perhaps the US and Britain, if we do not have such capability, should get this ability, as well.

I honestly don't understand how a flexible military prevents preemptive attacks. How are these concepts related?

by a reader on Fri, 01/20/2006 - 15:45 | [reply](#)

Re: Explain please

As we said, having a more flexible military is a sensible thing. Unfortunately, for the reasons we gave, the measure is unlikely to have any effect, particularly when combined with France's established policy of always waiting to be attacked first ('deterrence') and always opposing the United States and its allies.

The US and Britain do have such capabilities – as does France: this was a relatively minor adjustment.

by [Editor](#) on Fri, 01/20/2006 - 16:34 | [reply](#)

So your point is that France

So your point is that France is pretending to help by making announcements about deterrence, but these announcements serve as a smokescreen that obscures their actual inaction.

by a reader on Fri, 01/20/2006 - 20:44 | [reply](#)

France

It is precisely the point that France understands that it hides behind the front line countries. It mistakenly hopes that by appeasing Iran it will forestall attacks. It hopes to make more likely an outcome where "France will not be the first target." This tactic is primarily short term -- an attempt to buy time for the social dislocation associated with the recent riots to subside. In all likelihood events are going to pass them by and force another difficult choice sooner rather than later.

by [Michael Bacon](#) on Tue, 01/24/2006 - 03:45 | [reply](#)

hiding

i was looking through the CIA world factbook today and noticed south korea has a 20bil military budget while north korea has 5bil. so why does south korea need our help, exactly? *sigh*

-- Elliot Temple

Now Blogging Again

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Tue, 01/24/2006 - 06:56 | [reply](#)

Off-topic reply to Elliot.

Counterintuitively, a simple numbers to numbers comparison of military budgets is not a valid comparison of the two Koreas relative expenditures and efforts. NK has a GDP of 40 billion. Therefore, if the 5 billion number is to be believed, 1/8 of all NK expenditures are defense related. In comparison, South Korea has a GDP of close to one trillion. 20 Billion is only 2.5% of their GDP. Further, North Korea has a standing army of close to 1 million, in a nation of less than 25 million. Keep in mind also that, as North Korea is a Communist nation, their expenditures are necessarily going to be lower than South Korea's for similar items. Trade unions do not exist, nor does competitive bidding or rapacious defense contractors. South Korea doesn't have a vast army of enslaved people upon which to draw for "free" labor.

Those things being said, I think that it would be a good idea for every country where the US still has a military presence, Korea, Japan, Germany etc. to shoulder a larger share of their own defense burden instead of shifting it onto the back of the US taxpayer

by [dpatten](#) on Tue, 01/24/2006 - 15:34 | [reply](#)