

CLEARANCE REQUEST FOR PUBLIC RELEASE OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INFORMATION

(See Instructions on back.)

(This form is to be used in requesting review and clearance of DoD information proposed for public release in accordance with DoDD 5230.09.)

TO: (See Note) Chief, Defense Office of Prepublication and Security Review, 1155 Defense Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301-1155

Note: Regular mail address shown above. For drop-off/next day delivery, use:
Room 2A534, 1155 Defense Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301-1155

1. DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION

a. TYPE Oral History	b. TITLE DENNY, Michael - 0321963
c. PAGE COUNT 7	d. SUBJECT AREA British Nuclear Program

2. AUTHOR/SPEAKER

a. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial) Denny, Michael	b. RANK	c. TITLE
d. OFFICE	e. AGENCY	

3. PRESENTATION/PUBLICATION DATA (Date, Place, Event)

March 29, 1963 Oral History Interview

REVIEWED BY DOD 13

DEFENSE OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND OFFICE OF SECURITY REVIEW

NO CLASSIFIED INFORMATION FOUND

Jun 21, 2017

4. POINT OF CONTACT

a. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial) Carpenter, Ryan	b. TELEPHONE NO. (Include Area Code) 703-697-3306
--	--

5. PRIOR COORDINATION

a. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)	b. OFFICE/AGENCY	c. TELEPHONE NO. (Include Area Code)

6. REMARKS

7. RECOMMENDATION OF SUBMITTING OFFICE/AGENCY

a. THE ATTACHED MATERIAL HAS DEPARTMENT/OFFICE/AGENCY APPROVAL FOR PUBLIC RELEASE (qualifications, if any, are indicated in Remarks section) AND CLEARANCE FOR OPEN PUBLICATION IS RECOMMENDED UNDER PROVISIONS OF DODD 5230.09. I AM A GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE (civilian or military), AND NOT A CONTRACTOR, AUTHORIZED TO MAKE THIS RECOMMENDATION FOR RELEASE ON BEHALF OF:

Dr. Erin Mahan, OSD Chief Historian

b. CLEARANCE IS REQUESTED BY 20170601 (YYYYMMDD).

c. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial) Carpenter, Ryan	d. TITLE Historian
e. OFFICE OSD Historical	f. AGENCY WHS

g. SIGNATURE CARPENTER.RYAN.PAUL.139779370 9	h. DATE SIGNED (YYYYMMDD) 20170511
--	---------------------------------------

Digitally signed by CARPENTER.RYAN.PAUL.1397793709
DN: c=US, o=U.S. Government, ou=DoD, ou=PKI, ou=WHS,
cn=CARPENTER.RYAN.PAUL.1397793709
Date: 2017.05.11 09:19:43 -04'00'

DEFENSE OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND OFFICE OF SECURITY REVIEW

Interview with Admiral Sir Michael Denny

NO CLASSIFIED INFORMATION FOUND

by Alfred Goldberg

Jun 21, 2017

March 29, 1963

- Q. What was the effect of World War II experience on the strategic thinking and planning of the military services after the war?
- A. Immediately after the war the effect of the war experience brought no great change except in an increased understanding of the value and need of general mobility. As far as the Army was concerned, the form of the vital campaign was very similar to those of the previous 150 years of operations within the Empire. The limitation on the achievement was the degree of mobility that could be reached and maintained within the theater.
- Q. Did the British military services have an agreed single strategic concept to guide their planning and programming?
- A. Broadly speaking, yes. The picture that the chief of the services always had in mind was the peculiar needs of the Commonwealth, including our possessions, scattered all over the world. They could see the threat was pointed at parts of the Commonwealth. That caused us not to think very much in terms of divisions, but much more in terms of mobile brigade groups. It was the same with the Navy. The old fashioned concept of having fleets in certain places around the world, which we followed up to the beginning of World War II, gave way to the concept of having a small number of deployable units that would move around a whole area as separate units. Quickly after the war, starting with Western European Union, came the military alliances, and then the British were no longer

on their own. This change has brought into existence a state of military deployment and purpose which is without precedent in British history.

Q. What was the attitude of the military services towards the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Staff?

A. They were definitely in favor because the activities of such people as Ismay were respected right from the beginning. We had learned in World War II that collective action by the three armed services gave the best result. There was no senior officer in any of the services who tended to be an isolationist. That was regarded with horror by the end of the war. There was some slight reaction in 1946-47 against collective thought because of the effects of demobilization. The thoughts of the chiefs of the services were concentrated far too much on the future shape of their own services and not on the purpose of the military forces. This was pretty well corrected in 1948-49.

Q. What effect did the atomic bomb have on Navy strategic thought in the years after World War II?

A. It was the belief of the three services that Navy would be the least affected by the use of nuclear weapons. The biggest change brought about by the existence of nuclear weapons was the decreased reliance on shore bases to support naval forces and the development of self-sufficient sea-going units, complete with supply trains, etc. There was also the development of the concept that moving things from sea to land might not be able to be done in ports, because of their great vulnerability

to nuclear weapons, and alternatives would have to be considered.

Q. What was the Navy attitude towards the creation of the V-bomber force?

A. To start with, when first announced, one of considerable surprise and annoyance because the period of reshaping and rebuilding the three services, which had been planned in detail by the Government, had come to the final stage of approval without any reference to a heavy bomber force. None of the services felt that it had gotten enough under the rearmament program, and suddenly, nine months later, the bomber force was added at a cost of 275 million extra. When this program was approved, the Army and Navy reckoned that it was upsetting the balance that had been previously agreed to by the services. That attitude died out and was gone in about four years. The V-bomber force came to be completely accepted by all three services. We reckoned, however, that one of the natural results of a V-bomber force was to reduce the provision within the RAF for transports, which seriously affected mobility. Not until this last year has the policy started to move the other way and the Transport Command started to get modern aircraft and more squadrons. The original strength of the V-bomber force -240- was cut back to 180 for financial reasons.

Q. Was the development of the British nuclear deterrent force accomplished at the expense of the Army and Navy and of the British contribution to NATO?

A. In the end it was. The total money spent on defence was not increased by the amount required for the V-bomber force. If we hadn't had a

V-bomber force we would have spent the same amount on defence anyway. The only extra money provided for the V-bomber force was for the actual manufacture of the bombs.

Q. How much of a role did the existence of the U.S. nuclear deterrent play in frustrating development of NATO's conventional war capability? What other factors were important?

A. Practically nil. When we started NATO the concept of Allied Command, Europe, was to withdraw across Europe, and that was based on a strict military assessment of the immediate future. It was impossible to collect from the NATO countries an adequate military force to hold back the Soviet military threat on the ground. This had nothing to do with nuclear assessments. Then we changed, new studies were made, and it was calculated that a 30-division force could be planted in the "central" forward areas in peacetime and it could contain an attack in reasonable fashion and force the Russians to go all out or "pause". We were all certain that the United States would not lag in a maximum nuclear counterattack. In the early 1950's the European countries were economically and militarily shaky and couldn't create the conventional forces needed to hold the Russians. The principal motivation today for accenting the need for conventional forces to contain the Russians is basically our failure to produce the 30 divisions needed on the central front. Great Britain can be criticized over this. We have not maintained the British Army of the Rhine up to strength. Until very recently, at any rate, its seven brigade groups were never up to strength.

Q. Did possession of the independent deterrent force by Great Britain during the past decade actually have the effects desired by its creators?

A. I think so on the whole. The most important one to my mind was as one of the factors in the special alliance between the U.S. and the U.K. There was always the danger that the Pentagon might not be in accord with the British appreciation of NATO. There were pointers from time to time that a common appreciation and thought on these matters was in some measure the result of the V-bomber force being comparable to SAC as part of the armed forces of a great country. When we got to the stage where target planning was done, the genuine integration of target allocation was a joint effort of Bomber Command and SAC, and that is a potent factor in the reaction of the Pentagon to Whitehall.

Q. Is it desirable for the United Kingdom to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent in some form? Can it maintain a truly independent force?

A. I am of two minds about it. If it were possible for Britain to abandon the independent nuclear deterrent, I can see great benefit would result. For example, there could be a buildup of the NATO force. But I have a sneaking feeling that in the event of U.S. interests being challenged, say five years later, it would not take us into its confidence as it did with Cuba. I don't have a firm conviction either way. I do think that the period of time stated for washing out the V-bombers has been understated.

- Q. Is it desirable and feasible to create a European nuclear deterrent or a single NATO deterrent force?
- A. If it is found to be practicable, it would be advantageous to have a NATO integrated force.
- Q. Has the British contribution to NATO had higher priority than British commitments outside the NATO area?
- A. It has been a bit of a seesaw. Sometimes it has had higher priority, at other times not, depending on the course of world events. The governments in the United Kingdom during this period have done their utmost to make a just and reasonably adequate provision to NATO, and never have they denigrated its value. They have always supported NATO and they have had the nation with them.
- Q. Would the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe inevitably lead to all-out nuclear war?
- A. I personally do think that it would lead to all-out war. Continued use of tactical nuclear weapons certainly would. I can imagine an isolated, selective use that would not lead to quick escalation. We have parallels in gas warfare and ABC warfare. The same argument applies to nuclear weapons.
- Q. To what extent have financial considerations affected the strategic thinking of military planners?
- A. A whole lot in this country. Our planners are not allowed to make any plan without assessing its cost. This has been true since 1950 or 1951. We were forced to do this because when the Minister of Defence was advised by the Chiefs of Staff to submit plans, the Cabinet Defence Committee wouldn't look at them unless the costs were attached. The plans

were shaped very little by financial considerations; it was the availability of forces that was important. These, in turn, were, of course, the result of financial considerations.

- Q. In weighting the factors that influence strategic thinking and policy-making, what weight would you give to technology?
- A. There wasn't much sign of it in the last war. It is gradually coming in, but normally planners of future operations plan entirely on the basis of existing material and equipment, in the broad sense. They do not take into account new devices that are on the way, as, for instance, infra-red equipment on tanks. Long-range planning does try to take note of and plan for advanced technological changes. One sees examples of this in such things as formations of forces at sea. The old idea of the strike force, for instance. Now we have to spread out over as wide an area as we can so that one nuclear bomb won't knock out a whole force. When we get means of long-range detection of submarines, the whole aspect of anti-submarine war will change.