

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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The Constitution requires the federal government to “provide for the common defence.”¹ It assigns to Congress the authority to “raise and support Armies” and to “provide and maintain a Navy”² and specifies that the President is “commander in Chief” of America’s armed forces.³ Ever since our Founding, Americans have understood that the surest way to avoid war is to be prepared for it in peace—but when deterrence fails, we must fight and win.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is the largest part of our federal government. It has almost 3 million people serving in uniform or a civilian capacity throughout the world and consumes approximately \$850 billion annually—more than 50 percent of our government’s discretionary spending.

The DOD is also a deeply troubled institution. Historically, the military has been one of America’s most trusted institutions, but years of sustained misuse, a two-tiered culture of accountability that shields senior officers and officials while exposing junior officers and soldiers in the field, wasteful spending, wildly shifting security policies, exceedingly poor discipline in program execution, and (most recently) the Biden Administration’s profoundly unserious equity agenda and vaccine mandates have taken a serious toll.

Our disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, our impossibly muddled China strategy, the growing involvement of senior military officers in the political arena, and deep confusion about the purpose of our military are clear signals of a disturbing decay and markers of a dangerous decline in our nation’s capabilities and will. Additionally, more than 100,000 Americans die annually in large measure because

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

of illicit narcotics flows—more than four times as many people in one year as we lost in our 20-year war against al-Qaeda.

We also are witnessing a transformation in the character of war. The democratization of technology and the collapse of time and space require dramatic, thoughtful changes in how we defend, deter, and fight. As with any huge bureaucracy—and the DOD is one of the world’s largest—breaking the status quo requires leadership and endurance. Technology is critical to maintaining our warfighting primacy, but we must be leery of the siren song that technology alone can protect us. More important is how new technologies are developed, tested, procured, and used, and that relies on the true competitive advantages of our people: ingenuity, common sense, and thoughtfulness grounded in a free society. Because war will continue to be the most stressful and consequential human endeavor, the most powerful weapon systems will remain the six inches between the ears of our citizens and the strength of their hearts and content of their souls.

Military service is the most difficult task we ask of our citizens, and our nation is enormously blessed that so many young, patriotic Americans eagerly volunteer to carry such a heavy burden. We owe them everything, and we must do better. To do better, however, means recognizing and implementing four overriding priorities:

- **Priority No. 1:** Reestablish a culture of command accountability, nonpoliticization, and warfighting focus.
- **Priority No. 2:** Transform our armed forces for maximum effectiveness in an era of great-power competition.
- **Priority No. 3:** Provide necessary support to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) border protection operations. Border protection is a national security issue that requires sustained attention and effort by *all* elements of the executive branch.
- **Priority No. 4:** Demand financial transparency and accountability.

This chapter offers recommendations for improving our armed forces and the civilian organizations that support and oversee them.

DOD POLICY

By far the most significant danger to Americans’ security, freedoms, and prosperity is China. China is by any measure the most powerful state in the world other than the United States itself. It apparently aspires to dominate Asia and then, from that position, become globally preeminent. If Beijing could achieve this goal, it could dramatically undermine America’s core interests, including by restricting

U.S. access to the world's most important market. Preventing this from happening must be the top priority for American foreign and defense policy.

Beijing presents a challenge to American interests across the domains of national power, but the military threat that it poses is especially acute and significant. China is undertaking a historic military buildup that includes increasing capability for power projection not only in its own region, but also far beyond as well as a dramatic expansion of its nuclear forces that could result in a nuclear force that matches or exceeds America's own nuclear arsenal.

The most severe immediate threat that Beijing's military poses, however, is to Taiwan and other U.S. allies along the first island chain in the Western Pacific. If China could subordinate Taiwan or allies like the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan, it could break apart any balancing coalition that is designed to prevent Beijing's hegemony over Asia. Accordingly, the United States must ensure that China does not succeed. This requires a denial defense: the ability to make the subordination of Taiwan or other U.S. allies in Asia prohibitively difficult. Critically, the United States must be able to do this at a level of cost and risk that Americans are willing to bear given the relative importance of Taiwan to China and to the U.S.

The United States and its allies also face real threats from Russia, as evidenced by Vladimir Putin's brutal war in Ukraine, as well as from Iran, North Korea, and transnational terrorism at a time when decades of ill-advised military operations in the Greater Middle East, the atrophy of our defense industrial base, the impact of sequestration, and effective disarmament by many U.S. allies have exacted a high toll on America's military.

This is a grim landscape. The United States needs to deal with these threats forthrightly and with strength, but it also needs to be realistic. It cannot wish away these problems. Rather, it must confront them with a clear-eyed recognition of the need for choice, discipline, and adequate resources for defense.

In this light, U.S. defense strategy must identify China unequivocally as the top priority for U.S. defense planning while modernizing and expanding the U.S. nuclear arsenal and sustaining an efficient and effective counterterrorism enterprise. U.S. allies must also step up, with some joining the United States in taking on China in Asia while others take more of a lead in dealing with threats from Russia in Europe, Iran, the Middle East, and North Korea. The reality is that achieving these goals will require more spending on defense, both by the United States and by its allies, as well as active support for reindustrialization and more support for allies' productive capacity so that we can scale our free-world efforts together.

Needed Reforms

- **Prioritize a denial defense against China.** U.S. defense planning should focus on China and, in particular, the effective denial defense of Taiwan.

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This focus and priority for U.S. defense activities will deny China the first island chain.

1. Require that all U.S. defense efforts, from force planning to employment and posture, focus on ensuring the ability of American forces to prevail in the pacing scenario and deny China a *fait accompli* against Taiwan.
 2. Prioritize the U.S. conventional force planning construct to defeat a Chinese invasion of Taiwan before allocating resources to other missions, such as simultaneously fighting another conflict.
- **Increase allied conventional defense burden-sharing.** U.S. allies must take far greater responsibility for their conventional defense. U.S. allies must play their part not only in dealing with China, but also in dealing with threats from Russia, Iran, and North Korea.
 1. Make burden-sharing a central part of U.S. defense strategy with the United States not just helping allies to step up, but strongly encouraging them to do so.
 2. Support greater spending and collaboration by Taiwan and allies in the Asia-Pacific like Japan and Australia to create a collective defense model.
 3. Transform NATO so that U.S. allies are capable of fielding the great majority of the conventional forces required to deter Russia while relying on the United States primarily for our nuclear deterrent, and select other capabilities while reducing the U.S. force posture in Europe.
 4. Sustain support for Israel even as America empowers Gulf partners to take responsibility for their own coastal, air, and missile defenses both individually and working collectively.
 5. Enable South Korea to take the lead in its conventional defense against North Korea.
 - **Implement nuclear modernization and expansion.** The United States manifestly needs to modernize, adapt, and expand its nuclear arsenal. Russia maintains and is actively brandishing a very large nuclear arsenal, but China is also undertaking a historic nuclear breakout.

Department of Defense

1. Expand and modernize the U.S. nuclear force so that it has the size, sophistication, and tailoring to deter Russia and China simultaneously.
 2. Develop a nuclear arsenal with the size, sophistication, and tailoring—including new capabilities at the theater level—to ensure that there is no circumstance in which America is exposed to serious nuclear coercion.
- **Increase allied counterterrorist burden-sharing.** Transnational terrorism remains a threat to Americans even as we pivot toward Asia.
 1. Sustain the military forces needed to deter, prevent, and combat terrorism, but at a sustainable cost in concert with other elements of national power and partner efforts.
 2. Prioritize enhancing the capability of allies and partners to take the lead in combating terrorism in their regions.

DOD ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT (A&S)

The DOD's ability to acquire and field new and existing technologies is essential to the ability of America's military personnel to fight and win our nation's wars. To succeed in this endeavor, we must optimize the systems and personnel that the department uses, but the inflexible bureaucratic structure and risk-adverse culture that have developed over the decades make it difficult to provide the tools that warfighters need at the speed of relevance.

The number one problem is the DOD budgeting process (instituted in 1961) that requires acquisition spending to be locked years in advance. Because technologies change so rapidly and requirements can change overnight, this creates situations in which military personnel not only go to war with outdated technology, but also may be fighting with equipment that is less capable than that of their competitors. America owes its military many things, and the most important is the resources they need to survive on the battlefield and carry out the tasks we ask of them.

Needed Reforms

- **Reform the planning, programming, budgeting, and execution (PPBE) process.**
 1. Enhance funding and authority for DOD mission-focused innovation organizations and away from program-specific stovepipes that, planned for and designed two or three years earlier, may no longer be

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relevant. This allows the acquisition community to focus on portfolio management and move money around more easily instead of being locked into inflexible, multiyear procurement cycles.

2. The President should examine the recommendations of the congressionally mandated Commission on Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution Reform⁴ and develop a strategy for implementing those that the Administration considers to be in the best interests of the American people. The commission's final report is due on September 1, 2023.
3. Develop legislation or other means of providing funding outside the traditional PPBE process for the prototyping and experimentation of emerging technologies that are deemed essential to modernization and future conflict. Consider creating a "fast track" for projects that satisfy the most pressing national security needs.
4. Require the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, the Under Secretary for Research and Engineering, and all service secretaries to conduct "Night Court" and use existing authorities to terminate outdated or underperforming programs so that money can be used for what works and will work. Require the Under Secretaries and service secretaries to brief the Secretary annually on the results.
5. Require the Office of the Secretary of Defense to research and report on the acquisition processes used by America's adversaries to improve our understanding of how they are often able to innovate and field new technologies on a faster timeline.

- **Strengthen America's defense industrial base.**

1. Replenish and maintain U.S. stockpiles of ammunition and other equipment that have been depleted as a result of U.S. support to Ukraine. This will strengthen the defense industry supply chain and ensure that adequate inventory exists if it is needed for a future conflict.
2. Collaborate with industry to develop a prioritized list of reforms that the DOD and Congress can enact and implement to incentivize industry to help America's military innovate and field needed capabilities.

Department of Defense

3. Strengthen the ability of acquisition authorities to engage in multiyear procurements and block buys. This will improve private-sector rates of return, thereby incentivizing defense contractors to partner with the government. It will also reduce government overhead by reducing the number of procurement competitions.
 4. Prioritize the U.S. and allies under the “domestic end product” and “domestic components” requirements of the Build America, Buy America Act.⁵ Currently, defense companies are required to manufacture defense items for the U.S. government that are 100 percent domestically produced and at least 50 percent composed of domestically produced components. However, there are loopholes that allow companies to manufacture these items overseas. This can create supply chain and other issues, especially in wartime. Manufacturing components and end products domestically and with allies spurs factory development, increases American jobs, and builds resilience in America’s defense industrial base.
 5. Review the sectors currently prioritized for onshoring or “friendshoring” of manufacturing (kinetic capabilities, castings and forgings, critical materials, microelectronics, space, and electric vehicle batteries); evaluate them according to the strategic landscape; and expand or reprioritize the list as appropriate.
 6. Help small businesses to become medium-size and large vendors, which encourages a more resilient industrial base and fosters competition. Encourage and plan for durable supply chains for small businesses so they also have commercial/private-sector customers and are not solely dependent on defense orders, which can be highly specialized, expensive, and irregular.
 7. Increase external engagement among small businesses to inform them of DOD’s needs and how they could work with DOD to meet national security priorities.
- **Optimize the DOD acquisition community.**
 1. Create incentives to emphasize speed and agility in decision-making for prototyping and program-of-record starts and terminations. Most bureaucrats would rather follow a checklist and fail than go outside the procedures and win because failure means negative

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

career repercussions. Senior acquisition leaders should design a system that allows decision-makers to stay within the law but bypass unnecessary departmental regulations that are not in the best interest of the government and hamper the acquisition of capabilities that warfighters require.

2. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Under Secretary for Research and Engineering, and all service secretaries should assess their acquisition workforces; determine what additional personnel, resources, and training they need; and develop implementation plans. The goal is to develop, prototype, acquire, and field required capabilities at the speed of relevance to meet America's pacing threats and maintain a warfighting advantage.
3. Decentralize Defense Acquisition University (DAU) offerings and expand the DAU mission to include accreditation of non-DOD institutions. The critical shortage of trained and certified acquisition personnel must be addressed with urgency in order to support DOD mission objectives and goals. With the rapid evolution of training and educational technologies, including remote and virtual practices, there is no reason for DAU to maintain a monopoly on the knowledge and certification that are required to perform as acquisition professionals. Further, the cost to private contractors and non-DOD civilians who aspire to such a role limits the supply of trained and certified candidates. DAU has become an unnecessary barrier to entry in a career field that is vital to the DOD mission.

DOD RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION (RDT&E)

The FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act established the position of Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering and assigned broad responsibility for “all defense research and engineering, technology development, technology transition, prototyping, experimentation, and developmental testing activities and programs, including the allocation of resources for defense research and engineering, and unifying defense research and engineering efforts across the Department,” to the new Under Secretary, who also was tasked with “serving as the principal advisor to the Secretary on all research, engineering, and technology development activities and programs in the Department.”⁶ This led to the single largest DOD structural change since the Goldwater–Nichols act of 1986⁷ and was organized effectively during President Donald Trump's Administration.

Department of Defense

Needed Reforms

- **Champion, engage, and focus the American innovation ecosystem.**

To maintain leadership in the era of great-power competition and succeed against our adversaries, a key DOD effort must be the creation of mechanisms and processes to embrace America's most significant competitive advantage: innovation.

1. Engage and leverage all of America's scientific, engineering, and high-tech production communities to research, develop, prototype, and rapidly deploy advanced technology capabilities on a continuing basis to preserve our warfighting advantage.
2. Increase integration and collaboration among the DOD, government labs, and private companies to solve the department's most difficult problems.
3. Reduce the number of critical technology areas from 14 to a more manageable number to concentrate effort and resources on those that bear directly on great-power competition.
4. Rebuild RDT&E infrastructure that resides in Cold War-era facilities and is not well-suited to the current era of rapid development and testing of advanced technology and concepts to the maturity level necessary for acquisition and operational fielding.
5. Move toward a much more comprehensive independent risk-reduction approach to increase understanding of the technical risks by drawing on the expertise in DOD laboratories and agencies to help acquisition programs succeed.

- **Improve the rapid deployment of technology to the battlefield.**

America's military advantage has derived from the professionalism of our servicemembers and our ability to manifest our technological advantage in battlefield capability. The current era of great-power competition will continue for the foreseeable future, and technology will be the currency of competition. Our ability to prevail will rest on our ability to develop new technologies and move them onto the battlefield more rapidly than our adversaries can.

1. Accelerate the prototyping cycle to meet immediate battlefield needs.
2. Require tighter integration with user communities to provide value.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

3. Establish a pipeline of near-term, mid-term, and long-term technology that is aimed at great-power competition (China) and can be matured, prototyped, and evaluated to support major acquisitions (the ability to produce at scale) to break the cycle of schedule delays and cost overruns from underdeveloped and poorly understood technologies.
- **Develop a framework to protect the RDT&E enterprise from foreign exploitation.** Strategic competition and adaptive adversaries require new thinking about how to protect technology. China has been relentless in stealing U.S. technology, using the full range of measures from influence operations to outright theft. This has been a major factor in its ability to close the gap and in some cases to exceed U.S. capabilities.
 1. Implement a comprehensive approach to preserving U.S. technological leadership that is based on outpacing our adversaries; clear about what we need to protect; tailored to various specific sectors (for example, academia, the defense industrial base, and laboratories); and underpinned with a full range of consequences for attempted or actual theft.

DOD FOREIGN MILITARY SALES

The United States must regain its role as the “Arsenal of Democracy.” In fiscal year (FY) 2021, U.S. government foreign military sales (FMS) nosedived to a low of \$34.8 billion from a record high of \$55.7 billion in FY 2018.⁸ This decrease hinders interoperability with partners and allies, decreases defense industrial base capacity, and increases the taxpayer burden on the U.S. military’s own procurements. Under previous Administrations, the United States built its reputation as a reliable partner with a strong defense industrial base that could supply military articles and goods in a timely manner. Today’s FMS process is encumbered by byzantine bureaucracy, long contracting times, high costs, and mundane technology.

The United States can change this downward trajectory by improving internal processes that incentivize partners and allies to procure U.S. defense systems, thereby expanding our “defense ecosystem.” We must reverse the recent dip in FMS to ensure both that our partners remain interoperable with the United States and that our defense industrial base regains much-needed capacity in preparation for future challenges.

Needed Reforms

- **Emphasize exportability with U.S. procurements.** The record-low FMS sales in 2021 were driven partly by the high costs of converting weapon systems on the back end of production rather than emphasizing exportability in initial capability planning.

Department of Defense

1. Ensure that senior U.S. military leadership emphasizes exportability in the initial development of defense systems that are both available and interoperable with our partners and allies.
 2. Create a funding mechanism to incentivize exportability in initial planning, which can be recouped after future FMS transactions.
- **End informal congressional notification.** Informal congressional notification or “tiered review” is a hinderance to ensuring timely sales to our global partners. The tiered review process is not codified in law; it is merely a practice by which the Department of State provides a preview of prospective arms transfers before Congress is formally notified.⁹
 1. End the tiered review process to eliminate at least 20 days from the FMS process.
 2. Use the tiered review process only when unanimous congressional support is guaranteed in order to eliminate the “weaponization” by select Members of Congress that has prevented billions of dollars of arms sales from moving into formal congressional notification.
 - **Minimize barriers to collaboration.** The high cost of developing advanced defense platforms requires the United States to collaborate with key allies to minimize waste, complement strengths, and supplement our defense industrial base to create a system that is greater than that of the United States alone.
 1. Enhance defense industrial base planning with partners to allow them to focus on niche areas where there are cost advantages for the United States.
 2. Decrease International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) to facilitate trade with such allies as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia.
 3. Create opportunities to improve the health of the defense supply chain with added opportunities for partners and allies to contribute.
 - **Reform the FMS contracting process.** The contracting timeline for the FMS process is shockingly slow. On average, the DOD contracting timeline takes approximately 18 months because of slow bureaucratic processes and chronic understaffing.¹⁰

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

1. Immediately fund more contracting capacity in all services to decrease the contracting timeline and improve the delivery of defense articles to our global partners.
2. Rationalize and speed arms sales decision-making to preclude our enemies from exploiting bureaucratic slothfulness and allow us to manage the development of indigenous defense industrial bases.

DOD PERSONNEL

The men and women of America's armed forces are the most critical component of our national defense strategy, but in recent years, they have been overextended, undervalued, and insufficiently resourced. Their families help them to carry the burden of service, but the assistance they receive is disproportionately less than the sacrifices they make. Young civilians who would thrive in a military environment are disenfranchised when educators and influencers discourage them from learning about military service and preparing for the honor of wearing America's uniform.

The United States military is an extraordinary institution, staffed by exceptional people who have defended our nation and changed the course of history, but the Biden Administration, through word and deed, has treated the armed forces as just another place to work. We must restore our military to a place of honor and respect and recruit and retain the individuals who will meet the rigorous standards of excellence that are required for membership in the world's greatest fighting force.

Needed Reforms

- **Rescue recruiting and retention.** Recruiting was the worst in 2022 that it has been in two generations and is expected to be even worse in 2023. Some of the problems are self-inflicted and ongoing. The recruiting problem is not service-specific: It affects the entire Joint Force.
 1. Appoint a Special Assistant to the President who will maintain liaison with Congress, DOD, and all other interested parties on the issue of recruiting and retention.
 2. Improve recruiting by suspending the use of the recently introduced MHS Genesis system that uses private medical records of potential recruits at Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS), creating unnecessary delays and unwarranted rejections.¹¹
 3. Improve military recruiters' access to secondary schools and require completion of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

Department of Defense

(ASVAB)—the military entrance examination—by all students in schools that receive federal funding.¹²

4. Encourage Members of Congress to provide time to military recruiters during each townhall session in their congressional districts.
 5. Increase the number of Junior ROTC programs in secondary schools.
- **Restore standards of lethality and excellence.** Entrance criteria for military service and specific occupational career fields should be based on the needs of those positions. Exceptions for individuals who are already predisposed to require medical treatment (for example, HIV positive or suffering from gender dysphoria) should be removed, and those with gender dysphoria should be expelled from military service. Physical fitness requirements should be based on the occupational field without consideration of gender, race, ethnicity, or orientation.
 - **Eliminate politicization, reestablish trust and accountability, and restore faith to the force.** In 2021, the Reagan National Defense Survey found that only 45 percent of Americans have “a great deal of trust and confidence in the military”—down from 70 percent in 2018.¹³
 1. Strengthen protections for chaplains to carry out their ministry according to the tenets of their faith.
 2. Codify language to instruct senior military officers (three and four stars) to make certain that they understand their primary duty to be ensuring the readiness of the armed forces, not pursuing a social engineering agenda. This direction should be reinforced during the Senate confirmation process. Orders and direction motivated by purely partisan motives should be identified as threats to readiness.
 3. Reinstate servicemembers to active duty who were discharged for not receiving the COVID vaccine, restore their appropriate rank, and provide back pay.
 4. Eliminate Marxist indoctrination and divisive critical race theory programs and abolish newly established diversity, equity, and inclusion offices and staff.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

5. Restrict the use of social media solely for purposes of recruitment and discipline any armed services personnel who use an official command channel to engage with civilian critics on social media.
 6. Audit the course offerings at military academies to remove Marxist indoctrination, eliminate tenure for academic professionals, and apply the same rules to instructors that are applied to other DOD contracting personnel.
 7. Reverse policies that allow transgender individuals to serve in the military. Gender dysphoria is incompatible with the demands of military service, and the use of public monies for transgender surgeries or to facilitate abortion for servicemembers should be ended.
- **Value the military family.** Military service requires extreme sacrifices by families.
 1. Support legislation to increase wages and family allowances for active-duty enlisted personnel. No uniformed personnel should ever have to rely on social benefits like as food stamps or public housing assistance.
 2. Improve base housing and consider the military family holistically when considering change-of-station moves.
 3. Improve spouse employment opportunities and protections, including licensing reform,¹⁴ and expand childcare.
 4. Audit all curricula and health policies in DOD schools for military families, remove all inappropriate materials, and reverse inappropriate policies.
 5. Support legislation giving education savings account options to military families.¹⁵
 - **Reduce the number of generals.** Rank creep is pervasive. The number of O-6 to O-9 officers is at an all-time high across the armed services (above World War II levels), and the actual battlefield experience of this officer corps is at an all-time low. The next President should limit the continued advancement of many of the existing cadre, many of whom have been advanced by prior Administrations for reasons other than their warfighting prowess.

DOD INTELLIGENCE

Our national defense establishment must evolve to meet the rapid, profound, and dynamic change in the global landscape, but absent significant effort to evaluate and retool in critical areas—including our intelligence and security portfolios—America’s competitive advantage against rivals and adversaries is at serious risk. However, for any structural changes to succeed, the crisis in our Intelligence Community (IC)/Defense Intelligence Enterprise (DIE) leadership must be addressed.¹⁶

The DIE accounts for the bulk of the Intelligence Community’s personnel and a significant portion of its budget. Of the IC’s 17 elements, eight are within DOD,¹⁷ two are independent,¹⁸ and seven belong to various other departments and agencies.¹⁹ Overall, “[t]he DoD provides 86 percent of the personnel who conduct intelligence activities, both military and civilian.”²⁰

The Defense Intelligence Enterprise must deliver accurate, unbiased, and timely insights consistently and with clarity, objectivity, and independence. If they continue on their current path, however, both the DIE and the Intelligence Community writ large will continue to provide inaccurate and politicized intelligence assessments that mislead policymakers.

Needed Reforms

- **Improve the intelligence process.** Defense intelligence assets have been committed to the prosecution of operational campaigns since September 11, 2001, at the expense of our strategic objectives, and this has led to increased risk.²¹ Further, the DIE has evolved into a “customer-based” model with the DIE/IC trying to be supportive of policy direction at the expense of analytical integrity. The result has been a significant politicization of intelligence.

1. Establish unbiased intelligence reporting from DIE/IC senior leaders. As the leader of the DIE, the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security should provide a top-line, dissenting, or clarifying view of DIE and IC assessments as needed.
2. Align collection and analysis with vital national interests (countering China and Russia).
3. Establish an effective global federated intelligence framework with allies and partners and our Combatant Commands. Avoid the temptation to neglect areas that appear less pertinent but that support a convergence of threats and the critical requirements to sustain those threats.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

4. Establish and sustain feedback loops to provide insight and direction for continuous improvement and accountability.²² We must revisit our assessments and understand where we got it right and where we got it wrong.
 5. Better exploit publicly available information (PAI) data and foster innovation to improve collection and analysis. We must end the practice of multiple DIE organizations paying to acquire the same PAI data and invest more in machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) to exploit open-source and classified intelligence data.
 6. Remove policy obstacles that impede available technical solutions and tailored approaches in order to preclude corruption at the point of collection.
 7. Develop statistical discrimination techniques based on relative value to deal with the volume and velocity of available data and information, which are rapidly exceeding our ability to exploit and analyze available data and information efficiently.
- **Expand the integration of intelligence activities.** The prevalence of asymmetric warfare requires Defense Intelligence to leverage the unique authorities and capabilities of U.S. departments and agencies, as well as our partners and allies, to competitive advantage.
 1. Create an improved cyber defense and capability. We must reevaluate the dual-hat structure between the National Security Agency (NSA) and U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM).
 2. Resurrect economic analysis capability to improve our ability to counter Chinese whole-of-government strategies that combine security with predatory economic objectives.
 3. Resurrect critical thinking to provide true strategic intelligence that will enable the U.S. to counter global adversaries and emerging technologies (such as adversary advances in hypersonics, Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), cyber domain, advanced fighter aircraft, and advanced undersea capabilities) more effectively.
 4. Rebuild human intelligence (HUMINT) and counterintelligence (CI) and improve their integration with defensive and offensive cyber operations.

Department of Defense

5. Establish true alignment between DOD and DHS both to improve the defense of critical U.S. infrastructure and national border integrity and to develop vital information that enables defense against foreign targeted disruptions.²³
- **Restore accountability and public trust.** In recent years, public trust in Defense Intelligence has been eroded by, for example, flawed assumptions leading up to our Afghanistan withdrawal, flawed Russia–Ukraine assessments, divergences in relations with key Gulf allies, and voids being filled by Russia and China around the world. For trust to be restored and sustained, officials must be held accountable.
 1. Restore DIE critical thinking. Establish mechanisms to restore analytic integrity and return to true intelligence-driven operations. The next Administration should eliminate the conflict of interest in the current customer-based model (in which the customer is always right) by enforcing time-tested procedures that guarantee independent analysis, even if it means challenging policymakers’ assumptions. The Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security’s leadership role should be expanded to include providing analytic top-line views and improve DIE transparency by highlighting diverging views.
 2. Elevate the DIE’s voice in national policy discussions, commensurate with the DIE’s 75 percent share of the IC budget. Present defense intelligence to senior policymakers, either independently to avoid all-source bias or in consensus products like the National Intelligence Estimates.
 - **Eliminate peripheral intelligence obligations that do not advance military readiness.** In 2019, following the catastrophic 2015 data breach at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) accepted transfer of the responsibility to conduct security clearance and suitability investigations for 95 percent of the U.S. government’s civilian workforce. This decision, which grew out of an intention to deconstruct OPM, was wrongheaded on many levels and made the federal bureaucracy dependent on a new overlay of DOD bureaucracy, in a sense instilling DOD control of civilian managers. This function should be returned to OPM except for military security clearance investigations.

U.S. ARMY

The U.S. Army's mission is "[t]o deploy, fight and win our nation's wars by providing ready, prompt and sustained land dominance by Army forces across the full spectrum of conflict as part of the joint force."²⁴ Today, however, the Army cannot execute its land dominance mission.²⁵ The U.S. Army is at an inflection point that is marked by more than a decade of steadily eroding budgets and diluted buying power, an appreciable degradation in readiness and training capacity, a near crisis in the recruiting and retention of critical personnel, and a bevy of aging weapons systems that no longer provide a qualitative edge over peer and near-peer competitors but will not be replaced in the near term.

All of these challenges are set against the backdrop of a complex and dynamic global geopolitical environment that is exemplified and exacerbated by the triumph of our adversaries in Afghanistan after a 20-year struggle there as well as recent Russian outrages in the Ukraine and China's bellicosity both on its borders and in surrounding disputed regions. In spite of these ever-increasing operational pulls, our Army is consistently being asked to do more with fewer resources. The status quo is further marked by a pervasive politically driven top-down focus on progressive social policies that emphasize matters like so-called diversity, equity, and inclusion and climate change, often to the detriment of the Army's core warfighting mission.

Needed Reforms

- **Rebuild the Army.** The total Army budget has decreased by roughly 11 percent since 2018, perilously affecting the service's readiness and ability to train and to procure new personnel and equipment. Declining budgets and decreased buying power have forced the Army to lower training standards and opportunities to train, propose reductions in end strength, slash military construction programs to historically low levels, and scale back essential modernization programs.
 1. Increase the Army budget to remain the world's preeminent land power.
 2. Accelerate the development and procurement of the six current Army modernization priorities (long-range precision fires, the Next-Generation Combat Vehicle, Future Vertical Lift, the Army network, air and missile defense, and soldier lethality) to replace worn out and outdated combat systems and ensure ground combat dominance.
 3. Increase funding to improve Army training and operational readiness.
 4. Increase the Army force structure by 50,000 to handle two major regional contingencies simultaneously.

Department of Defense

5. Reform recruiting efforts. The Army missed its 2022 recruitment goal by 25 percent, or 15,000 soldiers.
- **Focus on deployability and sustained operations.** The U.S. Army's very lethal ground force capability is irrelevant if it cannot quickly deploy to locations for employment in decisive operations to secure our global security interests. Additionally, Army logisticians provide the ground transportation (of both personnel and equipment); fuel, food, and water; munitions (bombs and bullets); medical supplies and services; and veterinary services (food safety) that are critical to sustainment of the other services.
 1. Immediately increase the production and stockpiling of critical munitions and repair parts.
 2. Prioritize expeditionary logistics in all force design and operational planning to guarantee entry into a contested theater of war.
 3. Increase the level of Joint Force training, synchronization, and coordination focused on logistics.
 4. Prepare to deploy forces from degraded U.S.-based transportation infrastructure that is compromised by opposing forces.
 - **Transform Army culture and training.** The Army can no longer serve as the nation's social testing ground. A rebuilt Army that is focused again on its core warfighting mission and empowered it with the tools, resources, and authorities it needs to accomplish that mission must be the next Administration's highest defense priority.
 1. Stop using the Army as a test bed for social evolution. Misusing the Army in this way detracts from its core purpose while doing little to reshape the American social structure. The Army no longer reflects national demographics to the degree that it did before 1974 when the draft was eliminated.
 2. Demand accountability in senior leaders to reverse the decline in public support for military service.
 3. Reestablish the experiential base for the planning, execution, and leadership of Army formations in large-scale operations. Currently,

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

there are no general or field-grade officers who served as planners or commanders against a near-peer adversary in combat.

4. Examine the logic of emerging Army concepts about employing massed long-range fires and effects without considering how to gain advantage by closing with and dominating an adversary on land.
5. Recognize that high-intensity land combat operations cannot be sustained through short-term individual or unit rotations in the style of the sustained low-intensity campaigns conducted over the past 20 years.
6. Transform how the National Guard is employed during extended operations short of declared war to preclude back-to-back federal and state deployments of National Guard soldiers in order to stabilize and preserve military volunteerism in our communities.
7. Revamp Army school curricula to concentrate on preparation for large-scale land operations that focus on defeating a peer threat.
8. Address the underlying causal issues driving increasing Army suicide rates, which have surpassed pre–World War II rates and are now eclipsing the rate among civilians.

U.S. NAVY

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power to “provide and maintain a Navy.” Inherent in this phrase is a recognition that there is a vital national interest in the maritime environment and that this national interest requires sustained planning and investment. This is as true today as it was almost 250 years ago and will remain true into the future.

The U.S. Navy (USN) exists for two primary reasons: to project prompt, sustained, and effective combat power globally, both at sea and ashore, and to deter aggression by potential adversaries by maintaining a forward operating presence in conjunction with allies and partners. Today, the People’s Republic of China People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) can challenge the USN’s ability to accomplish its mission in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

In the production, employment, and control of maritime forces, the USN must consider the scope and rate of technological change and, where appropriate, adapt its processes and workforce development. In balancing the necessary long-term industrial model of naval platforms against emerging short-term opportunities, the USN must take account of advances that may present vulnerabilities and risks as well as what is assured and secure.

Department of Defense

Needed Reforms

- **Invest in and expand force structure.** The USN's organizing principle remains platform-centered: vessels manned by sailors. The manned surface and subsurface forces act in concert with land-based, air-based, and space-based forces to project power outside sovereign territory, principally by operating in international waters. Investments must be closely coordinated with these other elements of military power.
 1. Build a fleet of more than 355 ships.²⁶
 2. Develop and field unmanned systems to augment the manned forces.
 3. Require that range and lethality be the key factors in all procurement and sustainment decisions for ships, aircraft, and munitions.
- **Reestablish the General Board.** In contrast with the Navy General Board that served ship development so well during the interwar period, the current joint process²⁷ for defining the requirements for major defense acquisitions is not well-suited to long-term planning of the sort that is needed for USN fleet architecture and shipbuilding. The interwar General Board should serve as a model, empowered with final decision authority over all requirements documents concerning ships and the major defense systems fielded on ships. The individual board members would ensure a broad base of knowledge as well as independent thinking.²⁸
- **Establish a Rapid Capabilities Office.** The USN must transition technology into warfighting capability more rapidly. It must foster a culture of innovation that includes connecting theoretical and intangible ideas with real production environments that produce tangible and practical outcomes and adapting proven processes to advance material solutions.
 1. Harness innovation and willingness to tolerate risk so that “good enough” systems can be fielded rapidly.
 2. Use the Space Development Agency as a model.
 3. Establish an oversight Board of Directors made up of the service chief, service secretary, and Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

- **Accelerate the purchase of key munitions.** It takes years to build and maintain navies but only hours to expend their ordnance in combat. The USN must be prepared to expend large quantities of air-launched and sea-launched stealthy, precision, cruise missiles against targets both at sea and ashore. Additionally, modern air defense requires the use of high-performance surface-to-air missiles.
 1. Produce key munitions at the maximum rate with significant capacity.
 2. Working with the Congress, employ the widest possible range of techniques to enhance the munitions supply chains and workforce.
- **Enhance warfighter development.** The USN requires a variety of documented qualifications for personnel to advance in their careers and assume leadership positions. It also requires individual professional qualifications that are focused on warfighting.
 1. Mandate qualifications that demonstrate an understanding of core competence in collective, integrated warfighting, especially based on current plans and technologies.
 2. Elevate the Headquarters Staff focused on Warfighter Development (N7) within the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) and empower it to develop such requirements.
 3. Require that war games be utilized as experiential learning environments for the participants as a prerequisite for achieving career milestones (department heads, commanding officers, and major commanders).
 4. Highlight in training and leader development that USN forces can and must maintain the ability to operate from and/or defend sovereign territory to include our allies and partners.
 5. Train to balance effects from kinetic to nonkinetic and from lethal to nonlethal through effective command and control.

U.S. AIR FORCE

The U.S. Air Force today lacks a force structure with the lethality, survivability, and capacity to fight a major conflict with a great power like China, deter nuclear threats, and meet its other operational requirements under the National Defense Strategy.²⁹ For 30 years, the Air Force has received less annual funding

Department of Defense

(if pass-through funding, defined as money in the Air Force budget that does not go to the Air Force, is removed from the equation) than the Army and Navy have received. This underfunding has forced the Air Force to cut its forces and forgo modernizing aging weapons systems that were never designed to operate in current threat environments and are structurally and mechanically exhausted. The result is an Air Force that is the oldest, smallest, and least ready in its history.

The decline in Air Force capacity and capability is occurring at the same time the security environment demands the very options that the Air Force uniquely provides. Combatant commanders routinely request more Air Force capabilities than the service has the capacity to provide. The Air Force today simply cannot accomplish all of the missions it is required to perform.

The Air Force has consistently stated on the official record that it is not sized to meet the mission demands placed on it by the various U.S. Combatant Commands. A 2018 study, “The Air Force We Need,”³⁰ showed a 24 percent deficit in Air Force capacity to meet the needs of the National Defense Strategy. Those conclusions remain valid and are more pronounced today because of subsequent aircraft retirements. The demand is also higher because of world events. To understand these trends, one needs only to consider that the Air Force’s future five-year budget plan retires 1,463 aircraft while buying just 467. This makes for a reduction of 996 aircraft by 2027. The net result is a force that is smaller, older, and less ready at a time when demand is burgeoning.

Needed Reforms

- **Increase spending and budget accuracy in line with a threat-based strategy.** Returning the U.S. military to a force that can achieve deterrence or win in a fight if necessary requires returning to a threat-based defense strategy. Real budget growth combined with a more equitable distribution of resources across the armed services is the only realistic way to create a modernized Air Force with the capacity to meet the needs of the National Defense Strategy. Additionally, as noted above, pass-through funding causes numbers cited in current DOD budget documents to be higher than the dollar amounts actually received by the Air Force.
 1. Adopt a two-war force defense strategy with scenarios for each service that will allow the Air Force to attain the resources it requires by developing a force-sizing construct that reflects what is required to accomplish strategic objectives.
 2. Eliminate pass-through funding, which has grown to more than \$40 billion per year and has caused the Air Force to be chronically underfunded for decades.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

3. Increase the Air Force budget by 5 percent annually (after adjusting for inflation) to reverse the decline in size, age, and readiness and facilitate the transition to a more modern, lethal, and survivable force.
- **Reduce near-term and mid-term risk.** Increasing the Air Force's acquisition of next-generation capabilities that either are or soon will be in production will increase the ability of the United States to deter or defeat near-term to mid-term threats.
 1. Increase F-35A procurement to 60–80 per year.
 2. Build the capacity for a B-21 production rate of 15–18 aircraft per year along with applicable elements of the B-21 long-range strike family of systems.
 3. Increase Air Force airlift and aerial refueling capacity to support agile combat employment operations that generate combat sorties from a highly dispersed posture in both Europe and the Pacific.
 4. Develop and buy larger quantities of advanced mid-range weapons (50 nm to 200 nm) that are sized to maximize targets per sortie for stealth aircraft flying in contested environments against target sets that could exceed 100,000 aimpoints.
 5. Accelerate the development and production of the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile to reduce the risk inherent in an aging Minuteman III force in light of China's nuclear modernization breakout.
 6. Increase the number of EC-37B electronic warfare aircraft from 10 to 20 in order to achieve a minimum capacity to engage growing threats from China across the electromagnetic spectrum.
 - **Invest in future Air Force programs and efforts.** Increasingly capable adversaries require new capabilities to enable victory against those adversaries.
 1. Attain an operationally optimized advanced battle management system as the Air Force element of the DOD Joint All Domain Command and Control enterprise.
 2. Produce the next-generation air dominance system of systems (air moving target indication, other sensors, communications, command and control, weapons, and uninhabited aerial vehicles).

Department of Defense

3. Achieve moving target engagement capability and capacity against sea, surface, and ground mobile targets at the scale necessary to meet the needs of the National Defense Strategy.
4. Build resilient basing, sustainment, and communications for survivability in a contested environment.
5. Establish a vigorous and sufficiently funded electromagnetic spectrum operations recovery plan to make up for more than 20 years of neglect of this mission area.

U.S. MARINE CORPS

The U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) is the maritime land force of the Department of Defense and Department of the Navy. It serves a critical role as an expeditionary amphibious force that can project power from sea to shore and beyond while performing other specialized missions like securing America's diplomatic outposts abroad.

Between the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the conclusion of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan in August 2022, the Marine Corps engaged in extended operations ashore as directed by the Secretary of Defense, leaving it with little opportunity or ability to train for and execute the naval and amphibious operations for which it is uniquely suited and directed by law. This lengthy divergence from its primary mission led to deep concern that the Corps had become a "second land army," prompting senior Marine Corps leaders to push for the service to return to the sea. In addition, the USMC spent nearly two decades fighting counterinsurgency wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and developed capabilities that were specifically geared to those fights but have limited utility in scenarios involving evenly matched and advanced enemies or amphibious operations that are necessary for the projection of naval power.

As a result, Marine Corps Commandant General David H. Berger developed and began to implement Force Design 2030,³¹ a plan that, if completed, would be the most radical transformation of the Marine Corps since World War II. The successful implementation of this force redesign, coupled with reforms in the Marine Corps' personnel system and the Navy's amphibious shipbuilding plans, will be critical to ensuring the Corps' future combat effectiveness.

Needed Reforms

- **Divest systems to implement the Force Design 2030 transformation.**³² Divesting equipment that is less relevant to distributed, low-signature operations in a contested maritime environment will make funds available for modernization.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

1. Transform USMC force structure.
 - a. Eliminate all USMC law enforcement battalions.
 - b. Transform at least one Marine Infantry Regiment into a Marine Littoral Regiment.
 - c. Reduce the size of remaining infantry battalions.
 2. Divest systems or equipment that are better suited to heavier U.S. Army units.
 - a. Maintain divestment of M1 Abrams tanks.
 - b. Eliminate the majority of tube artillery (M777) batteries.
 - c. Reduce the number of Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicles and the number of their replacements.
 3. Use funds made available by divestment of systems to support new systems that are geared to the likely needs of future conflicts.
 - a. Increase the number of rocket artillery batteries (HIMARS).
 - b. Increase the number of upgraded Light Armored Vehicle (LAV) companies.
 - c. Increase the number of Unmanned Aerial Systems and anti-air systems (including counter-UAS systems).
 - d. Develop long-range strike missiles and anti-ship missiles for the Corps.
 - e. Modernize USMC infantry equipment.
- **Transform the USMC personnel paradigm.** More than other services, the USMC relies heavily on junior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to staff key positions across the force but especially in combat arms. For example, E-4s routinely hold squad leader billets when the Army normally has E-6s in those billets. The nature of more distributed operations and the increasingly complex responsibilities of a Marine Corps rifle squad and platoon under Force Design 2030 will only put more responsibility on the backs of squad leaders and platoon sergeants, increasing the need for more senior Marines in those critical positions. Additionally, the Corps needs to improve its retention of junior NCOs after their first enlistments (the Marines have much lower rates of reenlistment than other branches).³³
1. Align the USMC's combat arms rank structure with the U.S. Army's (squad leader billets are for E-6s, and platoon sergeant billets are for E-7s).

Department of Defense

2. Create better incentives to retain talented junior NCOs, especially in infantry and other critical military occupational specialties.
 3. Reduce unnecessary deployments to increase dwell time in order to enable more robust primary military education.
- **Align Navy amphibious shipbuilding with Force Design 2030.** The U.S. Navy has struggled for decades to maintain an amphibious fleet that could support USMC war plans around large-scale amphibious operations. In addition, amphibious shipbuilding has often had to compete against other priorities within a constrained budget and limited shipbuilding capacity.
 1. Develop and produce light amphibious warships (LAWs) to support more distributed amphibious operations, especially in the Pacific.³⁴
 2. Maintain between 28 and 31 larger amphibious warships as opposed to the 25 specified in current Navy shipbuilding plans and the 38 specified before 2020.³⁵

U.S. SPACE FORCE

U.S. space forces conduct global space operations to sustain and enhance air, land, and sea effectiveness, lethality, and superiority by providing secure broadband global communications (precision position, navigation, and timing accuracy); attack warning and threat tracking and targeting capability (real-time intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance information); and their assured continuity of operations both by defending U.S. assets and by conducting offensive operations that are capable of imposing unacceptable losses on adversaries that might seek to attack them.

The U.S. Space Force (USSF) was established to assure continuous global and theater combat support from space, to deter attacks against U.S. space assets, and to prevail in space should deterrence fail. The USSF posture was conceived as a balance of offensive and defensive deterrent capabilities designed for maximum effectiveness.

Needed Reforms

- **Reverse the Biden Administration's defensive posture.** The Biden Administration has eliminated almost all offensive deterrence capabilities and instead will rely solely on defensive capabilities of disaggregation, maneuver, and reconstitution—the most costly, the slowest, and ultimately the most fragile architecture selection.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

1. Reestablish offensive capabilities to guarantee a favorable balance of forces, efficiently manage the full deterrence spectrum, and seriously complicate enemy calculations of a successful first strike against U.S. space assets.
 2. Restore architectural balance in U.S. space forces, both offensive and defensive, to restore deterrence dominance efficiently and quickly.
 3. Rapidly expand space control capability, to include cis-lunar space (the region beginning at geosynchronous altitude and encompassing the moon), to provide early warning of an enemy attack.
 4. Seek arms control and “rules of the road” understandings only when they are unambiguously in the interests of the U.S. and its allies, and prohibit their unilateral implementation.
- **Reduce overclassification.** The USSF must move beyond the Cold War-era culture of secrecy and overclassification that surrounded military space to facilitate greater coordination and synchronization of efforts across the government and commercial sectors.

Declassify appropriate information about terrestrial and on-orbit space capabilities that threaten the U.S. space constellation, as well as those being pursued by our competitors, to secure the principled right to counter them offensively.

- **Implement policies suited to a mature USSF.** No longer a “newborn,” the USSF has entered its fourth year of existence, and the lessons learned can be incorporated across all facets of the force to increase its effectiveness.
 1. Restructure from the current “unity of effort” structure to “unity of command.”
 2. Lead the U.S. government’s development of a clear and unambiguous declaratory policy that the United States will operate at will in space and enforce these operations with capabilities that ensure effective deterrence and the ability to impose our will if necessary.
 3. End the current study phase of concept development and issue necessary guidance for the development and fielding of offensive capabilities.

Department of Defense

4. Alter the Space Development Agency's current "fail-early" approach and transition to a methodology that maintains aggressive timelines but with significantly greater engineering rigor, with special attention to sustainment, support, and fully integrated space operations.
5. Increase the number of general officer positions to ensure the Space Force's ability to compete for resources on a common basis with the other services.
6. Explore creation of a Space Force Academy to attract top aero-astro students, engineers, and scientists and develop astronauts. The academy could be attached initially to a large existing research university like the California Institute of Technology or MIT, share faculty and funding, and eventually be built separately to be on par with the other service academies.

U.S. CYBER COMMAND

USCYBERCOM was established in 2010 by the Department of Defense to unify the direction of cyberspace operations, strengthen DOD cyberspace capabilities, and integrate and enhance U.S. cyber expertise. Cyber capabilities and threats are evolving rapidly. Accordingly, a conservative Administration should be especially sensitive to and prepared to meet the challenges presented by bureaucratic silos, inappropriately rigid tactical doctrine, and strategic thinking's historic tendency to lag behind technological capability.

The preliminary evidence from the war in Ukraine suggests that existing cyber doctrine and certain capability and target assumptions may be incorrect or misplaced. The following recommendations therefore presuppose that there will be a rigorous "lessons learned" analysis and review of existing U.S. doctrine in light of the battlefield evidence.

Needed Reforms

- **Ensure that USCYBERCOM is properly focused.** Mission creep is leading to wasteful overlap with the Department of Homeland Security, National Security Agency, Department of Defense, and Central Intelligence Agency.
 1. Separate USCYBERCOM from the National Security Agency per congressional direction.
 2. Conduct effective offensive cyber-effects operations at the tactical and strategic levels.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

3. Expand defensive cyber-effects operations authorized by President Trump’s classified National Security Presidential Memorandum 13, “United States Cyber Operations Policy.”³⁶
 4. End USCYBERCOM’s participation in federal efforts to “fortify” U.S. elections to eliminate the perception that DOD is engaging in partisan politics.
- **Increase USCYBERCOM’s effectiveness.**
 1. Accelerate the integration of cyber and electronic warfare (EW) doctrine and capabilities, abiding by the time-tested norms of combined-arms warfare.
 2. Mandate that development teams will include both coders and soldiers, aircrew, and sailors with kinetic experience at the platoon level.
 3. Break the paradigm of cyber authorities held at the strategic level.
 4. Increase cyber resilience by, for example, protecting the Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications Network and the Air Force’s Cyber Resiliency Office for Weapons Systems (CROWS).
 5. Expand coordination of joint operations with allies.
 6. Implement the Government Accountability Office’s recommendation that the DOD Chief Information Officer, Commander of USCYBERCOM, and Commander of Joint Force Headquarters–DOD Information Network “align policy and system requirements to enable DOD to have enterprise-wide visibility of cyber incident reporting to support tactical, strategic, and military strategies for response.”³⁷
 - **Rationalize strategy and doctrine.**
 1. Update the October 2022 National Security Strategy to define DOD roles and responsibilities beyond existing platitudes.
 2. Apply traditional deterrence strategies and principles for using cyber/ EW in retaliation for foreign cyberattacks and/or EW actions against U.S. infrastructure and citizens.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

Even though America's conventional war in Afghanistan was a failure, Special Operations Forces of the United States Special Operation Command (USSOCOM) executed an extremely effective counterterrorism campaign: There has not been another major attack on the homeland, global terrorist threats are reduced and managed, collaboration with international partners is effective, and units under USSOCOM are the most capable and experienced warfighters in two generations.

There is a movement to reduce the scope and scale of USSOCOM's mission in favor of other service priorities in great-power competition. This would be a mistake because USSOCOM can be employed effectively in great-power competition.

It makes sense to capitalize on USSOCOM's experience and repurpose its mission to include irregular warfare within the context of great-power competition, thereby providing a robust organization that is capable of achieving strategic effects that are critical both to our national defense and to the defense of our allies and partners around the globe. Irregular warfare should be used proactively to prevent state and nonstate actors from negatively affecting U.S. policies and objectives while simultaneously strengthening our regional partnerships. If we maintain irregular warfare's traditional focus on nonstate actors, we limit ourselves to addressing only the symptoms (nonstate actors), not the problems themselves (China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran).

Needed Reforms

- **Make irregular warfare a cornerstone of security strategy.** The U.S. can project strength through unified action with our Interagency,³⁸ allies, and partners by utilizing irregular warfare capabilities synchronized with elements of national power. Broadly redefining irregular warfare to address current state and nonstate actors is critical to countering irregular threats that range from the Chinese use of economic warfare to Russian disinformation and Islamist terrorism. A broad definition of irregular warfare in the National Security Strategy would allow for a whole-of-government approach, thereby providing resources and capabilities to counter threats and ultimately serve as credible deterrence at the strategic and tactical levels.
 1. Define irregular warfare as “a means by which the United States uses all elements of national power to project influence abroad to counter state adversaries, defeat hostile nonstate actors, deter wider conflict, and maintain peace in great-power competition.”
 2. Characterize the state and nonstate irregular threats facing the U.S. by region in the National Security Strategy.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

3. Direct that irregular warfare resources, capabilities, and strategies be incorporated directly into the overall National Defense Strategy instead of being relegated to a supporting document.
 4. Establish an Irregular Warfare Center of Excellence to help DOD train, equip, and organize to conduct irregular warfare as a core competency across the spectrum of competition, crisis, and conflict.
- **Counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) globally.** DOD, in conjunction with the Interagency, allies, and partner nations, must work proactively to counter China's BRI around the globe.
 1. Task USSOCOM and corresponding organizations in the Pentagon with conceptualizing, resourcing, and executing regionally based operations to counter the BRI with a focus on nations that are key to our energy policy, international supply chains, and our defense industrial base.
 2. Use regional and global information operations to highlight Chinese violations of Exclusive Economic Zones, violations of human rights, and coercion along Chinese fault lines in Xinjiang Province, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in addition to China's weaponization of sovereign debt.
 3. Directly counter Chinese economic power with all elements of national power in North America, Central America, and the Caribbean to maintain maritime freedom of movement and protect the digital infrastructure of nations in the region.
 - **Establish credible deterrence through irregular warfare to protect the homeland.** A whole-of-government approach and willingness to employ cyber, information, economic, and counterterrorist irregular warfare capabilities should be utilized to protect the homeland.
 1. Include the designation of USSOCOM as lead for the execution of irregular warfare against hostile state and nonstate actors in the National Defense Strategy.
 2. Demonstrate a willingness to employ offensive cyber capabilities against adversaries who conduct cyberattacks against U.S. infrastructure, businesses, personnel, and governments.

Department of Defense

3. Employ a “name and shame” approach by making information regarding the names of entities that target democratic processes and international norms available in a transparent manner.
4. Work with the Interagency to employ economic warfare, lawfare, and diplomatic pressure against hostile state and nonstate actors.
5. Maintain the authorities necessary for an aggressive counterterrorism posture against threats to the homeland.

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

Nuclear deterrence is one of the most critical elements of U.S. national security, as it forms a backstop to U.S. military forces. Every operational plan relies on the assumption that nuclear deterrence holds. Ever since the U.S. first acquired nuclear weapons, Administrations of both parties have pursued a strategy designed to deter nuclear and non-nuclear attack; assure allies; and, in the event of nuclear employment, restore deterrence at the lowest possible cost to the U.S. Today, however, America’s ability to meet these goals is increasingly challenged by the growing nuclear threats posed by our adversaries.

- China is pursuing a strategic breakout of its nuclear forces, significantly shifting the nuclear balance and forcing the U.S. to learn how to deter two nuclear peer competitors (China and Russia) simultaneously for the first time in its history.
- Russia is expanding its nuclear arsenal and using the threat of nuclear employment as a coercive tactic in its war on Ukraine.
- North Korea is advancing its nuclear capabilities.
- Iran is inching closer to nuclear capability.

Meanwhile, all U.S. nuclear capabilities and the infrastructure on which they rely date from the Cold War and are in dire need of replacement. The next Administration will need to focus on continuing the effort to modernize the nuclear triad while updating our strategy and capabilities to meet the challenges presented by a more threatening nuclear environment.

Needed Reforms

- **Prioritize nuclear modernization.** All components of the nuclear triad are far beyond their intended lifetimes and will need to be replaced over the next

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

decade. This effort is required for the U.S. to maintain its nuclear triad—and will be the bare minimum needed to maintain U.S. strategic nuclear deterrence.

1. Accelerate the timelines of critical modernization programs including the Sentinel missile, Long Range Standoff Weapon (LRSO), *Columbia*-class ballistic missile submarine, B-21 bomber, and F-35 Dual Capable Aircraft.
 2. Reject any congressional proposals that would further extend the service lives of U.S. capabilities such as the Minuteman III ICBM.
 3. Ensure sufficient funding for warhead life extension programs (LEP), including the B61-12, W80-4, W87-1 Mod, and W88 Alt 370.
- **Develop the Sea-Launched Cruise Missile-Nuclear (SLCM-N).** In 2018, the Trump Administration proposed restoring the SLCM-N to help fill a growing gap in U.S. nonstrategic capabilities and improve deterrence against limited nuclear attack.³⁹ The Biden Administration canceled this program in its 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR).⁴⁰ The next President should support and accelerate funding for development of the SLCM-N with the goal of deployment by the end of the decade.
 - **Account for China's nuclear expansion.** To ensure its ability to deter both Russia and the growing Chinese nuclear threat, the U.S. will need more than the bare minimum of nuclear modernization. President Biden's 2022 NPR described the problem but proposed no recommendations to restore or maintain nuclear deterrence.
 1. Consider procuring more modernized nuclear systems (such as the Sentinel missile or LRSO) than currently planned.
 2. Improve the ability of the U.S. to utilize the triad's upload capacity in case of a crisis.
 3. Review what capabilities in addition to the SLCM-N (for example, nonstrategic weapons or new warhead designs) are needed to deter the unique Chinese threat.
 - **Restore the nuclear infrastructure.** The United States must restore its necessary nuclear infrastructure so that it is capable of producing and maintaining nuclear weapons.

Department of Defense

1. Accelerate the effort to restore plutonium pit production, which is essential both for modern warhead programs and for recapitalizing the stockpile.
 2. Continue to invest in rebuilding infrastructure, including facilities at the National Laboratories that support nuclear weapons development.
 3. Restore readiness to test nuclear weapons at the Nevada National Security Site to ensure the ability of the U.S. to respond quickly to asymmetric technology surprises.
- **Correctly orient arms control.** The U.S. should agree to arms control agreements only if they help to advance the interests of the U.S. and its allies.
 1. Reject proposals for nuclear disarmament that are contrary to the goal of bolstering deterrence.
 2. Pursue arms control as a way to secure the national security interests of the U.S. and its allies rather than as an end in itself.
 3. Prepare to compete in order to secure U.S. interests should arms control efforts continue to fail.

MISSILE DEFENSE

Missile defense is a critical component of the U.S. national security architecture. It can help to deter attack by instilling doubt that an attack will work as intended, take adversary “cheap shots” off the table, and limit the perceived value of missiles as tools of coercion. It also allows space for diplomacy during a crisis and can protect U.S. and allied forces, critical assets, and populations if deterrence fails.⁴¹ Adversaries are relying increasingly on missiles to achieve their aims.

- China and Russia, in addition to their vast and growing ballistic missile inventories, are deploying new hypersonic glide vehicles and investing in new ground-launched, air-launched, and sea-launched cruise missiles that uniquely challenge the United States in different domains.
- North Korea has pursued an aggressive missile testing program and is becoming increasingly belligerent toward South Korea and Japan.
- Iran continues to maintain a missile arsenal that is capable of striking U.S. and allied assets in the Middle East and Europe, and its rocket launches demonstrate that it either has or is developing the ability to build ICBMs.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

Missile defense has been underprioritized and underfunded in recent years. In light of these growing threats, the incoming Administration should treat missile defense as a top priority.

Needed Reforms

- **Champion the benefits of missile defense.** Despite its deterrence and damage-limitation benefits, opponents argue incorrectly that U.S. missile defense is destabilizing because it threatens Russian and Chinese second-strike capabilities.
 1. Reject claims made by the Left that missile defense is destabilizing while acknowledging that Russia and China are developing their own advanced missile defense systems.
 2. Commit to keeping homeland missile defense off the table in any arms control negotiations with Russia and China.⁴²
- **Strengthen homeland ballistic missile defense.** The United States currently deploys 44 Ground-Based Interceptors (GBIs) as part of its Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system to defend the homeland against North Korea, but as North Korea improves its missile program, this system is at risk of falling behind the threat.⁴³
 1. Buy at least 64 of the Next Generation Interceptor (NGI), which is more advanced than the GBI, for an eventual uniform fleet of interceptors.⁴⁴ The Biden Administration currently plans to buy only 20.
 2. Consider additional steps to strengthen the GMD system such as a layered missile defense or a third interceptor site on the East Coast.
- **Increase the development of regional missile defense.** As the Ukraine conflict amply demonstrates, U.S. regional missile defense capabilities are very limited. The United States has been unable to supply our partners reliably with any capabilities, and the number and types of regional missile defense platforms are less than the U.S. needs for its own defense. The U.S. should prioritize procurement of more regional defense systems such as Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), Standard Missile-3, and Patriot missiles.
- **Change U.S. missile defense policy.** Historically, the U.S. has chosen to rely solely on deterrence to address the Russian and Chinese ballistic

Department of Defense

missile threat to the homeland and to use homeland missile defense only against rogue nations.

1. Abandon the existing policy of not defending the homeland against Russian and Chinese ballistic missiles and focus on how to improve defense as the Russian and Chinese missile threats increase at an unprecedented rate.⁴⁵
 2. Invest in future advanced missile defense technologies like directed energy or space-based missile defense that could defend against more numerous missile threats.
- **Invest in new track-and-intercept capabilities.** The advent of hypersonic missiles and increased numbers of cruise missile arsenals by threat actors poses new challenges to our missile defense capabilities.
 1. Invest in cruise missile defense of the homeland.⁴⁶
 2. Accelerate the program to deploy space-based sensors that can detect and track missiles flying on nonballistic trajectories.⁴⁷
 3. Accelerate the Glide Phase Interceptor, which is intended to counter hypersonic weapons.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The mission of the Department of Defense is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our nation's security. This chapter provides a blueprint to ensure that the Department can meet our national security needs. Its preparation was a collective enterprise of individuals involved in the 2025 Presidential Transition Project. All contributors to this chapter are listed at the front of this volume, but Sergio de la Pena and Chuck DeVore deserve special mention. The author alone assumes responsibility for the content of this chapter, and no views expressed herein should be attributed to any other individual.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

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Department of Defense

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Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

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Department of Defense

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