

America's Strategic Posture Report: Get Behind It

By

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In October of this year, the [final report](#) of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States was released. It is a wake-up call and a national call to action.

The report is urgent, reasonable, and sound, assessing emerging threats in the international security environment, the United States' posture against those threats, and offering sound recommendations to address urgent deficiencies. The report consolidates the strategic threats facing the US and defines the context of the nation's new strategic posture. These threats are addressed by others, but the report captures them collectively, presenting a menacing glimpse into the future. It is vital that the country gets behind these recommendations without delay.

Sound Recommendations

The nation's current strategic posture is predicated on a benign threat environment, favorable political relationships, arms control, and a post-Cold War system of international cooperation. The report draws attention to vast and worsening threats, with implications for US and global security.

Today, the risk to strategic stability is simultaneous regional conflicts escalating to threaten the homeland, allies, and partners. The US must adapt the Defense Planning Guidance to address this new environment. This logic undergirds the rationale for sweeping changes to the nation's strategic posture, to include enhancing our conventional, nuclear, and strategic defense forces to meet this new era's deterrence, assurance, warfighting, and war termination requirements.

In isolation, the strategic threats are deeply troubling; combined they are alarming. For example, Russia's invasion of Ukraine includes repeated coercive nuclear threats. Russia may feel confident making such threats and unilaterally suspending adherence to the New START, given its 10-to-1 advantage in "non-strategic nuclear forces" and its modernized strategic nuclear forces. China undertook a rapid and comprehensive nuclear breakout, described as "[breathtaking](#)" by the former commander of USSTRATCOM. This breakout is propelling China to peer status with the US and Russia and posturing it to pursue a coercive strategy. Meanwhile, North Korea continues its nuclear expansion, threatening the US homeland with ballistic missiles. Iran persists in fomenting regional instability as it stubbornly progresses toward [becoming a nuclear weapons state](#).

The commission correctly warns that the US must presume that the Russia-China strategic partnership could include cooperation in waging war against the US and its allies in ways that maximize their advantages. This means, the US must deter both, and be prepared to combat both simultaneously, with the potential for simultaneous nuclear escalation.

The Report is Reasonable

When considering US strategic posture force requirements, the commission cites the traditional role of nuclear weapons, including deterrence, assurance, achieving objectives if deterrence fails, and hedging the force. The report also ascribes common, basic tenets of

American nuclear strategy to include assured second strike, flexible response, tailored deterrence, extended deterrence and allied assurance, the policy of calculated ambiguity, and hedging for future uncertainty.

When these roles and tenets are overlaid with simultaneous two-war planning, a wide-ranging set of recommendations necessarily results. These include tailored responses to threats, such as defense against decapitation strikes; the need to address the imbalance in strategic nuclear forces between the US and its adversaries; regional risks associated with theater nuclear force disparities; and comprehensive infrastructure reform of the nuclear weapons complex and defense industrial base.

For American strategic nuclear forces, this could include replacing delivery platforms, modernizing warheads and command and control, recapitalizing the entire nuclear enterprise infrastructure, preparing to upload some or all of our hedge warheads, deploying the new Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (with some road-mobile), building more B-21 bombers and supporting tankers (with some bombers on alert), and building more ballistic missile submarines, Trident missiles, and ship-building facilities.

To address widening disparities in theater nuclear forces, modernized nuclear forces need to be developed and deployed to provide forward-basing, survivability, yield variation, penetrability, and promptness in both INDOPACOM and EUCOM. Certainly, this alludes to the nuclear sea-launched cruise missile and similar platforms. But the report does not stop there.

The United States' nuclear weapons complex is vast but outdated, limited in responsiveness, and ill-equipped to meet existing and emerging threats. Therefore, the complex needs modernization and expansion to meet requirements, as well as to hedge against technical failures, delays, delivery system losses, or a further worsening of the threat environment. This includes recapitalization of nuclear weapon pit production and nuclear enterprise technical expertise.

Other significant recommendations include fielding missile defense systems designed to deter and defeat limited attacks by Russia, China, and North Korea. This is a significant expansion of the scope and mission of missile defenses. The report also recommends developing offensive and defensive space assets, fielding increased numbers of long-range (hypersonic) conventional strike weapons; improving our strategic supply chain; improving private-sector contracting processes; pursuing a global ban on fractional orbital bombardment systems; and establishing [nuclear deterrence](#) as the top priority in the Departments of Defense and Energy.

Getting Behind It

The US believed conventional dominance would deter conflict. Theater nuclear forces were removed from the Pacific and modernization of strategic nuclear forces was consistently delayed. Americans forgot that to first deter war and then wage war, if necessary, “quantity is a quality all its own.” The nation allowed the industrial base to both atrophy and be outsourced.

In a world marked by diverse threats and the prospect of simultaneous armed conflict against multiple nuclear adversaries, there are no reasonable alternatives to the report's recommendations. Arms control is not the answer to risk-tolerant adversaries and others seeking an organic deterrent capability. Allies and partners could and should share the burden of deterrence in the long run but that will take unavailable time.

The costs and risks of simultaneous armed conflict with nuclear-armed peers is unquestionably higher than the costs associated with a strong strategic posture aimed at



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preventing conflict and associated escalation of nuclear risks. *America's Strategic Posture* is a sound, reasonable, and urgent document and stands alone as the most credible solution to the nation's current challenges. It is time to once again "awaken a sleeping giant" and set America on the right path.

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