

Department of Defense Releases New National Defense Strategy

Lewis-Burke Associates – November 1, 2022

Complementing the recent release of the Biden Administration's [National Security Strategy \(NSS\)](#), the Department of Defense (DOD) published the subordinate [National Defense Strategy \(NDS\)](#), which includes the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), and updated Missile Defense Review (MDR) on October 27. The NDS re-articulates the NSS's assertion of a "decisive decade" shaped by dramatic changes in geopolitics, technology, economics, and the environment. The NDS reiterates the NSS's central policy and overarching vision of **integrated deterrence**, which includes four top-level defense priorities:

- Defend the homeland.
- Deter strategic attacks against the United States, our Allies, and our partners.
- Deter aggression and be prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary.
- Ensure future military advantage by building a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

DOD thus becomes the lead coordinating agency for implementation of integrated deterrence, a noted development in how the Biden Administration plans to orchestrate these Byzantine policies. The NDS states that DOD will work in coordination with other federal agencies and departments to protect the security of the American people, expand economic prosperity and opportunity, and realize and defend the values at the heart of American way of life. These are tasks for which DOD is ideally suited given present realities like the breadth of the defense industrial base, Pentagon investments in combating disinformation, and DOD-led efforts in setting cybersecurity standards across industry. Methods cited include deterrence by denial, resilience, and direct and collective cost imposition.

The NDS further sets conditions for tailored deterrence goals for Russia, North Korea, Iran, violent extremist organizations, and transboundary challenges such as climate change. The named priority, however, remains strategic competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC). The strategy alludes to complex escalation dynamics in areas other than those traditionally regarded as military, such as rapidly evolving domains and technologies and competitors' activities in the gray zone (e.g., beneath the level of armed conflict). The NDS authorizes a policy of active, ongoing campaigning in areas of the world that hold U.S. interest alongside partners and allies.

The NDS recognizes that the proposed US deterrence policy requires the right force structure and support to succeed. The Department will continue to modernize cyber, space, nuclear, and other emerging technologies to enable the Joint Force. This envisions an end state force that is:

- **Lethal** via long-range strike capabilities.
- **Sustainable** via secure logistics in a contested environment despite adversary disruption.
- **Resilient** in information and decision advantage, ensuring critical detection and targeting.
- **Survivable** through regenerative combat power despite adversary attacks.
- **Agile and Responsive** globally given adversary advantages and climate change impacts.

DOD will build enduring advantages via rapid experimentation, acquisition, and fielding; make the right technology investments for biotechnology, quantum science, advanced materials, and clean energy; and reform Departmental processes that integrate data, software, and artificial intelligence to speed delivery

to the warfighter. The NDS also calls for the adaptation and fortification of our defense ecosystem to better support advanced manufacturing processes (e.g., aircraft and ship building, preferred munition production) and increased collaboration with the private sector in priority areas, especially with the commercial space industry.

Finally, the NDS states the Department will cultivate its workforce through colleges and universities to build future skills while refocusing professional military education institutions to prioritize critical and analytical thinking, fluency in strategic foreign languages, and social and behavioral sciences studies.

The NDS also contains the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and the 2022 Missile Defense Review (MDR). The NPR is a comprehensive, balanced approach to defending vital national security interests and reducing nuclear risks in support of the NSS and NDS. The NPR affirms a nuclear strategy rooted in deterring strategic attacks, assuring Allies and partners of our commitment to security while laying the foundation for achieving U.S. objectives if deterrence fails. The MDR provides a framework informed by defense priorities and deterrence objectives as indicated in the NDS. The MDR also identifies how the U.S. is integrating missile defense with its Allies and partners to strengthen international cooperation against shared threats.

These documents are derivatives of classified versions with more detail and guidance to senior DOD and national security officials, versions of which DOD has been actioning since early 2022. The NDS in particular contains few surprises compared to the overarching NSS that was initially due earlier in the year but delayed by changes warranted over Russian aggression in Europe. Some critics have derided these national strategies as marginally improved over prior years' given current threats, citing a lack of actionable activity. However, the Pentagon has been executing along the general lines of these strategies since 2021, careful to prevent leakage of higher classified joint warfighting concepts that could telegraph defense moves in great power competition. These strategies are meant only to provide guidance and helpful orientations to the Pentagon's future warfighting posture. Aligning with their goals strategically can help tailor approaches in future research, science, and technology development to better complement DOD budgets and program offices.