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Hearing on Recommendations for a Future National Defense Strategy  
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Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss recommendations for a future National Defense Strategy. The Committee's leadership on this topic is essential, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share my expertise and assist with your mission.

Today's global security landscape is littered with national security challenges spanning the continuum of conflict. I would characterize it as chaotic and competitive with power increasingly dynamic and distributed. The nature of national security challenges is diversifying considerably, and the technological landscape is evolving in ways that diminish traditional U.S. strengths. While the U.S. military generally operates under two key principles—fighting “away” games and maintaining unfair advantages—both are growing harder. And of course, domestic disarray works to the advantage of those who seek to harm America.

**Defense Dilemmas:**

As the Defense Department pulls together the 2018 National Defense Strategy in an effort to outline the ambition and contours of the future U.S. military, it is wrestling with the following dilemmas, many of which will remain relevant for years to come:

- **Conflict Spectrum:** The U.S. military must be able to credibly confront challenges across the spectrum of conflict, including nuclear, high-end conventional, gray zone, and counter-terrorism. These potential challengers include China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and violent non-state actors (e.g.; ISIL 2.0; Hizballah). It should prioritize countering the former while limiting the stressors of the latter.
- **Regional Focus:** The Asia-Pacific and Europe are the priority theaters for the U.S. military as it competes with rivals; however, the United States cannot remain a global power if it dismisses other regions. China is the long-term challenge for the United States given its consequential military modernization over two decades. While the U.S. military remains preeminent, the imbalance is worsening. China is making it harder for the U.S. military to project power across Asia, and neither time nor geography work to the U.S. advantage.<sup>1</sup> Russia is a medium-term challenge for the United States. Moscow's use of force in Europe and the Middle East has been rotten, but more worrying is its military's modernization over the last decade and its dangerous doctrine euphemistically known as “escalate to deescalate.” In reality, its doctrine is “escalate to escalate” as no clear-eyed observer would consider limited nuclear use de-escalatory. Moreover, the Russian way of war considers society and military fair game, blurs the line between conflict and peace, and wields cyber tools to sow doubt and faith in U.S. institutions. In the wake of the 2011 uprisings, the Middle East will

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<sup>1</sup> RAND's Scorecards is the preeminent unclassified study of Chinese military modernization. Heginbotham, Eric, et. al. The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996–2017. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR392.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR392.html).

remain fragile for decades to come. The counter-terrorism fight there and in Africa will continue, degrading readiness. Containing the regional chaos when and where possible, and limiting the toll it takes on the military, should be a priority.

- **Today vs. Tomorrow:** The U.S. military must be able to counter near-term threats and exert U.S. presence globally while also preserving readiness and modernizing the future force to effectively fight and win future wars. It should prioritize the latter.
- **Nuclear vs. Conventional Investments:** The U.S. military must maintain a credible nuclear deterrent while not allowing it to overwhelm investment in conventional capabilities. Nuclear weapons must not be hived off in budget, strategy, or future force discussions; trade space between the nuclear and conventional portfolios requires meaningful adjudication.
- **Reliance on Allies/Partners:** Allies and partners are the United States' comparative global advantage. The U.S. military will always fight alongside allies and key partners; however, some will be more capable than others and the United States will perennially face an expectations mismatch between our needs and capabilities, and theirs.
- **Inheritance from 15+ Years of War:** The U.S. military must reconcile all it has inherited from the longest period of war in U.S. history, particularly given the inconclusive nature of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The opportunity costs of this inheritance are profound. They include a force whose predominant experience has been countering terrorists and insurgents; frayed equipment; a readiness crisis; a bias for ground forces; muddled accountability, a disinterested American public, a nadir of civil-military relations; and, above all, neuralgia over the conflicts' loss of blood, treasure, and limited results.

There is no binary answer to these dilemmas. Instead, the National Defense Strategy (NDS) will invariably bet and hedge across them. I urge the Committee to review the National Defense Strategy with an eye toward efforts to make meaningful, not marginal, change. Everybody—every service, every combatant command—cannot be a winner, and the classified version of the NDS should be clear about that tally. The U.S. military is facing serious modernization shortfalls that will only grow uglier and it has spent 15+ years in conflicts that look dramatically different from the future. It needs to catch up—fast.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, the resource picture has exacerbated these dilemmas. This Committee and those of us involved in defense strategy and budgeting in recent years know the pernicious damage that sequestration has done. We have a special responsibility to ensure it is not a partisan issue, but instead a bipartisan effort to rebuild the nation's defenses in a prudent and practical manner.

### **Force Sizing and Shaping Considerations**

The Committee should engage in a classified dialogue with the Department to ensure it fully understands the future force's abilities. The Committee should consider the following:

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpted from author's quote in Tony Bertuca, "Pentagon team working National Defense Strategy sizing up return to 'two-war' paradigm," *Inside Defense*, August 30, 2017.

- **Scenario Selection.** While the scenarios used to size and shape the force are illustrative—not exhaustive—their contours are crucial. They should align with U.S. national security interests and an appropriate level of American strategic ambition, incorporating varying challenges across the conflict spectrum while balancing between likelihood and consequence.
- **Scenario Pairing:** The U.S. military must be able to fight and win multiple conflicts. Anything short of that is reckless. A force that can only wage one conflict is effectively a zero-conflict force since employing it would require the president to preclude any other meaningful global engagement. In considering scenario pairing, their separation in time and distance should be realistic (not least because the theory behind preparing for simultaneous conflicts hasn't borne fruit: an opportunistic aggressor has not taken advantage of U.S. distraction to attack—indeed, the period since 2001 would have been an ideal opportunity).
- **Scenario Execution:** Scenario analysis must focus on how the military will fight and win a conflict—jointly. Risk should be delineated as specifically as possible, and underscore when and where the force will face “heart burn” (an uglier conflict with higher losses in blood and treasure) and “heart attack” (losing the conflict).
- **Posture:** The United States—thankfully—is generally far from the conflicts it wages. Maintaining this distance requires the U.S. military to be much closer, however. Forward posture enables a rapid response when conflict erupts, can deter rivals or adversaries from launching a conflict, and magnifies the force's capacity, capability, and readiness. In the near-term, modest improvements in forward posture in Asia and Europe will have significant operational benefits. The U.S. military must be able to get anywhere around the globe at any time, which in these regions increasingly involves poking holes in Chinese and Russian attempts to impede U.S. power projection.
- **Investments:** Technology is changing how the U.S. military fights, but not why it fights nor what it fights for. The U.S. military must lean forward to exploit the benefits of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and autonomy, but it must do so responsibly by developing a shared understanding of its prospects and how to field such systems consonant with the American way of war. Key areas of investment for the future force should include undersea, long-range strike, combat air force (particularly modernizing 4<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft and balancing the portfolio more broadly), counter-unmanned autonomous systems, short range air defenses, munitions, cyber resilience, and technology that facilitates operations in contested environments with degraded communications.

### **Strategic Guidance Coherence and Assessment**

I commend the Committee for changing the name of the Quadrennial Defense Review to the National Defense Strategy, thereby making clear to the entire national security apparatus that it represents the governing guidance for the Defense Department. This crucial step will mitigate the cacophony of strategies across the Department's guidance landscape, which has resulted in confusion over strategic direction, cherry-picking for parochial agendas, and discordant dialogue

on the strategy's implementation and efficacy.<sup>3</sup> As a next step, the Committee should consider codifying a vision of the Department's hierarchy of strategic guidance documents along with which entity should lead them. That framework should include a singular overarching strategy broken into classified documents for force development and force employment.

I also commend the Committee for legislating a new requirement for the secretary of defense to annually assess the strategy and its implementation. Strategies will always be flawed; recognizing in which ways they require adjustment is crucial. As a next step, the Committee should consider codifying who is involved in this assessment and how it is conducted to ensure a broad, deep, and meaningful review. I recommend an inclusive approach at the senior level, potentially using the deputy secretary of defense and vice chairman of the joint chiefs' regular forum with the Department's leadership (the deputy's management action group). The assessment should be classified with unclassified portions released at the secretary of defense's discretion, and should diagnose the current state of affairs (and how it differs from earlier expectations), and outline in what ways the Department's trajectory will now shift.

### **Roles and Missions**

The Committee has, in its laudable exploration of Goldwater-Nichols, begun an important conversation about roles and missions. It should continue to do so, particularly as it takes steps to enhance the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff's role. Broadening his role to include global integration can have profound consequences for mil-mil and civil-mil relations. Similarly, the increasing resonance of the term "best military advice" across the military merits reflection about how its continued use is influencing defense strategy development and civil-mil relations.<sup>4</sup> These issues require serious debate and consideration, and active Congressional involvement.

### **Questions to Consider**

As the Committee's Members review the next NDS and consider future iterations, I urge you to consider the following questions:

- 1) What are the primary areas of debate and disagreement in pulling together the NDS? Who are the winners and losers in the NDS?
- 2) In what ways does the NDS differ from the chairman of the joint chiefs' National Military Strategy, and why? What's the right balance between Defense Department civilians and military leaders in producing and implementing strategy?
- 3) How does the Department plan to implement the NDS? How does the Department plan to fulfill the Committee's annual requirement to assess it and make course corrections as necessary?
- 4) In what ways does the NDS influence roles and missions?
- 5) How is the Department assessing the last 15+ years of conflict and their impact on the force, including its biases, structures, and processes?

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<sup>3</sup> Mara Karlin and Christopher Skaluba, "Strategic Guidance for Countering the Proliferation of Strategic Guidance," *War on the Rocks*, July 20, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/07/strategic-guidance-for-countering-the-proliferation-of-strategic-guidance/>.

<sup>4</sup> James Golby and Mara Karlin, "Why 'Best Military Advice' is Bad for the Military—and Worse for Civilians," *Orbis*, Winter 2018 (forthcoming).