

Background

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Getting It Right: A Congressional Guide to Grading the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review

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Early next year, the Department of Defense will present its Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) to President George W. Bush and Congress. This report, which the DOD is required by law to prepare every four years, reviews the Defense Department's forces, resources, and programs. It outlines a strategy for addressing critical issues like budget and acquisition priorities, emerging threats, and Pentagon capabilities for years ahead. Congress's first step in reviewing the report should be to determine whether the Pentagon has answered the hard questions.

Congress has rightly come to expect the QDR to address major force structure and acquisition issues as a matter of course, justifying the size of the military; the overall mix of air, land, and sea forces; the balance of Active and Reserve troops; and the fate of major ongoing acquisition programs like tactical combat aviation and aircraft carriers. However, if that is all that this QDR does, it will not be enough. Other fundamental issues must also be addressed.

The QDR must confront the critical issues that will determine whether the nation can field the right force to secure America's national security interests in the 21st century. These include strategy, force structure, roles and missions, and budget, as well as emerging strategic imperatives including China's military modernization and space, missile defense, nuclear weapons policy, and the U.S. network of alliances. The QDR must address these issues head-on and make tough choices and clear recommendations.

Talking Points

- In the 2005 QDR, the Pentagon must consider four critical issues: strategy, force structure, roles and missions for each component of the military, and budgets.
- The QDR should also address strategic imperatives, including China's growing power, space and missile defense, and nuclear weapons policy, by (1) developing capabilities that are useful in fighting the war on terrorism and in meeting threats that may emerge in 10 to 15 years; (2) maintaining the overwhelming U.S. advantage in space; and (3) modernizing the U.S. nuclear arsenal to maintain a capable and credible deterrent.
- Forces should be restructured and missions redefined to meet three emerging mission areas: homeland security, stability and post-conflict operations, and maritime security.
- Robust budgets must be maintained to prevent the U.S. military from becoming a "hollow force."

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Refining the Strategy?

The Pentagon has attempted to move toward capabilities-based planning and strategy, trying to determine the kinds of instruments that it will need to meet future national security missions rather than tailoring forces to counter specific enemies. To do that, this QDR introduced a new threat matrix. The threats represent different “security environments.” The matrix, as defined by the March 2005 *National Defense Strategy*,¹ has four threat components:

- **Irregular threats** arise from the adoption or employment of unconventional methods, including terrorism, insurgency, and civil war, by state and non-state actors to counter stronger state opponents.
- **Catastrophic threats** involve the surreptitious acquisition, possession, and possible terrorist or rogue-state employment of weapons of mass destruction or methods of producing WMD-like effects.
- **Traditional threats** are posed largely by states employing legacy and advanced military capabilities and recognizable military forces in long-established, well-known forms of military competition and conflict.
- **Disruptive threats** are future challenges from competitors developing, possessing, and employing breakthrough technological capabilities intended to replace U.S. advantages in particular operational domains.

In general, the threat matrix makes sense. It takes an approach to strategy that integrates appropriate considerations of threats and capabilities. However, it is not perfect. The final QDR will need to expand the concepts in the threat matrix to accommodate the full spectrum of future challenges and ensure that it has mapped capabilities to address each of them.

- **Complex “Multi-Bloc” Threats.** The United States could face threats from across the matrix’s spectrum from one enemy. For example, a nation-state presenting a traditional threat could also support terrorist groups or insurgencies, develop weapons of mass destruction, and research new technologies to offset U.S. advantages, thereby presenting all four types of threats simultaneously. Meeting such threats might require unique combinations of assets and forces.
- **Unique Environmental Conditions.** Fighting in various types of terrain—such as mountain, jungle, and urban environments—presents specific types of challenges that could require specific training, organizations, or equipment.
- **Economic, Political, and Diplomatic Threats.** For example, the loss of competitive advantage to nations with emerging technology sectors could have significant strategic implications.² Likewise, the loss of basing rights in foreign countries might significantly affect U.S. operations.

Without addressing these challenges, the capabilities-based planning and strategy provided in the QDR will not sufficiently prepare the military for national security tasks of the future.³

Strategic Imperatives

While preparing for a variety of non-specific but likely missions, the United States must also ensure that it is well-prepared for the most potentially significant strategic challenges of the 21st century.

China. The Chinese leadership’s view of the post-Cold War world is different from that of the United States in that China sees a multipolar world order as inconsistent with U.S. superpower status. Much of what U.S. officials discuss as “new” or “enhanced” People’s Liberation Army (PLA) capa-

1. U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, March 18, 2005, at www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2005/d20050318nds1.pdf (December 9, 2005).

2. For example, see Jack Spencer, ed., *The Military Industrial Base in an Age of Globalization: Guiding Principles and Recommendations for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2005), at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/industrial_base_book.cfm.

3. Jack Spencer and Kathy Gudgel, “The 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review: Strategy and Threats,” Heritage Foundation WebMemo No. 728, April 20, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/wm728.cfm.

bilities is actually the result of a decade-long push for modernization.

The first Gulf War galvanized the PLA and forced it to confront the fact that it was almost 20 years behind every other developed military. This provided the impetus for reform and modernization efforts. Jiang Zemin enjoined the PLA to undergo a metamorphosis: from local war under ordinary conditions to local war under modern, high-tech conditions. The PLA is transforming from a military based on quantity to one based on quality.

Concern about China has always been at the forefront of U.S. military thinking and is addressed in numerous strategic planning processes and documents. China looms large in the strategic landscape, an “unmentionable” by virtue of size, complexity, and political sensitivities.

An important measure of the QDR’s success will be how well it addresses the long-term challenges posed by China’s growing military and economic power while addressing the near-term challenges of the global struggle against violent extremism, rogue states, and other operational commitments. The U.S. must maintain the ability to operate in near-mainland waters and airspace, to overcome any PLA access denial capabilities, and to selectively deny the PLA the advantage of any mainland “sanctuary.”

The United States will require certain capabilities such as long-range precision strike, advanced electronics, theater and homeland cyberdefense, naval capability to enter and remain in contested water, and ground forces capable of taking the conflict to the mainland. The QDR should consider investment in such capabilities, which are useful in the continuing war on terrorism and which would ensure that American forces are adequately prepared 10 to 15 years in the future.

Space and Missile Defense. Given the existing U.S. advantages in military space technologies and capabilities, as well as the inherent importance to the military of maintaining access to space and pro-

tecting valuable space assets, dissuasion is a concept readily adaptable to the military use of space. Dissuasion is a means of avoiding an arms race by convincing would-be enemies that they have little hope of competing effectively in important areas. However, if the U.S. military squanders its lead in military space capabilities, it could very well invite an arms race.

Some have charged that a policy of dissuasion would lead to the “weaponization of space.” However, this threshold has already been crossed technologically. Furthermore, space was a major focus of military planners in the 2001 QDR, the 2002 Joint Doctrine for Space Operations, the 2004 Air Force Doctrine on Counterspace Operations, and the 2005 National Defense Strategy.

In this QDR, the debate has focused on the Defense Department plan for military applications in space. The debate—when space is not regarded as so contentious as to be “unmentionable”—has been reduced to one over competing definitions. The side whose definitions prevail will win the debate. Space, especially the military use of space, is an extremely technical issue, and the QDR should address the specifics.

Nuclear Weapons. Since the QDR is intended to guide planning over the next 20 years, and since the trend toward increased nuclear proliferation seems likely to persist as an issue into the foreseeable future, the QDR should seriously consider how the United States will maintain its nuclear deterrent.

Although the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)⁴ does not use this terminology, it established a “damage-limitation strategy” to guide the creation of the new strategic triad. The nuclear arsenal, as an essential element of the new triad, is designed to make the necessary contributions to meeting the needs of the damage-limitation strategy. This strategy is designed to lessen the incentives for other states to acquire nuclear, biological, and chemical

4. The Nuclear Posture Review is a congressionally mandated study. The 2002 NPR established a new policy for governing U.S. strategic forces that was designed to adapt those forces to the requirements of the post-Cold War world. For more information, see Baker Spring, “Congress Should Back Bush Administration Plans to Update Nuclear Weapons Policy and Forces,” Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 1890, October 28, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg1890.cfm.

weapons; to reduce the likelihood of an attack on the U.S. and its friends and allies with such weapons; and to limit the impact of such attacks.

Meeting these requirements necessitates the kind of diversified strategic force envisioned by the NPR in the new triad. In this context, the nuclear arsenal as a subset of the new strategic triad⁵ will contribute greatly to meeting some of these requirements. Nuclear weapons can play roles in meeting these requirements, even in situations that would appear on the surface to play little or no role.

For example, U.S. nuclear weapons would appear to do little to dissuade suicidal terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, if the U.S. makes it known that a hostile state may be subject to nuclear retaliation if it furnishes a nuclear weapon that a terrorist organization uses in an attack, nuclear weapons will help to dissuade the state sponsor. While the terrorist organization itself may not be dissuaded in this instance, its logical supplier may think twice. This in turn, at least at the margin, will lessen the likelihood that the U.S. will face a nuclear-armed terrorist group.

The QDR must call for a modern nuclear arsenal that includes weapons specifically tailored to meeting the nation's security concerns. While the government has yet to define the design of these weapons, it is clear that the existing nuclear arsenal, inherited from the Cold War, does not include such weapons. The QDR should not miss this opportunity to update U.S. nuclear policy.

Alliance Maintenance. Pentagon leaders have stated that consideration of the roles, needs, and resources provided by America's friends and allies around the world for addressing common security concerns will feature prominently in the QDR, as well it should. As a priority, the United States must establish and retain the capability to:

- Continue to plan and consult with allies,
- Actively share intelligence, and
- Provide leadership.

5. During the Cold War, all three legs of the strategic triad were composed of offensive nuclear forces: intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and bombers. The 2002 NPR updated the triad to reflect today's strategic situation. Offensive nuclear forces now comprise only one leg of the new triad, with defensive forces and responsive infrastructure serving as the other two.

In particular, while "coalitions of the willing"—arrangements by which states cooperate on an ad hoc basis for specific operations—may have their uses, long-term alliances in which nations build trust, common practices, and shared approaches to military and security issues will be the essential mainstay of successful coalition operations in the future. The U.S. military must strengthen its bonds with traditional and dependable allies like Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and Japan, and also strengthen traditional alliances like NATO, while forging strong relationships with emerging allies like Poland, Pakistan, and India. Relationships with "new" allies must expand beyond military cooperation to include increasing economic and cultural exchanges.

Roles, Missions, and Force Structure

Translating threats and strategic priorities into guidance for acquisition and funding programs is no easy task. As the Pentagon addresses this challenge, it needs to ensure that three emerging needs are not neglected. The mission areas concerning homeland security, stability and post-conflict operations, and maritime security have become new national strategic priorities since 9/11. The QDR must state specifically how Defense Department forces will be structured to accomplish these tasks. The current allocation of missions and resources is inadequate.

Homeland Security. The Defense Department has a vital role in homeland security, particularly in regard to supporting state and local governments in the immediate hours and first days following man-made or natural catastrophes. Most disasters, including terrorist attacks, can be handled by emergency responders. Only catastrophic disasters—events that overwhelm the capacity of state and local governments—would require a large-scale military response. The military should be well-organized, trained, equipped, and exercised for this type of mission. The QDR must establish the requirement for creating the force structures,

doctrine, and acquisition programs in the National Guard that are optimized to respond to catastrophic threats.⁶

Assigning this mission to the military makes sense. It would be counterproductive and ruinously expensive for other federal agencies, local governments, or the private sector to maintain the excess capacity and resources needed for immediate catastrophic response.

These forces would mostly be National Guard soldiers, troops that have the flexibility to work equally well under state or federal control. The force needs to be large enough to maintain some units on active duty at all times for rapid response and sufficient to support missions at home and abroad. For catastrophic response, three components would need to be particularly robust: medical, security, and critical infrastructure response.

The QDR should determine the precise numbers of forces that are required and how the existing Cold War force structure can be converted into units that are appropriate for new missions overseas and at home.⁷

Post-Conflict and Stability Operations. U.S. military force structures have never reflected the reality that winning the peace is as important as winning the war. As a result, the American approach to occupations has always been ad hoc and plagued with problems. The U.S. military can do better.⁸

The American military requires force structure packages, equipment, training, education, and doctrine appropriate to post-conflict tasks. There are three ways to obtain commands suitable to post-conflict missions: (1) training and equipping allies to perform these duties, (2) retraining and reorganizing U.S. combat troops for the task, and

(3) maintaining special U.S. post-conflict forces. As a great power, the United States needs to use all three of these options to provide the flexibility that will enable the nation to adapt to different strategic situations that might require different levels of commitment from U.S. forces.

The QDR can help to ensure that the U.S. military has these options by creating requirements for special post-conflict units that could be assembled from existing National Guard and Reserve units, including security, medical, engineer, and public affairs commands. Since many of the responsibilities involved in postwar duties are similar to missions that might be required of homeland security units described above, these forces could perform double duty, having utility both overseas and at home.⁹

Maritime Security. Protecting maritime commerce from attack or exploitation by terrorists is critical to the future security of the United States. The vast preponderance of U.S. trade, accounting for one-third of U.S. gross domestic product, travels by sea. Likewise, the maritime domain can be used to carry bad things and dangerous people to America's shores and those of U.S. friends and allies.

The Navy and Coast Guard share responsibility for America's maritime security, which includes operations against non-military, non-traditional asymmetric threats like terrorists, criminals, pirates, weapons proliferators, and smugglers. These missions include both homeland security tasks and "constabulary" missions overseas. The Navy will conduct increased *global* maritime security operations under regional cooperative agreements, primarily against terrorist threats, while still addressing military threats from hostile nation-states and war-fighting and deterrence responsibilities for dissuasion, contested access, and power

6. Jack Spencer, James Jay Carafano, and Baker Spring, "Defense Priorities for the Next Four Years," Heritage Foundation *Executive Memorandum* No. 953, January 11, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/em953.cfm.

7. James Jay Carafano, "Foreign Disasters: Lessons for the Pentagon's Homeland Security Efforts," Heritage Foundation *Executive Memorandum* No. 979, August 29, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/em979.cfm.

8. James Jay Carafano and Dana Dillon, "Winning the Peace: Principles for Post-Conflict Operations," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1859, June 13, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg1859.cfm.

9. James Jay Carafano, "Post-Conflict and Culture: Changing America's Military for 21st Century Missions," Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 810, November 20, 2003, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/HL810.cfm.

projection.¹⁰ The Coast Guard will concentrate on maritime security operations against terrorist and criminal threats in America's maritime domain while still addressing its responsibilities for maritime safety, mobility, protection of natural resources, and national defense in support of the Navy in maritime missions overseas.

Current Coast Guard maritime security capabilities are a unique blend of military and constabulary means, and its capabilities for terrorist and civilian threats are one and the same, whereas current Navy maritime security capabilities are purely military and do not address civilian threats since the Navy, by policy and custom, does not have the authority to enforce U.S. law.¹¹ However, both the Navy and Coast Guard must be able to detect, intercept, and board ships in the ocean expanses as well as in littoral areas. Both need to conduct, at long range and for long periods of time, single-ship interdiction, escort, presence, surveillance, patrol, peacekeeping, international engagement, and other low-level sea-control/denial missions.

Each service has a major acquisition program to address these tasks: the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship program and the Coast Guard's Deepwater modernization program. It might be more advantageous and cost-effective to build out the maritime capabilities in the Coast Guard's Deepwater program and have it fulfill many of the Navy's maritime constabulary missions.

Delineating the constabulary maritime security mission requirements of the two services is important. Otherwise, it will be impossible to establish procurement plans that are both effective and efficient. Although the Coast Guard is part of the Department of Homeland Security, its complimen-

tary maritime missions argue for addressing the issue in the QDR.

Future Budgets

Budget prospects should not drive the QDR. Growing budget deficits have already prompted some in Congress to suggest that defense spending should be cut. However, growing deficits should have no bearing on analyses of how much money the nation needs to defend itself. The quickest way to make the QDR irrelevant is to compel Pentagon analysts to force their conclusions into predetermined budget constraints. Instead, those conducting the QDR should carry out their analysis based on the assumption that, while resources are not limitless, robust defense budgets will be and must be sustained.

In the periods following World War II and the Vietnam War, the United States had what is referred to as a "hollow force"—insufficient resources to provide for adequate training, new weapons and equipment, and ongoing operations.¹² The United States must prevent the hollow force from recurring.

The danger of returning to a hollow force is real. Few would believe that the share of the U.S. economy devoted to defense spending is actually *projected to decrease*, but a new study by the Congressional Budget Office reveals that this is in fact the case. The defense budget as a proportion of U.S. GDP fell from an average of 6 percent in the 1980s to 4 percent in the 1990s. The CBO now predicts that defense spending will drop to 3 percent of GDP by 2011 and 2.4 percent by 2024.¹³

However, the problem for the defense program is that the percent of GDP devoted to the defense budget does not measure whether the nation's

10. Robert O. Work, "Transforming the Battle Fleet: Steering a Course Through Uncharted Waters," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, October 18, 2004, at www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/Archive/B.20041018.FleetAnalysis/B.20041018.FleetAnalysis.pdf (December 9, 2005).

11. "The other important difference between military and constabulary activities is that the latter depend upon legitimacy deriving from a legal domestic mandate or an internationally agreed order, while the former—whatever the degree of force implied, threatened or exercised—is defined primarily by the national interest." Royal Australian Navy, *Australian Maritime Doctrine: RAN Doctrine 1* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, Australian Department of Defence, 2000), p. 56.

12. James Jay Carafano and Paul Rosenzweig, *Winning the Long War: Lessons from the Cold War for Defeating Terrorism and Preserving Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2005), p. 34, at www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/the-long-war-ch1.cfm.

defense requirements are being met. The QDR's challenge is first to determine the nation's defense requirements and then to recommend budget levels that are adequate to meet those requirements. For example, projected defense budgets will likely be inadequate to keep the force from becoming hollow after U.S. troops begin to withdraw from Iraq and Congress ceases to provide supplemental funds to the annual defense budget.

If the QDR first determines the nation's defense needs and then makes the case for the necessary funding, it is all but certain to recommend a defense budget that will not impose an undue burden on the economy. Yet the defense budget is heading in the wrong direction, and given the projected growth in entitlement spending, the problem is likely to grow worse in the long term.

Given the threats, this path is too dangerous to take. Sustained long-term budget increases over those currently projected by the CBO are necessary to ensure that America's forces are prepared for an unpredictable future. The QDR must make the case for higher defense spending.

Conclusion

The QDR must address the tough questions. It must provide clear and unambiguous recommen-

dations on the most contentious and critical issues. Specifically, Congress should insist that the QDR:

- Modify the Pentagon's threat matrix and update defense strategy;
- Explain how strategic issues like China's military modernization and space, missile defense, and nuclear weapons policy will be addressed;
- Address the force structure needed for homeland security, stability operations, and maritime security; and
- Make the case for robust defense budgets.

The standard is clear. Without the right answers, the Pentagon will not be able to transform the military into the force that America needs for the future.

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13. Congressional Budget Office, "The Long -Term Implications of Current Defense Plans and Alternatives: A Summary Update for Fiscal Year 2006," p. 8, at www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/67xx/doc6786/10-17-LT_Defense.pdf (December 9, 2005).