

Nuclear Posture Review Report

Foreword

The Congress directed the Defense Department to conduct a comprehensive Nuclear Posture Review to lay out the direction for American nuclear forces over the next five to ten years. The Department has completed that review and prepared the attached report.

Early on, we recognized that the new security environment demanded that the Department go beyond the Congressional mandate in developing a strategic posture for the 21st century. President Bush had already directed the Defense Department to transform America's military and prepare it for the new, unpredictable world in which we will be living. The result of his direction is the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). Building on the QDR, this Nuclear Posture Review puts in motion a major change in our approach to the role of nuclear offensive forces in our deterrent strategy and presents the blueprint for transforming our strategic posture.

This report establishes a New Triad, composed of:

- Offensive strike systems (both nuclear and non-nuclear);
- Defenses (both active and passive); and
- A revitalized defense infrastructure that will provide new capabilities in a timely fashion to meet emerging threats.

This New Triad is bound together by enhanced command and control (C2) and intelligence systems.

The establishment of this New Triad can both reduce our dependence on nuclear weapons and improve our ability to deter attack in the face of proliferating WMD capabilities in two ways:

- The addition of defenses (along with the prospects for timely adjustments to force capabilities and enhanced C2 and intelligence systems) means that the U.S. will no longer be as heavily dependent on offensive strike forces to enforce deterrence as it was during the Cold War.
- The addition of non-nuclear strike forces—including conventional strike and information operations—means that the U.S. will be less dependent than it has been in the past on nuclear forces to provide its offensive deterrent capability.

The combination of new capabilities that make up the New Triad reduce the risk to the nation as it draws its nuclear forces toward the goal of 1,700–2,200 operationally

deployed strategic nuclear warheads announced by President Bush on November 13, 2001.

The following is a summary of the highlights in this report.

First and foremost, the Nuclear Posture Review puts the Cold War practices related to planning for strategic forces behind us. In the decade since the collapse of the Soviet Union, planning for the employment of U.S. nuclear forces has undergone only modest revision, despite the new relationship between the U.S. and Russia. Few changes had been made to the size or composition of the strategic nuclear force beyond those required by the START Treaty. At the same time, plans and funding for sustaining some critical elements of that force have been inadequate.

As a result of this review, the U.S. will no longer plan, size or sustain its forces as though Russia presented merely a smaller version of the threat posed by the former Soviet Union. Following the direction laid down for U.S. defense planning in the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Nuclear Posture Review shifts planning for America's strategic forces from the threat-based approach of the Cold War to a capabilities-based approach. This new approach should provide, over the coming decades, a credible deterrent at the lowest level of nuclear weapons consistent with U.S. and allied security.

Second, we have concluded that a strategic posture that relies solely on offensive nuclear forces is inappropriate for deterring the potential adversaries we will face in the 21st century. Terrorists or rogue states armed with weapons of mass destruction will likely test America's security commitments to its allies and friends. In response, we will need a range of capabilities to assure friend and foe alike of U.S. resolve. A broader array of capability is needed to dissuade states from undertaking political, military, or technical courses of action that would threaten U.S. and allied security. U.S. forces must pose a credible deterrent to potential adversaries who have access to modern military technology, including NBC weapons and the means to deliver them over long distances. Finally, U.S. strategic forces need to provide the President with a range of options to defeat any aggressor.

To meet the nation's defense goals in the 21st century, the first leg of the New Triad, the offensive strike leg, will go beyond the Cold War triad of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and long-range nuclear-armed bombers. ICBMs, SLBMs, bombers and nuclear weapons will, of course, continue to play a vital role. However, they will be just part of the first leg of the New Triad, integrated with new non-nuclear strategic capabilities that strengthen the credibility of our offensive deterrence.

The second leg of the New Triad requires development and deployment of both active and passive defenses—a recognition that offensive capabilities alone may not deter aggression in the new security environment of the 21st century. The events of September 11, 2001 underscore this reality. Active and passive defenses will not be perfect. However, by denying or reducing the effectiveness of limited attacks, defenses can discourage attacks, provide new capabilities for managing crises, and provide insurance against the failure of traditional deterrence.

The third leg of the New Triad is a responsive defense infrastructure. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. defense infrastructure has contracted and our nuclear infrastructure has atrophied. New approaches to development and procurement of new capabilities are being designed so that it will not take 20 years or more to field new generations of weapon systems. With respect to the nuclear infrastructure, it needs to be repaired to increase confidence in the deployed forces, eliminate unneeded weapons, and mitigate the risks of technological surprise. Maintaining our ability to respond to large strategic changes can permit us to reduce our nuclear arsenal and, at the same time, dissuade adversaries from starting a competition in nuclear armaments.

The effectiveness of this New Triad depends upon command and control, intelligence, and adaptive planning. “Exquisite” intelligence on the intentions and capabilities of adversaries can permit timely adjustments to the force and improve the precision with which it can strike and defend. The ability to plan the employment of the strike and defense forces flexibly and rapidly will provide the U.S. with a significant advantage in managing crises, deterring attack and conducting military operations.

Constructing the New Triad, reducing our deployed nuclear weapons, and increasing flexibility in our strategic posture has resource implications. It costs money to retire old weapons systems and create new capabilities. Restoring the defense infrastructure, developing and deploying strategic defenses, improving our command and control, intelligence, planning, and non-nuclear strike capabilities require new defense initiatives and investments. However, these investments can make the U.S. more secure while reducing our dependence on nuclear weapons.

The Quadrennial Defense Review established the foundation for America’s post-Cold War defense strategy. Building on the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Nuclear Posture Review will transform the Cold War era offensive nuclear triad into a New Triad designed for the decades to come.



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