

Weekly ICBM EAR Report



Image: Illustration of the Sentinel next-generation ICBM. Credit: Northrop Grumman - Space News

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**ICBM EAR Week of December 8th 2025, Prepared by Peter Huessy, President of Geostrategic
Analysis and Senior Fellow, National Institute for Deterrent Studies.**

Summary

The Ear this week has a new essay on the National Security Strategy and an update on the abolition lobby and the movie Dynamite. The work at STRATCOM of General Cotton and Admiral Correll is detailed; the Reagan Forum has a number of interesting poll results; Amb. Billingslea and Gottemoeller both testified before the Senate Foreign Relation Committee on the current arms race and Chinese and Russian threats, and Amb. Billingslea detailed ten key commendations of what the US should do as well as laid out things we should not do. Amb. Gottemoeller recommended the US again extend the New START treaty. The EAR also includes five extended journal analyses of Golden Dome, as well as my notes for a speech at the Gold Institute re the US-Korean alliance on December 11. Numerous quotes of the week as well as some international nuclear developments are included, as well as an explanation of the legal and military issues re the strikes in the Caribbean on Venezuelan linked drug cartels. Extensive analysis from various news sources of the compromise conference bill for the defense budget is also included.

Quotes and Commentary of the Week

And Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE): “At this year’s #RNDF hosted by the Reagan Institute, I emphasized the very present threats our adversaries pose to our national security. This is one of the many reasons why President Trump’s Golden Dome is critical to our nation’s plan to achieve peace through strength.”

Rep. Mike Flood (R-NE): “Honored to welcome Four-Star Admiral Richard Correll as the new commander of STRATCOM at [Friday’s] change of command ceremony at Offutt AFB.

Rep. Mike Flood: “Thank you Gen. Tony Cotton for your leadership over the past few years. STRATCOM’s mission is in good hands.”

Admiral Correll: “As I assume command, the number one priority remains the same strategic deterrence... That deterrence is much broader than the nuclear portfolio, encompassing all elements of national power for the joint force.

American officials: Reaffirmed the United States’ commitment to providing extended deterrence to South Korea during a meeting of the U.S.-ROK Nuclear Consultative Group in Washington

Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE): The Pentagon has made real progress on electromagnetic spectrum operations by putting the right leaders and organizations in place and updating doctrine and strategy...without significantly higher funding those reforms will not translate into the capabilities.

CSAF Gen. Ken Wilsbach: “The B-52 will continue to serve as an unmatched symbol of U.S. airpower. With these [AESA] radar modification upgrades, the aircraft will remain ready to execute our nation’s deterrence and strike missions for decades.”

Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND): “Spoke with General Andrew Gebara about updating the nuclear missions at Minot, including efforts like Sentinel, B-52, and LRSO that are key parts of the nation’s nuclear triad.”

Admiral Correll: “At its core, this command exists as the ultimate insurance policy to ensure our adversaries say, ‘not today.’”

Congrats to Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael J. Lutton, another career missileer, who takes over as STRATCOM’s No. 2. He was previously deputy commander at Air Force Global Strike Command.

USAF General Guetlein: The Golden Dome system will integrate existing ground-based missile defense assets, as well as futuristic space-based assets, including potentially space-based missile interceptors. “Golden Dome is about building a layered defense capability for the nation to protect the nation against an attack against the homeland.” (Reagan Defense Forum, December 5, 2025, Simi Valley, Reagan Library)

USAF Gen. Guetlein: Moscow and Beijing have militarized space. “Space is not a sanctuary anymore. The adversary has been holding space at risk for years now. The Chinese have the ability to launch a missile at a satellite — take out a satellite. The Chinese have the ability to have a robot in space, kidnap ... another satellite, take it someplace else. The Russians have nesting dolls in space and a satellite spawns another satellite, spawns a kill vehicle. So, space is already contested.”

Reagan Defense Forum: The annual Reagan National Defense Survey, published ahead of the forum, showed that 68% of Americans polled expressed support for developing a Golden Dome.

Marshall Billingslea: SFRC December 9th: “Five years later, the grim assessment I delivered to you back then (2020) now seems to have been overly optimistic. China has proceeded at breathtaking pace. They field over 600 operational warheads and are ahead of schedule to field 1000 weapons by 2030.

Essays of the Week: The US Strategic Strategy Document

Facing Facts & Rolling Back Mythologies: The New National Security Strategy* *by Peter Huessy, Senior Fellow, National Institute for Deterrent Analysis

The new National Security Strategy is addressing some established foreign policy mythologies, a long overdue analysis. Though a relatively new way of laying out the US strategy, it was very important that it do so.

The biggest drawback of the strategy is the lack of assessment of what security danger Russia poses to the US and its allies even should the war in Ukraine be ended.

But the importance of the document is that it does address ten mythologies that have been largely conventional wisdom over the past many decades for the US foreign policy establishment. These are rejected by the Trump administration with many additional details part of Secretary War Hegseth’s remarks at the Reagan Defense Forum on December 6th at the Simi Valley Reagan Library.

The most provocative section is the analysis of the direction which Europe has been moving---very low birthrates, massive and often illegal migration of people that reject western civilization, an absence of a commitment to defense spending, rejecting a robust nuclear deterrent and missile defense, (currently being adjusted), vastly too much regulation and government coercion (being partially undone with Brexit), and a deliberate policy of making energy expensive and scarce (also currently being partially rolled back).

Important is the high priority given to both nuclear deterrence and missile defense. After the breakup of the USSR, it was assumed nuclear weapons were largely irrelevant. And that Russia and China would become largely cooperative nuclear powers, such as with the Nunn-Lugar program cutting down “loose nukes” in the former USSR.

By 2010, the Nuclear Posture Review emphasized both the benefits of US restraint in nuclear deployment and seeking a general policy of seeking the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons.

The new strategy underscores how nuclear deterrence is and remains central to US security and for the need for major investments in nuclear modernization. In 1991, even with the collapse of the USSR, Senator Sam Nunn urged that the National Defense University Foundation (NDUF) continue a long standing program of Hill nuclear seminars as he warned that nuclear dangers were not going away and would certainly re-emerge. Instead, the elites went on a 40-year holiday from history and put nuclear investments at the bottom of the priority requirements for the past Cold War era.

The new strategy also jettisons the false assumption that missile defense is dangerous or destabilizing, firmly foot-stomping that defenses are a critical adjunct and insurance policy for the US as General Michael Guetlein Director of Golden Dome emphasized on December 6th at the Reagan Defense Forum.

The strategy also captures an entire series of economic initiatives that are critical to US security, for which it has been strangely criticized. In 1981, the National Governors Association assumed the US did not need a steel industry as we could always buy cheap steel from China. The new Japanese investment in the US steel industry and reshoring of US industry is a welcome rebuff to the multiple decade hollowing out of US manufacturing and heavy industry. And the key understanding that US mineral mapping, mining and milling is also critical to US security is also welcome, as the recent mineral/trade deals have made clear.

On the Middle East, the strategy rejects the false notion that as former President Clinton noted in 2014, terrorism was largely related to Israel failing to offer the Palestinians a state. And implicitly reject the idea that Islamic jihad is some kind of peaceful religious individual empowerment as opposed to an ideology of conquest and murder. Keeping Iran from dominating the Middle East hydrocarbon reserves and engaging in terrorism while also being allied with Israel are priorities which is a welcome change from the embrace of Oslo, "the peace process" and Palestinian demands.

The strategy's western hemisphere embrace is a welcome switch. For decades, the US assumed open borders was a welcome adjunct to US economic requirements. It was assumed migrants were largely agricultural workers, unrelated to a massive illegal drug and human trafficking business closely associated with a campaign of "unrestricted warfare" by China against the United States and also including North Korea, Iran, Russia and Venezuela. And conventional wisdom assumed 100,000 drugs deaths a year was just the price one pays for a free and open society.

Critical to reforming our Western Hemisphere strategy is to understand the problem with an open border for agricultural workers is that it opens the borders to all potential "workers" including drug dealers and traffickers. And an open border with Mexico is also open to the rest of the world. That is why the section on Europe addresses that Europe is killing itself with mass migration of people that do not accept western civilization, but embrace Hamas and Jihad, condemn Israel, all of which itself will undermine the extent to which Europe can be an effective NATO ally and strengthen its western civilization heritage. As one top scholar recently surmised, Christendom may lose upwards of 1 billion or 50% of its adherents given current trends, especially in Europe, where hundreds of mosques are being built on top of what were Christian churches.

The requirement to keep Iran from its terrorism ways and its search for a nuclear weapons lever is also a welcome security plank. Gone is the strange notion the US engineered a coup in Iran in 1954 or that because Khomeini was a "man of the cloth" his regime was benign.

Gone too is the notion that scarce, expensive and hard to secure energy is a great idea as the former Secretary of Energy and green energy mandates assumed. Coupled with establishing secure sources of minerals, both mining and milling, as recent deals with Australia, Malaysia, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and others have done will further improve US security and end our reliance upon China for rare earth and other key minerals.

For decades, NATO did not even meet its own 2% of GDP for defense spending as an unstated assumption was that NATO was special and although 80 years removed from WWII, NATO was special and couldn't spend a lot on defense because Europe had to have a huge welfare state to prevent another Hitler from coming to power.

The strategy also drowns the idea that military strength is provocative and unnecessarily aggressive, a widespread assumption embraced by foreign policy elites through the Cold War, the era of détente and peaceful coexistence and most loudly during the Reagan "peace through strength" military buildup, which of course successfully led to the end of the USSR which fundamentally was in fact an explicit economic war against the USSR, as outlined by Warren Norquist in his 2000 essay in the National Intelligentser. The extent to which the Reagan administration used economic measures to dissolve the USSR is seriously underappreciated and leads to a continued inability to understand how effective such measures could be especially as the US confronts two nuclear armed peer adversaries.

Warren Norquist details what Reagan confronted in 1981, but unlike what President Trump also faced when in 2025 taking office for a second time.

- Western Europe was making loans to the USSR at half the normal interest rate.
- Sweden was buying restricted high technology needed by the Soviets and reselling the items with all the necessary instructions.

- Many western firms were selling restricted technology to companies fronting for the USSR.
- The technologies the Soviets could not buy were trying to steal.
- The USSR was earning hard currency by selling oil at three times its production cost.
- The USSR was earning hard currency by selling weapons to oil rich countries like Iran, Iraq and Libya. Europe was financing two gas pipelines from Siberia.
- West Germany, for instance, would become dependent on Moscow for 60 percent of its energy and Soviet hard currency earnings would double to \$60 billion per year
- The Soviets had effectively taken over Angola and Mozambique, and the Soviet military was providing aid and advice to many countries in Africa.
- U.S. military spending had declined from 9.2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) under President John Kennedy in 1962 to less than 4.6 percent under President Jimmy Carter in 1979
- In Nicaragua, the USSR financed equipment and thousands of trainers to "... build ... an army of 60,000 regulars backed by an equal number ... militia" ... armed with heavy weapons." The plan was to expand to 500,000 under arms according to Army General Jack Singlaub.
- The Soviets were positioning themselves to threaten Western Europe into less cooperation with the United States.
- The USSR had invaded and was assumed to be winning in Afghanistan.

Reagan reversed nearly all of these factors in an economic war against the USSR, a campaign that was largely missed by the foreign policy elites of the time, and if recognized largely dismissed as impractical.

The economic agenda for the new security strategy is very innovative and ambitious but also most needed and again not understood by the foreign policy elites of today. The security strategy gets many things right especially including China, the Middle East, the Western Hemisphere as well as the twin defense needs of nuclear modernization and missile defense.

Particularly welcome is the emphasis on preserving elements of Western civilization and the implied negative impact of rejecting religious faith and the acculturation or assimilation of egal immigrants, as well as the halt to illegal immigration and its companion twin evils of trafficking and drug running.

But critical is the plan to use America's economic leverage to rebalance international trade, onshore US manufacturing and industrial work especially energy, steel, minerals, chip and ship building, while bringing the trade deficit, budget deficit and national debt back under control.

Current economic growth for the year is now near 4% with most new employment going to American natives. With inflation at 2.5%, sharply down from the 9% in the early previous administration, Americans have more income with which to afford the goods the US is producing. Taiwan, Japan, the Republic of Korea and others are building plants and facilities in the US, bringing much needed capital back into the United States.

Added to gains from tax rate reform, regulation relief, better trade balances and (finally) lower interest rates, an economic revolution in the United States will leverage the US over China on top of what additional Naval carrier battlegroups and Air Force strategic bombers have provided. This integrated effort combined strength in our military and our economy to give us the peace and prosperity we all desire.

Peter Huessy: Point Paper for Remarks at the Gold Institute December 11, 2025 ion the US-Korean Alliance

Gold Institute Remarks: December 11th University Club, Washington, D.C.

The US-ROK Alliance and Nuclear Proliferation & Deterrence

Nine Point Paper re the US-ROK Alliance, extended nuclear deterrence and nuclear proliferation.

- 1982 Deng/CCP decided to share nuclear weapons technology with Pakistan and use the Khan network to transfer such technology to North Korea, Libya, Iran, Syria, and from Libya to Iraq.
- The point was to create out of multiple state sponsors of terrorism, nuclear armed adversaries of the US, able to act as mini hegemons in their region so as to seriously complicate US Security and go after US allies.

- Pakistan builds nuclear weapons first with North Korea/in return for assistance in building rockets/missiles. The North acceded to the NPT in 1985 but as camouflage to screen out their underlying goal to build nuclear weapons, with the first nuclear test on 9 October 2006. The entirety of the Agreed Framework was a con job by the North. Russia also assisted the North in building long range rockets/missiles as did Iran and China during this period.
- The CCP purpose was to generate turmoil in the US-ROK alliance. CCP however did risk: (1) the ROK might decide to build its own nuclear force which the USA would no doubt resist worried that the NPT would collapse. But nonetheless China might be adding an additional nuclear adversary right on its borders.
- However, the ROK building its own nuclear force might very well make the CCP to take down the nuclear program in the North as a ROK nuclear capability is the opposite of what the CCP desires.
- However, most likely the CCP rolled the dice and **assumed** the North's nuclear development: (2) might get the US to remove its own nuclear weapons from the region which GHWB did in 1991 in the Presidential nuclear initiative; (3) get anti-ROK elements to always blame America for the North securing nuclear weapons; even a nascent hoped for nuclear program could very well create a split in the alliance;
- (4) a North Korean nuclear program and the subsequent ROK concerns could generate PRC-friendly commentary from such people as Bandow/Carpenter at CATO and Cirincione at Quincy as all would advocate for the US to withdraw from the alliance—Bandow because he wanted to avoid a North Korean nuclear strike on the US should there be a military conflict on the peninsula; & Cirincione because the US presence was militaristic and unnecessarily created a hostile policy toward the North.
- Points 2-4 would help (5) blame the US for a hostile policy against North Korea and result in many urging the US to show restraint and remove its forces from the ROK, achieving the objective which the CCP envisioned all along.
- Thus, the US_ROK alliance while not preventing North Korean proliferation does avoid further proliferation in the ROK and possibly Japan and Tawain. Could be facing a region where between 6-7 nations had nuclear weapons—China, Russia, North Korea, ROK, Taiwan, the USA, and possibly Japan. The US alliance does prevent a war against the ROK by the North.
- Should the US withdraw, two developments would further the CCP objectives: North Korea would invade the ROK and the US position in the Western Pacific would be irreversibly harmed, leading to China achieving its hegemonic ambitions. An Indo-Pacific area which will have \$65 trillion in GDP and 5 billion people by 2050, with PRC control over the first island chain, the navigational route for millions of barrels of oil annually, and control over the Western Pacific, as well as control over Taiwan, coercion over Japanese activity, and a unified Korean peninsula under the control of the Kim family in Pyongyang.
- The US/ROK alliance is in my mind the lynchpin of security in the Western Pacific and thwarts the Chinese CCP ambition to achieve regional hegemonic status.....Critically necessary is also Golden Dome which as a robust defense is a deployment that undoes what the Chinese nuclear proliferation tried to accomplish.

Events of the Week

Peter Huessy and Adam Lothar of NIDS spoke on December 5th, 2025 at the nuclear deterrent seminar series hosted by Peter Huessy. The seminar was about the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons and significantly reduce the reliance on nuclear deterrence embedded in US defense strategy. The video and transcript are here/ Plus an essay on the subject by the ICBM EAR.

<https://youtu.be/CfGgbh9n0Tk>



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Congressional Developments

Defense Budget and NDAA Stuff



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The Compromise [NDAA] directs congressional briefing on SLCM-N, reduction in timeline to reach IOC”

And the ***National Nuclear Security Administration***: “The Senate has confirmed David Beck to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs. Beck has over 40 years of experience in the nuclear weapons complex and previously served as NNSA Assistant Deputy Administrator for Military Applications and Stockpile Operations.” From various news sources, here is a summary of ***key provisions in the defense bill or NDAA*** now completed by the House and now before the Senate for final passage. Congress unveiled its draft version of the compromise NDAA, or defense bill, which would authorize approximately \$900B for national defense, including new investments for nuclear modernization programs and the Golden Dome system, according to Fox News.

Here’s What’s in the \$901 Billion Compromise Defense Authorization Bill

The \$901 billion bill is higher than a previous House version, but lower than the \$925 billion version the Senate passed.

Ryan Morgan writes: Known as the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, the sweeping legislation describes the various programs and policies the U.S. government may pursue in a given fiscal year. This authorization is separate from the defense appropriations act that’s needed to fund these authorized programs.

An earlier House version of the bill largely aligned with an \$893 billion budget request from President Donald Trump, but the Senate sought a higher \$925 billion authorization. The latest House NDAA language provides for \$901 billion in defense authorizations.

Golden Dome, F-47, Other Weapons

Provisions within the new NDAA language would modify existing U.S. missile defense programs to reflect Trump’s “Golden Dome” initiative, which seeks to develop advanced missile and air defense capabilities to cover the United States and participating allies. Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee touted \$38 billion in additional authorizations for various military aircraft programs. This ***includes*** \$2.5 billion for the development of the Air Force’s planned next-generation stealth fighter jet, the F-47. ***Another \$1.1 billion is authorized to support the B-21 Raider stealth bomber program***, and \$26 billion more is authorized for shipbuilding programs.

Another \$25 billion is authorized for efforts to replenish various missile and artillery stockpiles, and \$4 billion is authorized for the procurement and modification of various military ground vehicles. The latest NDAA language supports \$145.7 billion for the research and development of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, autonomous vehicles and systems, and space-based capabilities.

Guard rails on European Troop Reductions

A provision limiting the Pentagon's ability to pull troops from Europe could create friction for the Trump administration's foreign policy strategy. The provision in question blocks funds for the Pentagon to reduce force levels below 76,000 personnel or divest from any bases there without the secretary of defense and the commander of the U.S. European Command first certifying to Congress that they consulted European allies and determined such steps were in the interests of U.S. national security.

The new NDAA includes additional provisions affirming Trump administration policy preferences and executive orders constraining cultural and environmental initiatives in the military. One provision prohibits the establishment of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and offices throughout the military

Another seeks to discontinue a policy within the Defense Department to prioritize the purchase of electric and hybrid vehicles. The Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee said the new NDAA language would cut about \$1.6 billion in climate-related programs across the Defense Department.

House Republicans said the NDAA would support several of Trump's border security policies, including fully funding troop deployments along the U.S.–Mexico border, and the establishment of new National Defense Areas along the border. The bill authorizes around \$1 billion in Defense Department funds for drug interdiction and counter-narcotics programs. The Defense Department is also authorized to enter into contracts with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to share detection and monitoring capabilities, transportation and logistics, aviation, and other support functions for border security

The conservative wins in the NDAA include a 4% pay raise for enlisted service members, ending “authorizations for use of military force” for previous Middle East wars, and a prohibition on programs related to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, as well as critical race theory. **One of the major changes is the repeal of the 1991 and 2002 “authorizations for use of military force” (AUMFs). In 1991, Congress voted to authorize the military's use of force in the Gulf War, and in 2002, they voted to allow the military to use force against Iraq again.** The bill does not affect the 2001 AUMF, which enabled the military to use force against the perpetrators of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

Testimony on the Nuclear Arms Race before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Amb Marshall Billingslea: Testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations “Arms Race 2.0” 10 December 2025. I am pleased to appear before you again on a matter of utmost importance to our national security – the nuclear arms buildup by both Russia and Communist China. In 2020, provided details on what these two adversaries were doing, and warned that China was in the early stages of a massive increase in its nuclear arsenal. I also discussed many of the problematic things Russia was pursuing, both with novel weapons and with its huge arsenal of theater-range nuclear weapons.

Five years later, the grim assessment I delivered to you back then now seems to have been overly optimistic. China has proceeded at breathtaking pace. They field over 600 operational warheads and are ahead of schedule to field 1000 weapons by 2030. As the Strategic Posture Commission, warned a few years ago, China will field at least 1500 warheads by 2035. That is roughly equivalent to what both the U.S. and Russia field today, and I believe China may ultimately exceed that number by a wide margin.

In the past few years, we have discovered three new Chinese ICBM fields, bringing the total number of silo launchers to around 400. That is more silos than we have. **China has also been recently discovered building 30 new silos for its DF-5 ICBMs in the mountainous regions of central-eastern China. The new DF-5C will be able to carry a multi-megaton warhead – a so-called “city buster” – or may be deployed with 10 warheads.** For

comparison, our Minutemen III missiles generally only carry one warhead, up to a maximum of three. We do not have megaton warheads on our ICBMs or SLBMs.

In addition to fielding a nuclear triad, involving both silo- and road-mobile ICBMs, bombers, and submarines, China is also pursuing a range of other capabilities, including low yield warheads. It also flight tested in 2021 a fractional orbital bombardment system, which could be used in a decapitation first strike scenario. **Finally, CIA Director Ratcliffe and Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Senator Cotton have both confirmed that China is engaged in nuclear weapons testing, despite its public commitment not to.**

For its part, Russia has for several years engaged in super-critical nuclear weapons tests despite its pledge to the contrary. This is something that the State Department under multiple administrations has warned about. Russia continues to possess a nuclear arsenal that is much bigger than ours (5,500 or more warheads) and highly diverse, with a myriad of theater range and tactical nuclear weapons, such as torpedoes, landmines, artillery shells, and medium and short range missiles. In short, Russia's warhead stockpile is growing, while ours is shrinking. Russia also is developing an indiscriminate space-based nuclear weapon, which may put it into anticipatory breach of the Outer Space Treaty. For the first time since the dawn of the atomic era, we soon will face two nuclear peer adversaries, and we must consider the possibility that they could engage in simultaneous coordinated, or opportunistic, aggression.

With urgency we need to:

- Prepare to upload some or all of the nation's hedge warheads;**
- Plan to deploy the Sentinel ICBM in a MIRVed configuration;**
- Increase the planned number of deployed Long-Range Standoff Weapons (for the bombers);**
- Increase the planned number of B-21 bombers**
- Increase the planned production of Columbia SSBNs and their Trident ballistic missile systems;**
- Look at fielding a road-mobile ICBM;**
- Prepare to put a portion of the future bomber fleet on continuous alert status;**
- Develop plans and procedures to "re-convert" SLBM launchers and B 52 bombers that were rendered incapable of launching a nuclear weapon under New START;**
- Prepare to keep operating Ohio-class SSBNs past their currently planned retirement dates.**

We also need to modify our theater nuclear forces to give the President better militarily effective nuclear response options to deter or counter Chinese or Russian limited nuclear use in theater, something we came dangerously close to seeing happen by Putin in Ukraine. **That includes development and deployment of theater nuclear weapons that are survivable against pre-emption, with a wide range of yield options, and which can be delivered in a timely fashion. This should be done with respect to both Europe and the Indo Pacific.**

I do not consider "friendly proliferation" a wise concept, for it surely would cost us the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the IAEA and its nuclear safeguards program, and would make constraining countries like Iran all the more difficult. For this reason, I believe the establishment of warhead storage area (WSA) and integration of Poland into the NATO nuclear burden-sharing process would be a wise and stabilizing set of actions to take. We also recommended, and I strongly believe this, that the United States should develop and field homeland integrated air and missile defense capabilities that can deter and defeat coercive attacks by Russia and China. Trump's "Golden Dome" initiative has the potential for providing this protection as it is rolled out incrementally. Given the geostrategic uncertainties we face today, we urgently need to defend the American people from missile attack.

So, what should not be done? For starters, an arbitrary political extension of the New START Treaty. Many of the measures that I set forth cannot be taken if we continue to bind ourselves to a treaty that Russia has been flagrantly violating. There is an urgency to several steps that we need to take, such as pulling the cement plugs out of the Ohio class submarines so that we can put missiles back in. That will be a lengthy process that will take two to three years to complete, in a best case scenario. Reconversion of the one third of the B-52 fleet that we denuclearized by stripping out wiring and removing antennas and firing systems will also be a lengthy process.

For as long as we abide by New START, this cannot happen. Moreover, the New START Treaty does not constrain the bulk of Russia's nuclear capabilities. The Senate recognized this fact with Declaration 11 in the Resolution of Ratification for the treaty. That declaration called upon President Obama to pursue an agreement with Russia that would address the disparity in tactical nuclear weapons stockpiles and reduce the weapons in a verifiable manner. This was never accomplished.

Quite obviously, the New START Treaty also does not place any limits on Communist China. They are not party to the treaty. To be fair, New START was negotiated long before we became concerned that Xi Jinping would derail longstanding bipolar strategic stability by engaging in his own, secretive nuclear crash program. But any future nuclear agreement needs to both cover all of Russia's weapons, as well as China's. The days of U.S.-Soviet / U.S. Russia bipolar arms control are over.

Of course, any administration could try for a non-legally binding agreement, though that is something that the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, has historically rejected. In fact, Declaration 12 of the treaty's ratification 5 resolution makes clear the Senate will only consider such obligations pursuant to the treaty making power under Article II, section 2, clause 2 of the Constitution. Declaration 9 is even more explicit. It states that "any agreement or understanding which in any material way modifies, amends, or reinterprets United States or Russian obligations under the New START Treaty, including the time frame for implementation of the New START Treaty, should be submitted to the Senate for its advice and consent to ratification."

Here I commend for the Committee's consideration of the Chapter on Risk Reduction in the Strategic Posture Commission's report. Robust diplomatic engagement which reduces uncertainty, the potential for deterrence failure, or unnecessary arms competition is in our national interest. We should lead, and be seen as leading, such efforts. There are many options for confidence building measures and risk reduction that fall well short of blocking our ability to respond both Russian and Chinese arms racing; ranging from things such as continued operation of the Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers, launch notifications, a pledge not interfere with National Technical Means (NTM) of monitoring, and even forswearing missile-launched FOBs.

But as we said in our report to Congress: "The United States cannot set its arms control limits without first determining the requirements for its overall strategic posture, and the strategy that those requirements will support." For this reason, I do not favor continuing to abide by New START limitations, or negotiation of any other form of militarily significant nuclear limitations, until we have first done our homework.

Part 2: Testimony of Rose Gottemueller, SFRC, December 9th, 2025

I understand these very processes are underway to permit the United States to rapidly upload our existing ballistic missiles, and I applaud those efforts.

But I want to stress that I do not believe we need to rush into uploading missiles right now. We need to keep planning and preparing on an intensive basis, using our time wisely, but also initiating diplomatic tracks in parallel.

it would be important for China to agree not to undermine the limits of the New START Treaty; and to agree to a ban on fractional orbital bombardment vehicles (FOBS) and to recommit to a ban on nuclear weapons in space, which is already enshrined in the Outer Space Treaty.

Second, the Chinese issued a White Paper on Arms Control on November 27, which for the first time indicated a willingness to explore “transparency” in the context of nuclear weapons.

I am aware, the Chinese have begun to flesh out a rationale for their nuclear modernization. Although we cannot take their arguments at face value,

Extending New START limits for one year is an easy win for him, [Trump] burnishing his credentials as a peacemaker—importantly, a nuclear peacemaker. It does not prejudice the other important work that we need to be doing right now to prepare for the possible worst case of a Chinese rush to parity by 2035.

It would be in our interest to have the best possible real-time insights about what is going on in the Russian strategic nuclear forces, which we can best achieve by fully implementing the treaty: conducting on-site inspections, receiving notifications about weapon system movements, and doing a data exchange.

Strategic Developments in the Administration

Welcome to the new Commander, US Strategic Command

In a ceremony at Offutt AFB presided over by CJCS Gen. Dan Caine, Adm. Richard Correll relieved Gen. Anthony Cotton as commander of U.S. Strategic Command and told attendees that his “number one priority remains the same: strategic deterrence.

At the Reagan National Defense Forum in California, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said that the Pentagon is “accelerating” the development of its Golden Dome missile defense system and that the U.S. will test nuclear weapons and related delivery systems on an “equal basis” with other countries.

Meet our New Commander, US Strategic Command and Honor Our Retiring Commander

Navy Adm. Richard Correll succeeded Air Force Gen. Anthony J. Cotton as head of U.S. Strategic Command on Dec. 5, focusing his remarks on the strategic deterrence mission. Correll, a career submariner, succeeds Cotton, a career missile officer; he was previously Cotton’s deputy.

“As I assume command, the number one priority remains the same strategic deterrence,” he said. “That deterrence is much broader than the nuclear portfolio, encompassing all elements of national power for the joint force. It encompasses all of our military capabilities, kinetic and nonkinetic, in coordination with the intelligence community and the interagency to deliver decisive effects from the seabed to cislunar space.”

Correll, Caine, and Cotton all stressed the never-ending demand of deterrence in their remarks, but elements of that deterrence are changing with the emergence of China as a growing nuclear power.

“This is not Cold War 2.0,” Cotton warned. “Unfortunately, it’s much more complex.”

“We must deter in a tech-saturated operational environment,” Correll said. “In that environment of tomorrow, the battlefield is being reshaped by rapid advancements in technology, and the character of warfare is changing, from unmanned and autonomous capabilities to innovative tools that manipulate the information environment. Engineering has become being possible at far smaller scales, and computing power continues to become exponentially cheaper.”

Citing the example of how far computer chips have come since the advent of the nuclear deterrence, Correll said STRATCOM cannot turn a blind eye to such developments. “It’s important for this command to understand the implication of these developments so we can leverage data advantage, for decision advantage, for warfighting advantage, together with the joint force,” he said. “While we may not be able to predict the next revolution in military affairs, one thing is certain: we will be challenged, and consistent with this command’s 79-year history, we will be ready.”

Correll’s focus on technology continues a push Cotton [began last year](#) when he said that digital tools like artificial intelligence can help STRATCOM make better, faster decisions “Advanced AI and robust data analytics capabilities provide decision advantage and improve our deterrence posture,” he said in October 2024. “IT and AI superiority allows for more effective integration of conventional and nuclear capabilities, strengthening deterrence.”

Yet Cotton also stressed the need for “a human decision in the loop to maximize the adoption of these capabilities”—a nod to the delicate balance STRATCOM faces in adopting new tech while maintaining the high level of confidence in systems necessary for deterrence to work.

The pursuit of new technologies coincides with the heart of what Correll called a “once every 70-year period of modernization.” The Navy is building new Columbia-class submarines, the Air Force is working on B-21 stealth bombers and Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missiles, and the Space Force and other services are working on new nuclear command, control, and communications systems.

Cotton praised his team for keeping that modernization on track during his tenure. The B-21 entered flight testing in November 2023, and the Sentinel survived a review triggered by cost and schedule overruns when the Secretary of Defense validated it as essential for national security. “Three years ago, we developed a three-phase approach to our vision and our strategy,” Cotton said. “The first year, we road mapped our nuclear command control and communication strategy and baselined our triad sufficiency against nuclear peers. In year two, we took decisive action and codified what we found in year one. And in year three, I made the team accelerate all of that. You truly raised the bar and set a new standard of excellence.” Now, Correll faces the task of continuing that modernization—the first B-21 is expected to be fielded within the next few years, perhaps during his tenure, and the Sentinel will likely finish a program restructuring. At the same time, the current deterrent must hold. “At its core, this command exists as the ultimate insurance policy to ensure our adversaries say, ‘not today,’” Correll said.

Navy/Columbia: The Navy awarded Palantir Technologies a contract to manage the supply chain of its nuclear submarine fleet, a move that Secretary of the Navy John Phelan said could “significantly” speed up the planned delivery of the first Columbia-class submarine.

International Developments

U.S. B-52 Stratofortresses flew alongside Japanese F-35 and F-15 fighter jets over the Sea of Japan on Wednesday, according to Japan’s defense ministry, which said the exercise reaffirmed the alliance’s “strong resolve to prevent any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force and confirmed the readiness posture of both the Self-Defense Forces and U.S. forces.”

US Senate Panel Sounds Alarm: Ukraine’s Loss Could Drive Nations to Go Nuclear
Kyiv Post Online (Ukraine), Dec. 10 | Alex Raufoglu

The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s Wednesday hearing on the emerging “Arms Race 2.0” was intended as a routine oversight session. Instead, it became a grim acknowledgment of just how fragile global deterrence has become, with Russia’s was in Ukraine emerging as the hinge on which much of the world’s nuclear future now swings.

Guest Brief Essay #1

The Revenge of Nuclear Deterrence
RealClearDefense.com, Dec. 10 | Frank A. Rose

When the Cold War ended, it seemed as though nuclear arms control had reached its natural high point. The Soviet Union had dissolved, the Warsaw Pact disappeared, and Washington and Moscow negotiated a succession of bilateral agreements—START I, START II, the 2002 Treaty of Moscow, and eventually New START—that placed both nations on what appeared to be a steady path toward deep reductions.

Abolition Lobby News

Union of Concerned Scientists

The world has been lulled into nuclear apathy by its own success in avoiding annihilation, without much thought to the possibility that that success was underpinned by sheer dumb luck. [Editor's note: In short folks, nuclear deterrence strategy had nothing to do with it.]

Ploughshares

Noel Oppenheim, the screenwriter of Dynamite was interviewed by Ploughshares and shared two key insights he learned while researching for the movie. First, nuclear machinery had to operate in a very short time to respond to a nuclear attack prior to an enemy missile reaching the continental United States. This leaves the US commanders a very short period during which to decide what to do. Second, there is only one person with the authority to launch US nuclear weapons, as no consensus has to be achieved prior to launch. Third, most President's, at least since Reagan, have not participated in practice decision making. And fourth, it is under human control to get rid of nuclear weapons, given South Africa gave up its nuclear arsenal some 40 years ago.

[The EAR's Commentary: No President need make a rapid or rushed decision except perhaps to intercept incoming missiles. A rapid response might be necessary if the objective is to retaliate quickly and take out the remainder of an enemy's arsenal to prevent it from being used. But current US strategy requires a launch conference to determine the origin and destination of a missile and then a second conference to determine the appropriate options to present to the command authorities. In Dynamite, the incoming missile is not identified and therefore there is no launching country to retaliate against. And no rushed or quick decision to make. Furthermore, if Presidential decision making is under such narrow constraints, what is the point of adding another decision maker which will only take more time and probably cause a delay in the US response?]

Missile Defense and Golden Dome Corner

By: Guy Taylor for THE WASHINGTON TIMES // 08DEC2025

SIMI VALLEY, CALIF. | President Trump's Golden Dome czar says he has held "one-vs.-one" talks with more than 300 private companies in recent months **to hash out the secretive architecture** of the futuristic missile defense shield that the administration is determined to put into operation over the entire U.S. homeland by mid-2028. In his first public remarks since being named to the position in June, **Gen. Michael A. Guetlein**, vice chief of space operations at the U.S. Space Force, told an audience at the annual Reagan National Defense Forum that although the layered design of the Golden Dome remains classified, he is confident that "our industry partners have a pretty good insight into what we're doing."

The Golden Dome is a signature and potentially costly national security initiative of the Trump administration. Speculation over the technology it will entail — specifically the extent to which it will be space-based or revolve mainly around more conventional ground-based missile interceptor systems — has been rampant for months.

In August, the Pentagon issued a gag order to prevent officials involved from speaking about it publicly. Gen. Guetlein cracked the lid on that gag order during an appearance Saturday at the forum — one of the top yearly gatherings of political leaders and national defense stakeholders — **by suggesting broadly that the system will integrate existing ground-based missile defense assets, as well as futuristic space-based assets, including potentially space-based missile interceptors.** "Golden Dome is about building a layered defense capability for the nation to protect the nation against an attack against the homeland," he said.

Secrecy around the space layer remains tight. The Space Force quietly awarded small contracts to develop prototypes for space-based interceptors last month to a group of companies, Bloomberg News reported. The Pentagon did not identify the companies by name, and the contracts fell below the dollar amount threshold that would require detailed disclosures. In his remarks over the weekend, Gen. Guetlein defended the need for secrecy, given that the intelligence agencies of U.S. adversaries, particularly China and Russia, are watching closely.

“Golden Dome is about partnering with industry in new and innovative ways ... and to do it with transparency,” Gen. Guetlein told an audience inside the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library that was packed with executives from several top American defense technology companies. “That transparency may not come in an industry symposium, but it is coming in one-vs.-ones,” he said. “It’s not coming in an industry symposium, because you guys are not the only ones in the audience. There are people in that audience that I don’t want to know what we’re doing. I don’t want to tell what we’re doing. I don’t want to give them a heads up.

But I do know that our competitive advantage, being our industrial partners, are all in it and are supportive, so they are pretty well informed. **Gen. Guetlein said Moscow and Beijing have militarized space. “Space is not a sanctuary anymore. The adversary has been holding space at risk for years now,” he said. “The Chinese have the ability to launch a missile at a satellite — take out a satellite. The Chinese have the ability to have a robot in space, kidnap ... another satellite, take it someplace else. The Russians have nesting dolls in space and a satellite spawns another satellite, spawns a kill vehicle. So, space is already contested.”**

He said an undergirding principle of the Golden Dome is to establish “a credible deterrent capability” against China and Russia. Congress approved \$24.5 billion in funding for the initiative this year. Defense industry sources indicate that the system’s development will incur significantly higher costs over the coming years. A consensus in the national security community is that the missile shield is urgently needed amid rising nuclear and ballistic missile threats from not only China and Russia but also North Korea and Iran. Some lawmakers are closely monitoring the funds and have expressed concern about the transparency of how they are spent.

The Senate Armed Services Committee’s ranking Democrat, Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, has warned that the Golden Dome could create a kind of “slush fund” for the Trump administration to spend however it sees fit. Yet support for the initiative is broad. The annual Reagan National Defense Survey, published ahead of the forum, showed that 68% of Americans polled expressed support for developing a Golden Dome. Sen. Deb Fischer, Nebraska Republican and member of the Armed Services Committee, defended the secrecy around the initiative.

“We have major adversaries who are very interested in anything that we do in this country, and especially with regards to this, and so we need to be very careful in holding a lot of this information close for the time being,” she said. Air Force Secretary Troy Meink was also on the panel with Ms. Fischer and Gen. Guetlein. So was Kathy Warden, the CEO, president and chair of the board of directors at Northrop Grumman. Ms. Warden said there are “many capabilities that exist in our nation today that can be brought to bear” to make Golden Dome a reality, and “it is going to take an all-of-industry effort.”

“There’s an industrial base with companies of all sizes that are ready to get behind this mission and support it with investment in not only people, but also the capacity needed to build it out,” she said. “I’m very confident that this industry has what it takes to field this capability for our nation.” Gen. Guetlein said “the technology exists” to deliver the Golden Dome. “This is not a technology problem. We have proven all the elements of the technology in one way or another,” he said. “The real challenge is, how do I bring together capabilities that have never been integrated — networked together into a system of systems type architecture, and then how do I leverage the entire innovation industrial base of the United States?”

The general said the Golden Dome is likely to be rolled out in pieces and may evolve technologically over time. “We will be incrementally building out that layered defense capability,” he said. “The president has requested that we deliver this capability, an operational capability, in the summer of 2028, and we are on that timeline to deliver,” Gen. Guetlein said. “That will not be the final capability, but we will have the ability to protect and defend the nation against advanced threats by the summer of 2028.

[Golden Dome Details Begin to Emerge](#)

By: [Chris Gordon](#) for A&S Forces // Dec. 7, 2025

SIMI VALLEY, Calif.—The Golden Dome air and missile defense shield to protect the United States will have some “operational capability” in 2028, the program’s leader said Dec. 6 at the [Reagan National Defense Forum here](#).

“It will not be the final capability. But we will have the ability to protect and defend the nation against advanced threats by the [summer of 2028](#),” Space Force **Gen. Michael A. Guetlein**, the officer in charge of the program, said of the ambitious effort championed by President Donald Trump. Guetlein acknowledged the complexity of the task but said a “solid plan” is already in place. “We believe we can get there,” Guetlein said. “I think we’re on a good trajectory, but I will tell you, it is not a ‘gimme putt.’ It is an extremely complex thing that we’re getting ready to do, and there’s a lot of risk in there.”

The Pentagon has said little publicly about the challenging program, and it is still unclear what it will exactly entail, though the ultimate cost is expected to reach hundreds of billions of dollars. “There are likely people in that audience that I don’t want to know what we’re doing,” said Guetlein, defending the secrecy. “I’m still hoping that we can start opening up dialogue in the new year.” While little information has been [publicly released](#), more details are being shared on a classified basis with defense firms and Congress, Guetlein said on a panel with Secretary of the **Air Force Troy Meink, Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), and Northrop Grumman CEO Kathy Warden**.

Fischer, who is chair of the Senate Armed Services Strategic Forces subcommittee, said she was satisfied with the information she has received. The project, which was established by an executive order that Trump [issued in January](#), is designed to expand the system that was designed to defend against North Korea’s ballistic missiles and other modest threats into a system that can defeat more advanced and numerous ballistic missiles, hypersonic weapons, cruise missiles, multiple sizes of drones, and more novel threats such as fractional orbital bombardment systems.

A new web of sensors, interceptors, and command-and-control capabilities is expected to make up the system, including space-based interceptors and data-transfer and missile-warning satellites. Guetlein reports directly to Deputy Secretary of Defense Steve Feinberg, giving him authority over much of the program’s structure. Golden Dome will not be a built-from-scratch project, Guetlein said, and will use existing systems and programs being pursued by the services. “We are focused on the entire homeland, to include Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam,” he said. “We won’t bring all that to bear immediately. The Army is already working really diligently to protect Guam today.

When they have got that capability in place, it will become part of Golden Dome.” Golden Dome is just one of a number of high priority defense programs being pursued amid considerable uncertainty about what the Pentagon spending levels will be in future years, to include across-the-board nuclear modernization; a major shipbuilding program; the Air Force’s F-47 fighter, and more. “We received a historic boost in funding last year, and believe that is only just the beginning,” Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told the forum, referring to the \$156 billion budget reconciliation legislation that was added to the DOD’s proposed budget for 2026.

But it remains unclear what spending levels will be in future years to advance programs that have also been dogged by inflation. “Have we made a decision yet on another reconciliation bill? No, we have not. We will make sure that we continue to grow. There will not be a hole there,” Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought told the forum. Though few details about Golden Dome have been released, Guetlein provided the most detailed public accounting of the program to date. Guetlein said work has begun on novel capabilities, such as space-based interceptors. According to the general, 18 Other Transaction Agreements have been awarded for space-based interceptors.

So-called OTAs are a flexible type of government-industry arrangement designed to advance technology, rather than procure a specific weapons system. Space System Command announced the deals in late November, though it did not say how many contracts were awarded. “That’s now off and moving,” Guetlein said. As for more traditional interceptors, Guetlein said that Feinberg’s office is “working really, really hard to scale out the industrial base ... to expand the magazine depth of our weapons” and that the Golden Dome office has “injected our requirements into that process.” Even before Golden Dome, the U.S. military already had a high demand for more interceptors for the THAAD and Patriot ballistic missile defense systems.

“They are already moving out on acquiring the interceptors that we need for Golden Dome,” Guetlein said, without naming specific systems. Trump’s executive order, which predated Guetlein’s role, also highlighted Space Force sensing and data transport efforts. “We are in discussions with the department on the need to acquire more transport capability, which is the ability to move data through space, more sensing capability, more missile warning [and] missile track capability. We are waiting on those contracts to come in and to be able to move forward on those, but we have given our needs to the department.,” Guetlein said.

Meink, acknowledging the Department of Air Force’s role as one of “providers” to Golden Dome, said he and Guetlein “talk a lot about those schedules” regarding the capabilities the Space Force and Air Force may contribute. Guetlein said tangible efforts were also underway on the architecture’s backbone. “We have a team of industry partners working on the command and control and fire control software already. We’re on-ramping others into that,” he said. “So, we have already moved out ... on our contracting strategy.”

[Golden Dome missile shield set for initial capability in 2028 as officials outline early progress](#)

By: Martin Chomsky (Defence Industry Europe) from A&S Forces // December 8, 2025

The Golden Dome air and missile defence shield will achieve “operational capability” in 2028, Space Force **Gen. Michael A. Guetlein** said on 6 December at the Reagan National Defense Forum.

He stressed it “will not be the final capability” but confirmed the United States will “have the ability to protect and defend the nation against advanced threats by the summer of 2028.” Guetlein said the effort has a “solid plan” while acknowledging its difficulty. “I think we’re on a good trajectory, but I will tell you, it is not a ‘gimme putt’ ... and there’s a lot of risk in there,” he said. The Pentagon has disclosed little about the project, which is expected to cost hundreds of billions of dollars. “There are likely people in that audience that I don’t want to know what we’re doing,” Guetlein said, adding he hopes to “start opening up dialogue in the new year.”

Although public information remains limited, Guetlein said more details have been shared on a classified basis with industry and Congress. Sen. Deb Fischer said she was satisfied with the material provided to her as chair of the Senate Armed Services Strategic Forces subcommittee. Golden Dome was established by an executive order issued by President Donald Trump in January and will expand current homeland missile defences. The aim is to counter advanced ballistic missiles, hypersonic weapons, cruise missiles, drones of multiple sizes, and emerging threats such as fractional orbital bombardment systems.

The system will rely on a new network of sensors, interceptors, and command and control tools, including space-based elements. Guetlein, who reports directly to Deputy Secretary of Defense Steve Feinberg, said Golden Dome will build existing programmes rather than start from scratch. “We are focused on the entire homeland, to include Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam,” he said. He added that Army efforts to protect Guam “will become part of Golden Dome” once complete. The programme advances amid broader uncertainty over future Pentagon budgets. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said the department “received a historic boost in funding last year” through a reconciliation bill but noted that long-term spending levels remain unsettled.

Budget pressures linked to inflation and competing priorities continue to weigh on planning. “Have we made a decision yet on another reconciliation bill? No, we have not,” Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought said, though he pledged “we will make sure that we continue to grow.” Guetlein offered the most detailed public update so far, highlighting ongoing work on new interceptor technologies. He said 18 Other Transaction Agreements have been awarded for space-based interceptors and confirmed “that’s now off and moving.”

Traditional interceptor capacity is also being expanded as Feinberg’s office works “really, really hard to scale out the industrial base ... to expand the magazine depth of our weapons.” Guetlein said industry is “already moving out on acquiring the interceptors that we need for Golden Dome.” He added that the programme has defined its needs for sensing, data transport, missile warning, and missile tracking. “We are waiting on those contracts to come in ... but we have given our needs to the department,” he said.

Secretary of the Air Force Troy Meink described the Air Force and Space Force as key “providers” to Golden Dome. He said he and Guetlein “talk a lot about those schedules” as their contributions take shape. Work is also progressing on the system’s core architecture. “We have a team of industry partners working on the command and control and fire control software already,” Guetlein said, noting that more partners are being added as the contracting strategy advances. --- Source: [Air & Space Forces Magazine](#).

We Might Regret Golden Dome’s Greatest Ambition

WarOnTheRocks.com, Dec. 11 | Andrew Facini and Mallory Stewart

What happens when the United States tries to build a missile shield so ambitious that Russia and China start dreaming up weapons that no defense can stop? Two demonstrations of Russian weapons pageantry this fall offered a clear, if unsettling, glimpse of that future as President Vladimir Putin proudly showcased systems built to sidestep American defenses. [Editor’s Note: Another always blame America first. If we just did build defenses, Russia would not build offenses!!

Reagan Forum Polls

Reagan Forum Poll Shows Broad Backing for Stronger Military Action Against Drug Traffickers as Strikes Escalate

BY **COMMON DEFENSE STAFF**

DECEMBER 8, 2025

A little over six in ten Americans back using military force against suspected drug traffickers as DoD airstrikes continue around Latin America. The findings show 62 percent approving of using the military to confront possible drug traffickers in Latin America and the Caribbean. This comes as the United States maintains a robust naval posture and a growing air campaign in the region.

By surveying the public while operations were intensifying, the poll captured a moment of heightened willingness to use force when national interests are at stake. The survey also notes that partisanship remains a driver on many issues, even as support for NATO and for defending Ukraine and Taiwan rises.

The Reagan survey also asks Americans to rate their confidence in public institutions. **The U.S. military received the highest marks, with eighty two percent expressing at least some confidence.** That benchmark stands in contrast to mixed views on other topics and reflects a long standing trust in the men and women who serve.

On domestic security matters, the poll reveals broad support for deploying National Guard troops to cities during major civil disturbances and to address violent crime. Sixty two percent of respondents favored taking such steps, signaling a readiness to use federal resources to restore order when cities feel overwhelmed.

A productive trend emerges in public attitudes toward service, with fifty nine percent saying they would encourage friends or family to join the military, up from fifty one percent in the prior year.

Support for arming Ukraine rose to sixty four percent, up from fifty five percent the previous year. Confidence in defending Taiwan also increased, and there was a parallel rise in support for strengthening NATO and its collective defense commitments.

From a policy standpoint, the numbers align with a course of action advocated by President Trump and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth. They would emphasize clearly defined missions, decisive use of force when necessary, and a reinforced deterrent posture that makes adversaries think twice before challenging American interests.

Addendum on Venezuela

By [Mike Glenn](#) and [Bill Gertz](#) - The Washington Times - Sunday, December 7, 2025

President Trump's Republican allies in [Congress](#) responded Sunday to concerns from lawmakers in both parties that a [U.S. Navy](#) commander's decision to launch a second strike on a capsized boat spotted with two survivors could constitute a war crime.

Sen. Tom Cotton, Arkansas Republican, said the Sept. 2 strike was a legal operation against a boat that was loaded with narcotics and bound for the U.S. He said the military has been ordered to strike such boats, crewed by associates or members of foreign terrorist organizations that are trying to kill Americans.

"Before our military conducts such a strike, they have multiple sources of intelligence. They give high confidence that everyone on that boat is a foreign drug trafficker, not an innocent civilian who is being 'human trafficked,' for instance," Mr. Cotton said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Sen. Tammy Duckworth, Illinois Democrat, accused the [Trump administration](#) of sanctioning a war crime in the follow-on attack in September that killed two survivors of a destroyed vessel.

"It was essentially murder with that 'double-tap' strike," she said on CNN's "State of the Union." "If a pilot bails out and he's in a rubber dinghy in the middle of the ocean, under all international laws of warfare, you are supposed to help render aid to that individual."

Republican Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska have also been sharply critical of the Sept 2 incident.

The [White House](#) has said Defense Secretary [Pete Hegseth](#) delegated authority for finishing the Sept. 2 mission to Adm. Frank M. "Mitch" Bradley, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command.

During a speech at the annual Reagan National Defense Forum on Saturday, Mr. [Hegseth](#) stood by the admiral's decision to launch a second strike. He said the days of foreign "narco-terrorists" operating freely near the U.S. borders are over.

He called them "the al Qaeda of our hemisphere."

"We are hunting them with the same sophistication and precision that we hunted al Qaeda," Mr. [Hegseth](#) said. "We're tracking them, we're killing them, and we'll keep killing them so long as they are poisoning our people with narcotics so lethal that they're tantamount to chemical weapons."

Mr. [Hegseth](#) said detailed intelligence work informs whether U.S. naval warships will target suspected drug boats. Intelligence helps determine where the vessels are originating, who is piloting them and, most important, what cargo they are hauling.

"At the top of all this, the president has designated these as terror organizations, poisoning and threatening the American people, making them a target, just like al Qaeda," he said.

Mr. Cotton said it was simply not the case that U.S. forces were ordered to kill helpless survivors of the initial attack.

"They were not floating in the ocean on a wooden plank or in life jackets. They were on the capsized vessel. They were not incapacitated in any way," he said. "It was entirely appropriate to strike the boat again to make sure that its cargo was destroyed."

Rep. Adam Smith of Washington, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, viewed the same video of the "double tap" mission as his Republican colleagues but drew a dramatically different conclusion.

"The boat was clearly incapacitated. A tiny portion of it remained capsized, the bow of the boat," he said on ABC News' "This Week." "They had no communications device, [and] certainly they were unarmed."

[White House](#) claims that the drugs had somehow survived the initial attack were "hard to square" with the images on the surveillance tape, Mr. Smith said.

"The boat was adrift. It was going where the current was going to take it, [and] these two were trying to figure out how to survive," he said.

Mr. [Hegseth](#) said the first strike mission lasted 30 to 40 minutes. He was satisfied that any legal questions had been satisfactorily answered. He left before Adm. Bradley ordered the second strike.

"A couple of hours later, I was told, 'Hey, there had to be a re-attack because there were a couple of folks who could still be in the fight [with] access to radios,'" he said. "There was a link-up point with another potential boat. Drugs were still there, [and] they were actively interacting with them."

Mr. [Hegseth](#) said he agreed that the second strike was appropriate. Anyone with experience in Afghanistan or Iraq over the past 20 years knows that follow-on strikes on enemy positions on the battlefield aren't uncommon.

"I fully support that strike. I would have made the same call myself," he said. "In this particular case, it was well within the authorities of Adm. Bradley, who is an incredible American."

He said U.S. forces have launched dozens of similar strikes using the same criteria. The Pentagon is reviewing the video of the Sept. 2 secondary strike to protect any potential intelligence sources and methods before it could be released to the public.

Mr. Smith said he believes the [Trump administration](#) is reluctant to release the video because it doesn't want the public to learn firsthand what happened with the second strike.

"And is this really about drugs, or is it about regime change in Venezuela? Are we about to go to war with Venezuela?" Mr. Smith said. "The president has alluded to that repeatedly over the course of the last several weeks, couple of months now. That too, I think, would be very, very bad for the national security interests of our country."

Sen. Eric Schmitt, Missouri Republican, said President [Trump](#) is well within his authority to "blow narco-terrorists out of the water."

[Congress](#) delegated the authority for the [White House](#) to designate terrorist organizations, which he has done, Mr. Schmitt said on ABC's "This Week."

"He sent a letter to [Congress](#) saying he's going to initiate these strikes," Mr. Schmitt said. "We've had regular briefings about it, including from Secretary of State [Marco] Rubio and high-ranking officials in the Department of Defense."

He said Democratic opposition to the strikes on suspected drug boats is based on their goal to oust Mr. [Hegseth](#) from the Pentagon.

"That's what this whole thing's been about. They didn't want him confirmed, [and] they don't want a 'realist' in place," Mr. Schmitt said. "We have core national interests at stake: the homeland and the Western Hemisphere and the rise of China. That's what this administration is about."

About the ICBM EAR

Peter Huessy's ICBM EAR Report was originally prepared for the USAF in 1981 to help inform US nuclear deterrent policy professionals at the height of the Cold War. Eventually it was provided only to key elements of the Nuclear related Aerospace Industry. The objective: help build an informed political community on nuclear deterrent issues, especially the deployment of the US nuclear deterrent, especially the MX (Peacekeeper) missile. The report covered developments in the nuclear arena on a weekly basis, including developments in Congress, key events, threat assessments, remarks of top US officials, international activity key to US security interests, nuclear budget and program element issues, and arms control and proliferation matters as well.

Weekly ICBM EAR Report

Prepared by Peter Huessy

Edition: Week of December 8, 2025

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