

Weekly ICBM EAR Report



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

Prepared by Peter Huessy

Senior Fellow at the National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS)

President of GeoStrategic Analysis, Potomac, Maryland

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The ICBM EAR Week of 15th of December, Prepared by Peter Huessy,
President of Geostrategic Analysis of Potomac, Maryland and Senior Fellow at the National
Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS).

Summary

Quotes of the Week especially from Senator Fisher; defense bill passes Congress and is signed into law by the President, but appropriations bill still to pass; Walters and Haley paper on China; the Bishops are back against nuclear weapons; Senator Warren and Representative Garamendi want to stop pit production; NNSA official David Hoagland in NIDS podcast/seminar reviews defense programs; great work of SSP; Japan will not seek nukes, reaffirms extended deterrence and the NPT; US record arms sales to Taiwan; an update on Hollywood & abolition by the WSJ; NIDS explains its new NPR; ICBM EAR essay on US sovereignty and the new national security strategy; and a new essay will be posted by the ICBM Ear on RealClearDefense on January 6th; an update on They Always Blame America First; and a commentary on the BAS views of the US nuclear and missile defense force.

Events of the Week

David Hoagland, NIDS/Huessy Seminar, December 19, 2025. You can access the recorded seminar through the following link: <https://youtu.be/FedV11v52b0>

The NIDS new (NPR) nuclear posture review 12th December Seminar remarks: <https://youtu.be/b95LcezhBo0>

ICBM News

The Air Force prepares to recapitalize the Looking Glass mission, indicating the service may reclaim the airborne ICBM-launch command-post role.

Quotes and Commentary of the Week

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he is willing to drop Kyiv's bid to join NATO in exchange for Western security guarantees, but he rejected Washington's push to cede territory to Russia

Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE): "One of our nation's most urgent challenges: strengthening America's space and missile defense systems. China and Russia are developing weapons capable of reaching the United States, and their arsenals grow more advanced each year."

Sen Deb Fischer (R-NE): I support the Golden Dome project, a next-generation missile defense system designed to protect the U.S. homeland from long-range threats."

Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE): "As Chair of the Cyber Subcommittee, I've pushed for stronger investments & improvements in our EW capabilities."

NNSA Administrator Brandon Williams: "At the National Lab Directors' Council Winter Retreat. I shared my vision for NNSA; faster delivery, better infrastructure, and scientific excellence, fueled by our own labs.

Holman Jenkins, WSJ, December 13th: **The movie Dynamite is "not grounded in reality. Credit it with being emotionally wrenching. But it's also full of dangerously misleading inanities despite the gushing of certain experts" [Full essay is below].**

Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE): "The first duty of Congress is to defend the nation, and I am proud to have played a key role in crafting this year's National Defense Authorization Act."

Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE): "This year's NDAA rises to this challenge, with key provisions I secured as a senior member of @SASCOP that will ensure our nuclear deterrent remains credible, effective and relevant."

NNSA Administrator Brandon Williams: "It was an honor to visit @PantexPlant to celebrate the Last Production Unit for the W88 Alt 370 warhead. Completing this program just four years after reaching the First Production Unit shows NNSA can produce and deliver a modern deterrent to safeguard the nation."

CQ: White House national security strategy painted Europe as over-regulated, culturally adrift and insufficiently committed to its own defense.

Mossad Director David "Dedi" Barnea: Israel will not allow a dangerous nuclear agreement to materialize and will ensure Tehran's nuclear project is never revived.

Special Report

Déjà vu all over again--From the Quotes Archives of the Ronald Reagan Library :

From the Washington Post on March 11, 1982: Washington Archbishop Michael Hickey is reported to support a nuclear freeze on all US nuclear forces. From the Reagan Library Archives. Archbishop Hickey followed this news story with a July 2, 1982 letter calling for a sound discussion of the morality of nuclear deterrence and the best US security policy including examination of a freeze of all nuclear forces to be followed by reductions and eventual abolition.

Army Major James Keeley: From those who question the morality of nuclear deterrence give slight approbation to the fact that the deterrence of nuclear war has worked for 37 years...Deterrence as policy continues to be an impressive accomplishment. Military Assistant to the Chairman, US START Delegation, Letter to the Washington Post, July 1, 1982

Pope Leo XIV: Peace is possible but necessary, and nuclear deterrence is irrational and immoral (Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, (BAS) December 2025) **[Editor's Note: While the American Bishops supported a nuclear freeze in 1981-2, the Pontiff at that time John Paul II did not. He publicly explained that deterrence was required in a dangerous world as he courageously also supported the full US assistance to Poland's Solidarity which he helped facilitate. Unlike John Paul II, Pope Leo now has joined the nuclear abolition movement while undermining US deterrent strength.]**

Congressional Developments

Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE) posted: "We must strengthen our nuclear command & control survivability to ensure we deter Russia & China from ever contemplating a strategic attack. Nuclear weapons can now hit anywhere in the U.S. within 15 minutes. We need a 24/7 airborne command & control capability (it's called 'Looking Glass') as we had for 29 years during the Cold War. We must have a survivable command center that backs up the White House, Pentagon & STRATCOM HQ. Offutt AFB used to host this mission, & I hope it will do so again. USSTRATCOM needs this capability close to home & our country needs the strengthened deterrence."

In a Dec. 16 letter, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts, and Rep. John Garamendi, D-California, pressed Energy Secretary Chris Wright "to seriously review the need for and scope of" the National Nuclear Security Administration's effort to reestablish mass production of plutonium pits, which are the explosive cores of modern nuclear weapons. **[Editor's note: A major series of recent NNSA projects have been completed ahead of schedule and under budget according to the 19th of December remarks of NNSA official David Hoagland—remarks linked above. And as predicted by the ICBM EAR, the opponents of nuclear modernization are now focusing on curtailing the budget of the NNSA despite major progress in moving NNSA in the right direction and the continued need for US nuclear modernization.]**

Amb Marshall Billingslea Testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. <https://www.c-span.org/program/public-affairs-event/former-defense-officials-discuss-us-russia-arms-control/663701>

The House passed the NDAA 215-211 while the Senate passed 77--20 the NDAA measure on Wednesday following the House's green light. **The NDAA firmly anchors the United States in Europe. The bill bars US troop levels on the continent from falling below 76,000 for more than 45 days and restricts the removal of major military equipment, effectively tying the administration's hands on any rapid drawdown. It also boosts resources for frontline NATO states, particularly in the Baltic region, reinforcing the alliance's northeastern flank. The measure authorizes roughly \$8 billion more than the administration budget request.** Beyond Europe, the NDAA locks in \$400 million in security assistance for Ukraine, aiming to preserve a baseline of support, and places new limits on any reduction of the 28,500 US troops stationed in South Korea. (From various news sources).

Administration Developments

Air Force expects first delivery of **Boeing** Air Force One jets in 'mid-2028. Good news Boeing.

Salute to Admiral Wolfe: The Strategic Systems Programs (SSP) Program Management Office Shipboard Systems (PMOSPS) is reinvigorating SSP's Technical Discipline Training and Qualification Program (TDTQP) and strengthening engineering and program management skills of SSP personnel to meet the critical needs of today's sea-based strategic deterrent and regional strike systems.

The National Nuclear Security Administration announced that it completed the last production unit of the W88 Alteration (Alt) 370, a multiyear program to modernize the nuclear warhead carried onboard Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines. The W88 first entered the U.S. nuclear stockpile in 1988, and the process to upgrade the warhead reached full production in 2022. The W88 Alt 370 program addressed aging issues identified during routine surveillance, enhancing the reliability of a critical element of the sea-based leg of America's strategic deterrent. **This milestone marks the concluding phase of one of seven ongoing major warhead modernization programs.**

President Trump signs annual NDAA Defense bill with record military spending.

CIA Director Ratcliffe backs Trump's nuclear test remarks as questions raised about Russia, China.

New USSTRATCOM Commander Adm. Rich Correll and CSEL Command Sgt. Maj. JoAnn Naumann visited Malmstrom AFB, where they received mission briefings from the 341st Missile Wing and Sentinel Site Activation Task Force,

Adm. Correll and CSM Naumann traveled to Minot AFB and met with personnel to discuss the 5th Bomb Wing's bomber alert mission, the 91st Missile Wing's ICBM operations and modernization efforts affecting both units.

International Developments

The People's Liberation Army Rocket Force's ongoing buildup of short-, medium-, and long-range missiles threaten "every major airfield, port and military installation across the Western Pacific."

Israeli officials are becoming "increasingly concerned" that Iran is expanding production of its ballistic missile program.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara reaffirmed Tokyo's pledge never to possess nuclear weapons after Japanese media had reported the previous day that a senior security official suggested the country should acquire those weapons to deter potential aggressors.

"Belarusian leader says Russia deployed its latest nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile to the country."

President Vladimir Putin touted Russia's next-generation strategic weapons, claiming recent successful tests of the nuclear-powered, nuclear-capable Burevestnik cruise missile and the nuclear-powered Poseidon torpedo, and saying the hypersonic, medium-range, nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile would be deployed by year's end

The US State Department announced that it approved \$11.1 billion in arms sales to Taiwan, the largest ever U.S. weapons package for the island.

The Abolition Trilogy Updated

The Netflixing of Nuclear War by| Holman W. Jenkins, Jr., The Wall Street Journal and December 13th.

Now I'm triggered. Kathryn Bigelow and Noah Oppenheim, director and screenwriter of Netflix's nuclear war drama, "A House of Dynamite," are making the rounds, calling their movie "journalism." A compliant PBS interviewer all but browbeats Mr. Oppenheim into confessing: "You approached writing this film as a journalist would, talking with top experts, defense officials, to really ground this film in reality."

Except it's not grounded in reality. The movie -- about the minutes between detection and impact of an unattributable sea-launched warhead aimed at Chicago -- is among Netflix's most watched. Credit it with being emotionally wrenching. **But it's also full of dangerously misleading inanities despite the gushing of certain experts** who seem overly swayed by gratitude toward the filmmakers for calling attention to their subject area.

Example: An intelligent ninth-grader could say how many interceptors, assuming a 50% success rate, are needed for a 99% chance of knocking down a single warhead before it lands on Chicago. The answer isn't two. Nor would the Pentagon skimp on interceptors the first time its multibillion-dollar system faced exactly the limited contingency it was designed for.

Neither, in such a situation, would the high command recommend an out-of-the-blue retaliation against Russia, China and North Korea to "neutralize" them. They wouldn't be neutralized. Even innocent moviegoers must be familiar with terms like "second-strike capability" and "mutually assured destruction."

Most bizarre is the film's insistence that President Idris Elba, who isn't in Chicago, must decide how to respond before the presumed warhead lands in Chicago. **Every other race-against-the-clock movie gives a logical premise for why the clock must be obeyed. This one doesn't. Even quite bad movies deploy MacGuffins to make their plots cohere. "A House of Dynamite" leaves a viewer feeling the producers couldn't be bothered -- which seems weird for a movie taking on such a solemn subject.**

If Ms. Bigelow wants to plead artistic license, fine, but don't call it journalism.

Last year's Annie Jacobsen book, "Nuclear War: A Scenario," is apparently about to become a movie too. Like the book, **Ms. Bigelow seems to be guided by a fundamentally unhelpful premise. That premise is embedded in her film's title, as if nuclear weapons are a scourge that might go off for no good reason.**

Unfortunately, nuclear arms won't be uninvented, so our only hope is that their possessors act with reason, according to a purpose, and therefore are amenable to being deterred. **There's no nice way of saying it: The new auteur fashion of encouraging unreasoning nuclear dread only benefits Vladimir Putin and others who want to use implausible nuclear threats to make the world safe for their conventional smash-and-grab operations, increasing the risk of nuclear confrontation.**

Which of the World War II antagonists would not have resorted to atomic bombs to secure victory or stave off defeat? None.

World War II followed World War I by 21 years, and World War III hasn't followed at all. Maybe think about why.

Earlier films like "Fail Safe" and "Dr. Strangelove" (both from 1964) faced the complexities of the nuclear dilemma squarely. The Netflix movie doesn't. It just bails on making sense of its own story, which involves a foreign power presumably targeting the U.S. with a single, politically disruptive, anonymous attack for some specific purpose. In fact, the U.S. maintains a "nuclear forensics" capability for exactly this reason -- to let an adversary know that an anonymous attack wouldn't remain anonymous for long.

Last year, a visiting U.S. Air Force contingent kindly indulged a question about North Korea's mobile missile crews. Are they authorized to launch on their authority after a hypothetical U.S. "decapitation" strike on Pyongyang? Do we know where those missiles are located? The answers were off the record and not especially clarifying. But the point is, plenty of intelligent, coherent movies could be made to do justice to the high-stakes quandaries nuclear weapons bring into the world.

Consider a question about which no movie will be made. Viewers would turn away. Hollywood would treat the script like a piece of hazmat. It concerns a variant on the question Dean Acheson once advised President John F. Kennedy to think about but never tell anyone his conclusions: when actually to use a nuke. Suppose a massive attack is headed toward the U.S. Nothing can stop it. Should the U.S. fire off its full arsenal and add to the global carnage and devastation of a planetary ecosystem on which all life depends?

A president really would have to convey his decision in the minutes before U.S. civilization was incinerated. Ethically, it would arguably be the wrong choice to fire off America's nukes. Ethically, it remains supremely important that our enemies believe a U.S. president nevertheless would.

Reviewing the Abolitionists

Alexandra Bell The CEO of the BAS on the US Nuclear Deterrent and Missile Defense:

Of course, the United States already has the world's most robust, credible, and modern nuclear deterrent in the world—but that status may be undermined if the administration and Congress go chasing the budget-busting boondoggle that Golden Dome is likely to be. **[Editor's Note: The United States strategic deterrent is 55 (ICBMS), 83 (B-52s) and 43 (Ohio Subs), years old, respectively, while the Russian nuclear forces are far more modern while China's most modern nuclear deterrent is no more than 1-5 years old. Part of the US theater nuclear force--the B61 bomb and Joint Strike Fighter that can carry nuclear weapons-- are the most recent additional to the force. Otherwise, it is absurd to claim the US strategic nuclear force is more modern than that of any of our serious adversaries.]**

Alexandra Bell then tackles missile defense: "In fact, huge investments in national missile defense—many observers believe the system would cost many times its purported \$175 billion budget—would undermine the National Security Strategy's thrice-mentioned desire to "reestablish strategic stability with Russia." Deterrence relies on the concept of mutual vulnerability, a balance of terror. That means investments in defense will prompt an adversary to invest in more offense—in short, an arms race.

[Editor's Note: When the Bush43 Administration invested in what became a force of 44-and possibly 66 missile interceptors, the US and Russia subsequently reduced nuclear weapons from 6000 (the START 1 level) to 1550, under the Moscow Treaty (2002) and then New START (2010), with Russian President Putin acknowledging that the US missile defense system did not in any way concern Moscow or upset the strategic balance.]

Alexandra Bell is the president and CEO of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

Guest Essay

Catholic bishops remind political leaders that nuclear weapons are immoral

By [John Wester](#) | December 14, 2025

Pope Leo XIV during his inauguration mass in St. Peter's Square on May 18, 2025. During a [general audience on August 6](#) at the Vatican for the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the new pope criticized nuclear deterrence as "illusory security **based on the threat of mutual destruction.**" (Credit: Mazur/cbcew.org.uk, via Flickr)

In August, a group of American Catholic Church leaders—including Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago, Cardinal Robert McElroy of Washington, DC, Archbishop Paul Etienne of Seattle, and me, the Archbishop of Santa Fe—traveled to Japan to mark the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There, we joined our Japanese counterparts—Bishop Mitsuru Shirahama of Hiroshima, Archbishop Emeritus Mitsuki Takami of Nagasaki, and Archbishop Michiaki Nakamura of Nagasaki—in commemorating the destruction of their cities. Takami is a *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivor); he was in his mother's womb on August 9, 1945, when his city of Nagasaki was bombed. His maternal aunt and grandmother were both killed in the blast.

Eighty years have passed. But the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons is still with us—and it is growing worse every day. In 2019, Pope Francis elevated the Catholic Church beyond conditional acceptance of so-called deterrence. He **declared** that the mere possession of nuclear weapons is immoral. Nevertheless, the nuclear powers are now spending enormous sums of money on "modernization" that will keep nuclear weapons virtually forever. Meanwhile, in the United States, taxes are being cut to benefit the rich, and economic inequality and

homelessness are exploding. **This situation is deeply immoral and counter to the Catholic Church's teachings on social justice.**

Today, the United States has entered a new arms race involving multiple nuclear powers, new cyber weapons, and artificial intelligence. Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara said **the world survived the Cuban Missile Crisis only thanks to luck. This is not a sustainable survival strategy: Luck is not eternal. Even the remote possibility of "nuclear winter" makes nuclear disarmament a profound pro-life issue on an immense scale.**

The word "deterrence" has been used by successive US presidents to justify nuclear weapons. But that one word is only a half-truth. The United States has always rejected minimal deterrence and, instead, preferred to include nuclear warfighting capabilities—capabilities that can end civilization overnight. Russia has followed the same course. That is why both sides still have thousands of nuclear weapons instead of only a few hundred, with China now racing to expand its own arsenal. That is why the United States plans to spend nearly \$1 trillion "to operate, sustain, and modernize current nuclear forces and purchase new [nuclear weapons] forces" in the next 10 years alone.

This is contrary to the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, or NPT, in which the non-nuclear weapon states pledged never to acquire nuclear weapons. In return, the nuclear powers promised to enter into negotiations leading to disarmament—a promise that has never been honored. From that betrayal sprang the 2021 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which the Vatican was the first nation-state to sign and ratify. The nuclear-weapon states oppose the TPNW, arguing that it does not effectively advance disarmament and could instead fuel further proliferation. But the treaty does nothing more than ban nuclear weapons, just like previous treaties that enjoyed universal support banned biological and chemical weapons, which are also weapons of mass destruction.

A prime example of this nuclear immorality is right in my own backyard of New Mexico.

A whopping \$1 billion is being added to the Los Alamos National Laboratory's annual \$4 billion nuclear weapons budget, largely for the expanded production of plutonium "pit" bomb cores. However, no future pit production is to maintain the existing stockpile. Instead, it is all for new-design nuclear weapons that will fuel the new arms race. The development of new weapon systems could prompt the United States to return to explosive nuclear testing, which would have severe proliferation consequences. Meanwhile, the lab's science, nonproliferation, and cleanup programs are being cut, and research on renewable energies is being zeroed out.

Jobs are often cited by the New Mexico congressional delegation as justification for expanding nuclear weapons programs in New Mexico. But jobs at Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories would be far better directed toward peaceful purposes. Nuclear weapon "modernization" diverts money from helping the poor and feeding the hungry—two far more important moral objectives than feeding warheads and war plans. In FY 2026, the Energy Department plans to spend \$10.8 billion in New Mexico alone—the same amount as the state government's entire operating budget. Of that federal money, 84 percent is for nuclear weapons research and production programs. Still, New Mexico remains the third poorest state in the nation and is ranked dead last in the quality of public education and the lives of our children.

People of all faiths—as well as people of no faith at all—need to know that the American Catholic Church is deeply engaged in nuclear disarmament issues. In a message addressed to Bishop Shirahama of Hiroshima on the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing, our new Pope Leo XIV said, "Nuclear arms offend our shared humanity and also betray the dignity of creation, whose harmony we are called to safeguard." The Vatican's Holy See delegation to the United Nations recently called "on all nuclear-armed States to fulfill their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by engaging in good faith negotiations [and] to ratify the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons." In that same spirit, two years ago, the dioceses of Santa Fe, Seattle, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki joined together to form the Partnership for a World without Nuclear Weapons to work on nuclear disarmament. We invite other Catholic entities to join us.

On August 5, the two American Cardinals present in Japan delivered stirring words from the Hiroshima World Peace Memorial Cathedral, whose bricks contain ashes from the atomic bomb. "We pray that this award [the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize to the *hibakusha* organization Nihon Hidankyo] may become a light of hope toward a world without nuclear weapons," said Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago. "We strongly urge both the world and the Japanese government to take this 'sign of the times' deeply to heart, and to take immediate steps toward the signing and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons."

"If our gathering here today is to mean anything, it must mean that in fidelity to all those whose lives were destroyed or savagely damaged on August 6, 80 years ago, we refuse to live in such a world of nuclear proliferation and risk-taking," said Cardinal Robert McElroy of Washington. "We will resist, we will organize, we will pray, we will not cease, until the world's nuclear arsenals have been destroyed."

Guest Essay #2

Haley and Walters: China's Stealth War Has Already Begun

From foreign investments to TikTok algorithms, Beijing is diminishing American power and hoping we don't notice.

THIS IS NOT NORMAL COMPETITION. IT IS A COORDINATED STRATEGY TO ATTACK U.S. VULNERABILITIES.

By Nikki R. Haley, John P. Walters

Mention China to a typical foreign-policy "expert" on the left or right, and they'll describe it as a formidable adversary with a chance to challenge the U.S. But that conventional wisdom is way out-of-date: Communist China's war on the U.S. has already begun. The trick is that Beijing is trying to make sure Americans never realize they're under attack.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is working to undermine the U.S. across economic, technological, informational, diplomatic, and gray-zone military domains. **Especially since Xi Jinping's rise, Chinese leaders have committed to diminish American superpower without triggering a U.S. military response. The Chinese don't want a shooting war today, or ever, if they can help it. Instead, they've chosen to erode the foundations of American power by coercing U.S. allies, commandeering global supply chains, and bending international institutions toward Chinese interests. Beijing wants to do all this while keeping the U.S. reactive, fragmented, and unsure about how seriously to take the threat.**

China's most destructive maneuver has been to subvert the miracle of free-market capitalism by turning international investment and trade into a weapon against the U.S. and its democratic allies. Through subsidies, forced technology transfers, and state-directed investment, the CCP has planted itself on choke points in global manufacturing. That includes rare-earth minerals, battery components, active pharmaceutical ingredients, solar panels, steel and aluminum, and even advanced technologies like cutting-edge sensors.

This is not normal competition. It is a coordinated strategy to attack U.S. vulnerabilities. The scramble during the Covid-19 pandemic for face masks and other medical supplies made predominantly in China revealed the threat that Beijing can pose—as did the shady origin of the virus near a Chinese lab. Supply-chain dominance is an economic weapon the CCP has built carefully through decades of manipulation.

China is also waging the most expansive espionage and intellectual-property theft campaign in history. Thousands of U.S. companies, universities, and laboratories have been infiltrated or targeted. These are not isolated incidents but a systemic effort to accelerate Communist China's technological rise by stealing the fruits of American innovation. The CCP understands that whoever controls the commanding heights of artificial intelligence, quantum computing, next-generation semiconductors, and advanced materials will dominate the global balance of power.

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Militarily, the U.S. is not at peace with China, even though shots have not yet been fired. China's military, the People's Liberation Army, conducts frequent coercive operations in the Taiwan Strait, East China Sea, and South China Sea. China's aggressive buzzing of U.S. and allied aircraft, unsafe naval maneuvers, and escalating gray-zone pressure on Taiwan are part of its effort to normalize Beijing's dominance and force the U.S. to accept a new regional status quo. This graduated pressure is designed to avoid crossing the threshold of open conflict while steadily achieving tactical and strategic gains. The same is true of China's support for Russia, Iran, and North Korea—partners and proxies in Xi's aggression.

China's information warfare is even more pervasive. Through censorship, cyber operations, propaganda, the TikTok algorithm, and manipulation of Chinese nationals overseas, Beijing seeks to shape American public debate, weaken confidence in U.S. institutions, divide the electorate, and delegitimize democratic alliances. The CCP views information dominance as essential to national power—more fundamental than missiles or tanks. If it can shape perceptions, influence elites, and distort the American public sphere, it can achieve strategic objectives at minimal cost.

Diplomatically, Beijing has pursued a systematic effort to erode U.S. alliances at the expense of its political leverage. Developing countries in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America repeatedly face the same offer: loans, infrastructure investments, and trade deals that appear mutually beneficial but are designed to boost Chinese influence. Beijing has been busy building port security systems overseas with high-tech spy systems baked in, giving the CCP biometric data on port employees and the ability to surveil shipping traffic and internal communications. Over time, these tools limit governments' willingness to align with Washington, speak out about China's human rights abuses, criticize Beijing's assertiveness, or cooperate with the U.S. on security matters. The CCP does not seek to develop partnerships. It is creating an anti-American bloc to advance its own interests.

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America's failure to recognize that China is already fully engaged in a confrontation with the U.S. is Beijing's greatest strategic advantage. Democracies want peace and are slow to mobilize, particularly when the threat does not take the dramatic form of tanks crossing a border. But waiting for a crisis can lead to a quick defeat. If the U.S. delays action until Taiwan is invaded or another kinetic event, Beijing will have already shaped the global environment to its advantage.

Recognizing that we are already at war with Communist China does not mean advocating immediate armed conflict. But it does require the U.S. to respond with measures appropriate to the scale of the challenge. It means strengthening alliances, upgrading military technology, and protecting America's infrastructure and political and information systems. Some of these defensive measures are in progress, but they can't come too soon.

Americans love peace, but today the necessary first step is recognizing that we are at war. Seeing and saying this does not create war. It cannot be politically incorrect to say, "We are at war with the CCP." In fact, it is politically necessary.

The second step is dramatically speeding up basic defensive measures already underway. But defense alone is a path to defeat. The CCP's multi-domain assault, which will soon be aided by artificial intelligence, includes lines of attack that are faster and more numerous than a "blocking" posture can meet.

Modern warfare strongly favors offense, and military powers beat their foes by achieving a decisive "overmatch." That means America needs to start working on a final crucial step. It needs its own multifront strategy—a comprehensive, asymmetric, offensive plan to diminish Communist China's power to make war.

Some will bristle at the argument above, as if seeing our situation for what it is makes it worse or even creates the risk of conflict. Actually, it is the U.S. status quo that is increasingly dangerous, and possibly unsustainable. Xi is betting we will not understand the true danger until it is too late to counterattack and reestablish deterrence. It is time to plan carefully. It is time to mobilize rapidly. With the great genius of Americans and the added capacities of our technology, we can win. It is time to fight back.

From NIDS and Peter Huessy

On behalf of the National Institute for Deterrence Studies and Peter Huessy, I want to thank you for registering for last week's Huessy Seminar: ***Peace Through Strength: Renewing America's Nuclear Deterrent featuring Curtis McGiffin, Kirk Fansher, and Dr. James Petrosky***

Here is a link to the recorded seminar: <https://youtu.be/b95LcezhBo0?si=0622BzVrvtKOnVAF> . The transcript is attached.



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Executive Summary

Decades of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence have produced a complex legacy marked by both triumph and uncertainty. The United States has, at critical moments, managed to successfully deter adversaries and reassure allies, yet these achievements have often been shadowed by persistent doubts about the credibility and cohesion of its commitments.

As the familiar contours of the Cold War faded, the emergence of new threats from Russia and China have exposed the fragility of traditional extended deterrence strategies. These shifting realities force us to confront a sobering question: Can the strategic approaches that once ensured stability in a bipolar world adapt to the unpredictable pressures of a new, multipolar nuclear era?

Today, U.S. extended nuclear deterrence stands at a pivotal juncture. The emergence of two nuclear-armed peer competitors, rapid technological advances, and evolving alliance dynamics demand a reassessment of established approaches. The United States must move beyond assumptions of static commitments and recognize the unique needs and contributions of its diverse allies across regions.

This paper identifies four main options on the table: reducing U.S. commitments, expanding guarantees to more countries, maintaining the status quo, or establishing a new division of labor among allies. Each path carries significant strategic implications, risks, and tradeoffs, but none fully addresses the central challenge—the “two-nuclear-peer problem.”

Confronted with the prospect of facing both Russia and China as nuclear-armed adversaries, the United States may struggle to maintain conventional superiority in two theaters simultaneously. This could force difficult choices between abandoning one theater or relying more heavily on nuclear weapons to offset conventional inferiority, highlighting the urgent need to reassess extended nuclear deterrence strategy.

As the United States confronts this rapidly evolving security environment, a new strategic approach to extended nuclear deterrence is essential. Allies are increasingly willing—and needed—to take on greater responsibilities, yet meaningful rebalancing of roles has yet to occur. Institutionalizing a new division of labor among allies over the next decade will be crucial for sustaining credible extended nuclear deterrence.

To meet the demands of a multipolar security environment, I argue that the United States and its allies must take several practical steps:

1. **Adopt a Comprehensive View of the Threat:** Allies in both Europe and the Indo-Pacific must develop a shared understanding of the challenges posed by Russia and China, recognizing that these threats are interconnected. Closer cooperation and coordination are necessary to address adversaries that increasingly integrate nuclear weapons into their strategies.
2. **Leverage Alliances as Essential Multipliers:** U.S. alliances provide critical capabilities and amplify U.S. strength. With finite resources, the United States cannot manage simultaneous conflicts with two nuclear peers without robust allied support. Allies must be prepared to compensate when U.S. forces are redirected to other regions.
3. **Assess and Rebalance Collective Capabilities:** The United States and its allies should identify capability gaps and determine where allies can contribute more effectively, moving beyond simple metrics like defense spending. A clear division of labor must be established, specifying which countries will provide which forces and capabilities.

This includes addressing the lack of limited nuclear response options and considering the potential for allies such as the UK or France to provide additional systems in Europe, or for Indo-Pacific allies to bolster regional deterrence.

4. **Prioritize Procurement and Capability Development:** Procurement decisions must be made now, given the long lead times required. Priorities should focus on both conventional and emerging domains such as cyber, space, and missile defense. By leveraging allied capabilities, the United States can free up resources for contingencies in other regions and ensure that investments are concentrated on the most strategically significant areas.

5. **Enhance Interoperability and Joint Planning:** U.S. force structure planning must account for allied contributions, with clear roles and missions defined in advance. Interoperability across all domains—cyber, space, conventional, and nuclear—is essential for effective deterrence. This requires joint training, co-production agreements, a stronger defense industrial base, and realistic exercises to ensure seamless allied operations in crisis or conflict.

6. **Strengthen Communication and Signaling:** A robust and consistent communication strategy is necessary to avoid contradictions that could undermine deterrence. Strategic communications should be global in scope, reflecting the interdependencies among theaters, and should incorporate lessons learned from recent conflicts and military exercises.

The stakes could not be higher. If the United States fails to modernize and rebalance its extended nuclear deterrence strategy for a multipolar world, the consequences will reverberate far beyond policy circles. Alliance cohesion may weaken, the risk of nuclear proliferation could rise, and the fragile architecture of international stability may begin to unravel. Delaying these necessary steps is not just a matter of strategic oversight—it is an invitation for risk: deterrence could fail, alliances could fracture, and the United States and its partners could find themselves dangerously unprepared when the next crisis or conflict erupts. In a world where the margin for error is shrinking, adaptation is not optional. Only by embracing a new division of labor among allies, investing in interoperability and capability development, and bolstering strategic communications can the United States hope to meet the challenges in the decade ahead.

Guest Essay

Guest Essay from Peter Huessy: More on UN National Sovereignty and the US National Security Strategy

Protecting our National Sovereignty by Peter Huessy, President of Geostrategic Analysis

A key thesis of the recently published National Security Strategy of the United States is that this country should get down to serious business in this Western Hemisphere especially about our borders. The important message: protect and restore our sovereignty, with control over immigration being at the top of the list along with stopping trafficking and drug dealing.

Here a new essay by Andrew Sullivan, a Never Trumper subscriber, and regular writer for the New Yorker and National Public Radio, argues that the administration is losing ground among previous supporters due to the too aggressive enforcement of immigration law.

Sullivan appears to support stopping illegal aliens at the border but not those working inside the country. President Obama deported 250,000 annually but these were stopped at the border and never came into contact with most working Americans. That is the kind of law enforcement Sullivan seems to like.

Those in the interior were deported 150,000 a year under Mr. Obama and they were arrested by ICE after an immigration judge issued an order of deportation.

What is different today?

Well, the same judges are issuing the same deportation orders. Except open border enthusiasts are going outside the immigration court system and judge shopping to stop the regular enforcement of immigration law.

The success of the administration is no one is trying to get across the border—which means at least 250,000 of our potential “neighbors” are annually not getting into the US. Same result as under Mr. Obama.

Why then does enforcing immigration law qualify as fascist? Which is what some never Trumplers and their friendly judges have described even though it is all sound legal law enforcement.

True, the US government is now deporting 600,000 illegal aliens a year but almost entirely from the interior. Some of these people are criminals, some have been unlawfully working in the country, and some are relying (illegally) on our social welfare programs. And some, including those here legally are apparently fraudulently ripping us of for literally billions annually.

So, what is it progressives and apparently some previous Trump supporters object to?

Well, progressives call these illegal aliens “our neighbors,” although the term previously used was “undocumented.” Why? In at least the 1970’s, supporters of open border immigration wanted to soften the crimes these illegal aliens committed—unlawfully entering the country, working here illegally, stealing someone’s identity, the fraudulent use of a social security number; and often evading income taxes. (Why else offer them amnesty that requires paying back taxes?)

But all these crimes are somehow to be overlooked because these people do landscape, agricultural or household chores and are our “neighbors.” Some argue that since LEGAL immigrants commit criminal acts at a rate less than that of native Americans, we somehow should be allowed to lump all legal AND illegal immigrants together and ignore the huge number of illegal aliens sitting in various prisons and jails around the country!! No one can ignore that ICE finds and arrests thousands of illegal aliens guilty of violent crimes every week.

Even those illegal aliens “working” in the country are in professions where 95% of the jobs are held by American citizens or legitimate guest workers, also “our neighbors. Ignored is the fact that some of these neighbors are also killers— one arrested 70 times who knifed a young Ukraine woman legal immigrant. And indeed, the illegal alien shooters, rapists, traffickers and killers are also “our neighbors.” Do they get to stay in America too?

But if arrested by an ICE officer, which the ICE officer has been sworn to do, opponents of ICE contend that is somehow beyond the pale. And because the “optics” make folks uncomfortable—like academic microaggressions—interfering with such law enforcement, which itself is against the law, is universally condoned or even undertaken by members of the Democratic party, blurring completely the distinction between lawful immigrants—which this President in 5 years in office has brought in over 5 million—vs those not here lawfully, particularly career criminals and cartel members attracted to the sanctuary status they enjoy in major US cities and some key states.

And “Oh Sacre bleu”, Mr. Sullivan is mad the ICE officers are masked! Why is this the case? Because the criminal cartels are offering bounties to have them identified and killed.

At issue is a simple issue. Should immigration law be enforced elsewhere than at the border? And should ICE agents publish their own names and addresses to facilitate the cartels and criminals and rioters to harm them and their families? And should their vans be gayly decorated so they can be easily rammed and the agents inside harmed or killed?

What is the difference between those impeding the work of ICE and the activities of those seeking to sway the judiciary—such as the thug who threatened to kill Judge Kavanaugh following Senator Schumer threatening the judge with “you won’t know what hit you.”

Getting serious about our sovereignty means going beyond just border enforcement. Taking down sex traffickers of children and drugs is not pretty business. That is why the administration is taking such tough measures to take Venezuela out of that business, (which Sullivan opposes).

Deliberate interference with law enforcement is a serious crime. But the fiction that only the border need to be defended is simply a political fairy tale that our drive-by media, academia and entertainment community have subscribed to for the last half century.

Then as early as 1975 illegal immigration was largely dismissed as just a few “undocumented workers” crossing the Rio Grande. Or some seasonal fruit pickers occasionally working in America. All part of the normal demographic landscape.

But then as the former Attorney General told Congress at least 8.5 million additional unvetted migrants were let into the country between 2021-4, including an estimated ten thousand Chinese men of military age according to Brian Kennedy, the founder of the Committee on the Present Danger-China.

Getting rid of potential terrorists and cartel gangs requires internal law enforcement, not just border patrols. That is the job of ICE. We have to stop pretending such law enforcement is mean spirited and that American sovereignty means little to the American people, because after all we are all neighbors.

Mr. Huessy is President of Geostrategic Analysis of Potomac, Maryland

Always Blame America First—And Still They Are Wrong

In the 18th of December Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Dec. 18 | Joe Cirincione argues four US presidents failed to stop North Korea's nuclear buildup. Here is a key argument: *Washington's obsession with disarming North Korea*. It does go back and examine past US policies toward North Korea. His book shows how, in the span of four US administrations, North Korea went from being a tiny, impoverished nation that in the early 2000s lacked both nuclear weapons and missiles that could travel much beyond its borders, to now a country with dozens of nuclear warheads and a growing arsenal of long-range ballistic missiles that can deliver them to any part of the United States. [Editor's Note: What Cirincione does not tell the reader is that for at least a decade prior to the North securing a nuclear weapon, he casually dismissed the missile threat from North Korea, claiming the North had only obsolete and old "Scuds" from the former Soviet Union and were not an existing or projected threat to the United States, and NO American missile defense need be deployed in response.]

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

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Contact: PHuessy@ThinkDeterrence.com

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