

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 November 17, 2025, Prepared by Peter Huessy, President of Geostrategic Analysis and Senior Fellow, National Institute of Deterrence Studies

Summary

Significant report from the Congressional China Commission re serious and growing nuclear threat from China; Japan and US engage in cooperative military exercises; the US Triad gets significant investments in the new funding bill passed by Congress; NIDS unveils a major new nuclear deterrent study; review of upcoming December NIDS events including assessment of the movie Dynamite; a new Hudson Institute study on the US defense industrial base is must reading; China is expanding its nuclear test site while Iran rejects IAEA inspection requirements of its nuclear sites; Golden Dome architecture outline is completed; Airbus President proposes Europe develop theater nuclear weapons; Tom Ramos provides us with an historical view of nuclear testing. The EAR's essay on the movie Dynamite is included as well as Bill Gert's assessment of the new Congressional Commission report on China, followed by an assessment of China's nuclear force upgrades by the Wash Post; and an essay explaining that Golden Dome is exactly what is needed given the dangers laid out by the movie Dynamite. Finally, in graph form is an illustration of the inflation from 2020-2025. And as usual, material highlighted in red is key to the material in this weekly report. Also, I want to thank Bob Lindseth's Morning Nuke and the wonderful people at Strategic Command for their daily strategic news clips from which comes much of this material.

Quotes of the Week

Senator John Kennedy: The water in DC is not going to clear up until you get the pigs out of the creek."

Rep. Mike Turner (R-OH): "China has dramatically expanded and modernized its nuclear arsenal beyond deterrence missions. This should not be ignored."

David Rubin: ICBMS - These babies are designed to keep rogue regimes and saber-rattling strongmen up at night, clutching their pillows.

David Rubin: Let's not forget the bigger picture here. While China is pumping billions into hypersonic missiles and Russia is doing its best Dr. Evil impersonation with nuclear threats, America can't afford to be caught with its pants down.

Minuteman II: "World-wide delivery in 30 minutes or less:" Message in a MMII launch control facility, linked here in a 2022 video: [The Minuteman America's Last Line of Nuclear Defense](#)

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent: "[Thursday's sanction] action continues Treasury's campaign to cut off funding for the Iranian regime's development of nuclear weapons and support of terrorist proxies. Disrupting the Iranian regime's revenue is critical to helping curb its nuclear ambitions."

Events Update

12/5/2025 - [Dr. Adam Lowther and Peter Huessy - Hollywood vs. Reality: Nuclear Deterrence in the Age of "Dynamite" and "Oppenheimer"](#)

12/12/25 - [Dr. James Petrosky, Curtis McGiffin, and Kirk Fansher: "Peace Through Strength: Renewing America's Nuclear Deterrent a Proposed Nuclear Posture Review For 2026"](#)

12/19/25 - Dave Hoagland - [Strategic Perspective on Nuclear Modernization](#)

You can register for all of our virtual and in-person events at [Events - National Institute for Deterrence Studies](#). If you can't make it to an event, our podcasts are available here: [NIDS Podcast Network - National Institute for Deterrence Studies](#).

Former NNSA Official Dr. Don Cook has updated/edited his remarks at our NIDS nuclear deterrent seminar. It is here:



Updated Congressional Developments of Strategic Significance

Congressional report warns Beijing's rapid buildup could erode America's deterrence edge in Indo-Pacific

China's military buildup has reached what a new congressional report calls a "war footing," with hundreds of new missile silos and expanding nuclear capabilities that could erode America's long-standing deterrence edge in the Indo-Pacific. China has built roughly 350 new intercontinental missile silos and expanded its nuclear warhead stockpile by 20% in the past year, part of a sweeping military expansion that the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission says could strain U.S. readiness to counter Chinese aggression.

The commission's 2025 annual report to Congress says Beijing's rapid nuclear buildup, combined with new artificial intelligence-driven warfare systems, is transforming the People's Liberation Army into a force "capable of fighting and winning a war against the United States" — even without matching U.S. nuclear numbers.

According to the report, China has unveiled an AI-powered electronic warfare system capable of detecting and suppressing U.S. radar signals as far as Guam, the Marshall Islands and Alaska, and is now deploying 6G-based platforms across its armed forces. **The report says China unveiled a new 6G-based electronic warfare platform in mid-2025, capable of coordinating radar jamming and signal interception across long distances. The system reportedly uses high-speed data links and artificial intelligence to synchronize attacks on U.S. and allied radar networks — a preview of what Beijing calls "intelligentized warfare."**

At a military parade in Beijing this September, China for the first time displayed a full nuclear triad — missiles launchable from land, air and sea. The commission warns these advances, paired with China's political crackdown and economic leverage, could allow Beijing to act "quickly and decisively in a crisis," shortening the time the U.S. and its allies would have to respond to aggression. **The commission is urging Congress to require the Pentagon to conduct a full audit of U.S. readiness to defend Taiwan, warning that Washington may no longer meet its legal obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act.** The report calls for a classified and unclassified assessment of whether U.S. forces could "resist any resort to force or coercion" by China — even in a scenario where the United States is also facing simultaneous aggression from Russia, Iran or North Korea.

A war over Taiwan, the commission cautions, could wipe out up to 10% of global GDP — a shock on par with the 2008 financial crisis — and carry a "cataclysmic" risk of nuclear escalation and wider conflict in the Indo-Pacific. China now holds around 600 nuclear warheads. The Pentagon has assessed China is aiming to own 1,000 by 2030. **The report further warns that China's economic coercion is compounding the threat, pointing to Beijing's dominance in foundational semiconductors, rare earth minerals, and printed circuit boards. It says these dependencies could leave the United States "reliant on its rival for the backbone of its modern economy and military."**

Among 28 recommendations, the commission calls for Congress to bar Chinese-made components from U.S. power grids, create a unified economic statecraft agency to enforce export controls, and reaffirm diplomatic backing for Taiwan — including its partnership with the Vatican, one of Taiwan's few remaining formal allies that Beijing has sought to isolate through church diplomacy. **"China's rapid military and economic mobilization shortens U.S. warning timelines," the report concludes, warning that without a coordinated response, America's deterrence posture "risks falling short" against Beijing's expanding capabilities.**

ICBM and Bomber News

From press sources with edits from the ICBM Ear:

The Air Force extra funding for its new strategic bomber and intercontinental ballistic missile programs, with hundreds of millions of dollars added to the government shutdown deal. The money will go to construction projects supporting the [B-21 Raider](#) and [Sentinel ICBM](#), both of which are high priorities for the Air Force amid efforts to modernize its platforms capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Signed by President Donald Trump last Wednesday, the spending package provides the Air Force with \$3.9 billion for [military construction projects](#), more than \$200 million above the service's budget request for fiscal year 2026.

Roughly \$850 million is designated for infrastructure supporting the B-21 and Sentinel. Air Force bases like Ellsworth, Whiteman, and Dyess — which will house the B-21 for training and main operations — received money to build flight simulators, specialized hangars, mission planning facilities, a weapons release storage system, and a radio-frequency hangar. The [B-21 bomber](#) will be delivered first to Ellsworth once operational. It's the successor

to the B-2 Spirit, and its developer, Northrop Grumman, has said that the new aircraft will feature next-generation software, weapons, and stealth capabilities.

The program has been a success, with flight tests and early procurement remaining on schedule and within budget. The Air Force expects to buy around 100 of the new bombers by the mid-2030s. **The additional funding specifically for B-21 projects at Dyess marks "the largest investment" in the base's history, US House Budget Chairman Jodey Arrington, a Republican representative from Texas, said in a [press release](#).** The funds "will directly support the B-21's arrival and ensure Dyess remains the tip of the spear for America's air arsenal."

The money for Sentinel infrastructure includes \$130 million for a utility corridor at F.E. Warren Air Force Base. Air Force officials have said much of the Sentinel's cost growth has gone toward modernizing infrastructure for launch facilities and constructing new silos. The extra \$850 million goes toward the B-21 and Sentinel programs. The additional money for both Sentinel and B-21 infrastructure comes as Air Force officials continue to emphasize nuclear modernization, as the service operates two legs of the US nuclear triad. The US Navy's new [Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine](#), the Navy's own major modernization effort, is also under construction as an upgrade to submarine-based nuclear weapons.

International Developments of Strategic Importance

The Wall Street Journal: China's rapidly growing nuclear arsenal and Russia's development of next-generation strategic weapons mean that the United States must confront two nuclear peers instead of one, without the industrial and economic edge that Washington held during the Cold War.

Washington Post—citing satellite imagery and expert analysis—reports that China is "rapidly expanding" its nuclear test site at Lop Nur by carving new tunnels, hollowing out explosive chambers, and building support facilities in ways that researchers say suggest preparations for nuclear testing.

Japanese government confirmed that Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is considering reviewing Tokyo's long-standing non-nuclear weapons principles, notably the prohibition on allowing those weapons to be brought into Japan because the ban is viewed as undercutting the effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

Japan Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. Armed Forces conducted a bilateral exercise [that included a B-1 bomber] to reaffirm the strong, collective cooperation between Japan and the U.S. demonstrating unwavering commitment to defense and deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.

The PLA Southern Theater Command announced on Sunday that it had conducted a bomber formation patrol in the South China Sea amid the Philippines' so-called 'joint patrols' with external forces.

Iranian scientists and nuclear experts made a second covert visit to Russia last year, in what Washington claims has been an effort to obtain sensitive technologies with potential nuclear weapons applications.

Ukraine's ATACMS strike in Russia signals major shift in U.S. policy. After a long hiatus, Ukraine says it used ATACMS missiles to strike inside Russia.

Russian and Chinese officials held "in-depth" discussions in Moscow this week on missile defense and strategic stability and agreed to strengthen cooperation in those areas

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Thursday that Tehran **was cancelling the agreement** it signed in September allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency to resume inspections at Iran's nuclear sites,

Speaking at the Berlin Security Conference, **Airbus Chairman René Obermann** said that European nations should jointly develop tactical nuclear weapons to more effectively deter Russia's expanding arsenal of those weapons. Europe's current posture leaves a dangerous gap below the strategic threshold, pointing to what he described as **"500-plus tactical nuclear warheads" deployed by Russia along NATO's eastern flank and in Belarus.** The Kremlin complained wondering why the Airbus chairman "was making provocative statements about nuclear weapons."

Administration Developments of Strategic Importance

US successfully flight tests the B61-12 <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/us/us-confirms-successful-stockpile-flight-tests-of-b61-12-nuclear-gravity-bomb20251116100032/>

Congrats to General Dynamics Electric Boat that received a nearly \$2.3 billion Navy award for advance procurement and advance construction to build five Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines.

The government funding agreement included nearly \$1 billion extra for US Air Force projects including funds for construction related to the B-21 Raider bomber and Sentinel ICBM.

The Pentagon has completed the baseline architecture for the Golden Dome system and is shifting its focus to reviewing an implementation plan, marking a key milestone for one of the most ambitious missile defense efforts in decades.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Dale White has been nominated for a fourth star in the newly created role of direct reporting portfolio manager (DRPM) for Critical Major Weapons Systems, which will oversee programs including the LGM-35A Sentinel and Minuteman III ICBM systems, and the B-21 Raider.

Congrats to GD as the bow of the future USS District of Columbia (SSBN-826) left Newport News Shipbuilding this week and is en route to General Dynamics Electric Boat, where the submarine will be assembled and tested.

Canadian and U.S. NORAD fighter aircraft during Operation GLOBAL GUARDIAN 26-1 intercepted a simulated threat demonstrated a cooperative and collaborative defense, strengthening our ability to deter shared threats through a layered defense of the U.S. and Canada by linking defense activities abroad.”

New NIDS Study of Critical Importance

NIDS latest: **Peace Through Strength: Renewing America’s Nuclear Deterrent; A Proposed Nuclear Posture Review for 2026.** The paper addresses the urgent need for a U.S. nuclear posture that reflects today’s accelerating threat environment and prepares for the challenges of the next decade. America’s traditional deterrence strategy—developed for a more stable era—has reached its limits amid intensifying great-power competition, expanding nuclear arsenals, and disruptive technological shifts.

This roadmap provides practical steps to restore credibility, resilience, and escalation control in an era of peer nuclear competition. It underscores that nuclear deterrence offers the highest strategic leverage at the lowest long-term cost—an indispensable investment for U.S. security and global stability.

Here is a link to our page which houses the paper: [Research Insights - National Institute for Deterrence Studies](#)

New Hudson Institute Study on the US Industrial Base

<https://www.hudson.org/defense-strategy/ending-self-imposed-scarcity-exploiting-americas-commercial-strengths-mobilize-bryan-clark-dan-patt-nadia-schadlow>

The United States military’s dominance over potential adversaries, a fixture of the international security environment since the Cold War, is coming to a predictable end. Exploiting technology proliferation and geographic advantages, **China, Russia, and Iran-backed proxies are all testing US forces from Europe to the Western Pacific. These rivals are also becoming more creative. Rather than relying on mass alone, they are combining software, modular hardware architectures, off-the-shelf microelectronics, and commercial surveillance services to evolve effective weapons** and ersatz reconnaissance-strike complexes.

These trends suggest US forces will need a combination of adaptability and scale to succeed in future conflicts. **But in its weapons designs, the US Department of Defense (DoD) has moved in the opposite direction. During the three decades since the Cold War, the US military has developed and built highly integrated, monolithic weapons to which it cannot easily introduce new features or subsystems. Incorporating dozens of specialized components, the DoD’s bespoke munitions may be class-leading but cannot take advantage of widely available commercial systems or manufacturing methods** that could allow expanding production in wartime.

To Test or Not to Test

In *From Berkeley to Berlin*, by Tom Ramos, Paul Brown, a Livermore physicist, wrote a document in the late 1980s, co-signed by post-Lab director George Miller, that concluded roughly 40% of the warheads we deployed during the three year test moratorium of 1958-61 had fatal flaws that were only discovered once we resumed testing.

From the 1987 report here is an excerpt: "Nuclear testing supports deterrence in four important ways. First, nuclear tests are required to maintain the proper functioning of the stockpile. Second, nuclear tests are needed to modernize the existing stockpile for enhanced safety, security, and effectiveness. The advance of Soviet technologies, most of which are nonnuclear, requires the modernization of U.S. weapon systems to ensure their survivability. Examples of such modernization needs are the mobile small ICBM (SICBM), the longer range Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missile, and the fast, low-flying B-1B bomber; nuclear testing is needed to verify the warheads for these systems. Third, nuclear tests are required to measure the effects of a nuclear weapon environment on U.S. weapon systems and on critical command, control, and communications systems. Finally, nuclear tests make it possible to identify future weapon concepts for U.S. decision-makers and to stay abreast of potential Soviet nuclear weapon developments, thus avoiding technological surprise."

More from the Abolition Corner and the creator and writer of the movie *Dynamite*. Interviewed by the *Washington Post*

Bigelow: I think that's a very good point. I think it could be. It's unfathomable to me that we're not in a process of denuclearizing the world. And obviously it has to be a global embrace of that concept and effort, but it just doesn't seem to be.

Bigelow: its degree of accuracy and authenticity and credibility is extremely heightened...

Oppenheim: I think there was a perception with the end of the Cold War that somehow the threat had diminished. And in reality, we all know now that the world has only grown more complicated, volatile and risky. And now we've seen in a weird way in the last couple of weeks even, it's sort of being pushed back front and center.

Oppenheimer: Because when we began our research process, one of the things that we found most terrifying was how quickly this would unfold. That would be less than 30 minutes from that side of the world. If a Russian sub were to ever launch off our Atlantic coast, it could be 10 to 12 minutes....And then the last telling is in some ways, the most important telling, which is the president of the United States, who in our country **is a nuclear monarch and has sole authority** to make this decision.

Oppenheimer: And we spoke to a ton of people who work in that field, who study that. And frankly, the testing statistics are publicly available and it is unfortunately the case that those tests have demonstrated a roughly 60 percent accuracy. But, you know, one of the questions that we wanted to open a debate around, and which the Pentagon has now engaged in, is: Is it possible to build an **impenetrable shield**? Is that really the way to keep us safe, or **are there other levers we should be pulling like nonproliferation and denuclearizing?**

Bigelow: This is something that could be very important to know about. And again, trying to move the needle toward reducing the nuclear stockpile. And so, I don't think that agenda has shifted at all. If not, it's perhaps become more important....But there are whole generations that don't understand that there are nuclear weapons out there and nine nuclear countries and only three are members of NATO. And that's a very, very terrifying calculus, in my opinion.

Wash Post: **To bring it back to this moment: President Donald Trump recently announced that he was going to order nuclear testing to resume on equal footing with China and Russia. And then Russia came out and said they're going to begin looking at nuclear testing. How did you receive that news when you heard it?**

Bigelow: Well, it's shocking, surprising.

In some ways it makes the film feel a little even more urgent, like this idea that we were living in a hum and normalization, but this is coming back up again.

Oppenheim: One of the dangers of normalization is that there used to be a taboo around speaking about the use of these weapons. **Even the mere mention or consideration or contemplation of their use used to be off-limits,**

because it was deemed to be escalatory. I think both of us would like to see the world get back to a place where the use of these weapons would be so unthinkable that it's not even theorized about.

Commentary from the ICBM EAR

After the end of the Soviet Union and the Cold War, Hollywood and their friends in academia and progressive think tanks told us that nuclear deterrence was no longer important. But other nuclear related issues were. For example, one concern was loose nukes in the former USSR. These important concerns led to the adoption of Congressional legislation called Nunn Lugar, as well as a very creative program called "Megatons to Megawatts," which took Russian nuclear material and burned it up in US nuclear power plants.

The various nuclear posture reviews such as in 2010 assumed that Russia and China would be cooperative adversaries and for example help the United States and its allies prevent terror organizations from getting nuclear weapons.

They blamed the Bush 43 administration for pushing North Korea to build nuclear weapons, particularly that the Bush 43 administration was too hardline when North Korea disclosed its illegal uranium enrichment program. Even worse, the 2015 JCPOA, which Hollywood embraced, turned out to be a sanctioned pathway for Iran to secure nuclear weapons. Even though the administrations of President Reagan, Bush 41 and 43 secured very significant reductions in nuclear weapons under the INF, START I and the Moscow agreements, bringing US and Russian strategic forces down to around 1700-2200 deployed or allowed warheads, the nuclear dangers now building in the world are becoming a more and more difficult challenge.

Now the Obama administration further reduced that number by roughly an additional 400-500 warheads in the 2010 New START treaty when compared to the Moscow treaty numbers. Taken together, US President's secured agreements that cumulative eliminated some 22,000 Russian and US nuclear warheads over a period of 28 years. Thus, reductions in stockpiles of strategic nuclear weapons have been achieved, but Bigelow and Oppenheim push only for additional stockpile reductions without explaining why such a path would change the nuclear dangers the country faces. One MSN reporter made this point when he explained that it only takes one missile/warhead to incinerate one American city which was the theme of the movie Dynamite.

Missile Defense and Golden Dome: Updates

[How Golden Dome could make nuclear weapons irrelevant - Space News](#)

By: [Marshall H. Kaplan](#) Space News // November 17, 2025

For nearly 80 years, the specter of nuclear war has haunted humankind, shaping foreign policy, military strategy, and international relations. The principle of "**mutually assured destruction**" (**MAD**) has been the cornerstone of global stability since the dawn of the atomic age. Yet, this fragile equilibrium has always depended on one terrifying certainty: No defense is strong enough to reliably stop a determined nuclear attack. That paradigm may soon shift, thanks to the potential development of the program known as the Golden Dome missile defense initiative. Although extremely complex and challenging, it offers the possibility of making nuclear attacks by adversaries technologically and strategically obsolete.

If successful, the United States may, for the first time, be able to credibly defend itself against even the most sophisticated missile salvos. Such a capability could render offensive nuclear arsenals irrelevant. For decades, anti-ballistic missile systems could only hope to intercept a handful of incoming warheads, because the cost and practicality of defending against a large-scale attack were prohibitive. Treaties such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 were signed to cap defenses and maintain MAD.

As offensive missiles evolved, with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles and hypersonics, the gap between offense and defense grew. But, by the late 2010s, new technologies began to change the calculus. Today, the dream of a robust missile shield could be realized with multi-layered defenses, persistent surveillance techniques and networked responses. The Golden Dome is intended to deliver these advancements. It is not surprising that the initial reaction to the Golden Dome concept has been one of skepticism due to its ambitious scope and likely high costs.

Nevertheless, major nuclear powers are scrambling to analyze and evaluate the proposed U.S. shield. When the Golden Dome is eventually deployed, adversaries are likely to respond with a shift in arms technologies, political pressure and alternative non-nuclear strategic weapons. However, as the Golden Dome system matures, assuming it demonstrates robustness against emergent threats, confidence in the shield will grow. Tests, exercises, wargames and real-world events will reveal missile interception rates that were previously thought impossible. If the shield is proven to be effective, strategic thinking will shift from resistance to adoption.

If successful, the Golden Dome concept will mark a significant turning point in history, a moment when the cycle of fear, deterrence and existential threat begins to unwind. Defensive supremacy will force nations to confront the futility of offensive nuclear arsenals. There will certainly be resistance, uncertainty, and transitional risks. Yet, as confidence in robust missile defense grows, the nuclear taboo will hopefully be replaced by a new reality: a world in which security is built through protection, not destruction. True deterrence will replace the fear of MAD. ---
Marshall H. Kaplan, PhD is the CEO of Launchspace Services.

The Nuclear Abolition Trilogy: Bad Ideas for a Dangerous World

by Peter Huessy, Senior Fellow, the National Institute for Deterrence Studies

Dynamite is a new movie about a single nuclear tipped missile attack against the United States. The attacker is not identified. It is not a terrorist group like Al Qaeda. It is not North Korea or Iran. And not the real bad guys, Russia or China.

The United States finds itself in this nuclear pickle because a lot of things we might do in response to or prevent such an attack are not possible. The movie producers rigged the story so the US ends up helpless only knowing one thing: our satellite systems are tracking a missile streaking over the Pacific and headed right for Chicago but we have no idea where the missile came from.

A lot of questions immediately come to mind. Why would an enemy launch just one missile at the United States, knowing that our DSP—Defense Support Program—satellites would immediately know from where the missile was launched? And knowing this, the US Strategic Command in Omaha or the United States Air Force Global Strike Command in Barksdale, Louisiana would be able to retaliate at the command of the American President and take out the bad guys that launched the missile in the first place.

That is called deterrence and in the nuclear deterrent business has operated perfectly for 80 years, preventing any such missile launch against the continental United States. But the movie assumes the satellite system magically fails to work just as the attacking missile is launched so the United States has no idea what country or government or terror group launched the missile in the first place. Implicitly letting the audience know that maybe this might happen in the real world. And thus, deterrence could easily breakdown because some attacker might roll the dice and could assume the US won't retaliate against an enemy the US can't identify because our DSP technology failed to detect the launch in the first place.

The second question would be why doesn't the United States missile defense command shoot down the one missile flying high over the Pacific ocean? The United States has intercepted such ballistic missiles nearly 20 times in demanding tests, including the last four in a row. The US and its allies, especially Ukraine and Israel, have also in the real world, successfully intercepted literally tens of thousands of drones, missiles and rockets with missile defenses and air defenses such as Patriot, THAAD, Aegis, Iron Dome, Arrow and David's Sling. Israel's military alone has knocked down and destroyed some 95% of the nearly 30,000 rockets and missiles launched by Iran, the Houthis, Hamas and Hezbollah at their country in the past two years.

Well, here is where the narrative takes another "rigged direction." The two interceptors launched from our missile defense system in Fort Greely, Alaska don't work—one fails to launch and the other interceptor fails to hit the incoming warhead. Even though the movie writer claims he understood that log range missile defense tests have worked 61% of the time, experts supposedly informed him the tests to date are scripted or rigged and thus not realistic.

But there is another reason for the script making sure the interceptors work. The movie guides published by various nuclear abolition groups in synthesis with the movie folks gave the story away: they all emphasize that while it is rationale to think missile defenses would be the right thing for the United States to deploy—like Golden Dome—such systems are too expensive, won't work, will start an arms race, and will upset the strategic balance between the United States, Russia and China.

Thus, the deterrent American's have built to prevent a nuclear attack on the United States, and the insurance plan of missile defense built to take down an attack should deterrence fail, both fail, and for the first time ever in the real world.

So, what is the United States left with? A sense of dread and helplessness. As the US cannot do anything to stop a nuclear bomb from detonating over the city of Chicago. Depending upon one's assumptions, some millions of people will perish or be casualties.

The movie was written by a veteran Hollywood movie maker, who has received many awards. She and the script writer recommended, when asked, that the United States should work on denuclearization, or the abolition of nuclear weapons. What first steps should be taken are not disclosed, or how to abolish nuclear weapons in even one nation let alone the nine now with such weapons. And during the time in which the abolition process takes place, the movie and its producers make no suggestions how we sustain deterrence in the meantime.

In a not dissimilar scenario, writer Annie Jacobsen in her 2023 book *Nuclear War: A Scenario* calls US nuclear deterrence strategy "mad" and "crazy." In interviews, Jacobsen also appears to recommend abolition. This theme of abolition was also the theme of the July 2023 movie *Oppenheimer*, which was the first of this anti-nuclear trilogy of movie, book and movie.

The *Oppenheimer* movie theme was that some of the top creators [such as Robert Oppenheimer] of the US nuclear bomb under the Manhattan Project subsequently were determined to get rid of all such weapons. But were not allowed to do so because of war mongers like Dr. Edward Teller who are blamed for developing the H-Bomb [1952] and thus starting an arms race that has left the United States in the helpless position as portrayed by *Dynamite*. Not explained and left out of the movie is that the H-Bomb allowed the US to build a nuclear bomb small enough to be placed on a ballistic missile in an invulnerable submarine that while at sea gave the United States an assured second strike capability that ungirded US nuclear deterrent strategy since at least 1958 when the first Polaris submarine went to sea. And prevented nuclear war.

The importance of the Golden Dome - the price of liberty is vigilance
[Washington Times](#)

'A House of Dynamite' shows the price of liberty is vigilance

By: David S. Jonas and Patrick Rhoads for The Washington Times // 19NOV2025

After a very brief run on the big screen, Netflix brought Academy Award-winning director Kathryn Bigelow's "A House of Dynamite" to the small screen on Oct. 24.

The flick drew an audience of more than 20 million in its first week. The plot: A land-based crew in Alaska detects an intercontinental ballistic missile launch after a satellite failure to spot the threat. U.S. Strategic Command determines that the missile is on a trajectory to destroy Chicago, but it cannot attribute the source of the weapon. **Setting aside distracting technical errors and an implausible premise, the movie gets two fundamental facts correct. First, the ticking clock accurately signals the limited time available to the president and the National Military Command Center to make momentous decisions.** One wonders whether the ticking clock was intended as a warning to the previous administration.

The requirements for rapid decision-making may have proved problematic in the Biden administration, which featured an enfeebled president many considered incapable of making choices quickly, as well as a secretary of defense whose whereabouts at one point could not be ascertained for days. **Second, the characters reveal the reality of the "fog of war," the inevitable uncertainties and exigencies that exist in times of crisis, which muddle decision-making. The lesson here is that the nation must be ever vigilant in assuring that all phases of national security, including our response to a scenario such as this, are impeccably planned and executed.**

The predicate for impeccable planning and execution is having competent leaders in place to execute nuclear response plans. The writer and director of the film hint that they share the goal of nuclear abolition. Stepping back from the movie, viewers can likely conclude that the writer's and director's policy intentions are the opposite. **The movie [inadvertently?] presents the case for the Golden Dome missile defense system, a priority of the Trump administration. The dome is ideally suited for identifying and disabling an attack from a small number of incoming missiles, such as the one depicted in the movie.**

If the U.S. were subjected to an attack by a rogue state or an accidental launch by China or Russia, the Golden Dome provides some assurance of avoiding the destruction of, say, Chicago. Moreover, if the world order is unstable now with nuclear weapons, how much more unstable would it be after atomic disarmament? **Just**

imagine South Korea the day after the world allegedly disavowed nuclear weapons. Its citizens know they could wake up any morning being threatened by the dictator on the other side of the 38th parallel, who might reemerge one day as the world's sole nuclear power. This scenario is the opposite of security and stability.

Perhaps counterintuitively, a nuclear-free world is vastly less stable and secure than the imperfect one we now have. Some seek to reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons as the basis for our national security. Unfortunately, as seductive as that sounds, we tried that recently, and it didn't work. At the end of the Cold War, the U.S. paid itself a peace dividend by reducing reliance on its nuclear deterrent. That dividend came at the expense of underinvesting in the nuclear assets deployed by the Department of Defense, as well as the production and laboratory facilities managed by the National Nuclear Security Administration. The investment required to modernize the entire enterprise now approaches \$1 trillion.

Our elected officials now understand "the price of liberty is vigilance," and they have accepted their responsibility to pay the price. In doing so, they echo the majestic words President Kennedy made in his inaugural address. The U.S. will "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty." *David S. Jonas is a partner at Fluett in Tysons, Virginia, and an adjunct professor at Georgetown and George Washington University law schools. Patrick Rhoads leads the nuclear research efforts at the National Strategic Research Institute. These are the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of any organization with which they have been or are now affiliated.*

China Corner

China preps population for conflict with U.S.

[Washington Times](#)

Fighting aggression is global challenge

By: Bill Gertz for THE WASHINGTON TIMES // 19NOV2025

The Chinese Communist Party and its military forces are preparing the entire country for a future war with the United States over Taiwan, the hot spots in the South China Sea or disputed territory near Japan, according to a new report by a congressional China commission.

The 728-page annual report by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission also warns that the U.S. and allied effort to counter Chinese communist expansion and replacement of the U.S.-led democratic system is an urgent problem. "Countering China's aggression is now a truly global challenge," the report said. China's large-scale military modernization advanced significantly and was not affected by extensive purges of key military leaders, the report said. **Over the past year, increases took place in nuclear warhead stockpiles, new amphibious warships, deployment of more advanced stealth fighter jets and greater fielding of drone weapons, the report said.**

The military modernization has strengthened the People's Liberation Army's capabilities for launching an attack on Taiwan, the report states. "China has continued to rapidly advance its capabilities to launch a successful invasion of Taiwan," said the report, noting intensified PLA operations near Taiwan and deployment of new forces for an amphibious attack. **The operations "have made it so that the PLA could pivot from a routine exercise to an actual blockade or invasion with almost no advance warning."** An alarming indicator of a potential conflict with China was disclosed in what the report called a divergence between Chinese and English language propaganda on Taiwan.

Chinese statements sent to international audiences downplayed the prospect of a Taiwan invasion. Contrary to that, **Chinese domestic propaganda has stated that "provocations" by Taiwan could justify military action in the near future. The split "suggests Beijing may be taking initial steps to prepare its people for the possibility of war,"** the report said. "While there is no indication that China is planning an imminent invasion — and Beijing still hopes to pressure Taiwan to surrender without a fight — the United States and its allies and partners can no longer assume that a Taiwan contingency is a distant possibility for which they would have ample time to prepare," the report said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered the PLA to be ready for military action by 2027. In May, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait "could be imminent" and would be devastating for the region and the world.

China also toughened its rhetoric against the U.S. in an official white paper that accused Washington of violating its “right to develop” through tariffs and sanctions and a U.S. alliance system that Beijing said is interfering in China’s internal affairs, the report said. The critical report has been released as President Trump and his administration engage in trade talks with China, aiming to smooth over differences and stabilize ties.

Mr. Trump said on Truth Social this month that his recent meeting with Mr. Xi, whom he called “a friend of mine,” was a victory. China relented on curbing rare earth mineral exports and agreed to resume purchases of U.S. soybeans. “This was a Big Victory for the U.S.A. and, indeed, the World!” he said. “Also, it was a wonderful outcome for China, and the fact that these two Major Powers left the meeting, as it began, with an excellent relationship, and specific plans for future talks and meetings.” **Cast in unusually blunt language, the bipartisan commission report warns that Beijing is systematically expanding its power and influence around the world in seeking global dominance with the goal of replacing the U.S.-led democratic and free market order.**

The study said that if Beijing is successful, “a China-dominated world order would be less stable, less secure, less prosperous and less free.” **“Such an order would be defined by weaponized interdependence, state surveillance and coercive control over global norms,”** the report said. **“It will be incumbent upon the United States to counter Beijing’s bid for hegemony with a positive vision for the future that promotes prosperity, security and freedom at home and around the world.”** To effectively counter the challenge, the United States must use defensive actions and an assertive, proactive strategy to rebuild American industrial strength, promote international rules and form coalitions that will counter Chinese ambitions, the report said.

“Over the past year, China has sought to present itself as a responsible world leader despite engaging in a range of destabilizing activities that have undermined global peace and security,” the report said. On Taiwan, the report said the world is in a crucial phase of Beijing’s long-standing bid to impose sovereignty over the island democracy. Randall Schriver, commission vice chairman and a former Pentagon and State Department official, said the danger of a Chinese attack on Taiwan is increasing. **Mr. Schriver said Mr. Xi has declared that China’s “great rejuvenation” must be completed by 2049 and that annexing Taiwan is a key element.**

On 2027, the date given to the PLA to be ready to attack, Mr. Schriver said China’s goal is “more a statement of capability than an actual go date.” The date does not indicate that the PLA will carry out an invasion or blockade, with a blockade being launched without warning, he said. “On the question about an attack and warning time, we’re losing warning time,” said Mr. Schriver, noting that the commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Adm. Samuel Paparo, has described PLA activities around Taiwan as appearing “not so much like exercising as it does rehearsal.” “I think what he means by that is these aren’t just moves to exert pressure and have presence to make a point,” Mr. Schriver told reporters at a press conference.

“They’re actually rehearsing certain aspects of amphibious invasion, communication links, logistics support, etc., so that all decreases warning time significantly if they choose to take the step of going from coercion to actual attack.” China is also engaged in provocative military, economic and influence operations short of war against Taiwan, the Philippines in the South China Sea and against Japan near the Senkaku Islands, the report said. Beyond Taiwan, the report stated that China is bolstering military forces for combat in all domains of warfare in preparation to defeat “strong enemies” — code for the United States, the report said.

One key area of enhanced warfighting highlighted in the report is the PLA’s rapid expansion of space warfare capabilities that could be used against American forces in the Indo-Pacific through satellite attacks. “Beijing’s investment in counterspace systems — including direct-ascent anti-satellite weapons and co-orbital interference platforms — illustrates its strategy of blinding and disorienting U.S. forces in the opening phase of a conflict,” the report said. The PLA is using significant resources to develop technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing for use by China’s military and intelligence services.

Globally, China is deepening cooperation with Russia, Iran and North Korea, which has allowed “pariah economies” to survive international economic restrictions, the report said. The cooperation is undermining U.S. statecraft and providing China with a live test bed for sanctions evasion and wartime logistics, the report said. **Working with rogue states also provides China with a network of supporters in a military crisis. The support could include technology transfer, diversionary regional actions, economic and energy lifelines, and undermining U.S. and allied deterrence,** the report said. The report includes extensive new details on the PLA’s forces and capabilities, which are rapidly gaining strength and reach.

“We’re very clear-eyed about China’s growing capabilities,” Mr. Schriver said. “They’re advancing military capabilities very rapidly, including the introduction of new capabilities such as self-propelled landing barges, the world’s largest amphibious ship and hypersonic missiles that could target U.S. forward deployed forces,” he

said. Inside China, the report states that despite economic problems, China stepped up a multiyear anti-corruption campaign that is a cover for CCP efforts to quash internal dissent and crack down on religious institutions that the government says are promoting separatism and undermining party rule.

The CCP is using what it regards as the current “turbulent” international environment to justify greater repression and control and to enforce “absolute political loyalty” for the 93 million members of the ruling party, the report said. To support that goal, spending on domestic security and controls has increased sharply and greater numbers of officials and military leaders were purged over perceived insufficient loyalty, the report said. “Considered in the aggregate, these actions reflect Beijing’s continued rapid preparations for the possibility of conflict and its systematic efforts to erode U.S. deterrence across the military, economic, technological, cyber, and diplomatic domains,” the report said.

China also has been “weaponizing” control of supply chains to advance CCP strategic interests, said the report, noting intensified controls in the past five years. “China has already deployed export controls on critical minerals as a coercive tool, including to seek policy concessions in trade negotiations with the United States and to punish other countries,” said the report, noting critical minerals are among several sectors where the U.S. is reliant on Chinese sources.

What to know about China’s newly modernized nuclear arsenal [China nuclear arsenal expands rapidly, concerning U.S. - The Washington Post](#)

China has expanded and modernized its nuclear arsenal at an astounding rate — and has refused to discuss arms control unless the U.S. agrees to parity.

By: [Christian Shepherd](#) for the WaPo // Yesterday at 5:00 a.m. EST

China rebuffed President Donald Trump’s proposal for nuclear arms control talks as “unreasonable,” even as Beijing has more than doubled the size of its arsenal, unveiled an expansive array of nuclear-capable missiles and laid the groundwork for new nuclear tests this decade.

China has a stockpile of about 600 nuclear warheads — a small fraction of the number held by the United States or Russia, which have 3,700 and 4,300, respectively, [according](#) to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, a Swedish think tank. But, [since 2020, the Chinese military has expanded and modernized its arsenal far faster than any other nuclear power, and its buildup has become a serious challenge to post-Cold War efforts to prevent another arms race, analysts say.](#) Beijing’s unwillingness to engage with Washington about its nuclear buildup remains a point of significant disagreement in U.S.-China relations, even after [Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping eased trade tensions with a truce](#) in South Korea last month.

China has expanded and modernized its nuclear arsenal at an astounding rate. Here's what you need to know about its nuclear weapons program.

How fast is China’s nuclear arsenal growing?

The exact size of China’s nuclear arsenal is one of the Chinese military’s most closely guarded secrets, but independent experts and U.S. officials agree that it has ballooned in the past five years. After the country’s [last confirmed nuclear test](#) in 1996, outside estimates put its stockpile of warheads between 200 and 300. In its annual report on the Chinese military, the Pentagon estimated in 2020 it was in the “low 200s.” But that number has increased dramatically since then. By the end of last year, [the same report estimated China had more than 600 warheads](#), with the potential to reach to 1,000 by 2030.

[Since 2020, China has also dramatically expanded its main nuclear testing site in the country’s remote northwest by adding buildings, electrical power lines and shafts drilled deep into the ground. Experts say those underground chambers could be used to conduct nuclear tests that would be difficult to detect or for lower-level tests that assess safety and reliability of weapons without causing an explosion.](#) The world was alerted to this paradigm shift in China’s nuclear weapons program in 2021, when analysts spotted vast fields of missile silos being constructed in remote parts of northwest China.

By last year, the country had some 350 silos — nearly as many as the United States. Silos are underground vertical shafts of reinforced concrete and steel that are used to store and launch ballistic missiles. The silo fields were just the first of several signs that Beijing was developing new ways to potentially fire nuclear warheads as far

as the continental U.S. and to strike American bases in Asia with smaller — but still powerful — low-yield nuclear weapons.

Traditionally, almost all China's operational nuclear weapons were loaded onto intercontinental ballistic missiles mounted on the back of trucks. They could be driven around the country in unpredictable patterns to avoid being taken out by a preemptive strike. China is now openly showing that it is developing a greater range of options — including missiles that can be launched from silos, dropped from long-range bombers and fired from submarines. A grand military parade in Beijing in September was the first time [China displayed its ambitions to operate a full nuclear triad](#).

At the parade, China also unveiled three nuclear-capable land-based missiles, including a mysterious truck-launched intercontinental ballistic missile, the DF-61, that appeared to be an improvement on existing missiles capable of hitting the continental U.S. Chinese [experts](#) claimed that a liquid-fueled missile paraded through Beijing was capable of hitting anywhere on Earth and can target multiple locations simultaneously using a combination of nuclear, conventional or decoy warheads — a technology that is harder for U.S. missile-defense systems to intercept.

China's military buildup — whether conventional or nuclear — is all about measuring up to the U.S. and making sure Washington has no interest in using force against China, said Victor Gao, vice president of the Center for China and Globalization, a Beijing-based think tank. "I think, increasingly," he said, "Washington gets the message."

What do we know about Beijing's motives?

Chinese officials have not explained — or even acknowledged — that they have apparently changed their policy of maintaining the minimum number of nuclear weapons required to deter adversaries from attack. They have also not denied the buildup. Beijing still says it has a policy not to use nuclear weapons unless it is attacked first. But [Chinese officials have increasingly talked about the need for a stronger "strategic counterbalance" — a phrase that probably means they see more formidable nuclear weapons as necessary to tip the balance of global power toward Beijing](#).

In March 2021, Xi call for China to "accelerate the construction of an advanced strategic deterrence" as part of sweeping upgrades to the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force, which manages the country's nuclear arsenal. Xi may believe that having more nukes will help him achieve "unification" with Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy that Beijing claims as its territory, analysts say. Chinese leader Xi Jinping inspects troops during a military parade in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in September. (Greg Baker/AFP/Getty Images)

[Gen. Anthony J. Cotton](#), commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, [told Congress in March that China's investment in additional land, sea and air-based launch systems for nuclear warheads was part of the Chinese military's preparations for a war over Taiwan](#). U.S. intelligence and military officials have said that Xi has instructed the PLA to be ready to seize Taiwan by 2027, although they add that the timeline does not mean he will order an invasion that year.

What are the prospects of arms-control talks?

Trump's trade truce with Xi was overshadowed by the U.S. leader's decision, on the morning of talks, to direct the Pentagon to begin testing nuclear weapons "on an equal basis" with China and Russia. Trump followed up in a speech in Miami last week by saying that his administration may be "working on a plan to denuclearize" China, Russia and the U.S. The proposal was met with a sharp rebuttal from Beijing. ["China's nuclear forces are not on the same scale as those of the U.S. and Russia," Mao Ning, a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry, said when asked about the prospect of talks last week. "It would be unfair, unreasonable and impractical to require China to join," she said.](#)

This is not the first time Trump has attempted to enter negotiations with Beijing about its nuclear weapons buildup. In his first term, the administration said it would [invite China to discuss](#) changes to the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, a pact between Russia and the United States that is set to expire in February. No such talks were ever publicly confirmed. The Biden administration also attempted to engage China on arms control but talks stalled after reaching an [agreement with Xi](#) that humans — not artificial intelligence — should decide whether to use nuclear weapons.

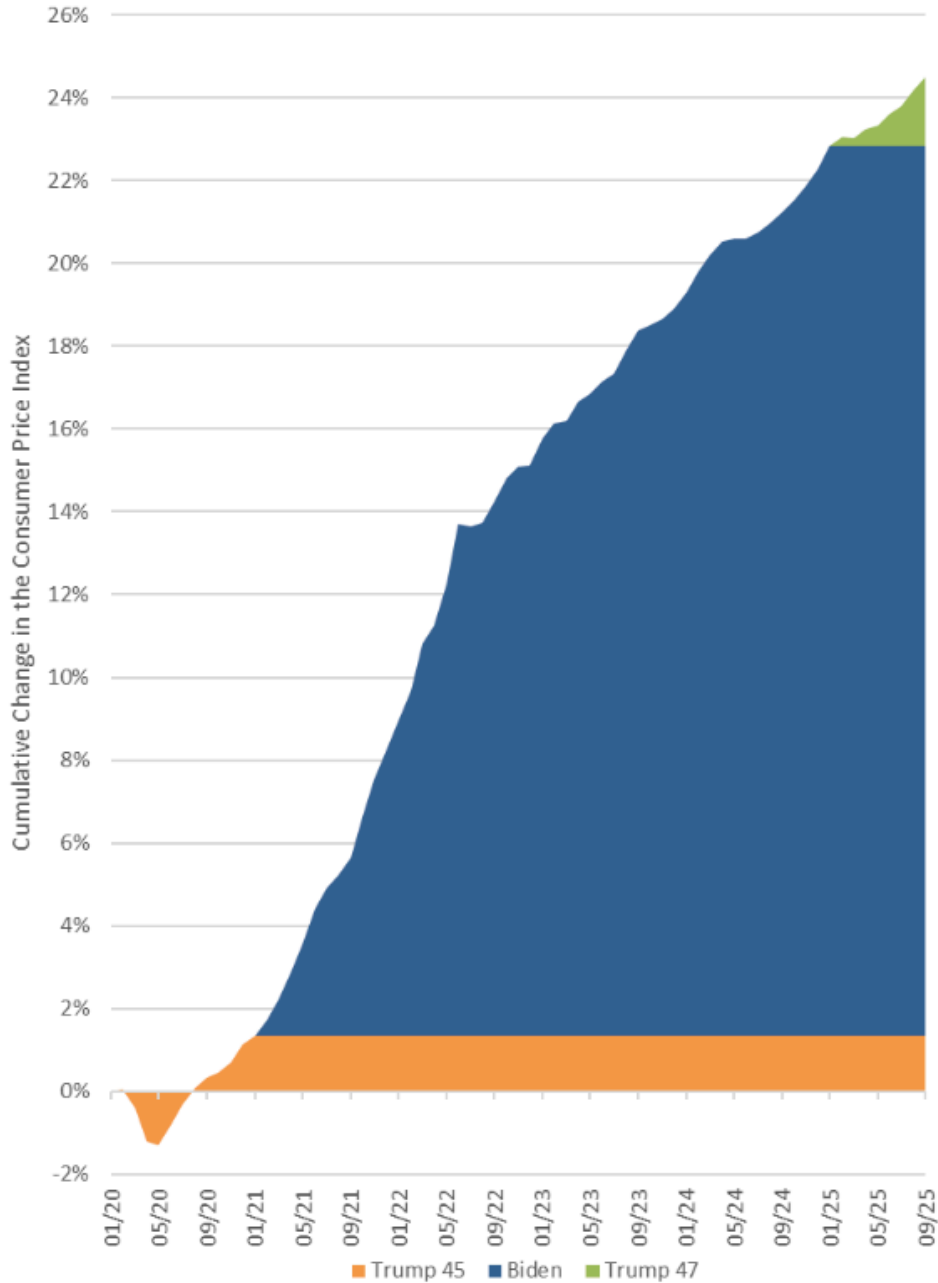
[China has previously pushed for the U.S. to adopt a no-first-use policy as a precondition for progress on talks. The Pentagon declined because that would undercut the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence for European allies](#), said Joseph Rodgers, a specialist on nuclear nonproliferation at the Center for Strategic and International

Studies, a Washington think tank. According to Gao, China's position is that the U.S. must show sincerity by either reducing its number of nuclear warheads to the same as China's or by allowing Beijing to expand its to stockpile to parity.

Even with recent advances, China is still far from a nuclear peer with the U.S., said Eliana Johns, a senior research associate at the Federation of American Scientists, a Washington think tank. "China's air-launched and sea-launched nuclear capabilities are nowhere near the size and sophistication of Russia's or the United States'," she said

Economic Corner

Inflation News: From Stephen Moore, Inflation from 2020-2025



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

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

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