

Weekly ICBM EAR Report



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

Prepared by Peter Huessy

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ICBM EAR Week of January 12, 2026, Prepared by Peter Huessy, President of Geostrategic Analysis and Senior Fellow at the National Institute for Deterrence Studies

Summary

We start with our quotes and commentary of the Week; the ICBM force gets a new helicopter; international news is next; administration actions; congressional updates; a SLCM-N update; Andrew Krepinevich has a very long study about future conflict scenarios with China and the US; the struggle to topple Iran; Woke stuff; Carnegie says China stops Putin from Nuking Ukraine; new House proposal to cut debt from 89% to 56% of US GDP; Kork says US is spurring a new arms race—the EAR publishes a response; shipbuilding news; what is the Russian nature of war; Robert Obrien and Admiral Charles Richard looks at he role of the private sector in preserving nuclear deterrence; and finally wisdom from Hudson folks.

Quotes and Commentary of the Week

Robert O'Brien and Admiral Charles Richard: American innovation excels when the government defines strategic imperatives, and industry mobilizes to meet them. The Trump administration should partner with the private sector to build an advanced radiation testing facility to complement the nuclear modernization mission and compete with China and Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov: Moscow has not yet received a response from Washington regarding President Vladimir Putin's proposal to extend the provisions of New START for a year.

Russia [on Thursday]: NATO talk of Moscow and Beijing being a threat to Greenland is a myth to create hysteria," according to a post from the Straits Times.

Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE): "Great to moderate the Air and Space Forces Caucus roundtable with [Secretary of the Air Force Troy E. Meink]. The SECAF reinforced that the @usairforce would execute the funds authorized for 2 Compass Calls and agreed on the vital role of the Looking Glass mission in projecting 'Peace through Strength.'"

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi: Iran is "not looking for war, but we are prepared for war" while reiterating "The country is also ready to negotiate with Washington."

President Trump: "Iran is looking at FREEDOM, perhaps like never before. The USA stands ready to help."

NNSA Administrator Brandon Williams: "Deputy Administrator Pappano and I met Senate leaders on Capitol Hill. We showcased NNSA's work to modernize our nuclear deterrent and deliver for the American people."

Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE): "Our ICBMs are 50 years old. We're still flying some B-52s built before I was born. At around 3% of GDP, defense spending is historically low and inadequate. A steady minimum of at least 4% of GDP is needed to modernize, deter China, and support our service members." [Bacon is a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee.]

President Trump: 'Iranian protester will no longer be sentenced to death...Likewise others.' This is good news. Hopefully, it will continue!"

President Trump: "Effective immediately, any Country doing business with the Islamic Republic of Iran will pay a Tariff of 25% on any and all business being done with the United States of America."

ICBM Top News of the Week

And the 341st Missile Wing announced that two MH-139A Grey Wolf helicopters assigned to the 40th Helicopter Squadron conducted their first operational Minuteman III ICBM convoy last week, a move the unit said marked “an important milestone in the modernization of Air Force Global Strike Command’s nuclear security operations.”

International Developments of Note

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi held a meeting at the Pentagon, during which they pledged to bolster the alliance’s deterrence capabilities.

Gen. Xavier T. Brunson (US Forces Korea) met with Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi at the Honolulu Defense Forum Jan. 12, reaffirming the importance of stronger Japan–U.S.–ROK defense cooperation for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.”

U.S. officials explain the Pentagon has broadened the menu of potential strikes President Trump could order against Iran—including targets linked to Tehran’s nuclear program and ballistic missile sites—even as he considers diplomacy and more limited measures against the Iranian regime.

Senior Iranian official: Tehran has warned neighboring countries hosting U.S. troops that it will retaliate against those American bases if Washington follows through with threats to intervene in protests in Iran.

Administration Developments of Note

President Trump wrote: “The United States needs Greenland for the purpose of National Security. It is vital for the Golden Dome that we are building. NATO should be leading the way for us to get it. IF WE DON’T, RUSSIA OR CHINA WILL, AND THAT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN! Militarily, without the vast power of the United States, NATO would not be an effective force or deterrent -NATO becomes far more formidable and effective with Greenland in the hands of the UNITED STATES. Anything less than that is unacceptable.”

U.S. Ambassador to the UN Mike Waltz: The United States stands by the “brave people of Iran,” and underscored that President Trump “has made it clear all options are on the table to stop the slaughter” of Iranian protestors.

USINDOPACOM Commander Adm. Samuel Paparo: “To the extent Operations Midnight Hammer and Absolute Resolve were “expressions of capabilities and will,” they “ultimately ... help to preserve deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.”

President Trump may postpone any attack on Iran for now, saying he had been reassured by “important sources on the other side” that the Iranian regime would stop killing people involved in protests.

President Trump told his top national security officials he would want any U.S. military action against Iran to deliver a swift, decisive blow to the regime and not trigger a prolonged war lasting weeks or months.

Deputy U.S. Representative to the United Nations Tammy Bruce: Russia’s use of the nuclear-capable Oreshnik ballistic missile against Ukraine last week constituted “another dangerous and inexplicable escalation” of the war.

Congressional Developments of Note

The federal government [loses](#) between \$231 billion and \$521 billion in taxpayer dollars each year to fraud, according to the Government Accountability Office, an arm of the US Congress.

Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV): “@POTUS must renew the last remaining U.S.-Russia arms control agreement which expires in under three weeks. Not extending the New START Treaty could result in a catastrophic international nuclear arms race.” [The EAR addresses this very subject in an essay posted by RealClearDefense, 19th January.]

SASC Thoughts: SLCM-N Update

The Reconciliation bill passed this summer has funding for the SLCM-N. However, there is a bureaucratic tussle going on over the release of the SLCM-N funding according to Congressional sources. \$ had the SLCM-N. Related to that is the new idea of battleships carrying hypersonic speed prompt global strike capabilities when Zumwalt class cruisers have that role. As to why the current schedule for SLCM-N is considered by some SASC members as being too long. The SASC member thinks certainly if the US did not need the SLCM-N it would not be in the budget....The Posture Commission was clear that the US capability in this area was “not fit for purpose” and thus needs to be advanced.

Key New Study of the Week - Food for Thought

Andrew Krepinovich’s new lengthy study at the Hudson Institute; posts a scenario from 2041, with comments from a senior US military officer: “The local [Western Pacific] conventional forces balance favors China. We’ve known this for some time now. Once, we could rely on our advantage in nuclear forces to discourage Beijing’s adventurism. This may have worked 20 years ago, but it ended with STRATFORE, [a nuclear arms treaty with China, Russia and the US] if not by 2030. Now the Chinese have flipped the script on us.

The General continues: “Today the nuclear balance favors China. True, their strategic forces equal our own. But they have a big advantage in theater nuclear forces. **We have no intermediate-range nuclear ballistic missiles, let alone any deployed.** With their breakout, they have hundreds. We do have nuclear-capable aircraft positioned at a few key bases in WestPac [the Western Pacific], but we have positioned no nuclear weapons with them.⁹⁴ And we have some [nuclear weapons] on our carriers.

Another important advantage the PLA has is that their missiles are mobile, while our aircraft are located at a few major bases and on the two carriers, we have in WestPac. **The air bases are obviously fixed targets, and they [the Chinese] have subs as well as undersea drones shadowing the carriers. Put simply, they would have a much easier time taking out our air bases and carriers than we would in locating and destroying their mobile missiles. And while they have armed only around half of their INF missiles with nuclear weapons, we don’t know which half.** Finally, stating the obvious, we would have to attack China itself should we attempt to take out those missiles.”

In this hypothetical scenario, President Howard asks General Kinder to lay out the US military options. The general responds:

“We can begin to flow forces into WestPac. To have anything like a chance of defending Taiwan successfully, it will likely require months—probably between three and five—to get them into the theater. Even here we have problems.

First, **we’d have to assume the Chinese will not sit and wait for us**—and hopefully our allies—to build up our forces and start to shift the balance in our favor. These guys [the Chinese] are not Saddam Hussein.⁹⁵

Second, we **estimate that the Taiwanese can hold out for some weeks, maybe six to eight, assuming** they ration food and fuel. But we have little confidence they can hold out much longer. So, we may have to begin operations to break the PLA blockade while the military balance is very much in their favor.

Third, the Chinese “quarantine” puts us in the position of striking first, as they are “simply” regulating commerce in what they claim to be their territorial waters around Taiwan. **Are our allies comfortable with us initiating combat operations? Are the American people? Will our allies commit their forces to wage war? Allow us to use their bases?”**

Confronting Iran

Pierre Rehov, noted French filmmaker and author explains the dilemma the United States and the West faces in confronting the Islamic Republic of Iran in this new essay from the Gatestone Institute: Iran possesses a vast missile and drone **arsenal** precisely intended to impose strategic costs on adversaries, and the regime has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to strike energy infrastructure, shipping lanes, and civilian targets. Israeli officials made no secret of the fact that their country could face massive **missile salvos** in the event of a US-Iran clash. Gulf states, while privately hostile to the Islamic Republic, feared becoming the battleground or retaliation target for a war that could devastate oil markets and destabilize their own societies. Meanwhile, the global economy remained sensitive to any potential disruption in energy supplies, and the United States itself is still emerging from years of inflationary pressure. **These realities do not absolve inaction, but they explain why escalation carries risks far beyond Iran's borders. Trump, who has consistently framed himself as opposed to open-ended wars, confronted the same dilemma that has paralyzed Western policy toward Iran for decades: how to punish a regime that thrives on escalation without triggering a conflict whose costs could be measured in thousands of lives across multiple countries.**

Wokes

In another Gatestone Institute essay Amir Taheri the Chairman of Gatestone Europe, cautions: "In the past three decades, a chunk of the American media and academia has fallen under the control of the modern levelers often known as wokes. They have turned the "humanities" faculties of many universities, supposed to be open to diversity as their name indicates, into caricatures of theological seminaries teaching and preaching one unquestionable truth presented as the cult of victimhood.

"Wokeism has introduced an apartheid system in the name of double-barrel identities, and real or imaginary past or present injustices, with the aim of turning the United States into an archipelago of resentments used as bases for revenge by imaginary minorities against an imaginary majority."

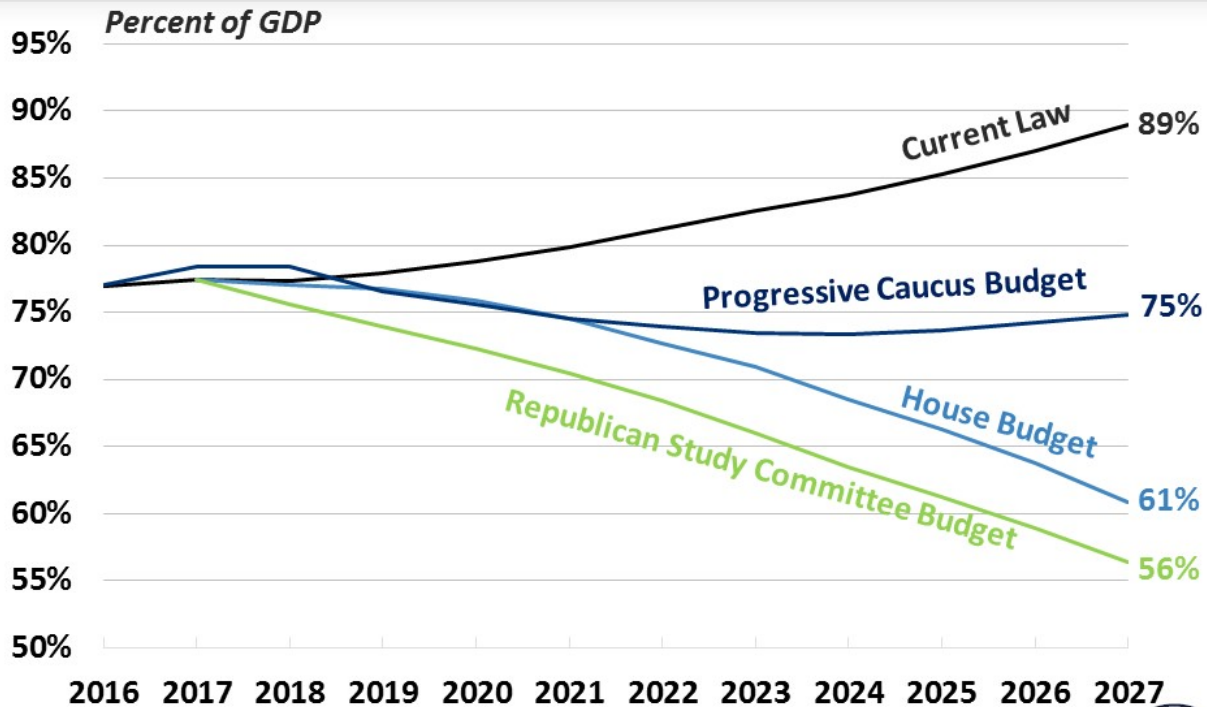
"The year ends with the US economy strong, unemployment figures down, inflation under control, and reshoring of industries back home under way.

Theater Nuclear Weapons Threats in Europe

China Stops Putin. So says the Carnegie Endowment in a new essay on the possible use of theater nuclear weapons in Europe by Putin. Carnegie explains that improving democratic resilience is a better deterrent to Moscow than the threat of either conventional or nuclear retaliation. The growth of authoritarian type governments are placing Europe in harm's way by walking away from democratic institutions. Why is Putin not using theater nuclear weapons? It is because of China's opposition, but not US nuclear/conventional retaliatory threats or deterrent capabilities. Traditional Cold War era nuclear deterrence doesn't work particularly due to the near accidental use of nuclear weapons which is not susceptible to deterrent threats. Here is the event link: This event will discuss the conclusions of ["From Nuclear Deterrence to Democratic Resilience: Towards a 21st Century Security Paradigm."](#)

New Budget Stuff

Debt Under the Republican Study Committee's Budget



Sources: House Budget Committee, Republican Study Committee, Congressional Progressive Caucus, January 2017 CBO Baseline.



Developments: House Study Committee Brings Out New Budget Proposal

January 13, 2026
Press Release

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Republican Study Committee (RSC) just released the [Making the American Dream Affordable Again reconciliation framework](#), a bold roadmap for the next reconciliation bill that takes direct aim at the affordability crisis created by the Biden-Harris agenda.

The plan lays out a clear, actionable strategy to restore the American Dream of homeownership, reduce health care premiums, cut energy prices, rebuild the American family, and slash wasteful government spending while codifying President Trump's America First agenda for the next generation.

“President Biden spent four years making everything more expensive. President Trump and Republicans will spend the next three making the American Dream affordable again,” said RSC Chairman August Pfluger (TX-11). “This blueprint cuts costs where families feel it most—housing, health care, and energy—slashes woke and wasteful spending, and locks in President Trump’s deregulatory agenda through the only process Democrats can’t block: reconciliation. We’re focused on results - lower prices, more freedom, and a stronger future for American families. We have 11 months of guaranteed majorities. We’re not wasting a single day.”

A Plan Built Around Affordability

The RSC's Reconciliation 2.0 Framework centers on three pillars rooted in building off the success of the Working Families Tax Cuts to deliver lasting affordability:

- **Housing:** restoring the American Dream of homeownership by expanding supply, lowering mortgage barriers, eliminating marriage penalties, and stopping policies that crowd Americans out of the housing market.
- **Health Care:** putting patients back in control, lowering drug prices, increasing transparency, and ensuring taxpayer-funded benefits serve American citizens—not bureaucrats or special interests.
- **Energy:** unleashing American energy dominance by cutting red tape, accelerating permitting, and driving down energy bills and prices at the pump.

The framework also achieves over **\$1 trillion in net deficit reduction** and permanently codifies more of President Trump's historic executive actions so future administrations cannot reverse them.

Now, below please find the key provisions of the first House Reconciliation measure passed in the summer of 2025:

2026 "Restoring America's Golden Age" blueprint and accompanying legislation, the Republican Study Committee (RSC) **proposes a significant shift toward military modernization while mandating historic increases in total defense spending.**

Funding Levels and Mechanism

- **Total Defense Spending:** The blueprint aims to lift total defense spending to over **\$1 trillion** in fiscal year 2026.
- **Reconciliation Funding:** A key feature of the proposal is the use of the **reconciliation process** to provide a massive, one-time infusion of **approximately \$113–\$119 billion in mandatory funding for defense**. This maneuver is designed to bypass traditional 60-vote Senate requirements and protect defense funds from being "held hostage" by negotiations over non-defense spending. [Reconciliation bill cannot cut nor increase discretionary spending.]
- **Base Budget:** The base discretionary request for the Department of Defense is approximately **\$848.3 billion**.

Key Strategic Priorities

The 2026 proposal prioritizes "Peace through Strength" by focusing on the following areas:

- **"Golden Dome" Missile Defense:** Approximately **\$13 billion** is allocated to develop a comprehensive national missile defense shield, integrating Missile Defense Agency and Space Force programs.
- **Modernization of the Nuclear Triad:** Continued support for the B-21 Raider, Columbia-class submarines, and Sentinel missiles.
- **Advanced Weaponry:**
 - **Hypersonics:** Over **\$3.9 billion** for hypersonic weapon development and production.
 - **Aviation:** Investments in 5th and 6th generation aircraft, including the F-35 and the next-generation F-47.
 - **Unmanned Systems:** Targeting resources for uncrewed maritime and aerial platforms.
- **Shipbuilding:** **\$36.9 billion** for 28 ships, including six new battle force ships and investments in the maritime industrial base.

Personnel and Efficiency Reforms

- **Military Pay Raise:** Includes a **3.8% basic pay increase** for all military personnel effective January 1, 2026.
- **Civilian Workforce Reductions:** Proposes reducing the Department of Defense civilian workforce by nearly **45,000 full-time equivalents** to save approximately \$3.6–\$6.5 billion.
- **Ending "Woke" Programs:** Explicitly prohibits funding for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and sex-change surgeries within the military.

- **DOGE Cooperation:** Codifies cooperation with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to eliminate waste and fraud at the Pentagon.

Homeland and Border Security

The defense proposal is closely tied to homeland security, providing **\$5 billion** for military support at the U.S. border for troop deployment and detention operations.

ICBM EAR Analysis and Commentary

On January 13th, in The National Interest, Larry Korb and Stephen Cimbala ask What are the drivers of contemporary nuclear arms races? Central to their answer is the US program of record or the nuclear deterrent modernization program adopted in December 2010. Is this the case?

Are there multiple arms races occurring in the world and is the United States guilty of instigating them? What in fact does the nuclear landscape look like?

First the United States is building what the 2010 New Start treaty allowed. That includes 400 Sentinel ICBMs, 12 Columbia class submarines and 20 B 21 bombers that will be placed in the nuclear force, along with a D5 submarine based missile that will be given a life extension and a new long range cruise missile for our strategic bombers. These “Triad” elements are designed to replace USA current nuclear elements that are between 43, 55 and 63 years old, respectively. The idea that replacing 40 to 60 year-old weapon systems is somehow initiating an arms race is patently absurd. How much slower should the United States move?

Second, if there is a nuclear arms race now going on it has been initiated by China, North Korea and Russia. Let me explain. The CCP are building more nuclear weapons on an annual basis than any other country in the world. They are also building more ballistic missiles of all ranges than any other country in the world with Iran a close second. North Korea supposedly is building up to 500 total nuclear warheads which would be a nearly five or tenfold increase from their inventory as of 2024.

Third, as for Russia they are building submarine and land based missiles for their nuclear arsenal as well as sustaining a full house of theater nuclear weapons and are approaching 92% complete according to the commander of the United States Strategic Command.

Fourth, Korb seems uninformed that Russia has adopted an escalate to win nuclear strategy initiated in 1999 when a Yeltsin Presidential decree called for the development and deployment of battlefield nuclear weapons that were highly accurate, low yield and usable in a military conflict.

Fifth, now some 27 years later, the United States has \$210 million in development money to build a sea-launched cruise missile that is nuclear armed, the original version of which the United States got rid of in two steps in 1991 and 2010. The current SLCM nuclear variant won't come into the force until 2034, decades after Russia and China have built and deployed their own regional or theater nuclear weapons.

Sixth, this US development is designed simply to maintain a strategic regional deterrent balance which a stand-off long range DCA aircraft will also give the US and NATO an extended deterrent to minimally balance a massive Russian regional and theater nuclear capability.

Seventh, Our SLBM and ICBM missile forces are, like China and Russia, all capable of hypersonic speeds and have been for decades. There is thus nothing new with respect to hypersonic speed capable systems, except now China and Russia want to expand the systems capable of such speed, hardly the fault of the United States.

Eighth, Korb and Cimbala continue their multi-decade inability to understand the stabilizing impact of missile defenses. Korb et al assumes the US will build a shield behind which the country will hide plans for military attacks, In fact, US missile defenses have been designed to make the task of our enemies much more difficult, especially contemplated attacks that are preemptive and designed to disarm the United States. US missile defenses also protect the United States against unauthorized or accidental launches of ballistic missiles or the sudden emergence of new nuclear armed terror entities committed to attacking the United States.

Ninth, on the other hand, America's adversaries are in the business of deploying nuclear weapons for coercive and blackmail objectives. Their missile defenses serve to enhance their offensive objectives, thus serving not to deter the initial use of force but to enable it! Missile defenses are a companion for their escalate to win strategies,

designed to allow them to commit aggression with impunity, to force the United States to stand down and take our deterrent off the table.

Tenth, and most importantly, no magical arms control frameworks will limit their strategic objectives. We signed New START in 2010 and then in 2014 Putin invaded Ukraine, and again in 2022. China, not the United States, routinely threatens to invade Taiwan. Iran, not the United States, serially attacks Israel. In the 72 years since the end of the Korean War the USA has not once used military force against North Korea while Pyongyang has used military and terror attacks against the ROK and USA interests in the region for over half a century. And as for withdrawing from the INF treaty, which upsets Korb, the USA did so because Russia not the USA failed to adhere to the provisions of the 1986 agreement. There cannot be a treaty in force where only one party is an adherent.

While it's understandable that one could hope for new arms control deals with the United States, Korb puts nothing on the table with any specificity as he remains stuck in his long-held "always blame America" paradigm. America's current nuclear modernization program of record was found—unanimously— by the Posture Commission of the United States to be necessary but not adequate to simply maintain current deterrent requirements. The US seeks no race to win nor war to wage, but to deter any and all uses of nuclear weapons. That is not arms racing.

From the Archives: War the Russian Way

Source: PostPravda.info 05.12..2024.

URL:<https://postpravda.info/en/stories/freedom-of-speech-en/war-as-an-end-in-itself/>

A Message to Help the Navy: Build More Ships, Like 15 Columbia Class Submarines!

Some analysts argue that reviving the domestic shipbuilding industry would help address contingencies such as those now posed by Iran's crisis. A May 2025 [article](#) by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation described the [SHIPS Act](#) as critical for near-term growth, as it entices maritime companies to improve competitiveness and develop shipyard workforces.

Under the [Ensuring Naval Readiness Act](#), the US is receiving a major industrial boost through key partnerships with Finland, Japan and South Korea that aim to improve the US Navy and its production capacity. Finland is assisting with Arctic Security Cutters development, Japan has pledged to invest in the US after signing a memorandum on shipbuilding and South Korean firms will train American shipyard workers on ways to accelerate output.

Neglect of the US Navy not only undermines national readiness but also hampers responses to global crises, an area in which the service once excelled. An overstretched military, coupled with declining naval ship production, is now constraining America's response to Iran's civil unrest at a crucial moment.

To avoid being caught off guard by an overextended fleet, a US naval revival must become a top priority for the Pentagon and Congress throughout the 2020s and beyond.

Julian McBride is a defense analyst and contributing editor at 19FortyFive.

Commentary

How the Private Sector Can Enable Nuclear Resilience

Developing nuclear fusion and modernizing the US nuclear arsenal will require substantial collaboration with the private enterprise.

NATIONAL INTEREST ONLINE, JAN. 15 | ROBERT C. O'BRIEN AND ADM. (RET.) CHARLES RICHARD

President Donald Trump's announcement of the possibility of resumed nuclear testing highlights the importance of maintaining the readiness and credibility of the US nuclear deterrent. The world is more dangerous than it was in the president's first term. Russia has threatened a nuclear first strike, and China is expanding its own nuclear arsenal at an alarming pace.

To deter our adversaries and ensure the United States is not surpassed strategically, we must leverage the private sector to rapidly build advanced radiation testing facilities that mimic the conditions of a nuclear blast without having to detonate warheads themselves. Having such a capability would complement the administration's agenda of nuclear modernization and provide a powerful card to play in the strategic competition with Beijing and Moscow.

Trump's comments point to a strategic reckoning, shaped by two peer nuclear-capable competitors who have to be deterred differently. China has completed a triad, constructed expansive missile fields, unveiled its arsenal of hypersonic weapons, and invested in pulsed-power and radiation-effects complexes designed to accelerate weapons science. Russia has nearly completed modernizing every leg of its arsenal while experimenting with exotic nuclear-enabled delivery systems, like the Poseidon nuclear-propelled torpedo.

Deterrence in this unprecedented global nuclear environment requires that US weapons work in a crisis under the most degraded and disruptive wartime environments imaginable. Demonstrating that high-altitude EMPs or other disruptive nuclear options are incapable of significantly damaging US systems reduces an adversary's incentives for seeking a first strike advantage. The credibility of the American nuclear triad and its arsenal of warheads rests on its perceived and actual resilience.

China and Russia are pursuing systems designed to blind, jam, and fracture American command-and-control. In any scenario involving limited nuclear use, adversaries may employ weapons specifically to disrupt US operations with the hope that a narrow attack would not trigger a full-scale nuclear exchange. That means conventional forces, space architectures, sensor networks, and broad communications systems must be able to function in radiation-stressed environments without inviting an attack.

If these systems are perceived as liable to fail, even a reliable nuclear arsenal will lack deterrent credibility. Ensuring American systems and platforms can operate through radiation and electromagnetic disruption is essential to credible deterrence.

The United States requires testing infrastructure that produces empirical data and enables rapid iteration necessary to continuously harden, adapt, and modernize its command and control and nuclear arsenal. Engineers and strategists need reliable data on how weapons platforms and associated systems respond in high-radiation environments. Demonstrating survivability increases deterrent power.

The national laboratories remain the intellectual and scientific heart of the nuclear enterprise. Yet the current lab infrastructure cannot meet the timelines demanded by geopolitical competition. Large-scale national capabilities take decades to deploy under today's procurement processes. Meanwhile, adversaries compress timelines and expand their capacity at an alarming speed.

For three decades, the United States has relied on detailed records and research from previous above and below-ground nuclear tests, along with smaller experiments and powerful computer simulations to stay current. The Z Machine at Sandia and the National Ignition Facility at Lawrence Livermore Lab can simulate crucial elements of nuclear environments and allow weapons designers to validate their resilience against the conditions most likely to challenge the arsenal.

The government is building the Combined Radiation Environments for Survivability Testing facility at Sandia, and Sandia lab director Laura McGill, in August 2025, projected that its cost now stands at roughly \$2.2 billion. Construction is not expected to begin until FY 2029 or 2030. Completion will not come until FY 2034. The program took three years and more than 14,000 pages of documentation merely to clear conceptual design—the result: roughly 80 percent cost escalation and a six-year delay before concrete is poured.

Unfortunately, our adversaries do not have the same constraints. Beijing's investment in pulsed-power and fusion-scale facilities at Mianyang (facilities that reproduce the same physical regimes relevant to weapons-effects work) proceeds in a lightning-fast manner compared to the sclerotic pace of the US bureaucracy.

In recent years, non-traditional defense companies have transformed autonomous systems, data analysis, and space launch. Yet no company has yet emerged to modernize the nuclear arsenal, the only weapons that are used every day of the year through their mere existence to deter our adversaries.

A hybrid public-private model, with the national laboratories retaining their scientific leadership and oversight role, could mobilize private capital, industrial engineering expertise, and rapid build cycles to deliver effects-testing infrastructure within commercially relevant timeframes. NASA's Commercial Orbital Transportation Services model showed how government stewardship and private-sector execution can accelerate complex national missions without sacrificing oversight.

American innovation excels when the government defines strategic imperatives, and industry mobilizes to meet them. The Trump administration should partner with the private sector to build an advanced radiation testing facility to complement the nuclear modernization mission and compete with China and Russia.

This facility would deliver effects-testing infrastructure within commercially relevant timelines, which is a national security imperative. Such a facility would not only secure the empirical backbone of deterrence but also accelerate foundational breakthroughs in fusion energy, a parallel domain in which technological leadership will define long-term geopolitical and economic power.

The United States has the talent, the scientific base, and the industrial depth to lead this effort to secure our nuclear arsenal and ensure America leads the fusion energy revolution. The administration should partner with the private sector to move in Trump time.

--Robert C. O'Brien was the 27th US national security advisor from 2019 to 2021. O'Brien is chairman of American Global Strategies LLC, which advises firms on energy issues. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Atlantic Council, a member of the American Academy of Diplomacy, and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations; Admiral (ret.) Charles "Chas" Richard is a retired United States Navy admiral who served as the 11th commander of United States Strategic Command (2019–2022). He previously served as commander of Submarine Forces, Submarine Force Atlantic, and Allied Submarine Command. Admiral Richard serves on the Advisory Board of Fuse, a leading US-based fusion company.

From Hudson Institute: Key Insights

1. The US needs to protect its interests in Venezuela while helping to restore the Venezuelan people's sovereignty.

"The belief [is] that he can get what he wants by changing the behavior of the regime by putting pressure on them, especially in connection with restricting their cash flow associated with narcotics trafficking and oil exports. . . . I think what he should be demanding—and I imagine what they probably are—is some form of a political transition within a year, during which you ensure that the people's will has an effect on the election."

— **H.R. McMaster**

[Watch the full appearance on CNBC.](#)

2. Trump still has options to enforce his red line in Iran.

"There are things the United States can do. We can launch massive cyberattacks against the regime to help the people. We can do very, very scoped, limited strikes against the security forces that are the ones killing the Iranian protesters. I think our help is late at this point. . . . But I don't think it's too late. I still think that the United States has to enforce the red line that President Trump drew himself."

— **Rebecca L. Heinrichs**

[Watch the full appearance on Fox News.](#)

3. An enhanced military presence in Greenland should be a priority in Washington and Brussels.

"We've been thinking about this region for a very long time. And it's not just because of the critical minerals or the waterways. It's because there are strategic positions on Greenland that help us defend against ballistic missile attacks. . . . Trump is right to again focus attention on it. I think a good outcome here would be to get the Europeans to help us put a NATO mission there, increase the number of US bases."

— **Mary Kissel**

[Watch the full appearance on Fox Business.](#)

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.

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