



United States Strategic Command

Peace Is Our Profession...

The national security environment is changing ... we must solidify the concept of integrated deterrence to incorporate every capability, every domain, across the spectrum of conflict in coordination with all elements of national power, U.S. allies and partners.

- It is essential to understand that every operational plan in the Department of Defense and every other capability we have rests on the assumption that strategic deterrence will hold. **None of our plans and no other capability will work as designed if strategic deterrence, and in particular nuclear deterrence, fails.** This is not well understood and often taken for granted.
- **The national security environment is changing;** and so should our approach to achieve our national objectives. The Department of Defense, following Secretary Austin's vision, is developing the concept of integrated deterrence to incorporate every capability, every domain, across the spectrum of conflict in coordination with all elements of national power, U.S. allies and partners.
- **We are witnessing a strategic breakout by China.** The breathtaking expansion of their strategic nuclear capability is a final brick in the wall of a military capable of coercion. China's ICBM silos, road mobiles, JIN-class ballistic missile submarines, H-6N bomber, air-launch ballistic missile, intermediate-range ballistic missiles, hypersonic development, higher levels of readiness including launch on warning and launch under attack, and improved Nuclear Command Control and Communications (NC3) allows for a full-range of nuclear employment strategies and complements their growing conventional force.
- Russia is the near-term pacing nuclear threat, for now. China is not a lesser included case. Both have the ability to unilaterally escalate a conflict to any level of violence, in any domain, in any geographic location, at any time, and with any instrument of national power. The Nation has not faced an opponent like this in 30 years. **For the first time in history, the Nation is facing two peer, nuclear-capable competitors at the same time,** who must be deterred differently. Business as usual will not work.
- **Operational deterrence theory does not sufficiently account for the three-party reality** we face. Our national intellectual capacity has been focused, necessarily, on others problems for the last three decades. We must shift our attention to the existential threat and consider potential third party actions. Russia and China may undertake cooperation or independent opportunistic actions in an attempt to exploit perceived weaknesses or subvert our Nation's standing with our Allies.
- Only when we gain a fundamental understanding of how deterrence theory is applicable in today's strategic environment, can we inform strategy, create a mutual understanding of that strategy and threat, and then execute plans in support of our national defense. **We must achieve a shared understanding of the threat** and a common approach to counter it. **We must define the larger whole of integrated deterrence** and how each of our parts fit into it. **We must revise our approach and understanding of escalation management.** This will take a national effort, including all elements of national power and the Nation's closest Allies.
- The ongoing national reviews provide the ideal opportunity to address this radically changed operational threat environment. **Clear-eyed, threat-informed decision making will avoid unintentional and premature policy and programmatic changes that affect U.S. strategy ... a strategy that must be resistant to adversarial coercion, now and into the future.**