

## • **National Defense Strategy a ‘Good Fit for Our Times,’ Mattis Says**

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 19, 2018 — The new [National Defense Strategy](#) is a good fit for the times, emphasizing the return of great power rivalry, yet still addressing other threats that abound in the world today, Defense Secretary James N. Mattis said today.



Defense Secretary James N. Mattis announces the new National Defense Strategy at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, a division of the Johns Hopkins University based in Washington, Jan. 19, 2018. DoD photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Kathryn E. Holm

The secretary unveiled the strategy at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies and stressed that the strategy is not merely a defense strategy, but an American strategy. The school is a division of the Johns Hopkins University based in Washington.

The strategy -- the first new strategy in a decade -- is based on the National Security Strategy President Donald J. Trump announced in December.

### **New Strategy Reclaims ‘An Era of Strategic Purpose’**

“Today, America's military reclaims an era of strategic purpose and we're alert to the realities of a changing world and attentive to the need to protect our values and the countries that stand with us,” the secretary said. “America's military protects our way of life and I want to point out it also protects a realm

of ideas. It's not just about protecting geography. This is a defense strategy that will guide our efforts in all realms.”

Threats have changed since the last strategy. There is increasing global volatility and uncertainty with challenges from Russia and China coming to the fore. “Though we will continue to prosecute the campaign against terrorists that we are engaged in today, but great power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of U.S. national security,” the secretary said.

The strategy will provide the American people the military required “to protect our way of life, stand with our allies and live up to our responsibility to pass intact to the next generation those freedoms that all of us enjoy here today,” Mattis said.

The strategy expands the U.S. military’s competitive space, prioritizes preparedness for war, provides clear direction for significant change at the speed of relevance and builds a more lethal force to compete strategically.

### **Tough Choices**

In forming the strategy, officials had to make tough choices, “and we made them based upon a fundamental precept, namely that America can afford survival,” Mattis said. “We face growing threats from revisionist powers as different as China and Russia are from each other, nations that do seek to create a world consistent with their authoritarian models, pursuing veto authority over other nations' economic, diplomatic and security decisions,” he said.

The threat from rogue regimes like North Korea and Iran persist. And even though ISIS’s physical caliphate is no more, the group -- and other extremist organizations -- continues to sow hatred. “In this time of change, our military is still strong, yet our competitive edge has eroded in every domain of warfare: air, land, sea, space and cyberspace, and it is continuing to erode,” the secretary said.

### **‘Our Military Will Win Should Diplomacy Fail’**

Sixteen years of war, rapid technological change, defense spending caps, and seemingly continuous continuing resolutions “have created an overstretched and under-resourced military,” he said. “Our military's role is to keep the peace; to keep the peace for one more year, one more month, one more week, one more day; to ensure our diplomats who are working to solve problems do

so from a position of strength and giving allies confidence in us. This confidence is underpinned by the assurance that our military will win should diplomacy fail.”

Mattis said the supremacy of American military is not preordained. “It is incumbent upon us to field a more lethal force if our nation is to retain the ability to defend ourselves and what we stand for,” Mattis said. “The defense strategy's three primary lines of effort will restore our comparative military advantage.”

The strategy commits the department to build a more lethal joint force. It calls for strengthening old alliances and building new ones. “At the same time, we'll reform our department's business practices for performance and affordability,” the secretary said.

An enemy will attack any perceived weakness, Mattis said. The American military, therefore, must be able to fight across the spectrum of conflict. “This means that the size and the composition of our force matters,” he said. “The nation must field sufficient capable forces to deter conflict. And if deterrence fails, we must win.”

Mattis added, “To those who would threaten America's experiment in democracy, they must know: If you challenge us it will be your longest and your worst day. Work with our diplomats: You don't want to fight the Department of Defense.”

Alliances are key to American success, the secretary said. “In my past, I fought many times and never did I fight in a solely American formation,” Mattis said. “It was always alongside foreign troops.”

The American military must be designed, trained and ready to fight alongside allies, he added. “History proves that nations with allies thrive, an approach to security and prosperity that has served the United States well in keeping peace and winning war,” Mattis said. “Working by, with and through allies who carry their equitable share allows us to amass the greatest possible strength.”

### **Reforming DoD’s Business Practices**

The third line of effort, he said, will be the foundation for the U.S. competitive edge: reforming the business practices of the department. “We are going to have to be good stewards of the tax dollars allocated to us, and that means results and accountability matter,” the secretary said. “The department will

transition to a culture of performance and affordability that operates at the speed of relevance. Success does not go to the country that develops a new technology first, but rather, to the one that better integrates it and more swiftly adapts its way of fighting.”

Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick M. Shanahan is already leading this effort. He expects it to leverage the scale of operations, driving better deals for equipping troops and modernizing systems.

This strategy means nothing if the resources are not in place, Mattis said. “No strategy can long survive without necessary funding and the stable, predictable budgets required to defend America in the modern age,” he said. “Failure to modernize our military risks leaving us with a force that could dominate the last war, but be irrelevant to tomorrow's security.”

### **Continuing Resolutions Harm Military Readiness**

Mattis added, “Let me be clear. As hard as the last 16 years have been on our military, no enemy in the field has done more to harm the readiness of the U.S. military than the combined impact of the Budget Control Act's defense spending cuts, worsened ... by us operating, nine of the last 10 years, under continuing resolutions, wasting copious amounts of precious taxpayer dollars.”

The military continues to work tirelessly to accomplish the mission with now inadequate and misaligned resources, simply because the Congress cannot maintain regular order, Mattis said. “That we have performed well is a credit to our wonderful and loyal troops, but loyalty must be a two-way street,” he said. “We expect the magnificent men and women of our military to be faithful in their service, even when going in harm's way. We must remain faithful to those who voluntarily sign a blank check, payable to the American people with their lives.”

Under the Constitution, it is Congress that has the authority to raise armies and navies, Mattis said. “Yet as I stand here this morning, watching the news, as we all are, from Capitol Hill, we're on the verge of a government shutdown or, at best, yet another debilitating continuing resolution,” he said. “We need Congress back in the driver's seat of budget decisions, not in the spectator seat of Budget Control Acts' indiscriminate and automatic cuts. We need a budget and we need budget predictability if we're to sustain our military's primacy.”  
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