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PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF THE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF WAR FOR POLICY
BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE NAVY

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I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Chair Eaglen, Chair Vela, and Commissioners: thank you for the opportunity to appear before this body. I am here to present the Department of War's strategic guidance as it bears on your statutory charge—the structure of the Fleet and the force generation system that produces naval combat power—specifically, to describe the international security environment, the logic of the 2026 National Defense Strategy (NDS), and the trends in military affairs that shape both.

This statement is unclassified in its entirety. Several of the judgments I offer below rest on classified assessments that I cannot fully characterize here; where that is true, I say so, and the Department stands ready to support the Commission in a closed session.

One framing observation at the outset: strategy is the discipline of allocating scarce military resources according to one's geopolitical objectives. It is not a wish list of missions, and it is not a catalogue of capabilities. The 2026 NDS is, at its core, an exercise in managing simultaneity under scarcity: how the United States sustains deterrence across multiple theaters when adversaries may act in coordinated or opportunistic fashion, and when neither the force nor the industrial base that generates it can currently meet every demand at once. Everything I say about the Navy follows from that.

II. THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The 2026 NDS implements President Trump's 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS) for the Department of War. The 2026 NDS is classified, and I am submitting it as an exhibit for the record. But there is an unclassified version available to the public. The NDS' assessment of the security environment is organized around the Homeland and the Western Hemisphere; the People's Republic of China; Russia; Iran; the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and the problem of simultaneity.

A. The Homeland and the Western Hemisphere

The Strategy's foremost priority is defense of the American Homeland, understood to include the most secure border in history; the maritime and air approaches, including as they are addressed through President Trump's Golden Dome for America and a dedicated counter-unmanned aerial systems effort; a modernized nuclear deterrent; cyber defense; and a resource-sustainable

counterterrorism effort focused on organizations with both the capability and the intent to strike the Homeland.

The Strategy extends this priority outward into the Western Hemisphere. It directs the Department to counter narco-terrorist organizations, to develop partner capability to do the same, and to guarantee U.S. military and commercial access to key terrain—namely the Panama Canal, the Gulf of America, and Greenland. It assesses that adversary influence has grown from the Arctic to the southern approaches, and asserts the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine: “After years of neglect, the Department of War will restore American military dominance in the Western Hemisphere. We will use it to protect our Homeland and our access to key terrain throughout the region. We will also deny adversaries’ ability to position forces or other threatening capabilities in our hemisphere. This is the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine—a commonsense and potent restoration of American power and prerogatives in this hemisphere, consistent with Americans’ interests”.

I would ask the Commission to note the character of this mission set. With the exception of the land border itself, these are maritime tasks executed in the approaches, in the chokepoints, in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific, and in the Arctic. They are not a rhetorical elevation of an existing economy-of-force effort, but as the Administration and the Department have demonstrated along the borders, in Operation SOUTHERN SPEAR, Operation ABSOLUTE RESOLVE, and in other ways, they are central to President Trump’s approach.

B. The People's Republic of China

The Strategy assesses China as the second most powerful state in the world and the most powerful relative to the United States since the nineteenth century—its power still growing, notwithstanding significant internal economic, demographic, and societal strain, and its military buildup is remarkable in speed, scale, and quality.

The Strategy, like the NSS, ties American security and prosperity to continued access to the Indo-Pacific and directs the Department to maintain a favorable balance of military power there. It is explicit that the objective is neither dominance over China nor its humiliation, but rather the prevention of any state's ability to dominate the United States or its allies. The military expression of that objective is denial: the Department is directed to build, posture, and sustain a strong denial defense along the First Island Chain, and to enable regional allies and partners to contribute to it.

On the naval balance, the public record is unambiguous. The Department's annual report to Congress on China assesses the PLA Navy as the largest navy in the world by hull count, with a battle force in excess of 370 platforms—excluding roughly 60 missile-armed patrol combatants—and projects growth toward approximately 435 ships by 2030. The U.S. battle force stands at approximately 291 ships. The disparity between the industrial bases that produce those fleets is larger still, and I return to it below.

C. Russia

The Strategy assesses Russia as a persistent but manageable threat to NATO's eastern members. It notes that the war in Ukraine has demonstrated Russia's remaining reservoirs of military and industrial power and its willingness to sustain protracted conflict, and that Russia retains the world's largest nuclear arsenal alongside undersea, space, and cyber capabilities it could employ against the U.S. Homeland. It judges that European NATO—whose economic capacity far exceeds Russia's—is positioned to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense, including the lead in supporting Ukraine's defense, with critical but more limited U.S. support.

For this Commission's purposes, the operative element is not so much the conventional military balance in Europe. It is the explicit identification of Russian undersea capability as a threat to the Homeland. Transferring primary conventional responsibility to European allies does not transfer strategic anti-submarine warfare as it relates to nuclear deterrence or to defense of the U.S. Homeland, nor Arctic and North Atlantic access germane to defense of the American Homeland. These remain U.S. responsibilities, and under this Strategy's Homeland-first logic they are reinforced, not relieved. The Strategy separately identifies a Canadian role in strengthening North American defenses against air, missile, and undersea threats.

D. Iran

The Strategy assesses an Iran materially weakened—its nuclear program struck, its proxy network degraded—but intent on reconstituting its conventional forces and unwilling to foreclose a nuclear option. Going forward, the Department is directed to empower Israel and Gulf partners to take primary responsibility for deterring and defending against Iran and its proxies, while retaining the U.S. ability to take focused, decisive action as the President may direct.

E. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Strategy assesses North Korea as a direct threat principally to the Republic of Korea and Japan, with nuclear forces growing in size and sophistication and increasingly capable of threatening the U.S. Homeland. It judges that the Republic of Korea—with a capable military, high defense spending, a robust defense industry, and conscription—can assume primary responsibility for deterring North Korea with critical but more limited U.S. support.

F. Simultaneity

The Strategy's organizing problem is the possibility that one or more opponents act together, in coordinated or opportunistic fashion, across multiple theaters. Its answer is twofold: sharp prioritization of the most consequential threats to Americans' interests, and genuine allied burden-sharing underwritten by the standard set at the Hague Summit—3.5 percent of gross domestic product on core military capability and an additional 1.5 percent on security-related spending, for a total of 5 percent—which the Department will advocate globally and not only in Europe.

This is the Strategy's central bet, and I would characterize it plainly. The Department has judged that the United States cannot be primary in every theater simultaneously, and that the alternative

to prioritization is not comprehensiveness—it is dispersion, and defeat in detail. Allied burden-sharing is what makes prioritization sustainable rather than merely necessary.

III. THE LOGIC OF THE STRATEGY

The NDS recognizes each of these threats but is also clear that not all threats are of equal severity, gravity, and consequence. However, even those of lesser salience still matter and must not be ignored. Therefore, even as the NDS prioritizes those threats of gravest consequence to our nation's security, freedom, and prosperity, it also positions our nation and our allies and partners to counter the others in an effective, sustainable manner. In doing so, it sets conditions for peace through strength. This strategic reality dictates our four core Lines of Effort (LOEs), all of which possess a maritime dimension:

1. **Defend the U.S. Homeland**
2. **Deter China in the Indo-Pacific Through Strength, Not Confrontation**
3. **Increase Burden-Sharing with U.S. Allies and Partners**
4. **Supercharge the U.S. Defense Industrial Base**

I would resist any reading of these as four parallel task lists. They are a single allocation logic. Lines of effort one and two identify where the United States will be primary. Line of effort three identifies where allies will be primary, which is what makes one and two sustainable. Line of effort four is the constraint that binds all three—the Strategy is explicit that the industrial base underpins not only U.S. forces but the ability to arm allies who are being asked to do more, and that meeting the requirement will demand something on the order of a national mobilization.

The military-strategic logic is a denial logic, and it is Clausewitzian

I want to be precise about what the Strategy directs, because it is frequently misread.

The Strategy does not direct the Department to achieve maritime supremacy or sea control in the Western Pacific as an end in a Mahanian sense. It directs the Department to erect a denial defense—to convince an adversary that he cannot achieve his political (and therefore military) objective by force, and therefore that the attempt is not worth making at all. That is deterrence by denial, and its object is the adversary's armed forces and their capacity to realize a political aim by military means. In Clausewitzian terms, the strategy is aimed at the enemy's ability to impose his will, not at the sea itself.

And the aim, concretely, is the denial of the seizure and holding of key terrain. This is what the Strategy means by a denial defense along the First Island Chain, and it is the same logic that animates its treatment of key terrain in the Western Hemisphere. The object is terrestrial. A medium is maritime.

That is the paradox with which I respectfully request the Commission to reckon, and it is why I would gently discourage the framing—appealing but analytically empty—that this is therefore a naval strategy. The Strategy is not naval in its object. It can be naval in its method, and only because the adversary's key operational problem is a maritime- and air-enabled seizure of terrain. An invasion must cross water. It must land. It must be sustained across water once it has landed. U.S. naval and joint forces are decisive in this strategy precisely because they are the instrument that denies an adversary the crossing, the lodgment, and the sustainment—not because seapower is an intrinsic purpose of the Strategy.

History is unambiguous on this point. Germany abandoned Operation SEA LION in 1940 not because the Wehrmacht could not fight in England, but because the Kriegsmarine and the Luftwaffe could not guarantee the crossing. Guadalcanal was decided not by the landing but by the six-month contest over which side could sustain a force across contested water. The crossing and the sustainment—not the beach—are where amphibious campaigns are won and lost.

The force planning consequence is significant and, I would argue, liberating: **the Navy required by this Strategy is the Navy that can defeat the PLA's operational problem—not the Navy that mirrors the PLA's fleet.** The right measure of effectiveness is whether the Joint Force, with allies, can destroy an invasion force and its sustainment at the necessary scale, in the necessary time, and at a sustainable cost.

IV. TRENDS IN MILITARY AFFAIRS

I turn now to the trends that determine whether that denial mission is achievable, and at what price. My central judgment is that the sea surface is increasingly transparent, and therefore vulnerable; the undersea is significantly less so, and therefore remains the United States' most durable military advantage. The Strategy's denial logic and this asymmetry point in the same direction.

A. The Sea Surface: The Transparency Revolution

The defining change in the surface domain is not any weapon. It is sensing.

Persistent, wide-area maritime surveillance is no longer the preserve of a handful of states. Proliferated commercial and military satellite constellations now deliver electro-optical, infrared, synthetic aperture radar, and radio-frequency collection at revisit rates and price points unthinkable a decade ago. That collection is increasingly fused, at machine speed, by automated multi-intelligence processing that turns overhead imagery and emissions into tracks—and tracks into targets. This is the democratization of space-based intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting, and its practical effect is that the open ocean is progressively ceasing to be a place where large objects can hide on its surface.

Coupled to that sensing is a fires revolution: long-range anti-ship cruise, ballistic, and hypersonic anti-ship systems; and—at the low end—mass-produced unmanned systems at costs three orders of magnitude below the platforms they hold at risk.

None of this is new in kind. It is new in degree, but the degree is decisive. In 1982, Argentina possessed a very modest air force and only a handful of air-launched Exocet anti-ship cruise missiles. With them it sank the guided missile destroyer HMS *Sheffield* and, with the loss of the container ship SS *Atlantic Conveyor*, destroyed the heavy-lift helicopters on which the British scheme of maneuver depended. The British landed at San Carlos rather than at the point of decision because the air and missile threat made the better anchorage unusable, and they lost the guided missile frigates HMS *Ardent* and HMS *Antelope*, the guided missile destroyer HMS *Coventry*, and—at Fitzroy—the logistics landing vessel *Sir Galahad*, and the logistics landing ship *Sir Tristram* was damaged, all with grievous casualties.

Of course, Britain—the power which was attempting to seize and hold terrain via amphibious assault—nonetheless succeeded, and I want to address that objection directly rather than leave it to the Commission to raise. The lesson of the Falklands is not that denial fails. It is that *thin* denial fails—and that even thin denial very nearly succeeded nonetheless.

Four points bear on this.

First, **the margin was thinner than the outcome suggests**—and the best authority on that point is the British commander himself. Admiral Sir John "Sandy" Woodward, who commanded the task force, judged in his memoir *One Hundred Days* that the British victory had to be counted a close-run thing, and that his force had "fought our way along a knife-edge."

The particulars bear him out. Argentina expended essentially its entire inventory of air-launched Exocets, and a significant British diplomatic effort went into preventing their purchase of more. Further, a substantial number of Argentine bombs struck British ships and failed to detonate, having been released too low for their fuzes to arm; Woodward himself acknowledged that Britain would have lost several additional ships had those weapons functioned as designed. Britain sailed with two flight decks and no replacement for either; a single hit on the light aircraft carriers HMS *Hermes* or HMS *Invincible* would have at least severely handicapped the campaign. Britain prevailed on a margin measured in single-digit missiles and defective fuzing. **That is not a refutation of sea denial. It is a demonstration of how nearly it succeeded with almost nothing.**

Second, **the Falklands is the floor of the precision-strike regime, not its ceiling.** Argentina had no satellites, negligible maritime surveillance, no aerial refueling of which to speak, aircraft operating at the outer edge of their combat radius, and a magazine of sea-skimming missiles in the single digits. Every one of those variables scales by orders of magnitude in the case this Strategy is built to address. The correct inference is not that a determined navy can absorb such losses; it is that *five air-launched missiles did that*—and to ask what a thousand will do, enabled by a purpose-built ocean-surveillance constellation.

Third, and most important for this Commission, **the roles invert.** The Falklands case is typically read today with Argentina in the place of China—conducting a *fait accompli* seizure of an island and then attempting to prevent its recapture by Britain which is the stand-in for the United States. Although this reading certainly underscores the need for a denial defense and deterrence by denial to prevent such a seizure in the first place, it can also be read another way. To invert the

roles, Britain was the amphibious attacker and Argentina the denier. In the scenario that governs this Strategy, China is the attacker and the United States and its allies and partners are the deniers. Therefore, this objection actually cuts the other way: the Falklands is a warning about the resolve of a determined amphibious power and about how deep a denial magazine must be to defeat one. If such an objection has merit, its conclusion is a *larger* denial force, not a smaller one.

Fourth, **there was in fact a decisive act of sea denial in that war—and it was not Argentina's.** After the nuclear powered attack submarine HMS *Conqueror* sank the light cruiser ARA *General Belgrano*, the Argentine surface fleet returned to port and remained there for the duration of the conflict. One submarine removed an opposing surface navy from the war without firing another shot. I return to that point in Section IV.D below, because it is the most economical denial of the campaign and it bears directly on where the American advantage lies today.

That was 1982, against an inferior military power with fewer than a dozen sea-skimming missiles and no satellite constellation whatever. The Commission should hold that image firmly in mind when contemplating the modern threat.

The implications for the surface force are severe, and it does not serve the Commission for me to soften them:

- **Detection is increasingly to be assumed.** Signature management, emissions control, dispersion, decoys, deception, and counter-targeting move from tactical technique to survival requirement.
- **Cost-exchange decides campaigns.** Fleet air and missile defense that expends multi-million-dollar interceptors against cheap mass is a losing proposition arithmetically, regardless of tactical success, especially given industrial constraints. Directed energy, guns, low-cost effectors, magazine depth, and the ability to reload forward are first-order design questions, not technical footnotes.
- **Counter-ISR (or counter-reconnaissance) becomes a function** on par with air defense and anti-submarine warfare. If the adversary's kill chain begins in space, the fleet's defense begins there too.

Adversaries therefore increasingly possess the ability to conduct sea denial from the land, over the ocean's surface and the surface ships that operate upon it.

B. The Same Revolution Favors the Denier

Here is the point I most want to leave with the Commission, because it is the one most often missed.

The transparency revolution is not a one-way indictment of American seapower. **It is a far heavier indictment of amphibious invasion.**

An amphibious assault force is the largest, slowest, most signature-rich, most schedule-bound formation in modern warfare. It cannot disperse without ceasing to be an invasion. It cannot maintain emissions control while conducting a coordinated crossing. It must mass at assembly areas and ports of embarkation, cross on predictable axes, land at favorable terrain, and sustain itself across contested water for as long as the operation lasts. Every attribute that makes a surface combatant vulnerable in an era of ubiquitous sensing makes an invasion fleet *more* vulnerable—and unlike a warship, an invasion force cannot decline the engagement. That is the asymmetry.

The contemporary evidence is before us. In the Black Sea, a state with essentially no navy has sunk or damaged a substantial portion of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, driven it from its principal base, and—most relevant here—foreclosed any Russian amphibious operation against Odessa. It did so with ground-based anti-ship missiles, unmanned surface vessels, and targeting derived in significant part from commercial and allied space-based sensing. That is the transparency revolution operating in favor of the denier, in real time, at a fraction of the cost of the fleet it neutralized.

Ubiquitous sensing, in short, is an asymmetric gift to the side trying to deny a seizure of terrain rather than accomplish one. **The Strategy's denial logic and the military-technical trend are aligned. Denial is the cheaper side of the exchange, and it is getting cheaper.**

What this requires is not a mirror-image fleet. It requires persistent surveillance of the adversary's approaches and embarkation; resilient, distributed, survivable long-range anti-ship fires from sea, air, land, and undersea; sufficient magazine depth to prosecute a very large number of targets in a very short window; mines and the means to deliver them; and a targeting and command and control architecture resistant to attack. The Commission's force planning recommendations should be tested against this operational problem.

C. Naval Mining: The Most Cost-Effective Denial Weapon in History

I want to dwell on mining, because it is a capability that very directly matches to this Strategy's logic yet one that is consistently neglected in force planning debates.

A mine attacks the crossing itself. It does not require a sensor-to-shooter chain in the moment of crisis, it is difficult to jam, and it imposes cost even when it fails to detonate—because the mere suspicion of mines compels an adversary to expend time he does not have. In an operation whose entire feasibility depends on a narrow weather and tidal window and a rapid buildup ashore—the *fait accompli* seizure—**delay is defeat**.

The historical record is emphatic on this point:

- During Operation STARVATION in 1945, the United States mined the approaches to the Japanese home islands from the air. Roughly twelve thousand mines, delivered primarily by U.S. Army Air Force B-29 bombers, sank or damaged hundreds of

vessels, closed the Inland Sea, and in the war's final months destroyed Japanese shipping at a rate exceeding any other single means—at a relatively tolerable cost.

- At Wonsan in 1950, some three thousand mines, many laid from junks and sampans, held a 250-ship United Nations amphibious force offshore for over a week. The American naval commander on the scene, Rear Admiral Allan Smith, reported that “we have lost control of the seas to a nation without a Navy, using pre-World War I weapons, laid by vessels that were utilized at the time of the birth of Christ.” It remains the most economical denial of an amphibious operation in modern history.
- In 1991, two Iraqi mines—one of them a moored contact weapon of a design a century old—damaged the landing platform helicopter USS *Tripoli* and the guided missile cruiser USS *Princeton*, and the mine threat was a principal factor in the decision to forgo the planned amphibious assault on the Kuwaiti coast. The world's foremost navy was denied an amphibious operation by a weapon costing a few thousand dollars.

Mining is also the mission least degraded by the transparency revolution, because the most effective delivery platform—the submarine—operates in the medium that remains relatively opaque. Mines can be laid clandestinely by submarines before hostilities are joined; delivered from standoff by aircraft using glide-extended weapons; emplaced by unmanned undersea vehicles; laid by fast surface craft; and laid by allies and partners in their own waters. Each of these delivery paths deserves the Commission's attention, and the mix matters: a mining campaign that depends on a single delivery mode is a mining campaign an adversary can feasibly defeat.

I would offer a candid assessment: the United States' offensive mine inventory, its modern mine designs, its minelaying capacity, and—critically—its institutional expertise in mine warfare have atrophied relative to the demand this Strategy would place on them. The same is true of mine countermeasures. **I recommend the Commission prioritizes actions to help recover the nation's mining and counter-mining capability and capacity.**

D. The Undersea: Opacity Endures—For Now

The physics of the ocean have not changed. Acoustic detection at long range against a quiet target remains among the hardest military-technical problems in engineering, and water remains opaque to many other potential media. Anti-submarine warfare is expensive, manpower-intensive, and unforgiving; expertise in it is achieved over decades and quickly atrophies.

The United States holds a meaningful and, at present, durable advantage in this domain—in platform quieting, in sensors, in processing, and above all in the accumulated tacit expertise of its submarine, maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft, and related forces. The Department has publicly assessed in its 2024 China Military Power Report that the PLA Navy, for all its progress in surface and aviation anti-submarine warfare, continues to lack a robust deep-water ASW capability.

Set that beside the two preceding points and the conclusion writes itself. In a denial campaign, against an adversary whose operational problem is a maritime crossing, in an era when the surface is increasingly transparent, **the attack submarine is the platform least affected by the transparency revolution and most lethal against the target set the Strategy cares about.**

The historical analogy is exact and worth stating. In the Pacific War, the United States submarine force accounted for roughly two percent of Navy personnel and sank more than half of all Japanese maritime tonnage lost. It was the most leveraged force in the fleet—the smallest force producing the largest strategic effect—and it did so by attacking sustainment across vast oceans.

The Falklands makes the same point in miniature, and it is the point I deferred in Section IV.A. The most efficient act of sea denial in that war was actually not the Exocet. It was HMS *Conqueror*: after the loss of the *General Belgrano*, the Argentine surface navy returned to port and stayed there. A single submarine removed an entire fleet from the war and held it out for the duration—the cheapest strategic effect purchased by anyone in that conflict, and a preview of the leverage this Strategy asks the undersea force to provide.

Three qualifications, in the interest of candor:

1. **The advantage is durable, not permanent.** Adversary investment in undersea sensing, seabed infrastructure, large unmanned undersea vehicles, and distributed acoustic and non-acoustic detection is real and sustained. Complacency here would be the most expensive error available to us.
2. **The undersea domain is itself broadening.** Subsea and seabed warfare, undersea cable and infrastructure defense, distributed sensing, and unmanned undersea systems are becoming a real area of competition—one in which the Homeland-defense line of effort and the Russia assessment converge, and one where allied contribution is readily obtained.
3. **The advantage is production-limited.** This is the crux, and it is where I turn in Section VI.

E. The Air Domain: The Range Problem

The trend that most concerns me in naval aviation is not survivability. It is reach.

The Commission is likely familiar with Dr. Andrew Krepinevich's assessment for the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, *Maritime Competition in a Mature Precision-Strike Regime* (which in turn builds on work from Andrew Marshall and the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment). His central chart traces the growth of naval strike range across four regimes:

Period	Effective naval strike range
Age of Sail	Less than half a mile

Period	Effective naval strike range
Dreadnought Era	8–10 miles
Aviation Regime	300-plus miles
Missile Age	7,000-plus miles

The inference Krepinevich draws is the one that should govern our thinking. As extended-range scouting and precision-strike forces proliferate, competitors can create what he calls a maritime “no man's land” for surface ships. A surface fleet in such an environment spends most of its time operating outside the adversary's anti-access/area-denial “bastions”—and perhaps outside the no man's land as well—entering only for periodic, short-duration dashes to launch strikes. Its ability to do so depends on the range and stealth of its strike systems, its counter-ISR capabilities, and its survivability. His conclusion is blunt: although the aircraft carrier possesses the fleet's greatest combat potential, **unless that potential can be projected at far greater ranges than is possible today, the carrier runs a high risk of detection and destruction in a mature precision-strike regime.**

Krepinevich wrote that a decade ago. Every trend he identified has accelerated. Admiral Lord Nelson’s old adage that “a ship is a fool to fight a fort” was never truer than when the fort can shoot an order of magnitude farther than the ship.

The implication for force planning is not that the carrier is obsolete. It is that **the carrier air wing's combat radius is now a strategic variable, and has been on the wrong side of the ledger.** The response set is well understood: organic carrier-based aerial refueling at scale; longer-range strike weapons launched from aircraft rather than delivered by them; longer-range and/or unmanned penetrating ISRT/strike aircraft; and the counter-ISR and signature-management capabilities that buy back the ability to approach at all.

Two further air-domain trends bear briefly on your work. First, the drone problem at both ends: the Strategy's counter-UAS emphasis is a Homeland requirement, but the fleet-defense problem is identical and even more acute, and it is again a cost-exchange problem. Second, the weapons-production problem: sortie generation and launcher count are meaningless if the weapons are not there to expend and not there to replace.

F. The Landward Side of Sea Denial

Although not the focus of the Commission’s work or my testimony, it would be an omission not to raise it because it bears directly on how the Commission should diagnose naval requirements.

Sea denial is not a monopoly of the fleet. Land-based anti-ship fires—mobile, magazine-deep, and emplaced within range of terrain the adversary must transit—are among the most efficient denial instruments available in the Pacific, and they nest precisely within this Strategy's logic. The Marine Corps' Marine Littoral Regiments, operating as stand-in forces conducting expeditionary advanced base operations with ground-launched anti-ship missiles and organic

sensing, convert the islands of the chain into distributed, difficult-to-target firing positions. Allied land-based anti-ship capability—Japanese, and increasingly others along the chain—does the same. The fort, in other words, is now mobile, and the ship is still a fool to fight it. Hunting for mobile transporter-erector-launchers is very difficult, and closing kill chains before they can move is even more so.

Two consequences for the Commission's force planning recommendations:

1. **Naval force structure requirements should be computed net of Joint and allied land-based sea denial**, not in isolation from it. Failing to do so overstates the fleet requirement in some mission areas—and, importantly, understates it in others.
2. **Stand-in forces generate a naval bill**. They must be inserted, sustained, repositioned, and extracted inside the adversary's weapons engagement zone. That is a demand for littoral maneuver shipping, connectors, and survivable logistics—a demand that is easy to omit from a force-level goal and impossible to omit from a campaign.

V. U.S. NAVY ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

The Navy's statutory roles are unchanged, but the Strategy changes the frame under which these roles and functions are interpreted and weighted, their geography, and—most importantly—the operational problem against which they are measured.

The 2026 NDS directs that, “The U.S. Navy must ensure U.S. access to the sea, deny the adversary the use of the sea, and threaten the sea lines of communication on which the adversary relies for both military sustainment and commerce. Maritime forces should provide standoff strike capabilities and survivable subsurface sovereign options. The Navy, via the Active Components and the Navy reserve, will:

- Conduct nuclear operations in support of strategic deterrence, to include providing and maintaining nuclear surety and capabilities.
- Conduct power projection [ashore] through sea-based global strike, to include nuclear and conventional capabilities, including aircraft carriers with carrier-based aviation; interdiction and interception; maritime and/or littoral fires, to include naval subsurface and surface fires; close air support for ground forces; offensive and defensive mine warfare; and, in conjunction with other Services and federal agencies, offensive blockade operations.
- Conduct offensive and defensive manned and unmanned operations associated with the maritime domain, including achieving and maintaining sea control, to include seabed, subsurface, land, air, space, and cyberspace. Conduct amphibious operations to seize, defend, and deny key maritime terrain for purposes of enabling or achieving sea control or sea denial.

- Conduct integrated air and missile defense.
- Provide naval expeditionary logistics to enhance the deployment, sustainment, and redeployment of naval forces and other forces operating within the maritime domain, to include joint sea bases, and provide sea transport for the Armed Forces other than that which is organic to the individual Services and USSOCOM.
- Establish, maintain, and defend sea bases in support of naval, amphibious, land, air, or other joint operations as directed.
- Provide support for joint operations to enhance naval operations, in coordination with the other Services, Combatant Commands, and U.S. Government (USG) departments and agencies.
- Conduct crisis response operations as directed by national leadership.
- Conduct Homeland defense missions, including maritime border defense operations, in support of other federal and local agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard.”

VI. THE BINDING CONSTRAINT: INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY

The Strategy's fourth line of effort is not a supporting effort. It is the enabling condition for the other three, and the Strategy says so—describing the requirement as a national mobilization comparable to the industrial revivals that carried the nation through the world wars and the Cold War. For the naval force, the public record establishes the following.

The submarine industrial base is not delivering the platform the Strategy most needs.

- The *Virginia*-class delivery rate has been approximately **1.1 to 1.2 boats per year since 2022**, against a requirement of 2.0 per year for U.S. needs alone and approximately 2.33 per year to also meet obligations under AUKUS Pillar 1.
- The Congressional Budget Office has reported that *Virginia*-class construction runs an **average of roughly four years late** against originally contracted delivery dates, and that delays or backlogs have increased despite substantial submarine industrial base investment.
- Departmental testimony to Congress has indicated that the two-per-year rate is not now expected until **2032**.
- The *Columbia*-class ballistic missile submarine—the future sea-based leg of the nuclear deterrent, and under this Strategy explicitly a Homeland-defense program—remains behind schedule as the *Ohio*-class begins to age out.

I will put this as directly as I can: The trends I described in Section IV converge on a single conclusion: that **the undersea force is the decisive instrument of the denial mission the Strategy assigns, but it is also the one force we are least able to produce.** That is the strategic problem of this decade stated in a sentence.

Surface construction and repair are similarly constrained. CBO has reported that *Arleigh Burke*-class guided missile destroyer construction delays or backlogs grew by roughly 25 months over three years, and estimates that at historical construction times the battle force would exceed 300 ships today, with an average shortfall of about 20 ships against that counterfactual across FY2026–FY2030. Ship repair and dry-dock capacity constrain readiness independent of new construction.

The comparison that matters is not fleet to fleet. It is yard to yard. China's dual-use commercial and naval shipbuilding base operates at a scale the United States does not possess and cannot rapidly replicate. That is the strategic fact underneath LOE 4.

And the constraint is not primarily financial. Congress has appropriated substantially; the Department has invested in the submarine industrial base at scale; allied contributions under AUKUS have added further capital. The rate has not moved commensurately.

I state this bluntly because I believe the Commission's central value to the nation lies exactly here. **The Strategy is sound and the concepts are maturing. Production capacity is the point of failure.** Any recommendation consisting of additional resources without a mechanism to materially compress the timelines above will not change the outcome.

VII. CONCLUSION

The 2026 NDS is an exercise in managing simultaneity under scarcity. It appropriately prioritizes defending the U.S. Homeland and restoring America's neglected position in our own hemisphere as a necessary predicate to a Eurasian denial strategy. And given the relative balances of power in Asia and Europe, it properly correlates the Department of War's focus and effort on building and sustaining a denial defense along the First Island Chain while relying on our unparalleled network of capable allies to assume primary responsibility for their own conventional defense in Europe and on the Korean Peninsula.

Its military logic is one of denial. Its object is to deny an adversary the seizure and holding of key terrain. That the decisive theater is primarily maritime does not make seapower the purpose of the strategy; it makes seapower an instrument by which a fundamentally Clausewitzian objective is achieved—the defeat of an adversary's capacity to impose his will by force.

The trends favor this objective more than is commonly appreciated. Ubiquitous sensing and cheap precision have made the sea surface more transparent and vulnerable—but they have made an invasion fleet far more so, and it cannot decline the engagement. The undersea, where the American advantage is greatest, remains relatively dark. The mine, the submarine, the long-range missile, unmanned penetrating ISRT/strike aviation, and the stand-in force on the island chain

are all instruments of denial, and denial is the cheaper side of the exchange. The strategy, the technology, and the geography are aligned.

What is not aligned is the industrial base. This is the gap. It is the reason Congress created this Commission, and it is where I would respectfully urge you to spend a preponderance of your finite time.

I thank the Commission and look forward to your questions.

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