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DEPARTMENT of WAR



2026 NDS

NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

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RESTORING PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH

FOR A NEW GOLDEN AGE OF AMERICA

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SECRETARY OF WAR
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JAN 2 3 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOW FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: 2026 National Defense Strategy

For too long, the U.S. Government neglected—even rejected—putting Americans and their concrete interests first. Previous administrations squandered our military advantages and the lives, goodwill, and resources of our people in grandiose nation-building projects and self-congratulatory pledges to uphold cloud-castle abstractions like the rules-based international order. These past leaders neglected and often actively undermined our warfighters' warrior ethos and our military's core, irreplaceable role—fighting, winning, and thereby deterring the wars that really matter to our people. Consequently, President Trump entered office with the nation on the precipice of disastrous wars for which we were unprepared.

President Trump has decisively changed that, courageously putting Americans first to truly make America great once again. Under his leadership, the United States has the world's strongest, most lethal, and most capable military—indeed, the most powerful military that this world has ever seen. No longer will the Department be distracted by interventionism, endless wars, regime change, and nation building. Instead, we will put our people's practical, concrete interests first. We will support a policy of actual peace through strength. We will be the sword and shield to deter war, with the goal of peace—but ready to fight and win the nation's necessary wars if called upon.

This does not mean isolationism. To the contrary, it means a focused and genuinely strategic approach to the threats our nation faces and how to best manage them. This approach is based on a flexible, practical realism that looks at the world in a clear-eyed way, which is essential for serving Americans' interests. As the National Security Strategy articulates, this is the commonsense approach President Trump has advanced.

America First. Peace Through Strength. Common Sense.

Essential to this approach is being realistic about the scale of the threats we face and the resources available to meet those threats. We recognize that it is neither America's duty nor in

our nation's interest to act everywhere on our own, nor will we make up for allied security shortfalls from their leaders' own irresponsible choices. Instead, the Department will prioritize the most important, consequential, and dangerous threats to Americans' interests. We will restore the warrior ethos and rebuild the Joint Force so that America's enemies never doubt our resolve or ability to respond decisively to those threats. We will insist that allies and partners do their part and lend them a helping hand when they do step up. We will be responsible stewards of Americans' lives, money, and support.

We will defend the Homeland and ensure that our interests in the Western Hemisphere are protected. We will deter China in the Indo-Pacific through strength, not confrontation. We will increase burden-sharing with allies and partners around the world. And we will rebuild the U.S. defense industrial base as part of the President's once-in-a-century revival of American industry.

In the process, we will restore peace through strength—not just for the duration of President Trump's administration but for decades to come, as the American people deserve. The 2026 National Defense Strategy shows how.

This Strategy reflects President Trump's historic approach to our nation's defense. It must be carried out thoroughly, rapidly, and comprehensively. All Department of War components will adhere to the guidance and direction enclosed.



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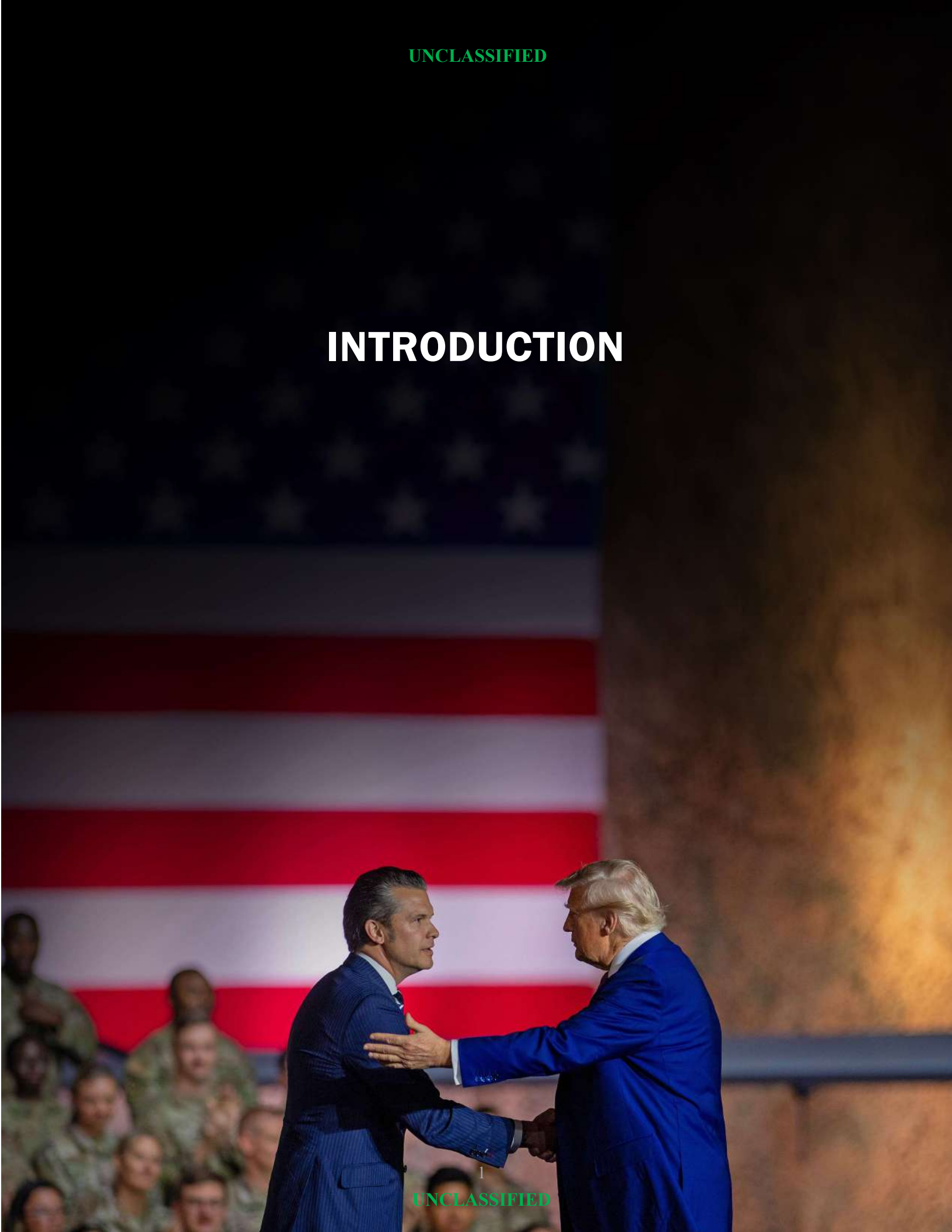
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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

President Trump in his first term and since reentering office in January 2025 has rebuilt the American military to be the world's absolute best—its most formidable fighting force. But it is essential to emphasize how much of an achievement this has been.

The fact is that President Trump took office in January 2025 to one of the most dangerous security environments in our nation's history. At home, America's borders were overrun, narco-terrorists and other enemies grew more powerful throughout the Western Hemisphere, and U.S. access to key terrain like the Panama Canal and Greenland was increasingly in doubt. Meanwhile in Europe, where President Trump had previously led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies to begin taking their defenses seriously, the last administration effectively encouraged them to free-ride, leaving the Alliance unable to deter or respond effectively to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In the Middle East, Israel showed that it was able and willing to defend itself after the barbaric attacks of October 7th—in short, that it is a model ally. Yet rather than empower Israel, the last administration tied its hands. All the while, China and its military grew more powerful in the Indo-Pacific region, the world's largest and most dynamic market area, with significant implications for Americans' own security, freedom, and prosperity.

None of this was foreordained. America emerged from the Cold War as the world's most powerful nation by a wide margin. We were secure in our hemisphere, with a military that was focused on warfighting and far superior to anyone else's, engaged allies, and powerful industry. But rather than husband and cultivate these hard-earned advantages, our nation's post–Cold War leadership and foreign policy establishment squandered them.



Secretary of War Pete Hegseth meets with World War II veterans in Normandy, France, on the 81st Anniversary of D-Day. These American heroes exemplify the warrior ethos at the heart of the U.S. military.

Rather than protect and advance Americans' interests, they opened our borders, forgot the wisdom of the Monroe Doctrine, ceded influence in our hemisphere, and outsourced America's industry, including the defense industrial base (DIB) upon which our forces rely. They sent America's brave sons and daughters to fight war after rudderless war to topple regimes and nation-build halfway around the world, in doing so eroding our military's readiness and delaying modernization. They

condemned our warfighters, criticizing and neglecting the warrior ethos that was once cultivated and heralded by our forerunners—and that made this American military the envy of the world. They allowed, even enabled, our cunning adversaries to grow more powerful, even as they encouraged our allies to behave as dependents rather than partners, weakening our alliances and leaving us more vulnerable. And so we found ourselves, in January 2025, facing not only a world with individual regions at war or descending toward it but also increased risk of America itself being drawn into simultaneous major wars across theaters—a third world war, as President Trump himself warned.

That is all changing now. Under President Trump's leadership, consistent with his vision and direction as laid out in the National Security Strategy (NSS), the Department of War (DoW) is laser-focused on restoring peace through strength. As detailed in the NSS, the President's approach is one of a flexible, practical realism that looks at the world in a clear-eyed way, which is essential for serving Americans' interests.

This has clear implications for the Department of War. Above all, it means prioritizing the missions that matter most for Americans' security, freedom, and prosperity. This means concentrating the Department's efforts to:

- **Defend the U.S. Homeland.** We will secure America's borders and maritime approaches, and we will defend our nation's skies through Golden Dome for America and a renewed focus on countering unmanned aerial threats. We will maintain a robust and modern nuclear deterrent capable of addressing the strategic threats to our country, raise and sustain formidable cyber defenses, and hunt and neutralize Islamic terrorists who have the ability and intent to strike our Homeland. At the same time, we will actively and fearlessly defend America's interests throughout the Western Hemisphere. We will guarantee U.S. military and commercial access to key terrain, especially the Panama Canal, Gulf of America, and Greenland. We will provide President Trump with credible military options to use against narco-terrorists wherever they may be. We will engage in good faith with our neighbors, from Canada to our partners in Central and South America, but we will ensure that they respect and do their part to defend our shared interests. And where they do not, we will stand ready to take focused, decisive action that concretely advances U.S. interests. This is the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, and America's military stands ready to enforce it with speed, power, and precision, as the world saw in Operation ABSOLUTE RESOLVE.

- **Deter China in the Indo-Pacific Through Strength, Not Confrontation.** President Trump seeks a stable peace, fair trade, and respectful relations with China, and he has shown that he is willing to engage President Xi Jinping directly to achieve those goals. But President Trump has also shown how important it is to negotiate from a position of strength—and he has tasked DoW accordingly. Consistent with the President's approach, DoW will therefore seek

and open a wider range of military-to-military communications with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) with a focus on supporting strategic stability with Beijing as well as deconfliction and de-escalation, more generally. But we will also be clear-eyed and realistic about the speed, scale, and quality of China's historic military buildup. Our goal in doing so is not to dominate China; nor is it to strangle or humiliate them. Rather, our goal is simple: To prevent anyone, including China, from being able to dominate us or our allies—in essence, to set the military conditions required to achieve the NSS goal of a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific that allows all of us to enjoy a decent peace. To that end, as the NSS directs, we will erect a strong denial defense along the First Island Chain (FIC). We will also urge and enable key regional allies and partners to do more for our collective defense. In doing so, we will reinforce deterrence by denial so that all nations recognize that their interests are best served through peace and restraint. This is how we will establish a position of military strength from which President Trump can negotiate favorable terms for our nation. We will be strong but not unnecessarily confrontational. This is how we will help to turn President Trump's vision for peace through strength into reality in the vital Indo-Pacific.

- **Increase Burden-Sharing with U.S. Allies and Partners.** Ours is not a strategy of isolation. As the NSS directs, it is one of focused engagement abroad with a clear eye toward advancing the concrete, practical interests of Americans. Through this America First, commonsense lens, America's alliances and partners have an essential role to play—but not as the dependencies of the last generation. Rather, as the Department rightly prioritizes Homeland defense and deterring China, other threats will persist, and our allies will be essential to dealing with all of them. Our allies will do so not as a favor to us, but out of their own interests. In the Indo-Pacific, where our allies share our desire for a free and open regional order, allies and partners' contributions will be vital to deterring and balancing China. In Europe and other theaters, allies will take the lead against threats that are less severe for us but more so for them, with critical but more limited support from the United States.

  In all cases, we will be honest but clear about the urgent need for them to do their part and that it is in their own interests to do so without delay. We will incentivize and enable them to step up. This requires a change in tone and style from the past, but that is necessary not only for Americans but also for our allies and partners. For too long, allies and partners have been content to let us subsidize their defense. Our political establishment reaped the credit while regular Americans paid the bill. With President Trump, a new approach is in effect. Already, President Trump has set a new global standard for defense spending at NATO's Hague Summit—3.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) on core military spending and an additional 1.5% on security-related spending, for a total of 5% of GDP. We will advocate that our allies and partners meet this standard around the world, not just in Europe. As our allies do so, together with the United States, they will be able to field the forces required to deter or defeat potential adversaries in every key region of the world, even in the face of simultaneous

aggression. This is how we will set conditions for lasting peace through strength around the world.

- **Supercharge the U.S. Defense Industrial Base.** President Trump is leading a once-in-a-century revival of American industry, re-shoring strategic industries to the United States and revitalizing the industries previous generations had shipped overseas. We will harness this historic initiative to rebuild our nation's defense industry, which underpins our defense and that of our allies and partners. We must return to being the world's premier arsenal, one that can produce not only for ourselves but also for our allies and partners at scale, rapidly, and at the highest levels of quality. To achieve this, we will reinvest in U.S. defense production, building out capacity; empowering innovators; adopting new advances in technology, like artificial intelligence (AI); and clearing away outdated policies, practices, regulations, and other obstacles to the type and scale of production that the Joint Force requires for the priorities before us. We will simultaneously leverage allied and partner production not just to meet our own requirements but also to incentivize them to increase defense spending and help them field additional forces as quickly as possible. In the process, we will not only ensure our own defense industrial advantage but also put our alliances on stronger footing so that they can do their part to maintain peace through strength on a strong, equitable, and enduring basis.

With the Department laser-focused on these priorities, we will ensure that the Joint Force is ready to deter and, if called upon, to prevail by achieving the nation's objectives against the most dangerous threats to Americans' interests. At the same time, this Strategy will enable the Joint Force to provide President Trump with the operational flexibility and agility required for other objectives, especially the ability to launch decisive operations against targets anywhere—including directly from the U.S. Homeland, as America's servicemembers so memorably demonstrated in Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER. By ensuring that the Joint Force is second to none, we will ensure the greatest optionality for the President to employ America's armed forces.



President Donald J. Trump salutes during the Pentagon's 9/11 Observance Ceremony on September 11, 2025.

The core logic of this Strategy, consistent with President Trump's historic and needed shift, is to put Americans' interests first in a concrete and practical way. This requires being clear-eyed about the threats that we face, as well as the resources available to both us and our allies to confront them. It requires prioritizing what matters most for Americans and where

the gravest and most consequential threats to their interests lie. It requires being honest and clear with our allies and partners that they simply must do more rapidly, not as a favor to Americans but for their own interests. This will entail a sharp shift—in approach, focus, and tone. But that is what is needed to shift away from the legacy course headed for disaster and toward making America great again. It is also the one that will set the conditions for lasting peace not only at home but abroad—in other words, a better outcome not only for Americans but also for our allies and partners. Out with utopian idealism; in with hardnosed realism. That is the mission we at DoW must embrace—boldly, actively, and without hesitation.

President Trump is leading our nation into a new golden age. As he does, he speaks often about restoring peace. But he is equally clear that we can only do so from a position of strength—including, fundamentally, military strength. Only the Department of War can provide that power to ensure that the nation's interests are defended, and we will unapologetically do so. We will be our nation's sword and its shield, always ready to be wielded decisively at the President's direction, in service of his vision for lasting peace through strength. This National Defense Strategy (NDS) shows how.

THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT



THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

At its heart, as the NSS lays out, an America First strategy must evaluate, sort, and prioritize. It must practically correlate ends, ways, and means in a realistic fashion. Consistent with this approach, this Strategy is defined by a realistic, practical approach to clearly understanding the threats Americans face and how realistically and pragmatically those threats can be addressed in ways consistent with American interests.

This Strategy is fundamentally different from the grandiose strategies of the past post–Cold War administrations, untethered as they were from a concrete focus on Americans' practical interests. It does not conflate Americans' interests with those of the rest of the world—that a threat to a person halfway around the world is the same as to an American. Nor does it see implanting our way of life by force as necessary. It does not seek to solve all the world's problems. Rather, it focuses in practical ways on real, credible threats to Americans' security, freedom, and prosperity. As it does so, it recognizes that some threats—like to our Homeland—are more direct and visceral than others. Yet it also acknowledges that even those that may feel distant—like the importance of maintaining U.S. access to the Indo-Pacific, the world's largest market area—still have exceptionally real—indeed, fundamental—implications for our nation's vital interests.

As the NSS directs, this Strategy recognizes very clearly that not all threats are of equal severity, gravity, and consequence. But even those of lesser salience still matter and must not be ignored. Therefore, even as this Strategy 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 not just over the remainder of the President's term but for many years to come.

HOMELAND AND HEMISPHERE

For decades, America's foreign policy establishment neglected our nation's Homeland defenses. This was partly due to the view that such defenses were no longer necessary. But it was also informed by an increasing desire on the part of Washington decisionmakers to ease border controls and facilitate the illegal migration of people and the unchecked, unfair flow of goods.

The sorry results speak for themselves. In recent decades, our nation has been overwhelmed by a flood of illegal aliens. At the same time, narcotics have poured across our borders, poisoning hundreds of thousands of Americans. Narcotics traffickers in our hemisphere have profited enormously off this evil and are rightly designated as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) as a result—but that is not all. Operation SOUTHERN SPEAR shows that President Trump is deadly

serious about preventing narco-terrorists from trafficking lethal narcotics into our country. The President is also serious about bringing narco-terrorists to justice. Nicolas Maduro, for instance, thought that he could poison Americans with impunity. Operation ABSOLUTE RESOLVE taught him otherwise—and all narco-terrorists should take note.

More direct military threats to the American Homeland have also grown in recent years, including nuclear threats as well as a variety of conventional strike and space, cyber, electromagnetic warfare capabilities. At the same time, although the United States has severely degraded Islamic terrorist organizations like al Qaeda and ISIS in recent decades, these actors continue to adapt and pose a credible threat.

"American interests are also under threat throughout the Western Hemisphere."

American interests are also under threat throughout the Western Hemisphere. As early as the 19th century, our predecessors recognized that the United States must take a more powerful, leading role in hemispheric affairs in order to safeguard our nation's own economic and national security. It was this insight that gave rise to the Monroe Doctrine and subsequent Roosevelt Corollary. But the wisdom of this approach was lost, as we took our dominant position for granted even as it started to slip away. As a result, we have seen adversaries' influence grow from Greenland in the Arctic to the Gulf of America, the Panama Canal, and locations farther south. This not only threatens U.S. access to key terrain throughout the hemisphere; it also leaves the Americas less stable and secure, undermining both U.S. interests and those of our regional partners.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC)

By any measure, China is already the second most powerful country in the world—behind only the United States—and the most powerful state relative to us since the 19th century. And, while China faces very significant internal economic, demographic, and societal challenges, the fact is that its power is growing. Beijing has already spent vast amounts on the PLA in recent years, often at the expense of domestic priorities. Yet China can still afford to spend even more on its military, should it choose to do so—and it has shown that it is able to do so effectively. Indeed, the speed, scale, and quality of China's historic military buildup speak for themselves, including forces designed for operations in the Western Pacific as well as those capable of reaching targets much farther away.

This matters for America's interests because, as the NSS recognizes, the Indo-Pacific will soon make up more than half of the global economy. The American people's security, freedom, and prosperity are therefore directly linked to our ability to trade and engage from a position of strength in the Indo-Pacific. Were China—or anyone else, for that matter—to dominate this broad and crucial region, it would be able to effectively veto Americans' access to the world's economic center of gravity, with enduring implications for our nation's economic prospects, including our ability to reindustrialize.

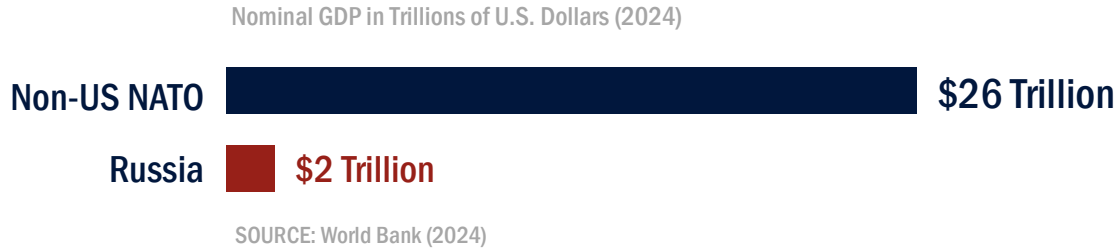
That is why the NSS directs DoW to maintain a favorable balance of military power in the Indo-Pacific. Not for purposes of dominating, humiliating, or strangling China. To the contrary, our goal is far more scoped and reasonable than that: It is simply to ensure that neither China nor anyone else can dominate us or our allies. This does not require regime change or some other existential struggle. Rather, a decent peace, on terms favorable to Americans but that China can also accept and live under, is possible. That is the wise premise of President Trump's visionary and realistic approach to diplomacy with Beijing. At the same time, the Department's efforts will provide the undergirding strength for this approach.

RUSSIA

Russia will remain a persistent but manageable threat to NATO's eastern members for the foreseeable future. Indeed, although Russia suffers from a variety of demographic and economic difficulties, its ongoing war in Ukraine shows that it still retains deep reservoirs of military and industrial power. Russia has also shown that it has the national resolve required to sustain a protracted war in its near abroad. In addition, although the Russian military threat is primarily focused on Eastern Europe, Russia also possesses the world's largest nuclear arsenal, which it continues to modernize and diversify, as well as undersea, space, and cyber capabilities that it could employ against the U.S. Homeland.

In light of this, the Department will ensure that U.S. forces are prepared to defend against Russian threats to the U.S. Homeland. The Department will also continue to play a vital role in NATO itself, even as we calibrate U.S. force posture and activities in the European theater to better account for the Russian threat to American interests as well as our allies' own capabilities. Moscow is in no position to make a bid for European hegemony. European NATO dwarfs Russia in economic scale, population, and, thus, latent military power. At the same time, although Europe remains important, it has a smaller and decreasing share of global economic power. It follows that, although we are and will remain engaged in Europe, we must—and will—prioritize defending the U.S. Homeland and deterring China.

Non-U.S. NATO Economic Capacity Far Outpaces Russia



Fortunately, our NATO allies are substantially more powerful than Russia—it is not even close. Germany's economy *alone* dwarfs that of Russia. At the same time, under President Trump's leadership, NATO allies have committed to raise defense spending to the new global standard of 5% of GDP in total, with 3.5% of GDP invested in hard military capabilities. Our NATO allies are therefore strongly positioned to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense, with critical but more limited U.S. support. This includes taking the lead in supporting Ukraine's defense. As President Trump has said, the war in Ukraine must end. As he has also emphasized, however, this is Europe's responsibility first and foremost. Securing and sustaining peace will therefore require leadership and commitment from our NATO allies.

IRAN

President Trump has consistently made clear that Iran will not be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons. And with Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER, he showed that he follows through on his word—decisively. No other military in the world could have executed an operation of such scale, complexity, and consequence as Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER. Yet the Joint Force did so flawlessly and obliterated Iran's nuclear program. U.S. forces also provided critical support to Israel's defense throughout the 12-Day War, enabling Israel's historic operational and strategic successes. Now, Iran's regime is weaker and more vulnerable than it has been in decades.

Iran's "Axis of Resistance" is similarly devastated. Israeli operations have left Hezbollah and Hamas severely degraded. At President Trump's direction, the United States also launched Operation ROUGH RIDER, which degraded the Houthis' strike capabilities and ultimately compelled the Houthis to sue for peace—and stop shooting at U.S. ships. In the process, through



Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Caine brief the success of Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER.

a short, sharp, and decisive campaign, the President was able to restore freedom of navigation for U.S. vessels.

Even so, although Iran has suffered severe setbacks over recent months, it appears intent on reconstituting its conventional military forces. Iran's leaders have also left open the possibility that they will try again to obtain a nuclear weapon, including by refusing to engage in meaningful negotiations. Moreover, although Iran's proxies have been severely degraded, they may also seek to rebuild devastated infrastructure and capabilities. Nor can we ignore the facts that the Iranian regime has the blood of Americans on its hands, that it remains intent on destroying our close ally Israel, and that Iran and its proxies routinely instigate regional crises that not only threaten the lives of American servicemembers in the region but also prevent the region itself from pursuing the kind of peaceful and prosperous future that so many of its leaders and peoples clearly wish for.

Yet there are significant opportunities before us as well. Israel has long demonstrated that it is both willing and able to defend itself with critical but limited support from the United States. Israel is a model ally, and we have an opportunity now to further empower it to defend itself and promote our shared interests, building on President Trump's historic efforts to secure peace in the Middle East. Likewise, in the Gulf, U.S. partners are increasingly willing and able to do more to defend themselves against Iran and its proxies, including by acquiring and fielding a variety of U.S. military systems. This creates even more opportunities for us to enable individual partners to do more for their defense. It will also enable us to foster integration between regional partners, so that they can do even more together.

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA (DPRK)

The DPRK poses a direct military threat to the Republic of Korea (ROK) as well as to Japan, both of which are U.S. treaty allies. Although many of North Korea's large conventional forces are aged or poorly maintained, South Korea must stay vigilant against the threat of a North Korean invasion. North Korea's missile forces are also capable of striking targets in the ROK and Japan with conventional and nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, the DPRK's nuclear forces are increasingly capable of threatening the U.S.

Homeland. These forces are growing in size and sophistication, and they present a clear and present danger of nuclear attack on the American Homeland.

THE SIMULTANEITY PROBLEM AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ALLIED BURDEN-SHARING

It is only prudent for the United States and its allies to be prepared for the possibility that one or more potential opponents might act together in a coordinated or opportunistic fashion across multiple theaters. Such a scenario would be less of a concern if our allies and partners had spent recent decades investing adequately in their defenses. But they did not. Instead, with rare exceptions, they were too often content to allow the United States to defend them, while they cut defense spending and invested instead in things like public welfare and other domestic programs. Nor were they the only ones at fault. Certainly, it was their own decision to underinvest in their respective defenses. But it was a decision often encouraged by past U.S. policymakers, who imprudently believed that the United States benefited from allies who were more dependencies than they were partners.



President Donald J. Trump speaks at the NATO Hague Summit after securing historic defense spending commitments from our NATO allies.

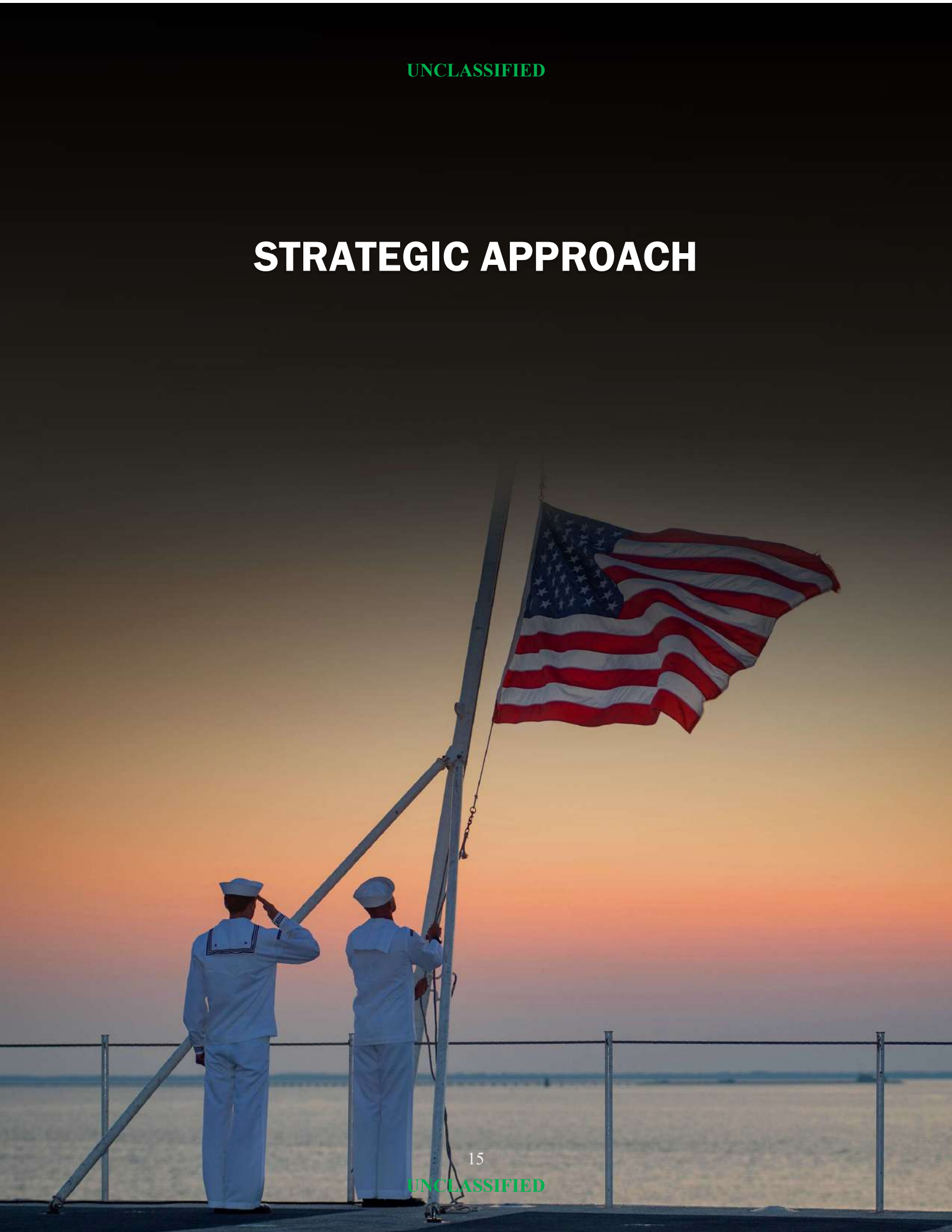
Fortunately, that is over now. As President Trump has made clear, our allies and partners must shoulder their fair share of the burden of our collective defense. This is the right thing for them to do, especially after decades of the United States subsidizing their defense. But it is also vital from a strategic perspective—both for us and for them. And thanks to President Trump's leadership, since January 2025, we have seen our allies beginning to step up, especially in Europe and South Korea.

This is why burden-sharing is such an essential ingredient of this Strategy, even as DoW prioritizes growing the Joint Force and advocating defense spending toplines to support such growth. America's alliances and partnerships form a defensive perimeter around Eurasia. Not only do these relationships offer favorable geography, but they also include many of the world's wealthiest nations. Taken together, our alliance network is far wealthier than all our potential adversaries combined. As a result, if our allies and partners invest properly in their defenses,

consistent with the new global standard set at the Hague Summit, together we can generate more than enough forces to deter potential opponents, including if they act concurrently.

In these ways, we will maintain favorable balances of power in each of the world's key regions, as directed by the NSS. As U.S. forces focus on Homeland defense and the Indo-Pacific, our allies and partners elsewhere will take primary responsibility for their own defense with critical but more limited support from American forces. This will enable President Trump to set us on a course to sustain peace through strength for decades to come and leave our alliances and partnerships stronger than they have been at any point since the end of the Cold War.

STRATEGIC APPROACH



STRATEGIC APPROACH

The Department's strategic approach rests on the following key lines of effort (LOEs):

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**

The remainder of this section provides further clarity, guidance, and direction for each LOE.

LINE OF EFFORT 1: DEFEND THE U.S. HOMELAND

As President Trump has said, the U.S. military's foremost priority is to defend the U.S. Homeland. The Department will therefore prioritize doing just that, including by defending America's interests throughout the Western Hemisphere. We will do so as follows:

- **Secure Our Borders.** Border security is national security. DoW will therefore prioritize efforts to seal our borders, repel forms of invasion, and deport illegal aliens in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
- **Counter Narco-Terrorists in the Hemisphere.** Even as the Department works to secure America's borders, we recognize that threats to those borders must also be addressed deeper in the hemisphere. We will therefore help to develop partners' ability to degrade narco-terrorist organizations across the Americas and support them as they do, while also maintaining our ability to take decisive action unilaterally. But if our partners cannot or will do not do their part, then we will be prepared to act decisively on our own, as the Joint Force demonstrated in Operation ABSOLUTE RESOLVE.
- **Secure Key Terrain in the Western Hemisphere.** As the NSS lays out, the United States will no longer cede access to or influence over key terrain in the Western Hemisphere. DoW will therefore provide the President with credible options to guarantee U.S. military and commercial access to key terrain from the Arctic to South America, especially Greenland, the Gulf of America, and the Panama Canal. We will ensure that the Monroe Doctrine is upheld in our time.

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.

- **Defend America's Skies with President Trump's Golden Dome for America and Other, Drone-Specific Measures.** The Department will prioritize efforts to develop President Trump's Golden Dome for America, with a specific focus on options to cost-effectively defeat large missile barrages and other advanced aerial attacks. In addition, DoW will develop and deploy capabilities and systems to counter unmanned aerial systems. We will also ensure that U.S. forces have access to the electromagnetic spectrum required to defend the Homeland.
- **Modernize and Adapt U.S. Nuclear Forces.** The United States requires a strong, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal adapted to the nation's overall and defense strategies. We will modernize and adapt our nuclear forces accordingly with focused attention on deterrence and escalation management amidst the changing global nuclear landscape. The United States should never—*will* never—be left vulnerable to nuclear blackmail.
- **Deter and Defend Against Cyber Threats.** The Department will prioritize bolstering cyber defenses for U.S. military and certain civilian targets. DoW will also develop other options to deter or degrade cyber threats to the U.S. Homeland.
- **Counter Islamic Terrorists.** The Department will maintain a resource-sustainable approach to countering Islamic terrorists, focused on organizations that possess the capability and intent to strike the U.S. Homeland.

LINE OF EFFORT 2: DETER CHINA IN THE INDO-PACIFIC THROUGH STRENGTH, NOT CONFRONTATION

The Department of War will follow President Trump's lead in engaging our PLA counterparts through a wider range of formats. As we do so, our focus will be on supporting strategic stability and on deconfliction and de-escalation more broadly. At the same time, President Trump has made clear his desire for a decent peace in the Indo-Pacific, where trade flows openly and fairly, we can all prosper, and our interests are respected. DoW will use these engagements to help communicate that vision and intent to Chinese authorities, while also demonstrating through our behavior our own sincere desire to achieve and sustain such a peaceful and prosperous future.

We will not lose sight, however, of President Trump's most important direction for the Department—*peace through strength*. Recognizing this, it is our essential responsibility at DoW to ensure that President Trump is always able to negotiate from a position of strength in order to sustain peace in the Indo-Pacific. To that end, as the NSS directs, we will build, posture, and sustain a strong denial defense along the FIC. We will also work closely with our allies and partners in the region to incentivize and enable them to do more for our collective defense, especially in ways that are relevant to an effective denial defense. Through these efforts, we will make clear that any attempt at aggression against U.S. interests will fail and is therefore not worth attempting in the first place. That is the essence of deterrence by denial.

In this manner, DoW will provide the military strength for President Trump's visionary and realistic diplomacy, thereby setting conditions for a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific that allows all of us—the United States, China, and others in the region—to enjoy a decent peace. At the same time, in the process of erecting a strong denial defense along the FIC, DoW will ensure that the Joint Force always has the ability to conduct devastating strikes and operations against targets anywhere in the world, including directly from the U.S. Homeland, thereby providing the President with second-to-none operational flexibility and agility.

LINE OF EFFORT 3: INCREASE BURDEN-SHARING WITH U.S. ALLIES AND PARTNERS

Consistent with the President's approach as detailed in the NSS, this Strategy prioritizes dealing with the greatest threats to Americans' interests. But it does not neglect the other threats. Rather, building on the President's approach, this Strategy relies on sensibly and prudently pressing and enabling U.S. allies and partners to take primary responsibility for defending against those other

threats, with critical but more limited U.S. support. In doing so, it sets the conditions for lasting peace through strength across all theaters.

To that end, the Department will prioritize strengthening incentives for allies and partners to take primary responsibility for their own defense in Europe, the Middle East, and on the Korean Peninsula, with critical but limited support from U.S. forces. At the same time, we will seek to make it as easy as possible for allies and partners to take on a greater share of the burden of our collective defense, including through close collaboration on force and operational planning and working closely to bolster their forces' readiness for key missions.

As President Trump has shown, there must be clear accountability. Incentives work and will be a critical part of our alliance policy. We will therefore prioritize cooperation and engagements with model allies—those who are spending as they need to and visibly doing more against threats in their regions, with critical but limited U.S. support—including through arms sales, defense industrial collaboration, intelligence-sharing, and other activities that leave our nations better off.

In practical terms, DoW will proceed as follows:

- **Western Hemisphere.** Canada and Mexico have strong roles in hemispheric defense, including by working with DoW and other U.S. agencies to prevent illegal aliens and narco-terrorists from reaching America's borders. Canada also has a vital role to play in helping to defend North America against other threats, including by strengthening defenses against air, missile, and undersea threats. In addition, U.S. partners throughout the Western Hemisphere can do far more to help combat illegal migration as well as to degrade narco-terrorists and prevent U.S. adversaries from controlling or otherwise exercising undue influence over key terrain, especially Greenland, the Gulf of America, and the Panama Canal. The Department will work with nations across the hemisphere to advance these objectives, incentivizing and enabling them to step up accordingly.
- **Europe.** As the NSS makes clear, Europe taking primary responsibility for its own conventional defense is the answer to the security threats it faces. The Department will therefore incentivize and enable NATO allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense with critical but more limited U.S. support. Central to this effort, DoW will work closely with our allies to ensure that they deliver on the defense spending pledge that they made at the Hague Summit. We will also seek to leverage NATO processes in support of these goals, while also working to expand transatlantic defense industrial cooperation and reduce defense trade barriers in order to maximize our collective ability to produce forces required to achieve U.S. and allied defense objectives. Finally, we will be clear with our European allies that their efforts and resources are best focused on Europe.

This is for the simple reason that it is in Europe where they can—and must—make the greatest difference for our collective defense.

- **Middle East.** As President Trump laid out in his historic Riyadh speech, the United States seeks a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East. As the President also made clear, however, this transformation can only come at the hands of those with the greatest stake in the region's future—our allies and partners in the region itself. Our task is to support them in that effort, building on the strong foundation that President Trump has laid through his clear-eyed, tireless diplomacy. To that end, DoW will empower regional allies and partners to take primary responsibility for deterring and defending against Iran and its proxies, including by strongly backing Israel's efforts to defend itself; deepening cooperation with our Arabian Gulf partners; and enabling integration between Israel and our Arabian Gulf partners, building on President Trump's historic initiative, the Abraham Accords. As we do, DoW will maintain our ability to take focused, decisive action to defend U.S. interests. Through this approach, we can set and reinforce conditions for lasting peace through strength in the region.



President Trump's leadership is remaking the world into a more peaceful and prosperous place, including the Middle East.

- **Africa.** The Department's priority in Africa is to prevent Islamic terrorists from using regional safe havens to strike the U.S. Homeland. Consistent with this Strategy's resource-sustainable approach to counterterrorism, we will stand ready to take direct action against Islamic terrorists who are both capable of and intent on striking the U.S. Homeland, including in close coordination with interagency and foreign partners. We will simultaneously seek to empower allies and partners to lead efforts to degrade and destroy other terrorist organizations.

- **Korean Peninsula.** With its powerful military, supported by high defense spending, a robust defense industry, and mandatory conscription, South Korea is capable of taking primary responsibility for deterring North Korea with critical but more limited U.S. support. South Korea also has the will to do so, given that it faces a direct and clear threat from North Korea. This shift in the balance of responsibility is consistent with America's interest in updating U.S. force posture on the Korean Peninsula. In this way, we can ensure a stronger

and more mutually beneficial alliance relationship that is better aligned with America's defense priorities, thereby setting conditions for lasting peace.

LINE OF EFFORT 4: SUPERCHARGE THE U.S. DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

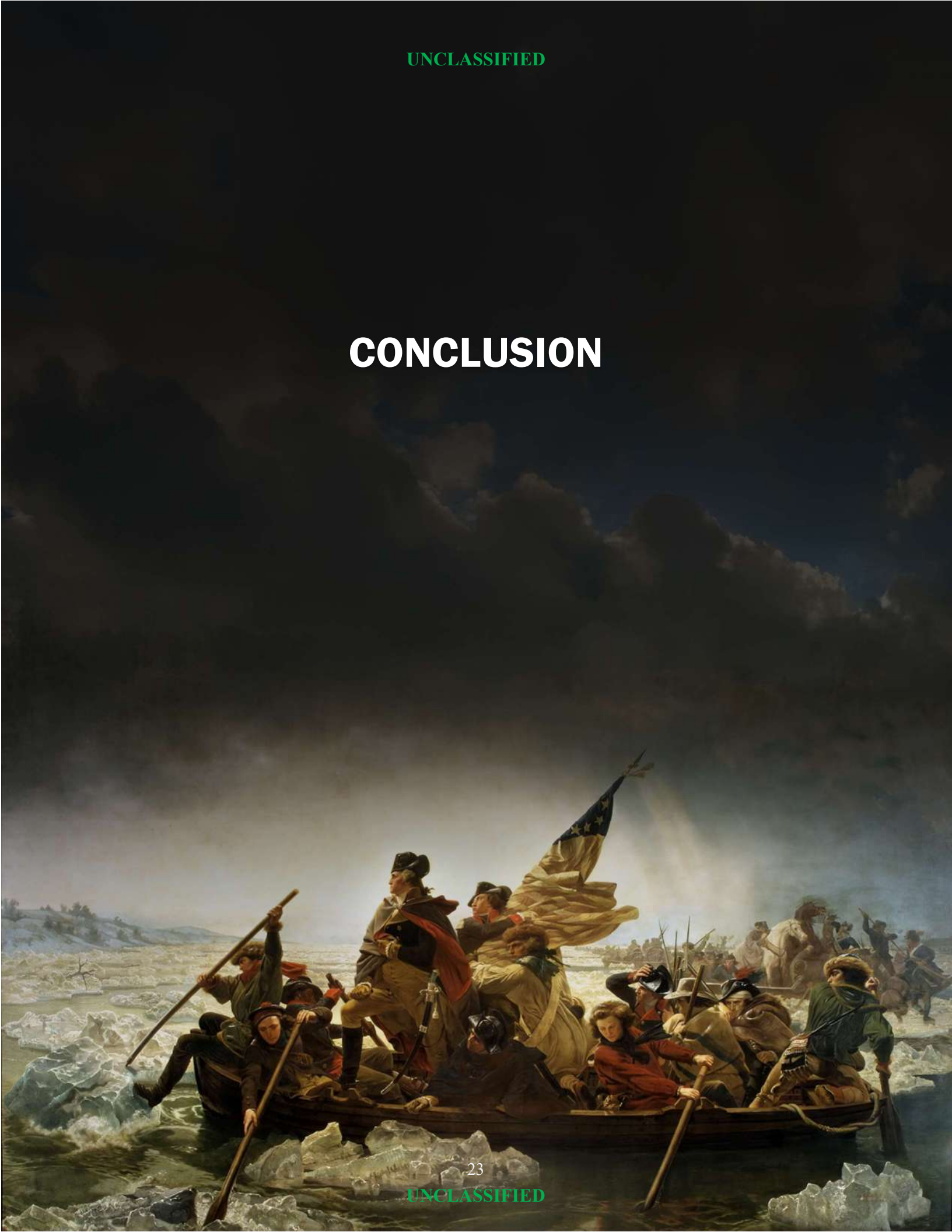
The U.S. DIB is the foundation to rebuilding and adapting our military so that it remains the strongest in the world. President Trump has succeeded in working with Congress to deliver and lead a once-in-a-century revival of American industry and a generational investment in our nation's defense, and we must be good stewards of those precious resources. Doing so is vital to ensuring that U.S. forces have the weapons, equipment, and transportation and distribution capability needed to implement this Strategy. It is also critical to ensuring that the United States can help arm allies and partners as they take on a greater share of the burden of our collective defense, including by leading efforts to deter or defend against other, lesser threats. The DIB thus undergirds the other key pillars of this Strategy. We will therefore take urgent action to mobilize, renew, and secure it—to supercharge American defense industry so that it is ready to meet the challenges of our era as effectively as it did those of the last century.

Our fighting force depends on the DIB to produce, deliver, and sustain critical munitions, systems, and platforms. Our readiness, lethality, range, and survivability—and, ultimately, the military options we provide—are directly linked to the DIB's ability to securely develop, field, sustain, resupply, and transport the equipment and materiel that affords us our warfighting advantage. We will therefore bolster our organic sustainment capabilities, grow nontraditional vendors, and partner with traditional DIB vendors, Congress, our allies and partners, and other federal departments and agencies to reinvigorate and mobilize our great nation's unrivaled creativity and ingenuity, re-spark our innovative spirit, and restore our industrial capacity. Making the DIB great again requires clear vision, strong relationships, and a solid commitment to rebuild the ultimate foundation of our military strength.

As the NSS makes clear, this effort will require nothing short of a national mobilization—a call to industrial arms on par with similar revivals of the last century that ultimately powered our nation to victory in the world wars and the Cold War that followed.

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CONCLUSION



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Taking our nation from the precipice of a world war just a year ago, President Trump is now leading our nation into a new golden age, one defined by putting Americans first in a commonsense, pragmatic, and concrete way. No longer will we squander Americans' will, resources, and even lives in foolish and grandiose adventures abroad. But we will not retreat. Rather, we will unabashedly prioritize Americans' concrete interests with an approach of flexible realism. We will restore the warrior ethos. We will refocus the American military on its core, irreplaceable goal of winning the nation's wars decisively.



President Donald J. Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth render honors during a Memorial Day Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia.

In doing so—as President Trump has so memorably emphasized—our purpose will not be aggression or perpetual war. Rather, our goal is peace. Peace is the highest good. But not a peace that sacrifices our people's security, freedoms, and prosperity. Rather, a peace that Americans deserve—a noble and proud peace. Fortunately, this peace is compatible with the interests of our potential opponents, *if* they keep their demands reasonable and cabined. We do not demand their humiliation or submission. Rather, we demand only that they respect our reasonably conceived interests and those of our allies and partners who stand stoutly with us. If we all can acknowledge this, we can achieve a flexible and sustainable balance of power among us, and peace.

But we at the Department of War will be ready if our gracious offer is spurned. We know that wishing for a decent peace is not the same thing as bringing it about. Thus, if our potential opponents are unwise enough to reject our peaceful overtures and choose conflict instead, America's armed forces will stand ready to fight and win the nation's wars in ways that make sense for Americans. To ensure that is the case, this Strategy will ensure that we see things and the choices we need to make clearly. We will prioritize addressing the most consequential and grave threats to Americans' interests. We will revamp our network of allies and partners to meet the threats we face. And we will be ready, always carrying the sharpest and most formidable sword but prepared to offer the olive branch.

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DEPARTMENT OF WAR
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA