

## The NMS and More Blank Pages

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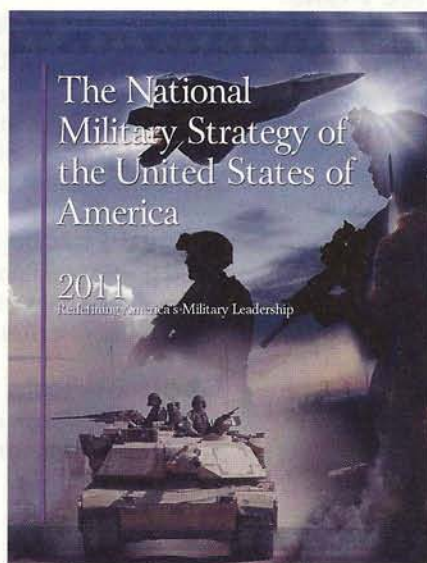
Our 2011 *National Military Strategy* (NMS), released in February, promises that our armed forces, the "Joint Force," will contribute—along with diplomacy, our economic power and our psychosocial efforts—to the satisfaction of the aims and objectives of the *National Security Strategy* (NSS), the *National Defense Strategy* (NDS) and the *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR). It asserts that military leadership is essential to exercising the full spectrum of power to defend national interests and advance international security and stability, and it establishes that we will achieve our goals in partnership with allies and friends, adhering to humanitarian efforts to minimize collateral damage and civilian casualties. We will simultaneously protect the future of the force by "modernizing military functions and capabilities," focusing on "growth in full spectrum capability," promoting and enhancing our all-volunteer force and the forces of our allies, and protecting and improving the well-being and welfare of the force and their families.

That is a thumbnail summary of the 21-page NMS. A more detailed presentation and discussion of its contents is found in the AUSA Institute of Land Warfare "National Security Watch" report, "The 2011 National Military Strategy: Resetting a Strong Foundation," published on May 2.

My reaction to the NMS is much the same as that expressed a few months ago about the last QDR: There are blank pages. The document is a reiteration of the aims and objectives of the NSS and the NDS, and it expresses a plausible understanding that it is all possible. It does not address, however, actual capabilities to achieve the goals identified or those that must be inferred. It is not supposed to lay out a "how to do it" plan, but I believe it

should create some confidence in what we can do or provide some expression of what resources will be needed.

There are new and expanded missions for a force structure and end strength that, at least in the Army, have been over-stressed, overused and worn out in the past decade. There have been dire consequences affecting soldiers and their families in both the active and



reserve components. Promising improvement in their well-being and welfare while programming expanding commitments is not reassuring. There have also been dire consequences to our stocks of combat equipment as the maintenance backlog and replacement acquisitions have not fulfilled needs.

There is very little reference to a continuing need for robust budget support—only a sentence that the "military will face increased budget pressures" to which we will adjust to assure that we do "not become a hollow force." Overall that sounds like acceptance that we will do more with less, a chronic demand that does not promise fulfillment of the strategy. It is also a promise that makes no reference to the President's

announced \$400 billion reduction in defense spending over the next 12 years, which must affect the case for readiness for full spectrum warfare.

There is also little reference to the extant threats that the strategy is intended to address. Concern is expressed over proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, China's military modernization, the continuance of worldwide terrorism and the need to conclude successfully the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. But again, those expressions are not accompanied by any reassurance that we will be trained, equipped and ready to meet all challenges.

The NMS's conclusion includes statements about "enabling whole-of-nation approaches" and leadership to "address"—not "solve"—problems. It states: "This strategy ... sets a vector toward transition from a force that has been engaged in sustained combat operations to a Joint Force that is shaped for the future ... flexible, agile and adaptive." Setting a vector sounds more like expressing hope than guaranteeing a capability.

The NMS may not be of great import to our future; its fate is to be stored in file cabinets, and then in the archives, until it is needed as a reference for the next version that will follow another NSS and NDS. But it seems important to me to recognize that it is merely a reflection of acquiescence of military leadership to accept the "do more with less" philosophy rather than an effort to put demands on the system explaining the real needs and the costs of fulfilling the national security requirements. □

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