

Reading Putin

"I am not sure what he [Russian President Vladimir Putin] is thinking, but I can look at what he is doing and derive from that what we should be thinking about on our side: He's building forces. The fact he has codified [a threat] in this language, publicly, is a message. He sent us a message."—**USAF Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, on the new Russian defense document naming US as a threat, Stars and Stripes, Jan. 4.**

Deterrence and Reassurance

"It was very important to introduce the F-22 [into NATO territory] to see how we could fly it in the airspace and how we could support it. ... I don't know if it's deterring Russia or not, but I do know that it's assuring our partners."—**Gen. Frank Gorenc, commander of US Air Forces in Europe, on 2015 stationing of F-22s in Germany, Poland, and Estonia, Air Force Times, Dec. 28.**

Black Flag

"The black flags of [ISIS] still fly over Mosul, Raqqa, and other key parts of Iraq and Syria. This threat is also metastasizing across the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. And it now poses a more direct threat than ever to our homeland and that of our allies. ... If our goal truly is to destroy [ISIS] in the near future, rather than kick the can down the road for others to deal with, the United States must play a far more active role than we are now, especially in supporting local Sunni Arab forces to take the fight to [ISIS] themselves."—**Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), statement, Dec. 28.**

Small Step, Giant Leap

"Falcon 9 back in the hangar at Cape Canaveral. No damage found. Ready to fire again."—**SpaceX President Elon Musk, message on Dec. 31, 10 days after historic launch, re-entry, and upright landing of a reusable booster.**

Damn, They Exclaimed

"They [traditional US space booster contractors] are all trying to play catch-up now, because their vehicles are suddenly too expensive to compete with SpaceX over the near- or mid-term. There is no way that a company that has expendable launch vehicles

can compete effectively over the long term."—**Marco Caceres, Teal Group space expert, Defense News, Jan. 6.**

Are You Certain?

"What we're doing, every day today, is producing super-stupid entities that make mistakes. Machines are dangerous because we are giving them too much power, and we give them power to act in response to sensory input. ... These rules are not fully thought through, and then, sometimes, the machine will act in the wrong way—but not because it wants to kill you."—**Boris Katz, MIT researcher in field of computer-driven artificial intelligence, quoted in Washington Post, Dec. 27.**

Folders No More

"It's been a great operational day. We're hitting them [ISIS fighters in Ramadi, Iraq] with combination punches now. They're getting hit in multiple places simultaneously. ... What this shows is that the Iraqis have moved from an army that folded on initial contact [with ISIS] in the summer of '14 to an army that has been able to conduct a complex operation in a large, built-up area. This is the biggest thing the Iraqi army has done. Period."—**US Army Col. Steve Warren, defense spokesman in Iraq, on the Iraqi army's recapture of Ramadi, formerly an ISIS stronghold, USA Today, Dec. 27.**

Reaching Out and Touching

"It's way past time [to honor operators of US remotely piloted aircraft]. People should be acknowledged and rewarded for their contributions to accomplishing security objectives, regardless of where they are located."—**Retired USAF Lt. Gen. David A. Deptula, on new military decoration for service members who affect the battlefield from afar, New York Times, Jan. 6.**

No More Hugging the Bear

"If you look at Russia's actions all the way back to '08—in Georgia, in Nagorno-Karabakh, in Crimea, in the Donbass, and now down in Syria—we see what most call a revanchist Russia, [which] has put force back on the table as an instrument of national power. ... Now every soldier, sailor, airman, or marine that comes to European Command will be focused on redeveloping [a] high-

end kinetic fighting capability."—**USAF Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, NATO SACEUR, Washington Free Beacon, Jan. 7.**

Seismic, as in Earth-shaking

"America's armed forces are the most highly trained, best equipped, and most experienced in the world, but the margin of their battlefield superiority is eroding. ... [There] is a consistent trend that powerfully influences the nature [of] global security competitions. That trend is the slow but steady erosion of America's military-technical superiority. ... Unless that trend is arrested, America's armed forces will find it more difficult to prevail in future conflicts. ... The United States can no longer rest its defense strategy on the confidence that it enjoys a qualitative military edge against its potential future adversaries. That the United States can no longer base its military planning on its presumed technological superiority is a seismic disruption in military affairs—one not yet fully grasped by many in the defense community."—**From "While We Can—Arresting the Erosion of America's Military Edge," by defense analyst Shawn Brimley, Center for a New American Security, December 2015.**

Going Up?

"I've trained in every environment—jungle, the desert, mountains, cold weather, but I've never really trained well in an urban environment. ... We have to figure out how we are going to fight in this environment. ... We are going to have these megacities that are ringed with these shanty towns, and we are going to fight there, because it will be the people who are uneducated, unemployed, the young men who are not married [who] are mad about their lot in life. We talk about the 'three-block war,' but we are moving quickly to the 'four-floor war.' We are going to be on the top floor of a skyscraper ... evacuating civilians and helping people. The middle floor, we might be detaining really bad people that we've caught. On the first floor we will be down there killing them. ... At the same time, they will be getting away through the subway or subterrain. How do we train to fight that?"—**USMC Brig. Gen. Julian Alford, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory commander, Defense News, Dec. 28.**