

By Robert S. Dudley

No Barriers

"They [female service members] will be allowed to drive tanks, fire mortars, and lead infantry soldiers into combat. They'll be able to serve as Army Rangers and Green Berets, Navy SEALs, Marine Corps infantry, Air Force parajumpers, and everything else that was previously open only to men."—*Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, announcing his decision to lift all gender-based restrictions on military service, Dec. 3.*

Long Wait

"Today's historic announcement finally recognizes that our military is strongest when it prioritizes merit and capability, not gender—and it's about damn time."—*Rep. Martha McSally (R-Ariz.), retired USAF colonel and pilot, news release, Dec. 3.*

Timing Is Everything

"ISIL [is] a dangerous organization like al Qaeda was, but we have hardened our defenses. The American people should feel confident that, you know, we are going to be able to defend ourselves and make sure that, you know, we have a good holiday and go about our lives."—*President Obama, CBS interview on Dec. 2—the day two ISIS-inspired terrorists killed 14 people in San Bernardino, Calif.*

Open for Business

"We're in the business of killing terrorists, and business is good. We need to replenish our munitions stock."—*Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James, statement about the pace of anti-ISIS flight operations, Dec. 3.*

Out of Beer

"We're at 82 to 85 percent manning levels, in virtually every mission area. We can't reach in someplace and grab more manpower to fix a problem anymore, and so we have got to figure out different ways of using our people in a more efficient way or we will wear them out. ... As we've built a 35,000-person ISR enterprise over the last 10 years or so, we have cut the Air Force 50,000 people, which is essentially an 85,000-person cut to

the rest of the mission areas."—*Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, USAF Chief of Staff, remarks to the Atlantic Council, Dec. 1.*

BUFF Time Machine

"It's like stepping back in time. I love the B-52, but the fact that this is still flying is really insane."—*Capt. Lance Adsit, 28-year-old pilot of a 50-plus-year-old B-52 bomber, during a training flight, New York Times, Dec. 5.*

Rising Danger

"We're now at the precipice, maybe I should say the brink, of a new nuclear arms race. This arms race will be at least as expensive as the arms race we had during the Cold War, which is a lot of money. Today, probably I would not have said this 10 years ago but, today, we now face the kind of dangers of a nuclear event like we had during the Cold War, an accidental war. I see an imperative to stop this damned nuclear arms race from accelerating again."—*William J. Perry, former Defense Secretary (1994-97), on plans to modernize US nuclear forces, Defense Writers Group, Dec. 3.*

An Islamic State

"ISIS now controls and holds vast territory, and they rule over 10 million people. No, they don't speak for all Muslims, but they do speak for quite a few."—*Kevin Hulbert, retired CIA operations officer, The Cipher Brief, Dec. 3.*

Gone With the Wind

"Let me give you the punchline here: Iraq doesn't exist. Syria doesn't exist. And they ain't coming back. They're gone."—*Retired USAF Gen. Michael V. Hayden, former CIA director, referring to shifting geopolitical borders, Air Force Times, Dec. 6.*

McCainonomics

"[To build a total of 2,443 F-35s], we would have to purchase 100 F-35s per year for more than 20 years at a cost of \$10 billion to \$12 billion a year. That seems unlikely. ... There may be some mismatch there. I'm not saying we shouldn't have 2,443. I just want to know how you get there."—*Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), remarks to reporters, Dec. 2.*

Losing Altitude

"When I started out in this business, ... all of the technology of consequence, most of it, originated in the United States, and a great deal of it originated with the government. Now, neither of those is true anymore."—*Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, remarks at Harvard University, Dec. 1.*

"Little Montenegro!"

"Is NATO a military alliance or social club? The 'North Atlantic' Treaty Organization just invited Montenegro to join. With 2,080 men under arms, [it] is a military nullity. Having peacefully separated from Serbia years ago, Montenegro neither threatens nor is threatened by anyone. Adding it to NATO is like accumulating Facebook friends. They do little more than allow preening Washington officials to wander the globe gloating how popular the US is."—*Doug Bandow, former advisor to President Reagan and now senior fellow at the Cato Institute, op-ed in The National Interest, Dec. 7.*

Decision and Indecision

"The way we are waging this war is immoral. As a young Marine officer, I was taught that achieving decisive results in warfare is critical. It even rises to the level of a moral imperative, because—as the Corps' tactics manual still puts the matter—'An indecisive battle wastes the lives of those who fight and die in it. It wastes the efforts of those who survive it as well. All the costs ... are suffered for little gain.' But the counter-Islamic State campaign generates little besides indecisive clashes."—*Aaron MacLean, Marine combat veteran, op-ed in Washington Post, Dec. 3.*

Lost in Space

"In 2015 thus far, we have had 261 cases where we have been jammed from getting information from our satellites down to the ground segment. How many were caused by an adversary? I really don't know. My guess is: zero. [The cause is] almost always self-jamming."—*USAF Gen. John E. Hyten, head of Air Force Space Command, remarks at a conference of the Association of Old Crows, Dec. 2.*