

By Robert S. Dudley

Chatter

"I will make a prediction, and I hope I'm wrong. If they [Obama Administration officials] don't change their policies toward Syria, ... an attack against this homeland is coming, and it's coming from Syria. It is being planned as I speak."—*Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), remarks to the press, Feb. 4.*

The Big Five

"We have five ... evolving challenges. ... First is in Europe, ... to deter Russian aggression, and we haven't had to worry about this for 25 years. ... Second is in the Asia-Pacific, where China is rising, and where we're continuing ... to maintain the stability in the region that we have underwritten for 70 years. ... Third challenge is North Korea, a hardy perennial, a threat to both us and to our allies. ... Iran is the fourth challenge. ... We still have to counter Iran's malign influence against our friends and allies in the region, especially Israel. And challenge number five is our ongoing fight to defeat terrorism and especially [ISIS]."—*Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, remarks at the Economic Club of Washington, D.C., Feb. 2.*

How To Lose Lives

"Unfortunately, there's nothing operationally today that's driving ... modernization. Air forces that fall behind the technology curve will fail. We can't let that happen. As the threat increases, if your capability against it does not become more and more technologically advanced, then you will lose more lives if you're faced with that threat. The enemy is not resting, and we can't afford to. We have to maintain a balance of capability, capacity, and readiness. The price of systems has prohibited us from buying all high-end equipment over time, and quantity does have a quality all of its own."—*Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, USAF Chief of Staff, comments to the press at JB Langley-Eustis, Va., Dec. 16.*

The Challenge

"Our job is not necessarily to defend our network. I can hire people to defend our network. We have to figure out how to operate in that [contested military cyber] domain and we have to protect our missions in

our domain. Our entire air superiority structure—the F-22, the F-35—is dependent on cyber."—*USAF Gen. John E. Hyten, commander of Air Force Space Command, remarks to a cyber symposium in Colorado Springs, Colo., Feb. 2.*

McCain Blasts Off

"Empty promises, ... stalling tactics, stale arguments, and suspect assertions. ... Little progress has been made in limiting the influence of Russia on space launch. ... Today, Russia holds many of our most precious national security satellites at risk before they ever get off the ground. ... It says an awful lot about the current acquisition system when the default assertion from the Air Force is that it takes longer to develop a rocket engine today than it took to develop the entire Saturn V launch vehicle that took us to the moon in the 1960s."—*Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Senate Armed Services Committee hearing with Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James, Jan. 27.*

Gates' Critique

"The level of dialogue on national security issues would embarrass a middle schooler. People are out there making threats and promises that are totally unrealistic, totally unattainable. Either they really believe what they're saying, or they're cynical and opportunistic—and, in a way, you hope it's the latter, because God forbid they actually believe some of the things that they're saying. ... A lot of people in both parties are making huge promises and commitments. In some cases the things they're saying they're going to do are unconstitutional or merely against the law, and others are, from a budgetary standpoint, inconceivable."—*Robert M. Gates, former Secretary of Defense and CIA director, slamming presidential candidates at a Politico event, Jan. 25.*

Terminator Conundrum

"Artificial intelligence can help us with a lot of things that make warfighting faster, that make warfighting more predictable, that allow us to mine all of the data that we have about an opponent, to make better operational

decisions. ... I might say to a weapon, 'Go learn the signature; once you've learned the signature, identify the target.' That's about as far as I'm willing to go at this point. ... A human has the responsibility to make the decision to prosecute the target. ... There are ethical implications, there are implications for the laws of war. There are implications that I call 'The Terminator Conundrum.' What happens when that thing can inflict mortal harm and is empowered by artificial intelligence? ... How are we going to know what is in the vehicle's mind, presuming for the moment that we are capable of creating a vehicle with a mind?"—*USAF Gen. Paul J. Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, remarks at Brookings Institution, Jan. 21.*

Sixteen in a Row

"The American public believes its military is No. 1, but its commanders and enemies increasingly know differently. ... Losing is no longer unthinkable. Beginning in 2014, former Pentagon force planner David Ochmanek ran wargames examining whether the US and NATO could defend the Baltics against an attempted Russian takeover. He ran 16 wargames with eight different teams of military personnel; the US lost every time. The exercise disproved the assumption that America's supposed technological edge would make up for US forces' being outnumbered in Europe."—*Mackenzie Eaglen, American Enterprise Institute's Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies, Wall Street Journal editorial, Jan. 31.*

Cyber and Terror

"A lot of people find this surprising in our post-9/11 world, but in 2013, 'cyber' bumped 'terrorism' out of the top spot on our list of national threats, and cyber has led our report every year since then. ... Our primary concern is low-to-moderate level cyber intrusions from a variety of sources which will continue and probably expand. They impose increasing costs to our businesses, to US economic competitiveness, and to national security. The cyber threat is here. It's upon us now."—*Retired USAF Lt. Gen. James R. Clapper Jr., Director of National Intelligence, speech, US Naval Academy, Jan. 29.*