

September Message to the DoD Team



Team,

As we close out FY18 and send a receipt to Congress to demonstrate what has been accomplished with taxpayer dollars—I urge you to reflect on your team’s accomplishments and set clear, specific, and ambitious goals for FY19. A year ago, we released the first National Defense Strategy in a decade, characterized by three lines of effort: restore readiness and modernize capabilities for a more lethal force, strengthen alliances and attract new partners, and reform the Department. Since then, we have relentlessly implemented that strategy, driving strong results.

To restore readiness and deliver combat credible forces to deter our adversaries, we shed layers of approval to accelerate acquisition, invested in new planes, ships, and munitions, revitalized ships and helicopters, and added over 20,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines. As we accelerate and scale our efforts this year, we should adopt existing solutions wherever possible. Copying best practices and using off-the-shelf equipment isn’t as easy as going to the hardware store, but it’s faster and cheaper than recreating the wheel. We must redirect our resources to more complex challenges.

To modernize, we split AT&L and charged the newly created R&E with developing next generation weapons. We conducted a Nuclear Posture Review, funded nuclear modernization, accelerated new missile defense capabilities, and established the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, the Close Combat Lethality Task Force and Army Futures Command to rapidly deliver new capabilities. To develop doctrine and capabilities for our two new warfighting domains, we elevated U.S. Cyber Command, released a Cyber Posture Review and strategy, and pressed forward with the Space Force. The next critical step is a FY2020 strategy-driven budget that integrates plans to transition from technology demonstrations to development and fielding, with the outcomes and timelines to dominate a new era of great power competition.

To strengthen our relationships, Secretary Mattis, our combatant commanders, and other senior leaders have traveled extensively, demonstrating our commitment to allies and partners. Foreign military sales grew 62% over three years and exercises grew 17% over two, enhancing interoperability. In Europe, we increased U.S. force rotations and NATO boosted spending by \$42 billion since 2016. In Asia, we normalized freedom of navigation with operations in the South China Sea, strengthened partners’ sovereignty with the Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative, and signed a Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement with India. Jordan, Qatar, and the UAE have expressed their intent to join the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and we have welcomed an additional 11 nations to the D-ISIS coalition over the past two years, liberating 99% of the territory once held by ISIS in Iraq and Syria working by, with, and through our partners. As we continue to build relationships, remember that relationships aren’t monolithic, they’re complex. We will agree with our partners in some places and disagree in others.

To reform the Department for better performance, accountability, and affordability, we began the largest-ever DoD consolidated audit and are cutting red tape. We’ve begun to streamline and modernize our IT network, simplify contracting and purchasing, and consolidate care within the Defense Health Agency to improve patient care and medical readiness. The F-35 contract was renegotiated to increase performance and lower costs, and the inefficient Defense Travel System is being replaced. As we deepen our reform efforts, I encourage you to embrace enterprise solutions. A custom, federated approach may seem attractive, but it’s a trap. Our teammates deserve a modern environment, the Department deserves standardization, and the taxpayers deserve the corresponding dividend.

As we attack a new fiscal year, aim high and continue to raise the bar on performance. The question is not, “are we getting better?” It’s “are we good enough to win?” We must win against our competitors.

As always, thank you for your relentless efforts. I am proud to serve alongside you.

-Pat