

SECNAV: Developing Capabilities to Deter China is Navy Department's Top Governing Concept



Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro delivers remarks at the christening ceremony of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Carl M. Levin (DDG 120) Oct. 2, at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works shipyard. His new strategic guidance says China is the “pacing challenge” for the U.S. maritime services. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class T. Logan Keown*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy’s and Marine Corps’ top priority will be to develop capabilities to deter China, the secretary of the Navy said in his strategic guidance to the service.

In a document released Oct. 8, “One Navy-Marine Corps Team: Strategic Guidance from the Secretary of the Navy,” Secretary Carlos Del Toro named China as the top challenge facing the Navy and Marine Corps.

“Since my confirmation as the 78th Secretary of the Navy, I have characterized the most pressing challenges facing the Department of the Navy as the ‘Four Cs:’ China, Culture, Climate Change, and COVID,” Del Toro wrote. “The People’s Republic of China represents the pacing challenge against which we must plan our warfighting strategies and investments.”

Of the four, Del Toro wrote, “the long-term challenge posed by the People’s Republic of China is the most significant for the Department. The People’s Liberation Army Navy [PLAN] has radically expanded both its size and capabilities, growing to

become the world's largest fleet. Complementing its modern surface combatants are hundreds of coast guard and maritime militia vessels that Beijing employs to compete in the 'gray zone,' the contested arena between routine statecraft and conflict. For the first time in at least a generation, we have a strategic competitor who possesses naval capabilities that rival our own, and who seeks to aggressively employ its forces to challenge U.S. principles, partnerships, and prosperity.

"Similarly, Russia, Iran, and other authoritarian states use gray-zone aggression and coercion to challenge the rules-based international order. The Department of the Navy will be expected to contribute our unique warfighting potential to compete in the gray zone, deter further aggression, and prepare to prevail in conflict as part of an integrated warfighting approach with our fellow services.

"As our central governing concept, the top priority for the Department of the Navy will be to develop concepts of operations and capabilities that bolster deterrence and expand our warfighting advantages vis-a-vis the People's Republic of China," he wrote. "We will ensure our Fleet and Fleet Marine Forces [FMF] are organized, trained, equipped, and employed in support of this priority, and that we are able to campaign and win now and in the future. In doing so, we must remain able to deter the full range of threats to our nation's security from other authoritarian states and transnational challenges that will continue to threaten our national security and economic interests. The Department of the Navy must always stand ready to address the multitude of crises that develop globally."

Del Toro listed four measures to enable strategic advantage: Expand forward presence; enhance warfighting readiness; innovate and modernize; and combat climate change.

To read the entire document, click here: <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Oct/07/2002870427/-1/-1/0>

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