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◆ **WSJ NEWS EXCLUSIVE** | NATIONAL SECURITY

Pentagon Plans to Improve Bases in Guam and Australia to Confront China

A review of U.S. military forces and capabilities world-wide makes adjustments but includes no major reshuffling to take on Beijing



A file U.S. Navy photo shows an aircraft carrier at Naval Base Guam in 2020.

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By [Gordon Lubold](#)

Nov. 29, 2021 11:30 am ET

WASHINGTON—A Pentagon review of military resources world-wide plans improvements to bases in Guam and Australia to counter China but contains no major reshuffling of forces as the U.S. moves to take on Beijing while deterring Russia and fighting terrorism in the Middle East and Africa.

The review, an unclassified version of which is due to be released later Monday, aims to sharpen the link between U.S.'s vast military capabilities and the Biden administration's strategic priorities—countering China's military buildup and more assertive use of power chief among them.

Known as the global posture review, the assessment—whose results haven't been

previously reported—plans for improvements to the airfields and other infrastructure at U.S. bases in Guam and Australia, defense officials said.

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While some details about the repositioning of military capabilities are classified and others have been previously announced, defense specialists said the review's lack of sizable adjustments to military forces in Asia shows the challenges the U.S. faces

in rebalancing resources to confront China while maintaining other global commitments.

In the 10 months since President Biden took office, his administration conducted a chaotic end to the U.S. war in Afghanistan and has faced Moscow's military threats against Ukraine, including a current buildup of Russian troops that U.S. officials said may be a prelude to invasion. China has meanwhile stepped up military intimidation of Taiwan, a U.S. partner.

"The world is even more unsteady than six months ago," said Mackenzie Eaglen, a senior fellow and specialist in defense strategy at the conservative American Enterprise Institute.

The pullout from Afghanistan in particular, Ms. Eaglen said, means the U.S. must monitor for terrorism threats and collect intelligence from farther away, making it difficult to shift resources. "That's part of the reason you can't significantly change force posture in the Middle East and Europe, because we lost our eyes in Afghanistan," she said.

The global outlook is fluid, a senior defense official said, but the review achieved some of its objectives, especially on China.



Andersen Air Force Base in Guam in a 2020 handout photo.

PHOTO: US AIR FORCE/REUTERS

“The more you look at any given region, the more complicated the region becomes,” the official said. “But I do think we were able to make some decisions through this that really reinforced our commitment to getting after the Indo-Pacific,” the official said. “We’ve moved the needle.”

The Pentagon review was begun under Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin earlier this year and is one of several national-security and defense-policy blueprints the Biden administration is expected to release in coming months.

Force posture in the Middle East, Europe and Africa will continue to be analyzed, the official and others in the Pentagon said. Afghanistan underwent a separate interagency review, they said, and cyber and nuclear capabilities are also being reviewed under separate initiatives. A China-specific review, of which much of the results are classified, was completed earlier this year.

Another senior defense official said that, despite expectations that it would result in strategic changes, the global posture review didn’t find a need for large adjustments. More changes may follow a new national-defense strategy due early next year, the official said.

“There was a sense at the outset that there was a potential for some major force posture changes,” said the official. “Then, as we got deeper and deeper into the work, we realized in the aggregate that the force posture around the world was about right.”

The infrastructure improvements touted in the review's unclassified version will begin next year in Guam, which hosts a large naval and Air Force contingent and thousands of American forces, and in Australia, where Marines deploy on a rotational basis. Both are key in Washington's strategy to counter China, officials said.

Improvements to airfields in Guam and Australia will expand the ability of the U.S. to ferry troops in and out of the area for deployments or in the event of a conflict, they said.

The officials declined to provide additional specifics on the improvements, saying they were classified.

Some shifting of troops or capabilities associated with the review and in keeping with the current strategy have already been announced or have occurred, the officials said.

Those include deployments of aircraft and logistics capabilities to Australia and a permanent deployment of an attack helicopter squadron and an artillery division headquarters in South Korea.

In Europe, Pentagon officials earlier removed a cap of 25,000 U.S. troops that could be assigned to Germany announced last year by Trump administration officials.

Defense officials have also notified
Belgium and Germany that the U.S.
would maintain its presence at seven sites previously marked for return to their
host nations under a base-consolidation plan.

In June, The Wall Street Journal reported that the Pentagon was removing eight Patriot antimissile systems from the Middle East in a major realignment of its military presence in the region.

The Patriot systems, which were used to defend U.S. forces and other military capabilities, like jet fighter squadrons, were removed because they were no longer needed as some of the military forces were pulled out, officials said. Many defense specialists and some military officials say the removal of military capabilities in

the region sent a sign to Gulf allies and others that the U.S. isn't committed to the region.

Mr. Austin, in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain last week, attempted to reassure countries in the region. "America's commitment to security in the Middle East is strong and secure," Mr. Austin said at a security forum in Bahrain.

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