

# Mattis says U.S. competitive warfighting edge has eroded

WASHINGTON (AP) — Countering China's rapidly expanding military and an increasingly aggressive Russia are now the U.S. military's top national security priorities, outpacing the threat of terrorism, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Friday. He said competition with those adversaries has threatened America's military advantage around the world.

Laying out a broad new strategy for the Defense Department, Mattis warned that all aspects of the military's competitive warfighting edge have eroded.

He said building a force that can deter war with established and emerging military powers in Moscow and Beijing, and U.S. enemies such as North Korea and Iran will require increased investment to make the military more lethal, agile and ready to fight.

"We will continue to prosecute the campaign against terrorists that we are engaged in today, but great power competition — not terrorism — is now the primary focus of U.S. national security," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said in remarks at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

He said the Islamic State group's "physical caliphate" in Iraq and Syria had been defeated, but that IS, al-Qaida and other extremists still pose threats across the globe.

Mattis repeated his call for America to work closely with allies and partners — an approach that aligns more closely with previous administrations than President Donald Trump's "America First" ideas. That mantra was repeated in a national security strategy released in December.

The U.S. and its allies, Mattis said, are stronger together. He recalled going to his first NATO meeting last year, carrying Trump's demand for nations to increase their defense spending and thinking about how to fit Trump's message into the broader framework of working with partners.



**Defense Secretary James Mattis listens to his introduction before speaking about the National Defense Review, Friday in Washington.**

When he got to Brussels, Mattis said he told the alliance: "Here's the bottom line: Please do not ask me to go back and tell Americans — the American parents — that they need to care more about the safety and security and the freedom of your children than you're willing to care for, than you're willing to sacrifice for. We're all going to have to put our shoulder to the wagon and move it up the hill."

Did the message resonate? "It's going better than expected," Mattis said Friday.

The most dominant theme in his strategy is for the U.S. to regain its competitive edge with China and Russia, according to an 11-page, unclassified version released by the Pentagon.

That shift reflects persistent U.S. worries about China's military buildup in the South China Sea, its moves to expand its political and

economic influence, and what has been described as Beijing's systematic campaign of cyberattacks and data theft from government agencies and private U.S. corporations.

The shift also underscores broad American concerns about Russia, given Moscow's takeover of Ukrainian territory, involvement in Syria's war and alleged meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

"We've been doing a lot of things in the last 25 years, and we've been focused on really other problems and this strategy really represents a fundamental shift to say, look, we have to get back, in a sense, to basics of the potential for war," said Elbridge Colby, the deputy assistant defense secretary for strategy. "This strategy says the focus will be on prioritizing preparedness for war and particularly major power war."

Previous defense chiefs long

warned about China, and the Obama administration put a greater focus on the Asia-Pacific region.

Derek Chollet, former senior Pentagon official in the Obama administration and now with the German Marshall Fund in Washington, said much of the strategy is "old wine in a new bottle, but in this context, that's a good thing."

He said he was "struck by his emphasis on strong diplomacy, getting out from under budget chaos, and the importance of having a healthy democracy. That's all correct, just seemed to be at variance with what's happening elsewhere in the government, including the White House."

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York that militaries frequently want more resources, but "it is regrettable that instead of having normal dialogue,

"Great power competition — not terrorism — is now the primary focus of U.S. National Security."

— Jim Mattis,  
U.S. Secretary of Defense

instead of using the basis of international law, the U.S. is trying to prove their leadership through such confrontational strategies and concepts."

He said Moscow is open to discuss military doctrines and the kind of military contacts that previously existed between the two countries."

Colby said the U.S. still seeks areas of cooperation with Russia and China, stressing "this is not a strategy of confrontation."

The U.S. has pushed China to increase pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Washington has maintained talks with Russia to ensure no conflicts or accidents in the sky over Syria, where both nations are bombing IS fighters.

The strategy, however, faces grim budget hurdles. And Mattis criticized Congress for budget caps that have done more to erode military readiness than any other enemy since 9/11.

"For too long we have asked our military to stoically carry a 'success at any cost' attitude, as they work tirelessly to accomplish the mission with now inadequate and misaligned resources, simply because the Congress could not maintain regular order," Mattis said.

Lawmakers have been deadlocked on a spending bill, bringing the federal government to the brink of a shutdown at midnight Friday. They're still constrained by the Budget Control Act of 2011, which put mandatory spending caps in place.

## Tabloid held porn star's 2011 interview after Trump threat

NEW YORK (AP) — A tabloid magazine held back from publishing an adult film star's 2011 account of an alleged affair with Donald Trump after the future president's personal lawyer threatened to sue, four former employees of the tabloid's publisher told The Associated Press.

In Touch magazine published its 5,000-word interview with the pornographic actor Stormy Daniels on Friday — more than six years after Trump's long-time attorney, Michael Cohen, sent an email to In Touch's general counsel saying Trump would aggressively pursue legal action if the story was printed, according to emails described to the AP by the former employees.

At the time, Trump was a reality TV star on the NBC show "The Apprentice."

The ex-employees spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to discuss their former employer's editorial policies.

Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, signed a source contract with the magazine, which said a friend and Clifford's ex-husband corroborated her account of a 2006 tryst. She also passed a lie detector test, the magazine said.

In the interview, Daniels claims she and Trump had a sexual encounter after meeting at a golf tournament in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, a year after Trump's marriage to his third wife, Melania.

Cohen has denied Trump had any relationship with Clifford.

## BRIEFLY

### U.S. flu season gets worse, has 'lot more steam'

NEW YORK (AP) — The flu season in the U.S. is getting worse.

Health officials last week said flu was blanketing the country but they thought there was a good chance the season was already peaking. But the newest numbers out Friday show it grew even more intense.

"This is a season that has a lot more steam than we thought," said Dr. Dan Jernigan of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

One measure of the season is how many doctor or hospital visits are because of a high fever, cough and other flu symptoms. Thirty-two states reported high patient traffic last week, up from 26 the previous week. Overall, it was the busiest week for flu symptoms in nine years.

Hawaii is the only state that doesn't have widespread illnesses.

This year's flu season got off to an early start, and it's been driven by a nasty type of flu that tends to put more people in the hospital and cause more deaths than other common flu bugs.

The flu became intense last month in the U.S. The last two weekly report show flu widespread over the entire continental United States, which is unusual.

### Family: Tom Petty died of accidental drug overdose

NEW YORK (AP) — Tom Petty's family says his death last year was due to an accidental drug overdose.

His wife and daughter released the results of Petty's autopsy via a

statement on his Facebook page Friday night. Dana and Adria Petty say they got the results from the coroner's office earlier in the day that the overdose was caused due to a variety of medications.

The statement was posted moments before the Los Angeles coroner's office issued its official findings, which confirmed that Petty had a variety of medications, including fentanyl and oxycodone in his system.

They say Petty suffered from emphysema, a fractured hip and knee problems that caused him pain but he was still committed to touring.

He had just wrapped up a tour a few days before he died in October at age 66.

### Congestion pricing: Driving in Manhattan could cost \$11.52

NEW YORK (AP) — A proposal to charge motorists nearly \$12 to drive into the busiest parts of Manhattan provoked protests and complaints even before it was released Friday, though there are signs the idea of congestion pricing is quietly gaining momentum in the nation's largest city.

London, Stockholm and Singapore already have congestion surcharges. But calls to impose similar tolls in New York as a way to address gridlock while raising funds for public transportation have been rejected in the past over concerns about the cost to middle-class and poor commuters.

On Friday even some past critics of congestion pricing said the ideas hold promise for addressing gridlock while raising funds for the city's beleaguered subway system.

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### KERMET APIO

A Hawaiian native, Kermet has been working in standup comedy since 1990. His credits include Las Vegas, Seattle and Aspen Comedy Festivals and everyday life.

### DEREK RICHARDS

Derek is a comic who has worked USO Tours, the Bob and Tom Show and you can hear him on Sirius/XM Satellite Radio.



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