



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

**BRIEFS**

# **The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review: An Initial Assessment**

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On February 1, 2010, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates submitted the fourth Quadrennial Defense review (QDR) report. This CSBA backgrounder provides an initial assessment of the QDR's strategy and force planning dimensions. It finds that in general the QDR correctly identifies the major security challenges likely to confront the United States in the foreseeable future. While its six key mission areas are appropriate guides for the types of capabilities and forces DoD will need in the coming years, the QDR's lack of operational concepts explaining how various strategic objectives can be achieved hinders the identification and prioritization of needed capabilities. In weighting its strategy and investments heavily toward addressing the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and transnational terrorism, the QDR appears to discount the urgency of investments needed to address emerging challenges, such as growing anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) threats, nuclear-armed regional powers, and sustaining access to, and use of, space and cyberspace. Thus the most significant programmatic changes in the QDR call for expanding the fleet of manned and unmanned, fixed and rotary-wing aircraft that are in highest demand in the current wars. The QDR also expands critical enablers such as logisticians and intelligence analysts for Special Operations Forces. Despite the adoption of a new force sizing construct, however, the QDR does not propose major force structure readjustments, nor does it significantly alter the allocation of resources away from legacy programs toward the QDR's priority mission areas unrelated to current wars. Consequently, the preexisting strategy-program mismatch will persist beyond the QDR. Finally, the QDR does not adequately address the rapidly eroding US fiscal posture, the worsening financial standing of America's key allies in Europe and Asia, or the likely consequences of the economic downturn for the united States' long-term defense posture.