

**MITCHELL INSTITUTE**  
for Aerospace Studies



# **Building a Force That Wins:**

**Recommendations for the  
2022 National Defense Strategy**

**Mark Gunzinger**

**Director of Future Concepts and  
Capability Assessments**



# 3 issues that increase risk

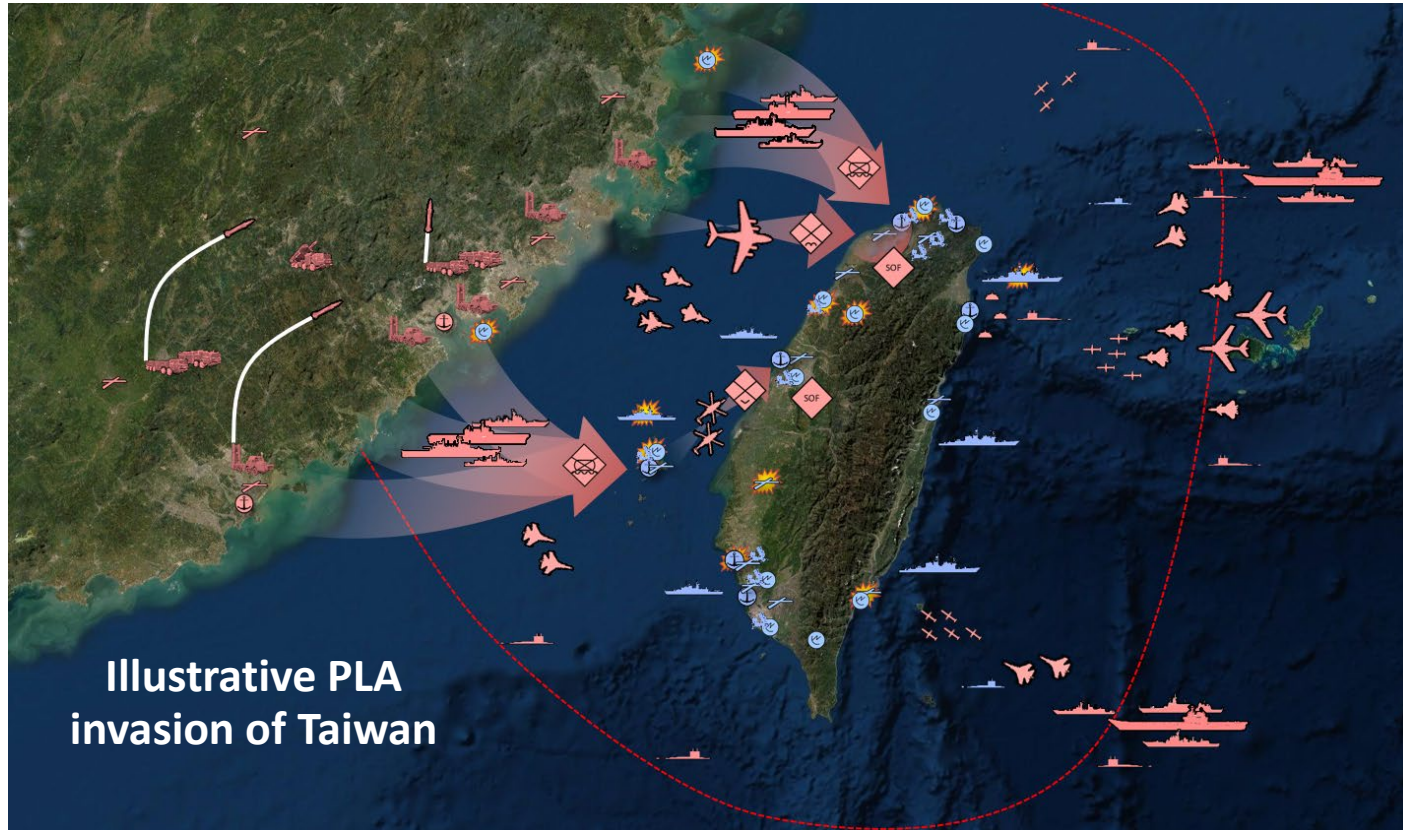
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- 1. Sizing and shaping the force for a short *fait accompli* denial operation risks creating decisive capability gaps in an extended duration conflict with a peer adversary**
- 2. Sizing and shaping the force for 1 war increases risk that a 2nd aggressor would choose to take advantage of a major U.S. engagement in another theater**
- 3. DOD must develop warfighting concepts that inform force structure and capability tradeoffs that will maximize its combat power given flat defense budgets**



## 2018 NDS most stressing challenge for sizing & shaping the force: defend U.S. allies against a peer adversary's *fait accompli* invasion

- Deter/defeat a Chinese or Russian invasion of an area on their periphery that is covered by their A2/AD complexes (such as Taiwan or the Baltic states)

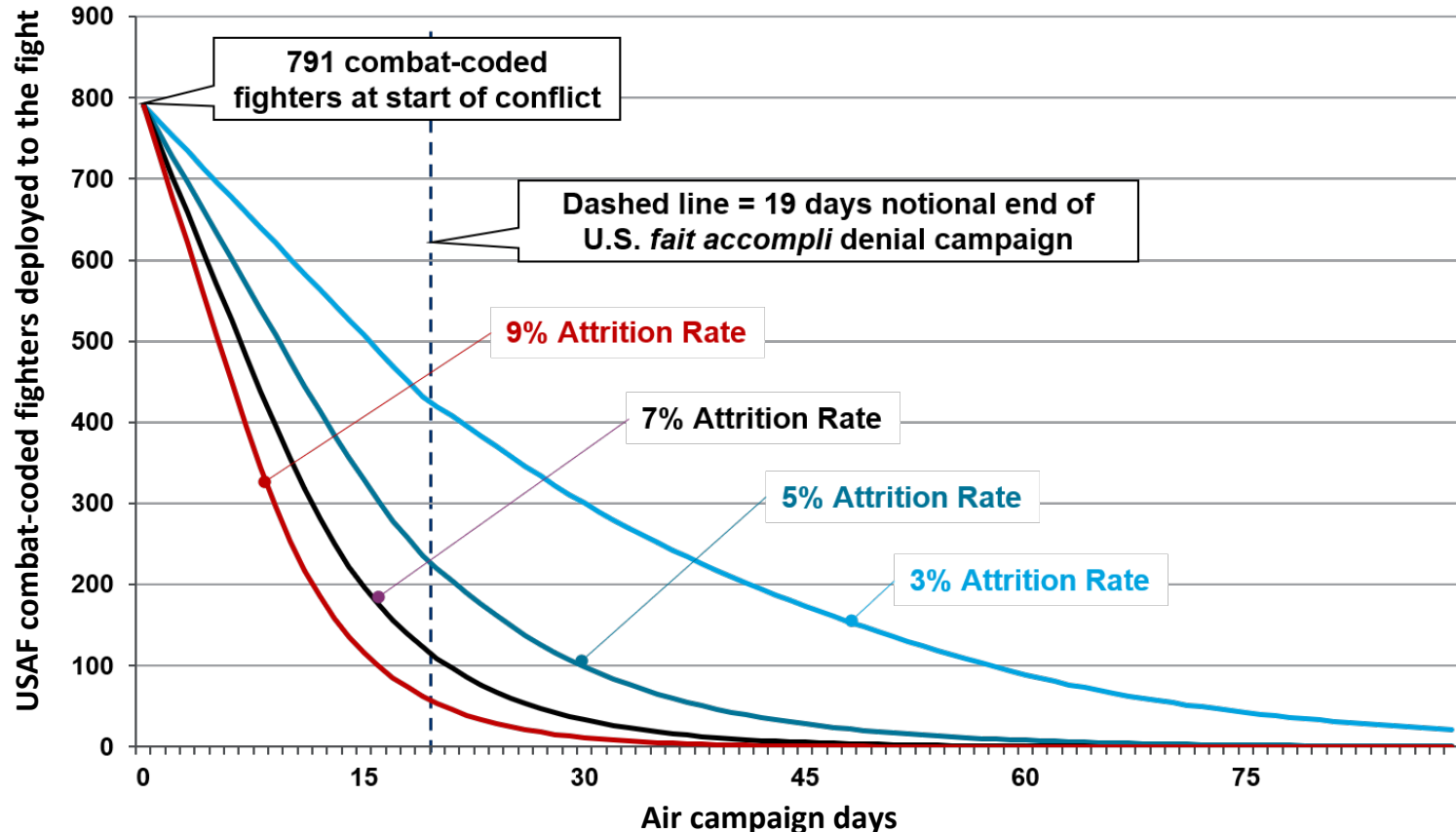


- Must immediately go on the offensive to deny *fait accompli* – waiting days or weeks to deploy an iron mountain of forces would give China time to achieve its objectives and reinforce, making the cost and risk of an Allied counteroffensive prohibitive



# Risk: Sizing for a short *fait accompli* denial campaign could create decisive capability gaps in a longer war

## Notional Air Force fighter attrition in a 2030 defense of Taiwan scenario

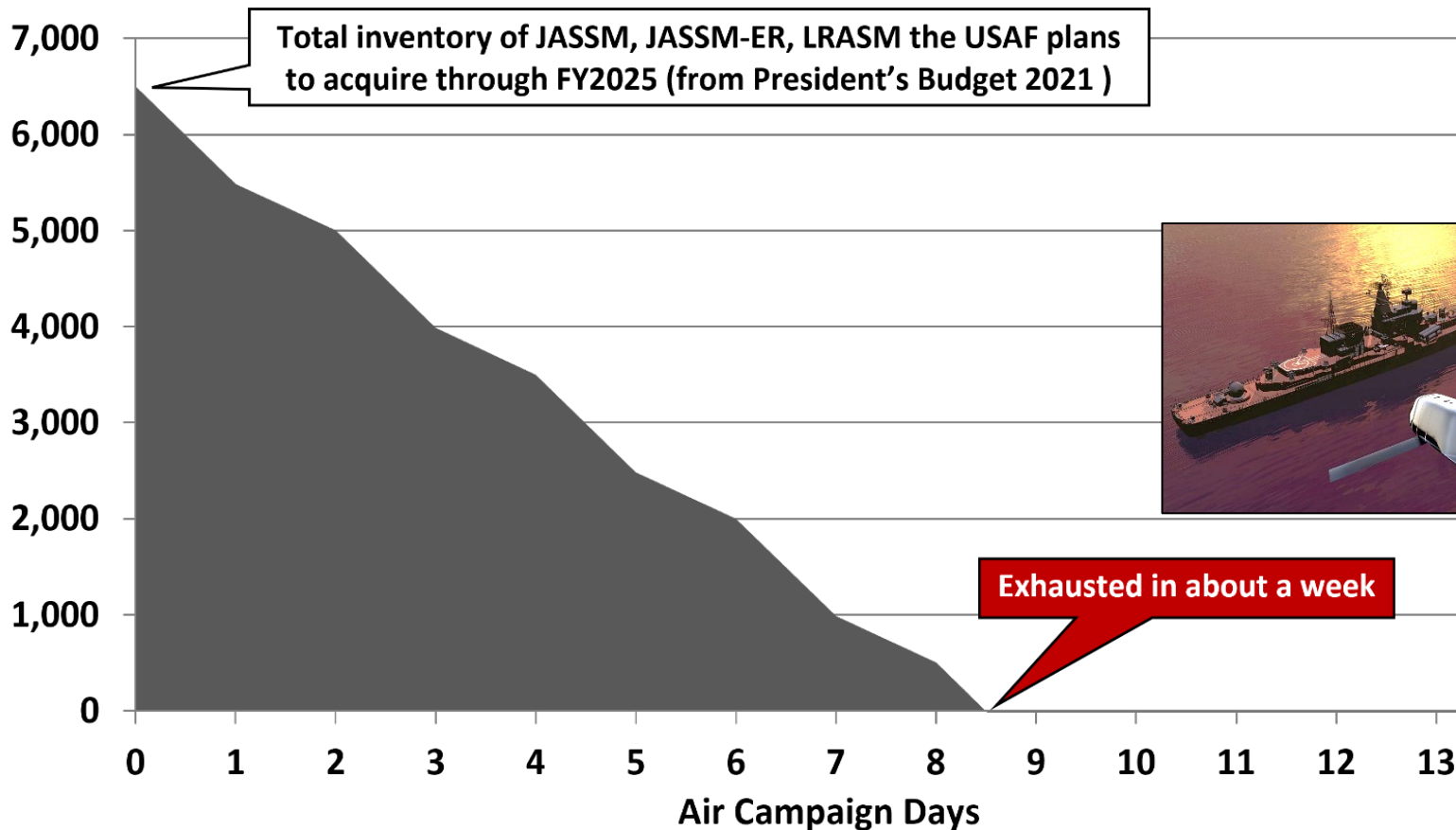


**Day 19: 431 fighters remaining with 3% attrition, 236 with 5% attrition, etc.**

(this example excludes hundreds of fighters and other aircraft that could be destroyed by PLA missile attacks on under-defended U.S. & allied airbases)



# Not just platforms ... advanced PGMs and other critical expendables could be quickly depleted



- B-52s and B-1s alone could expend inventory in a little over a week
- Other bombers and fighters using JASSM/LRASM would accelerate burn rate
- Continuing to undersize PGM inventory erodes credibility of our deterrence

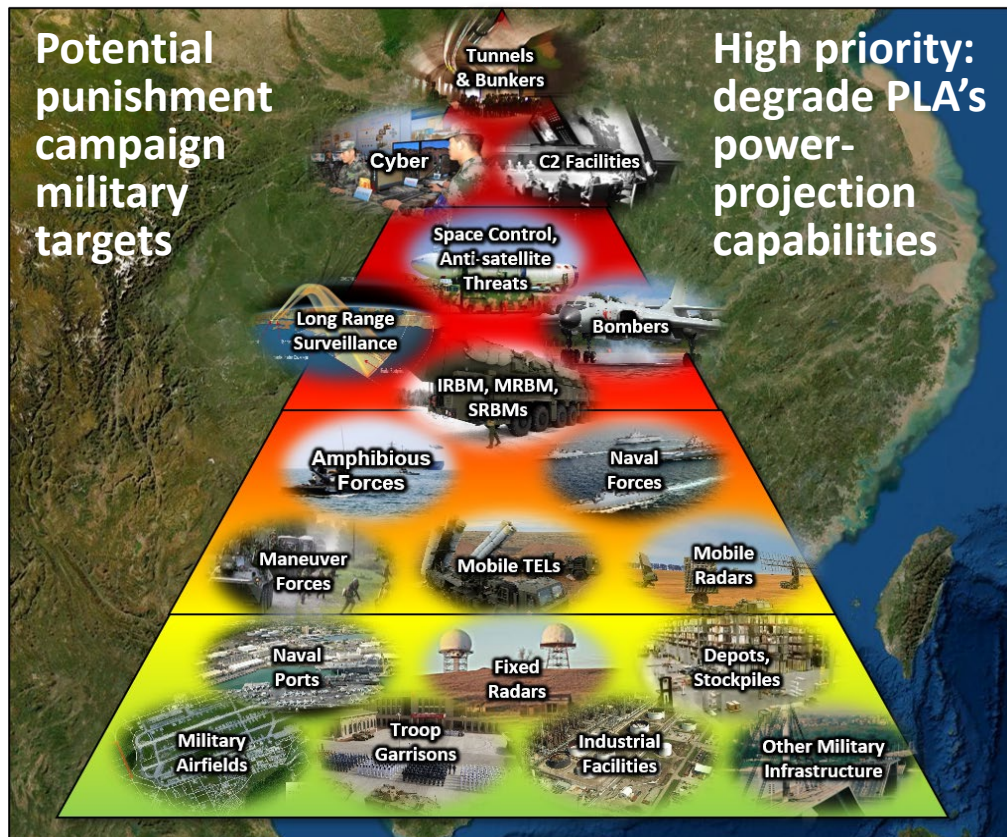




# Recommendation: The 2022 NDS should hedge against a protracted war with China

- Theory of victory should hedge against a Chinese decision to continue offensive operations with the intent to exhaust the U.S. military
- Size U.S. forces to conduct a punishment operation if required after a successful *fait accompli* denial
  - The ability to inflict costs that China considers unacceptable would enhance deterrence

**Air Force, Space Force, and Navy would be the predominant force providers for a punishment campaign against China**



- 5<sup>th</sup> gen fighters & stealth bombers, penetrating ISR
- 6<sup>th</sup> gen counterair to deny China control of the air
- USVs & UAVs including low-cost attritables for teaming ops
- EW to suppress area-denial threats and dominate the EMS
- Offensive cyber, offensive space, space domain awareness
- Next-generation PGMs including anti-ship weapons





# Risk: Sizing and shaping our military for one war creates a path to victory for a second peer aggressor

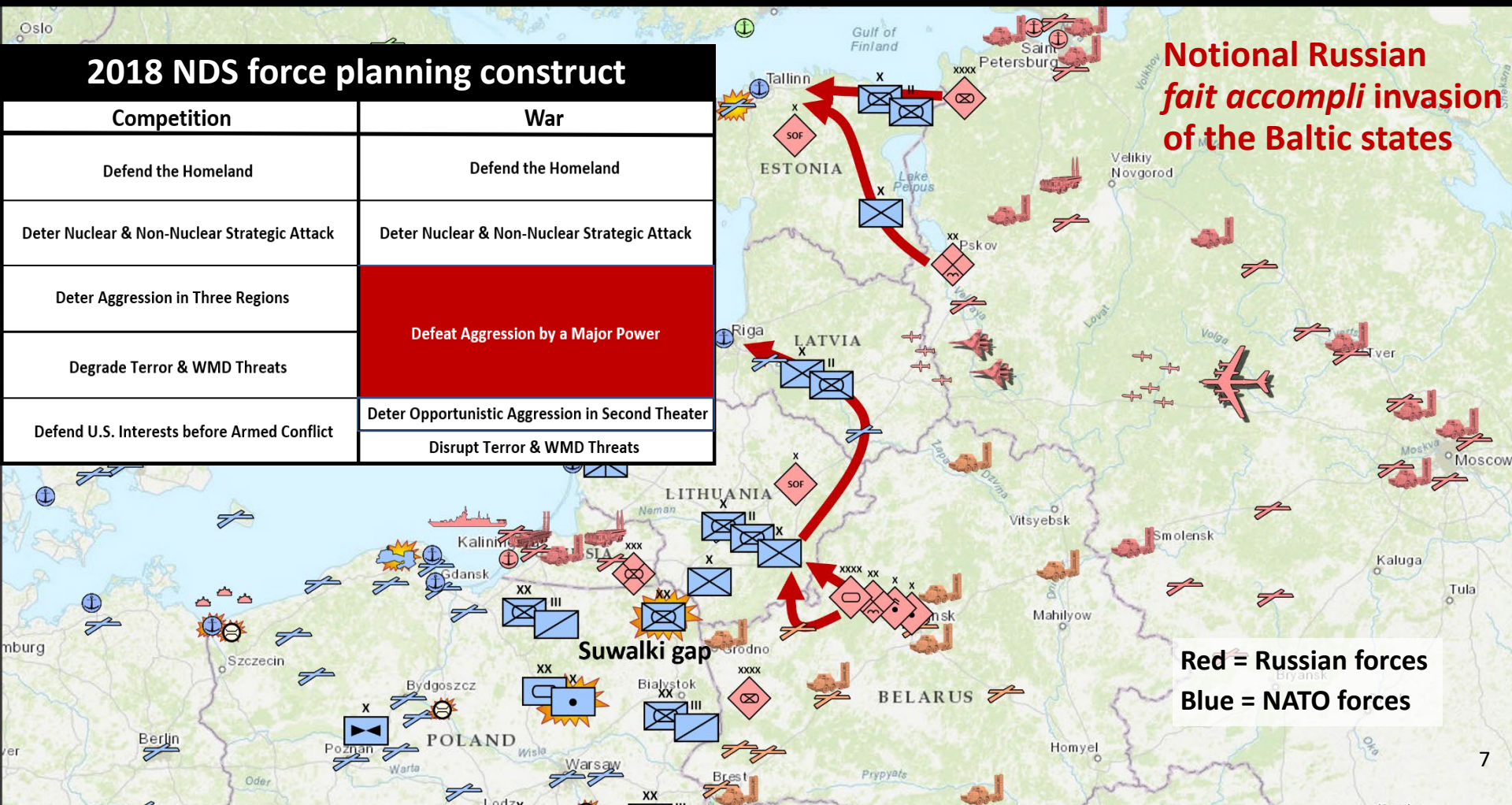
From 1990 to 2018 DOD maintained a 2-war planning construct

“We do not want a potential aggressor in one region to be tempted to take advantage if we are already engaged in halting aggression in another” (DOD 1993 Bottom-Up Review)

## 2018 NDS force planning construct

Competition	War
Defend the Homeland	Defend the Homeland
Deter Nuclear & Non-Nuclear Strategic Attack	Deter Nuclear & Non-Nuclear Strategic Attack
Deter Aggression in Three Regions	Defeat Aggression by a Major Power
Degrade Terror & WMD Threats	Deter Opportunistic Aggression in Second Theater
Defend U.S. Interests before Armed Conflict	Disrupt Terror & WMD Threats

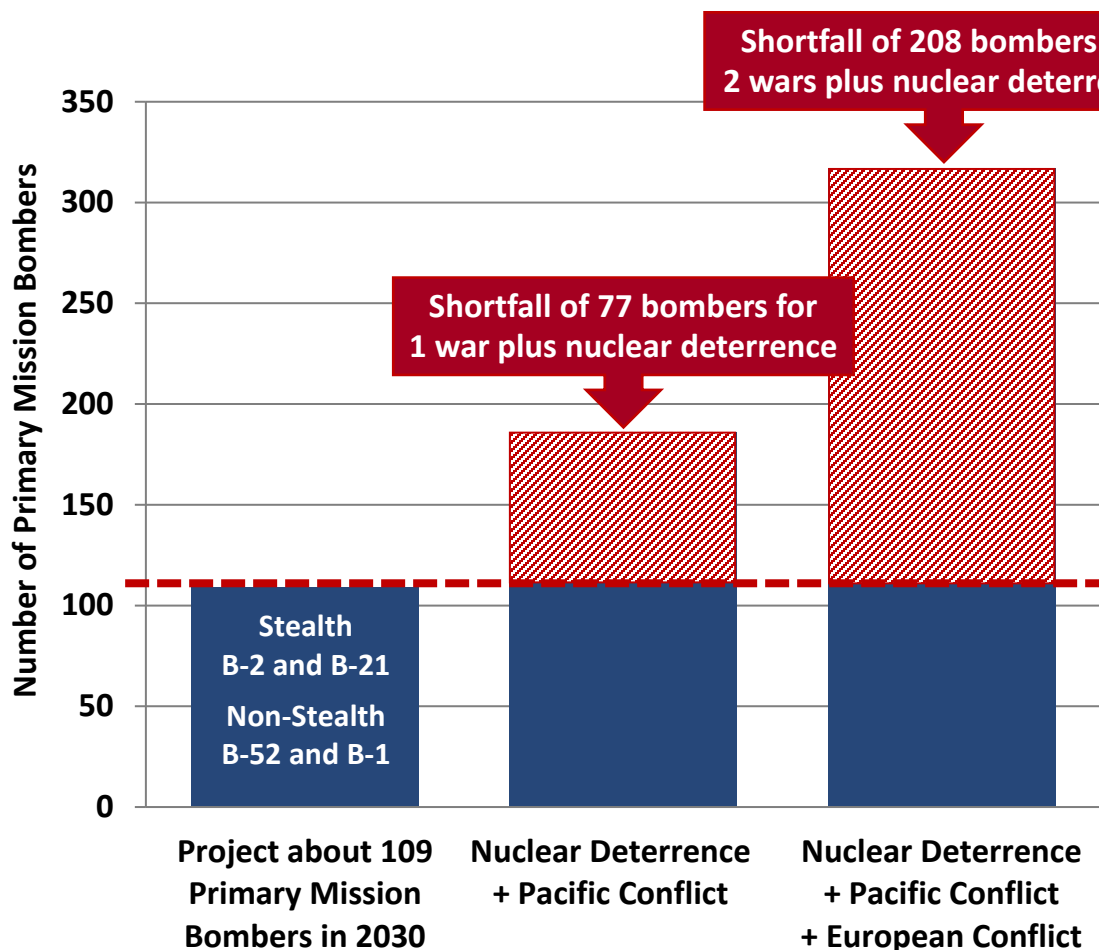
**Notional Russian fait accompli invasion of the Baltic states**



**Red = Russian forces**  
**Blue = NATO forces**



# One example – lack of long-range strike capacity may be the USAF’s most significant shortfall



- Only airpower can quickly project over long ranges the precision plus mass needed to blunt invading forces
- However, bomber force size now falls short of requirement for 1 peer conflict plus nuclear deterrence – more than twice that shortfall to prevent opportunistic peer aggression in another theater

- Plus, unlike in the past it would be difficult to reallocate (“swing”) bombers from a peer conflict to a fight in a separate theater





# Recommendation: DOD as a whole should have a two-war force

- The 2022 NDS should define and differentiate between pacing scenarios each service uses for sizing and shaping based on predominate forces needed for peer conflicts
- Would better deter opportunistic aggression and provide a hedge should deterrence fail

**Air Force and Space Force:** size to defeat Chinese and Russian aggression; critical to defeating *fait accompli* campaigns in both regions

**Navy and Marine Corps:** size primarily to deter/defeat Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific

**Army:** size primarily to deter/defeat Russian aggression against NATO





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