

Pentagon preparing to fight The Long War

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In the 2007 budget due out next week and a soon-to-be-released long-range plan for reshaping the military, the Defense Department talks about the military's future in terms of its ability to fight a new kind of war. It is one that cannot be won in days or weeks, and will be fought on many fronts and against a vast array of enemies.

Administration officials seem to refer to the "long war" more frequently these days. President Bush mentioned it during his State of the Union address this week. On Wednesday, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said the term is a way of telling people the truth about the fight against terrorism.

"Just as the Cold War lasted a long time, this war is something that is not going to go away," Rumsfeld said.

He said this does not mean U.S. troops will be in Iraq indefinitely, but rather that the U.S. will be fighting violent extremists for many years to come.

"The United States is a nation engaged in what will be a long war," the defense review document says. "Currently the struggle is centered in Iraq and Afghanistan, but we will need to be prepared and arranged to successfully defend our nation and its interests around the globe for years to come."

Critics, however, say the new defense plan does not fund a military big enough or equipped enough to fight the long war.

"They're not asking for a bigger military and a lot of us are surprised by that," said Michele Flournoy, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "We see the strains on the current forces — we need to grow the force to reduce the strain."

The terminology also reflects the administration's struggle to quell the public's growing impatience with the Iraq war. It costs more than \$4 billion a month and has left more than 2,240 service members dead. Also, it is not the first time that officials have tried to change the debate by changing the language.

Not long ago Rumsfeld said he would stop using "insurgency" to describe attackers in Iraq, instead calling them enemies of the legitimate Iraqi government. More recently, the administration has referred to the National Security Agency's electronic monitoring program as a terrorist surveillance program, dismissing suggestions that it is domestic spying.

While Rumsfeld would not discuss details of the Pentagon's plan to make the military better able to fight the Long War, he acknowledged it will include a larger investment in special

operations forces, including Army Rangers and Navy SEALs.

According to Gen. Peter Schoomaker, chief of staff of the Army, defense officials will be creating five more Army Special Forces battalions and a special operations aviation battalion.

The defense review will not recommend eliminating any major weapons programs, but instead calls for cutting some smaller programs such as the E-10 surveillance plane, reductions in Air Force personnel and cutbacks in plans to increase the number of Army and National Guard battalions.

Andrew Krepinevich, executive director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in Washington, said Wednesday that the defense review doesn't adequately address future budget shortfalls. He said that in coming years, as major weapons programs move into production, the Defense Department will not have the money to fund them.

The Pentagon, he said, is "deferring the difficult choices. We can't afford the modernization programs we've signed up for."

James Carafano, a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation, said spending on the defense budget will not increase much in 2007. In order to fund the programs needed, he said, Congress and the administration will have to hold down spending on other mandatory programs such as Medicare and tax reform.

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