

The Top 100 Rules of the New American Way of War

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THE PATHS TO WAR

The United States Stands Ready for Any Type of War

1. The U.S. military stays ready because it understands that while the world is full of ongoing situations in which it remains involved, it must be prepared for any acts of war against the United States that come "out of the blue."
2. U.S. forces believe in constant training, both to facilitate their command of their complex war-making system and to deal with a wide variety of circumstances.
3. Because the United States must move forces long distances to fight, it does extensive contingency planning to conquer the time and distance factors.

Whom the United States Fights in Wars

4. The United States wages war on states or nonstate actors that attack or threaten to attack the U.S. homeland.
5. The United States wages war on states or nonstate actors that attack U.S. military forces or other instruments of the government; because the United States is the de facto global cop, any such attack is perceived as an attack on global stability itself.
6. If all other measures fail, the United States reserves the right to bring war preemptively to states or nonstate actors that actively seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction for use against the United States or any of its allies.
7. The United States wages war on states that harbor or actively support terrorist groups with transnational objectives and reach, and this war encompasses all elements of U.S. national power.
8. Maintaining a commitment to global stability, the United States wages war on states or nonstate actors that threaten or launch wars against our key allies, including other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, Israel, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Australia, and others.

Where the United States Is Ready to Fight Wars

9. The United States is prepared to intervene within the western hemisphere, and especially in the Caribbean and Central American areas, because this is its neighborhood.

10. The United States is ready to defend against aggression in Europe because this was the source of the worst wars of the past and because NATO is its strongest and oldest security alliance.

11. The United States is ready to wage war in Southwest Asia, particularly in the Persian Gulf region, where it is the only power capable of stabilizing the area—thus ensuring the continuing flow of energy out of the region.

12. In strong alliance with Japan, the United States is prepared to deter or defeat a Chinese invasion of Taiwan and a North Korean attack on South Korea.

13. Beyond these cases, the United States is ready to go anywhere to combat terrorist groups that are part of a global organization and plot.

What Triggers the United States to Go to War

14. The United States retaliates automatically to any direct attack against its homeland, although this may not be instantaneous in the case of a terrorist attack because a nonstate actor's identity and home base may not immediately be clear.

15. Other than in response to direct attacks on the United States, there currently are five situations where the United States reflexively would engage in war:

- If Iraq were to attack Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, or Israel
- If China were to attack Taiwan
- If North Korea were to attack South Korea
- If Iran or Iraq were to attempt to close the Persian Gulf to oil traffic
- If al Qaeda or any successor terrorist group attacks U.S. citizens, forces, or property anywhere in the world.

16. Outside of those circumstances, any overt U.S. war effort will follow an extensive debate within the U.S. and international political system, with the critical questions being:

- How much congressional and public debate?
- How much U.N. consultation/approval?
- What level of allied consultation and contributions?

17. The United States pursues covert operations as part of the global war on terrorism in accordance with presidential findings.

U.S. Goals in the Conduct of War

18. Beyond preserving or restoring national security, the fundamental U.S. goal is sustaining global norms against the aggressive use of force, meaning U.S. actions are limited to those states or actors that transgress these rule sets.

19. Beyond that, U.S. interventions are meant to ensure aggression does not reoccur by supporting the institution of the rule of law and democracy.

20. In waging war, the United States seeks to protect the functioning of the global economy as necessary, since trade can flourish only under conditions of peace and freedom under law.

21. In any conflict, the United States seeks to limit its own absolute losses, so as not to damage the American public's support both for the intervention in question and for this nation's long-term involvement in international security.

22. The United States seeks to limit collateral damage, thus to limit foreign resentment concerning the use of U.S. military force and to set the stage for restoration of economies and government once the conflict has ended.

Whose Help the United States Seeks in War

23. The United States seeks as much approval, cooperation, and mutual agreement as possible from the global community for any conflict it responds to or initiates, because it wants all such actions to further the advance of collective security.

24. When practicable, the United States seeks approval and sanction in the U.N. forum, but reserves the right to act unilaterally or to organize a "coalition of the willing" if such consensus cannot be found.

25. As appropriate, the United States seeks the aid and agreement of the other NATO countries (especially the United Kingdom) because they are its closest allies and can provide forces most able to join U.S. efforts.

THE CONDUCT OF WAR

How the United States Commands in War

26. U.S. political control is direct and detailed at the start and conclusion of any war, and is coordinated with diplomatic actions.

27. The Unified Combatant Commander plans operations in detail.

28. The Unified Combatant Commander manages relations with involved coalition partners.

29. Combined Joint Task Forces closer to the action execute the plans, while keeping the Unified Combatant Commander fully informed.

30. As one specialized command, a Joint Forces Air Control Center or Combined Air Operations Center is set up to manage all air assets.

31. The common operational picture, compiled from extensively networked data and information flows, is available to every command element in the chain.

What the United States Mobilizes and Takes to Any War

32. Any war the United States wages involves all elements of national power, meaning the United States works to defeat its enemy in every way possible:

- Destroying their ability to wage war
- Isolating them from potential allies
- Denying them resources
- Denying them the sympathy of others.

33. The United States establishes logistical lines of communication because—aside from homeland defense—all operations are "overseas," and for the most part not likely to be where U.S. forces are stationed permanently. Thus the United States maintains and obtains airlift and sealift to get equipment, personnel, and supplies to the theater in sufficient time and quantities.

34. Relying heavily on space assets, the United States mobilizes a global information grid to achieve information dominance before a single shot is fired.

35. The United States brings as much firepower of the joint forces to bear as possible, supported by intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance within a comprehensive command-and-control system so it can be applied as precisely as possible.

36. To preserve personnel, the United States mobilizes the world's preeminent combat medical system.

How the United States Gets to War

37. Because the United States maintains the world's only global blue-water navy, most U.S. forces and supplies go safely by sea.

38. If speed is required, or if the United States wishes to strike directly from the continental United States, other remote bases, or the sea, it can deliver much force by strategic airlift or long-range strike aircraft, using midair refueling.

39. The United States prepositions equipment and supplies both on ships and on allies' territories for easy breakout and rapid deployment of personnel.

40. The United States uses established overseas bases, establishes new bases in adjacent countries that are supportive, or establishes lodgments in remote areas of hostile territories.

What Forces the United States Brings to War

41. The United States is ready to draw on all five services as needed for any particular war.

42. The United States brings overwhelming force to bear before joining a conflict, not committing forces piecemeal.

43. The United States seeks to overwhelm the opponent with joint firepower, and endeavors to keep the ground forces' "footprint" as economical as possible.

44. The United States operates air assets from both adjacent bases on allied territory and carriers in adjacent seas, as well as distant, over-the-horizon bases and even the continental United States, taking full advantage of its midair refueling assets.

45. The United States uses Special Forces—including Central Intelligence Agency paramilitaries—for special up-front and follow-on tasks, and for guiding precision munitions from on-the-ground locations.

46. Whenever interagency collaboration makes sense, those additional civilian personnel are brought along, rather than the military trying to replicate their capabilities.

How the United States Fights

47. The underlying principle for employing regular forces is the United States' desire to keep the conflict "over there" as much as possible; retaliation against terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland is an "away game."

48. The United States aims for rapid dominance of any battlefield it may enter, so the initial blows come from the air:

- First, the United States suppresses air defenses, including airfields
- Next, it hits strategic targets like command and control
- Then, it breaks the logistic connections to the deployed enemy forces
- Finally, it directs air strikes against opposing ground forces.

49. The United States uses ground forces to roll up enemy ground forces that have been softened by air attacks and to occupy territory.

50. Leveraging its space assets, the United States possesses and keeps expanding an unparalleled capacity to wage network-centric warfare:

- It drives up the enemy's information requirements and then degrades its ability to meet them
- It achieves as much transparency over the battlefield as possible for U.S. forces, then leverages that advantage to destroy enemy forces, equipment, and installations.

51. U.S. forces maneuver rapidly to avoid static "front lines," turning each engagement into an ambush across a "noncontiguous" battlefield.

52. Because no potential foe matches well, the United States expects opponents to defend themselves with dispersal and concealment, to seek destruction of high-value U.S. assets, to use chemical or biological weapons, and to seek sanctuary in both urban and remote environments; therefore the United States increasingly anticipates and prepares for those tactics and develops capabilities for combat in those venues.

How U.S. Forces Defend Themselves in War

53. If the United States has evidence that a potential foe possesses both the where-withal and the intention of employing weapons of mass destruction, it reserves the right to engage in preemptive strikes against that capability.

54. In any conflict, the U.S. military seeks to defeat its enemy in the field while simultaneously waging a three-front defensive strategy:

- Preserving its forces in-theater through mobility, range and stealth
- Defending U.S. military and diplomatic installations around the world through vigilance
- Protecting the homeland from retaliatory strikes by preventing their launching at the source.

55. The United States seeks to avoid using its nuclear weapons, but remains ready to retaliate against any state that first uses weapons of mass destruction against its forces.

How the United States Protects Its Homeland during War

56. Protecting the homeland remains the most important defense function of the Defense Department, therefore it makes forces available for those purposes as necessary.

57. Protecting the homeland is first and foremost a matter of deterring attacks that employ weapons of mass destruction by the threat of nuclear retaliation, so the United States maintains and modernizes its nuclear forces.

58. The United States develops and deploys missile defense to strengthen deterrence and to defend in the event deterrence fails.

59. The United States is prepared to strike preemptively against any regime or nonstate actor it knows to be planning for, or mounting, an attack against the homeland as part of a strategy to degrade U.S. power projection capabilities.

How the United States Stabilizes Situations as Wars Subside

60. The United States conducts "psychological operations" to try to win the hearts and minds of the local population toward the goals of its intervention.

61. The United States makes every necessary effort to track down and incapacitate known belligerents who refuse to comply with conflict-termination agreements; it also facilitates the capture, processing, and confinement of individuals suspected of war crimes for later adjudication by internationally recognized courts.

62. The United States works with local social and political leaders to resurrect basic elements of the government and infrastructure to return life to some semblance of normality.

63. When necessary, the United States conducts emergency humanitarian missions on its own, until civilian or international relief groups can pick up the task.

THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

When the United States Leaves a War

64. The United States does not leave until the capital city is under firm control by friendly forces and government.
65. The United States does not leave until the countryside is no longer roiling with conflict, and appears to be quiet enough for the local constabulary to once again extend its political reach—sometimes with the help of other states’ peacekeepers.
66. The United States does not leave until all the major local players in the conflict basically sign up to the conflict termination agreements and demonstrate their adherence.
67. The United States does not leave until the magnitude of any ongoing humanitarian crises have been reduced to the point where the international community can meet the population’s basic needs.

What the United States Leaves Behind Following a War

68. The United States may leave behind Special Forces or other Army trainers to help the country rebuild its military and to train them to combat remaining rebels.
69. If the United States expects to return for further combat in the country or region, it may leave behind a supply of prepositioned materiel, signaling a strong relationship with the surviving/reconstituted government.
70. The United States may leave with signed agreements for long-term military cooperation or government-financed arms sales to help the country get its military back on its feet.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF VARIOUS FORCES IN WAR

How the United States Uses Air Forces in War

71. The United States strikes enemies first from the air to suppress air and ground defenses and to hit strategic targets, using its Air Force and/or naval aviation as defined by circumstances.
72. Once the United States effectively rules the skies, it is free to choose the time and location of strikes for strategic effect.
73. Over time, because of increasing accuracy and better intelligence, the United States realizes greater economy of force with its air strike assets, limiting collateral damage.

74. The United States is able to strike with aircraft stationed far away and keep those aircraft loitering on station at length since it has an enormous capability for midair refueling.

75. U.S. air strike assets are managed centrally through an air tasking order, but as network-centric operations mature and enemy forces resort more to dispersing themselves, an increasingly larger portion of these assets is freed to respond flexibly to targets of opportunity.

76. Airlift is a major tool for delivering, dispersing, and removing ground personnel and materiel throughout combat areas.

77. By gradually increasing the use of unmanned air platforms, the United States loiters longer and closer in dangerous environments while risking fewer personnel.

How the United States Uses Naval Forces in War

78. Because the United States "owns" the world's oceans, it focuses its naval forces' combat activities onto the land—including strategic targets deep inland—as part of joint combat operations.

79. U.S. naval forces are responsible for defending the sea approaches to land against threats from mines, submarines, attack boats, cruise missiles, and air attacks.

80. Naval forces are part of U.S. joint air strike forces, with Tomahawk land-attack missiles playing a leading role.

81. U.S. naval forces provide off-shore staging platforms for Marines, Special Forces, and Army forces; the Marines, in particular, are customized to approach combat zones from the sea.

82. The Military Sealift Command, as part of the joint Transportation Command, transports the vast majority of Army troops and logistic supplies to a theater.

How the United States Uses Ground Forces in War

83. Marines, having been designed as a self-supporting force, are a useful interim force until the U.S. assembles larger ground forces.

84. Marines have specialized capabilities for special operations, chemical-biological responses, and urban warfare, thus expanding the joint commander's tool kit.

85. The Army offers broadly capable large-scale ground units featuring heavy firepower, armored mobility, and air and missile defenses.

86. Large Army units are moved mainly by sea to prepared staging areas, except for the lightly equipped 18th Airborne Corps.

87. To minimize ground force casualties, the United States avoids attrition warfare by stressing reconnaissance, overwhelming force, armor and other protections, and rapid maneuver.

88. Ground forces complete the liberation of territory and the eradication of opposing forces.

89. The Army is the premier long-term occupation force, which means if any nation-building is pursued postconflict, the Army maintains the peace while the transition is made to international or local civilian rule.

How the United States Uses Unconventional Forces in War

90. Special Forces are the clandestine/covert infiltration force, so they are used in small numbers for specialized tasks.

91. Where minimal personnel are needed in the most dangerous situations (e.g., pre-invasion reconnaissance, spotting for air strikes), Special Forces are preferred because they require the least support.

92. Special Forces set the military standard for cooperation with law enforcement agencies, apprehending combatants in both war and peace.

93. Special Forces set the standard for cooperation with intelligence agencies because of their sensor-like role in command and control and their unique abilities for unconventional tactics against asymmetrical opponents.

94. When covert preemptive strikes are attempted, the United States employs Special Forces with a level of impunity far beyond previous use of U.S. military power in a peacetime environment.

How the United States Uses Reserve Forces in War

95. Reserves are the backbone of an American hedge force and homeland security.

96. Reserves are the cornerstone of logistics for combat operations, manning a large part of the airlift and air refueling force.

97. Because of high demand, civil affairs personnel are de facto active-duty assets.

How the Services Fight Jointly in War

98. Operations are joint from beginning to end, because Combatant Commanders plan operations according to the law.

99. Space-based communications assets are the sine qua non of jointness because they move the services past mere deconfliction to genuine operational integration.

100. Facing no peer competitor and enjoying the lion's share of the earth's surface and space as its operating domain, the United States exploits the exterior position to employ all five services in a network-centric approach that yields their maximum combined combat power.

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