

Pentagon reviews war planning strategy

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The US Defense Department plans to prepare the army for a complex mix of conventional battles and countering terrorist attacks in the future conflicts.

The department, in a new strategy, intends to assure that the military is able to handle a range of possible threats, including computer network attacks, attempts to blind satellite positioning systems, precision missiles and roadside bombing strikes, plus TV and online propaganda campaigns.

The Pentagon's new strategy will reject the historic American strategy of preparation to fight two major wars at a time and will require training, troop deployment, weapons procurement and other aspects of military planning, the New York Times reported.

While the US has been fighting in two separate fronts in Iraq and Afghanistan in the past six years, Pentagon officials told the paper that the military needs to be ready for possible operations against North Korea and Iran or even China and Russia, which would present a hybrid range of challenges.

The new strategy "derives from my view that the old way of looking at irregular warfare as being one kind of conflict and conventional warfare as a discreet kind of warfare is an outdated concept. Conflict in the future will slide up and down a scale, both in scope or scale and in lethality," Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in a news conference last week.

Senior officials say hybrid warfare will be adopted as a central premise of military planning in the top-to-bottom review required every four years by Congress — namely the Quadrennial Defense Review — which will determine how military budget is spent on arms, and influences the military training reforms.

The previous Pentagon strategy review focused on a four-square chart that viewed the security challenges then as including traditional conflicts; irregular warfare by terrorists; unconventional weapons used by terrorists or rogue states; and disruptive threats, in which new technologies could counter American advantages.

"The 'quad chart' was useful in its time...but we aren't using it as a point of reference or departure," said under secretary of defense for policy Michele Flournoy. "I think hybrid will be the defining character. The traditional, neat categories — those are types that really don't match reality any more."

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