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Department of War
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

UNDER SECRETARY OF WAR
3030 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3030

RESEARCH
AND ENGINEERING

OCT 15 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIR, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION BOARD

SUBJECT: Terms of Reference - Study on Strategies for Difficult Target Defeat

Adversaries continue to use concealed and hard to reach targets and facilities to develop capabilities meant to disrupt U.S. military superiority. The use of these targets and facilities, coupled with the pace of proliferation of these concealment capabilities, pose challenges to U.S. Forces, allies, and partners. In the current age of warfare, comprehensive defeat strategies are required that examine the state of difficult targets and their outlook for the next 20-30 years, as well as how these capabilities spread to other adversaries. These defeat strategies must encompass an all-inclusive set of weapons effects that deny, degrade, deter, and/or destroy adversary targets for greater mission success to further U.S. military superiority.

I am tasking the Science, Technology and Innovation Board ("the Board"), working through its Permanent Subcommittee on Strategic Options ("the Permanent Subcommittee"), to identify strategies, capabilities, and concepts to accelerate mission success against adversary hard targets and better inform decision-making options across rapidly changing threat environments. Consideration should be given to prior Defense Science Board reports and other relevant studies that have considered a broad category of targets. Under the Board, the Permanent Subcommittee areas of consideration may include:

- Previous studies and programs undertaken to defeat these targets,
- Adversary proliferation of hard targets and the outlook for the next 20-30 years,
- Current intelligence on existing targets and what additional intelligence is needed,
- Results of recent attempts to defeat real world difficult targets and lessons learned,
- Advanced and emerging technologies relevant to defeating hard targets, including technologies being pursued in the commercial sector,
- Recommended system architecture framework for detection, target identification, decision support, effects implementation, and damage assessment,
- Such other matters as the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering (USW(R&E)) or the Secretary of War consider appropriate.

The Permanent Subcommittee's findings, observations, and recommendations will be presented to the full Board for its thorough, open discussion and deliberation at a properly noticed and public meeting(s), unless the meeting(s) must be closed in accordance with one or

more of the exemptions found in subsection 552b(c) of title 5, U.S.C. (commonly known as "the Sunshine Act"). The Board will provide its findings and recommendations to the USW(R&E) as the Sponsor of the Board. The nominal start date of the study period will be within 30 days of the signing of this Study on Strategies for Difficult Target Defeat Terms of Reference (ToR).

In support of this ToR and the work conducted in response to it, the Permanent Subcommittee and Board have my full support to meet with Department leaders. The Board staff, on behalf of the Board, may request the Office of the Secretary of War and Department of War (DoW) Component Heads to timely furnish any requested information, assistance, or access to personnel to the Board. All requests shall be consistent with applicable laws; applicable security classifications; Department of Defense Instruction 5105.04, "Department of Defense Federal Advisory Committee Management Program"; and this ToR. As special government employee members of a DoW federal advisory committee, Board members will not be given access to DoW networks, to include DoW email systems.

Material provided to the Board becomes a permanent part of the Board's records. All data/information provided is subject to public inspection unless the originating Component office properly marks the data/information with the appropriate classification and the exemption categories found in subsection 552(b) of title 5, U.S.C. before the data/information is released to the Board. The Board has physical storage capability and electronic storage and communications capability on both unclassified and classified networks to support receipt of material up to the Top Secret // Sensitive Compartmented Information level.

The Board and the Permanent Subcommittee will operate in conformity with and pursuant to the Board's charter; chapter 10 of title 5, U.S.C. (commonly known as "the Federal Advisory Committee Act"); the Sunshine Act; and other applicable federal statutes, regulations, and policy. Individual Board and Permanent Subcommittee members do not have the authority to make decisions or provide recommendations on behalf of the Board nor report directly to any Federal representative. The members of the Board are subject to certain Federal ethics laws, including section 208 of title 18, U.S.C., governing conflicts of interest, and the Standards of Ethical Conduct regulations in 5 C.F.R., Part 2635.

Emil Michael