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CNA Research Highlights

June 2026

About This Newsletter

This publication contains highlights of The CNA Corporation's (CNA's) publicly available work during the first half (October through March) of FY 2026. The highlights include work from CNA's federally funded research and development center (FFRDC), the Center for Naval Analyses, as well as from CNA's Institute for Public Research (IPR).

If you would like more information about a particular study, please email inquiries@cna.org.

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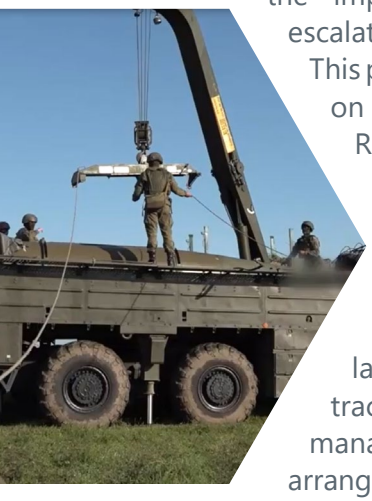
China, Russia, and Global Security

When Nuclear Weapons Return to Belarus: Evolving Concepts in Russian Escalation Strategy

Gabriela Rosa-Hernandez, Decker Eveleth, and Paul Schwartz

DRM-2025-U-043058-Final

The deployment of nonstrategic nuclear weapons to Belarus marks an important shift in Russia's nuclear posture. How does the Russia-Belarus nuclear sharing arrangement align with Russia's prewar escalation management framework, and what are the implications for Russia's prewar escalation management framework? This paper employs empirical research on the operationalization of the Russia-Belarus nuclear sharing arrangement, including official announcements, open-source media reports, and satellite imagery of key military sites in Belarus. It also reviews Russian-language defense periodicals to trace the evolution of escalation management concepts related to the arrangement. Findings suggest that the operationalization of the Russia-Belarus nuclear sharing agreement reflects both continuity and evolution in Russia's escalation management strategy, highlighting the country's efforts to adapt its nuclear posture in response to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and perceived threats of more proxy wars instigated by North Atlantic Treaty Organization members. Overall, the nuclear sharing arrangement aligns with Russia's preexisting escalation management framework while introducing novel features to enhance strategic deterrence.



PRC Concepts for UAV Swarms in Future Warfare

Timothy Ditter and Eleanor Harvey

DOP-2024-U-040462-2Rev

This report examines the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) writings on the growing use of uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs)—commonly called "drones"—in warfare. The PRC has been developing and testing uncrewed platforms since the 1960s but has largely lagged behind the world's leading military powers technologically in uncrewed systems, particularly in autonomous and semiautonomous drone swarm research. An examination and analysis of PRC writings from 2019 through 2024 indicates an intent to accelerate and advance the People's Liberation Army's (PLA's) development, testing, and use of uncrewed systems, especially for drone swarm technology, in part due to the perceived threat from advancements in US drone capabilities. PRC writings suggest the widespread use of drones in recent conflicts is drawing further PRC attention to drone warfare. PRC writings from the past four years demonstrate that the PLA is exploring the use of uncrewed systems and testing drone swarm technology for use in a possible invasion of Taiwan. In addition, the PRC is examining militaries' uses of drones and drone swarms to develop its own counter–drone swarm methods and technologies.

How Russia's War on Ukraine Changed Russian Military Medicine: Preliminary Lessons Learned

Gabriela Rosa-Hernandez and Kara Mandell

DMM-2026-U-044481-Final

Medical lessons learned by Russian military are valuable to DoW medical planners because Russian medical forces model their roles of care and wounding classification on NATO standards, and they use tactical combat casualty care for point-of-injury care. The use of these conventions makes comparisons to US capabilities and concepts of employment possible. Russian forces face a similar problem set to those that US forces are likely to face in a peer conflict—long lines of supply to support a large, dispersed force in unfamiliar territory with a potentially unfriendly civilian populace. Studying Russian innovation and lessons learned can help DoW military planners identify measures that would allow the US to rapidly adapt its capacity to treat the wounded.

Maritime Industry

CNA Maritime Dialogue: US Commercial Ports During a Wartime Mobilization

Jeffrey Kucik, Jerry Meyerle, John Milton, and Yee San Su

CCP-2025-U-043199-Final

In the fall of 2025, CNA convened more than 20 leaders from industry and government for a structured dialogue on the national security role of US commercial ports during a wartime mobilization. Government participants included representatives from the Federal Maritime Commission, the Maritime Administration, the US Coast Guard, Military Sealift Command, and the US Transportation Command. Members from major US port operators and nonprofit industry associations also attended. This document summarizes some of the key themes that emerged from that conversation, including challenges the maritime transportation system would likely face during wartime and proposed recommendations to mitigate those challenges.

Military Personnel and Readiness

Maximizing Mishap Prevention through Effective Near-Miss Reporting: Final Report

Rikesh Nana, Tiffany Schleeter, Warren T. Sutton, and Nicholas Bradford

DRM-2024-U-038999-3Rev

To reduce safety mishaps, the Department of War (DoW) seeks a better understanding of "near misses," events with the potential of causing serious consequences to individuals or property but resulting in few if any consequences. To support this goal, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War for Readiness/Force Safety and Occupational Health tasked CNA with examining how to optimize near-miss systems, which involves improving near-miss data reporting, collection, and analysis, as well as developing near-miss–related process improvement strategies, such as modifying training to address near-miss precursors. This report summarizes findings from our comparison of near-miss metrics from DoW, non-DoW, and service near-miss systems, as well as our findings from discussions with DoW and non-DoW subject matter experts on how to optimize near-miss systems.

Department of War Function Code Update and Coding Framework Review

Jessica S. Wolfanger, Tom Woo, Michelle A. Dolfini-Reed, Rikesh Nana, and Darlene E. Stafford

DRM-2025-U-042263-3Rev

Department of War (DoW) function codes identify the type of work performed by all activities in the defense infrastructure and operating forces. Every active, reserve, and civilian manpower authorization (or billet) is assigned a DoW function code in authoritative manpower databases to describe the work performed. The current set of function codes, however, has not been reviewed or updated in five years. CNA reviewed the function codes to determine their currency and relevancy and updated and revised the codes based on subject matter expert discussions and a review of the relevant literature. Our recommendations contain proposed revisions to the current DoW function codes.

An Evaluation of Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) Adequacy Standards and Recipient Housing Choices: Results from the 2025 BAH Adequacy Survey

Linda M. Pikulin, Shing L. Cheng, and Jaclyn Rosenquist

DRM-2025-U-043778-1Rev

The Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness asked CNA to answer the following compensation policy questions: Do current Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) adequacy standards (for housing size, type of home, etc.) and sampling methodologies result in BAH rates commensurate with actual servicemember choices? If not, why? CNA developed and administered the BAH Adequacy Survey to determine the extent to which BAH helps servicemembers secure their basic housing needs. The vast majority (84 percent) of BAH recipients are not living at their BAH standard and nearly half of BAH recipients overspend their BAH by 5 percent or more. Incongruencies between perceptions of BAH adequacy and reported costs indicate that BAH recipients' understanding of BAH does not align with policy; they consider BAH inadequate even when it covers their spending. Based on our study, we provide recommendations aimed at improving servicemember housing experiences and future iterations of the BAH Adequacy Survey.

Wargaming

Arsenal of Policy: Defense Industrial Base Wargame Final Report

Sarah Fusco, Kaia Haney, Charles Cartier, Andrew Olson, Margaret Holmes, Patrick Enochs, Noah Moyer, and Sharon Burke

DGR-2025-U-043140-Final

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of War for Industrial Base Policy asked CNA to design and execute a wargame focused on munitions supply chains during peacetime to explore opportunities to support the US defense industrial base. CNA designed and executed two workshops and a culminating wargame that brought together government and industry representatives to examine existing policy recommendations, refine their potential implementation plans and requirements, and consider possible reactions and effects. This report details the pregame analysis of existing policy recommendations, wargame and workshop series design, evolution of policy narratives throughout the series, and our analytical findings.

Homeland Security and Law Enforcement

Managing Mass Gatherings: A Toolkit for Law Enforcement

Allie Land and Tammy Felix

IIM-2025-U-043806-Final

This toolkit is designed as a self-assessment tool to assist law enforcement officials in maintaining public order and preventing violence and property destruction during mass gatherings (e.g., demonstrations, civil disturbances, unrest events, lawful gatherings, and peaceful assemblies). Mass gatherings are dynamic events during which law enforcement plays an important role in helping maintain public order and community safety. This toolkit can assist departments in their planning and preparation efforts, ensuring potential scenarios and options have been given thoughtful consideration in advance of an event.

Dedicated to the Safety and Security of the Nation

About CNA

The CNA Corporation (CNA) is a not-for-profit analytical organization dedicated to the safety and security of the nation. With nearly 700 scientists, analysts, and professional staff across the world, CNA's mission is to provide data-driven, innovative solutions to our nation's toughest problems. It operates the Center for Naval Analyses—the Department of the Navy's federally funded research and development center (FFRDC)—as well as the Institute for Public Research. The Center for Naval Analyses provides objective analytics to inform decision-making by military leaders and ultimately improve the lethality and effectiveness of the joint force. The Institute for Public Research leverages data analytics and innovative methods to support federal, state, and local government officials as they work to advance national and homeland security.

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