# In the Heart of the Storm: The World Seen by US Intelligence

Published on 26/03/2025

The *2025 Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Services* outlines an increasingly complex and dangerous world, where threats multiply and intertwine. From organized crime to terrorism, from traditional wars to new technological challenges, the United States faces a global environment where any crisis can become a spark for a wider escalation.

## The Invisible Enemy: Cartels, Cybercriminals, and Jihadists

In the United States, the first line of defense is now played within its borders. Drug cartels, particularly Mexican ones, continue to flood the country with fentanyl, responsible for over 52,000 deaths in a single year. Cyberspace has become a new battlefield: hospitals, water plants, and critical infrastructure are hit by increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks. Meanwhile, terrorist groups like ISIS and al-Qa'ida, though diminished, have not given up on striking, inspiring lone attackers or planning attacks in the West.

## The Global Challenge: China Plays as a Superpower

Among all adversaries, China is the most dangerous systemic rival. Xi Jinping aims for world supremacy by 2049 and uses every available tool: military force, technological dominance, control of raw materials, and political pressure on Taiwan. Its cyber capabilities directly threaten American infrastructure, and its ties with Russia and North Korea make it even more influential. Beijing is also the main supplier of the chemical precursors of fentanyl, which are then turned into drugs by Mexican cartels.

## Russia Holds On: Resilient, Dangerous, and Vindictive

Despite the conflict in Ukraine, Russia has proven adaptable. It has forged strategic alliances with China, Iran, and North Korea, revitalized its military industry, and maintains a formidable nuclear force. The Kremlin continues to use cyberattacks, propaganda, and covert operations to sow divisions in Western democracies. Its ability to "disturb" the global order remains intact, and the war in Ukraine has provided it with military experiences that it shares with its allies to strengthen common capabilities.

## Iran and North Korea: The Unpredictable Actors

Iran fuels tension in the Middle East by arming groups like Hezbollah and Hamas and supporting attacks against Israel and US forces. Although it has not yet restarted a nuclear program, internal and regional pressures could push it in that direction.
North Korea, on the other hand, continues unabated in the development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. It has forged a defensive alliance with Russia, sending weapons to Moscow in exchange for technology and support. Meanwhile, Pyongyang funds its programs with cyber thefts on a global scale.

## The Axis of Hostile Powers

What worries American intelligence the most is the growing collaboration between these hostile powers. China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea – although different in goals and interests – are strengthening each other. They exchange weapons, technologies, intelligence, and diplomatic support. This "informal axis" makes every crisis potentially global: a clash with one of them could quickly involve the others as well.

## A Threat That Knows No Borders

The world described in the report is a place where war, technology, crime, and propaganda merge into a single, fluid threat. The boundaries between peace and conflict, between civilians and combatants, between truth and disinformation are increasingly blurred. For the United States, it's no longer just about defending itself: the very ability to lead the global order in the chaos of the 21st century is at stake.