Weekly Report

National Security Division

Week ending 10 Jan 2020

National Security Strategy:

1. **Protect the homeland, the American people, and the American way of life**
2. **Promote American prosperity**
3. **Preserve peace through strength**
4. **Advance American influence**

Click here to read more.

National Defense Strategy:

1. **Rebuilding military readiness as we build a more lethal Joint Force**
2. **Strengthening alliances as we attract new partners**
3. **Reforming the Department's business practices for greater performance and affordability**

Click here to read more.

A timeline of the escalation in the Middle East

31 Dec 2019

Supporters of Kataib Hezbollah storm the entrances of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, chanting "Death to America!" The demonstrators smashed their way into one of the reception areas and set it on fire.

U.S. Embassy compound Chancery building State Department apartments

JAN. 3

A U.S. drone strike in Baghdad kills Qasem Soleimani, a powerful Iranian commander with close links to a network of armed groups backed by Iran across the Middle East. “Gen. Soleimani was actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region,” Esper says in a statement. “This strike was aimed at deterrence.

JAN. 7

Iranian forces launch more than a dozen ballistic missiles against two military bases housing U.S. military personnel in Iraq in response to the killing of Soleimani. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweets that Tehran “took & concluded proportionate measures in self-defense,” adding that Tehran did “not seek escalation” but would defend itself against further aggression.

Weapons storage area AL-ASAD AIR BASE Area of missile strikes al-Asad air base1/4 MILE Locations of impact

JAN. 8

Trump says the Iranian strike caused no American or Iraqi deaths, despite the claims by Iran's Revolutionary Guard that dozens of U.S. troops were killed. He announces that new sanctions on Iran would be imposed.

Click here to read more

Defense secretary insists U.S. isn't withdrawing from Iraq after PM calls for timetable

Since the drone strike on January 3rd took place killing top General Soleimani, there has been much speculation as to what is to come next. Iraq's parliament passed non-binding measure calling for the U.S. to be expelled from the country. Defense secretary Mark Esper sent a letter on Tuesday insisting that there would be no withdrawal of U.S. troops from the region.

This all coming at a time when Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi is considering the letter from Esper an official policy of U.S. to withdraw. With regards to the letter Esper claimed it was merely a draft and was taken out of context for a possible withdrawal. "Our policy has not changed. We are not leaving Iraq, and a draft, unsigned letter does not constitute a policy change." Esper said in a televised briefing at the Pentagon.

There has been much confusion since the death of Soleimani, but President Trump said, "The worst thing that could happen to Iraq would be a removal of forces. If we leave, that would mean that Iran would have a much bigger foothold in the country. But at some point, we will want to leave." Since the air strike on the 3rd there has been an additional 3,500 troop increase in the region.

Click here to read more

POW/MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency made 5 new announcements. Click on the links to read more:

News Releases

January 08, 2020
Airman Accounted For From World War II (McGowan, W.)
Marine Accounted For From World War II (Mills, J.)

January 08, 2020
Marine Accounted For From World War II (Summers, A.)
USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Timm, L.)

December 30, 2019
Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Shelemba, J.)

Staff Activities

- This week staff continued to develop briefing and sponsor pages for National Security Commission programs.
- Staff attended a briefing on U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation at the Hudson Institute. Topics discussed were the numerous challenges U.S. and Japan face in preparing for long-term competition with China. In a high-stakes race for global influence, the U.S. and Japan must re-consider what combined efforts are most effective in countering the rise of China. How do they seek the appropriate mix of offensive and defensive capabilities, and what roles, missions, and capabilities should the U.S. and Japan share, execute, and cooperate on together?
- Friday, staff met with officials from the Embassy of Japan to continue planning for upcoming events during and following Washington Conference.

Freddy Gessner, Acting Director, National Security Division