Weekly Report

National Security Division
Week ending December 14, 2018

The American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad begins Indo-Pacific Tour

Leaders from the American Legion pose with a U-2 Dragon Lady during their visit to Osan Air Base, Dec. 11, 2018. The American Legion is the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in their respective communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to fellow service members and veterans.

Annually, the National Commander departs for a tour of the Far East for the purpose of informing troops and commanders of the many programs and support the American Legion provides to our servicemembers. Additional, the National Commander uses these visits to gain a better understanding of the geopolitical and strategic challenges our country faces in the Indo-Pacific theater.

Last week National Commander Reistad also began the trip with briefing from Pacific Command Headquarters. The American Legion is mindful of the Pentagon's new National Defense Strategy, which lays out a world where great-power competition, rather than counterterrorism, will drive the department's decision-making and force structure. One of the main focuses during the travel is to gain a better understanding of regional security issues in the Indo-Pacific region and meet with senior Department of Defense officials in order to better inform the views of The American Legion. The information the National Commander receives assists the American Legion in articulating our legislative goals to Congress and the Administration for national security, servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

This week, Commander Reistad had a packed scheduled while visiting military installations throughout South Korea. The party toured facilities at Osan Air Base to gain a better understanding of conditions for deployed troops. They also met with Osan's installation leadership to receive an overview briefing of the installation's mission on the frontline.

American Legion National Commander Brett P. Reistad attends a dinner hosted by the Korean Veterans Association and receives an award. Photo by John Raughter/The American Legion.

Read more of the visit to South Korea here.

Commander Reistad also visited the newly established U.S. Army Garrison Humphreys. Camp Humphreys' installation mission integrates and delivers support to enable readiness for a globally-responsive Army. Located within the seaport city of Pyeongtaek, along the western coast of South Korea, and approximately 40 miles south of Seoul, Camp Humphreys is home to the Army's most active airfield in the Pacific and the center of the largest construction and transformation project in the U.S. Department of Defense's history.

In addition to its airfield, there are several U. S. Army tactical and direct support units located on Camp Humphreys, including the 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade, elements of the 1st Signal Brigade, 501st Military Intelligence Brigade, 65th Medical Brigade, and many other military units and commands.

In the coming years, the Camp Humphreys military community population will more than triple in size, from 10,000 to 36,000 Soldiers, Civilians, and their Family members. Main construction projects underway include unit headquarters buildings, vehicle maintenance facilities, barracks, family housing, medical facilities, a military communications complex, a commissary, a post exchange, schools, and child development centers.

The National Commander spent the second half of the week visiting U.S. military installation throughout Okinawa beginning with a windshield tour of Kadena Air Base followed by a meeting with the installation's leadership.

Kadena Air Base is the hub of airpower in the Pacific, and home to the 18th Wing and a variety of associate units. Nearly 18,000 Americans and more than 4,000 Japanese employees and contractors make up Team Kadena. The base's estimated economic impact upon Okinawa's economy is more than $700 million annually.

Upcoming
Over the weekend the party will travel to Taiwan where they will have agenda packed with events including meeting with the President of Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen. They will also visit the Taipei Veterans General Hospital and the Kinkaseki POW Camp. Monday evening Commander Reistad will attend a Veterans Affairs Council briefing and medal awarding.

Wednesday, the party will depart Taiwan for Japan where they will spend the remainder of the week meeting with the cabinet of Japan. While in Japan Commander Reistad will visit the United States Fleet at Yokosuka to tour the USS Ronald Reagan.

Follow updates from the National Commander's trip at: https://www.legion.org/

Items of Interest

Consequences of Ending U.S. Military Support for Saudi Arabia in Yemen

U.S. and Saudi troops engage in a joint training exercise in Saudi Arabia

(Courtesy of Heritage Foundation)

In a new resolution, a bipartisan group of senators is calling for the United States to end its involvement—specifically its support of Saudi Arabia—in the Yemen conflict.
On Wednesday, the Senate voted 63-37 to pass a procedural measure that will clear the way for a floor debate on the issue next week.

The push comes largely in response to the recent murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.
The Trump administration has banned 21 Saudi suspects in that murder from entering the U.S., imposed sanctions on 17 Saudi officials, and expressed its willingness to take further action if warranted by ongoing investigations. Many senators seek to do more to punish the Saudis, even if it means sacrificing the interests of the Yemeni government and making a negotiated settlement of the conflict more difficult.

The killing of Khashoggi was certainly abhorrent, but ending U.S. support for the multinational coalition in Yemen is not the proper solution. It risks dangerously conflating two separate issues and would inevitably trigger unintended consequences that would undermine U.S. national security interests in the region.

Senators must remember that Saudi Arabia is not the only belligerent in Yemen. A cutoff of U.S. support would also hurt the elected and internationally recognized government of Yemen, which was ousted by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in 2015 in a bloody coup that violated a U.N.-brokered ceasefire.

Withdrawing U.S. support would also harm the interests of other U.S. allies fighting in Yemen, including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

The war in Yemen is complex. Those who rush to blame Saudi Arabia entirely for the suffering of the Yemeni people ignore the war crimes and heavy-handed treatment meted out by the Houthis to their opponents and the ruthless role that Iran plays in supporting the Houthi Ansar Allah ("Supporters of Allah") movement, a Shia Islamist extremist group.

The Saudis are rightly criticized for not doing more to prevent civilian casualties as they target Ansar Allah positions. But the Houthis should not be given a free pass for deliberately targeting civilian targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with increasingly sophisticated Iranian ballistic missiles.

Ansar Allah also deserves criticism for its violent role in destabilizing Yemen and creating the conditions that led to the current humanitarian disaster. Ansar Allah regularly attacks the Saudi border, launches missiles strikes into Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and diverts international medical and food aid to favor its own supporters and sell on the black market.
Ansar Allah also has targeted U.S. Navy vessels, those of allied nations, and civilian shipping in the Red Sea with Iranian-supplied missiles, gunboat attacks, and boat bombs. Undermining the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen risks exacerbating this threat to international shipping and giving Iran the opportunity to threaten oil shipments through the Bab al-Mandab Strait, just as it has threatened to do in the Strait of Hormuz.

Those who advocate withdrawing support for Saudi Arabia apparently believe that they can somehow end the current conflict in Yemen through a one-sided strategy that penalizes allies and boosts Ansar Allah, a group that chants "Death to America" and looks more like Hezbollah, Iran's Lebanese proxy group, every day.

Never mind that Saudi Arabia is supporting the internationally recognized government of Yemen in this effort. Never mind that leaving Ansar Allah to run amuck will not bring an end to the humanitarian suffering, but only prolong it.

The U.S. currently extends only limited support to Saudi Arabia in Yemen centered on intelligence and information sharing. There are no U.S. troops involved in combat operations, except for occasional commando raids and air strikes against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a Sunni terrorist group that continues to target the U.S. homeland, as well as Saudi Arabia, France, and other countries.

The Trump administration already has stopped the aerial refueling of Saudi warplanes involved in the Yemen conflict and called for a negotiated settlement. But the United States cannot afford to abandon its allies and hope for the best. Undermining the Yemeni government and the Saudi-led coalition would make an acceptable political settlement impossible.

The Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia will continue to fight this war with or without U.S. support. Those who would connect two unrelated issues, condemn Saudi involvement, and ignore Iran's hostile role inside Yemen will only do more harm to innocent Yemeni civilians and empower Iran and its Yemeni proxies.

NATO needs a European Level of Ambition

A British sniper from 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, prepares to fire his riffle Oct. 25, 2018, during joint sniper training as part of Exercise Trident Juncture 2018 in Rena, Norway. (Sgt. Marc-André Gaudreault/NATO)

(Courtesy of Military Times)

As NATO finalizes its new political guidance designed to shape future military forces, the alliance has the chance to both strengthen Europe's commitment to burden-sharing and relieve American concern about the creation of a new European Army.

If the alliance wishes to make a bold move, its forthcoming political guidance, expected in February, should frame what might be called a "European level of ambition" within NATO, which may satisfy Europe's desire to have its own independent capabilities while keeping to agreed NATO guidance and command structures.

To alleviate known shortfalls in their military capacity, European nations might commit to a more robust capability goal — leading certain operations, within the context of the alliance.

Currently, the allies have agreed to guidance under which no single country is expected to provide more than 50 percent of NATO's individual capability targets, with some exceptions. The United States has used this guidance to press for greater European burden-sharing, but with minimal effect.

To combat Russian subs, NATO allies are teaming up to develop unmanned systems at sea
Thirteen NATO allies, including the United States, signed onto a plan to jointly pursue unmanned systems aimed at mine and sub hunting, a field where the U.S. has made big strides.

A logical extension of the 50 percent guidance could be to apply this ground rule to NATO's overall level of ambition. NATO's current level of ambition is for the entire alliance to maintain the capabilities for collective defense against a near-peer competitor, in what is termed a Major Joint Operation-Plus (MJO+), or to conduct concurrently eight less demanding missions, two at the Major Joint Operation (MJO) level and six Smaller Joint Operations (SJO).

Under a new European level of ambition, NATO's defense planners could be instructed to develop European capabilities needed to conduct one MJO and three SJOs for crisis management with limited or no American support. Alternatively, NATO's European members could commit to providing half the firepower needed to conduct an alliance wide MJO+. The goal would be to achieve this capability by 2024, when European nations have committed to deliver on their 2 percent of GDP defense spending pledge.

These stronger European forces would be commanded by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe should the contingency be against a near-peer adversary. But if an operation calls for a European-led response against a smaller opponent, then Europe could employ NATO's command structure under a more flexible version of the so-called Berlin Plus agreement between NATO and the EU, which would put a European in command.

There are four advantages to this concept.
First, it would give European nations a more compelling defense investment goal. Nations like Germany, which are unlikely to meet the agreed 2 percent pledge, argue that they can't adequately absorb their pledged investments. By placing additional defense investments in the context of an agreed upon European level of ambition, European defense ministries would have more compelling investment goals and perhaps greater public support to grow their defense budgets.

Creating this additional burden-sharing goal might also make it easier for the United States to accept less than complete compliance with the 2 percent goal by 2024. Although the budget pledge deserves to be met, if Europe could deliver a new level of ambition based on actual capabilities, that may be a more a significant achievement.

Next, a new NATO-linked level of ambition could fulfill European desires for a European Army and for strategic autonomy. These desires are understandable given President Trump's public comments raising doubts about America's commitment to the Article 5 common defense provision of NATO's Washington Treaty. Shaken by these comments and cognizant of America's broader global interests, many European leaders are looking for a Plan B to guard against American abandonment.

But development of a true European Army with headquarters outside of the NATO command structure has many alliance supporters in Washington worried, because it risks bifurcating NATO's capabilities and undercutting alliance cohesion. A European level of ambition within NATO could reassure Americans that the EU's notion of strategic autonomy is not a recipe for divorce, but rather a practical desire to lead smaller operations themselves.

Third, this concept is consistent with NATO's new "four 30s" readiness initiative, under which 30 battalions, air squadrons, and major naval combatants would be ready for employment within 30 days. Once this readiness initiative is implemented, European forces would be more capable of meeting a collective European level of ambition.

And finally, a European level of ambition within NATO could assure that British military capabilities are not lost for European-led operations. With a European Army under EU command, they might well be.

Building this enhanced European capacity within NATO entails some risk. Europe has large military forces, but they currently are unready, lack sustainment, and have inadequate military enablers like air lift and air-to-air refueling.

But the benefits of keeping European military growth inside the alliance context appear to outweigh concerns about possible European lack of reliability. NATO still has the time to consider this opportunity before the new political guidance is finalized.

G20 Leaders Summit Roundup

Leaders pose for a family photo during the G20 summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina on November 30, 2018.

(Courtesy of the Council on Foreign Relations)

Council of Councils global perspectives roundups gather opinions from experts on major international developments. In this edition, members of five leading global think tanks sum up the outcomes of the G20 summit, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from November 30 to December 1.

If the G20 is the steering committee for the global economy, the latest summit, in Argentina, lurched all over the map. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has for more than a year been sending a clear message of growing risks to global growth and the priority was reducing trade-restricting actions. For those expecting leadership from this group on this challenge, this was a disappointing event. It further strengthens the voices of those who fear that the G20 has lost its way and is becoming nothing more than an expensive talk shop.

There were many reasons for this outcome. In particular, the U.S.-China trade dispute, addressed in the post-summit dinner meeting between U.S. President Donald J. Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, sucked out a lot of the oxygen. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman were additional distractions. Brazilian President Michel Temer and Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto were present but lame ducks. The same could be said for new Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison. German Chancellor Angela Merkel missed the first day because of plane difficulties. French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Theresa May had other pressing issues on their minds, and Trump skipped some of the proceedings. Reports suggest that the leaders' discussions were rather perfunctory as leaders were not ready to engage Trump. Argentine President Mauricio Macri, chair of the discussions, was not in a position to be forceful, given the delicate state of the Argentine economy.

The fighting fell to sherpas, the chief policy aides who spent three nights wrestling with the draft communiqué, which brought out huge disagreements, notably with the United States on trade, migration, and climate change. The final communiqué does capture agreements on secondary issues that emerged from the long preparatory process. But on the big issues, leaders chose not to make a fight of them. On trade, they accepted the weakest language ever seen in a G20 communiqué, dropping their long-standing commitment to resist protectionism. On migration, they contented themselves by saying they would continue the dialogue. On climate change, they repeated that the nineteen members excluding the United States would continue their support for the Paris Agreement.

These summits cannot always have earth-shattering outcomes. Perhaps those who argue that these summits exist primarily to deal only with major crises have it right and ambitions must be reined in at other times. However, Christine Lagarde, managing director of the IMF, clearly articulated the challenges facing the slowing global economy and identified trade protectionism as the number one issue to be addressed. Leaders left Buenos Aires having ducked the world's most important economic issue.

What everyone feared did not materialize. The tariff war between the United States and China has been put on hold—perhaps in deference to the holiday season. But the respite is likely to be short-lived, and the messaging on trade at the G20 summit was troubling. The rhetoric foregoing protectionism was finally abandoned. Symbolically it was a shift, but in reality it was an acceptance that the emperor has no clothes and has not had some for years. The WTO has tracked the imposition of protectionist responses since the global financial crisis, and every year it notes the imposition of trade-restricting measures by many G20 members. From October 2017 to May 2018 thirty-nine new measures were implemented.

On trade, the G20 leaders agreed on the need to reform the WTO. However, they are no longer able to unanimously declare their support for the existing open international trade order. If they cannot agree on this, how are they going to tackle any problem of global importance, including how to engage more with Africa—a continent whose interests remain essentially unrepresented in the G20 format? Argentina's G20 presidency did little to follow up on last year's launch of the "Compact with Africa," an investment program that asked all G20 members to sign investment facilitation agreements with African countries, and the hope now is that Japan's government will pick up the task during its G20 presidency next year.

There are two conclusions, one for the world and one specifically for German foreign policy. For the world, it is still possible to maintain the global liberal order even in the absence of the hegemon that created it and sustained it for almost seven decades. What is needed are leaders willing to stand tall and capable of playing their cards wisely, working closely with friends but also cooperating with more difficult partners. For Germany, to continuously have a positive effect on world politics, it needs to make sure someone nearly as smart and savvy as Merkel, who is due to step down in 2022 but could do so much earlier, follows in her footsteps.

In addition, the highly anticipated bilateral meeting between U.S. President Donald J. Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping was even more successful than expected. The result—a ninety-day trade war truce while negotiations continue and a halt on further tariffs—was a huge success for the Argentine G20. The overall peaceful and friendly atmosphere that surrounded the summit paved the way for the United States and China to agree to this truce. Consensus on the need for future dialogue despite differing opinions was therefore the most salient feature of the Argentine G20.

The summit was also crucial for putting the international spotlight on Argentina, portraying the current administration as open to globalization, multilateral dialogue, and consensus at a time when other countries are turning away from these important principles. For Macri, this was an opportunity to deepen his strategy of reinserting Argentina into the world, holding bilateral meetings and signing agreements to attract foreign investments to generate much-needed income. As the summit gathering demonstrated, the challenges to multilateralism are many, and in these uncertain times one thing remains clear: consensus-building is crucial. In this sense, the Buenos Aires summit will be remembered for reinserting multilateralism and sustainability into the discourse and objectives of the G20.

Read the full article here.

Quality of Life

TRICARE Update

TRICARE Open Season

Did You Miss the 2018 TRICARE Open Season?

If you missed TRICARE Open Season, you still have time to act.

- For this year only, you have until Dec. 31, 2018 to enroll in a new plan or make changes to your enrollment (e.g., switch from individual to family enrollment).
- Beginning Jan. 1, 2019, you can only enroll or make changes during Open Season or after a Qualifying Life Event (QLE), as outlined below.
  Did you intend to enroll in a FEDVIP dental or vision plan, but missed the Federal Benefits Open Season for reasons beyond your control? Visit www.benefeds.com to see what options are available to you.

Making Enrollment Changes Outside of Open Season

- Outside of TRICARE Open Season, you can enroll in or change enrollment to TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select following a Qualifying Life Event (QLE).
- A QLE is a certain change in your life, such as marriage, birth of a child, or retirement from active duty, which may mean different TRICARE options are available to you. A TRICARE QLE opens a 90-day period for you to make eligible enrollment changes. A QLE for one family member means all family members may make enrollment changes. To learn more, visit www.tricare.mil/lifeevents.
- Outside of the Federal Benefits Open Season, you may only make changes to your existing FEDVIP plan if you experience a FEDVIP QLE. Remember, FEDVIP QLEs may be different from the TRICARE QLEs.

Staff Activities

- Tuesday, staff attended an event hosted by the Heritage Foundation with keynote speaker Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) to discuss the effects on defense of sequestration and the path forward.

- Wednesday, staff worked with the media division to develop a plan for the transfer of the spirit of service awards to the National Security Division.
- Wednesday, staff additional worked with the media division to ensure all significant events of the National Commander's trip to the Far East are covered.
- Thursday, staff participated in a roundtable with leadership from the Defense Health Agency to discuss the results of the first ever open season for TRICARE and FEDVIP as well as the future of integrating all the services under a single healthcare system lead by DHA.

POW/MIA Update

Personnel Recovered

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency made 10 new funeral announcements. Click on the links to read more:

12/14/18: Airman Accounted For From Vietnam War (Kibbey, R.)
12/03/18: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Dickson, M.)
12/11/18: Naval Aviator Accounted-For From Vietnam War (Bauder, J.)
12/11/18: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II
11/11/18: Pilot Accounted For From World War II (Turner, A.)
11/11/18: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Jayne, K.)
12/10/18: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Nix, C.)
12/10/18: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (O'Grady, C.)
12/10/18: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Finnegan, W.)
12/10/18: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Roesch, H.)

Joe Sharpe, Acting Director, National Security Division
Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division