Weekly Report

National Security Division

Week ending 17 April 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**

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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**

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Guam Locals Unhappy With Housing U.S. Sailors From Coronavirus-Hit Aircraft Carrier

Nearly 3,000 American sailors from the coronavirus-infected aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt are expected to have disembarked by Friday on the western Pacific U.S island territory of Guam, and plans to quarantine many of them in hotels there are drawing protests from local activists and politicians.

"I am disturbed by the reckless double-standard of potentially placing potentially exposed military personnel in local hotels," writes local Senator Sabina Flores Perez in a letter this week to Guam Governor Lourdes Leon Guerrero. "If sailors are placed in our hotels, we will be exposing lower-wage employees to greater risk, many of whom are older and have limited or no health benefits for themselves and their families."

"We are really hoping the process works and as much as possible we are going to get a negative tested group that will remain negative throughout their entire stay," Mary Rhodes, the president of the Guam Hotel and Restaurant Association, told the *Post*. "This is very strict. They will be constrained to the room. They will receive all their meals and beverages directly to the room without any contact with hotel staff. That is all coordinated with the military. There will be no guests."

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US Cancels Major Philippines War Games Due to Virus

The U.S. military has cancelled a large-scale exercise involving thousands of troops in the Philippines because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The decision to scrap Balikatan 2020 was taken "in light of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding COVID-19 pandemic and in the best interest of the health and safety of both countries' forces", U.S. Indo-Pacific Command chief Admiral Phil Davidson said.

The war games, scheduled for May 4-15, would have involved more than 10,000 troops from the two longstanding allies and a smaller contingent from Australia, according to the hosts.

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US, UAE troops Hold Major Exercise amid Virus, Iran Tensions

AL-HAMRA MILITARY BASE, United Arab Emirates — U.S. Marines and Emirati forces held a major military exercise Monday that saw forces seize a sprawling model Mideast city, a drill conducted amid tensions with Iran and despite the new coronavirus pandemic.

Troops raced over the dunes of the Al-Hamra Military Base to take the model city, complete with multi-story buildings, an airport control tower, an oil refinery and a central mosque. Controlled explosions rang out as Emirati troops rappelled from hovering helicopters and Marines searched narrow streets on the Persian Gulf for “enemy” forces.

The biennial exercise, called Native Fury, shows the close ties between American forces and the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula home to Abu Dhabi, the capital, and Dubai, its financial heart.

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Iranian Speedboats Conduct 'Dangerous And Provocative' Maneuvers Near U.S. Warships

Nearly a dozen small craft operated by the naval wing of Iran's Revolutionary Guard carried out harassing maneuvers dangerously close to U.S. warships conducting exercises in the Persian Gulf, Navy officials said Wednesday.

"The [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps navy] vessels repeatedly crossed the bows and sterns of the U.S. vessels at extremely close range and high speeds, including multiple crossings of the [USS Lewis B.] Puller with a 50 yard closest point of approach (CPA) and within 10 yards of [the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter] Maui's bow," the U.S. Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet said in a statement.

"The U.S. crews issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio, five short blasts from the ships' horns and long range acoustic noisemaker devices, but received no response from the IRGCN," the Navy said. "After approximately one hour, the IRGCN vessels responded to the bridge-to-bridge radio queries, then maneuvered away from the U.S. ships and opened distance between them."

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Russia in Review: Kremlin Tests Authoritarian Societal Control Measures during COVID-19 Crisis

Key Takeaway: Putin's response to the COVID-19 crisis is focused on shaping reality to conform to his desired narrative. The Kremlin is restricting the free flow of information on COVID-19, jailing doctors, and obfuscating its public infection numbers to support Putin's central narrative that COVID-19 will affect Russia less than much of the world. The Kremlin is additionally testing new methods of societal control as part of its efforts to control the spread of COVID-19. The Kremlin will retain these improved authoritarian tools for use against future opposition.

Putin delayed responding to COVID-19 in Russia until late March to continue advancing his power retention campaign. Russia closed its land border with China on January 30, but delayed implementing quarantines and other travel restrictions throughout February and March. Kremlin-run media claimed Russia would combat the virus without major disruptions. Putin claimed as late as March 17 that the situation was "under control" and infections had been "contained." Kremlin-run media have repeatedly claimed the West is targeting Russia with disinformation exaggerating the scale of COVID-19. The Kremlin has simultaneously conducted disinformation campaigns on COVID-19 around the world. Kremlin officials continue to deny widespread reports Russia is underreporting its infection numbers.

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POW/MIA Update

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

News Releases

April 10, 2020

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Rodgers, B.)

April 13, 2020
Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Mendonca, A.)

April 15, 2020

Marine Accounted For From World War II (Stambaugh, J.)

April 16, 2020

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Milano, D.)

Marine Accounted For From World War II (Baumbach, E.)

Marine Accounted For From World War II (Reeser, G.)

Marine Accounted For From World War II (Hoffman, J.)

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Beek, E.)

Staff Activity:

This week staff held a conference call with the National Security Chairman to go over planning for resolutions and other Commission business.

Staff continued to coordinate the Law Officer and Firefighter of the Year awards.

Staff developed a presentation for newcomers to the Division that provides an overview of the Commission and Division personnel structure with a list and descriptions of national programs.

Staff developed white papers for three resolutions that will be considered by the National Executive Committee during the Spring Meetings.

National Security staff continues to participate in the daily conference calls with the Legislative Division.

Thursday, staff participated in the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's quarterly partners conference call to receive updates.

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division