Weekly Report

National Security Division
Week ending April 12, 2019

Headlines of interest:

As It Test-Fired a New Tactical Guided Weapon, North Korea Says It Doesn't Want Sec. of State Mike Pompeo Involved In Nuclear Talks

(CNN) North Korea's Foreign Ministry has issued a stinging rebuke of United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, hours after the country claimed to have tested a new tactical weapon.

In a statement released by the state-run Korean Central News Agency, Foreign Ministry official Kwon Jong Gun said Pompeo had been "letting loose reckless remarks and sophism of all kinds against us every day."

Kwon said North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had made his "principled stand" on negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington clear in a recent speech to the country's rubberstamp parliament.

"Everyone has a clear interpretation of his speech which says that the US should change its way of calculation and come up with responsive measures before the end of this year," Kwon said.

North Korea has been pushing for more sanctions relief before it continues denuclearization, while the US has demanded greater evidence that the country is prepared to reduce its nuclear arsenal. The disagreement is believed to be the primary reason the most recent round of talks between Kim and US President Donald Trump fell apart in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Read the rest here: https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/18/politics/north-korea-us-pompeo-intl/index.html

Trump vetoes resolution to end U.S. participation in Yemen's civil war

(Washington Post) President Trump on Tuesday vetoed a resolution that would have ended U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen.

The move, which had been expected, marks the second veto of Trump's presidency.

"This resolution is an unnecessary, dangerous attempt to weaken my constitutional authorities, endangering the lives of American citizens and brave service members, both today and in the future," Trump said in a statement.

The measure had passed the House on a 247-to-175 vote this month and was approved by the Senate last month with the support of seven Republicans.

This month's House vote marked the first time both chambers had acted to invoke the same war-powers resolution to end U.S. military engagement in a foreign conflict. It also represented the latest instance of Congress's challenging Trump's decisions as commander in chief.

The veto means the United States will continue its involvement in Saudi Arabia's bombing campaign against Yemen's Houthi rebels, waged in the name of holding back Iran's expansion in the region.

Read the rest here: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-vetoes-resolution-to-end-us-participation-in-yemens-civil-war/2019/04/16/0fabc312-60a1-11e9-bfad-36a7eb36cb60_story.html?utm_term=.12775bdcc07e

Trump reverses slew of Obama-era Cuba policies in new crackdown

(Fox News) The Trump administration on Wednesday rescinded several Obama-era policies toward Cuba, while imposing tough sanctions against Venezuela and Nicaragua – as part of a new crackdown on what National Security Adviser John Bolton dubbed the "three stooges of socialism."

Bolton outlined the steps during an event in Coral Gables, Fla., honoring veterans of the United States' failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. Among the moves being taken against Cuba, the Trump administration is restricting non-family travel to the island and limiting the amount of remittances a person in the U.S. can send to family in Cuba to $1,000 per quarter.

Bolton also announced additions to the Cuba Restrict List, which prohibits direct financial transactions with entities tied to the communist nation's military, intelligence, and security services.

"While the last administration wanted to improve relations with the tyrants in Havana, and to convince the world that they posed no threat, the Cuban regime tightened its grip and extended its tentacles," Bolton said in reference to the Obama administration's thaw in the icy relationship with Cuba.

"These new measures will help steer American dollars away from the Cuban regime, or its military and security services," Bolton said.

Read the rest here: https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-reverses-slew-of-obama-era-cuba-policies-in-new-crackdown

Taliban Peace Talks Delayed

(Washington Examiner) Just as it seemed there could be a major breakthrough in the effort to reach a peace agreement with the Taliban, a highly anticipated meeting in Qatar between the terrorist group and a large delegation of prominent Afghans has been postponed.

The Taliban has been negotiating with the United States but has refused to deal directly with the U.S.-backed government of **Ashraf Ghani**. The agreement by the Taliban to meet informally with a group of Afghans was seen as a sign of hope that the Taliban position might be softening.

But just as the group of 250 delegates was set to fly to Doha, the Taliban canceled the meeting, objecting to the size of the delegation. "The gathering has been called off for now and details were being reworked," said a Western diplomat in Kabul, according to Reuters. "The government will have to change the composition of the delegation to make this meeting happen," the diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

Staff Activities

- This week, staff continued planning for the National Commander's upcoming Europe travel tentatively scheduled for May 25-June 11.
- Monday, National Security staff met with the former ambassador to the Marshall Islands to discuss veterans issues there. The Legion may bring a resolution before the Legion's Spring Meetings on the matter.
- Wednesday, National Security staff met with David Patch, Legion Department of Maine National Security chair, to discuss possible department level national security initiatives.
- Wednesday, National Security staff attended an event at on "Balancing EU relations with the U.S. and China" at the Hudson Institute. The U.S. has opened trade disputes with the E.U, and has worked toward withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and raised concerns regarding Europe's financial commitment to NATO. The E.U must defend its role in the U.S and China relationship. Trans-Atlantic Bond Alliances are vital to global security. These superpowers need to continue sharing information and intelligence in order to effectively progress. Once this has been established, then more can be done to counter China's efforts in the Indo Pacific and Indian Ocean. Event information and video are available here.
- Wednesday, National Security staff accompanied DC Executive Director, Lou Celli, to a Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride for a reception.
- Thursday, National Security staff held a conference call with Doug Haggan, Department of France, as part of the Europe travel planning process.

POW/MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency made 7 new announcements. Click on the links to read more:

News Releases Listing

04/18/19: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Hayes, J.)
04/18/19: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Ross, D.)
04/16/19: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Middlekauff, R.)
04/16/19: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Thomson, R.)
04/16/19: Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Hyman, R.)
04/16/19: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (West, E.)
04/16/19: Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Ferguson, C.)

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division