Weekly Report

National Security Division
Week ending January 25, 2019

Items of Interest

Public release of the Interim Report of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service

A commission created by Congress two years ago has issued an interim report as it considers whether the selective service registration requirement should be extended to include women. The panel's answer at its halfway point: maybe.

Congress created the bipartisan National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service in 2017 The late Sen. John McCain R-Ariz. and Sen. Jack Reed D-R.I. championed its creation. The panel is considering recommending several proposals:

- Expand the registration requirement for the Selective Service System to include women;
- Identify individuals who possess critical skills the nation might need;
- Call for volunteers during times of emergency using the existing system; and
- Incorporate reasonable changes to identify, evaluate, and protect those who object to military service, but are otherwise willing to serve.

THE COMMISSION'S FINDINGS SO FAR: For many, the draft is a distant memory, a vestige of the Vietnam War era. "Many do not realize the U.S. has a requirement for men to serve the nation if drafted," the report states.

"We also heard from many Americans who are surprised that women are currently neither required nor permitted to register for selective service and question the rationale for excluding women from the obligation to defend the nation. Because women can volunteer to serve as fighter pilots, as submariners, and in the infantry, many Americans have questioned why qualified women would not be subject to a draft like qualified men. We have heard from others, however, who believe that physical differences between men and women would make it impractical or even dangerous to conscript women to serve in combat roles."

LEGION RESOLUTION: At The Legion's 2016 National Convention, Resolution No. 218: Support for the Selective Service Registration Program was passed. It reiterates our support for the retention of the Selective Service Registration Program and supports legislation to amend the Selective Service Registration Program to include the mandatory registration of females between the ages of 18-25 years of age.

THE COMMISSION WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU: The commission's final report is due to Congress by March 2020. It's asking for thoughts/feedback at www.inspire2serve.gov. Or by email at info@inspire2serve.gov.

The Commission will conduct a series of public hearings over the next year. Here is the schedule according to the interim Report:

2019 Public Hearings		
Date	**Topic**	**Location**
February 21	Universal Service	Washington, D.C.
March 28	National Service	College Station, TX
April 24-25	Selective Service	Washington, D.C.
May 15-16	Public Service & Military Service	Washington, D.C.
June 20	Creating an Expectation of Service	Hyde Park, NY

The interim report is available on the commission's web site.

The Costs Of War

Anthony Cordesman, the respected analyst with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, is circulating a working draft of a report, America's Military Spending and the Uncertain Costs of its Wars. It highlights the failure of the executive branch and of Congress to report the true costs of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and other conflicts in the 21st century.

"The U.S. government … has never developed a convincing method of reporting on the cost of the wars, and its estimates are a confusing morass of different and conflicting Departmental, Agency, and other government reporting that leave major gaps in key areas," writes Cordesman.

"The result is a national embarrassment and a fundamental failure by the Executive Branch and Congress to produce the transparency and public debate and review that are key elements of a responsible government and democracy."

Venezuela In Crisis

President Trump is recognizing a political opponent of President Nicolas Maduro as the legitimate president of Venezuela, as thousands of people were demonstrating against the Maduro regime.

"Today, I am officially recognizing the President of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Juan Guaido, as the Interim President of Venezuela," he said. "In its role as the only legitimate branch of government duly elected by the Venezuelan people, the National Assembly invoked the country's constitution to declare Nicolas Maduro illegitimate, and the office of the presidency therefore vacant."

In response, Maduro broke off diplomatic relations with the U.S. and ordered all American diplomats out of the country. In a statement, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the U.S. would ignore the order.

"The United States does not recognize the Maduro regime as the government of Venezuela. Accordingly, the United States does not consider former president Nicolas Maduro to have the legal authority to break diplomatic relations with the United States or to declare our diplomats persona non grata," Pompeo said.

The State Department has ordered its non-essential staff to leave Venezuela this week though. Also, Pompeo pledged $20 million in humanitarian aid, which he said fulfilled a request from Guaido.

"These funds are to help them cope with the severe food and medicine shortages and other dire impacts of their country's political and economic crisis," Pompeo told a meeting of ambassadors at the Organization of American States. "Our announcement of aid is in response to a request from the National Assembly, led by the interim president."

Book Event: "By More Than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific Since 1783"

On January 24, the Institute of World Politics, a graduate school of national security, intelligence, and international affairs in Washington, D.C., hosted a book discussion with author Michael J. Green, senior vice president for Asia and Japan Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former National Security Council official in the George W. Bush Administration. Attending on behalf of The American Legion was National Security Assistant Director Jeff Steele.

About the Book: Soon after the American Revolution, certain of the founders began to recognize the strategic significance of Asia and the Pacific and the vast material and cultural resources at stake there. Over the coming generations, the United States continued to ask how best to expand trade with the region and whether to partner with China, at the center of the continent, or Japan, looking toward the Pacific. Where should the United States draw its defensive line, and how should it export democratic principles? In a history that spans the eighteenth century to the present, *By More Than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific Since 1783* follows the development of U.S. strategic thinking toward East Asia, identifying recurring themes in American statecraft that reflect the nation's political philosophy and material realities. Drawing on archives, interviews, and his own experience in the Pentagon and White House, Green finds one overarching concern driving U.S. policy toward East Asia: a fear that a rival power might use the Pacific to isolate and threaten the United States and prevent the ocean from becoming a conduit for the westward free flow of trade, values, and forward defense. *By More Than Providence* works through these problems from the perspective of history's major strategists and statesmen, from Thomas Jefferson to Alfred Thayer Mahan and Henry Kissinger. It records the fate of their ideas as they collided with the realities of the Far East and adds clarity to America's stakes in the region, especially when compared with those of Europe and the Middle East.

Check out the video online **here.** It's a little over an hour long.

Staff Activities

- This week, staff continued planning for the upcoming Washington Conference that will take place February 25 – 28.

- Wednesday, staff attended the release of the interim report of the Congressionally mandated National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, which is tasked to holistically and comprehensively review the Selective Service System, along with military, national, and public service. This report included the analysis of the impact of women serving in combat arms military professions. See above in the Items of Interest section for more.
- Thursday, staff attended the a discussion on Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific hosted by the Institute of World Politics. See above in the Items of Interest section for more.

POW/MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency made 2 new funeral announcements. Click on the links to read more:

01/25/19: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Eberhardt, E.)
01/22/19: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Fulmer, F.)

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division