Weekly Report

National Security Division

Week ending 31 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**

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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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US embassy in Baghdad hit by rocket attack

Three rockets have reportedly struck the US embassy in Iraq's capital on Sunday. This is the first direct hit after months of close calls. While attacks continue there are thousands of anti-government sit-ins across the nation.

Washington reportedly blames the rocket attacks on Iran-backed military factions in the region. Such attacks are a dangerous escalation in recent months that are specifically targeting embassies that house American troops. One of the rockets hit a cafeteria at dinner time while the other two landed nearby.

The attacks have only risked even more unrest in the region in such a fragile time. While tensions with the US and Iran have only gotten worse Iraq is left in the middle fearing another major war on their soil. A similar attack on a northern Iraqi base killed an American contractor, and the US retaliated with a strike on an Iran-backed faction known as Kataeb Hezbollah.

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U.S. military plane crashes in Taliban territory in Afghanistan

A U.S. surveillance plane crashed Monday in Taliban-controlled territory. The site of the crash was located in central Afghanistan in Ghazni province. The aircraft was a Bombardier E-11A more known as a surveillance plane "Wi-Fi in the sky", to which a Taliban spokesman took to twitter stating, "enemy intelligence aircraft." The spokesman went on to say "our mujahedeen (fighters) tactically crashed the plane." When question on the tactics that were used in bring down the aircraft the spokesman did not elaborate.

The downing of the aircraft comes at a pivotal time in the war. There are peace talks and an ongoing process to end this conflict. While in the past few months the conflict as intensified with the US and Taliban. It has left many long-time experts to speculate if the war effort has been lost since the draw down in 2013-2014. While the US is willing to negotiate peace talks with the Taliban they are unwilling to do it while attacks continue to occur.

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Trump predicts Palestinians will buy into his Middle East peace plan

President Trump has predicted in his peace plan that the Palestinians will eventually back his proposal for peace in the region. "We think we will ultimately have the support of the Palestinians," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office, though he also cast the plan as a "suggestion" to Israel and the Palestinians.

Trump alter said it would be the "deal of the century" although Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas reportedly refused to speak with the President about this proposal. This leaving doubt in many as to what might follow.

Monday Trump met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his election opponent Benny Gantz to discuss the "economic vision" for Palestine and the neighbouring Arab countries. This coming ahead of the diplomatic conference in Bahrain.

Though the President has made no official details yet about his plan on how to stabilize the region, he claims it will be a great deal for the Palestinians and moving forward the US and Israel will need their cooperation.

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Asia Maritime transparency Initiative: Occupation and Island Building

Five claimants occupy nearly 70 disputed reefs and islets throughout the South China Sea. These countries include China, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. There have been more than 90 outposts built on these contested features, many of which have seen expansion in recent years.

China has at least 20 outposts that they claim, 20 of those are in the Paracel Islands and 7 in the Spratlys. China also controls Scarborough Shoal, which it seized in 2012, via coast guard presence. While they have not seized any more land since then they have built up some of the shore line and outcroppings that they already have to equate to 3,200 acres. This has left the other nations to fear as to what might come next with these large expansions.

While china continues to expand its existing shore line's Vietnam occupies between 49 and 51 outposts. This makes them the owner of the majority of these contested islands. Taiwan only has sole control of one outpost which is Itu Aba. This island is the largest natural feature in the Spratlys. The Philippines occupies a total of nine features in the Spratly Islands. Thitu Island, the largest, boasts the only Philippine airstrip in the Spratlys. Leaving Malaysia with a total of five features remaining, the closest being to the Malaysian state of Sabah.

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U.S. Has Deployed New, Small Nukes On Submarine, According To Group

U.S. ballistic missile submarines are being outfitted with low-yield nuclear warheads, reports made by an independent monitor. The USS Tennessee, an Ohio-class submarine that went on patrol in the final weeks of 2019 carried "one or two" of these new weapons. This report coming from the Federation of American Scientists. "It is apparently still out there now and expected to come back sometime in February," says Hans Kristensen, director of the group's nuclear information project. The second is believed to be patrolling in the Pacific.

The Pentagon refused to make an official statement on these claims. "It is U.S. policy to neither confirm nor deny the presence or absence of nuclear weapons at any general or specific location, as such, we cannot confirm or deny this reporting at this time," it said in a written statement to NPR.

An Energy Department spokesman confirmed that they had produced the warheads over the past year and in November had been transferred to the U.S. Navy.

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POW/MIA Update

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

News Releases

January 27, 2020

USS West Virginia Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Kubinec, W.)

USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Mulick, J.)

USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Nightingale, J.)

USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Reagan, D.)

USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Carroll, J.)

January 28, 2020

USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Young, M.)

January 29, 2020

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Ramirez, A.)

USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Thornton, C.)

USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Gillette, W.)

Staff Activity:

- Staff Attended Political and Economic Trends within North Korea. Topics discussed were increasing securitization trends in North Korea, the expansion of infrastructure development beyond Pyongyang, and developing economic trends in spite of sanctions against North Korea.
- Staff attended VA DoD Survivors Form round table to converse with Gold Star stakeholders.
- Thursday, staff participated in a conference call with senior defense officials to discuss an update on the Department's efforts to eliminate sexual assault in our military community.
- Thursday, staff participated in a conference call with leadership from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to discuss DoD's past conflict personnel accounting mission and the continued progress of the Agency.
- Thursday, staff attended an event at the Embassy of Vietnam to meet with senior political counselors to discuss topics such as the American Legion's support for DPAA's recovery missions of missing in action U.S. service members in Vietnam.

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division