Weekly Report

National Security Division

Week ending 6 March, 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**

Click here to read more.

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**

Click here to read more.

The American Legion: Taliban Agreement Cause for Skeptical Hope

(INDIANAPOLIS, February 29, 2020) --The leader of the nation's largest veterans organization welcomed the prospect of peace in Afghanistan, while at the same time expressing distrust for the Taliban.

"We cannot forget that the Taliban comprised one of the most vicious and brutal regimes in history. Terrorists lie. At the same time, we are humane and deeply respect the sacrifices made by so many American families. Nobody hates war more than veterans, and The American Legion would like nothing more than seeing the nearly two decade conflict in Afghanistan end," said American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford. "The Taliban no longer rule Afghanistan and have expressed a desire to engage the legitimate government. They have agreed to a cease fire and to take steps to ensure that Afghanistan will never again be used as a haven by terrorists who plot to harm the United States. In exchange, the U.S. government has agreed to reduce our forces there to 8,600 and then gradually to zero. We welcome this agreement. It is made possible by the 800,000 U.S. troops and our coalition allies who have served there since 2001. We will never forget the nearly 2,400 Americans who died in Afghanistan. Nor will we forget their wounded comrades. They made Afghanistan a better place. We have a right to expect the Taliban to abide by the agreement so that peace can finally come to this troubled region. The Taliban have violated agreements before and we maintain a healthy dose of skepticism, along with a commitment to never again ignore threats that could lead to another 9/11."

Click Here To Read More

Pentagon, State Department envoy clash over sending Patriot missiles to Turkey

The U.S. special representative for Syria engagement, James Jeffrey has been pressing DoD to send additional military equipment to Turkey to help it repel the Syrian government's assault in Idlib province. But the Pentagon is resisting.

The additional aid and military equipment is to help Turkey fight against Russian-backed Syrian government forces. Jeffery has been pressing the DoD to send Patriot missile defense batteries to turkey to help repel the Syrian government assault.

Backed by Russian air power, Syrian government forces are attempting to seize the last remaining territory there held by Turkish-backed Syrian opposition forces. At least 33 Turkish soldiers were killed in Syrian government air raids in the opposition-held province on Thursday, marking a dramatic escalation of a conflict that has driven nearly a million people from their homes in the past three months.

Click Here To Read More

At least 50 killed in northern Nigeria 'bandit' attacks

There have been at least 50 killed in multiple attacks by armed bandits in the northern Nigeria. It has also included cattle theft and kidnappings. Sources said it was around 100 armed militants that stormed into the village of Kerawa and Minda in Kaduna state at dawn over the weekend. The assailants gunned down worshippers as they left a mosque for morning prayers before looting and burning homes.

"So far 50 bodies have been recovered but the figure is not conclusive and is very likely to rise as rescue efforts are still under way," said Zayyad Ibrahim, a legislator in the Nigerian parliament. "The bandits accused residents from the targeted villages of providing information about their hideouts to the military," said Kerawa. "We buried 51 victims yesterday."

Authorities in several states in northwest Nigeria have sought peace deals with the bandits to stop the bloodshed but these have failed to end the instability.

Click Here To Read More

US loses drone over Niger

U.S. Africa Command says it lost an MQ-1 drone on Saturday near Agadez, Niger. Photos released on Monday were making their rounds on social media seeming to have confirmed the downed drone.

“Our initial and current assessment is that the RPA (remotely piloted aircraft) was lost due to mechanical failure. We do not believe the RPA was lost as a result of any hostile action.” Navy Lt. Christiana M. Gibson, a spokeswoman with U.S. Africa Command, told Military Times in an email Monday.

AFRICOM said at the time the new base’s location in central Niger was critical due to the geographic advantages it posed in warding off threats from violent extremist groups in the area.

“Flexible and diverse postures across the African continent enable us to facilitate operational needs and better support our partners in the region,” U.S. Air Force Gen. Jeff Harrigian, commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces in Africa, said in a November AFRICOM news release. “The location in Agadez was selected in conjunction with Niger due to the geographic and strategic flexibility it offers to regional security efforts.”

Click Here To Read More

General Officer Announcement from the Department of Defense

Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper announced today that the president has made the following nomination:

Air Force Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. has been nominated for appointment to the rank of general, with assignment as chief of staff, U.S. Air Force, Pentagon, Washington, District of Columbia. Brown is currently serving as commander, Pacific Air Forces; air component commander for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command; and executive director, Pacific Air Combat Operations Staff, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

Click Here To Read More

USAF Still 2,100 Pilots Short of Goal

The Air Force had a set goal of 21,000 aviators to combat the shortage and have thus far been unsuccessful. They are currently 2,100 pilots short for the fiscal year of 2020.

"As of the end of [fiscal 2019], the Air Force remains 2,100 pilots short of the 21,000 required to execute the National Defense Strategy," service officials said in written testimony submitted to the House Armed Services readiness subcommittee for a March 3 hearing. "Increasing production of new aviators remains the most significant lever we have to arrest aircrew shortages."

Many military pilots are leaving government service to get into private airline jobs. The leave for aa multitude of reason to include better pay, flexible hours, and more control of their careers. At the end of fiscal 2016, the service said it was 1,555 pilots short and expected to see the gap grow. USAF launched a number of initiatives, such as additional payment as incentive to keep flying. The shortage grew to about 2,000 pilots short of a roughly 20,000-person goal in the following years.

Fighter pilots have traditionally made up the largest portion of the shortage, which is particularly problematic from an NDS standpoint because the strategy focuses on high-end aircraft to compete with and win in a war against an advanced military such as those of Russia or China.

Click Here To Read More

POW/MIA Update

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

News Releases

March 2, 2020

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

March 3, 2020

Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Cansler, J.)

Staff Activity:

- Staff attended a meeting with the Poland Desk at the state department. This was to discuss the upcoming trip to Europe. The meeting included areas of interests, cultural differences, and to establish a rapport with the people of Poland.

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division