National Security Division Report
Week ending April 9, 2021

Honoring Families of Fallen Soldiers on Gold Star Spouses Day 2021

During World War I, families of military men and women began displaying small Service flags with a blue star as an indication that their loved one was serving in the war. If that loved one lost his or her life, the blue star was replaced with a gold star.

In 1936, the last Sunday in September was named Gold Star Mother's Day, and before the end of World War II, Gold Star Wives of America and Gold Star Wives Day were established. Today, our Nation honors the sacrifice made by *all* Gold Star families and family members.

Although it was initially referred to as Gold Star Wives Day, the day of recognition was always intended to include all spouses who suffered a loss. Eventually, it was renamed to express that inclusivity explicitly. Gold Star Spouses Day 2021 will be recognized on April 5th, as it every year, to publicly honor the sacrifice made by spouses of our nation's fallen soldiers.

No group of people may have given more for their country than the families of our fallen soldiers.

To read the full article, click Here

Resolution No. 14: Establish Gold Star Families Program

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 17-18, 2018, That The American Legion establishes a program that will provide a network of support for Gold Star Families by assisting with connecting them to other families and providing benefits awareness.

U.S. warship transits Taiwan Strait amid China tensions

The guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain conducted a "routine" transit of the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday, the U.S. Navy said, as China sent more fighter jets into Taiwan's air defense zone and a Chinese carrier group drilled near Taiwan.

“The ship's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. The United States military will continue to fly, sail, and operate anywhere international law allows," the U.S. Navy said in a statement.

Resolution No. 38: Taiwan Straits Dialogue

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to encourage the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any negative actions by either side to change the status quo, which might lead to military conflict.

To read the full article, click Here

Defense Secretary Highlights Commitment to Allies, Partners, Kirby Says

Kirby discussed Austin's commitment to allies and partners worldwide and noted that the secretary spoke by phone today with several key defense leaders, including Ukrainian Defense Minister Andrii Taran.

In the call with Taran, Austin reaffirmed unwavering U.S. support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and condemned recent escalations of Russia's aggressive and provocative actions in eastern Ukraine, Kirby said.

Austin reiterated the U.S. commitment to building Ukraine's forces to defend more effectively against Russian aggression, Kirby added.

In turn, Kirby said that Taran expressed gratitude for the open dialogue and continued support.

In a conversation with Turkish National Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, Austin underscored commitment to the U.S.-Turkish bilateral defense relationship and collective security through NATO, Kirby said.

The leaders also discussed the positive diplomatic developments and efforts to reduce all tensions in the eastern Mediterranean. Kirby said the secretary welcomed ongoing exploratory talks between NATO allies Turkey and Greece and both governments' commitment to this process.

Kirby said Austin noted the importance of strengthening U.S-Turkey military-to-military cooperation, and he urged Turkey not to retain the Russian S-400 missile defense system.

Resolution No. 27: Sustaining Counterterrorism Efforts

RESOLVED, That The American Legion fully supports a more effective, lethal, resilient, and rapidly innovative joint force, combined with a robust constellation of allies and partners, to sustain American influence, ensure favorable balances of power that will safeguard the free and open international order.

To read the full article, click Here

DOD Struggling to Improve Readiness in Every Domain

The Defense Department has regained some lost readiness after two decades of continuous combat. Still, it has more work to do, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Office.

"Nearly two decades of conflict has degraded U.S. military readiness," wrote report author Diana Maurer, GAO's director of Defense Capabilities and Management.

The 2019 National Defense Authorization Act required the Pentagon to track readiness by domain—air, land, sea, space, and cyber—rather than individual service branches. GAO found readiness improved for land forces, decreased sea forces, mixed air, space, and cyber. The public report released April 7 is thin on specifics; however, as much of the data included in the classified version provided to Congress was redacted.

The American Legion has and will continue to advocate for a robust Armed Forces. The security of this nation depends on it. We will continue to monitor all areas stated in the article

Resolution No. 35: National Defense Budget

RESOLVED, That Congress never allows our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times.

To read GAO-21-279 released April 7, 2021, click Here

To read more, click Here

MILITARY ONESOURCE

TRICARE For Life: Coverage Basics, Eligibility, and Costs

TRICARE For Life, or TFL, is Medicare wraparound coverage for military retirees and their TRICARE-eligible family members who have Medicare Part A and Part B. This webinar will provide valuable information for those who will soon be eligible for Medicare and TFL coverage. Learn about who can participate, how TFL works, what you pay, and more.

Resolution No. 94: Earned Military Benefits

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion encourage Congress to ensure that any benefit in force at the time of initial enlistment cannot be reduced in value, and that benefit is to remain in force throughout the entire military career and retirement of a servicemember.

Date: April 15; **Time:** 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm (Eastern Time)

To Register for Webinar, click Here

April 5, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Magers, H.)
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Legislative Issues

• Availability of Healthcare benefits for residents at the Armed Forces Retirement Home in proposed language of the FY22NDAA – The American Legions support funding that provides long-term solvency and viability of the Armed Forces Retirement Home (Resolution No. 107, 2016)

• Quality of Life for Service members and their Families – We owe our military men and women a debt of gratitude we can never repay for all that they — and their families — sacrifice to serve our country. The American Legion supports a fully funded quality of life (Resolution No. 85, 2016)

• Ensure the Coast Guard is paid – The American Legion supports a fully funded United States Coast Guard (Resolution No. 23, 2016)

• Expedited Citizenship through Honorable Military Service – The American Legion supports measures to ensure the process of naturalization through military service is completed before discharge (Resolution No. 15, 2018)

• Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure – The American Legion supports refined processes and policies that will enhance interagency cybersecurity and promulgate best practices and standards and ensure the protection of critical infrastructure from cyber and other electronic attacks. (Resolution No. 20, 2017)

• Addressing the Forever Wars – The American Legion advocate for elevating diplomacy to build a better, safer world (Resolution No. 22, 2020)

Staff Activity:

- Assisted in coordinating a private tour for the National Commander, April 15, with the WWI Centennial Commission Chairman, Dan Dayton, and Terry Hamby of the new World War I monument scheduled to be unveiled later this month.

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Week ending 04/9/2021

NATIONAL SECURITY DIVISION REPORT