**National Security Division Report**
Week ending 29 May 2020

## The American Legion welcomes Trump tweet on National Guard extension

(LEGION Press Release—May 28, 2020) – The head of the nation's largest veterans organization praised a tweet by President Trump today indicating that federal orders for members of the National Guard would be extended through the middle of August.

The tweet comes just eight days after The American Legion called for an extension, which would entitle certain National Guard members to additional home loan, education and retirement benefits since their federal orders would now exceed 90 days.

"We know that the coronavirus emergency will not suddenly end at 89 days," American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford said. "Yet thousands of outstanding men and women of the National Guard left their homes and risked their lives in response to this emergency. From cleaning nursing homes to delivering supplies, the National Guard has been a national treasure. The American Legion welcomes the president's tweet indicating his plans to extend the Title 32 orders, which would enable these heroes to accumulate benefits that they have certainly earned."

The president's tweet stated "The men and women of the National Guard have been doing a great job fighting the Coronavirus. This week, I will extend their Title 32 orders through mid-August, so they can continue to help States succeed in their response and recovery efforts."

The American Legion, www.legion.org, is the nation's largest veterans service organization and was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national defense, the care and wellbeing of U.S. military veterans, patriotic youth programs and Americanism.

# The Pacific Deterrence Initiative: Peace Through Strength In The Indo-Pacific

*(Note: The following commentary is jointly authored by Sen. Jim Inhofe And Sen. Jack Reed, chair and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.)*

The credibility of American deterrence rests on a simple foundation. America prevents wars by convincing its adversaries they cannot win. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis said it succinctly: Deterrence is achieved when the enemy decides, "Not today. You, militarily, cannot win it, so don't even try it." Currently, in the Indo-Pacific, that foundation of deterrence is crumbling as an increasingly aggressive China continues its comprehensive military modernization.

This is not a partisan issue. Five years ago, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter warned that China was modernizing its military "to try to close the gap and erode our superiority in every domain." Then, two years ago, Mattis assessed that's exactly what happened, stating that America's "competitive edge has eroded in every domain of warfare … and it is continuing to erode." Even more bluntly, the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission report cautioned, "America's military superiority…has eroded to a dangerous degree" to the point that "the U.S. military could lose the next state-versus-state war it fights."

The best way to protect U.S. security and prosperity in Asia is to maintain a credible balance of military power. But America's ability to do so is at risk. And it's not just U.S. interests at stake. Allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific are watching closely, and wondering whether they will be able to count on America.

With the stakes so high, the time for action is now. That's why this year we intend to establish a Pacific Deterrence Initiative in the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021.* The Pacific Deterrence Initiative will enhance budgetary transparency and oversight, and focus resources on key military capabilities to deter China. The initiative will also reassure U.S. allies and partners, and send a strong signal to the Chinese Communist Party that the American people are committed to defending U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific.

**What the Pacific Deterrence Initiative Will Do**

The Pentagon is taking challenges in the Indo-Pacific seriously, and has made some important progress implementing the *National Defense Strategy* in the region. That's especially true when it comes to rebuilding readiness and investing in modernization. Unfortunately, the progress to date has been insufficient to achieve the "urgent change at significant scale" that is required. The Pacific Deterrence Initiative will improve the implementation of the *National Defense Strategy* in the Indo-Pacific, and incentivize the Pentagon to better prioritize the region in its annual budget process.

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## Breaking Down China's 2020 Defense Budget

(Courtesy of the Center for Strategic and International Studies) China kicked off the annual meeting of its legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC), in Beijing on Friday, May 22. The first day of the NPC session featured the widely anticipated announcement of China's new defense budget. Chinese officials revealed on Friday morning that spending on national defense in 2020 would rise to 1.268 trillion yuan, an increase of 6.6 percent—the lowest in decades.

Since 2016, year-over-year growth in China's defense budget has ranged between 7.2 percent and 8.1 percent. While the announcement of a 6.6 percent increase in defense spending in 2020 marks a significant downtick, it must be understood in light of the recent slowing of the Chinese economy. For the first time since China began publishing GDP targets in 1990, Chinese leaders did not set economic growth rates for the economy this year, as a very low rate of growth is expected due to Covid-19. The IMF estimates that China's GDP will grow by only 1.2 percent in 2020. By comparison, China's GDP grew by 6.1 percent in 2019 and the military budget grew by 7.5 percent.

Looking at expected government expenditure provides additional clarity. While the central government budget is slated to fall by 0.2 percent, total national government spending (which includes the central government spending) will increase by 3.8 percent as leaders work to stimulate the economy. Spending on the military as a percent of the central government budget will rise slightly from 5.06 percent in 2019 to 5.12 percent in 2020, and spending as a percent of overall national government spending will rise from 33.6 percent to 36.2 percent.

**Defense Spending as a Percent of Government Spending**

| Year | Share of Total Government Budget (%) | Share of Central Government Budget (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 2020 | 5.1 | 36.2 |
| 2019 | 5.1 | 33.6 |
| 2018 | 5.3 | 34.1 |
| 2017 | 5.2 | 34.6 |
| 2016 | 5.3 | 34.9 |

Source: Chinese Central Government

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## Army Scales Back In-Person Recruiting, Deploys Virus Testing Before Basic Training

The Inglewood Army recruiting station is tucked into a strip mall in a gritty part of Los Angeles. Its neighbors are a liquor store, fast food outlets and palm trees. Inside are the familiar posters: smiling soldiers with the slogans "Army Strong" and "Army Team."

Sergeant First Class Nathan Anslow runs this station. He points to something new just inside the door. A stack of questionnaires — coronavirus screening forms. It's the first stop for potential recruits.

"I go over the screening questions," he said. "Do they have any of the symptoms? Have they felt any of this? Have they travelled? Are they currently sick or been around someone who's sick?"

"So if they come to the office and don't have masks and gloves, I have some to provide for them," he said.

This store front office normally would hold 11 recruiters. But in the age of distancing, Anslow has chopped down that number. Now just three recruiters at a time are in the office, and only three recruits — who come in just to sign the final paperwork.

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## *POW/MIA Update*

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency made the following announcement. Click on the link to read more:

May 26, 2020
Marine Accounted For From World War II (Miller, C.)

## *Staff Activity:*

- National Security staff is working to get all National Security resolutions together in a digital file for distribution to the National Security Commission and Committees. These will be broken down by committee and sent by both email and USPS mail to the relevant chairmen when completed.
- National Security Policy Advisor (NSPA) Nick Riffel continues work on several award programs: Law Officer & Fire Fighter of the Year and Spirit of Service.
- NSPA Jeff Steele has completed work on updating the National Security Commission roster, to include the addition of email addresses. It has been shared with National Security Chairman Steve Brennan and will be broken down by Committee for dissemination to Committee leadership shortly. The goal is to improve communication among the Commission and to facilitate the conduct of business in the absence of the Spring NEC and National Convention, both cancelled.

- NSPA Jeff Steele continues work on the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures for the Legion's Military Equipment Program and the processing of outstanding requests. The DoD provides rifles, blank ammunition & clips, and other military equipment to American Legion posts free of charge, to perform military funeral honors, parades, and other events. The Legion's 2019 Post Officer's Guide provides an overview of the program and procedures on pages 128-133, which is available here.
- On Wednesday, May 27, NSPA Jeff Steele attended a virtual event hosted by the Cato Institute on the topic of "Chinese-U.S. Relations after the COVID-19 Pandemic." Even before the pandemic, relations between Beijing and Washington were heading south. Now the Trump Administration appears determined to turn China's poor response into a campaign issue. Joe Biden's campaign has responded in kind. The expert panelists discussed questions such as: Can the bilateral relationship survive the coming presidential campaign? More broadly, where should the relationship go? More information and video of the event is available here.
- On Thursday, May 28, NSPA Jeff Steele attended a virtual event hosted by the Global Taiwan Institute on: "US-Taiwan Relations in President Tsai's Second Term." This virtual seminar discussed the trajectory of US-Taiwan relations and cross-Strait relations as President Tsai enters her second term in an ever more uncertain strategic environment. More information and video of the event is available here.
- On Thursday, May 28, a National Commander's letter was sent to the Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of North Macedonia in DC. The letter welcomed North Macedonia as the 30th member to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). A digital version of the letter is available here.

*Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division*