VETERANS STRENGTHENING AMERICA
NATIONAL SECURITY DIVISION'S WEEKLY REPORT

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Meetings

- NS policy analysts received two days of training on how to effectively examine a wide range of national security issues. Topics included, Afghan Adjustment, the Foreign Affairs Budget, and the Defense Industrial Base. Staff also gained critical skills in communications, effective advocacy, and policy making.

- NS staff met with the Legislative and Media and Communications Divisions to discuss talking points for crafting a statement on the recently released FY25 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The full bill text can be read here and an executive summary can be found here.

- NS staff attended a reception for the 33rd anniversary of the Armed Forces of Ukraine at the Organization of American States. Attendees included Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine H.E. Oksana Markarova and Defense Attache Major General Borys Kremenetskyi.

Policy

- NS Staff analyzed content from the Congressional Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party's hearing "Rebuilding the Arsenal of Democracy: The Imperative to Strengthen America's Defense Industrial Base and Workforce" which took place last week. The hearing focused on ways the United States can bolster its economic security and defense innovation.

- NS Staff is closely monitoring the situation unfolding in Syria and the US airstrikes against ISIS-related targets in Syria.

Programs

- NS staff is continuing to prepare the Standard Operating Procedures for all programs within the National Security Division.

- NS staff has been prepping the letters and emails to get sent out for the Spirit of Service nominations.

The American Legion Military Surplus Equipment

- Items requested: Ammo- 4,960; Rifles- 19
- Requests submitted by: Posts- 5; Departments- 4

POW/MIA

Dec. 10, 2024

- Airman Accounted For From World War II (Nyberg, H.)

Dec. 6, 2024

- Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Crossland, A.)

DPAA has identified/repatriated 235 service members this year.

Be The One:

Mental Health Holistically Integrates with Multiple Dimensions of Health to Support Readiness

Mission readiness in the military involves both physical and psychological fitness, as service members face various operational stressors that contribute to allostatic load, or the "wear and tear" on the body. These stressors, which may include extreme environmental conditions, financial strain, medical issues, and social challenges, can lead to emotional distress, burnout, or illness. Mental toughness, resilience, and positive coping strategies, such as seeking support and engaging in healthy behaviors, can help mitigate these effects. Psychological fitness, which refers to the ability to cope with these unique stressors, is closely linked to overall health and mission readiness.

Several factors influence the mental health and readiness of service members, including nutrition, physical fitness, social networks, and spirituality. A nutritious diet and regular exercise can improve resilience and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, while strong social support from peers and unit cohesion can act as protective factors against mental health issues. Additionally, spirituality may provide a sense of purpose, reduce the risk of PTSD and depression, and offer a supportive community. A holistic approach to health, encompassing physical, mental, and social well-being, is essential for optimizing mission readiness. Addressing mental health issues through supportive environments and reducing stigma around seeking help are crucial for ensuring service members remain fit for duty.

Focus Topic:

The collapse of the Assad regime

Over the weekend, the National Security Division monitored the situation unfolding in Syria as the regime fell to rebel control and the 50-year reign of the Assad dynasty crumbled. The 13-year civil war came crashing down as rebel forces were met with little to no resistance by Assad's

Syrian Arab Army after a counteroffensive from rebel forces took the country with lighting speed in just 12 days.

As of December 2024, there are approximately 900 US troops stationed in the country near the tri-country border of Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, with a mission to counter ISIS from reforming. After President Bashir Al-Assad surrendered the capital city of Damascus and fled to Moscow, CENTCOM began a bombing raid just hours later against 75 ISIS-related targets in the country to prevent the group from using the national unrest to their advantage to launch fresh attacks.

The US backed rebel group, HTS, is set to take provisional control over the country for the time being. Concerns over the groups affiliation with Al-Qaeda and designation by the US State Department as a terrorist organization remains concerning for policy makers, as the fate of US troop presence has yet to be announced from either the outgoing or incoming presidential administrations.