VETERANS STRENGTHENING AMERICA

NATIONAL SECURITY DIVISION'S WEEKLY REPORT

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November 14 - November 18, 2022

STAFF ACTIVITY

- NS Director met with Gold Star Mothers National President Sarah Taylor. The discussion was centered around the National President's efforts involving Suicide Awareness and Prevention, and her desire to push for legislation that would make it mandatory for DoD to conduct wellness checks on service members, for e period of time after they exit the military. National President Taylor is also interested in meeting two Legionnaires, both Marine veterans, who have been hiking across the country since June 6, 2022 on their journey in support of Gold Star Families and POW/MIA remembrance and support. Read about their journey here.

- NS Staff participated in a webinar titled "US Defense Innovation and Great Power Deterrence" hosted by the Brookings Institute. The discussion focused on issues surrounding great power rivalry, characterized in part by growing capabilities of new weapons systems, cyber capabilities, robotics, artificial intelligence, satellites, and precision missiles, including those with hypersonic technologies. The vulnerability of similar systems in use by America, and how the US must modernize them was also discussed.

- NS Staff attended an in-person "*Military Health System MSO/VSO Executive Session*" update at the Defense Health Agency (DHA) Headquarters, with a focus on the following areas:

    - TRICARE Pharmacy: Mr. Norton, Chief, Pharmacy Operations Division (POD). TRICARE Retail Network Pharmacy Change, as of November 3, 2022, 165,000 of approximately 374,000 beneficiaries have switched or filled their medication at an alternative TRICARE retail network pharmacy. Starting January 1, 2023, beneficiaries who get their specialty medications from a pharmacy not in the TRICARE network must move to a pharmacy in the network to avoid paying a higher cost share. Accredo Specialty pharmacies, TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery, and Military pharmacies are network options.

- **Military Health System (MHS) Genesis:** Col Cantilina, Chief Health Informatics Officer, DHA. MHS GENESIS is the new electronic health record (EHR) for the Military that replaced legacy healthcare systems. MHS improves the availability of Electronic Health Records to support more than 9.6 million Department of Defense (DoD) beneficiaries and 205,000 other personnel globally.

- **NDAA 2017 Section7 702:** Navy Captain Farrill, Active-Duty Health Care Administrator. DHA has completed the transition of all Military Treatment Facilities to the Defense Health Agency; meeting the intent of Section 702 of the NDAA 2017 to achieve a more integrated, effective health system to support readiness and healthcare delivery.

- **The Rise of telehealth:** LtCol Reynolds, Chief, Virtual Health Branch, Healthcare Optimization Division. DHA has implemented "MHS Video Connect," an industry-standard video visit capability that can be used on phones, tablets, and computers in all 50 United States, and also includes services aboard ships, overseas, and in all US territories.

- **Introduction to DHA Public Health and Framework for the Future:** Rear Admiral Taylor, Director, DHA Public Health. DHA's mission is to Advance Joint Force health protection with agile public health Enterprise solutions in support of the National Defense Strategy. Their primary focus will focus on Force Readiness, Healthy Families, and Strong Partnerships.

- NS Staff attended a virtual Fireside chat titled *"Recruitment, Retention, and Quality of Life in the Force with Christine Wormuth,"* hosted by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS.) Secretary of the Army Wormuth focused on current issues plaguing the Army's recruitment, retention, and overall quality of life.

- NS Director joined the Executive Director for Government Affairs, and Legislative Director in a meeting with USMC leadership to discuss how the American Legion can assist with matters involving recruiting, retenetion, quality of life, and also relationship-building with the local community. Updates will be provided in the future as courses of action are identified and Legionnaires can assist all branches of DoD in the issues mentioned above.

- The War between Russia and Ukraine continues to be the prominent issue globally and concerns of escalation of the conflict across borders, including members of NATO, has contributed to energy, financial, supply chain, and food insecurity issues. As a result, misinformation and disinformation continue to provide incorrect assessments on actions on the ground. According to the Associated Press, the following update is provided on the previously reported Russin missile attack into Poland: "WARSAW, Poland (AP) — In earlier versions of a story published November 15, 2022, The Associated Press reported erroneously, based on information from a senior American intelligence official who spoke on condition of anonymity, that Russian missiles had crossed into Poland and killed two people. Subsequent reporting showed that the missiles were Russian-made and most likely fired by Ukraine in defense against a Russian attack."

- NS Staff attended a hearing titled *"JROTC: Protecting Cadets from Sexual Abuse and Instructor Misconduct,"* hosted by House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on National Security. In July, the *New York Times* published an article documenting high rates of sexual misconduct by instructors in JROTC programs in the past five years. The committee then conducted a report and found that sexual assault is even more prevalent than the *New York Times* reported. The Committee found 58 substantiated reports of sexual misconduct; the *New York Times* initially reported 33. This rate is much higher than sexual abuse amongst regular high school teachers. Discussions on getting after these problem also include updating and implementing more stringent certification and screening requirements for instructors.

- NS Staff is finalizing the logistics for the National Commander's upcoming travel to the Departments of Hawaii and Philippines (Okinawa, Japan visit).

- For those Legionnaires who would like to sign up for the daily (weekdays only) e-mail version of the Department of Defense's ***Early Bird Brief Newsletter,*** please register at the following link: *Defense News Early Bird Sign Up*

POW/MIA

November 14, 2022

- Soldier accounted for from World War II (Martin, F.)

- Soldier accounted for from World War II (Rotunno, J.)

November 15, 2022

- Airman accounted for from World War II (Nies, W.)

DPAA has identified/repatriated 170 servicemembers so far this year.

PROGRAMS (The American Legion Military Surplus Equipment)

- Processed request: Ammo – 9,920; Rifle – 19; Clips – 25; Static Display – 0

- Participants: Post – 6; Department – 5

Tip of the Week

- TRICARE Open Season began on November 14. Do not miss your chance to enroll in a health plan or change health plans for coverage that starts January 1, 2023. You have until Tuesday, December 13, to decide how to update options for you and your family. Remember, if you are not enrolled in a health plan, you can only receive care at military hospitals and clinics if space is available.

Options:

1. Are you staying with your current plan? No need to re-enroll.
2. Need to make enrollment changes or change plans?
    - Log in to milConnect and click the "Manage health benefits" button.
    - Call your TRICARE contractor.
    - Mail your enrollment form to your TRICARE contractor.
    - Visit an overseas TRICARE Service Center.