VETERANS STRENGTHENING AMERICA
NATIONAL SECURITY DIVISION'S WEEKLY REPORT

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October 5, 2024 – October 18, 2024

Meetings

- NS Staff attended an MSO/VSO Roundtable hosted by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, III. The American Legion asked the Secretary how the force posture has changed following escalatory attacks in the Middle East and what the Department is doing to protect American troops operating in the region. Additionally, the Secretary touched on military quality of life, childcare, recruiting, and defense industrial base revitalization.

- NS Staff attended the burial service at Arlington National Cemetery for Captain Ronald Forrester, USMC, whose A-6 Intruder aircraft was shot down over Vietnam. Captain Forrester's remains were identified in December 2023.

- NS Staff attended a Webinar hosted by the Welcome Corps, featuring recently resettled Afghans and participants of the Welcome Corps Program.

- NS Staff attended a webinar hosted by the Atlantic Council entitled, *"The Future of US Strategy toward Iran: A bipartisan roadmap for the next Administration"* which can be viewed here.

- NS Staff viewed a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) event titled "Counterintelligence 2.0: A Fireside Conversation with NCSC Director Michael Casey." NS Staff hoped to get a better understanding of the unorthodox security threats facing the United States.

- NS Staff attended a discussion at the Atlantic Council entitled, "Senator Mark Warner on the Global Risks Facing the Next President" to hear the Senator's opinions on the most pertinent security threats for the next four years.

- NS Staff attended event online called "At the Helm of Innovation: A Discussion with VADM Pitts on Advancing Naval Capabilities" Hosted by the CSIS.

- NS Staff attended a CSIS seminar titled "Employing 'Non-Peaceful' Means Against Taiwan: The Implications of China's Anti-Secession Law" to understand possible trends in China-Taiwan relations.

- NS Staff met with concerned Legionnaires to review solutions and oversight mechanisms that could help eligible non-citizen veterans receive permanent residency or citizenship.

- NS Staff dialed into a town hall sponsored by the U.S. Leadership Coalition titled "National Security in Focus: Integrating American Diplomacy, Development, and Defense on the African Continent." The town hall provided valuable outlook about the role of African countries in the United States' security and influence.

- NS Staff participated in a webinar titled "VSO/MSO Threat Briefing," hosted by the Center for Internet Security (CIS). The session focused on the increasing threats faced by military personnel, veterans, and their families, who are being targeted by both foreign and domestic actors seeking to manipulate, influence, or exploit them.

- NS Staff attended a panel at AUSA titled "Chief of Army Reserve Seminar: Adapt, Transform and Modernize the Army Reserve." Panelists discussed the various ways on how the Army Reserve can improve in terms of readiness and organization.

- NS Staff attended a panel at AUSA titled "Military to Civilian Transition—A Process" (Active Duty and Active Guard Reserve). Panelists gave advice to audience members on how to prepare themselves for the journey into veteran hood.

- NS The staff engaged with the Department of Defense to discuss the National Commander's upcoming visit to the Pacific region, with a particular emphasis on Guam.

- NS Staff attended a working group dedicated to the "Richard Star Act," which aims to ensure that medically retired service members receive full retirement pay without reductions or offsets.

Policy

- NS Staff continued researching and analyzing the debate over the creation of a U.S. Cyber Force. The FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) calls for an independent study on the establishment of a separate cyber force, but DOD opposes this provision claiming that it is redundant and inefficient.

- NS Staff wrote a summary on the transfer of 5,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa, Japan to the U.S. territory of Guam. This move is set to begin in December of 2024 as part of a restructuring of relations with Japan.

- NS Staff provided a review of the Secretary of Defense's recent letter to Congressional leadership on the Department's objections and priorities of amendments in the FY25 NDAA.

- NS Staff began research and policy preparation for the National Commander's Indo-Pacific travel.

- NS Staff reviewed the Democratic and Republican party platforms and summarized where each party stands on veterans, military, foreign policy, border security, and immigration.

- NS Staff conducted a review of the current vacant ambassadorships, specifically examining their implications for National Security and the potential negative impacts.

- NS Staff conducted a thorough analysis of potential legal frameworks and visa criteria concerning deported veterans, exploring pathways that may facilitate their return to the United States.

- NS Staff provided a comprehensive report on the Ukraine War, offering a summary and analysis of key developments and actions throughout September 2024.

Programs

- NS Staff is preparing final documents and arrangements for the upcoming BASE Program visit to Shaw Air Force Base next week.

The American Legion Military Surplus Equipment

- Items requested: Ammo- 7440; Rifles- 53
- Requests submitted by: Posts- 13; Departments- 13

POW/MIA

Oct. 17, 2024

- USS California Sailor Accounted for from WWII (McMurtrey, A.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Curran, B.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Carrino, F.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Nyberg, H.)

Oct. 16, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (McDuffie, C.)

Oct. 15, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Hardy, D.)

Oct. 10, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Cocco, J.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (O'Brien, T.)

Oct. 10, 2024

- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Kelly, T.)

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Karwacki, L.)

Oct. 9, 2024
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Garelick, S.)
- Merchant Marine Accounted for from WWII (Spotts, E.)

Oct. 8, 2024
- Pilot Accounted for from Vietnam War (Kilpatrick, L.)

Oct. 7, 2024
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Bowman, J.)

Oct. 4, 2024
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Sundstad, H.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Burgess, K.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Pierce, C.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Mitchell, J.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Murray, J.)

Oct. 3, 2024
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Hennessey, H.)
- Tanker Accounted for from WWII (Loterbaugh, J.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Corvin, E.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Edwards, W.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Hodak, G.)

DPAA has identified/repatriated 197 service members this year.

Be The One (BTO)

In October 2024, suicide prevention efforts for military personnel continue to be a critical focus, with renewed emphasis on improving mental health support, peer intervention programs, and access to care. According to the Department of Defense, initiatives such as confidential counseling services, hotlines, and expanded telehealth resources have been reinforced to combat rising mental health challenges among service members. Enhanced training for leadership to recognize warning signs and foster supportive environments remains a key component. These programs aim to reduce stigma surrounding mental health and encourage service members to seek help proactively before crises occur.

Focus Topic:

From **October 1st through February 1st**, we are accepting nominations for the **Firefighter of the Year** and **Law Enforcement Officer of the Year** awards. These awards recognize outstanding service and commitment within our communities.

Each department is invited to submit **one nomination** for each category (Firefighter and Law Enforcement Officer). Please take this opportunity to highlight the exceptional individuals in your ranks who have gone above and beyond in their duties.

An official email will be sent to all adjutants to ensure everyone is informed of the process. Let's honor those who dedicate their lives to serving and protecting us!

For any questions or additional information, feel free to reach out to Courtney Cash ccash@legion.org.