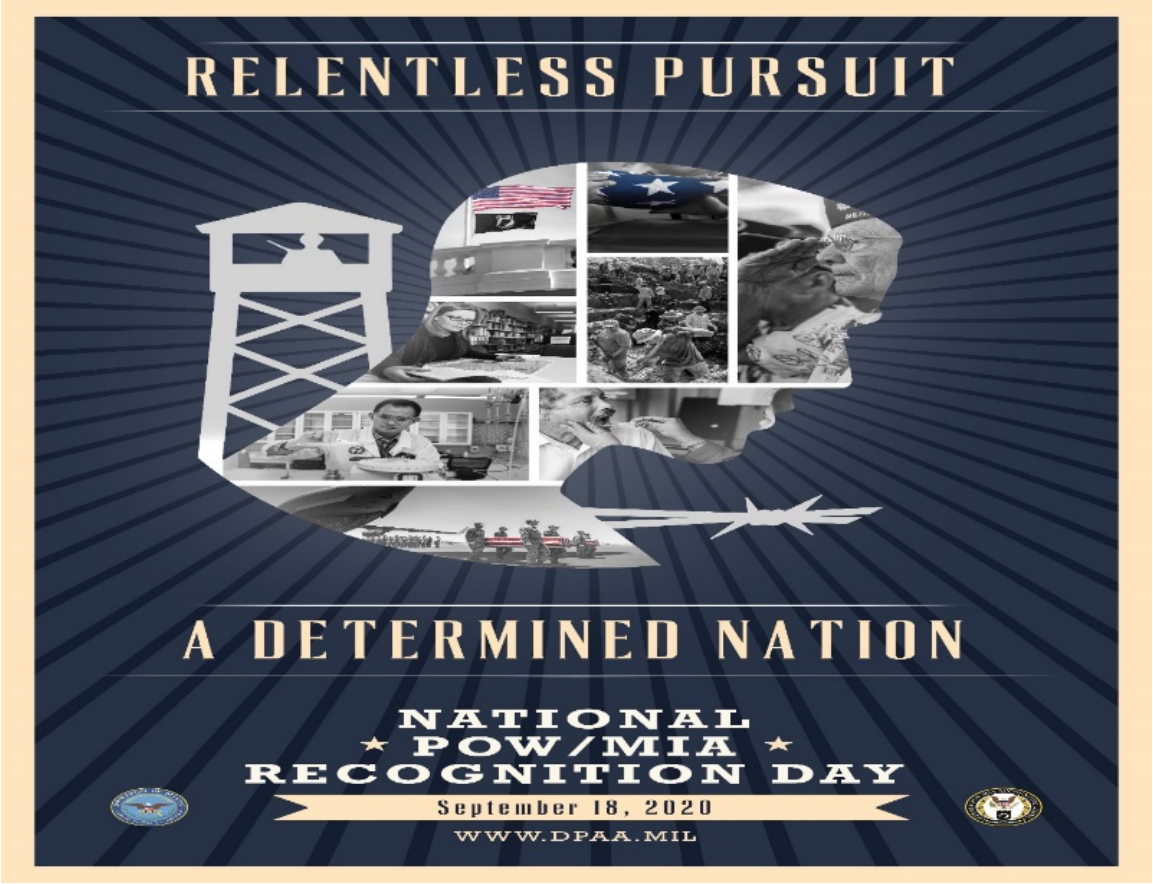
National Security Division Report

Week ending 18 September 2020

National POW/MIA Recognition Day



National POW/MIA Recognition Day was established in 1979 through a proclamation signed by President Jimmy Carter. Since then, each subsequent president has issued an annual proclamation commemorating the third Friday in September as National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

A national-level ceremony is held on every National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Traditionally held at the Pentagon, it features members from each branch of military service.

In addition to the national-level ceremony, observances of National POW/MIA Recognition Day are held across the country on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools and veterans' facilities.

No matter where they are held, these National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies share the common purpose of honoring those who were held captive and returned, as well as those who remain missing.

Click Here To Read More

Afghanistan-Taliban Talks Begin In Attempt To End 19 Years Of Bloodshed

Afghanistan's warring factions have officially begun what is likely to be a long and arduous process of negotiating a peaceful and prosperous future after nearly two decades of war.

Representatives for the Afghan government and the Taliban met in the capital of Qatar on Saturday to discuss their aspirations and decide on a framework for a lasting peace. The Trump administration paved the way for the negotiations — the first direct talks between the two sides — when it inked a peace agreement with the Taliban in February.

The talks in the city of Doha come 19 years after al-Qaida killed nearly 3,000 people in the Sept. 11 attacks. The attack was the deadliest act of terror in U.S. history and sparked war in Afghanistan, as the U.S. and its allies overthrew the Taliban regime for harboring the terrorists. But in the years since, Taliban militants have reclaimed control of much of the country.

Several concessions were made to reach today's peace talks. In exchange for a Taliban promise to renounce al-Qaida and prevent terrorist attacks, the U.S. and its allies have promised a complete troop withdrawal from Afghanistan by next spring.

Click Here To Read More

Agreements signed to normalize relations between Israel, UAE and Bahrain

In a historic signing ceremony hosted by President Donald Trump at the White House, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain on Tuesday became the third and fourth Arab nations to move toward establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel.

"We're here this afternoon to change the course of history," Trump said, speaking from the South Lawn of the White House ahead of the signing, presenting himself as a diplomat and dealmaker weeks ahead of the election. "After decades of division and conflict we mark the dawn of a new Middle East."

Representatives for Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain similarly heralded the historic nature of the agreements between their countries, making slight nods to the absent Palestinians and using soaring rhetoric to portray the dawn of a new era in the Middle East.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented himself as a peacemaker while speaking about strength, declaring "this day is a pivot of history. It heralds a new dawn of peace."

"This peace will eventually expand to include other Arab states and, ultimately, it can end the Arab-Israeli conflict once and for all," Netanyahu said.

Click Here To Read More

POW/MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency released the following announcements. Click Here To Read More

September 11, 2020: USS Colorado Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Dick, H.)
September 11, 2020: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Hoffman, J.)
September 15, 2020: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Parker, I.)
September 15, 2020: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (DeVault, W.)

Legislative Issue Tracker

Below is legislation the National Security Division is tracking in Congress. New bills are highlighted in yellow. Click on the bill numbers to see more information about the bills.

Bill #	Short Title
S. Res. 510/H. Res. 910	A resolution commending the people of Taiwan on holding free and fair democratic presidential and legislative elections, and congratulating Madame Tsai Ing-wen on her re-election to the presidency of Taiwan
H. RES. 1012	Recognizing the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War
H.R. 3508/ S.1634	South China Sea Sanctions
H.R.367	Pay Our Coast Guard Parity Act of 2019
S.2297	Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2019
H.R. 4710	The bipartisan Pharmaceutical Independence Long-Term Readiness Reform Act

H.R. 303	Retired Pay Restoration Act
H.R. 4890	The Veteran Deportation Prevention and Reform Act
H.R. 5151	Honoring the Oath Act
S.2794	Bring Our Heroes Home Act
H.R.6395	FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act
S. 3393	A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for concurrent receipt of veterans' disability compensation and retired pay for disability retirees with fewer than 20 years of service and a combat-related disability, and for other purposes.
S. 1041	Veterans Visa and Protection Act of 2019
S. 3732	A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to further protect officers and employees of the United States, and for other purposes
S 1218/HR 2249	World War I Valor Medals Review Act
H.R.4807	Cold War Service Medal Act
H.Con,Res 10	Authorizing the use of the rotunda of the Capitol to honor the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient of the Second World War upon death.
S. 3258	SHIPS Implementation Act
H.R.3233	National Defense Strategy Implementation Act

Click on the link below to open an Excel spreadsheet to see the full legislative tracker:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KgPaIfx04RA13m20qLDh5br8dyxiupVX5Dc5ByZteRQ/edit?usp=sharing

Staff Activity:

- 14 – 18 September 2020 National Security staff and Indianapolis IT Staff assisted with the virtual National Security Screening, Committee and Commission meetings this week in advance of the 2020 Fall NEC meetings in October 2020.

- 12 September 2020 Staff participated in the Iowa Department Leadership School with Commander James D. Kessler, Adjutant John A. Derner, and PNC David K. Rehbein with an inquiry on the posture of the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel peace

agreement. As a result, staff moved forward with setting up desk-side briefings with the Department of State and the Department of Defense on the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement - a Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization between those countries.

- 16 September 2020 Staff participated in the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs September MSO/VSO Partner Call with opening remarks by Mr. Michael Brady, Principal Deputy Chief of Public Affairs. Major General Lonnie Hibbard, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Center for Initial Military Training provided updates on the new Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) program designed to improve physical training and increase strength and wellness, and COL Dwayne Bowyer, Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army Talent Management Task Force provided updates on the 21st Century career assessments and pathways initiative.
- 17 September 2020 Staff participated in a webinar hosted by the John Quincy Adams Society and Alexander Hamilton Society. It featured a debate which focused on the United States' role in NATO and Eastern Europe. Representing JQAS was Professor Rajan Menon, who serves as the Anne and Bernard Spitzer Chair in Political Science at The City College of New York. AHS was represented by Ian Brzezinski, an American foreign policy and military affairs expert who served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO policy from 2001 -2005, under President George W. Bush.
- 18 September 2020 Staff attended the National POW/MIA Recognition Day Pentagon Ceremony hosted by Mr. David L. Norquist, 34th Deputy Secretary of Defense to share the common purpose of honoring those who were held captive and returned, as well as those who remain missing.

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division