National Security Division Report

Week ending May 21, 2021

Top U.S. General in the Mideast to Recommend Post-Withdrawal Plan for Afghanistan

The top U.S. commander for the Middle East said Wednesday he would recommend Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in early June to monitor and fight terrorist groups in Afghanistan from beyond its borders after all American forces withdraw.

Gen. Frank McKenzie, the commander of U.S. Central Command, said negotiations with Afghanistan's neighbors for overflight rights and troop basing are "moving forward" but will take time. As a result, he said, the way the United States keeps an eye on the terrorist threat and aids the Afghan Military will evolve as agreements are reached or security conditions on the ground change.

He cautioned that this would be a "taxing time" for the Afghan Military and "the risk is high."

Speaking to reporters from The Associated Press and ABC News traveling with him to the Middle East, McKenzie declined to provide details about the recommendations he will make to Austin. He said he would also provide cost estimates for keeping surveillance aircraft over Afghanistan regularly enough to keep track of terrorist groups after the U.S. pullout is completed no later than Sept. 11.

McKenzie has clarified that it will require far more aircraft to keep watch over Afghanistan without any bases in neighboring countries because they will have to fly for four hours to six hours from other U.S. military installations in the Middle East. The flight distance severely limits the amount of time the aircraft can spend in the air over Afghanistan.

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Resolution No. 27: Sustaining Counterterrorism Efforts

RESOLVED, That The American Legion fully supports a joint force with a long-term strategic plan, ability to rapidly disperse new technologies, and devise new concepts of warfare that span the entire spectrum of conflict

Nearly Half of Female Soldiers Still Failing New Army Fitness Test, While Males Pass Easily

More than seven months after the official launch of the Army Combat Fitness Test, or ACFT, nearly half of female soldiers are still falling short, with enlisted women struggling the most, Military.com has learned. The data again raises questions about whether the Army's attempt to create a fitter force creates more barriers to success for women.

From April, internal Army figures show 44% of women failed the ACFT, compared to 7% of men since Oct. 1. "Female soldiers continue to lag male soldier scores in all events," according to a United States Army Forces Command briefing obtained by Military.com.

FORSCOM data includes the results of 106,000 ACFTs taken in the first half of fiscal 2021. This amounts to 27% of women and 36% of men in the force who also have scores logged into the Army's database, meaning the data could be incomplete. FORSCOM tracks 3,400 new fitness tests per week on average.

While the Army's new Combat Fitness Test is still in its study phase, nearly half of our women Soldiers are not meeting the minimal ACFT standards. The backbone of our military is the men and women who answer the call. Therefore, we owe it to our Soldiers that they are provided with the necessary tools to meet today's battlefield. The American Legion will continue to monitor and follow the study.

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Commander of Space Force unit fired after accusing the Military of pushing an agenda 'rooted in Marxism.'

Lohmeier, who spent more than a decade with the Air Force before joining the Military's newest branch in 2020, was fired Friday for his comments, a move first reported by Military.com a day later and confirmed by The Washington Post on Sunday. Lt. Gen. Stephen Whiting, the head of Space

Operations Command, relieved Lohmeier of his command of a Colorado-based squadron that detects ballistic missile launches "due to loss of trust and confidence in his ability to lead," a Space Force spokesperson said in a statement.

"This decision was based on public comments made by Lt. Col. Lohmeier in a recent podcast," said the spokesperson, who added that an investigation is underway "on whether these comments constituted prohibited partisan political activity."

In an email to The Post, Lohmeier said that he consulted with a military public affairs officer and legal counsel before publishing the book. He had a team of attorneys read the manuscript.

Lt. Col. Matthew Lohmeier published his book, "Irresistible Revolution: Marxism's Goal of Conquest & the Unmaking of the American Military," this week and appeared on multiple conservative podcasts to promote it, each time criticizing Defense Department leadership and accusing the agency of pushing an agenda that is "rooted in Marxism."

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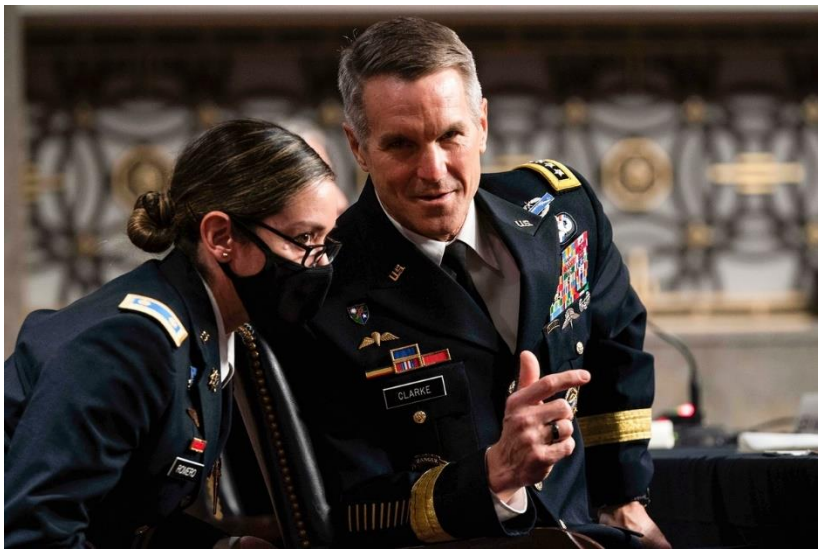
Resolution No. 26: Support For The United States Space Force

RESOLVED, By The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion urges Congress to appropriately support the United States Space Force's commitment to attract, retain, and train quality people who will be molded into a force capable of flexibly responding to threats to America's national and economic security that will enhance readiness through its continued focus on total force integration and modernization programs that will maintain America's dominance in space well into the 21st century.

General Clarke: The Future of Special Operations Forces



After 20 years of constant deployment as a critical element of U.S. military response around the globe, special operations forces are at an inflection point. There are fewer commandos deployed, spending less time downrange than at any point in years. Yet, the force continues to be plagued by incidents like the December slaying of a Delta Force NCO at Fort Bragg. And with President Joe Biden ordering all U.S. troops out of Afghanistan by Sept. 11, the question becomes: What now for special operations forces in an era of increasing tension with China and Russia?

On Wednesday, during the annual Special Operations Forces Industry Conference, Military Times sat down with Army Gen. Richard Clarke, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, and talked about the future of SOCOM and SOF.

During the 30-minute interview in his office at SOCOM headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, Clarke talked about the state of the special operators in the ranks — op-tempo, the threat of extremism, mental health during the COVID-era, and high-profile incidents of misconduct. He also discussed SOF's role in a potential conflict with Russia and China and, possibly, in Afghanistan after the troop withdrawal later this year.

The American Legion understands that strong Armed Forces are critical to ensure a safe nation; therefore, we must continue to work with our allies to build a stronger partnership as a determent for our adversaries.

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Resolution No. 27: Sustaining Counterterrorism Efforts

RESOLVED, By The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion fully supports the men, women, and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in ongoing counterterrorism efforts.

U.S.-Mexico Efforts Targeting Drug Cartels Have Unraveled, Top DEA Official Says

A senior Drug Enforcement Administration official told NPR efforts to target drug cartels operating inside Mexico have unraveled because of a breakdown in cooperation between law enforcement agencies and militaries in the two countries.

"We're willing to share [intelligence] with our counterparts in Mexico, but they themselves are too afraid to even engage with us because of repercussions from their own government if they get caught working with DEA," said Matthew Donahue, the DEA's deputy chief of operations.

The collapse of joint drug interdiction efforts has occurred at a time when cartels are manufacturing huge quantities of fentanyl and methamphetamines in illegal labs inside Mexico.

U.S. officials say those illicit drugs are being smuggled into communities across the United States, driving an explosion in overdose deaths that took more than 90,000 American lives last year.

"It's essential that we get [Mexico's] cooperation for the safety of American citizens as well as to stem the flow of violence in Mexico," Donahue said. "We would hope they'd want to sit down at the table and work bilaterally."

In an exclusive interview with NPR, Donahue described the current situation as a national security crisis.

"It's a national health threat, it's a national safety threat," he said, adding that drug gangs and criminal organizations now operate inside Mexico with impunity. "They do not fear any kind of law enforcement ... or military inside of Mexico right now."

According to Donahue, drug interdiction cooperation between the two countries eroded over the last two years when the DEA began to experience a "lack of engagement" on the part of Mexican agencies.

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Resolution No. 250: Law and Order

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Miami Beach, Florida, August 20, 21, 22, 1974, That we call upon the law enforcement agencies of our country to fulfill their responsibility when any crime is know or there is reasonable cause to believe that a crime has been committed to act with dispatch irrespective of the circumstances or wishes to do otherwise, to arrest with probable cause those responsible for acts in violation of the law of the land.

May 14, 2021: Chaplain Accounted For From Korean War (Kapaun, E.)
May 14, 2021: Pilot Accounted For From Vietnam War (Charvet, P.)
May 14, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Titterington, E.)
May 14, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Dill, L.)
May 14, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Bradley, C.)
May 18, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Boynton, R.)
May 19, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Ferguson, C.)
May 20, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Tucker, W.)
May 20, 2021: Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Mullins, B.)

Legislative Issues

• Availability of Healthcare benefits for residents at the Armed Forces Retirement Home in proposed language of the FY22NDAA – The American Legions support funding that provides long-term solvency and viability of the Armed Forces Retirement Home (Resolution No. 107, 2016)

• Quality of Life for Service members and their Families – We owe our military men and women a debt of gratitude we can never repay for all that they — and their families — sacrifice to serve our country. Ensure the Coast Guard is paid – The American Legion supports a fully funded United States Coast Guard (Resolution No. 23, 2016)

• Expedited Citizenship through Honorable Military Service – The American Legion supports measures to ensure the process of naturalization through military service is completed before discharge (Resolution No. 15, 2018)

• Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure – The American Legion supports refined processes and policies that will enhance interagency cybersecurity, promulgate best practices and standards, and protect critical infrastructure from cyber and other electronic attacks. (Resolution No. 20, 2017)

• Addressing the Forever Wars – The American Legion advocate for elevating diplomacy to build a better, safer world (Resolution No. 22, 2020)

Staff Activity:

- Staff attended the hearing on *Examining Next Steps for U.S. Engagement in Afghanistan*. Chairman Mr. Lynch moderated the proceedings while members of Congress discussed the future of Afghanistan with The Ambassador of Afghanistan, Mr. Khalilzad. Topics included the withdrawal of troops, civilian welfare, human rights violations, stability in the region, Pakistan's vital role, and build a trusted relationship with Afghanistan. The Ambassador could not give definitive answers as to the welfare and security of the Afghans, but he assured the Military was equipped with the technology to combat the Taliban.
- Staff attended the House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing -*U.S.-Afghanistan relationship Following the Military Withdrawal hearing on Afghanistan*. The Ambassador stated that they are negotiating with the Taliban not to kill or punish those translators who assisted the U.S. It was reiterated that the government of Afghanistan could use the skills obtained by the translators to help build and maintain a stronger Afghan government.
- Staff attended the *Military and civilian personnel programs in the Department of Defense to review the Defense Authorization Request for the Fiscal Year 2022 and the Future Years Defense Program* hearing. It was noted by Dr. Terry Adirim, Acting Assistant Secretary Of Defense For Health Affairs, that currently, 55 percent of active-duty servicemembers are vaccinated. Mission Readiness is paramount, and we cannot ill afford another incident like the U.S. Aircraft Carrier, U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt – forced to be taken out of service for nearly two months. Additionally, sexual assault cases were highlighted, and fear that the unit commanders may be withholding cases surrounding sexual assaults. Finally,

scrutiny on the Military's physical fitness tests came into question, as it was noted that the Army's Combat Fitness Test might not be balanced across men and women Soldiers A Rand Study (currently in process) list the failure rate as 44 percent women, and 7 percent men. The American Legion will continue to monitor these situations.

- Staff attended two separate meetings with representatives of the Afghanistan government where it was eluded that safety for the translators was at the forefront of the government; however, they would prefer that the translators stay in Afghanistan and use their skills to build a stronger government.
- Staff held virtual meetings with the chairman of foreign relations and aerospace to discuss past, present, and possible future resolutions.

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Week ending 05/21/2021