VETERANS STRENGTHENING AMERICA
NATIONAL SECURITY DIVISION'S WEEKLY REPORT

Ariel A De Jesus Jr, Acting Director
adejesus@legion.org

November 16, 2024 – November 22, 2024

Meetings

- NS Staff hosted a webinar on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) featuring guest speakers Admiral Abbot and Ambassador Moore, who spoke to the National Security and Legislative Commissions and Councils about the positive impacts on ratifying the treaty.

- NS Staff attended a webinar hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies titled "Spectrum National Security: Meeting America's Spectrum Needs." The People's Republic of China (PRC) has utilized spectrum development to expand its soft power, especially in developing nations, and to accelerate its own AI and technical research to compete with the U.S. NS Staff has been evaluating legislation to see how the U.S. will stay ahead of the curve and will continue to evaluate both countries' progress.

- NS Staff listened to a Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing titled "Big Hacks and Big Tech: China's Cybersecurity Threat." PRC-sponsored hackers continue to embed themselves in digital infrastructure and major tach companies' software, including Microsoft. A PRC attack on a company like Microsoft could be as detrimental as government hack. It is crucial that all Departments, from Defense and State to Justice and Commerce, are doing what they can to prevent such attacks.

- NS Staff tuned into The Brooks Institution to listen to a conversation with the Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Admiral Samuel Paparo. Commander Paparo briefed the audience on China's activities in the South China Sea, and how other conflicts across the globe are affecting relations in his area of responsibility.

- NS Staff attended an Executive MSO/VSO Roundtable hosted by the Defense Health Agency to discuss the final implementation of the T5 updates and changes related to the new TRICARE contract with TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corporation.

- NS Staff attend an online meeting hosted by the Wilson Center titled "Surviving and Thriving: Ukraine's Economy During and After the War." With tensions escalating on both sides and possible changes in U.S. engagement, it is prudent to re-examine the Russian and Ukrainian wartime economies and their survivability.

Policy

- NS Staff continued to draft the Shaw BASE Report visit.

- NS Staff completed a review of the Australia-U.K.-U.S. (AUKUS) security pact. Japan has strengthened relations with all three countries, and is engaging trilaterally with Australia and the U.S. It is possible that Japan will be folded into the pact in coming years to help counter the PRC.

- NS Staff began researching the undersea cables that were cut near Scandinavia and comparing the circumstances to previous cable cuttings near Taiwan. The issue relates directly to both UNCLOS, a free and fair Indo-Pacific, and the ability of NATO to counter the Sino-Russian alliance.

- NS Staff reviewed and revised the Guam and Hawaii packets for the Pacific trip. The National Commander will be visiting military installations including Camp Blaz, Schofield barracks, and Andersen Airfield.

- NS Staff researched the opening of a new U.S. military base in Poland. The primary reason for the establishment of the new installation in Poland is to strengthen NATO's defense capabilities and enhance deterrence against potential aggression, particularly from Russia. The base will be part of the NATO missile shield known as "Aegis Ashore."

Programs

- NS Staff is drafting letters to send out to the POC for the 7 Spirit Of Service Awardees for 2025.

The American Legion Military Surplus Equipment

- Items requested: Ammo- 4960; Rifles- 5
- Requests submitted by: Posts- 7; Departments- 5

POW/MIA

Nov. 20, 2024

- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Farnham, L.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Miller, J.)
- Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Hoots, P.)

Nov. 18, 2024

- Airman Accounted For From World War II (Scott, W.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Gutterman, J.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Mitchell, J.)

Nov. 15, 2024

- Airman Accounted For From World War II (Hop, Y.)
- Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Larson, G.)
- Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Worley, H.)
- Airman Accounted For From World War II (Kelly, T.)
- Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Clark, W.)

Nov. 14, 2024

- Airman Accounted For From World War II (Mourer, R.)

DPAA has identified/repatriated 226 service members this year.

Be The One

In December of 2022, the Defense Department released a report entitled, "Recommendations from the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee" also known as the SPRIRC Report. Detailed in the 115-page report are recommendations from a panel of experts including physicians, mental healthcare providers, and military leaders on how to address the scourge of suicide in the military. The report can be read here.

Focus Topic: Deepening Ties between AUKUS Member States and Japan

AUKUS is trilateral security agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The countries are committed to a "a free and open Indo-Pacific, and more broadly to an international system that respects human rights, the rule of law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes free from coercion." Ultimately, the aim is to counter aggression and crimes committed by Russia and China.

Japan is a crucial ally of Australia, the U.K., and the U.S. individually. Because of these bilateral partnerships and other advantages brought by Japan, the AUKUS security pact has been collaborating with Japan since April of 2024. There are rumors that Japan may actually be invited to join the pact as a bona fide member.

On November 17, 2024, the Pentagon announced that the U.S., Australia, and Japan will increase joint training in 2025. Japan will play a greater role in the Talisman Sabre exercise. The exercise is "the largest bilateral military exercise between Australia and the United States, with multinational participation." The United Kingdom is also a participating nation. Part of Japan's new role in Talisman Sabre will be a trilateral amphibious training session. By 2027, the exercise will include a trilateral live-fire event.

Exercise Southern Jackaroo, which is currently Australia, the U.S., and Japan's trilateral exercise, will become more complex. Currently, all the U.S. and Australian militaries operate bilaterally with the Japanese military. By increasing the breadth and depth of Southern Jackaroo and Talisman Sabre, the military's aim to leverage their separate bilateral relationships into a stronger trilateral, interoperable partnership.

It is unclear how the U.K., or AUKUS, might be involved in these strategic changes. But, in May of 2023, Japan and the U.K. amplified bilateral relations to reinforce their defense and economic partnership. Both countries aimed to strengthen domestic chip and semiconductor production through shared research, development, and supply-chain management.

Just one day after Australia, the U.S., and Japan increased its trilateral military interoperability, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba met with English Prime Minister Keir Starmer. On November 18, 2024, the two Heads of State reiterated their commitment to the May of 2023 agreement. They agreed that “the security of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific is indivisible.”