The National Security Division

WEEKLY REPORT

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

This week, Rhonda Powell the director of the National Security division, attended a week long summit in The American Legion's National Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. The purpose of this weeklong meeting is to update relevant stakeholders within the organization and finalize preparations and details for the 102nd Annual National Convention.

Last year's National Convention was virtual due to the ongoing pandemic. This year, the National Convention returns to an in-person setting hosted in Phoenix, Arizona. The convention will be held from August 27 to September 2, 2021. If you are interested in learning more, click here.

THE AMERICAN LEGION TO CONGRESS: 'PAY THE GUARD'

The head of the nation's largest veterans organization warned Congress that the American people will "be furious," if partisan gridlock causes a shutdown of the National Guard and delayed paychecks for its soldiers.

"Congress and the White House need to act immediately to ensure that our National Guard is fully funded and its members compensated for all of their drills, missions and deployments. Have they already forgotten the thousands of National Guard members who protected the Capitol during civil unrest just a few months ago? Or the crucial role of our National Guard members in America's response to COVID-19?" American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford asked. "The American Legion spoke loudly two years ago when partisan bickering led to an interruption of the Coast Guard being paid.

Click here to read more.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Foreign Relations

- Support for Afghan Interpreters through the Special Immigrant Visa Program – The American Legion advocate for Afghan Interpreters who stood shoulder to shoulder with U.S. Forces and Diplomats contributing to saving countless American lives. The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to recognize the contributions of Afghan SIV recipients. (Resolution No. 16, 2018) Recognition for Afghan and Iraq Combat Translators.

- Resolution No. 42: Foreign Policy Objectives
  That The American Legion believes that the following objectives should be incorporated into U.S. foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy:

  - 1. Recognition that the U.S. has great and multiple responsibilities as a leader of the Free World
  - 2. Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace through strength posture
  - 3. Support for a global fight on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism
  - 4. Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with U.S. national interests and national power
  - 5. Participation in essential collective security alliances, provided our allies contribute their fair share
  - 6. Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve U.S. national security
  - 7. Opposition to the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or long- range ballistic missiles which may be used by terrorists, terrorist organizations, communists or aggressor nations
  - 8. Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking
  - 9. Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with U.S. sovereignty and serve U.S. national interests
  - 10. Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices
  - 11. Recognition that the President must be the chief architect of U.S. foreign policy as envisioned in the U.S. Constitution, while Congress performs important functions of advice, oversight and funding
  - 12. Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect U.S. vital national interests world-wide.

Click here for the Resolution.

STAFF ACTIVITY

Aerospace

- Staff attended a House Armed Forces Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces Hearing: “Fiscal Year 2022 Rotary Wing". The hearing discussed and questioned the witnesses on the readiness, sustainment, management, and future of fixed-wing aviation in the United States Air Force, United States Navy, and the United States Marine Corps. Each witness, representing their respective service or department shared their testimony that highlights current projects, states, and the future outlook of fixed-wing aviation. Specific questions asked by the committee focused on the readiness and budget concerns of the F-35 program in all three services. Likewise, additional concerns about the divestment of the A-10 program were addressed. the committee addressed their concerns for the C-130H fleet and the delays in the future advance training jet, the T-7 Redhawk. Both concerns were addressed, noting that current C-130H units will be replaced with an equally important mission. Moreover, despite the delays in the T-7 program due to the pandemic affecting the supply chain, the air force is confident that no further delays are projected in the future.

F-35s preparing to fly from Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada

Foreign Relations

- Staff attended a Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing about “Modernizing the State Department for the 21st Century”. The SFRC showed their responsibility to oversight of the State Department through this hearing. President Biden has made it very clear our foreign policy will be grounded in our values. The State Department faces many challenges across the world in the 21st century, such as facing authoritarian governments in states such as Cuba, climate change, and negotiating the ends of conflicts as well as preventing conflicts from happening. Challenges of the State Department include the accountability of the workforce, and if the President's budget request passes then the State Department will see its largest increase in personnel in over a decade. Foreign actors such as North Korea may test the resolve of the United States, however the SRFC emphasized the alliance between Japan and the U.S. remains a cornerstone to keep peace in the Pacific. A modern and agile State Department must come to light to help restore the morale of our foreign policy institutions. A new and modern State Department, modernized by Congress, and enhanced by bipartisan legislation, would be ideal for reforming the State Department.

STAFF ACTIVITY

Foreign Relations...continued

- Staff attended a House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing about the "Historic Protests in Cuba and the Crackdown on Free Expression". The unfolding crisis in Cuba remains a reason for concern within American government. Over the last week, Cubans have taken to the streets to call for freedom and democracy and have demanded an end to the dictatorship. Cuban citizens have put their lives on the line for freedom. We must stand with the Cuban people in their quest for freedom, and statements from President Biden must be translated to action. The Cuban people must be able to access the internet and communication networks, something that has been taken away from them by the regime with the help of Chinese government. Another plan of action that was expressed in the hearing was imposing sanctions on those who violate human rights inside Cuba, and express more support for pro-democracy organizations in Cuba. The committee demanded the freeing of over 150 political prisoners as well. The conflict in Cuba is a fragile one, but one that can be mended if the United States takes the right steps in restoring democracy to our Cuban allies.

Unconventional Forces & Intelligence

- Staff attended a House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Intelligence and Special Operations Hearing: "Review of the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request for U.S. Special Operations Forces and Command". For the last two decades, Special Operations Forces have answered our nations most challenging calls, in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The withdrawal from Afghanistan gives SOCOM time to care for troops that experienced physical and mental injury in the Middle East. SOCOM shifts its focus from the Middle East to more clandestine activity, as well as cybersecurity and information operations. Accelerated development of technology is also essential to winning our future fights. This is all encompassed by the $752.9 billion budget request, with $715 billion going towards the DOD. The hearing emphasized that SOCOM must be briefed properly on threats in both Afghanistan and North Africa, to make sure the right measures are in place to maintain national security. Although we are currently ahead of the deadline for Afghanistan withdrawal, SOCOM must be postured to continue to fight terrorism post- withdrawal and be prepared for what adversaries wait on the horizon for the U.S.

DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY
FULFILLING OUR NATION'S PROMISE

- July 21, 2021: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Morrison, B.)
- July 20, 2021: Airman Accounted For From Vietnam War (Avolese, P.)
- July 20, 2021: Pilot Accounted For From Vietnam War (Krogman, A.)
- July 20, 2021: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Wright, J.)

Arlington National Cemetery Funeral

Army Cpl. Norvin D. Brockett, 18, of Crook, Oregon, killed during the Korean War, was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery July 21, 2021.

In December 1950, Brockett was a member of Battery A, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division, 31st Regimental Combat Team. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 6, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered following the attack and he was not reported as a prisoner of war. The U.S. Army declared him deceased as of Dec. 31, 1953.

His funeral was attended by his niece and other family members.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Sean Everette

PROGRAMS

JUNIOR ROTC AWARDS CEREMONY

JROTC Awards Ceremony at Frankford High School Army Junior ROTC on May 27, 2021. Thank you to The American Legion for their continued support of JROTC programs and youths nationwide.

ANNEX

MORE STORIES!

Biden administration provides pathway to citizenship for deported veterans

"Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough announced a plan to support non-citizen servicemembers, veterans and the immediate family of servicemembers on July 6." Read the rest here.

DHS, VA joining forces to locate deported veterans

"House Democrats are again pushing a Department of Homeland Security reform bill that would centralize oversight of the agency's multi-billion dollar acquisition portfolio. Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) and several others reintroduced the DHS Reform Act last week after it failed to advance during the 2020 session. The bill would designate the under secretary for management as DHS's chief acquisition officer. The legislation would also put restrictions on officials who can serve in leadership positions in an 'acting' capacity." Read the rest here.

Pentagon Racing to Stay Ahead of China in Artificial Intelligence

"The Pentagon's self-described sprint to put together a more effective plan to confront and counter a rising China may be over, but the race to stay ahead of Beijing's aggressive advancements in artificial intelligence is far from done.

That initial sprint culminated in June, months after the U.S. Defense Department's China Task Force recommended a series of internal, structural changes to ensure potential Chinese military threats did not escape notice or go unanswered." Read the rest here.

'Nothing short of historic.' Congress holds first hearing after Cuba protests.

"The first congressional meeting to address widespread, pro-democracy protests that ricocheted throughout Cuba on July 11 turned into a referendum on the U.S. government's longtime embargo.
The two witnesses at the House Foreign Affairs Committee's hearing on Tuesday were split on the issue. As were the members of Congress from both parties in attendance.

José Miguel Vivanco, Human Rights Watch's executive director of the Americas, urged an end to the embargo, calling it an "ongoing policy of isolation." Rosa María Payá, the director of Cuba Decide and the daughter of the late Cuban dissident Oswaldo Payá, said the U.S. should aggressively sanction any Cubans who hurt pro-democracy protesters and insisted that "all options under international law must be on the table." Read the rest here.

Gilday: The budget request supports future fleet vision, even if it's a smaller fleet

"The chief of naval operations remains firm that the fiscal 2022 budget request is aligned with the U.S. Navy's future fleet design plans, which were studied and wargamed in the Future Naval Force Study effort last year, even as lawmakers question the proposal.

Adm. Mike Gilday said the study provided the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps the clearest vision yet of what assets they'll need to deter or win a future fight, and he stands by the FY22 budget request as supporting that vision." Read the rest here.

ANNEX

MORE STORIES!

NATIONAL SECURITY IS STRONGER WHEN CONGRESS IS INVOLVED. HERE'S HOW WE GET BACK TO THE TABLE

In early 2020, former Vice President Mike Pence made a curious argument on social media: According to Pence, Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani knew about al-Qaeda's plans for the Sept. 11 attacks beforehand and worked to facilitate them. For those of us who have watched the executive branch, administration after administration, expand its authority to make war without congressional authorization, the intent was clear. Pence was trying to tie Iran to the 2001 attacks in order to justify starting a new war with Iran without coming to Congress for authorization first.

This phenomenon, of course, is not new. The entire Vietnam War was fought without an explicit declaration of war by Congress. But today, when the definition of enemies and the parameters of war are harder to define than ever, the pace of executive war making has become dizzying. In 2001, Congress passed an Authorization for Use of Military Force against those responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks. Since then, the executive branch has deployed combat-equipped troops to more than 20 countries for counter-terrorism missions and has stretched the logic of that authorization to justify operations in at least seven countries, including Syria, Somalia, and Niger. In not a single one of those deployments was there a comprehensive public debate about the wisdom of the decision.

Other major national security decisions are more frequently being made without public debate. Multi-billion dollar arms sales to oppressive regimes go forward without almost any input from voters. In 2017, President Donald Trump posed for a photo-op with the Saudi crown prince to tout $110 billion in arms sales to the country, even as the Saudi air force was pummeling civilian targets in Yemen. Before that, President Barack Obama presided over a massive scale-up of arms sales to Gulf countries unnerved by the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and Iran's regional aggression, without almost any up or down votes in Congress on the sales.

Read the rest here.