National Security Division Report
Week ending 29 January 2021

Climate change is now a national security priority for the Pentagon

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon will begin incorporating climate analysis into its war-gaming and analysis efforts as well as featuring the issue as part of its future National Defense Strategy. The announcement by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin came shortly after President Joe Biden signed a series of executive orders targeting the climate crisis.

The Defense Department "will immediately take appropriate policy actions to prioritize climate change considerations in our activities and risk assessments, to mitigate this driver of insecurity. As directed by the President, we will include the security implications of climate change in our risk analyses, strategy development, and planning guidance," Austin said in a statement.
"As a leader in the interagency, the Department of Defense will also support incorporating climate risk analysis into modeling, simulation, wargaming, analysis, and the next National Defense Strategy. And by changing how we approach our own carbon footprint, the Department can also be a platform for positive change, spurring the development of climate-friendly technologies at scale."
"There is little about what the Department does to defend the American people that is not affected by climate change," Austin concluded. "It is a national security issue, and we must treat it as such."
For years, the DoD has acknowledged that environmental change could pose a threat to military capabilities. In fiscal 2020, the department doled out $67 million in funds to help bases alleviate or repair climate-related damage. A 2018 report by the Center for Climate and Security identified a number of key domestic military installations, including both North Carolina's Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton in California, as at-risk from climate change. In 2019, a number of bases were hit by large weather events, including Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, which required more than $400 million in repairs.
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White House shifts from Middle East quagmires to a showdown with China

President Biden's foreign policy team is reorienting its priorities around rising powers in Asia, hoping to move on from the "forever wars" of the last two decades.

Joe Biden is pivoting to Asia. Just don’t expect him to say so explicitly.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan has restructured the National Security staff in the Middle East and Asia directorates — downsizing the team devoted to the Middle East and bulking up the unit that coordinates U.S. policy toward the vast region of the world stretching from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.

The move, which has not been previously reported, is the latest sign that the new administration will prioritize Asia in its foreign policy initiatives. It reflects China’s rapid rise over the last two decades, and the growing concerns among officials and lawmakers across parties about how Beijing’s authoritarian leaders are wielding their newfound muscle.

Under the new structure, Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell’s domain is growing, while the directorate overseen by Middle East coordinator Brett McGurk will be more limited, several current and former officials said.

The changes essentially flip the structure of the Obama-era NSC, where the Middle East directorate was much bigger than it is now and the Asia portfolio was managed by a handful of more junior staffers. Obama’s second term featured an onslaught of national security threats and

priorities emanating from the Middle East, from the Islamic State and the Iran nuclear deal to the Libyan and Syrian conflicts and the resulting migration crisis in Europe.

But Biden and his team now believe the biggest security challenges will emerge from the so-called great power competition between the U.S., China and Russia, current and former national security officials say, and are shifting their resources accordingly.

"What we've seen over the last few years is that China is growing more authoritarian at home and more assertive abroad," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Monday. "And Beijing is now challenging our security, prosperity, and values in significant ways that require a new U.S. approach."
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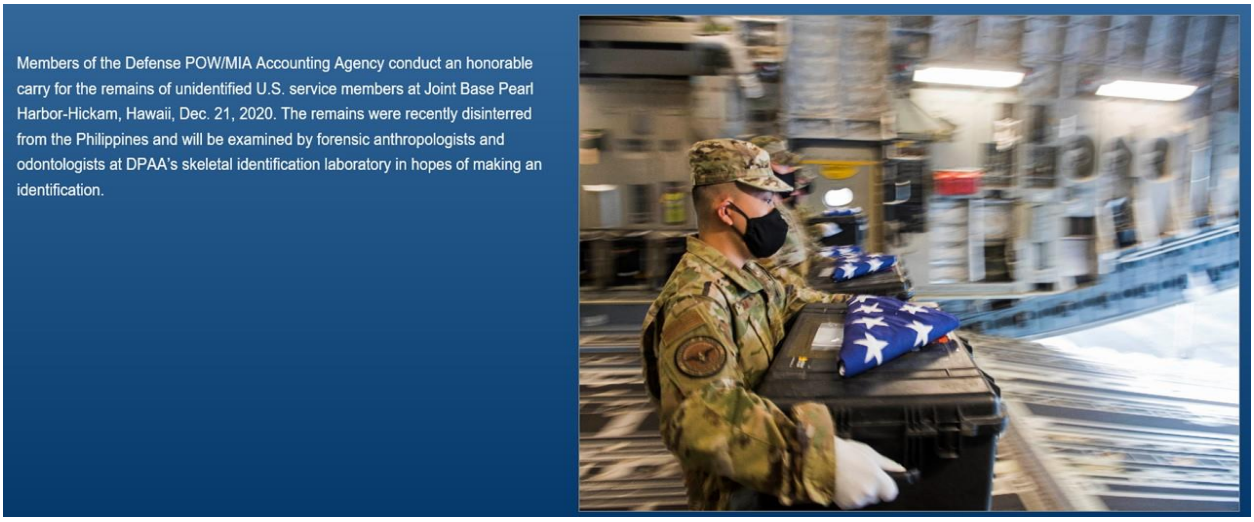
POW/MIA Update:



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This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency released the following announcements. Click on the links to read more:

January 5, 2021: USS West Virginia Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Barnett, W.)
January 14, 2021: Airman Accounted For From World War II (Turgeon, A.)
January 19, 2021: Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Smisek, L.)
January 22, 2021: Airman Accounted For From World War II (Norris, F.)
January 22, 2021: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Hathaway, A.)
January 22, 2021: USS West Virginia Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Ashby, W.)
January 22, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Griffith, T.)
January 27, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Ellis, E.)

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 Servicemembers 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. The American Legion supports a fully funded quality of life (Resolution No. 85, 2016)
- 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 prior to discharge (Resolution No. 15, 2018)
- Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure – The American Legion supports refined processes and policies that will enhance interagency cybersecurity…and promulgation of best practices and standards, and to ensure the protection of critical infrastructure from cyber and other electronic attack. (Resolution No. 20, 2017)
- End the Forever Wars – The American Legion advocate for elevating diplomacy to build a better safer world (Resolution No. 22, 2020)

Staff Activity:

- Staff participated in a virtual meeting with CQ Federal which hosted a virtual speaking event on *Navigating President Biden's First 100 Days.* Topics discussed included sweeping immigration overhaul and a $1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief plan. Including the donation of blood to help combat COVID. Other plans for the first 100 days include addressing criminal justice reform, including creating a national police oversight commission, and changing the tax code, partly by raising corporate tax rates to 28%. Those priorities were listed by the Biden campaign as 100-day goals, but the White House has not provided more specific timing for them.
- On Thursday 28 January members of the National Security Division participated in the Defense POW/MIA Accountability Agency (DPAA) roundtable call for VSOs, families, and others. DPAA reported an ongoing slowdown in operations as a result of COVID 19. However, in some cases they were able to identify that operations previously shut down were able to resume or finish because of partnerships with foreign partners that were able to access areas where US Personnel were unable. It was also highlighted that other broader international issues continue to affect their operations to include relationships with the Chinese People's Liberation Army and nuclear proliferation negotiations on the Korean Peninsula. (Resolution No. 22, 2017 POW MIA Policies)

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