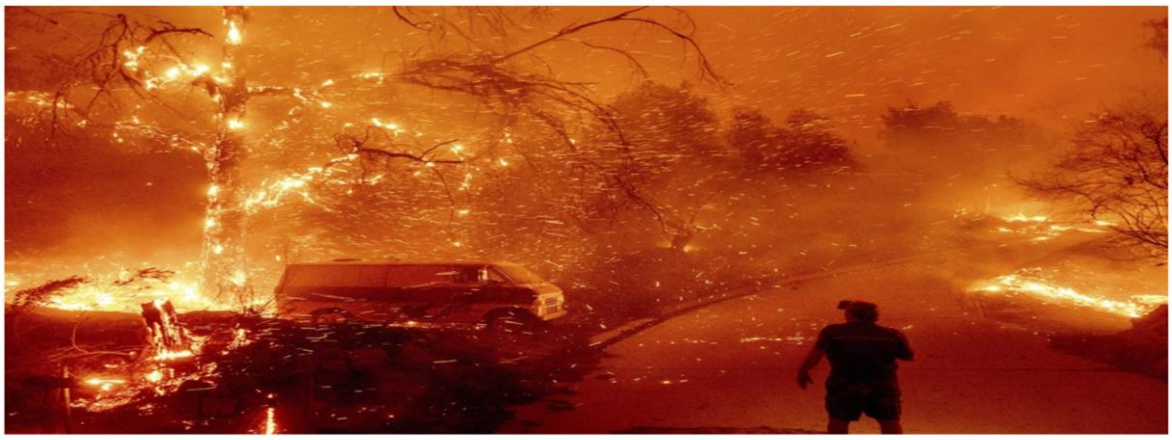
National Security Division Report
Week ending 4 December 2020

Southern California wildfire burning out of control — and will for days to come



The Bond Fire started with flames at one home, before it reached nearby vegetation and spread out of control touching off a massive, wind-whipped wildfire in Southern California, authorities said. The Bond Fire started shortly after 10 p.m. on Wednesday in Silverado Canyon in eastern Orange County, about 50 miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles, officials said.

Orange County Fire Authority Capt. Paul Holaday said this blaze, with plenty of tinder-dry brush in front of it and high winds in the forecast to fuel it, will surely burn through the weekend.

"A fully involved structure fire that extended into the brush," Holaday said. "With the high winds at the time (and) continuing through the weekend, this is going to be an ongoing campaign fire." By 3 p.m. on Thursday, the Bond Fire had consumed more than 7,200 acres with absolutely no containment. Authorities said homes have been damaged but were still assessing how many.

Click Here To Read More

Resolution No. 134 The American Legion Role in Homeland Security

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) Respond to California Fires

As fires ravaged huge swaths of California this summer and fall, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) stepped in to help. For some, fire response was a new activity, while others have helped staff call centers and direct traffic during evacuations for years. As fires grow larger and more destructive, CERTs find their help is needed now more than ever.

When numerous fires broke out in the steep terrain of counties surrounding San Francisco in August, 160 volunteers from 13 CERT programs jumped into action. In just two weeks in August and September, they logged 2,500 hours answering calls from the public. Callers asked about where they should go if evacuated, where to take their livestock, and when they would be allowed to go home.

Click Here For Information On The Free Basic Training CERTs Program

Navy Will Dismantle USS Bonhomme Richard

The U.S. Navy announced Monday it will decommission, rather than repair or repurpose, the USS Bonhomme Richard because of extensive damage from a fire while the vessel was in port. The Wasp-class amphibious assault ship was docked in San Diego when a fire broke out on July 12. It took five days to extinguish the inferno.

Ultimately, 40 sailors and 23 civilians were treated for minor injuries, according to the Navy. The ship was not so fortunate.

Repairing or repurposing the ship, according to Navy Secretary Kenneth Braithwaite, would be a billion-dollar battle.

"We did not come to this decision lightly," Braithwaite said in a statement. "Following an extensive material assessment in which various courses of action were considered and evaluated, we came to the conclusion that it is not fiscally responsible to restore her."

The Navy determined that the cost of restoring the ship could exceed $3 billion and it would take five to seven years from start to finish. Rebuilding and repurposing the ship could exceed $1 billion. The Navy says it could construct a new hospital ship, submarine tender, or command-and-control ship for the same price, or less.

Click Here To Read More

Resolution No. 96: Support Full Funding and Resourcing for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps

Click Here To Read Resolution

Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea

Tensions between China and both the Philippines and Vietnam have recently cooled, even as China increased its military activity in the South China Sea by conducting a series of naval maneuvers and exercises in March and April 2018. Meanwhile, China continues to construct military and industrial outposts on artificial islands it has built in disputed waters.

The United States has also stepped up its military activity and naval presence in the region in recent years, including freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in January and March 2018. In a speech during his November 2017 visit to Southeast Asia, President Donald J. Trump emphasized the importance of such operations, and of ensuring free and open access to the South China Sea. Since May 2017, the United States has conducted six FONOPs in the region.

China's sweeping claims of sovereignty over the sea—and the sea's estimated 11 billion barrels of untapped oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas—have antagonized competing claimants Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. As early as the 1970s, countries began to claim islands and various zones in the South China Sea, such as the Spratly Islands, which possess rich natural resources and fishing areas.

China maintains [PDF] that, under international law, foreign militaries are not able to conduct intelligence-gathering activities, such as reconnaissance flights, in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). According to the United States, claimant countries, under UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), should have freedom of navigation through EEZs in the sea and are not required to notify claimants of military activities. In July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague issued its ruling on a claim brought against China by the Philippines under UNCLOS, ruling in favor of the Philippines on almost every count. While China is a signatory to the treaty, which established the tribunal, it refuses to accept the court's authority.

Click Here To Read More

Resolution No. 90: South China Sea Island Building

Click Here To Read Resolution

POW/MIA Update:

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

November 30, 2020: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Booe, J.)
November 30,2020: Soldier Accounted For From World War II (Doddo, L.)
December 1, 2020: USS West Virginia Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Johnson, C.)
December 1, 2020: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Furr, T.)
December 1, 2020: USS Oklahoma Brothers Accounted For From World War II (Trapp, H. & Trapp, 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
H.R.8494	To reaffirm the critical role of congressional consultation and to require appropriate deliberation to assess the effects of the sale or export of major defense equipment to countries in the Middle East on the qualitative military edge of Israel
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:

- Staff attended a webinar hosted by the Atlantic Council. Hosts included former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General James Cartwright for opening remarks, Indo-Pacific security experts Jon Grevatt, Rukmani Gupta, and report author Tate Nurkin for a panel discussion on the emerging trends, technologies, and concepts that will define the future of competition and warfare in the Indo-Pacific region. The report explores major drivers of defense innovation in the region, including Chinese military modernization, hybrid and gray-zone threats, and increased activity in the space, cyber, and electromagnetic domains. This study advances a new “Five Revolutions” framework to capture defense technology and investment efforts in the region, focused on the intended military effects of new capabilities rather than on their technological characteristics alone. Mr. Nurkin posits key takeaways and policy implications for the United States and its Indo-Pacific allies and partners.

- Staff attended a virtual MS Teams live event for the release of the 2019 DoD Active Duty Spouse Survey. These annual surveys of military spouses provide a look at the experiences and attitudes of education and employment, deployment and reintegration and spouse and child-wellbeing across all military branches. The survey is conducted separately for active-duty service members and Reserve Component service members. Topics include spouse military support and benefits, Military OneSource, financial condition, spouse unemployment, and effects of deployment on children. Areas that remained steady or improved as compared with the 2017 survey results included well-being, marital satisfaction, financial stability, and positive child behaviors. Areas of improvement include managing stress, and support for employment and deployment reintegration.
  Click Here to Read The Survey Results With Infographics
- Staff attended the Center For Women Veteran Partners Meeting. The key take-away for outreach was The Women Veterans Book Corner. The Women Veteran Authors Book Corner Initiative was developed to create a place for women Veterans to come together and support their sister Veterans who are authors, share their stories, and learn more about their journey. This initiative will highlight the amazing contributions of women Veterans in all capacities, increasing awareness about the women Veteran authors who are in our communities and give them a platform to come together, share their love for reading with their sister Veterans, and inspire them who seek to become authors.
  Click Here To Learn How To Participate

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division, rpowell@legion.org, 202-861-2700
Week ending 12/04/2020