National Security Division Report

Week ending 12 June 2020

National Commander: unequal treatment violates nation's highest values

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford issued the following statement on Friday, June 12:

The American Legion stands on principles and serves purposes worldwide that are violated when justice, freedom and democracy are not applied equally, regardless of race, color, creed or class. These principles formed the foundation of the organization over a century ago, in a very different and deeply divided time in U.S. society. As our nation grieves and tries to reconcile the unconscionable deaths of African-American citizens George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, retired St. Louis Police Capt. David Dorn, Federal Protective Services Officer Patrick Underwood in Oakland, Calif., and others, The American Legion stands firm in a value it has upheld, in the form of a national resolution, first adopted 1923:

WHEREAS, The fundamental law of our country guarantees to all peoples equal rights and equal opportunities and the right to worship their God as they see fit; and...

WHEREAS, Membership of The American Legion is made up of those who served our country in a time of great national stress, without distinction as to race, color, creed or class; and...

RESOLVED, ...That we consider any individual, group of individuals, or organizations, which creates, or fosters racial, religious or class strife among our people, or which takes into their own hands the enforcement of law, determination of guilt, or infliction of punishment, to be un-American, a menace to our liberties, and destructive to our fundamental law; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we consider such actions by any individual, groups, or organizations, to be inconsistent with the ideals and purposes of The American Legion.

This resolution's place in The American Legion's conscience is so timeless it was reaffirmed, in full, at the organization's 99th National Convention in 2017.

Throughout its history, The American Legion has fought to improve racial equality not only for veterans, but for the communities they serve. In 1919, African-American veterans of World War I were among the organization's founders who adopted a mission statement – the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution – that pledges among other things 'to maintain law and order,' 'promote peace and goodwill on earth' and 'safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy.'

"Where the law has been broken, justice must be served. Where freedom has been denied, it must be returned, without prejudice. Our nation has much to consider as we continue to strive toward a shared goal found in the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag: 'with liberty and justice for all.' All means all. Anything less than complete equality in the execution of these values today is as un-American now as it was in 1923.

https://www.legion.org/commander/249251/national-commander-unequal-treatment-violates-nation%E2%80%99s-highest-values

Trump Orders National Guard To Pull Out Of Washington

President Trump on Sunday ordered National Guard troops to start withdrawing from Washington, where the protests over the killing of George Floyd have been peaceful in recent days. In a telephone briefing with reporters, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said guardsmen from 11 states, who came to assist the D.C. National Guard, will be returning home over the next two or three days.

Altogether, the National Guard force from D.C. and the states totaled more than 5,000 this past week, though only about one-third were on the streets at any given time, he said. The D.C. National Guard will, if needed, continue to support Washington police and federal law enforcement in the city, he added. In addition, McCarthy expressed relief that active duty troops, who were brought to bases in Virginia and Maryland, just outside Washington, were not needed.

"We came right up to the edge of bringing active duty troops here, and we didn't," he said. Those troops were sent back to their home bases over the past few days.

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SASC Complete Markup of FY21 National Defense Authorization Act

The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) completed all of its subcommittee and full committee markups this week. The $731.3 billion package (of which $69 billion is OCO funding) complies with last summer's budget deal. In a nod to the pandemic, the bill authorizes $44 million for vaccine and biotechnology research within the DoD. It also provides $5 million to start a civilian-military partnership to enhance interoperability and medical surge capacity of the National Disaster Medical System. The transition of military medical research is delayed until 2024, in recognition that the Defense Health Agency (DHA) has a lot on its plate with the pandemic.

The SASC markups are done behind closed doors (except for a mainly ceremonial one by the Personnel Subcommittee). It is generally recognized that this enables the Senators to operate in a quieter, more bipartisan manner, because no one is watching to criticize them for being friendly. In contrast, the House Armed Services Committee's (HASC) sometimes raucous markup will take place on July 1 in front of television cameras. The event, a highly anticipated event among defense wonks in DC, generally goes until the wee hours of the next morning. Subcommittee markups, on the other hand, are known for their brevity, often lasting less than 10 minutes. Those markups will occur next week.

Should the NDAA be passed, it would be the 60th consecutive year Congress managed to get this bill to the President's desk. The Senate's inclusion of a commission to study renaming bases and memorials named after Confederate officers is the first provision the White House has indicated might be a problem for the President. However, that provision was only opposed by two GOP Senators (Cotton (AR) and Hawley (MO)), and McCarthy has told reporters he does not oppose renaming the bases. Without the support of Republican lawmakers in either the House or the Senate, the President might quietly back off on his position.

Top Pentagon leadership refused to testify before the HASC this week, leading to a strongly worded letter from chair Rep. Smith (D-WA) and over 20 Democratic committee members. It is yet to be seen how this might impact how tough the committee gets on DoD in writing the NDAA.

Read more from the Committee website

Air Force Secretary Meets Airmen, Learns Readiness Practices Amid COVID-19

The secretary's May 20 visit included stops at the 27th Special Operations Logistics Readiness Squadron and the 20th Special Operations Squadron, among other units.

"It was reassuring to hear [Barrett's] insight and reflection on the wing and Air Force's response to COVID-19," said Air Force Lt. Col. Mark Hamilton, the commander of the 20th SOS. "We also noted her interest in taking away some of the best practices learned from the pandemic to become a more efficient and lethal vertical-lift squadron."

Hamilton and Barrett discussed the unit's role in the wing's mission, briefly showcasing the history of the unit and its accomplishments and how its airmen have continued staying current in meeting evolving demands with modern solutions.

"We are the sole vertical-lift platform at Cannon, and we strive to execute that professional specialized work for our nation," Hamilton added.

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US, Japan bomber-fighter integration demonstrates commitment, enhances readiness

A B-1B Bomber Task Force mission on May 26 included important elements for a complex theater – integration with allies and partners – in support of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Strategic Command objectives. This latest mission involved integration with the Koku Jieitai, or Japanese Air Self-Defense Force.

Two B-1s, deployed to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam from the 9th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, 7th Bomb Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, flew to the Sea of Japan to conduct bilateral training with eight Koku Jieitai F-15s and eight F-2s, before returning to Andersen.

“The U.S. steadfast commitment remains unchanged and integration missions are a way for the U.S. to demonstrate that commitment,” said Lt. Col. Ryan Stallsworth, 9th EBS commander, adding that “missions such as these make us better at integrating global fires and effects in a vast battlespace.”

“It’s always an honor to show our allies and partners that the U.S. is committed to security in the Indo-Pacific region,” said the B-1 pilot. “While flying BTF missions, we practice integrating through voice and data links to ensure we are a lethal force when employing together.”

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POW/MIA Update

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

June 8, 2020
Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (DeWitt, S.)
USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Griffith, T.)

June 9, 2020
Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Conley, P.)

Staff Activity:

- National Security staff continues working to get all National Security resolutions together in a digital file for distribution to the National Security Commission and Committees. These will be broken down by committee and sent by both email and USPS mail to the relevant chairmen when completed.
- National Security Policy Advisors (NSPA) Nick Riffel and Jeff Steele continue work on several award programs: Law Officer & Fire Fighter of the Year and Spirit of Service.
- On Tuesday, June 9, NSPA Jeff Steele participated in the Conservative Working Group weekly teleconference hosted by Republican leadership in the Senate.
- On Tuesday, June 9, NSPA Jeff Steele and Legislative staff participated in a conference call with the office of Rep. Andy Kim (NJ-3) on the VA Medical Leasing Process. At the beginning of this month, the solicitation for their much needed new CBOC in Ocean County fell apart (for the 2nd time since 2014) and the VA has had to go back to the RFP step. The VA's medical leasing process has been sadly broken for some time now and their office wants to be more active in this specific space.
- On Wednesday, June 10, NSPA Jeff Steele participated in a conference call with Legion media relations staff, Judge Bartlett, and HR Director Rolland on a media request from the Washington Post. Legion was asked its position on Army bases named after Confederate generals. The resulting story with Legion quote is available here.
- On Thursday, June 11, NSPA Jeff Steele and Legislative staff participated in a conference call with the office of Congresswoman Carol Miller (WV-3). Legion was asked to support her House Resolution, H. CON. RES. 10, which would authorize the use of the rotunda of the Capitol to honor the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient of the Second World War upon death. Legion has offered support based on Resolution No. 41: State Funeral for the Last World War II Medal of Honor Recipient.

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division