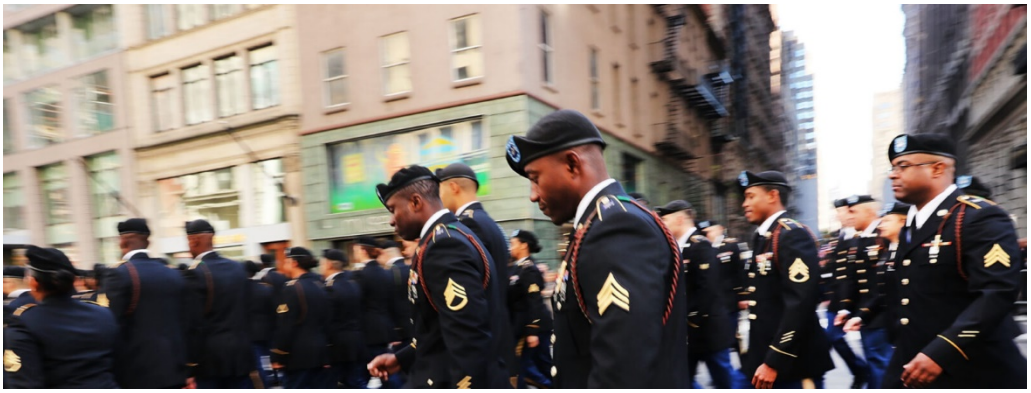
National Security Division Report

Week ending 14 August 2020

Challenges to Improving Racial Representation in the Military



(Center For New American Security) Though the U.S. military appears as one of the true meritocracies in our society, many unaddressed legacies from the nation's past regarding race and equity linger. Unresolved racial stress impacts all aspects of society, consistently leading to unequal treatment and tragic death for civilians and imbalances within the military. Nationwide protests demanding change have initiated dialogue across all levels and communication platforms in American society, giving many hope our country will finally address generations of inequity rather than merely have another moment of speeches and little action. While the scope of this movement may finally lead our country to address systemic racism and inequality, structural limitations and public perception will continue to affect the military's ability to recruit and retain top tier, diverse talent. If military leaders are serious about their desire to improve overall diversity and inclusion efforts in the services—and many have recently conveyed their support—they must address head on several issues of race and representation in the military. Leadership should consider how representation is reflected in all levels of leadership; how and where young, diverse talented is recruited; how to speak on and engage U.S. policies that may have a detrimental impact on recruiting and retaining talent; and how to address the issue of generational family service that often does not include diverse families.

To strengthen the force and remain competitive, the military must make it a 21st-century national security imperative to ensure diversity of thought and life experiences within the national security apparatus.

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This Is All Beyond Stupid.' Experts Worry About Russia's Rushed Vaccine

(New York Times) Vaccines are among the safest medical products in the world — but only because of the intense rigor of the clinical trials that test their safety and effectiveness. When

Vladimir Putin announced Tuesday that Russia had approved a coronavirus vaccine — with no evidence from large-scale clinical trials — vaccine experts were worried.

“I think it’s really scary. It’s really risky,” said Daniel Salmon, the director of the Institute for Vaccine Safety at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Salmon and other experts said that Russia is taking a dangerous step by jumping ahead of so-called Phase 3 trials, which can determine that the vaccine works better than a placebo and doesn’t cause harm to some people who get it.

Unlike experimental drugs given to the sick, vaccines are intended to be given to masses of healthy people. So they must clear a high bar of safety standards. If hundreds of millions of people get a vaccine, even a rare side effect could crop up in thousands of people.

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Pentagon Chief Esper Talks With Chinese Counterpart As Tensions Soar

(NPR) Amid deteriorating U.S.-China relations, further aggravated by a highly unusual trip to Taiwan this weekend by Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, Defense Secretary Mark Esper talked for 90 minutes on Thursday with his Chinese counterpart, Defense Minister Wei Fenghe.

According to accounts by both sides, the two nations' military leaders had plenty of grievances to air. The Trump administration has lately accused China of hiding information about the coronavirus, shut down China's consulate last month in Houston for alleged spying, accused China of military expansionism in the South China Sea, and enraged Beijing with a $2 billion sale of weapons to Taiwan, the democratically ruled island whose independence from China has never been recognized by Beijing.

"Secretary Esper called for greater PRC [People's Republic of China] transparency on COVID, expressed concern about PRC destabilizing activity in the vicinity of Taiwan and the South China Sea, and called on the PRC to honor international obligations under the principles of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration," the Pentagon press office said Thursday in a news release. "Secretary Esper communicated the importance that the PRC abide by international laws, rules, and norms, and meet its international commitments."

The United States, according to Xinhua, "should respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and stop interfering in China's domestic affairs, just as China respects those of the United States."

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Unarmed Minuteman III test launched: Missile launched from Airborne Navy aircraft

(Stratcom) A joint team of Air Force Global Strike Command Airmen and Navy sailors launched an unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile equipped with three test reentry vehicles from aboard the Airborne Launch Control System at 12:21 a.m. Pacific Time Aug. 4 from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

The test demonstrates that the United States' nuclear deterrent is safe, secure, reliable and effective to deter twenty-first century threats and reassure our allies. Test launches are not a response or reaction to world events or regional tensions.

Airmen from the 625th Strategic Operations Squadron out of Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, were aboard the U.S. Navy E-6 aircraft to demonstrate the reliability and effectiveness of the ALCS system. The ICBM's three reentry vehicles traveled approximately 4,200 miles to the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. These test launches verify the accuracy and reliability of the ICBM weapon system, providing valuable data to ensure a continued safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent.

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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:

August 6, 2020: Marine Accounted For From World War II (Reeser, G.)
August 10, 2020: Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Stryker, J.)
August 12, 2020: Marine Accounted For From World War II (Miller, C.)

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
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:

- National Security staff completed work on gathering all National Security resolutions with Legislative Intent together in digital files for distribution to the National Security Commission and Committees. These are broken down by committee and were sent by email to the relevant chairmen this week along with Excel spreadsheets listing the resolutions. .
- Staff continues work on several award programs: Law Officer & Fire Fighter of the Year and Spirit of Service.
- Staff continues work on improving the military equipment program process.
- On Monday, August 10, staff participated in webinar hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on the topic: America in the World: The History and Future of U.S. Foreign Policy. It featured a conversation with one of America's preeminent statesmen, Robert Zoellick, on his new book, America in the World: A History of U.S. Diplomacy and Foreign Policy. Zoellick discussed themes from his book like: What lessons does the history of American diplomacy, its practitioners, and its traditions hold for those looking to chart its future? More information and video of the event are available here.
- On Tuesday, August 11, staff held a Microsoft Teams call with a U.S. military staffer in the Defense Attaché's Office of the U.S. Embassy in Botswana. The servicemember is currently assisting the Government of Botswana Veterans Affairs Team develop their own veterans engagement program(s) akin to The American Legion. More background is available here.
- On Wednesday, August 12, staff participated in the webinar jointly hosted by the Center for American Progress and Hudson Institute which featured an address by Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen followed by a discussion with Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office Representative Hsiao Bi-khim, Hudson Senior Fellow Seth Cropsey, and Center for American Progress Vice President Kelly Magsamen. In January of this year, President Tsai won reelection to a second term. Since then, Taiwan has controlled the spread of its coronavirus outbreak, assisted other countries in combatting the pandemic, and faced increasing aggression from the Chinese Communist Party. President Tsai discussed these developments and the security, diplomatic, and economic challenges that face Taiwan in her second term. The conversation which followed President Tsai's remarks incorporated themes from her speech and addressed current U.S. policy and assistance toward Taiwan. More information and video of the event is available here.
- On Wednesday, August 12, staff participated in the webinar hosted by the Hudson Institute featuring Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John E. Hyten on the topic of the Department of Defense's progress in implementing the National Defense Strategy and remaining challenges. Amid an ongoing pandemic, the United States is faced with a broad ranges of security challenges. Responding to the long-term threat posed by China and Russia continues to be the greatest animating force of U.S. defense policy. However, the U.S. faces other serious threats from terrorist groups and rogue states like North Korea and Iran. General Hyten described how the National Defense Strategy is guiding major power competition and working to mitigate and defeat lesser threats; how the strategy has affected force size, strategy, and deployments; and what role alliances play in achieving the priorities laid out in the national defense strategy. More information and video of the event is available here.

- On Wednesday, August 12, staff briefed the new Legion Adjutants on the Military Equipment Loan program and resources/contacts.
- On Wednesday, August 12, staff held a Teams call with National Security Chairman Steven Brennan to continue planning for several upcoming National Security events and meetings.

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division