National Security Division Report
Week ending 17 July 2020

Gen. Mckenzie: Taliban On 'Dangerous Path'

(Washington Examiner) Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie is back at his headquarters at the U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida, having just completed a 13-day, 10-nation whirlwind tour of countries in his area of responsibility, which includes Iraq and Afghanistan.

In an interview with NPR that aired this morning, McKenzie said the Taliban are putting the Afghanistan peace process at risk by refusing to dial back their deadly attacks.

"The level of violence is still too high. The Taliban is still attacking Afghan forces across the country. They have scrupulously avoided attacking U.S. and coalition forces, but the attacks continue against the Afghan government forces and at far too high a level," McKenzie told NPR's Steve Inskeep, who asked if the Taliban were trying to gain a negotiating advantage through violence.

"I think they are actually, and I don't think that's going to be helpful because that's a very fine line, and the government of Afghanistan, they are not going to take their people being killed in this manner without ultimately being forced to respond," McKenzie replied. "So, I think this is a dangerous path that the Taliban appears to be going down. It is not helpful."

While McKenzie agreed there is a risk violence could derail the peace process, which has yet to result in direct talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, he said, “I also believe this is the closest we’ve been to a potential solution in all my time involved in this problem.”

“We have a narrow path to go forward. This path is the only way to get to a negotiated peaceful end to the situation there,” he said.

Listen to the interview here.

The United States Needs a New Foreign Policy

The global order is crumbling, domestic renewal is urgent, and America must reinvent its role in the world.

(The Atlantic) It’s tempting to draw sweeping conclusions about what geopolitics will look like after the pandemic. Some argue that we’re witnessing the last gasp of American primacy, the equivalent of Britain’s 1956 “Suez moment.” Others argue that America, the main driver of the post–Cold War international order, is temporarily incapacitated, with a president drunk at the wheel. Tomorrow, a more sober operator can swiftly restore U.S. leadership.

There is a lot we don’t know yet about the virus, or how it will reshape the international landscape. What we do know, however, is that we have drifted into one of those rare periods of transition, with American dominance in the rearview mirror, and a more anarchical order looming dimly beyond. The moment resembles—in both its fragility and its geopolitical and technological dynamism—the era before World War I, which triggered two global military convulsions before statecraft finally caught up with the magnitude of the challenges. To navigate today's complicated transition, the United States will need to move beyond the debate between retrenchment and restoration, and imagine a more fundamental reinvention of America’s role in the world.

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US military bases in Okinawa hit by Covid-19 as outbreak worsens

(CNN) United States military personnel on the Japanese island of Okinawa are on virtual lockdown after almost 100 cases of coronavirus have emerged on several US Marine Corps bases there.

The lockdown order, which was issued Saturday morning, bans almost all off-base movement by the tens of thousands of US military personnel on the bases unless approved by an officer with the rank of lieutenant colonel or above.

The order includes the vital Kadena Air Base, which bills itself the hub of US air power in the Pacific, and comes after US admirals last week touted the "extraordinary measures" the Navy had taken to restore US military readiness in the region in the face of the worsening pandemic.

A statement from US Air Force Brig. Gen. Joel Carey, the commander of Kadena Air Base, on Friday said "multiple new positive cases" had emerged on US military facilities on the island as well as three cases among the local population.

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At The U.N., Russia Forces Reduced Access For Aid To Syrians

(NPR) A divided United Nations Security Council approved a resolution on Saturday to allow just one border crossing — instead of the current two — to remain open for U.N. aid convoys into Syria, dealing another blow to a humanitarian assistance program for millions of displaced people.

The outcome alarmed aid groups struggling to help those trapped and in danger in the nine-year civil war. In its fifth and final attempt this week to vote on the issue, 12 nations voted in favor of the resolution, including the U.S. Three countries — Russia, China and the Dominican Republic — abstained.

"Today's resolution leaves us bitterly disappointed," said U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Kelly Craft.

The U.S. and European countries wanted to maintain U.N. aid routes through the two border crossings. The remaining crossing for U.N. aid is the Bab al-Hawa crossing point from Turkey, where the U.N. serves millions of displaced people in Syria's Idlib province. And even that route approval will last just one year.

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Kansas National Guardsmen Aim to Package 5 Million Meals

(Defense.gov) With social distancing requirements making it difficult for businesses and programs to operate — especially meal packaging services that rely on volunteers — the Kansas Division of Emergency Management has teamed up with the Kansas National Guard to overcome those difficulties to provide meals to those in need.

In late April more than 40 Kansas Guardsmen arrived in Leawood, Kansas, to work in one of seven meal packaging lines. Guardsmen pack, weigh, seal and box food bags that include menu items such as macaroni and cheese, Spanish rice and minestrone soup. The food is then put into seven-meal "pantry packs" and stacked on pallets for distribution to food pantries throughout the state.

"This mission is helping a lot," said Army Spc. Gabriella Guzman, a combat medic. "Because of COVID-19, there are a lot of people unemployed, especially with families, that need food."

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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:

July 14, 2020
Pilot Accounted For From Vietnam War (Krogman, A.)

July 15, 2020
Marine Accounted For From World War II (Gillen, J.)
Marine Accounted For From World War II (Langan, J.)

Legislative Issue Tracker

Click on the link to open an Excel spreadsheet to see what legislation the National Security Division is tracking in Congress. (This is a new feature and will be an ongoing part of this report.)

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KgPaIfx04RA13m20qLDh5br8dyxiupVX5Dc5ByZteRQ/edit?usp=sharing

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 email to the relevant chairmen when completed.
- On Monday, July 13, staff attended a virtual event hosted by the Hudson Institute titled "Keeping America Safe: Congressman Don Bacon on the National Defense Authorization Act." Discussed was the FY21 NDAA and the policy priorities it establishes for the U.S. military. From balancing investments in new defense capabilities with the sustainment of the current force posture to modernizing the nation's strategic nuclear deterrent, the Pentagon faces numerous global challenges. How will the NDAA affect these strategic concerns? How would the bill influence the U.S.-Taiwan relationship, and how does it prioritize U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific more broadly? What changes does it implement for U.S. troop presence in Germany, Afghanistan, and elsewhere? More information and video of the event is available here.
- On Tuesday, July 14, staff attended a virtual seminar hosted by the Global Taiwan Institute titled "Challenges and Opportunities for a Transatlantic Approach to Cross-Strait Relations." Amid the novel coronavirus pandemic, the world order is experiencing unprecedented disruption. The Transatlantic relationship between the United States and Europe has emerged as a vital foundation of an international system increasingly under strain by the rise of authoritarian revisionist powers. Despite a broad and deeply shared commitment to human rights and democratic values, the United States and Europe have been unable to translate overlapping policy goals to collaborate effectively on foreign policy initiatives. This has come against a backdrop of increasingly aggressive behavior by the People's Republic of China—both regionally and globally—as clearly exhibited by Beijing's heavy-handed approach to the Hong Kong protests. For Taiwan, such aggression is an existential matter as China ramps up its multifaceted pressure campaign on Taipei. If the United States and Europe are to effectively safeguard Taiwan's de facto independence, overcoming their differences and moving toward a truly Transatlantic approach to cross-Strait relations may be necessary. This virtual seminar examined opportunities and challenges for such an approach, incorporating voices from the US, Europe, and Taiwan. More information and video of the event is available here.
- On Thursday, July 16, staff attended a virtual event hosted by the CATO Institute titled "The Future of the World Trade Organization." The World Trade Organization (WTO) is in the midst of a series of crises: its dispute system is struggling to function; its director-general stepped down early; a U.S. senator is publicly advocating for it to be "abolished"; and it has been decades since a major new round of liberalization has been completed. On the other hand, its regular work of monitoring and discussing governments' trade policies

is continuing; governments are finding workarounds for the dispute process; and there have been low-profile deals struck in a number of policy areas. Are the straits as dire for the WTO as they sometimes seem, or is it simply in need of minor tweaks and new global leadership? What does the future hold for the WTO? More information and video of the event is available here.

- On Thursday, July 16, staff facilitated a Microsoft Teams meeting with the National Security Commission and Committee chairmen. The meeting served as an opportunity for the chairman to introduce himself to the group and provide guidance on improving communication among the Commission and to facilitate the conduct of Commission business in the absence of the Spring NEC and National Convention, both cancelled.
- On Friday, July 17, staff attended a virtual town hall meeting with Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Army General Mark A. Milley, and Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón "CZ" Colón-López. During the event, a variety of topics of the day were addressed and questions from Service members were answered. Of note, General Milley reminded service members of the oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and what matters is that "We Are All" united on the principle that all men are created equal. Leadership is willing to face the issues that are plaguing our Organization. DoD website: https://www.defense.gov/Watch/Live-Events
- National Security's contribution to The American Legion's Annual Report was forwarded today to include The American Legion's acceptance into our organization, the service members of the newest branch of the Armed Forces, United States Space Force. Also included was the National Commander's Far East Trip highlighting the visit to Australia.

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division