National Security Division Report

Week ending 26 June 2020

Senate GOP leaders buck Trump on base names

Less than a week after President Donald Trump said he hopes Senate Republicans will not "fall for" a proposal to rename U.S. military bases and other assets that honor Confederates, Senate Republican leaders said Tuesday they are considering doing just that.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., told reporters on Tuesday he is open to the changes, noting as an aside that he is descended from a Confederate veteran. "I can only speak for myself on this issue, if it's appropriate to take another look at these names, I'm personally okay with that," McConnell said.

Earlier in the day, John Thune, the Senate's majority whip, also distanced himself from Trump on the issue. The South Dakota Republican suggested to reporters he is inclined to support an amendment by Massachusetts Democrat Elizabeth Warren that the Senate Armed Services Committee incorporated in its draft defense authorization bill for fiscal 2021, the NDAA.

The amendment would require the Pentagon to jettison within three years all names, symbols, displays, monuments or paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederacy or anyone who volunteered to serve it, Senate aides have said. But other Senate Republicans have joined Trump in opposing changing base names, revealing fissures within the party over how to respond to a public groundswell calling for changes in America's racial laws, rules and policies across the board. Sen. James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma, the Armed Services chairman, opposes Warren's proposal. The NDAA text is expected to be published this week. The Senate will debate the bill in the coming weeks.

Senators ready clash over Confederate-named military assets

As the Senate sets up consideration of the fiscal 2021 defense authorization bill next week, senators are taking sides over its Confederate name removal mandate. As it stands the bill (S 4049) would require the Defense Department to review and rename military assets connected to the Confederacy within three years, and it would set up a commission to help guide the changes.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., wrote the language. She and other Democratic senators now want to go further -- potentially through an amendment to the bill -- by tightening the timeline to one year and doing away with the commission.

But Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., wants to get rid of the renaming mandate. His amendment would also set up a commission to review the issue, with a requirement for state and local input.
Democrats have looked united on the issue, John M. Donnelly reports, while Republicans are more scattered.

President Donald Trump has taken a hard stance against name changes, and Senate Armed Services Chairman James M. Inhofe, R-Okla., and others want them to be decided locally. But some GOP lawmakers have said they're open to considering removing the Confederate homages, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

House passes sweeping police reform bill

(Politico) The House passed a sweeping police overhaul bill Thursday, one month after the killing of a Black man by a Minneapolis police officer sparked a nationwide movement for systemic reforms of the criminal justice system.

Every Democrat voted for the package, which was drafted by the Congressional Black Caucus in a matter of days amid multiracial demonstrations in dozens of cities seeking justice for George Floyd's death. Ultimately just three Republicans — moderate Reps. Will Hurd (R-Texas), Fred Upton (R-Mich.) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.) — backed the measure.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi took the rare step of casting her vote and announcing the 236-181 tally.

The bill would crack down on excessive police force and ban chokeholds, enforce national transparency standards and push accountability for officer misconduct with a national database to track offenses.

"To the protesters: we hear you, we see you, we are you," House Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) said in an impassioned speech on the floor just before the vote. Jeffries, one of the most senior Black members in Congress, said he first learned of Floyd's death from his young son, who told him, "'Dad, it's happened again. What are you going to do about it?'"

"I say to him, and I say to all those other Black children throughout America: We are here today as House Democrats to do something about it," Jeffries said.

The three Republicans who ultimately supported the bill defied direct instructions from the White House to oppose it, handing a minor victory to Democrats, who can now say they passed a bipartisan police reform bill. Still, Democrats' success likely ends there as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has signaled he will not take up the package, leaving virtually no hope it will become law.

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1,000 more U.S. troops to Poland as Trump and Duda discuss NATO's eastern flank

(AP) — President Donald Trump welcomed Poland's president to the White House on Wednesday, with a U.S. decision to send more American troops to Poland to bolster NATO's eastern flank against Russian aggression at the top of the leaders' agenda.

Even before Andrzej Duda arrived, the U.S. ambassador to Poland, Georgette Mosbacher, told TVN24 in Poland that the U.S. will send another 1,000 troops to Poland — over and above the 1,000 declared last year. But she said they might not necessarily be transferred from Germany, where Trump is planning to withdraw about 10,000 U.S. troops.

This is Duda's third visit to Washington since Trump took office and the first visit by a head of state to the White House since the coronavirus pandemic shut things down. The U.S. and Polish delegations and members of the media were tested before the two leaders met in the Oval Office, although none of the officials wore masks.

Lt. Col. Carla Gleason, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said it "is working options with U.S. European Command consistent with the president's directive." She said the department's priorities include enhancing deterrence against Russia, which is a key part of any buildup in Poland. Based on the agreement with Poland, the U.S. will add a division headquarters, a combat training center, a unmanned aircraft squadron and structure to support an Army brigade that could rotate in and out of the country.

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Congressional defense leaders introduce plans to counter China

(Defense News) Congressional defense leaders now have at least three competing plans to push back on China in the Pacific. Which will they choose?

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith, D-Wash., introduced his own $3.6 billion Indo-Pacific Reassurance Initiative plan Thursday — a response to two plans, each called the Indo-Pacific Deterrence Initiative — that would spend more and be more prescriptive about how the Pentagon would use that money.

“Our goal in this was to send a signal to our partners and allies that we have an enduring commitment to the region and that collectively we want to help address the full spectrum of security threats that our partners and allies in the region face,” a committee aide said in a conference call with reporters Thursday.

Among other things, Smith’s plan identifies $3.6 billion in the base budget already detailed in the president’s budget request, and it requires the Pentagon produce a raft of analyses before Congress beefs up U.S. presence in the Pacific. The dollar figure is identified in a nonbinding “sense of Congress” provision.

The language is part of the HASC draft of the annual defense policy bill, due to be marked up in committee July 1. Whatever language survives the markup and amendment process on the floor will become the House’s negotiating position with the Senate, which began a preliminary floor debate this week.

Smith’s plan and the others represent Congress’ efforts to sharpen the Pentagon’s spending and focus in the Asia-Pacific region, even as Defense Secretary Mark Esper has said China is his department’s top adversary.

Each plan was inspired by the multiyear European Deterrence Initiative, which has consumed $22 billion since its inception in response to Russia annexing Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

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Navy Calls 1,629 Reservists To Shipyards Left Shorthanded By COVID-19 Pandemic

(NPR) The Navy is mobilizing 1,629 reservists to support aircraft carrier and submarine maintenance at its four public shipyards starting next month, officials said. The mobilization will help reduce the maintenance backlog that has developed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
In March, Naval Sea Systems Command authorized weather and safety leave for shipyard personnel who fell under the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "high risk" category for extreme complications tied to the COVID-19 virus.

With up to 25% of the production workforce unable to report to their duty location, the shipyards have not been able to handle all their work and have a backlog that, if left unchecked, would result in delays in returning ships to the fleet, officials said in a release. The Navy says all the reservists will be on-site by September. They will be on one-year mobilization orders which may be extended or curtailed should circumstances change.

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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 23, 2020
Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Quong, J.)
Marine Accounted For From World War II (Fahy, J.)

June 25, 2020
USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Stout, R.)

Staff Activity:

- On Monday, June 22, staff attended a virtual event hosted by Arena Civil Dialogues on the topic: "Is China the new enemy? Confront or Cooperate?" The event featured Quincy Institute Deputy Director for Research and Policy Stephen Wertheim and Research Fellow for East Asia Rachel Esplin Odell discussing how the U.S. should respond to the recent rise in tensions between the U.S. and China with Elbridge Colby and Rebeccah Heinrichs. Colby is widely credited as the architect of the 2018 National Defense Strategy's call for 'great power competition' with China. More information and video of the event are available here.
- On Tuesday, June 23, staff participated in the Conservative Working Group weekly teleconference call hosted by Republican leadership in the Senate.
- On Tuesday, June 23, staff attended a virtual Women Veterans Forum hosted by the Acting Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Pamela Powers. The focus was on support for women Veterans during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic. Customer service is the Secretary's priority and women Veterans are encouraged to contact the VA Women's Health to experience the department's core customer experience capabilities to include real-time customer experience data, tangible customer experience tools, modern technology and targeted engagements. The 'I Am Not Invisible' Women's Veteran Mobile Campaign is a success with great feedback from women Veterans and their families.
- On Tuesday, June 23, staff attended a virtual round table discussion hosted by The American Interest on the topic: "The Shape of a Real Grand Strategy: COVID-19 and the challenge coming from China", a recent essay by AEI Resident Defense and National Security Fellow Giselle Donnelly. The essay is available here and video here.
- On Wednesday, June 24, staff attended the MSO/VSO Conference Call with Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper. Discussed was the DoD Diversity and Inclusion directive that included three initiatives to build a better U.S. military that pursues equal opportunity and aspires to true meritocracy. #1, stand up a new Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion in the Military to provide in actionable recommendations to increase racial diversity and ensure equal opportunities across all ranks. #2, begin the process of standing up a Defense Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion in the Armed Forces to provide long-term sustainable guidance to the Department's leadership. And #3, directed the civilian and uniformed leadership of the Pentagon to immediately present actionable ideas that the department can begin implementing now. DoD also expressed its continued response to COVID-19.

- On Wednesday, June 24, staff attended a virtual discussion hosted by The Global Taiwan Institute with Dr. Matthew Kroenig on his new book, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy Versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China*. After several decades of unquestioned US dominance on the world stage, recent years have witnessed a return to the great power rivalry of the past. With authoritarian regimes in China and Russia on the rise, many analysts have predicted profound disruptions to the US-led international system. In *The Return of Great Power Rivalry*, Dr. Kroenig challenges these predictions, arguing that democratic systems are uniquely prepared to confront authoritarian rivals. More information and video of the event are available here.
- On Thursday, June 25, staff emailed rosters to the chairmen and members of all seven National Security Commission committees. The seven rosters contain a list of the committee members along with contact information (email address and telephone number) if available. This is intended to facilitate the work of the committees, especially during this period when all in-person meetings have been cancelled. A compendium of resolutions assigned to each committee will be distributed to the committee chairs and members soon.

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