National Security Division Report

Week ending 3 July 2020

House committee, Senate wrap up NDAA work for the week

The scene of the House Armed Services markup Wednesday.

(CQ) **Senate:**: Work continues in the Senate on a fiscal 2021 defense authorization bill (S 4049). Senators aren't expected to wrap up before the upcoming two-week recess. The chamber took its first vote in more than two days of debate on the bill Wednesday, rejecting an amendment from Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., that would have required the Pentagon to pull U.S. troops from Afghanistan within a year. The underlying bill takes the opposite view; it includes a nonbinding sense of the Senate provision warning against a "precipitous" withdrawal. The Trump administration is still planning to end military involvement by April 2021 under an agreement with the Taliban.

The Senate floor vote on Afghanistan comes in the context of reports that Russia has paid bounties to militants in Afghanistan to kill U.S. and coalition military personnel there. The reports have indicated that President Donald Trump did not notice or do anything in response to intelligence warnings about this threat.

House: The House Armed Services Committee approved 56-0 its defense authorization bill (HR 6395) late Wednesday evening, progressing through the unusual mix of in-person and virtual debate and amendments without too much trouble.

The panel adopted amendments lawmakers offered on renaming military assets with Confederate connections, strengthening standards on the levels of PFAS chemicals in certain drinking water, and limiting use of defense funds to carry out an executive order that could remove collective bargaining rights for some Defense Department employees.

The committee also adopted an amendment, with support from members on both sides of the aisle, that would prevent President Donald Trump from using funds to reduce U.S. troop levels in Germany.

It rejected an amendment that would have required the president to certify to Congress the justification for using military troops to deal with domestic unrest. The amendment was offered following Trump's threats to invoke the Insurrection Act to use troops to quell recent protests.

The panel adopted an amendment that would create a pilot program at service academies where the commandants would follow the recommendations of an independent special prosecutor in sexual assault cases.

Schumer and Trump trade barbs on NDAA as it nears Senate passage

(CQ) The Senate is closing in on passage of the fiscal 2021 defense authorization bill, and a war of words is escalating between President Donald Trump and Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer.

Trump took to on Twitter Tuesday evening to threaten a veto of the bill if it gets to his desk with a provision requiring renaming military bases named after Confederates. Schumer said on the Senate floor Wednesday that the final NDAA would require just that, and predicted Trump will not veto it.

It appears both the House and Senate bills will contain the provision requiring the renaming of military bases and buildings named in honor of Confederate generals, and banning all symbols, monuments and other references to the Confederacy, Andrew Clevenger reports.

The Senate version of the bill (S 4049) includes an amendment by Massachusetts Democrat Elizabeth Warren that would give the Defense Department three years to rename the 10 bases named after generals who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. The House Armed Services Committee began its markup Wednesday morning and is expected to adopt an amendment likely requiring the changes occur within a year.

Half Of States Where Pentagon Lifts Travel Ban Have Rising Coronavirus Infections

(NPR) Despite tracking data indicating new coronavirus infections are on the rise in 23 states, the Pentagon on Friday announced it is lifting pandemic-inspired travel restrictions for U.S. military personnel in 46 states, as well as in the U.S. territories of Guam and Puerto Rico.

Among the states deemed fit for a resumption of travel by military personnel is Arizona, which has had a sharp spike in confirmed COVID-19 cases over the past two weeks, as well as others with notable recent upticks in infections, including Alabama, Texas and Oklahoma.

The Pentagon's own guidance for lifting restrictions stipulates that a state must show a "14-day downward trajectory of new COVID-19 cases or positive tests," as well as having had its shelter-in-place or other travel restrictions lifted and showing what the Department of Defense describes as a "14-day downward trajectory of flu-like and COVID-19-like symptoms."

Only four states - California, North Carolina, Florida and Minnesota - are not included in the loosening of travel restrictions by the Pentagon. One of them — Minnesota — is among the 27 states where the number of newly detected COVID-19 infections has been declining.

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DoD COVID-19 recognition

The Pentagon has approved award of the Armed Forces Service Medal and the Humanitarian Service Medal to recognize service members for participating in COVID-19 operations or activities anywhere in the world. The period of award for both medals is from January 31, 2020 to a point in time to be determined. The deployment requirement is waived for the Armed Forces Services Medal, as long as the service member was re-assigned from normal duties to perform duties related to COVID-19 for 30 consecutive or non-consecutive days. Members of both the active duty and reserve components are eligible for these medals.

In addition, both the Senate and House versions of the NDAA would provide hazardous duty pay for those involved in COVID-19 related activities and operations. The House would provide constructive credit towards retirement for members of the reserve components who cannot complete minimum annual training requirements due to the pandemic.

Countering Russian & Chinese Influence Activities

Moscow and Beijing's toolkit for influencing democratic societies has evolved. Using Germany, the UK, Japan, and Australia as case studies, CSIS explores what traits made these democracies vulnerable to foreign influence as well as the sources of their resiliency.

(CSIS) The impact of Russian and Chinese malign influence activities within democratic states has come into sharp focus in recent years. In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has created new opportunities for Moscow and Beijing to advance geopolitical goals through disinformation and other influence activities. Despite greater public awareness of the challenge, governments have struggled to respond.

The "3 Cs" framework, coined by former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, defines "malign" influence activities as *covert*, *coercive*, or *corrupting*. These influence activities disrupt the normal democratic political processes in a targeted country by:

1. Manipulating public discourse;
2. Discrediting the electoral system;
3. Biasing the development of policy; or
4. Disrupting markets for the purpose of advancing a political or strategic goal.

A growing body of research details and scrutinizes the strategies and tactics behind Russian and Chinese influence activities. Our research focuses on understanding how these activities play out in democratic politics and how governments and societies respond. What are the factors that make countries particularly vulnerable to Chinese or Russian malign influence activities? What are the sources of resilience that enable democratic governments and polities to mitigate, fend off, or push back on malign efforts to distort public debate and political processes? To what degree have China and Russia been successful in influencing political outcomes through their activities?

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Israel's West Bank annexation plan sparks criticism

(New York Times) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's push to annex territory in the occupied West Bank entered a critical window on Wednesday, but with his government divided, the White House indecisive and domestic opposition mounting, his allies said that a formal announcement could be weeks or even months away.

International opposition is gaining steam, too: The British prime minister, Boris Johnson, added his name to the list of foreign leaders denouncing annexation, warning in a front-page op-ed in the newspaper Yediot Ahronot that it would be "contrary to Israel's own long-term interests" and that his country would not recognize any such unilateral move.

Mr. Netanyahu, seeking to cement his legacy, ran for re-election on a promise to impose Israeli sovereignty on as much as 30 percent of the West Bank, land that the Palestinians have long sought for a future state. His coalition agreement with Benny Gantz, the centrist former army chief who nearly defeated him, allowed him to proceed with annexation no sooner than July 1.

But that date came and went Wednesday without any clarification from Mr. Netanyahu about what he intends to annex. The scenarios that continue to be floated in the Israeli news media only raise new questions.

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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 2, 2020
Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Henderson, R.)

Staff Activity:

- On Monday, June 29, staff attended a virtual round table hosted by the Military Family Advisory Network. The meeting opened with a discussion around COVID-19 and how needs concerning military family housing have evolved with this new factor. With the sharing of information gathered by subcommittees, the Military Family Advisory Network will begin to shape what their "solution" looks like, a resource that they can all share to help keep military families informed and to advocate for them on housing concerns.
- On Tuesday, June 30, staff participated in the Conservative Working Group weekly teleconference call hosted by Republican leadership in the Senate.
- On Wednesday, July 1, staff attended a virtual meeting with Premier Virtual and The American Legion to discuss bridging the human interaction and technology gap by incorporating software as a service. The purpose of the meeting was to view a demonstration of how interactive software can be used to host a virtual National Security Convention.
- On Wednesday, July 1, staff attended a virtual video conference with Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Thomas McCaffery, Director of Washington Headquarters Services Thomas Muir, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy Lernes Hebert who held a press briefing to provide an update on the Department of Defense COVID-19 guidance and its commitment to continue to evaluate the threat from COVID-19 and its impact on the nation's security.
- On Wednesday, July 1, staff attended a video event hosted by the Hudson Institute, which featured a discussion with Michael Kimmage on his new book, "The Abandonment of the West: The History of an Idea in American Foreign Policy." Hudson Senior Fellow Tod Lindberg, who recently reviewed the book in the Wall Street Journal, moderated the event and State Department Director of Policy Planning Peter Berkowitz joined the conversation. This portrait of American diplomacy seeks to reveal how the concept of the West drove twentieth-century foreign policy, how it fell from favor, and why it is worth saving. More information and video of the vent are available here.
- On Thursday, July 2, National Security Division staff met with Legislative Division staff to conduct a strategy session. Charting a national security legislative agenda in the near, medium, and long term were discussed and action items were agreed upon.

Happy Fourth of July weekend! Stay hydrated, be careful, and have fun!

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division