NATIONAL SECURITY DIVISION REPORT

National Security Division Report

Week ending April 23, 2021

American Legion calls for ending 'Forever War'

Calling the White House plan to entirely withdraw troops from Afghanistan by September 11 "a good start," American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford is calling for an end to the "Forever war" nearly 20 years after troops were deployed there.

Acknowledging that the United States "had little choice but to strike back hard" after the 9/11 attacks, Oxford called for the repeal of the "outdated authorizations for the use of military force" currently being used to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Today, there are men and women defending our nation in uniform who were born after 9/11," Oxford wrote in the May 2021 issue of The American Legion Magazine. "Thousands of American lives have been lost or broken fighting the global war on terrorism. An entire generation grew into adulthood without knowing a time when the United States was at peace."

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Resolution No. 22: Addressing the 'Forever War'

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion urges a renewal of a proper constitutional balance to American foreign policy decision-making by encouraging Congress to repeal and replace outdated Authorizations for the Use of Military Force; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion advocate for the importance of a civilian-led approach of elevating development and diplomacy alongside a strong defense in order to build a better, safer world.

The Biden presidency and the future of America's 'forever wars.'

In the final days of Trump's presidency, the withdrawal of troops from the Middle East has raised many important questions about the future of America's "forever wars." The incoming Biden administration will have to make difficult decisions about these engagements and be prepared to respond to uncertainty over intra-Afghan peace talks, long-term deployments in the Middle East, and the overall American appetite for sustained military commitments abroad.

On November 24, Foreign Policy at Brookings hosted an event on the Biden presidency and the future of America's "forever wars" in partnership with the Charles Koch Institute. Moderated by Senior Fellow Michael O'Hanlon, the panel explored some of the difficulties of U.S. involvement in the war in the Middle East. It addressed potential actions the Biden administration may take to reduce America's commitments in the region.

Chris Preble, co-director of the New American Engagement Initiative at the Atlantic Council, said that America's continuous wars began after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and have not ended since, emphasizing that "policies don't change unless someone changes them."

This lack of political inertia has cost $5.5 trillion and thousands of Americans lives. When Biden takes office, he said, there is a real possibility for a generational shift in how America defines threats. The U.S. will have to determine how to rebalance the instruments of power it needs to respond to these shifting threats.

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Pentagon investigated suspected Russian directed-energy attacks on U.S. troops

According to two people with direct knowledge of the matter, the Pentagon has briefed top lawmakers on intelligence surrounding suspected directed-energy attacks against U.S. troops, and officials identified Russia as a likely culprit.

According to four former national security officials directly involved in the probe, the Defense Department had been investigating the incidents, including those targeting its personnel around the world, since last year.

Pentagon officials informed at least two critical groups of lawmakers earlier this year, in written form and in-person, about the investigation. POLITICO spoke with congressional officials who were briefed on the suspected attacks as part of their oversight duties of the Pentagon.

The briefings included information about injuries sustained by U.S. troops in Syria, the people said. The investigation includes one incident in Syria in the fall of 2020 in which several troops developed flu-like symptoms, two people familiar with the Pentagon probe said. After this article was published, Gen. Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, told lawmakers during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing that he has seen "no evidence" of such attacks against U.S. troops the Middle East.

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Here is the List of Military Clinics That Will No Longer Serve Retirees, and their Families

Pentagon officials released a list of military treatment facilities and clinics that will no longer provide care to military retirees and active-duty families as part of a shift in focus to supporting active-duty readiness.

"The military health system is implementing several significant reforms aimed at building a more integrated and effective system of readiness and health," said Tom McCaffery, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. "We reviewed all facilities through the lens of their contributions to military readiness -- that includes MTFs [being] operated to ensure service members are medically ready to train and deploy.

It also means MTFs are effectively utilized as platforms that enable our military medical personnel to acquire and maintain the clinical skills and experience that prepares them for deployment in support of combat operations around the world."

The list is included in a 61-page report to Congress delivered Wednesday. The report lays out how officials selected the locations slated for changes to impact 200,000 retirees and active-duty family members. Of those, officials said Wednesday, about 80,000 are active-duty family members, while the remaining 120,000 are retirees and their families.

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Full List of Military Treatment Facilities Closures

DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY
FULFILLING OUR NATION'S PROMISE

April 19, 2021: Pilot Accounted For From World War II (Melville, W.)
April 19, 2021: Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Hoogacker, P.)
April 20, 2021: Pilot Accounted For From World War II (Vienneau, E.)
April 20, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Hudson, C.)
April 21, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Stein, W.)
April 21, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Doernenburg, K.)
April 22, 2021: Pilot Accounted For From World War II (Parker, R.)
April 22, 2021: USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Bates, H.)

Legislative Issues

• Availability of Healthcare benefits for residents at the Armed Forces Retirement Home in proposed language of the FY22NDAA – The American Legions support funding that provides long-term solvency and viability of the Armed Forces Retirement Home (Resolution No. 107, 2016)
• Quality of Life for Service members and their Families – We owe our military men and women a debt of gratitude we can never repay for all that they — and their families — sacrifice to serve our country. The American Legion supports a fully fun• Ensure the Coast Guard is paid – The American Legion supports a fully funded United States Coast Guard (Resolution No. 23, 2016)
• Expedited Citizenship through Honorable Military Service – The American Legion supports measures to ensure the process of naturalization through military service is completed before discharge (Resolution No. 15, 2018)
• Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure – The American Legion supports refined processes and policies that will enhance interagency cybersecurity and promulgate best practices and standards and ensure the protection of critical infrastructure from cyber and other electronic attacks. (Resolution No. 20, 2017)
• Addressing the Forever Wars – The American Legion advocate for elevating diplomacy to build a better, safer world (Resolution No. 22, 2020)

Staff Activity:

Staff engaged with Admiral Yancy Lindsey's aide, Lieutenant Kelsey of the United States Navy, to discuss national security matters. Such topics included military housing, family life, and troop welfare. Other points of interest were combat effectiveness of the military and recruiting efforts by all branches of service in this time of COVID-19. Staff will continue to follow up with LT Kelsey for possible future engagements, speaking events, and engagements. (Resolution No. 85, 2016)

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