WEEK OF OCTOBER 15, 2021

The National Security Division

WEEKLY REPORT

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Since assuming my role in National Security Division on October 4, I have spent the time in discussions with Chairman Brennan, National Staff Leadership, and the Division Staff as part of my assessment of our important and extensive portfolio.

We have a small but committed staff made up of four personnel that "get after" our important mission on a daily basis.

The staff's priorities are as follows with pending adjustments in the near future:

- Preparation for National Commander's Pacific Trip
- Preparation for visit and conference by NS Commission and Committee Chairmen to our Washington D.C. Offices
- Planning and preparation (W/ VA&R Division) for the Tomb of the Unknown Centennial and Veteran's Day events
- Review and recommendation phase for Immigration Resolution / Policy matters
- Review and research involving Extremist Groups targeting Veterans-related matters
- Continue supporting review of all National Security Resolutions

Chairman Brennan and I have communicated on a multitude of topics and we look forward to the important work that lies ahead involving the National Security Pillar of The American Legion!

Mario A. Marquez
Director, National Security Division

While China's Intimidation of Taiwan Continues, U.S. Remains Committed to Taiwanese Self-Defense

Since October 1, more than 100 Chinese military aircraft have moved provocatively through the air defense identification zones of nearby Taiwan — just over 100 miles to the east. Those military maneuvers serve only to create uncertainty in a part of the world where the U.S. wants to see stability and peace, Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby said.

The PRC [Peoples Republic of China] has stepped up efforts to intimidate and pressure Taiwan and other allies and partners, including increasing their military activities conducted in the vicinity of Taiwan, the East China Sea and the South China Sea, which we believe are destabilizing and only increase the risk of miscalculation," Kirby said during a briefing today at the Pentagon.

Despite the recent Chinese show of force, Kirby said the U.S. remains committed to keeping the Taiwan Strait a peaceful region.

Click Here To Read More

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Foreign Relations

An Afghanistan Evac Flight Was Almost Hijacked, Air Force Reveals

The State Department estimates that “a couple thousand” additional evacuees have been able to depart Afghanistan since Aug. 31, as a rare pairing of Biden administration staff and private organizations try to finish the work of the largest, most chaotic, and most dangerous emergency airlift in U.S. history.

“It’s wild that the State Department and DOD are doing this,” said one of volunteers, a veteran who is in regular meetings with those government officials to keep the evacuation going, through his role in the #AfghanEvac coalition. “It’s the most American thing I’ve ever seen.”

In all, about 100 private groups—many of them run by Afghanistan veterans who spoke out about the chaos and broken promises created by the Aug. 31 deadline—have stuck around to finish the job. And they are getting support from DOD and the State Department to do so.

A signature image of the chaotic 17-day evacuation of Hamid Karzai International Airport was a departing C-17 mobbed by Afghans who hung on as it took off. But other aircraft were in similar straits that day, Air Force officials revealed in a statement released on Wednesday.

Two HC-130J Combat King II aircraft on the ramp were about to be swarmed when they “took off on a sliver of remaining runway. With seconds to spare, they were airborne skimming just 10 feet above the crowd.”

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Military Benefits & Quality of Life.....

Catholic Troops Can Refuse COVID Vaccine, Archbishop Declares

Catholic U.S. troops should be allowed to refuse the COVID-19 vaccine based solely on conscientious objection and regardless of whether abortion-related tissue was used in its creation or testing, the archbishop for the military declared in a new statement supporting service members who are seeking religious exemptions.

“No one should be forced to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if it would violate the sanctity of his or her conscience,” said Archbishop for the Military Services Timothy P. Broglio, in a statement released Tuesday.

Broglio previously has supported President Joe Biden’s mandatory vaccination order for U.S. troops, citing the church’s guidance that permits Catholics to receive even vaccines derived from fetal tissue, when no other vaccine option is available. In his new statement, the archbishop said that while he still encourages followers and troops to get vaccinated, some troops have questioned if the church’s permission to get vaccinated outweighed their own conscious objections to it.

STAFF ACTIVITY

Foreign Relations

- Staff attended a virtual hill event detailing Russian Grand Strategy: Reality and Rhetoric. United States decision-makers can avoid strategic surprise through understanding Russia's grand strategy by anticipating Moscow's actions and reactions and evaluating the depth and nature of potential conflicts between Russia and the United States. The authors of this report examine Russia's declared grand strategy, assess the extent to which Russian behavior is consistent with the stated strategy, and outline implications for the United States. The six key elements of Russia's stated grand strategy the authors analyzed for closer examination are:

- (1) the linkage between internal and external threats,
- (2) the nature of Russia's role in its immediate neighborhood,
- (3) concepts about the future of warfare,
- (4) expeditionary requirements for Russia's military,
- (5) Moscow's objectives vis-à-vis the West, and
- (6) Russia's declared prioritization of engagement with non-Western powers.

- The report's authors determined that Russia's declared strategy can generally be deemed a reliable predictor of the state's efforts. Their analysis did not suggest that Russia's revealed grand design be fundamentally divergent from its stated one. Due to a breakdown in western relations, Russia seeks to form a coalition of like-minded countries but still views itself as an independent central global power. The authors concluded that insufficient economic resources and a lack of political influence limit Russia's ability to accomplish its stated objectives.

- Staff attended a hearing held by the House Committee on Veteran Affairs titled "Domestic Violent Extremist Groups and the Recruitment of Veterans." The hearing highlighted the growing concern that military veterans are susceptible to recruitment by extremist organizations. This is the first of three hearings.

  To watch the hearing click on the link below:

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2ZpnqNCtr8

Law and Order & Homeland Security

- Staff attended a hearing on The Cyber Security Summit sponsored by Looking Glass, Cyber Solutions, that focused on the challenges of making policy choices that maximize innovation and social benefits without undermining fundamental privacy, security, and liberty. The discussion theme revolved around of Security since ransomware has become more prevalent as hackers shifted to aggressive attacks/tactics and involves the presence of different groups or state actors. Therefore, security institutions must devise both preventative and counter-measures to get ahead of attacks. In addition, the implementation of the federal breach notification rules has created accountability within the security community, forcing companies to report breaches in their systems to their clients. Finally, the issue of sophisticated phishing attacks via email threads in a new "remote working environment" created an increased requirement for employees to receive training.

DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY

FULFILLING OUR NATION'S PROMISE

October 7, 2021:

- USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Carney, H.)

October 8, 2021:

- USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Saunders, C.)
- USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Turner, B.)

October 12, 2021:

- Airman Accounted For From World War II (Petersen, A.)
- USS California Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Turk, P.)

PROGRAMS

- The American Legion has aligned with the U.S Army *TACOM* (Tank - automotive and Armaments Command) Army Donations Program. In doing so were are able to provide our members with ceremonial rifles and static displays to be used in parades, funerals, functions, and decommissioned military equipment displayed at the post.
- In the month of July, the National Security Division supplied...

Rifle - 3

Ammo - 4,960

Static Display - 0

Clips - 0

Departments - 0

Posts - 0

Tank-automotive & Armaments Command

ANNEX

MORE STORIES!

Navy Prepares for Discharges of Sailors Who Refuse COVID Vaccine

The Navy said Thursday it is ready to dole out discharges -- either honorable or general -- to sailors who do not take one of the COVID-19 vaccines by a mandatory Nov. 28 deadline.

Sailors who refuse the shot can be reassigned while their cases are heard, and will not be promoted or given any other orders -- even if they have a pending exemption application, according to new administrative guidance sent to the fleet.

Click Here To Read More

Military Retirees, Disabled Veterans to See Largest Pay Raise in Decades for 2022

Military retirees and veterans receiving disability payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will see their paychecks go up by 5.9% for 2022, triggered by inflation and an annual adjustment to the federal Cost of Living Allowance (COLA).

That annual adjustment has averaged around 1.5% for the last 10 years.

The adjustment rate was announced Wednesday by the Social Security Administration. The VA is required by law to alter disability payment rates by that amount. While military retirement is not legally required to follow suit, the change is traditionally the same.

Click Here To Read More

National Security Division Director, Mario A. Marquez, mmarquez@legion.org, (202) 263-2984