



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
9301 CHAPEK ROAD
FORT BELVOIR VA 22060-5527

September 20, 2021

SAAA-LS

Nikhel Sus
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
1101 K St., N.W., Suite 201
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Nikhel Sus:

This letter responds to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests dated January 8, 2021 and January 10, 2021. Your request is now in litigation, cited as *CREW v. DOJ*, 1:21-cv-572 (D.D.C.).

Your January 8, 2021 request is for:

1. All records from December 1, 2020 to January 6, 2021 relating to securing the U.S. Capitol Building during the January 6, 2021 congressional session to count electoral votes.
2. All records from December 1, 2020 to January 6, 2021 reflecting any request by the U.S. Capitol Police for assistance or support to secure the U.S. Capitol Building during the January 6, 2021 congressional session to count electoral votes, and any response to such requests.
3. All records from December 1, 2020 to January 6, 2021 reflecting any offer by DOD, the Army, or the National Guard to provide assistance or support to U.S. Capitol Police to secure the U.S. Capitol Building during the January 6, 2021 congressional session to count electoral votes, and any response to such offers.

Your January 10, 2021 request is for:

1. All records from December 1, 2020 to January 6, 2021 relating to DOD, the National Guard, or the Army providing assistance or support to the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department in connection with the January 6, 2021 congressional session to count electoral votes.
2. All records reflecting the parameters for the National Guard's deployment to D.C. on January 6, 2021, including any limitations imposed on the number of personnel deployed, their movement within the District, or their use of force.
3. All communications with the D.C. Mayor's Office or the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department regarding the parameters for the National Guard's deployment to D.C. on January 6, 2021.

Our search yielded the attached responsive records. The records we are releasing consist of the second release of what is expected to be a continuous rolling release over the course of the litigation. This release consists of 127 pages.

We have redacted material under Exemptions (b)(6) and (b)(7).

Exemption 6 of the FOIA 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6)

Exemption (b)(6) of the FOIA protects from mandatory disclosure “personnel and medical files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6) (2011). To qualify for protection under Exemption (b)(6), records must meet two criteria: (1) they must be “personnel and medical files and similar files,” (2) the disclosure of which “would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” *Id.*; *United States Dep’t of State v. Washington Post Co.*, 456 U.S. 595, 599-603 (1982). The first prong is met if the information “appl[ies] to a particular individual” and is “personal” in nature. *New York Times Co. v. NASA*, 852 F.2d 602, 606 (D.C. Cir. 1988). The second prong requires courts to strike a “balance between the protection of an individual’s right to privacy and the preservation of the public’s right to government information.” *United States Dep’t of State v. Washington Post Co.*, 456 U.S. 595, 599 (1982). The “public interest” in the analysis is limited to the “core purpose” for which Congress enacted the FOIA: to “shed . . . light on an agency’s performance of its statutory duties.” *United States Dep’t of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 773 (1989).

We are withholding telephone numbers and other contact information for all Army personnel (e.g., e-mail addresses, telephone-line numbers) and third-party information under Exemption (b)(6). 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6). See *Judicial Watch, Inc. v. United States*, No. 03-1160, 2004 WL 26736, at *4 (4th Cir. Jan. 6, 2004). Under the Exemption (b)(6) balancing test, the Supreme Court held in a similar case that disclosure of employee addresses “would not appreciably further the citizens’ right to be informed about what their Government is up to and, indeed, would reveal little or nothing about the employing agencies or their activities.” *United States Dep’t of Defense v. Fed. Labor Relations Auth.*, 510 U.S. 487, 497 (1994). The same is true here regarding contact information. Disclosure of the names, contact, and personal information of government employees would contribute little to the public’s understanding of government activities. By contrast, such disclosure would constitute a “non-trivial” and “not insubstantial” invasion of government employees’ privacy interests. *Id.* at 500, 501.

Exemption 7(A) of the FOIA 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)

Exemption (b)(7) of the FOIA protects from mandatory disclosure “records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that the production of such law enforcement records or information (A) could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings...” 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7) (2011). To qualify for protection under Exemption (b)(7), records must first be “records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes.” *Id.* The term “law enforcement” includes national security and homeland security-related governmental activities. *Milner v. Dept of the Navy*, 562 U.S. 562, 582-83 (2011).

We are withholding material that could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings.

If you have any questions, please contact Bradley Craigmyle at 202-616-8101 or bradley.t.craigmyle@usdoj.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Paul V. DeAgostino
Senior Counsel

From: [B6] LTC USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) [/O=EASF/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP
[B6] CN=RECIPIENTS/[B6] MIL]
Sent: 1/6/2021 6:40:25 PM
To: Flynn, Charles ALTG USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) [B6] .mil@mail.mil]; [B6] SMA
USARMY HQDA SMA (USA) [B6] .mil@mail.mil]; McPherson, James E HON USARMY HQDA SECARMY
(USA) [B6] .civ@mail.mil]; LaNeve, Christopher Charles BG USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA)
[B6] .mil@mail.mil]; Martin, Joseph M GEN USARMY HQDA VCSA (USA)
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CC: [B6] CSM USARMY HQDA CSA (USA) [B6] .mil@mail.mil]; [B6] COL
USARMY HQDA DAS (USA) [B6] .mil@mail.mil]; [B6] COL USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA)
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[B6] .mil@mail.mil]; [B6] COL USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) [B6] @mail.mil];
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USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) [B6] .mil@mail.mil]; Swindell, Sean P MG USARMY HQDA (USA)
[B6] .mil@mail.mil]
Subject: Civil DisturbanceOD Update #2 [View in HTML]

Leaders,

UPDATE #2

DHS NOC update as of 1330, 06 Jan.

1. Civil Support Operations: The NG has 851 personnel prepared to support Civil Disturbance Operations (CDO). Mission dates are 05-24 Jan.

- DCNG: 324 total NG
- WING: 572 ARNG: 547 x SAD & 25 x T-32
 - Activated in anticipation of prosecutorial decision in the Jacob Blake case
 - Units deployed to assigned staging areas at Kenosha, Racine, and Oak Creek armories. Mission sets include presence patrols, static security, quick reaction force, and crowd control.

2. DC Events Reported to DHS NOC:

- In the last 2 hrs – There are no major incidents of illegal activity at this time.
 - Crowds are estimated to be 15-20K and are now moving in the direction of the National Capitol.
 - 10-15K at the Ellipse
 - 2-5K at the Lincoln Memorial
 - 2-5K at the US Capitol Building
 - 500 transitioning to Freedom Plaza
 - 1-2K at the Washington Monument
 - 500 moving along Madison Avenue towards the protests
 - FPS determined Proud Boys threatening to shut down the water system in the downtown area not a credible threat
 - L'enfant Plaza
 - Suspicious package cleared no threat
 - Vehicle with rifle on the back seat in plain view under police control while attempting to contact the owner
 - (b) (7)(A) (b) (7)(A)

- **National Mall Area**
 - Man reported with a rifle at 15th & Constitution was detained and no weapon found
 - (b) (7)(A)
 - Protestors near 16th & Pennsylvania Ave reportedly with baseball bats; exaggerated report
 - UAS / drone was detected east of the Washington Monument; USSS has taken possession of the drone, unable to locate the operator
 - James Madison Memorial building and Cannon House Office Building are being evacuated due to bomb threat against the Capitol Hill Club
 - (b) (7)(A); situation continues to develop

UPDATE 1

DHS NOC update as of 1100.

3. Civil Support Operations: The NG has 851 personnel prepared to support Civil Disturbance Operations (CDO). Mission dates are 05-24 Jan.

- DCNG: 324 total NG
- WING: 572 ARNG: 547 x SAD & 25 x T-32
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4. DC Events Reported to DHS NOC 06 Jan:

- In the last 24 hrs – There were NO incidents of criminal or illegal activity directed at federal facilities or personnel.
- Approximately 3,000 gathered in Freedom Plaza into the night with minor altercations occurring near BLM plaza with MPD separating opposing groups and (b) (7)(A).
 - False report of gunshots fired near the capital
- USPP believe they can handle the POTUS event at the ellipse and National Mall
- USSS estimates the crowd in and around the Ellipse at 1000 hours in excess of 20K. There are no reported incidents at this time.
 - MPD estimation is 15k in and around the city.
- The Arlington County Police Department received and agreed to a request from the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department for mutual aid assistance for both today (Jan. 5) and tomorrow (Jan. 6).
- Threat to fly a plane into the Capitol building during inauguration deemed not credible by FBI

5. National events:

- Statement by Kenosha Mayor after release of prosecutorial decision in Jacob Blake case met with animosity
- DHS NOC Watch Officer: Las Vegas Metro Bomb Squad investigating a suspicious item deemed not an explosive device.
- Police confirm suspicious item found on the steps of the DeKalb County Courthouse, GA does not pose any threat. The courthouse has been re-opened.

v/r

B6

LTC, MP
HQDA G-3/5/7 - Army Operations Center (AOC)
Deputy Chief of Operations

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[B6] /CN=RECIPIENTS/[B6] MIL]
Sent: 1/6/2021 7:13:02 PM
To: Flynn, Charles ALTG USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) [B6] .mil@mail.mil]; [B6] SMA
USARMY HQDA SMA (USA) ([B6] .mil@mail.mil); McPherson, James E HON USARMY HQDA SECARMY
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USARMY HQDA DAS (USA) ([B6] @mail.mil); [B6] COL USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA)
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[B6] .mil@mail.mil]; [B6] COL USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) [B6] .mil@mail.mil];
[B6] MAJ USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) [B6] .mil@mail.mil]; [B6] COL
USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) [B6] .mil@mail.mil]; Swindell, Sean P MG USARMY HQDA (USA)
[B6] .mil@mail.mil]
Subject: Civil Disturbance OD Update #3 [View in HTML]

Leaders,

UPDATE #3

DHS NOC update as of 1400, 06 Jan.

1. DC Events Reported to DHS NOC:

- In the last 1 hr – Crowds continue to gather at the Capitol.
- US Capitol is reportedly locked down due to multiple attempts to cross police barriers and police injuries. (b) (7)(A); situation continues to develop
- ALL CLEAR given of the James Madison Memorial building and Cannon House Office Building
 - Crowds are estimated to be 15-20K and are now moving in the direction of the National Capitol.
 - 15-20K at the Ellipse
 - 2-5K at the Lincoln Memorial
 - 2-5K at the US Capitol Building
 - 500 transitioning to Freedom Plaza
 - 1-2K at the Washington Monument
 - 500 moving along Madison Avenue towards the protests
 - FPS determined Proud Boys threatening to shut down the water system in the downtown area not a credible threat
 - L'enfant Plaza
 - Suspicious package cleared no threat
 - Vehicle with rifle on the back seat in plain view under police control while attempting to contact the owner
 - (b) (7)(A) (b) (7)(A)
 - National Mall Area
 - Man reported with a rifle at 15th & Constitution was detained and no weapon found
 - (b) (7)(A)

- Protestors near 16th & Pennsylvania Ave reportedly with baseball bats; exaggerated report
- UAS / drone was detected east of the Washington Monument; USSS has taken possession of the drone, unable to locate the operator

UPDATE #2

DHS NOC update as of 1330, 06 Jan.

1. Civil Support Operations: The NG has 851 personnel prepared to support Civil Disturbance Operations (CDO). Mission dates are 05-24 Jan.

- DCNG: 324 total NG
- WING: 572 ARNG: 547 x SAD & 25 x T-32
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- In the last 2 hrs – There are no major incidents of illegal activity at this time.
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 - Protestors near 16th & Pennsylvania Ave reportedly with baseball bats; exaggerated report
 - UAS / drone was detected east of the Washington Monument; USSS has taken possession of the drone, unable to locate the operator
 - James Madison Memorial building and Cannon House Office Building are being evacuated due to bomb threat against the Capitol Hill Club
 - (b) (7)(A); situation continues to develop

UPDATE 1

DHS NOC update as of 1100.

3. Civil Support Operations: The NG has 851 personnel prepared to support Civil Disturbance Operations (CDO). Mission dates are 05-24 Jan.
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 - WING: 572 ARNG: 547 x SAD & 25 x T-32
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 - Units deployed to assigned staging areas at Kenosha, Racine, and Oak Creek armories. Mission sets include presence patrols, static security, quick reaction force, and crowd control.
4. DC Events Reported to DHS NOC 06 Jan:
- In the last 24 hrs – There were NO incidents of criminal or illegal activity directed at federal facilities or personnel.
 - Approximately 3,000 gathered in Freedom Plaza into the night with minor altercations occurring near BLM plaza with MPD separating opposing groups and (b) (7)(A).
 - False report of gunshots fired near the capital
 - USPP believe they can handle the POTUS event at the ellipse and National Mall
 - USSS estimates the crowd in and around the Ellipse at 1000 hours in excess of 20K. There are no reported incidents at this time.
 - MPD estimation is 15k in and around the city.
 - The Arlington County Police Department received and agreed to a request from the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department for mutual aid assistance for both today (Jan. 5) and tomorrow (Jan. 6).
 - Threat to fly a plane into the Capitol building during inauguration deemed not credible by FBI
5. National events:
- Statement by Kenosha Mayor after release of prosecutorial decision in Jacob Blake case met with animosity
 - DHS NOC Watch Officer: Las Vegas Metro Bomb Squad investigating a suspicious item deemed not an explosive device.
 - Police confirm suspicious item found on the steps of the DeKalb County Courthouse, GA does not pose any threat. The courthouse has been re-opened.

v/r

B6

LTC, MP

HQDA G-3/5/7 - Army Operations Center (AOC)
Deputy Chief of Operations

Com:

GC:

ALT:

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SVOIP:

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Data enclosed in this email are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. Contents shall not be disclosed, discussed, or shared with individuals unless they have a direct need-to-know in the performance of their official duties. Unauthorized disclosure of this information may result in civil or criminal penalties.

From: LaNeve, Christopher Charles BG USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) [/O=EASF/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (B6)/CN=RECIPIENTS/(B6)MIL]
Sent: 1/6/2021 4:28:59 PM
To: McCarthy, Ryan D HON USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) (B6)civ@mail.mil]; McConville, James C GEN USARMY HQDA CSA (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]
CC: Martin, Joseph M GEN USARMY HQDA VCSA (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; McPherson, James E HON USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) (B6)civ@mail.mil]; Piatt, Walter E LTG USARMY HQDA DAS (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; Flynn, Charles ALTG USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; Lowman, Christopher J SES USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) (B6)civ@mail.mil]; Pede, Charles N LTG USARMY HQDA OTJAG (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; (B6)COL USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; (B6)COL USARMY HQDA CSA (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; (B6)OL USARMY HQDA VCSA (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; (B6)COL USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; (B6)COL USARMY HQDA DAS (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; (B6)COL USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; (B6)MAJ USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; Smith, Matthew D BG USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]; (B6)LTC USARMY HQDA DCS G-3-5-7 (USA) (B6)mil@mail.mil]
Subject: Civil DisturbanceOD Update #1

Mr. Secretary and Chief,

DHS NOC update as of 1100.

1. **Civil Support Operations:** The NG has 851 personnel prepared to support Civil Disturbance Operations (CDO). Mission dates are 05-24 Jan.
 - DCNG: 324total NG
 - WING: 572 ARNG: 547 x SAD & 25 x T-32
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 - Threat to fly a plane into the Capitol building during inauguration deemed not credible by FBI
3. **National events:**
 - Statement by Kenosha Mayor after release of prosecutorial decision in Jacob Blake case met with animosity

- DHS NOC Watch Officer: Las Vegas Metro Bomb Squad investigating a suspicious item deemed not an explosive device.
- Police confirm suspicious item found on the steps of the DeKalb County Courthouse, GA does not pose any threat. The courthouse has been re-opened.

VR/

Chris

Christopher C. LaNeve

BG, USA

Director of Operations, Readiness, & Mobilization HQDA, G-3/5/7 Pentagon Room MD685

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Message

From: McPherson, James E HON USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) [/O=EASF/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (EXCHANG)]
Sent: 1/6/2021 10:06:27 PM
To: [B6] MAJ USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) [B6] mil@mail.mil
CC: [B6] COL USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) [B6] mil@mail.mil; [B6] MAJ USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) [B6] mil@mail.mil
Subject: Re: DMAG Update (DC National Guard)

Thanks [B6] ..

From: [B6] MAJ USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA)" <[B6] mil@mail.mil>
Date: Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 4:50:51 PM
To: "McPherson, James E HON USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA)" <[B6] civ@mail.mil>
Cc: "[B6] COL USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA)" <[B6] mil@mail.mil>, [B6] MAJ USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA)" <[B6] mil@mail.mil>
Subject: DMAG Update (DC National Guard)

Sir,

As discussed during close-out, attached and below is additional information you requested regarding the DC National Guard item for tomorrow's DMAG:

Key Points:

- "DC Mayor Consent for NG T32" is referring to Section 513 of the House version of the NDAA, H.R. 6395.
- This provision would have altered the relationship between the DC National Guard and the President by giving veto power to the DC Mayor for certain uses of the DC National Guard, since the DC Mayor currently has no authority over the DC National Guard.
- The provision would have impacted federal deployment of NG under Title 32 in all 54 states and territories with a NG.
- The Senate did not have a similar provision in their version of the NDAA, so it was ultimately not adopted during the NDAA conference process or into law.
- The Army had not formally weighed in with objections, but USD(P) had submitted an appeal (attached) that was transmitted to the Hill.

Attached for your reference:

1. USD(P) Appeal that was transmitted to the Hill
2. DMAG slide with additional background

I'll ask [B6] to have these attachments printed for you tomorrow morning.

Please let me know if you have further questions. Thank you!

[B6]
Major, US Army
Legislative Assistant to the
Under Secretary of the Army

Pentagon [B6]
Office: [B6]
Work Cell: [B6]

To: McCarthy, Ryan D HON USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) [B6] civ@mail.mil;
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[B6] COL USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) [B6] mil@mail.mil]; [B6] [B6]
[B6] LTC USARMY HQDA SECARMY (USA) [B6] mil@mail.mil]; [B6]

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HQDA SECARMY (USA) [B6] mil@mail.mil]; [B6] SFC USARMY HQDA
SECARMY (USA) [B6] mil@mail.mil]; [B6] LTC USARMY HQDA SECARMY
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6CE41109E]

Sent: Tue 1/5/2021 1:29:55 PM (UTC)

Subject: Congressional update 05 January 2021

Congressional update 05 January 2021.msg

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Subject: Congressional update 05 January 2021

Message-Id: <373620C582517E44B19C7114AD5D659E60EE139C@UMECHPA7C.easf.csd.disa.mil>

To: [B6] civ@mail.mil
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To: [B6] mil@mail.mil
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Bliss. Fort Bliss PAO/CACO notified REP Escobar's (D-CA) MLA of the death over the weekend, and LI&N has already received inquiries on the case from the HASC PSMs. Given the fact that the PFC was the victim of an ongoing sexual assault investigation from June 2020, and was reportedly having difficulty coping with the assault after seeing the subject in the unit area during random encounters, this likely warrants wider committee notification.

Items of Interest:

- USMA cheating—Both HASC and SASC PSMs submitted RFIs on the USMA cadet honor code violations. USMA is preparing written responses and scheduling LTG Williams to conduct a phone call with PSMs. RFIs are in response to two USA Today news articles.
- RFI/HASC/Suicide—HASC-MP PSMs requested suicide data for select installations and asked ARD to identify any clusters. ***A broad increase in suicides occurred across the Regular Army beginning in July 2019.*** Transmitted summary suicide data on 04JAN. Pending follow-up RFIs.
- Dr. Jette scheduled a courtesy office call with Mr. Bonsell, Mr. Wason, and Mr. TC William on 13 JAN 21. Dr. Jette also has a courtesy office call with HASC-TAL Chairman Norcross and Ranking Member Hartzler on 19 Jan 21.

Upcoming Events:

- 20 JAN 21: Presidential Inauguration
- (T) 28 JAN 21: 1st MDTF ACOET
- (T) 15-20 FEB 21: 5th SFAB ACOET

B6

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Sender: [B6] mil@mail.mil

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[5 JAN MRD Morning Report.pdf](#)
[Morning News of Note 5 Jan 2021.pdf](#)

Sir,

Army Focused Stories

- **Exclusive: Pentagon Sent Approval for Medal of Honor for SFC Alwyn Cashe to White House** (OCPA Top Story #1)
(Breitbart, Jan. 4, Kristina Wong)

Acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller has sent his endorsement to the White House for the awarding of the Medal of Honor to Army Sergeant First Class Alwyn Cashe, who died in 2005 after repeatedly rushing into a burning vehicle to rescue his soldiers after a roadside bomb attack in Iraq, a senior defense official told Breitbart News on Monday. Miller's endorsement is one of the final steps before Alwyn Cashe can finally be awarded the nation's highest military honor for bravery — after a 15-year fight by his family, a small bipartisan group of lawmakers, and the military and veteran community.

- **The Military Wants Volunteers to Test Another COVID-19 Vaccine Candidate** (OCPA Top Story #3)
(Military.com, Jan. 4, Patricia Kime)

A military hospital at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, has been selected to participate in research on a new coronavirus vaccine that uses a stabilized form of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein to generate an immune response. The Department of Defense announced Tuesday that Womack Army Medical Center will support Phase 3 clinical trial research of the vaccine made by Novavax. A Gaithersburg, Maryland, biotech firm, it wasn't initially chosen as part of Operation Warp Speed, but received a \$60 million DoD contract on June 4, 2020, to research and manufacture its vaccine. Womack joins five other military treatment facilities supporting end-stage COVID-19 vaccine research: Hospitals in California, Texas, Maryland and Virginia have been recruiting volunteers since September for clinical trials of a vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca.

- **DC Police and National Guard Preparing for Protests** (OCPA Broadcast Story #1)
(WJLA-ABC (DC), Jan. 4)

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser said Monday the National Guard will be deployed to assist local law enforcement during pro-Trump rallies this week. The National Guard is being called out to assist D.C. police. these will be unarmed guardsmen. about 340 of them to handle the traffic and the crowd control as the police focus more on protesters. Reporting live from northwest Washington, I'm Sam Ford, ABC7 news. [Click to watch:](#) <http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=40f56d29-f8a2-48ec-9375-be8d515337b4>

- **Family of deceased Texas soldier said she was previously sexually assaulted, was 'ready to fight' for justice** (OCPA People Story #2)
(Fox News, Jan. 4, Louis Casiano)

The father of [B6] told WCNC-TV the Cherryville, N.C., native had been sexually assaulted by another soldier in December 2019, the same month she arrived at the El Paso military installation upon completing Basic Combat Training in Missouri and Advanced Individual Training in South Carolina. The Army said foul play is not suspected,

though autopsy and toxicology results are still pending. An investigation is ongoing. It was not clear if the Army looked into [B6] claims.

- **What we know about the death of an Army sergeant found shot in stalled car on San Antonio highway** (OCA People Story #3)
(*San Antonio Express News (TX)*, Jan. 4, Mark Dunphy)

Officers were called to the eastbound side of Interstate 10 at West Avenue for a stranded vehicle in the left lane that was causing a hazard, police said. They found a white Dodge Charger with multiple gunshots to the driver's side door and window. The officers opened the door and checked the victim, later identified as Staff Sergeant [B6] for a pulse, but none was found. The 30-year-old was transported to University Hospital, where she was pronounced dead. On Friday, police spokesperson [B6] told the Express-News it was too early to know a motive. Police are searching for a suspect vehicle, described as possibly red in color with damage to the passenger side. People with information about [B6] death are asked to call SAPD's Homicide Unit at 210-207-7635.

OSD Report Stories

- **J6 Says JADC2 Is A Strategy; Service Posture Reviews Coming** (OSD Story #4)
BreakingDefense.com (Exclusive), Jan. 4 (1625) | Theresa Hitchens

The Joint Staff plans a lightning-fast analysis of the gaps in service capabilities needed for implementation of Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), with results expected as soon as the end of February, says **Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Dennis Crall**, who leads the effort as the head of the J6. "That gap analysis starts in January. We expect by the end of February to produce our JADC2 Posture Review. And that Posture Review will show the department exactly where we are deficient in executing our mission or missions," Crall said in an exclusive, one-hour interview. "We don't believe we can have an effective strategy with real milestones if we don't look at our gap analysis," he said. "That is what we will use to serve up against the funding strategy, and we will have to prioritize those to make sure we can deliver that capability."

- **DC Guard To Deploy for Pro-Trump Demonstrations In Washington** (OSD Story #19)
DefenseOne.com, Jan. 4 (1740) | Katie Bo Williams

Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller has approved the deployment of a small number of unarmed National Guard forces in Washington, D.C., in response to Trump supporters expected to protest the 2020 election results in the nation's capital this week. About 350 Guardsmen will move into the city between Tuesday and Thursday to help with crowd control at Metro stations, street closures, and traffic management, according to a D.C. Guard press release. Specially trained "Civil Support Team" personnel will support D.C. Fire and Emergency Management Services and Guardsmen "are prepared to respond to augment the main missions, should additional personnel be required," the release said. "Our main mission is augmenting select traffic control points and metro stations identified by MPD," **Maj. Gen. William Walker**, the D.C. Guard commanding general, said in a statement.

- **COVID vaccination starts at more bases in Europe, but not everyone wants the jab** (OSD Story #9)
Stars and Stripes Online, Jan. 4 (1407) | Jennifer H. Svan

The Army began vaccinating front-line health care personnel in Germany last week and expected to continue this week. Vaccinations are also underway at Naval Support Activity Bahrain, where the 5th Fleet is based. The vaccine was expected to be delivered this week to more military bases in Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain, U.S. European Command said in a statement released Thursday. At Ramstein, 86th Medical Group commander **Col. Ryan Mihata** was one of the first to get the jab. "I trust the science completely," he said. But troops who find the speed with which the vaccine was developed and approved unsettling can opt out of having the vaccine. At Ramstein, they have to show up at the gym, where their choice is noted in their medical records. If too many decline to be inoculated, it will be an uphill battle to vaccinate enough people to get herd immunity, said Mihata.

MEDIA INTERVIEW FORECAST

- 4 JAN: **Michele Pearce**, Senior Official Performing the Duties of General Counsel, will be interviewed by [B6] (Military Officer Magazine) for an article about today's outstanding women military leaders that will appear in the March 2021 edition in recognition of Women's History Month.

- 5 JAN: **Under Secretary James McPherson** will be interviewed by Nancy Youssef (Wall Street Journal) on Army priorities, the future of the Army and his transition.

- 6-8 JAN: **SMA Michael Grinston** will travel to Fort Hood to discuss "This Is My Squad" and People First priorities, and to conduct Project Inclusion listening sessions. (Media)

Respectfully,

B6

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"Every day show up and make a difference!"

(OSD Story #2)

(OCA Modernization Story #1)

Office of Chief of Public Affairs (OCPA)
Media Assessments Team

U.S. Army News Roundup

5 January 2021 as of 0400

Daily Snapshot

Breitbart reported that acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller has endorsed SFC Alwyn Cashe to receive the Medal of Honor. *Fedscoop* reported that BG Robert Powell will serve as the first general officer to oversee the cybersecurity of U.S. Army Reserve. *Military.com* reported that Fort Bragg's Womack Army Medical Center will participate in research on a new coronavirus vaccine.

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(Breitbart, Jan. 4, Kristina Wong)

Acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller has sent his endorsement to the White House for the awarding of the Medal of Honor to Army Sergeant First Class Alwyn Cashe, who died in 2005 after repeatedly rushing into a burning vehicle to rescue his soldiers after a roadside bomb attack in Iraq, a senior defense official told Breitbart News on Monday.

2. ARMY RESERVE GETS ITS FIRST CYBER GENERAL6

(Fedscoop, Jan. 4, Jackson Barnett)

Newly promoted Brig. Gen. Robert Powell will serve as a deputy commanding general of cyber for the 335th Signal Command, specializing in overseeing the unit's cyber activities, according to a news release from the Army. Powell has a long history in the Army Signal Corps and cyber-related units, most recently commanding the U.S. Army Reserve Cyber Protection Brigade from 2016 to 2019.

3. THE MILITARY WANTS VOLUNTEERS TO TEST ANOTHER COVID-19 VACCINE CANDIDATE7

(Military.com, Jan. 4, Patricia Kime)

A military hospital at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, has been selected to participate in research on a new coronavirus vaccine that uses a stabilized form of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein to generate an immune response.

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1. DC POLICE AND NATIONAL GUARD PREPARING FOR PROTESTS9

(WJLA-ABC (DC), Jan. 4)

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser said Monday the National Guard will be deployed to assist local law enforcement during pro-Trump rallies this week.

2. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ARMY CYBER COMMAND, GEORGIA CYBER CENTER PAYING OFF FOR REGION9

(WFXG-FOX (GA), Jan. 4)

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In September 2020, Army Cyber Command officially moved into the Georgia Cyber Center, culminating months of recruiting pitches and maneuvering. That included a substantial state investment that began when the Army announced in 2013 that the Cyber Command was moving from Fort Belvoir in Northern Virginia to Fort Gordon, Ga.

UPCOMING EVENTS:.....9

- 5 JAN: Under Secretary James McPherson will be interviewed by Nancy Youssef (Wall Street Journal) on Army priorities, the future of the Army and his transition.

6-8 JAN: SMA Michael Grinston will travel to Fort Hood to discuss “This Is My Squad” and People First priorities, and to conduct listening sessions to get feedback on changes since the investigations began. (Lita Baldor from the AP will cover.)

- 11 JAN: Under Secretary James McPherson will record an on-camera interview for social media platforms to highlight leadership lessons from his tenure.

PEOPLE:10

1. PENTAGON GETS DIVERSITY WATCHDOG IN BILL PASSED OVER TRUMP VETO.....10

(Bloomberg, Jan. 5, Anthony Capaccio)

Along with billions of dollars for new weapons systems and a pay raise for troops, a new deputy inspector general’s position was created by the bipartisan defense authorization bill to carry out audits, investigations and evaluations of military personnel policies, programs and systems to ensure they address diversity priorities.

2. FAMILY OF DECEASED TEXAS SOLDIER SAID SHE WAS PREVIOUSLY SEXUALLY ASSAULTED, WAS 'READY TO FIGHT' FOR JUSTICE11

(Fox News, Jan. 4, Louis Casiano)

The family of a 19-year-old soldier found dead in Fort Bliss, Texas last week said she had been sexually assaulted by another soldier a year before her death and was "ready to fight" for justice in her case.

3. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE DEATH OF AN ARMY SERGEANT FOUND SHOT IN STALLED CAR ON SAN ANTONIO HIGHWAY12

(San Antonio Express News (TX), Jan. 4, Mark Dunphy)

San Antonio police are investigating the death of an Army drill sergeant found shot in a stalled vehicle on New Year's Day.

4. REMAINS FOUND AT FORT SAM HOUSTON WERE THOSE OF A MASSACHUSETTS MAN NOT LINKED TO THE MILITARY.....12

(Stars and Stripes, Jan. 4, Rose L. Thayer)

The skeletal remains found near a creek at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston were a Massachusetts man who was not affiliated with the military, officials said Monday.

5. TRIAL DATE MOVED FOR WOMAN ACCUSED OF HELPING TO HIDE BODY OF SPC. VANESSA GUILLEN.....13

(Nexstar Media, Jan. 4, Dean Wetherbee)

The trial of the woman who faces criminal charges in connection with the murder of Spc. Vanessa Guillen is being moved.

6. NEW LAW EASES TAX REPAYMENT PAIN FOR MORE THAN A MILLION TROOPS14

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(Military Times, Dec. 4, Karen Jowers)

Military members and federal civilians will see a significantly smaller bite out of their paychecks under a new law that stretches their repayment of deferred payroll taxes to 12 months instead of four.

7. FOR MILITARY RECRUITERS, THE OVERALL MISSION HASN'T CHANGED DURING THE PANDEMIC.....15

(The Santa Fe New Mexican (NM), Jan. 4, James Barron)

While recruiters were shut out of high school and college campuses for much of 2020, they didn't lose important contacts that are vital to their job. They still communicate with school counselors and instructors of Junior ROTC programs.

8. INSIDE THE U.S. ARMY'S WAREHOUSE FULL OF NAZI ART.....17

(The New Yorker, Jan. 4, Dexter Filkins)

In the final days of the Second World War, a train loaded with relics of the collapsing Third Reich was speeding toward the Czech border when American pilots, flying P-47 fighters, spotted it and opened fire.

9. COMPLAINT ABOUT GREEN BERET COLONEL'S 'OVERREACTIONS' WAS DISMISSED MONTHS BEFORE POLICE STANDOFF19

(Army Times, Jan. 4, Kyle Rempfer)

An inspector general complaint about an Army Special Forces group commander's alleged overreactions and berating of subordinates was dismissed months before he was accused of domestic violence and engaging in an armed, two-hour standoff with police near Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, on Dec. 27.

10. BILL CRANE TAKES OVER AS ADJUTANT GENERAL FOR W.VA. NATIONAL GUARD.....21

(West Virginia Public Broadcasting, Jan. 4, Staff Writer)

Brig. Gen. William E. "Bill" Crane will lead the state's 6,500-member guard, consisting of citizen soldiers and airmen. Crane's new role will include supervision of the guard's day-to-day operations, in addition to the overall management of resources and personnel.

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11. NATIONAL GUARD ACTIVATED FOR D.C. PROTESTS, WITH MORE RESTRAINTS THAN IN JUNE, OFFICIALS SAY22

(The Washington Post, Jan. 4, Julie Zauzmer, Marissa J. Lang and Dan Lamothe)

The District has mobilized the National Guard and will have every city police officer on duty Tuesday and Wednesday to handle protests of the November presidential election, which Mayor Muriel E. Bowser said may include people looking to instigate violence.

12. DC GUARD TO DEPLOY FOR PRO-TRUMP DEMONSTRATIONS IN WASHINGTON24

(Defense One, Jan. 4, Katie Bo Williams)

Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller has approved the deployment of a small number of unarmed National Guard forces in Washington, D.C., in response to Trump supporters expected to protest the 2020 election results in the nation's capital this week.

13. WISCONSIN GOVERNOR AUTHORIZES NATIONAL GUARD TO KENOSHA AHEAD OF JACOB BLAKE CHARGING DECISION.....25

(Fox News, Jan. 4, Louis Casiano)

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Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers has mobilized 500 National Guard members to Kenosha in anticipation of a decision on whether prosecutors will charge the police officer who shot Jacob Blake last year.

14. N. KOREA SHOWS NO SIGN OF 'MAJOR PROVOCATION' FOR NOW: USFK CHIEF.....26
(Yonhap News Agency, Jan. 4, Byun Duk-kun)

North Korea is not showing any signs of preparation to stage a major provocation at least for now, the chief of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) said Monday.

15. TRUMP COURTS 'BLOODSHED, RIOTS' WITH INFLAMMATORY RHETORIC, FORMER DEFENSE SEC. HAGEL SAYS27
(USA Today, Jan. 4, Tom Vanden Brook)

Former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel warned of "bloodshed and riots" after President Donald Trump's latest attempt to overturn the election that he lost.

16. NEW IN 2021: THE NATIONAL GUARD WILL STAY BUSY IN 202128
(Army Times, Jan. 4, Davis Winkie)

The year 2020 will be remembered as the "Year of the Guard" by many senior Guard officials.

17. PENTAGON REPORTS OVER 7,000 NEW COVID-19 CASES29
(United Press International, Jan. 4, Ed Adamezyk)

Statistics revealed a cumulative total of 169,914 cases among military and civilian personnel, dependents and contractors.

18. CORONER, NATIONAL GUARD TO HELP WITH COVID-19 BODIES AS DEATH TOLL RISES.....29
(KTTV-FOX (CA), Jan. 4, Gigi Graciette and Kelli Johnson)

As a grim sign of the coronavirus surge in Los Angeles County, the COVID-19 death toll has overwhelmed private mortuaries and hospital morgues. Now, a team of California National Guardsmen is set to arrive in Southland on Monday to help.

19. COVID VACCINATION STARTS AT MORE BASES IN EUROPE, BUT NOT EVERYONE WANTS THE JAB30
(Stars and Stripes, Jan. 4, Jennifer H. Svan)

Airmen in Germany were given their first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine Monday, just over two weeks after it received emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration.

20. ANOTHER 43 NEW CORONAVIRUS PATIENTS FOR US MILITARY IN JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA 32
(Stars and Stripes, Jan. 4, Joseph Ditzler)

U.S. military bases in Japan and South Korea reported 43 new cases of the coronavirus over the New Year holiday weekend and up to 6 p.m. Monday.

21. WOMEN IN THE US MILITARY MAY FINALLY GET BODY ARMOR THAT ACTUALLY FITS33
(Task and Purpose, Jan. 4, Haley Britzky)

A provision in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act — which was passed when the Senate voted on Jan. 1 to override President Donald Trump's veto of the legislation — lays out a series of requirements and initiatives that could move women closer to having body armor that actually fits.

22. THREE VIRGINIA BASES INCLUDING FORT LEE TO BE RENAMED34
(WRIC-ABC (VA), Jan. 4, Kerri O'Brien)

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Fort Lee, Fort Pickett and Fort Hill in Virginia will be getting new names after Congress' recent override of the President's veto of the defense spending bill.

23. COMMENTARY: DON'T CUT THE ARMY IN 2021.....35 (Breaking Defense, Jan. 4, Thomas Spoehr)

2021 is shaping up to be challenging for the Army. Recent years have been hard enough: The Army's budget has been flat since FY2018, which means that, in real terms, it has suffered a decline of over \$13 billion in buying power when considering inflation.

MODERNIZATION:.....36

24. THE ARMY'S PROJECT CONVERGENCE SCALES UP37 (Army Times, Jan. 4, Todd South)

An ambitious project that could be the fulcrum for how the Army and other services leverage the technology of today and the near future to fight wars is expected to grow significantly in 2021.

25. BIG BOOST IN SPENDING FOR MILITARY ROBOTS.....37 (National Defense Magazine, Jan. 4, Jon Harper)

The Army is ramping up investments in robotic systems that could keep troops out of harm's way and serve as force multipliers on future battlefields.

26. ARMY SEEKS ROBOTS TO TRANSPORT WOUNDED TROOPS.....38 (National Defense Magazine, Jan. 4, Connie Lee)

The Army is examining ways to use autonomous vehicles to bring injured soldiers off the battlefield.

27. EXCLUSIVE: J6 SAYS JADC2 IS A STRATEGY; SERVICE POSTURE REVIEWS COMING39 (Breaking Defense, Jan. 4, Theresa Hitchens)

The Joint Staff plans a lightning-fast analysis of the gaps in service capabilities needed for implementation of Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), with results expected as soon as the end of February, says Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Dennis Crall, who leads the effort as the head of the J6.

TOP STORIES:

1. Exclusive: Pentagon Sent Approval for Medal of Honor for SFC Alwyn Cashe to White House (Breitbart, Jan. 4, Kristina Wong)

Acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller has sent his endorsement to the White House for the awarding of the Medal of Honor to Army Sergeant First Class Alwyn Cashe, who died in 2005 after repeatedly rushing into a burning vehicle to rescue his soldiers after a roadside bomb attack in Iraq, a senior defense official told Breitbart News on Monday.

Miller's endorsement is one of the final steps before Alwyn Cashe can finally be awarded the nation's highest military honor for bravery — after a 15-year fight by his family, a small bipartisan group of lawmakers, and the military and veteran community.

Cashe was 35 years old when he died pulling each of his soldiers from a burning Bradley Fighting Vehicle in Iraq on October 17, 2005.

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His platoon had just left their base in Iraq when their vehicle hit an improvised roadside bomb and erupted in flames. Only slightly injured, Cashe pulled out the driver, who was burning, and extinguished the flames. After a soldier inside pushed open the vehicle's hatch door, Cashe rushed back and pulled six more men out, not stopping even after he caught fire. More than 70 percent of his body was covered in burns. He was hurt the most badly but insisted on being medically evacuated last.

In the hospital, before he succumbed to his injuries, he told Stars and Stripes, "I had made peace with God, but I didn't know if my men had yet."

Cashe was first awarded the Silver Star for his heroism. However, his then-battalion commander, Army Col. Gary Brito, fought to have it upgraded to the Medal of Honor. Cashe's older sister, Kasinal Cashe White, also began doing research and learned that her baby brother was qualified for the upgraded award. However, by then, the five-year statute of limitations for the Medal of Honor since Cashe's heroic deed had passed.

But White and fellow veterans kept pushing. Just when they were about to give up, lawmakers who learned of Cashe's story stepped in.

Together, Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-FL), who represented Cashe's hometown district, Army Green Beret lieutenant colonel Rep. Mike Waltz (R-FL), and Navy SEAL veteran Rep. Dan Crenshaw (R-TX) asked then-Defense Secretary Mark Esper to review Cashe's case. Esper in September told them he agreed Cashe deserved the Medal of Honor but said Congress would have to pass a law extending the statute of limitations first.

Murphy and Waltz — with help from Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) in the Senate — fought hard to push the bill through a bitterly divided Congress that was stalled at the time over Judge Amy Barrett Coney's nomination. Congress finally passed the bill in November. However, shortly after, Esper was fired.

A senior defense official confirmed to Breitbart News that Miller recently pushed it through to the White House, where it now heads to the president for approval.

Trump in December signed Congress's bill extending the statute of limitations for Cashe and is likely to approve and issue the award in the coming weeks.

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2. Army Reserve gets its first cyber general

(Fedscoop, Jan. 4, Jackson Barnett)

The U.S. Army Reserve recently introduced its first general to oversee its cybersecurity.

Newly promoted Brig. Gen. Robert Powell will serve as a deputy commanding general of cyber for the 335th Signal Command, specializing in overseeing the unit's cyber activities, according to a news release from the Army. Powell has a long history in the Army Signal Corps and cyber-related units, most recently commanding the U.S. Army Reserve Cyber Protection Brigade from 2016 to 2019.

The military has seen its reserve components' cyber capabilities as one option to enhance cyber-readiness, hoping to lean on members of the military who have left full-time service but can still offer their technical expertise as reservists. The Marine Corps also recently announced plans for more reserve units focused on network security.

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"[Powell] is the first United States Army Reserve General Officer to come from the cyber branch," said Maj. Gen. Stephen Hager, who led Powell's promotion ceremony in December. "That is significant since it demonstrates to our younger troops that there is a path to general officership."

Many of the military's highest-ranking generals come from combat rolls — less often from IT or cyber. In a recent opinion piece, the former chief learning officer of the Navy criticized the over-representation of combat officers in the upper echelons of the military, saying it posed a threat to the effectiveness and cybersecurity of the armed forces.

In a speech during his promotion ceremony, Powell stressed the importance for general officers to have cyber experience as the Army puts greater emphasis on cybersecurity operations and information warfare.

"It was very evident in my time at Fort Meade that information warfare is growing in complexity, and we must continue to move in a direction to address these challenges," Powell said during the ceremony.

Being a general in the Army Reserve is a major achievement in its own right, with only 130 currently serving at that level.

"The jump from colonel to flag officer is a very competitive endeavor," Hager said.

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3. The Military Wants Volunteers to Test Another COVID-19 Vaccine Candidate

(Military.com, Jan. 4, Patricia Kime)

A military hospital at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, has been selected to participate in research on a new coronavirus vaccine that uses a stabilized form of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein to generate an immune response.

The Department of Defense announced Tuesday that Womack Army Medical Center will support Phase 3 clinical trial research of the vaccine made by Novavax. A Gaithersburg, Maryland, biotech firm, it wasn't initially chosen as part of Operation Warp Speed, but received a \$60 million DoD contract on June 4, 2020, to research and manufacture its vaccine.

Womack joins five other military treatment facilities supporting end-stage COVID-19 vaccine research: Hospitals in California, Texas, Maryland and Virginia have been recruiting volunteers since September for clinical trials of a vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca.

Novavax's two-dose vaccine uses recombinant protein nanotechnology to introduce the spike protein to cells and generate an immune response. The protein alone cannot cause COVID-19.

The vaccine also includes a proprietary booster, known as an adjuvant, to bolster the body's immune system. The hope is that the vaccine will prove effective in preventing the development of COVID-19 in those exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, adding to vaccines currently being distributed under emergency use.

"We've come this far, this fast, but we need to get to the finish line," said Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, on Dec. 28. "That will require multiple vaccines using different approaches to ensure everyone is protected safely and effectively from this deadly disease."

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Phase 3 trials are conducted to continue monitoring safety concerns and determine the efficacy of a vaccine -- how well it works in a research environment on a large group of people. The company hopes to enroll up to 30,000 participants in the U.S. and Mexico, at least 25% of whom are 65 or older.

The DoD patient population spans age and ethnicities -- a crucial component for any effective clinical trial, experts say.

In addition, military hospital clinical teams are experts at "implementing research at the highest ethical and quality standards," said Dr. Matt Hepburn, the vaccine development lead for Operation Warp Speed.

"These clinical trials are essential in assessing these vaccines, which are our best hope to end this pandemic," Hepburn said in a release Tuesday.

The DoD is currently distributing its allotment of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to health workers and frontline emergency and safety personnel. Once those tier 1 personnel are vaccinated or decline the immunization, the DoD will distribute vaccines in a phased format to other prioritized personnel.

Once priority personnel and beneficiaries living in communal settings, including the Armed Forces Retirement Homes, are vaccinated, dependents, retirees and family members will be able to get the vaccine, subject to availability.

To date, the DoD has received 248,200 doses of COVID-19 vaccine, but had given out only 67,766 first doses as of Monday, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More than 4.2 million people in the U.S. have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, but the immunizations remain scarce and in demand among those not targeted by the first allocation -- health care workers and those who live in communal settings.

Dr. Moncef Slaoui, the chief scientific adviser for Operation Warp Speed, said Sunday that the Food and Drug Administration will meet this week to consider whether half doses of Moderna's vaccine could be given to people ages 18 to 55 -- a change that would let twice as many people in that age group get the vaccine.

Slaoui said Sunday on CBS' Face the Nation that "half of the dose" given to people in that age range "induces identical immune response" to the currently authorized dose.

Nearly 17,000 cases of COVID-19 have been diagnosed in DoD personnel, employees and family members since the beginning of the outbreak nearly a year ago. Current hospitalizations are at an all-time high: 2,381 as of Monday.

Fourteen service members, nine family members, 118 DoD civilian employees and 42 defense contractors have died, according to data provided by the Pentagon.

Those who want to participate in vaccine or COVID-19 prevention research can go to the Coronavirus Prevention Network site and complete a survey.

Each DoD site has an assigned code that must be entered in the screening process if a volunteer wants to go to a certain location or facility.

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The following is a list of DoD sites supporting the research, contact information and codes:

- Womack Army Medical Center, North Carolina -- phone 253-316-3436; covidwamc@genevausa.org; site code WAMC.
- Naval Medical Center San Diego, California -- phone 253-341-5328 or 253-341-6007; covidnmcsd@genevausa.org; site code NMSD.
- Brooke Army Medical Center -- phone 253-924-9458; covidbamc@genevausa.org; site code BAMC.
- Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center -- phone 253-341-6170; covidwhasc@genevausa.org; site code WHMC.
- Walter Reed National Military Medical Center -- phone 253-341-6542; covidwrnmmc@genevausa.org; site code WRMC.
- Fort Belvoir Community Hospital -- phone 253-341-5163; covidfbch@genevausa.org; site code FBCH.

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BROADCAST CLIPS OF NOTE:

1. DC Police and National Guard Preparing for Protests

(WJLA-ABC (DC), Jan. 4)

<http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=40f56d29-f8a2-48ec-9375-be8d515337b4>

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser said Monday the National Guard will be deployed to assist local law enforcement during pro-Trump rallies this week.

2. Partnership between Army Cyber Command, Georgia Cyber Center paying off for region

(WFXG-FOX (GA), Jan. 4)

<http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=fc25ce23-dc02-4942-91a8-a09f7480efa7>

In September 2020, Army Cyber Command officially moved into the Georgia Cyber Center, culminating months of recruiting pitches and maneuvering. That included a substantial state investment that began when the Army announced in 2013 that the Cyber Command was moving from Fort Belvoir in Northern Virginia to Fort Gordon, Ga.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 5 JAN: Under Secretary James McPherson will be interviewed by Nancy Youssef (Wall Street Journal) on Army priorities, the future of the Army and his transition.

6-8 JAN: SMA Michael Grinston will travel to Fort Hood to discuss “This Is My Squad” and People First priorities, and to conduct listening sessions to get feedback on changes since the investigations began. (Lita Baldor from the AP will cover.)

- 11 JAN: Under Secretary James McPherson will record an on-camera interview for social media platforms to highlight leadership lessons from his tenure.

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PEOPLE:

1. Pentagon Gets Diversity Watchdog in Bill Passed Over Trump Veto

(Bloomberg, Jan. 5, Anthony Capaccio)

Defense legislation passed in spite of President Donald Trump's veto will bring a heightened focus on diversity issues and efforts to combat white supremacy and extremist behavior within the U.S. military.

Along with billions of dollars for new weapons systems and a pay raise for troops, a new deputy inspector general's position was created by the bipartisan defense authorization bill to carry out audits, investigations and evaluations of military personnel policies, programs and systems to ensure they address diversity priorities.

The new watchdog will also have a key role in responding to white supremacist and criminal gang activity by military personnel, according to the legislation passed on Jan. 1 over Trump's veto.

The deputy inspector general "will keep the heat on the military to make sure that racial inequality does not fade from the priority list, that these provisions are implemented successfully, and that Congress will receive an independent source of findings and recommendations," said Representative Jackie Speier, the California Democrat who heads the House Armed Services Committee's military personnel panel.

Once the position is filled, the deputy inspector general could, for instance, review the extent to which the military services are examining social media posts of recruits or personnel needing security clearances to see if they've disclosed support for extremist organizations.

Military leaders have been supportive of moves to curb behavior and eliminate symbols that are offensive to service members of color, who now make up more than 40% of the active-duty force. In vetoing the annual policy bill, Trump took issue with a provision to rename military installations that honor Confederate generals.

That provision and the less-noticed move to create a diversity watchdog followed national protests in 2020 over systemic racism in law enforcement that prompted Pentagon leaders to speak out more forcefully on diversity issues.

Then-Defense Secretary Mark Esper called the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, at the hands of Minneapolis police "a horrible crime" and said that the officers responsible should "be held accountable for his murder."

The military's response included an anguished Facebook post by then-Chief Master Sergeant Kaleth Wright, the Air Force's top enlisted airman, who expressed his fear that "what happens all too often in this country to Black men who are subjected to police brutality that ends in death...could happen to me."

The move also comes as President-elect Joe Biden said he intends to nominate retired General Lloyd Austin to be the nation's first Black defense secretary. Austin was previously the first African American to lead Central Command, which oversees operations in the Middle East.

While the U.S. military desegregated units years ahead of key civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s, it has continued to lag behind in many critical areas. Last month the Air Force's inspector general concluded that Black airmen in the Air Force and the Space Force face widespread disparities in

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opportunities and treatment compared to fellow service members, and many of them feel that the services are racist and biased against them.

The review found enlisted Black troops are 57% more likely to face court-martials and are promoted less often, trends that continued across military criminal justice and professional development. In a survey of 123,000 Air Force members, one-third of Black respondents said the Air Force and Space Force do not provide them the same opportunities as White peers.

One key oversight tool the new watchdog will be responsible for is an annual report with an assessment of the effectiveness of “policies, programs, systems, and processes in preventing and responding to supremacist, extremist, and criminal gang activity of a member of the Armed Forces,” according to the legislation.

In addition to objecting to the renaming of military bases, Trump vetoed the defense measure because he wanted it to include an unrelated provision to eliminate a portion of the Communications Decency Act that protects technology companies from liability for most content published by their users. In his veto message, Trump also called the bill a “gift” to China and Russia, without clearly articulating his reasoning.

But Trump’s repeated efforts to get Republicans to support his veto failed. Beyond the new weapons funding and pay increases for troops, it had become a point of pride for members of the House and Senate Armed Services committees that the annual legislation has been enacted without fail for six decades. With that backdrop, the veto override became the first -- and most likely last -- of Trump’s presidency.

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2. Family of deceased Texas soldier said she was previously sexually assaulted, was 'ready to fight' for justice

(Fox News, Jan. 4, Louis Casiano)

The family of a 19-year-old soldier found dead in Fort Bliss, Texas last week said she had been sexually assaulted by another soldier a year before her death and was "ready to fight" for justice in her case.

The father of Asia Graham told WCNC-TV the Cherryville, N.C., native had been sexually assaulted by another soldier in December 2019, the same month she arrived at the El Paso military installation upon completing Basic Combat Training in Missouri and Advanced Individual Training in South Carolina.

The alleged assault was reported but Graham's family felt the Army failed to help and protect her. Her brother, Andrew Koenigsfeld, said his sister wanted to get justice.

"She was ready to fight," Koenigsfeld said. "Then that got taken away."

Graham was a private first class assigned to the 1st Armored Division as a human resource specialist. She was found unresponsive in her room on New Year's Eve and later pronounced dead by the Fort Bliss Department of Emergency Services staff.

The Army said foul play is not suspected, though autopsy and toxicology results are still pending. An investigation is ongoing. It was not clear if the Army looked into Graham's claims.

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Officials at Fort Bliss did not return calls from Fox News. Graham's death comes after other female soldiers have died in recent years. Fort Hood Spc. Vanessa Guillen was killed last year after she reported being sexually harassed.

On New Year's Day, a female Army drill sergeant was found in her car shot multiple times in San Antonio.

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3. What we know about the death of an Army sergeant found shot in stalled car on San Antonio highway

(San Antonio Express News (TX), Jan. 4, Mark Dunphy)

San Antonio police are investigating the death of an Army drill sergeant found shot in a stalled vehicle on New Year's Day.

Staff Sergeant Jessica Mitchell, assigned to Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, was pronounced dead at 3 a.m. Friday.

Officers were called to the eastbound side of Interstate 10 at West Avenue for a stranded vehicle in the left lane that was causing a hazard, police said. They found a white Dodge Charger with multiple gunshots to the driver's side door and window.

The officers opened the door and checked the victim, later identified as Mitchell, for a pulse, but none was found. The 30-year-old was transported to University Hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

On Friday, police spokesperson Lt. Jesse Salame told the Express-News it was too early to know a motive.

Police are searching for a suspect vehicle, described as possibly red in color with damage to the passenger side. People with information about Mitchell's death are asked to call SAPD's Homicide Unit at 210-207-7635.

In a statement, Maj. Gen. Dennis LeMaster, who commands the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, said Mitchell's colleagues were "devastated by the tragic loss."

"Our sincere condolences go out to her family and friends," said LeMaster. "We are focused on supporting Drill Sergeant Mitchell's family as well as her soldiers during this extremely difficult time."

Mitchell was on holiday leave at the time of her death. She leaves behind a 10-year-old son, according to WOAI-TV.

Her sister Ashley told the station, "We heard there was no witnesses. But it's a highway. Someone had to see something."

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4. Remains found at Fort Sam Houston were those of a Massachusetts man not linked to the military

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(Stars and Stripes, Jan. 4, Rose L. Thayer)

The skeletal remains found near a creek at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston were a Massachusetts man who was not affiliated with the military, officials said Monday.

Dental records linked the partial remains to Juan Santiago, who moved from Massachusetts to San Antonio in June and had no known ties to the base or the military, according to officials at Joint Base San Antonio.

People discovered the remains on the evening of Dec. 27 while walking near Salado Creek in the northeast portion of the base and joint base security forces secured the area, the release stated. Air Force Office of Special Investigations personnel began investigating the next morning.

Santiago's family said the 36-year-old moved to Texas in June to be near his girlfriend. He went missing the same month after making a 911 call that he had been robbed while staying at a motel located about a mile from Fort Sam Houston, according to a local television station.

Air Force investigators and the Chelsea Police Department in Massachusetts are continuing to investigate the circumstances of Santiago's death and did not release any further information Monday.

Joint Base San Antonio consists of three large military bases, the Army's Fort Sam Houston and Lackland and Randolph Air Force bases, as well as a few smaller training facilities, which are spread throughout San Antonio. The Air Force's 502nd Air Base Wing manages the operations of the joint base, which supports about 47,000 service members. Missions in San Antonio include Air Force basic training and special warfare training, as well as a variety of Army medical training.

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5. Trial date moved for woman accused of helping to hide body of Spc. Vanessa Guillen

(Nexstar Media, Jan. 4, Dean Wetherbee)

The trial of the woman who faces criminal charges in connection with the murder of Spc. Vanessa Guillen is being moved.

Prosecutors claimed 22-year-old Cecily Aguilar helped 20-year-old U.S. Army specialist Aaron Robinson in disposing of the body of Guillen after he killed her.

Aguilar faces one count of conspiracy to tamper with evidence and two substantive counts of tampering with evidence.

She could get up to 20 years in federal prison for each count upon conviction.

The indictment alleges that from April 22, 2020, through July 1, 2020, Aguilar conspired with Robinson to corruptly alter, destroy, mutilate and conceal evidence, including the victim's body in order to prevent Robinson from being charged with and prosecuted for any crime.

Aguilar was set to be rearraigned Tuesday, and jury selection was set to start on January 19th.

Her attorney asked Judge Alan D. Albright to reset the hearing, which the prosecution did not object to.

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Judge Albright reset the arraignment to February 23, 2021 and jury selection to March 8, 2021, in front of Judge Jeffrey Manske.

He also reset the Plea Agreement deadline to February 15, 2021. You can read the full court order below.

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6. New law eases tax repayment pain for more than a million troops

(Military Times, Dec. 4, Karen Jowers)

Military members and federal civilians will see a significantly smaller bite out of their paychecks under a new law that stretches their repayment of deferred payroll taxes to 12 months instead of four.

The provision is included in the spending bill that was signed into law by President Donald Trump on Dec. 27. The law includes pandemic relief and federal spending.

Under guidance from the Internal Revenue Service, defense officials were set to start collecting deferred Social Security payroll taxes from troops' paychecks over a four-month period spanning January through April — paying back the extra money that troops received in their paychecks from September through December.

Now that payback will be stretched over 12 months, to Dec. 31, 2021, so the decrease in the paycheck will be one-third of what was previously scheduled.

In August, Trump signed an executive order requiring the temporary deferral of Social Security payroll taxes for military members and federal civilian employees, from September through December. While that has meant extra money in troops' paychecks for four months, they must now pay back those taxes.

The move was designed to put more money into the pockets of employees, at least temporarily, to ease the economic pain caused by the pandemic. The payroll tax is 6.2 percent of basic pay. Troops will be paying that tax back, in addition to the resumption of the regular payroll taxes.

The amount varies. For example, an active-duty E5 with eight years of service was receiving an extra \$205 a month for four months with the tax deferral. With this last-minute change, instead of paying back \$205 a month over four months, the E5 will be paying back about \$68 a month over 12 months.

The tax deferral policy affected all enlisted members, virtually all warrant officers and many officers, to include everyone up through the grade of O-4. Officers in the grade of O-5 with less than 16 years of service, and those in the grade of O-6 with less than 14 years of service were affected. Those who earned more than \$8,666.66 a month didn't have their Social Security taxes deferred — they continued to pay the payroll taxes.

Rep. Don Beyer, D-Va., an outspoken critic of the tax deferral policy, hailed the inclusion of the provision to stretch out the payments, saying it will alleviate the burden on military families and federal workers. "Our payroll tax fix will help lessen the damage of Donald Trump's payroll tax scam for military families and civil servants by minimizing the drop they see in individual paychecks," said Beyer, who helped secure the fix.

He was an earlier support of legislation to block the tax deferral policy, which was mandatory for military and federal civilians. They didn't have the option to opt out of the deferral.

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The provision is in Section 274 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021.

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7. For military recruiters, the overall mission hasn't changed during the pandemic

(The Santa Fe New Mexican (NM), Jan. 4, James Barron)

Jordan Lucey has had to replace a handshake with an email or phone call when it comes to reaching out to high school and college students about careers in the armed forces.

A local talent acquisition manager for the U.S. Air Force, Lucey admitted he misses personal interaction with prospective recruits.

But recruiting is a new game amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Instead of setting up shop at a high school or college career fair, or talking to a room full of students, Lucey has been using social media platforms and conducting virtual meetings.

The mission hasn't changed for him and other military recruiters: Find the next group of young men and women to join their ranks.

"You gotta be flexible, you gotta be agile, you gotta be willing to put one thing down and pick another thing up," Lucey said.

While recruiters were shut out of high school and college campuses for much of 2020, they didn't lose important contacts that are vital to their job. They still communicate with school counselors and instructors of Junior ROTC programs.

In some cases, it's a teacher or a coach who gives recruiters a heads up about a potential candidate.

Local recruiters and ROTC leaders said there is no shortage of interest in military opportunities among young people, even during the pandemic. In fact, the economic effects of COVID-19 might be prompting more students to consider military careers.

Craig Stapleton, the Junior ROTC instructor at Santa Fe High School, said the number of students in his program who are committed to serve in the armed forces — whether through officer training or regular enlistment — has not changed from previous years. Those planning to follow such a path generally are the ones who have been in the ROTC program for a few years and were considering joining the military long before COVID-19 arrived.

"For us, it really has been business as usual in that respect," Stapleton said. "It's really no different because once they make that decision, they're going to go deal with the recruiter."

Lucey said he's had more success recruiting college students than high school seniors. That's largely because the pandemic-era college campus experience has left much to be desired, with most classes conducted online and amenities shut down.

"Senior in high school enlistees are down slightly, but we have more high school graduates and college students coming in with interest," Lucey said. "In Northern New Mexico, those numbers have almost

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doubled. They are like, 'This is not what I signed up for in college,' not being in classes. It's harder to learn that way."

Employment is another factor that might be helping recruitment efforts, Lucey said.

With the unemployment rate still higher than usual and many businesses either shut down or operating at a limited capacity, military pay can be an attractive alternative to job seeking for young adults.

Another benefit is that those who sign up for military service will be eligible for the GI Bill and other tuition incentives to cover the cost of college later.

"Job security, it's huge," Lucey said. "We're guaranteeing them a job for the lifetime of their contract, so long as they abide by standards and keep their nose clean."

Recruiters still offer office visits with students to talk about a military career, and what that might look like. In-person meetings require temperature checks, face masks and social distancing, with public health guidelines strictly enforced.

Recruiters say candidates who demonstrate they are conscious about the importance of safety and health can make a lasting impression.

"Prior to the pandemic, our major focus was presenting opportunities that our organization has to offer," said Master Sgt. Greg Doss, who operates the northern recruiting office of the New Mexico National Guard. "Now what is on the forefront of our minds is health and safety concerns and how we can stay functional but also stay safe."

The National Guard can't always offer full-time work but reaches out to a broader base of the population — residents between the ages of 17 and 34.

Doss said he and his recruiting team attract people already in the workforce as well as students in high school and college. Many of them want to make a difference in their local community by serving in the National Guard, he said.

Doss cited the organization's work in the battle against COVID-19 — assisting with testing and distributing vaccines. This work is a recruiting tool, he said, because people can see the value of what they would be doing if they joined.

"We have just under 3,000 Guardsmen who [are] in various communities across New Mexico," Doss said. "They're helping out with the COVID-19 outbreak, and the families and friends and neighbors of those individuals see how we're helping out our community. That in itself helped us get referrals, which is a pretty ideal situation for us."

Lucey said military recruiters often face a stigma — that they are trying to lure unwitting young people into service — and he tries to assuage those fears by having a very open and frank discussion with each candidate.

"Being an informed student, that's the idea," Lucey said. "We talk to kids about college, we talk about all of their options. We talk to counselors all the time about being on the same page and making sure we're not here to try and trick a kid into service."

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"We like to consider ourselves as a local asset — someone who is a subject-matter expert on career paths."

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8. Inside the U.S. Army's Warehouse Full of Nazi Art

(The New Yorker, Jan. 4, Dexter Filkins)

In the final days of the Second World War, a train loaded with relics of the collapsing Third Reich was speeding toward the Czech border when American pilots, flying P-47 fighters, spotted it and opened fire. The train ground to a halt in a forest, where German soldiers spirited the cargo away. They were pursued, not long afterward, by Gordon Gilkey, a young captain from Linn County, Oregon, who had been ordered to gather up all the Nazi propaganda and military art he could find. Gilkey tracked the smugglers to an abandoned woodcutter's hut, where he pried up the floorboards and found what he was looking for: a collection of drawings and watercolors belonging to the German military's high command. The cache had survived the strafing, only to be afflicted by mildew and a family of hungry mice. "They had eaten the ends off many pictures, large holes in a few, and gave all the cabin pictures an uneven deckle edge," Gilkey wrote.

Two years later, after Gilkey completed his mission, he put the art he had recovered—thousands of pieces of it—on a ship bound for the United States. Today, one of the world's largest collections of Nazi propaganda sits in a climate-controlled warehouse at Fort Belvoir, in northern Virginia. Much of it is virulent; most of it is never seen by the public.

Fort Belvoir is home to the 29th Infantry Division and also to the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. It is also home to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, which maintains the Nazi art, along with thousands of other relics of wars past. One afternoon, before the pandemic struck, I drove inside the base to a cavernous warehouse where the collection is stored. It was like prying open a time capsule from a very dark time.

Much of Nazi propaganda was ephemeral: posters and flyers, designed to be mass-produced and spread quickly. The paintings stored on high metal racks in Fort Belvoir's warehouse were part of a different project, meant to give the Reich's predations a patina of high culture. One of the best-known works is "The Flag Bearer," painted by Hubert Lanzinger a year after Hitler came to power. It depicts the Führer astride a black horse, clad in shining armor and carrying a Nazi flag. "It's Hitler as a Teutonic knight," Sarah Forgey, the Army's chief art curator, told me, standing before the painting. "It's showing there's a connection between the Third Reich and Germany's feudal past."

When Hitler took control of Germany, in 1933, it was home to some of the most sophisticated modernist painters in the world. The Nazis despised them. "Any aberration in color, in proportion, shape, size—anything like that was anathema," Michael H. Kater, a historian and the author of "Culture in Nazi Germany," told me. (The view extended even to music; the Nazis loathed jazz, for its supposed lack of melody and its emphasis on improvisation.) "The Nazis insinuated that modernism was Jewish, that it was the product of a deranged mind," Kater said.

In Hitler's vision, art had to be universally accessible, a celebration of rural life, the traditional family, and the Aryan ideal. In 1937, he told an audience at the Great German Art Exhibition that "Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism, Impressionism, etc., have nothing to do with our German people." Hoping to prove the depravity of "degenerate" art, the Nazis staged an enormous exhibition containing works by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Paul Klee, and other giants of the period. In the coming years, Hitler's men banned or

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destroyed any art that did not adhere to an exacting realism; they confiscated works by Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, and Wassily Kandinsky. As the Nazis occupied territory and commandeered art, they replaced it with paintings that glorified the Nazi cause. As Gilkey put it, “A systematic looting of all removable cultural objects in German invaded lands was compensated for by the Germans with exhibits propagandizing the mighty Wehrmacht.”

The Nazis tended to make their argument not by finesse but by scale. “The Flag Bearer,” the picture of Hitler on horseback, is the size of a television at a sports bar. Looking at it, you could imagine how an ordinary German, perhaps cowed by the Nazis and not yet fully aware of their true nature, might find herself inspired. To other viewers, the picture, with its swaggering size and mythic overtones, read as an affront. The canvas has a jagged hole in it, as if Hitler’s left eye had been gouged out; after the war ended, an American soldier in the Third Army came upon the painting in one of Hitler’s retreats and rammed his bayonet through it. The curators decided to leave it as it was.

The works at Fort Belvoir are earnest and at times accomplished, but so vacant of nuance and irony that they can approach kitsch. “In the Beginning Was the Word,” painted in 1937 by Hermann Otto Hoyer, shows Hitler speaking to a roomful of rapt supporters. He wears civilian clothes and looks young; the painting depicts him at the time of the “Beer Hall Putsch,” his failed coup d’état in Munich in 1923, which landed him and many of his supporters in jail. Hitler and his listeners are surrounded by shadows, but, in chiaroscuro style, their faces shine as if struck by a divine light. Hitler liked the painting so much that he bought it. “The artist obviously knew what he was doing,” Forgey said. While the political sympathies of many of the artists employed by the Nazis were unknown, Hoyer’s were clear; he was a member of the Nazi Party.

All propaganda is meant to obscure the truth, but two paintings inadvertently highlight the decline of the Nazi project. The first, “Hitler at the Front,” was painted by Emil Scheibe in 1942, about a year after Hitler launched his titanic, megalomaniacal invasion of the Soviet Union. It shows a buoyant Führer surrounded by a throng of German soldiers—young, well-scrubbed Aryans gazing at him in adoration. The second work—“East Front Fighters,” by Wilhelm Sauter—was painted two years later, when the Nazis were being rolled back by the Soviet Army. The soldiers in this canvas are exhausted and battered, if still unbowed. The message to Germans is clear: The war is tougher than we thought, but our soldiers are indomitable. Not long afterward, Hitler killed himself, and the Nazi regime imploded.

At the Potsdam Conference, held after the war in Europe ended, Truman, Churchill, and Stalin decided that Nazi art and propaganda should be seized, to prevent it from fueling a Fascist resurgence. That’s when Gilkey got the call. His job was akin to that of the “Monuments Men,” whose exploits, recovering thousands of pieces of art looted by the Nazis, were memorialized in a book by Robert M. Edsel and a movie directed by George Clooney.

Working relentlessly, Gilkey searched throughout Germany and Austria. In many cases, he said, the Nazis tried to hide the works right up until the day of Germany’s surrender. He discovered paintings hidden in a Bavarian castle, another cache at a black market on the banks of the Danube, and about a thousand works under the protection of a colonel in the Russian zone. In a report, he gave a characteristically blunt description of how the Nazi art was hustled off the train: “The drawings and watercolors were rolled up in bundles and toted over a disused mountain trail to an abandoned woodcutter’s hut on a mountain straddling the border.” In all, Gilkey collected eight thousand seven hundred and twenty-two drawings, paintings, and sketches, produced by some three hundred and sixty-nine German artists.

Once in American hands, the collection passed from government building to government building, carefully maintained but barely noticed. In 1950, some sixteen hundred pieces were deemed harmless and

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returned to what was then West Germany. In 1982, Congress decided that it could return any art that did not overtly glorify the Reich. That turned out to be everything but three hundred and twenty-seven pieces, which were considered too virulently pro-Nazi to allow into circulation. Another two hundred and fifty-nine items were retained for educational purposes; these included pieces from a genre known as combat art, in which artists accompanied the Wehrmacht to capture the drama of the battlefield. (The American military also sent artists into the field, and still does.)

Among the hundreds of pieces at Fort Belvoir, the most curious are four watercolors by Hitler. During the First World War, when he served as a foot soldier, he carried paper and often spent free moments drawing—the remnants of an early dream of succeeding as an artist. As a young man, Hitler was twice rejected for admission to the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and the works at Fort Belvoir make it easy to see why. The draftsmanship is painstaking but stolid, without personal vision or lightness of touch. Most of the pieces are nostalgic street scenes, like something that might hang in a dentist's office—except that the streets are eerily devoid of people. “Hitler couldn't paint the human form,” Forgey said. One of the works—“Railway Embankment,” a brown-toned, faintly Impressionist work from 1917—depicts two human beings, but they are little more than dark blurs. Over the years, the Army has lent pieces from the collection to museums, but curators don't ask for the Hitler watercolors. “They are only interesting because of who produced them,” Forgey said.

How much longer will the United States hold on to the Nazi works? According to the Potsdam agreement, the U.S.'s role was to seize the works, not to destroy them. The Germans have never asked that they be returned, which suggests that they could remain locked away in a warehouse for many more years. Forgey thinks that this might not be such a bad thing. “The rationale in 1945 was that we take possession of these works to keep them out of dangerous hands,” she said. “The fear was that there would be a revival of Nazism. Look at the world today. That rationale seems more valid in 2020 than it's been in a long time.”

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9. Complaint about Green Beret colonel's ‘overreactions’ was dismissed months before police standoff

(Army Times, Jan. 4, Kyle Rempfer)

An inspector general complaint about an Army Special Forces group commander's alleged overreactions and berating of subordinates was dismissed months before he was accused of domestic violence and engaging in an armed, two-hour standoff with police near Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, on Dec. 27.

The IG complaint signals that some leaders were aware that the Green Beret colonel's temperament had been called into question. It also raises the question of whether officers earmarked for greater authority are properly held to account by investigations from within their own chain of command.

Former 1st Special Forces Group boss Col. Owen G. Ray, 47, was suspended Monday from his latest role as chief of staff for I Corps, after he was arrested and charged by Pierce County prosecutors with two counts of felony harassment, one count of kidnapping, two counts of assault and one count of reckless endangerment.

The charges stemmed from a night that court documents alleged involved Ray hitting his wife, grabbing a pistol and rifle from his gun locker and threatening to kill police if they attempted to arrest him.

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“Col. Ray’s decorated career as a soldier is a testament to his service to our country,” Jared E. Ausserer, an attorney with Puget Law Group representing Ray, said in a statement. “He understands the seriousness of these allegations and hopes to take advantage of services and counseling to better himself as husband and a father, in hopes that [he can] get back to his family that he loves more than anything.”

But prior to the Dec. 27 incident, concerns about Ray had already been raised in an IG complaint made by a Green Beret officer who served under him at 1st Group. Ausserer declined to comment on the complaint.

“They always say ‘see something; say something,’ but the Army has to do something too,” said the now-retired officer, who asked to remain anonymous to protect his new career. “At the end of the day, this is a failure on the leadership in the SF channels.”

A substantiated investigation could have sparked a range of actions, from anger management counseling to relief of command, the officer explained.

However, 1st Special Forces Command’s IG office returned the complaint as “not substantiated” this June, according to records reviewed by Army Times.

One month later, Ray was elevated to be I Corps’ chief of staff, a coveted role that often leads to the general officer ranks. Before being suspended, though, Ray was not in a promotable status, according to I Corps.

The complaint alleged Ray created a toxic command climate by setting expectations that everyone should act like him, which meant putting work before all else, even family relationships.

“He exacerbates this expectation by shaming people in public and berating them,” a statement submitted with the original complaint reads. “Additionally, he regularly overreacts on little information and has emotional outbursts.”

Ray evidently pushed key staff to work 14-hour days and discouraged the complaining officer from carving out time in the evenings to be with his family for dinner, according to the statement.

“He acknowledged that he is an ‘asshole (his word)’ to work for, but yet does not seem to learn or try to be different in his approach,” the statement added.

A second staff officer who was interviewed as part of the IG complaint said Ray was prone to swearing at subordinates and threatening their careers.

For instance, Ray said that a major serving as a liaison in South Korea needed to “get his fucking LinkedIn profile ready ... because he’s done,” after that major had an NCO represent him during a teleconference he couldn’t attend, the staff officer who was at the meeting said. The comments were made on a call with soldiers from units other than 1st Group and were unnecessarily vindictive, according to the staff officer.

During a separate incident, Ray missed a teleconference by an hour due to a mix up with time zones. He reportedly began “swearing, shaking” and “throwing papers on the table” before telling the staff to lace up in running shoes for a roughly 7-mile run, the officer said. The pace was brisk and about two-thirds fell out.

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After returning to unit headquarters, Ray “did not give a second look” and “just headed into his office,” while other people jumped into cars to check on those who had fallen out to ensure they weren’t injured or dehydrated, according to the complaint, which described the same incident.

Spokespeople at 1st Special Forces Command deferred comment to Army officials at the Pentagon, who confirmed the IG complaint against Ray was investigated, but declined to state why it was determined unsubstantiated.

“As a matter of Army policy, we do not comment on the details of Inspector General investigations,” said Army spokeswoman Col. Cathy Wilkinson.

While assigned to I Corps, Ray was not the subject of any other investigations, according to that unit’s IG office.

The officer who made the complaint believed an inquiry from outside the Special Forces chain of command was warranted and tried to submit his complaint to the Department of the Army Headquarters. Instead, he was instructed to file it with 1st Special Forces Command’s IG office.

“My feeling is they kind of just looked the other way, swept it under the rug and focused very narrowly on specific dates and times” that were difficult to substantiate, the officer said. “I don’t think they interviewed all the people on the witness list I gave them.”

In the military, many investigations into senior leaders are shrouded in mystery, even if wrongdoing is substantiated.

“There’s not a lot of transparency from Army leadership on senior leader misconduct,” the officer said. “You hear rumors, you hear allegations and you see a guy quietly retire but there’s never any public accounting of what happened and lessons learned.”

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10. Bill Crane Takes Over As Adjutant General For W.Va. National Guard

(West Virginia Public Broadcasting, Jan. 4, Staff Writer)

The West Virginia National Guard announced its newest leader Monday, while honoring its outgoing adjutant general of the last decade.

Brig. Gen. William E. “Bill” Crane will lead the state’s 6,500-member guard, consisting of citizen soldiers and airmen. Crane’s new role will include supervision of the guard’s day-to-day operations, in addition to the overall management of resources and personnel.

“We have a tremendous team,” Crane said during a virtual Change of Command ceremony Monday.

“During this pandemic response, I’ve seen the Army and the Air Guard come together as one guard, one guard that includes our service members, their families, our retirees [and] our civilian workforce, both state and federal.”

Crane joined the National Guard in 1984, through the ROTC program and West Virginia University. He was promoted to Brigadier General in March, having started 36 years earlier as a vehicle driver for the 1092nd Engineer Battalion.

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Crane is taking over after Maj. Gen. James Hoyer, who announced his own retirement in November. Hoyer promoted Crane to his latest rank in March.

Hoyer joined the West Virginia National Guard in 1983 through a joint ROTC program with West Virginia State University. Hoyer was promoted to adjutant general in 2011.

During Monday's ceremony, Gov. Jim Justice thanked Hoyer for leading the state's response to rebuilding hundreds of the homes lost to the 2016 floods, which killed 23 West Virginians and destroyed more than 1,500 homes and businesses.

Justice also awarded Hoyer with the West Virginia Distinguished Service Medal during Monday's online event.

"It's been an honor and a privilege to serve with and lead each one of the men and women of the National Guard," Hoyer said Monday. "I would ask the men and the women of the National Guard to continue to lead by example, follow the Army and Air Force values. Our nation needs it more than ever before."

Hoyer said he looks forward to helping the state "in a different uniform," as he will remain on the governor's COVID-19 task force and work for West Virginia University as senior associate vice president.

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11. National Guard activated for D.C. protests, with more restraints than in June, officials say
(The Washington Post, Jan. 4, Julie Zauzmer, Marissa J. Lang and Dan Lamothe)

The District has mobilized the National Guard and will have every city police officer on duty Tuesday and Wednesday to handle protests of the November presidential election, which Mayor Muriel E. Bowser said may include people looking to instigate violence.

Bowser (D) has asked D.C. residents to stay away from downtown Washington on both days while members of far-right groups, including the Proud Boys, amass to falsely claim President Trump was reelected.

Trump — who lost both the popular and electoral-college vote to President-elect Joe Biden — has continued to dispute the results, without evidence, and is encouraging his supporters to attend the rallies.

He has said he might appear at Wednesday's demonstration at the Ellipse, just outside the White House, which is timed to coincide with Congress's vote to certify the election results — a formality that this year will be a fraught and divisive process. The National Park Service on Monday night updated the crowd estimate on the permit for that event to 30,000 people, up from 5,000.

"People are allowed to come into our city to participate in First Amendment activities," Bowser said Monday. "We will not allow people to incite violence, intimidate our residents, or cause destruction in our city."

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Pro-Trump protests in November and December, which included some of the same groups, ended violently, with multiple people stabbed and several churches vandalized, including two historically Black houses of worship.

This time, members of right-wing groups have taken to social media sites such as Parler and Telegram to discuss how to bring guns into the District despite laws banning open carry throughout the city and prohibiting guns on federal lands such as the Mall and Freedom Plaza or anywhere within 1,000 feet of a protest.

Bowser said that the National Guard members, who will not carry guns, will help enforce street closures and otherwise assist with crowd management so that D.C.'s police department can focus on law enforcement, including arresting anyone who is unlawfully armed.

Defense officials said the Pentagon approved the activation of more than 300 members of the District of Columbia National Guard, but limited the size and scope of the mission after a deployment during racial justice protests in June raised questions about whether the Trump administration was trying to use the military as a political club.

Two defense officials familiar with the plans, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said the guard members are not expected to use armored vehicles, including Humvees, relying instead on civilian vans owned by the government. The military also has not approved the use of its helicopters, which were deployed over protesters in June in an apparent show of force, prompting a military investigation whose results still have not been released.

No National Guard members from other states are expected to be called into D.C., the officials said — again, in contrast to June. And under the terms of a new defense spending bill, any federal troops must be identifiable, personally and by agency, a provision added to the law after federal agents deployed this summer did not reveal the agencies with which they were affiliated.

The smaller military presence comes as current and former defense officials warn against relying on the armed forces for election-related activities. The military, with its nonpartisan tradition, should not be dragged into politics, they have said.

On Sunday, all 10 living former defense secretaries combined to publish an op-ed in The Washington Post warning that the time has come to stop contesting presidential election results and that the military should have no role in overturning them.

The National Park Service began issuing permits Monday for the so-called Stop the Steal rallies, which are expected to begin Tuesday afternoon and continue through Wednesday.

Women for America First — a group behind a pro-Trump march in November and another on Dec. 12 that ended in a night of chaos on D.C. streets — is organizing the event on the southern half of the Ellipse on Wednesday morning. Potential speakers include longtime Trump ally Roger Stone, whose sentence for seeking to impede a congressional probe into Russian election interference was commuted by Trump in July before being upgraded to a full pardon, and Rudolph W. Giuliani, Trump's personal attorney, who has waged a roundly unsuccessful legal fight to overturn the election results.

A new organization dubbed the Eighty Percent Coalition, a reference to the roughly three-quarters of Republicans who have said in polls they do not trust the results of the presidential election, received a permit for a Tuesday rally at Freedom Plaza that the Park Service estimated would draw 5,000 people.

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That event is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. and continue until 8:30 p.m. Groups questioning the election outcome will also hold protests Wednesday at Freedom Plaza, on the Mall and outside the Capitol.

Though no organized march between the Wednesday rallies has been planned, organizers said they expect a large number of attendees to make their way from the Ellipse to the Capitol at the conclusion of the morning event.

Pro-Trump protesters have also frequently visited the stretch of 16th Street NW near the White House that Bowser renamed Black Lives Matter Plaza during the summer demonstrations, tearing down signs demanding racial justice and honoring Black leaders and victims of violence.

Acting D.C. police chief Robert J. Contee III said Monday that police might close off the plaza to all pedestrians if conditions warrant. Bowser said she would consider imposing a curfew if needed, as she did during the protests in June.

The organization Black Lives Matter DC put out a statement Monday asking Bowser to go further than she has so far in her denunciation of far-right demonstrators. The groups asked D.C. businesses to not do business with “white supremacists and hate groups who incite violence”; D.C. officials to do more to enforce mask and social distancing rules among rallygoers; and D.C. lawmakers to do more to “protect our sacred Black spaces.”

“The authorities have no problem keeping the White House — and the white man inside — safe; Black people expect and demand no less for our sacred Black spaces, including Black churches and Black Lives Matter Plaza,” the group wrote.

Bowser said Monday that police would focus on enforcing gun laws and addressing any potential violence, and — just like at past demonstrations — would not prioritize arresting or fining people for violating the city’s masking and social distancing requirements.

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12. DC Guard To Deploy for Pro-Trump Demonstrations In Washington

(Defense One, Jan. 4, Katie Bo Williams)

Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller has approved the deployment of a small number of unarmed National Guard forces in Washington, D.C., in response to Trump supporters expected to protest the 2020 election results in the nation’s capital this week.

About 350 Guardsmen will move into the city between Tuesday and Thursday to help with crowd control at Metro stations, street closures, and traffic management, according to a D.C. Guard press release. Specially trained “Civil Support Team” personnel will support D.C. Fire and Emergency Management Services and Guardsmen “are prepared to respond to augment the main missions, should additional personnel be required,” the release said.

“Our main mission is augmenting select traffic control points and metro stations identified by MPD,” Maj. Gen. William Walker, the D.C. Guard commanding general, said in a statement.

The high-profile deployment comes amid ragged tensions over the election results. The deployment also raises the specter of a past deployment, in June.

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Some Republican lawmakers are refusing to acknowledge President-elect Biden's victory, despite repeated losses in courts across the country, and supporters of the president are expected to gather in Washington this week as Congress meets to certify the Electoral College results. Past gatherings by Trump supporters protesting the election results have resulted in violent clashes. Four people were stabbed during a similar protest gathering in Washington in December.

Acting Police Chief Robert Contee said during a press conference on Monday that the city is expecting larger crowds than during previous such protests — and that some protesters may be carrying guns, armed.

"Some of our intelligence certainly suggests there will be increased crowd sizes," said Contee. "There are people intent on coming to our city armed."

Anyone who carries a gun at a protest or within 1,000 feet of a protest will be arrested, in line with D.C. law, he said.

The D.C. Guard was called up to respond to widespread protests in response to the May killing of George Floyd, a Black man, by police officers. The D.C. Guard drew fierce fire when two of its helicopters, unauthorized, flew low over protesters' heads in what critics described as an unacceptable "show of force" against American citizens. An internal review into that incident has yet to be made public.

At the time, President Trump considered invoking the Insurrection Act and calling up active duty service members to help quell unrest and tamp down protests by supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement. In this instance, Trump has supported the protesters, and is expected to attend on Wednesday.

The Guard deployment comes at the request of D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, according to Walker. Trump is officially the commander in chief of the D.C. Guard, through Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy.

"The District of Columbia National Guard is in a support role to the Metropolitan Police Department which will enable them to provide a safe environment for our fellow citizens to exercise their first amendment right to demonstrate," Walker said.

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13. Wisconsin governor authorizes National Guard to Kenosha ahead of Jacob Blake charging decision

(Fox News, Jan. 4, Louis Casiano)

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers has mobilized 500 National Guard members to Kenosha in anticipation of a decision on whether prosecutors will charge the police officer who shot Jacob Blake last year.

The Guardsmen will assist local law enforcement authorities in an effort to prevent the kind of riots and unrest that gripped the city for several days after the Aug. 23 shooting. The troops will protect infrastructure and other facilities.

"We are continuing to work with our local partners in the Kenosha area to ensure they have the state support they need, just as we have in the past," Evers, a Democrat, said in a statement. "Our members of the National Guard will be on hand to support local first responders, ensure Kenoshans are able to assemble safely, and to protect critical infrastructure as necessary."

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It was not clear how long the deployment will last.

Kenosha County District Attorney Michael Gravely will issue a charging decision in the first two weeks of January, the city said.

Blake, a Black man, was shot seven times in the back by Rusten Sheskey, a White Kenosha police officer responding to a domestic disturbance call. Video footage of the shooting captured Blake walking away from the officer when he was shot.

The shooting left Blake paralyzed and touched off protests and riots that saw fatal shootings and destruction.

On Sunday, the Kenosha Police Department and Mayor John Antaramian announced additional measures to ensure public safety. The plan includes the designation of spaces to demonstrate, the limiting of city bus routes, road closures, a curfew and protective fencing in some areas.

In a Kenosha News op-ed, Antaramian and police Chief Daniel Miskinis made it clear the city will not tolerate any violence or destructive behavior.

"We will not — we cannot — tolerate the kind of violence we saw on our streets earlier this year and we will take definitive steps to protect our residents and businesses," they wrote.

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14. N. Korea shows no sign of 'major provocation' for now: USFK chief
(Yonhap News Agency, Jan. 4, Byun Duk-kun)

North Korea is not showing any signs of preparation to stage a major provocation at least for now, the chief of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) said Monday.

"I say that we are not seeing any indicators that suggest that there would be a major provocation. But that's today. That could change next week," Gen. Robert Abrams said when asked if North Korea may stage a military provocation before or after the Jan. 20 inauguration of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden.

Many experts believe Pyongyang may stage provocations, partly to draw the new U.S. administration's attention to the North.

Abrams said he had no way of knowing what would happen in the future but expressed hope the North would continue to keep tensions low as to give diplomacy a chance.

"I would hope, hope not being a method, but I hope that really the current state of detente and this reduction in tensions ... I hope that that continues, so that we can maintain that space, ultimately, for some sort of diplomatic outreach," he told the online meeting.

The USFK commander noted North Korea continues to enhance its asymmetric capabilities particularly in "SOF -- Special Operations Forces -- cyber and ballistic missiles."

Still, he said the combined forces of South Korea and the United States stand fully ready and capable to deter any North Korean aggression, despite the COVID-19 pandemic that he said may have undermined the defense posture of many other countries.

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"The ongoing pandemic has not dampened our combined defense posture," said the U.S. general, adding the combined forces have successfully conducted joint military exercises with "zero positive case" of COVID-19.

"It's got to be capable and the way we develop that capability is through tough, realistic and rigorous training, including live fire training to ensure that our forces are absolutely ready," he said of the latest joint exercise conducted "last fall."

The USFK chief noted a "handful" of joint exercises may have been either postponed or canceled over the past three years, partly amid denuclearization talks with the North and the COVID-19 pandemic but insisted they have never been "stopped."

"Most militaries have not demonstrated the will or the capacity to train during the pandemic. However, not here in Korea because your ROK and U.S. military leaders firmly believe in maintaining that sharp edge, so that we can ensure that our force is ready, credible, and it certainly prevents any potential adversaries from perceiving weakness in our readiness," Abrams said.

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15. Trump courts 'bloodshed, riots' with inflammatory rhetoric, former Defense Sec. Hagel says (USA Today, Jan. 4, Tom Vanden Brook)

Former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel warned of "bloodshed and riots" after President Donald Trump's latest attempt to overturn the election that he lost.

Hagel and Sen. Jack Reed, the Democrats' top member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, expressed alarm Monday following Trump's attempt to pressure Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to reverse President-elect Joe Biden's win there. Hagel and Reed, D-R.I., also said the possibility that Trump would attempt to involve the military to retain power is particularly worrisome.

Hagel, along with the other nine living former Defense secretaries, signed an op-ed published by the Washington Post Sunday that stated the Pentagon has no role in electoral politics. It called on acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller to aid the transition at the Pentagon to the Biden administration and admonished Miller and others to "refrain from any political actions that undermine the results of the election or hinder the success of the new team."

Miller had no comment on the op-ed from his predecessors, according to the Pentagon.

The extraordinary letter, signed by Republicans and Democrats, including Trump's first two Defense Secretaries, was necessary to try to avert a calamity on Jan. 6 when Congress formally counts votes from the Electoral College or Jan. 20, Inauguration Day, Hagel said.

"President Trump keeps inciting people," Hagel said in an interview. "And that's very dangerous because you could have bloodshed. On January 6, certainly on January 20 when there is this transition of power. It's not going to work, of course. It's a futile mission. But this could lead to real problems across our country. Bloodshed and riots."

Trump has urged his supporters to protest in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6.

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Since the civil unrest following the death last summer of George Floyd, a Black man killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Pentagon officials have resisted the deployment of active duty troops on American streets. Former Defense Secretary Mark Esper, and the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army Gen. Mark Milley, argued successfully against invoking the Insurrection Act, which would have allowed Trump to tap combat troops to quell domestic protests.

Milley has said several times that the Constitution has no provision for the military's involvement in elections. Late in December, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, a Trump appointee, and Gen. James McConville, the Army's chief of staff, issued a statement affirming Milley's stance.

Reed, in an interview and not speaking about the op-ed, said he expected civilian and uniformed leaders of the military to adhere to their constitutional duties and avoid being drawn into politics by Trump.

"The military is not a political force that can be used by a politician for his own purpose," Reed said. "So far the bulwark of the professionalism of military officers has been the saving factor. But it's completely reckless and irresponsible for the president to do this."

Reed branded as "preposterous," the declaration of martial law, which has reportedly been urged by Trump's former national security adviser, retired Army Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn. He predicted Trump would not find military officers willing to carry out unconstitutional orders.

"They won't do that," Reed said. "I think the other factor, though, too, is that they would be supported by a bipartisan Congress. And also, if necessary, the courts."

In signing the op-ed, Hagel said he considered the balance between warning the public about Trump's increasingly erratic behavior and a desire not to sow panic.

"It is alarming," Hagel said. "I don't want to overstate it and get everybody all juiced up and say, 'Oh, my God, we better go down to the hardware store and buy a gun right here.' I don't want to do that either. But I do think that it was serious enough that it needed to be written and needed to be published."

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16. New in 2021: The National Guard will stay busy in 2021

(Army Times, Jan. 4, Davis Winkie)

The year 2020 will be remembered as the "Year of the Guard" by many senior Guard officials.

"So far, in 2020, the National Guard has mobilized more Guard members, for longer, than at any time since World War II," said Air Force Lt. Col. Devin Robinson, director of public affairs for the Air National Guard, in a statement emailed to Military Times on Dec. 9.

The coming year stands to be a busy year, too, according to data from Army officials and National Guard Bureau officials. The Guard will be utilized extensively both at home and abroad, despite the shrinking number of troops directly involved in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"For the first half of 2021, approximately 16,000 Guard members will mobilize [on Title 10 orders]" to support the active-duty military, said Army Master Sgt. Sean McCollum, a spokesperson for First Army. This would put the Guard on pace to surpass 2020's 31,110 troops mobilized under Title 10.

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The National Guard's COVID-19 response mission continues, too. Twenty thousand Guard troops remained activated for pandemic-related missions as of Dec. 14, according to Nahaku McFadden, NGB's media operations chief. That number may increase as at least 26 states utilize their Guard to assist with vaccine distribution.

The usual suspects for Guard activations like weather and wildfires aren't going anywhere, either. Phil Klotzbach, a hurricane expert at Colorado State University, told Military Times that he expects an "above average" 2021 Atlantic hurricane season.

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17. Pentagon reports over 7,000 new COVID-19 cases

(United Press International, Jan. 4, Ed Adamczyk)

The Defense Department reported an increase on Monday of 7,150 COVID-19 cases in the past week.

Statistics revealed a cumulative total of 169,914 cases among military and civilian personnel, dependents and contractors.

This compares to a total of 162,764 cases reported last week, and an increase from 120,398 cases at the beginning of December. The figures announced on Monday include 183 deaths and 107,285 recoveries.

The Department of Veterans Affairs reported 160,013 cumulative cases of the virus among veterans on Monday, and 6,772 deaths from complications of the virus.

The death figure is higher than the combined 6,756 military casualties in Operation Iraqi Freedom, which lasted from 2003 to 2010, and Operation Enduring Freedom, which lasted from 2001 to 2004.

Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Monday noted 350,664 deaths from the virus in the U.S. population, a figure higher than the combined death totals of U.S. military personnel from conflicts in Vietnam, Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan and World War I.

It also reported 64.7 cases per thousand in the general population since the start of 2020, and an increase in the past week of 212,117 cases. A total of 20,558,489 have been reported.

The Pentagon reported last week that 59 of 62 naval bases are under reinstated travel restrictions, as well as 140 of 231 U.S. military installations around the world.

Only three naval bases, in Rota, Spain; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Naval Support Activity Bahrain are open for travel. The Air Force has 35 of its 80 installations under travel restrictions, and the Army only has 28 of 68 installations open.

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18. Coroner, National Guard to help with COVID-19 bodies as death toll rises

(KTTV-FOX (CA), Jan. 4, Gigi Graciette and Kelli Johnson)

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As a grim sign of the coronavirus surge in Los Angeles County, the COVID-19 death toll has overwhelmed private mortuaries and hospital morgues. Now, a team of California National Guardsmen is set to arrive in Southland on Monday to help.

The LA County Department of Public Health reported Sunday an additional 91 people died as a result of COVID-19 complications.

The department also reported a total of 7,544 COVID-19 patients were hospitalized with the virus, with 21% in intensive care. The county's totals for the entire pandemic are now 818,639 cases and 10,773 deaths.

Local mortuaries say they do not have enough room to accommodate the dead and the team of California National Guardsman will assist the LA County Medical Examiner-Coroner to process the deaths.

Hospitals across Southern California continue to be overwhelmed and many hospital workers are at their breaking point.

On Monday, Long Beach Community Hospital will reopen to assist with non-COVID patients to help free up hospital space.

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19. COVID vaccination starts at more bases in Europe, but not everyone wants the jab

(Stars and Stripes, Jan. 4, Jennifer H. Svan)

Airmen in Germany were given their first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine Monday, just over two weeks after it received emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration.

"I'm hopeful that this is the way to finally end COVID-19," said Chief Master Sgt. Alex Angulo, the security forces manager for the 569th U.S. Forces Police Squadron, one of the first in line to get the jab in the gym at Ramstein Air Base.

He said he got the shot "for my parents, my kids and the community," and to set an example for his airmen – some of whom have expressed concern about the shot.

Like the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, the U.S.-made Moderna vaccine was developed in months rather than years and was granted emergency use authorization, not full FDA approval.

EUA is issued during emergencies like the coronavirus pandemic, when the FDA deems that a treatment or test will benefit patients, even if all the evidence establishing its effectiveness and safety is not yet available.

Regulators, vaccine developers and the military moved extremely quickly to get the Moderna vaccine "from emergency use authorization to putting needles into arms," said Gino Mattorano, spokesman for Regional Health Command Europe.

The Moderna vaccine was granted EUA on Dec. 18, the FDA says on its website.

The first doses arrived in theater around Christmas Day, and troops began to be inoculated less than a week after that, Mattorano said.

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Clinical trials have found the Moderna vaccine to be more than 94% effective at preventing the illness caused by the coronavirus after two doses, given about 28 days apart, according to a report published last month in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Spangdahlem Air Base also began vaccinating medical professionals and first responders Monday, and Air Force bases in the United Kingdom gave key health care and emergency workers their first jabs last week.

The Army began vaccinating front-line health care personnel in Germany last week and expected to continue this week. Vaccinations are also underway at Naval Support Activity Bahrain, where the 5th Fleet is based.

The vaccine was expected to be delivered this week to more military bases in Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain, U.S. European Command said in a statement released Thursday.

But officials at the immunization clinic at Aviano Air Base in Italy said Monday they didn't expect to receive the vaccine for "a few weeks."

At Ramstein, 86th Medical Group commander Col. Ryan Mihata was one of the first to get the jab.

"I trust the science completely," he said.

But troops who find the speed with which the vaccine was developed and approved unsettling can opt out of having the vaccine. At Ramstein, they have to show up at the gym, where their choice is noted in their medical records.

If too many decline to be inoculated, it will be an uphill battle to vaccinate enough people to get herd immunity, said Mihata.

Herd immunity occurs when a large enough proportion of the population is vaccinated and has antibodies against a disease, preventing its spread to those who can't be immunized. Measles, mumps, polio and chickenpox are examples of infectious diseases that are now rare in the U.S. because of herd immunity.

Mihata estimated that achieving herd immunity for COVID-19 would require about 60% of the population to get the jab.

"It's really all we have," he said. "The handwashing, the distancing and the mask-wearing – it's not helping us to flatten the curve significantly, so we need more."

Despite toughening up lockdown measures in December after 28 days of "lockdown light" failed to have an impact on the virus, Germany's 16 states on Monday had, on average, just over 139 new coronavirus cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days. That's nearly three times more than the benchmark of 50 new cases per 100,000, set by the country's public health agency, the Robert Koch Institute.

The Defense Department has established phases for American military personnel to get the vaccine, starting with front-line health care, emergency and public safety workers, and working down to healthy individuals. The timeline for administering the vaccine to everyone who wants it is unknown, officials said.

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Ramstein has enough of the vaccine to give all first responders, firefighters and medics a first dose, Mihata said.

Once they've been vaccinated, "we're going to open it up to the next category of folks that are eligible," he said.

None of the vaccine will be left on the shelf, he said.

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20. Another 43 new coronavirus patients for US military in Japan and South Korea
(Stars and Stripes, Jan. 4, Joseph Ditzler)

U.S. military bases in Japan and South Korea reported 43 new cases of the coronavirus over the New Year holiday weekend and up to 6 p.m. Monday.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government reported 884 newly infected people, the most reported on a Monday, according to public broadcaster NHK.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Monday said he may declare an emergency in Tokyo and three surrounding prefectures in order to give their chief executives greater power to combat the virus's spread.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, 500 miles west of Tokyo, counted another 12 individuals as part of a local outbreak there, according to Facebook posts.

"The past two weeks have shown how quickly COVID spreads across the base and how difficult it can be to stay ahead of a spread," base commander Col. Lance Lewis wrote in a Facebook post Sunday. COVID-19 is the respiratory disease associated with the coronavirus.

The new cases are due to an "uptick in socializing and general lack of adherence to COVID basics by a small percentage of people," Lewis wrote.

"Simply put, we lowered our shields over the past few weeks, which resulted in new cases on base," he wrote.

Lewis ordered all social gatherings, formal and informal, canceled, as well as youth sports until Jan. 25 and other activities. He limited to two the number of families allowed to socialize together, put a ban on base visitors, closed the base clubs and prohibited socializing between residents of different barracks, among other measures. Schools will remain open, he said.

The base reported five new patients Sunday, six on Saturday and one on Friday. All 12 were already in quarantine as close contacts of a previously infected individual, according to the base.

"These individuals tested positive as part of a large-scale testing initiative for those in proximity to previously identified positive cases," according to the base in each case.

The base in December reported 33 individuals had become infected with the coronavirus.

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Sasebo Naval Base on Kyushu reported two individuals tested positive for the virus during a medical screening Thursday, according to a Facebook post Monday. The base has three people with the virus under observation.

On Okinawa, the Marine Corps on Friday reported two new patients at Camp Schwab.

In South Korea, the U.S. military command reported 23 people, all new arrivals to the peninsula, tested positive for the virus between Dec. 16 and Thursday, according to a news release Monday from U.S. Forces Korea.

Four other individuals became infected after having contact with a retiree and his wife who tested positive on Wednesday, according to a release on Saturday from USFK.

The four, another two retired service members and their spouses, tested positive on Thursday, according to USFK. Contact tracing revealed the six had contact with each other on Dec. 25.

One of the couples last visited Camp Humphreys on Wednesday, and the other couple last visited Humphreys on Dec. 23.

Both couples reside in Sangju city and are now in quarantine at Camp Humphreys.

Of the 23 new arrivals, eight service members and one dependent arrived at Osan Air Base on the Patriot Express, a government-chartered flight from the U.S., on Dec. 16, 21 and 29. Another nine service members, three dependents, one contractor and one retiree arrived on commercial flights at Incheon International Airport on Dec. 16, 19, 21, 27, 28, 29 and Thursday.

Nine of the new arrivals tested positive on their first mandatory test. Two tested positive while in quarantine, and 12 tested positive on the test required to exit quarantine. All of them are in quarantine at Humphreys and Osan Air Base.

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21. Women in the US military may finally get body armor that actually fits

(Task and Purpose, Jan. 4, Haley Britzky)

I live my life in a state of cautious optimism, so bear with me when I say this: Women in combat could maybe, finally get body armor that fits them properly.

A provision in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act — which was passed when the Senate voted on Jan. 1 to override President Donald Trump’s veto of the legislation— lays out a series of requirements and initiatives that could move women closer to having body armor that actually fits.

I say “cautiously optimistic” because the promise of properly-fitting body armor for women has been made by the military over and over and over again throughout the last decade, which is surprising when you take into consideration how crucial it actually is for women in combat to have gear that, you know, actually protects them.

“What we see is that when you have an opening in body armor, whether it’s body armor that is too large for someone or too small for someone, you do get injuries that are very unique to that,” Sen. Tammy

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Duckworth (D-Ill.), one of the sponsors of the bill, explained to Task & Purpose in an interview. “And there are certainly injuries that come as a result of female service members have ill-fitting body armor.”

The bill — which was sponsored by Duckworth, Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), Martha McSally (R-Ariz.) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) — will “encourage” the U.S. military to expedite contracting, procurement, and fielding of new personal protective equipment (PPE) that “better fits and protects” all service members.

The legislation also requires the military services to submit a report to Congress this year identifying any issues they run into while trying to field the new PPE, such as contractor delays or cost overruns.

Duckworth told Task & Purpose that she dealt with the issue first-hand during her deployment to Iraq with the Army National Guard in 2004, as well as the problem that there just simply wasn’t enough body armor to go around.

“As the war went on, the body armor would come in different sizes, so the smallest sized body armor oftentimes was still too big for some of the female service members,” Duckworth explained. “Or you couldn’t get enough of it. And so what that does is that would leave, for example, where the plates are ... there would be gaps, like at your collar bone, so you could actually get shot, receive shrapnel, in that area and sustain injury. Or if you’re wearing body armor that’s the wrong size, it can actually lead to stress fractures on your skeleton itself.”

When asked why a bill like this hadn’t been passed until now, and why this was still an ongoing issue, Duckworth said she believed there was a “lack of centralized organization,” and ultimately a “lack of priority.”

“Female service members are, depending on the branch or service you’re in, anywhere from 10 to 15 to 20 percent of the force. And what we see is that while the Air Force might be working on something this year, the Army might be working on it next year but they’re not sharing information, or the program within the Marine Corps might not be sufficiently funded,” she said.

Now, with their new legislation, lawmakers hope to centralize the military’s efforts and have “good data sharing” in an effort to actually make the dream of better-fitting body armor a reality.

“When you have four different branches each doing their own thing, there’s overlap and there’s going to be waste,” Duckworth said.

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22. Three Virginia bases including Fort Lee to be renamed

(WRIC-ABC (VA), Jan. 4, Kerri O'Brien)

Fort Lee, Fort Pickett and Fort Hill in Virginia will be getting new names after Congress’ recent override of the President’s veto of the defense spending bill.

The bill lays out plans to rename military installations with confederate names. Local Congressman, Donald McEachin has been among those pushing for the renaming of ten U.S. army bases currently named after confederates, two are in his district.

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“We live in a time of change. We live in a time of realization that we need to correct the wrongs of the past, this is just one of those types of wrongs that needs to be corrected,” McEachin said.

Last year, the Congressman wrote the Department of Defense requesting the name change. He called it wrong to memorialize those who took up arms against the United States.

“We shouldn’t be naming military installation after Confederates who at the end of the day tried to tear down the Republic,” McEachin said.

Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, who is on the Armed Services Committee co-sponsored the amendment.

“We don’t name bases after Cornwallis, we don’t name bases after Benedict Arnold,” Sen Kaine said. “These were individuals who took up arms against the united states, who killed U.S. military.”

Kaine said the change won’t happen overnight — it will be a three-year process. First, an eight-member commission will be formed to evaluate the base names and set requirements for nominating and renaming the bases. Representative McEachin has his own ideas for Fort Lee.

“I think it be very appropriate to have Fort Arthur J. Gregg,” he said.

Lieutenant General Arthur Gregg began his career at Fort Lee during a segregated post and retired as the highest-ranking Black officer in the Army.

In the meantime Senator Kaine has his own vision too.

“I hope school kids will get involved and local newspapers will get involved,” he said. Kaine see the renaming of the three bases as an opportunity to go back to the books, research our history and engage the community in the process.

Fort Lee tells us they are awaiting official guidance and will be ready to comply with any changes directed by the Department of the Army.

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23. Commentary: Don’t Cut The Army In 2021

(Breaking Defense, Jan. 4, Thomas Spoehr)

Every December, we ask our favorite experts and insiders to help us forecast the year ahead for the Defense Department. This year, the Heritage Foundation’s Thomas Spoehr – a contributor to our pages and a retired Army lieutenant general himself – offered such a passionate defense of the Army’s embattled modernization program that we decided, with his permission, to run every word:

2021 is shaping up to be challenging for the Army. Recent years have been hard enough: The Army’s budget has been flat since FY2018, which means that, in real terms, it has suffered a decline of over \$13 billion in buying power when considering inflation. These pressures have already forced the Army to make tough choices, including constraining end strength growth, chopping procurement quantities, and paring non-essential programs. In essence, the Army has already been in a budget-cutting mode for the last three years.

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Now, with predictions of continued flat defense funding and an emphasis on re-building sea power in the Indo-Pacific to counter China, some say the Army is in for even tougher days ahead. No less a figure than Gen. Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – and former Chief of Staff of the Army – predicted a budgetary “bloodletting” in which ground forces would be sacrificed to fund the other services.

“Look, I’m an Army guy,” Milley said last month. “And I love the Army...but the fundamental defense of the United States, and the ability to project power forward [are] going to be naval and air and space power.”

There is some recent precedent for the Army bearing the brunt of Pentagon budget cuts. Consider the last time the Democrats controlled the White House: In the last years of the Obama administration, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel (a Republican) and others were pushing the Army down to an active duty end strength of 420,000 – today, it’s around 485,000 – to free up money for other non-defense priorities.

But the landscape is radically different from the situation facing the nation in 2014-2015. Back then, national leaders were hoping for a post-Iraq-withdrawal peace dividend and were slow to come to terms with Russian aggression in Ukraine or Chinese expansion in the South China Sea, while the Army itself was still wrestling with its changing role. But over the last few years, the Army has re-imagined its modernization programs, which are now solidly grounded in a warfighting concept aimed at countering rival great powers.

To fund those programs, the Army has already scoured its budget. As a result of these famous multi-year Night Court efforts, all the low hanging fruit has already been picked. That makes the job of aspiring external budget cutters harder – even as the need to replace the Army’s 1970s-era equipment has only become more dire. Finally, there is a bipartisan consensus now that did not exist five years ago, a consensus that China and Russia pose significant threats that cannot simply be ignored and that competition with those countries is a global struggle, not restricted to mainland Asia or Europe. This drives the need for a modern, capable Army, able to defend US interests anywhere they are challenged.

For all those reasons, predictions of a major “bloodletting” from the Army are off the mark. An objective view of the facts reveals that defense department funding—including the Army’s—cannot be further cut without creating an unacceptable risk to the country. Even Congress seems to grasp this: A legislative proposal in early 2020 to cut Defense Department funding by 10 percent was defeated by overwhelming numbers.

To rebuild the armed forces that the nation needs, current and future Pentagon leaders must resist the temptation to start infighting amongst each other and instead focus on the need for overall adequate defense funding. That will be difficult. In almost every past defense downturn, the services have resorted to attacks on each other to grab a larger share of a shrinking pie. That would be a mistake with grave consequences – not just for the military itself, but for the nation.

Thomas Spoehr, a retired Army lieutenant general, directs The Heritage Foundation’s Center for National Defense. He’s a member of the Breaking Defense Board of Contributors.

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24. The Army's Project Convergence scales up

(Army Times, Jan. 4, Todd South)

An ambitious project that could be the fulcrum for how the Army and other services leverage the technology of today and the near future to fight wars is expected to grow significantly in 2021.

Project Convergence — a three-pronged blending of artificial intelligence, robotics and autonomy — saw its first major iteration conclude in August and September 2020.

In many ways, it is the tactile, real-world display of a warfighting concept known as Multi-Domain Operations. That combines the service's six leading tech initiatives to aim at a sophisticated-yet-clear tactical goal.

The goal is to get close to the enemy by bypassing or neutralizing long-range sensor and missile systems of China and Russia, then destroy — either with missiles or cyber — the adversary's anti-access and aerial denial systems. That would create new maneuvering ability to defeat enemy forces in their own backyard.

To make that happen, many Army officials and their Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps counterparts are looking to connect everything, which would ultimately mean that any sensor across their system could use any shooter to destroy any target.

For this, the Army brought out Firestorm, a type of electronic brain that connects those systems to assist in some of the Project Convergence goals.

"Can we actually link multiple sensors and shooters, right? In this case, it's not a huge number. It's less than a handful," Army Futures Command head Gen. Mike Murray told Defense News. "But the ability for Firestorm to figure out the right shooter against the right target is one of the key things we're driving. And then: can we do this in near-real time?"

The service already has set new goals in place for the coming year. They reached a range of about 62km during their 2020 experiment in a platoon-size exercise. They'd like to extend those ranges in the upcoming iteration and with a larger, service-diverse formation.

And it won't be the Army alone running these experiments. They're inviting the other services to hook into their work and see how best they can run across platforms operated by multiple service branches.

Murray wants an entire operational headquarters involved in the 2021 version and include a multidomain task force to test out how they bring all of the pieces together.

Allies such as the United Kingdom and potentially Australia are likely to participate.

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25. Big Boost in Spending for Military Robots

(National Defense Magazine, Jan. 4, Jon Harper)

The Army is ramping up investments in robotic systems that could keep troops out of harm's way and serve as force multipliers on future battlefields.

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Gen. John “Mike” Murray, commanding general of Army Futures Command, has said robotics, autonomy and artificial intelligence will change the character of warfare in coming decades.

The service’s portfolio includes everything from small unmanned aerial systems and ground robots to logistics trucks and combat vehicles to soldier-borne exoskeletons.

“The robotics portfolio has grown significantly in the past six years,” Maj. Jeremy Howell, deputy robotics branch chief, G-8, said at the virtual Joint Armaments, Robotics and Munitions conference.

Funding rose from \$17 million in fiscal year 2015 to \$379 million requested for 2021, according to his presentation slides.

Priorities include: improving situational awareness; lightening soldiers’ physical and cognitive workloads; improving sustainment; facilitating movement and maneuver; and protecting the force.

The Army currently has about 20 robotics programs underway, according to Howell’s slides.

The service isn’t just interested in buying new platforms. It also wants modular mission payloads. “These packages may include lethality packages, communications and sensor suites as well as obscuration and anti-jamming capabilities,” Howell said.

To communicate with its unmanned systems, the Army is looking for a universal robotics controller, also known as URC.

Officials are currently conducting a study to identify what the solution should be.

“We will be putting small UAS as well as ground robotic platforms — thousands of them — onto the battlefield,” Howell said. “The question that we have is, how do we communicate with this vast number of robots so that they are able to be a force multiplier for the commander instead of a distraction? How do they interact with each other? Is it a standard piece of hardware that controls all robots? Or are we looking for a software that enables each of the different systems to ... interact on a common medium of communications?”

The URC concept could be similar to the internet of things, Howell said. Civilians now have the ability to control the lights and thermostats in their homes from anywhere in the world with the push of a button on their smartphones, he noted.

“How do we take that technology and put it in the hands of soldiers so that they can apply it to ensuring robots out there on the battlefield are there to support them?” he asked members of industry. “What I ask you to do is think big and think far on this.”

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26. Army Seeks Robots to Transport Wounded Troops

(National Defense Magazine, Jan. 4, Connie Lee)

The Army is examining ways to use autonomous vehicles to bring injured soldiers off the battlefield.

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In September, Pennsylvania-based company RE2 Robotics received \$1.1 million in Small Business Innovation Research funding from the Army Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center to work on a dexterous two-arm system called the Autonomous Casualty Extraction, or ACE.

“This would be a system that would go out to the casualty wherever that person is, ... recognize where the person is autonomously, figure out how they’re laying [and] figure out how to safely maneuver that casualty onto this transport device that we’re developing,” Jorgen Pedersen, the company’s president and CEO, said in an interview.

The arms are mounted onto FLIR Systems’ Kobra unmanned ground vehicle that will be able to transport casualties away from the battlefield to safety. ACE will be equipped with artificial intelligence and perception software to detect the soldier’s location and figure out how to evacuate him, Pedersen noted.

Kobra has a height of 11.5 feet and can lift 330 pounds, according to FLIR.

“A medic can remotely view a casualty through this system,” Pedersen said. “A medic can also be dialed into this system ... and be looking at the patient assessing what needs to be done.”

ACE is the second phase of an ongoing effort. In the first phase, the company worked on a mechanism dubbed “Lifeline” that helps medics lift injured soldiers onto a squad multipurpose equipment transport for medical evaluation, he said. SMET is a program of record to develop a so-called “robotic mule” that can transport gear and other items for the Army.

“That’s what Lifeline is, it’s really just a lifting assist device that allows only one person to do it, instead of having to have two or three people that do it,” he said. “One person can do that whole operation on their own.”

The idea is to have the soldier retrieved by ACE, be led to Lifeline and transported out on a robotic mule.

If the Army decides to continue with the work, phase 3 is slated for about two years from now, Pedersen said.

“Once we’ve demonstrated that this is functional and is safe, then we would look to work with the Army to move into a phase 3 effort to ensure that it gets added on to the SMET program of record or other programs that could benefit from this technology,” he said.

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27. Exclusive: J6 Says JADC2 Is A Strategy; Service Posture Reviews Coming (Breaking Defense, Jan. 4, Theresa Hitchens)

The Joint Staff plans a lightning-fast analysis of the gaps in service capabilities needed for implementation of Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), with results expected as soon as the end of February, says Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Dennis Crall, who leads the effort as the head of the J6.

“That gap analysis starts in January. We expect by the end of February to produce our JADC2 Posture Review. And that Posture Review will show the department exactly where we are deficient in executing our mission or missions,” Crall said in an exclusive, one-hour interview.

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“We don’t believe we can have an effective strategy with real milestones if we don’t look at our gap analysis,” he said. “That is what we will use to serve up against the funding strategy, and we will have to prioritize those to make sure we can deliver that capability.”

Meanwhile, the J6 is within “weeks” of completing the overarching JADC2 strategy, said Crall. That will go to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley and presumptive Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin for approval and signatures.

The J6 held consultations with DoD and service leaders to coordinate on the draft JADC2 strategy during the week of Dec. 21. “We’ve got some good feedback. We have some very discreet lines of effort and we now have a roadmap. ... We’ve written it and now we’re going through that corrective phase of taking in some of that good input,” said Crall, whose official title is director for command, control, communications, and computers/cyber chief information officer, Joint Staff J6. “The plans of attack and milestones are not quite done. Once the strategy is determined, we then have to lay out who’s responsible for which pieces, and then look at funding against those.”

Not A Program; An Approach

Crall explained that JADC2 isn’t just a network to link all sensors to all shooters, but is a new approach to military decision-making. “JADC2 is that larger, broader — in simplistic terms — ability to sense, make sense, and act,” he said.

The JADC2 strategy, he said, is separate from — but inexorably linked to — the Joint Warfighting Concept, initiated by former Defense Secretary Mark Esper. The JADC2 strategy is a strategy for decision-making. The Joint Warfighting Concept is the strategy outlining the new American way of war known as All Domain Operations; that is, next-generation, information-based wars using enormous amount of fast computer analysis across the land, air, sea, space and cyberspace domains.

So, the JADC2 strategy feeds into the Joint Warfighting Concept, he elaborated: “It informed the Joint Warfighting Concept, but the strategy that I’m describing is the JADC2 strategy proper, that would sit, really, at the top with the Joint Warfighting Concept.”

The JADC2 strategy will be incorporated into all the supporting concepts that make up the Joint Warfighting Concept — which include, as Sydney and I reported in July, how to manage joint fires and to create so-called information advantage. “There isn’t a supporting concept that doesn’t have information over the OODA Loop ... at the heart of successful execution,” Crall said. (The OODA Loop is the cycle of Observe, Orient, Decide and Act, first described by legendary strategist John Boyd as the key to outthinking adversaries. It lies at the heart of most modern US military strategy.)

Yes, all this is confusing, Crall admitted, in part because of the short-hand and multiple, duplicative acronyms being used by the Pentagon and the services.

“I’ll describe a little bit of what JADC2 is and isn’t, because it is not that clear to many, and I think we’re responsible for that. We’re rolling out, hopefully, a campaign to clear up some of the misconceptions,” he said. “JADC2, unfortunately has a lot of the same letters in the acronyms that involve things like our Joint Warfighting Concept and JCC2, which is our command and control subconcept for the Joint Warfighting Concept. And then JADC2 has been used in some cases narrowly as a ‘sensor-to-shooter’ solution by some.”

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However, Crall said, JADC2 is “something much bigger than maybe what we’ve seen in the past. “This is all about adapting to an adversary’s prowess in what would be a peer or near-peer fight, where information and digital superiority — really information advantage — is key. That’s the outcome of JADC2.”

For example, he said, JADC2 also has a key role in how the US military will conduct operations “below the threshold of armed conflict — actions that are taking place now in the cyber world — [where] JADC2 could benefit speed of decision and processing information,” Crall said. “JADC2 has a lot of play way ‘left of bang’ from some of the more conventional action that we talk about; and that has been a tough message that I think the J6 has to do a better job of getting out.”

Automation at the hub

JADC2, at its heart, is about using emerging machine learning and artificial intelligence to automate access to, analysis of and sharing of data among commanders and forces in the field — in near-real time and across all domains, he explained.

“JADC2 is about automating all of it,” Crall said. “It is about taking advantage of that sensor-rich environment — looking at things like data standards; making sure that we can move this information into an area that, again, we can process it properly; bringing on cloud; bringing on artificial intelligence, predictive analytics; and then undergirding this with a network that can handle this, all domains and partners.”

The “lines of effort” identified by the JADC2 strategy — that is, the discrete functionalities required to build JADC2 functionality — include “pursuit of a common data fabric,” Crall said. That refers to a set of standards and algorithms that allow data to be shared among different weapon systems, different C2 networks, different organizations and services and across different levels of security. The services, he said, have made it very clear that such standards are a top-priority. This is because “data is an integral piece and a prerequisite for most of what we do.”

Figuring out how allies and partner nations can be integrated into JADC2 is another element in the strategy. “You would probably not be surprised to see a line of effort devoted entirely to mission partner environment, where we want to ensure that our partners plug into this, as I mentioned, very early on, and don’t become an afterthought.

“You probably also would not be surprised to see a line of effort centered on network improvements,” Crall added. “What good would it be to build the apparatus that we just described if the network was too fragile to carry it and deliver it in the area that you would want it to go?”

Building service cohesion; congressional support

Crall said that one of the reasons it is so important to speed finalization of the JADC2 strategy and doing the posture review is to ensure that individual efforts by the services to build their own next-generation C2 networks for All Domain Operations don’t conflict.

“They have these mission threads, we call them, or threadlets, where they want to start the very distinct areas of jump-starting elements of JADC2,” he said. “You may have heard them by other names: the Air Force talks about ABMS [Advanced Battle Management System]; the Navy talks about Overmatch; and the Army about Convergence. This isn’t about a competition with folks running off in different directions, and we’re going to pick. This is about good work being done in all of these lanes, but (also) making sure

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that we don't go off and do our own [thing] at the expense of the whole. ... We've got to move in a common direction."

As for actual implementation of the JADC2 strategy, a key start will be figuring out how to "translate" between and how to link the myriad incompatible C2 and communications networks currently used by the services, Crall said. (And even within individual services — think F-22 and F-35 comms.)

However, Crall said, DoD needs to provide "equal attention" to "making what we own interoperable" and ride herd on the development of new capabilities to ensure compatibility. The military can't afford to "spend so much of our time dealing with legacy that we don't look at what we're building and what we're delivering," he stressed. "So, the key is we've got to do both of these simultaneously."

That said, he noted that interoperability must come first because the operational commanders of the Combatant Commands "need to meet the services where they are, because that's what we have to fight tonight with."

Another reason the strategy and posture review are important is they are necessary tools to allow better engagement with Congress, which up to now has been skeptical — especially of ABMS, which is the service contribution to JADC2 farthest along. Crall stressed that Congress has every right to demand information that allows them to judge the merit of the JADC2 endeavor, saying that DoD needs "immediate engagement with professional staff members — so getting the PSMs to see what we're doing — and then eventually getting our leadership to present that to the members themselves in these various committees, or as individuals who have expressed interest."

"Without a plan and the metrics to show our progress — how we're spending the money against what benchmarks and what deliverables, —we're never going to be able to satisfy a very reasonable requirement of 'show me that this effort is worth it'."

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SOCIAL MEDIA OBSERVANCES:

- 11 JAN: Human Trafficking Awareness Day
- 16 JAN: Desert Storm Air War Begins (1991)
- 18 JAN: Martin Luther King Day
- 20 JAN: Inauguration Day
- 26 JAN: National Spouses Day
- 28 JAN: Data Privacy Day
- 30 JAN: Tet Offensive (1968)

JANUARY DIGITAL MEDIA STRATEGY:

During January, the Army's digital engagement plan will support the readiness effort by focusing on a mini-campaign push on the Training Done Right Campaign. The plan will also include sharing the most recent updates about Operation Warp Speed and the Army's role in the fight against COVID-19. In support of the Army's modernization efforts, the new release of the Army Installation Strategy will be highlighted on digital platforms. We will also continue the drumbeat on Project Inclusion by tying it in with Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of equality and inclusion.

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MORNING NEWS OF NOTE

As of 0430 Hours, January 5

Tweets of Note

Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL) tweeted: "Communist China's new defense law is giving more power to Xi and demonstrating their hunger to strengthen their position on the world stage. We cannot ignore the fact that China is an adversary intent on weakening the United States and our allies." On military equipment, Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) said: "For too long, women have volunteered to go into harm's way and have been forced to wear body armor designed for men—myself included. With the provision I secured, that's finally going to change." And U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad wrote: "I return to Doha and the region with expectations that the parties will make tangible progress in the next round of #Afghanistan Peace Negotiations. Both sides must demonstrate they are acting in the best interest of the Afghan people by making real compromises and negotiating an agreement on a political settlement as soon as possible and an immediate significant reduction in violence/ceasefire." ([CLICK HERE FOR ALL TWEETS OF NOTE](#))

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TOP NEWS

1. South Korean tanker was boarded by armed Iran Guard forces

Associated Press, Jan. 5 (0421) | Hyung-Jin Kim and Jon Gambrell

Armed Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops stormed a South Korean tanker and forced the ship to change course and travel to Iran, the vessel's owner said Tuesday, the latest maritime seizure by Tehran amid heightened tensions with the West over its nuclear program.

2. Saudis, Qatar to Settle Feud, Aiding U.S. Efforts on Iran

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 5 (0200), Pg. A1 | Dion Nissenbaum

Saudi Arabia moved to end a yearslong regional dispute with Qatar, taking a first step toward resolving a bitter feud that has fractured the Middle East and hampered U.S. efforts to isolate Iran, Saudi, Kuwaiti and U.S. officials said.

3. A year after Soleimani killing, U.S.-Iran tensions rising

Washington Post, Jan. 5 (0115), Pg. A3 | Missy Ryan, Erin Cunningham, Kareem Fahim and Louisa Loveluck

U.S. tensions with Tehran ran high on Monday, a day after the first anniversary of the American drone strike that killed Iranian military leader Qasem Soleimani, as U.S. officials warned of intelligence suggesting that Iran might still be preparing to retaliate. American officials said they fear a strike could

be more significant than the periodic rocket attacks that Iranian-linked militias in Iraq have lobbed at bases where U.S. troops are located or at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and that the militiamen in Iraq have added new advanced weaponry to their arsenals.

LETHALITY

4. J6 Says JADC2 Is A Strategy; Service Posture Reviews Coming

BreakingDefense.com (Exclusive), Jan. 4 (1625) | Theresa Hitchens

The Joint Staff plans a lightning-fast analysis of the gaps in service capabilities needed for implementation of Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), with results expected as soon as the end of February, says Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Dennis Crall, who leads the effort as the head of the J6.

ALLIANCES/PARTNERSHIPS

5. UK says its aircraft carrier strike group is ready to deploy. China's already watching

CNN.com, Jan. 5 (0021) | Brad Lendon

Britain is officially an aircraft carrier power again. The Royal Navy announced on Monday that the UK's Carrier Strike Group, centered on Britain's largest ever warship, the HMS Queen Elizabeth, had achieved initial operating capability.

6. U.S. Forces Korea CO: America Still Conducting Theater-Level Training Exercises

U.S. Naval Institute News, Jan. 4 (1847) | John Grady

America's top general in Korea said Monday that U.S. forces are still conducting theater-level training exercises. Army Gen. Robert Abrams said American forces "do so without talking about it," arguing there "is really no need for us to advertise it."

REFORM

7. Space Force's small launch program looks to pick up pace after a year of delays

SpaceNews Online, Jan. 4 (1012) | Sandra Erwin

Small satellite launches by the U.S. Space Force slowed considerably in 2020 due to the pandemic and technical setbacks. Small rocket missions that slipped to 2021 include launches by Virgin Orbit, Rocket Lab and Space Vector.

PERSONNEL

8. Pentagon Gets Diversity Watchdog in Bill Passed Over Trump Veto

Bloomberg News, Jan. 5 (0200) | Tony Capaccio

Defense legislation passed in spite of President Donald Trump's veto will bring a heightened focus on diversity issues and efforts to combat white supremacy and extremist behavior within the U.S. military.

9. COVID vaccination starts at more bases in Europe, but not everyone wants the jab

Stars and Stripes Online, Jan. 4 (1407) | Jennifer H. Svan

Airmen in Germany were given their first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine Monday, just over two weeks after it received emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration.

10. Another 43 new coronavirus patients for U.S. military in Japan and South Korea

Stars and Stripes Online, Jan. 4 (0520) | Joseph Ditzler

U.S. military bases in Japan and South Korea reported 43 new cases of the coronavirus over the New Year holiday weekend and up to 6 p.m. Monday.

11. Air Force Will Employ 'Influencers' to Boost Recruitment in 2021

Military.com, Jan. 4 (1203) | Oriana Pawlyk

In the past year, the Air Force has moved to a largely digital recruitment effort, including having one-on-one virtual meet-and-greets with recruiters and social media campaigns, an endeavor made more relevant by the COVID-19 pandemic.

EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

12. Trump keeps carrier in Middle East, overruling his Pentagon chief

Politico Online, Jan. 4 (1329) | Lara Seligman

President Donald Trump was behind the abrupt decision announced on Sunday night to reverse course and keep the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz in the Middle East due to Iranian threats against top U.S. officials, according to two people familiar with the discussions.

13. U.S. health officials to stick with two-dose vaccine plan

Washington Post, Jan. 5 (0115), Pg. A7 | Carolyn Y. Johnson

The U.S. government's top infectious-disease doctor, a leading drug regulator and the Health and Human Services secretary are dismissing suggestions that the second shot of authorized coronavirus vaccines could be delayed to make more doses available faster to more people.

14. Adviser to Biden's defense secretary scoffed at Taiwan, Australia Accords

Washington Times, Jan. 5 (0300), Pg. A1 | Rowan Scarborough

Retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin, if confirmed as secretary of defense, will rejoin a senior adviser at the Pentagon who privately expressed some unconventional views on alliances with longtime U.S. friends abroad, according to documents obtained by The Washington Times. The senior adviser suggested that losing Taiwan to China would not be a “great insult” to the U.S. and expressed dislike for the American security agreement with Australia.

GREAT POWER COMPETITION

15. Pompeo Cites China, North Korea as Trump’s Unfinished Business

Bloomberg News, Jan. 4 (1332) | Nick Wadhams

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo said Monday that he regrets the U.S. hadn’t made more progress in resolving “hard issues” with China or getting North Korea to shed its nuclear arsenal, while saying that the Trump administration has made the world a safer place than it was four years ago.

16. Taiwan says Chinese jets made record 380 incursions in 2020

Agence France-Presse, Jan. 5 (0209) | Not Attributed

Chinese jets made a record 380 incursions into Taiwan’s defence zone last year, a defence official said Tuesday, as a military-linked think-tank warned tensions were now at their highest since the mid-1990s.

17. Australia’s Influence in Pacific Islands Grows as China’s Wanes

Bloomberg News, Jan. 4 (0833) | Jason Scott

Australia is moving to boost ties with small island nations off its eastern coastline, pushing back against China’s growing influence in the Pacific Ocean as the virus outbreak hinders travel.

18. China doubles down on COVID narrative as WHO investigation looms

Reuters, Jan. 5 (0151) | David Stanway

As a team from the World Health Organization (WHO) prepares to visit China to investigate the origins of COVID-19, Beijing has stepped up efforts not only to prevent new outbreaks, but also shape the narrative about when and where the pandemic began.

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

19. DC Guard To Deploy for Pro-Trump Demonstrations In Washington

DefenseOne.com, Jan. 4 (1740) | Katie Bo Williams

Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller has approved the deployment of a small number of unarmed National Guard forces in Washington, D.C., in response to Trump supporters expected to protest the 2020 election results in the nation’s capital this week.

20. Iran, in Jab at U.S., Increases Enrichment Of Uranium at Plant

New York Times, Jan. 5 (0300), Pg. A9 | Marc Santora

Iran announced on Monday that it had increased its uranium enrichment levels, bringing it closer to developing the capacity to produce a nuclear weapon within six months.

21. Niger massacres highlight Sahel vulnerability to jihadis

Agence France-Presse, Jan. 4 (1334) | Amaury Hauchard and Daphne Benoit

The Sahel had just turned the page on a grim 2020 when the new year brought a chilling reminder of the region's vulnerability to ruthless, mobile jihadists.

NOTABLE COMMENTARY

22. China's Nuclear Madness

Newsweek.com, Jan. 4 (0530) | Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea

During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union recognized that arms control served both our countries' national security. So, we engaged in a series of talks that allowed both sides to understand the nature of our respective nuclear arsenals. We established a framework to handle potentially deadly misunderstandings. As President Ronald Reagan famously said, citing a Russian proverb, "Trust, but verify." Today, China allows no such transparency for the world's fastest-growing nuclear arsenal. Beijing refuses to disclose how many nuclear weapons it has, how many it plans to develop, or what it plans to do with them. It is the least transparent of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

23. COVID-19 vaccination rates will increase

USA Today Online, Jan. 4 (1909) | Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II

Operation Warp Speed's unprecedented partnership between the federal government and the private sector produced 20 million first doses of FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine for jurisdictions to order by the end of 2020 — with second doses on hand to ship at the right time.

24. COVID-19 vaccine rollout: Trump, Health and Human Services are throwing away their shot

USA Today Online, Jan. 4 (1909) | Editorial

In business, it's better to underpromise and overdeliver. But when it comes to getting Americans inoculated with COVID-19 vaccines, the Trump administration appears to be doing the opposite. Last year, President Donald Trump and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar promised 100

million doses by the end of 2020. As late as Dec. 13, Azar expressed confidence that at least 20 million people would be vaccinated by Jan. 1. "Oh sure, yes," he told "Face the Nation." By year's end, however, more than 14 million doses of new Pfizer and Moderna vaccines had been delivered to states and over 3 million people had received the first of two shots. (Total shots as of Monday evening stood at nearly 4.6 million, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.) Even accounting for lags in reporting, that's far short of the projections.

25. Brexit Arrives, for Better or Worse

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 5 (0200), Pg. A13 | Walter Russell Mead

For the U.S., Brexit is a challenge. Britain's egress from the EU didn't only widen the English Channel; the Atlantic Ocean is going to be harder to cross. Without the U.K., the EU is likely over time to become less Atlanticist, more statist and more inward looking. It will almost inevitably seek to define itself in juxtaposition to America in various ways. The rush to sign an investment treaty with China despite public requests for delay and consultations from senior members of the incoming U.S. administration is a sign of things to come as the center of gravity of the post-Brexit EU shifts east.

TWEETS OF NOTE

Twitter, Jan. 4

TOP NEWS

1. South Korean tanker was boarded by armed Iran Guard forces

Associated Press, Jan. 5 (0421) | Hyung-Jin Kim and Jon Gambrell

Armed Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops stormed a South Korean tanker and forced the ship to change course and travel to Iran, the vessel's owner said Tuesday, the latest maritime seizure by Tehran amid heightened tensions with the West over its nuclear program.

The military raid on Monday on the MT Hankuk Chemi was at odds with Iranian explanations that they stopped the vessel for polluting the waters of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Instead, it appeared the Islamic Republic sought to increase its leverage over Seoul ahead of negotiations over billions of dollars in Iranian assets frozen in South Korean banks amid a U.S. pressure campaign targeting Iran.

Iran on Monday also began enriching uranium up to 20%, a small technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%, at its underground Fordo facility. That move appeared aimed at pressuring the U.S. in the final days of President Donald Trump's administration, which unilaterally withdrew from

Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers, and ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden, who has said he'd be willing to re-enter the accord.

An official at DM Shipping Co. Ltd. of Busan, South Korea, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorized to talk to journalists, offered details of the Hankuk Chemi's seizure. The vessel had been traveling from Jubail, Saudi Arabia, to Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates when Iranian forces reached the ship and said they would board it.

Initially, Iranian forces said they wanted to run an unspecified check on the ship, the official said. As the vessel's captain spoke to company security officials back in South Korea, armed Iranian troops stormed the tanker as an Iranian helicopter flew overhead, the official said. The troops demanded the captain sail the tanker into Iranian waters over an unspecified investigation and refused to explain themselves, the official added.

The company has since been unable to reach the captain, the official said. Security cameras installed on the ship that initially relayed footage on the scene on the deck to the company are now turned off, the official said.

After the company lost contact with the captain, the company received an anti-piracy security alert notice, suggesting the captain activated an onboard warning system, the official said. It remains unclear if the ship tried to call for outside assistance.

The U.S. Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet routinely patrols the area along with an American-led coalition monitoring the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of the world's oil passes. A separate European-led effort also operates there as well.

The official denied the vessel had been polluting the waters.

In past months Iran has sought to escalate pressure on South Korea to unlock some \$7 billion in frozen assets from oil sales earned before the Trump administration tightened sanctions on the country's oil exports.

The head of Iran's central bank recently announced that the country was seeking to use funds tied up in a South Korean bank to purchase coronavirus vaccines through COVAX, an international program designed to distribute COVID-19 vaccines to participating countries.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry said Tuesday it plans to dispatch a delegation of officials to Iran for talks on securing the early release of the ship and its crew members. The crew included sailors from Indonesia, Myanmar, South Korea and Vietnam, according to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. South

Korea's Defense Ministry said it was sending its anti-piracy unit to near the Strait of Hormuz — a 4,400-ton-class destroyer with about 300 troops.

Foreign Ministry's spokesman Choi Young-sam said Iranian officials have assured South Korea that the ship's crew were all safe. He said an Iran-based South Korean diplomat has been dispatched to the location of the detained ship.

The U.S. State Department joined South Korea in calling for the tanker's immediate release, accusing Iran of threatening "navigational rights and freedoms" in the Persian Gulf in order to "extort the international community into relieving the pressure of sanctions."

Last year, Iran similarly seized a British-flagged oil tanker and held it for months after one of its tankers was held off Gibraltar.

Also Tuesday, the Iranian military began a wide-ranging, two-day aerial drill in the country's north, state media reported, featuring combat and surveillance unmanned aircraft, as well as naval drones dispatched from vessels in Iran's southern waters. State TV broadcast footage of scores of drones on a runway in the northern province of Semnan near the vast Kavir Desert.

Iran has previously conducted drills with military drones; it routinely releases footage from surveillance drones of U.S. aircraft carriers passing through the Persian Gulf. This week's drill also incorporates modern "suicide drones" that hover over a battlefield before diving down to a target, the TV report said.

The latest tense episodes between Iran and the West coincide with the anniversary of the U.S. drone strike that killed Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad last January. Iran responded by launching ballistic missiles at U.S. bases in Iraq, injuring dozens of U.S. troops. Tehran also accidentally shot down a Ukrainian passenger jet that same night, killing all 176 people on board.

As the anniversary approached and fears grew of possible Iranian retaliation, the U.S. dispatched B-52 bombers over the region and ordered a nuclear-powered submarine into the Persian Gulf.

Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Christopher Miller said late Sunday that he changed his mind about sending the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz home from the Middle East and instead will keep the vessel on duty. He cited Iranian threats against Trump and other U.S. government officials as the reason for the redeployment, without elaborating.

Last week, sailors discovered a limpet mine stuck on a tanker in the Persian Gulf off Iraq, near the Iranian border, as it prepared to transfer fuel to another tanker owned by a company traded on the New York Stock Exchange. No one has claimed responsibility for placing the mine, though it comes after

similar attacks in 2019 near the Strait of Hormuz that the U.S. Navy blamed on Iran. Tehran denied involvement.

--Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran; Isabel DeBre in Dubai; Tia Goldenberg in Tel Aviv, Israel; and Robert Burns and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report

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2. Saudis, Qatar to Settle Feud, Aiding U.S. Efforts on Iran

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 5 (0200), Pg. A1 | Dion Nissenbaum

Saudi Arabia moved to end a yearslong regional dispute with Qatar, taking a first step toward resolving a bitter feud that has fractured the Middle East and hampered U.S. efforts to isolate Iran, Saudi, Kuwaiti and U.S. officials said.

Riyadh on Monday reopened its airspace and land and sea borders to its tiny neighbor, and leaders of the rival nations will gather on Tuesday to sign an agreement meant to end a three-year-old regional blockade of Qatar, which Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt accused in 2017 of supporting terrorism and aligning with Iran.

White House senior adviser Jared Kushner, who helped broker an end to the standoff over the past few weeks, flew to Saudi Arabia on Monday to attend the signing after receiving a rare invitation to the Gulf Cooperation Council meeting where leaders are expected to take the first major steps in ending the dispute.

U.S. and Saudi officials said Saudi Arabia had a new incentive to end the dispute: The imminent start of the administration of President-elect Joe Biden. Mr. Biden, a Democrat, has vowed to take a tougher approach toward Saudi Arabia than President Trump, a Republican who stood by Riyadh's leaders when they were accused of jailing human-rights activists and killing Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

If it holds, an end to the blockade takes a diplomatic problem off the table for the incoming Biden team, which wants to turn its focus toward consolidating support for efforts to draw Iran back into the 2015 nuclear agreement and negotiate a follow-on agreement addressing Tehran's ballistic-missile program and regional ambitions.

U.S. and Saudi officials said they had secured a compromise that will allow Qatar again to fly planes over the Gulf nation in exchange for Qatar Airways dropping a series of legal challenges against the four nations that sought \$5 billion in compensation for the airspace bans.

While the detente won't address the underlying issues that led to the dispute, it will resolve the most problematic short-term challenges for Qatar and its rival Gulf neighbors.

"This is the biggest breakthrough we've had to date," one senior Trump administration official said. "It doesn't mean they will love each other and be best friends, but it does mean they will be able to work together."

Qatar's regional rivals remain wary. Officials from several Gulf nations warned that the Saudi-led deal would only paper over the problems and predicted that the divisions will quickly re-emerge unless Qatar takes major steps to reorient relations with its Gulf neighbors.

"Everyone is now waiting to see if Qatar does what it says it will do, now that we have a framework agreed upon," a senior Bahraini official said.

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is expected to attend Tuesday's meeting as a sign of the nation's commitment to resolving the dispute, according to an official government statement.

U.S. and Middle East officials said they hope Tuesday's meeting will set the stage for new talks meant to consolidate regional opposition to Iran and curb the animosity among the Gulf neighbors.

One major sticking point is the media war among the nations, where state-backed news outlets routinely target their rivals with negative coverage.

"Is it perfect? No," a second senior Trump administration official said. "Ultimately, I think what this shows is that the parties have more to gain from ending this now than from letting it go on beyond the Trump administration."

The Middle East nations' severing of ties with Qatar in 2017 had Mr. Trump's enthusiastic backing, even though Qatar is home to the largest U.S. military base in the region, which has long been used to carry out airstrikes against Islamic State forces in the Middle East and Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan.

Saudi Arabia and its allies issued a list of 13 demands for Qatar, including shutting the state-backed Al Jazeera satellite news network, severing ties with the Muslim Brotherhood, and cutting off its military cooperation with Iran. Doha rejected the accusations that it was aligned with Iran and supported terrorism, and managed to mitigate the damage caused by the dispute.

The Trump administration quickly reversed course and sought unsuccessfully for years to broker an end to the dispute. Over the past year, negotiations focused mainly on resolving the fight over airspace.

To evade the ban on flying over Saudi Arabia, Qatar rerouted some planes over Iran, providing Tehran with a new source of funds for use of its airspace while the U.S. was working to choke off money flowing to the government. Mr. Trump pressed Saudi Arabia to cede ground on the issue, but Riyadh was reluctant to give up its main pressure point with Qatar.

The feud was stoked by critical media coverage that incensed leaders in the rival capitals. In the fall of 2019, Qatar's foreign minister secretly flew to Riyadh to offer a new deal to end the dispute. Qatar agreed to constrain coverage by Al Jazeera, Gulf officials said, but the network continued to run programming that infuriated leaders in Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E. and Egypt.

Late last year, Gulf leaders reached out to Mr. Kushner and asked him to help, U.S. officials said. Mr. Kushner had developed close ties with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. And he had business ties in Qatar, where the Kushner family unsuccessfully tried to secure critical funding to bail out a financially troubled Manhattan real-estate project.

While Mr. Kushner was working to end the dispute in December, the Trump administration approved the sale of more than \$760 million in arms to Saudi Arabia and more than \$100 million to Egypt, which had pushed back on the U.S.-brokered deal.

U.S. officials said the arms sales weren't related to the deal to be signed on Tuesday.

Qatar has its own incentives to strike a deal to end the airspace restrictions: The tiny Gulf nation is preparing to host the 2022 soccer World Cup.

--Summer Said in Dubai contributed to this article

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3. A year after Soleimani killing, U.S.-Iran tensions rising

Washington Post, Jan. 5 (0115), Pg. A3 | Missy Ryan, Erin Cunningham, Kareem Fahim and Louisa Loveluck

U.S. tensions with Tehran ran high on Monday, a day after the first anniversary of the American drone strike that killed Iranian military leader Qasem Soleimani, as U.S. officials warned of intelligence suggesting that Iran might still be preparing to retaliate.

American officials said they fear a strike could be more significant than the periodic rocket attacks that Iranian-linked militias in Iraq have lobbed at bases where U.S. troops are located or at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and that the militiamen in Iraq have added new advanced weaponry to their arsenals.

"We still believe that that could rapidly move from planning to execution with little or no notice," a U.S. official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe an assessment of Iran's intentions. The concern, the official continued, is that any potential action "is not going to look like the standard proxy attack."

The officials did not provide evidence of the Iranian preparations or say what led them to conclude that Tehran was transferring weapons into Iraq. Iran's foreign minister has warned in recent days that "provocateurs" may be planning an attack on U.S. interests to bait the United States into a war in the final days of the Trump administration.

The U.S. assessment comes as Iran took a major step away from the 2015 international nuclear deal. According to Ali Rabie, a government spokesman, Tehran notified the International Atomic Energy Agency on Monday that it had begun 20 percent uranium enrichment at Fordow, an underground facility near the city of Qom.

The action defies the terms of the landmark agreement with world powers, which restricts Iranian enrichment and makes the Fordow site off-limits for uranium.

Iran began increasing its nuclear activities after President Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018 as part of his "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran, which the administration has identified as its chief rival in the Middle East.

The Jan. 3, 2020, strike on Soleimani, who oversaw a network of Iranian-supported proxy groups across the Middle East, marked the apex of that extended confrontation with Iran. Days later, Iran launched a significant missile attack on a U.S.-occupied base in Iraq, injuring scores of U.S. troops.

In recent weeks, Iranian officials have warned of further retaliation and issued threats against the United States, saying that not even Trump is safe.

In another apparent sign of intensifying concern, acting Defense Secretary Christopher C. Miller late Sunday abruptly reversed last week's decision to send the aircraft carrier Nimitz back to the United States from the Middle East. The carrier, which transports fighter jets and electronic attack aircraft and is accompanied by a flotilla including guided-missile destroyers, is now in the far eastern section of U.S. Central Command's naval zone, near India.

The nuclear-powered Nimitz, the Navy's oldest functioning carrier, has been part of the response to earlier U.S. confrontations with Iran. In 1979, U.S. pilots launched aircraft from its decks in a failed attempt to rescue Americans held hostage in Tehran. Before traveling east, the Nimitz supported an operation to reduce the U.S. troop footprint in Somalia.

Miller's decision on the Nimitz is the latest in a series of dramatic decisions during the final months under Trump, who fired Miller's predecessor, Mark T. Esper, after the Nov. 3 election.

In the lead-up to the first anniversary of the strike on Soleimani, which also killed a senior Iraqi militia figure, the Pentagon has taken other steps intended to deter Iran, including flying B-52 bombers to the region, and has reduced the staff at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. There are about 2,500 U.S. troops in Iraq.

Iranian-linked militia groups have been blamed for attacks on U.S. diplomatic and military facilities in Iraq over the past year, most recently firing a barrage of 21 rockets at the U.S. Embassy after a months-long lull in hostilities. But in the run-up to Trump's departure from office, Iraqi militia officials have mostly appeared to want to rein in any possibility of escalation, condemning rocket attacks and insisting that they do not intend to threaten the U.S. Embassy in the short term.

"We will not enter the embassy of evil nor topple the government, there is plenty of time for that," Hussain al-Hamidawi, secretary general of Iraq's Kataib Hezbollah militia, said Sunday in a statement.

Thousands of Iraqi militia supporters gathered in Baghdad on Sunday to commemorate the deaths in a vociferous but tightly stage-managed event. From a stage above the central Tahrir Square, militia officials urged the expulsion of U.S. troops from Iraq as the crowd chanted anti-American songs. The Soleimani strike intensified a long-standing dilemma for Iraqi leaders, who must juggle the desires of the United States, a major financial and military ally, with those of Iran, with whom Iraq shares a long border and deep religious and social ties.

The nuclear deal allows Iran to enrich uranium to a 3.67 percent concentration of uranium-235, a fissile isotope, at another site and to maintain a small stockpile of it to use as fuel for its nuclear power reactors. Uranium enriched to 20 percent U-235 is suitable for use in an old, U.S.-supplied research reactor in Tehran that began operating in 1967. However, the 20 percent enrichment level is also a relatively short, technical step from the 90 percent needed for the fissile material in a nuclear weapon. Iran began ramping up its nuclear activities after Trump withdrew from the agreement, which curbed Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for major sanctions relief.

Trump then began reimposing crippling sanctions. In response, Iran said it would progressively abandon some elements of the deal, notably the limits on the purity and size of its enriched-uranium stockpile, although it has maintained its commitment in the deal that it will not build or acquire nuclear arms.

The IAEA said in a statement Monday that it has informed member states that Iran "began feeding uranium already enriched up to 4.1 percent U-235 into six centrifuge cascades at Fordow for further

enrichment up to 20 percent." It said that "IAEA inspectors were present at the site" for the start of the process.

Iran's enrichment announcement, two weeks before President-elect Joe Biden is set to be sworn in, may constitute a new obstacle to his team's stated goal of rejoining the nuclear deal if Iran also returned to compliance.

Israel, which maintains that Tehran is seeking nuclear weapons, immediately condemned the Iranian move. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted that it "cannot be explained in any way other than the further realization of its intention to develop a military nuclear program."

Iran, meanwhile, has denounced recent shows of force as provocative and has suggested Israel may take action of its own. On Saturday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on Twitter that "new intelligence from Iraq indicate that agent-provocateurs are plotting attacks against Americans - putting an outgoing Trump in a bind with a fake casus belli," using a term for an action that justifies a war.

--Cunningham and Fahim reported from Istanbul. Loveluck reported from Baghdad

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LETHALITY

4. J6 Says JADC2 Is A Strategy; Service Posture Reviews Coming

BreakingDefense.com (Exclusive), Jan. 4 (1625) | Theresa Hitchens

WASHINGTON -- The Joint Staff plans a lightning-fast analysis of the gaps in service capabilities needed for implementation of Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), with results expected as soon as the end of February, says Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Dennis Crall, who leads the effort as the head of the J6.

"That gap analysis starts in January. We expect by the end of February to produce our JADC2 Posture Review. And that Posture Review will show the department exactly where we are deficient in executing our mission or missions," Crall said in an exclusive, one-hour interview.

"We don't believe we can have an effective strategy with real milestones if we don't look at our gap analysis," he said. "That is what we will use to serve up against the funding strategy, and we will have to prioritize those to make sure we can deliver that capability."

Meanwhile, the J6 is within “weeks” of completing the overarching JADC2 strategy, said Crall. That will go to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley and presumptive Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin for approval and signatures.

The J6 held consultations with DoD and service leaders to coordinate on the draft JADC2 strategy during the week of Dec. 21. “We’ve got some good feedback. We have some very discreet lines of effort and we now have a roadmap. ... We’ve written it and now we’re going through that corrective phase of taking in some of that good input,” said Crall, whose official title is director for command, control, communications, and computers/cyber chief information officer, Joint Staff J6. “The plans of attack and milestones are not quite done. Once the strategy is determined, we then have to lay out who’s responsible for which pieces, and then look at funding against those.”

Not A Program; An Approach

Crall explained that JADC2 isn’t just a network to link all sensors to all shooters, but is a new approach to military decision-making. “JADC2 is that larger, broader — in simplistic terms — ability to sense, make sense, and act,” he said.

The JADC2 strategy, he said, is separate from — but inexorably linked to — the Joint Warfighting Concept, initiated by former Defense Secretary Mark Esper. The JADC2 strategy is a strategy for decision-making. The Joint Warfighting Concept is the strategy outlining the new American way of war known as All Domain Operations; that is, next-generation, information-based wars using enormous amount of fast computer analysis across the land, air, sea, space and cyberspace domains.

So, the JADC2 strategy feeds into the Joint Warfighting Concept, he elaborated: “It informed the Joint Warfighting Concept, but the strategy that I’m describing is the JADC2 strategy proper, that would sit, really, at the top with the Joint Warfighting Concept.”

The JADC2 strategy will be incorporated into all the supporting concepts that make up the Joint Warfighting Concept — which include, as Sydney and I reported in July, how to manage joint fires and to create so-called information advantage. “There isn’t a supporting concept that doesn’t have information over the OODA Loop ... at the heart of successful execution,” Crall said. (The OODA Loop is the cycle of Observe, Orient, Decide and Act, first described by legendary strategist John Boyd as the key to outthinking adversaries. It lies at the heart of most modern US military strategy.)

Yes, all this is confusing, Crall admitted, in part because of the short-hand and multiple, duplicative acronyms being used by the Pentagon and the services.

“I’ll describe a little bit of what JADC2 is and isn’t, because it is not that clear to many, and I think we’re responsible for that. We’re rolling out, hopefully, a campaign to clear up some of the misconceptions,”

he said. “JADC2, unfortunately has a lot of the same letters in the acronyms that involve things like our Joint Warfighting Concept and JCC2, which is our command and control subconcept for the Joint Warfighting Concept. And then JADC2 has been used in some cases narrowly as a ‘sensor-to-shooter’ solution by some.”

However, Crall said, JADC2 is “something much bigger than maybe what we’ve seen in the past. “This is all about adapting to an adversary’s prowess in what would be a peer or near-peer fight, where information and digital superiority — really information advantage — is key. That’s the outcome of JADC2.”

For example, he said, JADC2 also has a key role in how the US military will conduct operations “below the threshold of armed conflict — actions that are taking place now in the cyber world — [where] JADC2 could benefit speed of decision and processing information,” Crall said. “JADC2 has a lot of play way ‘left of bang’ from some of the more conventional action that we talk about; and that has been a tough message that I think the J6 has to do a better job of getting out.”

Automation at the hub

JADC2, at its heart, is about using emerging machine learning and artificial intelligence to automate access to, analysis of and sharing of data among commanders and forces in the field — in near-real time and across all domains, he explained.

“JADC2 is about automating all of it,” Crall said. “It is about taking advantage of that sensor-rich environment — looking at things like data standards; making sure that we can move this information into an area that, again, we can process it properly; bringing on cloud; bringing on artificial intelligence, predictive analytics; and then undergirding this with a network that can handle this, all domains and partners.”

The “lines of effort” identified by the JADC2 strategy — that is, the discrete functionalities required to build JADC2 functionality — include “pursuit of a common data fabric,” Crall said. That refers to a set of standards and algorithms that allow data to be shared among different weapon systems, different C2 networks, different organizations and services and across different levels of security. The services, he said, have made it very clear that such standards are a top-priority. This is because “data is an integral piece and a prerequisite for most of what we do.”

Figuring out how allies and partner nations can be integrated into JADC2 is another element in the strategy. “You would probably not be surprised to see a line of effort devoted entirely to mission partner environment, where we want to ensure that our partners plug into this, as I mentioned, very early on, and don’t become an afterthought.

“You probably also would not be surprised to see a line of effort centered on network improvements,” Crall added. “What good would it be to build the apparatus that we just described if the network was too fragile to carry it and deliver it in the area that you would want it to go?”

Building service cohesion; congressional support

Crall said that one of the reasons it is so important to speed finalization of the JADC2 strategy and doing the posture review is to ensure that individual efforts by the services to build their own next-generation C2 networks for All Domain Operations don’t conflict.

“They have these mission threads, we call them, or threadlets, where they want to start the very distinct areas of jump-starting elements of JADC2,” he said. “You may have heard them by other names: the Air Force talks about ABMS [Advanced Battle Management System]; the Navy talks about Overmatch; and the Army about Convergence. This isn’t about a competition with folks running off in different directions, and we’re going to pick. This is about good work being done in all of these lanes, but (also) making sure that we don’t go off and do our own [thing] at the expense of the whole. ... We’ve got to move in a common direction.”

As for actual implementation of the JADC2 strategy, a key start will be figuring out how to “translate” between and how to link the myriad incompatible C2 and communications networks currently used by the services, Crall said. (And even within individual services — think F-22 and F-35 comms.)

However, Crall said, DoD needs to provide “equal attention” to “making what we own interoperable” and ride herd on the development of new capabilities to ensure compatibility. The military can’t afford to “spend so much of our time dealing with legacy that we don’t look at what we’re building and what we’re delivering,” he stressed. “So, the key is we’ve got to do both of these simultaneously.”

That said, he noted that interoperability must come first because the operational commanders of the Combatant Commands “need to meet the services where they are, because that’s what we have to fight tonight with.”

Another reason the strategy and posture review are important is they are necessary tools to allow better engagement with Congress, which up to now has been skeptical — especially of ABMS, which is the service contribution to JADC2 farthest along. Crall stressed that Congress has every right to demand information that allows them to judge the merit of the JADC2 endeavor, saying that DoD needs “immediate engagement with professional staff members — so getting the PSMs to see what we’re doing — and then eventually getting our leadership to present that to the members themselves in these various committees, or as individuals who have expressed interest.”

"Without a plan and the metrics to show our progress — how we're spending the money against what benchmarks and what deliverables, —we're never going to be able to satisfy a very reasonable requirement of 'show me that this effort is worth it'."

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ALLIANCES/PARTNERSHIPS

5. UK says its aircraft carrier strike group is ready to deploy. China's already watching

CNN.com, Jan. 5 (0021) | Brad London

Britain is officially an aircraft carrier power again. The Royal Navy announced on Monday that the UK's Carrier Strike Group, centered on Britain's largest ever warship, the HMS Queen Elizabeth, had achieved initial operating capability.

The designation means the 65,000-ton carrier, its air assets including F-35 stealth fighter jets and helicopters, as well as its escorting destroyers, frigates, submarines and supply ships, are ready to deploy within five days of receiving orders to do so.

Qualified pilots and ground crews are on notice.

"This is a hugely significant milestone for HMS Queen Elizabeth, the Royal Navy and the whole country. This achievement is a testament to the determination of our service personnel and industry workforce who have delivered this first-rate military capability, a capability held by only a handful of nations," UK Defense Minister Jeremy Quin said in a statement.

The commander of carrier strike group, Commodore Steve Moorehouse, touted his unit's readiness in a Twitter post.

"In practical terms, my Strike Group is now at Very High Readiness, meaning we are at 5 days' notice to deploy, if required, in response to global events & in defence of British interests," Moorehouse tweeted.

In a followup tweet, he hinted at what is to come. Carrier strike group staff are planning for the Queen Elizabeth's first operational deployment, which Moorhouse said would encompass the Royal Navy's largest peacetime task group in 25 years and be proof of Britain's commitment to maintaining worldwide security -- "a visible demonstration of Global Britain," Moorhouse called it.

Specific dates for the first deployment have yet to be announced.

UK as a global power

Since 2017, UK defense officials have been saying the carrier's first deployment would include Asia and the Pacific on a route from Britain that would likely take it through the South China Sea.

"The UK is a global power with truly global interest ... we must be prepared to compete for our interests and our values far, far from home," then-UK Defense Minister Gavin Williamson said in 2019.

The carrier would take its contingent of state-of-the-art F-35 stealth fighter jets into a region where "China is developing its modern military capability and its commercial power," Williamson said in an address to the Royal United Services Institute think tank in London.

But the presence of any foreign warships in the South China Sea is frowned upon by China. Beijing claims almost all of the 3.3 million square kilometer (1.3 million square mile) South China Sea as its territory.

Even ahead of Monday's Royal Navy readiness announcement, Chinese military officials were warning London against interfering in the region.

"We believe the South China Sea should not become a battleground for big power competition, or a sea full of roaming warships," Senior Col. Tan Kefei, a spokesman for China's Defense Ministry, said at a December 31 news briefing reported by the state-run Xinhua media agency in a posting on the Chinese military's official English website.

Foreign powers sending their warships to the South China Sea, where China has built military bases on man-made islands, were behind the "militarization" of the waterway, Tan said.

"The Chinese military will take necessary measures to protect national sovereignty, security, and its developmental interests, as well as safeguard peace and stability in the region," he said.

NATO and the Chinese threat

Tan's comments followed a report published late last year from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), of which Britain is a major player, calling the rise of the Chinese military a threat to the alliance.

"China has an increasingly global strategic agenda, supported by its economic and military heft. It has proven its willingness to use force against its neighbors, as well as economic coercion and intimidatory diplomacy well beyond the Indo-Pacific region," the NATO report said.

"China is increasingly likely to project military power globally, including potentially in the Euro-Atlantic area."

Yet a British presence in the South China Sea is not without precedent. In 2018, the Royal Navy amphibious assault ship HMS Albion steamed closed to the Chinese-claimed Paracel Islands in the South China Sea in what Beijing called a "provocative action."

And in 2019, UK and US warships conducted six days of coordinated drills in the South China Sea.

The UK-US cooperation is expected to continue with the carrier's upcoming deployment to the Asia-Pacific.

When the Queen Elizabeth held large-scale exercises in the Atlantic last fall, US Marine Corps F-35B fighter jets and Royal Navy F-35s were on board -- forming the largest concentration of fifth-generation stealth fighters ever at sea. That same aircraft contingent is planned for the Pacific deployment.

As those exercises for the carrier strike group began, Moorhouse, its commander, noted the significance.

"Protected by a ring of advanced destroyers, frigates, helicopters and submarines, and equipped with fifth-generation fighters, HMS Queen Elizabeth is able to strike from the sea at a time and place of our choosing; and with our NATO allies at our side, we will be ready to fight and win in the most demanding circumstances," he said in a statement last fall.

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6. U.S. Forces Korea CO: America Still Conducting Theater-Level Training Exercises

U.S. Naval Institute News, Jan. 4 (1847) | John Grady

America's top general in Korea said Monday that U.S. forces are still conducting theater-level training exercises.

Army Gen. Robert Abrams said American forces "do so without talking about it," arguing there "is really no need for us to advertise it."

Speaking at an ICAS event on Monday, Abrams said "we have adjusted in some cases" the exercises' size and scale and "cancelled or postponed a handful," but they are continuing.

President Donald Trump, following his 2018 summit meeting with North Korean lead Kim Jong-un, had ordered a pause in the exercises to facilitate diplomatic talks about denuclearizing the peninsula. But

as Abrams said, for the past 16 months, the North Koreans “haven’t been answering the phone” on resuming negotiations.

Despite North Korea’s refusal to resume negotiations on the future of the peninsula, Abrams emphasized that the “reduction in tensions [since 2017] is palpable” from the Demilitarized Zone to offshore islands. Pyongyang has so far not resumed testing nuclear weapons, he added. But over the last three years, Abrams noted Kim has built up conventional forces – including special operations; expanded capabilities in cyber and information operations; and the size, range and lethality of its growing ballistic missile arsenal.

Abrams, in response to a question, said the North’s parade of sophisticated missiles and other weapons in a night-time celebration of its 75th anniversary might not be more than show at this point. “We don’t have people on the ground there ... to look under the hood” to see if the missiles worked, he said. “We ought to be careful thinking that all of those are fully capable systems.”

He said North Korea maintains the fourth or fifth largest armed force in the world. At some point “quantity is quality,” particularly in a mountainous terrain like Korea’s. “You have to look no further than Afghanistan to see how this is infantry combat.” he said.

“In this terrain, numbers matter.”

During his opening remarks, Abrams said the most recent three-week theater-level training event took place despite the COVID-19 pandemic because the United States has employed an “aggressive reception and quarantine program” for service members coming onto the peninsula. Abrams said that in some respects, “it is more stringent than Korea’s entry requirements.”

So far only five American service members have tested positive for the virus in Korea, he said. This “builds trust and confidence of everyone.”

The pandemic also “has not dampened our defense commitment,” he said.

“For [training] to be credible, we have to have live-fire training,” but “we are sending our air crews [fixed-wing and rotary] to train off the peninsula,” he said. Abrams noted this is also affecting crew qualification schedules. The situation “is not sustainable in the long term,” a warning he also issued last fall.

Overall, “we’ve got all the tools we need” to deter North Korea. He added that he expected to be supported by U.S. 7th Fleet if push came to shove, as well as air units from Japan and partners from the United Nations.

“We have a very large quiver of a lot of different arrows” to defend South Korea, Abrams said.

REFORM

7. Space Force's small launch program looks to pick up pace after a year of delays

SpaceNews Online, Jan. 4 (1012) | Sandra Erwin

WASHINGTON -- Small satellite launches by the U.S. Space Force slowed considerably in 2020 due to the pandemic and technical setbacks. Small rocket missions that slipped to 2021 include launches by Virgin Orbit, Rocket Lab and Space Vector.

"Some of the small launch providers ran into technical challenges during the development of their systems and that has delayed missions into 2021," said Lt. Col. Ryan Rose, chief of the small launch and targets division of the Space and Missile Systems Center's launch enterprise.

"COVID-19 also had an impact on the execution of these missions," Rose told SpaceNews in an interview from Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico.

Rose runs the Space Force office that procures small-satellite launch services for military and civilian government agencies. Both the Space Force's and NASA's small launch programs will be taking on important roles in a crowded market where dozens of companies are developing small launch vehicles and need to secure government contracts to stay competitive.

Rose said the Space Force plans to evaluate as many emerging providers as possible and figure out how to contract for their services to meet a still uncertain future demand.

Small-satellite national security launches had a tough 2020, when only one mission flew — a Northrop Grumman Minotaur 4 classified launch for the National Reconnaissance Office that lifted off in July from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. The solid-propellant four-stage Minotaur is made with three government-furnished solid-rocket motors from decommissioned intercontinental ballistic missiles.

One Space Force launch that had been planned for 2020 but didn't happen is the Space Test Program STP-27RM mission scheduled to fly on Rocket Lab's Electron rocket.

The mission dubbed Monolith is an Air Force Research Laboratory experiment to test the ability of small satellites to support large aperture payloads to monitor space weather. The launch has been delayed not by vehicle issues but by the longer-than-expected certification of Rocket Lab's new launch pad at Wallops, Virginia. NASA has yet to sign off on the vehicle's autonomous flight abort system

Rose said the Space Force is targeting a spring or summer launch. "We've been working with NASA on a launch opportunity," she said.

Another Air Force Research Laboratory experiment that had been scheduled for 2020 is a sounding rocket mission also from Wallops on a new vehicle built by Space Vector and Kratos. This is an AFRL experiment to collect data during the vehicle's suborbital flight.

The sounding rocket mission is now projected to fly in the spring, said Rose.

Two Virgin Orbit launches planned

Two other Space Force launches that slid into 2021 are Space Test Program missions awarded to Virgin Orbit, a sister company to Richard Branson's space venture Virgin Galactic. The company intends to deploy satellites using rockets released from under the wing of a Boeing 747 airliner.

Virgin Orbit's LauncherOne has yet to reach orbit. The company's first attempt failed in May when the rocket's first-stage engine shut down a few seconds after ignition. Another test flight was planned for late 2020 but the company had to stand down temporarily to allow employees "precautionary quarantines" amid the pandemic, Virgin Orbit said. A new launch attempt could happen this month at the Mojave spaceport in California.

One of Virgin Orbit's Space Force contracts is to launch the STP-27VP mission from the the island of Guam in the Western Pacific. A second Virgin Orbit Space Force mission planned for 2021 is STP-S28, also from Guam.

Rose said the target for STP-27VP is summer and STP-S28 later in the year.

Another Minotaur launch for the National Reconnaissance Office, NROL-111, is planned for this summer from Wallops. This is the second of three missions the Space Force procured from Northrop Grumman for the NRO. The first was NROL-129 launched in 2020. A third one, NROL-174, has not yet been scheduled.

Rose said the Space Force is looking to launch other Space Test Program payloads using emerging small launch providers but that will depend on the status of newly developed vehicles. "We'll announce this when we're ready," she said.

The Space Force also intends to sponsor a "tactically responsive launch" demonstration with a small rocket provider some time in 2021. The Space and Missile Systems Center is "pushing industry to

demonstrate responsive launch requirements,” said Rose. That means a provider has to show it can launch a payload within months of a contract award.

Responsive launch is a Space Force priority but the details of how these services will be procured have yet to be worked out, Rose said. It’s a more complex service than just providing a rocket, she added. “You need to make sure the satellite is ready, that there’s a ground system that can support it, it’s the entire logistics package.”

Congress in the 2021 defense spending bill added \$15 million for tactically responsive launch even though the Pentagon did not request any money for the program.

Rose said she could not predict if or when any of the new small launchers will be ready to fly, and said the Space Force wants to work with as many providers as possible.

Her office in October 2019 selected several small launch providers to compete for task orders over nine years. That list includes providers that have not yet flown orbital missions, including Virgin Orbit, Xbow Launch Systems, Firefly Aerospace and Aevum Launch. More companies are expected to be added to the list in the near future.

“Our customers are building more small sats,” Rose said. “We’re trying to make sure we have contract vehicles available to satisfy those requirements. It’s hard to say how many providers we’ll need.”

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PERSONNEL

8. Pentagon Gets Diversity Watchdog in Bill Passed Over Trump Veto

Bloomberg News, Jan. 5 (0200) | Tony Capaccio

Defense legislation passed in spite of President Donald Trump’s veto will bring a heightened focus on diversity issues and efforts to combat white supremacy and extremist behavior within the U.S. military.

Along with billions of dollars for new weapons systems and a pay raise for troops, a new deputy inspector general’s position was created by the bipartisan defense authorization bill to carry out audits, investigations and evaluations of military personnel policies, programs and systems to ensure they address diversity priorities.

The new watchdog will also have a key role in responding to white supremacist and criminal gang activity by military personnel, according to the legislation passed on Jan. 1 over Trump’s veto.

The deputy inspector general “will keep the heat on the military to make sure that racial inequality does not fade from the priority list, that these provisions are implemented successfully, and that Congress will receive an independent source of findings and recommendations,” said Representative Jackie Speier, the California Democrat who heads the House Armed Services Committee’s military personnel panel.

Once the position is filled, the deputy inspector general could, for instance, review the extent to which the military services are examining social media posts of recruits or personnel needing security clearances to see if they’ve disclosed support for extremist organizations.

Military leaders have been supportive of moves to curb behavior and eliminate symbols that are offensive to service members of color, who now make up more than 40% of the active-duty force. In vetoing the annual policy bill, Trump took issue with a provision to rename military installations that honor Confederate generals.

That provision and the less-noticed move to create a diversity watchdog followed national protests in 2020 over systemic racism in law enforcement that prompted Pentagon leaders to speak out more forcefully on diversity issues.

Then-Defense Secretary Mark Esper called the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, at the hands of Minneapolis police “a horrible crime” and said that the officers responsible should “be held accountable for his murder.”

The military’s response included an anguished Facebook post by then-Chief Master Sergeant Kaleth Wright, the Air Force’s top enlisted airman, who expressed his fear that “what happens all too often in this country to Black men who are subjected to police brutality that ends in death...could happen to me.”

The move also comes as President-elect Joe Biden said he intends to nominate retired General Lloyd Austin to be the nation’s first Black defense secretary. Austin was previously the first African American to lead Central Command, which oversees operations in the Middle East.

While the U.S. military desegregated units years ahead of key civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s, it has continued to lag behind in many critical areas. Last month the Air Force’s inspector general concluded that Black airmen in the Air Force and the Space Force face widespread disparities in opportunities and treatment compared to fellow service members, and many of them feel that the services are racist and biased against them.

The review found enlisted Black troops are 57% more likely to face court-martials and are promoted less often, trends that continued across military criminal justice and professional development. In a

survey of 123,000 Air Force members, one-third of Black respondents said the Air Force and Space Force do not provide them the same opportunities as White peers.

One key oversight tool the new watchdog will be responsible for is an annual report with an assessment of the effectiveness of “policies, programs, systems, and processes in preventing and responding to supremacist, extremist, and criminal gang activity of a member of the Armed Forces,” according to the legislation.

In addition to objecting to the renaming of military bases, Trump vetoed the defense measure because he wanted it to include an unrelated provision to eliminate a portion of the Communications Decency Act that protects technology companies from liability for most content published by their users. In his veto message, Trump also called the bill a “gift” to China and Russia, without clearly articulating his reasoning.

But Trump’s repeated efforts to get Republicans to support his veto failed. Beyond the new weapons funding and pay increases for troops, it had become a point of pride for members of the House and Senate Armed Services committees that the annual legislation has been enacted without fail for six decades. With that backdrop, the veto override became the first -- and most likely last -- of Trump’s presidency.

--With assistance from Roxana Tiron

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9. COVID vaccination starts at more bases in Europe, but not everyone wants the jab

Stars and Stripes Online, Jan. 4 (1407) | Jennifer H. Svan

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany -- Airmen in Germany were given their first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine Monday, just over two weeks after it received emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration.

“I’m hopeful that this is the way to finally end COVID-19,” said Chief Master Sgt. Alex Angulo, the security forces manager for the 569th U.S. Forces Police Squadron, one of the first in line to get the jab in the gym at Ramstein Air Base.

He said he got the shot “for my parents, my kids and the community,” and to set an example for his airmen – some of whom have expressed concern about the shot.

Like the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, the U.S.-made Moderna vaccine was developed in months rather than years and was granted emergency use authorization, not full FDA approval.

EUA is issued during emergencies like the coronavirus pandemic, when the FDA deems that a treatment or test will benefit patients, even if all the evidence establishing its effectiveness and safety is not yet available.

Regulators, vaccine developers and the military moved extremely quickly to get the Moderna vaccine “from emergency use authorization to putting needles into arms,” said Gino Mattorano, spokesman for Regional Health Command Europe.

The Moderna vaccine was granted EUA on Dec. 18, the FDA says on its website.

The first doses arrived in theater around Christmas Day, and troops began to be inoculated less than a week after that, Mattorano said.

Clinical trials have found the Moderna vaccine to be more than 94% effective at preventing the illness caused by the coronavirus after two doses, given about 28 days apart, according to a report published last month in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Spangdahlem Air Base also began vaccinating medical professionals and first responders Monday, and Air Force bases in the United Kingdom gave key health care and emergency workers their first jabs last week.

The Army began vaccinating front-line health care personnel in Germany last week and expected to continue this week. Vaccinations are also underway at Naval Support Activity Bahrain, where the 5th Fleet is based.

The vaccine was expected to be delivered this week to more military bases in Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain, U.S. European Command said in a statement released Thursday.

But officials at the immunization clinic at Aviano Air Base in Italy said Monday they didn’t expect to receive the vaccine for “a few weeks.”

At Ramstein, 86th Medical Group commander Col. Ryan Mihata was one of the first to get the jab.

“I trust the science completely,” he said.

But troops who find the speed with which the vaccine was developed and approved unsettling can opt out of having the vaccine. At Ramstein, they have to show up at the gym, where their choice is noted in their medical records.

If too many decline to be inoculated, it will be an uphill battle to vaccinate enough people to get herd immunity, said Mihata.

Herd immunity occurs when a large enough proportion of the population is vaccinated and has antibodies against a disease, preventing its spread to those who can't be immunized. Measles, mumps, polio and chickenpox are examples of infectious diseases that are now rare in the U.S. because of herd immunity.

Mihata estimated that achieving herd immunity for COVID-19 would require about 60% of the population to get the jab.

"It's really all we have," he said. "The handwashing, the distancing and the mask-wearing – it's not helping us to flatten the curve significantly, so we need more."

Despite toughening up lockdown measures in December after 28 days of "lockdown light" failed to have an impact on the virus, Germany's 16 states on Monday had, on average, just over 139 new coronavirus cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days. That's nearly three times more than the benchmark of 50 new cases per 100,000, set by the country's public health agency, the Robert Koch Institute.

The Defense Department has established phases for American military personnel to get the vaccine, starting with front-line health care, emergency and public safety workers, and working down to healthy individuals. The timeline for administering the vaccine to everyone who wants it is unknown, officials said.

Ramstein has enough of the vaccine to give all first responders, firefighters and medics a first dose, Mihata said.

Once they've been vaccinated, "we're going to open it up to the next category of folks that are eligible," he said.

None of the vaccine will be left on the shelf, he said.

--Stars and Stripes reporters Chad Garland, Norman Llamas and Karin Zeitvogel contributed to this report

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10. Another 43 new coronavirus patients for U.S. military in Japan and South Korea

Stars and Stripes Online, Jan. 4 (0520) | Joseph Ditzler

TOKYO -- U.S. military bases in Japan and South Korea reported 43 new cases of the coronavirus over the New Year holiday weekend and up to 6 p.m. Monday.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government reported 884 newly infected people, the most reported on a Monday, according to public broadcaster NHK.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Monday said he may declare an emergency in Tokyo and three surrounding prefectures in order to give their chief executives greater power to combat the virus's spread.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, 500 miles west of Tokyo, counted another 12 individuals as part of a local outbreak there, according to Facebook posts.

"The past two weeks have shown how quickly COVID spreads across the base and how difficult it can be to stay ahead of a spread," base commander Col. Lance Lewis wrote in a Facebook post Sunday. COVID-19 is the respiratory disease associated with the coronavirus.

The new cases are due to an "uptick in socializing and general lack of adherence to COVID basics by a small percentage of people," Lewis wrote.

"Simply put, we lowered our shields over the past few weeks, which resulted in new cases on base," he wrote.

Lewis ordered all social gatherings, formal and informal, canceled, as well as youth sports until Jan. 25 and other activities. He limited to two the number of families allowed to socialize together, put a ban on base visitors, closed the base clubs and prohibited socializing between residents of different barracks, among other measures. Schools will remain open, he said.

The base reported five new patients Sunday, six on Saturday and one on Friday. All 12 were already in quarantine as close contacts of a previously infected individual, according to the base.

"These individuals tested positive as part of a large-scale testing initiative for those in proximity to previously identified positive cases," according to the base in each case.

The base in December reported 33 individuals had become infected with the coronavirus.

Sasebo Naval Base on Kyushu reported two individuals tested positive for the virus during a medical screening Thursday, according to a Facebook post Monday. The base has three people with the virus under observation.

On Okinawa, the Marine Corps on Friday reported two new patients at Camp Schwab.

In South Korea, the U.S. military command reported 23 people, all new arrivals to the peninsula, tested positive for the virus between Dec. 16 and Thursday, according to a news release Monday from U.S. Forces Korea.

Four other individuals became infected after having contact with a retiree and his wife who tested positive on Wednesday, according to a release on Saturday from USFK.

The four, another two retired service members and their spouses, tested positive on Thursday, according to USFK. Contact tracing revealed the six had contact with each other on Dec. 25.

One of the couples last visited Camp Humphreys on Wednesday, and the other couple last visited Humphreys on Dec. 23.

Both couples reside in Sangju city and are now in quarantine at Camp Humphreys.

Of the 23 new arrivals, eight service members and one dependent arrived at Osan Air Base on the Patriot Express, a government-chartered flight from the U.S., on Dec. 16, 21 and 29. Another nine service members, three dependents, one contractor and one retiree arrived on commercial flights at Incheon International Airport on Dec. 16, 19, 21, 27, 28, 29 and Thursday.

Nine of the new arrivals tested positive on their first mandatory test. Two tested positive while in quarantine, and 12 tested positive on the test required to exit quarantine. All of them are in quarantine at Humphreys and Osan Air Base.

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11. Air Force Will Employ ‘Influencers’ to Boost Recruitment in 2021

Military.com, Jan. 4 (1203) | Oriana Pawlyk

They’re not social media stars like the Kardashians, but the U.S. Air Force has its own “influencers” working to engage the next generation of airmen, according to the service’s head of recruiting.

In the past year, the Air Force has moved to a largely digital recruitment effort, including having one-on-one virtual meet-and-greets with recruiters and social media campaigns, an endeavor made more relevant by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is even promoting airmen who attract eyeballs to their Facebook or Instagram accounts, according to Maj. Gen. Edward Thomas, head of the Air Force Recruiting Service, or AFRS, part of Air Education and Training Command.

“They’re not paid or sponsored,” Thomas said in a recent interview with Military.com. “It’s mostly people who are just passionate about what they do, passionate about being an airman and specifically passionate about helping increase the diversity in our ranks.”

AFRS stressed that it’s not branding these airmen as “influencers” per se because many of their followers are already active or former military members. “That’s not our target demographic,” said spokeswoman Leslie Brown.

But their platforms give the recruiting service a taste of how it can use new ways to connect with prospective recruits by telling the service’s story from one airman’s point of view.

Some former military members have popular social media accounts. John “Rain” Waters, a retired major who was most recently the commander of the F-16V Viper demo team, has amassed nearly 120,000 followers on Instagram with his dazzling aerial videos.

And at least one of the popular accounts belongs to an actual recruiter: Tech. Sgt. Kelvin Boyington, aka “Sergeant B.”

Stationed in Ohio, Boyington creates “his own videos where he plays multiple characters,” Thomas said. “He dances; he does skits. I mean, he is super energetic in the way he’s going out trying to attract people to the Air Force.”

The recruiting service also has its “Detachment 1” unit, established in 2018 and headed by Lt. Col. Annie Driscoll, an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter pilot.

“Her whole mission is to be able to help increase diversity and rated career fields,” Thomas said, referring to the Air Force pilot community.

Driscoll and her team have held webinars with more than 1,000 participants each, and have their own social media program showcasing how potential aviators can earn their wings. Detachment 1 also works with aerospace organizations and nonprofits such as Women in Aviation to increase the public’s exposure to Air Force careers.

“They’re sharing, they’re posting, you know, they’re building that network,” Thomas said.

The AFRS may start an “Airman Ambassador” program this year to highlight these airmen, Brown said. The goal is to have social media-savvy airmen host online chats or mentorship events to discuss their day-to-day service experience, she added.

Niche Marketing

Over the last few years, recruiters have had to get creative to tailor their messages to young people with different priorities and means of communication than their predecessors. As a result, niche marketing efforts are on the rise.

Air Force recruiters have gone to CrossFit competitions seeking aspiring special warfare candidates, online gaming forums to attract cyber experts, and even the FIRST Robotics Competition to woo those interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) jobs, Thomas said.

“More and more and more, we have moved marketing to the local squadron-level recruiting office level to get after that market,” he said.

But with COVID-19, “[the] majority of our marketing effort has moved to online digital marketing,” Thomas said, adding that it’s unlikely the service will turn away from its heavy online presence.

“[It] allows us to be much more specific and much more niche [for] the different targets that we’re hitting, so we’re able to have a whole different suite and variety of the types of ads [we share],” he said.

But the Air Force isn’t focusing on online gaming as heavily as its service counterparts, Thomas said - an area where some have gotten into hot water.

Over the summer, the Army’s esports team -- part of Army Recruiting Command -- received intense attention to its correspondence with potential recruits on Twitch, a popular game-streaming app. The team took a five-week pause following accusations that it was banning people from its channel, which some experts said violated users’ First Amendment rights.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., questioned why the Army even uses the method to court “impressionable young people” and introduced legislation to forbid the practice.

The Air Force has sponsored a few e-gaming events, Thomas said, with a handful of airmen participating in tournaments. However, the recruiting service does not have a dedicated team, he added.

In 2018, then-Lt. Gen. Steven Kwast said the Air Force was working on its own aviation-themed game. Kwast, then commander of AETC and since retired, said the online game -- geared toward high school kids -- could be played anonymously, with the Air Force watching the player test his or her skills without violating their privacy.

"We are doing some different gaming prototypes right now," Thomas said, adding there's nothing available yet.

Mass Outreach

In the last two years, the AFRS has gone to a "Total Force" approach, Thomas added, bringing recruiting for the active-duty, reserve and Guard components under one umbrella.

Previously, "you could go to a job fair and have different tables set up ... and those Air Force recruiters would not even know the others were there," Thomas said. "Frankly, it sowed confusion. And it created an unhealthy competition amongst our own recruiters. So today, we have truly integrated all of the components of the Air Force into one recruiting service."

The Air Force reduced its active-duty recruitment goal from roughly 29,200 to 26,300 over the past year due to COVID-19, which prompted high retention rates.

In December, Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, the deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, said the Air Force experienced its highest service member retention rate in two decades, closing out fiscal 2020 well over its 333,700 goal. As a result, the service is working to voluntarily transfer some airmen into other specialties or the Air Force Reserve, he told reporters.

Thomas said he foresees special warfare; technical, STEM-related jobs; and aviation fields to remain "hot" in 2021.

"There's [also] a lot of excitement about Space Force," he said. "One of the challenges that we're working through is it's still a small, agile force so we will only be bringing in about 312 enlisted space professionals a year. To give you a sense of scope -- 312 a year, well, we bring in about 40,000 airmen a year. So the scale is still limited."

In the coming months, Thomas wants to make sure the Air Force assigns people into the jobs where they can best thrive.

While recruiting messages are becoming increasingly customized to people's specific interests, the AFRS shouldn't assign airmen to specialties before they can make a competent decision about their career choice, he said, adding that the Air Force wants young people to keep their options open.

"This is about having a conversation," he explained.

The question-answer portion of a recruitment event should look something like, "Would you like to serve full time? Would you like to serve part time? Would you like to serve in uniform? Or not in uniform? Would you like to stay close to your home? Or would you like to have assignments around the world?" Thomas said.

"We want [airmen] to have a realistic expectation of what they will do in our Air Force so that when they come in, there's not a mismatch of what they thought they were going to be doing," he said. "Right now, across our recruiting enterprise, optimism is high. We're going to continue to be able to bring people in, and we're going to continue to be able to meet goals in 2021."

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EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

12. Trump keeps carrier in Middle East, overruling his Pentagon chief

The Pentagon has in recent weeks taken action to shore up its forces in the Middle East

Politico Online, Jan. 4 (1329) | Lara Seligman

President Donald Trump was behind the abrupt decision announced on Sunday night to reverse course and keep the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz in the Middle East due to Iranian threats against top U.S. officials, according to two people familiar with the discussions.

The move was the latest in a string of reversals that befuddled observers and sent mixed signals to Iran.

The Pentagon, alarmed by increased Iranian activity ahead of the one-year anniversary of the death of Iranian leader Qasem Soleimani, has in recent weeks taken action to shore up its forces in the Middle East and signal that the U.S. will respond to any attack. So Iran watchers were surprised on Thursday when acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller ordered the Nimitz, which had been on station in the Middle East, to return home.

Miller made the move over the objections of top commanders, a development first reported by The New York Times and confirmed by a defense official. He announced he was sending the carrier home as a "de-escalation" tactic as tensions with Tehran continued to simmer. But the ship was also scheduled to

return around that time for routine maintenance anyway, and the Navy had pushed for the departure, officials said.

After public threats from Iranian leaders over the weekend, Trump abruptly ordered Miller to turn the carrier around and keep it in the Middle East, according to two U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. CNN first reported that Trump gave the order.

The White House and the Pentagon declined to comment.

Miller said in the new statement on Sunday that the reversal was due to "recent threats issued by Iranian leaders against President Trump and other US government officials." But one senior defense official said there had been no change in the threat level leading up to the decision.

"The USS Nimitz will now remain on station in the US Central Command area of operations," Miller said. "No one should doubt the resolve of the United States of America."

The reversal came after the head of Iran's judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi, seemed to implicitly threaten Trump on Friday, saying that all those who had a role in Soleimani's killing would not be able to "escape law and justice" — even if they were a U.S. president.

And on Saturday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif cited "new intelligence" from Iraq indicating that "Israeli agent-provocateurs" are plotting attacks against Americans, which some took as a preemptive effort to deflect blame for any attack.

"Be careful of a trap, @realDonaldTrump," Zarif tweeted. "Any fireworks will backfire badly, particularly against your same BFFs."

Some former defense officials criticized the latest reversal, noting that the mixed messaging increases the risk of a miscalculation that could lead to conflict.

"When you already have a volatile situation, a tension between two powers with large military formations, the risk of miscalculation is higher," said Dave Lapan, retired Marine colonel who served as DoD and Department of Homeland Security spokesperson. "It's hard to see what the strategy is."

Lapan also expressed concern for the Nimitz sailors and their families, who were told they were headed home only to be abruptly sent back again.

In recent weeks, the Pentagon has sent B-52 bombers over the Persian Gulf as a signal to deter an Iranian attack. Late last month, the military also sent a guided-missile submarine on an unusual transit

through the Strait of Hormuz, and an additional fighter squadron to the region. The military also published photos and videos of the flights and transits as a message to Iran.

The U.S. is reducing its troop level in Iraq from 3,000 to about 2,500 on Trump's orders.

The deployments to the region reflect growing concern that Iran will take additional military action in response for the Jan. 3, 2020, killing of Soleimani. Tehran's initial response, five days later, was a ballistic missile attack on Iraq's Camp Taji base, which caused concussion-like injuries to about 100 U.S. troops.

Even after the anniversary passed on Sunday, the Pentagon is still on high alert for an attack from Iran on U.S. or allied forces in the Middle East, according to one of the officials. Adding to the tension was a Dec. 20 rocket attack on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad by Iranian-backed Shiite militia groups, which caused no casualties. Days later, Trump blamed Iran for the attack and put Tehran on notice.

"Some friendly health advice to Iran: If one American is killed, I will hold Iran responsible. Think it over," Trump wrote on Twitter.

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13.U.S. health officials to stick with two-dose vaccine plan

Washington Post, Jan. 5 (0115), Pg. A7 | Carolyn Y. Johnson

The U.S. government's top infectious-disease doctor, a leading drug regulator and the Health and Human Services secretary are dismissing suggestions that the second shot of authorized coronavirus vaccines could be delayed to make more doses available faster to more people.

In recent days, some public health experts have debated whether it is worth taking a scientific gamble by altering the two-dose regimen that proved highly effective in trials to maximize the number of people partially protected with at least one shot as the pandemic surges.

The debate is playing out as the United States struggles with administering the doses it already has. More than 15 million doses of vaccine have been distributed, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data updated Monday morning, but only about 4.5 million have been administered.

The Food and Drug Administration on Monday evening said it would be "premature" and "not rooted solidly in the available evidence" to change the way the two authorized vaccines are administered.

The statement, by FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn and Peter Marks, director of the agency's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, said the available data "continue to support the use of two specified doses of each authorized vaccine at specified intervals."

Last week, the United Kingdom made the controversial decision to prioritize giving a first dose of its authorized vaccines - even if it meant there wasn't enough to give people a booster shot within the recommended three to four weeks. U.K. authorities have said people could wait as long as 12 weeks.

Limited data suggests a single shot affords some protection against disease, but it is not known how complete or long the protection lasts. The first shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was 52 percent effective in the three-week interval before people received the booster shot. U.S. officials have said repeatedly that while it is worth evaluating whether different dosing regimens make sense, they do not think such a strategy is supported by scientific evidence.

"There really are no data on what happens if you delay the second dose by three months or four months or two months," Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said Monday. "We don't have any idea what the level of protection is and what the durability of protection is. It's fraught with some danger when you're making a decision about the regimen you're going to use when you don't really have a considerable amount of data."

"We're holding in reserve that second dose, because we believe we need to go according to what the FDA said is the safe and effective way to use these vaccines," HHS Secretary Alex Azar told "Good Morning America."

On CBS's "Face the Nation" on Sunday, Moncef Slaoui, chief science adviser of Operation Warp Speed, the federal initiative to speed vaccine and therapeutics development and distribution, said the second dose gives people an immune response 10 times stronger than the first dose.

"We always said that these vaccines will be developed on the basis of science and all decisions will be made transparently on the basis of data," Slaoui said. "Changing the decisions made . . . without any data I think would not be responsible."

Slaoui went on to say that discussions were ongoing between regulators and Moderna about a two-dose regimen of half doses. But the agency's statement rebutted that idea, specifying that changes such as reducing the number of doses, extending the length of time between doses, using a half dose instead of a full dose, or mixing and matching vaccines to immunize more people would not be supported by the current evidence.

Others argued that because of the severity and persistence of the pandemic, the strategy of holding in reserve a second dose to ensure people get their booster shot on time is too conservative. The first shot trains the immune system to recognize the coronavirus, but the second is necessary to muster a full response, cementing the immunologic memory that was more than 90 percent effective at preventing illness in clinical trials.

"My feeling is that we're better off giving people one dose and hoping we'll get a second dose than holding back a second dose," said Walter A. Orenstein, a professor of medicine at Emory University and scientific advisory board member of Moderna. "It's one of those things where it's much nicer to be a historian and look backward."

Jennifer Beam Dowd, associate professor of demography and population health at the University of Oxford, said she was initially surprised by the British decision to allow people to defer shots, but she likened the policy positions to wartime decisions.

"To me, it's very compelling, giving the first doses to more people as soon as possible, given this exponential growth we're seeing in a lot of places," Dowd said. "Under reasonable assumptions, that would save a lot more lives and hospitalizations and prevent more severe disease than doing the complete course on half the number of people in the next three months or so."

Pfizer spokeswoman Jerica Pitts said in a statement that the company's vaccine appears to confer some protection as early as 12 days after the first dose, but that there isn't data on whether protection is sustained beyond three weeks with a single dose.

"While decisions on alternative dosing regimens reside with health authorities, Pfizer believes it is critical health authorities conduct surveillance efforts on any alternative schedules implemented and to ensure each recipient is afforded the maximum possible protection, which means immunization with two doses of the vaccine," Pitts said.

Fauci said there was scientific interest in the possibility that two half-doses of the Moderna vaccine might be effective in adults ages 18 to 55 based on evidence from an early clinical trial in which a subset of people received half a dose and had similar immune responses as the group given the full dose.

But, he said, regulators would have to decide whether that evidence was compelling, and "right now, I don't think there's a need to do that at this point, because you've got to ask yourself: What is the problem, and our problem is efficiently getting doses we already have into people."

Moderna spokesman Ray Jordan declined to comment on the use of the vaccine beyond the conditions in its emergency authorization. "At this point we wouldn't have any further information to share about any potential ongoing regulatory discussions," Jordan said.

Paul A. Offit, a vaccine expert at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a member of the external advisory committee to the FDA, called changes to the dosing regimen without more evidence "terrible ideas."

"We did a Phase 3 trial which taught us that two doses of Pfizer's or Moderna's vaccine induced excellent, high-level protection against disease. We don't know whether a half-dose would do that; we don't know if a single dose would do that," Offit said. "When people get on TV and say, 'Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good' - we shouldn't let the unknown be the enemy of the known."

Asked their views on the idea of a single dose, the transition team for President-elect Joe Biden did not answer with specifics. However, a transition official, speaking on the condition of anonymity in the absence of a concrete policy, said the incoming administration will follow the guidance of medical and scientific experts. If experts' recommendations about the number or pace of doses were ever updated, the official said, the Biden team would update the public on such guidance.

More vaccines are being manufactured, which will increase the supply - and the pressure to get distribution systems up and running. But the early months of this year could yield developments paralleling those in December, when the first two coronavirus vaccines, from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, were granted emergency authorization.

The one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine trial is fully enrolled and expected to report results by the end of the month, with an application for emergency authorization possible next month. The AstraZeneca-Oxford trial is ongoing in the United States. Slaoui recently said that the AstraZeneca vaccine could be available in the United States in April. A 30,000-person trial of a shot from Novavax began last week.

--Amy Goldstein and Laurie McGinley contributed to this report

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14. Adviser to Biden's defense secretary scoffed at Taiwan, Australia Accords

Washington Times, Jan. 5 (0300), Pg. A1 | Rowan Scarborough

Retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin, if confirmed as secretary of defense, will rejoin a senior adviser at the Pentagon who privately expressed some unconventional views on alliances with longtime U.S. friends abroad, according to documents obtained by The Washington Times.

The senior adviser suggested that losing Taiwan to China would not be a "great insult" to the U.S. and expressed dislike for the American security agreement with Australia.

Gen. Austin ran the Joint Staff, a brass-heavy advisory unit for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who was Navy Adm. Michael Mullen during the general's tenure. Gen. Austin transferred to Iraq in September 2010 as commander of all U.S. forces and culminated his career as head of U.S. Central Command.

A key military adviser to Adm. Mullen was James H. Baker, then an Air Force colonel. Col. Baker directed the chairman's "Action Team," which was charged with giving the admiral strategic advice.

After his Air Force career, Mr. Baker won the prestigious post of director of the Office of Net Assessment in 2015. He presides there today producing confidential studies on global threats and has a direct line to the defense secretary, who would be his old colleague, Gen. Austin, in the incoming Joseph R. Biden administration.

In November 2010, while preparing Adm. Mullen for a conference in Australia, the Joint Chiefs chairman's staff drew up "Asia scene setter" talking points for discussions about the region, according to documents provided to The Times by a congressional source.

Mr. Baker added his comments under "JHBaker." He said losing Taiwan to China would not be a "great insult."

"Should be last and least important to emphasize," he wrote. "Losing Taiwan to China would not be a great insult to US national interests. The other two are nation states with real nations and a long history of enmity."

The "other two" appears to be a reference to South Korea and Japan. The U.S. does not recognize Taiwan diplomatically. The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act authorizes arms sales for the island's defense.

Mr. Baker also dismissed a long-standing treaty with Australia. "I don't believe in ANZUS," he wrote.

ANZUS — the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty founded in 1951 — calls for the U.S. and Australia to cooperate on security matters. Australia and New Zealand cooperate separately.

Fast-forward to 2017, after Mr. Baker gained Office of Net Assessment directorship under President Obama. He wrote a paper titled "What are the threats ahead," which touched on Taiwan as well as Israel.

It was the first year in office for President Trump, who was looking for ways to reduce the military's troop commitment to anti-Islamic extremist wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

"Primacy advocates also face the problem of the increasing fragility of ambiguous commitments, commitments such as the defense of Taiwan, of Israel," Mr. Baker wrote.

Foreign policy experts have termed the Taiwan Relations Act as somewhat ambiguous. However, the U.S. has recognized Israel since 1948 and supplies billions of dollars in front-line weapons. Mr. Obama was cool toward Israel, but Mr. Trump said there is "no daylight" between the U.S. and the Jewish state.

The Washington Times reached out to Mr. Baker for comment, and a defense official responded with a statement: “I can’t speak to any alleged remarks or notes from an alleged decade-old briefing because I don’t know the context of the briefing, the intent of the briefing, what positions the briefers were tasked with conveying, why the comments were provided, or what questions they answered. The Department would need the opportunity to review the alleged comments before providing a response to them.

“However, successive Secretaries of Defense and Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs have tasked the Office of Net Assessment to provide various viewpoints — from a blue and red perspective — when assessing national security policy. The office’s insights regarding the importance of a more lethal military and more capable allies were included in the Department’s National Defense Strategy, and their views on the danger China poses to the United States are repeatedly sought by senior policy makers across the U.S. government. Mr. Baker and the Office of Net Assessment will continue to provide their best advice and counsel, regardless of who holds the position of Secretary of Defense,” the Pentagon official said.

The Office of Net Assessment is now the subject of an inquiry by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, Iowa Republican, into how Mr. Baker has awarded research contracts worth millions of dollars.

A Pentagon inspector general’s report found that the office failed to document work products submitted by Stefan Halper. The longtime Washington national security scholar gained fame as the undercover agent whom the FBI assigned to spy on two Trump campaign volunteers.

On Dec. 18, Mr. Grassley upped the pressure on Mr. Baker and the Office of Net Assessment via a letter to acting Pentagon Inspector General Sean O’Donnell. The senator wants investigators to look more deeply into the office’s operations.

The inspector general reported in August 2019 that the Office of Net Assessment did not follow basic contracting regulations in awarding research contracts. Focusing on four Halper studies for which he was paid \$1 million, the inspector general said Mr. Halper failed to document that he had interviewed experts and visited places he listed in his work proposal to win the contract.

The Times reported in 2018 that Mr. Halper cited a number of well-known national security figures as consultants for his \$244,000 study on Russian-Chinese relations. When The Times checked a large sample of those figures, they said they played no part and had not heard of the study.

Mr. Grassley said the Office of Net Assessment is stonewalling his requests for documents.

“I have made repeated requests for information from ONA,” he wrote to the inspector general. “ONA has provided documents, but has failed to produce all of them. Either ONA officials do not have

possession of certain documentation required in Professor Halper's contracts, or they've failed to comply with congressional demands."

Mr. Grassley said the Office of Net Assessment has not carried out its core mission— producing a net assessment of global threats — since 2007. He said the office responded to his criticism in April by removing the word "shall" from the directive that requires net assessments.

"This is yet another example of ONA's apparent lack of effort to perform its mission on behalf of the American taxpayer and an effort to cover-up its previous failures to do the job for which it was designed," Mr. Grassley wrote.

The Times asked Air Force Lt. Col. Uriah Orland, a Defense Department spokesman, to respond to Mr. Grassley.

Col. Orland said: "As stated multiple times over the past two years to Senator Grassley's office, and as noted publicly, the Office of Net Assessment has formally published two net assessments since 2017. These highly classified products were briefed to and debated by senior leaders in the Department of Defense. In the past five years, ONA has also provided dozens of memos, briefings, and reports which provide a comparative assessment of the United States, its allies, and its adversaries on a variety of strategic issues, often at the direct request of the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, their Principal Staff Assistants, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Additionally, throughout this correspondence, we have provided hundreds of pages of documentation responsive to the Senator's queries."

Col. Orland provided a link to an Office of Net Assessment website that details its work since Mr. Baker took charge in 2015.

It says, in part: "ONA products include internally-produced assessments which represent years of detailed analysis. These assessments are highly classified, tightly controlled in distribution, and provide strategic-level management insights for the Secretary of Defense and other senior DOD leaders. Two such assessments have been completed since 2017."

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GREAT POWER COMPETITION

15. Pompeo Cites China, North Korea as Trump's Unfinished Business

Bloomberg News, Jan. 4 (1332) | Nick Wadhams

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo said Monday that he regrets the U.S. hadn't made more progress in resolving "hard issues" with China or getting North Korea to shed its nuclear arsenal, while saying that the Trump administration has made the world a safer place than it was four years ago.

"The regret is that the big issues, the hard issues and the trade relationship between the United States and China have not been resolved," Pompeo said of China in an interview for "The David Rubenstein Show: Peer-to-Peer Conversations" on Bloomberg Television. "That work remains to be done."

Despite President Donald Trump's tougher approach to China, Pompeo said, the two countries still have an unfair trading relationship and its theft of intellectual property remains a problem. On North Korea, he said leader Kim Jong Un "has not yet made the decision that he is actually prepared to execute" on a commitment to give up his nuclear weapons after two summits with Trump.

Even so, Pompeo said the U.S. had achieved a number of key goals under Trump, including a more realistic approach to Israel and Iran, a reorientation by NATO to confront China and building a coalition of countries against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

Asked his plans for the future, Pompeo said he might return to Kansas and that he also wanted to offer a fuller accounting of his time as secretary of state, though he declined to say whether that would be through a book or another format. Since New Year's Day, he's been doing that on social media, with a torrent of tweets touting what he sees as the administration's successes around the world.

"I want to make sure and tell the story that the Trump administration did, so I'll find a way to do that," Pompeo said. The Trump loyalist, who's considered a potential presidential candidate for 2024, didn't explicitly acknowledge that President-elect Joe Biden will take office on Jan. 20 despite Trump's unsupported claims of election fraud.

Iran's Strategy

Pompeo also offered a warning, saying he believed that Iran was ramping up aggressive behavior with the goal of extracting concessions as Biden signals that he wants to return to the multinational nuclear deal that Trump abandoned in 2018.

“As they now think they may have a president coming in office who will do a deal again, they’re going to raise their level of activity to threaten and so that the Europeans and the United States will once again kowtow,” Pompeo told Rubenstein.

It was the Trump administration’s decision to quit the nuclear deal that Pompeo hailed as a major accomplishment, saying the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action entered into by the Obama administration “was creating wealth and capacity for the kleptocrats and theocrats” in Iran.

As he’s done many times before, Pompeo also cited the administration’s more confrontational approach to China as a necessary change from more than four decades of U.S. policy. He accused Beijing of trying to exert control over shipping lanes in the South China Sea, of covering up the extent of the coronavirus outbreak early on and reneging on its 1997 pledge to let the former British colony of Hong Kong run its own affairs for 50 years.

“Everything that we have seen over the past year has indicated that Hong Kong is going to become nothing more than another Communist-run city,” he said.

Other issues the top diplomat touched on in the interview:

- He said he believes more countries will join the Abraham Accords, the series of diplomatic agreements with Israel, including some in Asia. “I’m confident that there will be more,” he said. “It’s the direction of travel. It’s the direction of history.”
- He declined to say whether the Trump administration will designate Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism, though he said the U.S. was right to consider the issue. “The world knows Cuba’s evil hand in so many places,” he said.
- He faulted the Palestinians for failing to take up Trump’s offer of a peace deal, saying they had “rejected even the willingness to start a conversation about a conversation about this.”
- Pompeo said he had been vaccinated against the coronavirus and had never tested positive for it.

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16. Taiwan says Chinese jets made record 380 incursions in 2020

Agence France-Presse, Jan. 5 (0209) | Not Attributed

Chinese jets made a record 380 incursions into Taiwan’s defence zone last year, a defence official said Tuesday, as a military-linked think-tank warned tensions were now at their highest since the mid-1990s.

Democratic and self-ruled Taiwan lives under the constant threat of invasion by authoritarian China, which views the island as its own territory and has vowed to seize it one day, by force if necessary.

Beijing's animosity has increased dramatically since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen won election in 2016, as she rejects the idea that the island is part of "one China".

But the sabre-rattling reached new peaks last year as Beijing sent jets, bombers and surveillance planes into Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) at an unprecedented rate.

"The 380 incursions into our southwest ADIZ in 2020 are a lot more frequent than the past," said defence ministry spokesman Shih Shun-wen.

"This... poses a threat to regional and our national security."

Chinese aircraft targeted the area "to test our military's response, to exert pressure on our aerial defence and to squeeze the aerial space for our activities", he added.

The figures came as the military-affiliated Institute for National Defence and Security Research warned in an annual report on the People's Liberation Army that "the Chinese military threat was the highest since the 1996 missile crisis in Taiwan Strait".

That year Beijing fired missiles into the strait in a bid to deter voters in the island's first democratic presidential election, prompting Washington to send warships to the area.

Jeremy Hung, a co-author of the report, said Chinese jets flew closer to Taiwan and frequently into its defence zone on at least 110 days last year.

This compared with just six long-distance training missions around Taiwan in 2016, and 20 in 2017.

Beijing's increased military actions were meant as "a warning to Taiwan not to cross the red line" amid warming relations with the United States, Hung said.

Chinese jets also crossed over the so-called "median line" of the Taiwan Strait during two high-level visits by US officials.

The median line is an unofficial but, until now, largely adhered to border running down the narrow strait separating Taiwan from the mainland.

Last year a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman declared the line did not exist.

Beijing has also been angered by the increasingly warm ties Taiwan built with Washington during outgoing President Donald Trump's tenure.

On top of the high-level visits, his administration approved some \$18 billion worth of arms sales to Taipei, while US warships sailed through the Taiwan Strait 13 times last year, according to local media.

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17. Australia's Influence in Pacific Islands Grows as China's Wanes

Bloomberg News, Jan. 4 (0833) | Jason Scott

Australia is moving to boost ties with small island nations off its eastern coastline, pushing back against China's growing influence in the Pacific Ocean as the virus outbreak hinders travel.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government has promised to supply its neighbors with Covid-19 vaccines in 2021 as part of a A\$500 million package aimed at achieving "full immunization coverage" in the region. It also recently signed a "landmark" deal with Fiji, one of the region's most populous nations, to allow military deployments and exercises in each other's jurisdiction.

"China has largely been missing in action in regards to providing Covid-related support in the region," said Jonathan Pryke, who heads research on the region for Sydney-based think tank the Lowy Institute. "Australia has built up an amount of goodwill by not forgetting about the Pacific in a time of crisis."

Over the past decade, China's growing influence in the 14-nation Pacific Islands -- whose cumulative population of just 13 million is sprawled over thousands of islands and atolls in a region stretching across 15% of the world's surface -- has triggered alarm bells in the U.S. and Australia. Diplomats and intelligence officials fear Beijing's ultimate goal may be to establish a naval base that would upend their military strategies.

The battle for influence in the region comes after China hit Australia with a series of damaging trade reprisals following Morrison's decision to seek an independent investigation into the origins of the coronavirus. Australia's largest trading partner has put curbs on everything from wine to lobsters, prompting Canberra to file a challenge against barley tariffs at the WTO.

Projects Stalled

Still, Australia has made inroads in the Pacific after island nations quickly blocked incoming flights and cruise ships to keep the virus away from vulnerable communities in the aid-dependent region. China also ordered workers developing projects tied to its Belt and Road Initiative to return home, and reduced diplomatic staff in the 10 Pacific nations that recognize Beijing instead of Taiwan.

In resource-rich Papua New Guinea, the region's most populous nation and by far the biggest recipient of China's financial backing, work on one of the region's highest-profile infrastructure projects stalled

this year, according to Paul Barker, chief executive of Institute of National Affairs, a non-profit economic research group partially funded by the private sector based in Port Moresby.

Chinese staff left the marine industrial zone site in Madang on the nation's north coast, which has received at least \$73 million in funding from Beijing and will be used as a base to fish tuna, said Barker, who has lived in Port Moresby for four decades. While other China-backed projects around Papua New Guinea's capital have also crawled to a standstill this year, he said he expects China's on-the-ground presence, along with offers of financial aid, to ramp up again when the pandemic is under control.

"It's logical for Papua New Guinea to want to get competitive contractors and finance, and if the Chinese were to offer that going forward, the government will be interested," he said. "While most Papua New Guineans tend to look to their 'southern friends' in Australia because they know them, they also want to be offered more opportunities."

'Cold-War Mentality'

China hasn't been completely inactive. New Chinese ambassadors to the two countries that recognized it over Taiwan in 2019 -- Solomon Islands, one of the region's largest economies, and Kiribati. The new envoy in the former British colony raised eyebrows when a photo taken on his arrival seemed to show him walking over about 30 local men lying on their stomach.

China Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a daily briefing in Beijing on Monday China's relations with Pacific Island countries have been closer since the pandemic began.

"We have also considered providing vaccines to the island countries, contributing to the accessibility and affordability of vaccines in the island countries," Hua said.

The nation's foreign ministry said in an emailed response to questions that Beijing had shared medical experience and provided materials to nations during the pandemic, while Belt and Road projects including a new highway in western Papua New Guinea and a stadium in the Solomon Islands had been "progressing steadily".

"China hopes all other countries could adopt a mutually respectful attitude and open-minded spirit to facilitate the stability and prosperity of the region, instead of maintaining 'zero-sum' and Cold-War mentality and building exclusive 'small groupings'," the ministry said.

Kiribati's plan to build two major trans-shipment ports looks set to be integrated into the Belt and Road, according to a September report by government-backed think tank Australian Strategic Policy Institute. That would "raise the prospect of Chinese military bases across the center of the Pacific" through major sea lanes and near U.S. bases including Hawaii, the report said.

China also signed a memorandum of understanding last month to potentially fund a new \$150 million marine base in southern Papua New Guinea, on Australia's doorstep. The deal may have geopolitical implications, especially as the impoverished area isn't near rich fishing stocks.

'A Better Choice'

"The pandemic is not going to deter China from executing its strategy in the South Pacific because it wants to continue to exert its influence over weak, fragile democracies," said Paul Maddison, director of the University of New South Wales Defence Research Institute. "Under a Joe Biden administration, there's an opportunity for the U.S. and like-minded democracies to show sovereign Pacific nations they have a better choice in who they choose to work with."

Lawmakers in Washington and Canberra have warned developing countries to avoid taking Chinese loans, saying that Beijing would use the debt as geopolitical leverage. China has spent at least \$1.7 billion in aid and loans to the Pacific Islands in the past decade, much of it on much-needed transport and utility infrastructure, according to Lowy Institute data.

In response, Australia -- seen by China as an American puppet -- unveiled a A\$2 billion (\$1.5 billion) infrastructure fund for the region in 2018. The U.S., meanwhile, established a Directorate of Pacific Affairs within the White House National Security Council, which provides a hub for coordinating policy in the region with other like-minded countries.

With the economic devastation from the pandemic set to linger for years, the geostrategic competition in the region is only set to intensify as nations look to recover, said Pryke from the Lowy Institute.

"Beijing will be aware that Covid has shaped an economic crisis that's made the region even more vulnerable and desperate for foreign aid and loans, creating a better strategic environment to further its interests," he said.

--With assistance from Jing Li

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18. China doubles down on COVID narrative as WHO investigation looms

Reuters, Jan. 5 (0151) | David Stanway

SHANGHAI -- As a team from the World Health Organization (WHO) prepares to visit China to investigate the origins of COVID-19, Beijing has stepped up efforts not only to prevent new outbreaks, but also shape the narrative about when and where the pandemic began.

China has dismissed criticism of its early handling of the coronavirus, first identified in the city of Wuhan at the end of 2019, and foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said on Monday that the country would welcome the WHO team.

But amid simmering geopolitical tensions, experts said the investigators were unlikely to be allowed to scrutinise some of the more sensitive aspects of the outbreak, with Beijing desperate to avoid blame for a virus that has killed more than 1.8 million people worldwide.

“Even before this investigation, top officials from both sides have been very polarised in their opinions on the origins of the outbreak,” said Yanzhong Huang, senior fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations, a U.S. think tank.

“They will have to be politically savvy and draw conclusions that are acceptable to all the major parties,” he added.

While other countries continue to struggle with infection surges, China has aggressively doused flare-ups. After a new cluster of cases last week, the city of Shenyang sealed off entire communities and required all non-essential workers to stay home.

On Saturday, senior diplomat Wang Yi praised the anti-pandemic efforts, saying China not only curbed domestic infections, but also “took the lead in building a global anti-epidemic defence” by providing aid to more than 150 countries.

But mindful of the criticism China has faced worldwide, Wang also became the highest-ranking official to question the consensus about COVID-19’s origins, saying “more and more studies” show that it emerged in multiple regions.

China is also the only country to claim COVID-19 can be transmitted via cold chain imports, with the country blaming new outbreaks in Beijing and Dalian on contaminated shipments - even though the WHO has downplayed those risks.

TRANSPARENCY

China has been accused of a cover-up that delayed its initial response, allowing the virus to spread further.

The topic remains sensitive, with only a handful of studies into the origins of COVID-19 made available to the public.

But there have also been signs China is willing to share information that contradicts the official picture.

Last week, a study by China's Center for Disease Control showed that blood samples from 4.43% of Wuhan's population contained COVID-19 antibodies, indicating that the city's infection rates were far higher than originally acknowledged.

But scientists said China must also share any findings suggesting COVID-19 was circulating domestically long before it was officially identified in December 2019.

An Italian study showed that COVID-19 might have been in Europe several months before China's first official case. Chinese state media used the paper to support theories that COVID-19 originated overseas and entered China via contaminated frozen food or foreign athletes competing at the World Military Games in Wuhan in October 2019.

Raina MacIntyre, head of the Kirby Institute's Biosecurity Research Program in Australia, said the investigation needed to draw "a comprehensive global picture of the epidemiological clues", including any evidence COVID-19 was present outside of China before December 2019.

However, political issues mean they are unlikely to be given much leeway to investigate one hypothesis, that the outbreak was caused by a leak at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, said MacIntyre.

"I think it is unlikely all viruses in the lab at the time will be made available to the team," she said. "So I do not think we will ever know the truth."

--Additional reporting by Martin Pollard in Wuhan

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SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

19.DC Guard To Deploy for Pro-Trump Demonstrations In Washington

About 350 troops will help with crowd control — seven months after a fraught deployment in June

DefenseOne.com, Jan. 4 (1740) | Katie Bo Williams

Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller has approved the deployment of a small number of unarmed National Guard forces in Washington, D.C., in response to Trump supporters expected to protest the 2020 election results in the nation's capital this week.

About 350 Guardsmen will move into the city between Tuesday and Thursday to help with crowd control at Metro stations, street closures, and traffic management, according to a D.C. Guard press release.

Specially trained “Civil Support Team” personnel will support D.C. Fire and Emergency Management Services and Guardsmen “are prepared to respond to augment the main missions, should additional personnel be required,” the release said.

“Our main mission is augmenting select traffic control points and metro stations identified by MPD,” Maj. Gen. William Walker, the D.C. Guard commanding general, said in a statement.

The high-profile deployment comes amid ragged tensions over the election results. The deployment also raises the spectre of a past deployment, in June.

Some Republican lawmakers are refusing to acknowledge President-elect Biden’s victory, despite repeated losses in courts across the country, and supporters of the president are expected to gather in Washington this week as Congress meets to certify the Electoral College results. Past gatherings by Trump supporters protesting the election results have resulted in violent clashes. Four people were stabbed during a similar protest gathering in Washington in December.

Acting Police Chief Robert Contee said during a press conference on Monday that the city is expecting larger crowds than during previous such protests — and that some protesters may be carrying guns, armed.

“Some of our intelligence certainly suggests there will be increased crowd sizes,” said Contee. “There are people intent on coming to our city armed.”

Anyone who carries a gun at a protest or within 1,000 feet of a protest will be arrested, in line with D.C. law, he said.

The D.C. Guard was called up to respond to widespread protests in response to the May killing of George Floyd, a Black man, by police officers. The D.C. Guard drew fierce fire when two of its helicopters, unauthorized, flew low over protesters’ heads in what critics described as an unacceptable “show of force” against American citizens. An internal review into that incident has yet to be made public.

At the time, President Trump considered invoking the Insurrection Act and calling up active duty service members to help quell unrest and tamp down protests by supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement. In this instance, Trump has supported the protesters, and is expected to attend on Wednesday.

The Guard deployment comes at the request of D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, according to Walker. Trump is officially the commander in chief of the D.C. Guard, through Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy.

"The District of Columbia National Guard is in a support role to the Metropolitan Police Department which will enable them to provide a safe environment for our fellow citizens to exercise their first amendment right to demonstrate," Walker said.

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20.Iran, in Jab at U.S., Increases Enrichment Of Uranium at Plant

The move is another a series of escalations with the United States. In another provocation, the country seized a South Korean chemical tanker

New York Times, Jan. 5 (0300), Pg. A9 | Marc Santora

Iran announced on Monday that it had increased its uranium enrichment levels, bringing it closer to developing the capacity to produce a nuclear weapon within six months.

The resumption of enrichment to 20 percent was the latest in a series of escalations that have followed President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from a 2015 nuclear agreement that had limited Iran to enrichment levels of 4 to 5 percent.

In another provocation, Iran seized a South Korean chemical tanker, citing "environmental and chemical pollution concerns," the semiofficial Tasmin News Agency reported.

The seizure of the vessel, confirmed by the South Korean government, comes as Tehran is pressuring Seoul to release \$7 billion in funds frozen because of United States sanctions.

Further adding to the tensions, the Pentagon said on Sunday that it had ordered the aircraft carrier Nimitz to remain in the Middle East, just three days after directing the ship to head for home in an effort to de-escalate rising tensions with Tehran.

"Due to the recent threats issued by Iranian leaders against President Trump and other U.S. government officials, I have ordered the U.S.S. Nimitz to halt its routine redeployment," the acting secretary of defense, Christopher C. Miller, said in a statement.

A spokesman for the Iranian government, Ali Rabiei, told the state-run IRNA news agency on Monday that President Hassan Rouhani had ordered the implementation of a law passed last week authorizing the new enrichment levels.

"A few minutes ago, the process of producing 20 percent enriched uranium has started in Fordow enrichment complex," Mr. Rabiei told Iran's semiofficial Mehr News Agency.

Fuel enriched to that level is not sufficient to produce a bomb, but it is close. Getting from current levels to 20 percent is far more difficult than going from that level to the 90 percent purity that is traditionally used for bomb-grade fuel.

Fordow is Iran's newest nuclear facility, and is embedded deep inside a mountain at a well-protected base of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. Successfully striking it would require repeated attacks with the largest bunker-busting bomb in the American arsenal.

The decision to bolster uranium enrichment, while not a surprise, was officially reached after the assassination in November of Iran's top nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, long identified by American and Israeli intelligence services as the guiding figure behind a covert effort to design an atomic warhead.

It also coincides with the first anniversary of the assassination of a revered military commander, Qassim Suleimani, in a United States missile strike.

In a short statement, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel accused Iran of continuing to act on its intention to "develop a military nuclear program."

"Israel will not allow Iran to manufacture nuclear weapons," Mr. Netanyahu said.

The European Union on Monday said that Iran's decision to increase uranium enrichment would be "considerable departure" from commitments made in 2015.

Peter Stano, a spokesman for the bloc, said Brussels would wait until a briefing from the director of the United Nation's International Atomic Energy Agency expected later on Monday before deciding what action to take. France, Britain and Germany are all signatories to the 2015 accord.

The South Korean-flagged tanker was sailing in waters off Oman on Monday when the Iranian authorities demanded that it move to Iranian waters for investigation. The ship had 20 crew members onboard, including five South Koreans.

"The Foreign Ministry and our Embassy in Iran have looked into the detailed circumstances of the seizure of our ship and confirmed the safety of the crewmen," the South Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "We are asking for the early release of the ship."

The Defense Ministry in Seoul said that it was dispatching the South Korean navy destroyer Choe Yeong to the waters where the tanker was seized, issuing precautionary warnings to other South Korean ships sailing in the waters. The navy destroyer has been on an anti-piracy mission in the region.

Iranian officials have always maintained that their nuclear ambitions are for peaceful purposes, not weapons. But they expressed fury and vowed revenge over the assassination of Mr. Fakhrizadeh, the nuclear scientist.

In December, Iranian lawmakers passed a law ordering an immediate ramping up of the uranium enrichment program and calling for the expulsion of international nuclear inspectors if American sanctions were not lifted by early February, posing a direct challenge to President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.

Mr. Biden's incoming national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, has expressed optimism that the 2015 nuclear accord could still be salvaged.

In a Foreign Affairs article published in May, Mr. Sullivan and Daniel Benaim, a Middle East adviser to Mr. Biden when he was vice president, argued that the United States should "immediately re-establish nuclear diplomacy with Iran and salvage what it can from the 2015 nuclear deal," and then work with allies and Iran "to negotiate a follow-on agreement."

Appearing on CNN on Sunday, Mr. Sullivan said that as soon as Iran re-entered compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal there would be talks over its missile capabilities.

"In that broader negotiation, we can ultimately secure limits on Iran's ballistic missile technology," Mr. Sullivan said, "and that is what we intend to try to pursue through diplomacy."

But the missile program was not covered in the previous accord because the Iranians refused to commit to any limitations on their development or testing.

And that presupposes that the Iranians would be willing to return to the terms of the 2015 accord under any circumstances.

--Reporting was contributed by Adam Rasgon from Jerusalem and Choe Sang-Hun from Seoul

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21. Niger massacres highlight Sahel vulnerability to jihadis

Agence France-Presse, Jan. 4 (1334) | Amaury Hauchard and Daphne Benoit

The Sahel had just turned the page on a grim 2020 when the new year brought a chilling reminder of the region's vulnerability to ruthless, mobile jihadists.

About 100 people were slaughtered on Saturday in two villages in western Niger, according to local sources -- the biggest single massacre of civilians in the Sahel's eight-year-old Islamist insurgency.

The same day, two soldiers in France's Barkhane anti-jihadist mission were killed in Mali days after three of their colleagues were killed by a roadside bomb, bringing the total of French military deaths to 50.

Hit-and-run raids and roadside bombs are the deadliest tactics of a jihadist campaign that began in northern Mali before spreading into Niger and Burkina Faso.

Thousands have died and nearly three million have fled their homes, according to UN figures.

The latest attacks come as France contemplates cutting in its 5,100-man force, balancing the ability of Sahel states to defend themselves with French public opinion.

Defence Minister Florence Parly, confirming plans to withdraw an additional 600 troops deployed a year ago, told Le Parisien newspaper: "Reinforcements, are by definition, only temporary."

Defence sources in Paris have indicated that President Emmanuel Macron would like to bring home further troops before the next presidential election in 2022.

"Up until now the French have not really questioned France's role in the Sahel. But one has to be very careful. Public opinion can change very quickly," a government source told AFP recently.

Niger is caught in a pincer between jihadists crossing from Mali in its southwest and from Nigeria in its southeast.

Scores of armed men on motorbikes carried out Saturday's attack in the western Tillaberi region, an area that has been a hotbed of insurgents.

Interior Minister Alkache Alhada told AFP after a top-level security meeting on Monday that the country had decreed three days of national mourning.

He promised to increase troop numbers near the Mali border to achieve "greater saturation".

"We have to stop incursions. We have to create a kind of security cordon, but one of the difficulties is that there's a void on the Malian side," he said.

Lacking decent equipment and training, Niger's armed forces have lost nearly 200 men to roadside bombs and camp raids in the last two years.

The government plans to double military personnel to “at least 50,000” over the next five years, raising questions about funding as defence already eats up 17 percent of the budget.

Mohamed Bazoum, a former interior minister who at the weekend was declared the winner of the first round of presidential elections, told AFP last month that there had been a shift in tactics on the ground.

The army dismantled static posts in the border area because they were so vulnerable to large-scale hit-and-run raids, and replaced them with patrols.

“We have drawn the lessons from our failures,” Bazoum said.

Jihadist violence comes on top of heightened ethnic tension between rival communities in the Mali-Niger border area, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank.

Yvan Guichaoua, a researcher at the University of Kent in England, said jihadists stir tensions by recruiting from nomadic communities while regarding sedentary farming groups as “accomplices of the state”.

Interior minister Alhada said the government would hold forums with ethnic and religious leaders to “prevent the risk of intra-ethnic conflict” in the border area.

“I was there yesterday with the prime minister,” Alhada said. “It’s hard -- we saw the graves, the victims’ relatives. We have to hold back (anger) to prevent flareups. Some people are calling for weapons.”

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NOTABLE COMMENTARY

22. China’s Nuclear Madness

Newsweek.com, Jan. 4 (0530) | Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea

COVID-19 has taught the world that the Chinese Communist Party's lies can have vast and terrible consequences. As the United States, our allies and our partners renew calls for transparency about the virus, we also urge Beijing to come clean about another danger: China's opaque and threatening nuclear weapons buildup.

During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union recognized that arms control served both our countries' national security. So, we engaged in a series of talks that allowed both sides to understand the nature of our respective nuclear arsenals. We established a framework to handle potentially deadly misunderstandings. As President Ronald Reagan famously said, citing a Russian proverb, "Trust, but verify."

Today, China allows no such transparency for the world's fastest-growing nuclear arsenal. Beijing refuses to disclose how many nuclear weapons it has, how many it plans to develop, or what it plans to do with them. It is the least transparent of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Despite Beijing's secrecy about its nuclear activities, we know China is pursuing a nuclear triad on land, in the air and at sea, and that it is rapidly growing and modernizing its capabilities. General Secretary Xi Jinping champions this buildup. Soon after taking office in 2012, he described China's nuclear-weapons command as "support for China's status as a great power." He subsequently elevated that command to a standalone service called the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force as a part of his plan to build a "world-class" military by 2049.

Satellite imagery shows the PLA's advances toward that goal, with a 2019 military parade in Beijing featuring nuclear-capable missiles. The display stretched nearly 3 miles—almost 10 times longer than the same segment a decade ago, and certainly only a fraction of the total arsenal. The parade also showcased the Dongfeng-41 missile, which could strike America's shores in 30 minutes. The PLA will deploy this missile in silos and on mobile platforms in the near future, and we expect that—if current trends hold—China will at least double its total nuclear arsenal in the next decade.

Beijing has done all this while exploiting the United States' decades-long compliance with ineffective arms-control agreements. While we were constrained by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty's limits on ground-launched missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers, the PLA has fielded more than a thousand theater-range ballistic missiles near its coast. Many of these weapons are dual-capable, meaning they can be armed with nuclear as well as conventional warheads. They are intended to target U.S. forces in East Asia and to intimidate and coerce America's allies.

China's ballistic missiles aren't simply collecting dust. China launched more of them in both 2018 and 2019 than the rest of the world combined. This year, China has already test fired more than 220 ballistic missiles, exceeding its totals in either of the previous two years. Commercial satellite imagery reveals year-round activity at Lop Nur, China's nuclear weapons test site.

Paired with its weapons modernization, Beijing's nuclear posture is getting more aggressive, threatening even non-nuclear neighbors and undermining confidence in its so-called No First Use

policy. The Department of Defense's reports also show evidence that the PLA is moving to a "launch-on-warning" posture.

By contrast, the United States and other democracies uphold transparency and respect for international norms governing nuclear weapons. We participate in robust and reliable crisis communication networks with other nuclear powers, and we've encouraged Beijing to do the same. We also publicly release our Nuclear Posture Review and we conduct biannual data exchanges with Russia on nuclear issues. Both France and the United Kingdom regularly produce statements detailing the numbers and types of nuclear weapons in their arsenals. China refuses to adopt these processes, instead clinging to secrecy as its preferred strategy.

Our calls for China's leaders to change course are reasonable. We've asked Beijing for transparency, and to join the United States and Russia in crafting a new arms control agreement covering all categories of nuclear weapons. The current U.S.-Russia New START Treaty limits our two countries' development of certain types of weapons, but leaves China free to continue its buildup unchecked. Any successor to New START must be expanded to include China. The United States has done its part to reduce nuclear dangers; it is time that China stopped posturing and began to comport itself responsibly.

We need America's friends in the fight, too. Many of our allies and partners—more than half of our NATO allies among them—have urged Beijing to come to the negotiating table. But too many countries, including champions of arms control who depend on America's nuclear deterrence capabilities, remain publicly silent about Beijing's buildup. All nations must urge China to honor its obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to pursue negotiations in good faith.

Over the past four years, the Trump administration has awakened the world to the China challenge. Beijing's two-decades-long asymmetric arms race is a core part of that challenge. It endangers the American homeland, our strategic positions in the Indo-Pacific, and our allies and partners. It is of concern to all peace-loving nations. We've briefed allies, partners and even the highest levels of the Russian government on China's nuclear buildup.

History teaches a valuable lesson about the best way forward. The United States, the Soviet Union and other nations recognized long ago that great powers must behave responsibly with the world's most dangerous weapons. So, too, must any nation with claims to greatness today.

--Mr. Pompeo is U.S. Secretary of State. Mr. Billingslea is the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control

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23. COVID-19 vaccination rates will increase

We all know that vaccines sitting on shelves or in refrigerators isn't the end of the effort; shots in arms — in millions of arms — are what's needed now

USA Today Online, Jan. 4 (1909) | Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II

Operation Warp Speed's unprecedented partnership between the federal government and the private sector produced 20 million first doses of FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine for jurisdictions to order by the end of 2020 — with second doses on hand to ship at the right time.

This delivers on our projection to have enough doses by the end of the year for 20 million Americans, and it is a historic accomplishment. But we all know that vaccines sitting on shelves or in refrigerators isn't the end of the effort; shots in arms — in millions of arms — are what's needed now.

The federal government has already provided considerable assistance to state, local, territorial and tribal public health jurisdictions: a federally created vaccination playbook, provided in September, that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has used to work with states on their vaccination plans nearly every day since then; the kits with needles, syringes, swabs and personal protective equipment needed to administer the vaccine; and \$340 million for COVID-19 vaccine planning, with billions more in the relief bill the president just signed.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar receives his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine on Dec. 22, 2020, in Bethesda, Maryland.

More than 4.5 million vaccinations have been reported into our central tracking system. We know the number is greater, but there will always be a lag between doses allocated and doses ordered and delivered; between doses delivered and doses administered; and between doses administered and vaccinations reported. We are fully committed to working with everyone involved to keep these lag times as short as possible.

We are three weeks since the first vaccine doses showed up at administration sites. We've heard from states that the recent holidays and snowstorms slowed their plans for vaccinations. We know that jurisdictions share our sense of urgency in administering vaccines, and we are closely looking at jurisdiction-level data to understand any challenges and already looking at ways we could support administering vaccinations. CDC experts are encouraged with the progress so far, and the plans that states developed with our support show that the rate of vaccinations will increase.

Our manufacturing projections show that we are on track to have 200 million doses available by the end of the first quarter, with the possibility of more if another vaccine receives Food and Drug Administration authorization. This is a projection, made based on the best available data we have.

We would much rather provide the most accurate projections we have, with some chance we could miss them, than set intentionally pessimistic goals just to be sure we can say they were met. Real transparency is what the American people deserve, and it's what we'll continue to deliver.

--Alex M. Azar II is the secretary of Health and Human Services

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24. COVID-19 vaccine rollout: Trump, Health and Human Services are throwing away their shot
Our View: What happened to 100 million vaccination doses by the end of the year? Operation Warp Speed is being wasted as thousands are dying daily in America

USA Today Online, Jan. 4 (1909) | Editorial

In business, it's better to underpromise and overdeliver. But when it comes to getting Americans inoculated with COVID-19 vaccines, the Trump administration appears to be doing the opposite. Last year, President Donald Trump and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar promised 100 million doses by the end of 2020. As late as Dec. 13, Azar expressed confidence that at least 20 million people would be vaccinated by Jan. 1. "Oh sure, yes," he told "Face the Nation."

By year's end, however, more than 14 million doses of new Pfizer and Moderna vaccines had been delivered to states and over 3 million people had received the first of two shots. (Total shots as of Monday evening stood at nearly 4.6 million, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.) Even accounting for lags in reporting, that's far short of the projections.

Success of Operation Warp Speed

The slow start is alarming. The virus continues to rage, a new variant is spreading and scientists estimate that 197-230 million Americans will need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 for life to finally return to normal.

The irony is that the success of Operation Warp Speed in producing new vaccines in record time was the administration's one true success story in a year of otherwise failed and chaotic leadership. Even that success, though, and what remains of federal credibility, might be tarnished unless officials at all levels of government can get shots into arms at a faster pace.

To be sure, the obstacles are daunting. Major new programs — remember the Obamacare rollout? — often get off to rocky starts.

There were many honest reasons for the initial vaccination delays: holidays, snowstorms and the logistical constraints with vaccines requiring subzero storage — not to mention a recalcitrant Congress that waited until the very last minute to approve vitally needed vaccination funding. But this was

predictable when Trump and Azar made their promises. Officials had months to prepare for the well-known "last mile" problem of turning vaccines into a vaccination program.

Trump dumps on states

The president, as usual, blamed everyone else. If vaccinations were late, he tweeted, it was the fault of resource-strapped states with health care systems already overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients. Dumping the vaccines on the states has had the same results as leaving masking decisions, testing, contact tracing and other responsibilities to the 50 governors: Some do a good job, some not so much, and the country ends up with a patchwork response to a national crisis.

The vaccination rate has ranged from about 14% in Georgia to nearly 50% in South Dakota. The Florida Department of Health in Lee County offered hundreds of doses on a first-come-first-served basis to those 65 and older; phone lines crashed and people wrapped in blankets and sleeping bags waited all night in 46-degree weather for a short supply of shots that many missed out on.

Scientists desperate to see more people inoculated quickly are already talking about forgoing second-dosage requirements, or cutting doses in half to make more shots available. But increasing the number of shots available won't help where there's a logjam in getting them injected.

The federal government can't do everything, but it can establish best practices and work more closely with states on vaccine administration, following examples set elsewhere. In Germany, authorities have within days turned available public venues into massive vaccination centers. In Italy, the government has erected pop-up pavilions.

In addition, a federal plan could be developed to train retired or active medical personnel in vaccination delivery, along the lines of what Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, suggested last week.

There's also a key role for the private sector, including the major pharmacy chains.

There is no time to lose. This is a national emergency. Deaths have surpassed 350,000. Between 2,000 and 3,000 Americans are dying as a result of COVID-19 every day and, after a holiday season filled with parties and family gatherings, those numbers will almost certainly increase in the weeks ahead.

Trump, consumed with fantasies of overturning the election results, seems incapable of improving his leadership in this crisis. That means more delay as America waits for President-elect Joe Biden to take office in two weeks.

Like a slowly starting locomotive, the vaccine rollout will undoubtedly pick up steam. Biden is promising to inoculate a million people per day during his first 100 days in office. We can only hope that he overdelivers.

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25. Brexit Arrives, for Better or Worse

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 5 (2020), Pg. A13 | Walter Russell Mead

Forty-eight years after the U.K. entered what would become the European Union and more than four years after voters shocked David Cameron's government by voting to leave, Brexit is no longer only a gleam in Nigel Farage's eye. As of last weekend, Britons have joined Americans in those crowded "Other Passport" lanes in European airports and British trade faces more red tape.

Whatever its merits as policy, Brexit was an important test of the U.K. political system. Most of the British establishment hates Brexit as much as the U.S. establishment hates Donald Trump. But instead of following the European pattern of holding repeated referendums until voters return the "right" answer, the political glitterati bowed to the people's will. Like Brexit or loathe it, that is how democracy is supposed to work.

It is also a personal triumph for Boris Johnson. Prime Minister Johnson took office with a Parliament hopelessly deadlocked on Brexit. He maneuvered his opponents into allowing him to call an election on a date of his choosing, won some of Labour's safest seats to gain a solid majority, and -- to the astonishment and chagrin of his critics -- negotiated an agreement that won the backing of both hardline Tory Brexiteers and the head of the Labour opposition.

That he pulled all this off despite the pandemic eroding his government's standing in the polls, and sending him to critical care, only emphasizes the extraordinary nature of his success. It remains to be seen what Mr. Johnson will make of Brexit, but he has already joined Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair on the short list of post-imperial British leaders who made a mark on world history.

It is also much too soon to tell how Brexit will work out in practice. Raising barriers to travel and trade is not a recipe for economic growth, and the world-beating U.K. financial sector is particularly vulnerable. Still, both Britain and the EU may find offsetting advantages. Without Eurosceptic Brits dragging their feet, Europeans are now free to tighten the "ever closer union" that many hope will make the EU a more significant world power. And freed from the regulatory burdens of EU membership, Britain has the chance to engage more deeply with faster growing economies around the world.

For the U.S., Brexit is a challenge. Britain's egress from the EU didn't only widen the English Channel; the Atlantic Ocean is going to be harder to cross. Without the U.K., the EU is likely over time to become less Atlanticist, more statist and more inward looking. It will almost inevitably seek to define itself in juxtaposition to America in various ways. The rush to sign an investment treaty with China despite public requests for delay and consultations from senior members of the incoming U.S. administration is a sign of things to come as the center of gravity of the post-Brexit EU shifts east.

And the United Kingdom may shrink too. Brexit was unpopular in Scotland, and a plurality of Scots currently tell pollsters they would vote to secede from Britain if a new referendum is held. Scexit would have serious implications for U.S. security and the future of NATO. Although the Scottish National Party dropped its longstanding opposition to NATO in 2012, it remains fiercely opposed to nuclear weapons. This means that an independent Scotland might seek to ban both British and American nuclear submarines from its waters, a stance that could make Scottish membership in NATO impossible.

Brexit has been on the table since Jan. 2013 when then-Prime Minister David Cameron, hoping to eliminate Brexit as a divisive issue in British politics, announced that he intended to renegotiate the terms of Britain's EU membership and ask British voters to endorse the agreement in a referendum. The failure of the Obama administration to take this issue seriously, to try to facilitate a U.K.-EU agreement palatable to British voters, was the first of a number of unmistakable signals from Washington that Europe was no longer an important foreign policy priority.

Any Cold War American administration would have seen a potential rift between key NATO allies -- to say nothing of the potential break-up of Britain -- as a major national security challenge demanding a focused response. In the Obama years, Washington mostly yawned when the subject came up; then President-elect Trump suggested that the U.K. name Mr. Farage as its ambassador to the U.S. Neither approach did much to strengthen our trans-Atlantic alliances or to protect American interests as Brexit moved forward.

But there are weighty consequences to Britain's EU departure, and the Biden administration will need a more proactive European and Atlantic policy to avoid the worst. Promoting an Open Atlantic trade agreement, supporting Franco-British military cooperation and working to rejuvenate NATO can strengthen critical U.S. alliances even as the U.K. and the EU go their politically separate ways.

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TWEETS OF NOTE

Twitter, Jan. 4

Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), @SenDuckworth: “For too long, women have volunteered to go into harm's way and have been forced to wear body armor designed for men—myself included. With the provision I secured, that's finally going to change.” (1/4, 1913)

Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE), @RepDonBacon: “Since my first term in Congress, I have made the restoration of U.S. electronic warfare a top legislative priority. Work remains but we've taken giant strides to ensure spectrum dominance for ops in air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace. @AOCrows” (1/4, 1800)

Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE), @RepDonBacon: “‘Defense Bill Accelerates Opportunity for DOD-UNMC Partnership.’ Our UNMC can be the nation's pandemic center of excellence and focal point for pandemic readiness in the future.” (1/4, 0831)

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), @SenatorShaheen: “.@NHNationalGuard has been working tirelessly on the frontlines since March to support our communities during the #COVID19 crisis. Now Guard members are helping w/ vaccine distribution. Thank you to all Guard members for your round the clock work on behalf of all Granite Staters.” (1/4, 1732)

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-FL), @RepMichaelWaltz: “Space is in Florida's DNA. From the pipeline of talent flowing from our universities to the private partnerships already established & so much more, it's a no-brainer to bring #SPACECOMtoSpaceCoast! @realDonaldTrump @SecAFOfficial” (1/4, 1703)

Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL), @SenRickScott: “Communist China's new defense law is giving more power to Xi and demonstrating their hunger to strengthen their position on the world stage. We cannot ignore the fact that China is an adversary intent on weakening the United States and our allies.” (1/4, 1625)

Rep. Jim Banks (R-IN), @Jim_Banks: “My friend & northeast Indiana native @JerryHendrixII just released his book To Provide and Maintain a Navy: Why Naval Primacy is America's First Best Strategy. Jerry helped me write the Five Oceans Navy Act last year and writes about it in his book. Important read!! #Navy” (1/4, 1352)

Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA), @sethmoulton: “‘As senior Defense Department leaders have noted, ‘there's no role for the U.S. military in determining the outcome of a U.S. election.’ Efforts to involve the U.S. armed forces in resolving election disputes would take us into dangerous, unlawful and unconstitutional territory.’” (1/4, 1210)

U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad, @US4AfghanPeace: “1/3 I return to Doha and the region with expectations that the parties will make tangible progress in the next round of #Afghanistan Peace Negotiations.” (1/4, 1105)

U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad, @US4AfghanPeace: “2/3 Both sides must demonstrate they are acting in the best interest of the Afghan people by making real compromises and negotiating an agreement on a political settlement as soon as possible and an immediate significant reduction in violence/ceasefire.” (1/4, 1105)

U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad, @US4AfghanPeace: “3/3 The current levels of violence, including targeted killings, is unacceptable. Those perpetuating the violence seek to undermine the peace process and the country's future. They do not reflect the will of the Afghan people, who yearn for peace.” (1/4, 1105)

U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchison, @USAmbNATO: “Great to see solid U. S. cooperation with our Ukraine partners during a recent freedom of maneuver training in #Kosovo. Throughout the exercise our troops sharpened skills & strengthened interoperability with the Ukrainian detachment. #StrongerTogether” (1/4, 0626)

Chargé d’Affaires to Afghanistan Ross Wilson, @USAmbKabul: “I was honored to meet with three members of the Afghan negotiating team to discuss the Doha talks that resume this week. These women and the entire delegation have my admiration and respect for their efforts to secure a democratic, inclusive & peaceful Afghanistan.” (1/4, 0546)

Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah, @DrabdullahCE: “This evening the Leadership Committee of the #HCNR in a joint meeting with the Islamic Republic's Negotiation Team @SapedarPalace discussed the latest developments in the peace process, & provided a clear guideline for the team for the next round of the peace talks. 1/3” (1/4, 1311)

Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah, @DrabdullahCE: “The Republic's Negotiation Team will depart tomorrow Monday, the 5th of January 2021, as it was planed, to Doha-Qatar to begin the second round of peace talks with Taliban. The team enjoys the full support of the republic, & has the mandate to discuss the peace agenda. 2/3” (1/4, 1311)

Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah, @DrabdullahCE: “I thank the international community for its continued support for the peace process, & the State of

Qatar for hosting the second round of the peace talks. We are committed to achieving a lasting peace, & ask the Taliban to do so. We are looking for a successful second round. 3/3" (1/4, 1311)

Office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, @IsraeliPM: "PM Netanyahu: Iran's decision to continue violating its commitments, to raise the enrichment level & advance the industrial ability to enrich uranium underground, can't be explained in any way except as continued realization of its intention to develop a military nuclear program" (1/4, 0657)

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