[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Monday, September 13, 2021 7:29 AM
To: [redacted] USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] FW: check out date

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Good morning [redacted],

Please see below email from [redacted] at the hotel in Texas. Can you find out when the hotel was notified they would be leaving?

Thanks,

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MXKDRS8 >

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From: [redacted]@yahoo.com <[redacted]@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, September 10, 2021 7:24 PM
To: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Cc: Comfort Inn <[redacted]@yahoo.com>; [redacted]@yahoo.com>; [redacted]
[redacted]@yahoo.com>
Subject: [EXT] check out date

Hi [redacted],

I hope all is well with you and everyone around you. I am getting notice that the South Dakota National Guard is checking out but I have their due date to check out on Sunday. Since we did have this date for Sunday we will no be getting revenue for tomorrow. We will need to have your group checked in until the date specified by your office in order for us not to lose any revenue for almost all of the Mainstay Suites. Please let me know if this check out date can still stand for check out on Sunday. We appreciate your choice in lodging needs for your group.

[redacted]

General Manager

Comfort Inn/Mainstay Suites

Edinburg, Texas 78539

[redacted]

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Friday, September 3, 2021 1:03 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: FW: [Non-DoD Source] Gov. Noem Bringing South Dakota National Guard Troops Home from the Southern Border

FYSA

From: [redacted]@STATE.SD.US>
Sent: Friday, September 3, 2021 11:42 AM
To: GOVMEDIALIST@LISTSERV.SD.GOV
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Gov. Noem Bringing South Dakota National Guard Troops Home from the Southern Border

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

For Immediate Release

September 3, 2021

Contact: [redacted]

Gov. Noem Bringing South Dakota National Guard Troops Home from the Southern Border

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem announced that the South Dakota National Guard troops on state active duty at the southern border will be returning home later this month. Governor Noem gave the following statement:

“I want to thank our dedicated troops with the South Dakota National Guard who have served honorably in this deployment to the Mexican Border. Our troops delivered on their mission, providing boots on the ground to supplement the efforts of Texas state troopers, National Guard, and Customs and Border Patrol agents. They directly assisted in stopping human trafficking and drug smuggling into our nation.

"The end of this deployment comes at a key transition point Thanks to our troops, Texas had time to organize and will now increase its financial commitment and manpower from within the state. Additionally, this deployment has made two things very clear: what happens on the border doesn’t stay there, and President Biden’s policies are enabling this crisis to continue.

“The South Dakota National Guard encountered more than 6,000 individuals crossing the border. Unfortunately, because of the Biden Administration’s failed border policies, the system has become one of facilitating the crossing of illegal immigrants into our country.

“Over the course of this mission, the scope of the drug smuggling and human trafficking taking place has been made clear to us, and it is staggering. Every state in the nation, including South Dakota, is made less safe as a result. The cartels are taking advantage of the humanitarian crisis – which is soaking up virtually all of Border Patrol’s efforts – and using it as a distraction for their criminal activities. So long as the border remains unsecure, this crisis will continue.

“The end of this deployment, however, is not the end of our commitment to secure our southern border. South Dakota is sending an additional 125 troops next month on a federal mission.

“President Biden’s approach is an utter disaster. As border crossings continue to climb, I am reiterating my call for President Biden to focus on America first and secure the border.”

###

_____

Access the GOVMEDIALIST Home Page and Archives < Caution-http://listserv.sd.gov/scripts/wa.exe?A0=GOVMEDIALIST >

Unsubscribe from the GOVMEDIALIST List < Caution-http://listserv.sd.gov/scripts/wa.exe?TICKET=NzM4MDY2IGFudGhvbnkuYS5kZWlzcy5taWxATUFJTC5NSUwgR09WTUVESUFMSVNUIB5arwIxR%2Bg%2F&c=SIGNOFF >

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, August 17, 2021 10:35 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: Border (UNCLASSIFIED)

Is your spreadsheet from BGV jacked? Mine has the dates all screwed up

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, August 17, 2021 10:17 AM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>
Subject: RE: Border (UNCLASSIFIED)

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

I think we are looking for roll-up numbers for the TAGs numbers. I think if we add A, F, L to include remarks/comments to the TAGs spreadsheet we should be good for BGV's format review…before sending them on to the TAG.

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto:[redacted]@mail.mil> >
Sent: Tuesday, August 17, 2021 9:26 AM
To: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil <mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: RE: Border

Good morning Sir,

Attached is the tracker TF 153 is using to track activity and migrant numbers at the border. It is broken down by shift and day. Under event, it also shows surrenders/detections/scouts/turn-backs which more accurately annotates the contacts and observations of our Soldiers. I can break this down to just the surrenders you had on your spreadsheet if you wish.

[redacted]

From: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil
<mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >
Sent: Monday, August 16, 2021 8:37 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil
<mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil
<mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Subject: Border

[redacted]

I talked to the TAG this morning. He told the Governor the drop dead date of knowing if we are staying or going is 1 Sept. That will give us 12 days to plan their departure.

Other things discussed were, are we still deputizing the soldiers, where are we at in the process? Are we going to give the soldiers that tried to save the life of a child an award? Please research what kind of award we could give him.

Did the child that passed get tested for COVID? Was the soldier wearing any protective gear when administering CPR? Was the soldier tested? Lastly the TAG wanted to know if we were tracking surrenders etc by day, he attached a spread sheet of what he would like to see. Thanks Ed

Brig Gen Edwin A. VanDerWolde

Director, Joint Staff, SDNG

2823 W. Main Street

Rapid City, SD 57702

Office Phone: 605-737-6010

Cell Phone: 605-321-7425

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Date	# Soldiers Present for Duty	Total Surrenders	Family Surrenders	Individual Surrenders	Observation Reports to CBP	Comments
14-Jul-21	**48**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	
15 Jull 21						
16-Jul-21						
17-Jul-21						
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38 Jull 21						
31-Aug-21						
1-Sep-21						
39 Jull 21						
2-Sep-21						
3-Sep-21						
40 Jull 21						
4-Sep-21						
5-Sep-21						
41 Jull 21						
6-Sep-21						
7-Sep-21						
42 Jull 21						

8-Sep-21						
9-Sep-21						
10-Sep-21						
11-Sep-21						
12-Sep-21						
Totals		0	0	0	0	

[redacted] **LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)**

From: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)
Sent: Monday, August 16, 2021 8:37 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: Border
Attachments: TF153 Numbers.xlsx

[redacted]

I talked to the TAG this morning. He told the Governor the drop dead date of knowing if we are staying or going is 1 Sept. That will give us 12 days to plan their departure.

Other things discussed were, are we still deputizing the soldiers, where are we at in the process? Are we going to give the soldiers that tried to save the life of a child an award? Please research what kind of award we could give him.

Did the child that passed get tested for COVID? Was the soldier wearing any protective gear when administering CPR? Was the soldier tested? Lastly the TAG wanted to know if we were tracking surrenders etc by day, he attached a spread sheet of what he would like to see. Thanks Ed

Brig Gen Edwin A. VanDerWolde

Director, Joint Staff, SDNG

2823 W. Main Street

Rapid City, SD 57702

Office Phone: 605-737-6010

Cell Phone: 605-321-7425

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Monday, August 2, 2021 2:02 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Re: SWB rotation

Copy, you would think TX could take care of a handful this round.

From: "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil
<mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Date: Monday, August 2, 2021 at 1:44:39 PM
To: "[redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: SWB rotation

[redacted],

I just found out today that the first round of Soldiers that went down to the SWB on SAD apparently conducted familiarization firing prior to departure. I called COL [redacted] to validate and he said yes he approved it. I told them that in order to do that, the state has to pay for any ammunition expended and that the EMAC did not call for that. So here we are with the next rotation and the unit is of course asking for the same thing. I told them that unless we hear otherwise, there will be no shooting any ammunition in South Dakota.

Let me know if that changes.

Thanks

[redacted]

v/r

[redacted]

COL, IN

Deputy G3

South Dakota National Guard

[redacted]

[redacted]

NIPR: [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil>

SIPR: [redacted] @mail.smil.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.smil.mil>

CUI

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

CONTROLLED UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION (CUI)

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Saturday, July 31, 2021 9:38 AM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] FW: quote

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Hello Sir,

Below is the estimated cost of transporting two LMTV's to Texas.

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MXKDRS8 >

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From: [redacted] < [redacted] @globaltranz.com>
Sent: Friday, July 30, 2021 3:27 PM
To: [redacted] @state.sd.us>
Subject: Re: [EXT] quote

$6825 per load

2 loads equals - $ 13650.00

1 load - $ 6825

[redacted]

[redacted]

Caution-https://www.providedsolutionsandsupply. < Caution-https://www.providedsolutionsandsupply.com > com

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From: [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto: [redacted] @state.sd.us > >
Sent: Friday, July 30, 2021 9:21 AM
To: [redacted] @globaltranz.com < Caution-mailto: [redacted] @globaltranz.com > >

Subject: RE: quote

[External Email: Please validate sender before clicking links or opening attachments.]

[redacted],

Just to verify-this quote is for two LMTV's and is for one way?

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-
https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2FCaution-
www.surveymonkey.com%2Fr%2FMXKDRS8&data=04%7C01%7C%7C91f9992267ea4fe0b7a108d9536dac2b%7C3a1e65
f32d2b48d4a8236b554c94c4a1%7C0%7C0%7C637632552773000564%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLj
AwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Xqd8RCLJ58BAp8Y26tQq9t00paHiTEdE57
nfiY7MrNo%3D&reserved=0 >

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From: [redacted] @globaltranz.com < Caution-mailto: [redacted] @globaltranz.com > >
Sent: Friday, July 30, 2021 10:13 AM
To: [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us > >

Subject: Re: [EXT] quote

$6825 per load

We will give discount from $6995 last time per load. That price means your people at least have ramps at both ends, SD and TX.

On Jul 30, 2021, at 8:57 AM, [redacted]@state.sd.us < Caution-mailto [redacted]@state.sd.us > > wrote:

[External Email: Please validate sender before clicking links or opening attachments.]

[redacted],

Here are the dimensions of the LMTV:

L 22.1 ft

W 7.99 ft

H 9.28 ft

Weight 24,870 lbs

Let me know if questions.

Thanks,

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

<image001.jpg>

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2FCaution-www.surveymonkey.com%2Fr%2FMXKDRS8&data=04%7C01%7C%7C91f9992267ea4fe0b7a108d9536dac2b%7C3a1e65f32d2b48d4a8236b554c94c4a1%7C0%7C0%7C637632552773010515%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=2W7cIvkH%2BsnwT6O5dONfG2HachcUwLRgBZebn4VKYnY%3D&reserved=0 >

<image007.jpg>

<image008.jpg>

<image009.jpg>

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From: [redacted] < [redacted] @globaltranz.com < Caution-mailto: [redacted] @globaltranz.com > >
Sent: Friday, July 30, 2021 8:45 AM
To: [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us > >
Subject: Re: [EXT] quote

YES. WE LOVE SOUTH DAKOTA.

Please get me get me the dimensions, L X W X H and weight

length, width, height and weight and weight

[redacted]

[redacted]

Caution-https://www.providedsolutionsandsupply. < Caution-https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2FCaution-www.providedsolutionsandsupply.com%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7C91f9992267ea4fe0b7a108d9536dac2b%7C3a1e65f32d2b48d4a8236b554c94c4a1%7C0%7C0%7C637632552773010515%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=bkHmicMLTPYOtc0puAANNERXI30JHpFfKH%2FYdYElGvc%3D&reserved=0 > com

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From: [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto: [redacted] @state.sd.us > >
Sent: Friday, July 30, 2021 7:38 AM
To: [redacted] @globaltranz.com < Caution-mailto [redacted] @globaltranz.com > >
Subject: quote

[External Email: Please validate sender before clicking links or opening attachments.]

Hi [redacted],

Happy Friday! Hope you have some fun weekend plans in place.

Would you be able to provide a quote for me? I need a quote for transporting two South Dakota National Guard LMTV vehicles to Texas, the same drop off for the previous vehicle transport.

Let me know if you have questions.

Thank you!

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

<image010.jpg>

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2FCaution-www.surveymonkey.com%2Fr%2FMXKDRS8&data=04%7C01%7C%7C91f9992267ea4fe0b7a108d9536dac2b%7C3a1e65f32d2b48d4a8236b554c94c4a1%7C0%7C0%7C637632552773010515%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=2W7cIvkH%2BsnwT6O5dONfG2HachcUwLRgBZebn4VKYnY%3D&reserved=0 >

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[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Thursday, July 29, 2021 1:58 PM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: RE: Cost Estimate

Thank you for your work on this. It looks good.

Do you recall the number of soldiers who are vaccinated on this mission?

Jeffrey P. Marlette
Major General, SDNG
The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700
Cell: (605) 484-7777

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Thursday, July 29, 2021 1:17 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: Cost Estimate

Sir,

Attached is a brief with cost estimates for the TX Border Mission. BLUF with your questions to BG VanderWolde:

Cost to date - I used 23 July as that was when payroll submitted: $419,787

30 day cost estimate: $862,310

Additional equipment cost (line haul 2 LMTV's, will also incur a rental cost of $59.84 per day): $10,000

Replacement soldiers airfare (6 pax there and 6 pax return): $9000

Return to SD (People and Equipment): $95,000

[redacted], Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [redacted]

DSN: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: VANDERWOLDE, EDWIN A Brig Gen USAF ANG HQ SDANG/COS <edwin.vanderwolde@us.af.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, July 20, 2021 8:07 AM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: RE: SAD SWB Mission

Send this to Col [redacted] so he understands why.

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 11:48 AM
To: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: RE: Tx border

Thanks Ed,

I do hope to visit with the Governor later this week. We will need to look at the different options, most of which you have outlined below. I asked [redacted] to touch base with the 153rd Leadership to find out just how deep they think their pool of soldiers are that may be able to support the mission. At this point there is no need to have this discussion or poll the soldiers in TX to see how many want to stay.

JPM

Jeffrey P. Marlette

Major General, SDNG

The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700

Cell: (605) 484-7777

From: VANDERWOLDE, EDWIN A Brig Gen USAF ANG HQ SDANG/COS <edwin.vanderwolde@us.af.mil <mailto:edwin.vanderwolde@us.af.mil> >
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 9:04 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto:[redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: Tx border

Gen Marlette,

Sir, the only issue I am aware of for the border mission is the lack of a vehicle. [redacted] and [redacted] from OEM are working this, hopefully resolved today. [redacted] told me you and Gov Noem are talking this week to discuss the future of the border mission sometime this week. Some choices are; bring them back after 30 days with no replacements, swap out those that want to come home with other volunteers, or lastly bring back those that want to, and leave those that want to stay with no swap out. If we use the last option we would want to poll the people first to see if it is worth it, also may have to deploy a couple leadership personnel. I will be in the office all day, please feel free to call me.

EDWIN A. VANDERWOLDE, Brig Gen, SDANG

Director, Joint Staff

DSN: 747-6010

Commercial: 605-737-6010

Mobile: 605-321-7425

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, July 20, 2021 8:57 AM
To: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>
Subject: Fwd: SAD SWB Mission

Fysa. I do not want to go against your guidance yesterday. I understood from you to not do this yet. Let me know.
Thanks

From: "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil
<mailto[redacted]@mail.mil> >
Date: Tuesday, July 20, 2021 at 7:46:31 AM
To: "[redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: FW: SAD SWB Mission

[redacted],

As the top of the TF chain of command, would you reach down and find out an estimate of how many Soldiers at the border would want to extend for another rotation if GOVSD chooses to extend the mission? If they could get a good count today that would be great.

V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto[redacted]@mail.mil> >
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 9:37 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil
<mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Cc: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil
<mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >
Subject: SAD SWB Mission
Importance: High

[redacted],

I am tracking we sent 48 Pax to Texas on 8 July for subject mission.

Please put together a detailed plan to brief the TAG on the following COAs:

#1 - If we can continue supporting the mission for another rotation how many Soldiers will stay, how many will come home, those Soldiers that come home when do we need to switch them out, what will that process/timeline be, do they need additional equipment?

#2 - If GOV elects not to support for another rotation when do we bring our Soldiers home, what will that process be, timeline?

Please be ready by Tuesday COB, I assume the TAG will want a desk side brief on Wednesday after MOB/Staff Meeting.

Thanks, [redacted]

COL [redacted]
Army Chief of Staff
South Dakota Army National Guard
2823 West Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702-8186
[redacted]
[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto:[redacted]@mail.mil>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 2:32 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: Texas Deployment.

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Thank you, Sir.

I'll send him the response. [redacted]

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 3:26 PM
To: [redacted]@state.sd.us>; [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: RE: [EXT] Texas Deployment.

Please tell [redacted] that we would appreciate receiving these request for information in writing, so that we can have a log of questions we receive. I am still always puzzled why they never tell us who it is that is asking the questions.

1. The SDNG will receive it's reimbursement for this State Active Duty Mission the exact same way they always have and always will for all State Active Duty Mission. All pay and allowances comes from the Department of Public Safety (Office of Emergency Management) and is paid from their State Emergency funds.
2. The SDNG has no visibility as to rather or not the Department of Public Safety has ever received donations from public individuals for responses to State Emergency Actions.
3. The questions on costs associated with this State Active Duty mission should be addressed to the Department of Public Safety. They are the keeper of all costs associated with this mission.

Unless I am missing something, this is the response you can send back to him (In writing)

Jeffrey P. Marlette

Major General, SDNG

The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700

Cell: (605) 484-7777

From: [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us > >
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 1:18 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil < Caution-mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil > >; [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil < Caution-mailto [redacted] @mail.mil > >
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Texas Deployment.

Good Afternoon Gentlemen,

[redacted] from Legislative Research Council called me a couple of minutes ago.

He has a legislator who would like to know if a private donation has ever been made in the past for a deployment. And, what is the cost to deploy 50 National Guard soldiers to the Texas border.

Thank you,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Deputy Secretary

Department of the Military

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 2:13 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Texas Deployment.

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

He is following up on the email he sent last week.

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 3:00 PM
To: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Subject: Re: [EXT] [Non-DoD Source] Texas Deployment.

Did he send an email request or just call.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 6, 2021, at 1:18 PM, [redacted]@state.sd.us < Caution-mailto [redacted]@state.sd.us > > wrote:

Good Afternoon Gentlemen,

[redacted] from Legislative Research Council called me a couple of minutes ago.

He has a legislator who would like to know if a private donation has ever been made in the past for a deployment. And, what is the cost to deploy 50 National Guard soldiers to the Texas border.

Thank you,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Deputy Secretary

Department of the Military

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 9:08 AM
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] SDNG Departure to TX - G1 Schedule

Please note the soldiers do not stay in Huron the evening before. They will be home packing and spending a last night with their families. I recommend anything being done on Wednesday be completed prior to 5:30 P.M.

Jeff

Jeffrey P. Marlette

Major General, SDNG

The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700

Cell: (605) 484-7777

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 9:04 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Cc: [redacted]@state.sd.us>; [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] SDNG Departure to TX - G1 Schedule

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

_____

Good to know, I'll work on getting something setup for that morning or possibly Wednesday evening if there's an opportunity the night before?

[redacted]

Director of Scheduling

Office of South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem

O: [redacted]

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 9:55 AM
To: [redacted] @state.sd.us <mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us> >; [redacted] <[redacted] @state.sd.us <mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us> >
Cc: [redacted] @state.sd.us <mailto: [redacted] @state.sd.us> >; [redacted] @state.sd.us <mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us> >
Subject: RE: [EXT] [Non-DoD Source] SDNG Departure to TX - G1 Schedule

FYI – Busses will load that morning and depart Huron at 6:30 A.M.

No need for an activation type event, but there would be an opportunity for her to briefly speak with the Soldiers and shake their hands as the walk out to load the busses.

Jeff

Jeffrey P. Marlette

Major General, SDNG

The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700

Cell: (605) 484-7777

From: [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto: [redacted] @state.sd.us
<mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us %3c Caution-mailto: [redacted] @state.sd.us > > >
Sent: Tuesday, July 6, 2021 8:53 AM
To: [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us
<mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us %3c Caution-mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us > > >
Cc: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil < Caution-mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil %3c Caution-mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil > > >; [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto: [redacted] @state.sd.us
<mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us %3c Caution-mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us > > >; [redacted]
< [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto: [redacted] @state.sd.us
<mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us %3c Caution-mailto: [redacted] @state.sd.us > > >
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] SDNG Departure to TX - G1 Schedule

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

_____

[redacted] - I didn't see anything on Governors calendar Thursday morning for the departure of the sdng soldiers bound for Texas. Please work with General Marlette and his staff on what a send off by the Governor would look like that morning in Huron and ensure the Governor has a chance to decide whether that will work for her schedule.

We would normally do an activation ceremony for a deployment so marking this departure somehow is important in my view. We shouldn't overlook it.

Thanks,

[redacted]

Get Outlook for iOS < Caution-Caution-https://aka.ms/o0ukef >

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Thursday, July 1, 2021 1:35 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC offer

I have concurrence from our end

From: [redacted] @state.sd.us <mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us> >
Date: Thursday, July 1, 2021 at 1:03:42 PM
To: "[redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC offer

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

_____

[redacted],

Will you take a look at this, pretty simple…….

I'd like to get this to Texas this afternoon.

Let me know if any questions.

Thank you,

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MXKDRS8 >

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EMAC Offer of Assistance

2091-OFFER-10521-9660

Assisting State:	SD	State TN #:	United States
Assisting Agency:	South Dakota National Guard	State EM TN #:	SD

Offer Description

Mission Start Date:	7/6/2021	Arrival Date:	7/9/2021
Departure Date:	8/9/2021	Mission End Date:	8/13/2021
# Mission Days:	39		
Mission Type	National Guard	Type / Status	State Active Duty
Mission Description	Support listening and observation posts located along the Texas border region with Mexico. Specific locations will be determined by Texas Military Department point of contact in conjunction with the military border task force.		
Resource Description	Up to 48 National Guard Personnel. 11x up-armored HMMWVs, 1x Wrecker, 1x Contact Truck, 5x CLS bags, 5x SINCGARS radios, 5x PAS-13 (Thermal optics), 10x PVS-14s (NVGs), 5x M22 binoculars, 5x Camo Nets, 1ea M4 Carbine, Each Soldier will bring at a minimum: 2 sets ACU/OCP, 1ea Patrol Cap, 2ea Boots, 1ea Kevlar/ACH helmet, 1ea IBA/IOTV, 3x M4 Magazine Pouches, 3x M17 Magazine Pouches, 1ea IFAK, 1ea Water Source, 1ea Eye Protection (clear and tinted lenses) 1ea Hearing Protection 1ea Gloves. This support will be at no cost to the State of Texas.		
NIMS Type:			
Job Position Qualifications:			

In-State Resource Point of Contact

First Name:	[redacted]	Last Name	[redacted]
Phone 1:		Phone 2:	[redacted]
Email 1:	[redacted]@state.sd.us	Email 2:	

Assisting State REQ-A Contact

First Name:	[redacted]	Last Name	[redacted]
Phone 1:	[redacted]	Phone 2:	
Email 1:	[redacted]@state.sd.us	Email 2:	

Total Mission Estimated Costs

Travel:	$0.00
Personnel:	$0.00
Equipment:	$0.00
Commodities:	$0.00
Other:	$0.00
EST. TOTAL COST:	$0.00

Travel

Personal Vehicle Costs:	$0.00	Rental Vehicle Costs:	$0.00	Gvt. Vehicle Costs:	$0.00

Air Travel Costs:	$0.00	Meals & Tips (Receipt):	$0.00	Meals & Tips (Per Diem):	$0.00
Lodging:	$0.00	Parking Fees:	$0.00	Shipment & Transportation:	$0.00
Identify any transportation requirements:					

Personnel Assigned to Mission

Total:	48

Personnel Costs

Name / Phone / Email	Reg. Salary Hourly Rate	Fringe Benefit Hourly Rate	Reg. Hours Worked Per Day	OT Salary Hourly Rate	OT Fringe Benefit Hourly Rate	OT Hours Worked Per Day	# Days	Total Daily Cost	Total Mission Cost
16	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
15	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
14	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
13	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
12	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
11	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
10	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
9	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
8	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
7	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
6	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
2	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
3	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
4	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
5	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
48	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00

47	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
46	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
45	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
44	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
43	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
42	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
41	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
40	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
39	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
38	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
37	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
36	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
35	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
34	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
33	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
32	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
31	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
30	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
29	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
28	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
27	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
26	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00

25	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
24	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
23	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
22	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
21	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
20	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
17	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
18	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
19	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00
1	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00

Commodity Costs

ID	Commodity Description	Cost Per Item	Quantity	Total Costs

Equipment Costs

ID	Equipment Description	Cost Per Item	Qty	Rate Per Day	Qty	# Days Used	Total Cost
35529	HumVee	$0.00	11	$0.00	0	0	$0.00
35542	Wrecker	$0.00	1	$0.00	0	0	$0.00
35543	Contact Truck	$0.00	1	$0.00	0	0	$0.00
35544	LMTV	$0.00	1	$0.00	0	0	$0.00

Other Costs

ID	Other Description	Cost Per Item	Qty	Rate Per Day	Qty	# Days Used	Total Cost

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Thursday, July 1, 2021 12:37 PM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC offer
Attachments: Texas EMAC offer.pdf

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

[redacted],

Will you take a look at this, pretty simple…….

I'd like to get this to Texas this afternoon.

Let me know if any questions.

Thank you,

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MXKDRS8 >

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[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Thursday, July 1, 2021 8:04 AM
To: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)
Subject: Texas Mission

Sir

Were there a list of answers to questions the G3/5/7 or DOMOPS put together for NGB surrounding the Texas support. If so I was wondering if I could get a copy of it, I thought that might be some additional background info to have. Thanks sir

Lt. Col. [redacted]

Director of Public Affairs

South Dakota National Guard

e-m: [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil>

pho: [redacted]

cel: [redacted]

sd.ng.mil

www.facebook.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard <http://www.facebook.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard>

twitter.com/SD_Guard

www.instagram.com/sdnationalguard <http://www.instagram.com/sdnationalguard>

www.flickr.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard <http://www.flickr.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Thursday, July 1, 2021 7:50 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: PA Update 30 June 2021

Tracking Sir. This one will get interesting.

BG Michael J. Oster
Assistant Adjutant General
South Dakota Army National Guard
Deputy Commanding General-Mobilization
Joint Base Lewis McChord
michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil
605-484-6002

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 6:03 AM
To: Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); Pat Pardy; Lair, Gregory W Brig Gen USAF 114 FW (USA); Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] CSM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA); [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Re: PA Update 30 June 2021

Hit send to soon.

Everyone stay on your "A" game on this. People will be asking questions. Our position is we don't discuss the donation. We received a SAD Mission, just like every other. Our reimbursement comes from OEM (State $), just like it always does.

We don't comment on mission specifics, for security reasons. All requests for information get referred to our PAO.

Governor Noem will be doing a press release later today.

JPM

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 30, 2021, at 5:53 AM, Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> wrote:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Date: June 30, 2021 at 4:59:45 AM MDT
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: PA Update 30 June 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, June 30, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III welcomes Her Excellency Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Minister of Defense to the Federal Republic of Germany, to the Pentagon in an enhanced honor cordon ceremony at 8 a.m. EDT.

- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael M. Gilday and Commandant of the Marine Corps David H. Berger participate in the keynote panel discussion at 11 a.m. EDT; Adm. Sam Paparo, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, provides the keynote address at 3:30 p.m. EDT; and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

- Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Douglas Bush; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition Frederick “Jay” Stefany; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Darlene Costello; Army Lt. Gen. Eric C. Peterson, deputy chief of staff, G-8, Department of the Army; Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Mark Wise, deputy commandant for Aviation, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and Read Adm. Andrew Loiselle, director, Air Warfare Division, N98, Department of the Navy, testify on Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force rotary wing aviation programs and planned modernization efforts in the fiscal 2022 budget request at 3 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces hearing on fiscal 2022 rotary wing aviation budget request, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX: Military.com (National) – Billionaire GOP Mega-Donor Funds National Guard Mission to US-Mexico Border – By Steve Beynon

The South Dakota National Guard is deploying on mission to the U.S. southern border. And the operation is being funded by a billionaire, not the government, Military.com has learned. Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

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AR, TX: KNWA (Regional) – Governor Hutchison authorizes 90-day deployment of up to 40 National Guard members to U.S./Mexico Border – By Gary Gilbert

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SC, AZ, TX: WMBF (Regional) – S.C. congressmen thank Gov. McMaster for sending National Guard troops to U.S. border – By Staff Reports

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FULL STORY BELOW

2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military. McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

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FULL STORY BELOW

6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

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FULL STORY BELOW

7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity. Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown. … Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard. The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

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FULL STORY BELOW

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Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

"The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide," South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, said in a statement Tuesday.

Roughly 50 guardsmen will deploy on the mission, according to a South Dakota Guard spokesman. However, the mission is still in its early planning stages. It's unclear where the troops will deploy on the border, which unit will be sent or what the mission will be.

The National Guard declined to comment for this story or answer questions about the practice of allowing private donors to fund missions. A query to the Pentagon about the mission did not receive a response.

Willis Johnson is the founder of Copart, an online vehicle auction service, and has amassed a $2.2 billion fortune, according to Forbes. He resigned as CEO of Copart in 2010, according to reporting from the Nashville Post.

He is a Republican mega-donor, donating at least $1.5 million to conservative causes, including $50,000 to the "Trump Victory" political action committee, according to reporting from Bloomberg.

Former President Donald Trump made border security a key part of his presidency, ordering the deployment of troops to the border in April 2018 under a mission known as Operation Faithful Patriot. One of President Joe Biden's first acts as president was to suspend Trump's emergency declaration at the border, halting some government funds. The Associated Press reported that Trump is expected to visit the border with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, later this week.

Ian Fury, a spokesman for Noem, wouldn't confirm if Willis Johnson runs the foundation. When Military.com reached Johnson via telephone, he wouldn't confirm his identity and declined to be interviewed.

However, tax forms including for the foundation and donation records for Johnson share the same address in Franklin, Tennessee.

"Governor Noem welcomes any such donations to help alleviate the cost to South Dakota taxpayers," Fury told Military.com. Fury declined to disclose how much of a donation was made to cover the mission, saying revealing that would be "a security risk."

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2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military.

McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

She remembers the pilots who guided her, who said the days of female combat exclusion were numbered. They turned around to speak to her from the front seat, and said McCandless could help usher in a new chapter for the military.

"They encouraged me, and they said, 'hey, someday it'll change,'" McCandless said. "They have daughters. And I think was an awakening moment for them to think, 'wow, my daughter could be completely able to do this, from a physical and a mental standpoint, but won't be able to for one reason.'"

McCandless, 51, now finds herself in another moment of U.S. military history – serving as the first female leader of the D.C National Guard.

Beginning April 25, 2021, McCandless oversaw the end of the D.C. Guard's security mission at the Capitol, at a time when the Guard's role in Washington was redefined, and may still change in the months ahead.

She serves as the D.C. Guard's interim commanding general, appointed to the role after her predecessor, Maj. Gen. William Walker, became the new Sergeant-at-Arms for the U.S. House of Representatives. Her

fate now lies with President Joe Biden, who is expected to decide over the next few months if McCandless will fill the position permanently.

In her first interview since assuming the role, McCandless said the 2,700 soldiers and airmen under her command would not be put under immense strain if Congress decides to create a "strike force" of Guard members assisting U.S. Capitol Police. She affirmed one of her top priorities is to improve the speed and efficiency of communication with federal and District law enforcement, should another episode of insurrection threaten the heart of American democracy.

Yet her concerns are also focused on new outreach to the people of the District, expanding a program to instill leadership in teenagers who've dropped out of high school.

McCandless said she is also mindful of allowing Guard members adequate time to reconnect with families, following months of unprecedented service.

"We just have to make sure that we're constantly looking at evaluating balancing," McCandless said. "It's a constant evolution. We can never let rest on where we are."

A Possible U.S. Capitol Strike Force

Within a $1.9 billion Capitol security bill, passed by one vote in the House, Democratic lawmakers authored the creation of a quick-reacting force of National Guard members on U.S. Capitol grounds. The aim of the force would be to assist Capitol Police, should a scenario similar to the January 6 insurrection repeat once more.

Republican lawmakers oppose the measure, with Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) writing in a joint statement, "use of the uniformed military in D.C. and the Capitol Complex is subject to complex statutory restrictions, and for good reason."

"We cannot and should not militarize the security of the Capitol Complex."

While McCandless and the Guard take no position on the matter, leaving the decision to civilian lawmakers, the general said such a force would not strain the Guard's command structure, or its personnel.

"I think that the planning would need to take place, but I don't see any major changes required," McCandless said.

When asked if major shifts would be required to make such a force work, McCandless replied, "Not in my opinion."

McCandless stressed the D.C. Guard serves as a force of last resort, after law enforcement exhausted all its resources. Yet she affirmed under her command, the Guard would respond to a potential Capitol crisis with greater speed than what was seen in January.

"I'm on my 60th day [leading the D.C. Guard,]" McCandless said. "And I've spent a lot of those days connecting with my downtown partners. So, U.S. Capitol Police chief, U.S. Park Police chief, the mayor's office. I'm making sure that we are communicating, we know who each other are, and kind of where the National Guard in D.C. is at this time."

"I've been able to participate with some of our team at the Defense Department also, who has obviously been looking into and interested in those response times," she continued. "There's a great amount of learning and collaboration going on at this time to ensure that if and when we have our federal or District partners that require our assistance or the assistance of the National Guard, that we're in a better place."

Reaching out to the D.C. Community

McCandless is the granddaughter of an Iwo Jima Marine Corps veteran, who landed 45 minutes into the first wave of U.S. troops on the island. PFC Theodore Below helped raised McCandless, and instilled within the future D.C. Guard commander a sense of service which persists into the present.

"He actually still lives with me in my home in Washington, D.C.," McCandless said. "The foundation he built for me always provided a very clear sight picture for me about the criticality of service."

The arc of service could be seen in a hangar at Joint Base Andrews, when McCandless joined more than 30 D.C. teenagers for an up-close look at F-16 fighters.

The adolescents recently dropped out of high school, but are now back on the path to a diploma. They are enrolled in the D.C. Guard program, known as the "Capital Guardian Youth ChalleNGe Academy."

"In that 16 to 18-year-old range, as we all know, there are a lot of distractions and there's a lot of competing priorities in their lives," McCandless said. "And I think what we're able to offer to them is a safe environment to go into, inspired by the military, but having no outcome to join the military."

McCandless described the program neither as bootcamp, nor ROTC, but as a five-month full-time living experience on a D.C. Guard suburban campus in Laurel, Md.

"It allows them to re-engage in physical fitness activities, understanding how to balance a checkbook, understanding the criticality of their diet and how that feeds them and they basically learn skills that we think that will help them complete their education, join the workforce, and then come back into the D.C. community," she said.

Online applications for the fall 2021 program are now open, with McCandless setting a goal to expand the academy's enrollment and recognition as a force for change. Cadets are under no obligation to join the Guard upon completion of the program.

D.C. Guard Moving Forward

"We have an F-16 mission that's getting ready to depart for the Middle East, and we also have National Guardsmen that have departed to go down to Guantánamo," the general offered, describing ongoing operations after the U.S. Capitol mission. "We're always constantly making sure we're prepared for the overseas war fight – that's the core mission of what we do. But we also have to maintain and train our readiness as almost a byproduct of that federal mission, to respond to natural disasters and manmade disasters inside the United States."

McCandless described as the D.C. Guard moves forward, post-insurrection, her mission is to help its airmen and soldiers reconnect – first with their families, then with their civilian jobs balanced alongside National Guard duties.

"Simultaneously, the country is coming out of the pandemic. So there's the desire for guardsmen to get out, socialize again," she said.

"We're also going to start working again on some of the basic military skills that they did not have the opportunity to train on while they were doing the Capitol mission."

At an expansive moment for the Guard in the public consciousness, McCandless said she feels prepared to meet the expectations of the city and the nation. Once as a pilot in her 20's who helped shape the face of the U.S.

military, she now says she turns to the needs of the Guard in the nation's capital, a new arena to engage in a commanding change.

"It's really about the competency of the individuals and how they've been prepared through their lives to ascend to these roles," McCandless said. "I've been trying to prepare myself all along for roles that the military may ask me to perform… And I'm excited that it's now with the Guard where I call home."

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It started in 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition.

Airmen have supported the state's pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

Members of the Air National Guard came to Annapolis after the riot at the Capitol and provided protection for state lawmakers.

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4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading.

The situation has alarmed experts and public officials, who warn that this year's fire season could outpace last year's, which was the worst on record. Blazes have already ignited around California, where dry vegetation has left large swaths of the state primed to explode into flames, even as the federal government struggles to hire firefighters.

"We're in as high risk of a starting condition as we could ever expect," said Noah Diffenbaugh, a Stanford University professor who studies climate change and wildfires.

The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

Western states are eager for Washington to step up its commitment after President Trump repeatedly blamed them – particularly California, which he said failed to "clean your forests" of combustible vegetation – for failing to prevent and stop wildfires.

The threat comes amid staffing shortages at the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, problems exacerbated by low pay, competition from state and local fire departments and exhaustion from last year's fire season.

More than a month after seasonal hiring would typically have ended, the federal government is still trying to fill vacant positions on hot shot crews, the most elite and experienced firefighting teams. Although these crews are venerated for leading the attack against the most difficult fires, some have had so many veteran firefighters quit that they've been downgraded to a lower-ranking status.

Nationally, fire management teams are having to compete with each other for crews and equipment much earlier in the season than in years past. On June 22, the National Interagency Fire Center, which coordinates fire response from Boise, Idaho, raised the national preparedness to level 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, saying it was the second earliest it had reached that point.

The shortages have filled crews on the fire lines with anxiety and led to louder calls for change.

"We're at a point where we're simply going to be overwhelmed year after year going forward given the current systems we have in place," said Jim Whittington, an expert in wildland fire response. "We really need to look at the way we staff and work wildland fires, the way we fund them, and the way we take care of our people. We need a full reset."

Along with calls for higher pay – a first-year Forest Service firefighter currently earns a base wage of $13.45 an hour – there are those like Whittington who believe firefighting needs to become a full-time job. Currently, the federal government fills its ranks each summer with thousands of seasonal firefighters who don't get health insurance and are laid off after about six months. Some of these workers struggle at the end of the season as months of stress take their toll.

"We also need better mental health support for wildland firefighters," Whittington said. "Too many face a crisis when they are laid off."

Biden said last week that he was surprised to learn that some federal firefighters earn so little.

"That's a ridiculously low salary," he said, banging his hand on a table in the Roosevelt Room in the White House during a meeting with emergency officials.

Ben Elkind, a smokejumper for the forest service and a member of Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, a group that advocates for better pay and working conditions for federal firefighters, said the problem has left critical positions empty.

"People risking their lives for our public safety deserve to be paid a living wage," he said.

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5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

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On that November evening, the outdoor cocoon proved insufficient. Davis drove to a convenience store in Topeka where the mission was to slip in and out unrecognized, part of a concerted effort to adopt a lower-profile approach to living. As she exited the business, she bumped into a former Kansas Guard officer. Casual banter took a different tone by shifting to Davis' military status.

"I just started shaking," Davis said. "I can't think. I can't breathe. My mind just goes blank."

The fractured bones of Davis' 21-year Army career – reports, correspondence, testimony, photos, complaints, notes and emails – could fill boxes. The flesh of her military ordeal took shape during a review of those documents and through sporadic conversations and interviews beginning five years ago and intensifying after her retirement in 2020.

Davis said her life in uniform ended prematurely because of an unwillingness to look the other way at perceived wrongdoing in the Kansas Guard. She attempted to work within boundaries of the military system while filing reports or complaints ranging in subject from administrative corruption to sexual abuse to distortion of the promotion process. She raised alarms about personal issues as well as situations involving others in the Kansas Guard.

Substance of those allegations catapulted Davis into years of conflict with command staff that viewed complainants as irritating troublemakers ripe for expulsion.

Davis said her lonely campaign was aimed at bringing accountability and transparency to the insular Kansas Guard, especially actions of some high-ranking staff allied with then-Adjutant General Lee Tafanelli. For nine years, the general was responsible for training and readiness of 7,000 personnel in the Army and Air components of the Kansas Guard. He served as senior military adviser to Govs. Sam Brownback, Jeff Colyer and Laura Kelly before retiring in March 2020.

Davis' struggle evolved to emphasize self-defense as individuals within the Kansas Guard retaliated against her, she said. Her best asset was technical expertise in personnel policy and procedure acquired in service of the Kansas Guard. She said she proceeded under threat of reassignment to a lesser position, loss of promotion and firing.

"It wasn't ever about me until it was survival," Davis said. "Everything that could have gone wrong with the process went wrong."

The battle ended last year with her departure from the Kansas Guard and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs affirming her disability for post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I'm still not over my breakup with the Army," Davis said. "I have a hard time talking about it. When I see people from the military, period, it is extremely distressing. I see the uniform, and then the alarms start going off. I follow from their feet up to the face. Even if I don't know them, it's upsetting."

Maj. Gen. David Weishaar, who has led the Kansas Guard since April 2020, wasn't able to discuss personnel issues of current or former soldiers and airmen.

Weishaar said his commitment during 40 years of service was to foster a culture of dignity and respect and to compel troops to apply standards equally.

“That is what I try to convey across the force,” Weishaar said. “It doesn’t matter if you’re, in my case, a two-star general, or if you’re a one-striper. The expectation is the same. Do we have people do dumb things? Absolutely. Whatever goes on in the community is happening in the force.”

Weishaar said members of the Kansas Guard were expected to work daily to live up to military values and to better respond to societal problems of mental health, suicide, sexual abuse, gender-based harassment and other issues inevitably filtering into the armed forces. The Kansas Guard has adopted a series of programs to help members prevent, manage or overcome impediments to their service, he said.

Reform of military culture is a special challenge when only one-fourth of Kansas Guard employees work full-time and the part-timers report for duty as little as twice a month, the general said.

Paper warfare

Davis was instigator of reports aimed at members of the Kansas Guard reaching back to 2008, when she accused an officer of administrative fraud, waste and abuse. In a subsequent matter, Davis was ordered to be part of an investigation into allegations that officers and enlisted personnel participated in a sex scandal. She understood sensitivity of that inquiry and her involvement in the case didn’t go unnoticed by peers, she said.

“I have a moral compass,” Davis said. “My right and wrong does not have a gray.”

In 2013, Davis said, Kansas Guard officers conspired to delay or block her from appearing before a promotion board necessary to climb the ladder to chief warrant officer 3. She responded by submitting a complaint alleging inappropriate influence on command. The Kansas Guard’s inspector general found elements of reprisal, she said, before forwarding her case to the U.S. Army.

Davis said the Kansas Guard answered by launching a commander’s inquiry accusing her of failure to properly process paperwork.

Davis said a Kansas Guard member confided her promotion process might proceed unfettered if her complaints stopped. She declined to retreat. Davis was eventually promoted.

The Army’s IG investigation of alleged retaliation against Davis dragged on for 4½ years, which made it one of the department’s longest-running cases. The resulting 60-page report was a disappointment to Davis. It either concluded allegations were unfounded or left issues unresolved because of lack of information, she said.

In 2016, prior to conclusion of the Army IG inquiry, Davis met with Kansas Guard officers to discuss physical problems with her hips and back. Convalescent leave was an option. Instead, she was handed a packet containing a notice of intent to involuntarily release her from full-time duty. The recommendation was to provide an honorable characterization of her military service, despite an assertion she “failed to complete assigned tasks.”

Removal from full-time National Guard duty for the first time since 2002 would have made it more difficult to earn retirement benefits available after 20 years of full-time service.

Davis said evidence relied upon to justify demotion to part-time status hinged on a distorted selection of emails and “unwarranted negative counseling statements” provided by Kansas Guard personnel, including some who should not have been involved in rating her job performance. She said stacking the deck with complicit evaluators was part of a Kansas Guard playbook to flush people out the service.

She turned to then-Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, a Kansas Republican representing the 2nd District that includes Topeka. Davis sought help from Jenkins to speed completion of the U.S. Army inspector general’s analysis of

alleged retaliation against Davis by the Kansas Guard. Davis requested aid with retraction of the involuntary separation action or affirmation of due process rights while she challenged the action.

Davis presented herself to Jenkins as a "federal whistleblower with an ongoing inquiry into reprisal" involving members of the Kansas Guard.

"I frequently witnessed what I believed to be inappropriate conduct," Davis wrote in a document sent to Jenkins.

Davis said Jenkins' office took steps to intervene in her case, but nothing decisive came of that attempt by Kansas Guard officials to sever her full-time status.

The Kansas Guard issued an order in 2017 recalling Davis from remote duty to an office position in the organization's recruiting and retention command. By the end of that year, however, a medical board found Davis' chronic health condition rendered her unfit for duty. The Veterans Administration directed her not to return to work. That prompted a stalemate not resolved until her retirement in 2020.

'Toxic' culture

During the period from 2013 to 2015, a separate and much larger Kansas Guard investigation led by a one-star Air Guard general and an Army Guard lieutenant colonel produced compelling evidence of widespread malfeasance within the state's military organization. The roster of confirmed offenses attributed to officers and enlisted personnel of the Kansas Guard included acts of racism, enlistment fraud, bullying, sexual assault, retaliation and promotion manipulation.

The Kansas Guard investigating officers discovered confidential information gathered during their inquiry was leaked to people under scrutiny. The material was used to target individuals cooperating with the case, investigators reported.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported in 2017 that Brig. Gen. Scott Dold before retiring filed a final report on leadership shortcomings that concluded Tafanelli, the adjutant general, was responsible for systemic leadership problems within his command. Dold wrote in the report Kansas Guard leaders needed to place "soldier and airmen welfare and organizational needs before personal careerism and self-promotion."

"The predominant culture of this command has difficulty balancing legal, moral and ethical facets of decision making when addressing poor performance, toxic leadership and substantiated wrongdoing," Dold said.

In a response to the Capital-Journal's disclosures, Tafanelli said the way Kansas Guard members answered the call to duty during war, disaster and emergency shouldn't be overshadowed by a handful of corrupt colleagues.

"There are a few that will choose to act in an inappropriate manner and bring discredit to themselves and their service," he said.

Grab you, anywhere

Davis said she was tormented by what she perceived as indifference among some in the Kansas Guard to sexual harassment and assault. In her experience, she said, too many men in the Kansas Guard were complicit in creation of hostile work environments for women.

"It is not unusual for a female to be in there and they just walk up and grab you. Anywhere," Davis said.

Davis said a former Kansas Guard battalion commander, who she viewed as a friend, sexually assaulted her three years ago. A Veterans Affairs employee who offered to help Davis maneuver through the VA benefit system exposed himself to her, she said.

During a helicopter training assignment early in her Kansas Guard career, she said, a military doctor inappropriately penetrated her during a routine exam. Davis said she was sexually assaulted at age 18 by three men. It was after she enlisted, but before basic training.

Weishaar, the Kansas Guard's top officer and adjutant general, said sexual assault and sexual harassment were a menace to the military and society at large.

"When it happens – not if, because it does happen – we're going to take care of the victim," he said.

Jody Cope, the Kansas Guard's equal employment manager, said no one should accept the stereotype that sexual harassment was rampant in the Kansas Guard. The Kansas Guard's annual reports tracking formal complaints of sexual harassment showed six were submitted in 2015, six in 2016 and two in 2017. Comparable information for subsequent years wasn't released by the Kansas Guard.

Cope said the Kansas Guard had success resolving workplace conflicts with mediation. If allegations in an administrative complaint submitted to the Kansas Guard were substantiated, she said, there could be consequences.

"We've seen a really great increase over the last couple years of taking administrative action to address those," Cope said.

Michelle Ferrer, sexual assault response coordinator for the Kansas Guard, said her office offered confidentiality to employees reporting sexual misconduct. The exception to this rule was when a person was viewed as a danger to others or likely to engage in self-harm, she said. If an individual decided against pursuit of a formal complaint, she said, the paperwork could be shredded.

"That helps people to feel comfortable they can come talk to us," Ferrer said.

Potential sex crimes are referred to local law enforcement agencies because the Kansas Guard doesn't have authority to proceed, said Maj. Jacob McElwee, the Kansas Guard's judge advocate general.

Outcome of civilian criminal cases can influence military administrative actions involving Kansas Guard members. If the local prosecutor declined to file charges in a case, it's possible the National Guard Bureau's office of complex investigations could review allegations.

"Either way, we have an outside agency coming in and making sure that everything's being followed," McElwee said.

Weight of suicide

Davis said she could tick off names of Kansas Guard members who had taken their own life. She's felt overwhelmed by the thought that she tried but failed to help some of the deceased. She also is convinced not enough was being done to honor former Kansas Guard members who bring an end to their lives.

She recalled a poignant moment during a meeting in which Kansas Guard officers asked her if dismissing a specific soldier from the force would cause him to commit suicide. She said she advised there was substantial risk. The soldier was kicked out. His suicide followed, she said.

In the past 6½ years, Kansas Guard officials said, 19 members of the Air or Army Guard in Kansas committed suicide. An average of nearly three suicides occurred annually from 2015 to the present. Fifteen of those people were in the Army Guard, while four were in the Air Guard.

The Kansas Guard doesn't keep statistics on former Kansas Guard members who chose to commit suicide. Care and treatment of veterans with suicidal thoughts rests with the VA or private health professionals.

Terry Williams, an Air Guard colonel and the Kansas Guard's state chaplain, said the organization's training of people to recognize warning signs of trouble had improved in the past 15 years. Military chaplains have benefit of offering total confidentiality to people seeking assistance, he said. Statistics don't reveal the number of men and women saved through these interventions, he said.

"I've done eight or nine funerals for suicides," Williams said. "I've been at bedsides, gravesides, hospitals. My perspective encompasses all of that. I have a programmatic side, but it's very personal to me, too."

He recalled a January service with snow on the ground and a wind-chill index of 15 degrees below.

"I could hear the daughter cry above 'Taps,'?" said Williams, who has been in the Kansas Guard for 24 years and deployed overseas twice, including in 2009 to Iraq.

Angie Gabel, the 190th Air Refueling Wing's director of psychological health, said she was a champion of ASIST, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. Hundreds involved with the Kansas Guard have completed ASIST training to learn how to talk with people suspected of thinking about or planning suicide, she said.

Problems with personal relationships, money, job stress, legal issues or communication barriers are often indicators of a person in crisis, she said.

Gabel said a persistent challenge was overcoming a belief among soldiers and airmen that admitting to mental health challenges automatically destroyed careers.

"We still have that mentality of, 'If I say something my career is over, point blank, in the military.' We are slowly changing that mindset. It's not over. It's not a career-ender," Gabel said.

'Expendable'

Davis, 39, opposed her exit from the Kansas Guard last year because she thought it was unfair and meant she would never qualify for retirement benefits more generous than disability compensation. The end came without pomp and circumstance in April 2020.

Termination of the employee-employer relationship allowed her to speak more freely about the citizen-soldier organization's personnel issues. Many of those conversations were difficult for her. Others sparked a determination to keep fighting. She also shared a belief the mountain she was climbing could be too high, too far.

Davis said her forced exit was the consequence of her decisions to stare down the barrel of a Kansas Guard culture still anchored by a good-old-boy network. Reviewing threads of her Kansas Guard life suggests she was collateral damage of a toxic military environment, she said.

Administrative conflict that enveloped her felt like an organized effort to induce enough despair to drive her off, she said. The experience offered insight into factors contributing to the national plague of military suicide, she said.

“We’re expendable,” Davis said. “The decade has been really hard. The last five years has tried to kill me. It never had to be that way.”

It was not the way her career was to have evolved when she enlisted as a teenager and joined a UH-60 Blackhawk crew in 1999. She was the daughter of a highly decorated Army officer. She had risen in rank while completing a degree in criminal justice at Washburn University in 2006 and a master’s degree in business administration from Friends University in 2015.

She never deployed for combat despite volunteering to serve in hostile areas, but earned an Army commendation medal in 2010. She served more than a dozen years as a senior human resource officer in Kansas.

She said demise of her Army career failed to extinguish a conviction that military service provided rewarding experiences.

“I loved it. I loved the camaraderie. I loved taking care of soldiers. I loved learning new things,” Davis said. “I liked being able to obtain the knowledge and ability to do things – write policy or figure things out and then go to the boss: ‘OK, this is what you want. Here are your options.’?”

After months of evaluation, the VA rated Davis as 100% disabled. It was an analysis based primarily on diagnosis of her PTSD. Medical records indicated she suffered anxiety and depression in addition to physical limitations.

Fighting to get better

Not quite middle-aged, Davis’ body and mind have been worn down. She has a new left hip. The plan to replace the right hip was postponed. Her right knee was operated on, but issues linger. She has dental woes from grinding her teeth.

Her future is clouded by realities of PTSD. Therapy was helpful at times and challenging in other moments, she said. Because of the pandemic, she unexpectedly discovered remote conversations with a therapist were easier than in-person discussions.

“I couldn’t cry in front of her,” Davis said. “I’d have my work face on. We weren’t getting to the root of any problems.”

Davis said her recovery had been impeded by reading or being told about ongoing controversy in the Kansas Guard. The intel reminded her there was no certainty about what her advocacy accomplished.

“I complained about people at the very top. Nobody wants to have anything to do with me,” Davis said. “In retrospect, I went through a lot more than I realized at the time. I would like an apology.”

https://ngpa.us/14470

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6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ – By Bill O’Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

"I was in relationships – or dating people – (I) had to be very careful about who I was out to, where I was out, how I was, went out and about my daily life in public because that could have a consequence on my military career," Roth said.

The now-defunct policy forced gay and lesbian members of the military to serve in silence.

When it ended in 2011, Roth said it was a non-event, and the fears that it would undermine military professionalism didn't happen.

"I think what has changed is (that) I can be open and honest with my teammates," Roth said. "I can be my authentic self, I can share who I am, and vice versa. That builds trust and confidence."

Roth said about 13,000 gay and lesbian troops were forced out of the military under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Since then, Roth said things have gotten better.

"As we move forward as a military, I think we can be very proud of our diversity, how we're changing our culture to be more welcoming people and let the number of people the very small number of people who raise their hand to say, 'I want to serve,' need all of our support," he said.

Roth said the biggest surprise for him came last year – he had the opportunity to attend a Pride luncheon on a military base while serving overseas.

"It was the first time I saw visible evidence of (a) complete shift in how we approach it," he said.

Roth said the National Guard went further, sending out a letter in support of its LGBTQ members that noted celebrating pride and recognizing the contributions of LGBTQ to people who serve in the military.

Roth said it took him several years after the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" before he came out – since he doesn't believe it has had any effect on his military career.

https://ngpa.us/14471

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7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity.

Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown.

"I didn't have a job to go back to after orders," Schmucker, 20, said.

He was approached by a member of the food bank's management, who offered Schmucker a role pulling orders, preparing food for various agencies to pick up from the warehouse.

Schmucker is grateful for the opportunity to serve the Valley, but also for the door that opened up as a result of volunteering. “It does mean a lot. I just came here as a volunteer but was offered employment. It meant a lot,” he said.

Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard.

The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

On Monday, the volunteers were treated to a lunch from the food bank to thank them for their assistance during the pandemic.

As orders for the National Guard expire July 2, some of the volunteers will go back to school, while others go back to work, Warrant Officer candidate Adam Fullmer said.

“We’re going to be out of Task Force Fox. It’s standing down in about 60 days,” he said.

Task Force Fox encompasses the National Guard deployment around the state assisting agencies and organizations through the pandemic.

When the guard members were assigned to the food bank 15 months ago, 35 assisting. That number has shrunk to 15 now.

Last year was the “biggest” distribution year, Iberis said, with 15 million pounds of food handed out. This year, the food bank is on track to distribute 13 million pounds, Iberis said.

Most of the National Guard was activated for 30 days or more, Fullmer said. “We saw upwards of 75, 80 percent” of soldiers working extended assignments, ranging from food banks to helping in the prisons, to COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.

The National Guard also helped during what Fullmer called the “unemployment crisis,” helping to process claims throughout the pandemic in Ohio.

“We took a little of the edge off for some of the organizations,” Fullmer said.

“This is an illustration of when people work together, what can happen,” Iberis said. “This was such a smooth-working relationship” among the guard, food bank and its agencies, Iberis said, calling it “a mammoth collaboration.”

The food bank, like some other places, is returning to a state of pre-pandemic normalcy. Last week, phone calls were made to the normal roster of volunteers with about 80 percent already back in the warehouse this week, Iberis said.

Throughout the National Guard’s help and media coverage, something positive happened with volunteers.

“The Mahoning Valley took note of how these Guards people responded. That has resulted … in a barrage of new volunteer applications,” Iberis said. “It’s incredible.”

https://ngpa.us/14472

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]
[redacted]@mail.mil

<PA Update 30 June 2021.pdf>
<Defense Morning Clips 30 June 2021.pdf>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Thursday, July 1, 2021 6:29 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Cc: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: FW: Media Inquires

Sir I talked to [redacted] and followed up with an email.

I did not know she had already talked to a reporter.

Thanks [redacted]

[redacted]
Assistant Deputy Secretary
State of South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota National Guard [redacted]

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 2:13 PM
To: [redacted]@state.sd.us' <[redacted]@state.sd.us>
Cc: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted]
<[redacted]@state.sd.us>
Subject: Media Inquires

[redacted] with all of the interest in the SDNG deployment to TX, if you receive any media inquiries please forward them on to [redacted].

He is cc'd on the email so you have his email address and his phone number is [redacted].

Thanks [redacted]

[redacted]
Assistant Deputy Secretary
State of South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota National Guard [redacted]

PA Update
As of July 1, 2021, 0700

Today in the Department of Defense, July 1, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on his schedule. He hosts a meeting with Uzbekistan Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Kamilov at 2:15 p.m. EDT (closed press).
- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.
- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.
- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.
- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has no public or media events on his schedule.
- Air Force Lt. Gen. Kevin B. Schneider, commander, U.S. Forces Japan, provides keynote remarks at 8 a.m. EDT at a Center for Strategic and International Studies webcast to present the 2021 Ryozo Kato Award for Service to the U.S.-Japan Alliance to Benjamin Goldberg, foreign affairs analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; and Hidehiko Nakama, director, Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation Division, Bureau of Defense Policy, Japan Ministry of Defense. Register at csis.org.
- Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. discusses "Fight and Flight in Modern Air Warfare" at 3:30 p.m. EDT at an Atlantic Council online event. Register at atlanticcouncil.org.

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1. US, DC: The Hill (National) – Nearly 70 House lawmakers ask leadership to reimburse National Guard for Jan. 6 response – By Lexi Lonas

A group of 70 bipartisan House lawmakers penned a letter to House and Senate leaders demanding a deal be reached so the National Guard can be reimbursed for its five-month deployment at the Capitol. The letter is being led by Reps. Cheri Bustos (D-Ill.) and Steve Warnock (R-Ark.) after the Pentagon and Army secretary warned that a lack of reimbursement from the federal government would cause training issues. … The total cost of the stay is around $521 million.

https://ngpa.us/14497

FULL STORY BELOW

2. SD, TX: Task & Purpose (National) – A private donor is funding a National Guard deployment. Nobody's sure if it's legal or not – By Haley Britzky

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said on Tuesday that up to 50 South Dakota National Guardsmen would deploy to Texas "to help secure the border between the United States and Mexico." "The deployment will be paid for by a private donation," the statement read. The idea of mobilizing the National Guard on a private donation immediately spread like wildfire on social media. Overwhelmingly, the question everyone seemed to be asking was: Is this legal?

https://ngpa.us/14489

RELATED STORY:

SD, TX: Military Times (National) – A privately funded National Guard deployment is legal, but is it ethical? – By Meghann Myers and Leo Shane III

https://ngpa.us/14498

FULL STORY BELOW

3. AR: KTBS (Regional) – Arkansas to send National Guard troops to Texas border – By Staff Reports

Up to 40 members of the Arkansas National Guard will be deployed to Texas to help secure the U.S.-Mexico border, according to Gov. Asa Hutchinson announced. Hutchinson authorized a 90-day mission at the official request of the state of Texas. … The 90-day deployment will be consistent with a training mission for the National Guard, according to the release.

https://ngpa.us/14490

RELATED STORY:

NM: KOB (Regional) – Republican lawmakers ask governor to send National Guard to the border – By Tamara Lopez

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FULL STORY BELOW

4. FL: Florida Politics (Regional) – Florida National Guard troops go months without state education benefits – By Jason Delgado

Soldiers and airmen of the Florida National Guard went months without state education benefits this year despite serving amid the busiest activation period since World War II. According to the Florida National Guard (FLNG), the Educational Dollars for Duty (EDD) program stopped approving the applications of service members in April after funding for the state program ran out. The program, a flagship benefit and recruitment tool, covers tuition and fees for eligible troops.

https://ngpa.us/14500

FULL STORY BELOW

5. CA: Fox 40 (Regional) – Cal Fire, National Guard partner to fight wildfires across California – By Olivia DeGennaro, Amy-Xiaoshi DePaola

The National Guard is partnering with Cal Fire to help fight wildfires across the state. … The operation, Task Force Rattlesnake, was formed in 2019 when forest management became a concern after the devastating Camp Fire in Paradise. Members of the National Guard volunteered to work alongside Cal Fire to clear forest fuels.

https://ngpa.us/14492

FULL STORY BELOW

6. NE: Holt Independent (Regional) – Fire Brings National Guard to Northwestern Hold County – By Staff Reports

Northern Holt County and Southern Boyd County were hit hard by lighting strikes around 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 23, most of Holt County's Fire Departments were sent out on fire calls. The lightening ignited ground in the Brush Creek area setting off a wildland fire on miles of unreachable land and blanketing Boyd and Holt County in dense smoke. … Thursday morning departments started putting out hot spots with National Guard helicopters and the state patrol on scene. At the direction of Governor Pete Ricketts, the Nebraska Army National Guard activated two helicopter crews and support personnel to provide additional aerial firefighting capabilities at the request of local authorities in multiple north central Nebraska counties.

https://ngpa.us/14496

FULL STORY BELOW

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FULL STORIES:

1. US, DC: The Hill (National) – Nearly 70 House lawmakers ask leadership to reimburse National Guard for Jan. 6 response – By Lexi Lonas

A group of 70 bipartisan House lawmakers penned a letter to House and Senate leaders demanding a deal be reached so the National Guard can be reimbursed for its five-month deployment at the Capitol.

The letter is being led by Reps. Cheri Bustos (D-Ill.) and Steve Warnock (R-Ark.) after the Pentagon and Army secretary warned that a lack of reimbursement from the federal government would cause training issues.

The National Guard was deployed from all around the country to the Capitol after the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol and stayed in Washington, D.C., until May.

The total cost of the stay is around $521 million.

“Department of Defense (DOD) leadership has stated that without a commitment to reimburse the Guard by July 1st, 2021, preparations will begin to cancel August and September annual training and individual duty training assemblies,” Warnock and Bustos said in a press release of the letter.

“Without immediate action, the brave volunteers of our National Guard will suffer and the National Guard Bureau estimates its readiness will decrease by fifteen to twenty percent. We urge you to swiftly come to an agreement on emergency appropriations that includes full reimbursement for the National Guard,” they added.

The House-passed bill for Capitol security included funding to reimburse the National Guard, but the money cannot be released until the Senate finishes its bill.

“If trainings are canceled, several thousand Army National Guard Soldiers will not have enough service time this fiscal year to receive credit for a good year toward a military retirement. Approximately 2,000 training schools will be canceled, affecting their readiness, pay and career progression. Ground vehicle and rotary wing operations and maintenance will be halted. Facilities will degrade, including the delay of critical fire safety projects in Maryland, Minnesota and the Virgin Islands,” the letter to leadership states.

“Air National Guard flying operations will be negatively impacted as they begin recovery from the negative readiness effects of the pandemic. Without reimbursement this fiscal year, it will take years to recover our readiness,” the letter continues.

An agreement will need to be reached on emergency appropriations before the National Guard can receive the money it needs.

https://ngpa.us/14497

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2. SD, TX: Task & Purpose (National) – A private donor is funding a National Guard deployment. Nobody’s sure if it’s legal or not – By Haley Britzky

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said on Tuesday that up to 50 South Dakota National Guardsmen would deploy to Texas “to help secure the border between the United States and Mexico.”

“The deployment will be paid for by a private donation,” the statement read.

The idea of mobilizing the National Guard on a private donation immediately spread like wildfire on social media. Overwhelmingly, the question everyone seemed to be asking was: Is this legal?

Ian Fury, Noem's spokesman, said the donation in question was made by Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation, run by Willis Johnson who Axios reported is a "Tennessee billionaire and high-dollar Republican donor." Fury said the donation was "made directly to the state of South Dakota," and the "soldiers will be on a state active duty mission."

When asked if it was possible to mobilize the Guard through a private donation, National Guard Bureau spokesman Wayne Hall pointed back to state laws, as the National Guard is operated at the state level.

"It depends upon the state laws and fiscal policy of the state and status of orders," Hall said. "The governor has the authority to call up their National Guard on State Active Duty."

According to South Dakota law, if "any person, firm, or corporation offers to the state … services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds by way of gift, grant, or loan, for emergency management, the Governor … may accept such offer." Another law says whenever "any grant, devise, bequest, donation, or gift … is made to this state, the Governor shall receive the gift."

"However, if such gift is subject to any preexisting condition or contractual obligation, the Governor shall receive it only after determining that it is the best interest of the state to do so," the law states.

South Dakota law also dictates that when in active service of the state – which Fury says these Guardsmen will be – the "compensation and expenses … shall be paid out of any funds in the state treasury not otherwise appropriated."

But the move seems to have little precedent to point to, making it difficult to find a solid answer on its legality. Steve Vladeck, a constitutional and national security law expert at the University of Texas, said that technically it seems it's legal, though he said it "shouldn't be."

He pointed to the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, which according to its website allows states "to send personnel, equipment, and commodities to assist with response and recovery efforts in other states." Vladeck said that because this "is privately funded," it's "clear that it ain't EMAC."

While it might be legal, many have raised the question about whether or not it *should be*. Mandy Smithberger, a defense accountability expert at the Project on Government Oversight, told the Washington Post that you "certainly don't want our national security priorities up to the highest bidder."

"This subverts that the military is the instrument of the people," Katherine Kuzminski, a military policy expert at the Center for a New American Security, told the Post. "This puts a marker on individual soldiers as mercenaries they may not be comfortable with."

South Dakota State Sen. Renold Nesiba echoed that sentiment on Twitter, saying National Guardsmen "signed up to serve our state and country, not to generate airtime for our Governor on Fox News or to be mercenaries for some wealthy donor."

"Our National Guardsmen and women are not professional soldiers for hire," Nesiba said.

Sonja Johnson, the director of the South Dakota National Guard Museum, said on Wednesday that she's "never heard of anything like this happening before."

Duke Doering, a historian with the museum, seemed to agree, telling NPR that the move “kind of floors me, when you’re talking about a private donor sending the Guard, that doesn’t even make sense to me.”

https://ngpa.us/14489

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3. AR: KTBS (Regional) – Arkansas to send National Guard troops to Texas border – By Staff Reports

Up to 40 members of the Arkansas National Guard will be deployed to Texas to help secure the U.S.-Mexico border, according to Gov. Asa Hutchinson announced.

Hutchinson authorized a 90-day mission at the official request of the state of Texas.

“My hope is that our 90 days of support will improve the security of our country and reduce the adverse impact of illegal immigration on Arkansas," Hutchinson said in a news release.

Before he announced the National Guard deployment Tuesday, Hutchinson said he declined requests from Texas and Arizona to send Arkansas State Police to the border.

“Because of the safety needs we have in Arkansas and because of the important work they have here, I will not be sending the Arkansas State Police to the border," he said.

The 90-day deployment will be consistent with a training mission for the National Guard, according to the release.

https://ngpa.us/14490

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4. FL: Florida Politics (Regional) – Florida National Guard troops go months without state education benefits – By Jason Delgado

Soldiers and airmen of the Florida National Guard went months without state education benefits this year despite serving amid the busiest activation period since World War II.

According to the Florida National Guard (FLNG), the Educational Dollars for Duty (EDD) program stopped approving the applications of service members in April after funding for the state program ran out.

The program, a flagship benefit and recruitment tool, covers tuition and fees for eligible troops.

“When people work and they don’t get the education benefits that they’ve been promised, that, to me, is a serious problem,” said Volusia County Sen**.** Tom Wright, chairman of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security.

In all, roughly 250 guard members were denied the benefit, according to the Florida National Guard. Moreover, the entire force remained without it until Thursday, when the new budget kicked in.

Florida Politics spoke to several guard members who were unable to access the state tuition benefit during the months-long period.

One guard member, who spoke under the condition of anonymity, lamented the situation as unforeseen.

The 20-year-old joined the military with the benefit in mind and described the situation as an “unkept promise.”

“I’m only taking one class now and I paid out of pocket,” the soldier said. “It’s all I can afford and financially, it set me back.”

Alternatively, others opted to delay their education.

“I expected to drop classes for hurricane duty or a pandemic mission at some point,” said another guard member. “I didn’t expect to not go to school because they’re out of money.”

The EDD program operates on a $3.1 million annual recurring appropriation. In 2020 and 2021, it received an additional $1 million non-recurring appropriation, raising the program’s total to $4.1 million — an amount service members entirely expended this year and last.

Wright said demand for the program is outgrowing supply.

“The 4.1 (million) has always been enough money,” Wright explained. “But I think what’s happening is probably the guardsmen and women are probably, through word of mouth, discovering this program. And so, we ran about $600,000 short.”

Indeed, EDD usage is increasing.

Since FY 2018, the number of service members utilizing the program has climbed by 15% each year, with STEM program usage – a more costly field of study – rising from 28% to 32%, according to the National Guard.
When told soldiers were without education benefits, Christina Pushaw**,** DeSantis’ press secretary, noted the Republican Governor fully funded the program under his budget.

“The Florida National Guard indicated that the full release of funds would provide the resources necessary to process all the applications with no impact to students,” Pushaw said in an email.

The Florida National Guard, meanwhile, said some guard members may have alternative education benefits provided by the federal government.

“Florida Guardsmen who were planning to use EDD may also be able to take advantage of other educational funding sources, including Federal Tuition Assistance or the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill,” said Brown told Florida Politics in an email.

Still, not all Guardsmen may qualify for federal benefits.

Rather than a state education benefit, the Tuition Assistance program and Post 9/11 G.I. Bill are federally funded programs.

What's more, they cover various education expenses based on a soldier's unique circumstances.

For example, a Guardsmen who serves a year-long federal deployment is entitled to a lesser percentage of G.I Bill benefits than an active-duty soldier with several years of service.

To make up the difference, Guardsmen – who serve on a part time basis under the Governor's command – often couple the state education benefit with the federal programs.

Alternatively, some prefer to leave their G.I. Bill untouched and instead transfer it to their spouse or a child.

The state education benefit, one soldier suggested, is of paramount importance to his family – particularly in a world where a few hundred dollars can separate a student from a diploma.

"The GI bill isn't an option for me," the guard member said. "That's for my kid's success."

Notably, this isn't the first time Florida's troops went without.

According to the FLNG, the last time EDD paused benefits due to lack of funding was FY 2016-2017 under then-Gov. Rick Scott.

Financial impacts aside, underfunded benefits may strike a larger blow to the state's National Guard readiness.

Speaking to a Senate Subcommittee in January, the Florida National Guard's top-ranking general described the stated education benefit as an important tool in his toolbox.

Any cut or disruption, the general suggested, may undermine troop morale at a time when troop numbers are few and the mobilizations are many.

Adjutant General James Eifert's remarks came at a time when lawmakers warned of widespread budget cuts amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"When you make that promise and they're entering school and paying their bills and then you say you don't have that money anymore, it's really a letdown," Eifert told Florida Politics in January before the budget unveil. "It's a pretty significant impact when you cut that program."

If left unaddressed by lawmakers, the likelihood that guard members will go without state education benefits is significant.

According to the Governor's Office, DeSantis' newly signed budget contains funds to boost troop numbers within the state.

“In order to recruit approximately 450 new service members, the Florida Leads budget includes up to $50 million in ARP funding to build two new Florida National Guard armories in Immokalee and Zephyrhills,” a media release says.

The push to build and expand comes as Florida’s population outgrows the ranks of the Guard.

When compared to the state population, the Florida National Guard is the second smallest troop in the nation despite serving the fourth most disaster-prone state.

The expansion also comes as Guard units respond to emergencies more frequently. In the last year, Florida guardsmen served at home and abroad including local COVID-19 pandemic missions, natural disasters and the civil unrest in Washington, D.C.

Speaking to Florida Politics, Wright said he plans to use his chairmanship to seek more funds and assess the program’s needs.

“We promised these people when they were recruited that this would be one of their benefits and now, we need to come through with the money,” Wright said, later adding, “I don’t perceive that to be a problem. “We’ve got such a dedicated Governor that’s all about veterans, military, law enforcement.”

According to the National Guard Bureau, more troops were domestically mobilized in 2020 than in any other year in American history.

Roughly 12,000 men and women staff the Florida Army National Guard and Air National Guard.

https://ngpa.us/14500

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5. CA: Fox 40 (Regional) – Cal Fire, National Guard partner to fight wildfires across California – By Olivia DeGennaro, Amy-Xiaoshi DePaola

The National Guard is partnering with Cal Fire to help fight wildfires across the state.

“It was a program by the governor as a fuels reduction crew,” Sgt. John Spragg told FOX40.

The operation, Task Force Rattlesnake, was formed in 2019 when forest management became a concern after the devastating Camp Fire in Paradise.

Members of the National Guard volunteered to work alongside Cal Fire to clear forest fuels.

“So we’ll go in there with chainsaws, make piles, cut up trees, dead trees specifically and just make the forest more healthy,” explained Nathaniel Malone, a Task Force Rattlesnake specialist.

When COVID-19 hit, Cal Fire lost inmate crews who were released early during the pandemic.

“I thought it was just fuel reduction at first, and then I got here and probably like my fifth day, we went to a fire and I was like, ‘Oh, so we’re a fire crew. All right, got it!’” Malone recalled.

Lt. Angelo Ramento, another member of the task force, added, “We just signed up to do fuel management, and now, we’re responding to fires. … that’s pretty exciting. We’re learning new skill sets and we feel that instant gratification of helping the public, which is very very fulfilling.”

Now, hundreds of Guardsmen across 13 crews up and down the state are helping Cal Fire battle flames.

“We’re spread all the way from Mendocino, Redding, all the way down to San Diego, and then, they’re trying to open more crews all the time,” Spragg said.

Many see this as a stepping stone to get into the Cal Fire Academy and become full-time firefighters.

“Myself, I’m going to the academy in January, so I’ll be hopefully a Cal Fire employee next year,” Malone explained.

Although the program has been successful so far, Task Force Rattlesnake is still operating in temporary capacity.

The crew is living out of a nearby hotel and working on contracts that are only a few months long, but they hope this partnership between the National Guard and Cal Fire becomes a permanent operation.

“I definitely see a long future for this program and this partnership with Cal Fire,” Spragg said.

Task Force Rattlesnake is using emergency COVID-19 funding to operate. Their funding will expire in June 2022, and members of the task force hope the state can find a permanent funding solution to expand the program.

https://ngpa.us/14492

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6. NE: Holt Independent (Regional) – Fire Brings National Guard to Northwestern Hold County – By Staff Reports

Northern Holt County and Southern Boyd County were hit hard by lighting strikes around 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 23, most of Holt County's Fire Departments were sent out on fire calls.

The lightening ignited ground in the Brush Creek area setting off a wildland fire on miles of unreachable land and blanketing Boyd and Holt County in dense smoke.

The fire east of the Brush Creek Bridge on Hwy. 11 sent Atkinson Fire Units north to the blaze and quickly reached out for mutual aide to O'Neill. Units from Spencer, Butte and Napier also joined in fighting fire on both sides of the river. South Dakota fire units from Lake Andes and Wagner arrived and took position protecting houses in the rural area.

A command post was set up by the Holt County Emergency Manager just north of the Brush Creek Bridge where local fire chiefs monitored the situation of the blaze moving north west at times back to Hwy. 11.

Another storm came through around 11 p.m. and this time threw some moisture which kept the blaze at check.

Thursday morning departments started putting out hot spots with National Guard helicopters and the state patrol on scene. At the direction of Governor Pete Ricketts, the Nebraska Army National Guard activated two helicopter crews and support personnel to provide additional aerial firefighting capabilities at the request of local authorities in multiple north central Nebraska counties.

Eleven soldiers deployed Thursday evening from the Army Aviation Support Facility in Grand Island with one CH-47 Chinook helicopter, one UH-72 Lakota helicopter and one fuel truck. Both helicopters are equipped with water buckets.

The severe weather Wednesday afternoon and evening produced lightning strikes believed to have sparked at least 20 different fires, according to Seth Peterson of the Nebraska Forest Service. The largest has burned approximately 6,000 acres near Brush Creek and highway 11, Peterson said.

As of Friday morning, the National Guard crews have completed 34 drops totaling more than 23,000 gallons of water. Approximately 10 volunteer fire departments have assisted, including two from South Dakota, and the fires are now 95 percent contained. The ground was turned back over to the watch of the land owners.

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[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Thursday, July 1, 2021 6:09 AM
To: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Fwd: PA Update 1 July 2021
Attachments: PA Update 1 July 2021.pdf; Defense Morning Clips 1 July 2021.pdf

Today both [redacted] and [redacted] are quoted!! Did you guys talk to her?

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Date: July 1, 2021 at 5:59:44 AM CDT
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: "[redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: PA Update 1 July 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, July 1, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on his schedule. He hosts a meeting with Uzbekistan Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Kamilov at 2:15 p.m. EDT (closed press).

- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Air Force Lt. Gen. Kevin B. Schneider, commander, U.S. Forces Japan, provides keynote remarks at 8 a.m. EDT at a Center for Strategic and International Studies webcast to present the 2021 Ryozo Kato Award for Service to the U.S.-Japan Alliance to Benjamin Goldberg, foreign affairs analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; and Hidehiko Nakama, director, Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation Division, Bureau of Defense Policy, Japan Ministry of Defense. Register at csis.org.

- Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. discusses "Fight and Flight in Modern Air Warfare" at 3:30 p.m. EDT at an Atlantic Council online event. Register at atlanticcouncil.org.

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1. US, DC: The Hill (National) – Nearly 70 House lawmakers ask leadership to reimburse National Guard for Jan. 6 response – By Lexi Lonas

A group of 70 bipartisan House lawmakers penned a letter to House and Senate leaders demanding a deal be reached so the National Guard can be reimbursed for its five-month deployment at the Capitol. The letter is being led by Reps. Cheri Bustos (D-Ill.) and Steve Warnock (R-Ark.) after the Pentagon and Army secretary warned that a lack of reimbursement from the federal government would cause training issues. … The total cost of the stay is around $521 million.

https://ngpa.us/14497

FULL STORY BELOW

2. SD, TX: Task & Purpose (National) – A private donor is funding a National Guard deployment. Nobody's sure if it's legal or not – By Haley Britzky

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said on Tuesday that up to 50 South Dakota National Guardsmen would deploy to Texas "to help secure the border between the United States and Mexico." "The deployment will be paid for by a private donation," the statement read. The idea of mobilizing the National Guard on a private donation immediately spread like wildfire on social media. Overwhelmingly, the question everyone seemed to be asking was: Is this legal?

https://ngpa.us/14489

RELATED STORY:

SD, TX: Military Times (National) – A privately funded National Guard deployment is legal, but is it ethical? – By Meghann Myers and Leo Shane III

https://ngpa.us/14498

FULL STORY BELOW

3. AR: KTBS (Regional) – Arkansas to send National Guard troops to Texas border – By Staff Reports

Up to 40 members of the Arkansas National Guard will be deployed to Texas to help secure the U.S.-Mexico border, according to Gov. Asa Hutchinson announced. Hutchinson authorized a 90-day mission at the official request of the state of Texas. … The 90-day deployment will be consistent with a training mission for the National Guard, according to the release.

https://ngpa.us/14490

RELATED STORY:

NM: KOB (Regional) – Republican lawmakers ask governor to send National Guard to the border – By Tamara Lopez

https://ngpa.us/14499

FULL STORY BELOW

4. FL: Florida Politics (Regional) – Florida National Guard troops go months without state education benefits – By Jason Delgado

Soldiers and airmen of the Florida National Guard went months without state education benefits this year despite serving amid the busiest activation period since World War II. According to the Florida National Guard (FLNG), the Educational Dollars for Duty (EDD) program stopped approving the applications of service members in April after funding for the state program ran out. The program, a flagship benefit and recruitment tool, covers tuition and fees for eligible troops.

https://ngpa.us/14500

FULL STORY BELOW

5. CA: Fox 40 (Regional) – Cal Fire, National Guard partner to fight wildfires across California – By Olivia DeGennaro, Amy-Xiaoshi DePaola

The National Guard is partnering with Cal Fire to help fight wildfires across the state. … The operation, Task Force Rattlesnake, was formed in 2019 when forest management became a concern after the devastating Camp Fire in Paradise. Members of the National Guard volunteered to work alongside Cal Fire to clear forest fuels.

https://ngpa.us/14492

FULL STORY BELOW

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https://ngpa.us/14496

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1. US, DC: The Hill (National) – Nearly 70 House lawmakers ask leadership to reimburse National Guard for Jan. 6 response – By Lexi Lonas

A group of 70 bipartisan House lawmakers penned a letter to House and Senate leaders demanding a deal be reached so the National Guard can be reimbursed for its five-month deployment at the Capitol.

The letter is being led by Reps. Cheri Bustos (D-Ill.) and Steve Warnock (R-Ark.) after the Pentagon and Army secretary warned that a lack of reimbursement from the federal government would cause training issues.

The National Guard was deployed from all around the country to the Capitol after the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol and stayed in Washington, D.C., until May.

The total cost of the stay is around $521 million.

"Department of Defense (DOD) leadership has stated that without a commitment to reimburse the Guard by July 1st, 2021, preparations will begin to cancel August and September annual training and individual duty training assemblies," Warnock and Bustos said in a press release of the letter.

"Without immediate action, the brave volunteers of our National Guard will suffer and the National Guard Bureau estimates its readiness will decrease by fifteen to twenty percent. We urge you to swiftly come to an agreement on emergency appropriations that includes full reimbursement for the National Guard," they added.

The House-passed bill for Capitol security included funding to reimburse the National Guard, but the money cannot be released until the Senate finishes its bill.

"If trainings are canceled, several thousand Army National Guard Soldiers will not have enough service time this fiscal year to receive credit for a good year toward a military retirement. Approximately 2,000 training schools will be canceled, affecting their readiness, pay and career progression. Ground vehicle and rotary wing operations and maintenance will be halted. Facilities will degrade, including the delay of critical fire safety projects in Maryland, Minnesota and the Virgin Islands," the letter to leadership states.

"Air National Guard flying operations will be negatively impacted as they begin recovery from the negative readiness effects of the pandemic. Without reimbursement this fiscal year, it will take years to recover our readiness," the letter continues.

An agreement will need to be reached on emergency appropriations before the National Guard can receive the money it needs.

https://ngpa.us/14497

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2. SD, TX: Task & Purpose (National) – A private donor is funding a National Guard deployment. Nobody's sure if it's legal or not – By Haley Britzky

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said on Tuesday that up to 50 South Dakota National Guardsmen would deploy to Texas "to help secure the border between the United States and Mexico."

"The deployment will be paid for by a private donation," the statement read.

The idea of mobilizing the National Guard on a private donation immediately spread like wildfire on social media. Overwhelmingly, the question everyone seemed to be asking was: Is this legal?

Ian Fury, Noem's spokesman, said the donation in question was made by Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation, run by Willis Johnson who Axios reported is a "Tennessee billionaire and high-dollar Republican donor." Fury said the donation was "made directly to the state of South Dakota," and the "soldiers will be on a state active duty mission."

When asked if it was possible to mobilize the Guard through a private donation, National Guard Bureau spokesman Wayne Hall pointed back to state laws, as the National Guard is operated at the state level.

"It depends upon the state laws and fiscal policy of the state and status of orders," Hall said. "The governor has the authority to call up their National Guard on State Active Duty."

According to South Dakota law, if "any person, firm, or corporation offers to the state … services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds by way of gift, grant, or loan, for emergency management, the Governor … may accept such offer." Another law says whenever "any grant, devise, bequest, donation, or gift … is made to this state, the Governor shall receive the gift."

"However, if such gift is subject to any preexisting condition or contractual obligation, the Governor shall receive it only after determining that it is the best interest of the state to do so," the law states.

South Dakota law also dictates that when in active service of the state – which Fury says these Guardsmen will be – the "compensation and expenses … shall be paid out of any funds in the state treasury not otherwise appropriated."

But the move seems to have little precedent to point to, making it difficult to find a solid answer on its legality. Steve Vladeck, a constitutional and national security law expert at the University of Texas, said that technically it seems it's legal, though he said it "shouldn't be."

He pointed to the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, which according to its website allows states "to send personnel, equipment, and commodities to assist with response and recovery efforts in other states." Vladeck said that because this "is privately funded," it's "clear that it ain't EMAC."

While it might be legal, many have raised the question about whether or not it should be. Mandy Smithberger, a defense accountability expert at the Project on Government Oversight, told the Washington Post that you "certainly don't want our national security priorities up to the highest bidder."

"This subverts that the military is the instrument of the people," Katherine Kuzminski, a military policy expert at the Center for a New American Security, told the Post. "This puts a marker on individual soldiers as mercenaries they may not be comfortable with."

South Dakota State Sen. Renold Nesiba echoed that sentiment on Twitter, saying National Guardsmen "signed up to serve our state and country, not to generate airtime for our Governor on Fox News or to be mercenaries for some wealthy donor."

"Our National Guardsmen and women are not professional soldiers for hire," Nesiba said.

Sonja Johnson, the director of the South Dakota National Guard Museum, said on Wednesday that she's "never heard of anything like this happening before."

Duke Doering, a historian with the museum, seemed to agree, telling NPR that the move "kind of floors me, when you're talking about a private donor sending the Guard, that doesn't even make sense to me."

https://ngpa.us/14489

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3. AR: KTBS (Regional) – Arkansas to send National Guard troops to Texas border – By Staff Reports

Up to 40 members of the Arkansas National Guard will be deployed to Texas to help secure the U.S.-Mexico border, according to Gov. Asa Hutchinson announced.

Hutchinson authorized a 90-day mission at the official request of the state of Texas.

"My hope is that our 90 days of support will improve the security of our country and reduce the adverse impact of illegal immigration on Arkansas," Hutchinson said in a news release.

Before he announced the National Guard deployment Tuesday, Hutchinson said he declined requests from Texas and Arizona to send Arkansas State Police to the border.

"Because of the safety needs we have in Arkansas and because of the important work they have here, I will not be sending the Arkansas State Police to the border," he said.

The 90-day deployment will be consistent with a training mission for the National Guard, according to the release.

https://ngpa.us/14490

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4. FL: Florida Politics (Regional) – Florida National Guard troops go months without state education benefits – By Jason Delgado

Soldiers and airmen of the Florida National Guard went months without state education benefits this year despite serving amid the busiest activation period since World War II.

According to the Florida National Guard (FLNG), the Educational Dollars for Duty (EDD) program stopped approving the applications of service members in April after funding for the state program ran out.

The program, a flagship benefit and recruitment tool, covers tuition and fees for eligible troops.

"When people work and they don't get the education benefits that they've been promised, that, to me, is a serious problem," said Volusia County Sen. Tom Wright, chairman of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security.

In all, roughly 250 guard members were denied the benefit, according to the Florida National Guard. Moreover, the entire force remained without it until Thursday, when the new budget kicked in.

Florida Politics spoke to several guard members who were unable to access the state tuition benefit during the months-long period.

One guard member, who spoke under the condition of anonymity, lamented the situation as unforeseen.

The 20-year-old joined the military with the benefit in mind and described the situation as an "unkept promise."

"I'm only taking one class now and I paid out of pocket," the soldier said. "It's all I can afford and financially, it set me back."

Alternatively, others opted to delay their education.

"I expected to drop classes for hurricane duty or a pandemic mission at some point," said another guard member. "I didn't expect to not go to school because they're out of money."

The EDD program operates on a $3.1 million annual recurring appropriation. In 2020 and 2021, it received an additional $1 million non-recurring appropriation, raising the program's total to $4.1 million — an amount service members entirely expended this year and last.

Wright said demand for the program is outgrowing supply.

"The 4.1 (million) has always been enough money," Wright explained. "But I think what's happening is probably the guardsmen and women are probably, through word of mouth, discovering this program. And so, we ran about $600,000 short."

Indeed, EDD usage is increasing.

Since FY 2018, the number of service members utilizing the program has climbed by 15% each year, with STEM program usage – a more costly field of study – rising from 28% to 32%, according to the National Guard.

When told soldiers were without education benefits, Christina Pushaw, DeSantis' press secretary, noted the Republican Governor fully funded the program under his budget.

"The Florida National Guard indicated that the full release of funds would provide the resources necessary to process all the applications with no impact to students," Pushaw said in an email.

The Florida National Guard, meanwhile, said some guard members may have alternative education benefits provided by the federal government.

"Florida Guardsmen who were planning to use EDD may also be able to take advantage of other educational funding sources, including Federal Tuition Assistance or the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill," said Brown told Florida Politics in an email.

Still, not all Guardsmen may qualify for federal benefits.

Rather than a state education benefit, the Tuition Assistance program and Post 9/11 G.I. Bill are federally funded programs.

What's more, they cover various education expenses based on a soldier's unique circumstances.

For example, a Guardsmen who serves a year-long federal deployment is entitled to a lesser percentage of G.I Bill benefits than an active-duty soldier with several years of service.

To make up the difference, Guardsmen – who serve on a part time basis under the Governor's command – often couple the state education benefit with the federal programs.

Alternatively, some prefer to leave their G.I. Bill untouched and instead transfer it to their spouse or a child.

The state education benefit, one soldier suggested, is of paramount importance to his family – particularly in a world where a few hundred dollars can separate a student from a diploma.

"The GI bill isn't an option for me," the guard member said. "That's for my kid's success."

Notably, this isn't the first time Florida's troops went without.

According to the FLNG, the last time EDD paused benefits due to lack of funding was FY 2016-2017 under then-Gov. Rick Scott.

Financial impacts aside, underfunded benefits may strike a larger blow to the state's National Guard readiness.

Speaking to a Senate Subcommittee in January, the Florida National Guard's top-ranking general described the stated education benefit as an important tool in his toolbox.

Any cut or disruption, the general suggested, may undermine troop morale at a time when troop numbers are few and the mobilizations are many.

Adjutant General James Eifert's remarks came at a time when lawmakers warned of widespread budget cuts amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"When you make that promise and they're entering school and paying their bills and then you say you don't have that money anymore, it's really a letdown," Eifert told Florida Politics in January before the budget unveil. "It's a pretty significant impact when you cut that program."

If left unaddressed by lawmakers, the likelihood that guard members will go without state education benefits is significant.

According to the Governor's Office, DeSantis' newly signed budget contains funds to boost troop numbers within the state.

"In order to recruit approximately 450 new service members, the Florida Leads budget includes up to $50 million in ARP funding to build two new Florida National Guard armories in Immokalee and Zephyrhills," a media release says.

The push to build and expand comes as Florida's population outgrows the ranks of the Guard.

When compared to the state population, the Florida National Guard is the second smallest troop in the nation despite serving the fourth most disaster-prone state.

The expansion also comes as Guard units respond to emergencies more frequently. In the last year, Florida guardsmen served at home and abroad including local COVID-19 pandemic missions, natural disasters and the civil unrest in Washington, D.C.

Speaking to Florida Politics, Wright said he plans to use his chairmanship to seek more funds and assess the program's needs.

"We promised these people when they were recruited that this would be one of their benefits and now, we need to come through with the money," Wright said, later adding, "I don't perceive that to be a problem. "We've got such a dedicated Governor that's all about veterans, military, law enforcement."

According to the National Guard Bureau, more troops were domestically mobilized in 2020 than in any other year in American history.

Roughly 12,000 men and women staff the Florida Army National Guard and Air National Guard.

https://ngpa.us/14500

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5. CA: Fox 40 (Regional) – Cal Fire, National Guard partner to fight wildfires across California – By Olivia DeGennaro, Amy-Xiaoshi DePaola

The National Guard is partnering with Cal Fire to help fight wildfires across the state.

"It was a program by the governor as a fuels reduction crew," Sgt. John Spragg told FOX40.

The operation, Task Force Rattlesnake, was formed in 2019 when forest management became a concern after the devastating Camp Fire in Paradise.

Members of the National Guard volunteered to work alongside Cal Fire to clear forest fuels.

"So we'll go in there with chainsaws, make piles, cut up trees, dead trees specifically and just make the forest more healthy," explained Nathaniel Malone, a Task Force Rattlesnake specialist.

When COVID-19 hit, Cal Fire lost inmate crews who were released early during the pandemic.

"I thought it was just fuel reduction at first, and then I got here and probably like my fifth day, we went to a fire and I was like, 'Oh, so we're a fire crew. All right, got it!'" Malone recalled.

Lt. Angelo Ramento, another member of the task force, added, "We just signed up to do fuel management, and now, we're responding to fires. … that's pretty exciting. We're learning new skill sets and we feel that instant gratification of helping the public, which is very very fulfilling."

Now, hundreds of Guardsmen across 13 crews up and down the state are helping Cal Fire battle flames.

"We're spread all the way from Mendocino, Redding, all the way down to San Diego, and then, they're trying to open more crews all the time," Spragg said.

Many see this as a stepping stone to get into the Cal Fire Academy and become full-time firefighters.

"Myself, I'm going to the academy in January, so I'll be hopefully a Cal Fire employee next year," Malone explained.

Although the program has been successful so far, Task Force Rattlesnake is still operating in temporary capacity.

The crew is living out of a nearby hotel and working on contracts that are only a few months long, but they hope this partnership between the National Guard and Cal Fire becomes a permanent operation.

“I definitely see a long future for this program and this partnership with Cal Fire,” Spragg said.

Task Force Rattlesnake is using emergency COVID-19 funding to operate. Their funding will expire in June 2022, and members of the task force hope the state can find a permanent funding solution to expand the program.

https://ngpa.us/14492

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https://ngpa.us/14496

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]
[redacted] @mail.mil

DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, July 1

OVERVIEW

China has begun construction of "more than 100 new silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles" in a desert near the northwestern city of Yumen, which could represent "a historic shift" and "major expansion" of Beijing's nuclear capabilities, according to the *Washington Post*. Separately, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan remains "on the timeline" that President Biden has mandated, as Germany and Italy declared their missions in the country over, the *Associated Press* reported. Also of note, Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Terry Adirim noted that roughly 68 percent of active service members have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine but also emphasized that officials are "particularly concerned" with the delta COVID-19 variant spreading among the military's unvaccinated, *The Hill* wrote.

TOP STORIES

1. Signs that China is busy building silos for ICBMs

Washington Post, July 1 (0115), Pg. A1 | Joby Warrick

China has begun construction of what independent experts say are more than 100 new silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles in a desert near the northwestern city of Yumen, a building spree that could signal a major expansion of Beijing's nuclear capabilities. The acquisition of more than 100 new missile silos, if completed, would represent a historic shift for China, a country that is believed to possess a relatively modest stockpile of 250 to 350 nuclear weapons.

2. Most European troops exit Afghanistan quietly after 20 years

Associated Press, June 30 (2229) | Geir Moulson and Kathy Gannon

Most European troops have already pulled out of Afghanistan, quietly withdrawing months before the U.S.-led mission was officially expected to end — part of an anticlimactic close to the "forever war" that risks leaving the country on the brink of civil war. Germany and Italy declared their missions in Afghanistan over on Wednesday and Poland's last troops returned home, bringing their deployments to a low-key end nearly 20 years after the first Western soldiers were deployed there.

3. Pentagon: More than half of service members vaccinated against COVID-19

The Hill Online, June 30 (1749) | Ellen Mitchell

Just more than half of all service members are at least partially vaccinated against COVID-19, with the Navy the most vaccinated service and the Marine Corps the least. About 68 percent of active-duty troops have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Terry Adirim told reporters at the Pentagon.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. Maritime service chiefs push back on criticism that the military is becoming 'too woke'

Navy Times Online, June 30 (1359) | Geoff Ziezulewicz

The uniformed leaders of the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard all pushed back Wednesday against concerns that the services are becoming too "woke" in their renewed focus on diversity and inclusion in the ranks. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger and Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz were all asked the question at the beginning of a panel that was part of the annual WEST naval conference. "It's an assertion that isn't really grounded in facts," Gilday said in response to whether his service is "too woke."

5. Pentagon official touts NATO-Asia cooperation amid China threat

Nikkei Asia Online (Japan), June 30 (1328) | Ryo Nakamura

The U.S. looks to bring together partners in Europe and the Indo-Pacific for more joint military exercises to tackle the threats posed by China and Russia, the U.S. Department of Defense's principal director for Europe and NATO policy told Nikkei. Cyber, space and nonproliferation are areas where "NATO sees that we have common security challenges" with partners such as Japan, Australia and South Korea, Andrew Winternitz said in a recent interview.

6. Pentagon's top IT official: More coordination needed on weapon systems and critical infrastructure cybersecurity

C4ISRNET.com, June 30 (1213) | Andrew Eversden

The Pentagon's top IT official said Tuesday that he wants to make a concerted push to secure weapon systems and critical infrastructure from cybersecurity threats, adding that the effort requires higher coordination within the department. "I really want to put our shoulder into weapons systems and critical infrastructure, recognizing that our adversaries are coming after those two," John Sherman, the Defense Department's acting chief information officer, said in congressional testimony. "Those are some risk areas ... because some of these programs were started in the '90s, when cybersecurity was in a different place, [so now] we have a better way to come at this."

7. Top cyber Pentagon official overseeing defense contractor project placed on leave

The Hill Online, June 30 (1240) | Mychael Schnell

A top Pentagon official working on a cybersecurity project for defense contractors has been placed on leave following allegations that she disclosed classified information from a military intelligence agency without authorization.

COVID-19

8. The Navy is the service most vaccinated against COVID-19. The Marine Corps is the least

Air Force Times Online, June 30 (1408) | Meghann Myers

In the roughly six months since the military first began offering COVID-19 vaccines to its frontline personnel, the Navy has outpaced the other services with its vaccination rate, which stands at 77 percent for active-duty sailors, the head of the Defense Health Agency told reporters on Wednesday.

9. U.S. Fund Set Up to Counter China's Influence Backs Covid-19 Vaccine Maker in Africa

Wall Street Journal Online, June 30 (1256) | Alexandra Wexler and Stu Woo

A U.S. government investment fund created in part to counter Chinese deal-making around the world said it would lend about $119 million to support a manufacturer of Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine in Africa, a continent that has had little access to Western-made shots. The International Development Finance Corp. will lend 100 million euros to Aspen Pharmacare Holdings Ltd., a South African pharmaceutical company that has a deal with J&J to fill into vials and package the U.S. company's single-dose Covid-19 shot.

EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

10. Rep. Adam Smith pushes back against private funding for National Guard deployment

Politico Online, June 30 (1552) | Marissa Martinez

Rep. Adam Smith, chair of the House Armed Services Committee, said on Wednesday that he would press Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin about reports that the governor of South Dakota accepted private donations to fund the deployment of National Guard members to the U.S.-Mexico border. When asked about Gov. Kristi Noem's move during an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," the Washington Democrat said the Guard should not be treated like a "private militia." Smith said that while he wasn't a fan of calling hearings because they "don't solve problems," he would contact Austin to see whether a hearing would be necessary.

11. Nearly 70 House lawmakers ask leadership to reimburse National Guard for Jan. 6 response

The Hill Online, June 30 (1859) | Lexi Lonas

A group of 70 bipartisan House lawmakers penned a letter to House and Senate leaders demanding a deal be reached so the National Guard can be reimbursed for its five-month deployment at the Capitol. The letter is being led by Reps. Cheri Bustos (D-Ill.) and Steve Warnock (R-Ark.) after the Pentagon and Army secretary warned that a lack of reimbursement from the federal government would cause training issues.

12. House lawmakers seek to slash military personnel funding by $488 million from Biden's defense budget proposal

Stars and Stripes Online, June 30 (1226) | Sarah Cammarata

Members of the House Appropriations Committee want to cut funding for military personnel by $488 million from the Biden administration's fiscal 2022 budget proposal, according to a draft of a subcommittee spending bill.

13. Langevin takes DOD CIO Sherman to task for 'unacceptable' budget justification

FedScoop.com, June 30 (1210) | Jackson Barnett

The Pentagon wants billions of dollars for IT and cybersecurity in fiscal 2022, but so far, it hasn't given Congress a thorough enough justification for that money, according to a top cyber-focused lawmaker. Rep. Jim Langevin, D-R.I., expressed disappointment Tuesday for the Department of Defense's lack of specifics in its IT budget request summary for fiscal 2022 — which includes $5.5 billion for cybersecurity and more for enterprise IT on top of that, but is otherwise largely kept from the public. Langevin rebuked acting DOD CIO John Sherman because much of the budget documentation for 2022 is "nearly a carbon copy" from the previous year, equating it to plagiarism. Because of this, DOD's IT and cyber budget summary document shrank from 30 pages last year to six for fiscal 2022 — "only two of which contain any substance," the congressman said.

AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

14. U.S. Questioned Whether Afghan Government Could Survive Taliban Onslaught

ForeignPolicy.com, June 30 (1052) | Jack Detsch and Robbie Gramer

The Biden administration is mapping out a strategy for Afghanistan after the U.S. military completes its withdrawal that is centered around the boosting of economic support for the government, even as many Afghans are "increasingly skeptical" of the government's competence, according to an internal State Department document submitted to Congress and newly obtained by Foreign Policy.

15. Afghan civilians take up arms as U.S.-led forces leave

Reuters, June 30 (0924) | Not Attributed

Gun in hand, 55-year-old Dost Mohammad Salangi recites poetry as he leads a small group of men to a look-out post high in the rugged hills of Parwan province, north of the Afghan capital Kabul. Salangi is one of hundreds of former "mujahideen" fighters and civilians who have felt compelled to take up arms to help the army repel a growing Taliban insurgency.

MIDDLE EAST

16. U.S. and Iran show no move to put nuclear deal back on track

Associated Press, June 30 (1629) | Edith M. Lederer

The United Nations, European Union and many Security Council members urged the United States and Iran on Wednesday to quickly put the 2015 nuclear deal aimed at reining in Tehran's nuclear program back on track, but neither side showed any sign of movement toward an agreement.

INDO-PACIFIC

17. US and Japan conduct war games amid rising China-Taiwan tensions

Financial Times Online (UK), June 30 (1549) | Demetri Sevastopulo and Kathrin Hille

The US and Japan have been conducting war games and joint military exercises in the event of a conflict with China over Taiwan, amid escalating concerns over the Chinese military's assertive activity.

18. North Korean leader vows to elevate relations with China to new strategic point

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 30 (2049) | Koh Byung-joon

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un vowed to elevate relations with China to a new strategic point as he sent a congratulatory message to Chinese President Xi Jinping to mark the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China, state media said Thursday.

CHINA

19. China's Xi pledges 'reunification' with Taiwan, gets stern rebuke

Reuters, July 1 (0121) | Yew Lun Tian and Yimou Lee

Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged on Thursday to complete "reunification" with self-ruled Taiwan and vowed to "smash" any attempts at formal independence, drawing a stern rebuke from Taipei, which lambasted the Communist Party as a dictatorship.

EUROPE

20. German defence minister meets US counterpart Austin in Washington

Deutsche Presse-Agentur (Germany), June 30 (1245) | Not Attributed

German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer met her US counterpart Lloyd Austin in Washington on Wednesday. During their talks, the ministers discussed among other things the German purchase of five maritime reconnaissance aircraft from US manufacturer Boeing, a 1.1-billion-euro (1.3-billion-dollar) deal, according to the Defence Ministry in Berlin.

21. Swiss pick U.S. F-35 jet and Patriot missiles for defence needs

Reuters, June 30 (1250) | John Revill and Tim Hepher

Switzerland has chosen Lockheed Martin's F-35A Lightning II as its next-generation fighter jet, the government said on Wednesday, angering opponents who have pledged a new referendum to overturn what they dubbed an unnecessary "Ferrari" option. The $5.5 billion deal adds a 15th nation to the world's largest weapons project - a family of interconnected, single-engine jets to be used by the United States and its allies.

22. Russia says reassured by Turkey about controversial canal

Agence France-Presse, June 30 (1212) | Fulya Özerkan

Russia on Wednesday said Turkey had reassured it that a planned canal aimed at easing traffic on the Bosphorus would not lead to a greater presence of NATO navies in the Black Sea.

RUSSIA

23. U.S. Domination Ending, Putin Says

Wall Street Journal, July 1 (0200), Pg. A9 | Georgi Kantchev and Thomas Grove

Russian President Vladimir Putin challenged U.S. leadership in world affairs on Wednesday, arguing that an era of U.S. hegemony has come to an end as he touted Moscow's growing military strength and increasingly assertive foreign policy. At Wednesday's event, Mr. Putin pushed back, portraying the U.S. as a waning power. "The world is changing dramatically," he said. "On the one hand, our partners in the United States understand this, therefore there was a meeting in Geneva. On the other hand, they are trying at all costs to maintain their monopoly position."

24. Pentagon, allies drill in Black Sea as Russia fumes

Washington Times Online, June 30 (0802) | Mike Glenn

Only days after Russia said it fired warning shots and dropped bombs in the wake of a British destroyer it claimed was encroaching on its territorial waters, the USS Ross steamed into the Black Sea to join more than 30 other countries this week for the kickoff of the massive Sea Breeze maritime exercise. Sea Breeze, scheduled to run through July 10, will be the largest since its inception in 1997. More than 30 ships and 40 aircraft from NATO members and Black Sea countries will take part. Ukraine, which is locked in its own intense battle of wills with Russia, and the U.S. are hosting the maneuvers.

AIR FORCE

25. New Air Force PT Test Will Have Walking Option for Some Troops, General Says

Military.com, June 30 (1457) | Oriana Pawlyk

Airmen will have a broad menu of options, ranking from planks to sprints and even walking, on a new physical fitness assessment debuting in coming months.

NAVY

26. CNO Gilday: Tight Budgets Require Balance Between Readiness, Modernization

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 30 (1943) | Mallory Shelbourne

While the Navy is focused on readiness to prevent the pitfalls of an overworked and untrained force, it must also manage the need for modernization with maintaining the current fleet, the service's top officer said today. Asked about over tasking sailors and assets and its effects on retention, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday described a need for the service to adequately balance modernization with readiness and operating forward.

27. PACFLEET CO: Numbered Navy Fleets Don't Need to be Tied to Geography

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 30 (1939) | Sam LaGrone

The U.S. Navy's numbered fleets are by tradition tied to a specific geographical region, but that doesn't mean commanders in California can't command ships in the Western Pacific or any other part of the world, the new U.S. Pacific Fleet commander said on Wednesday.

MODERNIZATION & TECHNOLOGY

28. Space Development Agency celebrates launch of its first satellites

SpaceNews Online, June 30 (1740) | Sandra Erwin

The Defense Department's space agency on June 30 hailed the deployment of its first missions which flew to orbit on a SpaceX rideshare carrying 88 small satellites. "Today's missions will provide real-world data that we can use to verify our engineering assumptions and space-qualify a significant emerging technology," Derek Tournear, director of the Space Development Agency said in a statement after SpaceX confirmed the agency's payloads successfully separated.

OBITUARY

29. Donald H. Rumsfeld, Ex-Defense Secretary, Dies at 88

New York Times, July 1 (0300), Pg. A1 | Robert D. McFadden

Donald H. Rumsfeld, the secretary of defense for Presidents Gerald R. Ford and George W. Bush, who presided over America's Cold War strategies in the 1970s and, in the new world of terrorism decades later, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, died on Tuesday at his home in Taos, N.M. He was 88. Encores are hardly rare in Washington, but Mr. Rumsfeld had the distinction of being the only defense chief to serve two nonconsecutive terms: 1975 to 1977 under President Ford, and 2001 to 2006 under President Bush. He was also the youngest, at 43, and the oldest, at 74, to hold the post -- first in an era of Soviet-American nuclear perils, then in an age of subtler menace by terrorists and rogue states.

NOTABLE COMMENTARY

30. A Chinese buildup

Washington Post, July 1 (0115), Pg. A20 | Editorial

The report that China is building 100 or more silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach the United States marks a concerning waypoint in China's expansion and modernization of its nuclear forces. If missiles are deployed in the new silos, they would represent a blossoming arms race that is a serious challenge to the Biden administration, already facing competition from Beijing across many fronts. The new silos make more urgent the start of negotiations with China on strategic nuclear arms control.

31. 'China Has Risen.' And It Is Hungry for Competition

New York Times, July 1 (0300), Pg. A22 | Farah Stockman

The arrival of China as a global power has caused heartburn in Washington. The Biden administration has made it clear that it sees China as the greatest geopolitical challenge of the 21st century. A few weeks ago, Democrats and Republicans overcame their hatred of each other long enough to pass the United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021, which boosts investment in research and higher education. And a recent NATO summit addressed China's "growing influence" as a challenge for the alliance. Talk like that has sparked fears of a new and terrible cold war.

32. Reforming a president's war powers

Washington Post, July 1 (0115), Pg. A20 | Editorial

Certainly, any offensive or sustained U.S. military action against Iran or its militias should have Congress's approval, but Mr. Biden clearly does not intend that. Other current operations in the Mideast, such as U.S. support for the Iraqi military, depend on bilateral agreements with governments. Meanwhile, the 2002 AUMF lingers as a relic that bears no relation to current security threats - and should not be used to justify action against them. Its repeal, along with two older AUMFs pertaining to the Middle East, would open the way to fresh legislation to replace that of 2001, which has been used to legalize military interventions continents away from Afghanistan, decades later. Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) has worked on such a framework for years; it would authorize existing operations in places such as Yemen and West Africa while requiring congressional approval for new missions and setting a time limit after which the authorizations would expire.

33. I was a Guantànamo prosecutor. It's time to shut it down

Washington Post, July 1 (0115), Pg. A19 | Omar Ashmawy

Guantànamo was designed to bypass the Constitution and the U.S. criminal justice system. It failed because that idea is contrary to American principles. Putting it more bluntly: When it comes to our foreign enemies, we must kill them or arrest and try them for their crimes. Anything else is a setup for failure. If this administration is committed to ending the forever wars in the wake of 9/11, it cannot do so without closing one of the last vestiges of them. If we can bring home our troops from Afghanistan by September 2021, we can close Guantànamo by then as well. We must.

34. Ending military sexual assault starts long before service members don uniform

USA Today Online, June 30 (2005) | Kelsey Baker

If the solution to military sexual violence was training adults exclusively, then the money the Defense Department already spends on annual sexual assault and harassment training might have produced better results. From 2008 to 2018, the military spent almost $200 million on sexual assault violence education. And a DOD report on military sexual assault shows an increase in annual reporting, to more than 6,000 incidents in fiscal year 2019. That doesn't include the unknown number of incidents that go unreported, often because victims feel they won't

be believed or supported, that they'll face retribution, or that they'll be blamed. But until that K-12 education happens everywhere more troops will be harmed – getting us no closer to making military bases safer spaces.

35. What should the Biden administration do about far-right military figures?

Washington Post Online, June 30 (0622) | Paul Matzko

The likelihood of a military coup remains as slight today as it was in the 1960s, but the possibility of further, insurrectionary violence by current or former military personnel has never been higher. As Walker's post-military career demonstrated, high ranking, former officers like Flynn possess the power to inflame political tensions and foment mass violence. It can happen here, again. Yet, as the case of Walker shows, overreacting to the problem of military radicalization with heavy-handed measures can backfire too. By committing Walker to an asylum, the Kennedy administration turned him into a martyr, boosting his political aspirations and creating further opportunity for reactionary action. The Biden administration therefore faces a tough balancing act; it can't afford to ignore the far-right radicalization of the military nor should it overreact and throw additional fuel on the fire.

TOP STORIES

1. Signs that China is busy building silos for ICBMs

Washington Post, July 1 (0115), Pg. A1 | Joby Warrick

China has begun construction of what independent experts say are more than 100 new silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles in a desert near the northwestern city of Yumen, a building spree that could signal a major expansion of Beijing's nuclear capabilities.

Commercial satellite images obtained by researchers at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, Calif., show work underway at scores of sites across a grid covering hundreds of square miles of arid terrain in China's Gansu province. The 119 nearly identical construction sites contain features that mirror those seen at existing launch facilities for China's arsenal of nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles.

The acquisition of more than 100 new missile silos, if completed, would represent a historic shift for China, a country that is believed to possess a relatively modest stockpile of 250 to 350 nuclear weapons. The actual number of new missiles intended for those silos is unknown but could be much smaller. China has deployed decoy silos in the past.

During the Cold War, the United States developed a plan to move its ICBMs across a matrix of silos in a kind of nuclear shell game, to ensure that Soviet war planners could never know exactly where the missiles were at any given time.

The construction boom suggests a major effort to bolster the credibility of China's nuclear deterrent, said researcher Jeffrey Lewis, an expert on China's nuclear arsenal and part of a team that analyzed the suspicious sites, first spotted by colleague Decker Eveleth as he scoured photos taken by commercial satellites over northwestern China. Lewis described the scale of the building spree as "incredible."

"If the silos under construction at other sites across China are added to the count, the total comes to about 145 silos under construction," Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, part of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, said in a summary of his findings provided to The Washington Post. "We believe China is expanding its nuclear forces in part to maintain a deterrent that can survive a U.S. first strike in sufficient numbers to defeat U.S. missile defenses."

The discovery follows recent warnings by Pentagon officials about rapid advances in China's nuclear capability. Adm. Charles Richard, who commands U.S. nuclear forces, said at a congressional hearing in April that a "breathtaking expansion" was underway in China, including an expanding arsenal of ICBMs and new mobile missile launchers that can be easily hidden from satellites. In addition, the Chinese navy has introduced new nuclear-weapons-capable submarines to its growing fleet.

The reported silo construction project could provide China with yet another means of concealing its most powerful weapons. The construction sites spotted on satellite photos are arrayed in two huge swaths, covering parts of a desert basin stretching to the west and southwest of Yumen, a city of 170,000 people along China's ancient Silk Road.

Each site is separated from its neighbors by about two miles, and many of the sites are concealed by a large, dome-like covering, following a practice observed at known construction sites for missile silos in other parts of China. At sites where the dome is not in place, construction crews can be seen excavating a characteristic circular-shaped pit in the desert floor. Another construction site appears to be a partially built control center.

Lewis said the silos are probably intended for a Chinese ICBM known as the DF-41, which can carry multiple warheads and reach targets as far away as 9,300 miles, potentially putting the U.S. mainland within its reach. Major excavation work on the sites began early this year, although preparations were probably underway for months, Lewis said.

Emails and faxes seeking comment from China's Foreign Ministry in Beijing and the Chinese Embassy in Washington did not receive a response.

A Defense Department spokesman declined to comment on the satellite images or to discuss U.S. intelligence assessments of China's nuclear program. But the spokesman, John Supple, noted that Pentagon reports and analysts have previously raised concerns about the proliferation of China's missile silos. "Defense Department leaders have testified and publicly spoken about China's growing nuclear capabilities, which we expect to double or more over the next decade," Supple said.

Missile silos are easily spotted by trained imagery analysts, and they are vulnerable to destruction by precision-guided missiles in the early hours of a nuclear war. For those reasons, Lewis sees the silo construction project as part of an expanded deterrent strategy by a country whose nuclear arsenal is dwarfed by those of the United States and Russia, which collectively possess more than 11,000 nuclear warheads.

Rather than engaging in an expensive arms race with Washington and Moscow, China has traditionally embraced a "limited deterrence" doctrine that prioritizes a lean but robust nuclear arsenal that ensures Beijing's ability to retaliate against any adversary if attacked.

In recent years, however, Chinese officials have complained that their country's nuclear deterrent is losing credibility because of nuclear modernization programs proposed or already underway in Russia and the United States. Beijing has resisted calls to join new arms-control talks because of fears that new limits would forever enshrine its status as a second-rate nuclear power compared with Washington and Moscow.

Photos of the Gansu construction project were supplied to Lewis and Eveleth by the commercial satellite company Planet, which provided a continuous stream of updated images showing progress at each of the construction sites over time. Based on his analysis, Lewis said, there was "a very good chance that China is planning a shell game" in which it hides a relatively small number of warheads across a network of silos. Still, he said, the sudden appearance of so many new launch sites could increase pressure on U.S. officials to speed up efforts to modernize the U.S. arsenal.

"We're stumbling into an arms race that is largely driven by U.S. investments and missile defense," Lewis said. The Pentagon has announced plans for an extensive upgrade of U.S. nuclear weapons and delivery systems over the next two decades, including a new air-launched cruise missile and at least two new types of warheads.

In February, Secretary of State Antony Blinken vowed in a statement that the Biden administration would "pursue arms control to reduce the dangers from China's modern and growing nuclear arsenal." He did not explain how that goal would be accomplished but said the administration would seek "effective arms control that enhances stability, transparency and predictability while reducing the risks of costly, dangerous arms races."

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2. Most European troops exit Afghanistan quietly after 20 years

Associated Press, June 30 (2229) | Geir Moulson and Kathy Gannon

BERLIN -- Most European troops have already pulled out of Afghanistan, quietly withdrawing months before the U.S.-led mission was officially expected to end — part of an anticlimactic close to the “forever war” that risks leaving the country on the brink of civil war.

Germany and Italy declared their missions in Afghanistan over on Wednesday and Poland's last troops returned home, bringing their deployments to a low-key end nearly 20 years after the first Western soldiers were deployed there.

Announcements from several countries analyzed by The Associated Press show that a majority of European troops has now left with little ceremony — a stark contrast to the dramatic and public show of force and unity when NATO allies lined up to back the U.S. invasion to rid the country of al-Qaida after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

In the ensuing decades, the war went from one mission to another. Former U.S. President George W. Bush's administration shied away from nation-building and the United Nations advocated a light footprint. But with the passing years, NATO and U.S. troops took on greater roles developing Afghanistan's National Security and Defense Forces and training police. At the war's peak, the U.S. and NATO military numbers surpassed 150,000.

NATO agreed in April to withdraw its roughly 7,000 non-American forces from Afghanistan to match U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to pull all American troops from the country, starting May 1.

Biden set a Sept. 11 deadline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. But more recently, American officials have said that pullout would most likely be completed by July 4 — and many allies have moved to wrap up their own presence by then as well.

NATO declined to give an update Wednesday on how many nations still have troops in its Resolute Support mission. But an analysis of 19 governments' announcements shows that more than 4,800 of the non-American forces have left.

The U.S. has refused to give troop figures, but when Biden announced the final pullout, between 2,500 and 3,500 troops were deployed. As of February, a total of some 832,000 American troops had served in Afghanistan, while about 25,100 Defense Department civilians had also served there.

The U.S. has also refused to give a clear date for a final withdrawal.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Wednesday only that the U.S. withdrawal remains "on the timeline that the president announced ... which is to get our troops out of Afghanistan, while having a remaining diplomatic presence on the ground, by September."

Germany announced the end of its nearly 20-year deployment in a statement and a series of tweets from the defense minister late Tuesday, shortly after the last plane carrying its troops had left Afghan airspace.

Three transport aircraft landed at the Wunstorf air base in northern Germany on Wednesday afternoon. The troops, wearing masks, lined up on the tarmac for a brief ceremony, but the military dispensed with a bigger reception because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“We have worked long and hard to stand here today,” said Brig. Gen. Ansgar Meyer, the last commander of the German contingent. “As your commander, I can say for you: ‘Mission accomplished.’ You have fulfilled your task.”

But the top American general in Afghanistan gave a sobering assessment Tuesday, warning about the recent rapid loss of districts to the Taliban and cautioning the country could descend into civil war.

The German pullout came amid a spate of withdrawals by European nations. Poland’s last departing troops were greeted Wednesday by Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak. Some 33,000 Polish troops have served in Afghanistan over the past 20 years.

The last Italian troops from Italy’s base in Herat arrived at the military airport in Pisa late Tuesday. Italy officially declared its mission in Afghanistan over in a statement Wednesday, with Defense Minister Lorenzo Guerini paying tribute to the 53 Italians who died and 723 who were injured over the past two decades.

Going forward, Guerini said Italy’s commitment to Afghanistan would remain, “beginning with the strengthening of development cooperation and support for Afghan institutions.”

Georgia’s last troops returned home Monday, while Romania brought home its remaining 140 troops Saturday, when Norway also pulled out. Troops from Denmark, Estonia and the Netherlands also returned home last week. Spain withdrew its last troops on May 13, Sweden on May 25, and Belgium on June 14. The small contingents deployed by Portugal, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Finland, Albania, North Macedonia and Luxembourg have left as well.

The pullout is nearing its end as security in Afghanistan worsens. Since May 1, when the withdrawal began, the Taliban have overrun district after district, including along major transportation routes. Many have fallen after Afghan soldiers surrendered, often convinced to leave their posts by elders. But elsewhere there have been bitter military battles, with Afghan troops sometimes losing when their positions could not be resupplied.

The U.S. military commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Austen S. Miller, meanwhile, expressed concern about the resurrection of militias, which were deployed to help the beleaguered national security forces but have a brutal reputation for widespread killing.

“A civil war is certainly a path that can be visualized if this continues on the trajectory it’s on right now, that should be of concern to the world,” he said.

At a ceremony last week to mark the official end of the Dutch deployment, Dutch Defense Minister Ank Bijleveld-Schouten underscored the uncertain outlook.

"We see reports of the rise of the Taliban, growing violence, also in areas where we were stationed," she said. "A lot has been achieved but we must be realistic: The results are not irreversible."

--Gannon reported from Kabul, Afghanistan. Associated Press writers Nicole Winfield in Rome; Mike Corder in The Hague, Netherlands; Robert Burns in Washington and reporters from around Europe contributed to this report

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3. Pentagon: More than half of service members vaccinated against COVID-19
The Hill Online, June 30 (1749) | Ellen Mitchell

Just more than half of all service members are at least partially vaccinated against COVID-19, with the Navy the most vaccinated service and the Marine Corps the least.

About 68 percent of active-duty troops have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Terry Adirim told reporters at the Pentagon.

Combined with service members in the Reserve and National Guard, a little more than 51 percent of all military personnel are at least partially vaccinated.

Broken down among the military services, the Navy boasts a 77 percent vaccination rate for active-duty sailors, the Army has 70 percent of its troops inoculated, the Air Force is at 61 percent and the Marine Corps at 58 percent.

Adirim could not say why the percentages varied so widely.

The figures are a slight improvement from last month, when 58 percent active-duty service members had at least one dose.

The Pentagon in April made all Defense personnel and their beneficiaries eligible to receive a vaccine and in May called on military leaders to take steps to ramp up COVID-19 vaccination rates among service members.

But the military is still struggling to convince thousands of its members to get the shot.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has COVID-19 vaccines under an emergency use authorization, which means the Pentagon can't legally mandate that all service members receive them.

The Department of Defense (DOD) also doesn't track how many of its personnel reject the vaccine, making it hard to pinpoint why troops, sailors and airmen are choosing to decline the shot.

President Biden has the power to grant an exemption to the FDA rule, and in late April he said he would not dismiss the possibility of requiring all service members to get the vaccine once it is fully approved. He added, however, that the decision was a "tough call" and said he was "going to leave that to the military."

Adirim said Wednesday that officials are "particularly concerned" with the new delta COVID-19 variant potentially spreading among the military's unvaccinated.

"We are particularly concerned with the impact of the delta variant on our unvaccinated or partially vaccinated population and its potential spread at installations that are located in parts of the country with low vaccination rates," she said.

As of Wednesday, 930,125 service members are fully vaccinated and another 253,116 have received the first of two shots, according to the latest DOD numbers.

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DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. Maritime service chiefs push back on criticism that the military is becoming 'too woke'
Navy Times Online, June 30 (1359) | Geoff Ziezulewicz

The uniformed leaders of the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard all pushed back Wednesday against concerns that the services are becoming too "woke" in their renewed focus on diversity and inclusion in the ranks.

Capitol Hill Republicans, including Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, have in recent weeks expressed concern that the military is going too far in its efforts, and that some training on such subjects amounts to "anti-American indoctrination."

The military is not alone in refocusing on such issues, as many American sectors have reassessed such matters following the murder of a Black man, George Floyd, by a white police officer in Minneapolis last year.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger and Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz were all asked the question at the beginning of a panel that was part of the annual WEST naval conference.

"It's an assertion that isn't really grounded in facts," Gilday said in response to whether his service is "too woke."

"We're definitely focused on warfighting first, readiness first, but an essential element of that readiness has to do with people," he said. "We know that diverse teams outperform those teams that are not as diverse."

Talking about such issues, and "closing those gaps" while working to make the ranks look as much like America as possible, yields a stronger Navy, Gilday said.

"We know that esprit de corps, particularly in our small units and ships, is an incredibly important part of combat effectiveness," he added.

Berger's comments on the matter echoed those made to Congress by Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who last week disputed contentions that the military is too focused on such issues and that service members need to be widely read on the different thoughts and theories circulating in American society, including divisive topics like critical race theory.

"Since we draw from that society…we want service members to read widely," Berger said. "We want them to actually think, not be programmed."

"There are some places on earth where you're not allowed to read (certain kinds of) books," he said. "You're only allowed to read this and espouse that. The great part of America is it's not run that way."

Schultz agreed with Gilday and Berger's comments and called making the Coast Guard look like the nation it serves "a strategic imperative."

"We're working hard to be an inclusive organization," he added.

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5. Pentagon official touts NATO-Asia cooperation amid China threat
Europe policy director notes 'common security challenges' with Beijing and Russia
Nikkei Asia Online (Japan), June 30 (1328) | Ryo Nakamura

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. looks to bring together partners in Europe and the Indo-Pacific for more joint military exercises to tackle the threats posed by China and Russia, the U.S. Department of Defense's principal director for Europe and NATO policy told Nikkei.

Cyber, space and nonproliferation are areas where "NATO sees that we have common security challenges" with partners such as Japan, Australia and South Korea, Andrew Winternitz said in a recent interview.

In a June summit communique, NATO warned that "China's stated ambitions and assertive behavior present systemic challenges to the rules-based international order and to areas relevant to alliance security."

"While I probably wouldn't say that NATO sees them as a direct military threat, they see a lot of their actions in the international system and how China participates in the international order as threats to our values, for example," Winternitz said.

In particular, he underlined a shift in attitudes among European NATO members that had sought to stay friendly with Beijing because of the economic opportunities it offered.

“I think that the European countries are more and more seeing how China has some very coercive policies towards smaller countries and lesser-developed countries,” Winternitz said. He noted concerns about the expansion of China’s nuclear arsenal and its strategy of military-civil fusion.

With this in mind, “NATO wants to do more with our partners in the Indo-Pacific,” Winternitz said. He highlighted a joint exercise with the U.S., Japan and France in Kyushu -- the southernmost of Japan’s four main islands -- which included a scenario involving defending a remote island from enemy attack, seemingly with an eye toward China.

“It was something very new but it does show that there is the ability to do that type of cooperation,” Winternitz said.

Indo-Pacific countries could join more Europe-oriented drills as well.

Japan and Australia are participating in Sea Breeze 2021, a large multinational exercise in the Black Sea region co-hosted by the U.S. and Ukraine that runs until July 10, according to the U.S. Navy’s Sixth Fleet.

The Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014, sits on the northern coast of the Black Sea. Having Tokyo and Canberra join the drills adds Asian voices to the message from Western nations that redrawing national borders by force is unacceptable.

“You might see more and more joint exercises, potentially involving European countries and Indo-Pacific countries,” Winternitz said. “I hope that’s the future.”

While U.S. President Joe Biden’s administration is shifting its military focus to the Indo-Pacific to deal with China, which it regards as Washington’s sole competitor, Winternitz stressed that this does not mean neglecting American commitments to NATO and to Europe’s defense.

“I don’t think there’s any doubt about that in the European minds at this point,” he said, citing plans to bring more forces into Germany.

“I think that there is the ability that we have to be able to do both,” he added.

Europe and Washington are not entirely of one mind when it comes to defense-related issues. The U.S., Germany and France are seeking out dialogue with Russia, an approach opposed by some Eastern European and Baltic

countries. Previous U.S. President Barack Obama had scaled back America's military presence in Europe amid its shift toward Asia, only to reverse course after the annexation of Crimea.

Meanwhile, Beijing and Moscow have stepped up military and economic cooperation with an eye toward countering the U.S., in what Winternitz called "partnerships of convenience" -- arms trade and joint exercises, for example.

He suggested that Washington does not see this as a serious concern for now. But "if Russia and China were to grow even closer over the long term, that could be something where it would start to become more and more of a threat," he said.

Before his current role in Europe and NATO policy, Winternitz previously served in the Pentagon's East Asia office, as country director for Japan and then as acting principal director for East Asia. He also worked within Japan's ministries of defense and foreign affairs under the Mansfield Fellowship Program.

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6. Pentagon's top IT official: More coordination needed on weapon systems and critical infrastructure cybersecurity

C4ISRNET.com, June 30 (1213) | Andrew Eversden

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon's top IT official said Tuesday that he wants to make a concerted push to secure weapon systems and critical infrastructure from cybersecurity threats, adding that the effort requires higher coordination within the department.

"I really want to put our shoulder into weapons systems and critical infrastructure, recognizing that our adversaries are coming after those two," John Sherman, the Defense Department's acting chief information officer, said in congressional testimony. "Those are some risk areas ... because some of these programs were started in the '90s, when cybersecurity was in a different place, [so now] we have a better way to come at this."

Sherman's testimony before the House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies, and Information Systems come after a series of high-profile hacks in the last six months, including a ransomware attack that affected the IT systems of a major oil pipeline and the SolarWinds breach that affected numerous government systems. In his testimony, he called the pipeline attack a "wakeup call."

He told lawmakers that cybersecurity is his "top priority" but that the Office of the CIO must "do a better job" working with Cyber Command and the Defense Department's undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment, who is the chief weapons buyer. That coordination would involve a focus on the cybersecurity of weapons systems and industrial control systems, he said, adding that there are "seams" within the department that must be addressed. Industrial control systems are integrated software and hardware systems that control the networks of infrastructure such as power plants or pipelines.

“That’s the type of area ... where I think we’re carrying some risk, but I want to do a better job of working with our colleagues in the department,” said Sherman, who previously served as principal deputy CIO before taking over the acting duties.

The department’s recent fiscal 2022 budget request asked Congress for $5.6 billion for cybersecurity, a $200 million increase over last year’s request. According to Sherman’s written testimony, that money will be spent on “key” cybersecurity capabilities such as identity, credential and access management; endpoint security; the Navy’s “comply to connect” framework; and user-activity monitoring. Those capabilities would contribute to the department’s push toward a zero-trust cybersecurity model in which users have to continuously verify their identity.

The Defense Department’s work has accelerated on zero trust over the last 18 months, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic and telework, but also because its acknowledgement that its current cybersecurity systems are vulnerable to advanced hackers. Earlier this year, the Defense Information Systems Agency released a zero-trust reference architecture to outline the department’s vision for zero-trust networks. Additionally, the Office of the CIO has a series of zero-trust pilots underway.

But the department still needs money to invest in new cybersecurity tools to secure its networks using zero trust, Sherman said. His written testimony stated the department needs “new investments” in software-defined environments, continuous multifactor authentication, micro-segmentation, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and user-behavior monitoring.

“What keeps me up at night are cyber threats of the kind we’re seeing across the country — not only against the government, but against the private sector,” Sherman said. “This is the main reason I am so committed to moving out with a zero-trust implementation at the Department of Defense. I want DoD to be a leader in this space.”

Cloud computing

Sherman also highlighted several ongoing IT modernization initiatives within the CIO portfolio. In his opening statement, he told lawmakers that the department plans to release a software modernization strategy “later this summer” focused on using the DevSecOps process to quickly deliver resilient software.

In its FY22 budget request, the Defense Department requested $50.6 billion for IT and cyber activities, up from $47.7 billion FY21 request and up 4 percent from the amount enacted for FY21. The DoD also asked for $1.48 billion for cloud computing needs, a number Sherman told lawmakers will “require double-digit growth” in future years as cloud technology becomes more prevalent in the department.

Lawmakers didn’t press him hard about the future of the Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure cloud, a multibillion cloud contract won by Microsoft in October 2019. The deal has been embroiled in a court battle.

Sherman reiterated Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks' comments earlier this month that the JEDI cloud's future will be decided in the next month.

In his written testimony, Sherman stated that "optimizing the Department's cloud acquisitions remains challenging" due to the JEDI delay. He added that centralized cloud contracts from the military services along with DISA's milCloud 2.0 are helping to "fill the gaps and provide a more streamlined and cost-effective approach to DoD cloud adoption" in the meantime.

"We're continuing to assess our next steps vis a vis ... what comes next or what should we be doing with that enterprise cloud, [an] urgent and unmet need," Sherman said.

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7. Top cyber Pentagon official overseeing defense contractor project placed on leave
The Hill Online, June 30 (1240) | Mychael Schnell

A top Pentagon official working on a cybersecurity project for defense contractors has been placed on leave following allegations that she disclosed classified information from a military intelligence agency without authorization.

Bloomberg first reported that Katie Arrington, chief information security officer for the Pentagon's acquisition and sustainment office, was placed on leave in May.

Arrington was told on May 11 that "her security clearance for access to classified information is being suspended" as "a result of a reported Unauthorized Disclosure of Classified Information and subsequent removal of access by the National Security Agency," according to a memo from the Office of the Under Secretary of Acquisition and Sustainment obtained by the news organization.

The memo continued, informing Arrington that "if this preliminary decision becomes final, you will not be eligible for access to classified information" or "assignments to duties that have been designated national security sensitive."

Bloomberg noted, however, that the memo did not include any information regarding her alleged unauthorized disclosure of information.

Attorney Mark Zaid, who is representing Arrington, confirmed to The Hill that she has been placed on administrative leave.

Zaid told The Hill that the "process has been dragging on for weeks with little movement," adding that the National Security Agency is "delaying providing the proper DoD security component with information explaining its concerns" for "no reason."

“This is causing harm to Ms. Arrington, is denying her due process and is inexcusable,” he added.

The attorney contended to Bloomberg that the opening of an investigation into allegations against Arrington is a routine matter.

“When faced with such programmatic allegations DoD would routinely open an investigation as a matter of course. This is how the system works. Accepting an investigation, however, doesn’t prejudge the merits,” Zaid said.

“Absolutely no decisions have been reached regarding any aspect,” he added.

He said his client “has neither been fired nor had her security clearance revoked,” adding “We look forward to an opportunity to completely clear her name and her return to work.”

A Pentagon spokesperson confirmed to The Hill that Arrington is on leave, but would not discuss the details or timeline of the situation “out of respect for her privacy.”

Additionally, the spokesperson said the department does not comment on personnel issues.

Arrington has worked in her post at the Pentagon since early 2019, according to the AP.

In 2018, she beat then-Rep. Mark Sanford (S.C.) in the GOP primary, serving the former governor of the state his first-ever loss.

Arrington, however, ultimately lost in the general election to Democrat Joe Cunningham, who took control of the district from Republicans for the first time in decades.

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COVID-19

8. The Navy is the service most vaccinated against COVID-19. The Marine Corps is the least
Air Force Times Online, June 30 (1408) | Meghann Myers

In the roughly six months since the military first began offering COVID-19 vaccines to its frontline personnel, the Navy has outpaced the other services with its vaccination rate, which stands at 77 percent for active-duty sailors, the head of the Defense Health Agency told reporters on Wednesday.

The Army is just behind it with 70 percent, followed by 61 percent for the Air Force and 58 percent for the Marine Corps. The numbers reflect troops who have received at least one dose of vaccine, Army Lt. Gen. Ronald Place said.

"For those who've received their first dose in our system, we're following up with each of them to ensure they get their second dose — or at least significantly offer that opportunity," he said.

The numbers roughly reflect estimates from earlier this year, when officials offered that they believed about one-third of service members were opting to get vaccinated once they became eligible — based on surveys and data from the U.S. population and general.

The Marine Corps in April confirmed it was seeing about a 40-percent take rate, which has improved significantly.

"...we're seeing individuals who may have been initially wary about the vaccine now come forward and ask for," Place told reporters in March. "I expect that trend to continue."

All service members have been eligible for vaccination since mid-April, and as reflected nationally, vaccine demand has slowed into the summer.

Active-duty troops might be done, but more than 12,000 Guardsmen are still helping vaccinate the public.
As of Wednesday, 914, 528 service members are fully vaccinated, while 261,590 have received the first of two doses.

Among active-duty troops, 68 percent have received at least one dose, according to Dr. Terry Adirim, the acting assistant defense secretary for health affairs. Adding in the Reserve and National Guard components, just over 51 percent of all troops are at least partially vaccinated.

Officials didn't offer explanations for the discrepancies in vaccination rates among the services, which have undertaken their own campaigns to convince their members to get the shot.

The Navy, in many ways, has borne the biggest brunt of the pandemic's fall-out, which may have something to do with its vaccination rate. The carrier Theodore Roosevelt was sidelined in Guam for weeks in April 2020, after more than 1,000 of its crew contracted the novel coronavirus.

With ships steadily deploying through the pandemic, though with two-week quarantine periods on either end and liberty at port calls, the incentives to get vaccinated are a matter of quality of life.

The vaccines, still under an emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration, aren't legally mandatory for service members, and likely won't be until they receive full authorization in the next couple of years.

Pentagon officials have ducked the question of whether they would push for an exemption to that law, which could only be granted by the president, who hasn't made any public statements one way or another about the issue.

With hospitalization and infection rates falling in many places, so, too, have on-base health protection levels. But concerns about variants, particularly the more deadly and more transmissible "delta," have officials concerns.

"We are particularly concerned with the impact of the delta variant on our unvaccinated or partially vaccinated population and its potential spread at installations that are located in parts of the country with low vaccination rates," Adirim said Wednesday.

Accordingly, she said, some bases could tighten up their movement restrictions again, ordering more telework and closing off access to installation facilities.

Those decisions are made locally, based on conditions in the surrounding communities, and vaccination rates are one factor in that decision.

"It's really based on what the conditions are in the community," Adirim said. "So if we're at 68 percent of active-duty being vaccinated, then there's 32 percent who are not vaccinated. So those people are at risk."

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9. U.S. Fund Set Up to Counter China's Influence Backs Covid-19 Vaccine Maker in Africa
New agency aims to support global infrastructure and other investments much as Beijing does
Wall Street Journal Online, June 30 (1256) | Alexandra Wexler and Stu Woo

JOHANNESBURG -- A U.S. government investment fund created in part to counter Chinese deal-making around the world said it would lend about $119 million to support a manufacturer of Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine in Africa, a continent that has had little access to Western-made shots.

The International Development Finance Corp. will lend 100 million euros to Aspen Pharmacare Holdings Ltd., a South African pharmaceutical company that has a deal with J&J to fill into vials and package the U.S. company's single-dose Covid-19 shot.

The loan would help Aspen reach production of 500 million doses of the vaccine by the end of 2022, with the goal of vaccinating much of the African continent, said David Marchick, the DFC's chief operating officer. Aspen said late last year that it had reached a deal with J&J to make 300 million doses.

Several African countries have received vaccine donations from Beijing since the pandemic's start. As China scales up vaccine manufacturing and inoculates much of its own population, it could be in position to export 340 million doses a month by September, according to research-firm Capital Economics.

Offering an alternative to China's vaccine diplomacy is a factor in financing Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing, U.S. officials said, though they said they are primarily driven by healthcare reasons. "This is part of our broad strategy to help end the pandemic," Mr. Marchick said.

Much of the Covid-19 vaccine doses have gone to wealthy countries and only around 1.1% of Africa's 1.3 billion people are fully vaccinated, just as the continent is seeing a new surge of infections driven by the more-transmissible Delta variant of the coronavirus.

Since opening doors during the Trump administration in 2019, the DFC, a development bank with an investment limit of $60 billion, has offered loans and other financial assistance to help Western businesses win contracts over Chinese-backed ones and counter Beijing's broader soft-diplomacy efforts.

Beyond healthcare, DFC is working to invest more in Africa, where many governments have entered into infrastructure and other deals with Chinese companies as part of Beijing's Belt and Road initiative. In May, a consortium of telecommunications companies led by the U.K.'s Vodafone Group PLC and backed by a $500 million DFC loan offer won a bid to build a new cellular network in Ethiopia. One condition of the loan is it couldn't be used on equipment from China's Huawei Technologies Co., which Washington considers a spying threat.

The DFC loan is part of a 600 million euro loan package for Aspen from the World Bank's International Finance Corp. and French and German development agencies. The loan is longer-term than would be available from commercial lenders.

The DFC cash will help Aspen refinance existing debt and strengthen the company's balance sheet, supporting Aspen's operations including production of vaccines and other therapies in African and emerging markets, officials said.

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EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

10. Rep. Adam Smith pushes back against private funding for National Guard deployment
The chair of the House Armed Services Committee criticized the move by South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem and said the Guard shouldn't be treated like a 'private militia'
Politico Online, June 30 (1552) | Marissa Martinez

Rep. Adam Smith, chair of the House Armed Services Committee, said on Wednesday that he would press Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin about reports that the governor of South Dakota accepted private donations to fund the deployment of National Guard members to the U.S.-Mexico border.

When asked about Gov. Kristi Noem's move during an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," the Washington Democrat said the Guard should not be treated like a "private militia." Smith said that while he wasn't a fan of calling hearings because they "don't solve problems," he would contact Austin to see whether a hearing would be necessary.

"The one thing we're going to do on the Armed Services Committee is we're going to put pressure on the secretary of defense and everyone else to say, 'This should not be happening. How do we make it stop?'" Smith said.

Noem, a Republican and potential 2024 presidential candidate, used a donation from a Tennessee-based billionaire to deploy up to 50 members to the border in Texas for dealing with the migration situation there. A spokesperson for Noem said on Tuesday that the governor could accept private donations if she determined that doing so was in the best interest of South Dakota. The spokesperson, citing "security reasons," did not say how much money was involved.

"This is unbelievably dangerous to think that rich people can start using the U.S. military to advance their objectives, independent of what the commander in chief and the secretary of defense think they ought to be doing," Smith said on Wednesday.

Republican governors from Arkansas, Florida, Iowa and Nebraska have also promised to send border security officers to Texas.

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11. Nearly 70 House lawmakers ask leadership to reimburse National Guard for Jan. 6 response
The Hill Online, June 30 (1859) | Lexi Lonas

A group of 70 bipartisan House lawmakers penned a letter to House and Senate leaders demanding a deal be reached so the National Guard can be reimbursed for its five-month deployment at the Capitol.

The letter is being led by Reps. Cheri Bustos (D-Ill.) and Steve Warnock (R-Ark.) after the Pentagon and Army secretary warned that a lack of reimbursement from the federal government would cause training issues.

The National Guard was deployed from all around the country to the Capitol after the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol and stayed in Washington, D.C., until May.

The total cost of the stay is around $521 million.

"Department of Defense (DOD) leadership has stated that without a commitment to reimburse the Guard by July 1st, 2021, preparations will begin to cancel August and September annual training and individual duty training assemblies," Warnock and Bustos said in a press release of the letter.

"Without immediate action, the brave volunteers of our National Guard will suffer and the National Guard Bureau estimates its readiness will decrease by fifteen to twenty percent. We urge you to swiftly come to an agreement on emergency appropriations that includes full reimbursement for the National Guard," they added.

The House-passed bill for Capitol security included funding to reimburse the National Guard, but the money cannot be released until the Senate finishes its bill.

"If trainings are canceled, several thousand Army National Guard Soldiers will not have enough service time this fiscal year to receive credit for a good year toward a military retirement. Approximately 2,000 training schools will be canceled, affecting their readiness, pay and career progression. Ground vehicle and rotary wing operations and maintenance will be halted. Facilities will degrade, including the delay of critical fire safety projects in Maryland, Minnesota and the Virgin Islands," the letter to leadership states.

"Air National Guard flying operations will be negatively impacted as they begin recovery from the negative readiness effects of the pandemic. Without reimbursement this fiscal year, it will take years to recover our readiness," the letter continues.

An agreement will need to be reached on emergency appropriations before the National Guard can receive the money it needs.

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12. House lawmakers seek to slash military personnel funding by $488 million from Biden's defense budget proposal

Stars and Stripes Online, June 30 (1226) | Sarah Cammarata

WASHINGTON -- Members of the House Appropriations Committee want to cut funding for military personnel by $488 million from the Biden administration's fiscal 2022 budget proposal, according to a draft of a subcommittee spending bill.

But the proposal from the committee's subpanel on defense includes the administration's request for a 2.7% pay raise for service members, providing a total of $166.8 billion in funding for troops and Defense Department contractors. The proposal also matches the administration's request to fund an active-duty military force of 1,346,400 troops.

The draft spending bill, which was released Tuesday and is set to be considered by the subcommittee in a closed session Wednesday, proposes $706 billion in defense spending, largely in line with Biden's $715 billion proposal for the Defense Department. The administration's request includes $10 billion for Pentagon infrastructure projects, which is part of a separate bill.

That legislation from the military construction subpanel of the House Appropriations Committee was approved last week and provides $10.9 billion for construction projects. It is set to be debated Wednesday by the full House Appropriations Committee.

The House Appropriations Committee's work on the pair of defense-related measures kicks off months of deliberations on the National Defense Authorization Act — the annual defense legislation that sets policy and funding for the Pentagon.

During the last week of July, the House Armed Service Committee is set to hold a series of hearings to debate each of its seven subcommittee's spending bills. At that time, lawmakers will offer amendments and compromises on elements included in the bills. The full committee is scheduled to debate the NDAA's provisions on Sept. 1.

It's unclear when the Senate Armed Services Committee and its subpanels will hold hearings to consider their own version of the NDAA. Often the Senate takes up the House bill and considers amendments to it, and both chambers must reach an agreement on a final version of the bill. The new fiscal year starts Oct. 1, but negotiations can drag on for months.

At the same time, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees consider several appropriations bills, including one for defense spending, which provides funding for the agencies and programs authorized by the House and Senate Armed Services Committees' bill.

The draft bill released Tuesday does not seem to stray far from the defense budget proposed by the Biden administration and Pentagon, which both sought to divest from legacy systems to funnel cash into new technologies. However, it could face criticism from Republican lawmakers who have called for a 3-5% increase to the overall defense budget. At the same time, Democratic lawmakers have pushed for significant cuts in defense spending.

"Democrats have landed on a responsible funding level for the Department of Defense that maintains a strong national security posture today, while making important investments in modernization that will make us even stronger in the years to come," said Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., chairwoman of the defense subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee.

The bill would also boost funding in President Joe Biden's proposal for sexual assault prevention and response programs at the Pentagon and for the services by an additional $54.5 million.

The measure adds $1.7 billion in funding for weapons procurement from Biden's budget but reduces money for developing next-generation weaponry to deter China and Russia by $1.6 billion.

The spending bill also reverses a move from the Biden administration to cut one Arleigh Burke-class destroyer. A contract between the Navy and shipyards Bath Iron Works and Ingalls Shipbuilding called for two surface combat ships in fiscal 2022, meaning the service would not be able to meet its obligations under Biden's proposal.

The Biden administration's budget cut of the second destroyer sparked backlash from lawmakers who argued that breaking the contract could hurt the shipbuilding workforce and Navy capabilities.

"We've been working for weeks to restore approval and funding for a [Arleigh Burke-class] destroyer in next year's defense budget. [Tuesday's] news puts the delegation in a strong starting position to defeat this ill-advised cut proposed by the president's administration," said Rep. Jared Golden, D-Maine, vice chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

Members of the House appropriations subcommittee also want to cancel the Navy's nuclear sea-launched cruise missile, a decision that acting Navy Secretary Thomas Harker supported in a recent memo. Some Republicans condemned the move to eliminate the program ahead of the administration's nuclear posture review that is set to start in the next month. Lawmakers also scolded Harker for not consulting other top military and Pentagon leaders.

The defense spending bill cuts one of two fleet ocean tugs requested by Biden, which means the subcommittee proposal calls for eight new ships.

The bill also funds 85 F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft and 12 F-15EX fighter jets to match Biden's proposal.

The legislation also similarly ends the use of the Defense Department's long-held wartime coffers, known as Overseas Contingency Operations funds.

Amid calls from lawmakers, advocates and the public to evacuate translators and their families who helped U.S. personnel in Afghanistan for the last 20 years, the measure would also give $25 million to provide safe passage for these interpreters and others who are under threat from the Taliban. However, the defense funding bill is not typically passed by Congress until December, months after U.S. troops are scheduled to leave the country.

The bill would also give $1 million to the Army to rename installations, facilities, roads and streets that are named after Confederate leaders and officers from the Civil War, and orders the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to be shuttered by Sept. 30, 2022.

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13. Langevin takes DOD CIO Sherman to task for 'unacceptable' budget justification
FedScoop.com, June 30 (1210) | Jackson Barnett

The Pentagon wants billions of dollars for IT and cybersecurity in fiscal 2022, but so far, it hasn't given Congress a thorough enough justification for that money, according to a top cyber-focused lawmaker.

Rep. Jim Langevin, D-R.I., expressed disappointment Tuesday for the Department of Defense's lack of specifics in its IT budget request summary for fiscal 2022 — which includes $5.5 billion for cybersecurity and more for enterprise IT on top of that, but is otherwise largely kept from the public.

Langevin rebuked acting DOD CIO John Sherman because much of the budget documentation for 2022 is "nearly a carbon copy" from the previous year, equating it to plagiarism. Because of this, DOD's IT and cyber budget summary document shrank from 30 pages last year to six for fiscal 2022 — "only two of which contain any substance," the congressman said.

"With all due respect if your office cannot be troubled to put together the necessary materials for this committee's oversight, how can we trust the stewardship of this critical portfolio?" Langevin, chair of the House Armed Services Cyber, Innovative Technologies, and Information Systems Subcommittee.

He continued: "Without that level of detail, you need to understand, we can't fulfill our oversight responsibilities; we're in the dark otherwise," Langevin said. "That's unacceptable going forward."

On top of this, Langevin criticized the department's seeming lack of understanding of how to define and categorize total cybersecurity spending across its enterprise. For instance, the Navy and Air Force count end-point security differently toward their cybersecurity budgets, he pointed out. That lack of standardization in categorizing IT spending makes putting a top-line number on the DOD's cybersecurity budget difficult, he said.

"I will own this…we need to do a better job," Sherman said of the evidence his office presented Congress while pointing to new requirements to restrict some of the materials in the document as controlled unclassified information as part of the reason it shrank.

In addition to agreeing that his office needed to provide Congress more information, Sherman also admitted the issue with how DOD defines and categorizes IT spending — a problem the department perennially has across its budgeting activities. "$5.5 billion for cyber doesn't indeed represent the totality of cybersecurity for the department," he said.

Redundancies in the terminology DOD uses for cybersecurity could also create gaps in authorities of that spend, Langevin said, pointing out that DOD uses the terms "operational technology" or "industrial control systems" for the same protection of industrial systems, like air conditioning and elevators.

Langevin has long been a vocal proponent of funding cybersecurity and IT modernization. His subcommittee marks up the section of the defense appropriations bill that grants DOD its IT and cyber funding.

During his testimony, Sherman gave little else away on other hot-button issues, like the Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure (JEDI) cloud procurement. He reiterated comments made by Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks that the DOD is in the process of figuring out what it will do next to develop an enterprise cloud solution.

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AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

14. U.S. Questioned Whether Afghan Government Could Survive Taliban Onslaught
Biden to boost aid to Kabul as the militants capture more territory
ForeignPolicy.com, June 30 (1052) | Jack Detsch and Robbie Gramer

The Biden administration is mapping out a strategy for Afghanistan after the U.S. military completes its withdrawal that is centered around the boosting of economic support for the government, even as many Afghans are "increasingly skeptical" of the government's competence, according to an internal State Department document submitted to Congress and newly obtained by Foreign Policy.

The assessment offers one of the most detailed accounts yet of how the Biden administration is thinking through U.S. engagement with Afghanistan after it winds down 20 years of war and nation-building that cost American taxpayers some $2 trillion. It also provides a more sober, behind-the-scenes assessment of how the Biden administration views Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his ability to tackle corruption and manage the economy after the United States departs.

Inside the U.S. administration, officials are privately voicing concern that the fragile government lacks the basic ability to govern, even as a surge in Taliban offensives threatens to topple the government or plunge the country deeper into civil war.

"Bringing about and implementing a political settlement will require basic government functionality and political coherence," the State Department reported to Congress in April, the same month U.S. President Joe Biden announced a full U.S. withdrawal from the country by Sept. 11.

"Weak governance and political institutions, as well as structural economic problems, leave the government ill-equipped to address these challenges," the State Department added.

"The Afghan public is increasingly skeptical of the government's commitment to the rule of law, to address corruption, and to appoint senior-level officials based on merit rather than personal allegiance. This mistrust is exacerbated by the inability of the government to deliver basic services to the population," the report said.

(Some of this language was effectively copied and pasted from a public 2018 U.S. government document outlining the strategy on Afghanistan—a sign of how little has changed over years despite massive U.S. investment in Afghan governance programs).

Biden's post-withdrawal strategy is focused on increasing the Afghan government's transparency, providing more avenues for citizens to participate in democracy, tamping down on rampant corruption, and strengthening the rule of law.

In its report, the State Department conceded that heightened Taliban violence would "pose significant risks to the peace process and to donors' ability to deliver much-need development and humanitarian assistance."

The Taliban have refused to move forward on peace talks with the Afghan government and taken over more than 80 districts since Biden's withdrawal announcement, according to an analysis conducted by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a hawkish think tank. The group now controls nearly 40 percent of the country.

"The Taliban's advances are more rapid than people expected," said Lisa Curtis, an expert at the Center for a New American Security and former National Security Council senior director for South and Central Asia during the Trump administration. "The fact that they have taken so many districts in the north in just the last couple of weeks has surprised many people. … Now people are thinking, 'Wow, this could happen a lot more quickly than we had originally thought.'"

Curtis said Ghani's government could stave off more losses and reverse the Taliban's gains by coordinating with other Afghan power brokers who have their own militias, such as the controversial warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum. "The government is starting to work with local power brokers, understanding they should leave aside their current differences, in order to band together to save the country," she said.

She also said continued U.S. support, including financial, humanitarian, and security assistance, will be critical. But she and other experts on the region are not confident about the government's ability to retain power in the long term.

During Ghani's visit to Washington last week, Biden insisted the United States would remain a key partner for Afghanistan after the withdrawal of U.S. and coalition troops. "Our troops may be leaving, but support for Afghanistan is not ending," Biden said.

Ghani downplayed U.S. intelligence assessments that indicated the Taliban could topple the Afghan government in six months, but he appeared to acknowledge the possibility of a potential civil war.

Ghani said Afghanistan was facing an "1861 moment, like President Lincoln," referring to the year Abraham Lincoln entered office and the American Civil War broke out. Afghanistan, he said, is "rallying to the defense of the republic, determined that the republic is defended. It's a choice of values, the values of an exclusionary system or an inclusionary system."

"We are determined to have unity, coherence, national sense of sacrifice, and will not spare anything," he added.

In open- and closed-door meetings in Washington last week, Ghani pressed U.S. officials and experts to keep up American aid to the Afghans, fearing a resurgence of the civil conflict that followed the 1989 drawdown of troops from the then-Soviet Union, which left a fledgling communist government to fend for itself.

"What I said to him and the group was that I think we need a narrative that's credible even if it's not probable about how the deterioration of Afghanistan can be stanched," said Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow and director of research at the Brookings Institution, who met with Ghani during his visit. "It seems to me there's a growing sense in the Western conversation that Rome is falling."

So far, Biden has insisted that the money will keep flowing, pledging to back Ghani's government with $266 million in humanitarian aid and $3.3 billion in weapons assistance. But Ghani spent some of his trip in listening mode, inviting a gaggle of experts to a dinner at the posh Willard InterContinental hotel last week. They urged the Afghan leader to push for American air support to stave off Taliban attacks on major cities, as well as keeping residual presence of Western contractors to help maintain the fledgling Afghan Air Force, according to sources familiar with the meeting.

Ghani also made the case that Afghan was a "neutral" country, in what some analysts read as a messaging effort to try to stop Pakistan and other neighboring countries from maneuvering for control of parts of the country after the U.S. withdrawal.

“The ability for the Afghan leaders to work together instead of fighting among themselves doesn’t seem to have been moved in a positive direction by this visit,” said David Sedney, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense for Afghanistan and Pakistan in the Obama administration. “The unity of the Afghan government is much reduced and the reliance of the Afghan government on the United States has proven to be a huge error in judgement on their part. Right now I don’t see any sign that they’re going to improve.”

And while the Taliban have warned their fighters in internal decrees not to attack American forces or harbor foreign militants under a withdrawal deal negotiated by the Trump administration, the group hasn’t shown any willingness to budge on peace negotiations.

The Taliban have rebuffed “every proposal to secure more specific commitments that would achieve a meaningful reduction in violence” at peace talks in Doha, the State Department reported. The group has also failed to fully implement a counterterrorism agreement with the United States that remains classified.

Meanwhile, the assessment of the violence has been getting more dire from some senior U.S. military leaders. Speaking to a small group of reporters in Kabul on Tuesday, the commander of NATO’s waning Resolute Support mission Gen. Austin Scott Miller said the security situation was “not good” and hinted that the country could be on a path to civil war if the trajectory continues.

But some of Biden’s allies in Congress still see a way to engage with Afghanistan after the U.S. troop withdrawal. “A troop withdrawal doesn’t mean the end of U.S. engagement with Afghanistan—there are still areas we can support the Afghan people without a permanent military presence there,” said Sen. Chris Murphy, a Democrat from Connecticut who sits on the Foreign Relations Committee.

“The United States should continue supporting the Afghan National Security Forces, and expedite processing of Afghan Special Immigrant Visas. We should also continue pressing the Afghan government on anti-corruption to increase its legitimacy and work multilaterally with those who have a vested interest in the stability of the country,” Murphy said.

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15. Afghan civilians take up arms as U.S.-led forces leave
Reuters, June 30 (0924) | Not Attributed

PARWAN -- Gun in hand, 55-year-old Dost Mohammad Salangi recites poetry as he leads a small group of men to a look-out post high in the rugged hills of Parwan province, north of the Afghan capital Kabul.

Heavily bearded and wearing a traditional circular pakol hat to keep off the sun, he has a warning for the Islamist militant Taliban movement, which has increased attacks on Afghan forces and claimed more territory as foreign troops withdraw.

“If they impose war on us, oppress us and encroach on women and people’s property, even our seven-year-old children will be armed and will stand against them,” he told Reuters.

Salangi is one of hundreds of former “mujahideen” fighters and civilians who have felt compelled to take up arms to help the army repel a growing Taliban insurgency.

The group’s ascendancy on the ground comes as the last U.S.-led international forces prepare to leave after two decades of fighting that ended with no clear victory for either side.

“We have to protect our country ... now there is no choice as the foreign forces abandon us,” said Farid Mohammed, a young student who joined a local anti-Taliban leader from Parwan.

He was speaking as the German military concluded the withdrawal of the second largest contingent of foreign troops after the United States with around 150,000 soldiers deployed over the past two decades, many of them serving more than one tour in the country.

U.S. President Joe Biden and NATO said in mid-April they would pull out the roughly 10,000 foreign troops still in Afghanistan by Sept. 11, the 20th anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York that prompted the mission.

The United Nations envoy for Afghanistan said this week the Taliban had taken more than 50 of 370 districts and was positioned to control provincial capitals as the country looked increasingly unstable as foreign military support ended.

Armed mainly with old assault rifles, pistols and grenade launchers, men like Salangi and Mohammed have joined local shopkeepers and traders as part of a loosely-formed Public Uprising Force trying to reclaim some of those areas.

Ajmal Omar Shinwari, a spokesman for the Afghan defence and security forces, said Afghans keen to take up arms against the Taliban were being absorbed into the structure of territorial army forces.

But some political analysts warn of the growing risk of a return to civil war as more groups took up arms.

Faced with rising violence, President Ashraf Ghani visited Washington in June to meet Biden, who pledged U.S. support to Afghanistan but said Afghans must decide their own future.

Talks to try and find a political settlement in Afghanistan have stalled, although the head of the Afghan peace council has said they should not be abandoned despite the surge in Taliban attacks.

--*Reporting by Afghanistan bureau*

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MIDDLE EAST

16. U.S. and Iran show no move to put nuclear deal back on track
Associated Press, June 30 (1629) | Edith M. Lederer

UNITED NATIONS -- The United Nations, European Union and many Security Council members urged the United States and Iran on Wednesday to quickly put the 2015 nuclear deal aimed at reining in Tehran's nuclear program back on track, but neither side showed any sign of movement toward an agreement.

During six rounds of talks in Vienna, the six countries that remain parties to the agreement -- Russia, China, Germany, France, Britain and Iran -- have been trying to resolve major outstanding issues on how the United States can rejoin. Then-President Donald Trump pulled out of the agreement in 2018, but President Joe Biden repudiated his predecessor and said the U.S. wants to return to the pact.

After the latest Vienna talks June 20, the EU official who coordinated the meeting, Enrique Mora, told reporters: "We are closer to a deal, but we are not there." Top Russian representative Mikhail Ukyanov said that "the time has come for political decisions" ahead of what is supposed to be a final round of negotiations.

But in the Security Council on Wednesday, diplomats from Iran and the United States took tough stands, giving no hint of compromise during a meeting on implementation of the 2015 council resolution that endorsed the nuclear agreement.

The 2015 accord is aimed at preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons, which Tehran denies it is seeking. Under its provisions, U.N. sanctions that severely affected the oil-rich nation's economy were lifted, but Trump re-imposed those sanctions unilaterally and added tougher ones when the U.S. pulled out of the pact.

Iranian Ambassador Majid Takht Ravanchi strongly criticized the continuing impact of U.S. sanctions, saying they were also affecting the country's efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Nothing has changed except the verbal declaration of the United States of its intention to return to compliance" with the agreement, he told the council. "In reality, until this very moment, the maximum pressure policy and the draconian sanctions against our people still continue."

He said Iran has paid "a heavy price" to preserve the deal and remains committed to it "as long as other parties put an end, completely and without any precondition or further delay, to their bullying policies."

Ravanchi said that “it is high time” for the United States and the three European parties to the agreement to make “difficult decisions” to return to full compliance.

U.S. deputy ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis told council members that “the last few rounds of discussions in Vienna have helped to crystallize the choices that need to be made by Iran and by the United States in order achieve a mutual return to compliance.”

“The United States is committed to ensuring Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon, and we believe diplomacy, in coordination with our allies and regional partners, is the best path to achieve that goal,” he said.

But DeLaurentis said recent reports by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the International Atomic Energy Agency make clear that Iran is escalating its nuclear program beyond the agreement’s limits, both in numbers and types of centrifuges, quantities and levels of uranium enrichment up to 60%, and producing uranium metal.

“We urge Iran to refrain from taking further escalatory steps and to return to full implementation” of the agreement’s provisions, “including those related to IAEA verification, monitoring, and implementation of the additional protocol,” DeLaurentis said.

Ravanchi said all Iran’s steps are allowed under the deal because the U.S. violated the agreement, and reiterated that they are reversible.

A key provision in the 2015 Security Council resolution endorsing the agreement calls on Iran “not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons” — but it does not explicitly demand that Tehran do so.

Iran launched ballistic missiles and tested a space vehicle early this year, which sparked complaints from France, Britain, Germany and Israel, backed by the U.S. But Russia and Iran insisted they did not violate the agreement.

U.N. political chief Rosemary DiCarlo told the council that diplomatic efforts in Vienna “offer a critical opportunity” for the U.S. and Iran to return fully to the deal.

She echoed Guterres’ appeal to the U.S. to lift or waive sanctions and extend waivers on oil trade with Iran. She called on Iran to refrain from further escalation, return to full implementation of the deal, and resume an agreement with the IAEA to monitor and verify its nuclear activities that expired June 24.

Calling this “a defining moment,” DiCarlo said it is “critical for all parties to seize this opportunity” to put the agreement back on track.

EU Ambassador Olof Skoog warned that "what might be possible still today may prove impossible in the near future."

"We have a limited diplomatic window ahead of us that we should not miss," he told the council.

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INDO-PACIFIC

17. US and Japan conduct war games amid rising China-Taiwan tensions

Secret table-top planning and joint exercises in South China Sea continue as concerns grow over Beijing stance

Financial Times Online (UK), June 30 (1549) | Demetri Sevastopulo and Kathrin Hille

The US and Japan have been conducting war games and joint military exercises in the event of a conflict with China over Taiwan, amid escalating concerns over the Chinese military's assertive activity.

US and Japanese military officials began serious planning for a possible conflict in the final year of the Trump administration, according to six people who requested anonymity. The activity includes top-secret tabletop war games and joint exercises in the South China and East China seas.

Shinzo Abe, then Japanese prime minister, in 2019 decided to significantly expand military planning because of the Chinese threat to Taiwan and the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. This work has continued under the administrations of Joe Biden and Japanese prime minister Yoshihide Suga, according to three of the people with knowledge of the matter.

The US and Japan have become alarmed as China has flown more fighter jets and bombers into Taiwan's air defence identification zone, including a record 28 fighters on June 15. The Chinese navy, air force and coast guard have also become increasingly active around the Senkaku, which are administered by Japan but claimed by China and Taiwan.

China insists that it wants to unify Taiwan with the mainland. While it says it wants peaceful unification, it has not ruled out the use of force to seize control of Taiwan.

"In many ways, the People's Liberation Army drove the US and Japan together and toward new thinking on Taiwan," said Randy Schriver, who served as the top Pentagon official for Asia until the end of 2019. "Assertiveness around the Senkaku and Taiwan at the same time drives home the issue of proximity."

The US has long wanted Japan, a mutual defence treaty ally, to conduct more joint military planning, but Japan was constrained by its postwar pacifist constitution. That obstacle was eased, but not eliminated, when the Abe government in 2015 reinterpreted the constitution to allow Japan to defend allies that came under attack.

As the two allies started to bolster their joint planning, Japan asked the US to share its Taiwan war plan, but the Pentagon demurred because it wanted to focus on boosting planning between the two countries in phases. One former US official said the eventual goal was for the two allies to create an integrated war plan for Taiwan.

Two of the six people said the US military and Japanese self-defence forces had conducted joint exercises in the South China Sea that had been couched as disaster relief training. They have also held more military exercises around the Senkaku, which also helps prepare for any conflict with China over Taiwan, which is just 350km west of the islands.

"Some of the activities we're training on are highly fungible," said Schriver, adding that exercises such as an amphibious landing in a "disaster relief scenario" would be "directly applicable" to any conflict around the Senkaku or the Taiwan Strait.

Mark Montgomery, a retired admiral who commanded the USS George Washington aircraft carrier strike group and was director of operations at Indo-Pacific command between 2014 and 2017, said the Pentagon needed a "comprehensive understanding" of the support Japan could provide in the case of a conflict.

"As a crisis grows and Japan is potentially drawn in as a participant, the US will need to understand how Japan could support or enable US operations," he added.

US and Japanese diplomats are examining the legal issues related to any joint military action, including access to bases and the kind of logistical support Japan could provide US forces engaged in a conflict with China.

In the event of a war over Taiwan, the US would rely on air bases in Japan. But that raises the odds that Tokyo would be dragged into the conflict, particularly if China tried to destroy the bases in an effort to hobble the US.

One official said the US and Japan needed to urgently create a trilateral sharing mechanism with Taiwan for information about Chinese naval and air force movements, especially around the Miyako Strait to the east of Taiwan which is covered by Japanese sensors from the north-east and Taiwanese sensors from the south-west.

"Some of that kind of data is shared between Taiwan and the US, and between Japan and the US. But we have no direct sharing trilaterally," the official said. "You cannot start setting that up in the middle of a contingency. You have to do it now."

Another official said the three nations had taken a small but important step in 2017 by agreeing to share military aircraft codes to help identify friendly aircraft.

Taiwanese officials and US and Japanese sources said co-operation had since risen significantly, driven by the growing awareness in Japan about the importance of Taiwan — which is 110km from Yonaguni, the westernmost island in the Japanese archipelago — for its own security.

"The Japanese government has increasingly recognised, and even acknowledges publicly, that the defence of Taiwan equates to the defence of Japan," said Heino Klinck, a former top Pentagon official who oversaw military relations with Japan and Taiwan from late 2019 until the end of the Trump administration.

The Japanese defence ministry said Tokyo and Washington continued to update their joint planning following the 2015 revision of guidelines that underpin the military alliance, but declined to provide any detail. The Pentagon did not comment.

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18. North Korean leader vows to elevate relations with China to new strategic point
Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 30 (2049) | Koh Byung-joon

SEOUL -- North Korean leader Kim Jong-un vowed to elevate relations with China to a new strategic point as he sent a congratulatory message to Chinese President Xi Jinping to mark the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China, state media said Thursday.

In an apparent reference to the deepening Sino-U.S. rivalry, Kim also said in the message that "hostile forces" are engaged in "vicious slander and all-round pressure" upon China, but they can "never check the on-going advance of the Chinese people," according to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

"Despite the complicated international situation, the two parties and the two countries, with firm faith in the justice of the socialist and communist cause, accelerate their advance toward a brighter future, tiding over difficulties and ordeals by dint of their militant friendship and bonds of kinship," Kim was quoted as saying by the KCNA.

"The WPK, by its firm unity with the CPC, would raise the DPRK-China friendship to a new strategic point as required by the times and as desired by the peoples of the two countries, and powerfully encourage the socialist construction... to vigorously advance despite any change of the situation and challenges," he added.

DPRK is the acronym of the North's official name, Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"The WPK and the Korean people firmly support the cause of the CPC for accelerating socialist construction, protecting the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and preserving global peace," Kim said.

Kim sent a floral basket bearing his name to Xi through his ambassador in Beijing on the occasion of the 100th founding anniversary, according to the KCNA.

In a front-page editorial on Thursday, the Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the WPK, highlighted the "undefeated" relations forged through blood with China, saying that ties continue to move forward no matter how complicated the international situation might be.

"It is our party and government's unwavering stance and will to make an all-out revival of the friendly and cooperative relations with China, which is a precious asset and strategic choice," the paper said.

North Korea and China have highlighted their close and friendly relations amid stalemated nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington, and an escalating Sino-U.S. rivalry.

Last month, China's ambassador in Pyongyang and North Korea's top diplomat in Beijing stressed the importance of bilateral relations in rare op-ed pieces published in state media of the host country on the second anniversary of Xi's trip to Pyongyang.

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CHINA

19. China's Xi pledges 'reunification' with Taiwan, gets stern rebuke
Reuters, July 1 (0121) | Yew Lun Tian and Yimou Lee

BEIJING/TAIPEI -- Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged on Thursday to complete "reunification" with self-ruled Taiwan and vowed to "smash" any attempts at formal independence, drawing a stern rebuke from Taipei, which lambasted the Communist Party as a dictatorship.

China, which considers democratically-ruled Taiwan its own territory, has stepped up efforts under Xi to assert its sovereignty claims, including regular flights by fighter jets and bombers close to the island.

"Solving the Taiwan question and realising the complete reunification of the motherland are the unswerving historical tasks of the Chinese Communist Party and the common aspiration of all Chinese people," Xi said in a speech on the 100th birthday of the ruling Communist Party.

"All sons and daughters of China, including compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, must work together and move forward in solidarity, resolutely smashing any 'Taiwan independence' plots."

In response, Taiwan's China policy-making Mainland Affairs Council said while the Communist Party had achieved "certain economic development", it remained a dictatorship that trampled on people's freedoms, and should embrace democracy instead.

"Its historical decision-making errors and persistent harmful actions have caused serious threats to regional security," it added.

Taiwan's people have rejected the "one China principle", which states the island is part of China, and Beijing should abandon its military intimidation and talk with Taipei on an equal footing, the council said.

"Our government's determination to firmly defend the nation's sovereignty and Taiwan's democracy and freedom and to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait remains unchanged."

While China has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control, Xi called for a process of "peaceful reunification".

Still, he said that nobody should "underestimate the Chinese people's strong determination, firm will, and formidable ability to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity".

The defeated Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war to Mao Zedong's Communist Party.

Most Taiwanese have shown no interest in being ruled by China. Taiwan says only the island's people can decide their future, and has decried Chinese pressure.

China believes Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen is a separatist bent on declaring independence. She says Taiwan is already an independent country called the Republic of China, its formal name.

--*Writing by Ben Blanchard*

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EUROPE

20. German defence minister meets US counterpart Austin in Washington
Deutsche Presse-Agentur (Germany), June 30 (1245) | Not Attributed

Washington -- German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer met her US counterpart Lloyd Austin in Washington on Wednesday.

During their talks, the ministers discussed among other things the German purchase of five maritime reconnaissance aircraft from US manufacturer Boeing, a 1.1-billion-euro (1.3-billion-dollar) deal, according to the Defence Ministry in Berlin.

The P-8A Poseidon aircraft are used, among other things, for hunting submarines.

Kramp-Karrenbauer was only the second German minister to travel to Washington for talks with President Joe Biden's new government, after Economy Minister Peter Altmaier.

Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, who is hoping to replace Angela Merkel as Germany's chancellor in elections scheduled in September, is also expected in Washington this week.

Merkel herself is scheduled to meet Biden for talks at the White House in July.

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21. Swiss pick U.S. F-35 jet and Patriot missiles for defence needs
Reuters, June 30 (1250) | John Revill and Tim Hepher

ZURICH -- Switzerland has chosen Lockheed Martin's F-35A Lightning II as its next-generation fighter jet, the government said on Wednesday, angering opponents who have pledged a new referendum to overturn what they dubbed an unnecessary "Ferrari" option.

The $5.5 billion deal adds a 15th nation to the world's largest weapons project - a family of interconnected, single-engine jets to be used by the United States and its allies.

It came alongside a $2.1 billion agreement to buy the Patriot surface-to-air missile system from U.S. group Raytheon, with European competitors losing out on both deals.

The F-35 has faced multiple budget overruns, delays and technical setbacks, but is building export momentum. Critics say the project, valued at trillions of dollars over its lifetime, has seen costs soar while failing to meet goals on capability.

Neutral Switzerland will buy 36 F-35As after an evaluation found it had "the highest overall benefit at the lowest overall cost," the government said.

The aircraft beat bids from Boeing's F/A-18 Super Hornet, the Rafale from France's Dassault and the four-nation Eurofighter built by Germany- and Spain-backed Airbus, Italy's Leonardo and Britain's BAE Systems.

The decision drew immediate criticism from anti-armaments campaigners and a left-wing parties who will now launch a campaign for a referendum on the issue, the third Swiss vote on buying fighter jets.

Voters seven years ago rejected the purchase of Gripen jets from Sweden's Saab, while the 6 billion Swiss franc ($6.5 billion) funding, which led to the decision to buy the F-35As, was only narrowly approved last year.

Opponents say Switzerland doesn't need cutting-edge warplanes to defend its Alpine territory which a supersonic jet can cross in 10 minutes.

"The decision is simply incomprehensible," said Priska Seiler Graf, a member of parliament for the left-leaning Social Democrats (SP), who has raised concerns about the cost.

"It's not just about buying them, but the upkeep and operating costs," she added. "We should seek a European solution ... we don’t want to be dependent on the United States."

The government picked the Patriot missile system over Franco-Italian group Eurosam.

PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL

Defence Minister Viola Amherd said the F-35As were chosen after being the most impressive performer in an evaluation and offered best value for money.

Total costs of 15.5 billion francs came in 2 billion cheaper than the next lowest bidder, the government said, based on buying and operating the aircraft over 30 years.

"We would not have bought a Ferrari if a VW would do and the Ferrari would be three times more expensive," Amherd told a news conference.

The Swiss parliament now has to approve the funding for the purchase, with the debate scheduled for early next year. It can debate costs and terms but not revisit the model selection.

The fighter decision was closely watched as the first of three face-offs ahead of Finland and Canada.

Lockheed's stealthy fifth-generation fighter recently added Poland to its list of European customers which includes Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, and Britain.

U.S. President Joe Biden had lobbied for American companies when meeting his Swiss counterpart while in Geneva for his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin this month.

Analysts said the decision to snub both the European fighter jet candidates and surface-to-air missile offering could be seen as a Swiss rebuff to the European Union in a time of strained relations between Bern and Brussels after the collapse of talks over a new agreement governing trade and other matters.

By doubling down on U.S. suppliers the government could antagonise the 49.8% of voters who opposed funding last year.

Anti-arms campaigners say Switzerland, which last fought a foreign war more than 200 years ago and has no discernable enemies, does not need cutting-edge fighters.

But supporters have said Switzerland needs to be able to protect itself without relying on others.

Jonas Kampus, political secretary of the Group for a Switzerland without an Army, said he was confident of winning a referendum against the F-35As.

The government "can expect a heavy defeat in the vote. The follow-up polls in September (2020) showed a clear rejection of the F-35 among the voting population," he said.

Marionna Schlatter, a lawmaker with the Greens Party said the September poll was too close to ignore opposition concerns.

"The people don't want a Ferrari in the air," she said.

--*Additional reporting by Michael Shields and Mike Stone*

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22. Russia says reassured by Turkey about controversial canal
Agence France-Presse, June 30 (1212) | Fulya Özerkan

Russia on Wednesday said Turkey had reassured it that a planned canal aimed at easing traffic on the Bosphorus would not lead to a greater presence of NATO navies in the Black Sea.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government has long championed the controversial Canal Istanbul project -- a 45-kilometre (28-mile) waterway running parallel to the Bosphorus Strait connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara and the Mediterranean.

Russia fears that Ankara's approval of plans to develop the canal will undermine its commitment to a 1936 convention that governs passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelle Straits.

Russian President Vladimir Putin in April called on Erdogan to preserve the accord.

"We are satisfied by our interactions with our Turkish colleagues," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters after talks with his counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu in the southern Turkish holiday resort of Antalya.

"During our negotiations, we put on record that the Istanbul Canal's construction plans will in no way touch the parameters of the presence of foreign navies in the Black Sea," Lavrov said.

Moscow is suspicious of NATO navies in the Black Sea, last week confronting a British warship that passed through contested waters around Crimea, which Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014.

The 1936 Montreux Convention aimed at demilitarising the Black Sea by setting strict rules on passage by commercial and military ships.

The pact guarantees free passage for civilian vessels in times of peace and war.

But Cavusoglu did not confirm that Turkey had committed to not allowing NATO to send additional warships to the Black Sea, saying only that the Istanbul Canal would have no "direct effect" on the 1936 convention.

The Turkish minister said the convention has its own provisions stipulating how it can be terminated or revised.

"There will be no change to the Montreux Convention with the building of Canal Istanbul," he said, adding that the waterway would be subject to Turkish laws.

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RUSSIA

23. U.S. Domination Ending, Putin Says
Wall Street Journal, July 1 (0200), Pg. A9 | Georgi Kantchev and Thomas Grove

MOSCOW -- Russian President Vladimir Putin challenged U.S. leadership in world affairs on Wednesday, arguing that an era of U.S. hegemony has come to an end as he touted Moscow's growing military strength and increasingly assertive foreign policy.

Mr. Putin spoke during an annual event at which he answers questions from ordinary Russians. The remarks come two weeks after a summit with President Biden in Geneva where the two leaders sought to ease tensions but achieved little tangible progress. At the same time, Mr. Biden depicted the Kremlin leader as presiding over a country increasingly isolated by sanctions and struggling economically.

At Wednesday's event, Mr. Putin pushed back, portraying the U.S. as a waning power.

"The world is changing dramatically," he said. "On the one hand, our partners in the United States understand this, therefore there was a meeting in Geneva. On the other hand, they are trying at all costs to maintain their monopoly position."

At their meeting last month, Messrs. Biden and Putin acknowledged that relations between the U.S. and Russia have reached a post-Cold War low, but both expressed hopes that the summit would allow for greater cooperation over time.

Following their talks, Mr. Biden said he wasn't confident Mr. Putin would change his behavior without pressure from Western democracies.

The Russian president has denied allegations by the U.S. that Moscow was responsible for a series of cyberattacks against the U.S.

On Wednesday, Mr. Putin said that a British warship that entered the Black Sea waters near Crimea last week was a provocation carried out by the British and the Americans.

Russia has said its armed forces fired warning shots at a British destroyer that was violating what it considers its territorial waters near Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula Russia annexed in 2014. The U.K. government has said that its ship was "innocently" passing through Ukrainian waters and that no shots were fired.

"It was a complex provocation," Mr. Putin said Wednesday. "Even if we sank this ship, it would still be difficult to imagine that the world would be on the brink of a world war, because those who do this know that they cannot emerge victorious from this war.

"They came to our borders and violated our territorial sea," he said. "We know what we are fighting for, we are fighting for ourselves, for our future on our territory."

Asked about Mr. Putin's allegations about U.S. involvement, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said, "I don't have anything to detail or confirm for you from the podium." She referred comment to the U.S. Defense Department.

Mr. Putin accused U.S. social-media platforms operating in Russia of ignoring authorities' requests to delete illegal content, but stressed Moscow had no plans to block them. The Kremlin has intensified pressure on U.S. social-media companies in recent months to delete content supporting Russia's political opposition ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for September.

"As they are working in our country and making good money, they should comply with our laws. We aren't asking anything extraordinary of them," Mr. Putin said.

The Putin government has steadily silenced opposition voices in recent years, shutting or co-opting dissenting broadcasters and other media groups and outlawing the organization led by Russian dissident Alexei Navalny.

The annual call-in show offers Mr. Putin a chance to showcase his leadership and mastery of policy details. But the questions have increasingly turned to issues of poverty, inflation, and falling living standards -- problems that have stirred increased popular resentment in recent years.

For more than three hours during the tightly choreographed event, he answered questions on everything from dilapidated schools to taxes on cattle and phone scammers, as well his stance on diets.

Mr. Putin urged Russians to get vaccinated, as a new wave caused by the more-transmissible Delta variant of the coronavirus has swept the country and cases have more than doubled. Vaccination rates in Russia have been low, and many regions last month introduced mandatory inoculation for workers in the service sector.

Mr. Putin said that while he opposes compulsory vaccination, some regions had to introduce such measures to prevent a lockdown and avoid economic losses.

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24. Pentagon, allies drill in Black Sea as Russia fumes
Washington Times Online, June 30 (0802) | Mike Glenn

The Black Sea is emerging as a prime flashpoint in the West's standoff with Vladimir Putin's Russia. President Biden said he seeks stable, predictable relations with the Kremlin, but the U.S. and its allies aren't backing off on a major naval military exercise in the contested sea this week that has the Russian leader fuming.

Only days after Russia said it fired warning shots and dropped bombs in the wake of a British destroyer it claimed was encroaching on its territorial waters, the USS Ross steamed into the Black Sea to join more than 30 other countries this week for the kickoff of the massive Sea Breeze maritime exercise.

Sea Breeze, scheduled to run through July 10, will be the largest since its inception in 1997. More than 30 ships and 40 aircraft from NATO members and Black Sea countries will take part. Ukraine, which is locked in its own intense battle of wills with Russia, and the U.S. are hosting the maneuvers.

Wide-ranging operations include amphibious warfare, maritime interdiction and air defense.

Exercises "will help enhance interoperability and capabilities among participating nations," said Kristina Kvien, charge d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine. "We are committed to maintaining the safety and security of the Black Sea."

Looming over the naval maneuvers is the increasingly frigid relationship between Russia and the West, which now includes some former client states of the Soviet Union. The Russian Embassy in Washington issued a statement calling for this year's exercises to be canceled. It warned that the operations will raise tensions in the region and encourage "militaristic sentiments" in Ukraine.

"The scale and clearly aggressive nature of the Sea Breeze exercises in no way correspond to the real tasks of security in the Black Sea region," said the statement, posted on Twitter. Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, said in early June that the drills could provide cover for the supply of new offensive weapons and ammunition to Ukraine.

Sending a message

Aykan Erdemir, an analyst with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, said NATO is sending a message of deterrence and the Kremlin is replying.

"On the Kremlin side, it's about intimidating not only Ukraine but also NATO member states and NATO partners that can come to Ukraine's aid," said Mr. Erdemir, who heads the foundation's Turkey program. "Putin is very much in the offense mode. [Sea Breeze] provides him with a unique opportunity to make a point."

Mr. Putin aired fresh grievances about the allied naval exercises during his annual marathon call-in press conference Wednesday. He said the aggressor is the West, which is intruding on waters claimed by Russia. Ukraine, he said, is essentially a puppet of the U.S. and top European Union powers.

“We are fighting for ourselves and our future on our own territory,” he said. “It’s not us who traveled thousands of kilometers to come to them; it’s them who have come to our borders and violated our territorial waters.”

Navy officials say they routinely operate in the Black Sea consistent with international law and the 1936 Montreux Convention, which regulates the transit of naval warships through the Bosporus and the Dardanelles.

“It is in the world’s best interest to maintain a stable, prosperous Black Sea region and deter aggressive actors who seek destabilization for their own gain,” Navy officials said.

Analysts say planning for the Sea Breeze exercise took on unusual prominence this year when Russia began shuttling thousands of soldiers, along with tanks and howitzers, to the border with Ukraine. Moscow has strongly backed Ukrainian separatist forces in a standoff with the Western-backed government in Kyiv. Clashes have killed more than 13,000 people since 2014.

Russia’s massive buildup “got a lot of attention from the Western world. We started sending ships more frequently to the Black Sea,” said Brent Sadler, a senior fellow for naval warfare and advanced technology at The Heritage Foundation. “NATO and the U.S. have been worried about what Russia has been doing in the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean for many years.”

Less than a week before the naval exercises commenced, Russia said it had fired warning shots to drive the British destroyer HMS Defender away from waters near Sevastopol, the location of Russia’s main naval base in Crimea. Moscow also said a Russian air force Sukhoi Su-24 attack aircraft dropped four high-explosive fragmentation bombs near the British ship.

“The destroyer was warned in advance that weapons would be fired in case of a violation of the Russian state border. It disregarded the warning,” the Russian Defense Ministry said, according to the Interfax news agency. Russian officials said the HMS Defender left Russian waters after the engagement.

The British government disputed Moscow’s account. It said the Defender’s crew heard no warning shots or bombs during the incident. Like the U.S. and most other countries, the United Kingdom doesn’t recognize Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea. The destroyer was conducting a freedom of navigation operation through a well-traveled international transit corridor in the Black Sea, British officials said.

In his call-in show, Mr. Putin said the Russian military detected an American military aircraft shepherding the Defender on its transit.

“It was clearly a provocation, a complex one involving not only the British but also the Americans,” he said. The mission, he added, was in sharp contradiction of Mr. Biden’s accommodating tone at the Geneva summit in mid-June.

Expanding Russian influence

While Moscow complains about the Sea Breeze exercises, critics say, the Russian navy and air force are conducting maneuvers to expand their influence in the Mediterranean.

“The pilots of the aircraft received practical skills to perform tasks in new geographical areas. Tasks were performed to destroy a mock enemy. The tasks are completed with high quality,” said Russian Air Force Lt. Gen. Sergei Kobylash, according to the Defense Ministry.

“Aviation equipment has once again confirmed its high reliability. The flight crew has gained invaluable experience,” Gen. Kobylash said.

NATO has been gradually building up its assets and presence in the Black Sea since the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Mr. Sadler said Sea Breeze 2021 and similar exercises are meant to remind Moscow that the U.S. has what it lacks: regional partners.

“There’s definitely an implied message: We have a network of allies. It’s not just you and Ukraine,” he said. “There are a lot of people you’re going to be alienating. You’re taking on the world if you keep doing the things you’re doing.”

Some think the Russian confrontation with the Defender was a bungled effort by Mr. Putin and his generals to send a message to the West and to divide the U.S. from its European allies.

“The decision to take on HMS Defender and fire live warning shots was apparently taken ahead of time, at the highest level in Moscow …,” Russian military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer wrote in the Eurasia Daily Monitor, published by the Jamestown Foundation. “Moscow strived to make the encounter bloodless while still sufficiently scaring the West away from supporting Ukraine — the goal was clearly not to start an all-European war.”

Mr. Erdemir said Mr. Putin’s ultimate goal is to maintain some level of coercive control in countries with Russian-speaking populations, such as Georgia and Ukraine, and to benefit from the region’s “frozen conflicts.”

“It allows the Kremlin to use that presence as leverage over those former satellite states now pivoting toward the trans-Atlantic alliance,” Mr. Erdemir said. “Putin would like to turn [Ukraine] into a fait accompli whereby NATO and its partners around the world would come to accept the state of affairs that he favors.”

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AIR FORCE

25. New Air Force PT Test Will Have Walking Option for Some Troops, General Says
Military.com, June 30 (1457) | Oriana Pawlyk

Airmen will have a broad menu of options, ranking from planks to sprints and even walking, on a new physical fitness assessment debuting in coming months.

During a Facebook Live chat earlier this week, Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, the deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne Bass outlined the options as part of the PT "evolution" to measure fitness.

The event alternatives aim to further the service's goal of moving away from a one-size-fits-all model, which officials have said limits airmen on achieving their best possible score. So far, the service has named four new options: a shuttle run, walking, planks and hand-release push-ups. Officials have not said how these new events will be scored, or what rules will govern troops' ability to choose between difference events.

Airmen will choose their events to fit the three required categories the service already uses: the single aerobic event, and two strength events.

"There will be an option to walk. Today, you'd only walk if you get a medical [waiver], but you'll have an option to walk as well," Kelly said during the chat.

The push-up component of the existing test may also be amended to feature a hand-release option, similar to what the Army adopted for its new combat fitness test. For abdominal strength, an airman can choose planking instead of the traditional sit-ups, Kelly said.

The service's existing but slightly tweaked PT test resumes tomorrow for airmen and Space Force guardians, and will not have the new options yet.

The current fitness test is gender- and age-normed. Airmen complete a timed 1.5-mile run, and try to do as many push-ups and sit-ups as possible in one-minute events.

In May, officials said they will start using a new scoring system July 1.

The Air Force has increased the maximum score for the sit-up and push-up events from 10 points to 20 points each after it stopped counting the results of the waist measurement, or tape test. The best possible score for the 1.5-mile run remains 60 points, meaning an airman could achieve 100 points on the test overall.

Scoring benchmarks remain the same: An "excellent" composite score is 90 points or higher, with all minimum components met. A satisfactory score is between 75 and 89.99 points. Anything below 75 is a failing score.

The service also created smaller age brackets for both men and women, according to the new scoring sheet. Previously, age groups spanned 10 years: under 30; 30 to 39; and so on. Now, age groups will be broken into five-year increments: under 25; 25 to 29; 30 to 34; and so on.

The new even options likely won't be available at bases until Jan. 2022, Kelly said.

The test will remain 100 points maximum, with 60 points for the aerobic portion, and 20 for each strength category, he said.

"When we release this and introduce the other components, we're going to have about a six-month break-in period, so people can test them out, can see, get feedback, but they won't be able to count those," he said. "We'll learn something. And if we have to make any adjustments, we'll make those adjustments."

He added, "And then when you get ready to test, you choose."

The service is still determining what it can do in place of the tape test to assess body fat.

Kelly said it's possible the tape test will resume on Oct. 1 if officials don't decide on an alternative option.

Last year, the service said it would not administer the tape test in order to adhere to social distancing protocols amid the pandemic. The test has long been unpopular among airmen, regarded by many as too subjective.

Months later, the Air Force decided not to bring back the tape test in favor of a new body composition measurement that has yet to be revealed. However, the service backtracked on axing the tape test altogether because of a mandatory requirement outlined in a Department of Defense instruction document.

Instead, the tape test will be used to determine whether an airman is in compliance with body composition standards, but the result won't be counted in the overall PT score.

"It's the law," Kelly said. "DoD requires us to do that."

The tape test may be removed from the overall PT test, and measured at a later date from an airman's PT assessment, he said.

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NAVY

26. CNO Gilday: Tight Budgets Require Balance Between Readiness, Modernization
U.S. Naval Institute News, June 30 (1943) | Mallory Shelbourne

While the Navy is focused on readiness to prevent the pitfalls of an overworked and untrained force, it must also manage the need for modernization with maintaining the current fleet, the service's top officer said today.

Asked about over tasking sailors and assets and its effects on retention, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday described a need for the service to adequately balance modernization with readiness and operating forward.

"I think that my priority is to field the best Navy we can every day. And also at the same time, I am making focused investments into the future in growing the Navy at a supportable rate. I do think that as we come out of this Global Posture Review that the SECDEF is leading, I think that's an opportunity to have an honest discussion based on the budget that we have right now, in terms of what we want to spend on current readiness because it is expensive. I do believe that you need and you want a Navy, a Marine Corps, a Coast Guard out there. We have to be forward to be relevant to matter," Gilday said during a virtual appearance at the WEST 2021 conference, cohosted by the U.S. Naval Institute and AFCEA.

"I think we need to take a deeper look at our day-to-day commitments and make sure that they're prioritized sufficiently with respect to not only what we're responsible for today, but our modernization for tomorrow," he added.

The CNO said his prioritization of training and readiness stems from lessons the service gleaned after the 2017 fatal ship collisions, including the consequences of prioritizing capacity over maintenance and training.

"Some of what we learned is investments that we made 10, 15 years ago came at a cost. And so, we invested in capacity – that is shipbuilding – at the expense of maintenance, at the expense of training, at the expense of sailors, numbers of sailors on ships, at the expense of munitions and magazines and supply parts in supply rooms," Gilday said.

"And I don't want to return to that. I don't want to return to that place because the cost was very, very high in this case with respect to the loss of life."

During the panel, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger noted that he is reducing the service's end strength to ensure all of the force is fully ready.

"We're not going to have a hollow force. None of the service chiefs are going to have a hollow force. So we're shrinking the force, we're contracting it to the size we can man at 100 percent," Berger said. "We can have

everybody trained. We can fill – there won't be holes in our force. So we're shrinking the size of the force so that it's sized to what we can afford."

In response to a question about turning down tasking, Berger emphasized that it's a hard undertaking for the Joint Chiefs to manage combatant commanders' requests.

"But in reality, the secretary of defense has to make hard decisions on where he's going to accept strategic risk. And that's our job I think to advise him and say – it's not saying no to a task. That's not the point. The point is being there's more tasks than we have forces and capabilities and capacity for, so where as a nation are we willing to accept what degree of risk," Berger said.

"And I think this secretary has clearly proven that he's willing and ready to make those kinds of decisions. And we're giving him the best advice we can give him," he added, referring to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

On Tuesday, the admiral who oversees the Navy's budget described readiness as one priority the service focused on in building the Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

"Clearly, the Marine Corps is divesting to invest." Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, the Navy's deputy assistant secretary for budget, said during a separate panel at WEST 2021. "The Navy is actually cutting forces to sustain what we have, so we don't have a hollow force."

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27. PACFLEET CO: Numbered Navy Fleets Don't Need to be Tied to Geography
U.S. Naval Institute News, June 30 (1939) | Sam LaGrone

The U.S. Navy's numbered fleets are by tradition tied to a specific geographical region, but that doesn't mean commanders in California can't command ships in the Western Pacific or any other part of the world, the new U.S. Pacific Fleet commander said on Wednesday.

The commanders of the Navy's numbered fleets bring more than just area expertise to operations, Adm. Sam Paparo said in an address during the WEST 2021 conference, cohosted by the U.S. Naval Institute and AFCEA.

"We have largely associated numbered fleets with geographic areas, but the power of the fleet, the power of a three-star fleet commander and that three-star fleet commander's staff is not in the geography or in the ships that they're in command of," he said.

"Every numbered fleet is a tactical three-star headquarters that can be deployed worldwide against any task."

While by doctrine the Navy can deploy numbered fleets without an eye to geography, existing international relationships for U.S. 5th Fleet in the Middle East, U.S. 6th Fleet in Europe and U.S. 7th Fleet in the Western Pacific keep those commanders actively engaged and unlikely to leave.

"You couldn't see us disconnecting 5th Fleet, 6th Fleet or 7th Fleet from their geographic areas because of the deep partnerships that they had formed, but for others such as 4th, such as 2nd, such as 3rd, those are up and ready rounds that can be deployed to the point of need," he said.

The Navy has experimented with using the 3rd Fleet command and control structure to operate forces in the Western Pacific – where 7th fleet particularly operates.

The "3rd Fleet Forward" concept, championed by former PACFLEET commander Adm. Scott Swift, had the staff in San Diego command units like a surface action group in the Western Pacific. The idea, USNI News understands, was to provide an additional command and control capacity for the Pacific Fleet commander in the event the 7th Fleet commander was tied up managing another conflict.

The concept was shelved when now U.S. Indo Pacific Command commander Adm. John Aquilino took command of PACFLEET from Swift in 2018.

"'Third Fleet Forward' was a concept designed to enable 3rd Fleet's maneuver force capability in order to aggregate and, when necessary, fight with the combined power of both numbered fleets in the Pacific Fleet," the command said in a press statement in 2018. "The term 'Third Fleet Forward' is no longer being used."

Following Paparo's remarks, a PACFLEET spokesperson told USNI News there was no plan to resurrect the 3rd Fleet Forward concept.

However, the Defense Department is still mulling creating a geographic command for the Indian Ocean.

The decision to stand up U.S. 1st Fleet, an initiative put forth by former Navy Secretary Kenneth Braithwaite, is tied up with the current global force posture review led by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

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MODERNIZATION & TECHNOLOGY

28. Space Development Agency celebrates launch of its first satellites
These are the Space Development Agency's first in-space experiments since it was established in 2019
SpaceNews Online, June 30 (1740) | Sandra Erwin

WASHINGTON -- The Defense Department's space agency on June 30 hailed the deployment of its first missions which flew to orbit on a SpaceX rideshare carrying 88 small satellites.

"Today's missions will provide real-world data that we can use to verify our engineering assumptions and space-qualify a significant emerging technology," Derek Tournear, director of the Space Development Agency said in a statement after SpaceX confirmed the agency's payloads successfully separated.

SDA's missions on Transporter-2, estimated to cost $21 million, include two pairs of satellites to demonstrate the performance of optical communications terminals in low Earth orbit, and one to demonstrate on-orbit data processing.

These are the agency's first in-space experiments since it was established in 2019. SDA plans to deploy a network of satellites in low Earth orbit for military communications and for missile defense. The first batch of satellites is scheduled to launch in late 2022.

Optical communications between satellites, from satellites to aircraft in flight and to the ground is a key technology SDA wants to use in its constellations. "SDA is relying on optical communications terminals to get massive amounts of data off of sensors and into warfighters' hands faster than has ever been possible," said Tournear.

One of the missions, called Mandrake 2, was supposed to launch in January on the Transporter-1 rideshare but the satellites were damaged during processing. This is a joint SDA, DARPA and Air Force Research Laboratory mission to evaluate the pointing, acquisition and tracking algorithms that allow optical terminals to establish and maintain high-speed communication links.

Mandrake 2 will help characterize data transfer rates and optical link performance between space vehicles in LEO and from space to ground. After separation from the launch vehicle, the pair of Mandrake 2 satellites will gradually drift apart on orbit, allowing for tests at ranges up to 2,400 kilometers.

The other optical communications demonstration — called Laser Interconnect Networking Communications System (LINCS) — uses two satellites equipped with optical terminals. The satellites and terminals were supplied by General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems. This mission will test in-space communication and also attempt

to demonstrate space-to-air optical links between a satellite and a specially developed optical communications pod on an MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle.

"Optical links between space, air, and ground assets offer significantly higher data rates and lower latency when compared to conventional radio frequency links," Tournear said. Another benefit of optical links is that they are more difficult to detect and disrupt than traditional communication links.

SDA's fifth payload on Transporter-2 is the Prototype On-orbit Experimental Testbed (POET), which rode on a commercial satellite built by Loft Orbital called YAM-3, short for "Yet Another Mission."

The agency said POET will demonstrate the integration of data from multiple sources on a computer aboard the satellite, known as an "edge processor." The payload's software suite was developed by Scientific Systems Company Inc.

Peraton, a systems engineering contractor, helped SDA procure the rideshare slots on Transporter-2 and integrate the LINCS satellites in the launch vehicle.

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OBITUARY

29. Donald H. Rumsfeld, Ex-Defense Secretary, Dies at 88
Mr. Rumsfeld, who served four presidents, oversaw a war that many said should never have been fought. But he said the removal of Saddam Hussein had 'created a more stable and secure world'
New York Times, July 1 (0300), Pg. A1 | Robert D. McFadden

Donald H. Rumsfeld, the secretary of defense for Presidents Gerald R. Ford and George W. Bush, who presided over America's Cold War strategies in the 1970s and, in the new world of terrorism decades later, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, died on Tuesday at his home in Taos, N.M. He was 88.

The cause was multiple myeloma, said Keith Urbahn, a spokesman for the family.

Encores are hardly rare in Washington, but Mr. Rumsfeld had the distinction of being the only defense chief to serve two nonconsecutive terms: 1975 to 1977 under President Ford, and 2001 to 2006 under President Bush. He was also the youngest, at 43, and the oldest, at 74, to hold the post -- first in an era of Soviet-American nuclear perils, then in an age of subtler menace by terrorists and rogue states.

A staunch ally of former Vice President Dick Cheney, who had been his protégé and friend for years, Mr. Rumsfeld was a combative infighter who seemed to relish conflicts as he challenged cabinet rivals, members of

Congress and military orthodoxies. And he was widely regarded in his second tour as the most powerful defense secretary since Robert S. McNamara during the Vietnam War.

Like his counterpart of long ago, Mr. Rumsfeld in Iraq waged a costly and divisive war that ultimately destroyed his political life and outlived his tenure by many years. But unlike McNamara, who offered mea culpas in a 2003 documentary, "The Fog of War," Mr. Rumsfeld acknowledged no serious failings and warned in a farewell valedictory at the Pentagon that quitting Iraq would be a terrible mistake, even though the war, the country learned, had been based on a false premise -- that Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader, had been harboring weapons of mass destruction.

"A conclusion by our enemies that the United States lacks the will or the resolve to carry out our missions that demand sacrifice and demand patience is every bit as dangerous as an imbalance of conventional military power," he said. "It may well be comforting to some to consider graceful exits from the agonies and, indeed, the ugliness of combat. But the enemy thinks differently."

In his 2011 memoir, "Known and Unknown," Mr. Rumsfeld, more than four years out of office, still expressed no regrets over the decision to invade Iraq, which had cost the United States $700 billion and 4,400 American lives, insisting that the removal of President Hussein had justified the effort. "Ridding the region of Saddam's brutal regime has created a more stable and secure world," he wrote.

He sidestepped the issue of whether the Iraq war had diverted resources from the conflict in Afghanistan, leading to a Taliban resurgence there after the United States had invaded the country for harboring terrorists involved in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. "It was precisely during the toughest period in the Iraq war that Afghanistan, with coalition help, took some of its most promising steps toward a free and better future," he declared.

Positions of Power

Mr. Rumsfeld had been an athlete at Princeton and a Navy fighter pilot after the Korean War, and when he got to Washington in 1957 he seemed like an All-American who had stepped off the Wheaties box -- a strikingly handsome Midwesterner radiating confidence, taking on big tasks and doing everything well. He worked for a couple of congressmen, then was elected to four terms in the House of Representatives himself.

He worked for four presidents in a succession of personal triumphs, migrating from Capitol Hill to the Nixon administration's Office of Economic Opportunity, to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as ambassador, and into the Ford White House as chief of staff. Between Pentagon stints, he was President Ronald Reagan's special envoy to the Middle East and made fortunes as an executive with pharmaceutical, electronics and biotechnology companies.

As President Bush's defense secretary, Mr. Rumsfeld had hoped to modernize an antiquated military establishment by cutting the bloated Pentagon bureaucracy, streamlining weapons systems, developing a missile

defense shield and creating smaller, more mobile and lethal forces that could move swiftly around the globe to put down regional flare-ups in the new century.

But his innovative plans were all but forgotten on the morning of 9/11, when terrorists crashed hijacked jetliners into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and into the Pentagon, killing nearly 3,000 people. (A fourth plane went down in a field in Pennsylvania after passengers had tried to regain control.)

Mr. Rumsfeld was in his Pentagon office that day as the building shook and collapsed on one side. As 20,000 military and civilian employees were evacuated, he helped carry the wounded into ambulances. Through the day, as Mr. Bush was shuttled from a Florida school visit to secure locales in Louisiana and Nebraska and Mr. Cheney took charge at the White House, Mr. Rumsfeld, in a Pentagon bunker, conveyed orders to safeguard national leaders, activate defense measures across the country and place American forces on alert around the world.

That evening he held a televised news conference. "The United States government is functioning in the face of this terrible act," Mr. Rumsfeld said, and he announced that the Pentagon would be open for business in the morning.

As Americans woke to a perilous new era, Mr. Bush declared war on terrorism, and Mr. Rumsfeld became chief executor of the strategic plans. In October, American forces invaded Afghanistan to suppress a fanatical Taliban regime that had sheltered terrorists and imposed a brutal theocracy on the Afghan people, and to hunt for Osama bin Laden, who had masterminded the Sept. 11 attacks.

And in 2003, with Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney insisting that President Hussein was allied with Al Qaeda, that he was harboring weapons of mass destruction and that he would soon threaten the world, Mr. Rumsfeld deployed forces in Iraq for a pre-emptive strike. Baghdad fell in three weeks, and Iraqi military resistance quickly faded. But the short war gave way to a long struggle against internecine fighting and a resolute insurgency. Saddam Hussein was captured and executed, but no weapons of mass destruction were ever found.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, the defense secretary had argued for the minimal force levels needed to achieve victories, an idea codified as the Rumsfeld Doctrine. But critics said that he had no viable plan for the postwar era in either country, and that his determination to strike in Iraq with a light, fast force had crippled the military's postwar ability to restore order and contain the sectarian violence and a widening insurgency.

Mr. Rumsfeld contested that idea in his memoir. "Too many troops could hurt our ability to win Iraqi confidence," he wrote, "and it could translate into more casualties, because more troops would mean more targets for our enemies."

Coming Under Attack

Over the next three years, as casualties mounted and the American public grew restive, the sectarian violence brought Iraq to the brink of civil war. There was even talk of an unthinkable defeat for the Americans.

Mr. Rumsfeld, who briefed Mr. Bush daily and was his chief spokesman on the war, came to embody what critics called the administration's misjudgments and arrogance in a war gone wrong. He was accused of refusing to admit mistakes or change direction, of being slow to adopt counterinsurgency tactics, and of relying on a closed circle of hawkish advisers, including Paul D. Wolfowitz and Douglas J. Feith.

While it was not up to Mr. Rumsfeld to fix troop strengths in Iraq, he was often blamed for keeping insufficient forces on the ground. And beyond his conduct of the war, many critics, including human rights groups and a bipartisan Senate committee, said he should face criminal charges for decisions that had led to the abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison, near Baghdad, and at the Guantánamo Bay detention camp in Cuba.

Mr. Rumsfeld, in his memoir, blamed "a small group of prison guards who ran amok in the absence of adequate supervision" for the Abu Ghraib abuse and said he regretted not having resigned in the wake of the scandal. He said that he had twice offered to quit, but that Mr. Bush had turned him down. He also portrayed his department as a reluctant jailer at Guantánamo Bay, and said that the interrogation techniques he had authorized were less extreme than some used by the C.I.A.

As the midterm elections of 2006 approached, with the war in its fourth year and public frustration at a pitch, Mr. Bush prepared to discard Mr. Rumsfeld, who had become a lightning rod for criticism of the war. Mr. Rumsfeld drafted an 11th-hour memo acknowledging that the Iraq strategy was not working and calling for a major course correction.

But it was too late. The chorus calling for his dismissal included the voices of many Republicans and senior military officials and, reportedly, that of the first lady, Laura Bush. The president publicly expressed his unconditional support, but after the Democrats won control of Congress, he announced Mr. Rumsfeld's resignation and named Robert M. Gates, a former director of central intelligence, as his successor.

In retrospect, military experts gave Mr. Rumsfeld high marks for his first term in the Pentagon, and for trying to modernize the military in his second. But they faulted his handling of the Iraq war, held him to account for the mistreatment of prisoners, and said he had alienated colleagues and the public with his imperious style.

He was defiant to the last, however. "I have benefited greatly from the criticism," he said, invoking Winston Churchill on the day he resigned, "and at no time have I suffered from the lack thereof."

In a statement released on Wednesday, former President Bush said he mourned "an exemplary public servant and a very good man."

"On the morning of September 11, 2001," he wrote, "Donald Rumsfeld ran to the fire at the Pentagon to assist the wounded and ensure the safety of survivors. For the next five years, he was in steady service as a wartime secretary of defense -- a duty he carried out with strength, skill, and honor."

A Son of Illinois

Donald Henry Rumsfeld was born in Evanston, Ill., a suburb of Chicago, on July 9, 1932, to George and Jeanette (Huster) Rumsfeld. His parents were successful real estate agents, and in 1937 the family moved to nearby Winnetka, where Donald and his sister, Joan, attended both private and public schools.

He was an excellent student and became an Eagle Scout and an athlete. After graduating from New Trier High School in 1950, he attended Princeton on scholarships, majored in political science, was captain of the wrestling and football teams and graduated in 1954.

That year he married his high school sweetheart, Joyce Pierson. She survives him, as do their three children, Valerie Richard, Marcy Rumsfeld and Nicholas Rumsfeld; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. Mr. Rumsfeld had homes in Washington and St. Michaels, Md., in addition to his ranch in Taos.

Mr. Rumsfeld joined the Navy in 1954 and became a jet fighter pilot and flight instructor. He left active service as a lieutenant (junior grade) in 1957, though he continued to fly and take administrative assignments in the Naval Reserve for many years.

He went to Washington in 1957 and for a few years was an aide to two Republican congressmen, David Dennison of Ohio and Robert Griffin of Michigan. The experience whetted his appetite for politics. After working briefly as a banker, Mr. Rumsfeld, at 30, won a seat in Congress as a Republican in 1962, representing an affluent district north of Chicago.

In the House he backed Representative Gerald R. Ford's successful bid for the Republican leadership and compiled a generally conservative voting record, opposing the social programs of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson and taking a hard line on Cuba's dictator, Fidel Castro. But he also voted for the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and for freedom of information laws. He easily won re-election in 1964, 1966 and 1968.

In 1968, he was Richard M. Nixon's floor manager at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach and campaigned energetically in his successful race against Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey.

Impressed with his performance, President Nixon in 1969 asked Mr. Rumsfeld to run the Office of Economic Opportunity, the federal antipoverty agency. Mr. Rumsfeld quit his House seat to accept the post.

The appointment alarmed critics. Mr. Rumsfeld had opposed the agency's creation, as well as food stamps and Medicare. He did not dismantle the agency, as some had feared, but he pared it down sharply.

Mr. Rumsfeld became known as a tough administrator who slashed costs and personnel in social programs, and as an aggressive bureaucratic infighter who made enemies but got things done. In 1971 and 1972, he ran President Nixon's Cost of Living Council, administering wage and price controls. He also joined the inner circle of Nixon advisers, including his chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, and his domestic adviser, John D. Ehrlichman.

But as the Watergate scandal began to disrupt the White House in 1973, Mr. Rumsfeld was named ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He was thus in Brussels when Nixon and many of his top aides were forced to resign. After Vice President Ford assumed the presidency in 1974, Mr. Rumsfeld was called back to the White House as his chief of staff. He soon installed his own aides and a staff system that diminished the influence of others.

Memos Like Snowflakes

When Ford named him defense secretary in 1975, Mr. Rumsfeld faced formidable problems. The Vietnam War had ended, and an all-volunteer force was in its infancy. Troop morale was low, drug scandals and racial tensions were rife, and his predecessor, James R. Schlesinger, had been fired, partly for clashing with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and others.

Although Mr. Rumsfeld was steeped in Washington's wiles, he knew little about the Pentagon. But he learned fast and tried to fit into the macho military world by demonstrating his one-handed push-ups and his prowess on a squash court. His memos -- a hallmark of Rumsfeld communications in government and the private sector for years -- began drifting down on the Pentagon and came to be known as snowflakes.

Publicly warning of "adverse trends" -- meaning Soviet strengths and American weaknesses -- Mr. Rumsfeld called for buildups of conventional and strategic forces, budget increases and the development of cruise missiles, B-1 bombers, F-16 fighters and other weapons systems. It was an ambitious program for what proved to be a limited term.

President Ford's defeat by Jimmy Carter in the 1976 presidential election cut Mr. Rumsfeld's tenure to just 14 months, too short for sweeping initiatives. But he made a strong impression as an able steward of the Pentagon bureaucracy; he even once managed to outmaneuver Mr. Kissinger spectacularly by withdrawing Pentagon support for an arms control agreement that Mr. Kissinger was on the verge of completing in Moscow in 1976.

The move killed SALT II negotiations for the remainder of the Ford administration, depriving the president of a major foreign policy coup. Nevertheless, Ford in 1977 awarded Mr. Rumsfeld the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

Leaving government for the first time in 15 years, Mr. Rumsfeld became president and chief executive of G.D. Searle & Company, the pharmaceutical maker, which was struggling. He turned the company around by cutting

costs, selling subsidiaries and developing the artificial sweetener NutraSweet, which made billions after its approval by the Food and Drug Administration. In 1985, the company was sold to Monsanto, a move that made Mr. Rumsfeld wealthy.

On leave from Searle for six months in 1983 and 1984, Mr. Rumsfeld was President Reagan's special envoy to the Middle East. He became a conduit for extending American intelligence and military aid to Iraq, then at war with neighboring Iran. American support for Iraq's dictatorship and Mr. Rumsfeld's meetings with President Hussein were not particularly controversial at a time of mounting concern over the expansion of Iran's Islamic revolution.

Having flirted with political races from time to time, Mr. Rumsfeld explored runs for the United States Senate in 1986 and for the Republican presidential nomination in 1988 and 1996, but did not pursue them. In 1996, he was the national campaign chairman for Senator Bob Dole, the Republican presidential nominee, who lost to the incumbent, Bill Clinton.

Making His Fortune

From 1990 to 1993, Mr. Rumsfeld was chairman and chief executive of the General Instrument Corporation, an electronics manufacturer that specialized in cable, satellite and ground-based broadcasting applications and pioneered the first all-digital high-definition television technology. Mr. Rumsfeld took the company public and made another fortune.

From 1997 to 2001, he was chairman of Gilead Sciences, the developer of Tamiflu, used in the treatment of bird flu. After he became defense secretary in 2001, he recused himself from any decisions involving Gilead, but his holdings in the company grew substantially when avian flu prompted widespread anxiety over a possible pandemic.

Over the years, questions were raised about Mr. Rumsfeld's work as a director of many corporations, including some defense contractors. But he denied any wrongdoing, and none was ever demonstrated.

His complex character -- he was a creative and dedicated reformer to admirers, a vain and egotistical bully to detractors -- was the subject of endless debate and analysis in public forums, newspaper and magazine articles, television documentaries and books.

Andrew Cockburn, in "Rumsfeld: His Rise, Fall and Catastrophic Legacy" (2007), called him an inveterate schemer who had tried to evade responsibility for disastrous failures.

Bradley Graham's "By His Own Rules: The Ambitions, Successes and Ultimate Failures of Donald Rumsfeld" (2009) drew a more nuanced portrait of a man of wisdom, ruthlessness and ambition, but concluded that Iraq had doomed his career and the lives of thousands.

On the day of Mr. Rumsfeld's resignation, Mr. Graham wrote, "the tally of U.S. troops who had died in the Iraq war had reached 2,939," the "number wounded in action had exceeded 22,000," and "countless others were mentally and emotionally traumatized from the nightmarish conflict."

In 2007, after leaving government service, Mr. Rumsfeld created the Rumsfeld Foundation to encourage public service with study fellowships and grants to support the growth of free political and economic systems abroad.

He was the subject of a documentary, "The Unknown Known" (2014), by the filmmaker Errol Morris, who interviewed him about his years of government service. The title, like that of Mr. Rumsfeld's memoir, "Known and Unknown," referred to his comment at a 2002 news conference in which he argued that a major Pentagon objective was to evaluate "unknown knowns" -- or "the things you think you know, that it turns out you did not."

--*Alex Traub contributed reporting*

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NOTABLE COMMENTARY

30. A Chinese buildup
Washington Post, July 1 (0115), Pg. A20 | Editorial

The report that China is building 100 or more silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach the United States marks a concerning waypoint in China's expansion and modernization of its nuclear forces. If missiles are deployed in the new silos, they would represent a blossoming arms race that is a serious challenge to the Biden administration, already facing competition from Beijing across many fronts. The new silos make more urgent the start of negotiations with China on strategic nuclear arms control.

Jeffrey Lewis and Decker Eveleth at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies have used commercial satellite images taken by Planet to discover the new silos spread across 700 square miles near Yumen in Gansu province, some 1,300 miles west of Beijing. China broke ground just this year on the new facilities and the pace of construction has been rapid. All told, if new silos elsewhere are added, China has more than 145 under construction. It now has 100 land-based ICBMs that are divided among a few dozen silos, with the rest on mobile launchers.

Not every new silo may house a missile. There could be an attempt to create a shell game to disguise the true location of China's missiles, not unlike the thinking behind proposed basing modes for the MX missile in the 1980s in the United States. But even if China only deploys missiles in some of the silos now, it could add to them later.

In recent years, China has expanded and modernized its conventional and nuclear missile forces, both shorter and longer range. These new silos appear to be intended for nuclear-armed missiles such as the DF-41, which, with a range of up to 9,300 miles, could easily reach targets in the United States. The Defense Department has estimated that China has an operational nuclear weapons stockpile in the low 200s, with plans to expand, and is pursuing a land-sea-air triad like those of the United States and Russia. Beijing, for many years, has insisted that it maintains a "minimum deterrent" of nuclear weapons, but the modernization efforts suggest it is reaching for the next level. Even so, its arsenal remains significantly smaller than those deployed by the United States and Russia.

In the past, China stored warheads for older silo-based missiles separately from the missiles. It eschewed the launch-ready alert posture of Washington and Moscow. But there are signs China is moving toward putting at least some portion of the missile force on launch-ready alert, deployed with warheads attached.

The answer to an arms race is arms control. If successful, it can slow the pace and bring needed verification. The administration has said it is committed to such talks with China. So far the regime of President Xi Jinping has shown little interest. But that is not a reason to give up. The signs of an accelerating competition are clear, and talks at the outset could encompass nuclear crisis management, new-generation weapons such as hypersonic gliders and anti-satellite weapons, as well as thorny older issues like missile defenses and nuclear testing.

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31. 'China Has Risen.' And It Is Hungry for Competition
New York Times, July 1 (0300), Pg. A22 | Farah Stockman

When the Soviet Union crumbled in the 1990s, Americans did a victory lap that lasted for decades. We saw it as the triumph of capitalism over communism, freedom over authoritarianism, democracy over one-party rule. We assumed that the game was over and that we had won. We had reached "the end of history." We thought that it was only a matter of time before China, which had already embraced some free-market reforms, transitioned to a system just like ours. Americans normalized trade with China and waited patiently for the "Chinese Gorbachev." If you're still out there waiting, don't hold your breath.

On July 1, the Chinese Communist Party celebrates its 100th birthday, under President Xi Jinping, a man who learned a very different lesson from the Soviet Union's demise. To him, the Soviet Union dissolved not because communism is doomed but because Soviet party officials had become corrupt and lost their convictions. One of the first pledges he made as party leader in 2013 was that he would never let that happen in China.

The great debate over which system is better hasn't faded away. In fact, it's gearing up for another round. But rather than see competition with China as a zero-sum game, the United States could embrace a way of competing that spurs us to make investments in our people that we should have been making all along.

Mr. Xi's Communist Party has ruled China since 1949 -- longer than any other surviving political party on earth, except for North Korea's. The Chinese Communist Party didn't just outlive its Soviet patrons. It has overseen an

economy far more vibrant and prosperous than the Soviet Union's. When Communists took over China, only about 20 percent of the country could read and write. Today 97 percent of Chinese adults are literate. Per capita G.D.P. grew to over $10,000 today, from less than $90 in 1960. China's economy looks poised to be bigger than the U.S. economy by 2028, a trend that has accelerated with the Covid-19 pandemic. China is investing in military strength, opening its first overseas military base, in Djibouti. But its economic power is even more formidable. China has quietly become the biggest lender in the world, surpassing the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund combined.

"It's no longer 'China is rising,'" said David Shambaugh, the author of several books on China, including a new one, "China's Leaders: From Mao to Now." "China has risen. It is here."

The arrival of China as a global power has caused heartburn in Washington. The Biden administration has made it clear that it sees China as the greatest geopolitical challenge of the 21st century. A few weeks ago, Democrats and Republicans overcame their hatred of each other long enough to pass the United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021, which boosts investment in research and higher education. And a recent NATO summit addressed China's "growing influence" as a challenge for the alliance. Talk like that has sparked fears of a new and terrible cold war.

That's understandable, since the growing rivalry has the potential to spiral out of control and cause unthinkable damage. But if it is managed correctly, the competition could actually be a good thing for the United States, for China and for the world.

President Biden may have said it best in 2012, when he told Mr. Xi, "As Americans, we welcome competition. It's part of our D.N.A., and it propels our citizens to rise to the challenge."

If there's one thing our capitalist country should know, it's that competition is healthy. Monopolies tend to produce laziness, distortions and flat-out extortion. This is true in economics, and it's true when it comes to geopolitical supremacy. Superpower status has allowed Americans to neglect the aspirations of the Global South while squandering blood and treasure in disastrous wars of choice in Afghanistan and Iraq. It lulled Americans into believing that capitalism and democracy are destiny for all mankind -- so obviously so that we don't even have to make a case for them anymore. It left us imagining that our country could run without investments in the education, civic learning or sense of common purpose that keep democracies healthy and strong.

Economic competition with China could provide a path to reviving what has always made America great. If looking over our shoulders at China makes Americans spend more money on scientific research and education, that's a good thing. If it makes us ensure that our supply chains are more resilient and that our economy isn't too dependent on any one source, all the better. If it produces public debate in the United States about how to boost our collective prosperity -- not just the profits of the few -- then hallelujah.

If China's Covid diplomacy pushes the United States to "become an arsenal of vaccines for other countries," as Mr. Biden promised, that's a win-win. And if, in an effort to counter China's $1.2 trillion Belt and Road plan to boost infrastructure around the world, Western countries start lending more money to developing countries at better interest rates, then African and Latin American countries might finally be able to get a fair shake.

"If it gets the U.S. out of our doldrums, we could achieve a lot of at least the liberal agenda in the country," Bruce Dickson, a political scientist at George Washington University who studies the Chinese Communist Party, told me. "In that sense, the competition of China could be a good thing. The problem is that it spills over into racist and nationalist rhetoric, and the military dimension is very real."

The irony is that as this rivalry heats up, China and the United States are grappling with similar problems: vast inequality, manufacturers leaving for lower-wage countries, environmental damage and the impossible dreams of a precarious middle class. We must keep the doors of communication open and work together where we can to address common challenges.

Perhaps one day this global rivalry will make Chinese leaders reflect more deeply on the true source of prosperity and innovation and open their system to a freer exchange of ideas. After all, the incredible success of the Communist Party comes not from its communism but from its ability to adapt the free market to China's situation.

China didn't gain global power status because of the policies of Mao Zedong, who abolished private property and waged an endless war against educated professionals. Those policies led to one of the worst famines in human history, an unending cycle of political purges and Red Guards killing one another.

In fact, China owes its success to the reforms that came after, instituted by Deng Xiaoping, who opened up the system to private ownership, public feedback and decisions based on results, not ideology. If the U.S. system swings between Democrats and Republicans, China's system swings between those who want to tighten control over the people and the economy and those who want to loosen it. Mr. Deng was a loosener who sought to learn from the best practices around the world.

Mr. Xi is a tightener who has clamped down on dissent, rolled back reforms and returned to one-man rule. Members of his wing of the party have mainly looked to other countries to figure out what not to do. They studied the "color revolutions" in former Soviet republics and the Arab Spring to figure out how to avoid similar fates. When they discovered that entrepreneurs tend to be on the side of revolution, they recruited the emerging capitalist class in China into the party. When they learned that the Soviet Union's economic isolation had been a weakness, they integrated into the global economy, becoming indispensable to the West.

In recent years, Mr. Xi has seemed to think there's nothing more to learn. After the 2008 financial crisis and the election of Donald Trump, Mr. Xi could be forgiven for seeing America's demise as a foregone conclusion. "The East is rising and the West is declining," he declared in March. I'm not so sure. As messy as American democracy

has been lately, I'd still bet on it over dictatorship. If we invest in ourselves, Americans have nothing to fear from competition.

-- Farah Stockman joined the Times editorial board in 2020. For four years, she was a reporter for The Times, covering politics, social movements and race. She previously worked at The Boston Globe, where she won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 2016

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32. Reforming a president's war powers
Washington Post, July 1 (0115), Pg. A20 | Editorial

The bombing strikes ordered by President Biden against Iran-backed militia groups in Iraq and Syria last Sunday gave more impetus to an ongoing discussion in Congress about the limits of presidential war-making powers. The White House said Mr. Biden was legally justified in ordering the mission under his constitutional authority as commander in chief, because he was responding to drone attacks on U.S. targets by the militias. That position was endorsed by some senior Democrats, but others warned that there was a risk that hostilities would escalate with Iran and its proxies without any authorization by Congress.

As it happens, this discussion erupted as the Senate considers legislation, passed by the House last month with a large bipartisan majority, that would repeal the authorization for military action in Iraq that Congress approved in 2002. Like the authorization for military force, or AUMF, passed the previous year allowing intervention against terrorist groups in Afghanistan, the Iraq legislation was intended for a distinct purpose - the ouster of Saddam Hussein - but has since been used to justify other operations, including the war against the Islamic State. After President Donald Trump cited the Iraq AUMF as a basis for the controversial 2020 U.S. airstrike that killed Iran's most important general, Qasem Soleimani, at the Baghdad airport, efforts to repeal it gained momentum; there was concern the Trump administration would use it to justify a larger conflict with Tehran.

The current bill has White House backing and is likely to pass out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee next month. But several Republican senators have raised concerns, asking that any vote be preceded by both public and classified hearings at which Biden administration officials explain "their legal analysis and their strategy to continue to protect the American people, our personnel and our allies and partners in the region." Following Sunday's airstrikes, Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), the senior GOP member of the Armed Services Committee, said they showed the need either to preserve the 2002 AUMF or replace it with legislation sanctioning action against the Iranian-backed militias.

Certainly, any offensive or sustained U.S. military action against Iran or its militias should have Congress's approval, but Mr. Biden clearly does not intend that. Other current operations in the Mideast, such as U.S. support for the Iraqi military, depend on bilateral agreements with governments. Meanwhile, the 2002 AUMF lingers as a relic that bears no relation to current security threats - and should not be used to justify action against them. Its repeal, along with two older AUMFs pertaining to the Middle East, would open the way to fresh legislation to replace that of 2001, which has been used to legalize military interventions continents away from Afghanistan, decades later. Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) has worked on such a framework for years; it would authorize existing operations in places such as Yemen and West Africa while requiring congressional approval for new missions and setting a time limit after which the authorizations would expire.

That larger reform, while badly needed, is likely to face steep obstacles in a polarized Congress. But the repeal of the 2002 Iraq AUMF would be a step toward restoring Congress's proper role in military affairs. Its proponents say they lack only a handful of Republican votes to overcome a potential filibuster; GOP senators who do not wish to hand Mr. Biden or future presidents a blank check in the Middle East should step forward.

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33. I was a Guantànamo prosecutor. It's time to shut it down
Washington Post, July 1 (0115), Pg. A19 | Omar Ashmawy

I was one of the prosecutors for the only two litigated U.S. military tribunals since Nuremberg. These were the trials of Salim Ahmed Hamdan and Ali Hamza al-Bahlul, who were among those detained at Guantànamo Bay Naval Base after the attacks of 9/11. While it's been 12 years since I served at Guantànamo, and the number of detainees has dropped dramatically, the realities that must be faced for trials to proceed haven't changed. Military tribunals are sometimes a necessary consequence of war, but to drag the judicial process out for this long - up to nearly 20 years - is absurd and un-American. It's an abandonment of our commitment to rule of law and what we consider to be fair jurisprudence.

My entire experience at Guantànamo was a rude awakening. I believed in the system after the first failed effort at prosecuting alleged terrorists was repaired in the Supreme Court case Hamdan v. Rumsfeld, where the court acknowledged the unconstitutionality of the process. I thought our pursuit of justice could be fair and impartial, and an example to the world. I was wrong. Everything I saw and experienced while serving in that assignment convinced me of that. Nothing I've observed since has changed my mind.

For years, leaders across the political, legal and humanitarian spectrum have called for the prison at Guantànamo to be closed. Thus far, the Biden administration has paid only lip service to that idea, except for clearing the potential release of three detainees who are still in custody. Without a comprehensive plan for trying the others - or, the more politically difficult alternative, releasing many of them without trial - closing the facility is impossible. Practically, this would mean coming to terms with the crimes the United States has committed: torture, extraordinary rendition and indefinite, illegal confinement - all of which are antithetical to our concepts of justice and international norms. Can you imagine the outrage if an American were snatched off the streets of

Cancún, Mexico, accused of crimes, tortured until they confessed and held for more than 10 years without trial? It would be an act of war.

Except for U.S. v. Hamdan and the case against Bahlul, we have been unable to successfully litigate a tribunal since Sept. 11, 2001. Two decades of failed efforts speak for itself - no tribunal held in Guantànamo after nearly 20 years of unlawful confinement could come to a conclusion that the legal or humanitarian community will accept. The recent ruling in U.S. v. Nashiri - saying a jury can't hear evidence derived from torture, but the same evidence can be introduced to bring an accused person to trial - is too little too late; it's a Band-Aid that only accentuates the failures of the process.

As an American, a former military officer and an attorney, I am disgusted by what I witnessed during the George W. Bush presidency and continued to observe over the next two administrations. A short list includes the lack of transparency; the fiscally irresponsible cost of maintaining the prison; the intelligence community's continued lack of cooperation; the palpable anti-Arab, anti-Muslim sentiment; and charging ex post facto crimes such as "material support for terrorism" that didn't exist before 9/11, in violation of the U.S. Constitution.

Legally, the answer is as simple as it is politically difficult. Of the original approximately 780 original detainees, 40 remain - almost all of whom have been detained for 15 years or more - and only seven are facing a military trial. Some prominent voices are calling for the immediate release of the 28 prisoners who have yet to be charged with any crime. That should be done, but it does not go far enough. We should bring the individuals who can be tried to the United States for prosecution in federal courts. Release the rest. Yes, there will be recidivism, but we must address that on the battlefield, not by continuing to abandon our judicial standards of right and wrong.

To those who fear bringing committed terrorists to prisons on U.S. territory: They are already here. To those who think civilian federal courts can't handle crimes of international terror: They already have - almost 1,000 cases of international terrorism have been prosecuted by the Justice Department since 9/11, with an 84 percent record of conviction.

Guantànamo was designed to bypass the Constitution and the U.S. criminal justice system. It failed because that idea is contrary to American principles. Putting it more bluntly: When it comes to our foreign enemies, we must kill them or arrest and try them for their crimes. Anything else is a setup for failure. If this administration is committed to ending the forever wars in the wake of 9/11, it cannot do so without closing one of the last vestiges of them. If we can bring home our troops from Afghanistan by September 2021, we can close Guantànamo by then as well. We must.

--The writer, staff director and chief counsel for the Office of Congressional Ethics, is a retired Air Force major who served as a war crimes prosecutor from 2007 to 2009

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34. Ending military sexual assault starts long before service members don uniform
USA Today Online, June 30 (2005) | Kelsey Baker

Combatting sexual violence in the military is becoming more paramount as time passes. Between 2018 and 2019, restricted reports of sexual assault (those that weren't investigated per the victims' wishes) went up by 17%, and formal reports by 10%, according to Pentagon data released last year.

In addition, military sexual assault harms female recruitment and retention. The Department of Defense's apparent inability to curb sexual violence threatens the most vulnerable – and, as more roles have opened to women, perhaps the most needed – military employees.

In April, the Army released the full investigation into the April 2020 disappearance and death of Spc. Vanessa Guillén. The story of her harassment and killing went viral last year, prompting protests over the way the military addresses issues of sexual assault and violence against women.

Accordingly, the I Am Vanessa Guillén Act was proposed last year. It allows for complaints about assault to be charged outside of the chain of command.

Just last week, Senate and House leaders combined last year's efforts with Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand's Military Justice Improvement Act to get around roadblocks to reform. The new hybrid bill, the Vanessa Guillén Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act, is in the House and is an end run around Senate shenanigans.

After years of being ignored, the idea of revamping military prosecution received support from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, who finally acknowledged that the ways the Department of Defense has been handling sexual assault cases haven't been working.

While the new hybrid bill is a sea change in how we tackle military justice, its potential to reduce sexual violence is limited. It won't stop sexual violence in the military because it only enhances accountability among adults and takes power away from generals acting as "convening authorities."

To prevent military sexual assault and harassment, we have to start earlier.

I served in the Marine Corps for six years. While my primary job was being a logistics officer, I also served as a sexual assault uniformed victim advocate. I educated Marines of all ranks on sexual consent, examples of assault and harassment, how victims could respond to assault and victim blaming.

It's well known that education is the path to prevention. Fiscal year 2018 and 2019 sexual assault reports by the Pentagon acknowledged that education and awareness are the best weapons against sexual misconduct. One report included input from nearly 500 personnel who desired more education on "healthy relationships and consent."

But by the time troops enlist, it's already too late. Teaching at later ages requires unlearning on the pupils' part. By the time they're adults, people have had more experience with intimate relationships where boundary violations may have been normalized. Adults might also see more "gray areas," meaning they might have become accustomed to certain interpersonal encroachments being acceptable when they're not. Consent is a black-and-white issue.

As of June 1, only 18 states required K-12 sexual health education to even be "medically accurate." Only nine states require that ideas centering around consent be worked into the lesson, and 28 states require curricula to stress the importance of abstinence.

People ages 18 to 24 are already at a higher risk of being victimized, so it makes sense that colleges and the military would face real problems with sexual violence. People are most at risk once they've left high school and are starting their adult lives. Though it's worth noting that 1 in 3 female victims and 1 in 4 male victims were sexually assaulted between 11 and 17 years of age – and perpetrators of child sexual abuse can be children, too.

Congress can't mandate better sexual health education throughout all states, but they can use federal funding to motivate changes. And, critically, not enough states have meaningful curriculum on healthy romantic relationships – communication, conflict resolution and personal boundaries – perhaps because there's little inducement.

Waiting to teach these lessons to adults, even younger ones, misses a crucial opportunity. Children are actually better at absorbing these instructions. They lack biases. A study published in 2018 on college sexual assault shows that comprehensive high school sex education with consent and healthy relationships verbiage can be a good strategy for preventing college sexual assault.

But Congress knows this connection exists. In 2015, Sens. Tim Kaine, D-Va., and Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., introduced the Teach Safe Relationships Act, after Kaine met with college students who pushed for teaching consent and healthy relationships before college. What could have been a great prevention strategy was never passed.

Passing that bill for a program with concrete guidance centered around consent and healthy romantic relationships could have resulted in students getting critical information over the past six years.

Guillén's suspected killer, who was 20 when he allegedly beat her to death and later killed himself, would have been in high school in 2015 and possibly benefitted from those lessons. He was also accused of harassment.

If the solution to military sexual violence was training adults exclusively, then the money the Defense Department already spends on annual sexual assault and harassment training might have produced better results. From 2008 to 2018, the military spent almost $200 million on sexual assault violence education. And a DOD report on military sexual assault shows an increase in annual reporting, to more than 6,000 incidents in fiscal year 2019. That doesn't include the unknown number of incidents that go unreported, often because victims feel they won't be believed or supported, that they'll face retribution, or that they'll be blamed.

This doesn't mean the Department of Defense should abandon this training. The level of misconduct by troops shows that we need these modules.

But they're not enough. The additional help the Department of Defense needs must come from the elementary and secondary school systems – Congress can and should help with that. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi vowed last fall that Congress won't stop until "we have finally, fully ended this epidemic – in the military, in the workplace and in all places."

But until that K-12 education happens everywhere more troops will be harmed – getting us no closer to making military bases safer spaces.

--Kelsey Baker is a former Marine officer and military sexual assault victims advocate. She is now a freelance journalist

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35. What should the Biden administration do about far-right military figures?
Washington Post Online, June 30 (0622) | Paul Matzko

It sparked outrage when former national security adviser and retired Army Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn said that he favored a Myanmar-style military coup in the United States. The beneficiary of such a coup would be, presumably, Flynn's old boss, former president Donald Trump, who has been telling people that he expects to be restored to the White House in August. While these ideas are fantasies, voicing them is dangerous because they can prompt some followers to react with violence.

We learned as much on Jan. 6, when individuals who believed Trump's false claims about a stolen election stormed the Capitol. Of the insurrectionists criminally charged, 1 in 5 were veterans, some bearing prisoner restraints and body armor. One of them was retired Air Force Lt. Col. Larry Rendall Brock Jr., who saw "no distinction" between the outcome of the 2020 election, which he perceived as "a group of Americans seizing power and governing with complete disregard to the Constitution" and Chinese communists invading and doing the same thing. Brock's paranoia has been echoed by some active-duty military officers.

Yet, this is not the first time that the U.S. military has faced such a radicalization problem. Today's headlines about military service members, both current and former, flirting with extremism could be ripped right out of the

1960s, when newspapers and politics were filled with fears of conniving communists, fifth column anti-racists and counterrevolutionary rumblings. The 1960s even had its own set of radicalized former military generals. Long before Flynn, there was Army Major Gen. Edwin Walker.

Walker was a war hero, having led a commando unit at the Anzio beachhead during World War II. Later, he commanded the paratroopers sent to Little Rock in 1957 to protect the "Little Rock Nine" as they integrated Central High School. But by the early 1960s the general had become a politically polarizing and controversial figure. In 1961, Congress censured Walker for claiming that the Democratic Party and the Kennedy administration were filled with communist sympathizers. After his resignation, Walker became a cause celebre on the right, which portrayed him as a victim of creeping liberal authoritarianism.

After he resigned from the Army, Walker helped foment the riots at the University of Mississippi in 1962 when James Meredith — a fellow veteran — attempted to integrate the college. Walker went on the local airwaves and declared, "Now is the time to be heard! Thousands strong from every state in the union! Rally to the cause of freedom! The battle cry of the republic! … It's now or never!" A mob of white supremacists poured into town. When the smoke cleared, two people were dead and more than 300 injured.

In response, U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy had Walker arrested and charged with insurrection, a reasonable measure given the severity of the riot. However, the administration then went too far. The Justice Department claimed, with no substantiation, that "it held some doubt as to General Walker's competence to stand trial," and had him placed in isolation in a maximum-security ward at a federal medical center for a 90-day psychiatric evaluation. After protest from the ACLU and noted psychiatrist Thomas Szasz, the Justice Department freed Walker after five days.

This overreaction dramatically backfired. Instead of looking like someone who incompetently fomented a failed race riot — though he later protested that the riot was not his intent — Walker now looked even more like a brave victim of government authoritarianism than before. This left Walker, who had just finished a distant sixth in the Texas Democratic gubernatorial primary, considering a third-party run for president in 1964.

In 1963, the general began holding campaign-style rallies around the country with right-wing radio preacher Billy James Hargis. Walker and Hargis called their tour "Operation Midnight Ride," a reference to Paul Revere's warning during the Revolutionary War. They stoked fear among conservatives of imminent communist invasion; one if by Congress, two if by White House.

Liberal observers, by contrast, worried that Walker's anti-communist paranoia and revolutionary rhetoric presaged an attempt at a military coup. President John F. Kennedy even signed off on special access for a camera crew to film at the White House for the movie "Seven Days in May," in which a disaffected general — modeled partly after Walker — launches a coup to prevent a cowardly Congress from disarming America.

Concerns about a coup weren't outlandish. Walker's actions exposed a lack of respect for the law and, at a minimum, a tolerance for violence against Black Americans. Yet despite his provocative language, there is no indication that Walker — then under FBI surveillance — intended a potential coup in 1963.

But that wasn't clear to many Americans, including a disgruntled Marine veteran and communist sympathizer who believed that Walker would launch a fascistic coup and invade communist-controlled Cuba. On a warm night in April 1963, the Marine staked out Walker's Dallas home with a mail-order rifle, firing a shot as the general sat in his kitchen. Only a deflection from the window frame saved Walker from death instead of injury.

When the attempted assassin's wife questioned what right he had to try to kill the general, he allegedly replied, "Well, what would you say if somebody got rid of Hitler at the right time?" Seven months later, the man, Lee Harvey Oswald, used the same rifle to shoot and kill John F. Kennedy, retaliation for Kennedy's attempt to overthrow the Castro regime at the Bay of Pigs.

Ironically, Walker's political aspirations — boosted by the Kennedy administration's overreach — faltered after Kennedy's assassination. He was eventually replaced as the cigar-chomping, war hawk du jour in conservative circles by ex-Air Force Gen. Curtis LeMay, who would run as George Wallace's vice-presidential sidekick in 1968. The last time Walker landed on the national news radar, it was because of his arrest in 1974 for "public lewdness" after fondling an undercover police officer.

Today, the pathway to continued political relevance for ex-military generals is wider. Right-wing radio in the 1960s, although significant, pales next to the right-wing media ecosystem that exists today. Today there are dozens of Hargises, pundits and broadcasters willing to amplify the grievances of disgraced ex-service members. And while the anti-communist paranoia of the 1960s has waned, distrust in American institutions has exploded and inchoate fears about enemies within have metastasized.

This combination has produced a Republican Party and a right-wing media that thirsts for bombastic figures willing to deploy incendiary rhetoric in slash-and-burn political fights. It's a perfect fit for Flynn even after losing his position as Trump's national security adviser for failing to disclose that he was a paid foreign agent of the Turkish government and for lying to the FBI. Even after his latest comments, Flynn still remains a fixture on cable news, a mainstay of the Make America Great Again rally circuit and plugged into a highly profitable network of QAnon grifters. There is even buzz about a 2024 Flynn campaign for president.

Flynn is just one example of a dangerous erosion in the wall between the military and domestic politics. During last summer's Black Lives Matter demonstrations, Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) — a veteran — called for Trump to send troops to occupy urban America. And last month, 124 retired generals and admirals signed a letter that falsely called the "Democrat Congress and the Current Administration" a "tyrannical government."

People like Cotton and Flynn are going where even Walker dared not tread. Last December, Flynn even called on Trump to "temporarily suspend the Constitution," "silence the destructive media" and order an election revote under military supervision.

The likelihood of a military coup remains as slight today as it was in the 1960s, but the possibility of further, insurrectionary violence by current or former military personnel has never been higher. As Walker's post-military career demonstrated, high ranking, former officers like Flynn possess the power to inflame political tensions and foment mass violence. It can happen here, again.

Yet, as the case of Walker shows, overreacting to the problem of military radicalization with heavy-handed measures can backfire too. By committing Walker to an asylum, the Kennedy administration turned him into a martyr, boosting his political aspirations and creating further opportunity for reactionary action. The Biden administration therefore faces a tough balancing act; it can't afford to ignore the far-right radicalization of the military nor should it overreact and throw additional fuel on the fire.

--Paul Matzko is the author of "The Radio Right: How a Band of Broadcasters Took on the Federal Government and Built the Modern Conservative Movement" (Oxford University Press). He is an editor at the Cato Institute's Libertarianism.org

RETURN TO TOP

Resource Request

2091-RR-10521

State Mission TN #:	06-28-2021-001	EM Software TN #:	
Requesting Agency:	Texas Military Department	EMAC TN #:	2091-RR-10521

Resource Request

Mission Type/Source:	National Guard	Type/Status	State Active Duty
Mission Description:	Support listening and observation posts located along the Texas border region with Mexico. Specific locations will be determined by Texas Military Department point of contact in conjunction with the military border task force.		
Resource Description:	Up to 50 National Guard Personnel. See below equipment requirements for specific list of requirements. This support will be at no cost to the State of Texas.		
NIMS Type:			
Job Position Qualifications:			
Equipment Requirements	11x up-armored HMMWVs, 1x Wrecker, 1x Contact Truck, 5x CLS bags, 5x SINCGARS radios, 5x PAS-13 (Thermal optics), 10x PVS-14s (NVGs), 5x M22 binoculars, 5x Camo Nets, 1ea M4 Carbine, Each Soldier will bring at a minimum: 2 sets ACU/OCP, 1ea Patrol Cap, 2ea Boots, 1ea Kevlar/ACH helmet, 1ea IBA/IOTV, 3x M4 Magazine Pouches, 3x M17 Magazine Pouches, 1ea IFAK, 1ea Water Source, 1ea Eye Protection (clear and tinted lenses) 1ea Hearing Protection 1ea Gloves		

Deployment Dates (Including Travel Days)

Deployment Date	7/6/2021	Demobilization Date:	8/31/2021
Duty Length	57		

Deployment Details

Work Location / Facilities	Various location along the Texas/Mexico Border reg

Location / Facility Name			
Address 1			
Address 2			
City		Zip Code	
Working Conditions	Normal - Infrastructure & Support services operational		
Comments:			
Living Conditions	Normal - All amenities available		
Comments:			
Logistics Comments	Lodging arrangement will be coordinated by contacting Major [redacted] at [redacted]@mail.mil or by phone at		

Identify Health & Safety Concerns

	No Safety or Health Concerns have been Identified
	Immunizations or Vaccinations are suggested to deploy
	Environmental Hazards Exist
X	Personal Protection Equipment Needed
Safety Concerns / Remarks	High temperatures and heat indices are common in Texas counties along the Texas/Maxico border region.

Requesting State Resource Coordination Contact

First Name	[redacted]	Last Name	[redacted]
Title	Major	Agency	Texas Military Department
Phone 1	[redacted]	Mobile	
Email 1		Email 2	

Staging Area and Point of Contact

POC First Name	TMD POC will determine reporting location in conjunction with the military border Task Force	Last Name	
Phone 1		Phone 2	
Location/Facility Name			
Address 1			
Address 2			
City		Zip Code	

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 6:30 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Fwd: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC request
Attachments: 2091-RR-10521.pdf

EMAC as requested

From: "[redacted]@state.sd.us <mailto [redacted]@state.sd.us> >
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 2:48:01 PM
To: "NG SD SDARNG List J3 JOC" <ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil <mailto:ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil> >
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC request

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Hello,

Attached is the EMAC request from Texas.

Thank you,

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MXKDRS8 >

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[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 6:20 PM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: Re: TX Mission End of Day Update

Thank you.

Can you please send me a copy of the EMAC

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 30, 2021, at 6:47 PM, [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil> wrote:
>
> Good afternoon Gentlemen,
>
> A recap of the events today:
>
> Charter bus contract through Reading Bus Lines - 2 busses, waiting payment from SD OEM. Charter is scheduled to pick up Soldiers at 0700 8 July.
>
> Commercial line haul of rolling stock (11 HUMVVWs, 1 contact truck, 1 wrecker, 1 LMTV) through Global Tranz Trucking Company. SD OEM is coordinating directly with the company at this point. Anticipating resolution tomorrow or Friday at the latest.
>
> Contacts made with TF Salerno and several questions raised with conflicting information. Our state OEM EMAC coordinator has also encountered this. One person saying TX providing lodging and another saying SD paying for lodging. Same with vehicles for in and around while at motels to get food, eat, personal items etc. We had scheduled a sync meeting at 0700 in the morning with TX to de-conflict. TX moved the meeting to later in the day so they can de-conflict on their end prior to the sync.
>
> There was also a conflicting information on the familiarization/shooting of assigned weapons once on the ground in TX. Currently scrubbing our roster for any soldiers needing qualifications. This is an RFI to TX and would be part of the sync conversation with them. Could be a potential issue if TX does not support.
>
> Planning for 30 days boots on ground in TX
>
> FRAGORD 01 to 21-08 Published (Load Out Plan for SAD TX Response)
>
> Please communicate any concerns, thank you,
>
> [redacted]
>
> [redacted], Lt Col, SDANG
> Director of Military Support
> Deputy J3/7
> South Dakota National Guard
> Office: [redacted]
> DSN: [redacted]

> Cell: [redacted]
> Email: [redacted]@mail.mil
>
>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 4:28 PM
To: [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA); Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: RE: SWB Mission

Thanks Sir!

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 4:26 PM
To: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: SWB Mission

Gents here is the authority sited by the Gov's Press Sec, [redacted]

"The Governor has authority under SDCL 5-24-12 to accept a donation if she determines doing so is in the best interest of the State. The Governor has additional authority to accept donated funds for emergency management under SDCL 34-48A-36."

5-24-12. Acceptance of gifts to state--Actions for recovery.

Whenever any grant, devise, bequest, donation, or gift, or assignment of money, or chose in action, of any property, real or personal, is made to this state, the Governor shall receive the gift, the title thereto shall pass to the state, and the state may, if necessary, commence proceedings for the recovery of such property. However, if such gift is subject to any preexisting condition or contractual obligation, the Governor shall receive it only after determining that it is the best interest of the state to do so. A gift may be received subject to a preexisting condition or contractual obligation which it would be otherwise illegal to impose on state property if the property were already in the possession of the state.

Source: SDC 1939, § 55.1102; SL 1949, ch 216; SL 1977, ch 54, § 7; SL 1996, ch 46.

34-48A-36. Authority to accept federal moneys, services, or equipment--Conditions.

If the federal government, or any agency or officer thereof, or any person, firm, or corporation offers to the state or to any political subdivision thereof, services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds by way of gift, grant, or loan, for emergency management, the Governor or the political subdivision, acting through the Governor, or such political subdivision, acting through its executive officer or governing body, may accept such offer. Upon acceptance the Governor or executive officer or governing body of such political subdivision may authorize any officer of the state or of the political subdivision, as the case may be, to receive such services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds on behalf of the state or political subdivision, and subject to the terms of the offer and the rules and regulations, if any, of the agency making the offer.

Source: SL 1949, ch 236, § 11; SL 1951, ch 285, § 11; SDC Supp 1960, § 41.01C10 (2); SL 1977, ch 271, § 6; SL 1992, ch 236, § 12; SDCL § 33-15-25.

Thanks [redacted]

[redacted]
Assistant Deputy Secretary
State of South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota National Guard [redacted]

1. What is the proposed C2 structure for the SD Guardsmen while they are in proximity of the border?

SDARNG will report to the Texas National Guard and receive specific C2 information when we arrive next week.

2. Do you anticipate that they will have any interaction with the Guardsman who are performing duty on the SWB under 10 USC 12302 and NORTHCOM C2?

Interaction with T10 forces should not occur with SDARNG forces while in TX. However, T10 forces may coordinate with TX at a higher level.

3. What specific missions will the SDARNG be performing while on the SWB?

SDARNG will support Operation Lone Star and integrate forces into TF Salerno, of Operation Lone Star, which occupies up to 40 LP/OPs along the Rio Grande River IOT disrupt and report illegal activities conducted by transnational criminal organizations ISO The Texas Department of Public Safety.

4. Do you see private donations as a legally permissible basis for funding state active duty operations under SD state law?

SDARNG forces have been ordered to state active duty by Governor Noem. The general authority for Governor Noem to issue this order can be found in section 33-9-1 of the South Dakota Code. As you know the Governor of Texas has made the request for assistance, and other provisions of the South Dakota Code supplement the Governor's authority with respect to emergency responses or requests for assistance by other states. Further, pursuant to SDCL 5-24-12 the Governor has the authority to accept a donation if she determines that it is in the best interest of the State of South Dakota, and specifically she has the authority to accept donated funds for emergency management pursuant to SDCL 34-48A-36. Finally, SDCL 33-9-11 states: "In active service pursuant to 33-9-1 to 33-9-3, inclusive, the compensation and expenses of the National Guard and claims of the members thereof for injury or illness incurred in the line of duty, shall be paid out of any funds in the state treasury not otherwise appropriated." All expenses incurred will be presented and reimbursed by the South Dakota Department of Emergency Management for operational expenses incurred during Operation Lone Star.

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 4:05 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); Young, Charles Lee SES NG NG JA (USA); Wilz, Giselle M MG USARMY NG DNGBJS (USA)
Subject: NGB C2 Questionsv2.docx
Attachments: NGB C2 Questionsv2.docx

Attached, please find our response to the questions sent earlier today.

If you or the CNGB have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

V/r

Jeff

Sent from my iPhone

1. What is the proposed C2 structure for the SD Guardsmen while they are in proximity of the border?

SDARNG will report to the Texas National Guard and receive specific C2 information when we arrive next week.

2. Do you anticipate that they will have any interaction with the Guardsman who are performing duty on the SWB under 10 USC 12302 and NORTHCOM C2?

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4. Do you see private donations as a legally permissible basis for funding state active duty operations under SD state law?

SDARNG forces have been ordered to state active duty by Governor Noem. The general authority for Governor Noem to issue this order can be found in section 33-9-1 of the South Dakota Code. As you know the Governor of Texas has made the request for assistance, and other provisions of the South Dakota Code supplement the Governor's authority with respect to emergency responses or requests for assistance by other states. Further, pursuant to SDCL 5-24-12 the Governor has the authority to accept a donation if she determines that it is in the best interest of the State of South Dakota, and specifically she has the authority to accept donated funds for emergency management pursuant to SDCL 34-48A-36. Finally, SDCL 33-9-11 states: "In active service pursuant to 33-9-1 to 33-9-3, inclusive, the compensation and expenses of the National Guard and claims of the members thereof for injury or illness incurred in the line of duty, shall be paid out of any funds in the state treasury not otherwise appropriated." All expenses incurred will be presented and reimbursed by the South Dakota Department of Emergency Management for operational expenses incurred during Operation Lone Star.

[redacted] **LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)**

From: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 4:04 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: FW: Response to NGB
Attachments: NGB C2 Questionsv2.docx

Importance: High

Attached are the responses the TAG sent in.

Brig Gen Edwin A. VanDerWolde
Director, Joint Staff, SDNG
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702
Office Phone: 605-737-6010
Cell Phone: 605-321-7425

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 1:32 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Attachments: What is the proposed C2 structure for the SD Guardsmen while they.docx

[redacted], Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [redacted]
DSN: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

1. What is the proposed C2 structure for the SD Guardsmen while they are in proximity of the border?
    a. SD Guardsmen will be in a State Active Duty Status for the duration of the mission while in TX supporting the southwest border mission. They will not be in a T10 or T32 status.
    b. In TX, SD Guardsmen will be under parallel command where dual status command is taking place. In this case, SAD and T10 forces. SDARNG forces will be under command and control of the TX Governor.

2. Do you anticipate that they will have any interaction with the Guardsman who are performing duty on the SWB under 10 USC 12302 and NORTHCOM C2?
    a. No. Interaction with T10 forces should not occur with SDARNG forces while in TX. However, T10 forces may coordinate with TX at a higher level.

3. What specific missions will the SD Guardsman be performing while on the SWB?
    a. SDARNG will support Operation Lone Star and integrate forces into TF Salerno, of Operation Lone Star, which occupies up to 40 LP/OPs along the Rio Grande River IOT disrupt and report illegal activities conducted by transnational criminal organizations ISO The Texas Department of Public Safety.

4. Do you see private donations as a legally permissible basis for funding state active duty operations under SD state law?

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 11:14 AM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA); Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Cc: [redacted]; [redacted]
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC

[redacted] just emailed and said you were able to connect. Here is one updated I also shared with him.

FYI also on EMAC-

I also called EMAC and explained to [redacted], Program Director that the processes are all remaining the same and none of it In terms of donations etc should be their concern. We will put them on SAD like we always do etc. and use same processes and authorities.

She wondered about Fed resources being used for state active duty and I told her the NG understands their authorities under state active duty and basically again told her it wasn't their concern. I told her our TAG talking w Bureau leadership and told her the Bureau has no authority over SD SAD per the TAG.
I advised her the mission was no longer showing up in the system and that it needed to be reestablished for [redacted] to work. She said ok.

[redacted] will continue working the mission for NG to gather on the 6th and deploy Fri and Sat. EMAC should not be an issue now. Any questions please let me know.
Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 11:17 AM
To: Strong, Craig W BG USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG KSARNG (USA); [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG TXARNG (USA); [redacted] CIV NG NG GC (USA)
Subject: RE: PA Update 29 June 2021 (UNCLASSIFIED)
Signed By: [redacted]@mail.mil

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

BG Strong.....you are correct. The federal government generally cannot receive "gifts" as it would be an augmentation to federal funds. I'm being told that this donation is within state codified law. As you can imagine, the Governor and TAG are starting to field questions related to this SAD mission.

[redacted]

[redacted]
COL, NG
USPFO-SD

Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

Just because you can doesn't mean you should

-----Original Message-----
From: Strong, Craig W BG USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <craig.w.strong.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 11:02 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG KSARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG TXARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] CIV NG NG GC (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: RE: PA Update 29 June 2021 (UNCLASSIFIED)

Spot on since the last I knew the federal government generally cannot accept private donations. Not sure what SD law has to say about the state treasury receiving private donations.

CWS

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 11:22 AM
To: Strong, Craig W BG USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <craig.w.strong.mil@mail.mil>

Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG KSARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG TXARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] CIV NG NG GC (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: RE: PA Update 29 June 2021 (UNCLASSIFIED)

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

BG Strong.....I suspect you have heard that a billionaire has agreed to fund South Dakota's costs related to this mission. Not sure of how the state plans to handle the funds, but the check I receive for all expenses associated with this SAD requirement will be from the state of South Dakota payable to the US Treasury Misc Receipts Account.

[redacted]

[redacted]
COL, NG
USPFO-SD

Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

Just because you can doesn't mean you should

-----Original Message-----
From: Strong, Craig W BG USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <craig.w.strong.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 5:45 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG KSARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG TXARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] CIV NG NG GC (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: Re: PA Update 29 June 2021 (UNCLASSIFIED)

[redacted],

Thanks for the update. Appreciate your oversight of any federal equities involved in the mission.

Best,

CWS

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 29, 2021, at 1:33 PM, [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil> wrote:
>
> CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED
>
> BG Strong.....a quick update on South Dakota's participation in the Texas Border mission. All support will be in a SAD status. South Dakota has apparently agreed not to seek reimbursement from Texas for this SAD response. An EMAC however is still be worked between South Dakota EOM and the state of Texas. Current plan is to send a Task Force of volunteers (50PAX with weapons) with 11 LMTVs to conduct surveillance missions along the Texas/Mexico border. It's my understanding that South Dakota's Task Force will be under the C2 of the Texas National Guard. I was told that

Texas would be providing ammunition for the M4 and M9s. RSOI will commence on or about 6Jul21 with arrival in Texas on the 8th of July. South Dakota Army National Guard G3/G4 is working with their counterparts in Texas to answer a few RFIs, one of which is do we need to provide our own tactical vehicles. That's all I know of now. If anything changes I will provide an update.
>
> V/R
> [redacted]
>
> [redacted]
> COL, NG
> USPFO-SD
>
> Office: [redacted]
> Cell: [redacted]
> Email: [redacted]@mail.mil
>
> Just because you can doesn't mean you should
>
>
> -----Original Message-----
> From: [redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
> Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 5:00 AM
> To: Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA) <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
> Cc: [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
> Subject: PA Update 29 June 2021
>
> GEN Hokanson,
>
> Today in the Department of Defense, June 29, 2021
>
> * Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on her schedule.
>
> * Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.
>
> * Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.
>
> * Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.
>
> * Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson will host a media roundtable focused on Cyber Shield 2021 at 1130 a.m. EDT
>
> * Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, commander, U.S. Cyber Command, provides the keynote address at 11 a.m. EDT, and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.
>
> * Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander, U.S. Africa Command, participates in a panel on European and U.S. military engagement in Africa at 10:45 a.m. EDT at the CSIS tenth annual EU Defense Washington Forum. Register at csis.org.
>
> * Acting Chief Information Officer John Sherman testifies on cybersecurity posture and DoD digital modernization strategy at 4 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies and Information

Systems hearing on DoD information technology, cybersecurity and information assurance for FY2022, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.
>
>
> _____
>
>
> 1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) - Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border - By Jonathan Ellis
>
> Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis. In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14442
>
> RELATED STORY :
>
> SD, TX, AZ: KELO Land (Regional) - Gov. Noem sending National Guard members to Texas Border - By Mitch Klein
>
> https://ngpa.us/14443
>
>
> FULL STORY BELOW
>
>
> 2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) - Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar - By Associated Press
>
> The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar. The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14438
>
> RELATED STORY:
>
> NM: Air Force Magazine (National) - New Mexico RED HORSE Commander Dies at Al Udeid - By Brian W. Everstine
>
> https://ngpa.us/14440
>
>
> FULL STORY BELOW
>
>
> 3. MS: WLBT (Regional) - Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson - By C.J. LeMaster
>
> With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage. ... With two more homicides in the last twenty-

four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14444
>
>
> FULL STORY BELOW
>
>
> 4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) - The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina - By Zea Capistrano
>
> A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps. Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14445
>
>
> FULL STORY BELOW
>
>
> 5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) - State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine - By Kate Sweigart
>
> On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine. Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14446
>
>
> FULL STORY BELOW
>
>
> 6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) - PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard - By Staff Reports
>
> Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home. ... A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14434
>
>
> FULL STORY BELOW
>
>
> 7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) - National Guard remembers 2011 flood response - By Reporter

>
> The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.
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> https://ngpa.us/14435
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> FULL STORY BELOW
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> 8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) - Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service - By Abbie Shull
>
> While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard. ... Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.
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> https://ngpa.us/14441
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> FULL STORY BELOW
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> FULL STORIES:
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> 1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) - Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border - By Jonathan Ellis
>
> Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis.
>
> In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.
>
> "Tomorrow morning I'm officially announcing up to 50 National Guard troops to Texas to help secure our border," she said. "The Biden Administration has failed to keep America safe. We shouldn't be making our own communities vulnerable by sending police to fix Biden's border crisis."
>
> On June 10, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey sent a letter to other governors invoking the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a compact that allows states to get help from other states during a time of emergency. Abbott and Ducey are both Republicans.
>

> The letter warned other governors that while Texas and Arizona were "ground zero" for the crisis, other states would see spillover. It warned of increases in human trafficking and deadly drugs, including fentanyl.
>
> "Given the staggering number of violations now occurring in Texas and Arizona, additional manpower is needed from any state that can spare it," the letter said. "With your help, we can apprehend more of these perpetrators of state and federal crimes, before they can cause problems in your state."
>
> Besides law enforcement, the two states are searching for other law enforcement resources, including helicopters and drones.
>
> Once invoked, the compact affords out-of-state officers operating in Texas and Arizona with the same duties as domestic law enforcement personnel, including the power to make arrests.
>
> "Crucially," the letter said, "this will include the power to arrest migrants who illegally cross the border into our territory. Many of these crossings involved state-law crimes, such as criminal trespassing or smuggling of persons."
>
> Noem joins other Republican governors, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who have pledged dozens of additional law enforcement officers to help their counterparts in Texas and Arizona.
>
> Noem's Tweet did not specify which units the Guard soldiers would be drawn from.
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> https://ngpa.us/14442
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> 2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) - Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar - By Associated Press
>
> The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar.
>
> The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.
>
> The 55-year-old airman was providing support to military efforts against the Islamic State group of Iraq and Syria.
>
> Willis had been assigned as commander of the 210th Red Horse Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base.
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> https://ngpa.us/14438
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> 3. MS: WLBT (Regional) - Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson - By C.J. LeMaster
>
> With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage.

>
> When asked if the strategies already in place have had an impact, Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes shakes his head.
>
> "I don't see it working. But, you know, my suggestion has always been, let's get some sheriffs out here, where they see more police presence, or more law enforcement presence," Stokes said. "If that does not work, my suggestion then was to move toward the National Guard. Now I'm at that point now, because we can't keep waiting, cause people keep losing lives."
>
> With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.
>
> The most recent took place Monday morning, after a drive-by shooting led to 30-year-old Christopher Thomas losing control of his vehicle on Livingston Road.
>
> Thomas ended up smashing into a building, startling the owner, who had just arrived for the day.
>
> "I thought I had a break in. I look, I check my shop, I just, you know, no cars missing, no tubes missing. But the air conditioning wasn't working. So I went to the side of the building to see had anybody stole my air conditioner. Then I saw a car had jumped this ditch, came to Jackson Housing Authority and had landed on top of my AC unit and plowed inside of my building," said Ernest Stanton Sr., who owns Stanton Body Shop.
>
> Stanton saw firsthand Monday morning the violence that has gripped the Capital City for months on end.
>
> Thomas died shortly after crashing into the side of the structure.
>
> "Somebody's life is gone for nonsense, something that could have been worked out. And so if we don't find a solution as to how to work out differently than with others, they're gonna continue to happen like this," Stanton said. "I'm gonna fix the building, but I hate it for the young man. I hate it for the family. I've been here 25 years and they've been a good location and I don't regret being here. I love the area. But I hate the crime."
>
> Thomas' killing happened in Stokes' ward.
>
> Though Stokes and other council members already approved and appropriated half a million dollars to bring extra Hinds County deputies to Jackson months ago, it has yet to materialize because legal staff from the city, county and sheriff's department still haven't hammered out an agreement.
>
> "We cannot sit back, sit idly by and watch people keep dying in Jackson, Mississippi," Stokes said.
>
> The longtime councilman said the resolution to bring the National Guard will be on Tuesday's council meeting, but he's unsure how the vote will go.
>
> Tuesday's council meeting will be the first with newly-elected councilmembers Vernon Hartley and Brian Grizzell.
>
> When asked what the turning point would have to be for the city and police department to get tougher on crime, Stokes said the "right people" haven't been hurt yet.
>
> "As soon as the right people get hurt, all that will change. Right now, the majority of people getting hurt are poor and are Black. And it seems that no one cares but Kenny Stokes," he said. "You let the wrong person, somebody with some influence, get robbed or hurt, then all the money we put for jail space, all the money we put for sheriffs [deputies], that would be happening instantaneously."
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> https://ngpa.us/14444

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> 4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) - The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina - By Zea Capistrano
>
> A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps.
>
> Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.
>
> "But I've been a full-time chaplain since 2018," Boling told The Manila Bulletin in a virtual interview on Monday, June 28.
>
> Boling was promoted to the rank of colonel in March this year. Her promotion ceremony was held on May 11 - which coincided with her 57th birthday.
>
> "As a colonel, I'm the first Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) female colonel in the Hawaii Air National Guard. As a colonel, I'm also the first AAPI colonel chaplain for the US Air Force," Boling shared.
>
> Before 2018, while serving as a part-time chaplain, Boling also had a full-time job as a mental health supervisor for one of the biggest nonprofit agencies in Hawaii. This year, she will be relocating to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland for a four-year stat tour overseeing the welfare of 108,100 Guardsmen.
>
> Becoming a chaplain
>
> Boling earned her degree in customs administration at the Holy Cross of Davao College here in Davao City. While doing her internship with the Bureau of Customs in Cagayan de Oro City, Boling was also active in the church. This eventually led her to pursue vocational ministry.
>
> She finished her Master of Divinity at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City. She specialized in pastoral care and counseling.
>
> "To get that degree, I had to do an internship as a hospital chaplain," Boling said. Later on, she was accepted at the Makati Medical Center as a chaplain for her internship and in 1991, she applied and got accepted as a hospital chaplain in Hawaii.
>
> "My mind has always been for ministry, what I can do for the world, what I can do for other people."
>
> Turning points
>
> Boling said she never had any idea of military chaplaincy.
>
> "Wala gyud military sa among pamilya. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the PNP but that was it (There was no military member in our family. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the Philippine National Police, but that was it)," she said.
>

> Boling later met her husband, Jeff, who at that time was on active duty in the Air Force in Hawaii. Her husband invited her to serve as chaplain for the military, but Boling was hesitant.
>
> "I was not really thrilled about it because I really thought that military chaplains would carry guns just like any military, and I'm not big on guns," she said.
>
> Her Sunday school teacher, who was also the head of the chaplain at the wing, also invited her to become a military chaplain.
>
> But at that time, Boling said, she was still unsure since their only child, was only about two years old. "I really didn't want to have two militaries in the family," she said.
>
> However, it was the 9-11 bombing in 2001 which made her decide to enter the military.
>
> "Throughout that day I was shaking, and then I kept following the story and it really broke my heart. I was like these Airmen, these service members need someone to comfort them, to provide counseling, someone to pray with them," she said.
>
> After the incident, Boling's resolve to join the Guard became stronger. In April 2002, Boling swore in as first lieutenant.
>
> Boling said her deployment to Zamboanga in 2008 also paved the way for her to take on the full-time job as a military chaplain.
>
> "In 2008, I was sent to Zamboanga, I was there for about five or six months for the Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines through the Joint Special Operations Task Force. While there, apparently, I did an awesome job that the Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) here in Hawaii offered me a full-time job," she recalled.
>
> "I became their command chaplain, full time, for almost four years. From there, I had more opportunities to be on order" she said.
>
> Growing up in Mati City
>
> Boling grew up in Mati City as a child and fondly recalled treating her friends in the restaurant which their family owned. Boling's family were also active church members. She finished elementary at the Mati Central Elementary School.
>
> Before the pandemic hit, Boling was still able to visit her family in Mati City in February last year.
>
> "Prior to COVID, I usually go home once a year. I'm hoping to go back home before we went to D.C. but I don't think that's ever gonna happen because of COVID," she said.
>
> Currently, Boling said her focus now is to focus on her goal of doing what is best for the interest of the Corps.
>
> "How can I help the Airmen, how can I help the wing. We call it 54/90/108,100. I am responsible for 50 states and four territories, I am responsible for 90 wings, and the 108,100 - the guard members that I am responsible for," she said.
>
> "That's how big my responsibility is, so I really need God on my side," Boling added.
>
> Boling also had this to say to her fellow women: "Be the best version of you."
>
> "Don't worry about things that you have no control over. What is it that you are passionate about, follow that - which means, do your homework and be the best you can be at that job," she added.

>
> "Ako lang mag-isa and (I am the only one) Leah Botona Boling. Nobody else can be Leah Botona Boling. So, I need to be the best version of myself, otherwise, I will miss the opportunity of being who I am," she said.
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> 5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) - State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine - By Kate Sweigart
>
> On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine.
>
> Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.
>
> "All of our neighboring states are further along in the vaccination of their eligible population," Phillips-Hill said. "The administration's failed unilateral rollout of the vaccine has further demonstrated that its go-it-alone approach has not worked. The unanimous support of this legislation shows people on both sides of the aisle are frustrated and seeking to be part of the solution."
>
> According to the state Senate, the National Guard will operate under the Pa. Department of Health and Human Services to collect, secure, and transport doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. If requested, members who have the necessary training would also be able to administer the vaccine, as well.
>
> "The bill could help improve Pennsylvania's troubled roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine," the state Senate said in a release.
>
> Pennsylvania currently ranks 46th in the nation in terms of the percentage of distributed vaccines that have been administered.
>
> House Bill 326 would also allow for the creation of mass vaccination sites throughout Pennsylvania.
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> 6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) - PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard - By Staff Reports
>
> Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home.
>
> "The Idaho National Guard's support has been integral in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and aiding PHD in the reduction of the loss of life and the sustainment of our community's health," said Don Duffy, Health Services Administrator for PHD. "They have supported our COVID-19 response operations in the five northern

counties in a variety of initiatives. We truly could not have done this without their support and we will miss having them as part of our team."
>
> A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need. Specifically, the IDNG assisted with the following:
>
> * IDNG directly supported the COVID-19 vaccine operations and provided numerous operational functions such as: patient intake, quality control, vaccine loading, traffic control, and logistical support. Operations have been conducted 6 days a week resulting in over 39,000 vaccinations administered during their time in the community. Additionally, the Guard worked in conjunction with Panhandle Health District, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and numerous other agencies to support an international vaccination clinic for members of the Lower Kootenay Band of Canada at the US-Canadian border.
>
> * Soldiers coordinated with local partners to store, process, and deliver over 110,000 vaccinations in the five northern counties.
>
> * Numerous service members served at PHD's COVID-19 call center. They worked closely with Medical Reserve Corps and PHD staff to provide the community with a direct line of support to answer questions and address concerns.
>
> * The remainder of the assigned personnel supported PHD by providing operational planning, logistics planning and support, and National Guard administration.
>
> Due to the decrease in demand and the reduction in available staffing, PHD will be closing the mass vaccine clinics at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene and Rathdrum and the University of Idaho Agriculture Center in Sandpoint effective July 8. Anyone who would like to receive a COVID-19 vaccine can schedule an appointment at any of our office locations in Hayden, Sandpoint, St. Maries, Bonners Ferry, and Kellogg.
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> https://ngpa.us/14434
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> 7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) - National Guard remembers 2011 flood response - By Reporter
>
> The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.
>
> The North Dakota National Guard's 2011 flood response consisted of 67,264 personnel workdays, which surpassed the 54,341 recorded during the 2009 flood response. This record was broken November 2020 when the Guard's COVID-19 pandemic response surpassed that number, and is currently at 116,427 personnel days worked.
>
> "The remarkable support provided by the dedicated men and women of the North Dakota National Guard during the 2011 flood - as well as in 2009 and 2010 - was a critical component of the massive efforts to protect lives and property in Minot, Bismarck and beyond," said Gov. Doug Burgum, commander-in-chief of the North Dakota National Guard. "Whether it's flooding, pandemic or other disaster response, we can rely on our National Guard to be Always ready, Always there."
>

> "On this 10th anniversary of the historic flood that impacted Minot and surrounding communities, we remember the 4,100 homes that flooded, the more than 11,000 residents who were displaced and the hundreds of millions of dollars in damages sustained," Burgum continued. "And we honor the courage and resiliency of the residents, National Guard members, volunteers and leaders at the local, state and federal levels who fought the flood, picked up the pieces and worked together to secure permanent flood protection, including the more than $400 million committed by the State of North Dakota to the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection and $870 million for the Fargo-Moorhead Area Diversion projects."
>
> Eastern North Dakota missions
>
> Flood response in 2011 for the North Dakota National Guard came in two phases. Phase one began in eastern North Dakota and lasted about 32 days. It saw more than 600 citizen-soldiers and -airmen on duty in a single day. North Dakota Guardsmen assisted communities from Cass County, up through the Red River Valley, and west to Ward County and the Valley City and Lisbon areas.
>
> On April 5, 2011, Guard soldiers and airmen began assisting communities along the Red River, which included Pembina, Harwood, Drayton, Kindred, Fargo, north to Grand Forks and others. Within weeks, the National Guard support shifted attention to the Valley City area, where the local community reinforced levees, bracing for a second crest by the Sheyenne River. A reported 400,000 sandbags were transported by contractors and Guard members from Fargo to support this mission. At the end of the spring 2011 flood mission, nearly 9,800 individual personnel days were expended on flood suppression operations.
>
> "Flood fighting missions like those undertaken in 2011 are examples of how our great soldiers and airmen serve our communities when the need arises," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, N.D. adjutant general. "We are always appreciative of the tremendous support shown by our employers and families during state active duty and overseas deployments. This unyielding support allows us to concentrate on our jobs and successfully complete our missions at home and abroad."
>
> Central North Dakota missions
>
> Phase two of flood support began on May 23, 2011, with the North Dakota National Guard assuming missions in Ward County, with 30 Guardsmen conducting levee patrols in Minot and Burlington. The following week, response surged to nearly 200 soldiers and airmen, who provided presence patrols in evacuated neighborhoods, evacuation teams, levee patrols and construction, traffic control points, as well as quick reaction force teams ready to respond immediately to any flood-related requests.
>
> Minot-area flood support peaked at over 575 North Dakota National Guard personnel. As the situation stabilized, the National Guard drew down to 146 personnel by June 20, but severe flood conditions soon returned. As the waters of the Souris River Basin rose again, hundreds of additional Guard members returned to duty. On June 22, 2011, warning sirens in Minot sounded as water topped levees. Guard support grew to 870 soldiers and airmen by the end of June.
>
> In Minot, the Souris River, also known as the Mouse, crested on June 26 at 1,561.7 feet, exceeding the record crest set in 1881 by 3.7 feet.
>
> In Burleigh County, specifically in the Bismarck and Mandan areas, similar flood conditions were seen along the Missouri River when the upstream Garrison Dam, 75 miles to the north, released record volumes of water. At its peak, 150,000 cubic feet per second of water passed through the dam, surpassing the previous record release of 65,200 cubic feet per second in 1975. The Missouri River crested on July 1, 2011, at 19.25 feet. This was the highest level since Garrison Dam was built. The river stayed at flood stage until Aug. 18, 2011.
>
> Guard missions in this area began a day after Ward County operations, with the establishment of traffic control points on May 24, 2011. Missions included filling, transporting and distributing sandbags, aviation support, levee patrol and establishment of quick reaction force teams with heavy equipment for assisting with water breaches. The Guard also ran

civil-military assistance teams who went from house-to-house in flood-prone areas to provide literature on properly constructing flood protection.
>
> Other National Guard support missions during the 2011 flood support included ambulance teams, erecting temporary levees with Hesco barriers and TrapBags, purifying and distributing potable water, transport of flood-fighting supplies, operating Zodiac raft boats and running borrow pits to provide material for dike construction.
>
> The North Dakota National Guard's flood support missions ended on July 26, 2011.
> By the Numbers - 2011 Flood Response:
> (For the Red, Sheyenne, Souris and Missouri rivers) - 3,047 individual Guard soldiers and airmen on flood response duty for at least one day.
> - 114 calendar days of North Dakota National Guard on flood duty.
> - 67,264 personnel work days on flood response duty.
> - 169 aviation missions flown by North Dakota National Guard helicopters.
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> https://ngpa.us/14435
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> 8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) - Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service - By Abbie Shull
>
> While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard.
>
> "I didn't really have the intent to win and go on to compete for Miss Washington. I just thought it would be a fun experience," Hoyt said. "When I ended up winning, I didn't know how I would do this and serve in the guard. COVID hit and I was able to go to basic training and advanced individual training. It gave me time to manage everything."
>
> Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.
>
> Hoyt says she never imagined she would become a soldier, but serving in the National Guard has made it easier for her to pay for school. Hoyt participated in Washington's Running Start program which means she graduated from South Kitsap High School with both her high school diploma and an associate of arts degree from Olympic College in Bremerton.
>
> This fall, Hoyt will start classes at Washington State University where she's pursuing a degree in accounting while enrolled as part of the reserve officer training corps.
>
> "I stumbled my way into a recruiter's office and thought, 'Well, that sounds cool,'" Hoyt said. "I didn't know you could serve while going to school. I thought all military was active-duty."
>
> Hoyt is the first member of her family to serve in the military and says she was excited by the challenge. Now, she's planning a future as an officer in the Army.
>
> "I'm excited by the prospect of being part of something bigger than myself," Hoyt said. "How long I want to stay in, I can't stay. If I like it, I'll continue to make it a part of my career."
>

> On July 2 and 3, Hoyt will compete to serve as Miss Washington at the Little Creek Hotel and Casino in Shelton. She said there is more to the pageant world than most people think.
>
> To win the Miss Pierce County title, Hoyt went through a private interview in addition to the live pageant that includes an evening-wear presentation, an on-stage question and showcasing a talent.
>
> Hoyt has been competing in pageants since she was 12 years old. Over the years, her talent portion has evolved from playing the violin to acting and dramatic interpretation. Hoyt's talent for the Miss Washington pageant is a dramatic interpretation of "Our War" from "Visions of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War."
>
> "They're looking for depth in a title-holder. Right now our Miss Washington has just graduated from Brigham Young University, and she's going on to get her master's," Hoyt said. "Being a title holder isn't what you'd expect from your average soldier, either, so I'm excited to bring that diversity to the competition."
>
> As for her fellow soldiers, Hoyt said, there is a bit of healthy teasing but they're very supportive.
>
> "Other soldiers in the guard have full-time jobs and I have this," Hoyt said. "They're always like, 'OK, go wear your crown and come back tomorrow in your uniform.'"
>
> If crowned Miss Washington, Hoyt will win over $40,000 in scholarship money and go on to compete in the Miss USA pageant.
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> https://ngpa.us/14441
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>
> Very respectfully,
>
> [redacted]
> Media Operations Branch
> National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
> 111 S. George Mason Dr.
> Arlington, VA 22204
> Mobile: [redacted]
> Press Desk: [redacted]
>
>
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> CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED
> <PA Update 29 June 2021.pdf>
> <Defense Morning Clips 29 June 2021.pdf>

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 10:37 AM
To: [redacted]@state.sd.us)
Subject: For your Awareness

Are you tracking some push back from the National EMAC leadership? They seem to be questioning the donation piece. I tried to call [redacted], but couldn't catch him. I visited with [redacted] and she thought it had been forwarded up to your level and the Governor's attention.

I am also fielding some questions from some NGB Staff, but we are 100% clean on this and I am not concerned.

On a not as good of note, the below article is an example of what happens when people speak outside of their lane and over their paygrade. [redacted] is a former NG soldier who works part-time as our State Historian. Some of this was the twisting of his words and some is the fact that he is an 80 year old part-time state employee and he got led down a slippery slope.

https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-sd-state-wire-south-dakota-texas-c9461c65234434f91f749a92608d2287

I am going to be traveling to SF this afternoon, but feel free to call anytime.

Jeff

Jeffrey P. Marlette
Major General, SDNG
The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700
Cell: (605) 484-7777

LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Lair, Gregory W Brig Gen USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 7:55 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: PA Update 30 June 2021

Copy, thanks sir.

V/R,

Hook

GREGORY W. LAIR, Brig Gen

Assistant Adjutant General – Air

South Dakota Air National Guard

DSN: 798-7401 Comm: 605-988-5401

Personal iPhone: 605-929-8460

NIPR: gregory.lair@us.af.mil <mailto:gregory.lair@us.af.mil>

SIPR: gregory.w.lair.mil@mail.smil.mil <mailto:gregory.w.lair.mil@mail.smil.mil>

Sent with BlackBerry Work iPad
(www.blackberry.com <http://www.blackberry.com/>)

"IMPORTANT NOTE:

I have recently migrated to Cloud Hosted Enterprise Services. Please update your email address for me.

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Date: Wednesday, Jun 30, 2021, 08:53
To: LAIR, GREGORY W Brig Gen USAF ANG HQ SDANG/AAG <gregory.lair@us.af.mil <mailto:gregory.lair@us.af.mil> >
Subject: Re: PA Update 30 June 2021

Just Army at this point.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 30, 2021, at 7:11 AM, LAIR, GREGORY W Brig Gen USAF ANG HQ SDANG/AAG <gregory.lair@us.af.mil> wrote:

Copy Sir. Confirm this Army tasking only. My wife thought Air was mentioned on KELO this morning.

V/R,

Hook

GREGORY W. LAIR, Brig Gen

Assistant Adjutant General – Air

South Dakota Air National Guard

DSN: 798-7401 Comm: 605-988-5401

Personal iPhone: 605-929-8460

NIPR: gregory.lair@us.af.mil <mailto:gregory.lair@us.af.mil>

SIPR: gregory.w.lair.mil@mail.smil.mil <mailto:gregory.w.lair.mil@mail.smil.mil>

Sent with BlackBerry Work iPad
(www.blackberry.com <http://www.blackberry.com/>)

"IMPORTANT NOTE:

I have recently migrated to Cloud Hosted Enterprise Services. Please update your email address for me.

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Date: Wednesday, Jun 30, 2021, 07:04
To: Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil <mailto:michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil> >, [redacted] @ujs.state.sd.us <mailto [redacted] @ujs.state.sd.us> >, LAIR, GREGORY W Brig Gen USAF ANG HQ SDANG/AAG

<gregory.lair@us.af.mil <mailto:gregory.lair@us.af.mil> >, Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil <mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >, [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto[redacted]@mail.mil> >, [redacted] CSM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto:[redacted]@mail.mil> >, [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW SOUTH DAKOTA ANG HQ/NGSD-DOMS <[redacted]@us.af.mil <mailto [redacted]@us.af.mil> >, [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >

Subject: Re: PA Update 30 June 2021

Hit send to soon.

Everyone stay on your "A" game on this. People will be asking questions. Our position is we don't discuss the donation. We received a SAD Mission, just like every other. Our reimbursement comes from OEM (State $), just like it always does.

We don't comment on mission specifics, for security reasons. All requests for information get referred to our PAO.

Governor Noem will be doing a press release later today.

JPM

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 30, 2021, at 5:53 AM, Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> wrote:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Date: June 30, 2021 at 4:59:45 AM MDT
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: "[redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: PA Update 30 June 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, June 30, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III welcomes Her Excellency Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Minister of Defense to the Federal Republic of Germany, to the Pentagon in an enhanced honor cordon ceremony at 8 a.m. EDT.

- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael M. Gilday and Commandant of the Marine Corps David H. Berger participate in the keynote panel discussion at 11 a.m. EDT; Adm. Sam Paparo, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, provides the keynote address at 3:30 p.m. EDT; and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

- Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Douglas Bush; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition Frederick "Jay" Stefany; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Darlene Costello; Army Lt. Gen. Eric C. Peterson, deputy chief of staff, G-8, Department of the Army; Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Mark Wise, deputy commandant for Aviation, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and Read Adm. Andrew Loiselle, director, Air Warfare Division, N98, Department of the Navy, testify on Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force rotary wing aviation programs and planned modernization efforts in the fiscal 2022 budget request at 3 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces hearing on fiscal 2022 rotary wing aviation budget request, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX: Military.com (National) – Billionaire GOP Mega-Donor Funds National Guard Mission to US-Mexico Border – By Steve Beynon

The South Dakota National Guard is deploying on mission to the U.S. southern border. And the operation is being funded by a billionaire, not the government, Military.com has learned. Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

https://ngpa.us/14474

RELATED STORIES:

SD, TX: Newsweek (National) – Private Donation Will Send 50 South Dakota National Guard Troops to U.S.-Mexico Border – By Zoe Strozewski

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SD, TX, TN: Capital Journal (Local) – Tennessee donor foots the bill for SD National Guard deployment– By Jorge Encinas

https://ngpa.us/14469

AR, TX: KNWA (Regional) – Governor Hutchison authorizes 90-day deployment of up to 40 National Guard members to U.S./Mexico Border – By Gary Gilbert

https://ngpa.us/14473

SC, AZ, TX: WMBF (Regional) – S.C. congressmen thank Gov. McMaster for sending National Guard troops to U.S. border – By Staff Reports

https://ngpa.us/14475

FULL STORY BELOW

2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military. McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

https://ngpa.us/14476

FULL STORY BELOW

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https://ngpa.us/14477

FULL STORY BELOW

4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading. … The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

https://ngpa.us/14468

FULL STORY BELOW

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https://ngpa.us/14470

FULL STORY BELOW

6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

https://ngpa.us/14471

FULL STORY BELOW

7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity. Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown. … Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard. The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

https://ngpa.us/14472

FULL STORY BELOW

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Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

"The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide," South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, said in a statement Tuesday.

Roughly 50 guardsmen will deploy on the mission, according to a South Dakota Guard spokesman. However, the mission is still in its early planning stages. It's unclear where the troops will deploy on the border, which unit will be sent or what the mission will be.

The National Guard declined to comment for this story or answer questions about the practice of allowing private donors to fund missions. A query to the Pentagon about the mission did not receive a response.

Willis Johnson is the founder of Copart, an online vehicle auction service, and has amassed a $2.2 billion fortune, according to Forbes. He resigned as CEO of Copart in 2010, according to reporting from the Nashville Post.

He is a Republican mega-donor, donating at least $1.5 million to conservative causes, including $50,000 to the "Trump Victory" political action committee, according to reporting from Bloomberg.

Former President Donald Trump made border security a key part of his presidency, ordering the deployment of troops to the border in April 2018 under a mission known as Operation Faithful Patriot. One of President Joe Biden's first acts as president was to suspend Trump's emergency declaration at the border, halting some government funds. The Associated Press reported that Trump is expected to visit the border with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, later this week.

Ian Fury, a spokesman for Noem, wouldn't confirm if Willis Johnson runs the foundation. When Military.com reached Johnson via telephone, he wouldn't confirm his identity and declined to be interviewed.

However, tax forms including for the foundation and donation records for Johnson share the same address in Franklin, Tennessee.

"Governor Noem welcomes any such donations to help alleviate the cost to South Dakota taxpayers," Fury told Military.com. Fury declined to disclose how much of a donation was made to cover the mission, saying revealing that would be "a security risk."

https://ngpa.us/14474

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2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military.

McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

She remembers the pilots who guided her, who said the days of female combat exclusion were numbered. They turned around to speak to her from the front seat, and said McCandless could help usher in a new chapter for the military.

"They encouraged me, and they said, 'hey, someday it'll change,'" McCandless said. "They have daughters. And I think was an awakening moment for them to think, 'wow, my daughter could be completely able to do this, from a physical and a mental standpoint, but won't be able to for one reason.'"

McCandless, 51, now finds herself in another moment of U.S. military history – serving as the first female leader of the D.C National Guard.

Beginning April 25, 2021, McCandless oversaw the end of the D.C. Guard's security mission at the Capitol, at a time when the Guard's role in Washington was redefined, and may still change in the months ahead.

She serves as the D.C. Guard's interim commanding general, appointed to the role after her predecessor, Maj. Gen. William Walker, became the new Sergeant-at-Arms for the U.S. House of Representatives. Her fate now lies with President Joe Biden, who is expected to decide over the next few months if McCandless will fill the position permanently.

In her first interview since assuming the role, McCandless said the 2,700 soldiers and airmen under her command would not be put under immense strain if Congress decides to create a "strike force" of Guard members assisting U.S. Capitol Police. She affirmed one of her top priorities is to improve the speed and efficiency of communication with federal and District law enforcement, should another episode of insurrection threaten the heart of American democracy.

Yet her concerns are also focused on new outreach to the people of the District, expanding a program to instill leadership in teenagers who've dropped out of high school.

McCandless said she is also mindful of allowing Guard members adequate time to reconnect with families, following months of unprecedented service.

"We just have to make sure that we're constantly looking at evaluating balancing," McCandless said. "It's a constant evolution. We can never let rest on where we are."

A Possible U.S. Capitol Strike Force

Within a $1.9 billion Capitol security bill, passed by one vote in the House, Democratic lawmakers authored the creation of a quick-reacting force of National Guard members on U.S. Capitol grounds. The aim of the force would be to assist Capitol Police, should a scenario similar to the January 6 insurrection repeat once more.

Republican lawmakers oppose the measure, with Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) writing in a joint statement, "use of the uniformed military in D.C. and the Capitol Complex is subject to complex statutory restrictions, and for good reason."

"We cannot and should not militarize the security of the Capitol Complex."

While McCandless and the Guard take no position on the matter, leaving the decision to civilian lawmakers, the general said such a force would not strain the Guard's command structure, or its personnel.

"I think that the planning would need to take place, but I don't see any major changes required," McCandless said.

When asked if major shifts would be required to make such a force work, McCandless replied, "Not in my opinion."

McCandless stressed the D.C. Guard serves as a force of last resort, after law enforcement exhausted all its resources. Yet she affirmed under her command, the Guard would respond to a potential Capitol crisis with greater speed than what was seen in January.

"I'm on my 60th day [leading the D.C. Guard,]" McCandless said. "And I've spent a lot of those days connecting with my downtown partners. So, U.S. Capitol Police chief, U.S. Park Police chief, the mayor's office. I'm making sure that we are communicating, we know who each other are, and kind of where the National Guard in D.C. is at this time."

"I've been able to participate with some of our team at the Defense Department also, who has obviously been looking into and interested in those response times," she continued. "There's a great amount of learning and collaboration going on at this time to ensure that if and when we have our federal or District partners that require our assistance or the assistance of the National Guard, that we're in a better place."

Reaching out to the D.C. Community

McCandless is the granddaughter of an Iwo Jima Marine Corps veteran, who landed 45 minutes into the first wave of U.S. troops on the island. PFC Theodore Below helped raised McCandless, and instilled within the future D.C. Guard commander a sense of service which persists into the present.

"He actually still lives with me in my home in Washington, D.C.," McCandless said. "The foundation he built for me always provided a very clear sight picture for me about the criticality of service."

The arc of service could be seen in a hangar at Joint Base Andrews, when McCandless joined more than 30 D.C. teenagers for an up-close look at F-16 fighters.

The adolescents recently dropped out of high school, but are now back on the path to a diploma. They are enrolled in the D.C. Guard program, known as the "Capital Guardian Youth ChalleNGe Academy."

“In that 16 to 18-year-old range, as we all know, there are a lot of distractions and there’s a lot of competing priorities in their lives,” McCandless said. “And I think what we’re able to offer to them is a safe environment to go into, inspired by the military, but having no outcome to join the military.”

McCandless described the program neither as bootcamp, nor ROTC, but as a five-month full-time living experience on a D.C. Guard suburban campus in Laurel, Md.

“It allows them to re-engage in physical fitness activities, understanding how to balance a checkbook, understanding the criticality of their diet and how that feeds them and they basically learn skills that we think that will help them complete their education, join the workforce, and then come back into the D.C. community,” she said.

Online applications for the fall 2021 program are now open, with McCandless setting a goal to expand the academy’s enrollment and recognition as a force for change. Cadets are under no obligation to join the Guard upon completion of the program.

D.C. Guard Moving Forward

“We have an F-16 mission that’s getting ready to depart for the Middle East, and we also have National Guardsmen that have departed to go down to Guantánamo,” the general offered, describing ongoing operations after the U.S. Capitol mission. “We’re always constantly making sure we’re prepared for the overseas war fight – that’s the core mission of what we do. But we also have to maintain and train our readiness as almost a byproduct of that federal mission, to respond to natural disasters and manmade disasters inside the United States.”

McCandless described as the D.C. Guard moves forward, post-insurrection, her mission is to help its airmen and soldiers reconnect – first with their families, then with their civilian jobs balanced alongside National Guard duties.

“Simultaneously, the country is coming out of the pandemic. So there’s the desire for guardsmen to get out, socialize again,” she said.

“We’re also going to start working again on some of the basic military skills that they did not have the opportunity to train on while they were doing the Capitol mission.”

At an expansive moment for the Guard in the public consciousness, McCandless said she feels prepared to meet the expectations of the city and the nation. Once as a pilot in her 20’s who helped shape the face of the U.S. military, she now says she turns to the needs of the Guard in the nation’s capital, a new arena to engage in a commanding change.

“It’s really about the competency of the individuals and how they’ve been prepared through their lives to ascend to these roles,” McCandless said. “I’ve been trying to prepare myself all along for roles that the military may ask me to perform… And I’m excited that it’s now with the Guard where I call home.”

https://ngpa.us/14476

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3. MD: Fox Baltimore (Regional) – [Video] MD Air National Guard celebrates 100 years of service – By Staff Reports

The Maryland Air National Guard kicked off a celebration commemorating 100 years of service to the state.

It started in 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition.

Airmen have supported the state's pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

Members of the Air National Guard came to Annapolis after the riot at the Capitol and provided protection for state lawmakers.

https://ngpa.us/14477

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4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading.

The situation has alarmed experts and public officials, who warn that this year's fire season could outpace last year's, which was the worst on record. Blazes have already ignited around California, where dry vegetation has left large swaths of the state primed to explode into flames, even as the federal government struggles to hire firefighters.

"We're in as high risk of a starting condition as we could ever expect," said Noah Diffenbaugh, a Stanford University professor who studies climate change and wildfires.

The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

Western states are eager for Washington to step up its commitment after President Trump repeatedly blamed them – particularly California, which he said failed to "clean your forests" of combustible vegetation – for failing to prevent and stop wildfires.

The threat comes amid staffing shortages at the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, problems exacerbated by low pay, competition from state and local fire departments and exhaustion from last year's fire season.

More than a month after seasonal hiring would typically have ended, the federal government is still trying to fill vacant positions on hot shot crews, the most elite and experienced firefighting teams. Although these crews are venerated for leading the attack against the most difficult fires, some have had so many veteran firefighters quit that they've been downgraded to a lower-ranking status.

Nationally, fire management teams are having to compete with each other for crews and equipment much earlier in the season than in years past. On June 22, the National Interagency Fire Center, which coordinates fire response from Boise, Idaho, raised the national preparedness to level 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, saying it was the second earliest it had reached that point.

The shortages have filled crews on the fire lines with anxiety and led to louder calls for change.

"We're at a point where we're simply going to be overwhelmed year after year going forward given the current systems we have in place," said Jim Whittington, an expert in wildland fire response. "We really need to look at the way we staff and work wildland fires, the way we fund them, and the way we take care of our people. We need a full reset."

Along with calls for higher pay – a first-year Forest Service firefighter currently earns a base wage of $13.45 an hour – there are those like Whittington who believe firefighting needs to become a full-time job. Currently, the federal government fills its ranks each summer with thousands of seasonal firefighters who don't get health insurance and are laid off after about six months. Some of these workers struggle at the end of the season as months of stress take their toll.

"We also need better mental health support for wildland firefighters," Whittington said. "Too many face a crisis when they are laid off."

Biden said last week that he was surprised to learn that some federal firefighters earn so little.

"That's a ridiculously low salary," he said, banging his hand on a table in the Roosevelt Room in the White House during a meeting with emergency officials.

Ben Elkind, a smokejumper for the forest service and a member of Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, a group that advocates for better pay and working conditions for federal firefighters, said the problem has left critical positions empty.

"People risking their lives for our public safety deserve to be paid a living wage," he said.

https://ngpa.us/14468

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5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

Insomnia compelled Morgan Davis to seek refuge on a small backyard patio offering sanctuary from the downward spiral of her career in the Kansas Army National Guard.

On that November evening, the outdoor cocoon proved insufficient. Davis drove to a convenience store in Topeka where the mission was to slip in and out unrecognized, part of a concerted effort to adopt a lower-profile approach to living. As she exited the business, she bumped into a former Kansas Guard officer. Casual banter took a different tone by shifting to Davis' military status.

"I just started shaking," Davis said. "I can't think. I can't breathe. My mind just goes blank."

The fractured bones of Davis' 21-year Army career – reports, correspondence, testimony, photos, complaints, notes and emails – could fill boxes. The flesh of her military ordeal took shape during a review of those documents and through sporadic conversations and interviews beginning five years ago and intensifying after her retirement in 2020.

Davis said her life in uniform ended prematurely because of an unwillingness to look the other way at perceived wrongdoing in the Kansas Guard. She attempted to work within boundaries of the military system while filing reports or complaints ranging in subject from administrative corruption to sexual abuse to distortion of the promotion process. She raised alarms about personal issues as well as situations involving others in the Kansas Guard.

Substance of those allegations catapulted Davis into years of conflict with command staff that viewed complainants as irritating troublemakers ripe for expulsion.

Davis said her lonely campaign was aimed at bringing accountability and transparency to the insular Kansas Guard, especially actions of some high-ranking staff allied with then-Adjutant General Lee Tafanelli. For nine years, the general was responsible for training and readiness of 7,000 personnel in the Army and Air components of the Kansas Guard. He served as senior military adviser to Govs. Sam Brownback, Jeff Colyer and Laura Kelly before retiring in March 2020.

Davis' struggle evolved to emphasize self-defense as individuals within the Kansas Guard retaliated against her, she said. Her best asset was technical expertise in personnel policy and procedure acquired in service of the Kansas Guard. She said she proceeded under threat of reassignment to a lesser position, loss of promotion and firing.

"It wasn't ever about me until it was survival," Davis said. "Everything that could have gone wrong with the process went wrong."

The battle ended last year with her departure from the Kansas Guard and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs affirming her disability for post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I'm still not over my breakup with the Army," Davis said. "I have a hard time talking about it. When I see people from the military, period, it is extremely distressing. I see the uniform, and then the alarms start going off. I follow from their feet up to the face. Even if I don't know them, it's upsetting."

Maj. Gen. David Weishaar, who has led the Kansas Guard since April 2020, wasn't able to discuss personnel issues of current or former soldiers and airmen.

Weishaar said his commitment during 40 years of service was to foster a culture of dignity and respect and to compel troops to apply standards equally.

"That is what I try to convey across the force," Weishaar said. "It doesn't matter if you're, in my case, a two-star general, or if you're a one-striper. The expectation is the same. Do we have people do dumb things? Absolutely. Whatever goes on in the community is happening in the force."

Weishaar said members of the Kansas Guard were expected to work daily to live up to military values and to better respond to societal problems of mental health, suicide, sexual abuse, gender-based harassment and other issues inevitably filtering into the armed forces. The Kansas Guard has adopted a series of programs to help members prevent, manage or overcome impediments to their service, he said.

Reform of military culture is a special challenge when only one-fourth of Kansas Guard employees work full-time and the part-timers report for duty as little as twice a month, the general said.

Paper warfare

Davis was instigator of reports aimed at members of the Kansas Guard reaching back to 2008, when she accused an officer of administrative fraud, waste and abuse. In a subsequent matter, Davis was ordered to be part of an investigation into allegations that officers and enlisted personnel participated in a sex scandal. She understood sensitivity of that inquiry and her involvement in the case didn't go unnoticed by peers, she said.

"I have a moral compass," Davis said. "My right and wrong does not have a gray."

In 2013, Davis said, Kansas Guard officers conspired to delay or block her from appearing before a promotion board necessary to climb the ladder to chief warrant officer 3. She responded by submitting a complaint alleging inappropriate influence on command. The Kansas Guard's inspector general found elements of reprisal, she said, before forwarding her case to the U.S. Army.

Davis said the Kansas Guard answered by launching a commander's inquiry accusing her of failure to properly process paperwork.

Davis said a Kansas Guard member confided her promotion process might proceed unfettered if her complaints stopped. She declined to retreat. Davis was eventually promoted.

The Army's IG investigation of alleged retaliation against Davis dragged on for 4½ years, which made it one of the department's longest-running cases. The resulting 60-page report was a disappointment to Davis. It either concluded allegations were unfounded or left issues unresolved because of lack of information, she said.

In 2016, prior to conclusion of the Army IG inquiry, Davis met with Kansas Guard officers to discuss physical problems with her hips and back. Convalescent leave was an option. Instead, she was handed a packet containing a notice of intent to involuntarily release her from full-time duty. The recommendation was to provide an honorable characterization of her military service, despite an assertion she "failed to complete assigned tasks."

Removal from full-time National Guard duty for the first time since 2002 would have made it more difficult to earn retirement benefits available after 20 years of full-time service.

Davis said evidence relied upon to justify demotion to part-time status hinged on a distorted selection of emails and "unwarranted negative counseling statements" provided by Kansas Guard personnel, including some who should not have been involved in rating her job performance. She said stacking the deck with complicit evaluators was part of a Kansas Guard playbook to flush people out the service.

She turned to then-Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, a Kansas Republican representing the 2nd District that includes Topeka. Davis sought help from Jenkins to speed completion of the U.S. Army inspector general's analysis of alleged retaliation against Davis by the Kansas Guard. Davis requested aid with retraction of the involuntary separation action or affirmation of due process rights while she challenged the action.

Davis presented herself to Jenkins as a "federal whistleblower with an ongoing inquiry into reprisal" involving members of the Kansas Guard.

"I frequently witnessed what I believed to be inappropriate conduct," Davis wrote in a document sent to Jenkins.

Davis said Jenkins' office took steps to intervene in her case, but nothing decisive came of that attempt by Kansas Guard officials to sever her full-time status.

The Kansas Guard issued an order in 2017 recalling Davis from remote duty to an office position in the organization's recruiting and retention command. By the end of that year, however, a medical board found Davis' chronic health condition rendered her unfit for duty. The Veterans Administration directed her not to return to work. That prompted a stalemate not resolved until her retirement in 2020.

'Toxic' culture

During the period from 2013 to 2015, a separate and much larger Kansas Guard investigation led by a one-star Air Guard general and an Army Guard lieutenant colonel produced compelling evidence of widespread malfeasance within the state's military organization. The roster of confirmed offenses attributed to officers and enlisted personnel of the Kansas Guard included acts of racism, enlistment fraud, bullying, sexual assault, retaliation and promotion manipulation.

The Kansas Guard investigating officers discovered confidential information gathered during their inquiry was leaked to people under scrutiny. The material was used to target individuals cooperating with the case, investigators reported.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported in 2017 that Brig. Gen. Scott Dold before retiring filed a final report on leadership shortcomings that concluded Tafanelli, the adjutant general, was responsible for systemic leadership problems within his command. Dold wrote in the report Kansas Guard leaders needed to place "soldier and airmen welfare and organizational needs before personal careerism and self-promotion."

"The predominant culture of this command has difficulty balancing legal, moral and ethical facets of decision making when addressing poor performance, toxic leadership and substantiated wrongdoing," Dold said.

In a response to the Capital-Journal's disclosures, Tafanelli said the way Kansas Guard members answered the call to duty during war, disaster and emergency shouldn't be overshadowed by a handful of corrupt colleagues.

"There are a few that will choose to act in an inappropriate manner and bring discredit to themselves and their service," he said.

Grab you, anywhere

Davis said she was tormented by what she perceived as indifference among some in the Kansas Guard to sexual harassment and assault. In her experience, she said, too many men in the Kansas Guard were complicit in creation of hostile work environments for women.

"It is not unusual for a female to be in there and they just walk up and grab you. Anywhere," Davis said.

Davis said a former Kansas Guard battalion commander, who she viewed as a friend, sexually assaulted her three years ago. A Veterans Affairs employee who offered to help Davis maneuver through the VA benefit system exposed himself to her, she said.

During a helicopter training assignment early in her Kansas Guard career, she said, a military doctor inappropriately penetrated her during a routine exam. Davis said she was sexually assaulted at age 18 by three men. It was after she enlisted, but before basic training.

Weishaar, the Kansas Guard's top officer and adjutant general, said sexual assault and sexual harassment were a menace to the military and society at large.

"When it happens – not if, because it does happen – we're going to take care of the victim," he said.

Jody Cope, the Kansas Guard's equal employment manager, said no one should accept the stereotype that sexual harassment was rampant in the Kansas Guard. The Kansas Guard's annual reports tracking formal complaints of sexual harassment showed six were submitted in 2015, six in 2016 and two in 2017. Comparable information for subsequent years wasn't released by the Kansas Guard.

Cope said the Kansas Guard had success resolving workplace conflicts with mediation. If allegations in an administrative complaint submitted to the Kansas Guard were substantiated, she said, there could be consequences.

"We've seen a really great increase over the last couple years of taking administrative action to address those," Cope said.

Michelle Ferrer, sexual assault response coordinator for the Kansas Guard, said her office offered confidentiality to employees reporting sexual misconduct. The exception to this rule was when a person was viewed as a danger to others or likely to engage in self-harm, she said. If an individual decided against pursuit of a formal complaint, she said, the paperwork could be shredded.

"That helps people to feel comfortable they can come talk to us," Ferrer said.

Potential sex crimes are referred to local law enforcement agencies because the Kansas Guard doesn't have authority to proceed, said Maj. Jacob McElwee, the Kansas Guard's judge advocate general.

Outcome of civilian criminal cases can influence military administrative actions involving Kansas Guard members. If the local prosecutor declined to file charges in a case, it's possible the National Guard Bureau's office of complex investigations could review allegations.

"Either way, we have an outside agency coming in and making sure that everything's being followed," McElwee said.

Weight of suicide

Davis said she could tick off names of Kansas Guard members who had taken their own life. She's felt overwhelmed by the thought that she tried but failed to help some of the deceased. She also is convinced not enough was being done to honor former Kansas Guard members who bring an end to their lives.

She recalled a poignant moment during a meeting in which Kansas Guard officers asked her if dismissing a specific soldier from the force would cause him to commit suicide. She said she advised there was substantial risk. The soldier was kicked out. His suicide followed, she said.

In the past 6½ years, Kansas Guard officials said, 19 members of the Air or Army Guard in Kansas committed suicide. An average of nearly three suicides occurred annually from 2015 to the present. Fifteen of those people were in the Army Guard, while four were in the Air Guard.

The Kansas Guard doesn't keep statistics on former Kansas Guard members who chose to commit suicide. Care and treatment of veterans with suicidal thoughts rests with the VA or private health professionals.

Terry Williams, an Air Guard colonel and the Kansas Guard's state chaplain, said the organization's training of people to recognize warning signs of trouble had improved in the past 15 years. Military

chaplains have benefit of offering total confidentiality to people seeking assistance, he said. Statistics don't reveal the number of men and women saved through these interventions, he said.

"I've done eight or nine funerals for suicides," Williams said. "I've been at bedsides, gravesides, hospitals. My perspective encompasses all of that. I have a programmatic side, but it's very personal to me, too."

He recalled a January service with snow on the ground and a wind-chill index of 15 degrees below.

"I could hear the daughter cry above 'Taps,'?" said Williams, who has been in the Kansas Guard for 24 years and deployed overseas twice, including in 2009 to Iraq.

Angie Gabel, the 190th Air Refueling Wing's director of psychological health, said she was a champion of ASIST, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. Hundreds involved with the Kansas Guard have completed ASIST training to learn how to talk with people suspected of thinking about or planning suicide, she said.

Problems with personal relationships, money, job stress, legal issues or communication barriers are often indicators of a person in crisis, she said.

Gabel said a persistent challenge was overcoming a belief among soldiers and airmen that admitting to mental health challenges automatically destroyed careers.

"We still have that mentality of, 'If I say something my career is over, point blank, in the military.' We are slowly changing that mindset. It's not over. It's not a career-ender," Gabel said.

'Expendable'

Davis, 39, opposed her exit from the Kansas Guard last year because she thought it was unfair and meant she would never qualify for retirement benefits more generous than disability compensation. The end came without pomp and circumstance in April 2020.

Termination of the employee-employer relationship allowed her to speak more freely about the citizen-soldier organization's personnel issues. Many of those conversations were difficult for her. Others sparked a determination to keep fighting. She also shared a belief the mountain she was climbing could be too high, too far.

Davis said her forced exit was the consequence of her decisions to stare down the barrel of a Kansas Guard culture still anchored by a good-old-boy network. Reviewing threads of her Kansas Guard life suggests she was collateral damage of a toxic military environment, she said.

Administrative conflict that enveloped her felt like an organized effort to induce enough despair to drive her off, she said. The experience offered insight into factors contributing to the national plague of military suicide, she said.

"We're expendable," Davis said. "The decade has been really hard. The last five years has tried to kill me. It never had to be that way."

It was not the way her career was to have evolved when she enlisted as a teenager and joined a UH-60 Blackhawk crew in 1999. She was the daughter of a highly decorated Army officer. She had risen in rank while completing a degree in criminal justice at Washburn University in 2006 and a master's degree in business administration from Friends University in 2015.

She never deployed for combat despite volunteering to serve in hostile areas, but earned an Army commendation medal in 2010. She served more than a dozen years as a senior human resource officer in Kansas.

She said demise of her Army career failed to extinguish a conviction that military service provided rewarding experiences.

"I loved it. I loved the camaraderie. I loved taking care of soldiers. I loved learning new things," Davis said. "I liked being able to obtain the knowledge and ability to do things – write policy or figure things out and then go to the boss: 'OK, this is what you want. Here are your options.'?"

After months of evaluation, the VA rated Davis as 100% disabled. It was an analysis based primarily on diagnosis of her PTSD. Medical records indicated she suffered anxiety and depression in addition to physical limitations.

Fighting to get better

Not quite middle-aged, Davis' body and mind have been worn down. She has a new left hip. The plan to replace the right hip was postponed. Her right knee was operated on, but issues linger. She has dental woes from grinding her teeth.

Her future is clouded by realities of PTSD. Therapy was helpful at times and challenging in other moments, she said. Because of the pandemic, she unexpectedly discovered remote conversations with a therapist were easier than in-person discussions.

"I couldn't cry in front of her," Davis said. "I'd have my work face on. We weren't getting to the root of any problems."

Davis said her recovery had been impeded by reading or being told about ongoing controversy in the Kansas Guard. The intel reminded her there was no certainty about what her advocacy accomplished.

"I complained about people at the very top. Nobody wants to have anything to do with me," Davis said. "In retrospect, I went through a lot more than I realized at the time. I would like an apology."

https://ngpa.us/14470

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6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

"I was in relationships – or dating people – (I) had to be very careful about who I was out to, where I was out, how I was, went out and about my daily life in public because that could have a consequence on my military career," Roth said.

The now-defunct policy forced gay and lesbian members of the military to serve in silence.

When it ended in 2011, Roth said it was a non-event, and the fears that it would undermine military professionalism didn't happen.

"I think what has changed is (that) I can be open and honest with my teammates," Roth said. "I can be my authentic self, I can share who I am, and vice versa. That builds trust and confidence."

Roth said about 13,000 gay and lesbian troops were forced out of the military under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Since then, Roth said things have gotten better.

"As we move forward as a military, I think we can be very proud of our diversity, how we're changing our culture to be more welcoming people and let the number of people the very small number of people who raise their hand to say, 'I want to serve,' need all of our support," he said.

Roth said the biggest surprise for him came last year – he had the opportunity to attend a Pride luncheon on a military base while serving overseas.

"It was the first time I saw visible evidence of (a) complete shift in how we approach it," he said.

Roth said the National Guard went further, sending out a letter in support of its LGBTQ members that noted celebrating pride and recognizing the contributions of LGBTQ to people who serve in the military.

Roth said it took him several years after the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" before he came out – since he doesn't believe it has had any effect on his military career.

https://ngpa.us/14471

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7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity.

Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown.

"I didn't have a job to go back to after orders," Schmucker, 20, said.

He was approached by a member of the food bank's management, who offered Schmucker a role pulling orders, preparing food for various agencies to pick up from the warehouse.

Schmucker is grateful for the opportunity to serve the Valley, but also for the door that opened up as a result of volunteering. "It does mean a lot. I just came here as a volunteer but was offered employment. It meant a lot," he said.

Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard.

The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

On Monday, the volunteers were treated to a lunch from the food bank to thank them for their assistance during the pandemic.

As orders for the National Guard expire July 2, some of the volunteers will go back to school, while others go back to work, Warrant Officer candidate Adam Fullmer said.

“We’re going to be out of Task Force Fox. It’s standing down in about 60 days,” he said.

Task Force Fox encompasses the National Guard deployment around the state assisting agencies and organizations through the pandemic.

When the guard members were assigned to the food bank 15 months ago, 35 assisting. That number has shrunk to 15 now.

Last year was the “biggest” distribution year, Iberis said, with 15 million pounds of food handed out. This year, the food bank is on track to distribute 13 million pounds, Iberis said.

Most of the National Guard was activated for 30 days or more, Fullmer said. “We saw upwards of 75, 80 percent” of soldiers working extended assignments, ranging from food banks to helping in the prisons, to COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.

The National Guard also helped during what Fullmer called the “unemployment crisis,” helping to process claims throughout the pandemic in Ohio.

“We took a little of the edge off for some of the organizations,” Fullmer said.

“This is an illustration of when people work together, what can happen,” Iberis said. “This was such a smooth-working relationship” among the guard, food bank and its agencies, Iberis said, calling it “a mammoth collaboration.”

The food bank, like some other places, is returning to a state of pre-pandemic normalcy. Last week, phone calls were made to the normal roster of volunteers with about 80 percent already back in the warehouse this week, Iberis said.

Throughout the National Guard’s help and media coverage, something positive happened with volunteers.

“The Mahoning Valley took note of how these Guards people responded. That has resulted … in a barrage of new volunteer applications,” Iberis said. “It’s incredible.”

https://ngpa.us/14472

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]
[redacted]@mail.mil

<PA Update 30 June 2021.pdf>
<Defense Morning Clips 30 June 2021.pdf>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 6:43 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Re: PA Update 30 June 2021

Sir,
Good copy.
[redacted]

From: "Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 at 6:03:51 AM
To: "Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil <mailto:michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] @ujs.state.sd.us <mailto [redacted] @ujs.state.sd.us> >, "Lair, Gregory W Brig Gen USAF 114 FW (USA)" <gregory.lair@us.af.mil <mailto:gregory.lair@us.af.mil> >, "Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)" <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil <mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, "[redacted] CSM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Subject: Re: PA Update 30 June 2021

Hit send to soon.

Everyone stay on your “A” game on this. People will be asking questions. Our position is we don’t discuss the donation. We received a SAD Mission, just like every other. Our reimbursement comes from OEM (State $), just like it always does.

We don’t comment on mission specifics, for security reasons. All requests for information get referred to our PAO.

Governor Noem will be doing a press release later today.

JPM

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 30, 2021, at 5:53 AM, Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> wrote:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil>
Date: June 30, 2021 at 4:59:45 AM MDT
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: "[redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil>
Subject: PA Update 30 June 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, June 30, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III welcomes Her Excellency Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Minister of Defense to the Federal Republic of Germany, to the Pentagon in an enhanced honor cordon ceremony at 8 a.m. EDT.

- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael M. Gilday and Commandant of the Marine Corps David H. Berger participate in the keynote panel discussion at 11 a.m. EDT; Adm. Sam Paparo, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, provides the keynote address at 3:30 p.m. EDT; and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

- Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Douglas Bush; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition Frederick “Jay” Stefany; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Darlene Costello; Army Lt. Gen. Eric C. Peterson, deputy chief of staff, G-8, Department of the Army; Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Mark Wise, deputy commandant for Aviation, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and Read Adm. Andrew Loiselle, director, Air Warfare Division, N98, Department of the Navy, testify on Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force rotary wing aviation programs and planned modernization efforts in the fiscal 2022 budget request at 3 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces hearing on fiscal 2022 rotary wing aviation budget request, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX: Military.com (National) – Billionaire GOP Mega-Donor Funds National Guard Mission to US-Mexico Border – By Steve Beynon

The South Dakota National Guard is deploying on mission to the U.S. southern border. And the operation is being funded by a billionaire, not the government, Military.com has learned. Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

https://ngpa.us/14474

RELATED STORIES:

SD, TX: Newsweek (National) – Private Donation Will Send 50 South Dakota National Guard Troops to U.S.-Mexico Border – By Zoe Strozewski

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SD, TX, TN: Capital Journal (Local) – Tennessee donor foots the bill for SD National Guard deployment– By Jorge Encinas

https://ngpa.us/14469

AR, TX: KNWA (Regional) – Governor Hutchison authorizes 90-day deployment of up to 40 National Guard members to U.S./Mexico Border – By Gary Gilbert

https://ngpa.us/14473

SC, AZ, TX: WMBF (Regional) – S.C. congressmen thank Gov. McMaster for sending National Guard troops to U.S. border – By Staff Reports

https://ngpa.us/14475

FULL STORY BELOW

2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military. McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

https://ngpa.us/14476

FULL STORY BELOW

3. MD: Fox Baltimore (Regional) – [Video] MD Air National Guard celebrates 100 years of service – By Staff Reports

The Maryland Air National Guard kicked off a celebration commemorating 100 years of service to the state. It started in 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition. Airmen have supported the state's pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

https://ngpa.us/14477

FULL STORY BELOW

4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading. … The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

https://ngpa.us/14468

FULL STORY BELOW

5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

Insomnia compelled Morgan Davis to seek refuge on a small backyard patio offering sanctuary from the downward spiral of her career in the Kansas Army National Guard. On that November evening, the outdoor cocoon proved insufficient. Davis drove to a convenience store in Topeka where the mission was to slip in and out unrecognized, part of a concerted effort to adopt a lower-profile approach to living. As she exited the business, she bumped into a former Kansas Guard officer. Casual banter took a different tone by shifting to Davis' military status.

https://ngpa.us/14470

FULL STORY BELOW

6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

https://ngpa.us/14471

FULL STORY BELOW

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https://ngpa.us/14472

FULL STORY BELOW

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Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

"The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide," South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, said in a statement Tuesday.

Roughly 50 guardsmen will deploy on the mission, according to a South Dakota Guard spokesman. However, the mission is still in its early planning stages. It's unclear where the troops will deploy on the border, which unit will be sent or what the mission will be.

The National Guard declined to comment for this story or answer questions about the practice of allowing private donors to fund missions. A query to the Pentagon about the mission did not receive a response.

Willis Johnson is the founder of Copart, an online vehicle auction service, and has amassed a $2.2 billion fortune, according to Forbes. He resigned as CEO of Copart in 2010, according to reporting from the Nashville Post.

He is a Republican mega-donor, donating at least $1.5 million to conservative causes, including $50,000 to the "Trump Victory" political action committee, according to reporting from Bloomberg.

Former President Donald Trump made border security a key part of his presidency, ordering the deployment of troops to the border in April 2018 under a mission known as Operation Faithful Patriot. One of President Joe Biden's first acts as president was to suspend Trump's emergency declaration at the border, halting some government funds. The Associated Press reported that Trump is expected to visit the border with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, later this week.

Ian Fury, a spokesman for Noem, wouldn't confirm if Willis Johnson runs the foundation. When Military.com reached Johnson via telephone, he wouldn't confirm his identity and declined to be interviewed.

However, tax forms including for the foundation and donation records for Johnson share the same address in Franklin, Tennessee.

"Governor Noem welcomes any such donations to help alleviate the cost to South Dakota taxpayers," Fury told Military.com. Fury declined to disclose how much of a donation was made to cover the mission, saying revealing that would be "a security risk."

https://ngpa.us/14474

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2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military.

McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

She remembers the pilots who guided her, who said the days of female combat exclusion were numbered. They turned around to speak to her from the front seat, and said McCandless could help usher in a new chapter for the military.

"They encouraged me, and they said, 'hey, someday it'll change,'" McCandless said. "They have daughters. And I think was an awakening moment for them to think, 'wow, my daughter could be completely able to do this, from a physical and a mental standpoint, but won't be able to for one reason.'"

McCandless, 51, now finds herself in another moment of U.S. military history – serving as the first female leader of the D.C National Guard.

Beginning April 25, 2021, McCandless oversaw the end of the D.C. Guard's security mission at the Capitol, at a time when the Guard's role in Washington was redefined, and may still change in the months ahead.

She serves as the D.C. Guard's interim commanding general, appointed to the role after her predecessor, Maj. Gen. William Walker, became the new Sergeant-at-Arms for the U.S. House of Representatives. Her

fate now lies with President Joe Biden, who is expected to decide over the next few months if McCandless will fill the position permanently.

In her first interview since assuming the role, McCandless said the 2,700 soldiers and airmen under her command would not be put under immense strain if Congress decides to create a "strike force" of Guard members assisting U.S. Capitol Police. She affirmed one of her top priorities is to improve the speed and efficiency of communication with federal and District law enforcement, should another episode of insurrection threaten the heart of American democracy.

Yet her concerns are also focused on new outreach to the people of the District, expanding a program to instill leadership in teenagers who've dropped out of high school.

McCandless said she is also mindful of allowing Guard members adequate time to reconnect with families, following months of unprecedented service.

"We just have to make sure that we're constantly looking at evaluating balancing," McCandless said. "It's a constant evolution. We can never let rest on where we are."

A Possible U.S. Capitol Strike Force

Within a $1.9 billion Capitol security bill, passed by one vote in the House, Democratic lawmakers authored the creation of a quick-reacting force of National Guard members on U.S. Capitol grounds. The aim of the force would be to assist Capitol Police, should a scenario similar to the January 6 insurrection repeat once more.

Republican lawmakers oppose the measure, with Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) writing in a joint statement, "use of the uniformed military in D.C. and the Capitol Complex is subject to complex statutory restrictions, and for good reason."

"We cannot and should not militarize the security of the Capitol Complex."

While McCandless and the Guard take no position on the matter, leaving the decision to civilian lawmakers, the general said such a force would not strain the Guard's command structure, or its personnel.

"I think that the planning would need to take place, but I don't see any major changes required," McCandless said.

When asked if major shifts would be required to make such a force work, McCandless replied, "Not in my opinion."

McCandless stressed the D.C. Guard serves as a force of last resort, after law enforcement exhausted all its resources. Yet she affirmed under her command, the Guard would respond to a potential Capitol crisis with greater speed than what was seen in January.

"I'm on my 60th day [leading the D.C. Guard,]" McCandless said. "And I've spent a lot of those days connecting with my downtown partners. So, U.S. Capitol Police chief, U.S. Park Police chief, the mayor's office. I'm making sure that we are communicating, we know who each other are, and kind of where the National Guard in D.C. is at this time."

"I've been able to participate with some of our team at the Defense Department also, who has obviously been looking into and interested in those response times," she continued. "There's a great amount of learning and collaboration going on at this time to ensure that if and when we have our federal or District partners that require our assistance or the assistance of the National Guard, that we're in a better place."

Reaching out to the D.C. Community

McCandless is the granddaughter of an Iwo Jima Marine Corps veteran, who landed 45 minutes into the first wave of U.S. troops on the island. PFC Theodore Below helped raised McCandless, and instilled within the future D.C. Guard commander a sense of service which persists into the present.

"He actually still lives with me in my home in Washington, D.C.," McCandless said. "The foundation he built for me always provided a very clear sight picture for me about the criticality of service."

The arc of service could be seen in a hangar at Joint Base Andrews, when McCandless joined more than 30 D.C. teenagers for an up-close look at F-16 fighters.

The adolescents recently dropped out of high school, but are now back on the path to a diploma. They are enrolled in the D.C. Guard program, known as the "Capital Guardian Youth ChalleNGe Academy."

"In that 16 to 18-year-old range, as we all know, there are a lot of distractions and there's a lot of competing priorities in their lives," McCandless said. "And I think what we're able to offer to them is a safe environment to go into, inspired by the military, but having no outcome to join the military."

McCandless described the program neither as bootcamp, nor ROTC, but as a five-month full-time living experience on a D.C. Guard suburban campus in Laurel, Md.

"It allows them to re-engage in physical fitness activities, understanding how to balance a checkbook, understanding the criticality of their diet and how that feeds them and they basically learn skills that we think that will help them complete their education, join the workforce, and then come back into the D.C. community," she said.

Online applications for the fall 2021 program are now open, with McCandless setting a goal to expand the academy's enrollment and recognition as a force for change. Cadets are under no obligation to join the Guard upon completion of the program.

D.C. Guard Moving Forward

"We have an F-16 mission that's getting ready to depart for the Middle East, and we also have National Guardsmen that have departed to go down to Guantánamo," the general offered, describing ongoing operations after the U.S. Capitol mission. "We're always constantly making sure we're prepared for the overseas war fight – that's the core mission of what we do. But we also have to maintain and train our readiness as almost a byproduct of that federal mission, to respond to natural disasters and manmade disasters inside the United States."

McCandless described as the D.C. Guard moves forward, post-insurrection, her mission is to help its airmen and soldiers reconnect – first with their families, then with their civilian jobs balanced alongside National Guard duties.

"Simultaneously, the country is coming out of the pandemic. So there's the desire for guardsmen to get out, socialize again," she said.

"We're also going to start working again on some of the basic military skills that they did not have the opportunity to train on while they were doing the Capitol mission."

At an expansive moment for the Guard in the public consciousness, McCandless said she feels prepared to meet the expectations of the city and the nation. Once as a pilot in her 20's who helped shape the face of the U.S.

military, she now says she turns to the needs of the Guard in the nation's capital, a new arena to engage in a commanding change.

"It's really about the competency of the individuals and how they've been prepared through their lives to ascend to these roles," McCandless said. "I've been trying to prepare myself all along for roles that the military may ask me to perform… And I'm excited that it's now with the Guard where I call home."

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3. MD: Fox Baltimore (Regional) – [Video] MD Air National Guard celebrates 100 years of service – By Staff Reports

The Maryland Air National Guard kicked off a celebration commemorating 100 years of service to the state.

It started in 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition.

Airmen have supported the state's pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

Members of the Air National Guard came to Annapolis after the riot at the Capitol and provided protection for state lawmakers.

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4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading.

The situation has alarmed experts and public officials, who warn that this year's fire season could outpace last year's, which was the worst on record. Blazes have already ignited around California, where dry vegetation has left large swaths of the state primed to explode into flames, even as the federal government struggles to hire firefighters.

"We're in as high risk of a starting condition as we could ever expect," said Noah Diffenbaugh, a Stanford University professor who studies climate change and wildfires.

The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

Western states are eager for Washington to step up its commitment after President Trump repeatedly blamed them – particularly California, which he said failed to "clean your forests" of combustible vegetation – for failing to prevent and stop wildfires.

The threat comes amid staffing shortages at the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, problems exacerbated by low pay, competition from state and local fire departments and exhaustion from last year's fire season.

More than a month after seasonal hiring would typically have ended, the federal government is still trying to fill vacant positions on hot shot crews, the most elite and experienced firefighting teams. Although these crews are venerated for leading the attack against the most difficult fires, some have had so many veteran firefighters quit that they've been downgraded to a lower-ranking status.

Nationally, fire management teams are having to compete with each other for crews and equipment much earlier in the season than in years past. On June 22, the National Interagency Fire Center, which coordinates fire response from Boise, Idaho, raised the national preparedness to level 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, saying it was the second earliest it had reached that point.

The shortages have filled crews on the fire lines with anxiety and led to louder calls for change.

"We're at a point where we're simply going to be overwhelmed year after year going forward given the current systems we have in place," said Jim Whittington, an expert in wildland fire response. "We really need to look at the way we staff and work wildland fires, the way we fund them, and the way we take care of our people. We need a full reset."

Along with calls for higher pay – a first-year Forest Service firefighter currently earns a base wage of $13.45 an hour – there are those like Whittington who believe firefighting needs to become a full-time job. Currently, the federal government fills its ranks each summer with thousands of seasonal firefighters who don't get health insurance and are laid off after about six months. Some of these workers struggle at the end of the season as months of stress take their toll.

"We also need better mental health support for wildland firefighters," Whittington said. "Too many face a crisis when they are laid off."

Biden said last week that he was surprised to learn that some federal firefighters earn so little.

"That's a ridiculously low salary," he said, banging his hand on a table in the Roosevelt Room in the White House during a meeting with emergency officials.

Ben Elkind, a smokejumper for the forest service and a member of Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, a group that advocates for better pay and working conditions for federal firefighters, said the problem has left critical positions empty.

"People risking their lives for our public safety deserve to be paid a living wage," he said.

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5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

Insomnia compelled Morgan Davis to seek refuge on a small backyard patio offering sanctuary from the downward spiral of her career in the Kansas Army National Guard.

On that November evening, the outdoor cocoon proved insufficient. Davis drove to a convenience store in Topeka where the mission was to slip in and out unrecognized, part of a concerted effort to adopt a lower-profile approach to living. As she exited the business, she bumped into a former Kansas Guard officer. Casual banter took a different tone by shifting to Davis' military status.

"I just started shaking," Davis said. "I can't think. I can't breathe. My mind just goes blank."

The fractured bones of Davis' 21-year Army career – reports, correspondence, testimony, photos, complaints, notes and emails – could fill boxes. The flesh of her military ordeal took shape during a review of those documents and through sporadic conversations and interviews beginning five years ago and intensifying after her retirement in 2020.

Davis said her life in uniform ended prematurely because of an unwillingness to look the other way at perceived wrongdoing in the Kansas Guard. She attempted to work within boundaries of the military system while filing reports or complaints ranging in subject from administrative corruption to sexual abuse to distortion of the promotion process. She raised alarms about personal issues as well as situations involving others in the Kansas Guard.

Substance of those allegations catapulted Davis into years of conflict with command staff that viewed complainants as irritating troublemakers ripe for expulsion.

Davis said her lonely campaign was aimed at bringing accountability and transparency to the insular Kansas Guard, especially actions of some high-ranking staff allied with then-Adjutant General Lee Tafanelli. For nine years, the general was responsible for training and readiness of 7,000 personnel in the Army and Air components of the Kansas Guard. He served as senior military adviser to Govs. Sam Brownback, Jeff Colyer and Laura Kelly before retiring in March 2020.

Davis' struggle evolved to emphasize self-defense as individuals within the Kansas Guard retaliated against her, she said. Her best asset was technical expertise in personnel policy and procedure acquired in service of the Kansas Guard. She said she proceeded under threat of reassignment to a lesser position, loss of promotion and firing.

"It wasn't ever about me until it was survival," Davis said. "Everything that could have gone wrong with the process went wrong."

The battle ended last year with her departure from the Kansas Guard and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs affirming her disability for post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I'm still not over my breakup with the Army," Davis said. "I have a hard time talking about it. When I see people from the military, period, it is extremely distressing. I see the uniform, and then the alarms start going off. I follow from their feet up to the face. Even if I don't know them, it's upsetting."

Maj. Gen. David Weishaar, who has led the Kansas Guard since April 2020, wasn't able to discuss personnel issues of current or former soldiers and airmen.

Weishaar said his commitment during 40 years of service was to foster a culture of dignity and respect and to compel troops to apply standards equally.

“That is what I try to convey across the force,” Weishaar said. “It doesn’t matter if you’re, in my case, a two-star general, or if you’re a one-striper. The expectation is the same. Do we have people do dumb things? Absolutely. Whatever goes on in the community is happening in the force.”

Weishaar said members of the Kansas Guard were expected to work daily to live up to military values and to better respond to societal problems of mental health, suicide, sexual abuse, gender-based harassment and other issues inevitably filtering into the armed forces. The Kansas Guard has adopted a series of programs to help members prevent, manage or overcome impediments to their service, he said.

Reform of military culture is a special challenge when only one-fourth of Kansas Guard employees work full-time and the part-timers report for duty as little as twice a month, the general said.

Paper warfare

Davis was instigator of reports aimed at members of the Kansas Guard reaching back to 2008, when she accused an officer of administrative fraud, waste and abuse. In a subsequent matter, Davis was ordered to be part of an investigation into allegations that officers and enlisted personnel participated in a sex scandal. She understood sensitivity of that inquiry and her involvement in the case didn’t go unnoticed by peers, she said.

“I have a moral compass,” Davis said. “My right and wrong does not have a gray.”

In 2013, Davis said, Kansas Guard officers conspired to delay or block her from appearing before a promotion board necessary to climb the ladder to chief warrant officer 3. She responded by submitting a complaint alleging inappropriate influence on command. The Kansas Guard’s inspector general found elements of reprisal, she said, before forwarding her case to the U.S. Army.

Davis said the Kansas Guard answered by launching a commander’s inquiry accusing her of failure to properly process paperwork.

Davis said a Kansas Guard member confided her promotion process might proceed unfettered if her complaints stopped. She declined to retreat. Davis was eventually promoted.

The Army’s IG investigation of alleged retaliation against Davis dragged on for 4½ years, which made it one of the department’s longest-running cases. The resulting 60-page report was a disappointment to Davis. It either concluded allegations were unfounded or left issues unresolved because of lack of information, she said.

In 2016, prior to conclusion of the Army IG inquiry, Davis met with Kansas Guard officers to discuss physical problems with her hips and back. Convalescent leave was an option. Instead, she was handed a packet containing a notice of intent to involuntarily release her from full-time duty. The recommendation was to provide an honorable characterization of her military service, despite an assertion she “failed to complete assigned tasks.”

Removal from full-time National Guard duty for the first time since 2002 would have made it more difficult to earn retirement benefits available after 20 years of full-time service.

Davis said evidence relied upon to justify demotion to part-time status hinged on a distorted selection of emails and “unwarranted negative counseling statements” provided by Kansas Guard personnel, including some who should not have been involved in rating her job performance. She said stacking the deck with complicit evaluators was part of a Kansas Guard playbook to flush people out the service.

She turned to then-Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, a Kansas Republican representing the 2nd District that includes Topeka. Davis sought help from Jenkins to speed completion of the U.S. Army inspector general’s analysis of

alleged retaliation against Davis by the Kansas Guard. Davis requested aid with retraction of the involuntary separation action or affirmation of due process rights while she challenged the action.

Davis presented herself to Jenkins as a "federal whistleblower with an ongoing inquiry into reprisal" involving members of the Kansas Guard.

"I frequently witnessed what I believed to be inappropriate conduct," Davis wrote in a document sent to Jenkins.

Davis said Jenkins' office took steps to intervene in her case, but nothing decisive came of that attempt by Kansas Guard officials to sever her full-time status.

The Kansas Guard issued an order in 2017 recalling Davis from remote duty to an office position in the organization's recruiting and retention command. By the end of that year, however, a medical board found Davis' chronic health condition rendered her unfit for duty. The Veterans Administration directed her not to return to work. That prompted a stalemate not resolved until her retirement in 2020.

'Toxic' culture

During the period from 2013 to 2015, a separate and much larger Kansas Guard investigation led by a one-star Air Guard general and an Army Guard lieutenant colonel produced compelling evidence of widespread malfeasance within the state's military organization. The roster of confirmed offenses attributed to officers and enlisted personnel of the Kansas Guard included acts of racism, enlistment fraud, bullying, sexual assault, retaliation and promotion manipulation.

The Kansas Guard investigating officers discovered confidential information gathered during their inquiry was leaked to people under scrutiny. The material was used to target individuals cooperating with the case, investigators reported.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported in 2017 that Brig. Gen. Scott Dold before retiring filed a final report on leadership shortcomings that concluded Tafanelli, the adjutant general, was responsible for systemic leadership problems within his command. Dold wrote in the report Kansas Guard leaders needed to place "soldier and airmen welfare and organizational needs before personal careerism and self-promotion."

"The predominant culture of this command has difficulty balancing legal, moral and ethical facets of decision making when addressing poor performance, toxic leadership and substantiated wrongdoing," Dold said.

In a response to the Capital-Journal's disclosures, Tafanelli said the way Kansas Guard members answered the call to duty during war, disaster and emergency shouldn't be overshadowed by a handful of corrupt colleagues.

"There are a few that will choose to act in an inappropriate manner and bring discredit to themselves and their service," he said.

Grab you, anywhere

Davis said she was tormented by what she perceived as indifference among some in the Kansas Guard to sexual harassment and assault. In her experience, she said, too many men in the Kansas Guard were complicit in creation of hostile work environments for women.

"It is not unusual for a female to be in there and they just walk up and grab you. Anywhere," Davis said.

Davis said a former Kansas Guard battalion commander, who she viewed as a friend, sexually assaulted her three years ago. A Veterans Affairs employee who offered to help Davis maneuver through the VA benefit system exposed himself to her, she said.

During a helicopter training assignment early in her Kansas Guard career, she said, a military doctor inappropriately penetrated her during a routine exam. Davis said she was sexually assaulted at age 18 by three men. It was after she enlisted, but before basic training.

Weishaar, the Kansas Guard's top officer and adjutant general, said sexual assault and sexual harassment were a menace to the military and society at large.

"When it happens – not if, because it does happen – we're going to take care of the victim," he said.

Jody Cope, the Kansas Guard's equal employment manager, said no one should accept the stereotype that sexual harassment was rampant in the Kansas Guard. The Kansas Guard's annual reports tracking formal complaints of sexual harassment showed six were submitted in 2015, six in 2016 and two in 2017. Comparable information for subsequent years wasn't released by the Kansas Guard.

Cope said the Kansas Guard had success resolving workplace conflicts with mediation. If allegations in an administrative complaint submitted to the Kansas Guard were substantiated, she said, there could be consequences.

"We've seen a really great increase over the last couple years of taking administrative action to address those," Cope said.

Michelle Ferrer, sexual assault response coordinator for the Kansas Guard, said her office offered confidentiality to employees reporting sexual misconduct. The exception to this rule was when a person was viewed as a danger to others or likely to engage in self-harm, she said. If an individual decided against pursuit of a formal complaint, she said, the paperwork could be shredded.

"That helps people to feel comfortable they can come talk to us," Ferrer said.

Potential sex crimes are referred to local law enforcement agencies because the Kansas Guard doesn't have authority to proceed, said Maj. Jacob McElwee, the Kansas Guard's judge advocate general.

Outcome of civilian criminal cases can influence military administrative actions involving Kansas Guard members. If the local prosecutor declined to file charges in a case, it's possible the National Guard Bureau's office of complex investigations could review allegations.

"Either way, we have an outside agency coming in and making sure that everything's being followed," McElwee said.

Weight of suicide

Davis said she could tick off names of Kansas Guard members who had taken their own life. She's felt overwhelmed by the thought that she tried but failed to help some of the deceased. She also is convinced not enough was being done to honor former Kansas Guard members who bring an end to their lives.

She recalled a poignant moment during a meeting in which Kansas Guard officers asked her if dismissing a specific soldier from the force would cause him to commit suicide. She said she advised there was substantial risk. The soldier was kicked out. His suicide followed, she said.

In the past 6½ years, Kansas Guard officials said, 19 members of the Air or Army Guard in Kansas committed suicide. An average of nearly three suicides occurred annually from 2015 to the present. Fifteen of those people were in the Army Guard, while four were in the Air Guard.

The Kansas Guard doesn't keep statistics on former Kansas Guard members who chose to commit suicide. Care and treatment of veterans with suicidal thoughts rests with the VA or private health professionals.

Terry Williams, an Air Guard colonel and the Kansas Guard's state chaplain, said the organization's training of people to recognize warning signs of trouble had improved in the past 15 years. Military chaplains have benefit of offering total confidentiality to people seeking assistance, he said. Statistics don't reveal the number of men and women saved through these interventions, he said.

"I've done eight or nine funerals for suicides," Williams said. "I've been at bedsides, gravesides, hospitals. My perspective encompasses all of that. I have a programmatic side, but it's very personal to me, too."

He recalled a January service with snow on the ground and a wind-chill index of 15 degrees below.

"I could hear the daughter cry above 'Taps,'?" said Williams, who has been in the Kansas Guard for 24 years and deployed overseas twice, including in 2009 to Iraq.

Angie Gabel, the 190th Air Refueling Wing's director of psychological health, said she was a champion of ASIST, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. Hundreds involved with the Kansas Guard have completed ASIST training to learn how to talk with people suspected of thinking about or planning suicide, she said.

Problems with personal relationships, money, job stress, legal issues or communication barriers are often indicators of a person in crisis, she said.

Gabel said a persistent challenge was overcoming a belief among soldiers and airmen that admitting to mental health challenges automatically destroyed careers.

"We still have that mentality of, 'If I say something my career is over, point blank, in the military.' We are slowly changing that mindset. It's not over. It's not a career-ender," Gabel said.

'Expendable'

Davis, 39, opposed her exit from the Kansas Guard last year because she thought it was unfair and meant she would never qualify for retirement benefits more generous than disability compensation. The end came without pomp and circumstance in April 2020.

Termination of the employee-employer relationship allowed her to speak more freely about the citizen-soldier organization's personnel issues. Many of those conversations were difficult for her. Others sparked a determination to keep fighting. She also shared a belief the mountain she was climbing could be too high, too far.

Davis said her forced exit was the consequence of her decisions to stare down the barrel of a Kansas Guard culture still anchored by a good-old-boy network. Reviewing threads of her Kansas Guard life suggests she was collateral damage of a toxic military environment, she said.

Administrative conflict that enveloped her felt like an organized effort to induce enough despair to drive her off, she said. The experience offered insight into factors contributing to the national plague of military suicide, she said.

“We’re expendable,” Davis said. “The decade has been really hard. The last five years has tried to kill me. It never had to be that way.”

It was not the way her career was to have evolved when she enlisted as a teenager and joined a UH-60 Blackhawk crew in 1999. She was the daughter of a highly decorated Army officer. She had risen in rank while completing a degree in criminal justice at Washburn University in 2006 and a master’s degree in business administration from Friends University in 2015.

She never deployed for combat despite volunteering to serve in hostile areas, but earned an Army commendation medal in 2010. She served more than a dozen years as a senior human resource officer in Kansas.

She said demise of her Army career failed to extinguish a conviction that military service provided rewarding experiences.

“I loved it. I loved the camaraderie. I loved taking care of soldiers. I loved learning new things,” Davis said. “I liked being able to obtain the knowledge and ability to do things – write policy or figure things out and then go to the boss: ‘OK, this is what you want. Here are your options.’?”

After months of evaluation, the VA rated Davis as 100% disabled. It was an analysis based primarily on diagnosis of her PTSD. Medical records indicated she suffered anxiety and depression in addition to physical limitations.

Fighting to get better

Not quite middle-aged, Davis’ body and mind have been worn down. She has a new left hip. The plan to replace the right hip was postponed. Her right knee was operated on, but issues linger. She has dental woes from grinding her teeth.

Her future is clouded by realities of PTSD. Therapy was helpful at times and challenging in other moments, she said. Because of the pandemic, she unexpectedly discovered remote conversations with a therapist were easier than in-person discussions.

“I couldn’t cry in front of her,” Davis said. “I’d have my work face on. We weren’t getting to the root of any problems.”

Davis said her recovery had been impeded by reading or being told about ongoing controversy in the Kansas Guard. The intel reminded her there was no certainty about what her advocacy accomplished.

“I complained about people at the very top. Nobody wants to have anything to do with me,” Davis said. “In retrospect, I went through a lot more than I realized at the time. I would like an apology.”

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6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ – By Bill O’Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

"I was in relationships – or dating people – (I) had to be very careful about who I was out to, where I was out, how I was, went out and about my daily life in public because that could have a consequence on my military career," Roth said.

The now-defunct policy forced gay and lesbian members of the military to serve in silence.

When it ended in 2011, Roth said it was a non-event, and the fears that it would undermine military professionalism didn't happen.

"I think what has changed is (that) I can be open and honest with my teammates," Roth said. "I can be my authentic self, I can share who I am, and vice versa. That builds trust and confidence."

Roth said about 13,000 gay and lesbian troops were forced out of the military under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Since then, Roth said things have gotten better.

"As we move forward as a military, I think we can be very proud of our diversity, how we're changing our culture to be more welcoming people and let the number of people the very small number of people who raise their hand to say, 'I want to serve,' need all of our support," he said.

Roth said the biggest surprise for him came last year – he had the opportunity to attend a Pride luncheon on a military base while serving overseas.

"It was the first time I saw visible evidence of (a) complete shift in how we approach it," he said.

Roth said the National Guard went further, sending out a letter in support of its LGBTQ members that noted celebrating pride and recognizing the contributions of LGBTQ to people who serve in the military.

Roth said it took him several years after the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" before he came out – since he doesn't believe it has had any effect on his military career.

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7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity.

Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown.

"I didn't have a job to go back to after orders," Schmucker, 20, said.

He was approached by a member of the food bank's management, who offered Schmucker a role pulling orders, preparing food for various agencies to pick up from the warehouse.

Schmucker is grateful for the opportunity to serve the Valley, but also for the door that opened up as a result of volunteering. “It does mean a lot. I just came here as a volunteer but was offered employment. It meant a lot,” he said.

Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard.

The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

On Monday, the volunteers were treated to a lunch from the food bank to thank them for their assistance during the pandemic.

As orders for the National Guard expire July 2, some of the volunteers will go back to school, while others go back to work, Warrant Officer candidate Adam Fullmer said.

“We’re going to be out of Task Force Fox. It’s standing down in about 60 days,” he said.

Task Force Fox encompasses the National Guard deployment around the state assisting agencies and organizations through the pandemic.

When the guard members were assigned to the food bank 15 months ago, 35 assisting. That number has shrunk to 15 now.

Last year was the “biggest” distribution year, Iberis said, with 15 million pounds of food handed out. This year, the food bank is on track to distribute 13 million pounds, Iberis said.

Most of the National Guard was activated for 30 days or more, Fullmer said. “We saw upwards of 75, 80 percent” of soldiers working extended assignments, ranging from food banks to helping in the prisons, to COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.

The National Guard also helped during what Fullmer called the “unemployment crisis,” helping to process claims throughout the pandemic in Ohio.

“We took a little of the edge off for some of the organizations,” Fullmer said.

“This is an illustration of when people work together, what can happen,” Iberis said. “This was such a smooth-working relationship” among the guard, food bank and its agencies, Iberis said, calling it “a mammoth collaboration.”

The food bank, like some other places, is returning to a state of pre-pandemic normalcy. Last week, phone calls were made to the normal roster of volunteers with about 80 percent already back in the warehouse this week, Iberis said.

Throughout the National Guard’s help and media coverage, something positive happened with volunteers.

“The Mahoning Valley took note of how these Guards people responded. That has resulted … in a barrage of new volunteer applications,” Iberis said. “It’s incredible.”

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]

<PA Update 30 June 2021.pdf>
<Defense Morning Clips 30 June 2021.pdf>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 6:42 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Col USAF 114 FW (USA); [redacted] Col USAF 114 FW (USA); [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: PA Update 30 June 2021

Copy Sir!

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Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 6:05 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] Col USAF 114 FW (USA) < [redacted] @us.af.mil>; [redacted] Col USAF 114 FW (USA) [redacted] @us.af.mil>; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil>
Subject: Fwd: PA Update 30 June 2021

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Begin forwarded message:

From: "Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Date: June 30, 2021 at 6:03:50 AM MDT
To: "Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil <mailto:michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil> >, [redacted] @ujs.state.sd.us <mailto [redacted] @ujs.state.sd.us> >, "Lair, Gregory W Brig Gen USAF 114 FW (USA)" <gregory.lair@us.af.mil <mailto:gregory.lair@us.af.mil> >, "Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)" <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil <mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >, '[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, '[redacted] CSM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, '[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, '[redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, '[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >
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Hit send to soon.

Everyone stay on your "A" game on this. People will be asking questions. Our position is we don't discuss the donation. We received a SAD Mission, just like every other. Our reimbursement comes from OEM (State $), just like it always does.

We don’t comment on mission specifics, for security reasons. All requests for information get referred to our PAO.

Governor Noem will be doing a press release later today.

JPM

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On Jun 30, 2021, at 5:53 AM, Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> > wrote:

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Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Date: June 30, 2021 at 4:59:45 AM MDT
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil <mailto:daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil> >
Cc: "[redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: PA Update 30 June 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, June 30, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III welcomes Her Excellency Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Minister of Defense to the Federal Republic of Germany, to the Pentagon in an enhanced honor cordon ceremony at 8 a.m. EDT.

- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael M. Gilday and Commandant of the Marine Corps David H. Berger participate in the keynote panel discussion at 11 a.m. EDT; Adm. Sam Paparo, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, provides the keynote address at 3:30 p.m. EDT; and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

- Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Douglas Bush; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition Frederick "Jay" Stefany; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Darlene Costello; Army Lt. Gen. Eric C. Peterson, deputy chief of staff, G-8, Department of the Army; Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Mark Wise, deputy commandant for Aviation, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and Read Adm. Andrew Loiselle, director, Air Warfare Division, N98, Department of the Navy, testify on Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force rotary wing aviation programs and planned modernization efforts in the fiscal 2022 budget request at 3 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces hearing on fiscal 2022 rotary wing aviation budget request, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX: Military.com (National) – Billionaire GOP Mega-Donor Funds National Guard Mission to US-Mexico Border – By Steve Beynon

The South Dakota National Guard is deploying on mission to the U.S. southern border. And the operation is being funded by a billionaire, not the government, Military.com has learned. Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

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AR, TX: KNWA (Regional) – Governor Hutchison authorizes 90-day deployment of up to 40 National Guard members to U.S./Mexico Border – By Gary Gilbert

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SC, AZ, TX: WMBF (Regional) – S.C. congressmen thank Gov. McMaster for sending National Guard troops to U.S. border – By Staff Reports

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2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military. McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

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FULL STORY BELOW

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FULL STORY BELOW

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FULL STORY BELOW

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FULL STORY BELOW

6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

https://ngpa.us/14471

FULL STORY BELOW

7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity. Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown. … Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard. The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

https://ngpa.us/14472

FULL STORY BELOW

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Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

"The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide," South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, said in a statement Tuesday.

Roughly 50 guardsmen will deploy on the mission, according to a South Dakota Guard spokesman. However, the mission is still in its early planning stages. It's unclear where the troops will deploy on the border, which unit will be sent or what the mission will be.

The National Guard declined to comment for this story or answer questions about the practice of allowing private donors to fund missions. A query to the Pentagon about the mission did not receive a response.

Willis Johnson is the founder of Copart, an online vehicle auction service, and has amassed a $2.2 billion fortune, according to Forbes. He resigned as CEO of Copart in 2010, according to reporting from the Nashville Post.

He is a Republican mega-donor, donating at least $1.5 million to conservative causes, including $50,000 to the "Trump Victory" political action committee, according to reporting from Bloomberg.

Former President Donald Trump made border security a key part of his presidency, ordering the deployment of troops to the border in April 2018 under a mission known as Operation Faithful Patriot. One of President Joe Biden's first acts as president was to suspend Trump's emergency declaration at the border, halting some government funds. The Associated Press reported that Trump is expected to visit the border with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, later this week.

Ian Fury, a spokesman for Noem, wouldn't confirm if Willis Johnson runs the foundation. When Military.com reached Johnson via telephone, he wouldn't confirm his identity and declined to be interviewed.

However, tax forms including for the foundation and donation records for Johnson share the same address in Franklin, Tennessee.

"Governor Noem welcomes any such donations to help alleviate the cost to South Dakota taxpayers," Fury told Military.com. Fury declined to disclose how much of a donation was made to cover the mission, saying revealing that would be "a security risk."

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2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military.

McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

She remembers the pilots who guided her, who said the days of female combat exclusion were numbered. They turned around to speak to her from the front seat, and said McCandless could help usher in a new chapter for the military.

"They encouraged me, and they said, 'hey, someday it'll change,'" McCandless said. "They have daughters. And I think was an awakening moment for them to think, 'wow, my daughter could be completely able to do this, from a physical and a mental standpoint, but won't be able to for one reason.'"

McCandless, 51, now finds herself in another moment of U.S. military history – serving as the first female leader of the D.C National Guard.

Beginning April 25, 2021, McCandless oversaw the end of the D.C. Guard's security mission at the Capitol, at a time when the Guard's role in Washington was redefined, and may still change in the months ahead.

She serves as the D.C. Guard's interim commanding general, appointed to the role after her predecessor, Maj. Gen. William Walker, became the new Sergeant-at-Arms for the U.S. House of Representatives. Her fate now lies with President Joe Biden, who is expected to decide over the next few months if McCandless will fill the position permanently.

In her first interview since assuming the role, McCandless said the 2,700 soldiers and airmen under her command would not be put under immense strain if Congress decides to create a "strike force" of Guard members assisting U.S. Capitol Police. She affirmed one of her top priorities is to improve the speed and efficiency of communication with federal and District law enforcement, should another episode of insurrection threaten the heart of American democracy.

Yet her concerns are also focused on new outreach to the people of the District, expanding a program to instill leadership in teenagers who've dropped out of high school.

McCandless said she is also mindful of allowing Guard members adequate time to reconnect with families, following months of unprecedented service.

"We just have to make sure that we're constantly looking at evaluating balancing," McCandless said. "It's a constant evolution. We can never let rest on where we are."

A Possible U.S. Capitol Strike Force

Within a $1.9 billion Capitol security bill, passed by one vote in the House, Democratic lawmakers authored the creation of a quick-reacting force of National Guard members on U.S. Capitol grounds. The aim of the force would be to assist Capitol Police, should a scenario similar to the January 6 insurrection repeat once more.

Republican lawmakers oppose the measure, with Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) writing in a joint statement, "use of the uniformed military in D.C. and the Capitol Complex is subject to complex statutory restrictions, and for good reason."

"We cannot and should not militarize the security of the Capitol Complex."

While McCandless and the Guard take no position on the matter, leaving the decision to civilian lawmakers, the general said such a force would not strain the Guard's command structure, or its personnel.

"I think that the planning would need to take place, but I don't see any major changes required," McCandless said.

When asked if major shifts would be required to make such a force work, McCandless replied, "Not in my opinion."

McCandless stressed the D.C. Guard serves as a force of last resort, after law enforcement exhausted all its resources. Yet she affirmed under her command, the Guard would respond to a potential Capitol crisis with greater speed than what was seen in January.

"I'm on my 60th day [leading the D.C. Guard,]" McCandless said. "And I've spent a lot of those days connecting with my downtown partners. So, U.S. Capitol Police chief, U.S. Park Police chief, the mayor's office. I'm making sure that we are communicating, we know who each other are, and kind of where the National Guard in D.C. is at this time."

"I've been able to participate with some of our team at the Defense Department also, who has obviously been looking into and interested in those response times," she continued. "There's a great amount of learning and collaboration going on at this time to ensure that if and when we have our federal or District partners that require our assistance or the assistance of the National Guard, that we're in a better place."

Reaching out to the D.C. Community

McCandless is the granddaughter of an Iwo Jima Marine Corps veteran, who landed 45 minutes into the first wave of U.S. troops on the island. PFC Theodore Below helped raised McCandless, and instilled within the future D.C. Guard commander a sense of service which persists into the present.

"He actually still lives with me in my home in Washington, D.C.," McCandless said. "The foundation he built for me always provided a very clear sight picture for me about the criticality of service."

The arc of service could be seen in a hangar at Joint Base Andrews, when McCandless joined more than 30 D.C. teenagers for an up-close look at F-16 fighters.

The adolescents recently dropped out of high school, but are now back on the path to a diploma. They are enrolled in the D.C. Guard program, known as the "Capital Guardian Youth ChalleNGe Academy."

"In that 16 to 18-year-old range, as we all know, there are a lot of distractions and there's a lot of competing priorities in their lives," McCandless said. "And I think what we're able to offer to them is a safe environment to go into, inspired by the military, but having no outcome to join the military."

McCandless described the program neither as bootcamp, nor ROTC, but as a five-month full-time living experience on a D.C. Guard suburban campus in Laurel, Md.

"It allows them to re-engage in physical fitness activities, understanding how to balance a checkbook, understanding the criticality of their diet and how that feeds them and they basically learn skills that we think that will help them complete their education, join the workforce, and then come back into the D.C. community," she said.

Online applications for the fall 2021 program are now open, with McCandless setting a goal to expand the academy's enrollment and recognition as a force for change. Cadets are under no obligation to join the Guard upon completion of the program.

D.C. Guard Moving Forward

"We have an F-16 mission that's getting ready to depart for the Middle East, and we also have National Guardsmen that have departed to go down to Guantánamo," the general offered, describing ongoing operations after the U.S. Capitol mission. "We're always constantly making sure we're prepared for the overseas war fight – that's the core mission of what we do. But we also have to maintain and train our readiness as almost a byproduct of that federal mission, to respond to natural disasters and manmade disasters inside the United States."

McCandless described as the D.C. Guard moves forward, post-insurrection, her mission is to help its airmen and soldiers reconnect – first with their families, then with their civilian jobs balanced alongside National Guard duties.

"Simultaneously, the country is coming out of the pandemic. So there's the desire for guardsmen to get out, socialize again," she said.

"We're also going to start working again on some of the basic military skills that they did not have the opportunity to train on while they were doing the Capitol mission."

At an expansive moment for the Guard in the public consciousness, McCandless said she feels prepared to meet the expectations of the city and the nation. Once as a pilot in her 20's who helped shape the face of the U.S. military, she now says she turns to the needs of the Guard in the nation's capital, a new arena to engage in a commanding change.

"It's really about the competency of the individuals and how they've been prepared through their lives to ascend to these roles," McCandless said. "I've been trying to prepare myself all along for roles that the military may ask me to perform… And I'm excited that it's now with the Guard where I call home."

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It started in 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition.

Airmen have supported the state's pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

Members of the Air National Guard came to Annapolis after the riot at the Capitol and provided protection for state lawmakers.

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4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading.

The situation has alarmed experts and public officials, who warn that this year's fire season could outpace last year's, which was the worst on record. Blazes have already ignited around California, where dry vegetation has left large swaths of the state primed to explode into flames, even as the federal government struggles to hire firefighters.

"We're in as high risk of a starting condition as we could ever expect," said Noah Diffenbaugh, a Stanford University professor who studies climate change and wildfires.

The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

Western states are eager for Washington to step up its commitment after President Trump repeatedly blamed them – particularly California, which he said failed to "clean your forests" of combustible vegetation – for failing to prevent and stop wildfires.

The threat comes amid staffing shortages at the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, problems exacerbated by low pay, competition from state and local fire departments and exhaustion from last year's fire season.

More than a month after seasonal hiring would typically have ended, the federal government is still trying to fill vacant positions on hot shot crews, the most elite and experienced firefighting teams. Although these crews are venerated for leading the attack against the most difficult fires, some have had so many veteran firefighters quit that they've been downgraded to a lower-ranking status.

Nationally, fire management teams are having to compete with each other for crews and equipment much earlier in the season than in years past. On June 22, the National Interagency Fire Center, which coordinates fire response from Boise, Idaho, raised the national preparedness to level 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, saying it was the second earliest it had reached that point.

The shortages have filled crews on the fire lines with anxiety and led to louder calls for change.

"We're at a point where we're simply going to be overwhelmed year after year going forward given the current systems we have in place," said Jim Whittington, an expert in wildland fire response. "We really need to look at the way we staff and work wildland fires, the way we fund them, and the way we take care of our people. We need a full reset."

Along with calls for higher pay – a first-year Forest Service firefighter currently earns a base wage of $13.45 an hour – there are those like Whittington who believe firefighting needs to become a full-time job. Currently, the federal government fills its ranks each summer with thousands of seasonal firefighters who don't get health insurance and are laid off after about six months. Some of these workers struggle at the end of the season as months of stress take their toll.

"We also need better mental health support for wildland firefighters," Whittington said. "Too many face a crisis when they are laid off."

Biden said last week that he was surprised to learn that some federal firefighters earn so little.

"That's a ridiculously low salary," he said, banging his hand on a table in the Roosevelt Room in the White House during a meeting with emergency officials.

Ben Elkind, a smokejumper for the forest service and a member of Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, a group that advocates for better pay and working conditions for federal firefighters, said the problem has left critical positions empty.

"People risking their lives for our public safety deserve to be paid a living wage," he said.

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5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

Insomnia compelled Morgan Davis to seek refuge on a small backyard patio offering sanctuary from the downward spiral of her career in the Kansas Army National Guard.

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"I just started shaking," Davis said. "I can't think. I can't breathe. My mind just goes blank."

The fractured bones of Davis' 21-year Army career – reports, correspondence, testimony, photos, complaints, notes and emails – could fill boxes. The flesh of her military ordeal took shape during a review of those documents and through sporadic conversations and interviews beginning five years ago and intensifying after her retirement in 2020.

Davis said her life in uniform ended prematurely because of an unwillingness to look the other way at perceived wrongdoing in the Kansas Guard. She attempted to work within boundaries of the military system while filing reports or complaints ranging in subject from administrative corruption to sexual abuse to distortion of the promotion process. She raised alarms about personal issues as well as situations involving others in the Kansas Guard.

Substance of those allegations catapulted Davis into years of conflict with command staff that viewed complainants as irritating troublemakers ripe for expulsion.

Davis said her lonely campaign was aimed at bringing accountability and transparency to the insular Kansas Guard, especially actions of some high-ranking staff allied with then-Adjutant General Lee Tafanelli. For nine years, the general was responsible for training and readiness of 7,000 personnel in the Army and Air components of the Kansas Guard. He served as senior military adviser to Govs. Sam Brownback, Jeff Colyer and Laura Kelly before retiring in March 2020.

Davis' struggle evolved to emphasize self-defense as individuals within the Kansas Guard retaliated against her, she said. Her best asset was technical expertise in personnel policy and procedure acquired in service of the Kansas Guard. She said she proceeded under threat of reassignment to a lesser position, loss of promotion and firing.

"It wasn't ever about me until it was survival," Davis said. "Everything that could have gone wrong with the process went wrong."

The battle ended last year with her departure from the Kansas Guard and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs affirming her disability for post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I'm still not over my breakup with the Army," Davis said. "I have a hard time talking about it. When I see people from the military, period, it is extremely distressing. I see the uniform, and then the alarms start going off. I follow from their feet up to the face. Even if I don't know them, it's upsetting."

Maj. Gen. David Weishaar, who has led the Kansas Guard since April 2020, wasn't able to discuss personnel issues of current or former soldiers and airmen.

Weishaar said his commitment during 40 years of service was to foster a culture of dignity and respect and to compel troops to apply standards equally.

"That is what I try to convey across the force," Weishaar said. "It doesn't matter if you're, in my case, a two-star general, or if you're a one-striper. The expectation is the same. Do we have people do dumb things? Absolutely. Whatever goes on in the community is happening in the force."

Weishaar said members of the Kansas Guard were expected to work daily to live up to military values and to better respond to societal problems of mental health, suicide, sexual abuse, gender-based harassment and other issues inevitably filtering into the armed forces. The Kansas Guard has adopted a series of programs to help members prevent, manage or overcome impediments to their service, he said.

Reform of military culture is a special challenge when only one-fourth of Kansas Guard employees work full-time and the part-timers report for duty as little as twice a month, the general said.

Paper warfare

Davis was instigator of reports aimed at members of the Kansas Guard reaching back to 2008, when she accused an officer of administrative fraud, waste and abuse. In a subsequent matter, Davis was ordered to be part of an investigation into allegations that officers and enlisted personnel participated in a sex scandal. She understood sensitivity of that inquiry and her involvement in the case didn't go unnoticed by peers, she said.

"I have a moral compass," Davis said. "My right and wrong does not have a gray."

In 2013, Davis said, Kansas Guard officers conspired to delay or block her from appearing before a promotion board necessary to climb the ladder to chief warrant officer 3. She responded by submitting a complaint alleging inappropriate influence on command. The Kansas Guard's inspector general found elements of reprisal, she said, before forwarding her case to the U.S. Army.

Davis said the Kansas Guard answered by launching a commander's inquiry accusing her of failure to properly process paperwork.

Davis said a Kansas Guard member confided her promotion process might proceed unfettered if her complaints stopped. She declined to retreat. Davis was eventually promoted.

The Army's IG investigation of alleged retaliation against Davis dragged on for 4½ years, which made it one of the department's longest-running cases. The resulting 60-page report was a disappointment to Davis. It either concluded allegations were unfounded or left issues unresolved because of lack of information, she said.

In 2016, prior to conclusion of the Army IG inquiry, Davis met with Kansas Guard officers to discuss physical problems with her hips and back. Convalescent leave was an option. Instead, she was handed a packet containing a notice of intent to involuntarily release her from full-time duty. The recommendation was to provide an honorable characterization of her military service, despite an assertion she "failed to complete assigned tasks."

Removal from full-time National Guard duty for the first time since 2002 would have made it more difficult to earn retirement benefits available after 20 years of full-time service.

Davis said evidence relied upon to justify demotion to part-time status hinged on a distorted selection of emails and "unwarranted negative counseling statements" provided by Kansas Guard personnel, including some who should not have been involved in rating her job performance. She said stacking the deck with complicit evaluators was part of a Kansas Guard playbook to flush people out the service.

She turned to then-Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, a Kansas Republican representing the 2nd District that includes Topeka. Davis sought help from Jenkins to speed completion of the U.S. Army inspector general's analysis of alleged retaliation against Davis by the Kansas Guard. Davis requested aid with retraction of the involuntary separation action or affirmation of due process rights while she challenged the action.

Davis presented herself to Jenkins as a "federal whistleblower with an ongoing inquiry into reprisal" involving members of the Kansas Guard.

"I frequently witnessed what I believed to be inappropriate conduct," Davis wrote in a document sent to Jenkins.

Davis said Jenkins' office took steps to intervene in her case, but nothing decisive came of that attempt by Kansas Guard officials to sever her full-time status.

The Kansas Guard issued an order in 2017 recalling Davis from remote duty to an office position in the organization's recruiting and retention command. By the end of that year, however, a medical board found Davis' chronic health condition rendered her unfit for duty. The Veterans Administration directed her not to return to work. That prompted a stalemate not resolved until her retirement in 2020.

'Toxic' culture

During the period from 2013 to 2015, a separate and much larger Kansas Guard investigation led by a one-star Air Guard general and an Army Guard lieutenant colonel produced compelling evidence of widespread malfeasance within the state's military organization. The roster of confirmed offenses attributed to officers and enlisted personnel of the Kansas Guard included acts of racism, enlistment fraud, bullying, sexual assault, retaliation and promotion manipulation.

The Kansas Guard investigating officers discovered confidential information gathered during their inquiry was leaked to people under scrutiny. The material was used to target individuals cooperating with the case, investigators reported.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported in 2017 that Brig. Gen. Scott Dold before retiring filed a final report on leadership shortcomings that concluded Tafanelli, the adjutant general, was responsible for systemic leadership problems within his command. Dold wrote in the report Kansas Guard leaders needed to place "soldier and airmen welfare and organizational needs before personal careerism and self-promotion."

"The predominant culture of this command has difficulty balancing legal, moral and ethical facets of decision making when addressing poor performance, toxic leadership and substantiated wrongdoing," Dold said.

In a response to the Capital-Journal's disclosures, Tafanelli said the way Kansas Guard members answered the call to duty during war, disaster and emergency shouldn't be overshadowed by a handful of corrupt colleagues.

"There are a few that will choose to act in an inappropriate manner and bring discredit to themselves and their service," he said.

Grab you, anywhere

Davis said she was tormented by what she perceived as indifference among some in the Kansas Guard to sexual harassment and assault. In her experience, she said, too many men in the Kansas Guard were complicit in creation of hostile work environments for women.

"It is not unusual for a female to be in there and they just walk up and grab you. Anywhere," Davis said.

Davis said a former Kansas Guard battalion commander, who she viewed as a friend, sexually assaulted her three years ago. A Veterans Affairs employee who offered to help Davis maneuver through the VA benefit system exposed himself to her, she said.

During a helicopter training assignment early in her Kansas Guard career, she said, a military doctor inappropriately penetrated her during a routine exam. Davis said she was sexually assaulted at age 18 by three men. It was after she enlisted, but before basic training.

Weishaar, the Kansas Guard's top officer and adjutant general, said sexual assault and sexual harassment were a menace to the military and society at large.

"When it happens – not if, because it does happen – we're going to take care of the victim," he said.

Jody Cope, the Kansas Guard's equal employment manager, said no one should accept the stereotype that sexual harassment was rampant in the Kansas Guard. The Kansas Guard's annual reports tracking formal complaints of sexual harassment showed six were submitted in 2015, six in 2016 and two in 2017. Comparable information for subsequent years wasn't released by the Kansas Guard.

Cope said the Kansas Guard had success resolving workplace conflicts with mediation. If allegations in an administrative complaint submitted to the Kansas Guard were substantiated, she said, there could be consequences.

“We’ve seen a really great increase over the last couple years of taking administrative action to address those,” Cope said.

Michelle Ferrer, sexual assault response coordinator for the Kansas Guard, said her office offered confidentiality to employees reporting sexual misconduct. The exception to this rule was when a person was viewed as a danger to others or likely to engage in self-harm, she said. If an individual decided against pursuit of a formal complaint, she said, the paperwork could be shredded.

“That helps people to feel comfortable they can come talk to us,” Ferrer said.

Potential sex crimes are referred to local law enforcement agencies because the Kansas Guard doesn’t have authority to proceed, said Maj. Jacob McElwee, the Kansas Guard’s judge advocate general.

Outcome of civilian criminal cases can influence military administrative actions involving Kansas Guard members. If the local prosecutor declined to file charges in a case, it’s possible the National Guard Bureau’s office of complex investigations could review allegations.

“Either way, we have an outside agency coming in and making sure that everything’s being followed,” McElwee said.

Weight of suicide

Davis said she could tick off names of Kansas Guard members who had taken their own life. She’s felt overwhelmed by the thought that she tried but failed to help some of the deceased. She also is convinced not enough was being done to honor former Kansas Guard members who bring an end to their lives.

She recalled a poignant moment during a meeting in which Kansas Guard officers asked her if dismissing a specific soldier from the force would cause him to commit suicide. She said she advised there was substantial risk. The soldier was kicked out. His suicide followed, she said.

In the past 6½ years, Kansas Guard officials said, 19 members of the Air or Army Guard in Kansas committed suicide. An average of nearly three suicides occurred annually from 2015 to the present. Fifteen of those people were in the Army Guard, while four were in the Air Guard.

The Kansas Guard doesn’t keep statistics on former Kansas Guard members who chose to commit suicide. Care and treatment of veterans with suicidal thoughts rests with the VA or private health professionals.

Terry Williams, an Air Guard colonel and the Kansas Guard’s state chaplain, said the organization’s training of people to recognize warning signs of trouble had improved in the past 15 years. Military chaplains have benefit of offering total confidentiality to people seeking assistance, he said. Statistics don’t reveal the number of men and women saved through these interventions, he said.

“I’ve done eight or nine funerals for suicides,” Williams said. “I’ve been at bedsides, gravesides, hospitals. My perspective encompasses all of that. I have a programmatic side, but it’s very personal to me, too.”

He recalled a January service with snow on the ground and a wind-chill index of 15 degrees below.

“I could hear the daughter cry above ‘Taps,’?” said Williams, who has been in the Kansas Guard for 24 years and deployed overseas twice, including in 2009 to Iraq.

Angie Gabel, the 190th Air Refueling Wing's director of psychological health, said she was a champion of ASIST, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. Hundreds involved with the Kansas Guard have completed ASIST training to learn how to talk with people suspected of thinking about or planning suicide, she said.

Problems with personal relationships, money, job stress, legal issues or communication barriers are often indicators of a person in crisis, she said.

Gabel said a persistent challenge was overcoming a belief among soldiers and airmen that admitting to mental health challenges automatically destroyed careers.

"We still have that mentality of, 'If I say something my career is over, point blank, in the military.' We are slowly changing that mindset. It's not over. It's not a career-ender," Gabel said.

'Expendable'

Davis, 39, opposed her exit from the Kansas Guard last year because she thought it was unfair and meant she would never qualify for retirement benefits more generous than disability compensation. The end came without pomp and circumstance in April 2020.

Termination of the employee-employer relationship allowed her to speak more freely about the citizen-soldier organization's personnel issues. Many of those conversations were difficult for her. Others sparked a determination to keep fighting. She also shared a belief the mountain she was climbing could be too high, too far.

Davis said her forced exit was the consequence of her decisions to stare down the barrel of a Kansas Guard culture still anchored by a good-old-boy network. Reviewing threads of her Kansas Guard life suggests she was collateral damage of a toxic military environment, she said.

Administrative conflict that enveloped her felt like an organized effort to induce enough despair to drive her off, she said. The experience offered insight into factors contributing to the national plague of military suicide, she said.

"We're expendable," Davis said. "The decade has been really hard. The last five years has tried to kill me. It never had to be that way."

It was not the way her career was to have evolved when she enlisted as a teenager and joined a UH-60 Blackhawk crew in 1999. She was the daughter of a highly decorated Army officer. She had risen in rank while completing a degree in criminal justice at Washburn University in 2006 and a master's degree in business administration from Friends University in 2015.

She never deployed for combat despite volunteering to serve in hostile areas, but earned an Army commendation medal in 2010. She served more than a dozen years as a senior human resource officer in Kansas.

She said demise of her Army career failed to extinguish a conviction that military service provided rewarding experiences.

"I loved it. I loved the camaraderie. I loved taking care of soldiers. I loved learning new things," Davis said. "I liked being able to obtain the knowledge and ability to do things – write policy or figure things out and then go to the boss: 'OK, this is what you want. Here are your options.'?"

After months of evaluation, the VA rated Davis as 100% disabled. It was an analysis based primarily on diagnosis of her PTSD. Medical records indicated she suffered anxiety and depression in addition to physical limitations.

Fighting to get better

Not quite middle-aged, Davis' body and mind have been worn down. She has a new left hip. The plan to replace the right hip was postponed. Her right knee was operated on, but issues linger. She has dental woes from grinding her teeth.

Her future is clouded by realities of PTSD. Therapy was helpful at times and challenging in other moments, she said. Because of the pandemic, she unexpectedly discovered remote conversations with a therapist were easier than in-person discussions.

"I couldn't cry in front of her," Davis said. "I'd have my work face on. We weren't getting to the root of any problems."

Davis said her recovery had been impeded by reading or being told about ongoing controversy in the Kansas Guard. The intel reminded her there was no certainty about what her advocacy accomplished.

"I complained about people at the very top. Nobody wants to have anything to do with me," Davis said. "In retrospect, I went through a lot more than I realized at the time. I would like an apology."

https://ngpa.us/14470

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6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

"I was in relationships – or dating people – (I) had to be very careful about who I was out to, where I was out, how I was, went out and about my daily life in public because that could have a consequence on my military career," Roth said.

The now-defunct policy forced gay and lesbian members of the military to serve in silence.

When it ended in 2011, Roth said it was a non-event, and the fears that it would undermine military professionalism didn't happen.

"I think what has changed is (that) I can be open and honest with my teammates," Roth said. "I can be my authentic self, I can share who I am, and vice versa. That builds trust and confidence."

Roth said about 13,000 gay and lesbian troops were forced out of the military under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Since then, Roth said things have gotten better.

"As we move forward as a military, I think we can be very proud of our diversity, how we're changing our culture to be more welcoming people and let the number of people the very small number of people who raise their hand to say, 'I want to serve,' need all of our support," he said.

Roth said the biggest surprise for him came last year – he had the opportunity to attend a Pride luncheon on a military base while serving overseas.

"It was the first time I saw visible evidence of (a) complete shift in how we approach it," he said.

Roth said the National Guard went further, sending out a letter in support of its LGBTQ members that noted celebrating pride and recognizing the contributions of LGBTQ to people who serve in the military.

Roth said it took him several years after the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" before he came out – since he doesn't believe it has had any effect on his military career.

https://ngpa.us/14471

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7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity.

Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown.

"I didn't have a job to go back to after orders," Schmucker, 20, said.

He was approached by a member of the food bank's management, who offered Schmucker a role pulling orders, preparing food for various agencies to pick up from the warehouse.

Schmucker is grateful for the opportunity to serve the Valley, but also for the door that opened up as a result of volunteering. "It does mean a lot. I just came here as a volunteer but was offered employment. It meant a lot," he said.

Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard.

The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

On Monday, the volunteers were treated to a lunch from the food bank to thank them for their assistance during the pandemic.

As orders for the National Guard expire July 2, some of the volunteers will go back to school, while others go back to work, Warrant Officer candidate Adam Fullmer said.

"We're going to be out of Task Force Fox. It's standing down in about 60 days," he said.

Task Force Fox encompasses the National Guard deployment around the state assisting agencies and organizations through the pandemic.

When the guard members were assigned to the food bank 15 months ago, 35 assisting. That number has shrunk to 15 now.

Last year was the "biggest" distribution year, Iberis said, with 15 million pounds of food handed out. This year, the food bank is on track to distribute 13 million pounds, Iberis said.

Most of the National Guard was activated for 30 days or more, Fullmer said. "We saw upwards of 75, 80 percent" of soldiers working extended assignments, ranging from food banks to helping in the prisons, to COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.

The National Guard also helped during what Fullmer called the "unemployment crisis," helping to process claims throughout the pandemic in Ohio.

"We took a little of the edge off for some of the organizations," Fullmer said.

"This is an illustration of when people work together, what can happen," Iberis said. "This was such a smooth-working relationship" among the guard, food bank and its agencies, Iberis said, calling it "a mammoth collaboration."

The food bank, like some other places, is returning to a state of pre-pandemic normalcy. Last week, phone calls were made to the normal roster of volunteers with about 80 percent already back in the warehouse this week, Iberis said.

Throughout the National Guard's help and media coverage, something positive happened with volunteers.

"The Mahoning Valley took note of how these Guards people responded. That has resulted … in a barrage of new volunteer applications," Iberis said. "It's incredible."

https://ngpa.us/14472

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]

<PA Update 30 June 2021.pdf>

<Defense Morning Clips 30 June 2021.pdf>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 6:01 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Re: PA Update 30 June 2021

Interesting

From: "Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 at 06:53:10
To: "Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil <mailto:michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] @ujs.state.sd.us <mailto [redacted] @ujs.state.sd.us> >, "Lair, Gregory W Brig Gen USAF 114 FW (USA)" <gregory.lair@us.af.mil <mailto:gregory.lair@us.af.mil> >, "Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)" <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil <mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, "[redacted] CSM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, "[redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >, "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Subject: Fwd: PA Update 30 June 2021

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Begin forwarded message:

> From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" [redacted] @mail.mil>
> Date: June 30, 2021 at 4:59:45 AM MDT
> To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
> Cc: "[redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" [redacted] @mail.mil>
> Subject: PA Update 30 June 2021
>
> GEN Hokanson,
>
> Today in the Department of Defense, June 30, 2021
>
> • Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III welcomes Her Excellency Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Minister of Defense to the Federal Republic of Germany, to the Pentagon in an enhanced honor cordon ceremony at 8 a.m. EDT.
>
> • Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael M. Gilday and Commandant of the Marine Corps David H. Berger participate in the keynote panel discussion at 11 a.m. EDT; Adm. Sam Paparo, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, provides the keynote address at 3:30 p.m. EDT; and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

- Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Douglas Bush; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition Frederick "Jay" Stefany; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Darlene Costello; Army Lt. Gen. Eric C. Peterson, deputy chief of staff, G-8, Department of the Army; Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Mark Wise, deputy commandant for Aviation, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and Read Adm. Andrew Loiselle, director, Air Warfare Division, N98, Department of the Navy, testify on Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force rotary wing aviation programs and planned modernization efforts in the fiscal 2022 budget request at 3 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces hearing on fiscal 2022 rotary wing aviation budget request, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX: Military.com (National) – Billionaire GOP Mega-Donor Funds National Guard Mission to US-Mexico Border – By Steve Beynon

The South Dakota National Guard is deploying on mission to the U.S. southern border. And the operation is being funded by a billionaire, not the government, Military.com has learned. Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

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AR, TX: KNWA (Regional) – Governor Hutchison authorizes 90-day deployment of up to 40 National Guard members to U.S./Mexico Border – By Gary Gilbert

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SC, AZ, TX: WMBF (Regional) – S.C. congressmen thank Gov. McMaster for sending National Guard troops to U.S. border – By Staff Reports

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FULL STORY BELOW

2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military. McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

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FULL STORY BELOW

3. MD: Fox Baltimore (Regional) – [Video] MD Air National Guard celebrates 100 years of service – By Staff Reports

The Maryland Air National Guard kicked off a celebration commemorating 100 years of service to the state. It started in 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition. Airmen have supported the state's pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

https://ngpa.us/14477

FULL STORY BELOW

4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading. … The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

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FULL STORY BELOW

5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

Insomnia compelled Morgan Davis to seek refuge on a small backyard patio offering sanctuary from the downward spiral of her career in the Kansas Army National Guard. On that November evening, the outdoor cocoon proved insufficient. Davis drove to a convenience store in Topeka where the mission was to slip in and out unrecognized, part of a concerted effort to adopt a lower-profile approach to living. As she exited the business, she bumped into a former Kansas Guard officer. Casual banter took a different tone by shifting to Davis' military status.

https://ngpa.us/14470

FULL STORY BELOW

6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

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FULL STORY BELOW

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Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

"The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide," South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, said in a statement Tuesday.

Roughly 50 guardsmen will deploy on the mission, according to a South Dakota Guard spokesman. However, the mission is still in its early planning stages. It's unclear where the troops will deploy on the border, which unit will be sent or what the mission will be.

The National Guard declined to comment for this story or answer questions about the practice of allowing private donors to fund missions. A query to the Pentagon about the mission did not receive a response.

Willis Johnson is the founder of Copart, an online vehicle auction service, and has amassed a $2.2 billion fortune, according to Forbes. He resigned as CEO of Copart in 2010, according to reporting from the Nashville Post.

He is a Republican mega-donor, donating at least $1.5 million to conservative causes, including $50,000 to the "Trump Victory" political action committee, according to reporting from Bloomberg.

Former President Donald Trump made border security a key part of his presidency, ordering the deployment of troops to the border in April 2018 under a mission known as Operation Faithful Patriot. One of President Joe Biden's first acts as president was to suspend Trump's emergency declaration at the border, halting some government funds. The Associated Press reported that Trump is expected to visit the border with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, later this week.

Ian Fury, a spokesman for Noem, wouldn't confirm if Willis Johnson runs the foundation. When Military.com reached Johnson via telephone, he wouldn't confirm his identity and declined to be interviewed.

However, tax forms including for the foundation and donation records for Johnson share the same address in Franklin, Tennessee.

"Governor Noem welcomes any such donations to help alleviate the cost to South Dakota taxpayers," Fury told Military.com. Fury declined to disclose how much of a donation was made to cover the mission, saying revealing that would be "a security risk."

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2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military.

McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

She remembers the pilots who guided her, who said the days of female combat exclusion were numbered. They turned around to speak to her from the front seat, and said McCandless could help usher in a new chapter for the military.

"They encouraged me, and they said, 'hey, someday it'll change,'" McCandless said. "They have daughters. And I think was an awakening moment for them to think, 'wow, my daughter could be completely able to do this, from a physical and a mental standpoint, but won't be able to for one reason.'"

McCandless, 51, now finds herself in another moment of U.S. military history – serving as the first female leader of the D.C National Guard.

Beginning April 25, 2021, McCandless oversaw the end of the D.C. Guard's security mission at the Capitol, at a time when the Guard's role in Washington was redefined, and may still change in the months ahead.

She serves as the D.C. Guard's interim commanding general, appointed to the role after her predecessor, Maj. Gen. William Walker, became the new Sergeant-at-Arms for the U.S. House of Representatives. Her fate now lies with President Joe Biden, who is expected to decide over the next few months if McCandless will fill the position permanently.

In her first interview since assuming the role, McCandless said the 2,700 soldiers and airmen under her command would not be put under immense strain if Congress decides to create a "strike force" of Guard members assisting U.S. Capitol Police. She affirmed one of her top priorities is to improve the speed and efficiency of communication with federal and District law enforcement, should another episode of insurrection threaten the heart of American democracy.

Yet her concerns are also focused on new outreach to the people of the District, expanding a program to instill leadership in teenagers who've dropped out of high school.

McCandless said she is also mindful of allowing Guard members adequate time to reconnect with families, following months of unprecedented service.

"We just have to make sure that we're constantly looking at evaluating balancing," McCandless said. "It's a constant evolution. We can never let rest on where we are."

A Possible U.S. Capitol Strike Force

Within a $1.9 billion Capitol security bill, passed by one vote in the House, Democratic lawmakers authored the creation of a quick-reacting force of National Guard members on U.S. Capitol grounds. The aim of the force would be to assist Capitol Police, should a scenario similar to the January 6 insurrection repeat once more.

Republican lawmakers oppose the measure, with Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) writing in a joint statement, "use of the uniformed military in D.C. and the Capitol Complex is subject to complex statutory restrictions, and for good reason."

“We cannot and should not militarize the security of the Capitol Complex.”

While McCandless and the Guard take no position on the matter, leaving the decision to civilian lawmakers, the general said such a force would not strain the Guard’s command structure, or its personnel.

“I think that the planning would need to take place, but I don’t see any major changes required,” McCandless said.

When asked if major shifts would be required to make such a force work, McCandless replied, “Not in my opinion.”

McCandless stressed the D.C. Guard serves as a force of last resort, after law enforcement exhausted all its resources. Yet she affirmed under her command, the Guard would respond to a potential Capitol crisis with greater speed than what was seen in January.

“I’m on my 60th day [leading the D.C. Guard,]” McCandless said. “And I’ve spent a lot of those days connecting with my downtown partners. So, U.S. Capitol Police chief, U.S. Park Police chief, the mayor’s office. I’m making sure that we are communicating, we know who each other are, and kind of where the National Guard in D.C. is at this time.”

“I’ve been able to participate with some of our team at the Defense Department also, who has obviously been looking into and interested in those response times,” she continued. “There’s a great amount of learning and collaboration going on at this time to ensure that if and when we have our federal or District partners that require our assistance or the assistance of the National Guard, that we’re in a better place.”

Reaching out to the D.C. Community

McCandless is the granddaughter of an Iwo Jima Marine Corps veteran, who landed 45 minutes into the first wave of U.S. troops on the island. PFC Theodore Below helped raised McCandless, and instilled within the future D.C. Guard commander a sense of service which persists into the present.

“He actually still lives with me in my home in Washington, D.C.,” McCandless said. “The foundation he built for me always provided a very clear sight picture for me about the criticality of service.”

The arc of service could be seen in a hangar at Joint Base Andrews, when McCandless joined more than 30 D.C. teenagers for an up-close look at F-16 fighters.

The adolescents recently dropped out of high school, but are now back on the path to a diploma. They are enrolled in the D.C. Guard program, known as the “Capital Guardian Youth ChalleNGe Academy.”

“In that 16 to 18-year-old range, as we all know, there are a lot of distractions and there’s a lot of competing priorities in their lives,” McCandless said. “And I think what we’re able to offer to them is a safe environment to go into, inspired by the military, but having no outcome to join the military.”

McCandless described the program neither as bootcamp, nor ROTC, but as a five-month full-time living experience on a D.C. Guard suburban campus in Laurel, Md.

“It allows them to re-engage in physical fitness activities, understanding how to balance a checkbook, understanding the criticality of their diet and how that feeds them and they basically learn skills that we think that will help them complete their education, join the workforce, and then come back into the D.C. community,” she said.

Online applications for the fall 2021 program are now open, with McCandless setting a goal to expand the academy's enrollment and recognition as a force for change. Cadets are under no obligation to join the Guard upon completion of the program.

D.C. Guard Moving Forward

"We have an F-16 mission that's getting ready to depart for the Middle East, and we also have National Guardsmen that have departed to go down to Guantánamo," the general offered, describing ongoing operations after the U.S. Capitol mission. "We're always constantly making sure we're prepared for the overseas war fight – that's the core mission of what we do. But we also have to maintain and train our readiness as almost a byproduct of that federal mission, to respond to natural disasters and manmade disasters inside the United States."

McCandless described as the D.C. Guard moves forward, post-insurrection, her mission is to help its airmen and soldiers reconnect – first with their families, then with their civilian jobs balanced alongside National Guard duties.

"Simultaneously, the country is coming out of the pandemic. So there's the desire for guardsmen to get out, socialize again," she said.

"We're also going to start working again on some of the basic military skills that they did not have the opportunity to train on while they were doing the Capitol mission."

At an expansive moment for the Guard in the public consciousness, McCandless said she feels prepared to meet the expectations of the city and the nation. Once as a pilot in her 20's who helped shape the face of the U.S. military, she now says she turns to the needs of the Guard in the nation's capital, a new arena to engage in a commanding change.

"It's really about the competency of the individuals and how they've been prepared through their lives to ascend to these roles," McCandless said. "I've been trying to prepare myself all along for roles that the military may ask me to perform… And I'm excited that it's now with the Guard where I call home."

https://ngpa.us/14476

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It started in 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition.

Airmen have supported the state's pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

Members of the Air National Guard came to Annapolis after the riot at the Capitol and provided protection for state lawmakers.

https://ngpa.us/14477

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4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading.

The situation has alarmed experts and public officials, who warn that this year's fire season could outpace last year's, which was the worst on record. Blazes have already ignited around California, where dry vegetation has left large swaths of the state primed to explode into flames, even as the federal government struggles to hire firefighters.

"We're in as high risk of a starting condition as we could ever expect," said Noah Diffenbaugh, a Stanford University professor who studies climate change and wildfires.

The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

Western states are eager for Washington to step up its commitment after President Trump repeatedly blamed them – particularly California, which he said failed to "clean your forests" of combustible vegetation – for failing to prevent and stop wildfires.

The threat comes amid staffing shortages at the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, problems exacerbated by low pay, competition from state and local fire departments and exhaustion from last year's fire season.

More than a month after seasonal hiring would typically have ended, the federal government is still trying to fill vacant positions on hot shot crews, the most elite and experienced firefighting teams. Although these crews are venerated for leading the attack against the most difficult fires, some have had so many veteran firefighters quit that they've been downgraded to a lower-ranking status.

Nationally, fire management teams are having to compete with each other for crews and equipment much earlier in the season than in years past. On June 22, the National Interagency Fire Center, which coordinates fire response from Boise, Idaho, raised the national preparedness to level 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, saying it was the second earliest it had reached that point.

The shortages have filled crews on the fire lines with anxiety and led to louder calls for change.

"We're at a point where we're simply going to be overwhelmed year after year going forward given the current systems we have in place," said Jim Whittington, an expert in wildland fire response. "We really need to look at the way we staff and work wildland fires, the way we fund them, and the way we take care of our people. We need a full reset."

Along with calls for higher pay – a first-year Forest Service firefighter currently earns a base wage of $13.45 an hour – there are those like Whittington who believe firefighting needs to become a full-time job. Currently, the federal government fills its ranks each summer with thousands of seasonal firefighters who don't get health insurance and are laid off after about six months. Some of these workers struggle at the end of the season as months of stress take their toll.

"We also need better mental health support for wildland firefighters," Whittington said. "Too many face a crisis when they are laid off."

Biden said last week that he was surprised to learn that some federal firefighters earn so little.

“That’s a ridiculously low salary,” he said, banging his hand on a table in the Roosevelt Room in the White House during a meeting with emergency officials.

Ben Elkind, a smokejumper for the forest service and a member of Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, a group that advocates for better pay and working conditions for federal firefighters, said the problem has left critical positions empty.

“People risking their lives for our public safety deserve to be paid a living wage,” he said.

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5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

Insomnia compelled Morgan Davis to seek refuge on a small backyard patio offering sanctuary from the downward spiral of her career in the Kansas Army National Guard.

On that November evening, the outdoor cocoon proved insufficient. Davis drove to a convenience store in Topeka where the mission was to slip in and out unrecognized, part of a concerted effort to adopt a lower-profile approach to living. As she exited the business, she bumped into a former Kansas Guard officer. Casual banter took a different tone by shifting to Davis’ military status.

“I just started shaking,” Davis said. “I can’t think. I can’t breathe. My mind just goes blank.”

The fractured bones of Davis’ 21-year Army career – reports, correspondence, testimony, photos, complaints, notes and emails – could fill boxes. The flesh of her military ordeal took shape during a review of those documents and through sporadic conversations and interviews beginning five years ago and intensifying after her retirement in 2020.

Davis said her life in uniform ended prematurely because of an unwillingness to look the other way at perceived wrongdoing in the Kansas Guard. She attempted to work within boundaries of the military system while filing reports or complaints ranging in subject from administrative corruption to sexual abuse to distortion of the promotion process. She raised alarms about personal issues as well as situations involving others in the Kansas Guard.

Substance of those allegations catapulted Davis into years of conflict with command staff that viewed complainants as irritating troublemakers ripe for expulsion.

Davis said her lonely campaign was aimed at bringing accountability and transparency to the insular Kansas Guard, especially actions of some high-ranking staff allied with then-Adjutant General Lee Tafanelli. For nine years, the general was responsible for training and readiness of 7,000 personnel in the Army and Air components of the Kansas Guard. He served as senior military adviser to Govs. Sam Brownback, Jeff Colyer and Laura Kelly before retiring in March 2020.

Davis’ struggle evolved to emphasize self-defense as individuals within the Kansas Guard retaliated against her, she said. Her best asset was technical expertise in personnel policy and procedure acquired in service of the Kansas Guard. She said she proceeded under threat of reassignment to a lesser position, loss of promotion and firing.

“It wasn’t ever about me until it was survival,” Davis said. “Everything that could have gone wrong with the process went wrong.”

The battle ended last year with her departure from the Kansas Guard and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs affirming her disability for post-traumatic stress disorder.

“I’m still not over my breakup with the Army,” Davis said. “I have a hard time talking about it. When I see people from the military, period, it is extremely distressing. I see the uniform, and then the alarms start going off. I follow from their feet up to the face. Even if I don’t know them, it’s upsetting.”

Maj. Gen. David Weishaar, who has led the Kansas Guard since April 2020, wasn’t able to discuss personnel issues of current or former soldiers and airmen.

Weishaar said his commitment during 40 years of service was to foster a culture of dignity and respect and to compel troops to apply standards equally.

“That is what I try to convey across the force,” Weishaar said. “It doesn’t matter if you’re, in my case, a two-star general, or if you’re a one-striper. The expectation is the same. Do we have people do dumb things? Absolutely. Whatever goes on in the community is happening in the force.”

Weishaar said members of the Kansas Guard were expected to work daily to live up to military values and to better respond to societal problems of mental health, suicide, sexual abuse, gender-based harassment and other issues inevitably filtering into the armed forces. The Kansas Guard has adopted a series of programs to help members prevent, manage or overcome impediments to their service, he said.

Reform of military culture is a special challenge when only one-fourth of Kansas Guard employees work full-time and the part-timers report for duty as little as twice a month, the general said.

Paper warfare

Davis was instigator of reports aimed at members of the Kansas Guard reaching back to 2008, when she accused an officer of administrative fraud, waste and abuse. In a subsequent matter, Davis was ordered to be part of an investigation into allegations that officers and enlisted personnel participated in a sex scandal. She understood sensitivity of that inquiry and her involvement in the case didn’t go unnoticed by peers, she said.

“I have a moral compass,” Davis said. “My right and wrong does not have a gray.”

In 2013, Davis said, Kansas Guard officers conspired to delay or block her from appearing before a promotion board necessary to climb the ladder to chief warrant officer 3. She responded by submitting a complaint alleging inappropriate influence on command. The Kansas Guard’s inspector general found elements of reprisal, she said, before forwarding her case to the U.S. Army.

Davis said the Kansas Guard answered by launching a commander’s inquiry accusing her of failure to properly process paperwork.

Davis said a Kansas Guard member confided her promotion process might proceed unfettered if her complaints stopped. She declined to retreat. Davis was eventually promoted.

The Army’s IG investigation of alleged retaliation against Davis dragged on for 4½ years, which made it one of the department’s longest-running cases. The resulting 60-page report was a disappointment to Davis. It either concluded allegations were unfounded or left issues unresolved because of lack of information, she said.

In 2016, prior to conclusion of the Army IG inquiry, Davis met with Kansas Guard officers to discuss physical problems with her hips and back. Convalescent leave was an option. Instead, she was handed a packet containing a notice of intent to involuntarily release her from full-time duty. The recommendation was to provide an honorable characterization of her military service, despite an assertion she "failed to complete assigned tasks."

Removal from full-time National Guard duty for the first time since 2002 would have made it more difficult to earn retirement benefits available after 20 years of full-time service.

Davis said evidence relied upon to justify demotion to part-time status hinged on a distorted selection of emails and "unwarranted negative counseling statements" provided by Kansas Guard personnel, including some who should not have been involved in rating her job performance. She said stacking the deck with complicit evaluators was part of a Kansas Guard playbook to flush people out the service.

She turned to then-Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, a Kansas Republican representing the 2nd District that includes Topeka. Davis sought help from Jenkins to speed completion of the U.S. Army inspector general's analysis of alleged retaliation against Davis by the Kansas Guard. Davis requested aid with retraction of the involuntary separation action or affirmation of due process rights while she challenged the action.

Davis presented herself to Jenkins as a "federal whistleblower with an ongoing inquiry into reprisal" involving members of the Kansas Guard.

"I frequently witnessed what I believed to be inappropriate conduct," Davis wrote in a document sent to Jenkins.

Davis said Jenkins' office took steps to intervene in her case, but nothing decisive came of that attempt by Kansas Guard officials to sever her full-time status.

The Kansas Guard issued an order in 2017 recalling Davis from remote duty to an office position in the organization's recruiting and retention command. By the end of that year, however, a medical board found Davis' chronic health condition rendered her unfit for duty. The Veterans Administration directed her not to return to work. That prompted a stalemate not resolved until her retirement in 2020.

'Toxic' culture

During the period from 2013 to 2015, a separate and much larger Kansas Guard investigation led by a one-star Air Guard general and an Army Guard lieutenant colonel produced compelling evidence of widespread malfeasance within the state's military organization. The roster of confirmed offenses attributed to officers and enlisted personnel of the Kansas Guard included acts of racism, enlistment fraud, bullying, sexual assault, retaliation and promotion manipulation.

The Kansas Guard investigating officers discovered confidential information gathered during their inquiry was leaked to people under scrutiny. The material was used to target individuals cooperating with the case, investigators reported.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported in 2017 that Brig. Gen. Scott Dold before retiring filed a final report on leadership shortcomings that concluded Tafanelli, the adjutant general, was responsible for systemic leadership problems within his command. Dold wrote in the report Kansas Guard leaders needed to place "soldier and airmen welfare and organizational needs before personal careerism and self-promotion."

"The predominant culture of this command has difficulty balancing legal, moral and ethical facets of decision making when addressing poor performance, toxic leadership and substantiated wrongdoing," Dold said.

In a response to the Capital-Journal's disclosures, Tafanelli said the way Kansas Guard members answered the call to duty during war, disaster and emergency shouldn't be overshadowed by a handful of corrupt colleagues.

"There are a few that will choose to act in an inappropriate manner and bring discredit to themselves and their service," he said.

Grab you, anywhere

Davis said she was tormented by what she perceived as indifference among some in the Kansas Guard to sexual harassment and assault. In her experience, she said, too many men in the Kansas Guard were complicit in creation of hostile work environments for women.

"It is not unusual for a female to be in there and they just walk up and grab you. Anywhere," Davis said.

Davis said a former Kansas Guard battalion commander, who she viewed as a friend, sexually assaulted her three years ago. A Veterans Affairs employee who offered to help Davis maneuver through the VA benefit system exposed himself to her, she said.

During a helicopter training assignment early in her Kansas Guard career, she said, a military doctor inappropriately penetrated her during a routine exam. Davis said she was sexually assaulted at age 18 by three men. It was after she enlisted, but before basic training.

Weishaar, the Kansas Guard's top officer and adjutant general, said sexual assault and sexual harassment were a menace to the military and society at large.

"When it happens – not if, because it does happen – we're going to take care of the victim," he said.

Jody Cope, the Kansas Guard's equal employment manager, said no one should accept the stereotype that sexual harassment was rampant in the Kansas Guard. The Kansas Guard's annual reports tracking formal complaints of sexual harassment showed six were submitted in 2015, six in 2016 and two in 2017. Comparable information for subsequent years wasn't released by the Kansas Guard.

Cope said the Kansas Guard had success resolving workplace conflicts with mediation. If allegations in an administrative complaint submitted to the Kansas Guard were substantiated, she said, there could be consequences.

"We've seen a really great increase over the last couple years of taking administrative action to address those," Cope said.

Michelle Ferrer, sexual assault response coordinator for the Kansas Guard, said her office offered confidentiality to employees reporting sexual misconduct. The exception to this rule was when a person was viewed as a danger to others or likely to engage in self-harm, she said. If an individual decided against pursuit of a formal complaint, she said, the paperwork could be shredded.

"That helps people to feel comfortable they can come talk to us," Ferrer said.

Potential sex crimes are referred to local law enforcement agencies because the Kansas Guard doesn't have authority to proceed, said Maj. Jacob McElwee, the Kansas Guard's judge advocate general.

Outcome of civilian criminal cases can influence military administrative actions involving Kansas Guard members. If the local prosecutor declined to file charges in a case, it's possible the National Guard Bureau's office of complex investigations could review allegations.

“Either way, we have an outside agency coming in and making sure that everything’s being followed,” McElwee said.

Weight of suicide

Davis said she could tick off names of Kansas Guard members who had taken their own life. She’s felt overwhelmed by the thought that she tried but failed to help some of the deceased. She also is convinced not enough was being done to honor former Kansas Guard members who bring an end to their lives.

She recalled a poignant moment during a meeting in which Kansas Guard officers asked her if dismissing a specific soldier from the force would cause him to commit suicide. She said she advised there was substantial risk. The soldier was kicked out. His suicide followed, she said.

In the past 6½ years, Kansas Guard officials said, 19 members of the Air or Army Guard in Kansas committed suicide. An average of nearly three suicides occurred annually from 2015 to the present. Fifteen of those people were in the Army Guard, while four were in the Air Guard.

The Kansas Guard doesn’t keep statistics on former Kansas Guard members who chose to commit suicide. Care and treatment of veterans with suicidal thoughts rests with the VA or private health professionals.

Terry Williams, an Air Guard colonel and the Kansas Guard’s state chaplain, said the organization’s training of people to recognize warning signs of trouble had improved in the past 15 years. Military chaplains have benefit of offering total confidentiality to people seeking assistance, he said. Statistics don’t reveal the number of men and women saved through these interventions, he said.

“I’ve done eight or nine funerals for suicides,” Williams said. “I’ve been at bedsides, gravesides, hospitals. My perspective encompasses all of that. I have a programmatic side, but it’s very personal to me, too.”

He recalled a January service with snow on the ground and a wind-chill index of 15 degrees below.

“I could hear the daughter cry above ‘Taps,’?” said Williams, who has been in the Kansas Guard for 24 years and deployed overseas twice, including in 2009 to Iraq.

Angie Gabel, the 190th Air Refueling Wing’s director of psychological health, said she was a champion of ASIST, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. Hundreds involved with the Kansas Guard have completed ASIST training to learn how to talk with people suspected of thinking about or planning suicide, she said.

Problems with personal relationships, money, job stress, legal issues or communication barriers are often indicators of a person in crisis, she said.

Gabel said a persistent challenge was overcoming a belief among soldiers and airmen that admitting to mental health challenges automatically destroyed careers.

“We still have that mentality of, ‘If I say something my career is over, point blank, in the military.’ We are slowly changing that mindset. It’s not over. It’s not a career-ender,” Gabel said.

‘Expendable’

Davis, 39, opposed her exit from the Kansas Guard last year because she thought it was unfair and meant she would never qualify for retirement benefits more generous than disability compensation. The end came without pomp and circumstance in April 2020.

Termination of the employee-employer relationship allowed her to speak more freely about the citizen-soldier organization's personnel issues. Many of those conversations were difficult for her. Others sparked a determination to keep fighting. She also shared a belief the mountain she was climbing could be too high, too far.

Davis said her forced exit was the consequence of her decisions to stare down the barrel of a Kansas Guard culture still anchored by a good-old-boy network. Reviewing threads of her Kansas Guard life suggests she was collateral damage of a toxic military environment, she said.

Administrative conflict that enveloped her felt like an organized effort to induce enough despair to drive her off, she said. The experience offered insight into factors contributing to the national plague of military suicide, she said.

"We're expendable," Davis said. "The decade has been really hard. The last five years has tried to kill me. It never had to be that way."

It was not the way her career was to have evolved when she enlisted as a teenager and joined a UH-60 Blackhawk crew in 1999. She was the daughter of a highly decorated Army officer. She had risen in rank while completing a degree in criminal justice at Washburn University in 2006 and a master's degree in business administration from Friends University in 2015.

She never deployed for combat despite volunteering to serve in hostile areas, but earned an Army commendation medal in 2010. She served more than a dozen years as a senior human resource officer in Kansas.

She said demise of her Army career failed to extinguish a conviction that military service provided rewarding experiences.

"I loved it. I loved the camaraderie. I loved taking care of soldiers. I loved learning new things," Davis said. "I liked being able to obtain the knowledge and ability to do things – write policy or figure things out and then go to the boss: 'OK, this is what you want. Here are your options.'?"

After months of evaluation, the VA rated Davis as 100% disabled. It was an analysis based primarily on diagnosis of her PTSD. Medical records indicated she suffered anxiety and depression in addition to physical limitations.

Fighting to get better

Not quite middle-aged, Davis' body and mind have been worn down. She has a new left hip. The plan to replace the right hip was postponed. Her right knee was operated on, but issues linger. She has dental woes from grinding her teeth.

Her future is clouded by realities of PTSD. Therapy was helpful at times and challenging in other moments, she said. Because of the pandemic, she unexpectedly discovered remote conversations with a therapist were easier than in-person discussions.

"I couldn't cry in front of her," Davis said. "I'd have my work face on. We weren't getting to the root of any problems."

Davis said her recovery had been impeded by reading or being told about ongoing controversy in the Kansas Guard. The intel reminded her there was no certainty about what her advocacy accomplished.

"I complained about people at the very top. Nobody wants to have anything to do with me," Davis said. "In retrospect, I went through a lot more than I realized at the time. I would like an apology."

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6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

"I was in relationships – or dating people – (I) had to be very careful about who I was out to, where I was out, how I was, went out and about my daily life in public because that could have a consequence on my military career," Roth said.

The now-defunct policy forced gay and lesbian members of the military to serve in silence.

When it ended in 2011, Roth said it was a non-event, and the fears that it would undermine military professionalism didn't happen.

"I think what has changed is (that) I can be open and honest with my teammates," Roth said. "I can be my authentic self, I can share who I am, and vice versa. That builds trust and confidence."

Roth said about 13,000 gay and lesbian troops were forced out of the military under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Since then, Roth said things have gotten better.

"As we move forward as a military, I think we can be very proud of our diversity, how we're changing our culture to be more welcoming people and let the number of people the very small number of people who raise their hand to say, 'I want to serve,' need all of our support," he said.

Roth said the biggest surprise for him came last year – he had the opportunity to attend a Pride luncheon on a military base while serving overseas.

"It was the first time I saw visible evidence of (a) complete shift in how we approach it," he said.

Roth said the National Guard went further, sending out a letter in support of its LGBTQ members that noted celebrating pride and recognizing the contributions of LGBTQ to people who serve in the military.

Roth said it took him several years after the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" before he came out – since he doesn't believe it has had any effect on his military career.

https://ngpa.us/14471

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7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity.

Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown.

"I didn't have a job to go back to after orders," Schmucker, 20, said.

He was approached by a member of the food bank's management, who offered Schmucker a role pulling orders, preparing food for various agencies to pick up from the warehouse.

Schmucker is grateful for the opportunity to serve the Valley, but also for the door that opened up as a result of volunteering. "It does mean a lot. I just came here as a volunteer but was offered employment. It meant a lot," he said.

Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard.

The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

On Monday, the volunteers were treated to a lunch from the food bank to thank them for their assistance during the pandemic.

As orders for the National Guard expire July 2, some of the volunteers will go back to school, while others go back to work, Warrant Officer candidate Adam Fullmer said.

"We're going to be out of Task Force Fox. It's standing down in about 60 days," he said.

Task Force Fox encompasses the National Guard deployment around the state assisting agencies and organizations through the pandemic.

When the guard members were assigned to the food bank 15 months ago, 35 assisting. That number has shrunk to 15 now.

Last year was the "biggest" distribution year, Iberis said, with 15 million pounds of food handed out. This year, the food bank is on track to distribute 13 million pounds, Iberis said.

Most of the National Guard was activated for 30 days or more, Fullmer said. "We saw upwards of 75, 80 percent" of soldiers working extended assignments, ranging from food banks to helping in the prisons, to COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.

The National Guard also helped during what Fullmer called the "unemployment crisis," helping to process claims throughout the pandemic in Ohio.

"We took a little of the edge off for some of the organizations," Fullmer said.

"This is an illustration of when people work together, what can happen," Iberis said. "This was such a smooth-working relationship" among the guard, food bank and its agencies, Iberis said, calling it "a mammoth collaboration."

The food bank, like some other places, is returning to a state of pre-pandemic normalcy. Last week, phone calls were made to the normal roster of volunteers with about 80 percent already back in the warehouse this week, Iberis said.

Throughout the National Guard's help and media coverage, something positive happened with volunteers.

"The Mahoning Valley took note of how these Guards people responded. That has resulted … in a barrage of new volunteer applications," Iberis said. "It's incredible."

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]
[redacted]@mail.mil

PA Update
As of June 30, 2021, 0700

Today in the Department of Defense, June 30, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III welcomes Her Excellency Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Minister of Defense to the Federal Republic of Germany, to the Pentagon in an enhanced honor cordon ceremony at 8 a.m. EDT.

- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael M. Gilday and Commandant of the Marine Corps David H. Berger participate in the keynote panel discussion at 11 a.m. EDT; Adm. Sam Paparo, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, provides the keynote address at 3:30 p.m. EDT; and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

- Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Douglas Bush; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition Frederick "Jay" Stefany; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Darlene Costello; Army Lt. Gen. Eric C. Peterson, deputy chief of staff, G-8, Department of the Army; Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Mark Wise, deputy commandant for Aviation, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and Read Adm. Andrew Loiselle, director, Air Warfare Division, N98, Department of the Navy, testify on Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force rotary wing aviation programs and planned modernization efforts in the fiscal 2022 budget request at 3 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces hearing on fiscal 2022 rotary wing aviation budget request, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX: Military.com (National) – Billionaire GOP Mega-Donor Funds National Guard Mission to US-Mexico Border – By Steve Beynon

The South Dakota National Guard is deploying on mission to the U.S. southern border. And the operation is being funded by a billionaire, not the government, Military.com has learned. Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

https://ngpa.us/14474

RELATED STORIES:

SD, TX: Newsweek (National) – Private Donation Will Send 50 South Dakota National Guard Troops to U.S.-Mexico Border – By Zoe Strozewski

https://ngpa.us/14466

SD, TX, TN: Capital Journal (Local) – Tennessee donor foots the bill for SD National Guard deployment– By Jorge Encinas

https://ngpa.us/14469

AR, TX: KNWA (Regional) – Governor Hutchison authorizes 90-day deployment of up to 40 National Guard members to U.S./Mexico Border – By Gary Gilbert

https://ngpa.us/14473

SC, AZ, TX: WMBF (Regional) – S.C. congressmen thank Gov. McMaster for sending National Guard troops to U.S. border – By Staff Reports

https://ngpa.us/14475

FULL STORY BELOW

2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military. McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

https://ngpa.us/14476

FULL STORY BELOW

3. MD: Fox Baltimore (Regional) – [Video] MD Air National Guard celebrates 100 years of service – By Staff Reports

The Maryland Air National Guard kicked off a celebration commemorating 100 years of service to the state. It started in 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition. Airmen have supported the

state's pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

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FULL STORY BELOW

4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

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https://ngpa.us/14468

FULL STORY BELOW

5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

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https://ngpa.us/14470

FULL STORY BELOW

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https://ngpa.us/14471

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FULL STORIES:

1. SD, TX: Military.com (National) – Billionaire GOP Mega-Donor Funds National Guard Mission to US-Mexico Border – By Steve Beynon

The South Dakota National Guard is deploying on mission to the U.S. southern border. And the operation is being funded by a billionaire, not the government, Military.com has learned.

Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

"The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide," South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, said in a statement Tuesday.

Roughly 50 guardsmen will deploy on the mission, according to a South Dakota Guard spokesman. However, the mission is still in its early planning stages. It's unclear where the troops will deploy on the border, which unit will be sent or what the mission will be.

The National Guard declined to comment for this story or answer questions about the practice of allowing private donors to fund missions. A query to the Pentagon about the mission did not receive a response.

Willis Johnson is the founder of Copart, an online vehicle auction service, and has amassed a $2.2 billion fortune, according to Forbes. He resigned as CEO of Copart in 2010, according to reporting from the Nashville Post.

He is a Republican mega-donor, donating at least $1.5 million to conservative causes, including $50,000 to the "Trump Victory" political action committee, according to reporting from Bloomberg.

Former President Donald Trump made border security a key part of his presidency, ordering the deployment of troops to the border in April 2018 under a mission known as Operation Faithful Patriot. One of President Joe Biden's first acts as president was to suspend Trump's emergency declaration at the border, halting some government funds. The Associated Press reported that Trump is expected to visit the border with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, later this week.

Ian Fury, a spokesman for Noem, wouldn't confirm if Willis Johnson runs the foundation. When Military.com reached Johnson via telephone, he wouldn't confirm his identity and declined to be interviewed.

However, tax forms including for the foundation and donation records for Johnson share the same address in Franklin, Tennessee.

"Governor Noem welcomes any such donations to help alleviate the cost to South Dakota taxpayers," Fury told Military.com. Fury declined to disclose how much of a donation was made to cover the mission, saying revealing that would be "a security risk."

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2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military.

McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

She remembers the pilots who guided her, who said the days of female combat exclusion were numbered. They turned around to speak to her from the front seat, and said McCandless could help usher in a new chapter for the military.

"They encouraged me, and they said, 'hey, someday it'll change,'" McCandless said. "They have daughters. And I think was an awakening moment for them to think, 'wow, my daughter could be completely able to do this, from a physical and a mental standpoint, but won't be able to for one reason.'"

McCandless, 51, now finds herself in another moment of U.S. military history – serving as the first female leader of the D.C National Guard.

Beginning April 25, 2021, McCandless oversaw the end of the D.C. Guard's security mission at the Capitol, at a time when the Guard's role in Washington was redefined, and may still change in the months ahead.

She serves as the D.C. Guard's interim commanding general, appointed to the role after her predecessor, Maj. Gen. William Walker, became the new Sergeant-at-Arms for the U.S. House of Representatives. Her fate now lies with President Joe Biden, who is expected to decide over the next few months if McCandless will fill the position permanently.

In her first interview since assuming the role, McCandless said the 2,700 soldiers and airmen under her command would not be put under immense strain if Congress decides to create a "strike force" of Guard members assisting U.S. Capitol Police. She affirmed one of her top priorities is to improve the speed and efficiency of communication with federal and District law enforcement, should another episode of insurrection threaten the heart of American democracy.

Yet her concerns are also focused on new outreach to the people of the District, expanding a program to instill leadership in teenagers who've dropped out of high school.

McCandless said she is also mindful of allowing Guard members adequate time to reconnect with families, following months of unprecedented service.

"We just have to make sure that we're constantly looking at evaluating balancing," McCandless said. "It's a constant evolution. We can never let rest on where we are."

A Possible U.S. Capitol Strike Force

Within a $1.9 billion Capitol security bill, passed by one vote in the House, Democratic lawmakers authored the creation of a quick-reacting force of National Guard members on U.S. Capitol grounds. The aim of the force would be to assist Capitol Police, should a scenario similar to the January 6 insurrection repeat once more.

Republican lawmakers oppose the measure, with Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) writing in a joint statement, "use of the uniformed military in D.C. and the Capitol Complex is subject to complex statutory restrictions, and for good reason."

"We cannot and should not militarize the security of the Capitol Complex."

While McCandless and the Guard take no position on the matter, leaving the decision to civilian lawmakers, the general said such a force would not strain the Guard's command structure, or its personnel.

"I think that the planning would need to take place, but I don't see any major changes required," McCandless said.

When asked if major shifts would be required to make such a force work, McCandless replied, "Not in my opinion."

McCandless stressed the D.C. Guard serves as a force of last resort, after law enforcement exhausted all its resources. Yet she affirmed under her command, the Guard would respond to a potential Capitol crisis with greater speed than what was seen in January.

“I’m on my 60th day [leading the D.C. Guard,]” McCandless said. “And I’ve spent a lot of those days connecting with my downtown partners. So, U.S. Capitol Police chief, U.S. Park Police chief, the mayor’s office. I’m making sure that we are communicating, we know who each other are, and kind of where the National Guard in D.C. is at this time.”

“I’ve been able to participate with some of our team at the Defense Department also, who has obviously been looking into and interested in those response times,” she continued. “There’s a great amount of learning and collaboration going on at this time to ensure that if and when we have our federal or District partners that require our assistance or the assistance of the National Guard, that we’re in a better place.”

Reaching out to the D.C. Community

McCandless is the granddaughter of an Iwo Jima Marine Corps veteran, who landed 45 minutes into the first wave of U.S. troops on the island. PFC Theodore Below helped raised McCandless, and instilled within the future D.C. Guard commander a sense of service which persists into the present.

“He actually still lives with me in my home in Washington, D.C.,” McCandless said. “The foundation he built for me always provided a very clear sight picture for me about the criticality of service.”

The arc of service could be seen in a hangar at Joint Base Andrews, when McCandless joined more than 30 D.C. teenagers for an up-close look at F-16 fighters.

The adolescents recently dropped out of high school, but are now back on the path to a diploma. They are enrolled in the D.C. Guard program, known as the “Capital Guardian Youth ChalleNGe Academy.”

“In that 16 to 18-year-old range, as we all know, there are a lot of distractions and there’s a lot of competing priorities in their lives,” McCandless said. “And I think what we’re able to offer to them is a safe environment to go into, inspired by the military, but having no outcome to join the military.”

McCandless described the program neither as bootcamp, nor ROTC, but as a five-month full-time living experience on a D.C. Guard suburban campus in Laurel, Md.

“It allows them to re-engage in physical fitness activities, understanding how to balance a checkbook, understanding the criticality of their diet and how that feeds them and they basically learn skills that we think that will help them complete their education, join the workforce, and then come back into the D.C. community,” she said.

Online applications for the fall 2021 program are now open, with McCandless setting a goal to expand the academy’s enrollment and recognition as a force for change. Cadets are under no obligation to join the Guard upon completion of the program.

D.C. Guard Moving Forward

“We have an F-16 mission that’s getting ready to depart for the Middle East, and we also have National Guardsmen that have departed to go down to Guantánamo,” the general offered, describing ongoing operations after the U.S. Capitol mission. “We’re always constantly making sure we’re prepared for the overseas war fight – that’s the core mission of what we do. But we also have to maintain and train our readiness as almost a byproduct of that federal mission, to respond to natural disasters and manmade disasters inside the United States.”

McCandless described as the D.C. Guard moves forward, post-insurrection, her mission is to help its airmen and soldiers reconnect – first with their families, then with their civilian jobs balanced alongside National Guard duties.

“Simultaneously, the country is coming out of the pandemic. So there’s the desire for guardsmen to get out, socialize again,” she said.

“We’re also going to start working again on some of the basic military skills that they did not have the opportunity to train on while they were doing the Capitol mission.”

At an expansive moment for the Guard in the public consciousness, McCandless said she feels prepared to meet the expectations of the city and the nation. Once as a pilot in her 20’s who helped shape the face of the U.S. military, she now says she turns to the needs of the Guard in the nation’s capital, a new arena to engage in a commanding change.

“It’s really about the competency of the individuals and how they’ve been prepared through their lives to ascend to these roles,” McCandless said. “I’ve been trying to prepare myself all along for roles that the military may ask me to perform… And I’m excited that it’s now with the Guard where I call home.”

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3. MD: Fox Baltimore (Regional) – [Video] MD Air National Guard celebrates 100 years of service – By Staff Reports

The Maryland Air National Guard kicked off a celebration commemorating 100 years of service to the state.

It started in 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition.

Airmen have supported the state’s pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

Members of the Air National Guard came to Annapolis after the riot at the Capitol and provided protection for state lawmakers.

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4. CA: Los Angeles Times (National) – As the West begins to burn, Biden to talk wildfires with Newsom and other governors – By Reporter

President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading.

The situation has alarmed experts and public officials, who warn that this year's fire season could outpace last year's, which was the worst on record. Blazes have already ignited around California, where dry vegetation has left large swaths of the state primed to explode into flames, even as the federal government struggles to hire firefighters.

"We're in as high risk of a starting condition as we could ever expect," said Noah Diffenbaugh, a Stanford University professor who studies climate change and wildfires.

The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

Western states are eager for Washington to step up its commitment after President Trump repeatedly blamed them – particularly California, which he said failed to "clean your forests" of combustible vegetation – for failing to prevent and stop wildfires.

The threat comes amid staffing shortages at the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, problems exacerbated by low pay, competition from state and local fire departments and exhaustion from last year's fire season.

More than a month after seasonal hiring would typically have ended, the federal government is still trying to fill vacant positions on hot shot crews, the most elite and experienced firefighting teams. Although these crews are venerated for leading the attack against the most difficult fires, some have had so many veteran firefighters quit that they've been downgraded to a lower-ranking status.

Nationally, fire management teams are having to compete with each other for crews and equipment much earlier in the season than in years past. On June 22, the National Interagency Fire Center, which coordinates fire response from Boise, Idaho, raised the national preparedness to level 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, saying it was the second earliest it had reached that point.

The shortages have filled crews on the fire lines with anxiety and led to louder calls for change.

"We're at a point where we're simply going to be overwhelmed year after year going forward given the current systems we have in place," said Jim Whittington, an expert in wildland fire response. "We really need to look at the way we staff and work wildland fires, the way we fund them, and the way we take care of our people. We need a full reset."

Along with calls for higher pay – a first-year Forest Service firefighter currently earns a base wage of $13.45 an hour – there are those like Whittington who believe firefighting needs to become a full-time job. Currently, the federal government fills its ranks each summer with thousands of seasonal firefighters who don't get health insurance and are laid off after about six months. Some of these workers struggle at the end of the season as months of stress take their toll.

"We also need better mental health support for wildland firefighters," Whittington said. "Too many face a crisis when they are laid off."

Biden said last week that he was surprised to learn that some federal firefighters earn so little.

"That's a ridiculously low salary," he said, banging his hand on a table in the Roosevelt Room in the White House during a meeting with emergency officials.

Ben Elkind, a smokejumper for the forest service and a member of Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, a group that advocates for better pay and working conditions for federal firefighters, said the problem has left critical positions empty.

"People risking their lives for our public safety deserve to be paid a living wage," he said.

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5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

Insomnia compelled Morgan Davis to seek refuge on a small backyard patio offering sanctuary from the downward spiral of her career in the Kansas Army National Guard.

On that November evening, the outdoor cocoon proved insufficient. Davis drove to a convenience store in Topeka where the mission was to slip in and out unrecognized, part of a concerted effort to adopt a lower-profile approach to living. As she exited the business, she bumped into a former Kansas Guard officer. Casual banter took a different tone by shifting to Davis' military status.

"I just started shaking," Davis said. "I can't think. I can't breathe. My mind just goes blank."

The fractured bones of Davis' 21-year Army career – reports, correspondence, testimony, photos, complaints, notes and emails – could fill boxes. The flesh of her military ordeal took shape during a review of those documents and through sporadic conversations and interviews beginning five years ago and intensifying after her retirement in 2020.

Davis said her life in uniform ended prematurely because of an unwillingness to look the other way at perceived wrongdoing in the Kansas Guard. She attempted to work within boundaries of the military system while filing reports or complaints ranging in subject from administrative corruption to sexual abuse to distortion of the

promotion process. She raised alarms about personal issues as well as situations involving others in the Kansas Guard.

Substance of those allegations catapulted Davis into years of conflict with command staff that viewed complainants as irritating troublemakers ripe for expulsion.

Davis said her lonely campaign was aimed at bringing accountability and transparency to the insular Kansas Guard, especially actions of some high-ranking staff allied with then-Adjutant General Lee Tafanelli. For nine years, the general was responsible for training and readiness of 7,000 personnel in the Army and Air components of the Kansas Guard. He served as senior military adviser to Govs. Sam Brownback, Jeff Colyer and Laura Kelly before retiring in March 2020.

Davis' struggle evolved to emphasize self-defense as individuals within the Kansas Guard retaliated against her, she said. Her best asset was technical expertise in personnel policy and procedure acquired in service of the Kansas Guard. She said she proceeded under threat of reassignment to a lesser position, loss of promotion and firing.

"It wasn't ever about me until it was survival," Davis said. "Everything that could have gone wrong with the process went wrong."

The battle ended last year with her departure from the Kansas Guard and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs affirming her disability for post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I'm still not over my breakup with the Army," Davis said. "I have a hard time talking about it. When I see people from the military, period, it is extremely distressing. I see the uniform, and then the alarms start going off. I follow from their feet up to the face. Even if I don't know them, it's upsetting."

Maj. Gen. David Weishaar, who has led the Kansas Guard since April 2020, wasn't able to discuss personnel issues of current or former soldiers and airmen.

Weishaar said his commitment during 40 years of service was to foster a culture of dignity and respect and to compel troops to apply standards equally.

"That is what I try to convey across the force," Weishaar said. "It doesn't matter if you're, in my case, a two-star general, or if you're a one-striper. The expectation is the same. Do we have people do dumb things? Absolutely. Whatever goes on in the community is happening in the force."

Weishaar said members of the Kansas Guard were expected to work daily to live up to military values and to better respond to societal problems of mental health, suicide, sexual abuse, gender-based harassment and other issues inevitably filtering into the armed forces. The Kansas Guard has adopted a series of programs to help members prevent, manage or overcome impediments to their service, he said.

Reform of military culture is a special challenge when only one-fourth of Kansas Guard employees work full-time and the part-timers report for duty as little as twice a month, the general said.

Paper warfare

Davis was instigator of reports aimed at members of the Kansas Guard reaching back to 2008, when she accused an officer of administrative fraud, waste and abuse. In a subsequent matter, Davis was ordered to be part of an investigation into allegations that officers and enlisted personnel participated in a sex scandal. She understood sensitivity of that inquiry and her involvement in the case didn't go unnoticed by peers, she said.

"I have a moral compass," Davis said. "My right and wrong does not have a gray."

In 2013, Davis said, Kansas Guard officers conspired to delay or block her from appearing before a promotion board necessary to climb the ladder to chief warrant officer 3. She responded by submitting a complaint alleging inappropriate influence on command. The Kansas Guard's inspector general found elements of reprisal, she said, before forwarding her case to the U.S. Army.

Davis said the Kansas Guard answered by launching a commander's inquiry accusing her of failure to properly process paperwork.

Davis said a Kansas Guard member confided her promotion process might proceed unfettered if her complaints stopped. She declined to retreat. Davis was eventually promoted.

The Army's IG investigation of alleged retaliation against Davis dragged on for 4½ years, which made it one of the department's longest-running cases. The resulting 60-page report was a disappointment to Davis. It either concluded allegations were unfounded or left issues unresolved because of lack of information, she said.

In 2016, prior to conclusion of the Army IG inquiry, Davis met with Kansas Guard officers to discuss physical problems with her hips and back. Convalescent leave was an option. Instead, she was handed a packet containing a notice of intent to involuntarily release her from full-time duty. The recommendation was to provide an honorable characterization of her military service, despite an assertion she "failed to complete assigned tasks."

Removal from full-time National Guard duty for the first time since 2002 would have made it more difficult to earn retirement benefits available after 20 years of full-time service.

Davis said evidence relied upon to justify demotion to part-time status hinged on a distorted selection of emails and "unwarranted negative counseling statements" provided by Kansas Guard personnel, including some who should not have been involved in rating her job performance. She said stacking the deck with complicit evaluators was part of a Kansas Guard playbook to flush people out the service.

She turned to then-Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, a Kansas Republican representing the 2nd District that includes Topeka. Davis sought help from Jenkins to speed completion of the U.S. Army inspector general's analysis of alleged retaliation against Davis by the Kansas Guard. Davis requested aid with retraction of the involuntary separation action or affirmation of due process rights while she challenged the action.

Davis presented herself to Jenkins as a "federal whistleblower with an ongoing inquiry into reprisal" involving members of the Kansas Guard.

"I frequently witnessed what I believed to be inappropriate conduct," Davis wrote in a document sent to Jenkins.

Davis said Jenkins' office took steps to intervene in her case, but nothing decisive came of that attempt by Kansas Guard officials to sever her full-time status.

The Kansas Guard issued an order in 2017 recalling Davis from remote duty to an office position in the organization's recruiting and retention command. By the end of that year, however, a medical board found Davis' chronic health condition rendered her unfit for duty. The Veterans Administration directed her not to return to work. That prompted a stalemate not resolved until her retirement in 2020.

'Toxic' culture

During the period from 2013 to 2015, a separate and much larger Kansas Guard investigation led by a one-star Air Guard general and an Army Guard lieutenant colonel produced compelling evidence of widespread malfeasance within the state's military organization. The roster of confirmed offenses attributed to officers and enlisted personnel of the Kansas Guard included acts of racism, enlistment fraud, bullying, sexual assault, retaliation and promotion manipulation.

The Kansas Guard investigating officers discovered confidential information gathered during their inquiry was leaked to people under scrutiny. The material was used to target individuals cooperating with the case, investigators reported.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported in 2017 that Brig. Gen. Scott Dold before retiring filed a final report on leadership shortcomings that concluded Tafanelli, the adjutant general, was responsible for systemic leadership problems within his command. Dold wrote in the report Kansas Guard leaders needed to place "soldier and airmen welfare and organizational needs before personal careerism and self-promotion."

"The predominant culture of this command has difficulty balancing legal, moral and ethical facets of decision making when addressing poor performance, toxic leadership and substantiated wrongdoing," Dold said.

In a response to the Capital-Journal's disclosures, Tafanelli said the way Kansas Guard members answered the call to duty during war, disaster and emergency shouldn't be overshadowed by a handful of corrupt colleagues.

"There are a few that will choose to act in an inappropriate manner and bring discredit to themselves and their service," he said.

Grab you, anywhere

Davis said she was tormented by what she perceived as indifference among some in the Kansas Guard to sexual harassment and assault. In her experience, she said, too many men in the Kansas Guard were complicit in creation of hostile work environments for women.

"It is not unusual for a female to be in there and they just walk up and grab you. Anywhere," Davis said.

Davis said a former Kansas Guard battalion commander, who she viewed as a friend, sexually assaulted her three years ago. A Veterans Affairs employee who offered to help Davis maneuver through the VA benefit system exposed himself to her, she said.

During a helicopter training assignment early in her Kansas Guard career, she said, a military doctor inappropriately penetrated her during a routine exam. Davis said she was sexually assaulted at age 18 by three men. It was after she enlisted, but before basic training.

Weishaar, the Kansas Guard's top officer and adjutant general, said sexual assault and sexual harassment were a menace to the military and society at large.

"When it happens – not if, because it does happen – we're going to take care of the victim," he said.

Jody Cope, the Kansas Guard's equal employment manager, said no one should accept the stereotype that sexual harassment was rampant in the Kansas Guard. The Kansas Guard's annual reports tracking formal complaints of sexual harassment showed six were submitted in 2015, six in 2016 and two in 2017. Comparable information for subsequent years wasn't released by the Kansas Guard.

Cope said the Kansas Guard had success resolving workplace conflicts with mediation. If allegations in an administrative complaint submitted to the Kansas Guard were substantiated, she said, there could be consequences.

"We've seen a really great increase over the last couple years of taking administrative action to address those," Cope said.

Michelle Ferrer, sexual assault response coordinator for the Kansas Guard, said her office offered confidentiality to employees reporting sexual misconduct. The exception to this rule was when a person was viewed as a danger to others or likely to engage in self-harm, she said. If an individual decided against pursuit of a formal complaint, she said, the paperwork could be shredded.

"That helps people to feel comfortable they can come talk to us," Ferrer said.

Potential sex crimes are referred to local law enforcement agencies because the Kansas Guard doesn't have authority to proceed, said Maj. Jacob McElwee, the Kansas Guard's judge advocate general.

Outcome of civilian criminal cases can influence military administrative actions involving Kansas Guard members. If the local prosecutor declined to file charges in a case, it's possible the National Guard Bureau's office of complex investigations could review allegations.

"Either way, we have an outside agency coming in and making sure that everything's being followed," McElwee said.

Weight of suicide

Davis said she could tick off names of Kansas Guard members who had taken their own life. She's felt overwhelmed by the thought that she tried but failed to help some of the deceased. She also is convinced not enough was being done to honor former Kansas Guard members who bring an end to their lives.

She recalled a poignant moment during a meeting in which Kansas Guard officers asked her if dismissing a specific soldier from the force would cause him to commit suicide. She said she advised there was substantial risk. The soldier was kicked out. His suicide followed, she said.

In the past 6½ years, Kansas Guard officials said, 19 members of the Air or Army Guard in Kansas committed suicide. An average of nearly three suicides occurred annually from 2015 to the present. Fifteen of those people were in the Army Guard, while four were in the Air Guard.

The Kansas Guard doesn't keep statistics on former Kansas Guard members who chose to commit suicide. Care and treatment of veterans with suicidal thoughts rests with the VA or private health professionals.

Terry Williams, an Air Guard colonel and the Kansas Guard's state chaplain, said the organization's training of people to recognize warning signs of trouble had improved in the past 15 years. Military chaplains have benefit of offering total confidentiality to people seeking assistance, he said. Statistics don't reveal the number of men and women saved through these interventions, he said.

"I've done eight or nine funerals for suicides," Williams said. "I've been at bedsides, gravesides, hospitals. My perspective encompasses all of that. I have a programmatic side, but it's very personal to me, too."

He recalled a January service with snow on the ground and a wind-chill index of 15 degrees below.

"I could hear the daughter cry above 'Taps,' " said Williams, who has been in the Kansas Guard for 24 years and deployed overseas twice, including in 2009 to Iraq.

Angie Gabel, the 190th Air Refueling Wing's director of psychological health, said she was a champion of ASIST, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. Hundreds involved with the Kansas Guard have completed ASIST training to learn how to talk with people suspected of thinking about or planning suicide, she said.

Problems with personal relationships, money, job stress, legal issues or communication barriers are often indicators of a person in crisis, she said.

Gabel said a persistent challenge was overcoming a belief among soldiers and airmen that admitting to mental health challenges automatically destroyed careers.

"We still have that mentality of, 'If I say something my career is over, point blank, in the military.' We are slowly changing that mindset. It's not over. It's not a career-ender," Gabel said.

'Expendable'

Davis, 39, opposed her exit from the Kansas Guard last year because she thought it was unfair and meant she would never qualify for retirement benefits more generous than disability compensation. The end came without pomp and circumstance in April 2020.

Termination of the employee-employer relationship allowed her to speak more freely about the citizen-soldier organization's personnel issues. Many of those conversations were difficult for her. Others sparked a determination to keep fighting. She also shared a belief the mountain she was climbing could be too high, too far.

Davis said her forced exit was the consequence of her decisions to stare down the barrel of a Kansas Guard culture still anchored by a good-old-boy network. Reviewing threads of her Kansas Guard life suggests she was collateral damage of a toxic military environment, she said.

Administrative conflict that enveloped her felt like an organized effort to induce enough despair to drive her off, she said. The experience offered insight into factors contributing to the national plague of military suicide, she said.

“We’re expendable,” Davis said. “The decade has been really hard. The last five years has tried to kill me. It never had to be that way.”

It was not the way her career was to have evolved when she enlisted as a teenager and joined a UH-60 Blackhawk crew in 1999. She was the daughter of a highly decorated Army officer. She had risen in rank while completing a degree in criminal justice at Washburn University in 2006 and a master’s degree in business administration from Friends University in 2015.

She never deployed for combat despite volunteering to serve in hostile areas, but earned an Army commendation medal in 2010. She served more than a dozen years as a senior human resource officer in Kansas.

She said demise of her Army career failed to extinguish a conviction that military service provided rewarding experiences.

“I loved it. I loved the camaraderie. I loved taking care of soldiers. I loved learning new things,” Davis said. “I liked being able to obtain the knowledge and ability to do things – write policy or figure things out and then go to the boss: ‘OK, this is what you want. Here are your options.’ ”

After months of evaluation, the VA rated Davis as 100% disabled. It was an analysis based primarily on diagnosis of her PTSD. Medical records indicated she suffered anxiety and depression in addition to physical limitations.

Fighting to get better

Not quite middle-aged, Davis’ body and mind have been worn down. She has a new left hip. The plan to replace the right hip was postponed. Her right knee was operated on, but issues linger. She has dental woes from grinding her teeth.

Her future is clouded by realities of PTSD. Therapy was helpful at times and challenging in other moments, she said. Because of the pandemic, she unexpectedly discovered remote conversations with a therapist were easier than in-person discussions.

“I couldn’t cry in front of her,” Davis said. “I’d have my work face on. We weren’t getting to the root of any problems.”

Davis said her recovery had been impeded by reading or being told about ongoing controversy in the Kansas Guard. The intel reminded her there was no certainty about what her advocacy accomplished.
“I complained about people at the very top. Nobody wants to have anything to do with me,” Davis said. “In retrospect, I went through a lot more than I realized at the time. I would like an apology.”

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6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

"I was in relationships – or dating people – (I) had to be very careful about who I was out to, where I was out, how I was, went out and about my daily life in public because that could have a consequence on my military career," Roth said.

The now-defunct policy forced gay and lesbian members of the military to serve in silence.

When it ended in 2011, Roth said it was a non-event, and the fears that it would undermine military professionalism didn't happen.

"I think what has changed is (that) I can be open and honest with my teammates," Roth said. "I can be my authentic self, I can share who I am, and vice versa. That builds trust and confidence."

Roth said about 13,000 gay and lesbian troops were forced out of the military under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Since then, Roth said things have gotten better.

"As we move forward as a military, I think we can be very proud of our diversity, how we're changing our culture to be more welcoming people and let the number of people the very small number of people who raise their hand to say, 'I want to serve,' need all of our support," he said.

Roth said the biggest surprise for him came last year – he had the opportunity to attend a Pride luncheon on a military base while serving overseas.

"It was the first time I saw visible evidence of (a) complete shift in how we approach it," he said.

Roth said the National Guard went further, sending out a letter in support of its LGBTQ members that noted celebrating pride and recognizing the contributions of LGBTQ to people who serve in the military.

Roth said it took him several years after the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" before he came out – since he doesn't believe it has had any effect on his military career.

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7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity.

Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown.

"I didn't have a job to go back to after orders," Schmucker, 20, said.

He was approached by a member of the food bank's management, who offered Schmucker a role pulling orders, preparing food for various agencies to pick up from the warehouse.

Schmucker is grateful for the opportunity to serve the Valley, but also for the door that opened up as a result of volunteering. "It does mean a lot. I just came here as a volunteer but was offered employment. It meant a lot," he said.

Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard.

The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

On Monday, the volunteers were treated to a lunch from the food bank to thank them for their assistance during the pandemic.

As orders for the National Guard expire July 2, some of the volunteers will go back to school, while others go back to work, Warrant Officer candidate Adam Fullmer said.

"We're going to be out of Task Force Fox. It's standing down in about 60 days," he said.

Task Force Fox encompasses the National Guard deployment around the state assisting agencies and organizations through the pandemic.

When the guard members were assigned to the food bank 15 months ago, 35 assisting. That number has shrunk to 15 now.

Last year was the "biggest" distribution year, Iberis said, with 15 million pounds of food handed out. This year, the food bank is on track to distribute 13 million pounds, Iberis said.

Most of the National Guard was activated for 30 days or more, Fullmer said. "We saw upwards of 75, 80 percent" of soldiers working extended assignments, ranging from food banks to helping in the prisons, to COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.

The National Guard also helped during what Fullmer called the "unemployment crisis," helping to process claims throughout the pandemic in Ohio.

"We took a little of the edge off for some of the organizations," Fullmer said.

“This is an illustration of when people work together, what can happen,” Iberis said. “This was such a smooth-working relationship” among the guard, food bank and its agencies, Iberis said, calling it “a mammoth collaboration.”

The food bank, like some other places, is returning to a state of pre-pandemic normalcy. Last week, phone calls were made to the normal roster of volunteers with about 80 percent already back in the warehouse this week, Iberis said.

Throughout the National Guard’s help and media coverage, something positive happened with volunteers.

“The Mahoning Valley took note of how these Guards people responded. That has resulted … in a barrage of new volunteer applications,” Iberis said. “It’s incredible.”

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[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 5:53 AM
To: Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); Pat Pardy; Lair, Gregory W Brig Gen USAF 114 FW (USA); Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] CSM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA); [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Fwd: PA Update 30 June 2021
Attachments: PA Update 30 June 2021.pdf; Defense Morning Clips 30 June 2021.pdf

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Date: June 30, 2021 at 4:59:45 AM MDT
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: PA Update 30 June 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, June 30, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III welcomes Her Excellency Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Minister of Defense to the Federal Republic of Germany, to the Pentagon in an enhanced honor cordon ceremony at 8 a.m. EDT.

- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael M. Gilday and Commandant of the Marine Corps David H. Berger participate in the keynote panel discussion at 11 a.m. EDT; Adm. Sam Paparo, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, provides the keynote address at 3:30 p.m. EDT; and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

• Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Douglas Bush; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition Frederick "Jay" Stefany; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Darlene Costello; Army Lt. Gen. Eric C. Peterson, deputy chief of staff, G-8, Department of the Army; Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Mark Wise, deputy commandant for Aviation, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and Read Adm. Andrew Loiselle, director, Air Warfare Division, N98, Department of the Navy, testify on Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force rotary wing aviation programs and planned modernization efforts in the fiscal 2022 budget request at 3 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces hearing on fiscal 2022 rotary wing aviation budget request, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX: Military.com (National) – Billionaire GOP Mega-Donor Funds National Guard Mission to US-Mexico Border – By Steve Beynon

The South Dakota National Guard is deploying on mission to the U.S. southern border. And the operation is being funded by a billionaire, not the government, Military.com has learned. Soldiers will serve on state active-duty orders, meaning that traditionally the state would cover the cost of the mission. However, in this case the tab is being picked up by the private Tennessee-based Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation.

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SD, TX: Newsweek (National) – Private Donation Will Send 50 South Dakota National Guard Troops to U.S.-Mexico Border – By Zoe Strozewski

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AR, TX: KNWA (Regional) – Governor Hutchison authorizes 90-day deployment of up to 40 National Guard members to U.S./Mexico Border – By Gary Gilbert

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SC, AZ, TX: WMBF (Regional) – S.C. congressmen thank Gov. McMaster for sending National Guard troops to U.S. border – By Staff Reports

https://ngpa.us/14475

FULL STORY BELOW

2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military. McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

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FULL STORY BELOW

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FULL STORY BELOW

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President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading. … The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It's the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

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FULL STORY BELOW

5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

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FULL STORY BELOW

6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

https://ngpa.us/14471

FULL STORY BELOW

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"The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide," South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, said in a statement Tuesday.

Roughly 50 guardsmen will deploy on the mission, according to a South Dakota Guard spokesman. However, the mission is still in its early planning stages. It's unclear where the troops will deploy on the border, which unit will be sent or what the mission will be.

The National Guard declined to comment for this story or answer questions about the practice of allowing private donors to fund missions. A query to the Pentagon about the mission did not receive a response.

Willis Johnson is the founder of Copart, an online vehicle auction service, and has amassed a $2.2 billion fortune, according to Forbes. He resigned as CEO of Copart in 2010, according to reporting from the Nashville Post.

He is a Republican mega-donor, donating at least $1.5 million to conservative causes, including $50,000 to the "Trump Victory" political action committee, according to reporting from Bloomberg.

Former President Donald Trump made border security a key part of his presidency, ordering the deployment of troops to the border in April 2018 under a mission known as Operation Faithful Patriot. One of President Joe Biden's first acts as president was to suspend Trump's emergency declaration at the border, halting some government funds. The Associated Press reported that Trump is expected to visit the border with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, later this week.

Ian Fury, a spokesman for Noem, wouldn't confirm if Willis Johnson runs the foundation. When Military.com reached Johnson via telephone, he wouldn't confirm his identity and declined to be interviewed.

However, tax forms including for the foundation and donation records for Johnson share the same address in Franklin, Tennessee.

"Governor Noem welcomes any such donations to help alleviate the cost to South Dakota taxpayers," Fury told Military.com. Fury declined to disclose how much of a donation was made to cover the mission, saying revealing that would be "a security risk."

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2. DC: WUSA (Regional) – Veteran fighter pilot makes history as 1st woman to lead DC National Guard – By Mike Valerio

The now vintage photo of Maj. General Sherrie L. McCandless standing next to her F-16 fighter jet evokes both a scene from Top Gun, and a sea change in the military.

McCandless earned her wings during the dawn of a new era for the Air Force – the end of women being excluded from flying combat aircraft in the '90s, and the beginning of expanding possibilities for women in uniform. No longer was McCandless training in the backseat of a cockpit, but was ascending to new leadership roles in South Korea, Arizona, and South Carolina.

She remembers the pilots who guided her, who said the days of female combat exclusion were numbered. They turned around to speak to her from the front seat, and said McCandless could help usher in a new chapter for the military.

“They encouraged me, and they said, ‘hey, someday it’ll change,’” McCandless said. “They have daughters. And I think was an awakening moment for them to think, ‘wow, my daughter could be completely able to do this, from a physical and a mental standpoint, but won’t be able to for one reason.’”

McCandless, 51, now finds herself in another moment of U.S. military history – serving as the first female leader of the D.C National Guard.

Beginning April 25, 2021, McCandless oversaw the end of the D.C. Guard’s security mission at the Capitol, at a time when the Guard’s role in Washington was redefined, and may still change in the months ahead.

She serves as the D.C. Guard’s interim commanding general, appointed to the role after her predecessor, Maj. Gen. William Walker, became the new Sergeant-at-Arms for the U.S. House of Representatives. Her fate now lies with President Joe Biden, who is expected to decide over the next few months if McCandless will fill the position permanently.

In her first interview since assuming the role, McCandless said the 2,700 soldiers and airmen under her command would not be put under immense strain if Congress decides to create a “strike force” of Guard members assisting U.S. Capitol Police. She affirmed one of her top priorities is to improve the speed and efficiency of communication with federal and District law enforcement, should another episode of insurrection threaten the heart of American democracy.

Yet her concerns are also focused on new outreach to the people of the District, expanding a program to instill leadership in teenagers who’ve dropped out of high school.

McCandless said she is also mindful of allowing Guard members adequate time to reconnect with families, following months of unprecedented service.

“We just have to make sure that we’re constantly looking at evaluating balancing,” McCandless said. “It’s a constant evolution. We can never let rest on where we are.”

A Possible U.S. Capitol Strike Force

Within a $1.9 billion Capitol security bill, passed by one vote in the House, Democratic lawmakers authored the creation of a quick-reacting force of National Guard members on U.S. Capitol grounds. The aim of the force would be to assist Capitol Police, should a scenario similar to the January 6 insurrection repeat once more.

Republican lawmakers oppose the measure, with Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) writing in a joint statement, “use of the uniformed military in D.C. and the Capitol Complex is subject to complex statutory restrictions, and for good reason.”

“We cannot and should not militarize the security of the Capitol Complex.”

While McCandless and the Guard take no position on the matter, leaving the decision to civilian lawmakers, the general said such a force would not strain the Guard’s command structure, or its personnel.

“I think that the planning would need to take place, but I don’t see any major changes required,” McCandless said.

When asked if major shifts would be required to make such a force work, McCandless replied, “Not in my opinion.”

McCandless stressed the D.C. Guard serves as a force of last resort, after law enforcement exhausted all its resources. Yet she affirmed under her command, the Guard would respond to a potential Capitol crisis with greater speed than what was seen in January.

"I'm on my 60th day [leading the D.C. Guard,]" McCandless said. "And I've spent a lot of those days connecting with my downtown partners. So, U.S. Capitol Police chief, U.S. Park Police chief, the mayor's office. I'm making sure that we are communicating, we know who each other are, and kind of where the National Guard in D.C. is at this time."

"I've been able to participate with some of our team at the Defense Department also, who has obviously been looking into and interested in those response times," she continued. "There's a great amount of learning and collaboration going on at this time to ensure that if and when we have our federal or District partners that require our assistance or the assistance of the National Guard, that we're in a better place."

Reaching out to the D.C. Community

McCandless is the granddaughter of an Iwo Jima Marine Corps veteran, who landed 45 minutes into the first wave of U.S. troops on the island. PFC Theodore Below helped raised McCandless, and instilled within the future D.C. Guard commander a sense of service which persists into the present.

"He actually still lives with me in my home in Washington, D.C.," McCandless said. "The foundation he built for me always provided a very clear sight picture for me about the criticality of service."

The arc of service could be seen in a hangar at Joint Base Andrews, when McCandless joined more than 30 D.C. teenagers for an up-close look at F-16 fighters.

The adolescents recently dropped out of high school, but are now back on the path to a diploma. They are enrolled in the D.C. Guard program, known as the "Capital Guardian Youth ChalleNGe Academy."

"In that 16 to 18-year-old range, as we all know, there are a lot of distractions and there's a lot of competing priorities in their lives," McCandless said. "And I think what we're able to offer to them is a safe environment to go into, inspired by the military, but having no outcome to join the military."

McCandless described the program neither as bootcamp, nor ROTC, but as a five-month full-time living experience on a D.C. Guard suburban campus in Laurel, Md.

"It allows them to re-engage in physical fitness activities, understanding how to balance a checkbook, understanding the criticality of their diet and how that feeds them and they basically learn skills that we think that will help them complete their education, join the workforce, and then come back into the D.C. community," she said.

Online applications for the fall 2021 program are now open, with McCandless setting a goal to expand the academy's enrollment and recognition as a force for change. Cadets are under no obligation to join the Guard upon completion of the program.

D.C. Guard Moving Forward

"We have an F-16 mission that's getting ready to depart for the Middle East, and we also have National Guardsmen that have departed to go down to Guantánamo," the general offered, describing ongoing operations after the U.S. Capitol mission. "We're always constantly making sure we're prepared for the overseas war fight – that's the core mission of what we do. But we also have to maintain and train our readiness as almost a byproduct of that federal mission, to respond to natural disasters and manmade disasters inside the United States."

McCandless described as the D.C. Guard moves forward, post-insurrection, her mission is to help its airmen and soldiers reconnect – first with their families, then with their civilian jobs balanced alongside National Guard duties.

"Simultaneously, the country is coming out of the pandemic. So there's the desire for guardsmen to get out, socialize again," she said.

"We're also going to start working again on some of the basic military skills that they did not have the opportunity to train on while they were doing the Capitol mission."

At an expansive moment for the Guard in the public consciousness, McCandless said she feels prepared to meet the expectations of the city and the nation. Once as a pilot in her 20's who helped shape the face of the U.S. military, she now says she turns to the needs of the Guard in the nation's capital, a new arena to engage in a commanding change.

"It's really about the competency of the individuals and how they've been prepared through their lives to ascend to these roles," McCandless said. "I've been trying to prepare myself all along for roles that the military may ask me to perform… And I'm excited that it's now with the Guard where I call home."

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Airmen have supported the state's pandemic response at multiple mass vaccination sites, and have led the task forces going out to hard-to-reach communities.

Members of the Air National Guard came to Annapolis after the riot at the Capitol and provided protection for state lawmakers.

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President Biden will meet Wednesday with Cabinet officials and leaders from Western states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, as he faces what could be another devastating year of wildfires with drought conditions worsening and searing temperatures spreading.

The situation has alarmed experts and public officials, who warn that this year's fire season could outpace last year's, which was the worst on record. Blazes have already ignited around California, where dry vegetation has left large swaths of the state primed to explode into flames, even as the federal government struggles to hire firefighters.

“We’re in as high risk of a starting condition as we could ever expect,” said Noah Diffenbaugh, a Stanford University professor who studies climate change and wildfires.

The California National Guard deployed a month earlier than last year, sending helicopters to drop water on the Lava fire near Mt. Shasta. It’s the largest active fire in the state, burning more than 13,000 acres since sparking Thursday, and Newsom announced Tuesday that the federal government was going to help cover some of the costs.

Western states are eager for Washington to step up its commitment after President Trump repeatedly blamed them – particularly California, which he said failed to “clean your forests” of combustible vegetation – for failing to prevent and stop wildfires.

The threat comes amid staffing shortages at the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, problems exacerbated by low pay, competition from state and local fire departments and exhaustion from last year’s fire season.

More than a month after seasonal hiring would typically have ended, the federal government is still trying to fill vacant positions on hot shot crews, the most elite and experienced firefighting teams. Although these crews are venerated for leading the attack against the most difficult fires, some have had so many veteran firefighters quit that they’ve been downgraded to a lower-ranking status.

Nationally, fire management teams are having to compete with each other for crews and equipment much earlier in the season than in years past. On June 22, the National Interagency Fire Center, which coordinates fire response from Boise, Idaho, raised the national preparedness to level 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, saying it was the second earliest it had reached that point.

The shortages have filled crews on the fire lines with anxiety and led to louder calls for change.

“We’re at a point where we’re simply going to be overwhelmed year after year going forward given the current systems we have in place,” said Jim Whittington, an expert in wildland fire response. “We really need to look at the way we staff and work wildland fires, the way we fund them, and the way we take care of our people. We need a full reset.”

Along with calls for higher pay – a first-year Forest Service firefighter currently earns a base wage of $13.45 an hour – there are those like Whittington who believe firefighting needs to become a full-time job. Currently, the federal government fills its ranks each summer with thousands of seasonal firefighters who don’t get health insurance and are laid off after about six months. Some of these workers struggle at the end of the season as months of stress take their toll.

“We also need better mental health support for wildland firefighters,” Whittington said. “Too many face a crisis when they are laid off.”

Biden said last week that he was surprised to learn that some federal firefighters earn so little.

“That’s a ridiculously low salary,” he said, banging his hand on a table in the Roosevelt Room in the White House during a meeting with emergency officials.

Ben Elkind, a smokejumper for the forest service and a member of Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, a group that advocates for better pay and working conditions for federal firefighters, said the problem has left critical positions empty.

“People risking their lives for our public safety deserve to be paid a living wage,” he said.

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5. KS: Kansas Reflector (Regional) – Kansas Guard veteran worn down from years battling leadership over misconduct, retaliation – By Tim Carpenter

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"I just started shaking," Davis said. "I can't think. I can't breathe. My mind just goes blank."

The fractured bones of Davis' 21-year Army career – reports, correspondence, testimony, photos, complaints, notes and emails – could fill boxes. The flesh of her military ordeal took shape during a review of those documents and through sporadic conversations and interviews beginning five years ago and intensifying after her retirement in 2020.

Davis said her life in uniform ended prematurely because of an unwillingness to look the other way at perceived wrongdoing in the Kansas Guard. She attempted to work within boundaries of the military system while filing reports or complaints ranging in subject from administrative corruption to sexual abuse to distortion of the promotion process. She raised alarms about personal issues as well as situations involving others in the Kansas Guard.

Substance of those allegations catapulted Davis into years of conflict with command staff that viewed complainants as irritating troublemakers ripe for expulsion.

Davis said her lonely campaign was aimed at bringing accountability and transparency to the insular Kansas Guard, especially actions of some high-ranking staff allied with then-Adjutant General Lee Tafanelli. For nine years, the general was responsible for training and readiness of 7,000 personnel in the Army and Air components of the Kansas Guard. He served as senior military adviser to Govs. Sam Brownback, Jeff Colyer and Laura Kelly before retiring in March 2020.

Davis' struggle evolved to emphasize self-defense as individuals within the Kansas Guard retaliated against her, she said. Her best asset was technical expertise in personnel policy and procedure acquired in service of the Kansas Guard. She said she proceeded under threat of reassignment to a lesser position, loss of promotion and firing.

"It wasn't ever about me until it was survival," Davis said. "Everything that could have gone wrong with the process went wrong."

The battle ended last year with her departure from the Kansas Guard and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs affirming her disability for post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I'm still not over my breakup with the Army," Davis said. "I have a hard time talking about it. When I see people from the military, period, it is extremely distressing. I see the uniform, and then the alarms start going off. I follow from their feet up to the face. Even if I don't know them, it's upsetting."

Maj. Gen. David Weishaar, who has led the Kansas Guard since April 2020, wasn't able to discuss personnel issues of current or former soldiers and airmen.

Weishaar said his commitment during 40 years of service was to foster a culture of dignity and respect and to compel troops to apply standards equally.

"That is what I try to convey across the force," Weishaar said. "It doesn't matter if you're, in my case, a two-star general, or if you're a one-striper. The expectation is the same. Do we have people do dumb things? Absolutely. Whatever goes on in the community is happening in the force."

Weishaar said members of the Kansas Guard were expected to work daily to live up to military values and to better respond to societal problems of mental health, suicide, sexual abuse, gender-based harassment and other issues inevitably filtering into the armed forces. The Kansas Guard has adopted a series of programs to help members prevent, manage or overcome impediments to their service, he said.

Reform of military culture is a special challenge when only one-fourth of Kansas Guard employees work full-time and the part-timers report for duty as little as twice a month, the general said.

Paper warfare

Davis was instigator of reports aimed at members of the Kansas Guard reaching back to 2008, when she accused an officer of administrative fraud, waste and abuse. In a subsequent matter, Davis was ordered to be part of an investigation into allegations that officers and enlisted personnel participated in a sex scandal. She understood sensitivity of that inquiry and her involvement in the case didn't go unnoticed by peers, she said.

"I have a moral compass," Davis said. "My right and wrong does not have a gray."

In 2013, Davis said, Kansas Guard officers conspired to delay or block her from appearing before a promotion board necessary to climb the ladder to chief warrant officer 3. She responded by submitting a complaint alleging inappropriate influence on command. The Kansas Guard's inspector general found elements of reprisal, she said, before forwarding her case to the U.S. Army.

Davis said the Kansas Guard answered by launching a commander's inquiry accusing her of failure to properly process paperwork.

Davis said a Kansas Guard member confided her promotion process might proceed unfettered if her complaints stopped. She declined to retreat. Davis was eventually promoted.

The Army's IG investigation of alleged retaliation against Davis dragged on for 4½ years, which made it one of the department's longest-running cases. The resulting 60-page report was a disappointment to Davis. It either concluded allegations were unfounded or left issues unresolved because of lack of information, she said.

In 2016, prior to conclusion of the Army IG inquiry, Davis met with Kansas Guard officers to discuss physical problems with her hips and back. Convalescent leave was an option. Instead, she was handed a packet containing a notice of intent to involuntarily release her from full-time duty. The recommendation was to provide an honorable characterization of her military service, despite an assertion she "failed to complete assigned tasks."

Removal from full-time National Guard duty for the first time since 2002 would have made it more difficult to earn retirement benefits available after 20 years of full-time service.

Davis said evidence relied upon to justify demotion to part-time status hinged on a distorted selection of emails and "unwarranted negative counseling statements" provided by Kansas Guard personnel, including some who should

not have been involved in rating her job performance. She said stacking the deck with complicit evaluators was part of a Kansas Guard playbook to flush people out the service.

She turned to then-Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, a Kansas Republican representing the 2nd District that includes Topeka. Davis sought help from Jenkins to speed completion of the U.S. Army inspector general's analysis of alleged retaliation against Davis by the Kansas Guard. Davis requested aid with retraction of the involuntary separation action or affirmation of due process rights while she challenged the action.

Davis presented herself to Jenkins as a "federal whistleblower with an ongoing inquiry into reprisal" involving members of the Kansas Guard.

"I frequently witnessed what I believed to be inappropriate conduct," Davis wrote in a document sent to Jenkins.

Davis said Jenkins' office took steps to intervene in her case, but nothing decisive came of that attempt by Kansas Guard officials to sever her full-time status.

The Kansas Guard issued an order in 2017 recalling Davis from remote duty to an office position in the organization's recruiting and retention command. By the end of that year, however, a medical board found Davis' chronic health condition rendered her unfit for duty. The Veterans Administration directed her not to return to work. That prompted a stalemate not resolved until her retirement in 2020.

'Toxic' culture

During the period from 2013 to 2015, a separate and much larger Kansas Guard investigation led by a one-star Air Guard general and an Army Guard lieutenant colonel produced compelling evidence of widespread malfeasance within the state's military organization. The roster of confirmed offenses attributed to officers and enlisted personnel of the Kansas Guard included acts of racism, enlistment fraud, bullying, sexual assault, retaliation and promotion manipulation.

The Kansas Guard investigating officers discovered confidential information gathered during their inquiry was leaked to people under scrutiny. The material was used to target individuals cooperating with the case, investigators reported.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported in 2017 that Brig. Gen. Scott Dold before retiring filed a final report on leadership shortcomings that concluded Tafanelli, the adjutant general, was responsible for systemic leadership problems within his command. Dold wrote in the report Kansas Guard leaders needed to place "soldier and airmen welfare and organizational needs before personal careerism and self-promotion."

"The predominant culture of this command has difficulty balancing legal, moral and ethical facets of decision making when addressing poor performance, toxic leadership and substantiated wrongdoing," Dold said.

In a response to the Capital-Journal's disclosures, Tafanelli said the way Kansas Guard members answered the call to duty during war, disaster and emergency shouldn't be overshadowed by a handful of corrupt colleagues.

"There are a few that will choose to act in an inappropriate manner and bring discredit to themselves and their service," he said.

Grab you, anywhere

Davis said she was tormented by what she perceived as indifference among some in the Kansas Guard to sexual harassment and assault. In her experience, she said, too many men in the Kansas Guard were complicit in creation of hostile work environments for women.

"It is not unusual for a female to be in there and they just walk up and grab you. Anywhere," Davis said.

Davis said a former Kansas Guard battalion commander, who she viewed as a friend, sexually assaulted her three years ago. A Veterans Affairs employee who offered to help Davis maneuver through the VA benefit system exposed himself to her, she said.

During a helicopter training assignment early in her Kansas Guard career, she said, a military doctor inappropriately penetrated her during a routine exam. Davis said she was sexually assaulted at age 18 by three men. It was after she enlisted, but before basic training.

Weishaar, the Kansas Guard's top officer and adjutant general, said sexual assault and sexual harassment were a menace to the military and society at large.

"When it happens – not if, because it does happen – we're going to take care of the victim," he said.

Jody Cope, the Kansas Guard's equal employment manager, said no one should accept the stereotype that sexual harassment was rampant in the Kansas Guard. The Kansas Guard's annual reports tracking formal complaints of sexual harassment showed six were submitted in 2015, six in 2016 and two in 2017. Comparable information for subsequent years wasn't released by the Kansas Guard.

Cope said the Kansas Guard had success resolving workplace conflicts with mediation. If allegations in an administrative complaint submitted to the Kansas Guard were substantiated, she said, there could be consequences.

"We've seen a really great increase over the last couple years of taking administrative action to address those," Cope said.

Michelle Ferrer, sexual assault response coordinator for the Kansas Guard, said her office offered confidentiality to employees reporting sexual misconduct. The exception to this rule was when a person was viewed as a danger to others or likely to engage in self-harm, she said. If an individual decided against pursuit of a formal complaint, she said, the paperwork could be shredded.

"That helps people to feel comfortable they can come talk to us," Ferrer said.

Potential sex crimes are referred to local law enforcement agencies because the Kansas Guard doesn't have authority to proceed, said Maj. Jacob McElwee, the Kansas Guard's judge advocate general.

Outcome of civilian criminal cases can influence military administrative actions involving Kansas Guard members. If the local prosecutor declined to file charges in a case, it's possible the National Guard Bureau's office of complex investigations could review allegations.

"Either way, we have an outside agency coming in and making sure that everything's being followed," McElwee said.

Weight of suicide

Davis said she could tick off names of Kansas Guard members who had taken their own life. She's felt overwhelmed by the thought that she tried but failed to help some of the deceased. She also is convinced not enough was being done to honor former Kansas Guard members who bring an end to their lives.

She recalled a poignant moment during a meeting in which Kansas Guard officers asked her if dismissing a specific soldier from the force would cause him to commit suicide. She said she advised there was substantial risk. The soldier was kicked out. His suicide followed, she said.

In the past 6½ years, Kansas Guard officials said, 19 members of the Air or Army Guard in Kansas committed suicide. An average of nearly three suicides occurred annually from 2015 to the present. Fifteen of those people were in the Army Guard, while four were in the Air Guard.

The Kansas Guard doesn't keep statistics on former Kansas Guard members who chose to commit suicide. Care and treatment of veterans with suicidal thoughts rests with the VA or private health professionals.

Terry Williams, an Air Guard colonel and the Kansas Guard's state chaplain, said the organization's training of people to recognize warning signs of trouble had improved in the past 15 years. Military chaplains have benefit of offering total confidentiality to people seeking assistance, he said. Statistics don't reveal the number of men and women saved through these interventions, he said.

"I've done eight or nine funerals for suicides," Williams said. "I've been at bedsides, gravesides, hospitals. My perspective encompasses all of that. I have a programmatic side, but it's very personal to me, too."

He recalled a January service with snow on the ground and a wind-chill index of 15 degrees below.

"I could hear the daughter cry above 'Taps,'?" said Williams, who has been in the Kansas Guard for 24 years and deployed overseas twice, including in 2009 to Iraq.

Angie Gabel, the 190th Air Refueling Wing's director of psychological health, said she was a champion of ASIST, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. Hundreds involved with the Kansas Guard have completed ASIST training to learn how to talk with people suspected of thinking about or planning suicide, she said.

Problems with personal relationships, money, job stress, legal issues or communication barriers are often indicators of a person in crisis, she said.

Gabel said a persistent challenge was overcoming a belief among soldiers and airmen that admitting to mental health challenges automatically destroyed careers.

"We still have that mentality of, 'If I say something my career is over, point blank, in the military.' We are slowly changing that mindset. It's not over. It's not a career-ender," Gabel said.

'Expendable'

Davis, 39, opposed her exit from the Kansas Guard last year because she thought it was unfair and meant she would never qualify for retirement benefits more generous than disability compensation. The end came without pomp and circumstance in April 2020.

Termination of the employee-employer relationship allowed her to speak more freely about the citizen-soldier organization's personnel issues. Many of those conversations were difficult for her. Others sparked a determination to keep fighting. She also shared a belief the mountain she was climbing could be too high, too far.

Davis said her forced exit was the consequence of her decisions to stare down the barrel of a Kansas Guard culture still anchored by a good-old-boy network. Reviewing threads of her Kansas Guard life suggests she was collateral damage of a toxic military environment, she said.

Administrative conflict that enveloped her felt like an organized effort to induce enough despair to drive her off, she said. The experience offered insight into factors contributing to the national plague of military suicide, she said.

"We're expendable," Davis said. "The decade has been really hard. The last five years has tried to kill me. It never had to be that way."

It was not the way her career was to have evolved when she enlisted as a teenager and joined a UH-60 Blackhawk crew in 1999. She was the daughter of a highly decorated Army officer. She had risen in rank while completing a degree in criminal justice at Washburn University in 2006 and a master's degree in business administration from Friends University in 2015.

She never deployed for combat despite volunteering to serve in hostile areas, but earned an Army commendation medal in 2010. She served more than a dozen years as a senior human resource officer in Kansas.

She said demise of her Army career failed to extinguish a conviction that military service provided rewarding experiences.

"I loved it. I loved the camaraderie. I loved taking care of soldiers. I loved learning new things," Davis said. "I liked being able to obtain the knowledge and ability to do things – write policy or figure things out and then go to the boss: 'OK, this is what you want. Here are your options.'?"

After months of evaluation, the VA rated Davis as 100% disabled. It was an analysis based primarily on diagnosis of her PTSD. Medical records indicated she suffered anxiety and depression in addition to physical limitations.

Fighting to get better

Not quite middle-aged, Davis' body and mind have been worn down. She has a new left hip. The plan to replace the right hip was postponed. Her right knee was operated on, but issues linger. She has dental woes from grinding her teeth.

Her future is clouded by realities of PTSD. Therapy was helpful at times and challenging in other moments, she said. Because of the pandemic, she unexpectedly discovered remote conversations with a therapist were easier than in-person discussions.

"I couldn't cry in front of her," Davis said. "I'd have my work face on. We weren't getting to the root of any problems."

Davis said her recovery had been impeded by reading or being told about ongoing controversy in the Kansas Guard. The intel reminded her there was no certainty about what her advocacy accomplished.

"I complained about people at the very top. Nobody wants to have anything to do with me," Davis said. "In retrospect, I went through a lot more than I realized at the time. I would like an apology."

https://ngpa.us/14470

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6. NC: WXII (Regional) – National Guard member: Great strides have been made since US repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' – By Bill O'Neil

As the end of Pride Month nears, an openly gay member of the Army National Guard is speaking out, sharing that the U.S. military has made great strides in diversity in the decade since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Lt. Col. Jeff Roth said when he joined the Army 20 years ago, he lived a secret life out of necessity.

"I was in relationships – or dating people – (I) had to be very careful about who I was out to, where I was out, how I was, went out and about my daily life in public because that could have a consequence on my military career," Roth said.

The now-defunct policy forced gay and lesbian members of the military to serve in silence.

When it ended in 2011, Roth said it was a non-event, and the fears that it would undermine military professionalism didn't happen.

"I think what has changed is (that) I can be open and honest with my teammates," Roth said. "I can be my authentic self, I can share who I am, and vice versa. That builds trust and confidence."

Roth said about 13,000 gay and lesbian troops were forced out of the military under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Since then, Roth said things have gotten better.

"As we move forward as a military, I think we can be very proud of our diversity, how we're changing our culture to be more welcoming people and let the number of people the very small number of people who raise their hand to say, 'I want to serve,' need all of our support," he said.

Roth said the biggest surprise for him came last year – he had the opportunity to attend a Pride luncheon on a military base while serving overseas.

"It was the first time I saw visible evidence of (a) complete shift in how we approach it," he said.

Roth said the National Guard went further, sending out a letter in support of its LGBTQ members that noted celebrating pride and recognizing the contributions of LGBTQ to people who serve in the military.

Roth said it took him several years after the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" before he came out – since he doesn't believe it has had any effect on his military career.

https://ngpa.us/14471

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7. OH: The Vindicator (Local) – National Guard prepares to end long mission at Second Harvest – By Ashely Fox

When Spc. Sam Schmucker of Cortland began his assignment with the Ohio National Guard at the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley, he didn't imagine it turning into such an opportunity.

Schmucker is one of several soldiers offered a position with the food bank, located in Youngstown.

"I didn't have a job to go back to after orders," Schmucker, 20, said.

He was approached by a member of the food bank's management, who offered Schmucker a role pulling orders, preparing food for various agencies to pick up from the warehouse.

Schmucker is grateful for the opportunity to serve the Valley, but also for the door that opened up as a result of volunteering. "It does mean a lot. I just came here as a volunteer but was offered employment. It meant a lot," he said.

Gratitude extends throughout the food bank and National Guard.

The soldiers played a crucial part to ensure people in not only the Mahoning Valley but across the state were able to have access to food, said Mike Iberis, executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley.

On Monday, the volunteers were treated to a lunch from the food bank to thank them for their assistance during the pandemic.

As orders for the National Guard expire July 2, some of the volunteers will go back to school, while others go back to work, Warrant Officer candidate Adam Fullmer said.

"We're going to be out of Task Force Fox. It's standing down in about 60 days," he said.

Task Force Fox encompasses the National Guard deployment around the state assisting agencies and organizations through the pandemic.

When the guard members were assigned to the food bank 15 months ago, 35 assisting. That number has shrunk to 15 now.

Last year was the "biggest" distribution year, Iberis said, with 15 million pounds of food handed out. This year, the food bank is on track to distribute 13 million pounds, Iberis said.

Most of the National Guard was activated for 30 days or more, Fullmer said. "We saw upwards of 75, 80 percent" of soldiers working extended assignments, ranging from food banks to helping in the prisons, to COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.

The National Guard also helped during what Fullmer called the "unemployment crisis," helping to process claims throughout the pandemic in Ohio.

"We took a little of the edge off for some of the organizations," Fullmer said.

"This is an illustration of when people work together, what can happen," Iberis said. "This was such a smooth-working relationship" among the guard, food bank and its agencies, Iberis said, calling it "a mammoth collaboration."

The food bank, like some other places, is returning to a state of pre-pandemic normalcy. Last week, phone calls were made to the normal roster of volunteers with about 80 percent already back in the warehouse this week, Iberis said.

Throughout the National Guard's help and media coverage, something positive happened with volunteers.

"The Mahoning Valley took note of how these Guards people responded. That has resulted … in a barrage of new volunteer applications," Iberis said. "It's incredible."

https://ngpa.us/14472

Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]

DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, June 30

OVERVIEW

NATO Resolute Support Commander Gen. Austin Miller said the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan was going "very well," but warned "civil war" was a "path that can be visualized" if the Taliban offensive continued on its current trajectory, the *New York Times* reported. Separately, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said security for Afghanistan's Hamid Karzai International Airport is not just crucial for the U.S. but also for "any other nation that likewise plans to maintain a diplomatic presence in Kabul," according to the *New York Times*. Also of note, President Biden officially justified recent airstrikes to Congress, stating the attacks against Iranian-backed militias in Syria and Iraq were to "defend the safety of our personnel" and "deter the Islamic Republic of Iran" and its proxies from further attacks, the *New York Times* wrote.

TOP STORIES

1. U.S. General Warns of Civil War Gripping Afghanistan After Exit

New York Times, June 30 (0300), Pg. A1 | Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Eric Schmitt

The commander of the U.S.-led mission in Afghanistan warned on Tuesday that the country could be on a path to chaotic civil war as American and other international troops prepare to leave in the coming weeks. Speaking from a garden adjacent to the circle of flagpoles that once displayed the flags of the 36 countries that contributed to the U.S.-led NATO mission -- now reduced to Turkey, Britain and the United States -- General Miller said the troop withdrawal was reaching a point where he would soon end his command, which began in September 2018, and in turn, say goodbye to Afghanistan.

2. Last Stand in Exit Plan Is Kabul Airport Security

New York Times, June 30 (0300), Pg. A7 | Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Eric Schmitt and Helene Cooper

For years, Hamid Karzai International Airport has been a main gateway to Afghanistan, an aspirational symbol of civilian life and normalcy amid military bases, warplanes and the scars of decades of fighting in the surrounding countryside. But now the airport, known to all as Kabul International, has become the last stand in America's 20-year campaign in Afghanistan.

3. 'Ready to take further action': Biden officially notifies Congress of his airstrikes on Iran-allied militias

New York Times Online, June 29 (1832) | David E. Sanger

President Biden officially notified Congress on Tuesday about his justification for recent American airstrikes against Iranian-backed militias in Syria and Iraq, declaring that he acted to "defend the safety of our personnel" and to "deter the Islamic Republic of Iran" and its proxies from further attacks.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. MDA Director Sees New Space Investment

BreakingDefense.com, June 29 (1533) | Theresa Hitchens

Space is becoming ever-more important for detecting and tracking "evolved" threats from both ballistic and hypersonic cruise missiles, Vice Adm. Jon Hill, Missile Defense Agency director, said today. "One of the great values of space" is to "sensor architectures," Hill told a webinar sponsored by The Hill newspaper. "That's how we handle the global maneuver problem."

5. Panel: Budget Priorities Prompted Navy Cut to Forces to Prevent Hollow Fleet

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 29 (1928) | Mallory Shelbourne

While the Marine Corps is divesting legacy systems to invest in modernization, the Navy has had to make cuts to sustain its current force, the admiral who oversees the Navy budget said today. Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, the Navy's deputy assistant secretary for budget, detailed the Department of the Navy's approach to the Fiscal Year 2022 budget request, which cut an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer. "We built the [Fiscal Year 20]22 budget, you know, noting a change in administration and the topline that the department of the navy receives, the DoN, or the Department of the Navy, built their budget with four things in mind. One ... nuclear deterrent, number one priority – paying for the Columbia class. Number two, for the Navy and the Marine Corps, number priority for the DoN was ready to fight for tonight – that non-nuclear deterrent ready to go tonight," Gumbleton said during a virtual appearance at the WEST 2021 conference, cohosted by the U.S. Naval Institute and AFCEA.

6. Watchdog sounds alarm on NSA surveillance tool

Washington Post, June 30 (0115), Pg. A2 | Ellen Nakashima

An extensive surveillance program first revealed by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden in 2013 continues to operate with no judicial and limited congressional oversight despite its potential to capture Americans' communications, a member of a privacy watchdog agency said in a statement released Tuesday.

COVID-19

7. Heart inflammation after COVID-19 shots higher-than-expected in study of U.S. military

Reuters, June 29 (1456) | Carl O'Donnell

Members of the U.S. military who were vaccinated against COVID-19 showed higher-than-expected rates of heart inflammation, although the condition was still extremely rare, according to a study released on Tuesday.

EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

8. House votes to repeal military authorizations dating to Gulf War, Cold War

Washington Post, June 30 (0115), Pg. A11 | Karoun Demirjian

The House voted overwhelmingly Tuesday to repeal two decades-old measures authorizing American military action in the Middle East, in a rare bipartisan gesture of what one senior Democrat called "good legislative housekeeping." Congress needs "to take seriously its responsibility over war and peace" and "recall and repeal authorities when their usefulness has passed," Rep. Gregory W. Meeks (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said during a floor debate this week.

9. House Democrats want to spend more on weapons procurement than Biden

Defense News Online, June 29 (1243) | Joe Gould

Tweaking President Joe Biden's Pentagon spending request for next year, House appropriators have proposed $1.7 billion more for weapons procurement and $1.6 billion less for development and testing of cutting-edge technologies meant to deter China. The House Appropriations Committee on Tuesday morning released its fiscal 2022 Pentagon-funding bill, which proposes $706 billion in defense spending, or roughly $10 billion above the amount enacted for the current fiscal year. When added to the $11 billion for military construction appropriators are seeking separately, that sets it about even with Biden's $716 billion request.

10. Smith slams F-35 lifecycle costs: 'We can do a hell of a lot better'

Defense News Online, June 29 (1830) | Joe Gould

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith on Tuesday criticized Lockheed Martin and other contractors over the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and its exorbitant lifecycle costs. "There's no question that everyone involved — certainly Lockheed Martin — could be doing a better job on getting sustainment costs down," Smith, D-Wash., told the Defense Writer's Group. "The sustainment costs — and it varies, I understand they're as high as $38,000 an hour, and that is incredibly expensive — it'll make the plane so that you don't really want to operate it any more than you absolutely have to."

11. HASC Chairman Says Congress Won't 'Kill' GBSD Program

National Defense Magazine Online, June 29 (1326) | Meredith Roaten

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee will not try to eliminate the controversial nuclear missile program that some Democrats have targeted for cuts, the lawmaker told reporters June 29. Now, Smith says the high cost of extending the Minuteman III's lifecycle has changed his thinking about GBSD. "The biggest problem here is that it turns out that Minuteman [life] extension, as it is currently being explained to us, is actually more expensive than building the GBSD," he said during a Defense Writers Group event. "We're not going to kill the GBSD program. We've got to keep it alive."

12. HASC to scrutinize Space Force budget: Satellites have to be 'easier to defend'

SpaceNews Online, June 29 (1641) | Sandra Erwin

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee said he expects to see a shift in U.S. military spending away from large satellites to a "more survivable infrastructure" of smaller spacecraft. "We need more smaller, easier to defend satellites that have redundancy. That's the biggest priority for me within the Space Force budget," Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.) said June 29 on a Defense Writers Group video conference.

13. U.S. Pushes Bill to Hasten Visa Process For Afghans

New York Times, June 30 (0300), Pg. A6 | Luke Broadwater

Rushing to help Afghans who face retribution for working alongside American troops in their home country, the House voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday to speed up the process that would allow them to immigrate to the United States.

14. House Defense Panel Seeks Conditions on Afghan Security Money

Bloomberg Government, June 29 (1254) | Roxana Tiron

Lawmakers want the defense secretary to certify that Afghan Security Forces are controlled by a civilian government committed to human rights and preventing terrorists from using the country to threaten the U.S. and allies before committing $3 billion next year to help the Afghan military.

AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

15. U.S. military days away from completing Afghan withdrawal – sources

Reuters, June 29 (2014) | Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali

The U.S. military appears just days away from completing its withdrawal from Afghanistan, well ahead of the Sept. 11 deadline set by President Joe Biden to end America's longest war, U.S. officials told Reuters on Tuesday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

16. Germany completes troop pull-out from Afghanistan – minister

Agence France-Presse, June 29 (1833) | Not Attributed

Germany has completed its troop pull-out from Afghanistan, started in May, the defence ministry announced Tuesday, ending a nearly 20-year deployment there alongside US and other international forces.

17. America's longest war is ending. A nation is left wondering whether it was all worth it

CNN.com (Analysis), June 30 (0002) | Stephen Collinson

America's "forever war" in Afghanistan outlasted the first three commanders in chief of this century. But this week, Joe Biden is set to become the president who imposes closure on the US' role in the bloody, intractable conflict.

MIDDLE EAST

18. In Iraq, an old U.S. foe grows his political power

Reuters (Special Report), June 29 (0600) | John Davison and Ahmed Rasheed

On a tense February night, thousands of militiamen loyal to Shi'ite Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr took to the streets of Baghdad and southern Iraqi cities, parading in gun-laden pick-up trucks while state security forces stood by. It was the biggest show of force by the populist cleric since the mid-2000s, when his followers battled the U.S. occupation and inflicted thousands of American casualties.

INDO-PACIFIC

19. U.S. respects South Korea's decision to bow out of multinational military drill – Pentagon

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 29 (1544) | Byun Duk-kun

The United States fully respects South Korea's decision to skip a multinational naval exercise, a Pentagon spokesman said Tuesday, also adding Seoul's decision does not affect the South Korea-U.S. alliance in any way.

20. INDO-PACOM Used Ground-based Aegis Combat System Prototype to Target Missile Threats, Surface Targets

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 29 (1923) | Sam LaGrone

Last September, INDO-PACOM used the Virtualized Aegis Weapon System (VAWS) in an experiment to see if the combat management technology of the sea-based Aegis could be used by Army and Air Force units, Lockheed Martin software engineers said during the WEST 2021 conference, cohosted by the U.S. Naval Institute and AFCEA. The experiments used VAWs to route targeting information used by destroyers and cruisers with an Army High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) unit and a PAC-3 missile defense system instead. During the September 2020 exercise, VAWS – developed in part by the Navy's Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems (PEO IWS) – was installed at the Pacific Air Forces' multi-domain operations center (MDOC) in Hawaii and routed information to the Army's 17th Field Artillery Brigade, which was functioning as a multi-domain task force (MDTF) at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam.

CHINA

21. China looks to East Africa for second Indian Ocean foothold

Nikkei Asia Online (Japan), June 29 (1453) | Ken Moriyasu

News that Tanzania will revive a $10 billion port project in the town of Bagamoyo has ignited speculation that China, the project's main investor, is looking to establish an additional dual-use foothold on the East African coast, a move that would greatly enhance Beijing's strategic aims in the region.

RUSSIA

22. U.S. eyes more stable, predictable ties with Russia, Blinken tells paper

Reuters, June 29 (0738) | Not Attributed

The United States hopes for more stable and predictable relations with Russia but if the latter continues to "be aggressive", then Washington will respond, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a newspaper interview published on Tuesday.

23. Dutch say Russian jets buzzed warship in Black Sea

Agence France-Presse, June 29 (1148) | Danny Kemp

The Netherlands on Tuesday accused Russian fighter jets of "unsafe" behaviour in an encounter with a Dutch warship in the Black Sea. The incident last Thursday involved the frigate HNMLS Evertsen, part of a carrier strike group with the British destroyer HMS Defender, which itself purportedly came under Russian warning fire a day earlier.

AFRICA

24. As Pentagon weighs sending troops back to Somalia, AFRICOM chief makes his case

Military Times Online, June 29 (1220) | Meghann Myers

Six months after former President Donald Trump abruptly pulled troops out of Somalia, the new administration is discussing whether to send them back in. The head of U.S. Africa Command has been sharing his opinions with the Pentagon's top civilian leadership, he said Tuesday. "I think we'll keep those options right where they should be, in private communications with the secretary of defense, so our civilian leaders have the opportunity to make their decisions," Army Gen. Stephen Townsend said during the European Union Defense Washington Forum. But, he added, it's a lot hard to train, advise and assist Somalian forces from afar.

25. Islamic State group says it's behind Congo suicide bombing

Associated Press, June 29 (1353) | Al-Hadji Kudra Maliro

An Islamic State group in Africa claimed responsibility Tuesday for two explosions in eastern Congo, including its first suicide bombing, deepening fears that extremists have now laid roots in this corner of the continent long plagued by rebels.

ARCTIC

26. Coast Guard Considers Arctic FONOPs As Russian Activity Increases in Region

Military.com, June 29 (0802) | Patricia Kime

The Arctic could potentially become the next region in which the U.S. executes "freedom of navigation operations," or FONOPS, the Coast Guard's top officer said Monday. Home to an estimated $1 trillion worth of rare minerals, a third of the world's supply of liquefied natural gas and migratory fish species, the Arctic is increasingly attracting traffic -- especially from Russia, which draws 20% to 24% of its gross domestic product

from the region, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said in an online discussion hosted by the Washington, D.C.-based Brookings Institution.

NAVY

27. House Bill Cuts Money for Navy Nuke Cruise Missile, Saves three LCS from Decommissioning

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 29 (1522) | Sam LaGrone

House appropriators are cutting development money for the Navy's ship-launched nuclear cruise missile, preventing the service from decommissioning three Freedom-class Littoral Combat Ships and adding funds for a second destroyer, according to the House Appropriations Committee defense subcommittee's draft of the Fiscal Year 2022 defense spending bill issued today.

28. There's a theory the Navy's shock tests caused the condo collapse. Experts say why it didn't

Miami Herald Online, June 29 (0700) | Madeleine Marr

People continue to pine for answers after last week's horrific condo collapse in Surfside, Florida. It may be weeks or months before the actual cause is known -- but that doesn't stop non-experts coming up with their own hypotheses.

29. Navy won't investigate Eddie Gallagher's podcast comments about Islamic State detainee's death

Navy Times Online, June 29 (1614) | Geoff Ziezulewicz

The Navy announced Tuesday that it will not pursue further action against former Chief Special Warfare Operator Eddie Gallagher for comments he made earlier this year on a podcast regarding medical treatment of an Islamic State detainee who later died in 2017. "After a review conducted by the Navy, it was determined that Gallagher's statements were not corroborated and no substantive information was found to merit an investigation based on those statements," Navy spokeswoman Cmdr. Courtney Hillson said in an email to Navy Times.

CYBER

30. 'The Future Is About Information Dominance' - Gen. Nakasone

BreakingDefense.com, June 29 (1806) | Brad D. Williams

Future competition and conflict will hinge on "information dominance" — a mission that will play out largely in cyberspace but that cannot be separated from conventional military operations, CYBERCOM and NSA chief Gen. Paul Nakasone said today. "The future is about information — information dominance," Nakasone said during the U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association annual WEST Conference. For context, Nakasone made the comment about the future after reflecting on key moments in the decade-long existence of CYBERCOM, an organization he has been involved with since the beginning and took leadership of in 2018. Nakasone also leads the NSA and the Central Security Service.

31. CYBERCOM: Navy-Marine Integration Must Extend Across the Cyber Realm to Protect Weapons Systems, Data

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 29 (1727) | Gidget Fuentes

The Navy and Marine Corps must be prepared to handle cyber-attacks like the recent attack embedded in routine software updates on thousands of government and business networks, said the nation's top cybersecurity official. "Continuing Navy-Marine Corps integration must account for the information environment, especially adversary intrusions, information operations and next-gen cryptography," Army Gen. Paul Nakasone, head of U.S. Cyber Command, said Tuesday during the WEST 2021 defense conference. Cyber operations, cybersecurity and information operations are "increasingly important roles for the joint force," including the growing capabilities coming from naval integration.

NOTABLE COMMENTARY

32. 'People are watching': Attacks on Milley and the U.S. military play right into enemy hands

USA Today Online, June 29 (0315) | Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA)

Last week in Washington, Gen. Mark Milley made headlines. With surgical precision, the decorated general and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff eviscerated untrue and unfounded allegations about critical race theory, levied by one of my Republican colleagues.

33. The military's critical race facts

Washington Post, June 30 (0115), Pg. A25 | Michele L. Norris

Conservative politicians have weaponized critical race theory to thwart discussion about America's pernicious racial history. The U.S. military - an institution with a mixed record on racial equality - should close down this phony war by simply telling its own story with a full and open examination of the record. I am not normally hawkish about calling for military action, but I'll pound on the table to advocate for this battle. Why is the military so well suited to take this on? Let's start with the Capitol Hill testimony last week by Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the conservative response that followed it.

34. Racism has long undermined military cohesion, just as Gen. Milley testified

Washington Post Online, June 29 (1044) | Natalie Shibley

The idea that understanding histories and theories about race is important for military discipline and cohesion is nothing new. In fact, the hundreds of conflicts between White and Black troops during the Vietnam War, especially major incidents at Camp LeJeune in 1969 and Travis Air Force Base in 1971, prompted the military to launch an educational program that aimed to diminish such tensions through better understanding. The program did not achieve its promise, in part because of the very opposition to teaching service members about structural racism that is recurring today. Yet, the fact that such discussions are happening after a half-century underscores the necessity of addressing racism in our society and institutions, rather than curtailing its study.

35. The Taliban's March to Kabul

Wall Street Journal, June 30 (0200), Pg. A18 | Editorial

Americans of a certain age recall the humiliating U.S. flight from Saigon as the North Vietnamese army marched into the city in 1975: The desperate pleas of Vietnamese at the U.S. Embassy gates, the last helicopters taking off from the Embassy roof. Could we soon see the same in Afghanistan?

TOP STORIES

1. U.S. General Warns of Civil War Gripping Afghanistan After Exit

'Civil war is certainly a path that can be visualized,' said Gen. Austin S. Miller, commander of the U.S.-led forces. 'That should be a concern for the world'

New York Times, June 30 (0300), Pg. A1 | Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Eric Schmitt

KABUL, Afghanistan -- The commander of the U.S.-led mission in Afghanistan warned on Tuesday that the country could be on a path to chaotic civil war as American and other international troops prepare to leave in the coming weeks.

His assessment, in a rare news conference at the headquarters of U.S. and NATO command in Kabul, will likely be one of the last publicly delivered by an American four-star general in Afghanistan, where recent events have included a Taliban offensive that has seized around 100 district centers, left dozens of civilians wounded and killed, and displaced thousands more.

"Civil war is certainly a path that can be visualized if it continues on the trajectory it's on," the commander, Gen. Austin S. Miller, told reporters during the news conference. "That should be a concern for the world."

With some intelligence estimates saying that the Afghan government could fall in six months to two years after a final American withdrawal, General Miller's comments were a window into recent tension between the White House and the Pentagon.

For months, Pentagon leaders argued for some sort of lasting American military presence in Afghanistan, citing counterterrorism concerns and the need to provide a check on the Taliban's advance. President Biden's response, in April, was final: All American forces except for an embassy garrison will be gone by Sept. 11.

Speaking from a garden adjacent to the circle of flagpoles that once displayed the flags of the 36 countries that contributed to the U.S.-led NATO mission -- now reduced to Turkey, Britain and the United States -- General Miller said the troop withdrawal was reaching a point where he would soon end his command, which began in September 2018, and in turn, say goodbye to Afghanistan.

“From a military standpoint it’s going very well,” General Miller said of the U.S. withdrawal. He did not offer a timeline for when the withdrawal will be complete. The Taliban, for the most part, have not attacked U.S. or international forces as they have departed, instead focusing the brunt of the violence on the Afghanistan security forces and the civilians caught in the crossfire.

What U.S. forces remain are spread between Kabul and Bagram Air Base, the sprawling base that was once home to thousands of troops and contractors. Bagram is now the final gateway for moving out what troops and equipment remain in the country.

The NATO headquarters, soon to become part of the U.S. Embassy compound, was quiet Tuesday. The Georgian guards who had manned its perimeter were gone, replaced by U.S. Embassy security. The interior, a web of protective cement barriers, barracks and offices, felt much like an empty home.

Roughly 650 U.S. troops are expected to remain in the country to provide security for diplomats, American officials said last week.

The U.S. military inches closer to the exit, but it is still providing what support it can to the Afghan security forces -- flying jets from the aircraft carrier Eisenhower, recently replaced by the Reagan, over Afghanistan to drop airstrikes on Taliban fighters as Afghan security have found themselves under siege.

But with much of the high-tech American communications equipment gone, in at least one instance those jets were unable to communicate properly to carry out an airstrike on Taliban positions and had to pass the attack off to an armed drone, said one military official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters. Currently much of the air support over Afghanistan has already been moved out of the country.

But what the Americans are doing in Afghanistan becomes less relevant by the day as their presence in the country shrinks, and with it their capacity to affect what happens on the battlefield.

The United States has spent billions of dollars propping up Afghan security forces, but it remains unresolved whether it will continue to provide those forces with air support after Sept. 11, when American troops are withdrawn.

The United States currently has “the ability to support Afghan security forces when attacked,” General Miller said. “That exists today, and I don’t want to speculate what that looks like in the future.”

U.S. airstrikes, targeting groups of Taliban fighters following their recent offensive in the country’s north, have drawn outrage from the Taliban but little else as their fighters continue to take territory daily. The insurgent group has taken dozens of districts in past weeks -- sometimes through military means and at others by exploiting local divisions along with mediation with local officials.

Afghan forces have managed to retake several districts, but nothing on the scale of their insurgent foes.

“What we’re seeing is the rapid loss of district centers,” General Miller said, adding that he had passed his advice -- to pull security forces back to defend key areas such as big cities -- on to Afghan leaders.

This domino effect of falling districts has only served to demoralize the Afghan security forces, who have watched some of their comrades surrender, forfeiting their vehicles and equipment to an increasingly triumphant Taliban. In recent days, the fighting had reached roughly 60 miles away from Kabul, the country’s capital.

To bolster the depleted government forces, militias -- some long on the government’s payroll -- have gained new prominence, a distinct echo of the civil war in the 1990s when warlords and their fiefs of armed men harassed and taxed residents to the point where the Taliban’s rise was welcome in broad areas of the country. Both President Ashraf Ghani and his newly appointed defense minister have made comments that seemed to welcome the resurgence of such groups.

The militias’ efficacy on the battlefield is questionable, but the government will continue to back their rise because “it will bleed the Taliban by a thousand cuts,” said Ibraheem Bahiss, a consultant with International Crisis Group and independent research analyst.

Abdullah Abdullah, the top Afghan official leading continuing peace talks in Qatar, has been oblique about whether he supported the militias, saying in a recent interview only that they need to be in direct coordination with the security services to avoid any fracturing.

The Biden administration has pledged to provide Mr. Ghani with financial support. That includes $266 million in humanitarian aid and $3.3 billion in security assistance, as well as three million doses of the Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine and oxygen supplies.

Still, Mr. Biden’s message in his meetings with the Afghan leaders was clear: The U.S. military was leaving.

NATO and the U.S. military will also continue to assist the Afghan security forces with training and logistics from outside the country.

“Afghans are going to have to decide their future, what they want,” Mr. Biden said at the White House. “The senseless violence has to stop.”

But the violence is unlikely to come to a halt anytime soon. Peace talks in Doha between the Afghan government and the Taliban that began in September have all but stalled, and with the insurgents’ gains on the battlefield, the Taliban is increasingly likely to only settle for an outright military victory.

Speaking to reporters in Washington hours after General Miller's remarks, the Pentagon spokesman, John F. Kirby, deflected questions on the precise timing of the final withdrawal of American forces -- officials have previously said early to mid-July -- and on how the Pentagon and Biden administration would mark that occasion.

No senior Pentagon officials are expected to visit Afghanistan as the last troops leave. And it is unclear what kind of official homecoming ceremonies -- if any -- the last returning troops and their commanders, including General Miller, will receive.

"We're all mindful, all of us here, of the fact that this war is now two decades on, and is coming to a close, and of our responsibility to communicate the closure of that to you and to the American people and we will do that," Mr. Kirby said.

"We will find a way to mark it officially," he added, "and to state it unequivocally for the American people at the right time and in an appropriate way."

--*Eric Schmitt reported from Washington*

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2. Last Stand in Exit Plan Is Kabul Airport Security

With the main allied military air base about to close, negotiations are underway with Turkey about continuing to secure the civilian airport as the Taliban advance across the country

New York Times, June 30 (0300), Pg. A7 | Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Eric Schmitt and Helene Cooper

KABUL, Afghanistan -- For years, Hamid Karzai International Airport has been a main gateway to Afghanistan, an aspirational symbol of civilian life and normalcy amid military bases, warplanes and the scars of decades of fighting in the surrounding countryside.

But now the airport, known to all as Kabul International, has become the last stand in America's 20-year campaign in Afghanistan.

If the United States and its allies can complete a deal for Turkey to keep forces in place to secure the airport, President Biden can go ahead with his plan to maintain the American Embassy -- and diplomatic missions from allied countries -- even after combat troops for the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization depart.

If not, senior American and NATO officials said, the consequences could be substantial: Mr. Biden's plans to try to retain a diplomatic presence in the country, as part of an international effort seeking to prevent a return to the grim Taliban-controlled era of the past, will most likely be cast aside, and access to the country by aid groups could be cut off.

“Security at the airport in whatever form or fashion it takes will be important, not only for the United States, but for any other nation that likewise plans to maintain a diplomatic presence in Kabul,” the Pentagon spokesman, John F. Kirby, said in an interview.

James G. Stavridis, a retired admiral who served as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s supreme allied commander for Europe, put it more bluntly. “Without a secure airport, the ability to conduct day-to-day embassy operations in a large country like Afghanistan, which is the size of Texas, is significantly diminished,” he said.

“In addition to personal safety and ability to evacuate in emergencies, helos and planes are needed to move U.S. diplomats, aid workers, intelligence officers and support personnel around the country,” he said. “Without that fundamental capability, the mission of the embassy is a failure.”

Turkey for its own reasons wants to retain a presence in Afghanistan, where it has a long affiliation, and a shared history and religion as well as an economic stake. As a Muslim-majority nation and a member of the Atlantic alliance, Turkey has played a consistent role in Afghanistan since 2001, including sending troops in noncombat roles. It currently has about 600 service members in Afghanistan, where its main mission has been providing security for the airport.

The talks over completing an agreement for Turkey to continue doing so have yet to resolve details of how the operation would work. They are also taking place against the backdrop of high-level strains between Turkey and the United States over issues like Ankara’s purchase of Russian antiaircraft batteries.

Military planners and intelligence analysts say the growing strength of the Taliban and planned withdrawal of international combat troops mean that the Afghan government was likely to fall in six months to two years. And while it is not clear that the Taliban would want to completely shut down the airport and isolate the country if they take full control of Afghanistan, the group has signaled that it will not accept the presence of any foreign troops, even from Turkey.

After two decades of war, failed military strategies and set-piece battles that seem to have fallen out of remembered time, the fate of the airport is shaping up as a potential epitaph to America’s presence in Afghanistan.

The importance of the strip of tarmac, radars and terminals, surrounded by the ring of mountains that define the capital city, cannot be overstated. Beyond its strategic importance for maintaining embassy operations and having an evacuation route for diplomats and the forces protecting them, the airport is the gateway to Afghanistan for workers from international aid groups and other nongovernmental organizations and health care providers that remain vital in a nation long reliant on foreign assistance to provide basic services.

“It’s important for the diplomatic communities, aid agencies, international organizations and also for the country to continue to have support from outside,” Abdullah Abdullah, the chairman of the Afghan government council

that has led peace negotiations with the Taliban, said of the airport in an interview on Friday after he and President Ashraf Ghani met with Mr. Biden at the White House.

Kabul International's importance was underscored last week after Pentagon and other administration officials said the military airport at Bagram, about an hour north of Kabul, would soon close on schedule.

Administration officials had briefly considered delaying the closure of Bagram to give commanders more options if security arrangements at Kabul International stalled or Pentagon planners needed another airport to evacuate thousands of Western diplomats or Afghan interpreters and other workers who helped the United States.

"The withdrawal continues on pace," Mr. Kirby told reporters on Thursday when asked about any plans to delay shutting Bagram.

The United States and Turkey agreed this month on the outlines of a plan for the Turks to continue providing security at the airport, easing anxiety among many allied partners about maintaining safe access to the airfield for their embassies.

Jake Sullivan, Mr. Biden's national security adviser, told reporters this month that both sides had made a "clear commitment" on the security of the airport. But Turkey and its Atlantic alliance partners continue to haggle over the details of how this will be done, and no specifics have yet emerged.

A Pentagon team met with Turkish officials in Ankara last week to begin hammering out many of the political, financial and logistic details.

American officials say Turkey is making two broad sets of requests to continue providing security at the airport, which it has done for the past several years as part of the NATO force in the country. One set deals with the tactical details of securing the airport.

Turkey is expected to provide 600 to 1,000 troops to secure the airport, but it is looking for other nations to contribute up to an additional 1,000 troops, Pentagon officials said. Turkish officials have said they are seeking help from Hungary to provide security. Turkey's defense minister, Hulusi Akar, has said that Turkey would not be sending additional troops to increase its contingent already in Afghanistan.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey has said he would also discuss Turkey's remaining at the airport with Afghanistan's neighbor Pakistan, which is an influential supporter of the Taliban and has good relations with Mr. Erdogan.

About 650 U.S. troops are expected to remain in Afghanistan to provide security for diplomats after the last American combat troops leave in the next weeks, American officials said on Friday.

In addition, several hundred additional American forces will remain at the Kabul airport, possibly until September, to assist the Turkish troops providing security, as a temporary move until a more formal Turkey-led security operation is in place, planning previously reported by The Associated Press.

The United States is expected to commit Black Hawk helicopters and their aircrews and maintenance specialists. The helicopters would be used to ferry diplomats from Kabul to the airport.

Washington is also expected to share intelligence with the Turks and extend the range of an antirocket system to help protect the airport, American officials said.

These tactical details are so important that Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has personally gone through the list of requests and requirements with his Turkish counterpart, Gen. Yasar Guler, Pentagon officials said.

There are also issues with the operation of the airport, which is heavily reliant on international forces to oversee flight operations. They include the need to provide more training for Afghan air traffic controllers and replacing a contract that provides communications for the air traffic management center for the airport.

A second set of higher-level requests was conveyed by Mr. Erdogan to Mr. Biden during the NATO summit this month in Brussels.

The most vexing of half a dozen disputes between the two countries is Mr. Erdogan's refusal to reverse his purchase of an advanced surface-to-air missile system from Russia. The deal by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally to buy sophisticated Russian military equipment led to Turkey becoming the only country in the alliance to be on the receiving end of U.S. sanctions and removed from the F-35 fighter aircraft program.

American officials, however, insist that any deal allowing the S-400 system to proceed as part of the deal to secure the Kabul airport is a nonstarter.

But Turkish officials have continued to bring up the issue at lower-level discussions, American officials said.

Taliban leaders have already expressed opposition to any foreign personnel, including from Turkey, remaining in the country to provide airport security.

Though the Afghan government has welcomed Turkey's commitment to the airport, the Taliban do not, despite some far-fetched hope among Western officials that the insurgent group would allow Turkey's presence after the Americans left.

In a statement this month, the Taliban said that "the presence of foreign forces under whatever name or by whichever country in our homeland is unacceptable for the Afghan people and the Islamic Emirate."

--Thomas Gibbons-Neff reported from Kabul, and Eric Schmitt and Helene Cooper from Washington. Carlotta Gall contributed reporting from Istanbul

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3. 'Ready to take further action': Biden officially notifies Congress of his airstrikes on Iran-allied militias
The notification, in compliance with the War Powers Act, came as Mr. Biden drew criticism over the strikes from some in his own party
New York Times Online, June 29 (1832) | David E. Sanger

President Biden officially notified Congress on Tuesday about his justification for recent American airstrikes against Iranian-backed militias in Syria and Iraq, declaring that he acted to "defend the safety of our personnel" and to "deter the Islamic Republic of Iran" and its proxies from further attacks.

The notification, in compliance with the War Powers Act, came as Mr. Biden drew criticism over the strikes from some in his own party — both progressives who generally oppose further military action in the Middle East and some Biden allies who questioned whether he needed a vote of Congress before getting into repeated conflict with the militias.

Senator Christopher S. Murphy, Democrat of Connecticut and one of Mr. Biden's most enthusiastic supporters, called the actions against Iran in the region part of a "low-intensity war" and said that, at some point, Congress' approval would be necessary.

The strikes occurred early Monday local time against locations in Syria and Iraq that White House officials said were used to launch unmanned aerial vehicles against U.S. troops in Iraq.

The White House has rejected the idea that Congress needs to authorize such action, saying Mr. Biden acted as many of his predecessors did, under his constitutional authority as commander in chief. Mr. Biden's formal notification to Congress continued that argument, saying that he acted consistently "with my responsibility to protect United States citizens both at home and abroad and in furtherance of United States national security and foreign policy interests."

The notification concluded with a warning that the United States stood "ready to take further action, as necessary and appropriate, to address further threats or attacks." That language could confirm suspicions by many in Congress that this was not a single attack on a terror group, but part of a continuing, low-level conflict.

The formal notification itself was no surprise, but Mr. Biden submitted it quickly, an acknowledgment of the sensitivity of the issue for Democrats. The airstrikes underscored how many conflicting currents Mr. Biden faces as he attempts to fashion a coherent Iran policy. Those include pressures from Congress, from Israel and from Arab allies who worry about his determination to get back into the Iran nuclear accord, and now from a new

leader in Tehran, Ebrahim Raisi, the incoming hard-liner who was elected president two weeks ago. He will be inaugurated in August.

Since Mr. Biden's inauguration, there have been six meetings toward completing work on restoring the nuclear deal, which President Donald J. Trump exited three years ago. No additional meeting has been scheduled since Mr. Raisi won the election as the preferred candidate of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Nor has Iran indicated whether it will renew an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear inspection group, to maintain cameras and other sensors that monitor the status of Iran's nuclear material. Those negotiations remain underway. The last agreement expired on Thursday.

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DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. MDA Director Sees New Space Investment

'What we don't want to do is launch a weapon that then opens a seeker and there's nothing there, because the target has maneuvered,' Vice Adm. Jon Hill, said

BreakingDefense.com, June 29 (1533) | Theresa Hitchens

WASHINGTON -- Space is becoming ever-more important for detecting and tracking "evolved" threats from both ballistic and hypersonic cruise missiles, Vice Adm. Jon Hill, Missile Defense Agency director, said today.

"One of the great values of space" is to "sensor architectures," Hill told a webinar sponsored by The Hill newspaper. "That's how we handle the global maneuver problem."

Hill explained that, "if you don't have a sensor, tracking from launch all the way through demise, there's a period of uncertainty in that track. And what we don't want to do is launch a weapon that then opens a seeker and there's nothing there, because the target has maneuvered."

Thus, he said, "being able to look down from space and have a global view becomes critically important and that's recognized, not just within Missile Defense Agency, but within the services as a future area for investment, and we're moving smartly in that direction."

Hill last week said that DoD is about to launch a new Missile Defense Review, firmly based on defending against emerging threats. The last such review was released in January 2019 but actually completed in 2017.

Meanwhile, the agency asked in its 2022 budget request for $256 million in research, development, test and evaluation (RTD&E) funds for the Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor (HBTSS) to better track ballistic missiles and, more importantly, hypersonic cruise missiles — the latter of which, DoD leaders worry, are

being developed rapidly by Russia and China. MDA in January MDA awarded L3Harris a $121 million contract; and Northrop Grumman $155 million for each to develop a prototype for a sat-based, medium field-of-view sensor targeted specifically at keeping tabs on hypersonic missiles flying fast and low.

Hill's focus on space as a critical piece of future MDA plans was echoed during the webinar by two key House lawmakers: Rep. Jim Cooper, chair of the House Armed Services strategic forces subcommittee; and Rep. Mike Turner, ranking member.

"We've really got to be careful here as space becomes a contested environment," Cooper, one of the fathers of the Space Force, said. While noting that both Russia and China are building up their counterspace capabilities, Cooper said that given Moscow's economic woes, Beijing is the real threat that needs attention.

"Russia is a declining nation. They have huge internal problems," Cooper said. Russian President Vladimir Putin is "making the best of a bad situation" by "over-investing" in nuclear and missile capabilities. But at the same time, he added, "pretty soon he won't even have the demographics to field a serious army by the way their population is declining."

China, Cooper said, "is the more serious threat and they're beefing up their nuclear capability dramatically, as well as their hypersonic capabilities. We need the ability to detect these threats."

Space is an "integral foundation to almost every operation or aspects of operating for our military service branches," Turner said. "In addition, it is the way we see, it is the way we assess the threat, and certainly for missile defense, it [provides] both our understanding of if we are at risk — if someone is attacking us — but also then how do we approach trying to neutralize that target."

Citing increasing missile threats, Turner also made a pitch for directed energy weapons — something he has promoted for many years.

"The missile threat has been proliferating, both in North Korea and Iran who are pursuing you ICBM or missile technology, but also in other nations, and in the numbers of missiles that put the United States at risk," he said. "So we're not keeping up — we have a lot more to do, and I think it's going to pull us into some new technology ultimately, which hopefully will be directed energy."

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5. Panel: Budget Priorities Prompted Navy Cut to Forces to Prevent Hollow Fleet

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 29 (1928) | Mallory Shelbourne

While the Marine Corps is divesting legacy systems to invest in modernization, the Navy has had to make cuts to sustain its current force, the admiral who oversees the Navy budget said today.

Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, the Navy's deputy assistant secretary for budget, detailed the Department of the Navy's approach to the Fiscal Year 2022 budget request, which cut an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer.

"We built the [Fiscal Year 20]22 budget, you know, noting a change in administration and the topline that the department of the navy receives, the DoN, or the Department of the Navy, built their budget with four things in mind. One ... nuclear deterrent, number one priority – paying for the Columbia class. Number two, for the Navy and the Marine Corps, number priority for the DoN was ready to fight for tonight – that non-nuclear deterrent ready to go tonight," Gumbleton said during a virtual appearance at the WEST 2021 conference, cohosted by the U.S. Naval Institute and AFCEA.

"Our readiness accounts had to be paid and paid upfront. The third priority speaks to getting after high leverage investments that will meet our number one competitor: China," he said in response to a question from panel moderator former Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert. "How can we get ready for that eventuality? And then the fourth priority was to grow the size of the Department of the Navy. Clearly, the Marine Corps is divesting to invest. The Navy is actually cutting forces to sustain what we have, so we don't have a hollow force."

Lawmakers have criticized the Navy's recent budget submission, which only sought one destroyer as opposed to the two anticipated under the service's current multi-year procurement contract with General Dynamics Bath Iron Works and Ingalls Shipbuilding. The service would incur a $33 million penalty should it only buy one destroyer, USNI News previously reported.

Service officials have described the destroyer cut as a difficult choice the Navy had to make in this budget cycle due to cost. The ship appeared at the top of the Navy's annual unfunded priorities list.

"Long story short is on the fifth and final year of the multi-year, we looked at the topline for the Navy, the investments that we wanted to make within those four priorities as stated, the multi-year penalty, as reported was a $33 million loss if we didn't buy that ship," Gumbleton said today. "And then the Navy looked at investments in Columbia, paying the readiness bills to fight tonight, high leverage investments in the future, and we took that $1.8 billion for a destroyer and spread it for readinesss for today, modernization for tomorrow, and investments for the future."

When explaining the Navy's rationale for cutting the second destroyer, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday last week emphasized to Congress the importance of readiness.

"No, sir it wasn't playing with the numbers," Gilday told Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) when asked if the Navy no longer needed the second destroyer. "So, I go back to the thesis of our budget proposal, which is to field the best, most capable and most lethal fleet that we can – and that's 296 ships – and make it the best that we can, including a modernization plan that gives us increased capabilities and then growing the Navy at an affordable rate. And so it was a balance across those three areas, sir."

“Based on instances like the collisions in ‘17, we are unwilling – at least my best advice, sir – is to continue to prioritize training and readiness as our top priority,” Gilday continued.

For its modernization efforts, the Marine Corps has emphasized that its approach is to cut legacy systems to invest in new equipment and strategies under the premise of flat or declining budgets. During the conference today, Lt. Gen. John Jansen, the Marine Corps’ deputy commandant for programs and resources, said the Marines have divested about $8 billion across the service in the last three budget cycles.

“If you look at [Program Objective Memorandum] ‘20, POM ‘21, and POM ‘22, the Marine Corps has divested of end strength force structure and equipment in the amount of $8 billion, with half of that being force structure. So $4 billion worth of military personnel, approaching 12,000 Marines in end strength, in order to not only generate resources, but he’s really looking at the size of these formations, the number of formations, and so forth,” Jansen said, referring to Marine Corps commandant Gen. David Berger.

Congress is widely expected to fund and authorize the second destroyer. The House Appropriations Committee defense subcommittee in its draft of the defense spending bill unveiled on Tuesday included funding for two destroyers.

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6. Watchdog sounds alarm on NSA surveillance tool

Washington Post, June 30 (0115), Pg. A2 | Ellen Nakashima

An extensive surveillance program first revealed by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden in 2013 continues to operate with no judicial and limited congressional oversight despite its potential to capture Americans’ communications, a member of a privacy watchdog agency said in a statement released Tuesday.

The National Security Agency’s XKeyscore program was the subject of a five-year investigation by the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board (PCLOB), an independent government privacy watchdog, that wrapped up in December.

According to documents leaked by Snowden, the program has existed for more than a decade. It allows analysts to use a Google-like search function across vast databases of Internet traffic captured from sites worldwide to pluck out the emails, Web browsing histories and social media activity of specific people.

The program relies heavily on the “autonomous collection of massive data sets,” and analysis driven by artificial intelligence, Travis LeBlanc, a Democratic board member appointed by President Donald Trump, said in a statement. His partly redacted statement was released after it went through a declassification process.

LeBlanc was alone among the board's five members to vote against approving the panel's classified report on XKeyscore in December, saying that the board "failed to adequately investigate or evaluate" the NSA's collection activities.

"What most concerned me was that we have a very powerful surveillance program that eight years or so after exposure, still has no judicial oversight, and what I consider to be inadequate legal analysis and serious compliance infractions," LeBlanc said in an interview.

The board sent copies of the report to Congress, the White House and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in March.

NSA officials pushed back against LeBlanc's assertions, saying the agency conducted appropriate legal reviews of the use of XKeyscore. They also said the agency has protections to safeguard Americans' privacy. They pointed to a document issued in January that outlines the rules.

Former board chairman Adam Klein, an appointee of Trump who stepped down from the board this month, defended its work. "The board produced a detailed, comprehensive report and recommendations on a very complex program," he said. "The clarity of description will enable Congress and other appropriate actors in the executive branch to ask hard questions as needed about this program."

The program operates under a broad framework laid out by a presidential directive known as Executive Order 12333, which governs most surveillance taking place outside the United States and some surveillance taking place inside the United States. When collection activities take place under 12333, they are not subject to oversight by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

According to a 2009 slide released by Snowden and published in the Intercept in 2015, many of the sites that XKeyscore relies on for data were either in the United States or linked to sites in the United States. LeBlanc, in his statement, suggested as much. "It is beyond obvious that NSA must gather or collect that signals intelligence from somewhere - in the United States or abroad."

The NSA declined to discuss the location of the collection.

"I continue to be concerned that Americans still know far too little about the government's surveillance activities under EO 12333 and how it threatens their privacy," said Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a member of the Intelligence Committee, in a statement to The Washington Post. "I've been pressing for multiple PCLOB reports about EO 12333 to be declassified, which will shed light on these secret authorities that govern the collection and use of Americans' personal information."

The program also resulted in hundreds of compliance incidents in 2019, a majority of which were considered "questionable intelligence activities" - a category that means the action may have involved improper surveillance

of Americans' communications, according to U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because details are classified.

"Obviously violations of U.S. law and the known collection or processing of U.S. person information are serious compliance issues," LeBlanc said in his statement.

Rebecca Richards, NSA's civil liberties and privacy officer, said: "When we looked at the [questionable intelligence activities] associated with this, we didn't find any of them to identify systemic issues or any particular concerns. We found them to be standard intelligence practices."

The incidents could include making a typo in a query or making too broad a query, she said.

Richards noted that the NSA has adopted the board's recommendation that it provide training for analysts specifically on XKeyscore. Analysts, she said, already receive general compliance training.

LeBlanc devoted some of his strongest criticism to the NSA's legal analysis, which he said "lacks any consideration of recent relevant" privacy case law, including Supreme Court decisions that have imposed stricter limits on cellphone and geolocation surveillance.

Agency spokesman Charlie Stadtlander said "NSA's Office of General Counsel regularly reviews NSA intelligence programs and capabilities to ensure compliance with the Constitution, laws, and other applicable regulations and policies."

But some privacy advocates say the technical capabilities have outpaced the law. For instance, according to slides disclosed by Snowden, the program enabled an analyst to review communications indiscriminately as long as they were not tagged as belonging to an American, meaning that the analyst could inadvertently be viewing an American's information without penalty, said Ashkan Soltani, a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Institute for Technology Law and Policy.

And much of the indexing work on the data is done by machines, before a human even sets eyes on it, Soltani said. "The realities of the Internet today means the likelihood that the NSA might accidentally be processing an American's communications is quite high," he said.

LeBlanc said the board did not analyze the extent to which XKeyscore's use of machine analysis - as opposed to human review - of Americans' information triggers Fourth Amendment scrutiny.

The board, he said, ultimately "failed the public" by not using its investigation to "delve into important technological and modern electronic surveillance issues" raised by XKeyscore.

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COVID-19

7. Heart inflammation after COVID-19 shots higher-than-expected in study of U.S. military

Reuters, June 29 (1456) | Carl O'Donnell

Members of the U.S. military who were vaccinated against COVID-19 showed higher-than-expected rates of heart inflammation, although the condition was still extremely rare, according to a study released on Tuesday.

The study found that 23 previously healthy males with an average age of 25 complained of chest pain within four days of receiving a COVID-19 shot. The incident rate was higher than some previous estimates would have anticipated, it said.

All the patients, who at the time of the study's publication had recovered or were recovering from myocarditis - an inflammation of the heart muscle - had received shots made by either Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE or Moderna Inc.

U.S. health regulators last week added a warning to the literature that accompanies those mRNA vaccines to flag the rare risk of heart inflammation seen primarily in young males. But they said the benefit of the shots in preventing COVID-19 clearly continues to outweigh the risk.

The study, which was published in the JAMA Cardiology medical journal, said 19 of the patients were current military members who had received their second vaccine dose. The others had either received one dose or were retired from the military.

General population estimates would have predicted eight or fewer cases of myocarditis from the 436,000 male military members who received two COVID-19 shots, the study said.

An outside panel of experts advising the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said last week that reports of myocarditis were higher in males and in the week after the second vaccine dose than would be anticipated in the general population. A presentation at that meeting found the heart condition turned up at a rate of about 12.6 cases per million people vaccinated.

Eight of the military patients in the study were given diagnostic scans and showed signs of heart inflammation that could not be explained by other causes, the study said. The patients in the study ranged from ages 20 to 51.

The CDC began investigating the potential link between the mRNA vaccines and myocarditis in April after Israel flagged that it was studying such cases in people who received the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine there, and after a report that the U.S. military had also found cases.

Health regulators in several countries are conducting their own investigations.

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EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

8. House votes to repeal military authorizations dating to Gulf War, Cold War
Washington Post, June 30 (0115), Pg. A11 | Karoun Demirjian

The House voted overwhelmingly Tuesday to repeal two decades-old measures authorizing American military action in the Middle East, in a rare bipartisan gesture of what one senior Democrat called "good legislative housekeeping."

Congress needs "to take seriously its responsibility over war and peace" and "recall and repeal authorities when their usefulness has passed," Rep. Gregory W. Meeks (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said during a floor debate this week.

The top Republican on the panel, Rep. Michael McCaul (Tex.), agreed. "This is an example of how we can work together to clean up these old AUMFs," he said, using the shorthand for authorization for use of military force. McCaul said there was "no reason" to leave such fully defunct authorizations "on the books."

The first authorization was passed in 1957 to help the president confront communism in the Middle East. The second was passed in 1991 to pave the way for the Persian Gulf War. Neither has been referenced as a justification for a military campaign in decades.

The vote was 366 to 46, with only Republicans opposed. Yet the enthusiasm for repealing two "relic" authorizations, as lawmakers referred to them, is expected to do little to bridge the deep divide that remains between Democrats and most of the GOP over whether to repeal more-recent military authorizations.

Those particularly at issue are the 2001 measure that greenlighted the U.S. government's campaign in Afghanistan to pursue the perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the 2002 measure that enabled the Iraq War. Democrats and some Republicans have argued that those measures have been contorted beyond recognition by successive presidents to justify operations against new threats that Congress never envisioned or approved.

Even as he cheered the repeal of the 1957 and 1991 measures, McCaul warned that talks on removing the more recent authorizations are "very different."

The House passed a repeal of the 2002 measure this month, with the support of 49 Republicans - far more than backed an attempt to do the same just last year. The Biden administration also backs the repeal of that authorization, which has not been used as the sole justification for a military campaign for more than a decade.

But most Republicans remain strongly opposed to the repeal, warning that it could compromise the United States' ability to respond to future terrorist threats and instability in the Middle East. In the Senate, efforts to advance parallel legislation ran aground this month when Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee objected, demanding briefings from the country's top diplomats, military leaders and intelligence officials before voting on the repeal.

The process of repealing the 2001 authorization promises to be more complicated. Critics and supporters of that authorization agree it must be updated or replaced so as not to compromise ongoing operations against terrorist groups.

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9. House Democrats want to spend more on weapons procurement than Biden

Defense News Online, June 29 (1243) | Joe Gould

WASHINGTON -- Tweaking President Joe Biden's Pentagon spending request for next year, House appropriators have proposed $1.7 billion more for weapons procurement and $1.6 billion less for development and testing of cutting-edge technologies meant to deter China.

The House Appropriations Committee on Tuesday morning released its fiscal 2022 Pentagon-funding bill, which proposes $706 billion in defense spending, or roughly $10 billion above the amount enacted for the current fiscal year. When added to the $11 billion for military construction appropriators are seeking separately, that sets it about even with Biden's $716 billion request.

The legislation, crafted by Democrats, includes $134.3 billion for procurement, which is $2.2 billion less than the current year's budget. For research funding, appropriators are proposing $110.4 billion, which is $3.2 billion above the current year's budget.

Appropriators were expected to tailor Biden's request, but at first blush the bill doesn't appear to include any major pushback against the administration's strategy of divesting from legacy platforms to reinvest in cutting-edge technologies.

For the Navy, the bill adds a second Arleigh Burke-class destroyer sought widely by lawmakers, and it cuts one of two towing, salvage and rescue ships. Otherwise, it matches Biden's two Virginia-class attack submarines, one Constellation-class frigate, one John Lewis-class fleet oiler and the one ocean surveillance ship.

The Biden administration's omission of the second destroyer was controversial on Capitol Hill because without it, the Navy cannot meet its obligation under multiyear contracts with both Ingalls Shipbuilding and General Dynamics' Bath Iron Works. Those contracts call for each of the companies to build one ship in FY22.

All told, appropriators propose the same number of ships as Biden — eight — but they add $915 million above the Navy's budget request.

For aircraft, the bill would add 12 F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, of which the administration sought none; four C/KC/MC-130J tankers for 134 total; six MQ-9 Reaper drones for 12 total; $170 million for the second and third set of five CH-47F Block II Chinook helicopters; three UH/HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters for 33 total; and two CH-53K helicopters for 11 total.

It matches Biden's request for 85 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, 12 F-15EX aircraft and 14 KC-46 tankers, plus assorted helicopters. The Air Force's unfunded priorities list conspicuously omitted additional Lockheed Martin-made F-35s, but it did want another 12 Boeing F-15EXs to help narrow a projected gap as the service divests its aging F-15C/D fleet.

Wading into controversy around nuclear modernization, the bill matches the Navy's decision to shelve its sea-launched nuclear cruise missile. While the decision was been cheered by arms control advocates and some lawmakers, it's come under tough scrutiny from Republicans, who argue the move should be subject to the rigor of the administration's upcoming Nuclear Posture Review.

At the same time, appropriators would provide $2.5 billion to develop the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, which is the next-generation intercontinental ballistic missile, as well as $581 million for the Long Range Standoff Weapon, a new air-launched cruise missile.

The bill includes the administration's 2.7 percent pay raise but takes sharper aim at personnel costs, trimming $488 million from the request for a total of $167 billion.

The bill also gets rid of the much-criticized overseas contingency operations account, like the Biden request.

"The Defense Appropriations bill provides resources requested by the Secretary of Defense to protect our national security, maintain a strong industrial base to support good paying jobs, and counter the rising threats from our adversaries, including China," House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., said in a statement. "As it protects our nation, it also honors the soldiers and civilians who serve and support our nation's military by providing for them and their families. This includes strong funding to combat sexual assault in the military, a serious and pervasive problem that for too long has been overlooked by the Pentagon."

The legislation includes a number of policy provisions likely to spark partisan debate, like ordering the closure the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay by Sept. 30, 2022; requiring contractors to pay a $15 minimum wage; and barring support for the Saudi-led coalition's offensive military operations in Yemen.

A partisan fight over the top line has been brewing for months, as key conservatives — including the defense subpanel's top Republican, California Rep. Ken Calvert — have called for a 3-5 percent increase above inflation. Progressive Democrats are expected to push for cuts — a move moderate Democrats are resisting.

The Appropriations Committee's defense subpanel will take up the FY22 spending bill in a closed session on Wednesday.

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10. Smith slams F-35 lifecycle costs: 'We can do a hell of a lot better'
Defense News Online, June 29 (1830) | Joe Gould

WASHINGTON -- House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith on Tuesday criticized Lockheed Martin and other contractors over the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and its exorbitant lifecycle costs.

"There's no question that everyone involved — certainly Lockheed Martin — could be doing a better job on getting sustainment costs down," Smith, D-Wash., told the Defense Writer's Group. "The sustainment costs — and it varies, I understand they're as high as $38,000 an hour, and that is incredibly expensive — it'll make the plane so that you don't really want to operate it any more than you absolutely have to."

The comments are the latest volley at the F-35 program from Smith, who called the fighter a "rathole" in March. He has been pointing to the F-35′s costs and performance problems as a symbol of the Pentagon acquisition system's shortcomings.

Air Force officials plan to complete a business-case analysis this summer to attack escalating sustainment costs, the service's top uniformed acquisition official, Lt. Gen. Duke Richardson, said at a Senate hearing last week. In addition, the Air Force is negotiating a three-year sustainment contract with performance incentives, instead of the standard annual contract.

Beyond cost, average repair times stood at 131 days a year ago because there wasn't enough depot capacity, according to a GAO finding. Richardson touched on that figure last week, telling lawmakers that more repair depots need to be in place quickly.

"When it does break, it tends to stay down for a very long time, and that's because we haven't stood up the repair infrastructure," Richardson said. "We should have gotten started on that, frankly, a lot sooner than we did. And so, that's the part that we're really attacking."

Though F-35 sustainment costs have long been a hot topic, the issue took on new urgency when the GAO found a difference of $3.7 million per aircraft between actual sustainment costs and what the services project they can afford over the program's lifecycle — and projected a total overrun of $4.4 billion by 2036.

To build pressure for cost reductions, Smith talked about threatening to mothball F-35s in favor of other platforms or somehow barring contractors linked to F-35 overruns from the emerging Next-Generation Air Dominance, or NGAD, program.

“The NGAD is a pretty good way to incentivize it: you know, if you screw us on this contract, then we ain’t giving you the next one,” Smith said. “There [are] a bunch of different ways to work it, but I want to be as creative as possible about incentivizing competition and incentivizing all of our contractors to give us the best deal possible.”

Lockheed says it has lowered its portion of the sustainment cost per flight hour by 44 percent since 2015 and that it expects to lower it another 40 percent over the next five years.

“We’re committed to bringing F-35 sustainment costs down across the enterprise and improving overall aircraft capability, availability and affordability for our warfighters,” a company spokesperson said in a statement.

Smith stopped short of bashing the F-35 entirely, calling it “an important platform,” and he didn’t say the problems were all Lockheed’s fault.

“It’s part of our future no matter what, but for it to be effective, we got to get those costs under control, and we got to find ways to incentivize — and I know it’s not just Lockheed,” Smith told reporters.

“You’ve got a lot of subs that are involved with the software problems, and there [are] engine issues that we’re trying to get our arms around. So, you know there’s a lot of work to be done here, but we need to incentivize the entire operation to bring costs down, and also, by the way, to get us to the capability that we need.”

Work is afoot on new, more fuel-efficient engine technology meant for sixth-generation fighters that could be used in the F-35 to drive down costs, Smith said. Fully funding those upgrades and fielding them as soon as possible would be helpful, he added.

To inject more competition in defense acquisitions more broadly, Smith said he is considering language in the upcoming defense policy bill aimed at to ensuring the Defense Department can maintain intellectual property rights when it buys systems from defense contractors.

“It’s a freaking complicated thing to build an airplane, or to build anything that’s going to be in the middle of a firefight, and it’s not going to go seamlessly, and it’s not going to go on time and under budget every time,” Smith said. “However, we can do a hell of a lot better than we did in the last 20 years.”

--*Valerie Insinna and Rachel Cohen in Washington, D.C. contributed to this report*

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11. HASC Chairman Says Congress Won't 'Kill' GBSD Program
National Defense Magazine Online, June 29 (1326) | Meredith Roaten

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee will not try to eliminate the controversial nuclear missile program that some Democrats have targeted for cuts, the lawmaker told reporters June 29.

The Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent, or GBSD, program aims to replace the aging Minuteman III nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles that first became operational in 1970. The Pentagon awarded Northrop Grumman a $13.3 billion contract for the weapon system in September. Air Force officials say the new ICBMs will have increased accuracy, extended range and improved reliability compared to the Minuteman III.

HASC Chairman Adam Smith, D-Wash., has in the past called for scaling back U.S. spending on strategic weapons. Last year he supported a bill that would have taken $1 billion from nuclear modernization funds to support pandemic preparedness.

Now, Smith says the high cost of extending the Minuteman III's lifecycle has changed his thinking about GBSD.

"The biggest problem here is that it turns out that Minuteman [life] extension, as it is currently being explained to us, is actually more expensive than building the GBSD," he said during a Defense Writers Group event. "We're not going to kill the GBSD program. We've got to keep it alive."

Cost estimates for the GBSD are close to $100 billion for acquisition and $264 billion over its lifetime, which is set to run to the mid-2070s.

The Biden administration, as is standard practice for new administrations, will complete a new nuclear posture review to look at the nation's strategic force structure and requirements for the future. The study could take several months to be completed.

Although Smith says he won't try to eliminate the GBSD program, he suggested the planned missile buy could be scaled back. The forthcoming nuclear posture assessment should reevaluate how many GBSD missiles are needed and assess if that number can be reduced, he said.

"Let's not commit to the full-scale, building as many missiles on the ground-based system approaches as we did" during the Trump administration, he said.

Currently, the GBSD program is set to build 400 missiles that will be operating in the 2030s. President Joe Biden's fiscal year 2022 budget request included $2.6 billion for the project.

Smith said no nuclear modernization program, including the Long-Range Stand-Off air-launched cruise missile, should be taken off table, but funding decisions could be delayed.

Lawmakers should not "push snowballs over the hill and start them rolling before the president makes his decision on what the nuclear posture review is going to be," he said. "We should wait for the president's posture review before fully committing ourselves to a lot of spending."

However, the GBSD program still faces opposition from other Democratic leaders. Rep. John Garamendi, D-Calif., who chairs the House Armed Services Committee's readiness subcommittee, told Business Insider that the Pentagon could halt the effort without compromising nuclear deterrence.

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12. HASC to scrutinize Space Force budget: Satellites have to be 'easier to defend'

Rep. Adam Smith: The satellites that the Pentagon has relied on for decades have to be replaced with more resilient systems

SpaceNews Online, June 29 (1641) | Sandra Erwin

WASHINGTON -- The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee said he expects to see a shift in U.S. military spending away from large satellites to a "more survivable infrastructure" of smaller spacecraft.

"We need more smaller, easier to defend satellites that have redundancy. That's the biggest priority for me within the Space Force budget," Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.) said June 29 on a Defense Writers Group video conference.

Smith said the military needs reliable and cyber secure information systems and those systems depend on satellites. The Space Force, he noted, is responsible for the "survivability of our satellites and our command and control systems."

The satellites that the Pentagon has relied on for decades have to be replaced with more resilient systems, he said.

"That's where we are a little bit vulnerable right now, because for decades we have built very large, very sophisticated systems," Smith added. "It's a bit of an overstatement to say they are a single point of failure, but it's not that big of an overstatement."

This has to be the "primary objective of the Space Force going forward," Smith said. "We need to build greater redundancy and greater survivability. What I think the Space Force can bring is to look at the whole architecture and say 'how do we make sure that this keeps working no matter what happens.'"

Smith said he could not predict what space weapons Russia or China will deploy to target U.S. satellites. Whatever happens, he said, "we need to be ready for it, we need to be able to protect our systems and we need to be able to deter our adversaries from attacking them in the first place."

The issue of Space Force investments in next-generation systems came up during a June 16 HASC hearing on the Department of the Air Force's budget request for fiscal year 2022.

The chief of space operations of the Space Force Gen. John Raymond agreed with Smith.

"We have to shift to a new architecture," Raymond said at the hearing. "The capabilities that we have in space today are exquisite, they're the world's best. They're expensive, but they're not defendable. We have to shift to a more diversified architecture and we have to shift to an architecture that has resiliency built into it and not bolted on as an afterthought."

Raymond said the Space Force is standing up a Space Warfighting Analysis Center to focus on planning and budgeting for the future space architecture. The Space Force is seeking $6.2 million in 2022 for the SWAC to "conduct analysis, modeling, wargaming and experimentation to create operational concepts and force design guidance for U.S. Space Force missions."

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13. U.S. Pushes Bill to Hasten Visa Process For Afghans

The legislation would scrap a requirement that Afghans applying for Special Immigrant Visas undergo a medical examination in the country, allowing them to do so after entering the United States

New York Times, June 30 (0300), Pg. A6 | Luke Broadwater

WASHINGTON -- Rushing to help Afghans who face retribution for working alongside American troops in their home country, the House voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday to speed up the process that would allow them to immigrate to the United States.

With the American military in the final phases of withdrawing from Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of war, more than 18,000 Afghans who have worked for the United States as interpreters, drivers, engineers, security guards and embassy clerks are stuck in a bureaucratic morass after applying for Special Immigrant Visas, available to people who face threats because of work for the U.S. government.

"I can say with confidence that I might not be here today had it not been for these men and women," said Representative Jason Crow, Democrat of Colorado and a former Army Ranger who is the lead sponsor of the bill.

The measure, passed 366 to 46, would waive a requirement for applicants to undergo medical examinations in Afghanistan before qualifying, instead allowing them to do so after entering the United States. The first in a series of bipartisan bills intended to smooth the visa process, it aims to shorten the long waiting period, which can be as long as six or seven years for some applicants.

Mr. Crow said waiving the medical examination requirement would save the average applicant about a month on processing the visa. The bill requires that applicants complete their examinations within 30 days of arriving in the United States.

“In combat and in a war zone, every hour matters,” Mr. Crow said. “A month will save many, many lives.”

Some of the “Afghan allies” awaiting visas have spoken out about the threats they face from the Taliban.

Since 2014, the nonprofit No One Left Behind has tracked the killings of more than 300 translators or their family members, many of whom died while waiting for their visas to be processed, according to James Miervaldis, the group’s chairman and an Army Reserve noncommissioned officer.

“It is a life and death situation,” said Representative Brad Wenstrup, Republican of Ohio. “It’ll be a black eye on the United States if we don’t do everything in our power to protect these allies.”

Both Mr. Crow and Representative Cliff Bentz, Republican of Oregon, said staff members had worked tirelessly over the past few weeks to alleviate the concerns of some House Republicans, who worried that eliminating the medical examination requirement could lead to the spread of disease once the applicants entered the United States. They added the 30-day deadline to address those fears.

The measure is one of several being pushed by a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers, many of them military members or veterans who have worked with translators, drivers and fixers in Afghanistan and other combat zones.

The group has also pressured the Biden administration to carry out a mass evacuation of Afghans who are awaiting their visas, an idea that President Biden embraced last week, saying, “Those who helped us are not going to be left behind.”

But first, the Afghans must qualify for visas. Only one clinic in the country -- a German facility in Kabul -- does the examinations, requiring some people to travel long distances through dangerous conditions. And the exams are expensive, Mr. Crow said.

A separate bill introduced by the group would expand the universe of eligible Afghans by removing what its proponents call “burdensome” application requirements, including a “credible sworn statement” of a specific threat and proof of a “sensitive and trusted” job. Instead, it would in effect stipulate that any Afghan who helped the U.S. government by definition faced retribution and should be able to apply for a visa. The bill would also increase the number of visas available.

Biden administration officials have said they plan to relocate the Afghan allies outside Afghanistan, possibly to Guam, to await the processing of their visa requests.

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14. House Defense Panel Seeks Conditions on Afghan Security Money
Bloomberg Government, June 29 (1254) | Roxana Tiron

Lawmakers want the defense secretary to certify that Afghan Security Forces are controlled by a civilian government committed to human rights and preventing terrorists from using the country to threaten the U.S. and allies before committing $3 billion next year to help the Afghan military.

The condition is part of a House draft Pentagon spending proposal for fiscal 2022 that would allocate $3 billion for the Afghanistan Security Forces as the U.S. is on track to withdraw all its troops from that country by Sept. 11.

The security assistance may be spent only after the Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin certifies that a program is in place to monitor, evaluate, and oversee funds.

The draft measure the Appropriations Defense subcommittee released Tuesday would prevent payments to "ghost soldiers" by prohibiting funds for Afghanistan security personnel not enrolled in their country's personnel and pay system.

The spending panel also would propose $25 million for transport and safe passage to Afghans who've helped the U.S. and who are under serious threat from the Taliban. The Biden administration plans to relocate an unspecified number of Afghans who assisted the U.S. military's invasion and occupation of the country before American forces finish their withdrawal later this year.

The White House is increasingly under pressure to say how the Biden administration intends to aid Afghan allies who could face retaliation after U.S. forces leave and the Taliban seek to take control of the war-torn country. Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill have criticized the administration, saying there's no plan in place.

Separately, the draft measure would require for-profit defense contractors to pay a minimum $15 an hour. It would also provide $1 million to the Army to rename installations, facilities, roads, and streets that bear the name of Confederate leaders and officers. The Army has the biggest share of the changes to make.

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AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

15. U.S. military days away from completing Afghan withdrawal – sources
Reuters, June 29 (2014) | Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. military appears just days away from completing its withdrawal from Afghanistan, well ahead of the Sept. 11 deadline set by President Joe Biden to end America's longest war, U.S. officials told Reuters on Tuesday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The withdrawal of troops and equipment from Afghanistan would not include forces that will remain to protect diplomats at the U.S. embassy and potentially assist securing Kabul airport.

U.S. officials have told Reuters that embassy presence could be around 650 troops.

The U.S. military stopped publicly detailing the pace of its withdrawal after it was more than 50 percent complete earlier in June.

The disclosure of the brisk pace of the U.S. withdrawal comes as the Taliban insurgency ramps up its offensive throughout the country. The Pentagon now estimates the Taliban control 81 of the country's 419 district centers.

Peace talks in Qatar, meanwhile, have failed to make significant progress.

The Pentagon said earlier on Tuesday that the U.S. withdrawal would not necessarily signify the end of NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan, but referred further queries to NATO.

The withdraw of U.S.-led NATO forces has raised concerns that the country could erupt in full-scale civil war, potentially providing al Qaeda space in which to rebuild and plan new attacks on U.S. and other targets.

A United Nations report in January said there were as many as 500 al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan and that the Taliban maintained a close relationship with the Islamist extremist group. The Taliban denies al Qaeda has a presence in Afghanistan.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is expected on Wednesday to meet his Germany counterpart at the Pentagon. Germany, which had the second largest contingent of troops after the United States in Afghanistan, announced on Tuesday that it had concluded its withdrawal from Afghanistan.

It was unclear if the pace of the U.S. withdrawal would still allow first for a planned evacuation of thousands of vulnerable Afghan interpreters and their families, something that had been expected before the U.S. pullout.

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16. Germany completes troop pull-out from Afghanistan – minister
Agence France-Presse, June 29 (1833) | Not Attributed

Germany has completed its troop pull-out from Afghanistan, started in May, the defence ministry announced Tuesday, ending a nearly 20-year deployment there alongside US and other international forces.

The announcement of the pull-out of German troops, whose presence there was second only to the US forces, came as the US aims to complete its own withdrawal by September 11.

“After nearly 20 years of deployment, the last soldiers of our Bundeswehr have left Afghanistan this evening,” said German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer in a statement. “They are on the way back.

“A historic chapter comes to an end, an intensive deployment that challenged and shaped the Bundeswehr, in which the Bundeswehr proved itself in combat,” she added.

On Twitter, the minister offered her thanks to all the 150,000 men and women who had served there since 2001, saying they could be proud of their service.

And she paid tribute to those killed and wounded in service there. “You will not be forgotten,” she said.

According to the army, 59 German soldiers have been killed since 2001 in the course of their service in Afghanistan.

The last of the troops were airlifted out of their base at Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan on two German A400 Ms and two US C17s.

Before the pull-out began, Germany still had 1,100 soldiers operating as part of the 9,600-strong NATO training and support mission -- second only to the US military presence.

Britain, Italy and Turkey also have a significant military presence there, the five countries between supplying 6,000 members of the mission, called Resolute Support.

Smaller contributors to the force, such as Denmark, Estonia and Spain, have already pulled out their forces.

Germany stepped up its pull-out after US President Joe Biden announced he was pulling US troops out of the country after 20 years there.

In April, Germany’s defence ministry had announced it planned to pull out its troops by early July.

Biden aims to have US troops out of Afghanistan by September 11, the 20th anniversary of the devastating Al-Qaeda attacks on the United States.

The pace of the US pull-out has led to speculation that he aims to have them all home before July 4: Independence Day in the United State.

Questioned by AFP about the timetable for the pull-out Tuesday, a NATO spokesman would only say: “The withdrawal of forces is proceeding in an orderly and coordinated manner.

“While we reduce our military presence, we are continuing to support Afghanistan, by ensuring training and financial support for the security forces and the Afghan institutions, by maintaining a diplomatic presence in Kabul and by financing the functioning of the international airport,” the sourced added.

The Pentagon declined to comment on the German announcement.

The security situation in Afghanistan has been deteriorating for several weeks.

Fighting has surged since early May when the US military began its final withdrawal of troops, with the Taliban claiming to have recently captured more than 100 of the over 400 districts across Afghanistan.

On Tuesday, General Scott Miller, the top US commander in Afghanistan did not rule out conducting air strikes against the Taliban if they pressed on with their campaign.

Some observers fear the Taliban might once again seize the capital Kabul once the Western troops have left, and have expressed fears for the thousands of Afghans who worked along side the international force.

Washington has already announced it is preparing for the evacuation of their Afghan translators.

The international intervention in Afghanistan began on October 7 2001, less than a month after the 9/11 attacks that killed around 3,000 people in the United States.

The country’s Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime had been sheltering Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda movement, which carried out the attacks. Within weeks, US-led forces had overthrown them.

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17. America's longest war is ending. A nation is left wondering whether it was all worth it
CNN.com (Analysis), June 30 (0002) | Stephen Collinson

America's "forever war" in Afghanistan outlasted the first three commanders in chief of this century. But this week, Joe Biden is set to become the president who imposes closure on the US' role in the bloody, intractable conflict.

Twenty years after the 9/11 attacks -- plotted by al-Qaeda from Afghan soil -- plunged the United States into a fractured graveyard of empires, the US pull-out will be complete within days, multiple military sources told CNN. As many as 1,000 troops could remain to guard the American embassy in Kabul, and to protect the airport -- a lifeline for the fragile government and its armed forces who are destined to carry on fight the perpetual war that raged before the US arrived and will continue after it leaves.

But the American operation -- launched by President George W. Bush when New York's Twin Towers and the Pentagon lay in ruins -- is functionally over.

In a wider strategic sense, the withdrawal underscores how the War on Terror -- which US and allied leaders insisted would be the organizing principle of international relations for decades to come -- has faded as the dominant priority. Years of war abroad sapped US hegemony and contributed to domestic discord that further weakened its global footprint. A new era of great power competition, marked by China's rise and Russia's belligerence now most concerns Washington.

And the Covid-19 pandemic has killed hundreds of thousands more Americans than terrorism ever did.

After years of full-scale anti-terror blitzes, bitter land combat, nation-building, US neglect then fresh resolve, counter-insurgency offensives, negotiating with the Taliban and simple grim holding on, the US will leave with many citizens wondering why Americans are still in Afghanistan.

Unless things really deteriorate in Kabul, there will no scenes like the last helicopters lifting off from the US embassy roof in Saigon after the Vietnam War. This conflict, which dragged on so long that some US soldiers who deployed sent offspring off to the same battlefield, is ending largely out of the view of the American public. But just as in that earlier prolonged war, there are no victory parades, only exhaustion, a series of busted US plans and offensives and a strong political imperative to quit.

"We did not ask for this mission. But we will fulfill it," Bush said in October 2001.

Two decades later, many are left wondering if the US lived up to that promise. That this is such a difficult question to answer explains why it was such a harrowing experience for those who fought and led the war.

The muted departure lacks the drama and resolve that drove Bush's lightning offensive against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. But it is an important moment in American history, nonetheless. The more than 3,500 US and allied war dead, the many more maimed physically and mentally and tens of thousands of Afghan security forces and civilians who also perished, deserve an accounting.

A new US chapter

The US exit will sever one of the final links with the tumultuous years of America's wars abroad after the September 11 attacks, a period that shook the nation's feeling of security in its own continent, challenged its global reputation and tested the Constitution.

As the President who is ending America's "longest war," Biden will be on the spot for these answers and what happens next. The Afghan war has faded from public consciousness to such an extent that there is no huge groundswell of demands to leave. But ending foreign wars has been one belief that has united progressives and Donald Trump's voters.

There is kudos in being the president who ended it all. But the privilege begs the question of whether Biden is acting on political or strategic goals.

Then there is the question of whether the United States has a responsibility for millions of Afghans who thrived under its sponsorship of democracy and who now face the prospect of a new dark age under the feudal Taliban, which stops little girls from going to school among other terrors. Indeed, Washington is making a hurried effort to extract thousands of translators and other Afghans who helped US troops.

Inside Afghanistan, the Taliban is on the march, assuming control of districts countrywide. There are real fears that the government will fall in what could be a severe blow to American prestige. While US forces are expected to continue anti-terror operations from bases outside the country, some military experts worry such strikes won't be as effective as an on-the-ground presence. The US intelligence operation will need rebuilding.

Yet all foreign wars rely on the consent of people at home. The rationale for US involvement -- to fight the terrorists over there instead of over here, in a popular phrase of the Bush era -- is hard for a new generation to comprehend.

Biden, who was always one of the less enthusiastic warriors in the war on terror overseas as vice president, channeled this disconnect when he announced the final US departure in April.

"We went to Afghanistan because of a horrific attack that happened 20 years ago. That cannot explain why we should remain in 2021," Biden told the nation from the same spot in the White House Treaty Roomfrom where Bush launched combat operations 20 years before.

Was it worth it?

The question of whether the war was worth it looks different from Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery, which holds ranks of the dead from the post-9/11 wars, than in the West Wing or Washington think-tanks.

But those courageous Americans who perished early in the war may not have died in vain.

To begin with, the war was a success. Al-Qaeda was gutted within weeks. Dreams of democracy stirred after the rout of the Taliban by US and Northern Alliance forces -- even if Osama bin Laden escaped to live another decade before the US finally exacted revenge in his Pakistan hideout. And the large-scale follow-on terror attacks feared by US leaders two decades ago never materialized.

But when the Bush administration diverted attention to Iraq the war languished, and the Taliban regrouped. From then on, new US offensives and new plans to build Afghan forces unfolded, none with great success.

Confidential documents published by The Washington Post in 2019 suggested that senior US officials failed to come clean with Americans about the war -- making optimistic assessments they knew were false.

The paper reported, “US officials acknowledged that their war-fighting strategies were fatally flawed and that Washington wasted enormous sums of money trying to remake Afghanistan into a modern nation.”

For years, Afghanistan was the war that the US couldn’t afford to wage but thought it couldn’t afford to leave. But Biden made his decision to make good on an earlier undertaking by Trump to leave this year.

“When will it be the right moment to leave?” Biden asked in April. “One more year, two more years, 10 more years? Ten, 20, 30 billion dollars more above the trillion we’ve already spent?”

Most dilemmas that presidents face involve bad choices.

If the Kabul government falls and there is a bloodbath, it will be on Biden’s watch. If US diplomats die in a terror attack blamed on diminished security in the country, he will face a human and political disaster.

The danger in post-US Afghanistan is acute. The top US commander in the country, Gen. Austin Miller, told the New York Times on Tuesday that civil war was a real possibility and “that should be a concern for the world.”

Ever since the 1980s, when the US turned its back on Afghanistan and paved the way for the emergence of an anarchic terror-haven after arming mujahideen forces to defeat occupying Soviet forces, experts have warned of the peril of ignoring the country. National security hawks point to President Barack Obama’s withdrawal from Iraq and the subsequent rise of ISIS as another cautionary tale.

Retired Gen. David Petraeus, a former CIA director who commanded US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, said he did not see a threat to the homeland right now. But he warned at a Washington Post event Monday that the group has shown “no signs that it’s going to cut ties with al-Qaeda.”

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in an interview with Italy’s RAI TG1 on Tuesday “al-Qaeda in Afghanistan currently does not represent a real threat to the United States, to Italy, to any of the other countries.”

The argument that the US needs to stay to prevent a new terror haven is undercut by the fact that extremists operate from many failed states across the globe -- and are targeted by the US without huge troop garrisons.

This logic helped Biden conclude in his April speech that the US had achieved its clear goals when it went to war since bin Laden is dead and al-Qaeda is degraded, before adding: “it’s time to end the forever war.”

--*CNN’s Barbara Starr, Nicole Gaouette and Kevin Liptak contributed to this report*

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MIDDLE EAST

18. In Iraq, an old U.S. foe grows his political power
Reuters (Special Report), June 29 (0600) | John Davison and Ahmed Rasheed

BAGHDAD -- On a tense February night, thousands of militiamen loyal to Shi’ite Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr took to the streets of Baghdad and southern Iraqi cities, parading in gun-laden pick-up trucks while state security forces stood by.

It was the biggest show of force by the populist cleric since the mid-2000s, when his followers battled the U.S. occupation and inflicted thousands of American casualties.

Two days later, Sadr made a rare appearance in front of news cameras from his base in the Shi’ite holy city of Najaf in southern Iraq. He said his Peace Brigades deployed because of a terrorist threat against Shi’ite holy sites. Iraq was not secure without his paramilitaries, he added. “The security forces are in a state of collapse.”

For Sadr’s opponents and allies alike, the cleric’s message was clear: after years on the fringes, Sadr is back. On the streets and in the corridors of power.

Over the past two years, Sadr’s political organisation, the Sadrist Movement, has quietly come to dominate the apparatus of the Iraqi state. Its members have taken senior jobs within the interior, defence and communications ministries. They have had their picks appointed to state oil, electricity and transport bodies, to state-owned banks and even to Iraq’s central bank, according to more than a dozen government officials and lawmakers.

These new positions have brought the Sadrists financial power. Ministries where Sadrists or their allies have recently taken senior posts account for between a third and a half of Iraq's $90 billion draft budget for 2021, according to a Reuters analysis. Iraq's government didn't comment.

The Sadrists are poised to be the biggest winners in a general election set for October. This growing influence could pose problems for the United States and Iran, both of whom Sadr accuses of meddling in Iraq. He has called for the departure of America's remaining 2,500 troops and he has told Tehran he will "not leave Iraq in its grip."

Yet some Western diplomats say privately they would rather deal with an Iraq dominated by Sadr than by his Iran-backed Shi'ite rivals. Sadr is a more nationalist Shi'ite figure.

Since the defeat of the Sunni extremist Islamic State in 2017, the United States and the Iran-backed militias that fought the group have turned their guns on one another with rocket attacks and drone strikes. With his Shi'ite rivals distracted, Sadr quietly set to work in politics.

"We found Sadr one of the principal brakes on expansion of Iranian and very sectarian Shia political influence in Iraq after the 2018 elections," said Doug Silliman, former U.S. ambassador to Iraq and President of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

Reuters interviewed more than two dozen people with direct knowledge of Sadr's activities – including his allies and opponents – and reviewed legal documents to chart how his supporters have taken command of key positions in ministries and state bodies that control wealth and patronage networks – what Iraqis call the "deep state."

Senior government officials and Shi'ite politicians say the Sadrists have learned some of their political tactics from Hezbollah, the Lebanese armed and populist Shi'ite group with which the Sadrist Movement maintains close contact. These methods include ways to avoid splitting the Sadrist vote and so to maximise electoral gains.

Nassar al-Rubaie, a top political representative of Sadr, summed up the Sadrists' revival. "Today, we have Sadrists in positions in every state institution," he said. "This is a blessing from God!"

Cleric Hazem al-Aaraji, a close aide of Sadr, told Reuters the Sadrist Movement is stronger than at any point since 2003. Sadr, he said, is "the most powerful man in Iraq."

Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi has previously denied that the Sadrist Movement controls senior posts in his administration and insists he is in charge. His government didn't respond to detailed questions for this article.

A U.S. official declined to comment on internal Iraqi affairs. Iranian officials didn't respond.

A FAMILY TRADITION

Sadr's greatest strength is his popular appeal. It sets him apart from other Iraqi leaders.

His father, Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr, led dissent among Iraq's oppressed Shi'ite majority against Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein and was killed by the regime in 1999. Muqtada al-Sadr, 47, draws on his father's martyred status and his own reputation as a cleric who never fled Iraq. Other prominent figures in post-Saddam governments returned from exile in Iran and the West after the U.S.-led invasion.

In 2003, Sadr and his Mehdi Army, a thousands-strong militia formed as a volunteer force against American invaders, defied the U.S. occupation.

Baghdad's sprawling Sadr City district is a Sadrist bastion of three million people. Among them is Jaafar Mohammed, a 37-year-old fighter. He told Reuters he fought against the Americans in the early 2000s. "I sold my daughter's gold earrings so I could afford a gun." He later participated, unarmed, in protests that toppled an Iran-backed government in 2019.

Sadr's appeal extends far beyond Sadr City.

In a mosque in the southern city of Basra, graduates in search of work waited in March to speak to Sadr's religious aide Aaraji. The cleric explained to Reuters that he helps graduates find jobs by talking to politicians, to people in the Sadrist Movement or even to Sadr.

Two of the graduates told Reuters they tried for years through connections with other political parties to get jobs in the energy sector. "The Sadrist Movement were the only people who helped," said 25-year-old Shihab al-Din Nouri. "I got a steady job through them three months ago working in the Basra Oil Company. I'll vote for them in the next election."

A KEY MEETING

Starting in the mid-2000s, Sadr generally stood apart from Iraqi governments that were supported by either America or Iran.

In 2007 he pulled his Sadrist Movement out of the government over its refusal to set a timetable for a U.S. troop withdrawal. In 2008, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki led a crackdown on Sadr's Mehdi Army that killed several hundred fighters. And in 2014, Sadr announced he was quitting politics. Aides say he feared his reputation would be hurt by association with a ruling class that is perceived by almost all Iraqis to be corrupt.

To be sure, the Sadrist Movement continued to hold key posts in some ministries, notably the health ministry, and it continued to field candidates in elections. But it ceased to be a major force in the government of Iraq.

Sadr's attitude began to change in the summer of 2018 at a meeting with several of his most senior political representatives at his home in Najaf, according to two senior Sadrist officials familiar with the episode. The Sadrists had just won their strongest ever election result and controlled the biggest parliamentary bloc. Sadr listened to those who wanted to take top state administrative posts. "They lobbied Sayyed Muqtada for his blessing" to install Sadrists in top jobs, said one of the officials.

Sadr gave cautious assent. "If you're able to correct the mistakes made by previous governments and save the country from chaos, then proceed," the official quoted him as saying. "If you fail it will be on your heads." Sadr declined to be interviewed for this article.

WHERE POWER LIES

In the months that followed, the Sadrists surprised some observers by forgoing top ministerial positions. Instead they targeted one job in particular that would prove decisive in their future hold on the levers of power: secretary-general of the prime minister's office, a role that oversees appointments to state bodies.

"Parties supported by Iran didn't appear to understand the value of that post, and were focusing on minister jobs, so they agreed to the deal. It ended up being the most important post the Sadrists have taken," said a lawmaker who was allied with Sadr at the time. A Sadrist official recounted that a personal connection tipped the balance: The Sadrists' candidate was from the same southern city as then-Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi. "Sometimes these ties can affect decisions," he said.

Hamid al-Ghizzi, a Sadrist bureaucrat, took the post and set about ordering the removal of almost all government officials who had been appointed on an acting basis. In a May 2019 directive, Ghizzi said acting post holders were to be replaced by permanent appointees. These new appointments would require the approval of parliament – where Sadrists now had the upper hand. The directive targeted jobs at the level of deputy minister, senior ministry officials and heads of independent state bodies. These roles are involved in awarding contracts, budget spending and ministry appointments.

While Sadr's political rivals focused on the commanding heights, the Sadrists recognized that "sometimes real power lies at the bottom," said a senior government official. "The Sadrists focus on institutions with money and access to resources."

Rubaie, Sadr's political representative, noted that governments are swept away at the ballot box but the state "is permanent and all positions other than the minister are part of the state. A minister comes and goes, but the deputy will stay."

Ghizzi declined an interview request. His office said the secretary-general's role is the administration of state institutions and political appointments are outside its remit.

INTO THE VOID

Still, some posts were out of the Sadrists' reach. Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi refused the Sadrists' pick for central bank governor and several other roles under pressure from Iran-backed groups to resist Sadrist appointees, according to a former minister and a lawmaker involved in the talks. "They wanted to control the state oil marketer, central bank, interior ministry senior positions and various government banks. Abdul Mahdi resisted," the former minister said. Abdul Mahdi didn't comment.

But the last obstacles would vanish within months.

In late 2019, protests erupted against Abdul Mahdi's Iran-backed government. Demonstrators slammed corruption and foreign influence, with particular venom reserved for Iran. Iraqi security forces and Iran-backed militias cracked down on the unarmed protesters.

Sadr took to Twitter calling for the government's resignation. His supporters joined the protests. "Having the Sadrist Movement on our side was extremely important. It's a powerful force and it gave us moral and material support," 31-year-old pro-democracy protester Mustafa Qassim said.

Abdul Mahdi's government announced it would resign in November 2019.

Weeks later a drone strike ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump killed Iran's top Revolutionary Guards commander Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis at Baghdad airport. The loss of the two men further fractured and divided the pro-Iran bloc.

Into the void stepped Sadr. He used the scattering of his rivals and a weak interim prime minister, Kadhimi, to accelerate the Sadrists' takeover, according to a dozen current and former government ministers and Western diplomats.

Kadhimi, who remains in office, has denied that the Sadrist Movement is calling the shots. "The only thing Sadr asked of me and the Sadrist Movement was: Take care of Iraq," he said in a televised interview in May. He didn't elaborate. Kadhimi's office didn't respond to questions from Reuters.

Starting in September 2020, Ghizzi and the prime minister's office signed off on a raft of appointments. The Sadrists took the role of deputy interior minister for administrative affairs, a job that oversees spending and appointments. A Sadr loyalist became a deputy in the communications ministry. Where the Sadrists haven't filled posts directly, their preferred candidates have, making them beholden to Sadr, government officials and lawmakers said.

Posts the Sadrists dominate through allies include a deputy oil minister, the central bank governor and other sensitive fiscal posts, according to oil and finance ministry officials. Sadr aide Rubaie denied that Sadrists control

the central bank. Central bank governor Mustafa Ghaleb and deputy oil minister Karim Hattab didn't respond to questions from Reuters.

A recent report by Chatham House, a London-based international affairs think tank, estimates the Sadrists have taken some 200 of the most influential sub-ministerial positions since 2018.

The Sadrist Movement's increasing role in the running of the state has helped it push its choice of legislation and approve or veto key government decisions. The 2021 budget allocates more funds to Iraq's southern Shi'ite heartlands, the Sadrists' traditional support base, and to the ministries where it has the most influence, according to senior Shi'ite and Kurdish politicians. That may leave less for northern Sunni areas that were destroyed in the battle with Islamic State and are in desperate need of reconstruction. The Sadrist Movement didn't comment.

An early general election set for October and a new election law, both pressed for by the Sadrists, favour large parties with a wide popular support base because candidates will require more votes, and could fuel Sadr's ascendancy, legislators and analysts say.

Hezbollah, the armed Shi'ite movement that has come to control much of the Lebanese state, has provided political instruction to the Sadrists, said two Sadrists and three senior Shi'ite officials. For example, in local elections in 2009, the Sadrist Movement calibrated the number of candidates it put forward in each area to avoid splitting the Sadrist vote.

The Sadr aide and two other Sadrist officials said the movement and Hezbollah remain in close contact and regularly share political, economic and military expertise including how to deal with local and regional political crises. They declined to elaborate. The two organizations use a similar approach of local outreach combined with militia and political activity. They have family ties through second cousins and marriage. Sadr's family historically hails from Lebanon.

A Hezbollah spokesman confirmed the group had provided what he called assistance and electoral instruction to Iraqi factions including the Sadrists, and said relations between the two movements were "ongoing and positive."

UNKNOWN QUANTITY

With elections due in October, the Sadrists are feeling confident. "The (next) prime minister will, one million percent, be a Sadrist," deputy parliament speaker Hassan al-Kaabi said in a televised interview in April.

Most of Sadr's opponents concede that the Sadrists will come first, and their outsize influence in state administration will give them the final say on who leads the government.

That prediction poses a dilemma for Western and regional powers.

Sadr has variously railed against Tehran, Washington, London and Gulf Arab capitals for their interference in Iraq. But he has also been one of the few senior Shi'ite leaders to visit Saudi Arabia and has spent long periods in Iran despite an uneasy relationship with the Islamic Republic.

"Muqtada has good relations with the Gulf, Iran, Turkey," a senior Sadrist official said, but corrected himself after mentioning America in the same breath. "He has relatives in (the holy Iranian city) Qom," he said, referring to Sadr's reclusive older brother, who is based in Iran.

A senior official in Iraqi Kurdistan, the autonomous region which has close ties with the United States, said of Sadr's geopolitical alignment: "I find it very hard to see Sadr confronting Iran. In the end, Muqtada will be closer to Iran than he will to America."

A Western diplomat said Western nations viewed Sadr as an "unknown quantity" who is the only Iraqi leader able to enact reform and counter Iran-backed militias but retains a deep distrust of America and Britain in particular.

"There would also be concerns over human rights," the diplomat said, referring to Sadr's Islamist stance against homosexuality, alcohol consumption and women's freedoms. In March last year, Sadr blamed the legalization of same-sex marriage by some foreign countries for the COVID-19 pandemic.

TURNING AWAY

Sadr's ascent also carries risks for his movement.

Followers have sometimes been ruthless in their grabbing of state posts, said two senior government officials who oppose Sadr.

Abu Amir, a teacher in southern Iraq, described being threatened by supporters of Sadr to step down from his position as headmaster of a state school – a job his Sadrist predecessor had just been sacked from over corruption charges. They wanted his Sadrist predecessor to be reinstated, he said.

"As soon as I began the job, I got messages from Sadr supporters threatening me and telling me to resign," he said. The deputy education minister – a Sadrist newly appointed in his post – walked into the school a few days later with armed men and reinstalled the disgraced former head. Abu Amir had already fled. He asked that he not be identified by his full name for fear of retribution. The Sadrist Movement didn't respond to a request for comment.

Some younger Sadrists are meanwhile abandoning the movement.

Qassim, the protester, used to be a supporter. He said he and many others left in disgust after followers of Sadr turned on the pro-democracy activists in early 2020. Sadr abruptly withdrew his backing for the protests a few weeks after they succeeded in their goal of toppling the Iran-backed government.

“Sadr might be gaining state power, but he’s losing people like me,” said Qassim.

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INDO-PACIFIC

19. U.S. respects South Korea’s decision to bow out of multinational military drill – Pentagon
Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 29 (1544) | Byun Duk-kun

WASHINGTON -- The United States fully respects South Korea’s decision to skip a multinational naval exercise, a Pentagon spokesman said Tuesday, also adding Seoul’s decision does not affect the South Korea-U.S. alliance in any way.

“It’s a sovereign decision by a nation state. And they’re certainly entitled to make that decision and to speak to that decision and we absolutely respect it,” the spokesman, John Kirby, said in a press briefing.

South Korea earlier said it had been invited to take part in the U.S.-led exercise, Sea Breeze 21, in the Black Sea that involves some 5,000 troops from 32 countries, including NATO members, but that it has decided not to take part.

The multinational exercise got under way this week and is scheduled to end July 10.

Kirby noted South Korea had been invited because its participation was desirable, but said the country had every right to make its own decision.

“I don’t think they would have been invited if there wasn’t a genuine desire to have them participate in whatever way they deemed fit,” he said.

“They’ve obviously chosen not to participate and we respect that. It doesn’t change the strength of the alliance or our commitment to the people of South Korea or our security commitments there on the peninsula,” he added.

Seoul said on Monday (Seoul time) that it will take part in another U.S.-led naval exercise that will also involve Australia.

The country said it plans to send a 4,400-ton-class destroyer to the planned military drill, called the Talisman Sabre, to be held next month.

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20. INDO-PACOM Used Ground-based Aegis Combat System Prototype to Target Missile Threats, Surface Targets

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 29 (1923) | Sam LaGrone

Last year, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command quietly packed the combat system from a guided-missile destroyer into about the size of a footlocker, took it ashore and hooked it up to an Army artillery unit, an Air Force command node and an F-35 Lighting II Joint Strike Fighter.

Last September, INDO-PACOM used the Virtualized Aegis Weapon System (VAWS) in an experiment to see if the combat management technology of the sea-based Aegis could be used by Army and Air Force units, Lockheed Martin software engineers said during the WEST 2021 conference, cohosted by the U.S. Naval Institute and AFCEA. The experiments used VAWs to route targeting information used by destroyers and cruisers with an Army High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) unit and a PAC-3 missile defense system instead.

During the September 2020 exercise, VAWS – developed in part by the Navy's Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems (PEO IWS) – was installed at the Pacific Air Forces' multi-domain operations center (MDOC) in Hawaii and routed information to the Army's 17th Field Artillery Brigade, which was functioning as a multi-domain task force (MDTF) at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam.

"We used a traditionally naval Aegis combat system software in a virtualized computing environment to send digital force orders between the MDOC in Hawaii and our counterparts at the MDTF in Guam. So, we coordinated land and maritime fires in that way," engineer Alex Bui said at the conference.

"We were able to demonstrate VAW's ability to enable maritime anti-ship fires with existing Army fire systems, specifically the HIMARS launcher."

VAW provided targeting information to the HIMARS launcher to simulate a strike on an anti-ship target.

In a separate experiment, information from an F-35 was routed through VAWS to cue a PAC-3 missile defense system.

"That involved recorded F-35 data from a demonstration in December of 2019, that recorded data was sent to our VAWS C2 node in the MDOC in Hawaii and that was integrated to an interface with the PAC 3 mission controller to simulate that entire defensive kill chain across the services again, Navy and Army," Bui said.

Lockheed Martin has experimented with using the sensors on an F-35 to provide targeting data to missiles launched from the shore. Previously, the company has tested using data from an F-35 to target an SM-6 in a successful intercept.

In addition, the information collected and synthesized by VAWS provided a common operating picture as part of the wider Valiant Shield battle network for the joint force.

News of last year's test comes as the Navy continues to refine its emerging tactical network for the service's Project Overmatch effort – nested inside the larger Pentagon Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) program.

"Project Overmatch will provide that architecture for us to connect all our systems – whether they're unmanned or manned – in the future in a more robust manner to include both the Marine Corps and the Navy contribution to that naval fight," Vice Adm. Jim Kilby, the deputy chief of naval operations for warfighting requirements and capabilities (OPNAV N9), said on Tuesday.

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CHINA

21. China looks to East Africa for second Indian Ocean foothold
A Tanzanian naval base would ease Beijing's 'Malacca Dilemma,' analyst says
Nikkei Asia Online (Japan), June 29 (1453) | Ken Moriyasu

NEW YORK -- News that Tanzania will revive a $10 billion port project in the town of Bagamoyo has ignited speculation that China, the project's main investor, is looking to establish an additional dual-use foothold on the East African coast, a move that would greatly enhance Beijing's strategic aims in the region.

The main purpose of Bagamoyo Port would be to ease the congestion at the country's main port, Dar es Salaam, located 75 km to its south. Bagamoyo could also become a maritime gateway for neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, "the world's greatest untapped non-oceanic/polar minerals gold mine," according to Lauren Johnston, a visiting senior lecturer of the School of Economics and Public Policy at the University of Adelaide.

But the port could be tapped for purposes that go beyond purely commercial endeavors. It may also be used as a ship repair hub for China's People's Liberation Army Navy, or perhaps even more. China established its first and only overseas military base in northern Africa's Djibouti in 2017.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan announced on Saturday that Tanzania would restart the port project, which had been halted on concerns that Chinese demands about usage of the facility were too onerous.

Indian Ocean expert Darshana Baruah, an associate fellow with the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, says East Africa offers China an easier entry point to the Indian Ocean than other locations closer to the Strait of Malacca.

“China has been looking at the Indian Ocean in a more cohesive manner than I think most other nations have been doing,” Baruah said. “Any kind of an effort to build a facility or a port in the eastern Indian Ocean, whether it is Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives or Pakistan, I think would have more of a reaction, or a pushback, than I think in Africa. Many nations forget to connect it, but Africa is still a part of the Indian Ocean region.”

Baruah said that a second naval base in the Indian Ocean, following Djibouti, would help with China’s “Malacca Dilemma” -- a phrase former President Hu Jintao used to describe the Asian country’s dependence on the world’s busiest chokepoint.

“Even if something were to happen within the Malacca Strait, if they would have two bases or more facilities in the Indian Ocean, they can still continue their operations in the Indian Ocean region,” Baruah said.

“I’m not talking about a war,” Baruah said. “I’m talking about limited conflicts or competition. Even with the Strait of Malacca interrupted, from a grand strategy point of view, they could sustain their operations in the Indian Ocean region without necessarily having to make frequent calls back home.”

While Beijing’s main maritime focus is in the South and East China seas, it has poured time and effort into building relationships in the Indian Ocean. China has diplomatic missions in all six of the island nations in the region, namely Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros. Washington has three -- in Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Madagascar -- with plans in place for a fourth in the Maldives.

“No other Indian Ocean player -- India, France or the United Kingdom -- has a presence in all six island nations,” Baruah noted.

Securing a foothold in East Africa would also allow China to prepare for contingencies such as the blockage of the Suez Canal, as was seen earlier this year. The Ever Given, the 400-meter-long container vessel, blocked one of the world’s busiest waterways for almost a week.

“If anything were to happen in the Suez Canal, then the Mozambique Channel will quickly again become the alternate route, which was originally the key trading route,” Baruah said.

The 400-km-wide waterway between Madagascar and Mozambique is an important route for shipping in eastern Africa.

University of Adelaide’s Johnston said that for Beijing, Tanzania was “much more trustworthy than Mozambique and Kenya, both of which are more likely to be security partners of the West.”

But Tanzania's independent-minded tradition could stand in the way of China's ambition to use Bagamoyo as a dual-use port. "It's not their style," she said. "They are neutral-minded, and they are trusted by Africans for that. Housing a Chinese security port or base would undermine what Tanzania is."

When Tanzania's Hassan announced that she would revive the Bagamoyo project, she said, "We are going to start talks with the investors that came for the project with the aim of opening it for the benefit of our nation."

At an event hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies on Tuesday, Army Gen. Stephen Townsend, commander of the U.S. Africa Command, warned African countries to be clear-eyed about engaging with China.

"These countries ought to just go into these relationships with their eyes wide open. I think that it's possible to do business with China, but you better be on your game and have your eyes and ears open," he said. "China is bringing a lot of investment to the continent, and I would just urge our African partners: try to take advantage of that without getting taken advantage of."

At the same event, Vice Adm. Herve Blejean, director-general of the European Union military staff, warned of China's so-called debt-trap diplomacy. "China is tailoring its support to each country, answering immediately their expressed needs, but by doing that also trapping them in their net and establishing bonds for life that they would be unable to pay back."

There is a possibility that the world wakes up one day to find that "most of the resources of Africa, legally, belong to China," he said. "That should be a real concern."

Carnegie's Baruah predicts that bigger players in the Indo-Pacific will be competing to win the hearts and minds of small nations in the region. In that battle, geography will play a major factor.

"One example was during the outbreak of COVID-19, when a lot of countries were undertaking evacuation missions, bringing citizens back from Wuhan," Baruah said. "Indians were the ones who also brought back students for Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and others. China sent an aircraft to Maldives to bring back their citizens but they did not offer those aircrafts to send South Asian citizens who were in China."

She praised India for actions during the pandemic "to show its presence, its investments and its friendship across the Indian Ocean region."

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RUSSIA

22. U.S. eyes more stable, predictable ties with Russia, Blinken tells paper
Reuters, June 29 (0738) | Not Attributed

ROME -- The United States hopes for more stable and predictable relations with Russia but if the latter continues to "be aggressive", then Washington will respond, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a newspaper interview published on Tuesday.

"But if Russia is going to continue to take reckless or aggressive actions, we'll respond — not for purposes of conflict, not to escalate, but because we will defend our interests and values," he told Italian daily La Repubblica.

Blinken - who was in Rome for a meeting on international efforts to combat Islamist militia - referred to the SolarWind cyberattacks and the attempt to poison jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Earlier this month U.S. President Joe Biden told Russian President Vladimir Putin at a summit in Geneva that certain critical infrastructure should be "off-limits" to cyberattacks.

China was "the most complicated" when it came to relations Blinken added, but said the United States respected the different relations countries had with China and that it would not ask any of them to choose between the two countries.

"I think we see adversarial aspects to the relationship, competitive aspects of the relationship, and cooperative ones. There's no single word that can define it," he said

He added that, when dealing with China, "we are much more effective if we're working together."

Blinken also said that Italy had made important efforts in drafting legislation aimed at protecting its 5G network from "untrusted vendors" and that it should continue to carry out checks should investments from other countries arrive.

The United States has lobbied Italy and other European allies to avoid using equipment made by Huawei in their next-generation networks, saying the Chinese company could pose a security risk. Huawei has rejected the accusations.

--*Reporting by Giulia Segreti*

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23. Dutch say Russian jets buzzed warship in Black Sea
Agence France-Presse, June 29 (1148) | Danny Kemp

The Netherlands on Tuesday accused Russian fighter jets of “unsafe” behaviour in an encounter with a Dutch warship in the Black Sea.

The incident last Thursday involved the frigate HNMLS Evertsen, part of a carrier strike group with the British destroyer HMS Defender, which itself purportedly came under Russian warning fire a day earlier.

The Dutch defence ministry said Russian planes “repeatedly harassed the Everts” over a period of five hours when it was southeast of Russian-annexed Crimea, adding that they “flew dangerously low and close by, performing feint attacks”.

“The fighters were armed with bombs and so-called air-to-surface missiles... After hours of intimidation, disruptions to electronic equipment of the Evertsen also took place,” the ministry said in a statement.

Dutch Defence Minister Ank Bijleveld-Schouten said the Russian actions were “irresponsible” and that the Netherlands “will address Russia about this”.

“The Evertsen has every right to sail there. There is no justification whatsoever for this kind of aggressive action, which also unnecessarily increases the risk of accidents,” she said.

There was no immediate reaction from Moscow.

The standoff came a day after Russia said a border patrol ship fired warning shots at Britain’s HMS Defender and a fighter jet dropped four bombs along its path.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson defended the route taken by the Royal Navy destroyer.

Ukraine and the United States meanwhile launched joint naval exercises in the Black Sea on Monday in a show of Western cooperation with Kiev.

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AFRICA

24. As Pentagon weighs sending troops back to Somalia, AFRICOM chief makes his case
Military Times Online, June 29 (1220) | Meghann Myers

Six months after former President Donald Trump abruptly pulled troops out of Somalia, the new administration is discussing whether to send them back in.

The head of U.S. Africa Command has been sharing his opinions with the Pentagon's top civilian leadership, he said Tuesday.

"I think we'll keep those options right where they should be, in private communications with the secretary of defense, so our civilian leaders have the opportunity to make their decisions," Army Gen. Stephen Townsend said during the European Union Defense Washington Forum.

But, he added, it's a lot hard to train, advise and assist Somalian forces from afar.

"I would say, though, that there's really no denying our repositioning — fairly sudden repositioning — out of Somalia earlier this year has introduced new layers of risk and complexity to our mission there," Townsend said.

About 700 troops had been deployed to Somalia, supporting their military in a decades-long power struggle with al-Shabab, the biggest and most well-funded arm of al-Qaida in the world.

The idea has been, since the Bush administration first authorized airstrikes in the country in 2007, that keeping things under control in Somalia would protect the American homeland.

Trump saw it differently, as another front in the "forever wars" he tried to end during his term in office. Notably, pulling boots off the ground in Somalia only diminished American's physical engagement in the country.

With a rotation of troops in and out of neighboring Kenya, as well as consistent communication with AFRICOM headquarters in Germany, train-advise-assist continued on a mostly virtual basis, with intermittent trips down for in-person meetings and training. Airstrikes on al-Shabab strongholds also continued.

"Right now, we're commuting back and forth to work," Townsend said.

Which isn't to say that the mission has become untenable, AFRICOM's senior enlisted leader told Military Times April.

“So I mean, it’s obvious — you can figure out that it does reduce a little bit of your nimbleness,” Marine Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Thresher said. “So you just rely better on indications and warnings, and use those types of things to best plan for what types of patrols or whatever you’re going to do. You’ve got to plan better, and earlier, and more often. And a lot of that’s dependent upon intelligence.”

But with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin launching another global posture review, the results of which are expected later this summer, there’s ample opportunity to make the case that being in Somalia makes more sense than trying to do the same mission remotely.

For his part, Townsend said, he really prefers face-to-face, shoulder-to-shoulder engagement with partners.

“We have limited opportunities to do that when we fly in and fly out for training,” he said.

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25. Islamic State group says it’s behind Congo suicide bombing
Associated Press, June 29 (1353) | Al-Hadji Kudra Maliro

BENI, Congo -- An Islamic State group in Africa claimed responsibility Tuesday for two explosions in eastern Congo, including its first suicide bombing, deepening fears that extremists have now laid roots in this corner of the continent long plagued by rebels.

The claims came just days after a Ugandan man detonated his explosives at a busy intersection in the eastern town of Beni, where both U.N. peacekeepers and the Congolese army have maintained a large presence in recent years.

Authorities at the time said he was a member of a rebel group known as the Allied Democratic Forces, or ADF. While ADF has pledged its allegiance to the Islamic State group, there has not been independent corroboration that the two organizations were working in coordination with one another beyond sharing ideology.

While no civilians were killed in Sunday’s suicide bombing, it came on the same day that another explosion rocked a Catholic church in the area, authorities said.

The Islamic State’s Central Africa Province claimed responsibility for both explosions. It said that the suicide bomber was targeting Christians at a bar in Beni, according to the SITE Intelligence Group that monitors communications from extremist groups.

The IS group, in a separate statement, also said it had detonated an explosive device inside the Butsili Catholic Parish. Authorities have said two people were wounded.

Eastern Congo has been mired in conflict for more than a quarter-century particularly near its border with Rwanda. Armed groups there have vied for control of the region’s mineral resources.

The ADF, which traces its origins to nearby Uganda, has mounted an escalating number of attacks in and around Beni in the last several years even as the community was struck by an Ebola epidemic. The rebel attacks have brought gunfire to the center of town on multiple occasions, prompting anger from community members about the U.N. and military's inability to stop the violence.

Authorities in Beni have urged residents to remain calm, and closed schools, markets and churches for 48 hours after the attacks Sunday.

The news of a suicide bomber terrified many Beni residents, who feared it was a sign extremists have made deeper inroads putting the community at risk.

"Here in Beni we have never seen such things," Mumbere Mafuta said after Sunday's attacks. "Today it is a bar, church and market. We don't know if tomorrow it will be a school. May God help us."

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ARCTIC

26. Coast Guard Considers Arctic FONOPs As Russian Activity Increases in Region
Military.com, June 29 (0802) | Patricia Kime

The Arctic could potentially become the next region in which the U.S. executes "freedom of navigation operations," or FONOPS, the Coast Guard's top officer said Monday.

Home to an estimated $1 trillion worth of rare minerals, a third of the world's supply of liquefied natural gas and migratory fish species, the Arctic is increasingly attracting traffic -- especially from Russia, which draws 20% to 24% of its gross domestic product from the region, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said in an online discussion hosted by the Washington, D.C.-based Brookings Institution.

While Russia has "legitimate access and rights" to the area, the U.S. also has an obligation to preserve "rules-based international order" if Russia or another country with Arctic interests, like China, fail to be "responsible actors" there, Schultz said.

"I don't want to accuse Russia of doing anything definitively, but I think what we have seen in terms of a propensity to aggressively be present ... is something we need a countering, tempering force for," Schultz said.

Russia increased the number of Tu-95 Bear strategic bombers flyovers near Alaska last year and is positioning MiG-31BM Foxhound interceptors at bases on the Barents Sea. It recently held its annual Ocean Shield exercises

to defend its maritime approaches in the Arctic and Pacific, which included amphibious landings on the Chukotka Peninsula near Alaska.

At the same time, the U.S. Coast Guard doesn't have the resources it needs to patrol the Arctic, with just one heavy icebreaker -- the Polar Star -- in operation, Schultz said.

"Presence equals influence in the Arctic, and right now, we are woefully lacking," he said.

The Department of the Navy released its Strategic Blueprint for the Arctic in January, noting that "U.S. naval forces must operate more assertively across the Arctic region to prevail in day to day competition."

According to the document, the challenge is to "apply naval power to keep the Arctic seas free and open and deter coercive behavior and conventional aggression."

Having a naval mission and law enforcement authorities, the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to be the U.S.'s representative in the region, Schultz said.

"What we're concerned about is how [Russia] conducts in this space -- the same concerns we have about rules-based international order and adherence, modern maritime governance. The Coast Guard brings a lot of 'street cred;' we're recognized across the globe as adhering to and modeling those behaviors," Schultz said.

Some Arctic experts believe that increased activity in the Arctic, by Russia and to some extent, in partnership with China, is less a plan to be recognized as a "Great Power," when in fact it is a resumption of its Cold War activities in the face of adversaries who are far better equipped than they were during that era.

Eugene Rumer, director of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Richard Sokolosky, a non-resident senior fellow with the organization, described the current situation as a "clash of the two parties' interests."

In a report in March, they recommended that the issue be dealt with through diplomacy and deterrence.

"The alliance should continue to manage competition with Russia through a combination of resolve and restraint, improving and demonstrating its capabilities for defense and deterrence, but without overreacting to Russian muscle-flexing," they wrote.

In their meeting June 18, U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed how to "make the Arctic a region of cooperation rather than conflict," according to Biden, while Putin described the area as a "zone of understanding."

The U.S. Coast Guard, according to Schultz, is doing its part to improve cooperation in the region, but is also keeping its eye on Russian behavior.

“We want to have a cooperative dialogue with Russia ... search and rescue, fisheries operations, environmental cooperation -- those are places that it’s advantageous to U.S. interests and Russia interests that we cooperate up there,” Schultz said.

“I do think there is a practical, functional approach that Russia takes to the U.S. Coast Guard in these spaces, and that’s a positive thing.”

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NAVY

27. House Bill Cuts Money for Navy Nuke Cruise Missile, Saves three LCS from Decommissioning
U.S. Naval Institute News, June 29 (1522) | Sam LaGrone

House appropriators are cutting development money for the Navy’s ship-launched nuclear cruise missile, preventing the service from decommissioning three Freedom-class Littoral Combat Ships and adding funds for a second destroyer, according to the House Appropriations Committee defense subcommittee’s draft of the Fiscal Year 2022 defense spending bill issued today.

The changes to the Navy budget are part of a $706 billion defense spending package that’s in line with the Biden administration’s proposed top line when a separate $11 billion military construction proposal is added in.

Development of the nuclear cruise missile for the Navy has become a divisive topic through the current round of the FY 2022 budget hearings with the House and Senate. Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Harker issued an internal planning memo for the FY 2023 budget process that included language to cut the missile, reported USNI News earlier this month.

Language in the bill also prevents the Navy from using any funds appropriated in the bill to decommission three LCS. The service in its recent budget submission proposed decommissioning the relatively young USS Fort Worth (LCS-3), commissioned in 2012; USS Detroit (LCS-7), commissioned in 2016; and USS Little Rock (LCS-9), commissioned in 2017. Two of the three ships have had issues with the German-built gearing system that links its engines, a problem Naval Sea Systems Command declared a class-wide issue in January, USNI News reported at the time. Fort Worth has a U.S.-built gear that doesn’t have the same flaw, USNI News understands.

The appropriations bill also funds $3.33 billion for two Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers – one more than the Navy asked for in the budget.

During the rollout in late May, Navy budget director Rear Adm. John Gumbleton told USNI News that cutting the destroyer "was absolutely an affordability question, where the goal of the department was to balance the first priority, which was investment in Columbia [ballistic missile submarine] recapitalization."

Adding the second destroyer was the Navy's top unfunded budget priority and it was widely expected that Congress would add funding for the destroyer back into the budget.

The bill also keeps Boeing's F/A-18E/F Super Hornet line open with a buy of 12 additional fighters for $977 million. The service was set to end the line and instead invest in development the Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) family of systems.

Other stipulations of the bill include $300 million in the shipbuilding account for the service to buy five used merchant ships for the National Defense Reserve Fleet and restrictions on buying foreign-manufactured components for the Constellation-class guided-missile frigate program (FFG-62).

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28. There's a theory the Navy's shock tests caused the condo collapse. Experts say why it didn't
Miami Herald Online, June 29 (0700) | Madeleine Marr

People continue to pine for answers after last week's horrific condo collapse in Surfside, Florida. It may be weeks or months before the actual cause is known -- but that doesn't stop non-experts coming up with their own hypotheses.

One pervasive question some observers have is if the U.S. Navy "shock tests" of a new warship off the Florida coast on June 18 may have triggered the tragedy a few days later, at approximately 1:30 a.m. on June 24. Ponce Inlet is roughly 250 miles north of Surfside.

The USS Gerald R. Ford was positioned about 100 miles from Ponce Inlet in Volusia County when a 40,000 pound explosive was detonated in the water. Official video provided to the public on Twitter shows the explosion that was so intense that it registered a 3.9 in earthquake terms.

"[Investigators] are going to check it out," Abieyuwa Aghayere, a professor of forensic engineering at Drexel University, told the Miami Herald last week.

Paul Earle, a Golden, Colorado-based seismologist with the U.S. Geological Survey's National Earthquake Information Center (NEIC), said he didn't believe the two incidents are related.

"Given the size of the explosion, the distance from the building, and the time between the explosion and the collapse, we do not see any reasonable mechanism for the Navy explosion on June 18 to have triggered the

collapse of the Miami Beach-area condo on June 24," he said. "There are about 300 earthquakes of similar size to the Navy explosion in the contiguous U.S. every year, none of which have triggered a major building collapse."

Earled added that 3.9 is not classified as a large earthquake. "California has those quite often."

On Monday, Lieutenant Commander Desiree Frame, public affairs officer for the USS Gerald R. Ford, debunked the theory of a connection between the collapse and the battleship's Full Ship Shock Trials (FSSTs) off of the Florida coast.

"We have seen nothing that will correlate the shock trial test with the terrible event last week in South Florida," she told the Miami Herald in an email. "Certainly, our thoughts and prayers go out to everybody affected by that."

Frame went on to assuage any fears the public has about these tests.

"I can assure you that when we do these shock trials, there are a wide variety of environmental and safety factors that are taken into account," she wrote. "We know we need to do this kind of testing for the hull of our major ships like aircraft carriers, that it's an important opportunity to evaluate the structural integrity of the hull, and its ability to handle a blast of that size, but in choosing the location, the depth of the water, the time of day, marine life migration patterns, etc. There are a lot of factors that are considered to make sure that it's as safe as it can possibly be."

As for the current theory as to what caused the catastrophe, six engineering experts told the Miami Herald Saturday that based on the current available evidence -- including surveillance video, building plans, inspection reports and a chilling account of a resident who said she saw the pool turn into a sinkhole -- a structural column or concrete slab beneath the pool deck likely gave way, collapsing into the garage below, causing the tower to cave in on itself.

As of Tuesday morning, 11 were declared dead in the collapse, with dozens still missing.

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29. Navy won't investigate Eddie Gallagher's podcast comments about Islamic State detainee's death
Navy Times Online, June 29 (1614) | Geoff Ziezulewicz

The Navy announced Tuesday that it will not pursue further action against former Chief Special Warfare Operator Eddie Gallagher for comments he made earlier this year on a podcast regarding medical treatment of an Islamic State detainee who later died in 2017.

“After a review conducted by the Navy, it was determined that Gallagher’s statements were not corroborated and no substantive information was found to merit an investigation based on those statements,” Navy spokeswoman Cmdr. Courtney Hillson said in an email to Navy Times.

“Evidence against Gallagher related to medical treatment and the death of the detainee was already investigated and/or adjudicated at Gallagher’s court-martial,” she said. “Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice and our Constitution, he cannot be prosecuted again for these alleged offenses.”

Gallagher was charged with murder in 2018 for the death of the militant.

He was eventually acquitted of fatally stabbing the 17-year-old following testimony from another SEAL team member, who testified that he had actually killed the injured fighter by blocking a breathing tube and asphyxiating him.

Gallagher was later convicted of posing for a photo next to the corpse of the teen. The jury’s recommended sentence of reducing Gallagher’s rank to E-6 was nullified after then-President Donald Trump intervened in the case, paving the way for Gallagher to retire as a chief and keep his SEAL trident.

The recent renewed scrutiny of Gallagher came after an episode of “The Line” podcast dropped last month.

In that episode, Gallagher said that the team’s intention “was to kill him,” and “to do medical scenarios on him until he died.”

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin confirmed last month that the Navy was looking into Gallagher’s latest utterances on the high-profile incident.

Timothy Parlatore, Gallagher’s civilian defense attorney in the court-martial, told Navy Times Tuesday that his client’s comments reflected what defense counsel and prosecutors have known for some time, “that the medical treatment that was provided was not expected to save (the militant’s) life.”

“Rather, it was done for the purpose of keeping the Iraqis away from him so they would not torture, dismember and execute him,” said Parlatore, who added that the Navy’s decision not to conduct further investigation was “unsurprising,” as it would have raised questions about the truthfulness of witness testimony at Gallagher’s trial “and would only further show the incompetence of (the Naval Criminal Investigative Service) and JAG prosecutors.”

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CYBER

30. 'The Future Is About Information Dominance' - Gen. Nakasone

'We're not in Kansas anymore,' Gen. Nakasone said about the cyber threat landscape and the U.S.'s adversaries

BreakingDefense.com, June 29 (1806) | Brad D. Williams

WASHINGTON -- Future competition and conflict will hinge on "information dominance" — a mission that will play out largely in cyberspace but that cannot be separated from conventional military operations, CYBERCOM and NSA chief Gen. Paul Nakasone said today.

"The future is about information — information dominance," Nakasone said during the U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association annual WEST Conference. For context, Nakasone made the comment about the future after reflecting on key moments in the decade-long existence of CYBERCOM, an organization he has been involved with since the beginning and took leadership of in 2018. Nakasone also leads the NSA and the Central Security Service.

"Too often we think of cyberspace as distinct from the physical fight. That's not always the case," Nakasone said, adding that the virtual and the physical are increasingly intertwined. In this way, he said, "events in the virtual battlefield inform and reflect the physical battlefield."

The theme of "information dominance" seems to reflect broader views about the changing global competitive environment. The US military, more broadly, is modernizing even as it repositions from a two-decade focus on thwarting terrorism to "competing" against "near-peers" China and Russia. Significant aspects of this so-called "near-peer competition" are already playing out in cyberspace.

China has also stressed its goal to control the information environment.

As Breaking D readers know, a recent International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) study found the US stands alone as the only tier-one global cyber power. China, the study found, is poised to challenge the US's current "clear superiority" in cyberspace within the next decade.

"Information dominance" also seems, in part perhaps, related to what Army Maj. Gen. Peter Gallagher, who heads the Army's network modernization for Futures Command, has called the concept of "decision dominance." Gallagher's comments reflect the goal of Joint All Domain Command and Control, or JADC2, characterized as a meta-networking strategy for coordinating military operations across land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace. Timely information for decision-makers and control of the information environment are viewed as integral to the success of JADC2.

In discussing the "threat picture," Nakasone detailed three familiar themes from recent speeches and congressional testimony. The first is the growing scope of what the US must defend and protect in cyberspace, owing to a "much broader" attack surface, to include weapons systems and an exponentially expanding trove of military data. As Breaking D readers know, data will be a key enabler of JADC2.

The second theme is the scale of cyberattacks, evidenced recently by high-profile cyber campaigns such as SolarWinds, Microsoft Exchange server hacks, and Colonial Pipeline. Nakasone observed that near-peer competitors China and Russia have executed "persistent, malicious campaigns" that shouldn't be thought of as "episodic."

"We're not in Kansas anymore," Nakasone said, noting US adversaries have invested in and operationalized cyber.

His third theme is how sophisticated the US's cyber adversaries sometimes prove to be. However, he also noted, sometimes they've found success with simpler techniques. The key is to recognize how adversaries are adapting and to engage accordingly.

Nakasone pointed to three tasks he views as important going forward. First is the hard work of integrating cyber across the military, government, allies, and partners. The second is strengthening cyber defenses. The third is continued development of a pool of domestic cyber talent by finding ways to attract, train, and retain a generation of elite cyber warriors.

"It's not all about the money, trust me," Nakasone said, referring to the temptation of higher-paying jobs in the private sector. "But it's also not all about the mission either. We need to be open to new ideas about career development."

To this last point, Nakasone challenged the audience to "think differently."

"We have incredible technology, incredible tradecraft, but the most important thing we have is talent," Nakasone said. He noted the importance of military reserves and the National Guard, which he referred to collectively as "our strategic depth," as well as the importance of the civilian workforce, which he said currently constitutes about 60 percent of CYBERCOM headquarters staff and which provides "continuity, experience, and mentoring."

But it's not just CYBERCOM that will play a role in America's cyber future. Nakasone touted NSA's role, with its dual missions of signals intelligence and cybersecurity. Nakasone pointed to the importance of cryptology, an NSA specialty, in cyber defenses. "The true backstop is encryption," he said, "to protect weapons systems and data." The stronger the US's crypto capabilities, "the better off we'll be."

"I close with optimism," Nakasone said, "balanced with the realization we have work to do."

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31. CYBERCOM: Navy-Marine Integration Must Extend Across the Cyber Realm to Protect Weapons Systems, Data

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 29 (1727) | Gidget Fuentes

The Navy and Marine Corps must be prepared to handle cyber-attacks like the recent attack embedded in routine software updates on thousands of government and business networks, said the nation's top cybersecurity official.

"Continuing Navy-Marine Corps integration must account for the information environment, especially adversary intrusions, information operations and next-gen cryptography," Army Gen. Paul Nakasone, head of U.S. Cyber Command, said Tuesday during the WEST 2021 defense conference. Cyber operations, cybersecurity and information operations are "increasingly important roles for the joint force," including the growing capabilities coming from naval integration.

"The scope of what we need to defend and protect has dramatically expanded," said Nakasone, who oversees the Fort Meade, Md.,-based headquarters organization of nearly 6,200 personnel, including 133 Cyber Mission Force teams, and a $610 million annual budget.

"The attack surface is much broader. Think about the need to protect the Navy and Marine Corps' weapons systems," Nakasone said. "That's a related but distinct challenge compared to networks. For example, how do we think about software updates and patches for systems on ships that don't return to port for months at a time?"

"How do we improve the security of weapons systems – and not just those that are already fielded, but how do we make cybersecurity a consideration at the earliest phases of the acquisition cycle?"

Moreover, the increase in integrated training and operations among the military services raises the potential costs and fallout from cyber attacks on systems and equipment.

"We must also protect the military data, which is rapidly becoming a core enabler of capabilities across the joint force," Nakasone said, adding that "as the [Defense] Department expands how it brings together and uses data, so too we must develop new ways to keep it safe."

The rate and scope of cyber threats continue to grow in type and scale.

"Sophistication of our competitors has increased," said Nakasone, who also is director of the National Security Agency and chief of the Central Security Services. Just in the last five months, the nation has seen supply chain attacks from the hack of a SolarWinds software update, zero-day vulnerabilities – or when software does not have a current security fix for a known problem – and attacks of ransomware malware.

Preparing for the worst-case scenario in a crisis or conflict is a core mission of CYBERCOM and the NSA. Among its rare, publicly acknowledged successes is the agencies' joint counter-terrorism operations and successful hack of the ISIS terror network by Joint Task Force Ares.

Countering cyber threats requires a "unity of effort" to work together and provide support across the joint force, said Nakasone, who previously led U.S. Army Cyber Command. It also requires greater recognition that the cyber world and physical world are intertwined.

"Events on the virtual battlefield can reflect and inform events on the physical battlefield," he said. But "too often, we think of cyberspace as something that is separate and distinct from the physical fight."

The counter-ISIS mission "graduated us to the security of our elections," Nakasone said, referring to the work by CYBERCOM and the NSA on U.S. election security and foreign interference, beginning with the 2018 midterm elections. As director of the NSA, he oversees the agency's two key missions of signals intelligence and cybersecurity.

As the nation's top cyber chief, Nakasone created the "Russia Small Group" focused on potential threats, including hackers and foreign influence. The command's "hunt forward" operations, as they were called, involved CYBERCOM teams embedded in countries "to better understand emerging cyber threats that we might not otherwise see from a U.S.-centric perspective," he said. Those lessons learned "are shared widely with interagency and other partners to inform new defenses."

The partnerships, he noted, "proved critical in election security to thwart interference." For the 2020 elections, he said, the Election Security Group created a "Cyber 9-line" reporting tool for National Guard cyber teams to use for suspected threats when they deployed to assist states' efforts.

Cyber threats from Russia and China, Nakasone said, are "not one-off events." He noted Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's vision and the continuing threats from Russia and China of "persistent, malicious cyber campaigns" against the United States.

"That's going to require a shift – a shift in our posture, a shift in our thought processes, to return to a focus on these kinds of near-peer threats," he said. "We have to respond to this across a full spectrum of activities and situations, that is, across cyber defense and offense, information operations and in competition, in crisis or, if necessary, in conflict. The more we can synchronize those activities, the more powerful we'll be as a military and as a nation."

"Our adversaries are not static. They continue to morph in their tradecraft and in their techniques," he added in response to a question about trends and lessons learned about the threats to elections security. "We've got to be able to operate with speed… and with agility and… with a unity of effort."

More integration across the services – "even across communities within the services" – and non-traditional interagency and industry partners are necessary, he said. In 2018, CYBERCOM partnered with a Maryland nonprofit organization to establish DreamPort, an unclassified cyber innovation, collaboration and prototyping facility in Columbia, Md.

The military also must "tend to our own vulnerabilities," Nakasone said, and must look to improve cybersecurity, counter-information operations and bolster encryption. The latter should be looked at as "the last line of defense, to protect not just our networks, but our data and our weapons systems as well."

Cybersecurity, he added, "really is national security."

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NOTABLE COMMENTARY

32. 'People are watching': Attacks on Milley and the U.S. military play right into enemy hands
USA Today Online, June 29 (0315) | Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA)

Last week in Washington, Gen. Mark Milley made headlines. With surgical precision, the decorated general and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff eviscerated untrue and unfounded allegations about critical race theory, levied by one of my Republican colleagues.

If you have not watched, I encourage you to do so. He reminded people like me, a fellow veteran, why we raise our hands to serve this country – because we believe not only in the Constitution but also in the people we swore to defend.

In his testimony, Gen. Milley also said something that reminded me of what my commanding officer in the Air Force used to say: "People are watching …"

As Republican lawmakers barraged Gen. Milley and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin with highly politicized questions about race, the pair issued that same warning I heard 30 years ago up at Hanscom Air Force Base: People are watching.

It's a dire warning that has fallen on deaf ears, I fear.

'Stupid pig' and defunding military

They weren't referencing the "people" in the hearing room, or those watching Fox News or MSNBC. They weren't talking about the Twitter trolls retweeting content for clout. They meant our enemies.

I served in the Air Force as an engineer at the tail end of the Cold War era and Desert Storm. My assignment was anti-ballistic missile defense command and control design. My job was to understand how our enemies thought, predict how they were likely to attack and then design systems that would help us protect our homeland and allies.

What the American people need to understand about our enemies is this: They look for any and every vulnerability. What might start as a small crack in our national security or our nation – a throwaway comment that our military or our military leaders are weak and ineffective, for example – can quickly become a gaping hole. The opportunity to sow and foment discord is the textbook first step of the divide and conquer strategy.

Gen. Milley and Secretary Austin heard what I heard in that hearing – a damaging attempt to politicize our military, an attempt that I'm sure was cheered by our enemies, both foreign and domestic, both state and nonstate actors.

In just the past two weeks, here's what we've heard from leading conservative and Republican voices: Fox News host Tucker Carlson called Gen. Milley a "pig" who is "stupid." Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida openly mocked the sacrifices our armed forces have made in past conflicts. Rep. Madison Cawthorn of North Carolina suggested America looks to the Viet Cong for inspiration. And Fox News host Laura Ingraham even floated defunding the military.

Hurtful comments make us vulnerable

The irony of someone who has never served suggesting our troops go without pay or go unprotected, the same troops who defend the very right to make such absurd statements or suggestions, is not lost on me. It's not lost on my brother or many cousins who've served in the global war on terror. It's not lost on my dad who served in Vietnam. It would not be lost on my grandfather who served in Korea.

Those people may think they're making innocuous comments, however hurtful, but Gen. Milley, Secretary Austin and I know better, and so does anyone who has worn a uniform. My colleagues in Congress are actively undermining our national security, aiding and abetting the enemies we swore to defend Americans against.

People are watching. We need to start acting like it.

--*Rep. Chrissy Houlahan is a Democrat from Pennsylvania's 6th Congressional District*

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33. The military's critical race facts
Washington Post, June 30 (0115), Pg. A25 | Michele L. Norris

Conservative politicians have weaponized critical race theory to thwart discussion about America's pernicious racial history. The U.S. military - an institution with a mixed record on racial equality - should close down this phony war by simply telling its own story with a full and open examination of the record.

I am not normally hawkish about calling for military action, but I'll pound on the table to advocate for this battle. Why is the military so well suited to take this on? Let's start with the Capitol Hill testimony last week by Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the conservative response that followed it.

Milley defended the study of critical race theory while appearing alongside Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, the first Black American to hold that post. Republican lawmakers had argued that including CRT on the syllabus at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point would weaken the military by giving in to a progressive agenda. Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.), a former Green Beret, said a guest lecturer speaking to officer candidates at West Point dared to include the phrase "White rage."

Oh, the irony of a GOP congressman decrying White rage when White rage on full display drove lawmakers out of the Capitol on Jan. 6. Milley wasn't having it. "I want to understand White rage. And I'm White," Milley said. "What is it that caused thousands of people to assault this building and try to overturn the Constitution of the United States of America. What caused that? … I want to find out."

Milley has since been eviscerated for those common-sense remarks. Former president Donald Trump called him "pathetic." Fox News host Tucker Carlson said, "He's not just a pig. He's stupid."

At some point, this disrespect drifted into delusion. Pennsylvania Senate candidate Sean Parnell, an Army veteran and Fox News regular, mocked Milley's comments last Friday, saying, "We have been a colorblind culture in the U.S. military for almost 200 years."

That's just wrong. Pretending that the military has had a sterling history on race erases both the current challenges and the slow evolution past racist restrictions. It's too easy to see the fully integrated armed forces of today and forget that there have been outright bans, separation of the races and a wide range of restrictions on service going back to the American Revolution.

So yes, tell the story of how and why the Militia Act of 1792 excluded Black men from service. Explain how and why Black World War II vets did not have equal access to GI Bill benefits or how the Marine Corps did not have fully integrated units until 1960, a dozen years after segregation officially ended in the armed forces. In each of these cases, the how will likely be easier to explain than the why. Please do it anyway.

But please also tell the story of the Buffalo soldiers, the Philippine Scouts, the Navajo Code Talkers. Describe how Black, Latino, Native American and Filipino men served as the literal backbone of the military during both world wars, building roads, hauling cargo, peeling potatoes and shoveling coal. Tell the stories of the Harlem Hellfighters and patriots such as Robert Smalls, Marcelino Serna, Dorie Miller and Susan Ahn Cuddy. Every American should learn how their valor rose above the strictures meant to restrict their service.

Racism is a scourge that limits the potential of individuals and groups within a specific cohort. But in the end, everyone pays a price - even those who enjoy the false comfort of status built upon the lie of inherent supremacy. The military learned that lesson in the heat of battle, and it's clearly spelled out in a World War II-era document.

In February 1945, the same month that the battle of Iwo Jima began, the U.S. Navy published a pamphlet called the "Guide to Command of Negro Naval Personnel." After years of limiting roles for men of color, the Navy by necessity was shifting course. "In modern total warfare any avoidable waste of manpower can only be viewed as material aid to the enemy, "the document said. "Restriction, because of racial theories, of the contribution of any individual to the war effort is a serious waste of human resources."

I hope you noticed the word "theories" in that last sentence. It stands as a reminder that many of the laws, customs, covenants and hierarchies that opponents of critical race theory so desperately want to avoid discussing were tenets based on dubious conjectures about race.

Those theories were used to justify the foundation, frame and ceiling for the house we all still dwell in. We may have opened wide some of the windows and rearranged the structure, but the basic blueprint has not fully been researched or replaced.

I hope Austin, who has demonstrated courage by openly discussing racial issues in his ranks, will direct the military to fully tell the critical race facts within its history - to the public, to recruits and future generals, to a young generation that needs to understand that to win clean, you have to play fair on the battlefield and in the regulations - because to do anything less provides material aid to the enemies of truth, honor and decency.

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34. Racism has long undermined military cohesion, just as Gen. Milley testified

Late 1960s conflicts within the armed forces produced efforts to educate service members on racism

Washington Post Online, June 29 (1044) | Natalie Shibley

"I do think it's important, actually, for those of us in uniform to be open-minded and be widely read," said Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at a House Armed Services Committee hearing on June 23. In what later became a widely circulated video, Milley responded to questions from Reps. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) and Michael Waltz (R-Fla.) about the teaching of critical race theory in the military. Milley explained that he found it "offensive" to describe service members as "being 'woke' or something else because we're

studying some theories that are out there," concluding that "it matters to our military and the discipline and cohesion of this military."

The idea that understanding histories and theories about race is important for military discipline and cohesion is nothing new. In fact, the hundreds of conflicts between White and Black troops during the Vietnam War, especially major incidents at Camp LeJeune in 1969 and Travis Air Force Base in 1971, prompted the military to launch an educational program that aimed to diminish such tensions through better understanding. The program did not achieve its promise, in part because of the very opposition to teaching service members about structural racism that is recurring today. Yet, the fact that such discussions are happening after a half-century underscores the necessity of addressing racism in our society and institutions, rather than curtailing its study.

In September 1971, the Defense Race Relations Institute opened at Patrick Air Force Base in Florida. The institute trained instructors in small group discussion methods so that they could return to their installations and run mandatory courses in what was called "race relations." Sociologist Richard O. Hope, the first director of research and evaluation at the DRRI, explained that the training operated from the assumption that "racial conflict originates from prejudices, misunderstandings, and a general lack of knowledge among groups." Therefore, the institute hoped to teach service members about other racial groups and to have open discussions about their prejudices, often confronting each other directly.

The DRRI drew heavily from academic research on race and racism. The initial curriculum had four sections: "Minority Studies," (later renamed "American Ethnic Studies"), which was historical and sociological in focus; "Behavioral Sciences," which discussed psychology, racism and social dynamics; "Educational Techniques," which focused on discussion-leading skills and a "Community Laboratory Experience," in which DRRI students spent a weekend in Miami visiting African American, Cuban, Puerto Rican and Native American neighborhoods, migrant camps and incarcerated veterans.

By 1974, the DRRI was producing its own manuals of information about different racial groups, including "Afro-American Culture," "Asian Americans," "Latino Studies," "The Native American," "Appalachian Studies" and "White Working Class Culture." One manual, "Signs and Symbols," reprinted articles that had appeared in major publications, including a satirical feature on White culture from the National Lampoon and an essay by Amari Baraka in the journal the Black Scholar outlining Black cultural nationalist Maulana Ndabezitha Karenga's theory of Kawaida, an Afrocentric political and philosophical ideology.

As historian Say Burgin has argued, the institute took a fairly radical approach in both its course material and its method. For example, the DRRI provided instruction about the concept of "institutional racism," coined by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton in their 1967 book, "Black Power." By asking service members to be able to identify examples of this phenomenon, the DRRI adopted the perspective that racism was not solely individual, but also structural. The implication of the institute's training was that communication between members of different racial groups was an important part of conflict resolution, but that it would not itself eliminate racism within the military or within American society.

To some critics, the DRRI seemed to have much in common with the new ethnic studies courses that students at many universities were starting to demand. These critics did not believe race and racism were appropriate subjects of instruction in the military, or that service members ought to be reading the work of Black Power intellectuals.

Yet for others, these programs did not do enough to address racism within the military itself. Instead, the problem called for more attention to structural issues such as discrimination in the military justice system or high concentrations of Black service members in the lower ranks and less technical occupational specialties.

Outside of the DRRI itself, the military promoted other race relations education based in reading scholarly and philosophical literature. A suggested reading list in the Army publication Commander's Call included several works of African American military history, the novel "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison, and Eldridge Cleaver's essay collection, "Soul on Ice," a work vastly more radical than the academic scholarship on critical race theory about which Gaetz and Waltz are so concerned about today.

Yet, when DRRI students began returning to their installations as race relations instructors, they encountered some commanders who did not share an interest in confronting racial prejudice. These commanders thought the DRRI trainees were troublemakers and became concerned that the DRRI was a radical organization within the military. In addition to the curriculum itself, the program's open discussion and confrontational role-playing mixed service members of different ranks, minimizing attention to military hierarchy in a way that some military and political leaders disliked.

Complaints led to changes in the DRRI's methods and a shift in the focus on race relations education in the military more broadly. Students at the DRRI had volunteered to attend; others in the armed forces, however, were less enthusiastic to engage in race relations training. A 1978 analysis suggested that race relations courses should be "less centered on minority history and culture," be "less slanted to benefit minorities" and involve "less blaming of whites." While the report noted some "improvement in racial attitudes and perceptions," it stated that this progress had ended by 1976. In fact, the study identified a new problem: "the anger of an increasing number of whites who see themselves as being victimized by what they perceived as 'reverse discrimination'" — the "White rage" that Milley stated that he wanted to understand.

In the face of this resistance, the military's "race relations" efforts soon became subsumed into its Equal Opportunity programs. In 1979, the DRRI was renamed the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute. The name reflected the military's desire to shift focus from racial conflict to "opportunity," as well as the institute's increasing inclusion of sexism as an equal opportunity issue. The DEOMI still operates, training advisers and counselors in the military's equal opportunity programs, though its methods differ significantly from the early years of the DRRI.

Yet, despite the Defense Department's investment of resources into equal opportunity programs and improvement on some issues, many of the criticisms that Black service members leveled about racism in the military in the

1970s are still present today. In a 2017 Equal Opportunity survey conducted by the Defense Department, 31.2 percent of Black active duty service members indicated that they had experienced racial or ethnic harassment or discrimination in the past year, compared with 12.7 percent of White active duty service members. A 2020 report by the Government Accountability Office demonstrated that Black service members were more likely than White service members to be tried in a court-martial proceeding. In the same year, Reuters reported that many Black service members found Equal Opportunity offices and discrimination complaint processes inadequate.

In other words, many of the issues that led to the creation of the DRRI persist. The resistance to the DRRI's initial curriculum and methodology not only diminished its potential, but highlighted the limitations of any one program to address the structural elements of racism in the armed services and in society.

In its original iteration, the DRRI was doing what Milley suggested: It was teaching service members about racism and racial prejudice to promote discipline and cohesion in the armed forces. It promoted, as Milley put it, "having some situational understanding about the country for which we're here to defend." The DRRI's advocates recognized that refusing to try to understand the history of racism not only imperiled discipline and cohesion, it was a failure of leadership — one that weakened the military and undermined the mission itself.

--*Natalie Shibley is a visiting assistant professor at Wesleyan University and is writing a book about race, homosexuality investigations and notions of disease in the U.S. military between the 1940s and 1990s*

RETURN TO TOP

35. The Taliban's March to Kabul

Wall Street Journal, June 30 (0200), Pg. A18 | Editorial

Americans of a certain age recall the humiliating U.S. flight from Saigon as the North Vietnamese army marched into the city in 1975: The desperate pleas of Vietnamese at the U.S. Embassy gates, the last helicopters taking off from the Embassy roof. Could we soon see the same in Afghanistan?

On the current pace of events, we might. As the U.S. continues to withdraw its troops ahead of President Biden's Sept. 11 deadline, the Taliban is rapidly advancing around the country. An NBC dispatch Tuesday said their gains have been so rapid that even the jihadists are surprised. Some Taliban are slowing their march to make sure they don't give the Americans second thoughts.

The top U.S. commander in the country, the highly capable Gen. Austin Miller, told reporters in Kabul Tuesday that he's concerned about the rapid loss of territory to the Taliban. He said for now he has the means to aid the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, but that "what I don't want to do is speculate what that looks like in the future."

It won’t look like much once U.S. and allied forces depart. The Afghans are fighting bravely, but morale is falling as they anticipate the U.S. departure and potential fall of the government in Kabul. The Taliban is even advancing in the north, far from their home territory, and in districts surrounding Kabul.

Gen. Miller has little choice other than to repeat the White House line that “the way it must end for the Afghan people is something that revolves around a political solution.” He added: “I’ve also said that if you don’t reduce the violence, that political solution becomes more and more difficult.”

No kidding. The Taliban never negotiated seriously once former President Trump set a withdrawal date, and especially since Mr. Biden has confirmed the retreat with the ignominious choice of the 20th anniversary of Sept. 11 as the deadline. No one should be shocked if the worst happens.

RETURN TO TOP

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Strong, Craig W BG USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 5:45 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG KSARNG (USA); [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG TXARNG (USA); [redacted] CIV NG NG GC (USA)
Subject: Re: PA Update 29 June 2021 (UNCLASSIFIED)

[redacted],

Thanks for the update. Appreciate your oversight of any federal equities involved in the mission.

Best,

CWS

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 29, 2021, at 1:33 PM, [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil> wrote:
>
> CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED
>
> BG Strong.....a quick update on South Dakota's participation in the Texas Border mission. All support will be in a SAD status. South Dakota has apparently agreed not to seek reimbursement from Texas for this SAD response. An EMAC however is still be worked between South Dakota EOM and the state of Texas. Current plan is to send a Task Force of volunteers (50PAX with weapons) with 11 LMTVs to conduct surveillance missions along the Texas/Mexico border. It's my understanding that South Dakota's Task Force will be under the C2 of the Texas National Guard. I was told that Texas would be providing ammunition for the M4 and M9s. RSOI will commence on or about 6Jul21 with arrival in Texas on the 8th of July. South Dakota Army National Guard G3/G4 is working with their counterparts in Texas to answer a few RFIs, one of which is do we need to provide our own tactical vehicles. That's all I know of now. If anything changes I will provide an update.
>
> V/R
> [redacted]
>
> [redacted]
> COL, NG
> USPFO-SD
>
> Office [redacted]
> Cell: [redacted]
> Email: [redacted]@mail.mil
>
> Just because you can doesn't mean you should
>
>
> -----Original Message-----
> From: [redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
> Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 5:00 AM

> To: Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA) <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
> Cc: [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
> Subject: PA Update 29 June 2021
>
> GEN Hokanson,
>
> Today in the Department of Defense, June 29, 2021
>
> * Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on her schedule.
>
> * Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.
>
> * Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.
>
> * Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.
>
> * Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson will host a media roundtable focused on Cyber Shield 2021 at 1130 a.m. EDT
>
> * Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, commander, U.S. Cyber Command, provides the keynote address at 11 a.m. EDT, and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.
>
> * Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander, U.S. Africa Command, participates in a panel on European and U.S. military engagement in Africa at 10:45 a.m. EDT at the CSIS tenth annual EU Defense Washington Forum. Register at csis.org.
>
> * Acting Chief Information Officer John Sherman testifies on cybersecurity posture and DoD digital modernization strategy at 4 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies and Information Systems hearing on DoD information technology, cybersecurity and information assurance for FY2022, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.
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> 1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) - Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border - By Jonathan Ellis
>
> Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis. In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14442
>
> RELATED STORY :
>
> SD, TX, AZ: KELO Land (Regional) - Gov. Noem sending National Guard members to Texas Border - By Mitch Klein
>
> https://ngpa.us/14443
>

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> FULL STORY BELOW
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> 2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) - Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar - By Associated Press
>
> The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar. The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.
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> https://ngpa.us/14438
>
> RELATED STORY:
>
> NM: Air Force Magazine (National) - New Mexico RED HORSE Commander Dies at Al Udeid - By Brian W. Everstine
>
> https://ngpa.us/14440
>
>
> FULL STORY BELOW
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> 3. MS: WLBT (Regional) - Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson - By C.J. LeMaster
>
> With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage. ... With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.
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> https://ngpa.us/14444
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> FULL STORY BELOW
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> 4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) - The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina - By Zea Capistrano
>
> A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps. Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.
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> https://ngpa.us/14445
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> FULL STORY BELOW
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> 5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) - State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine - By Kate Sweigart
>
> On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine. Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.
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> https://ngpa.us/14446
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> FULL STORY BELOW
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> 6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) - PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard - By Staff Reports
>
> Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home. ... A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need.
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> https://ngpa.us/14434
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> FULL STORY BELOW
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> 7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) - National Guard remembers 2011 flood response - By Reporter
>
> The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.
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> https://ngpa.us/14435
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> FULL STORY BELOW
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> 8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) - Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service - By Abbie Shull
>
> While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard. ... Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.
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> https://ngpa.us/14441

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> FULL STORY BELOW
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> FULL STORIES:
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> 1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) - Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border - By Jonathan Ellis
>
> Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis.
>
> In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.
>
> "Tomorrow morning I'm officially announcing up to 50 National Guard troops to Texas to help secure our border," she said. "The Biden Administration has failed to keep America safe. We shouldn't be making our own communities vulnerable by sending police to fix Biden's border crisis."
>
> On June 10, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey sent a letter to other governors invoking the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a compact that allows states to get help from other states during a time of emergency. Abbott and Ducey are both Republicans.
>
> The letter warned other governors that while Texas and Arizona were "ground zero" for the crisis, other states would see spillover. It warned of increases in human trafficking and deadly drugs, including fentanyl.
>
> "Given the staggering number of violations now occurring in Texas and Arizona, additional manpower is needed from any state that can spare it," the letter said. "With your help, we can apprehend more of these perpetrators of state and federal crimes, before they can cause problems in your state."
>
> Besides law enforcement, the two states are searching for other law enforcement resources, including helicopters and drones.
>
> Once invoked, the compact affords out-of-state officers operating in Texas and Arizona with the same duties as domestic law enforcement personnel, including the power to make arrests.
>
> "Crucially," the letter said, "this will include the power to arrest migrants who illegally cross the border into our territory. Many of these crossings involved state-law crimes, such as criminal trespassing or smuggling of persons."
>
> Noem joins other Republican governors, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who have pledged dozens of additional law enforcement officers to help their counterparts in Texas and Arizona.
>
> Noem's Tweet did not specify which units the Guard soldiers would be drawn from.
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> https://ngpa.us/14442
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> 2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) - Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar - By Associated Press
>
> The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar.
>
> The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.
>
> The 55-year-old airman was providing support to military efforts against the Islamic State group of Iraq and Syria.
>
> Willis had been assigned as commander of the 210th Red Horse Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base.
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> https://ngpa.us/14438
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> 3. MS: WLBT (Regional) - Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson - By C.J. LeMaster
>
> With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage.
>
> When asked if the strategies already in place have had an impact, Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes shakes his head.
>
> "I don't see it working. But, you know, my suggestion has always been, let's get some sheriffs out here, where they see more police presence, or more law enforcement presence," Stokes said. "If that does not work, my suggestion then was to move toward the National Guard. Now I'm at that point now, because we can't keep waiting, cause people keep losing lives."
>
> With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.
>
> The most recent took place Monday morning, after a drive-by shooting led to 30-year-old Christopher Thomas losing control of his vehicle on Livingston Road.
>
> Thomas ended up smashing into a building, startling the owner, who had just arrived for the day.
>
> "I thought I had a break in. I look, I check my shop, I just, you know, no cars missing, no tubes missing. But the air conditioning wasn't working. So I went to the side of the building to see had anybody stole my air conditioner. Then I saw a car had jumped this ditch, came to Jackson Housing Authority and had landed on top of my AC unit and plowed inside of my building," said Ernest Stanton Sr., who owns Stanton Body Shop.
>
> Stanton saw firsthand Monday morning the violence that has gripped the Capital City for months on end.
>
> Thomas died shortly after crashing into the side of the structure.

>
> "Somebody's life is gone for nonsense, something that could have been worked out. And so if we don't find a solution as to how to work out differently than with others, they're gonna continue to happen like this," Stanton said. "I'm gonna fix the building, but I hate it for the young man. I hate it for the family. I've been here 25 years and they've been a good location and I don't regret being here. I love the area. But I hate the crime."
>
> Thomas' killing happened in Stokes' ward.
>
> Though Stokes and other council members already approved and appropriated half a million dollars to bring extra Hinds County deputies to Jackson months ago, it has yet to materialize because legal staff from the city, county and sheriff's department still haven't hammered out an agreement.
>
> "We cannot sit back, sit idly by and watch people keep dying in Jackson, Mississippi," Stokes said.
>
> The longtime councilman said the resolution to bring the National Guard will be on Tuesday's council meeting, but he's unsure how the vote will go.
>
> Tuesday's council meeting will be the first with newly-elected councilmembers Vernon Hartley and Brian Grizzell.
>
> When asked what the turning point would have to be for the city and police department to get tougher on crime, Stokes said the "right people" haven't been hurt yet.
>
> "As soon as the right people get hurt, all that will change. Right now, the majority of people getting hurt are poor and are Black. And it seems that no one cares but Kenny Stokes," he said. "You let the wrong person, somebody with some influence, get robbed or hurt, then all the money we put for jail space, all the money we put for sheriffs [deputies], that would be happening instantaneously."
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> https://ngpa.us/14444
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> 4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) - The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina - By Zea Capistrano
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> A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps.
>
> Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.
>
> "But I've been a full-time chaplain since 2018," Boling told The Manila Bulletin in a virtual interview on Monday, June 28.
>
> Boling was promoted to the rank of colonel in March this year. Her promotion ceremony was held on May 11 - which coincided with her 57th birthday.
>
> "As a colonel, I'm the first Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) female colonel in the Hawaii Air National Guard. As a colonel, I'm also the first AAPI colonel chaplain for the US Air Force," Boling shared.
>

> Before 2018, while serving as a part-time chaplain, Boling also had a full-time job as a mental health supervisor for one of the biggest nonprofit agencies in Hawaii. This year, she will be relocating to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland for a four-year stat tour overseeing the welfare of 108,100 Guardsmen.
>
> Becoming a chaplain
>
> Boling earned her degree in customs administration at the Holy Cross of Davao College here in Davao City. While doing her internship with the Bureau of Customs in Cagayan de Oro City, Boling was also active in the church. This eventually led her to pursue vocational ministry.
>
> She finished her Master of Divinity at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City. She specialized in pastoral care and counseling.
>
> "To get that degree, I had to do an internship as a hospital chaplain," Boling said. Later on, she was accepted at the Makati Medical Center as a chaplain for her internship and in 1991, she applied and got accepted as a hospital chaplain in Hawaii.
>
> "My mind has always been for ministry, what I can do for the world, what I can do for other people."
>
> Turning points
>
> Boling said she never had any idea of military chaplaincy.
>
> "Wala gyud military sa among pamilya. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the PNP but that was it (There was no military member in our family. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the Philippine National Police, but that was it)," she said.
>
> Boling later met her husband, Jeff, who at that time was on active duty in the Air Force in Hawaii. Her husband invited her to serve as chaplain for the military, but Boling was hesitant.
>
> "I was not really thrilled about it because I really thought that military chaplains would carry guns just like any military, and I'm not big on guns," she said.
>
> Her Sunday school teacher, who was also the head of the chaplain at the wing, also invited her to become a military chaplain.
>
> But at that time, Boling said, she was still unsure since their only child, was only about two years old. "I really didn't want to have two militaries in the family," she said.
>
> However, it was the 9-11 bombing in 2001 which made her decide to enter the military.
>
> "Throughout that day I was shaking, and then I kept following the story and it really broke my heart. I was like these Airmen, these service members need someone to comfort them, to provide counseling, someone to pray with them," she said.
>
> After the incident, Boling's resolve to join the Guard became stronger. In April 2002, Boling swore in as first lieutenant.
>
> Boling said her deployment to Zamboanga in 2008 also paved the way for her to take on the full-time job as a military chaplain.
>

> "In 2008, I was sent to Zamboanga, I was there for about five or six months for the Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines through the Joint Special Operations Task Force. While there, apparently, I did an awesome job that the Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) here in Hawaii offered me a full-time job," she recalled.
>
> "I became their command chaplain, full time, for almost four years. From there, I had more opportunities to be on order" she said.
>
> Growing up in Mati City
>
> Boling grew up in Mati City as a child and fondly recalled treating her friends in the restaurant which their family owned. Boling's family were also active church members. She finished elementary at the Mati Central Elementary School.
>
> Before the pandemic hit, Boling was still able to visit her family in Mati City in February last year.
>
> "Prior to COVID, I usually go home once a year. I'm hoping to go back home before we went to D.C. but I don't think that's ever gonna happen because of COVID," she said.
>
> Currently, Boling said her focus now is to focus on her goal of doing what is best for the interest of the Corps.
>
> "How can I help the Airmen, how can I help the wing. We call it 54/90/108,100. I am responsible for 50 states and four territories, I am responsible for 90 wings, and the 108,100 - the guard members that I am responsible for," she said.
>
> "That's how big my responsibility is, so I really need God on my side," Boling added.
>
> Boling also had this to say to her fellow women: "Be the best version of you."
>
> "Don't worry about things that you have no control over. What is it that you are passionate about, follow that - which means, do your homework and be the best you can be at that job," she added.
>
> "Ako lang mag-isa and (I am the only one) Leah Botona Boling. Nobody else can be Leah Botona Boling. So, I need to be the best version of myself, otherwise, I will miss the opportunity of being who I am," she said.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14445
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> 5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) - State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine - By Kate Sweigart
>
> On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine.
>
> Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.
>
> "All of our neighboring states are further along in the vaccination of their eligible population," Phillips-Hill said. "The administration's failed unilateral rollout of the vaccine has further demonstrated that its go-it-alone approach has not

worked. The unanimous support of this legislation shows people on both sides of the aisle are frustrated and seeking to be part of the solution."
>
> According to the state Senate, the National Guard will operate under the Pa. Department of Health and Human Services to collect, secure, and transport doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. If requested, members who have the necessary training would also be able to administer the vaccine, as well.
>
> "The bill could help improve Pennsylvania's troubled roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine," the state Senate said in a release.
>
> Pennsylvania currently ranks 46th in the nation in terms of the percentage of distributed vaccines that have been administered.
>
> House Bill 326 would also allow for the creation of mass vaccination sites throughout Pennsylvania.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14446
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> 6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) - PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard - By Staff Reports
>
> Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home.
>
> "The Idaho National Guard's support has been integral in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and aiding PHD in the reduction of the loss of life and the sustainment of our community's health," said Don Duffy, Health Services Administrator for PHD. "They have supported our COVID-19 response operations in the five northern counties in a variety of initiatives. We truly could not have done this without their support and we will miss having them as part of our team."
>
> A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need. Specifically, the IDNG assisted with the following:
>
> * IDNG directly supported the COVID-19 vaccine operations and provided numerous operational functions such as: patient intake, quality control, vaccine loading, traffic control, and logistical support. Operations have been conducted 6 days a week resulting in over 39,000 vaccinations administered during their time in the community. Additionally, the Guard worked in conjunction with Panhandle Health District, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and numerous other agencies to support an international vaccination clinic for members of the Lower Kootenay Band of Canada at the US-Canadian border.
>
> * Soldiers coordinated with local partners to store, process, and deliver over 110,000 vaccinations in the five northern counties.
>
> * Numerous service members served at PHD's COVID-19 call center. They worked closely with Medical Reserve Corps and PHD staff to provide the community with a direct line of support to answer questions and address concerns.
>
> * The remainder of the assigned personnel supported PHD by providing operational planning, logistics planning and support, and National Guard administration.

>
> Due to the decrease in demand and the reduction in available staffing, PHD will be closing the mass vaccine clinics at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene and Rathdrum and the University of Idaho Agriculture Center in Sandpoint effective July 8. Anyone who would like to receive a COVID-19 vaccine can schedule an appointment at any of our office locations in Hayden, Sandpoint, St. Maries, Bonners Ferry, and Kellogg.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14434
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>
> 7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) - National Guard remembers 2011 flood response - By Reporter
>
> The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.
>
> The North Dakota National Guard's 2011 flood response consisted of 67,264 personnel workdays, which surpassed the 54,341 recorded during the 2009 flood response. This record was broken November 2020 when the Guard's COVID-19 pandemic response surpassed that number, and is currently at 116,427 personnel days worked.
>
> "The remarkable support provided by the dedicated men and women of the North Dakota National Guard during the 2011 flood - as well as in 2009 and 2010 - was a critical component of the massive efforts to protect lives and property in Minot, Bismarck and beyond," said Gov. Doug Burgum, commander-in-chief of the North Dakota National Guard. "Whether it's flooding, pandemic or other disaster response, we can rely on our National Guard to be Always ready, Always there."
>
> "On this 10th anniversary of the historic flood that impacted Minot and surrounding communities, we remember the 4,100 homes that flooded, the more than 11,000 residents who were displaced and the hundreds of millions of dollars in damages sustained," Burgum continued. "And we honor the courage and resiliency of the residents, National Guard members, volunteers and leaders at the local, state and federal levels who fought the flood, picked up the pieces and worked together to secure permanent flood protection, including the more than $400 million committed by the State of North Dakota to the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection and $870 million for the Fargo-Moorhead Area Diversion projects."
>
> Eastern North Dakota missions
>
> Flood response in 2011 for the North Dakota National Guard came in two phases. Phase one began in eastern North Dakota and lasted about 32 days. It saw more than 600 citizen-soldiers and -airmen on duty in a single day. North Dakota Guardsmen assisted communities from Cass County, up through the Red River Valley, and west to Ward County and the Valley City and Lisbon areas.
>
> On April 5, 2011, Guard soldiers and airmen began assisting communities along the Red River, which included Pembina, Harwood, Drayton, Kindred, Fargo, north to Grand Forks and others. Within weeks, the National Guard support shifted attention to the Valley City area, where the local community reinforced levees, bracing for a second crest by the Sheyenne River. A reported 400,000 sandbags were transported by contractors and Guard members from Fargo to support this mission. At the end of the spring 2011 flood mission, nearly 9,800 individual personnel days were expended on flood suppression operations.
>

> "Flood fighting missions like those undertaken in 2011 are examples of how our great soldiers and airmen serve our communities when the need arises," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, N.D. adjutant general. "We are always appreciative of the tremendous support shown by our employers and families during state active duty and overseas deployments. This unyielding support allows us to concentrate on our jobs and successfully complete our missions at home and abroad."
>
> Central North Dakota missions
>
> Phase two of flood support began on May 23, 2011, with the North Dakota National Guard assuming missions in Ward County, with 30 Guardsmen conducting levee patrols in Minot and Burlington. The following week, response surged to nearly 200 soldiers and airmen, who provided presence patrols in evacuated neighborhoods, evacuation teams, levee patrols and construction, traffic control points, as well as quick reaction force teams ready to respond immediately to any flood-related requests.
>
> Minot-area flood support peaked at over 575 North Dakota National Guard personnel. As the situation stabilized, the National Guard drew down to 146 personnel by June 20, but severe flood conditions soon returned. As the waters of the Souris River Basin rose again, hundreds of additional Guard members returned to duty. On June 22, 2011, warning sirens in Minot sounded as water topped levees. Guard support grew to 870 soldiers and airmen by the end of June.
>
> In Minot, the Souris River, also known as the Mouse, crested on June 26 at 1,561.7 feet, exceeding the record crest set in 1881 by 3.7 feet.
>
> In Burleigh County, specifically in the Bismarck and Mandan areas, similar flood conditions were seen along the Missouri River when the upstream Garrison Dam, 75 miles to the north, released record volumes of water. At its peak, 150,000 cubic feet per second of water passed through the dam, surpassing the previous record release of 65,200 cubic feet per second in 1975. The Missouri River crested on July 1, 2011, at 19.25 feet. This was the highest level since Garrison Dam was built. The river stayed at flood stage until Aug. 18, 2011.
>
> Guard missions in this area began a day after Ward County operations, with the establishment of traffic control points on May 24, 2011. Missions included filling, transporting and distributing sandbags, aviation support, levee patrol and establishment of quick reaction force teams with heavy equipment for assisting with water breaches. The Guard also ran civil-military assistance teams who went from house-to-house in flood-prone areas to provide literature on properly constructing flood protection.
>
> Other National Guard support missions during the 2011 flood support included ambulance teams, erecting temporary levees with Hesco barriers and TrapBags, purifying and distributing potable water, transport of flood-fighting supplies, operating Zodiac raft boats and running borrow pits to provide material for dike construction.
>
> The North Dakota National Guard's flood support missions ended on July 26, 2011.
> By the Numbers - 2011 Flood Response:
> (For the Red, Sheyenne, Souris and Missouri rivers) - 3,047 individual Guard soldiers and airmen on flood response duty for at least one day.
> - 114 calendar days of North Dakota National Guard on flood duty.
> - 67,264 personnel work days on flood response duty.
> - 169 aviation missions flown by North Dakota National Guard helicopters.
>
> https://ngpa.us/14435
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> 8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) - Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service - By Abbie Shull
>
> While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard.
>
> "I didn't really have the intent to win and go on to compete for Miss Washington. I just thought it would be a fun experience," Hoyt said. "When I ended up winning, I didn't know how I would do this and serve in the guard. COVID hit and I was able to go to basic training and advanced individual training. It gave me time to manage everything."
>
> Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.
>
> Hoyt says she never imagined she would become a soldier, but serving in the National Guard has made it easier for her to pay for school. Hoyt participated in Washington's Running Start program which means she graduated from South Kitsap High School with both her high school diploma and an associate of arts degree from Olympic College in Bremerton.
>
> This fall, Hoyt will start classes at Washington State University where she's pursuing a degree in accounting while enrolled as part of the reserve officer training corps.
>
> "I stumbled my way into a recruiter's office and thought, 'Well, that sounds cool,'" Hoyt said. "I didn't know you could serve while going to school. I thought all military was active-duty."
>
> Hoyt is the first member of her family to serve in the military and says she was excited by the challenge. Now, she's planning a future as an officer in the Army.
>
> "I'm excited by the prospect of being part of something bigger than myself," Hoyt said. "How long I want to stay in, I can't stay. If I like it, I'll continue to make it a part of my career."
>
> On July 2 and 3, Hoyt will compete to serve as Miss Washington at the Little Creek Hotel and Casino in Shelton. She said there is more to the pageant world than most people think.
>
> To win the Miss Pierce County title, Hoyt went through a private interview in addition to the live pageant that includes an evening-wear presentation, an on-stage question and showcasing a talent.
>
> Hoyt has been competing in pageants since she was 12 years old. Over the years, her talent portion has evolved from playing the violin to acting and dramatic interpretation. Hoyt's talent for the Miss Washington pageant is a dramatic interpretation of "Our War" from "Visions of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War."
>
> "They're looking for depth in a title-holder. Right now our Miss Washington has just graduated from Brigham Young University, and she's going on to get her master's," Hoyt said. "Being a title holder isn't what you'd expect from your average soldier, either, so I'm excited to bring that diversity to the competition."
>
> As for her fellow soldiers, Hoyt said, there is a bit of healthy teasing but they're very supportive.
>
> "Other soldiers in the guard have full-time jobs and I have this," Hoyt said. "They're always like, 'OK, go wear your crown and come back tomorrow in your uniform.'"
>
> If crowned Miss Washington, Hoyt will win over $40,000 in scholarship money and go on to compete in the Miss USA pageant.

>
> https://ngpa.us/14441
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>
> _____
>
>
> Very respectfully,
>
> [redacted]
> Media Operations Branch
> National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
> 111 S. George Mason Dr.
> Arlington, VA 22204
> Mobile: [redacted]
> Press Desk: [redacted]
> [redacted]@mail.mil
>
>
>
> CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED
> <PA Update 29 June 2021.pdf>
> <Defense Morning Clips 29 June 2021.pdf>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 4:23 PM
To: NG SD SDARNG List DISTRIBUTION A
Subject: Media/Public Queries on deployment of SDNG troops to Texas

ALCON

Today, Gov. Noem's announcement on the deployment of SDNG troops to support the State of Texas to help secure the border has generated a number of media and public queries. If you receive calls from the news media or members of the public concerning this announcement, please refer them to the Public Affairs Office for assistance.

Thank you

Lt. Col. [redacted]

Director of Public Affairs

South Dakota National Guard

e-m: [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil>

pho: [redacted]

cel: [redacted]

sd.ng.mil

www.facebook.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard <http://www.facebook.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard>

twitter.com/SD_Guard

www.instagram.com/sdnationalguard <http://www.instagram.com/sdnationalguard>

www.flickr.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard <http://www.flickr.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 4:17 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY (USA)
Subject: Fwd: [Non-DoD Source] Answers on Certain National Guard Deployment Questions

For your eyes only.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted]@state.sd.us>
Date: June 29, 2021 at 3:12:15 PM MDT
To: [redacted]>, "[redacted]@sdlegislature.gov>, [redacted]@gmail.com, [redacted]@yahoo.com>, "[redacted]@sdlegislature.gov>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Answers on Certain National Guard Deployment Questions

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Leadership –

Since the Governor's announcement that SD National Guard troops will be activated and deployed to Texas to support border-related law enforcement activity there, we've had several questions come up from legislators. I thought it would be helpful to share the following with you for your awareness:

First, the activation will be done as a State active duty activation. The Governor's authority for such a State activation is found in SDCL 33-9-1 < Caution-https://sdlegislature.gov/Statutes/Codified_Laws/2055496 > .

Second, the costs associated with this initial deployment will be paid through a private donor, Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation. The foundation has pledged $1 million to support South Dakota's efforts, and this money was already received today by the State. The Governor has authority under SDCL 5-24-12 < Caution-https://sdlegislature.gov/Statutes/Codified_Laws/2034753 > to accept a donation, including those subject to conditions, if she determines doing so is in the best interest of the State. The Governor has additional authority to accept donated funds for emergency management under SDCL 34-48A-36 < Caution-https://sdlegislature.gov/Statutes/Codified_Laws/2057960 > . In this instance the deployment to Texas is being made following a request from Texas under the Emergency Management Assistance Company ("EMAC"). South Dakota is a member of the Compact, which is regularly used by many states to request sister-state assistance during emergencies or disasters.

I'm sure there will be additional questions that come up on this from your caucus members and constituents. Feel free to reach out to me at any time.

Regards,

Chief of Staff – South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem

500 East Capitol Avenue

Pierre, SD 57501

For non-official topics, please email me @gmail.com < Caution-mailto @gmail.com > .

Hi, I'm Governor Kristi Noem. Today, I'm announcing that South Dakota is sending 50 National Guard troops to our southern border to help fight the border crisis. This crisis is a matter of national security. And it's getting worse because of the Biden Administration's inaction.

I want to say thank you to the sacrifice of these guardsmen and their families. I appreciate your willingness to serve. And our nation values you more than you know.

The Biden Administration has failed to secure the border from illegal entry. As a result, drugs are pouring over our border, and sex trafficking is through the roof. If President Biden won't secure the border, we will. South Dakota, Texas, and others are stepping in to address this national security crisis.

America is the greatest country in the world. I understand why people want to come here and join us. But they have to follow the legal process to enter our country.

Thank you for listening. God Bless South Dakota and God Bless America.

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 4:15 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] SDNG Video Script

No issues from this end.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 29, 2021, at 4:13 PM, [redacted]@state.sd.us> wrote:

See attached

<Border video script.docx>

Resource Request

2091-RR-10521

State Mission TN #:	06-28-2021-001	EM Software TN #:	
Requesting Agency:	Texas Military Department	EMAC TN #:	2091-RR-10521

Resource Request

Mission Type/Source:	National Guard	Type/Status	State Active Duty
Mission Description:	Support listening and observation posts located along the Texas border region with Mexico. Specific locations will be determined by Texas Military Department point of contact in conjunction with the military border task force.		
Resource Description:	Up to 50 National Guard Personnel. See below equipment requirements for specific list of requirements. This support will be at no cost to the State of Texas.		
NIMS Type:			
Job Position Qualifications:			
Equipment Requirements	11x up-armored HMMWVs, 1x Wrecker, 1x Contact Truck, 5x CLS bags, 5x SINCGARS radios, 5x PAS-13 (Thermal optics), 10x PVS-14s (NVGs), 5x M22 binoculars, 5x Camo Nets, 1ea M4 Carbine, Each Soldier will bring at a minimum: 2 sets ACU/OCP, 1ea Patrol Cap, 2ea Boots, 1ea Kevlar/ACH helmet, 1ea IBA/IOTV, 3x M4 Magazine Pouches, 3x M17 Magazine Pouches, 1ea IFAK, 1ea Water Source, 1ea Eye Protection (clear and tinted lenses) 1ea Hearing Protection 1ea Gloves		

Deployment Dates (Including Travel Days)

Deployment Date	7/6/2021	Demobilization Date:	8/31/2021
Duty Length	57		

Deployment Details

Work Location / Facilities	Various location along the Texas/Mexico Border reg

Location / Facility Name			
Address 1			
Address 2			
City		Zip Code	
Working Conditions	Normal - Infrastructure & Support services operational		
Comments:			
Living Conditions	Normal - All amenities available		
Comments:			
Logistics Comments	Lodging arrangement will be coordinated by contacting Major [redacted] at [redacted]@mail.mil or by phone at		

Identify Health & Safety Concerns

	No Safety or Health Concerns have been Identified
	Immunizations or Vaccinations are suggested to deploy
	Environmental Hazards Exist
X	Personal Protection Equipment Needed
Safety Concerns / Remarks	High temperatures and heat indices are common in Texas counties along the Texas/Maxico border region.

Requesting State Resource Coordination Contact

First Name	[redacted]	Last Name	[redacted]
Title	Major	Agency	Texas Military Department
Phone 1	[redacted]	Mobile	
Email 1		Email 2	

Staging Area and Point of Contact

POC First Name	TMD POC will determine reporting location in conjunction with the military border Task Force	Last Name	
Phone 1		Phone 2	
Location/Facility Name			
Address 1			
Address 2			
City		Zip Code	

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:32 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: FW: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC request
Attachments: 2091-RR-10521.pdf

Brig Gen Edwin A. VanDerWolde

Director, Joint Staff, SDNG

2823 W. Main Street

Rapid City, SD 57702

Office Phone: 605-737-6010

Cell Phone: 605-321-7425

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:54 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] MAJ USARMY NG SDANG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] CPT USARMY (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: FW: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC request

EMAC from TX

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us <mailto [redacted]@state.sd.us> >
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:45 PM
To: NG SD SDARNG List J3 JOC <ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil <mailto:ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil> >
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC request

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

_____

Hello,

Attached is the EMAC request from Texas.

Thank you,

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MXKDRS8 >

Confidentiality Notice: The information contained in this email is confidential or privileged material and is intended only for use by the individual or entity to which it was addressed. Use or distribution of information contained in this email by any other individual or entity not intended to receive this is strictly prohibited.

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:51 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC request

Received, thank you

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:45 PM
To: NG SD SDARNG List J3 JOC <ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] EMAC request

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Hello,

Attached is the EMAC request from Texas.

Thank you,

[redacted]

Preparedness Team Leader

SD Dept. of Public Safety | Office of Emergency Management

[redacted]

Click here to complete a two question customer experience survey < Caution-
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MXKDRS8 >

Confidentiality Notice: The information contained in this email is confidential or privileged material and is intended only for use by the individual or entity to which it was addressed. Use or distribution of information contained in this email by any other individual or entity not intended to receive this is strictly prohibited.

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:32 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: SWB Mission

Will do, Sir.

Thank you. [redacted]

[redacted]
Deputy Secretary
Department of the Military
[redacted]

-----Original Message-----
From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:30 PM
To: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] <[redacted]@state.sd.us>; [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: FW: [EXT] SWB Mission

Forward all media inquiries to [redacted].

Hold tight on the others until we see what [redacted] and [redacted] come up with.

Jeffrey P. Marlette
Major General, SDNG
The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700
Cell: (605) 484-7777

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:55 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] <[redacted]@state.sd.us>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: SWB Mission

I can field media inquiries.

It is my understanding that [redacted] and [redacted] are working on an email to LRC to help answer legislators' questions.

-----Original Message-----
From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:52 PM
To: [redacted]@state.sd.us>; [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Subject: [EXT] SWB Mission

We are starting to receive inquiries from legislators, media and the public on the SWB mission. Most center around the private donation.

Who is best prepared to field these questions?

Jeff

Jeffrey P. Marlette
Major General, SDNG
The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700
Cell: (605) 484-7777

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:22 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: TX Border Mission

Thanks [redacted], we are looking at a few options here. Will keep you in the loop.

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:00 PM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: TX Border Mission

[redacted] just told me flying is also an option and sounds like maybe cheaper option to get the soldiers there. Seems like a much nicer way of getting there. I also understand that comes with challenges of paying for parking at the airport if they can't be dropped off and then also how do they get from the airport in TX to their Humvees.

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:45 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@state.sd.us>; [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Cc: [redacted] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted]@state.sd.us>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: [EXT] TX Border Mission

Good morning,

Starting an email string so we can track information each of us is working on regarding NG Support to TX.

The number of personnel supporting is in flux and will be depending on information still coming in from TX and what we actually send for equipment and how we travel, both personnel and equipment.

I know [redacted] and [redacted] talked this morning and we had a meeting here at Camp Rapid to de-conflict some information. Clarification on a few items still need to happen.

First item is whether or not to send the FLA's (the Army Field Litter Ambulances) and medics. It's either both, just medics, or neither. This will affect the roster and cost for transport of FLA's, maintenance, and daily rate in TX. Information we received from you is that TX only wanted the 11 HUMMV's. IT appears TX has medical contacts, sick call and those need health care at local facilities set up. COL [redacted] will touch base with TX on what we need for medical support.

Second, after our meeting here, we feel the best course of action for getting, at a minimum 11 HUMMV's and a quadcon (for equipment) to TX, would be a commercial line haul. Several advantages to this course of action is not needing our additional soldiers for sate active duty, needing lodging for these soldiers while in transport (and in Huron while

loading), possibility of trucks breaking down along the way to TX, paying for fuel for the semi-trucks to TX, and needing the support personnel to follow. If OEM is willing to go this route, SDNG will get specs for equipment to work the haul contract, or can facilitate the estimate for contract to OEM.

Third, maintenance for our vehicles in TX. We talked about sending our maintenance soldiers and contact trucks for breakdowns. There may be a process in place in TX to complete maintenance. COL [redacted] verifying what is really needed. [redacted] discussion with TX for EMAC did not indicate we needed the maintenance soldiers and contact trucks, but SD will have to pay for parts needed in repairs.

Verify lodging in TX. Motel name, location, is TX paying or SD OEM contracting? [redacted] working this.

Charter busses. With the unavailability of airlift from TX, request two charter busses for 48 pax (number is as of writing this email). If possible, the charter busses have trailers behind to haul personal gear for soldiers. These trailers will replace the quadcon mentioned above.

OEM is provided fuel cards, 1 ea per vehicle. Can the fuel cards be used for maintenance items on the vehicle (oil, flat tires, headlights etc). What is the limit of the use of fuel cards or will there be a separate card for maintenance?

3 commercial flights on 7 July for LNO, supply SGT, (both 1 way) and myself (round trip couple days only for myself) to coordinate incoming soldiers and equipment.

JAG brief. COL [redacted] verifying SD brief.

Our tentative timeline is:

06 July 1200: soldiers report to Armory in Huron
Begin RSOI, complete inventories, admin paperwork, intel brief, individual equipment prep, etc
07 July: Load of equipment and prep to roll out
07 July: 3 pax commercial flight to TX to coordinate incoming SD pax and equipment
08 July: Personnel leave first thing in the morning via bus

What I am tracking as OEM working on:

Lodging in Huron - understood this is complete (block of rooms at Crossroads)
2 Charter buses
EMAC paperwork with TX
Determine when TX will be able to accept our soldiers Lodging in TX

What SDNG needs to get OEM:

Updated personnel roster
Updated cost estimate for personnel and equipment

[redacted], Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [redacted]
DSN [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:21 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

Roger sir, will do.

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:08 PM
To: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

We the SDNG are going on SAD at the order of the Governor. We have no involvement with the donation. It will go to the State of SD and how they do or don't get it to a position to pay for this is not our doing or concern. You should keep referring all of these inquiries to [redacted].

I have personally notified the Chief of NGB and the Director of the ARNG on the fact that a donation is involved. No issues were raised by them at that time.

Just don't get in a hurry to answer for a couple of hours. Let's let the Governor's team develop their responses format.

Jeffrey P. Marlette

Major General, SDNG

The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700

Cell: (605) 484-7777

From: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil
<mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:04 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil
<mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Subject: FW: [Non-DoD Source] Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

Sir

Just wanted to give you a quick update on the barrage of media calls I've been getting regarding the governors deployment announcement and the use of a private donation to fund the request. Which of course we expected.

Most calls are state media and I've been deferring a lot of the donation questions to [redacted] office. However a few are from national level media such as the Washington Post and Military.com. They are asking a lot of: has this happened before, is this typical from private organizations/people, is this legal, etc.

NGB Press Desk is also starting to field calls regarding questions of this nature. I've provided them the background info about the donation and the press release from the governor's office. – Just wanted you to be aware of the visibility at NGB.

From: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 8:58 AM
To: Jeffrey P BG USARMY Marlette (USA) (jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>)
<jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil <mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG [redacted] (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil>)
< [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Subject: FW: [Non-DoD Source] Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

Sir – FYSA

[redacted] just published the press release on the border mission. I'm sure you saw from [redacted] news articles this morning that the Governor did Tweet last night about her intent to deploy up to 50 troops for the mission.

From: Governor's Office PIO List <GOVPIOLIST@LISTSERV.SD.GOV <mailto:GOVPIOLIST@LISTSERV.SD.GOV> > On Behalf Of [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 8:21 AM
To: GOVPIOLIST@LISTSERV.SD.GOV <mailto:GOVPIOLIST@LISTSERV.SD.GOV>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

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For Immediate Release

June 29, 2021

Contact [redacted]

Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem announced that up to fifty South Dakota National Guard troops are being deployed to Texas to help the secure the border between the United States and Mexico. This is in response to Texas Governor Greg Abbott's request for help to respond to ongoing violations of state and federal law by illegal aliens crossing the unsecured border.

"The Biden Administration has failed in the most basic duty of the federal government: keeping the American people safe," said Governor Kristi Noem. "The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide. We should not be making our own communities less safe by sending our police or Highway Patrol to fix a long-term problem President Biden's Administration seems unable or unwilling to solve. My message to Texas is this: help is on the way."

The initial deployment to the border will last for between 30 and 60 days. South Dakota Adjutant General Jeff Marlette and the South Dakota Department of the Military are working with their counterparts in Texas to finalize the details of this mission. The deployment will be paid for by a private donation.

For operational security reasons, specific names of units, number of members, and mission specifics will not be released.

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Access the GOVPIOLIST Home Page and Archives < Caution-http://listserv.sd.gov/scripts/wa.exe?A0=GOVPIOLIST >

Unsubscribe from the GOVPIOLIST List < Caution-http://listserv.sd.gov/scripts/wa.exe?TICKET=NzM4MDAwIGFudGhvbnkuYS5kZWlzcy5taWxATUFJTC5NSUwgR09WUElPTElTVB9Y1NGpbiAA&c=SIGNOFF >

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:46 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: deployment calls

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Sounds good.

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:44 PM
To: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Subject: RE: [EXT] deployment calls

Just collect them for right now. We will talk later this afternoon. We don't have to immediately respond to them.

Jeffrey P. Marlette

Major General, SDNG

The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700

Cell: (605) 484-7777

From: [redacted] @state.sd.us < Caution-mailto [redacted] @state.sd.us > >
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:50 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil < Caution-mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil > >
Cc: [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil < Caution-mailto [redacted] @mail.mil > >
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] deployment calls

Sir,

Just rec'd a call from [redacted] from the AGs office. She rec'd a call from a [redacted]. Her question to [redacted] was how can we use a private donations to pay for the deployment. As these calls come in, how do you want me to handle. Thank you. [redacted]

[redacted]

Deputy Secretary

Department of the Military

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:00 PM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: TX Border Mission

[redacted] just told me flying is also an option and sounds like maybe cheaper option to get the soldiers there. Seems like a much nicer way of getting there. I also understand that comes with challenges of paying for parking at the airport if they can't be dropped off and then also how do they get from the airport in TX to their Humvees.

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:45 PM
To: [redacted]@state.sd.us>; [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Cc: [redacted] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted]@state.sd.us>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
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Verify lodging in TX. Motel name, location, is TX paying or SD OEM contracting? [redacted] working this.

Charter busses. With the unavailability of airlift from TX, request two charter busses for 48 pax (number is as of writing this email). If possible, the charter busses have trailers behind to haul personal gear for soldiers. These trailers will replace the quadcon mentioned above.

OEM is provided fuel cards, 1 ea per vehicle. Can the fuel cards be used for maintenance items on the vehicle (oil, flat tires, headlights etc). What is the limit of the use of fuel cards or will there be a separate card for maintenance?

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Our tentative timeline is:

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2 Charter buses
EMAC paperwork with TX
Determine when TX will be able to accept our soldiers Lodging in TX

What SDNG needs to get OEM:

Updated personnel roster
Updated cost estimate for personnel and equipment

[redacted], Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [redacted]
DSN: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:24 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA); [redacted] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted]; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] RE: TX Border Mission

My contact info:
Cell [redacted] work
Cell [redacted] personal.

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 29, 2021, at 1:16 PM, [redacted]@state.sd.us> wrote:
>
> I trust your judgement from your planning meetings that the commercial line hauler is the best option.
>
> I also trust your judgement on what you need for getting the soldiers and their gear to Texas with the buses and trailers.
>
> -----Original Message-----
> From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
> Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:45 PM
> To: [redacted]@state.sd.us>; [redacted]@state.sd.us>
> Cc: [redacted] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] <[redacted]@state.sd.us>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
> Subject: [EXT] TX Border Mission
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> Good morning,
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> First item is whether or not to send the FLA's (the Army Field Litter Ambulances) and medics. It's either both, just medics, or neither. This will affect the roster and cost for transport of FLA's, maintenance, and daily rate in TX. Information we received from you is that TX only wanted the 11 HUMMV's. IT appears TX has medical contacts, sick call

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>
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>
> Updated personnel roster
> Updated cost estimate for personnel and equipment
>
>
> [redacted], Lt Col, SDANG

> Director of Military Support
> Deputy J3/7
> South Dakota National Guard
> Office: [redacted]
> DSN: [redacted]
> Cell: [redacted]
> Email: [redacted]@mail.mil
>
>

LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:09 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Cc: Jensen, Jon A LTG USARMY NG NGB ARNG (USA)
Subject: Re: SDNG TX Support

Thank you Jeff!

From: "Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 9:01:06 AM
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil <mailto:daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil> >
Cc: "Jensen, Jon A LTG USARMY NG NGB ARNG (USA)" <jon.a.jensen.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jon.a.jensen.mil@mail.mil> >
Subject: SDNG TX Support

Good Morning Sir,

As a quick follow up to the below article. We will bring on 50 soldiers on 6 July. They will in process, gear up, and depart for TX on 9 July. Our intent is for them to do 30 days on the ground. Decision on follow on rotations will be made down the road. Naturally, we are working closely with MG Norris and her team. We are very comfortable with the mission and life support they have in place.

One very interesting piece of this is that all States are paying their own costs. The State of SD received a $1 Million private donation to help support this effort. We will be on SAD through an EMAC with TX. The donation will roll into the State and will be transparent to us.

Please let me know if you have any questions questions. We will start reporting these soldiers up, once they come on duty.

Jeff

SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis. In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

https://ngpa.us/14442

Sent from my iPhone

Copy__of___copies
SD-JFHQ
Rapid City, SD
241700TJUN21
21-07

OPERATION ORDER 21-08 (Texas Response)

(U) Reference:

a) (U) South Dakota National Guard All Hazard Plan.

b) (U) Texas Governor State of Emergency Declaration

(U) Time Zone Used Throughout the OPORD: TANGO

(U) Task Organization:
SD-JFHQ
JFHQ
109th Regional Support Group (RSG)
196th Maneuver Enhanced Brigade (MEB)
196th Regional Training Institute (RTI)

1. (U) Situation. The Governor of Texas has issued a proclamation certifying that the ongoing surge of individuals unlawfully crossing the Texas-Mexico border poses an ongoing and imminent threat of widespread and severe damage, injury, and loss of life and property, including property damage, property crime, human trafficking, violent crime, threats to public health, and a violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, in certain Texas counties and for all state agencies affected by this emergency declaration. South Dakota Governor, Kristi Noem, has ordered the South Dakota Department of Military to begin planning for a response force consisting of South Dakota National Guard personnel to respond and assist Texas State Agencies in a State Active Duty (SAD) status as needed.

2. (U) Mission. On order, 153rd EN BN will establish Task Force Rushmore to alert, mobilize, deploy, and assist the State of Texas in response to the increasing immigrant population crossing the Texas Border NLT 06000JUL21.

3. (U) Execution.

a. (U) Commander's Intent. TF Rushmore Soldiers will report to their designated armories, begin abbreviated mobilization, draw appropriate equipment, move to designated consolidation facility (Huron Armory) to complete final mobilization requirements and deploy to Texas to execute mission on or about the 10 JUL 21.

b. (U) Concept of Operations. Task Force Rushmore will deploy volunteers in a State Active Duty status. Soldiers will complete abbreviated mobilization tasks to include weapon familiarization on required response weapons. Once complete, Task Force Rushmore will

conduct a ground movement to a specified location in Texas and conduct RSOI operations and begin the mission assignment.

End State: SDARNG provides Soldiers and resources to support the State of Texas' emergency declaration and safely return to home station without incident to refit and prepare for follow on missions.

c. (U) Tasks to Subordinate Units.

(1) (U) JFHQ.

(2) (U) 109th RSG.

i. (U) BPT plan transportation of the following Task Force Rushmore vehicles and container to Texas (destination TBD):

a. (U) 11 x Uparmored Humvees

b. (U) 1 x LMTV

c. (U) 2 x FLA

d. (U) 1 x Quadcon

e. (U) 2 x Maintenance Contact Truck

ii. (U) BPT to provide drivers for Bluebird buses should the Task Force conduct ground transportation by government bus.

(3) (U) 153rd EN BN.

i. (U) BPT conduct the following tasks.

ii. Provide the following Soldiers in a State Active Duty Status:

a. Task Force CDR / LNO – O4

a. (U) 1 x TF PLT LDR – O2

b. (U) 1 x NCOIC – E7

c. (U) 2 x Squad Leader – E6

d. (U) 4 x Team Leader – E5

e. (U) 28 x E4/E5 (MOS Immaterial)

f. (U) 2 x Medic – E5

g. (U) 2 x Medic – E4

h. (U) 1 x Log NCO – E7

i. (U) 1 x Log/Admin NCO – E5

j. (U) 5 x Maintenance Personnel – E5/E6

ii. (U) Provide the following vehicles for Task Force Rushmore:

a. (U) 11 x 4-door, uparmored Humvees

b. (U) 1 x LMTV

c. (U) 2 x Maintenance Contact Truck

d. (U) 2 x FLA

iii. (U) BPT facilitate a weapons familiarization shoot for all deploying personnel for their assigned weapon.

(4) (U) 196th RTI.

(5) (U) Tasks to Staff.

(a) (U) G1

i. (U) BPT publish a State Active Duty order for Soldier's employers as required.

ii. (U) BPT forward a Task Force manifest to Texas G1 for designated personnel.

iii. (U) Brief all Task Force on medical situation and other coverages since the Task Force will not be in a military status.

(b) (U) G3.

i. (U) BPT schedule and coordinate weapon familiarization for all responding Task Force Soldiers.

ii. (U) BPT draw sufficient amount of ammunition from the SDNG Operational Load. These rounds will be used for familiarization only.

iii. (U) BPT coordinate with Texas agencies for basic ammo load.

(c) (U) G4

iii. (U) provide refueling procedures and procurement instructions for the purchase of fuel while deployed in Texas and to RSG forces line hauling the equipment.

iv. (U) If required, provide Task Force Supply Sergeant with a Government Purchase Card for the Texas response and specific instructions outlining restrictions while on State Active Duty.

v. (U) Coordinate the issue of CL I to the Task Force for emergency purposes.

vi. (U) Provide a maintenance POC to coordinate requirements while enroute to and from Texas as required.

vii. (U) Coordinate to ensure that all FLAs and CLS bags deploy with all required supplies. BPT to procure items that are needed with a short suspense to meet mission requirements.

viii. (U) Coordinate for the use of one quadcon for Taskforce Rushmore. The Quadcon needs to be positioned at the Huron armory.

iv. (U) Coordinate either military buses or commercial charter buses for ground transportation to Texas.

x. (U) Coordinate with units to ensure that TF Rushmore departs with sufficient weapons racks and locks to properly secure their weapons as needed.

xi. (U) Ensure that Task Force Rushmore has sufficient M9 pistols, magazines, and holsters if required.

(d) (U) G6.

i. (U) BPT provide sufficient hand-held radios for individual communications

ii. (U) BPT provide four mifi devices to Task Force to enable redundant communications

iii. (U) BPT provide one cellular phone to the TF CDR, TF PLT LDR, TF NCOIC, LOG NCOIC

(e) (U) USPFO.

i. (U) BPT size and issue a vest w/sappi plates to each TF Rushmore Member at the Huron Armory during the mobilization process.

ii. (U) BPT to fill any OCIE shortages prior to departure of TF Rushmore to Texas.

(f) (U) SJA BPT coordinate with Texas SJA to receive Rules for the Use of Force (RUF) and brief to Task Force if required.

d. (U) Coordinating Instructions.

(1) (U) All Task Force Rushmore personnel will deploy with all OCIE for a summer weather deployment. Specific Packing list will be published by the TF NCOIC.

(2) (U) Volunteers will need to be licensed on deploying vehicles if possible. Vehicles are an uparmored Humvee and LMTV. Medics will drive FLAs. Maintenance personnel will drive Contact Trucks.

(3) (U) No personnel weapons or ammunition are authorized for this deployment.

(4) (U) Task Force will submit Daily SITREPS to the JOC.

(5) (U) Soldiers will mobilize on State Active Duty orders.

(6) (U) Fueling Operations. All vehicles used both by Task Force personnel and support units during the mobilization process and travel to Texas will use that vehicle's fuel card. On the back of the receipt will have the following items:

i. (U) Printed Name

ii. (U) Bumper Number of vehicle

iii. (U) Annotate "SAD" on the receipt

iv. (U) Date

v. (U) Mileage of vehicle

vi. (U) Dollar amount of fuel

vii. (U) Quantity of Fuel

4. (U) Sustainment.

a. (U) Logistics. TBP

b. (U) Personnel.

5. (U) Command and Signal.

a. (U) Command. TF CDR/LNO, DOMS-SD, TAG-SD

b. (U) Control. TF Rushmore will be TACON to the DOMS-SD from notification to closure at SD-RSOI Site. Once SD-RSOI is complete, TF Rushmore will be OPCON to the Texas Army National Guard until released to travel back to South Dakota. Once released, TF Rushmore will be TACON back to the DOMS-SD until TF Rushmore is released at Huron Armory by property authority.

c. (U) SD Directorates will coordinate all support through DOMS-SD.

d. (U) Signal. Primary: Phone, Alternate: Email System, Contingency: State Radio, Channel 1SD JOC while in South Dakota, Emergency: Personal Cell phone.

ACKNOWLEDGE:

OSTER
BG

OFFICIAL:

[redacted]
DCSOPS

DISTRIBUTION:
109th RSG, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57702-8186
196th MEB, 801 West National Guard Dr, Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57104-0117
196th Regiment (RTI), 60 Sheridan Road, Fort Meade, SD 57741-0317
JFHQ, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57701-8186

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:03 PM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: FW: OPORD 21-08 (Texas Response) (UNCLASSIFIED)
Attachments: OPORD 21-08 (Texas Response).docx

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Sorry……left you off the distro

[redacted]

COL, NG

USPFO-SD

Office: [redacted]

Cell: [redacted]

Email: [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil>

Just because you can doesn't mean you should

From: Ommen, Terry J COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:03 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] ([redacted] @mail.mil) <[redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] CIV NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil>
Subject: FW: OPORD 21-08 (Texas Response) (UNCLASSIFIED)

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Ok…….other than removing the draft watermark this OPORD appears to be the same as the previous version. As such, I will remind everyone that despite language found under the G4 and G6 portion of this OPORD. Use of any federal resource (personnel and equipment) will be reimbursed by the state of South Dakota since this is a SAD requirement. Likewise, use of GPC and Wright Fuel Cards are prohibited during a SAD mission. I'd also recommend that the state of South Dakota provide communication support (Wifi, cell phones, etc.) versus the SDARNG. Any 2065 funds expended to support this SAD requirement and later reimbursed by the state of South Dakota is deposited in the US Treasury Misc Receipts account. Given our current 2065 shortfall, we need to consider expending 2065 funds as a last resort only. Just a recommendation from the USPFO. Decision rests with the senior leadership.

Recommend the first FRAGO address the above concerns.

V/R

COL, NG

USPFO-SD

Office:

Cell:

Email: @mail.mil <mailto: @mail.mil>

Just because you can doesn't mean you should

From: CPT USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) @mail.mil <mailto @mail.mil> >
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 9:02 AM
To: COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < @mail.mil <mailto @mail.mil> >; LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) @mail.mil <mailto @mail.mil> >; COL

USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] CW3 USARMY NG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] MSG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] SFC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] CSM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] MAJ USARMY NG SDANG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] CPT USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] MAJ USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] CSM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil <mailto:michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] M CPT USARMY (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] MAJ USARMY NG SDANG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] CIV NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] SFC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] CSM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] MAJ USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] CPT USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY FIRST ARMY DIVWEST (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >; [redacted] Col USAF 114 FW (USA) < [redacted] @us.af.mil <mailto [redacted] @us.af.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Cc: NG SD SDARNG List J3 JOC <ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil <mailto:ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil> >; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Subject: OPORD 21-08 (Texas Response)

ALCON,

See attached OPORD 21-08 (Texas Response).

V/R

[redacted]

CPT, SDARNG

Joint Operations Center OIC

235th MP CO Commander

South Dakota National Guard

[redacted] (office)

[redacted] (cell)

[redacted] (Staff Duty Officer)

SD JOC email - ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil <mailto:ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil>

SIPR email - [redacted] @mail.smil.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.smil.mil>

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:55 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Subject: RE: TX Border Mission (UNCLASSIFIED)

Copy, thanks

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 12:49 PM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: RE: TX Border Mission (UNCLASSIFIED)

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Good recap [redacted]. TF 153rd also owes an answer to us regarding two issues.....do they have sufficient M9 Pistols and SAPi plates or will the G4 cross level?

[redacted]

[redacted]
COL, NG
USPFO-SD

Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: terry.j.ommen.mil@mail.mil

Just because you can doesn't mean you should

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:45 AM
To: [redacted]@state.sd.us>; [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Cc: [redacted] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] <[redacted]@state.sd.us>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: TX Border Mission

Good morning,

Starting an email string so we can track information each of us is working on regarding NG Support to TX.

The number of personnel supporting is in flux and will be depending on information still coming in from TX and what we actually send for equipment and how we travel, both personnel and equipment.

I know [redacted] and [redacted] talked this morning and we had a meeting here at Camp Rapid to de-conflict some information. Clarification on a few items still need to happen.

First item is whether or not to send the FLA's (the Army Field Litter Ambulances) and medics. It's either both, just medics, or neither. This will affect the roster and cost for transport of FLA's, maintenance, and daily rate in TX. Information we received from you is that TX only wanted the 11 HUMMV's. IT appears TX has medical contacts, sick call and those need health care at local facilities set up. COL [redacted] will touch base with TX on what we need for medical support.

Second, after our meeting here, we feel the best course of action for getting, at a minimum 11 HUMMV's and a quadcon (for equipment) to TX, would be a commercial line haul. Several advantages to this course of action is not needing our additional soldiers for sate active duty, needing lodging for these soldiers while in transport (and in Huron while loading), possibility of trucks breaking down along the way to TX, paying for fuel for the semi-trucks to TX, and needing the support personnel to follow. If OEM is willing to go this route, SDNG will get specs for equipment to work the haul contract, or can facilitate the estimate for contract to OEM.

Third, maintenance for our vehicles in TX. We talked about sending our maintenance soldiers and contact trucks for breakdowns. There may be a process in place in TX to complete maintenance. COL [redacted] verifying what is really needed. [redacted] discussion with TX for EMAC did not indicate we needed the maintenance soldiers and contact trucks, but SD will have to pay for parts needed in repairs.

Verify lodging in TX. Motel name, location, is TX paying or SD OEM contracting? [redacted] working this.

Charter busses. With the unavailability of airlift from TX, request two charter busses for 48 pax (number is as of writing this email). If possible, the charter busses have trailers behind to haul personal gear for soldiers. These trailers will replace the quadcon mentioned above.

OEM is provided fuel cards, 1 ea per vehicle. Can the fuel cards be used for maintenance items on the vehicle (oil, flat tires, headlights etc). What is the limit of the use of fuel cards or will there be a separate card for maintenance?

3 commercial flights on 7 July for LNO, supply SGT, (both 1 way) and myself (round trip couple days only for myself) to coordinate incoming soldiers and equipment.

JAG brief. COL [redacted] verifying SD brief.

Our tentative timeline is:

06 July 1200: soldiers report to Armory in Huron
Begin RSOI, complete inventories, admin paperwork, intel brief, individual equipment prep, etc
07 July: Load of equipment and prep to roll out
07 July: 3 pax commercial flight to TX to coordinate incoming SD pax and equipment
08 July: Personnel leave first thing in the morning via bus

What I am tracking as OEM working on:

Lodging in Huron - understood this is complete (block of rooms at Crossroads)
2 Charter buses
EMAC paperwork with TX

Determine when TX will be able to accept our soldiers Lodging in TX

What SDNG needs to get OEM:

Updated personnel roster
Updated cost estimate for personnel and equipment

[redacted], Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [redacted]
DSN: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

PA Update
As of June 29, 2021, 0700

Today in the Department of Defense, June 29, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on her schedule.
- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.
- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.
- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.
- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson will host a media roundtable focused on Cyber Shield 2021 at 1130 a.m. EDT
- Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, commander, U.S. Cyber Command, provides the keynote address at 11 a.m. EDT, and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.
- Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander, U.S. Africa Command, participates in a panel on European and U.S. military engagement in Africa at 10:45 a.m. EDT at the CSIS tenth annual EU Defense Washington Forum. Register at csis.org.
- Acting Chief Information Officer John Sherman testifies on cybersecurity posture and DoD digital modernization strategy at 4 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies and Information Systems hearing on DoD information technology, cybersecurity and information assurance for FY2022, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis. In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

https://ngpa.us/14442

RELATED STORY :

SD, TX, AZ: KELO Land (Regional) – Gov. Noem sending National Guard members to Texas Border – By Mitch Klein

https://ngpa.us/14443

FULL STORY BELOW

2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) – Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar – By Associated Press

The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar. The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.

https://ngpa.us/14438

RELATED STORY:

NM: Air Force Magazine (National) – New Mexico RED HORSE Commander Dies at Al Udeid – By Brian W. Everstine

https://ngpa.us/14440

FULL STORY BELOW

3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage. … With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

https://ngpa.us/14444

FULL STORY BELOW

4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) – The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina – By Zea Capistrano

A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps. Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

https://ngpa.us/14445

FULL STORY BELOW

5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) – State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine – By Kate Sweigart

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine. Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.

https://ngpa.us/14446

FULL STORY BELOW

6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) – PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard – By Staff Reports

Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home. … A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need.

https://ngpa.us/14434

FULL STORY BELOW

7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) – National Guard remembers 2011 flood response – By Reporter

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.

https://ngpa.us/14435

FULL STORY BELOW

8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) – Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service – By Abbie Shull

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard. … Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.

https://ngpa.us/14441

FULL STORY BELOW

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FULL STORIES:

1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis.

In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

"Tomorrow morning I'm officially announcing up to 50 National Guard troops to Texas to help secure our border," she said. "The Biden Administration has failed to keep America safe. We shouldn't be making our own communities vulnerable by sending police to fix Biden's border crisis."

On June 10, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey sent a letter to other governors invoking the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a compact that allows states to get help from other states during a time of emergency. Abbott and Ducey are both Republicans.

The letter warned other governors that while Texas and Arizona were "ground zero" for the crisis, other states would see spillover. It warned of increases in human trafficking and deadly drugs, including fentanyl.

“Given the staggering number of violations now occurring in Texas and Arizona, additional manpower is needed from any state that can spare it,” the letter said. “With your help, we can apprehend more of these perpetrators of state and federal crimes, before they can cause problems in your state.”

Besides law enforcement, the two states are searching for other law enforcement resources, including helicopters and drones.

Once invoked, the compact affords out-of-state officers operating in Texas and Arizona with the same duties as domestic law enforcement personnel, including the power to make arrests.

“Crucially,” the letter said, “this will include the power to arrest migrants who illegally cross the border into our territory. Many of these crossings involved state-law crimes, such as criminal trespassing or smuggling of persons.”

Noem joins other Republican governors, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who have pledged dozens of additional law enforcement officers to help their counterparts in Texas and Arizona.

Noem’s Tweet did not specify which units the Guard soldiers would be drawn from.

https://ngpa.us/14442

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2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) – Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar – By Associated Press

The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar.

The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.

The 55-year-old airman was providing support to military efforts against the Islamic State group of Iraq and Syria.

Willis had been assigned as commander of the 210th Red Horse Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base.

https://ngpa.us/14438

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3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage.

When asked if the strategies already in place have had an impact, Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes shakes his head.

"I don't see it working. But, you know, my suggestion has always been, let's get some sheriffs out here, where they see more police presence, or more law enforcement presence," Stokes said. "If that does not work, my suggestion then was to move toward the National Guard. Now I'm at that point now, because we can't keep waiting, cause people keep losing lives."

With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

The most recent took place Monday morning, after a drive-by shooting led to 30-year-old Christopher Thomas losing control of his vehicle on Livingston Road.

Thomas ended up smashing into a building, startling the owner, who had just arrived for the day.

"I thought I had a break in. I look, I check my shop, I just, you know, no cars missing, no tubes missing. But the air conditioning wasn't working. So I went to the side of the building to see had anybody stole my air conditioner. Then I saw a car had jumped this ditch, came to Jackson Housing Authority and had landed on top of my AC unit and plowed inside of my building," said Ernest Stanton Sr., who owns Stanton Body Shop.

Stanton saw firsthand Monday morning the violence that has gripped the Capital City for months on end.

Thomas died shortly after crashing into the side of the structure.

"Somebody's life is gone for nonsense, something that could have been worked out. And so if we don't find a solution as to how to work out differently than with others, they're gonna continue to happen like this," Stanton said. "I'm gonna fix the building, but I hate it for the young man. I hate it for the family. I've been here 25 years and they've been a good location and I don't regret being here. I love the area. But I hate the crime."

Thomas' killing happened in Stokes' ward.

Though Stokes and other council members already approved and appropriated half a million dollars to bring extra Hinds County deputies to Jackson months ago, it has yet to materialize because legal staff from the city, county and sheriff's department still haven't hammered out an agreement.

"We cannot sit back, sit idly by and watch people keep dying in Jackson, Mississippi," Stokes said.

The longtime councilman said the resolution to bring the National Guard will be on Tuesday's council meeting, but he's unsure how the vote will go.

Tuesday's council meeting will be the first with newly-elected councilmembers Vernon Hartley and Brian Grizzell.

When asked what the turning point would have to be for the city and police department to get tougher on crime, Stokes said the “right people” haven’t been hurt yet.

“As soon as the right people get hurt, all that will change. Right now, the majority of people getting hurt are poor and are Black. And it seems that no one cares but Kenny Stokes,” he said. “You let the wrong person, somebody with some influence, get robbed or hurt, then all the money we put for jail space, all the money we put for sheriffs [deputies], that would be happening instantaneously.”

https://ngpa.us/14444

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4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) – The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina – By Zea Capistrano

A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps.

Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

“But I’ve been a full-time chaplain since 2018,” Boling told The Manila Bulletin in a virtual interview on Monday, June 28.

Boling was promoted to the rank of colonel in March this year. Her promotion ceremony was held on May 11 – which coincided with her 57th birthday.

“As a colonel, I’m the first Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) female colonel in the Hawaii Air National Guard. As a colonel, I’m also the first AAPI colonel chaplain for the US Air Force,” Boling shared.

Before 2018, while serving as a part-time chaplain, Boling also had a full-time job as a mental health supervisor for one of the biggest nonprofit agencies in Hawaii. This year, she will be relocating to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland for a four-year stat tour overseeing the welfare of 108,100 Guardsmen.

Becoming a chaplain

Boling earned her degree in customs administration at the Holy Cross of Davao College here in Davao City. While doing her internship with the Bureau of Customs in Cagayan de Oro City, Boling was also active in the church. This eventually led her to pursue vocational ministry.

She finished her Master of Divinity at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City. She specialized in pastoral care and counseling.

“To get that degree, I had to do an internship as a hospital chaplain,” Boling said. Later on, she was accepted at the Makati Medical Center as a chaplain for her internship and in 1991, she applied and got accepted as a hospital chaplain in Hawaii.

“My mind has always been for ministry, what I can do for the world, what I can do for other people.”

Turning points

Boling said she never had any idea of military chaplaincy.

“Wala gyud military sa among pamilya. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the PNP but that was it (There was no military member in our family. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the Philippine National Police, but that was it),” she said.

Boling later met her husband, Jeff, who at that time was on active duty in the Air Force in Hawaii. Her husband invited her to serve as chaplain for the military, but Boling was hesitant.

“I was not really thrilled about it because I really thought that military chaplains would carry guns just like any military, and I’m not big on guns,” she said.

Her Sunday school teacher, who was also the head of the chaplain at the wing, also invited her to become a military chaplain.

But at that time, Boling said, she was still unsure since their only child, was only about two years old. “I really didn’t want to have two militaries in the family,” she said.

However, it was the 9-11 bombing in 2001 which made her decide to enter the military.

“Throughout that day I was shaking, and then I kept following the story and it really broke my heart. I was like these Airmen, these service members need someone to comfort them, to provide counseling, someone to pray with them,” she said.

After the incident, Boling’s resolve to join the Guard became stronger. In April 2002, Boling swore in as first lieutenant.

Boling said her deployment to Zamboanga in 2008 also paved the way for her to take on the full-time job as a military chaplain.

“In 2008, I was sent to Zamboanga, I was there for about five or six months for the Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines through the Joint Special Operations Task Force. While there, apparently, I did an awesome job that the Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) here in Hawaii offered me a full-time job,” she recalled.

“I became their command chaplain, full time, for almost four years. From there, I had more opportunities to be on order” she said.

Growing up in Mati City

Boling grew up in Mati City as a child and fondly recalled treating her friends in the restaurant which their family owned. Boling's family were also active church members. She finished elementary at the Mati Central Elementary School.

Before the pandemic hit, Boling was still able to visit her family in Mati City in February last year.

"Prior to COVID, I usually go home once a year. I'm hoping to go back home before we went to D.C. but I don't think that's ever gonna happen because of COVID," she said.

Currently, Boling said her focus now is to focus on her goal of doing what is best for the interest of the Corps.

"How can I help the Airmen, how can I help the wing. We call it 54/90/108,100. I am responsible for 50 states and four territories, I am responsible for 90 wings, and the 108,100 – the guard members that I am responsible for," she said.

"That's how big my responsibility is, so I really need God on my side," Boling added.

Boling also had this to say to her fellow women: "Be the best version of you."

"Don't worry about things that you have no control over. What is it that you are passionate about, follow that – which means, do your homework and be the best you can be at that job," she added.

"Ako lang mag-isa and (I am the only one) Leah Botona Boling. Nobody else can be Leah Botona Boling. So, I need to be the best version of myself, otherwise, I will miss the opportunity of being who I am," she said.

https://ngpa.us/14445

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5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) – State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine – By Kate Sweigart

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine.

Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.

"All of our neighboring states are further along in the vaccination of their eligible population," Phillips-Hill said. "The administration's failed unilateral rollout of the vaccine has further demonstrated that its go-it-alone approach has not worked. The unanimous support of this legislation shows people on both sides of the aisle are frustrated and seeking to be part of the solution."

According to the state Senate, the National Guard will operate under the Pa. Department of Health and Human Services to collect, secure, and transport doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. If requested, members who have the necessary training would also be able to administer the vaccine, as well.

“The bill could help improve Pennsylvania’s troubled roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine,” the state Senate said in a release.

Pennsylvania currently ranks 46th in the nation in terms of the percentage of distributed vaccines that have been administered.

House Bill 326 would also allow for the creation of mass vaccination sites throughout Pennsylvania.

https://ngpa.us/14446

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6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) – PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard – By Staff Reports

Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home.

“The Idaho National Guard’s support has been integral in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and aiding PHD in the reduction of the loss of life and the sustainment of our community’s health,” said Don Duffy, Health Services Administrator for PHD. “They have supported our COVID-19 response operations in the five northern counties in a variety of initiatives. We truly could not have done this without their support and we will miss having them as part of our team.”

A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need. Specifically, the IDNG assisted with the following:

- IDNG directly supported the COVID-19 vaccine operations and provided numerous operational functions such as: patient intake, quality control, vaccine loading, traffic control, and logistical support. Operations have been conducted 6 days a week resulting in over 39,000 vaccinations administered during their time in the community. Additionally, the Guard worked in conjunction with Panhandle Health District, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and numerous other agencies to support an international vaccination clinic for members of the Lower Kootenay Band of Canada at the US-Canadian border.

- Soldiers coordinated with local partners to store, process, and deliver over 110,000 vaccinations in the five northern counties.

- Numerous service members served at PHD’s COVID-19 call center. They worked closely with Medical Reserve Corps and PHD staff to provide the community with a direct line of support to answer questions and address concerns.

- The remainder of the assigned personnel supported PHD by providing operational planning, logistics planning and support, and National Guard administration.

Due to the decrease in demand and the reduction in available staffing, PHD will be closing the mass vaccine clinics at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene and Rathdrum and the University of Idaho Agriculture Center in Sandpoint effective July 8. Anyone who would like to receive a COVID-19 vaccine can schedule an appointment at any of our office locations in Hayden, Sandpoint, St. Maries, Bonners Ferry, and Kellogg.

https://ngpa.us/14434

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7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) – National Guard remembers 2011 flood response – By Reporter

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.

The North Dakota National Guard's 2011 flood response consisted of 67,264 personnel workdays, which surpassed the 54,341 recorded during the 2009 flood response. This record was broken November 2020 when the Guard's COVID-19 pandemic response surpassed that number, and is currently at 116,427 personnel days worked.

"The remarkable support provided by the dedicated men and women of the North Dakota National Guard during the 2011 flood – as well as in 2009 and 2010 – was a critical component of the massive efforts to protect lives and property in Minot, Bismarck and beyond," said Gov. Doug Burgum, commander-in-chief of the North Dakota National Guard. "Whether it's flooding, pandemic or other disaster response, we can rely on our National Guard to be Always ready, Always there."

"On this 10th anniversary of the historic flood that impacted Minot and surrounding communities, we remember the 4,100 homes that flooded, the more than 11,000 residents who were displaced and the hundreds of millions of dollars in damages sustained," Burgum continued. "And we honor the courage and resiliency of the residents, National Guard members, volunteers and leaders at the local, state and federal levels who fought the flood, picked up the pieces and worked together to secure permanent flood protection, including the more than $400 million committed by the State of North Dakota to the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection and $870 million for the Fargo-Moorhead Area Diversion projects."

Eastern North Dakota missions

Flood response in 2011 for the North Dakota National Guard came in two phases. Phase one began in eastern North Dakota and lasted about 32 days. It saw more than 600 citizen-soldiers and -airmen on duty in a single day. North Dakota Guardsmen assisted communities from Cass County, up through the Red River Valley, and west to Ward County and the Valley City and Lisbon areas.

On April 5, 2011, Guard soldiers and airmen began assisting communities along the Red River, which included Pembina, Harwood, Drayton, Kindred, Fargo, north to Grand Forks and others. Within weeks, the National Guard support shifted attention to the Valley City area, where the local community reinforced levees, bracing for a second crest by the Sheyenne River. A reported 400,000 sandbags were transported by contractors and Guard members from Fargo to support this mission. At the end of the spring 2011 flood mission, nearly 9,800 individual personnel days were expended on flood suppression operations.

"Flood fighting missions like those undertaken in 2011 are examples of how our great soldiers and airmen serve our communities when the need arises," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, N.D. adjutant general. "We are always appreciative of the tremendous support shown by our employers and families during state active duty and overseas deployments. This unyielding support allows us to concentrate on our jobs and successfully complete our missions at home and abroad."

Central North Dakota missions

Phase two of flood support began on May 23, 2011, with the North Dakota National Guard assuming missions in Ward County, with 30 Guardsmen conducting levee patrols in Minot and Burlington. The following week, response surged to nearly 200 soldiers and airmen, who provided presence patrols in evacuated neighborhoods, evacuation teams, levee patrols and construction, traffic control points, as well as quick reaction force teams ready to respond immediately to any flood-related requests.

Minot-area flood support peaked at over 575 North Dakota National Guard personnel. As the situation stabilized, the National Guard drew down to 146 personnel by June 20, but severe flood conditions soon returned. As the waters of the Souris River Basin rose again, hundreds of additional Guard members returned to duty. On June 22, 2011, warning sirens in Minot sounded as water topped levees. Guard support grew to 870 soldiers and airmen by the end of June.

In Minot, the Souris River, also known as the Mouse, crested on June 26 at 1,561.7 feet, exceeding the record crest set in 1881 by 3.7 feet.

In Burleigh County, specifically in the Bismarck and Mandan areas, similar flood conditions were seen along the Missouri River when the upstream Garrison Dam, 75 miles to the north, released record volumes of water. At its peak, 150,000 cubic feet per second of water passed through the dam, surpassing the previous record release of 65,200 cubic feet per second in 1975. The Missouri River crested on July 1, 2011, at 19.25 feet. This was the highest level since Garrison Dam was built. The river stayed at flood stage until Aug. 18, 2011.

Guard missions in this area began a day after Ward County operations, with the establishment of traffic control points on May 24, 2011. Missions included filling, transporting and distributing sandbags, aviation support, levee patrol and establishment of quick reaction force teams with heavy equipment for assisting with water breaches. The Guard also ran civil-military assistance teams who went from house-to-house in flood-prone areas to provide literature on properly constructing flood protection.

Other National Guard support missions during the 2011 flood support included ambulance teams, erecting temporary levees with Hesco barriers and TrapBags, purifying and distributing potable water, transport of flood-fighting supplies, operating Zodiac raft boats and running borrow pits to provide material for dike construction.

The North Dakota National Guard's flood support missions ended on July 26, 2011.
By the Numbers – 2011 Flood Response:

(For the Red, Sheyenne, Souris and Missouri rivers)
– 3,047 individual Guard soldiers and airmen on flood response duty for at least one day.
– 114 calendar days of North Dakota National Guard on flood duty.
– 67,264 personnel work days on flood response duty.
– 169 aviation missions flown by North Dakota National Guard helicopters.

https://ngpa.us/14435

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8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) – Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service – By Abbie Shull

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard.

"I didn't really have the intent to win and go on to compete for Miss Washington. I just thought it would be a fun experience," Hoyt said. "When I ended up winning, I didn't know how I would do this and serve in the guard. COVID hit and I was able to go to basic training and advanced individual training. It gave me time to manage everything."

Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.

Hoyt says she never imagined she would become a soldier, but serving in the National Guard has made it easier for her to pay for school. Hoyt participated in Washington's Running Start program which means she graduated from South Kitsap High School with both her high school diploma and an associate of arts degree from Olympic College in Bremerton.

This fall, Hoyt will start classes at Washington State University where she's pursuing a degree in accounting while enrolled as part of the reserve officer training corps.

"I stumbled my way into a recruiter's office and thought, 'Well, that sounds cool,'" Hoyt said. "I didn't know you could serve while going to school. I thought all military was active-duty."

Hoyt is the first member of her family to serve in the military and says she was excited by the challenge. Now, she's planning a future as an officer in the Army.

"I'm excited by the prospect of being part of something bigger than myself," Hoyt said. "How long I want to stay in, I can't stay. If I like it, I'll continue to make it a part of my career."

On July 2 and 3, Hoyt will compete to serve as Miss Washington at the Little Creek Hotel and Casino in Shelton. She said there is more to the pageant world than most people think.

To win the Miss Pierce County title, Hoyt went through a private interview in addition to the live pageant that includes an evening-wear presentation, an on-stage question and showcasing a talent.

Hoyt has been competing in pageants since she was 12 years old. Over the years, her talent portion has evolved from playing the violin to acting and dramatic interpretation. Hoyt's talent for the Miss Washington pageant is a dramatic interpretation of "Our War" from "Visions of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War."

"They're looking for depth in a title-holder. Right now our Miss Washington has just graduated from Brigham Young University, and she's going on to get her master's," Hoyt said. "Being a title holder isn't what you'd expect from your average soldier, either, so I'm excited to bring that diversity to the competition."

As for her fellow soldiers, Hoyt said, there is a bit of healthy teasing but they're very supportive.

"Other soldiers in the guard have full-time jobs and I have this," Hoyt said. "They're always like, 'OK, go wear your crown and come back tomorrow in your uniform.'"

If crowned Miss Washington, Hoyt will win over $40,000 in scholarship money and go on to compete in the Miss USA pageant.

https://ngpa.us/14441

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[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:34 AM
To: Strong, Craig W BG USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG KSARNG (USA); [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG TXARNG (USA)
Subject: FW: PA Update 29 June 2021 (UNCLASSIFIED)
Attachments: PA Update 29 June 2021.pdf; Defense Morning Clips 29 June 2021.pdf

Importance: High

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

BG Strong.....a quick update on South Dakota's participation in the Texas Border mission. All support will be in a SAD status. South Dakota has apparently agreed not to seek reimbursement from Texas for this SAD response. An EMAC however is still be worked between South Dakota EOM and the state of Texas. Current plan is to send a Task Force of volunteers (50PAX with weapons) with 11 LMTVs to conduct surveillance missions along the Texas/Mexico border. It's my understanding that South Dakota's Task Force will be under the C2 of the Texas National Guard. I was told that Texas would be providing ammunition for the M4 and M9s. RSOI will commence on or about 6Jul21 with arrival in Texas on the 8th of July. South Dakota Army National Guard G3/G4 is working with their counterparts in Texas to answer a few RFIs, one of which is do we need to provide our own tactical vehicles. That's all I know of now. If anything changes I will provide an update.

V/R
[redacted]

[redacted]
COL, NG
USPFO-SD

Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

Just because you can doesn't mean you should

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 5:00 AM
To: Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA) <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: PA Update 29 June 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, June 29, 2021

• Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on her schedule.

• Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

• Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

• Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

• Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson will host a media roundtable focused on Cyber Shield 2021 at 1130 a.m. EDT

• Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, commander, U.S. Cyber Command, provides the keynote address at 11 a.m. EDT, and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

• Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander, U.S. Africa Command, participates in a panel on European and U.S. military engagement in Africa at 10:45 a.m. EDT at the CSIS tenth annual EU Defense Washington Forum. Register at csis.org.

• Acting Chief Information Officer John Sherman testifies on cybersecurity posture and DoD digital modernization strategy at 4 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies and Information Systems hearing on DoD information technology, cybersecurity and information assurance for FY2022, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

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https://ngpa.us/14442

RELATED STORY :

SD, TX, AZ: KELO Land (Regional) – Gov. Noem sending National Guard members to Texas Border – By Mitch Klein

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FULL STORY BELOW

2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) – Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar – By Associated Press

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RELATED STORY:

NM: Air Force Magazine (National) – New Mexico RED HORSE Commander Dies at Al Udeid – By Brian W. Everstine

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FULL STORY BELOW

8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) – Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service – By Abbie Shull

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard. … Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.

https://ngpa.us/14441

FULL STORY BELOW

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FULL STORIES:

1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis.

In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

"Tomorrow morning I'm officially announcing up to 50 National Guard troops to Texas to help secure our border," she said. "The Biden Administration has failed to keep America safe. We shouldn't be making our own communities vulnerable by sending police to fix Biden's border crisis."

On June 10, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey sent a letter to other governors invoking the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a compact that allows states to get help from other states during a time of emergency. Abbott and Ducey are both Republicans.

The letter warned other governors that while Texas and Arizona were "ground zero" for the crisis, other states would see spillover. It warned of increases in human trafficking and deadly drugs, including fentanyl.

"Given the staggering number of violations now occurring in Texas and Arizona, additional manpower is needed from any state that can spare it," the letter said. "With your help, we can apprehend more of these perpetrators of state and federal crimes, before they can cause problems in your state."

Besides law enforcement, the two states are searching for other law enforcement resources, including helicopters and drones.

Once invoked, the compact affords out-of-state officers operating in Texas and Arizona with the same duties as domestic law enforcement personnel, including the power to make arrests.

"Crucially," the letter said, "this will include the power to arrest migrants who illegally cross the border into our territory. Many of these crossings involved state-law crimes, such as criminal trespassing or smuggling of persons."

Noem joins other Republican governors, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who have pledged dozens of additional law enforcement officers to help their counterparts in Texas and Arizona.

Noem's Tweet did not specify which units the Guard soldiers would be drawn from.

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2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) – Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar – By Associated Press

The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar.

The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.

The 55-year-old airman was providing support to military efforts against the Islamic State group of Iraq and Syria.

Willis had been assigned as commander of the 210th Red Horse Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base.

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3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage.

When asked if the strategies already in place have had an impact, Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes shakes his head.

"I don't see it working. But, you know, my suggestion has always been, let's get some sheriffs out here, where they see more police presence, or more law enforcement presence," Stokes said. "If that does not work, my suggestion then was to move toward the National Guard. Now I'm at that point now, because we can't keep waiting, cause people keep losing lives."

With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

The most recent took place Monday morning, after a drive-by shooting led to 30-year-old Christopher Thomas losing control of his vehicle on Livingston Road.

Thomas ended up smashing into a building, startling the owner, who had just arrived for the day.

"I thought I had a break in. I look, I check my shop, I just, you know, no cars missing, no tubes missing. But the air conditioning wasn't working. So I went to the side of the building to see had anybody stole my air conditioner. Then I saw a car had jumped this ditch, came to Jackson Housing Authority and had landed on top of my AC unit and plowed inside of my building," said Ernest Stanton Sr., who owns Stanton Body Shop.

Stanton saw firsthand Monday morning the violence that has gripped the Capital City for months on end.

Thomas died shortly after crashing into the side of the structure.

"Somebody's life is gone for nonsense, something that could have been worked out. And so if we don't find a solution as to how to work out differently than with others, they're gonna continue to happen like this," Stanton said. "I'm gonna fix the building, but I hate it for the young man. I hate it for the family. I've been here 25 years and they've been a good location and I don't regret being here. I love the area. But I hate the crime."

Thomas' killing happened in Stokes' ward.

Though Stokes and other council members already approved and appropriated half a million dollars to bring extra Hinds County deputies to Jackson months ago, it has yet to materialize because legal staff from the city, county and sheriff's department still haven't hammered out an agreement.

"We cannot sit back, sit idly by and watch people keep dying in Jackson, Mississippi," Stokes said.

The longtime councilman said the resolution to bring the National Guard will be on Tuesday's council meeting, but he's unsure how the vote will go.

Tuesday's council meeting will be the first with newly-elected councilmembers Vernon Hartley and Brian Grizzell.

When asked what the turning point would have to be for the city and police department to get tougher on crime, Stokes said the "right people" haven't been hurt yet.

"As soon as the right people get hurt, all that will change. Right now, the majority of people getting hurt are poor and are Black. And it seems that no one cares but Kenny Stokes," he said. "You let the wrong person, somebody with some influence, get robbed or hurt, then all the money we put for jail space, all the money we put for sheriffs [deputies], that would be happening instantaneously."

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4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) – The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina – By Zea Capistrano

A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps.

Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

"But I've been a full-time chaplain since 2018," Boling told The Manila Bulletin in a virtual interview on Monday, June 28.

Boling was promoted to the rank of colonel in March this year. Her promotion ceremony was held on May 11 – which coincided with her 57th birthday.

"As a colonel, I'm the first Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) female colonel in the Hawaii Air National Guard. As a colonel, I'm also the first AAPI colonel chaplain for the US Air Force," Boling shared.

Before 2018, while serving as a part-time chaplain, Boling also had a full-time job as a mental health supervisor for one of the biggest nonprofit agencies in Hawaii. This year, she will be relocating to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland for a four-year stat tour overseeing the welfare of 108,100 Guardsmen.

Becoming a chaplain

Boling earned her degree in customs administration at the Holy Cross of Davao College here in Davao City. While doing her internship with the Bureau of Customs in Cagayan de Oro City, Boling was also active in the church. This eventually led her to pursue vocational ministry.

She finished her Master of Divinity at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City. She specialized in pastoral care and counseling.

“To get that degree, I had to do an internship as a hospital chaplain,” Boling said. Later on, she was accepted at the Makati Medical Center as a chaplain for her internship and in 1991, she applied and got accepted as a hospital chaplain in Hawaii.

“My mind has always been for ministry, what I can do for the world, what I can do for other people.”

Turning points

Boling said she never had any idea of military chaplaincy.

“Wala gyud military sa among pamilya. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the PNP but that was it (There was no military member in our family. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the Philippine National Police, but that was it),” she said.

Boling later met her husband, Jeff, who at that time was on active duty in the Air Force in Hawaii. Her husband invited her to serve as chaplain for the military, but Boling was hesitant.

“I was not really thrilled about it because I really thought that military chaplains would carry guns just like any military, and I’m not big on guns,” she said.

Her Sunday school teacher, who was also the head of the chaplain at the wing, also invited her to become a military chaplain.

But at that time, Boling said, she was still unsure since their only child, was only about two years old. “I really didn’t want to have two militaries in the family,” she said.

However, it was the 9-11 bombing in 2001 which made her decide to enter the military.

“Throughout that day I was shaking, and then I kept following the story and it really broke my heart. I was like these Airmen, these service members need someone to comfort them, to provide counseling, someone to pray with them,” she said.

After the incident, Boling’s resolve to join the Guard became stronger. In April 2002, Boling swore in as first lieutenant.

Boling said her deployment to Zamboanga in 2008 also paved the way for her to take on the full-time job as a military chaplain.

“In 2008, I was sent to Zamboanga, I was there for about five or six months for the Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines through the Joint Special Operations Task Force. While there, apparently, I did an awesome job that the Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) here in Hawaii offered me a full-time job,” she recalled.

“I became their command chaplain, full time, for almost four years. From there, I had more opportunities to be on order” she said.

Growing up in Mati City

Boling grew up in Mati City as a child and fondly recalled treating her friends in the restaurant which their family owned. Boling's family were also active church members. She finished elementary at the Mati Central Elementary School.

Before the pandemic hit, Boling was still able to visit her family in Mati City in February last year.

"Prior to COVID, I usually go home once a year. I'm hoping to go back home before we went to D.C. but I don't think that's ever gonna happen because of COVID," she said.

Currently, Boling said her focus now is to focus on her goal of doing what is best for the interest of the Corps.

"How can I help the Airmen, how can I help the wing. We call it 54/90/108,100. I am responsible for 50 states and four territories, I am responsible for 90 wings, and the 108,100 – the guard members that I am responsible for," she said.

"That's how big my responsibility is, so I really need God on my side," Boling added.

Boling also had this to say to her fellow women: "Be the best version of you."

"Don't worry about things that you have no control over. What is it that you are passionate about, follow that – which means, do your homework and be the best you can be at that job," she added.

"Ako lang mag-isa and (I am the only one) Leah Botona Boling. Nobody else can be Leah Botona Boling. So, I need to be the best version of myself, otherwise, I will miss the opportunity of being who I am," she said.

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5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) – State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine – By Kate Sweigart

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine.

Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.

"All of our neighboring states are further along in the vaccination of their eligible population," Phillips-Hill said. "The administration's failed unilateral rollout of the vaccine has further demonstrated that its go-it-alone approach has not worked. The unanimous support of this legislation shows people on both sides of the aisle are frustrated and seeking to be part of the solution."

According to the state Senate, the National Guard will operate under the Pa. Department of Health and Human Services to collect, secure, and transport doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. If requested, members who have the necessary training would also be able to administer the vaccine, as well.

"The bill could help improve Pennsylvania's troubled roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine," the state Senate said in a release.

Pennsylvania currently ranks 46th in the nation in terms of the percentage of distributed vaccines that have been administered.

House Bill 326 would also allow for the creation of mass vaccination sites throughout Pennsylvania.

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6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) – PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard – By Staff Reports

Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home.

"The Idaho National Guard's support has been integral in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and aiding PHD in the reduction of the loss of life and the sustainment of our community's health," said Don Duffy, Health Services Administrator for PHD. "They have supported our COVID-19 response operations in the five northern counties in a variety of initiatives. We truly could not have done this without their support and we will miss having them as part of our team."

A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need. Specifically, the IDNG assisted with the following:

- IDNG directly supported the COVID-19 vaccine operations and provided numerous operational functions such as: patient intake, quality control, vaccine loading, traffic control, and logistical support. Operations have been conducted 6 days a week resulting in over 39,000 vaccinations administered during their time in the community. Additionally, the Guard worked in conjunction with Panhandle Health District, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and numerous other agencies to support an international vaccination clinic for members of the Lower Kootenay Band of Canada at the US-Canadian border.

- Soldiers coordinated with local partners to store, process, and deliver over 110,000 vaccinations in the five northern counties.

- Numerous service members served at PHD's COVID-19 call center. They worked closely with Medical Reserve Corps and PHD staff to provide the community with a direct line of support to answer questions and address concerns.

- The remainder of the assigned personnel supported PHD by providing operational planning, logistics planning and support, and National Guard administration.

Due to the decrease in demand and the reduction in available staffing, PHD will be closing the mass vaccine clinics at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene and Rathdrum and the University of Idaho Agriculture Center in Sandpoint effective July 8. Anyone who would like to receive a COVID-19 vaccine can schedule an appointment at any of our office locations in Hayden, Sandpoint, St. Maries, Bonners Ferry, and Kellogg.

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7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) – National Guard remembers 2011 flood response – By Reporter

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.

The North Dakota National Guard's 2011 flood response consisted of 67,264 personnel workdays, which surpassed the 54,341 recorded during the 2009 flood response. This record was broken November 2020 when the Guard's COVID-19 pandemic response surpassed that number, and is currently at 116,427 personnel days worked.

"The remarkable support provided by the dedicated men and women of the North Dakota National Guard during the 2011 flood – as well as in 2009 and 2010 – was a critical component of the massive efforts to protect lives and property in Minot, Bismarck and beyond," said Gov. Doug Burgum, commander-in-chief of the North Dakota National Guard. "Whether it's flooding, pandemic or other disaster response, we can rely on our National Guard to be Always ready, Always there."

"On this 10th anniversary of the historic flood that impacted Minot and surrounding communities, we remember the 4,100 homes that flooded, the more than 11,000 residents who were displaced and the hundreds of millions of dollars in damages sustained," Burgum continued. "And we honor the courage and resiliency of the residents, National Guard members, volunteers and leaders at the local, state and federal levels who fought the flood, picked up the pieces and worked together to secure permanent flood protection, including the more than $400 million committed by the State of North Dakota to the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection and $870 million for the Fargo-Moorhead Area Diversion projects."

Eastern North Dakota missions

Flood response in 2011 for the North Dakota National Guard came in two phases. Phase one began in eastern North Dakota and lasted about 32 days. It saw more than 600 citizen-soldiers and -airmen on duty in a single day. North Dakota Guardsmen assisted communities from Cass County, up through the Red River Valley, and west to Ward County and the Valley City and Lisbon areas.

On April 5, 2011, Guard soldiers and airmen began assisting communities along the Red River, which included Pembina, Harwood, Drayton, Kindred, Fargo, north to Grand Forks and others. Within weeks, the National Guard support shifted attention to the Valley City area, where the local community reinforced levees, bracing for a second crest by the Sheyenne River. A reported 400,000 sandbags were transported by contractors and Guard members from Fargo to support this mission. At the end of the spring 2011 flood mission, nearly 9,800 individual personnel days were expended on flood suppression operations.

"Flood fighting missions like those undertaken in 2011 are examples of how our great soldiers and airmen serve our communities when the need arises," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, N.D. adjutant general. "We are always appreciative of the tremendous support shown by our employers and families during state active duty and overseas deployments. This unyielding support allows us to concentrate on our jobs and successfully complete our missions at home and abroad."

Central North Dakota missions

Phase two of flood support began on May 23, 2011, with the North Dakota National Guard assuming missions in Ward County, with 30 Guardsmen conducting levee patrols in Minot and Burlington. The following week, response surged to nearly 200 soldiers and airmen, who provided presence patrols in evacuated neighborhoods, evacuation teams, levee

patrols and construction, traffic control points, as well as quick reaction force teams ready to respond immediately to any flood-related requests.

Minot-area flood support peaked at over 575 North Dakota National Guard personnel. As the situation stabilized, the National Guard drew down to 146 personnel by June 20, but severe flood conditions soon returned. As the waters of the Souris River Basin rose again, hundreds of additional Guard members returned to duty. On June 22, 2011, warning sirens in Minot sounded as water topped levees. Guard support grew to 870 soldiers and airmen by the end of June.

In Minot, the Souris River, also known as the Mouse, crested on June 26 at 1,561.7 feet, exceeding the record crest set in 1881 by 3.7 feet.

In Burleigh County, specifically in the Bismarck and Mandan areas, similar flood conditions were seen along the Missouri River when the upstream Garrison Dam, 75 miles to the north, released record volumes of water. At its peak, 150,000 cubic feet per second of water passed through the dam, surpassing the previous record release of 65,200 cubic feet per second in 1975. The Missouri River crested on July 1, 2011, at 19.25 feet. This was the highest level since Garrison Dam was built. The river stayed at flood stage until Aug. 18, 2011.

Guard missions in this area began a day after Ward County operations, with the establishment of traffic control points on May 24, 2011. Missions included filling, transporting and distributing sandbags, aviation support, levee patrol and establishment of quick reaction force teams with heavy equipment for assisting with water breaches. The Guard also ran civil-military assistance teams who went from house-to-house in flood-prone areas to provide literature on properly constructing flood protection.

Other National Guard support missions during the 2011 flood support included ambulance teams, erecting temporary levees with Hesco barriers and TrapBags, purifying and distributing potable water, transport of flood-fighting supplies, operating Zodiac raft boats and running borrow pits to provide material for dike construction.

The North Dakota National Guard's flood support missions ended on July 26, 2011.
By the Numbers – 2011 Flood Response:
(For the Red, Sheyenne, Souris and Missouri rivers) – 3,047 individual Guard soldiers and airmen on flood response duty for at least one day.
– 114 calendar days of North Dakota National Guard on flood duty.
– 67,264 personnel work days on flood response duty.
– 169 aviation missions flown by North Dakota National Guard helicopters.

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8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) – Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service – By Abbie Shull

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard.

"I didn't really have the intent to win and go on to compete for Miss Washington. I just thought it would be a fun experience," Hoyt said. "When I ended up winning, I didn't know how I would do this and serve in the guard. COVID hit and I was able to go to basic training and advanced individual training. It gave me time to manage everything."

Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.

Hoyt says she never imagined she would become a soldier, but serving in the National Guard has made it easier for her to pay for school. Hoyt participated in Washington's Running Start program which means she graduated from South Kitsap High School with both her high school diploma and an associate of arts degree from Olympic College in Bremerton.

This fall, Hoyt will start classes at Washington State University where she's pursuing a degree in accounting while enrolled as part of the reserve officer training corps.

"I stumbled my way into a recruiter's office and thought, 'Well, that sounds cool,'" Hoyt said. "I didn't know you could serve while going to school. I thought all military was active-duty."

Hoyt is the first member of her family to serve in the military and says she was excited by the challenge. Now, she's planning a future as an officer in the Army.

"I'm excited by the prospect of being part of something bigger than myself," Hoyt said. "How long I want to stay in, I can't stay. If I like it, I'll continue to make it a part of my career."

On July 2 and 3, Hoyt will compete to serve as Miss Washington at the Little Creek Hotel and Casino in Shelton. She said there is more to the pageant world than most people think.

To win the Miss Pierce County title, Hoyt went through a private interview in addition to the live pageant that includes an evening-wear presentation, an on-stage question and showcasing a talent.

Hoyt has been competing in pageants since she was 12 years old. Over the years, her talent portion has evolved from playing the violin to acting and dramatic interpretation. Hoyt's talent for the Miss Washington pageant is a dramatic interpretation of "Our War" from "Visions of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War."

"They're looking for depth in a title-holder. Right now our Miss Washington has just graduated from Brigham Young University, and she's going on to get her master's," Hoyt said. "Being a title holder isn't what you'd expect from your average soldier, either, so I'm excited to bring that diversity to the competition."

As for her fellow soldiers, Hoyt said, there is a bit of healthy teasing but they're very supportive.

"Other soldiers in the guard have full-time jobs and I have this," Hoyt said. "They're always like, 'OK, go wear your crown and come back tomorrow in your uniform.'"

If crowned Miss Washington, Hoyt will win over $40,000 in scholarship money and go on to compete in the Miss USA pageant.

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]

Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]
[redacted]@mail.mil

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, June 29

OVERVIEW

President Biden cited his constitutional authority to approve "retaliatory airstrikes against Iran-linked targets in Iraq and Syria" under Article II, adding that even Congressional members "who are reluctant to acknowledge that have acknowledged that is the case," according to the *Washington Post*. In northeast Syria, hours after the U.S. airstrikes, multiple rockets targeted a facility housing U.S. troops near al-Omar oil field, but U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria spokesperson Army Col. Wayne Marotto confirmed there were no casualties, the *Washington Post* reported. Also of note, NATO Resolute Support Commander Gen. Austin Miller told *ABC News* in an interview that the security situation in Afghanistan is "not good," but the U.S. would try to "ensure that the security assistance that can continue does continue."

TOP STORIES

1. Biden defends authority to launch airstrikes in Iraq and Syria

Washington Post Online, June 28 (1817) | Anne Gearan

President Biden said Monday that he acted within his constitutional authority to order what his administration calls retaliatory airstrikes against Iran-linked targets in Iraq and Syria, which came as the White House has backed efforts to rewrite congressional authorization for such actions.

2. U.S. forces come under fire after airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Syria, Iraq

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A9 | Louisa Loveluck, John Hudson and Alex Horton

U.S. forces said Monday that they came under rocket attack hours after they carried out airstrikes against Iran-backed militia targets in Syria and Iraq in what officials had described as an effort to deter mounting violence by anti-American groups.

3. An inside look at the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan

ABCNews.com (Exclusive), June 28 (1754) | Luis Martinez and Martha Raddatz

The top U.S. general directing the full withdrawal of all 2,500 American troops from Afghanistan acknowledged in an exclusive interview with ABC News chief Global Affairs correspondent Martha Raddatz that the security situation in the country is "not good" and that the Taliban's push to seize parts of the country is "concerning." Gen. Austin Scott Miller said he stands by his belief that there cannot be a military victor in Afghanistan, but he told Raddatz that as the Taliban continues with its military operations across the country, while also engaging in peace talks, "you're starting to create conditions here that doesn't -- won't look good for Afghanistan in the future if there is a push for a military takeover" that could result in a civil war.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. Top Pentagon Cyber Official Probed Amid Disclosure Concerns

Bloomberg News, June 29 (0200) | Tony Capaccio

The Pentagon official who has been overseeing its new cybersecurity initiative for defense contractors has been placed on leave in connection with a suspected unauthorized disclosure of classified information from a military intelligence agency, according to an official document.

COVID-19

5. Perna Retiring From Covid Task Force as U.S. Response Shifts

Bloomberg News, June 28 (1549) | Riley Griffin and Josh Wingrove

U.S. Army General Gustave Perna, a top official in the Covid-19 vaccine rollout in both the Trump and Biden administrations, is set to retire July 2. Robert Johnson, an official at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, will serve as interim chief operating officer for the pandemic effort, according to Jeffrey Zients, President Joe Biden's Covid-19 coordinator.

EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

6. New Middle East airstrikes inflame Democratic war powers debate

Politico Online, June 28 (1331) | Andrew Desiderio and Lara Seligman

President Joe Biden's weekend airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria are rankling Democrats frustrated by his decision to sidestep Congress — a dynamic that promises to fuel the party's long-running push to rein in presidential war powers. But some in Biden's party are sounding the alarm about possible abuses of that power, which presidents of both parties have employed to circumvent Congress and legally justify various military operations. The airstrikes come as lawmakers are already working to repeal the two-decade-old authorizations for the use of military force in Iraq, an effort that Biden supports.

7. Assault victims demand military justice

Los Angeles Times, June 29 (0300) | David S. Cloud

Among other shortcomings in the system, critics say, victims are too often doubted or pressured not to bring formal charges, even more than in the civilian world. Senior officers who have responsibility for prosecuting offenders too often side with the accused, rather than the victim. Some victims find their lives destroyed while some perpetrators face little or no punishment. And many assaults go unreported, according to reports even from within the military. Now, a push in Congress to overhaul military prosecution procedures -- started by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) nearly a decade ago -- is finally gaining traction after years of opposition from the Pentagon and its supporters in Congress.

8. GOP senator jams up Pentagon pick over Biden's Navy plan

Politico Online, June 28 (1720) | Paul McLeary and Connor O'Brien

Republican Sen. Roger Wicker is holding up a high-level Pentagon nominee in an attempt to push the Navy to commit to buying more amphibious ships, according to two people familiar with the situation. The nominee, Susanna Blume, had been tapped to run the Pentagon's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office, which would give her a central role in assessing new weapons systems proposed by the armed services. The veteran of the Obama Pentagon largely sailed through her confirmation hearing in May, and her nomination has been sent to the full Senate for a vote with several other top picks for the department.

9. Moderate Democrats rebuke defense budget cuts

Defense News Online, June 28 (0500) | Joe Gould

In the upcoming budget debate, a group of moderate Democrats are trying to set a floor for 2022 defense spending before progressive Democrats try to push it lower.

MIDDLE EAST

10. Biden vows to Israel: No nuclear weapon for Iran on my watch

Reuters, June 28 (1918) | Andrea Shalal and Steve Holland

U.S. President Joe Biden, in a meeting on Monday with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, said his commitment to Israel is "iron-clad" and he looks forward to meeting with new Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett soon. Biden, in his first meeting as president with a top Israeli official, also said Iran would not come to possess a nuclear weapon during his time in office.

11. Baghdad Is Caught in the Middle as the U.S. and Iran Spar on Iraqi Territory

New York Times, June 29 (0300), Pg. A10 | Jane Arraf

American airstrikes against two Iranian-backed militias on Monday were just the latest skirmish in a conflict between the United States and Iran that is playing out on Iraqi soil.

12. US airstrikes follow a spate of sophisticated attacks by Iran using new drones that can avoid US surveillance

CNN.com, June 28 (1750) | Katie Bo Williams

President Joe Biden's decision to conduct airstrikes against Iran-backed militia groups on the Iraq-Syria border Sunday night follows a recent spate of attacks against US military assets in Iraq by a new class of Iranian-made drones that US officials say can evade US surveillance and defenses.

13. Number of ISIS members detained in Syria is 'untenable,' Blinken says

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A11 | Karen DeYoung

More than two years after they last met in person, top diplomats representing the 78-nation coalition to defeat the Islamic State gathered here Monday to assess what has happened in the interim and position themselves for the future. The news, in many respects, was not good. While the caliphate in Syria was declared dead in 2019, "there is still more work to be done," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his global counterparts as he opened the meeting co-hosted by the United States and Italy.

AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

14. It's imminent: After nearly 20 years U.S. to leave Bagram

Associated Press, June 29 (0209) | Kathy Gannon

For nearly 20 years, Bagram Airfield was the heart of American military power in Afghanistan, a sprawling mini-city behind fences and blast walls just an hour's drive north of Kabul. Initially, it was a symbol of the U.S. drive to avenge the 9/11 attacks, then of its struggle for a way through the ensuing war with the Taliban. In just a matter of days, the last U.S. soldiers will depart Bagram. They are leaving what probably everyone connected to the base, whether American or Afghan, considers a mixed legacy.

15. Taliban assaults motivate Afghans to rally and stand up

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A10 | Pamela Constable and Ezzatullah Mehrdad

As Afghan President Ashraf Ghani met with President Biden and members of Congress last week, his country faced a dramatic surge in Taliban attacks that began in the north but rapidly spread to other regions. The defense forces have been unable to stem the offensive, and Afghan officials are concerned that the planned pullout of U.S. troops by September could leave the country dangerously vulnerable to a Taliban takeover. At the same time, the Kabul government's call for able-bodied Afghans to join in the fight - an extraordinary appeal to former armed rivals and local renegades that has so far met with surprising success - seems partly aimed at convincing U.S. officials that despite its failures on the battlefield, Ghani's government and its anti-Taliban cause enjoy strong public support and deserve more help.

16. Violence intensifies across Afghanistan's central and northern provinces

Reuters, June 28 (1025) | Not Attributed

Taliban militants have taken over a district, launched attacks on checkpoints and cemented control over a border trade crossing, officials said on Monday, as clashes intensify in Afghanistan's central and northern provinces.

17. Reagan carrier strike group now operating in 5th Fleet amid Afghanistan withdrawal

Military Times Online, June 28 (1828) | Diana Stancy Correll

The aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan and its carrier strike group are now operating in the 5th Fleet — a first for the carrier since 2012. The Navy said that the Reagan carrier strike group will "operate and train alongside regional

and coalition partners" and provide airpower to assist U.S. and coalition forces while the U.S. withdraws troops from Afghanistan.

INDO-PACIFIC

18. Outgoing USFK commander vows to continue support for alliance

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 29 (0103) | Choi Soo-hyang

Outgoing U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) Commander Gen. Robert Abrams on Tuesday vowed to continue supporting the "ironclad" alliance between South Korea and the United States, describing his time here as a "personal honor and privilege."

19. Can Biden Solve the North Korea Puzzle?

ForeignPolicy.com (Report), June 28 (1639) | Robbie Gramer

Five months into office, U.S. President Joe Biden has his hands full with foreign-policy crises. But there's one conspicuously missing from the headlines: North Korea. It's only a matter of time before that changes, according to current and former U.S. officials and other experts. North Korea has a penchant for turning up the heat on Washington and its Asian allies through saber-rattling or provocative missile tests. Most analysts agree the next major North Korea crisis is a matter of when, not if.

20. Japan minister says necessary to 'wake up' to protect Taiwan

Reuters, June 28 (1657) | Not Attributed

Japan's deputy defense minister on Monday warned of the growing threat posed by Chinese and Russian collaboration and said it was necessary to "wake up" to Beijing's pressure on Taiwan and protect the island "as a democratic country." Nakayama said democratic countries had to protect each other and noted that he had in the past referred to Taiwan as a "red line."

CHINA

21. Russia, China declare friendship treaty extension, hail ties

Associated Press, June 28 (0807) | Vladimir Isachenkov

The leaders of Russia and China on Monday hailed increasingly close ties between their countries and announced the extension of a 20-year-old friendship treaty, a show of unity amid their tensions with the West. Speaking in a video call with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the treaty signed in July 2001 in Moscow helped take relations between Moscow and Beijing to an "unprecedented height" and would be extended for another five years.

EUROPE

22. Ukraine, US launch Black Sea drills after warship incident

Agence France-Presse, June 28 (1236) | Dmytro Gorshkov

Ukraine and the United States launched joint naval exercises in the Black Sea on Monday in a show of Western cooperation with Kiev as it faces off with Russia. The Sea Breeze drills -- which have taken place 21 times since 1997 -- will involve some 5,000 military personnel from more than 30 countries.

RUSSIA

23. Russian snipers are picking off Ukrainian soldiers

Washington Examiner Online, June 28 (0700) | Abraham Mahshie

The war between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists in the semi-states known as the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics is largely contained to a no man's land in empty fields on the outskirts of small villages like this. Tree lines are where the opposing sides establish their positions, digging trenches to store weapons and provisions and to hide armored vehicles, should they be necessary. In this low-intensity conflict, most soldiers are dying from sniper fire.

AFRICA

24. Blinken Urges Stronger Focus Against Islamist Groups in Africa

Bloomberg News, June 28 (0638) | John Follain

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged an 83-member alliance against Islamic State to step up its focus on operations in Africa, while working to prevent a resurgence of the militant organization in Iraq and Syria.

25. Tigray rebels in Ethiopia claim control of region's capital

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A11 | Max Bearak

The former leaders of Ethiopia's Tigray region claimed Monday to have regained control over the regional capital seven months after being driven out by the Ethiopian military, marking what could be a major turning point in a deadly civil war.

26. UN panel accuses Russia of Africa killings; Moscow says no

Associated Press, June 28 (1722) | Edith M. Lederer

U.N. experts are accusing Russian military instructors and the Central African Republic forces they are supporting of "excessive use of force, indiscriminate killings, the occupation of schools and looting on a large scale" -- allegations Moscow strongly rejected Monday. The panel of experts monitoring sanctions on the conflict-torn African nation said in a 40-page report obtained Monday by The Associated Press that it collected "testimonies" from a large number of local officials, government military and internal security forces, and community-level sources in multiple locations in the country who reported "the active participation of Russian instructors in combat operations on the ground."

AMERICAS

27. Severe Weather Swings Disrupt Panama Canal

Wall Street Journal, June 29 (0200), Pg. A9 | Santiago Pérez

The Panama Canal faces a creeping threat from climate change, including droughts so intense that ships sometimes reduce their cargo so as not to run aground, and giant storms that almost overwhelm its dams and locks, canal officials say.

ARCTIC

28. Coast Guard in Talks to Add Ships to Heavy Icebreaker Program

National Defense Magazine Online, June 28 (1721) | Jon Harper

The Coast Guard is in talks with the Biden administration about adding additional heavy icebreakers to its Polar Security Cutter program, the head of the sea service said June 28.

AIR FORCE

29. Air Force previews new exercises on fitness test 'menu'

Air Force Times Online, June 28 (1715) | Rachel Cohen

The Air Force is preparing to launch a customizable physical fitness test where airmen and guardians can mix and match the exercises they prefer, a service official said Monday. Starting early next year, the Air Force will offer a menu of options that fall into three categories: aerobic exercise, core strength and upper body strength.

NAVY

30. Six Littoral Combat Ships to Deploy by Year's End as Navy Continues to Refine Operations

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 28 (0918) | Sam LaGrone

The Navy will have six Littoral Combat Ships deployed by the end of the year – a record for the program, several Navy officials have confirmed to USNI News. Later this year, two Independence-class LCS will join USS Tulsa (LCS-16) and USS Charleston (LCS-18) in the Western Pacific. The two ships kicked off an expansive deployment across the Western Pacific earlier this year that began in Oceana and has ranged to as far as the Indian Ocean. Two other LCS will deploy soon to U.S. Southern Command later this year.

CYBER

31. DOD to send AI data teams to combatant commands this summer

Federal Computer Week Online, June 28 (1606) | Lauren C. Williams

The Defense Department will start sending out teams of data and artificial intelligence experts in the next month to help combatant commands speed AI implementation efforts as part of a new initiative.

NOTABLE COMMENTARY

32. Biden Needs to Leave Afghanistan the Right Way

Bloomberg Opinion, June 28 (0800) | Editorial

As U.S. troops prepare to leave Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of combat, the situation on the ground could hardly be more disheartening. Taliban insurgents are already racking up battlefield gains; deprived of U.S. close air support and help maintaining its equipment, the Afghan military may well crumble against concerted onslaught. Al-Qaeda maintains ties to the Taliban and could pose a renewed threat to the U.S. in as little as two years. That timeline could shrink if the Kabul government falls to the Taliban or the country devolves into civil war.

33. The Iran Deal May Still Be Dead

Wall Street Journal, June 29 (0200), Pg. A15 | Blaise Misztal and Jonathan Ruhe

'No deal is better than a bad deal," then-Secretary of State John Kerry opined during nuclear negotiations for the Obama administration with Iran before ultimately clinching the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015. Now, as discussions about returning to the JCPOA drag on, President Biden should prepare for a no-deal outcome.

34. China is not the cyber superpower that many people think

Nikkei Asia Online (Japan), June 29 (1600) | Greg Austin

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato recently warned that cyberattacks should be expected during the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, due to start on July 23. Yet Japan's defenses in this sphere remain somewhat immature, creating cause for concern given escalating threats and reports about shifting power balances, both in cyberspace and more broadly. In this debate, China is often portrayed as a world-leading cyber power based on its massive and highly successful espionage operations. But for now, according to a new assessment by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the U.S. is still ahead of China on that front and has a much stronger track record.

TOP STORIES

1. Biden defends authority to launch airstrikes in Iraq and Syria
Washington Post Online, June 28 (1817) | Anne Gearan

President Biden said Monday that he acted within his constitutional authority to order what his administration calls retaliatory airstrikes against Iran-linked targets in Iraq and Syria, which came as the White House has backed efforts to rewrite congressional authorization for such actions.

The strikes also came as nuclear negotiations with Iran appear at an impasse.

"I directed last night's airstrikes, targeting sites used by the Iranian-backed militia group responsible for recent attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq, and I have that authority under Article II, and even those up in the Hill who are reluctant to acknowledge that have acknowledged that is the case," Biden said.

The airstrikes Sunday evening led to warnings from some Democrats that Biden risked flouting the constitutional requirement to consult Congress. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), a Biden ally and senior member of the Foreign Relations Committee, was blunt in his concern.

"There is no doubt that President Biden possesses the ability to defend our forces abroad, and I continue to trust inherently the national security instincts of this White House," Murphy said in a statement issued late Sunday.

"My concern is that the pace of activity directed at U.S. forces and the repeated retaliatory strikes against Iranian proxy forces are starting to look like what would qualify as a pattern of hostilities under the War Powers Act. Both the Constitution and the War Powers Act require the president to come to Congress for a war declaration under these circumstances."

Biden cited his authority under Article II of the Constitution, which allows him to act on behalf of U.S. military service members in self-defense, for the strikes Sunday and an earlier set in February.

The White House supports an effort in Congress to repeal the emergency authorization of force approved after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. That authorization has been used ever since as justification for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as other military actions.

"The United States selected these targets because Iran-backed militias used them to conduct at least five [drone] attacks against U.S. facilities in Iraq since April," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters Monday.

The White House maintains that the action abides by domestic and international law.

“The president has been clear that there will be serious consequences if Iranian leaders continue to arm, fund and train militia groups to attack our people,” Psaki said.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said two Iranian-linked militia locations in Syria were attacked, along with one in Iraq, and described the strikes as defensive. The locations were used by the Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada groups, which both have ties to Iran. Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada said four of its militiamen were killed.

Iraq condemned the U.S. airstrike on its soil Monday, describing the overnight attack as a “blatant” violation of national sovereignty that breached international conventions.

The White House sidestepped the unusually harsh condemnation from a military ally.

“The prime minister is a partner. He has a tough job,” Psaki said. “His statement calls for a de-escalation from all sides and we agree with that. But the attacks against our troops need to stop and that is why the president ordered the operation last night in self-defense of our personnel.”

Biden spoke alongside visiting Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, whose government remains firmly opposed to the 2015 international nuclear deal with Iran and skeptical of Biden’s efforts to rejoin it.

Rivlin presided over creation of a new coalition government in Israel this month, but he will leave office himself July 7 after a seven-year term. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has taken a less confrontational tone over the Iran deal than his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Biden stressed the main area of agreement with Israel over Iran and said he intends to soon meet with Bennett at the White House.

“What I can say to you: Iran will never get a nuclear weapon on my watch,” Biden said.

Rivlin smiled as he said that the strong bond between Israel and the United States can withstand some strains.

“We, according to a real friendship, can from time to time discuss matters and even … agree not to agree about everything,” Rivlin said. “But we count on you.”

Six rounds of negotiations in Vienna have yet to reach agreement on a deal both the Biden administration and Iran’s leadership are eager to restore.

Iran is seeking the lifting of hundreds of U.S.-imposed sanctions that have throttled its economy. The Biden administration wants Iran to return to compliance with the terms of the nuclear deal and to hold talks aimed at curbing Tehran’s support for proxy forces in the Middle East as well as its development of ballistic missiles.

The victory this month in Iran of Ebrahim Raisi, a hard-line cleric who opposes negotiations with the United States, has added to the sense of urgency hovering over the talks. Raisi, who replaces President Hassan Rouhani, a political moderate, will assume office in August.

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2. U.S. forces come under fire after airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Syria, Iraq

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A9 | Louisa Loveluck, John Hudson and Alex Horton

U.S. forces said Monday that they came under rocket attack hours after they carried out airstrikes against Iran-backed militia targets in Syria and Iraq in what officials had described as an effort to deter mounting violence by anti-American groups.

A spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria, Army Col. Wayne Marotto, said that multiple rockets had targeted a facility housing U.S. troops near al-Omar oil field in northeast Syria. No casualties were reported. Marotto said U.S. forces responded in self-defense with artillery fire targeting positions where the rockets were launched.

No one claimed responsibility for the rocket attacks, but video of the assault was shared on Telegram social media channels used by the militias.

U.S. officials have said the American airstrikes carried out a night earlier were meant to stem militia attacks on U.S. forces, but the Iran-backed groups have sworn revenge, raising the prospect of a further escalation.

The Iraqi government condemned the U.S. airstrike against Iranian-linked militias on Iraqi soil early Monday, underscoring how combustible the situation has become. Iraq described the overnight strike as a “blatant” violation of national sovereignty that breached international conventions.

“Iraq reiterates its refusal to be an arena for settling scores,” Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi said in a statement, urging both sides to refrain from escalation.

The latest violence comes amid rising U.S. concern over the use of small, explosive-laden drones by Iran-backed groups targeting American and Iraqi personnel in Iraq. U.S. officials describe the emerging drone threat as one of the chief concerns for the small U.S. military mission remaining in the country.

The U.S. airstrikes followed a spate of drone strikes early Saturday in Iraq’s Kurdish region. A congressional aide with knowledge of the Biden administration’s decision-making said the attacks involved Iranian-manufactured drones similar to those that have prompted alarm in Washington as they evade detection systems and strike sensitive targets.

Kadhimi is under pressure from Washington to rein in attacks on U.S.-linked targets. But in practice, Iraq's network of militia groups, some of them backed by Iran, often hold more power than the prime minister does, experts say, heightening the stakes for any confrontation with them.

As if to underscore the point, thousands of Iraqi paramilitary fighters marched Saturday in the eastern province of Diyala as part of an annual parade, attended this year by Kadhimi, that showcased the range of tanks and rocket launchers in their disposal.

Hours earlier in Iraq's Irbil province, two of the Iran-linked drones landed roughly a mile from where a new U.S. Consulate is being built, according to the congressional aide and the area's governor.

In the airstrikes that followed, U.S. forces hit one site used in the launch and recovery of armed unmanned aircraft and another targeted site was a logistics hub, said an official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation.

Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, an Iran-backed group largely based in Iraq, said that four of its militiamen were killed. Photographs suggested that the youngest among them was in his early 20s.

A U.S. official with knowledge of the strikes said that the deaths appeared to have happened in Syria and that the strike in Iraq had targeted a storage facility with nobody on-site.

Separately, Syrian state media said, without providing evidence, that U.S. strikes hit residential buildings near the border around 1 a.m. local time, killing a child and wounding three residents.

The militia groups that were targeted said they would seek revenge. "We will not remain silent about the continued presence of the American occupation forces," groups calling themselves the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Commission said in a statement. "We will make the enemy taste the bitterness of revenge."

During a visit to Rome on Monday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he hoped the U.S. airstrikes would deter future attacks by Iraqi militias. "I think we've demonstrated both with the actions taken last night and actions taken previously that the president is fully prepared to act and act appropriately and deliberately to protect U.S. interests, to protect our people, to protect our personnel," he said, referring to an earlier set of strikes on the Syrian side of the border.

U.S. officials have counted at least six attacks since April that use drones that appear to have been manufactured by Iran or by its proxies.

"President Biden has been clear that he will act to protect U.S. personnel," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said. "Given the ongoing series of attacks by Iran-backed groups targeting U.S. interests in Iraq, the president directed further military action to disrupt and deter such attacks."

Iraqi officials have lobbied their U.S. counterparts to avoid retaliatory strikes on Iraqi soil, arguing that they would complicate the already delicate politics surrounding the remaining U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq.

That force has been cut in half to roughly 3,000 troops since the start of last year, after the U.S. assassination of Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani and senior Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis outside Baghdad Airport prompted Iraq's parliament to urge the expulsion of all U.S. troops.

The U.S. strikes came after increasingly brazen and sophisticated attacks by Iranian-backed militias on U.S.-linked forces. Officials in Washington say these are probably linked to Kataib Hezbollah, a group that U.S. forces have bombed on several occasions in Iraq.

--*Loveluck reported from London. Mustafa Salim in Baghdad, Dan Lamothe in Washington and Sarah Dadouch in Beirut contributed to this report*

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3. An inside look at the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan

ABC News' Martha Raddatz interviews the top general directing the withdrawal

ABCNews.com (Exclusive), June 28 (1754) | Luis Martinez and Martha Raddatz

The top U.S. general directing the full withdrawal of all 2,500 American troops from Afghanistan acknowledged in an exclusive interview with ABC News chief Global Affairs correspondent Martha Raddatz that the security situation in the country is "not good" and that the Taliban's push to seize parts of the country is "concerning."

Gen. Austin Scott Miller said he stands by his belief that there cannot be a military victor in Afghanistan, but he told Raddatz that as the Taliban continues with its military operations across the country, while also engaging in peace talks, "you're starting to create conditions here that doesn't -- won't look good for Afghanistan in the future if there is a push for a military takeover" that could result in a civil war.

"I think what you're seeing -- just if you look at the security situation -- it's not good," Miller told Raddatz. "The Afghans have recognized it's not good. The Taliban are on the move."

Miller explained that while the Taliban are participating in peace talks in Qatar with the government of Afghanistan and expressing sentiments favoring a political settlement "you have an offensive operation going on across the country by the Taliban."

He has previously said neither side can win militarily in Afghanistan.

"I still stand by those words," Miller said. "You're starting to create conditions here that doesn't won't look good for Afghanistan in the future if there is a push for a military takeover.

Miller said “we should be concerned” by reports of increasing Taliban violence as Taliban fighters have seized dozens of Afghan government district centers throughout Afghanistan.

“The loss of terrain and the rapidity of that loss of terrain has to be a concerning one,” Miller said, noting that it can lower morale among military forces and civilians. “So as you watch the Taliban moving across the country, what you don’t want to have happen is that the people lose hope and they believe they now have a foregone conclusion presented to them.”

Miller said Afghanistan’s new Defense Minister Bismillah Mohammadi “understands the gravity of the situation” and is moving to strategically consolidate Afghan security forces to maintain the fight against the Taliban and not necessarily defend every district center.

“They’re going to need to do that” Miller said, and “they’re going to have to choose where they want to fight the Taliban as they continue to move forward.”

Miller also said he understood concerns by residents in Kabul that the Taliban would like to attack Afghanistan’s capital in the future.

“If you go back to what the Taliban’s objectives are, they want to take over and so at some point that implies that at some point they are in Kabul,” he said. “And certainly some of them remember what it was like the last time under with the Taliban regime.”

Departing Bagram

ABC News accompanied Miller to the sprawling Bagram Air Base located 40 miles east of Kabul that is the main transportation hub for the hundreds of cargo flights that have taken out U.S. military equipment and personnel over the past two months.

“Where we’re standing right now is this equipment that’s waiting to get on aircraft and that will redeploy from Afghanistan as part of our order in retrograde,” Miller told Raddatz, using the military’s official term for the full withdrawal.

“What’s happening here is also happening at other airfields around the country, particularly in the north,” said Miller, who stressed that the objective is for a safe and orderly withdrawal that will protect American and coalition forces as they depart the country.

Ultimately Miller said that the base would be turned over to Afghan security forces, much as is happening with other U.S. inventory in the country.

“The idea is that there is equipment that stays here that supports them, certainly in a strategic airfield,” said Miller. “But again, we’re looking to make sure that they have the ability to absorb it and secure it as we go forward.

More than half of the U.S. military equipment in Afghanistan has already been shipped out of the country as the U.S. forces quickly move towards pulling out all U.S. troops from Afghanistan by Sept. 11, as ordered by President Joe Biden. But it appears that the withdrawal could be completed much sooner than that with one U.S. official telling ABC News that it could be completed as soon as July.

The pace of the operations at Bagram has been eye-opening for the experienced logistics officers in charge of the operation.

“It’s a little surreal to see things very bare and empty,” said Col. Erin Miller, a logistics officer overseeing the withdrawal. “And as we continue to move forward with the retrograde, seeing the equipment leave out, it truly is surreal.”

Maintaining security

With all the billions of dollars the United States has invested in training and equipping Afghanistan’s security forces, it will be up to them to maintain security.

“What we’ve said is this is Afghanistan, this is their country,” said Miller. “The Afghan security forces have to hold.”

The U.S. military will continue to provide Afghan forces with financial support and continued assistance for Afghan air force maintenance crews, but as the U.S. completes its withdrawal, there will not be a physical U.S. military presence in Afghanistan aside from the hundreds of personnel who will be stationed at the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

Americans will also continue to fly “over-the-horizon” reconnaissance missions and counterterrorism missions from countries in the Persian Gulf area focused on al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, not the Taliban.

While the U.S. is continuing to provide defensive airstrikes in support of Afghan ground troops during the withdrawal, U.S. Central Command’s Gen. Frank McKenzie has indicated that airstrikes later will only be directed against the two terror groups if they are planning to attack the American homeland or allies.

Miller praised the effectiveness of Afghanistan’s Air Force but indicated that the possibility of U.S. defensive airstrikes in the future will continue “to be discussed as we move forward.”

“I think we need to see how that how that lands,” he told Raddatz.

The withdrawal in Afghanistan after an almost 20-year presence has drawn comparisons to the 2011 U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, which created a security vacuum that led to the rise of ISIS and the eventual return of U.S. forces in 2014.

“Do you think about Iraq when we’re leaving here and what happened in Iraq when we left?” Raddatz asked Miller.

“Absolutely, I mean that’s on everybody’s mind,” said Miller. “These are judgments that we have to make balanced against our national interests.”

Friends in need

Miller first served in Afghanistan in December, 2001 as a special operations commander and has deployed at least eight other times to Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations.

As he prepares to leave Afghanistan for the final time Miller described mixed feelings both professionally and personally.

“On the professional side, what you’re seeing is a -- what I would call -- a historic retrograde being done under at least the threat of conflict,” said Miller. “So far, it has not been contested, at least to date. So you see that and you know the goodness that’s taking place there, watching our service members as well as our allies doing this as professionally as possible.”

He said that after 20 years he has developed friends in Afghanistan, but “I don’t like leaving friends in need and I know my friends are in need.”

“As we continue to move down the retrograde and withdraw forces, there’s less and less I can directly offer them in terms of assistance,” he said. “So that’s hard.”

For example, he said Afghan Defense Minister Mohammadi has asked him occasionally for some type of assistance -- provided in years past -- and “there’s points where I have to tell him I won’t be able to do that.”

“It’s a tough, tough business, it is tough,” said Miller.

“We knew we were going to have to leave at some point,” he continued. “I don’t know that you could find a right time, but so know what you are trying to do is, as you depart, ensure that the security assistance that can continue does continue; that you keep those lines open. So even as we discuss -- we call it ‘departure’ -- it doesn’t mean a full break of the relationship.”

Gen. Haibatullah Alizai, the commander of the Afghan Army's Special Operations Command acknowledged that there will be challenges ahead for Afghanistan's military, but he expressed confidence that his forces and Afghanistan will be able to endure after all U.S. troops have left Afghanistan.

"Absolutely, we will survive," said Alizai. "Afghanistan will survive."

"We have learned a lot from our friends and partners in the last two decades," he said. "Based on those lessons we are going to expand and extend and make our army great to make Afghanistan keep the situation in Afghanistan the same or better than today."

"I'm really optimistic about this and we are really committed to this fight against terrorism and to keep Afghanistan safe for the future," said Alizai.

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DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. Top Pentagon Cyber Official Probed Amid Disclosure Concerns
Bloomberg News, June 29 (0200) | Tony Capaccio

The Pentagon official who has been overseeing its new cybersecurity initiative for defense contractors has been placed on leave in connection with a suspected unauthorized disclosure of classified information from a military intelligence agency, according to an official document.

Katie Arrington, chief information security officer for the Pentagon's acquisition and sustainment office, was informed May 11 that "her security clearance for access to classified information is being suspended" as "a result of a reported Unauthorized Disclosure of Classified Information and subsequent removal of access by the National Security Agency," according to a memo made available to Bloomberg News.

The National Security Agency, which is part of the Defense Department, gathers some of the nation's most sensitive signals and eavesdropping intelligence from foreign adversaries, mostly via satellite. "If this preliminary decision becomes final, you will not be eligible for access to classified information" or "assignments to duties that have been designated national security sensitive," the memo from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment said.

The memo to Arrington provided no details about the possible disclosure of information. Pentagon acquisition spokesperson Jessica Maxwell said the department can't comment on any questions about Arrington's status.

'No Decisions'

“Absolutely no decisions have been reached regarding any aspect,” Arrington’s attorney, Mark Zaid, said in an email. He confirmed the content of the memo, saying that “when faced with such programmatic allegations DoD would routinely open an investigation as a matter of course. This is how the system works. Accepting an investigation, however, doesn’t prejudge the merits.”

Arrington is on administrative leave during the “preliminary investigation,” the “specific details of which have not been made known to us,” Zaid said.

“She has neither been fired nor had her security clearance revoked,” he said. “We look forward to an opportunity to completely clear her name and her return to work.”

Arrington is a former two-term Republican state representative from South Carolina who ran an unsuccessful campaign for Congress in 2018 that emphasized her private-sector cyber experience. She was brought into the Pentagon in 2019 under the category of “Highly Qualified Expert” and later competed for and attained the nonpartisan Senior Executive Service status, Zaid said.

Her official Pentagon biography says she has more than 15 years of cyber experience “through positions at Booz Allen Hamilton, Centuria Corporation, and Dispersive Networks. These positions have given her a unique experience of supporting and work with the government at large, small, and non-traditional contracting firms.”

A U.S. official familiar with the case said Arrington’s politics -- as a Republican under a Democratic president -- aren’t a factor in the investigation, and it’s not an attempt to force her from the Pentagon. The official, who discussed the case on condition of anonymity because of its sensitivity, also said the disclosure investigation isn’t connected to Arrington’s management of the Pentagon’s ambitious Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification system, or CMMC, which is being slowly implemented as Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks reviews the program inherited from the Trump administration.

Cybersecurity Certification

In 2019, Arrington took over implementing the program and attempting to build industry support for its complex certification process. She quickly emerged as a skillful ambassador, speaking at dozens of events to sell the program to the defense industry, according to Bloomberg Government analyst Chris Cornillie, who has studied the program.

Under the certification program, every company in the defense supply chain –- as many as 300,000 American companies producing everything from F-35 fighter jets to computer microprocessors to office supplies and plumbing equipment –- must undergo a cybersecurity audit performed by a third party about every three years overseen by an “accreditation board,” Cornillie said. It’s “proceeding at a halting pace.”

The proposed program "sets the standard for our defense industrial base" and "must be the first step in establishing a framework of safeguards" for industry, Senator Joe Manchin said in an email. The West Virginia Democrat, who's chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee's cyber panel, said during a May 19 hearing that Hicks "will be making significant modifications" to the certification process.

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COVID-19

5. Perna Retiring From Covid Task Force as U.S. Response Shifts

Bloomberg News, June 28 (1549) | Riley Griffin and Josh Wingrove

U.S. Army General Gustave Perna, a top official in the Covid-19 vaccine rollout in both the Trump and Biden administrations, is set to retire July 2.

Robert Johnson, an official at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, will serve as interim chief operating officer for the pandemic effort, according to Jeffrey Zients, President Joe Biden's Covid-19 coordinator.

Perna has "been helping lead our nation through a war he probably did not envision when he joined the army in 1981," Zients said in an interview. "He's been a key driver of the success that we've had."

The four-star general's departure marks yet another shift in the leadership and vision of the U.S. pandemic response. In July 2020, Perna became the co-leader of Operation Warp Speed, the Trump administration's multi-billion-dollar coronavirus vaccine and treatment effort. Working alongside Moncef Slaoui, the program's former chief scientific adviser, Perna was responsible for logistical issues, such as manufacturing and distribution of rapidly developed pharmaceutical products.

In the wake of Biden's election, the White House dropped the Warp Speed name. The program now holds a new designation, the Countermeasures Acceleration Group. Biden asked that Perna stay on as chief operations officer, according to Zients. Slaoui, meanwhile, was let go.

Assuming responsibility for the vaccine rollout posed a challenge for the new administration, Zients said.

"The way we were prepared for that was to have General Perna in his seat," he said.

Perna's departure signals a transition away from the Defense Department's outsized role in coordinating the rollout. The Countermeasures Acceleration Group will soon become part of the Department of Health and Human Services, according to Zients.

Shifting Response

Since the origin of Warp Speed, U.S. pandemic response leaders have adapted to new missions. Last summer, the effort was focused on developing vaccines and therapeutics. That shifted to securing manufacturing and distribution capabilities, and then getting millions of doses quickly into arms around the nation.

Roughly half the U.S. population has now received at least one dose, and states are flush with supply as fewer people rush to clinics. The mass-vaccination phase of the rollout is nearly complete, Zients said, and the U.S. will focus on immunizing children and developing more antiviral medicines to treat those who contract Covid-19.

HHS took a step in that direction earlier this month, announcing it would invest $3.2 billion in developing antiviral medicines to combat Covid and other viruses with pandemic potential.

Johnson, Perna's temporary replacement, is currently director of Influenza and Emerging Infectious Disease within Barda. Among his tasks will be getting doses of the vaccine from Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE to teenagers through doctor's offices and clinics.

David Kessler, a former head of the Food and Drug Administration who replaced Slaoui, will remain as as chief scientific officer of the countermeasures group.

Central Role

Perna, 61, had planned for retirement prior to the pandemic. He earlier served as commanding general of the U.S. Army Materiel Command, overseeing the fighting force's global supply chain.

His leadership and expertise have been critical to the Covid-19 response, said of Defense Lloyd J. Austin II who served with Perna in Iraq, dealing with logistics. "Thanks to his unrelenting efforts and leadership in the fight against Covid, we are one step closer to returning to a normal way of life," he said in a statement.

The general's participation was key to the success of Warp Speed, said Paul Mango, a senior HHS official under the Trump administration.

"I wish the current administration had embraced his role as vigorously as we had," he said

Zients said that Perna remained central to the vaccine rollout even after the transition to the new administration.

"When I think about the people we rely on most, General Perna is one of a very small handful," he said. "A day doesn't go by when I'm not getting his counsel and advice."

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EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

6. New Middle East airstrikes inflame Democratic war powers debate

Amid President Joe Biden's latest operations on the Iraq-Syria border, members of his party want answers

Politico Online, June 28 (1331) | Andrew Desiderio and Lara Seligman

President Joe Biden's weekend airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria are rankling Democrats frustrated by his decision to sidestep Congress — a dynamic that promises to fuel the party's long-running push to rein in presidential war powers.

Democratic lawmakers are in familiar territory over Biden's latest retaliatory airstrikes after criticizing him for striking the same Iranian proxies in the region earlier this year without first seeking congressional approval. In both instances, the president cited his authority under Article II of the Constitution, which allows him to take steps to protect U.S. service members in self-defense.

But some in Biden's party are sounding the alarm about possible abuses of that power, which presidents of both parties have employed to circumvent Congress and legally justify various military operations. The airstrikes come as lawmakers are already working to repeal the two-decade-old authorizations for the use of military force in Iraq, an effort that Biden supports.

"The danger here is that you fall into a pattern of military escalation that becomes war without voters ever having a say," Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), a top member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said in an interview. "The safest bet for a president is to just claim broad Article II authority."

Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), the Foreign Relations panel's chair, suggested he wants a broader examination of Biden's legal rationale for the strikes. The president's Article II powers have long been viewed as expansive and broad by Democratic and Republican administrations alike.

"Congress has the power to authorize the use of military force and declarations of war, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is planning to hear from the administration more on these strikes," Menendez said in a Monday statement on the airstrikes.

Complicating matters further for the Biden administration, the Iraqi government condemned the strikes on its soil on Monday, with officials calling the attack a "blatant" violation of its sovereignty.

Additionally, U.S. forces in Syria came under rocket fire late Monday in what was likely a retaliation for the strikes by the militia groups, Lt. Col. Wayne Marotto, a spokesperson for the coalition, said on Twitter. There are no injuries and the damage is still being assessed, Marotto said.

Iran-backed militia groups in Iraq and Syria have stepped up their attacks against Americans in the region in recent months, prompting Biden to approve what Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby described as "defensive precision airstrikes" targeting the groups' weapons storage facilities near the Iraq-Syria border.

"Given the ongoing series of attacks by Iran-backed groups targeting U.S. interests in Iraq, the president directed further military action to disrupt and deter such attacks," Kirby added.

The Pentagon concluded that each strike hit its intended target, and officials are currently assessing the full effects of the operation, Pentagon spokesperson Cmdr. Jessica McNulty told POLITICO on Monday. Air Force jets from U.S. Central Command bases carried out the strikes, according to a defense official.

The groups have changed tactics from using rockets to deploying unmanned aerial systems or UAS in recent months, a move that U.S. officials see as escalation. The militias have launched at least five UAS attacks against facilities used by U.S. and coalition personnel in Iraq since April, McNulty said.

But those explanations from the Pentagon might not be enough for Democrats who are already demanding classified briefings about the nature of the threat. Several already view the airstrikes as "hostilities" under the War Powers Act that thus require congressional approval.

"The administration would be better off coming to Congress and asking for a debate on a declaration of war if they foresee a need to continue to go back and forth with … Iranian proxy groups," Murphy said.

Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-Va.), a former CIA officer who has pushed to repeal aging war authorizations, said she hasn't read the administration's justification for the airstrike yet but didn't foresee the move spurring a protracted war powers debate.

"We're pretty far away from authorizing or moving towards an authorization of use of military force specific to Iranian-backed militia[s]," Spanberger said in an interview. "There's a lot that happens throughout the world, and I think that there would be significant, significant debate … within Congress, before we would look at writing such an authorization."

Since Biden directed an airstrike on a border crossing used by Iran-backed militia groups in eastern Syria in February, he has refrained from launching additional retaliatory operations amid repeated militia attacks on U.S. and Iraqi personnel. Officials said the February move was calculated to signal to Iran that the Biden administration would not tolerate such attacks through proxies in the region, while avoiding escalation into a wider conflict.

But the administration sees the growing number of UAS attacks as an escalation designed to increase pressure on Washington to withdraw troops from Iraq, said one senior defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive operations. The drones are now carrying larger and more precise payloads, this official said.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), who has led the effort in the upper chamber to repeal the 1991 and 2002 Iraq war authorizations, said the White House's Middle East coordinator Brett McGurk was planning to brief him about the strikes on Monday.

Kaine said he was concerned that the conflict would "escalate without a congressional discussion" but added that Biden's actions were a "classic" self-defense mechanism.

"I have a much more constrained view of Article II powers than most around here," Kaine added. "I think it has to be defense against attacks or imminent attacks."

Democrats also raised concerns about whether U.S. strikes against the Iran-backed militia groups are actually having a deterrent effect. The administration has described the strikes as targeted and precise in nature, but the attacks on Americans have not abated.

"Protecting American troops is a priority, but clearly continuing airstrikes is not deterring Iran-backed militias from attacking our troops in Iraq," Rep. Sara Jacobs (D-Calif.) said. "I look forward to hearing a realistic plan from the Biden administration to de-escalate — as we discussed back in February — because we can't keep launching strikes over and over again and expecting a different result."

Biden's airstrikes got a key endorsement from at least one top Democrat, though. House Intelligence Committee Chair Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) said in a statement that the strikes "were an appropriate and reasonable use of force intended for defensive purposes." Schiff added that he has asked the administration for "an assessment of whether this action will truly deter or prevent further attacks."

Republicans were mostly mum about the airstrikes as of Monday morning, but Oklahoma Sen. Jim Inhofe, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said Biden did the right thing and that the decision highlights the need to keep the 2002 Iraq war authorization on the books.

"I believe these actions are overdue and highlight the continued need for the 2002 AUMF, or — at a minimum — the need for a comprehensive replacement before a repeal can be considered, especially given that Iranian-backed militias in Iraq are an ongoing threat to American troops," Inhofe said in a statement.

Iraq's government has long been in a tough spot as it has tried to maintain good relations with both Tehran and Washington, which are adversaries. Both U.S. troops and Iranian-backed forces have aided the Iraqi government in fighting against the Islamic State terrorist group, and Iran has significant economic, cultural and religious ties with Iraq.

--*Nahal Toosi and Connor O'Brien contributed to this report*

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7. Assault victims demand military justice

Support grows in Congress for overhaul of how sexual offense cases are prosecuted

Los Angeles Times, June 29 (0300) | David S. Cloud

Amy Marsh had never seen so much alcohol consumed at a work affair when she and her husband hosted a 2018 holiday party at Travis Air Force Base in Northern California, she said. By the time she left for an off-base after-party, she said, she was drunk.

Marsh said she wasn't worried, though. The 25-year-old, who is married to an Air Force junior officer, went with a noncommissioned officer who had been a mentor to her husband since he'd moved to the base a year earlier, according to Marsh.

What happened that night and in the months afterward nearly destroyed her marriage, ruined her husband's Air Force career and left her to suffer in silence -- her husband's military colleague sexually assaulted her, she said.

"I didn't consent to anything, and I was too intoxicated to do anything about it," Marsh said in an interview.

Marsh says her treatment by the Air Force after reporting the incident two months later exemplifies what advocates and members of Congress say are long-standing deficiencies in the military system for handling sexual assault allegations.

Among other shortcomings in the system, critics say, victims are too often doubted or pressured not to bring formal charges, even more than in the civilian world. Senior officers who have responsibility for prosecuting offenders too often side with the accused, rather than the victim. Some victims find their lives destroyed while some perpetrators face little or no punishment. And many assaults go unreported, according to reports even from within the military.

Now, a push in Congress to overhaul military prosecution procedures -- started by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) nearly a decade ago -- is finally gaining traction after years of opposition from the Pentagon and its supporters in Congress.

Gillbrand's legislation would take decisions about whether to prosecute rape, murder, child pornography and other felony offenses out of the hands of commanders, instead turning them over to independent prosecutors outside the chain of command. Other uniquely military crimes such as desertion would remain under commanders' purview.

On June 22, the secretary of Defense for the first time endorsed taking decisions about prosecuting sexual assault and related crimes away from military commanders, though he stopped short of endorsing Gillibrand's more far-reaching proposal.

Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III vowed to work with Congress to enact the change, saying the reform offered "real opportunities to finally end the scourge of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the military."

In Marsh's case, the commander of her husband's unit "decided not to prosecute the alleged assailant" because "he determined that the investigation yielded insufficient evidence to prove Ms. Marsh was too intoxicated to consent to sexual activity," William E. Orr Jr, associate director of the Air Force Judiciary, said in a 2020 letter to a senator from Arizona, where Marsh's husband is now based.

The letter said "marital difficulties" between Marsh and her husband were "likely to undermine" her claims that the "alleged acts were nonconsensual." Marsh called the response "victim blaming."

The noncommissioned officer who Marsh says assaulted her refused to talk to investigators, citing his constitutional right to remain silent, according to the letter. He received "administrative action" for "misconduct" unrelated to sexual assault, it said. The man did not respond to an email and phone calls seeking comment. The Air Force said it would not comment on the case, and Marsh's military lawyer said she is not authorized to speak publicly.

The Pentagon has acknowledged for years that the number of rapes and sexual assaults in the ranks is too high. An annual Defense Department report released in May found that 6,290 service members had reported sexual assaults, rapes and other incidents of unwanted sexual contact during military service in 2020, a 1% increase from a year earlier.

The Pentagon also acknowledges that the actual number of incidents is estimated to be more than three times higher -- as many as 20,500 a year in 2018, the most recent estimate.

For women in the military, the estimated rate of sexual assaults and rapes is at its highest level since 2006, despite repeated pledges by the heads of each military service to combat the problem, according to Col. Don Christensen, a retired Air Force prosecutor and president of Protect Our Defenders, a policy and legal assistance organization that advocates on behalf of military sexual assault victims. The estimates are based on an annual Defense Department poll on the question.

In 2019, only 363 military members were charged with sexual assault or other related offenses and only 138 were convicted, a 50% reduction in prosecution and conviction rates, he said.

"Survivors have been reporting at record rates," Christensen said. "But rather than see their offenders held accountable, they are the ones who suffer the price for reporting."

Gillibrand says the armed services have failed to eradicate a "significant scourge" of sexual violence.

“Despite every promise by the Defense Department to have zero tolerance, we’ve seen a continuing decline in the number of cases going to trial and in guilty verdicts, while the number of cases continues to grow,” she said in an interview.

The bill, which she introduced with Republican Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa, a former Army officer who said she was sexually assaulted in college, would mandate training on preventing sexual assault for all members of the military. It would also give commanders the option of reviewing a prosecutor’s decision not to seek felony charges.

The measure has attracted 65 co-sponsors in the Senate, including 21 Republicans, giving it a strong chance of passing for the first time since Gillibrand introduced it in 2013. Support for a similar bill in the House introduced by Bay Area Democratic Rep. Jackie Speier has also increased.

The surge is due at least in part to the killing of Army Spc. Vanessa Guillen, a 20-year-old soldier at Ft. Hood in Texas who disappeared in April 2020; her mutilated and burned remains were found two months later.

Authorities believe another soldier, Spc. Aaron Robinson, bludgeoned Guillen to death on base. Robinson killed himself when confronted by police days before a murder charge was announced. Guillen’s family said she had been sexually harassed before her death. A subsequent investigation confirmed she had been harassed, but not by Robinson, though he had been accused in a separate harassment case.

The Army investigation into Ft. Hood, released in December, found major flaws at the sprawling base in central Texas. Commanders there allowed a “permissive environment for sexual assault and sexual harassment,” the report concluded.

Among the more than 500 female soldiers interviewed, investigators found 93 credible accounts of sexual assault from 2018 to 2020 -- but only 59 had been reported to commanders, the report said. Of 135 credible instances of sexual harassment, 72 were reported, according to the findings.

In part because of the report’s findings, Austin, in his first directive after becoming Defense secretary in January, gave senior leaders two weeks to send him reports on sexual assault prevention programs, and the next month created an independent review commission.

Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last month that he was reconsidering his opposition to removing decisions on sexual assault prosecution from the chain of command. Top commanders have long defended the system, saying it is important for maintaining discipline and readiness for a commander to have final decision-making authority over prosecution decisions.

President Biden has so far been silent on the Gillibrand bill, but as a candidate he appeared to endorse the idea. Asked at a campaign event in April 2020 whether he supported “empowering experienced military prosecutors to

make prosecution decisions for nonmilitary crimes -- serious felonies like rape, murder, and child abuse," Biden said, "Yes, yes, yes."

He added: "When I was vice president, that was my position as well. As a matter of fact, I had a real run-in with one of the members of the Joint Chiefs in the Cabinet Room on that issue," he said. "We have to change the culture of abuse in this country, especially in the armed services."

But for all the high-level support, the bill's future remains uncertain.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jack Reed (D-R.I.) said last month that he supports shifting the decision-making power only for sexual assault cases, not all felony-level charges. The Army veteran has proposed including the provision in the annual defense authorization, instead of in a stand-alone bill. The defense authorization is due to be taken up in committee in July.

Gillibrand sought to have her broader bill brought up on the Senate floor for a vote, bypassing the committee, but Reed has objected to her request. Oklahoma Sen. James M. Inhofe, another Army veteran and the top Republican on the panel, calls the measure an "imperfect, overly broad bill."

"I do not support removing the chain of command from the decision-making process on these crimes," he said, "but I do support having a debate about how to address and fix these issues at our [defense authorization] markup."

Inhofe on June 22 made public letters he solicited from the Joint Chiefs, who outlined their reservations about Gillibrand's bill while acknowledging the need for a better military response.

"I do not know if removing the commanders' authority to act on certain offenses will affect the occurrence of sexual assault," said Gen. Charles Q. Brown, the Air Force chief of staff. If Congress does remove commanders' role in prosecutions, "the scope of the offenses covered should be specific to sexual assault and harassment," he added.

The other members of the Joint Chiefs had similar views. Gillibrand in a statement called the letters "disappointing but not surprising."

The system now in place, she says, allows some commanders to show favoritism to popular or senior members of their units accused of sexual assault, or to cover up cases so their own prospects for promotion are not affected by evidence that discipline is lacking.

"It's related to command control. If the accused is more valuable to the unit than the accuser, then they may not prosecute the case," she said. "That is bias, and I believe it has no place in the decision."

Limiting the bill to sexual abuse, assault and rape would create a two-tier system of prosecution in the military, Gillibrand said. Plus, removing most felonies from commander control would make it more likely that cases like Guillen's death would be fully investigated and not just in response to public outcry, she added. Guillen's sexual harassment came to light only after her death.

Even if the broader Gillibrand proposal passes in the Senate committee and is included in the authorization bill, it could be revised when a final version of the legislation is worked out in closed-door negotiations between the House and Senate, she warns.

"I believe that if it goes through the committee, it will either be watered down or eliminated entirely," said Gillibrand. "This has been done to us before."

The Senate panel that Gillibrand chairs, the Armed Services subcommittee on personnel, asked Marsh to testify in March about what happened to her at Travis, a base southwest of Sacramento.

"The Air Force promises survivors 'maximum support' after reporting sexual assault," Marsh told the senators, "but that is not what I felt following my decision to come forward."

At first, she decided against reporting the incident, fearing retaliation in the insular and rumor-ridden world she found at the base, Marsh said in an interview. Months later, after speaking with a clergy member, she reported what happened -- but her efforts to gain justice were repeatedly frustrated, she said.

The Air Force took administrative steps to discipline the man but not for sexual assault, according to a letter it sent in 2020 to then-Sen. Martha McSally (R-Ariz.) about the case. A copy of the letter was provided to The Times by Marsh.

"The alleged assailant received administrative action for his misconduct on the night of the alleged sexual assault," the letter said. The action taken "did not involve allegations of sexual assault or nonconsensual activity," it added.

Administrative action is a procedure for handling disciplinary issues not serious enough to merit a court-martial.

The Air Force declined to comment on the action it took against the noncommissioned officer, citing privacy rules.

"Sexual assault and harassment of any kind are inconsistent with the Department of the Air Force's core values," said Ann Stefanek, an Air Force spokesperson. "Allegations of sexual assault are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly."

The Air Force's letter to McSally described its decision not to charge the noncommissioned officer who accompanied Marsh to the after-party.

It said the man touched her and "made sexualized comments" at her house before they and other members of the unit left to go to the off-base party. In addition to asserting there was insufficient evidence that Marsh was too intoxicated to give her consent, the letter said she and the noncommissioned officer engaged in "consensual sexual intercourse upon waking up the next morning."

Marsh disputed that account. "I was way too intoxicated to make any kind of decision," she said of the first encounter. Investigators later asked her how many drinks she had, but had no other way of knowing how intoxicated she was, Marsh said.

As for the incident the next morning, "I wouldn't say it was consensual. I knew it was happening. It was traumatic," she said.

Marsh said she feared repercussions for herself and her husband if she filed a complaint against the popular senior noncommissioned officer. "I knew people wouldn't believe me because everybody loved him," she said. The Times is not naming the man because he was not charged with a crime.

After speaking with an Air Force chaplain, Marsh told her husband what had happened and they decided to file a formal complaint, she said.

Marsh said she didn't initially consider filing a report with the local police, thinking the military would be "equitable." After she learned the military was unlikely to prosecute, she asked her lawyer about filing charges with civilian authorities and was told "at that point it was not possible," she said.

After her husband's commander decided against bringing sexual assault charges against the member of his unit, the base commander at Travis denied her request to open an inquiry that could lead to a court-martial, according to Marsh.

She filed multiple appeals, all of which were turned down over the next two years, she said. In one case, Marsh was told that a court-martial was impossible because she and her husband had been in marriage counseling and that would "likely undermine my case," she said. The couple requested and received a transfer to a different Air Force base; they're now in Arizona.

Meanwhile, the letter says, her husband's commander opened disciplinary proceedings against him for improper "fraternization" with enlisted personnel the night of the holiday party. A letter of reprimand was put in his personnel file and he has yet to be promoted. He now plans to leave the Air Force, Marsh said.

"After it was all over, we felt the repercussions for reporting had been worse for us," Marsh testified to senators.

"If the status quo remains unchanged, bad actors will be able to continue their military careers while victims suffer in silence."

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8. GOP senator jams up Pentagon pick over Biden's Navy plan

The nominee on hold, Susanna Blume, had been tapped to run the Pentagon's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office

Politico Online, June 28 (1720) | Paul McLeary and Connor O'Brien

Republican Sen. Roger Wicker is holding up a high-level Pentagon nominee in an attempt to push the Navy to commit to buying more amphibious ships, according to two people familiar with the situation.

The nominee, Susanna Blume, had been tapped to run the Pentagon's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office, which would give her a central role in assessing new weapons systems proposed by the armed services. The veteran of the Obama Pentagon largely sailed through her confirmation hearing in May, and her nomination has been sent to the full Senate for a vote with several other top picks for the department.

Wicker, the second-most senior Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, slowed down her nomination in an effort to pressure the Pentagon into following through with a congressionally mandated rule to buy four amphibious ships in a single "block buy," which proponents say would be cheaper than acquiring the ships individually, the people said. Defense policy legislation enacted in January mandated the contract, but the four ships were left out of President Joe Biden's fiscal 2022 budget submission. Recent comments from Navy officials make the contract's eventual award far from a sure thing.

In a statement to POLITICO, Wicker blamed the White House and professional budgeteers for undercutting Navy plans to significantly expand the fleet that have the support of shipbuilding boosters on Capitol Hill.

"Congress provided the Navy the authority and direction to pursue a block buy of amphibious ships to save hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars and help to stabilize the industrial base," said Wicker, who did not mention the hold on Blume in his statement. "But the Biden Administration has chosen to ignore this direction and the advice of Navy and Marine Corps leaders in its recent budget and shipbuilding plans. The United States doesn't need bureaucrats putting their 'armchair opinions' on warfighting above those of our men and women in uniform."

Wicker's action alone isn't enough to block Blume's confirmation if Senate Democrats want to force the issue on the Senate floor. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer could file cloture — a procedural motion to shut of debate on a nominee or bill — and force a vote that requires only a majority of senators to agree to advance her nomination.

Acting Navy chief acquisition executive Frederick Stefany recently suggested the four-ship contract might come in the fiscal 2023 budget submission, though that decision is contingent on the results of a new fleet assessment that will be conducted this summer and fall — in part by the same CAPE office that Blume has been tapped to lead.

Stefany told the Senate Armed Services Committee's Seapower subpanel on June 9 that the Navy had reached a "handshake agreement" with shipbuilder Huntington Ingalls Industries for the four-ship procurement to happen possibly by 2023.

"It's not a done deal," he said. "It's going through the process within the department for a final decision."

Wicker, whose state of Mississippi is home to Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula that builds Navy destroyers and amphibious ships, is an advocate for increasing the size of the Navy to at least 355 ships and warned that Biden's budget proposal "doesn't get us anywhere near back on the path to do that."

The block buy would involve one America-class and three San Antonio-class amphibious ships.

The Mississippi Republican, like many defense hawks on Capitol Hill, has slammed the Biden administration's $715 billion defense budget request as underfunding the military's needs. He's called out the Navy's failure to fund a second destroyer and execute the block purchase of amphibious warships, which Pentagon officials have chalked up to tough budget calls.

Wicker needled Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on the flat budget at a Senate Armed Services hearing this month, blaming "bean counters" at the White House Office of Management and Budget for limiting Pentagon resources.

"While we appreciate the suggestion by OMB budget crunchers, it is our obligation to defend this nation, and this proposed budget does not do so," Wicker said.

A Senate aide said Wicker wants the Pentagon to agree to follow through and agree to execute the package deal Congress authorized before the authority for the block purchase expires in the fall, but warned the potential savings would diminish over time if the deal is delayed. Once the Pentagon seals the deal, lawmakers will be able to allocate money to begin work on the new ships in annual defense policy and spending legislation.

The amphibious ship bundle has drawn bipartisan concerns in the Senate. Wicker and Virginia Democrat Tim Kaine sent a letter to Austin in May urging him to act immediately, extolling the budget savings and certainty to the shipbuilding industry the deal would provide. The pair warned that inaction "is causing uncertainty in the already-fragile industrial base."

Blume was part of a raft of nominees approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee on June 10, but the full Senate must consider them before they can be confirmed. Included in the vote was nominee for Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall, whose nomination has also been placed on hold by several senators.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Gary Peters (D-Mich.) — Senate Armed Services Committee members — and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) slapped procedural holds on Kendall this month. Warren is looking to extract several ethics pledges from Kendall, who previously worked for Raytheon and sits on the board of directors of Leidos. He has also consulted for various defense companies. At the same time, Peters opposes the Air Force's decision to pass over Michigan's Selfridge Air National Guard Base as the location for a new international training center for the F-35 fighter.

Also awaiting a full Senate vote are Heidi Shyu for undersecretary of defense for research and engineering, Jill Hruby for administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, Frank Rose for principal deputy administrator of the NNSA, Deborah Rosenblum for assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical and biological defense, and Christopher Maier for assistant secretary of defense for special operations/low-intensity conflict.

The two holds come as the Biden administration slowly fills in political appointees across the government, and as the Pentagon works on a new National Defense Strategy and Nuclear Posture Review, both of which are expected to be released next year.

The hold on Blume also comes at a critical time as the military rushes to modernize and innovate with new technologies to stay ahead of Chinese and Russian advances in areas such as hypersonic missiles, electronic warfare and long-range precision weapons. Blume has been working as CAPE's acting director since Jan. 20, and played a role in the fiscal 2022 defense budget request, the Biden administration's first.

Blume had previously served in the Obama administration as deputy chief of staff for programs and plans in the office of the deputy secretary of defense, and was also director of the Center for a New American Security's Defense Program until January.

Asked about the holdup, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said, "we are eager for the Senate to act on all our pending nominees. ...This certainly would include Ms. Bloom, who is eminently qualified to direct the efforts of the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office. The Secretary looks forward to serving with her."

Overall, the Navy sought to buy two amphibious ships in the fiscal 2022 budget request, a San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship along with an America-class amphibious assault ship.

The CAPE office was directly involved in last year's "Battle Force 2045" shipbuilding plan put together by then-Defense Secretary Mark Esper, and was central to building the Navy's fiscal 2022 budget submission. The plan

has found few friends on Capitol Hill because it cuts the number of ships the service planned to buy and punts on any long-range reassessment of the fleet until 2023 or after.

The push for more amphibious ships — which can transport Marines and aircraft including F-35s to hot spots quickly — and frustration with CAPE have become increasingly intertwined.

On June 14, Reps. Rob Wittman (R-Va.) and Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.) introduced legislation to withhold 50 percent of CAPE's budget until the Navy executes a "bundle-buy contract" for the four amphibious ships.

Packaging the ships in one large contract would save $720 million, they contend. "The Navy still wants these ships and has signaled they will build them," Wittman said in a statement, slamming "faceless political bureaucrats" for kicking the contracts down the road.

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9. Moderate Democrats rebuke defense budget cuts

Defense News Online, June 28 (0500) | Joe Gould

WASHINGTON -- In the upcoming budget debate, a group of moderate Democrats are trying to set a floor for 2022 defense spending before progressive Democrats try to push it lower.

Leaders of the House's Blue Dog Coalition say they oppose calls to fund any less than the requested $753 billion national defense budget for fiscal 2022—which included $715 billion for the Pentagon. The stance adds fuel to an already complicated budget debate, where Democrats are split and key Republicans are pushing for a boost.

"We believe this is a strong and sensible funding request, and we oppose calls to authorize or appropriate funding below this level," the six lawmakers said in a June 24 letter to leaders of the House Armed Services Committee and House Appropriations Committee.

The lawmakers on the letter are Reps. Mikie Sherrill, of New Jersey; Tom O'Halleran, of Arizona; Stephanie Murphy, of Florida; Ed Case, of Hawaii; Abigail Spanberger, of Virginia, and Kurt Schrader, of Oregon.

A group of six is significant in the House, where the 220-211 partisan split means Democrats can only lose four members on any party-line vote. The letter comes as some Democrats are worrying that appropriations bills will have difficulty garnering the necessary support to advance before the August recess.

"My understanding is that it isn't just my bill that's in trouble, just appropriations across the board," Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman Lucille Roybal-Allard told CQ on Wednesday. "A lot of the subcommittees are having problems for different reasons."

The House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Defense is set to release its proposed defense spending bill this week.

The letter from the Blue Dog bloc emphasizes President Joe Biden's budget request, which sets them at odds with a group of 50 House progressives who have called on Biden to "significantly" slash defense. However, it does not rule out an alliance with key Republicans, who have have said defense must rise 3-5 percent above inflation to counter a rising China.

The lawmakers joined bipartisan pushback against the Biden request's formulation of the China-focused Pacific Deterrence Initiative, saying Congress should "provide no less than $4.68 billion," for FY22, as outlined by Indo-Pacific Command's Section 1251 report. (Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has acknowledged the criticism and said the Pentagon will work with Congress to correct them.)

Also on Thursday, several Senate Republicans held a press conference to say Biden's defense spending proposal is too low, and they challenged moderate Democrats to join them. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, said moderate Democrats, and Pentagon leaders, have told him privately that they are unhappy with the budget.

"We think national defense should be the top priory of the Congress, not the last priority, and I think we have the American people behind us on this," he said. "I think there'll be tough votes for Democratic senators from states — Virginia, Georgia, Arizona — think about those states, very pro-military states."

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MIDDLE EAST

10. Biden vows to Israel: No nuclear weapon for Iran on my watch
Reuters, June 28 (1918) | Andrea Shalal and Steve Holland

WASHINGTON -- U.S. President Joe Biden, in a meeting on Monday with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, said his commitment to Israel is "iron-clad" and he looks forward to meeting with new Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett soon.

Biden, in his first meeting as president with a top Israeli official, also said Iran would not come to possess a nuclear weapon during his time in office.

"My commitment to Israel is ... ironclad," Biden told Rivlin at the start of their meeting in the Oval Office. He said the two officials would discuss a range of topics, including Iran.

"What I can say to you is that Iran will never get a nuclear weapon on my watch," Biden said.

The meeting took place just weeks after Bennett took over as Israel's new prime minister, replacing Benjamin Netanyahu. U.S. officials are working on setting up a meeting between Biden and Bennett in the coming weeks.

"He's going to invite the prime minister of Israel in the very next days in order to find a way to go forward and to exchange ideas," Rivlin said of Biden after their meeting.

The get-together comes amid concerns in Israel and Arab capitals about U.S. efforts to re-enter the Iran nuclear deal because of fears a resumption of the accord may eventually allow Tehran to acquire atomic weapons that would leave them vulnerable to Iranian intimidation or military threat.

U.S. attempts to revive the Iran nuclear deal, after then-President Donald Trump abandoned it in 2018, have been slow to make progress with Tehran insisting the United States lift all economic sanctions.

A source familiar with the Biden-Rivlin meeting said Biden was expected to tell Rivlin that the United States and Israel share the same objective, that Iran not be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon, and that Biden would stress U.S. support for Israel's right to defend itself.

The two leaders are also expected to discuss Israel's 11-day war with Gaza. The United States has pledged to resupply Israel's Iron Dome defense system, which got heavy usage during the Gaza conflict.

Rivlin is to leave office on July 7 after a seven-year term, with Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog taking over as Israeli president.

Rivlin is on his final foreign trip as president. He will meet officials at the United Nations in New York and congressional lawmakers in Washington.

--*Reporting by Andrea Shalal and Steve Holland*

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11. Baghdad Is Caught in the Middle as the U.S. and Iran Spar on Iraqi Territory

Baghdad condemned American airstrikes on Iranian-controlled militias that have been harrying U.S. operations in Iraq, fearing an escalation

New York Times, June 29 (0300), Pg. A10 | Jane Arraf

American airstrikes against two Iranian-backed militias on Monday were just the latest skirmish in a conflict between the United States and Iran that is playing out on Iraqi soil.

Iran has relied on the militias to attack American assets in Iraq, putting pressure on the United States while the two countries engage in indirect talks over their nuclear deal in Vienna. Monday's airstrikes were the second time the Biden administration has responded militarily to the harassment.

But the conflict between its two powerful allies has put Iraq squarely in the middle. Unable to rein in the Iranian-backed forces or to stop the United States from retaliating, Iraq now faces the biggest threat to its stability since the Islamic State was marching toward Baghdad in 2014.

On Monday, it strongly protested the U.S. attack on its soil.

The Iraqi government described the strikes as a “blatant and unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty and national security.” Maj. Gen. Yahya Rasool, military spokesman for Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, urged de-escalation and said Iraq did not want to be turned into an “arena for settling accounts.”

The strikes hit facilities used by two militias that the Pentagon accused of involvement in recent drone attacks on American bases in Iraq. The Pentagon said Monday that the overnight airstrikes were meant to send a message while avoiding escalation.

But Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said the United States was disrupting the security of the region.

The strikes also revived questions about the future of about 2,500 U.S. troops remaining in Iraq, where they serve as one of the country’s main security partners.

The government in Baghdad has been unable to stop attacks on its U.S. allies by the Iranian-backed militias, even though they are on the government payroll as the country tries to integrate them into its regular security forces.

The Pentagon said the strikes had hit both sides of the Iraqi-Syrian border. Two of the targets were just across the border into Syria and the third was inside Iraq.

Mr. al-Kadhimi, the prime minister, called an emergency meeting of security advisers to discuss the airstrikes. The Iraqi cabinet called them “a flagrant violation” of international law and said Iraq was in the advanced stages of dialogue with the United States on what it said were the logistical details of removing American combat forces from the country.

The United States and Iraq have been negotiating a new framework agreement governing security and other cooperation. Similar statements by the Iraqi government about an agreement to withdraw U.S. combat forces have been aimed at catering to Iranian-backed political parties and militias demanding their removal.

The American troops are in Iraq at the invitation of the government, which still relies on U.S. air power, intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance to help fight remnants of the Islamic State.

The American strikes were the latest escalation in tensions over recent revelations that Iranian-backed militias in Iraq had increasingly been using small, explosive-laden drones in late-night attacks on Iraqi bases, including those used by the C.I.A. and U.S. Special Operations units, according to American officials.

“There are clear signs of escalation,” said Farhad Alaaldin, head of the Iraq Advisory Council think tank, referring to recent attacks by the Iran-backed groups. “Really, the question for the U.S. is: ‘What does it take to say we have had enough, let’s go home?’”

The two militias that were targeted in the strikes, Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada and Kata’ib Hezbollah, are part of the Popular Mobilization Forces umbrella group, which formed to fight the Islamic State in Iraq in 2014. The forces mobilized following a fatwa, or religious edict, from Iraq’s most revered Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, when the Islamic State was nearing Baghdad in 2014.

Most but not all of the groups are Shiite Muslim, who are a majority in Iraq, and the most powerful ones are backed by Shiite Iran. In 2016, they were merged into the Iraqi government’s security force.

Despite that, the most powerful militias on the Iraqi government payroll are only nominally under control of Baghdad. The Popular Mobilization Forces are made up of more than 50 different paramilitary groups with an estimated 160,000 fighters.

Iran over the last two years has decreased its financial support for proxy paramilitary groups in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon because of the effect of U.S. sanctions, lower oil prices and the pandemic. So the dozens of militia forces under the umbrella of the Popular Mobilization Forces have relied more on Iraqi government funding and moneymaking schemes that include oil smuggling and extortion at Iraqi borders and ports, according to security analysts and government officials.

American officials said they had not relied on Iraqi intelligence to identify and monitor the targets hit overnight, and had not consulted with the Iraqi government in advance. It was not known whether the United States notified Russia in advance of the airstrikes on the Syrian side of the border, but both countries operate in the same airspace in Syria.

The group Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada said four of its fighters stationed along the border had been killed in the strikes.

“From now on, we will go to open war with the American occupation, the first action of which is targeting the enemy planes in beloved Iraq’s sky,” the group said in a statement.

Another little-known Iran-backed group, Guardians of Blood, said the first target would be American aircraft in Iraq’s Kurdish capital, Erbil.

The Popular Mobilization Forces denied Pentagon claims that weapons storehouses were targeted and said the airstrikes had targeted its fighters.

A front organization for Iranian-backed armed groups in Iraq, the Iraqi Resistance Coordination, vowed revenge and said it would continue to target U.S. forces.

“We will avenge the blood of our righteous martyrs against the perpetrators of this heinous crime and with God’s help, we will make the enemy taste the bitterness of revenge,” the group said in a statement.

Later on Monday, suspected Iranian-backed militias fired rockets at American forces in Syria, according to a U.S. military spokesman, Col. Wayne Marotto. Kurdish-Syrian media said the targets were U.S. troops near an oil field.

The U.S. airstrikes overnight Sunday were the second in the same area authorized by Mr. Biden since he came to power and the first since elections in Iran this month in which the hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi become president.

Although bodies are normally buried the same day under Islamic tradition, the Popular Mobilization Forces said it would hold a public ceremony in Baghdad on Tuesday morning to transport the remains of those killed in the airstrike and to express condemnation of the attack.

The normally calm Kurdish-led region has also come under increased attack from fighters suspected to be from the Iranian-backed militias. The latest incident was on Saturday when an explosive-laden drone landed in a village near Erbil, causing damage but no casualties.

The Kurdish region’s counterterrorism directorate on Saturday released photos of what it said were recovered drone pieces from an attack with an inscription referring to Abdu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the Iraqi militia leader killed in Baghdad in a U.S. drone strike last year along with Iranian general Qassim Suleimani, commander of the country’s Quds Force.

Iran has said it has not yet avenged the killing of General Suleimani, who helped direct wars in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen and became the face of Iran’s efforts to build a regional bloc of Shiite power well beyond Iran’s borders.

--*Eric Schmitt contributed reporting from Washington*

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12. US airstrikes follow a spate of sophisticated attacks by Iran using new drones that can avoid US surveillance

CNN.com, June 28 (1750) | Katie Bo Williams

President Joe Biden's decision to conduct airstrikes against Iran-backed militia groups on the Iraq-Syria border Sunday night follows a recent spate of attacks against US military assets in Iraq by a new class of Iranian-made drones that US officials say can evade US surveillance and defenses.

The latest of these attacks occurred earlier this month when an armed drone detonated at a dining facility at a key entry point in the Baghdad airport used by American soldiers and diplomats, a US military official told CNN. In April, a drone damaged a CIA drone hanger near Erbil.

The American airstrikes Sunday night hit operational and weapons storage facilities at two locations in Syria and one in Iraq, according to the Pentagon, targets that were "selected because these facilities are utilized by Iran-backed militias that are engaged in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq."

The strikes were initially contemplated after the April attack in Erbil, according to one source briefed on the decision, but were put on hold until this weekend, when another attack by four of the more precise Iranian drones hit the northern Iraqi city -- including one that landed near the building site for a new US consulate. There were no Americans killed or injured in the strike.

For months, US intelligence and military personnel in Iraq have been raising alarms about the risk to American forces from these newer, more sophisticated Iranian-made drones. Rather than being guided by a pilot from a remote location, some of these small, fixed-wing drones use GPS navigation, making them far less visible to US surveillance systems and impervious to jamming.

"Suffice it to say the (CIA) is now paying a great deal of attention to this issue, because those things tend to wake you up a little bit," said one former intelligence official with experience in the region.

While rocket attacks against US personnel in Iraq have become almost routine, these new Iranian-made drones, so-called suicide drones, are viewed by US intelligence and military personnel as a clear escalation by Iran — and a worrying signal to intelligence officials that the US no longer enjoys autonomy in the skies over Iraq.

New drone technology

Packed with explosives, the new drones come in varying sizes -- anywhere from a five-foot wingspan to a 12 to 15 feet, according to one US military official -- with the larger iterations carrying up to 30 kilograms of explosives.

That's far smaller and less lethal than the American-made MQ-9 Reaper drones. But current and former officials say these new Iranian-made drones pose a unique threat in part because Tehran has no deniability -- since no one else is known to have the technology. Unlike the more commonly-available Katyusha rockets often fired at US troops in Iraq, US officials say there's no question that Iran is providing them to the complex web of militia groups who seek to oust the United States from Iraq.

They are also substantially more dangerous, these sources say.

"Someone could get killed, and more so than in the past, because things are accurate," said one US military official who spoke to CNN on the condition of anonymity. "We think they're actually aiming them -- and the warheads on these things are pretty substantial."

Critical for officials tracking the threat from these new drones is that many use GPS to find their target, making them much harder to defend against.

"What we used to do in the past is try to jam the link between the person flying it and the aircraft or take it over," the former intelligence official told CNN. "That is still what we try to do, but ... now they just send it to a GPS. There's no link, there's nothing to jam, there's nothing to take over."

It also "makes them less visible," that person said. "If they're talking to somebody then they emit something, it's easier for us to find. It allows us to take it back to the point of origin."

These smaller drones are also "increasingly used by enemy forces for intelligence-gathering on US and allied bases," a spokesman for the US mission in Iraq confirmed to CNN.

Heightened political tensions

The rising attacks using these more sophisticated drones is part of an ongoing effort by Iran to use proxy militias in Iraq to try to oust the United States from the region, sources tell CNN. Complicating matters, they also come as the Biden administration is pursuing delicate negotiations with Tehran over a new nuclear deal.

The strikes also come just over a week after Iran elected a new hardline president, Ebrahim Raisi. Last week, Raisi said he would not would not meet with Biden, even if both sides agreed on terms to revive the 2015 nuclear deal under which Iran agreed to stop uranium enrichment in return for the lifting of crippling US sanctions.

Sunday's strikes are the second time Biden has chosen to use force in the region. In February, he launched airstrikes in eastern Syria against buildings that he said were used by Iranian-backed militia groups to launch attacks on US forces in Iraq.

Military officials have raised concerns about the proliferation of drones in the region for more than a year, in particular after they were used in the attack on a Saudi oil refinery in 2019. Multiple suicide drone strikes on Riyadh launched by Iranian-supplied Houthi fighters have also raised concerns.

Unlike a rocket, which must be launched from nearby the target, the drones can fly a much farther range and can be launched from anywhere. Smaller ones can simply be dropped off of a roof. The larger ones can take flight from the back of a pick-up truck, according to sources familiar with the technology.

Gen. Frank McKenzie, the top US general in the Middle East, earlier this year said "drones are the biggest threat to US forces in the region."

Then, in April, one of these drones damaged a CIA hangar in Erbil. Although officials don't necessarily believe the perpetrators knew the hanger belonged to the agency -- hangars are high-value targets no matter which government agency owns them -- the attack was still an unnerving escalation.

These drones have been used in at least five attacks since April, although in some cases, the drone has hit short of its target or been shot down by US defenses. At least some military officials have been pushing for the US to respond to the attacks.

"We don't have definitive evidence to say, it's that Iran is saying, 'do this' or 'don't do this,'" the US military official said, adding that there is "a growing belief" that some of the attacks are carried out by "rogue elements" without Iranian direction or permission.

"But who provided the weapon systems, who provided the training -- absolutely none of that is in doubt," this person said. There is "zero doubt" the technology comes from Iran.

--*CNN's Zachary Cohen contributed to this report*

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13. Number of ISIS members detained in Syria is 'untenable,' Blinken says
Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A11 | Karen DeYoung

ROME -- More than two years after they last met in person, top diplomats representing the 78-nation coalition to defeat the Islamic State gathered here Monday to assess what has happened in the interim and position themselves for the future. The news, in many respects, was not good.

While the caliphate in Syria was declared dead in 2019, "there is still more work to be done," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his global counterparts as he opened the meeting co-hosted by the United States and Italy.

Rapidly expanding in Africa, the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, is also regrouping in Iraq and Syria, where U.S. military commanders have said the potential for new recruitment is high among tens of thousands of displaced youths and children being held in detention camps run by U.S.-allied Kurds in northeastern Syria.

At least 10,000 captured Islamic State fighters - 2,000 of them foreigners from around the world, most of whose homelands have refused to take them back, even for prosecution - are in separate, makeshift Kurdish prisons.

The situation, Blinken said in remarks opening the conference, is “simply untenable.”

At a later news conference with Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, Blinken said that “there is a need for countries to take action to repatriate” their citizens among both Islamic State members and their families, “to prosecute where appropriate, to rehabilitate and reintegrate where appropriate.”

The United States, Italy and some others have repatriated and prosecuted some of their nationals. But “the strong message coming out of today’s meeting was for countries to do more,” Blinken said. “We’ll see the results in the weeks and months ahead.”

The meeting was held at the Fiera di Roma, a cavernous event complex outside the Italian capital. Shortly after it ended, many of the same diplomats reconvened in a separate meeting of the international coalition on Syria. It, too, had suspended in-person meetings during the coronavirus pandemic.

At the Syria event, discussion centered on how to persuade or pressure Russia not to veto an upcoming U.N. Security Council vote on a resolution to continue to allow the United Nations to convoy food and medicine across a single corridor on the Turkish border into Syria. From there it is distributed to millions more displaced, not by the Islamic State, but by Syria’s decade-old civil war.

That war has been more or less won by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, with massive assistance from Russian airstrikes and Iranian-backed militias. Remaining opposition forces, including some affiliated with al-Qaeda, have been pushed into a northwest corner of the country, along with millions of refugees who ended up there after fleeing fighting elsewhere.

When the United Nations started delivering humanitarian aid in 2014, there were four border crossings. In 2020, however, Russia twice used its veto threat to insist the other three be closed, and limit the one remaining, at Bab al-Hawa, to a six-month mandate that ends at midnight July 10. The United Nations has warned that millions inside Syria are at risk of starvation, and desperately need medical aid, including for the coronavirus.

Russia has accused the Americans and their allies of trying to undercut Syria’s territorial sovereignty, and has said aid should only be delivered across the lines of internal fighting - meaning it should all come through Damascus.

Asked how the administration would pressure the Russians, and what officials would do in the event of another veto, a senior State Department official said that "what's been made clear all the way from the president on down ... is that we want to have a constructive relationship with Russia on areas where we can work together, and Syria is one of them."

In his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva this month, Biden "raised the issue directly" and made it clear the administration wants not only for the Bab al-Hawa crossing to remain open, but also for others to be reopened, said the official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks.

"If we are not able to work together on this basic human need," the official said, "that would make it difficult to work with the Russians on anything else with regard to Syria more broadly."

Blinken also announced that the administration would provide an additional $436 million in humanitarian assistance to Syrians inside the country, and to countries in the region hosting millions of Syrians who fled during the civil war.

Blinken and Di Maio were asked at their news conference whether they had discussed Italy's relationship with China during bilateral talks. In 2019, despite U.S. and European warnings, a previous Italian government signed on to China's Belt and Road initiative in hopes of increased trade and investment.

But since Beijing's crackdown on Hong Kong, and its more recent underperformance in providing promised covid-19 aid to Italy, Rome has eased away from the agreement.

"Italy is a strong trade partner of China," Di Maio said. "We've enjoyed relations that have lasted for years. But they cannot and do not interfere with the alliance of values we have with the United States, with NATO and the European Union."

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AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

14. It's imminent: After nearly 20 years U.S. to leave Bagram
Associated Press, June 29 (0209) | Kathy Gannon

BAGRAM, Afghanistan -- For nearly 20 years, Bagram Airfield was the heart of American military power in Afghanistan, a sprawling mini-city behind fences and blast walls just an hour's drive north of Kabul. Initially, it was a symbol of the U.S. drive to avenge the 9/11 attacks, then of its struggle for a way through the ensuing war with the Taliban.

In just a matter of days, the last U.S. soldiers will depart Bagram. They are leaving what probably everyone connected to the base, whether American or Afghan, considers a mixed legacy.

“Bagram grew into such a massive military installation that, as with few other bases in Afghanistan and even Iraq, it came to symbolize and epitomize the phrase ‘mission creep’,” said Andrew Watkins, Afghanistan senior analyst for the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

U.S. Central Command said last week that it’s well past 50% done packing up Bagram, and the rest is going fast. American officials have said the entire pullout of U.S. troops will most likely be completely finished by July 4. The Afghan military will then take over Bagram as part of its continuing fight against the Taliban — and against what many in the country fear will be a new eruption of chaos.

The departure is rife with symbolism. Not least, it’s the second time that an invader of Afghanistan has come and gone through Bagram.

The Soviet Union built the airfield in the 1950s. When it invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to back a communist government, it turned it into its main base from which it would defend its occupation of the country. For 10 years, the Soviets fought the U.S.-backed mujahedeen, dubbed freedom fighters by President Ronald Reagan, who saw them as a front-line force in one of the last Cold War battles.

The Soviet Union negotiated its withdrawal in 1989. Three years later, the pro-Moscow government collapsed, and the mujahedeen took power, only to turn their weapons on each other and kill thousands of civilians. That turmoil brought to power the Taliban who overran Kabul in 1996.

When the U.S. and NATO inherited Bagram in 2001, they found it in ruins, a collection of crumbling buildings, gouged by rockets and shells, most of its perimeter fence wrecked. It had been abandoned after being battered in the battles between the Taliban and rival mujahedeen warlords fleeing to their northern enclaves.

After dislodging the Taliban from Kabul, the U.S.-led coalition began working with their warlord allies to rebuild Bagram, first with temporary structures that then turned permanent. Its growth was explosive, eventually swallowing up roughly 30 square miles.

“The closure of Bagram is a major symbolic and strategic victory for the Taliban,” said Bill Roggio, senior fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

“If the Taliban is able to take control of the base, it will serve as anti-U.S. propaganda fodder for years to come,” said Roggio who is also editor of the foundation’s Long War Journal.

It would also be a military windfall.

The enormous base has two runways. The most recent, at 12,000 feet long, was built in 2006 at a cost of $96 million. There are 110 revetments, which are basically parking spots for aircraft, protected by blast walls. GlobalSecurity, a security think tank, says Bagram includes three large hangars, a control tower and numerous support buildings. The base has a 50-bed hospital with a trauma bay, three operating theaters and a modern dental clinic. There are also fitness centers and fast food restaurants. Another section houses a prison, notorious and feared among Afghans.

Jonathan Schroden, of the U.S.-based research and analysis organization CNA, estimates that well over 100,000 people spent significant time at Bagram over the past two decades. “Bagram formed a foundation for the wartime experience of a large fraction of U.S. military members and contractors who served in Afghanistan,” said Schroden, director of CNA’s Center for Stability and Development.

“The departure of the last U.S. troops from there will likely serve as the final turn of the page for many of these folks with respect to their time in that country,” he said.

For Afghans in Bagram district, a region of more than 100 villages supported by orchards and farming fields, the base has been a major supplier of employment. The U.S. withdrawal effects nearly every household, said Darwaish Raufi, district governor.

The Americans have been giving the Afghan military some weaponry and other material. Anything else that they are not taking, they are destroying and selling it to scrap dealers around Bagram. U.S. officials say they must ensure nothing usable can ever fall into Taliban hands.

Last week, the U.S. Central Command said it had junked 14,790 pieces of equipment and sent 763 C-17 aircraft loaded with material out of Afghanistan. Bagram villagers say they hear explosions from inside the base, apparently the Americans destroying buildings and material.

Raufi said many villagers have complained to him about the U.S. leaving just their junk behind.

“There’s something sadly symbolic about how the U.S. has gone about leaving Bagram. The decision to take so much away and destroy so much of what is left speaks to the U.S. urgency to get out quickly,” said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the U.S.-based Wilson Center.

“It’s not the kindest parting gift for Afghans, including those taking over the base,” he said.

Inevitably, comparisons to the former Soviet Union have arisen.

Retired Afghan Gen. Saifullah Safi, who worked alongside U.S. forces at Bagram, said the Soviets left all their equipment when they withdrew. They “didn’t take much with them, just the vehicles they needed to transport their soldiers back to Russia,” he said.

The prison in the base was handed over to the Afghans in 2012, and they will continue to operate it. In the early years of the war, for many Afghans, Bagram became synonymous with fear, next only to Guantanamo Bay. Parents would threaten their crying children with the prison.

In the early years of the invasion, Afghans often disappeared for months without any reports of their whereabouts until the International Red Committee of the Red Cross located them in Bagram. Some returned home with tales of torture.

“When someone mentions even the word Bagram I hear the screams of pain from the prison,” said Zabihullah, who spent six years in Bagram, accused of belonging to the faction of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a warlord designated a terrorist by the U.S. At the time of his arrest it was an offense to belong to Hekmatyar’s party.

Zabihullah, who goes by one name, was released in 2020, four years after President Ashraf Ghani signed a peace deal with Hekmatyar.

Roggio says the status of the prison is a “major concern,” noting that many of its prisoners are known Taliban leaders or members of militant groups, including al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. It’s believed about 7,000 prisoners are still in the prison.

“If the base falls and the prison is overrun, these detainees can bolster the ranks of these terror groups,” Roggio said.

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15. Taliban assaults motivate Afghans to rally and stand up

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A10 | Pamela Constable and Ezzatullah Mehrdad

KABUL -- Just a few miles north of the Afghan capital, a sleepy village of apple and grape orchards sprang to attention last week. Old rifles were brought out from closets and several hundred men gathered excitedly on the main street, hoisting their battered weapons and raising war whoops for the news cameras.

There was no danger of imminent attack, but the villagers were caught up in the spirit of a government call to action that has sounded across the country. In less than a week, militia members and armed citizens in more than a dozen provinces have rushed to join Afghan security forces battling the Taliban.

“We have buried hundreds of young men during this war, many in uniform,” said Sayed Mahmoud Sadat, 52, an agricultural worker and longtime loyalist of the local ex-militia commander who orchestrated Wednesday’s rally in Khodaman village. Such seasoned fighters, he said, were “sidelined for a long time, but I always knew our generation would be needed sooner or later.”

Jamshid Wahdat, 32, a law school graduate who helped to arrange the event, was a child when his family returned to the village after the Taliban regime was overthrown in 2001. It is a community of ethnic Tajiks that fiercely opposed the takeover by the ethnic Pashtun Taliban.

“I couldn’t recognize our house. They had burned everything to ashes,” he said. The rally, he added, was “to show the armed forces that they are not alone. We need to defend our lands, our houses and ourselves.”

As Afghan President Ashraf Ghani met with President Biden and members of Congress last week, his country faced a dramatic surge in Taliban attacks that began in the north but rapidly spread to other regions. The defense forces have been unable to stem the offensive, and Afghan officials are concerned that the planned pullout of U.S. troops by September could leave the country dangerously vulnerable to a Taliban takeover.

At the same time, the Kabul government’s call for able-bodied Afghans to join in the fight - an extraordinary appeal to former armed rivals and local renegades that has so far met with surprising success - seems partly aimed at convincing U.S. officials that despite its failures on the battlefield, Ghani’s government and its anti-Taliban cause enjoy strong public support and deserve more help.

Some critics have warned that relying on former ethnic militia leaders and informal local fighting groups could weaken government control of the military effort and risk a revival of abusive and predatory behavior that marred past anti-Taliban campaigns, such as the suffocation of hundreds of Taliban prisoners inside shipping containers by an ethnic Uzbek warlord whose forces have now been invited to join the national campaign.

“Ghani came to power with an anti-warlord narrative and plan for disarming the people. Now his government is arming people,” said Hafiz Mansour, a legislator from the opposition Jamiat-i-Islami party that once led the anti-Taliban fight. “The government should show leadership and manage guns in a useful way. These forces should not become lawbreakers.”

But some government advisers said that many onetime militia bosses have now become invested in the country’s stability and economic success and that like other Afghans who have experienced the fruits of democracy since the Taliban regime fell in 2001, they don’t want to see it collapse or be replaced by repressive religious rule again.

“Everyone has a stake in the system now,” said one senior government security adviser, speaking on the condition of anonymity to speak freely. “Even our strongest critics have enjoyed the freedoms that came with civilian rule. Nobody wants things to go backwards. Our forces can’t be in every village, and we are counting on the people to help. They are not trying to grab power. They are defending the system.”

Despite the enthusiastic response to the government’s call to arms, however, the Taliban is still gaining ground. In the past week, fighters have reportedly seized more than 20 districts and attacked more than 80. In Kunduz province, a critical gateway to the northern border, militia fighters have swarmed the capital city to help besieged government troops, but the fighting has continued unabated and the surrounding districts are in Taliban hands.

Taliban officials, who signed a peace deal with U.S. negotiators last year, have dropped out of follow-up talks with Afghan leaders and now boast that they have triumphed on the battlefield. In a long online statement last week, a Taliban spokesman said that the group has cleared “large regions” of the country with local cooperation, and that it hopes that “recent developments” will restore peace and security to the country.

The statement said the group “reassures all citizens” that none will be mistreated and invited all members of the armed forces to “embrace the open arms” of their Islamic government and live safely in “liberated” zones under its control. It said that no markets, schools, hospitals, private property or other facilities would be harmed, and that women would be granted “due Islamic rights” and opportunities.

The Taliban statement also fiercely criticized the local fighters who have been newly encouraged by the government, referring to them as “arbakis,” or former local militia members who were notoriously abusive, and accusing them of “fanning the flames of war” to maintain a grip on power. It said such groups will receive “stern” treatment from their Islamic authorities.

But the actual picture in many parts of the country under Taliban assault and control, as reported by Afghan officials and media, is one of increasing conflict and fear. In the past week, the pattern of insurgent attacks has both widened and intensified, with frequent reports that they now involve military vehicles and weaponry that were once in the hands of U.S. or Afghan forces.

Officials and international observers have warned that more than half a dozen provincial capitals could fall into Taliban hands. Perhaps even more disturbing, the insurgents made new inroads as they moved south last week through a corridor of provinces where former ethnic Tajik militias once battled them ferociously.

The major U.S. military base is located in this region, known as the Shomali Plain, and so is the village of Khodaman. The capital lies just a half-hour drive farther south.

Mir Adil Shah, 57, a lifelong village resident, said he first fought against occupying Soviet troops when he was 17, fought the Taliban at home before they seized power in 1996, then fled north to the Panjshir Valley and fought the extremists under the command of Afghanistan’s late militia leader Ahmed Shah Massoud. He said he had lost “dozens of relatives” in those years at war.

“This is my motherland. I have been fighting for it since I was a kid,” Shah said Thursday. Now that they have been called to arms by the government, he said, “all our people stand ready to fight them again.”

“As long as I am alive,” he said, “I will never lay down my gun.”

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16. Violence intensifies across Afghanistan's central and northern provinces
Reuters, June 28 (1025) | Not Attributed

KABUL -- Taliban militants have taken over a district, launched attacks on checkpoints and cemented control over a border trade crossing, officials said on Monday, as clashes intensify in Afghanistan's central and northern provinces.

Violence has risen sharply around the country as foreign forces work towards withdrawing by Sept. 11 and peace talks in Qatar have failed to make significant progress.

The Taliban have launched a wave of offensives around the country, particularly in the north, outside of their southern strongholds.

In central Bamiyan province, normally relatively free of conflict, Taliban fighters attacked several security checkpoints, resulting in heavy clashes overnight, according to Humayoon Elkhani, spokesman for Bamiyan's provincial police.

In central Ghazni province, Muqur district fell to the Taliban after months of being under siege, according to a member of the provincial council and a security source. A health centre in the district was bombed on Monday morning, according to provincial health director Zaher Shah Nekmal, injuring five health workers.

In northern Badakhshan province, the Taliban launched coordinated attacks on five districts overnight but were fought back by Afghan security forces, according to a spokesperson for the provincial government.

The Taliban also still has maintained control of Shir Khan Bandar, a significant border crossing town with Tajikistan, after seizing it last week.

Shafiqullah Atayi, chairman of Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said the Taliban had appointed their own members to run the administration offices but that trade had stopped. A Taliban spokesman said they had appointed officials to run the transit point and it was open for people to cross.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's capital Kabul suffered severe power outages in recent days after a power pylon in central Parwan province was blown up on the weekend by unknown attackers.

A spokesperson for national power utility Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat said around 35 power pylons had been blown up in the last six months, but they were not clear on who was behind the explosions.

--*Reporting by Kabul bureau*

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17. Reagan carrier strike group now operating in 5th Fleet amid Afghanistan withdrawal
Military Times Online, June 28 (1828) | Diana Stancy Correll

The aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan and its carrier strike group are now operating in the 5th Fleet — a first for the carrier since 2012.

The Navy said that the Reagan carrier strike group will "operate and train alongside regional and coalition partners" and provide airpower to assist U.S. and coalition forces while the U.S. withdraws troops from Afghanistan.

"Ronald Reagan's flexible presence is a key element in helping assure our regional partners that the United States remains committed to ensuring freedom of the seas," Capt. Fred Goldhammer, Ronald Reagan's commanding officer, said in a Navy news release. "The crew aboard Ronald Reagan seeks to preserve 'peace through strength' and remains ready to answer the call."

The Wall Street Journal first reported in May that the Reagan was poised to head to CENTCOM's area of operations to assist with the Afghanistan withdrawal, and that the aircraft carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower would depart the region in July to return to Norfolk, Virginia.

The report said that the carrier is unable to operate safely if it exceeds the July timeframe, given that the carrier was deployed in 2020 and subsequently deployed again in February 2021, according to unnamed defense officials.

Earlier this month, the Reagan and its carrier strike group headed into the South China Sea for the first time during its 2021 deployment to conduct maritime security operations, flight operations, maritime strike exercises, and coordinated tactical training between surface and air units.

"Our commitment to regional stability strengthens those we sail with and discourages anyone who would seek to disrupt international norms, no matter where we deploy in the world," Rear Adm. Will Pennington, commander of Task Force 50 and Carrier Strike Group 5, said in a Navy news release.

The Reagan's carrier strike group includes guided-missile cruiser Shiloh, guided-missile destroyer Halsey, along with Carrier Air Wing 5 and the embarked staffs of Task Force 70 and Destroyer Squadron 15.

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INDO-PACIFIC

18. Outgoing USFK commander vows to continue support for alliance
Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 29 (0103) | Choi Soo-hyang

SEOUL -- Outgoing U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) Commander Gen. Robert Abrams on Tuesday vowed to continue supporting the "ironclad" alliance between South Korea and the United States, describing his time here as a "personal honor and privilege."

Abrams made the remarks during an honor guard ceremony hosted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Won In-choul ahead of USFK's change of command slated for Friday, according to the military.

Expressing gratitude to "28,500 men and women of USFK for their service and dedication away from home for the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula," Abrams said he will continue to "actively support and back the alliance."

The U.S. general said his "time as a member of the ironclad ROK-U.S. alliance was a personal honor and privilege, and full of indelible memories," adding that he is "certain this alliance will emerge greater and stronger going forward." ROK stands for South Korea's official name, the Republic of Korea.

Won said Abrams showed "tremendous leadership during the extremely difficult circumstances of COVID-19 to maintain the utmost ROK-U.S. combined defense posture," and asked for his continued support for the advancement of the alliance.

Abrams led the USFK since November 2018.

Gen. Paul LaCamera, who most recently served as Army Pacific commander, will replace Abrams to lead the USFK. The USFK commander also heads the United Nations Command and the South Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command.

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19. Can Biden Solve the North Korea Puzzle?
Biden opened the door for talks with Kim Jong Un, but Pyongyang is playing hard to get
ForeignPolicy.com (Report), June 28 (1639) | Robbie Gramer

Five months into office, U.S. President Joe Biden has his hands full with foreign-policy crises. But there's one conspicuously missing from the headlines: North Korea.

It's only a matter of time before that changes, according to current and former U.S. officials and other experts. North Korea has a penchant for turning up the heat on Washington and its Asian allies through saber-rattling or provocative missile tests. Most analysts agree the next major North Korea crisis is a matter of when, not if.

All the while, U.S. diplomacy toward North Korea seems to be stuck in the mud, with no clear opportunities on the horizon for Biden to curtail North Korea's nuclear weapons program—a national security problem that has vexed many of his predecessors. Like them, Biden faces the same problem: how to convince the world's most insular and recalcitrant regime to give up its nuclear weapons program when that regime appears to base its very survival on having the bomb. Former U.S. President George W. Bush labeled North Korea as part of an "axis of evil" and then engaged the regime in so-called "six-party talks" that ultimately foundered. Former U.S. President Barack Obama tried a strategy of "strategic patience"—sanctioning North Korea while holding out for talks and a possible easing of sanctions if it behaved better—to no avail. Former U.S. President Donald Trump tried personal diplomacy: high-profile summits, complete with flashy photo ops with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and follow-up "love letters." That, too, failed to get North Korea to renounce its nuclear weapons program.

Top Biden administration officials have opened the door to talks in recent weeks, only to see those overtures slapped down by North Korean officials. That could leave the administration in limbo on North Korea as the hermit kingdom continues to make advances on its ballistic missile and nuclear program. In January, North Korea displayed a new submarine-launched ballistic missile during a military parade that showcased its rapidly advancing missile capabilities.

Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, said he saw an "interesting signal" from Kim in a recent speech, where the North Korea leader said the country would prepare for both "dialogue and confrontation." In a more direct overture to Pyongyang, Biden's new special envoy for North Korea, Sung Kim, said the United States is willing to meet with North Korea "anywhere, anytime, without preconditions" during a visit to South Korea last week.

In a scornful and oblique statement, Kim Yo Jong, a senior North Korean official and sister of leader Kim Jong Un, seemed to dismiss the prospect of talks with the United States—at least for now. "It seems that the U.S. may interpret the situation in such a way as to seek a comfort for itself," she said in a statement sent to the state-run Korean Central News Agency. "The expectation, which they chose to harbor the wrong way, would plunge them into a greater disappointment."

The U.S. State Department declined to comment, including regarding whether North Korea responded through formal channels to Sung Kim's invitation to talk, instead referring the matter to the White House. A White House National Security Council (NSC) spokesperson said the administration is "under no illusions" about the challenges of diplomacy with North Korea. The spokesperson stressed that the administration's goal remained the "complete denuclearization" of the Korean Peninsula, and diplomacy remains the best way to achieve that objective. "We will wait to see if comments from [North Korea] are followed up with any more direct communications about a potential path forward," the spokesperson added.

Getting North Korea to the negotiating table is one matter, but making any progress on talks is an entirely different uphill battle. When South Korean President Moon Jae-in visited the White House last month, Biden outlined the difficulties of diplomacy with North Korea. “We closely studied what others have tried and what worked and what hasn’t worked. And, you know, we’re under no illusions how difficult this is. None whatsoever,” Biden said. “The past four administrations have not achieved the objective. It’s an incredibly difficult objective.”

If North Korea changes its tune and signals a willingness to talk, there is another complicating factor at play: the pandemic. U.S. and South Korean officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, concede little is known about the spread of the coronavirus in North Korea, considered the most secretive and closed-off country in the world. “Because of a lot of unknowns of COVID in North Korea, the option for in-person meetings could be very limited,” said one South Korean official.

The administration in April announced it concluded a monthslong policy review on North Korea. It gave few details publicly on the review but said it would pursue “calibrated diplomacy” with North Korea.

Among the officials driving this policy are Sung Kim; Kurt Campbell, the NSC’s top official overseeing Indo-Pacific affairs; Edgard Kagan, another top NSC official for East Asia; and Jung Pak, a former CIA analyst and expert on North Korea who joined the Biden administration as deputy assistant secretary of state. Biden’s pick to be his top diplomat on Asia, Daniel Kritenbrink, is still awaiting Senate confirmation, and Biden has yet to name his ambassador to South Korea.

With diplomacy stalled, pressure has ramped up on the administration to toughen its military posture in the region. Trump froze large-scale military exercises with South Korea in 2018 to pave the way for diplomacy with Kim. The Biden administration has not yet indicated how it will move forward with major annual joint military exercises with South Korea this year, which usually take place in August.

“Military readiness is a top priority. Our combined military training events are a principal method of ensuring our combined Alliance readiness,” John Supple, a U.S. Department of Defense spokesperson said when approached for comment. “These training events are non-provocative, defensive in nature, and are intended to maintain alliance readiness to ensure we are ready to ‘fight tonight.’ Any decision on the scope, scale, and timing of exercises will be made bilaterally with these factors in mind.”

“We really need to beef up missile defense capabilities to keep pace with how quickly North Korea’s missile capability is improving and diversifying and expanding in terms of numbers and types of systems,” said Markus Garlauskas of the Atlantic Council and formerly a top U.S. intelligence analyst on North Korea at the National Intelligence Council. He said the United States should consider restarting large-scale military exercises and sending more missile radar and missile defense systems to the region.

“At the rate the North Korea threat is evolving, we not only have to get back to where we were, [but] we have to improve our posture to stay ahead.”

--*Foreign Policy reporter Jack Detsch contributed to this report*

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20. Japan minister says necessary to ‘wake up’ to protect Taiwan
Reuters, June 28 (1657) | Not Attributed

WASHINGTON -- Japan’s deputy defense minister on Monday warned of the growing threat posed by Chinese and Russian collaboration and said it was necessary to “wake up” to Beijing’s pressure on Taiwan and protect the island “as a democratic country.”

Speaking to the Hudson Institute think tank, State Minister of Defence Yasuhide Nakayama questioned whether the decision of many countries, including Japan and United States, to follow a “one-China” policy that has recognized Beijing rather than Taipei since the 1970s would stand the test of time.

“Was it right?” he asked at the online event, referring to how future generations will judge policymakers on the issue. “I don’t know.”

Nakayama said democratic countries had to protect each other and noted that he had in the past referred to Taiwan as a “red line.”

“So we have to protect Taiwan as a democratic country.”

Nakayama noted that Japan and Taiwan were geographically close, and added that if something happened in Taiwan it would affect Japan’s Okinawa prefecture, where U.S. forces and their families are based.

Nakayama highlighted growing threats posed by China in space, in missile technology, in the cyber domain and in nuclear and conventional forces, and said that under Xi Jinping’s leadership it had “aggressive, aggressive ... thought and will.”

“So wake up. We have to wake up,” he said.

Nakayama said it was necessary to show deterrence to China and also Russia, which had stepped up exercises in Japanese-claimed territory and near the U.S. territory of Hawaii.

“You can see China and Russia collaborating together, when they are doing some military exercise around our neighbors,” Nakayama said, adding that he wanted to see the United States “stronger, stronger and stronger.”

Nakayama referred to Tokyo's decision to scrap its one-percent-of-GDP cap on defense spending. He said Japan needed to spend more on weapons, including missiles, and cut costs, given that 50 percent of its budget went on personnel.

Washington and Tokyo should boost technological collaboration in the face of closer Chinese and Russian cooperation, he said.

--*Reporting by David Brunnstrom*

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CHINA

21. Russia, China declare friendship treaty extension, hail ties
Associated Press, June 28 (0807) | Vladimir Isachenkov

MOSCOW -- The leaders of Russia and China on Monday hailed increasingly close ties between their countries and announced the extension of a 20-year-old friendship treaty, a show of unity amid their tensions with the West.

Speaking in a video call with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the treaty signed in July 2001 in Moscow helped take relations between Moscow and Beijing to an "unprecedented height" and would be extended for another five years.

The Russian leader noted that the coordination of foreign policy efforts by Russia and China has played a "stabilizing role in global affairs."

Xi in his opening remarks emphasized the importance of a "strategic cooperation" between Moscow and Beijing in defending their common interests on the global stage. He added that Russia and China have worked to uphold a "true multilateralism and global justice."

Putin and Xi have developed strong personal ties to bolster a "strategic partnership" between the two former Communist rivals as they vie with the West for influence and face soaring tensions in relations with the U.S. and its allies. While Moscow and Beijing in the past rejected the possibility of forging a military alliance, Putin said last fall that such a prospect can't be ruled out entirely.

During Monday's call, Putin congratulated Xi on the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China celebrated Thursday, saying that China is marking it with "new achievements in the country's social-economic development and on the international stage" and recalling Soviet support for the Chinese communists.

Moscow marked the CPC's centennial by sharing historic documents on Soviet-Chinese links with Beijing.

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EUROPE

22. Ukraine, US launch Black Sea drills after warship incident
Agence France-Presse, June 28 (1236) | Dmytro Gorshkov

Ukraine and the United States launched joint naval exercises in the Black Sea on Monday in a show of Western cooperation with Kiev as it faces off with Russia.

The drills come just days after the British navy's HMS Defender passed near Russian-annexed Crimea in the Black Sea, with Moscow saying it fired warning shots at the destroyer to ward it off.

The Sea Breeze drills -- which have taken place 21 times since 1997 -- will involve some 5,000 military personnel from more than 30 countries.

The exercises will last two weeks and involve around 30 ships, including the missile destroyer USS Ross.

Ukrainian navy commander Oleksiy Neizhpapa said during an opening ceremony in Odessa that the exercises would send a "powerful message to maintain stability and peace in our region."

Russia on Monday denounced "the scale and aggressiveness" of the drills which "hardly contribute to security in the Black Sea region".

The Russian arms control delegation in Vienna on Twitter urged the US to "show transparency in withdrawing modern weapons, ammunition and equipment from Ukraine" after the exercises are over.

Russia said it fired warning shots last Wednesday at the HMS Defender after what it said was a violation of its territorial waters.

Britain said it was making "an innocent passage through Ukrainian territorial waters in accordance with international law".

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and claims the waters around the peninsula as part of its territory. Most countries do not recognise the takeover and stand behind Ukraine's claims to the waters.

Washington is a key ally of Kiev in its conflict with Moscow over Crimea and pro-Moscow separatist regions in eastern Ukraine.

In 2018 Russian forces boarded and took control of three Ukrainian naval ships off the Black Sea peninsula.

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RUSSIA

23. Russian snipers are picking off Ukrainian soldiers
Washington Examiner Online, June 28 (0700) | Abraham Mahshie

HRANITNE VILLAGE, Ukraine front line -- Ukrainian soldiers are taught to drop in their trench position and stay down for at least 15 minutes if a sniper's bullet misses them. The hope is the sniper will believe them dead. But elite Russian snipers usually don't miss.

In a hand-dug trench a half-mile from the front line in the restive Donbas region on eastern Ukraine, bright green grass grows and red poppies flower just inches above the heads of Ukrainian soldiers manning their position.

The nearby village of Hranitne is like many in post-industrial eastern Ukraine. A showy, Soviet-era rectangular City Hall, an abandoned agricultural factory converted to a military installation, and a central plaza with a stepped platform where a statue of Lenin once stood.

But this village is different.

Schoolchildren cross a military checkpoint from occupied territory to Ukrainian-controlled territory so they can continue attending the same school. Young soldiers walk the streets. Many of them volunteered from wealthier western Ukraine to fight Russian officers and commandos and their own Ukrainian brethren who have taken sides with Vladimir Putin in yet another protracted conflict spurred by the Russian president.

The war between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists in the semi-states known as the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics is largely contained to a no man's land in empty fields on the outskirts of small villages like this. Tree lines are where the opposing sides establish their positions, digging trenches to store weapons and provisions and to hide armored vehicles, should they be necessary.

In this low-intensity conflict, most soldiers are dying from sniper fire.

"At night, you see nothing," said a Ukrainian soldier who gave his name as Unit Commander "Marhanets" to the Washington Examiner for operational security.

"Right now, there is no sniper at this position, but they are there. We received a warning because their intelligence position is nearby," Marhanets said, a green face mask pulled up just below his eyes to conceal his identity.

All day, every day, he and the other dozen or so troops in his unit take turns peering through periscope binoculars positioned just below camo netting and fixed on the enemy front line.

They used to watch the enemy dig trenches until spring rains came and the grass grew taller. Now, they stare at a tree line across the field, looking for movement.

Marhanets knows two comrades hit by sniper fire. One died. One survived. The one who survived is still in the hospital, paralyzed from the neck down.

In the underground network of sandbag positions and lookout spots, any peek above ground level is potentially lethal.

“There’s a little window where you look up, and the sniper hits exactly where you look,” he said.

In 2015, shortly after the conflict broke out, Marhanets was on the front line with no night-vision goggles or thermal vision technology.

“We were in a position at the north, and on the radio, we captured a signal, that’s how we knew a diversion group was moving towards our direction,” he said. “But what can you do? You cannot make your eyes see better, you cannot make your ears hear better. You are just sitting and waiting, and there’s nothing you can do to know when they will arrive. And when you have this vision, it really helps to see the situation.”

Russian snipers with night-vision technology can see Ukrainian movements and kill the soldiers one by one. Enemy intelligence groups known as “sabotage groups” can walk right up to a position, shielded by darkness, and kill soldiers directly in the trench.

Then, American assistance began to arrive.

It included sniper rifles, thermal optics, laser rangefinders, optical detection systems, and electronic warfare systems.

“There’s actually a very dangerous situation in eastern Ukraine in terms of the sniper attacks that we see on Ukrainian forces,” Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia Laura Cooper told the Washington Examiner in a May Pentagon interview.

“There’s also a number of other systems that we’re providing that are effective and fill critical requirements for the Ukrainian armed forces. That includes sniper rifles, counter-artillery radars, grenade launchers,” she added, noting that nonlethal assistance includes military medical equipment and armored Humvees. “I want to also be clear that this isn’t something we invent in Washington. This is something that responds to what the Ukrainian armed forces themselves have identified.”

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba underscored the importance of the American support in a meeting with the Washington Examiner in Kyiv.

“Almost every week, we lose soldiers in the east, and almost every day, some young Ukrainian man enlists in the Ukrainian army willing to defend it,” Kuleba said.

“All of us have friends or relatives or someone who has been affected by the war, either as an internally displaced person or as a soldier or as a civilian. I mean, this is part of our life,” he said. “We know that no one is going to fight this war for us. We’re going to fight it, but it’s much easier to fight and prevail when you have reliable friends next to you, standing by you and behind you. And that’s the role of the United States of America.”

In late March, Russia built up 100,000 troops on the border of eastern Ukraine, threatening another invasion and escalation in the conflict. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited front-line positions, calling for international assistance and a path to entry into NATO.

Leaders of NATO, the European Union, and President Joe Biden condemned the Russian move.

The U.S. spoke of support for a path to eventual NATO entry, but needed reforms would have to come first. Secretly, the National Security Council prepared a $100 million contingency aid package, the NSC confirmed to the Washington Examiner.

“In addition to the $275 million that has already been authorized for aid to Ukraine this fiscal year, as has been reported, a $100 million contingency package was prepared given escalating tensions on Ukraine’s border in April 2021,” a U.S. official said. “That contingency package is prepared for whenever it is needed.”

U.S. assistance to Ukraine since Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014 has totaled $2.5 billion.

Kuleba said absent NATO entry, his country seeks a broader defense agreement with the U.S.

“Ukraine exists in a security void. We are not members of NATO. We do not have a single security guarantee agreement,” he said.

“If NATO membership is not an immediate answer, then a defense partnership with the United States could be an answer,” he suggested. “We are buying the military equipment from you. You are giving us some of the equipment, but what we need is an agreement that would kind of certify that relationship that would bring it to the next level.”

Kuleba said his government envisions tying up disparate programs so that U.S. departments from the State Department to USAID to the Defense Department are working in concert to secure Ukraine's democracy against Russian aggression.

Meanwhile, 600 miles from the capital, over muddy tracks on gently rolling hills outside an otherwise peaceful village, young Ukrainian soldiers forfeit rotations back home to serve repeat tours on the front line.

Here, they live in a sort of primitive brotherhood but with the sophisticated tools they need to survive.

"Right now, many people die from snipers," Marhanets said. "When there is a ceasefire, when there is no heavy artillery working, then snipers are working."

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AFRICA

24. Blinken Urges Stronger Focus Against Islamist Groups in Africa
Bloomberg News, June 28 (0638) | John Follain

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged an 83-member alliance against Islamic State to step up its focus on operations in Africa, while working to prevent a resurgence of the militant organization in Iraq and Syria.

Blinken, speaking in Rome on Monday at a ministerial meeting he co-hosted of the Global Coalition to Defeat Isis, said the group had been a critical element in achieving the "territorial defeat" of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

"Ensuring the enduring defeat of Isis also means effectively confronting Isis threats outside of Iraq and Syria, in places where Isis has recently focused its efforts," he said, mentioning "countries on the front-lines of the Isis threat in Africa."

"Let's use today's discussion to try and expand on Coalition plans for effective dealing with the threat in Africa," Blinken told the foreign ministers and senior government officials at the meeting. He also called for stabilization assistance across Iraq and Syria "to ensure that Isis does not have a resurgence in these countries."

Nations including France have been fighting Islamist insurgents who have threatened state authority and investors' interests in West Africa's Sahel region, at the southern fringe of the Sahara desert.

Blinken also announced new sanctions against a senior leader of an affiliate known as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara. That group, operating along Niger's border with Mali, has been targeting civilians, fueling

concerns that local self-defense militias are engaging in the fight against the jihadists, the International Crisis Group said last month.

Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, co-hosting the gathering with Blinken, also called for a stronger focus on Africa.

“Even if the Daesh threat in Iraq and Syria remains central to the Coalition’s task, we cannot avoid tackling its global ramifications especially in the African continent, and specifically in Sahel whose stability is crucial for Europe and the broader Mediterranean,” Di Maio said, using another term for Islamic State.

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25. Tigray rebels in Ethiopia claim control of region’s capital
Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A11 | Max Bearak

The former leaders of Ethiopia’s Tigray region claimed Monday to have regained control over the regional capital seven months after being driven out by the Ethiopian military, marking what could be a major turning point in a deadly civil war.

In a statement, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front said Mekele was under its “complete control.” The statement said the group anticipated retaliation from the government and called on the city’s residents to rally behind the group.

An official in Tigray’s Addis Ababa-appointed interim government, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the situation, said celebrations broke out Monday.

“People are firing fireworks, hooting horns, shouting in groups,” he said.

He added that the interim government’s top leadership had all left Mekele.

Amid the developments in Mekele, Ethiopia’s government unilaterally declared a cease-fire Monday, claiming that it would last until the end of Tigray’s planting season in September.

“An unconditional, unilateral ceasefire has been declared starting from today, June 28,” read a statement published by state media Monday night.

A cease-fire had long been sought by humanitarian groups and Western governments. Tigrayan officials did not immediately or publicly respond to the cease-fire announcement.

The United Nations and humanitarian organizations have warned that nearly 1 million people could be facing famine conditions. Fighting, and alleged incidents of outright theft of humanitarian vehicles and cargo by combatants, have severely hindered aid delivery.

U.N. Secretary General António Guterres said that he had spoken with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and that he was "hopeful an effective cessation of hostilities will take place."

Last week, an Ethiopian airstrike hit a bustling market in a town near Mekele, killing at least 60, according to the interim government official. Ethiopia's military claimed that all the dead were rebel fighters, despite numerous reports of children being among the casualties.

Days later, three Doctors Without Borders employees were killed in an ambush. The Ethiopian government and Tigrayan forces traded blame.

On Monday morning, Ethiopian soldiers allegedly entered the offices of UNICEF in Mekele and dismantled a satellite communication device, according to the organization's top official. Agence France-Presse cited witness reports from Mekele of federal soldiers and police raiding banks and commandeering vehicles belonging to private citizens while fleeing the city ahead of the rebel advance.

Ethiopian troops have fought alongside ethnic militias and neighboring Eritrea's military. Tigray's western portion, which also borders Sudan, has been under administration for months by officials from Ethiopia's Amhara region.

While Abiy had claimed at the outset of the conflict in November that it would be brief and that Tigray's rebellious leadership would be eliminated with surgical precision, it long ago became clear that a protracted battle for the region was unfolding. Tigray's rebel leaders ran Ethiopia for decades as part of the regime that preceded Abiy's.

Large-scale atrocities have accompanied the fighting, including allegations of door-to-door killings and rapes by Eritrean troops, massacres carried out by both Tigrayan and Amhara militias, and scores of extrajudicial killings by Ethiopian troops.

The Tigrayan militia, known as the Tigray Defense Forces, had been gaining momentum in moving back toward Mekele in recent weeks, according to U.N. security reports. Tigray's interim government leaders, who are ethnic Tigrayans but appointed by the federal government, quietly left the city last week, telling colleagues it was related to recently concluded voting in national elections - even though no voting took place in Tigray.

"A lot of young people, merchants, farmers have joined the TDF," said the interim government official. "They feel that they are fighting for survival. They will fight forever, that's for sure. It is now irreconcilable."

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26. UN panel accuses Russia of Africa killings; Moscow says no
Associated Press, June 28 (1722) | Edith M. Lederer

UNITED NATIONS -- U.N. experts are accusing Russian military instructors and the Central African Republic forces they are supporting of "excessive use of force, indiscriminate killings, the occupation of schools and looting on a large scale" -- allegations Moscow strongly rejected Monday.

The panel of experts monitoring sanctions on the conflict-torn African nation said in a 40-page report obtained Monday by The Associated Press that it collected "testimonies" from a large number of local officials, government military and internal security forces, and community-level sources in multiple locations in the country who reported "the active participation of Russian instructors in combat operations on the ground."

The panel said many of the officials and other sources reported that Russian instructors "often led rather than followed" Central African Republic troops as they advanced on different towns and villages in a counter-offensive against rebels linked to former President Francois Bozize. Bozize tried to prevent elections in December and then attempted to seize power from President Faustin Archange Touadera.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov categorically denied the allegations, first reported in The New York Times, that Russian instructors were involved in killing civilians and looting homes.

"Russian military advisers couldn't take part and didn't take part in any killings or lootings," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. "This is yet another lie."

The mineral-rich Central African Republic has faced deadly inter-religious and inter-communal fighting since 2013. A peace deal between the government and 14 rebel groups was signed in February 2019, but violence blamed on Bozize and his allies threatens to nullify the agreement.

It erupted after the constitutional court rejected Bozize's candidacy to run for president in December and has continued since Touadera won a second term later that month with 53% of the vote.

The experts said Russia informed the U.N. Security Council committee monitoring sanctions on the Central African Republic in December that it would send 300 unarmed instructors to support the training of the country's infantry and motorized forces and that those deployed did not take part in military operations carried out by the security forces.

The coordinator of the Russian instructors told the panel they were all Russians, recruited from an association of primarily former military officers, and had not been hired by "a private company," contrary to reports by a U.N. human rights commission working group and a number of media outlets, the report said.

Last week, the U.S., Britain and France accused Russian personnel in Central African Republic of committing abuses against civilians and obstructing U.N. peacekeeping — accusations Russia angrily denied.

The Western powers linked the Russian personnel to the notorious Wagner Group, a private security company allegedly tied to Yevgeny Prigozhin, a businessman who has been indicted in the United States on charges of meddling in the 2016 presidential election and whose companies have reportedly secured lucrative mining contracts in Central African Republic.

According to the experts' findings, Russia confirmed on April 18 that it had 532 instructors in the African country, and had never exceeded 550. But the panel noted multiple sources estimated the number of Russian instructors at between 800 and 2,100, and said multiple sources reported the instructors included individuals who identified themselves as nationals of Libya, Syria and other countries.

Although the sanctions committee was informed that the instructors would be unarmed, the panel said it "directly observed and received testimonies that Russian instructors" supporting government military operations and providing close protection to Central African Republic officials "were armed."

It said Russian officials confirmed that instructors were armed, saying that it was for their own protection and that weapons were only used "when fired upon." It said the arms and ammunition came from stocks Russia provided to the Ministry of Defense, a breach of end-user commitments to the sanctions committee by Central African Republic's president in 2018 and 2019.

The panel said that in several areas it visited its experts received confidential information and found evidence of excessive use of force by Central African Republic's military and Russian instructors.

As one example, it said a commercial truck driving to the capital, Bangui, was arriving at a temporary checkpoint on Dec. 28, 2020, in Grimari in south-central Ouaka Prefecture when soldiers appeared and ordered the driver to stop. According to eyewitnesses, as he was trying to stop, the soldiers started shooting from both sides and Russian instructors opened fire from the front, it said.

The panel said three civilians were killed and 15 were injured, including six women and a minor, many with multiple bullet wounds. Local officials found no evidence of a connection in the truck to armed groups, it said, and the Russian coordinator denied any involvement.

The panel said that during an operation against rebels backing Bozize in Bambari, the capital of Ouaka Prefecture, on Feb. 15, government troops and Russian instructors entered Al-Takwa mosque, shooting without respect to its religious nature or making any effort to distinguish between fighters and civilians. According to local sources there were 17 victims, including some fighters, but the panel said it was able to confirm that at least six people who died were civilians.

The experts said they received “numerous reports of indiscriminate killings against unarmed civilians by Russian instructors. They said they were able to confirm with local officials or eyewitnesses a number of such incidents, including the shooting of an unarmed man Feb. 21, the killings of two disabled civilians, and the shooting of two civilians from the Fulani tribe March 8.

In many locations where government soldiers and Russian instructors passed through or deployed, the panel said, it received accounts of looting of houses and buildings with items ranging from livestock to mattresses as well as money and motorbikes.

It said humanitarian groups were also targeted, citing as an example statements about the March 18 looting of an unnamed humanitarian organization in the capital of northwest Ouham prefecture, where goods taken included kits for victims of sexual violence worth about $1,850.

--*Associated Press writer Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report*

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AMERICAS

27. Severe Weather Swings Disrupt Panama Canal
Alternating heavy rain, extreme drought hinder 50-mile channel’s operation
Wall Street Journal, June 29 (0200), Pg. A9 | Santiago Pérez

PANAMA CITY -- The Panama Canal faces a creeping threat from climate change, including droughts so intense that ships sometimes reduce their cargo so as not to run aground, and giant storms that almost overwhelm its dams and locks, canal officials say.

The canal hasn’t had a major disruption like the one suffered by the Suez Canal in late March, when a container megaship ran aground for almost a week, tying up a chunk of global shipping at a time of rising bottlenecks in the world’s supply chains.

But the Panama waterway faces more serious long-term challenges that could also disrupt global shipping. The biggest problem is diminishing rainwater needed to operate the 50-mile waterway, through which 4% of global trade passes. Four of the past seven years have been among the driest since 1950, according to estimates from the state-run Panama Canal Authority.

“Our challenge is how to solve the water problem,” said Ricaurte Vasquez, chief of the Panama Canal Authority. There is too little water during the dry months, or too much all at once as warmer weather causes bigger storms to hit the area, including nearby hurricanes.

Canal authorities are working on a $2 billion plan to build infrastructure to manage and preserve freshwater reserves -- an amount equal to the canal's annual contributions to Panama's government coffers. On Monday, officials said they would choose from among 30 proposed solutions and put those out for bids in about two years. The projects, with a completion target of 2028, are expected to be a combination of new dams and reservoirs, using treated sewage water, or finding alternative freshwater sources like diverting flows from other rivers. Authorities have also considered pumping desalinated seawater.

Several countries, such as the U.S., have developed large reservoirs and river transfers to offset growing water shortages. Cities such as New Orleans or Italy's Venice have developed levees and barriers to contain flooding and sea-level rise. Miami Beach is planning to invest $1 billion to raise roads, lift sea walls and install pump stations to drain storm water.

But a project of the size planned by the Panama Canal doesn't exist anywhere else in the world, said Daniel Muschett, who heads the canal's environment and water division.

Trade Artery Grows Increasingly Vital

The Panama Canal's importance to global shipping grows as skyrocketing demand for consumer goods has sparked congestion in the world's busiest shipping routes.

"The pandemic meant less shopping and more shipping," said Carlos Urriola, executive president of Manzanillo International Terminal, a Panama-based logistics and port operator. "The boom in maritime trade increases the strategic value of the canal at a time when you can't find space on ships, or empty containers for that matter."

A disruption in the canal's operations can hurt exporters and consumers.

Chilean wines and Ecuadorean bananas are shipped to the U.S. East Coast through the canal, as is copper from Chile to Europe and liquefied natural and petroleum gas from one U.S. coast to the other.

Unlike Suez, a flat seawater canal whose stream flow is defined by the tide, the Panama Canal is a much more complex infrastructure that relies on freshwater and uses a system of locks as aquatic elevators, lifting ships almost 90 feet above sea level onto a navigable waterway, and then lowering them down the other end.

The Panama waterway depends on rainwater to fill reservoirs and lakes that provide trillions of gallons of freshwater to fill the locks, which empty into the sea after every use. Its daily water consumption is triple that of New York City. Every time a ship traverses the waterway, the canal uses between 200 million and 350 million gallons of water -- enough to fill as many as 500 Olympic pools.

Fortunately for the canal, Panama is the world's fifth-rainiest country. But the supply of freshwater is no longer steady, with very strong storms at the end of the wet season or long spells of dryness. Canal officials say they have faced more challenges during the past 12 years than the rest of the canal's existence since 1914.

"We are seeing more frequent and more severe extreme weather events, and the past isn't a good prediction of the future anymore," said Jefferson Hall, a scientist at the Panama-based Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute who studies how different landscapes in the rural tropics affect ecosystems and climate change.

The Panama Canal Authority, which charges tolls as high as $1 million for the biggest cargo ships, last year introduced a freshwater surcharge of more than 10% depending on the depth of Lake Gatun. The artificial lake carries ships for about 20 miles of their transit across the isthmus and is the main reservoir to fill its locks.

A decline in Lake Gatun's depth means ships can't go through fully loaded. Authorities also face the possibility of reducing the number of ships that cross the canal. Monster storms test the resistance of dams and increase the risk of landslides and sedimentation that can clog narrow passages of the waterway such as the difficult Culebra Cut.

In 2010, a giant storm forced the canal to close temporarily for the first time since the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989.

Hurricanes are now inching closer to the canal. Eta and Iota pounded Central America at the end of the Atlantic hurricane season late last year.

"The locks were designed for more homogeneous and less volatile weather. Because of a new reality, we have to change the water-storage and management process," Mr. Vasquez said.

When water levels drop, that is problematic for ships that sometimes carry as many as 13,000 containers at a time. Reducing cargo during the dry season means higher costs, lower fuel efficiency and more pollution, said Lars Nielsen, chief of operations for the Americas for A.P. Moller-Maersk A/S, the Danish shipping firm.

Pressure on Panama's watershed intensified after a $5 billion expansion of the canal's system of locks in 2016 to accommodate larger vessels. A growing urban population and agriculture have also drawn water away from the area.

Deforestation adds to the threat. A rainforest that surrounds the canal is now about half its original size, diminishing its ability to act as a sponge and store excess water, which regulates water levels for the area during the dry months. The canal authority, along with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, has reforested more than 20,000 acres along the watershed.

But reforestation won't solve the problem, canal officials say.

“If you don’t start the dry season with maximum water levels, you already have problems, and this has been more frequent in the last five to seven years,” Mr. Muschett said.

--*Jose de Cordoba contributed to this article*

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ARCTIC

28. Coast Guard in Talks to Add Ships to Heavy Icebreaker Program
National Defense Magazine Online, June 28 (1721) | Jon Harper

The Coast Guard is in talks with the Biden administration about adding additional heavy icebreakers to its Polar Security Cutter program, the head of the sea service said June 28.

The current program of record is to build three new vessels. Congress has already provided funding for the first two. President Joe Biden’s fiscal year 2022 budget request asks for an additional $170 million in procurement funding for the program, including for long-lead time materials for a third vessel.

“There’s probably a conversation for more than three Polar Security Cutters,” Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said during a Brookings Institution event. “We’ve done some work with … the current National Security Council about broadening that conversation.”

“I am encouraged that after a decade-plus of talking about the need for new ships, we’ve got funding for the first two, on track for the third, and having conversations about additional ships,” he added. “That’s a much better place for our nation to be in. But it takes time to build those ships, and it takes money.”

Schultz reiterated his call for 3 to 5 percent annual growth in Coast Guard funding to help with modernization and other service needs.

Schultz said concerns about climate change and melting sea ice could bolster the case for building more icebreakers in coming years.

Currently, the Coast Guard only has one operational heavy icebreaker in its inventory, the aging Polar Star, that is capable of operating in the Arctic region — an area of growing strategic importance as the United States competes with Russia.

“Presence equals influence in the Arctic. And right now ... we’re woefully lacking as a nation in terms of our capacity,” Schultz said.

In 2019, VT Halter Marine was awarded a $745.9 million fixed-price, incentive-firm contract for the detail design and construction of the first Polar Security Cutter, which is scheduled to start construction this year in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and be delivered in 2024.

The company is expected to begin “cutting steel” in the coming months, Schultz said.

“We have not built a heavy icebreaker in this nation ... for a good part of a half a century,” he said. “But we’re guardedly encouraged that the Polar Security [Cutter] program is moving ahead on pace.”

Additionally, the Coast Guard plans to acquire up to three medium icebreakers known as Arctic Security Cutters.

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AIR FORCE

29. Air Force previews new exercises on fitness test ‘menu’
Air Force Times Online, June 28 (1715) | Rachel Cohen

The Air Force is preparing to launch a customizable physical fitness test where airmen and guardians can mix and match the exercises they prefer, a service official said Monday.

Starting early next year, the Air Force will offer a menu of options that fall into three categories: aerobic exercise, core strength and upper body strength.

In addition to the current 1.5-mile run to test cardiovascular health, troops can pick a back-and-forth shuttle run if they prefer sprinting instead of endurance running. The faster someone finishes the shuttle run, the better their score, Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, said during a question-and-answer session on Facebook.

Service members will also be allowed to walk without first getting a medical waiver. Cardio will still count for 60 percent of a person’s total physical training score.

Pushups will remain as one option to measure upper-body strength, but airmen and guardians could choose variations on that exercise, Kelly said. For the abdominal portion, the Air Force will allow situp variations as well as planks. Each category will count as 20 percent of the total score.

Officials considered other exercises, like swimming, rowing and biking, but likely won’t add those to the menu because not all bases have the facilities or equipment to accommodate them. The tests should be equitable for any airman, no matter where they are.

“When we release this and introduce the other components, we’re going to have about a six-month break-in period, so people can test them out, can see, get feedback, but they won’t be able to count those,” he said. “If we have to make any adjustments, we’ll make those adjustments.”

Body composition measurements will resume on Oct. 1, but will no longer contribute toward the fitness test score. Decoupling waist circumference or another metric from the PT score is meant to discourage unhealthy behavior like calorie restriction and purging.

“Weight will not be a part of your PT test,” Kelly added. “That body composition, your weight will impact that.”

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne Bass noted the Air Force also wants to give noncommissioned officers the ability to administer PT tests instead of asking people to go to a fitness assessment site.

Pushing back on criticism that the changes are watering down high military standards with a laissez-faire attitude, Bass said the Air Force must strike a balance between what bolsters readiness and what works best for members.

“We ought to be mindful when we’re characterizing changes that we’re making,” she said. “What are the standards that are non-negotiable, but what are some things we need to evaluate as we become that Air Force of 2030?”

Regular PT tests resume July 1 after multiple delays due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Space Force will continue following Air Force fitness requirements until it comes up with its own PT policies.

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NAVY

30. Six Littoral Combat Ships to Deploy by Year’s End as Navy Continues to Refine Operations
U.S. Naval Institute News, June 28 (0918) | Sam LaGrone

The Navy will have six Littoral Combat Ships deployed by the end of the year – a record for the program, several Navy officials have confirmed to USNI News.

Later this year, two Independence-class LCS will join USS Tulsa (LCS-16) and USS Charleston (LCS-18) in the Western Pacific. The two ships kicked off an expansive deployment across the Western Pacific earlier this year that began in Oceana and has ranged to as far as the Indian Ocean. Two other LCS will deploy soon to U.S. Southern Command later this year.

The deployments come as the service has begun to better understand how to use the two LCS variants. Two commanders recently told USNI News how they are improving the reliability of the platforms and refining how to deploy the ships.

Within the last year, seven LCS have operated in U.S. 4th Fleet as part of a counter-narcotics force expansion that began in 2020, 4th Fleet Commander Rear Adm. Donald Gabrielson told USNI News in a June interview.

"As a platform, [LCS] got a lot of utility in the kind of work that we're doing, which from a naval perspective is about building the capacity and the capability of our partners in the region," Gabrielson said.

"We've got lot of successes on that front. The ships are doing the other things that people would expect here as well – the detection and monitoring with the [Joint Interagency Task Force] South counter-narcotic mission, which also includes a lot of partner interaction. We've got 23 different nations that are connected to that effort."

In addition to the counter-narcotic effort, LCS was key to expanding how the U.S. worked with partners in the region. Most of the forces the U.S. operates with in the region have smaller ships that work more easily with LCS than the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers that are three times the tonnage of both classes of LCS, he said.

"If you look at how our partners are operating, it's kind of amazing. They have these tiny boats that are out there for weeks at a time – pretty far off the coast, even, you know, several hundred miles in some cases for a couple of them," Gabrielson said.

"The advantage that LCS has is the size and the draft of the ship. [Those] enabled it to get into places where other ships cannot."

In the Western Pacific, the Navy has found that the Independence-class ships USS Montgomery (LCS-8) and USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS-10) have opened up places for the Navy to operate where they had not been for years, Capt. Tom Ogden, commander of the Singapore-based Destroyer Squadron 7, told reporters earlier this month.

"Gabby Giffords and Montgomery did stops, pre-COVID, in ports that we hadn't been in a number of years. Puerto Princesa in the Philippines was one of them," he said.

"The ability for the ship, with the steerable water jets that they have, even with less powerful tugs, you can do a lot of things on your own. Getting a DDG in and out of an austere port requires a little bit more support."

In U.S. 7th Fleet, the Navy has operated its LCS out of the Changi base in Singapore, but is looking to expand to other places in the region, Japan-based fleet commander Vice Adm. Bill Merz said in May.

“Do we want to keep them in Sasebo, [Japan]? We’re kind of done parking things in the first island chain if I can avoid it,” he said.

“Right now, it’s still Singapore because that’s where the maintenance model is.”

As originally envisioned, LCS would be supported by contractor-led maintenance while they were forward deployed, but the service is moving toward more sailor-led maintenance. For example, the service positioned a maintenance team in Guam, Ogden said.

“The last two availabilities that we had on Tulsa and Charleston on Guam, we had maintenance execution teams from the LCS division 12 in San Diego. They came out and conducted maintenance on the ship,” he said.

“Not only did they do all the checks that were scheduled for them to complete, they completed checks that had been deferred in availabilities in the past … They’re building a level of knowledge and understanding of the equipment, which allows them to not only need new preventive maintenance, but then corrective maintenance as needed. The maintenance execution team expansion is a huge step forward.”

While maintenance is improving, it’s still not perfect, Merz said in May.

“I’m [not] okay or happy with the sustainability of LCS. That has to be fixed,” he said.

In 4th Fleet, maintenance is at the forefront of operating in the region. “The challenge for us or the, or the necessity for us is to develop the facilities piece of this in terms of the footprint for the maintenance,” Gabrielson said.

The Navy is beginning to slowly bring additional mine countermeasures and surface warfare capabilities into the Western Pacific.

For the Independence-class ships headed to 7th Fleet, that means each ship would deploy with the capability to field the anti-ship Naval Strike Missile and parts of the MCM mission package – a grab-bag of anti-sea mine capabilities that are being developed for LCS to replace several legacy MCM platforms.

Every ship that deploys to 7th Fleet now has some combination of the MCM mission package board and works in coordination with MCM Squadron 7 based in Japan, Ogden said.

“Tulsa and Charleston both deployed with versions of the mine warfare, or the mine-countermeasure mission module. They have systems onboard that allow them to do mine hunting, and mine warfare,” he said.

“We’re able to think through the command and control, the tactical availability, and how we would use a multi-mission ship to do maritime warfare, and mine warfare, at the right time and in the right spot. And so, [we’re]

integrating with the capabilities that come with LCS, the expertise that MCMRON 7 has, then I would say the expertise and the capabilities that some other [larger] task forces have."

The Navy has backed away from its previous plan to have mission package sailors augment a core crew of sailors trained to just run the ship.

"When a crew is on board it's not separate from the core crew and the mission package, they are one, and they are a team that stays through no matter which ship they're on or which hull they're on at the time they are one crew," he said.

Ogden would not go into detail on the crew makeup, but LCS deploy with a total of 94 sailors – 70 for the core crew, including the MCM force, and an additional 24 that make up the aviation detachment for the MH-60 aboard, a Navy official confirmed to USNI News.

With more LCS moving into the fleet, Gabrielson said that the ships' experiences in SOUTHCOM – particularly in counter-narcotics missions – are offering new lessons for LCS in other places around the globe.

"We spend every single day trying to find people that are trying to not be found in waters that are not easy to always operate in," he said.

"They're trying to take advantage of the terrain and the geography and they're well-resourced. If we can find those guys, well, it's going to make problems in other parts of the world much more solvable for us."

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CYBER

31. DOD to send AI data teams to combatant commands this summer
Federal Computer Week Online, June 28 (1606) | Lauren C. Williams

The Defense Department will start sending out teams of data and artificial intelligence experts in the next month to help combatant commands speed AI implementation efforts as part of a new initiative.

"Our combatant commanders have some of the most intense decision-making environments, but have yet to have the opportunity to apply the latest tools to responsive decision support. And we want to correct that. And we want to do that in a repeatable way," Lt. Gen. Michael Groen, the director of the Defense Department's Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, told reporters June 24.

DOD announced it was launching the AI and data accelerator (ADA) initiative during its AI symposium earlier that week. The goal, Groen said, is to test algorithms in real warfighter scenarios to uncover potential barriers to adoption, from latency issues to policy constraints.

The JAIC is also working with the individual services on their efforts from the Army's Project Convergence to the Navy's Project Overmatch and the Air Force's Advanced Battle Management System, but it aims to address data readiness challenges from cleaning data to workflows and so allow combatant commanders to "experiment with data driven decision-making," Groen said.

The first data reinforcement teams will likely be deployed over the next 30 days with the JAIC helping combatant commands build flyaway teams within the next 90 days, he said.

"We also want to do that in a way that scales. If we make progress at one combatant command and help their decision processes, we expect to be able to rapidly scale those capabilities across other combatant commands to help their decision-making as well," Groen said.

The general said the initiative will help the DOD rethink development and infrastructure as it tries to shift to more software-defined capabilities as part of a "new operating model" with "pieces that purposely fit together."

"You can do it in a lab. But when you bring that lab-tested capability out to the combatant commander or out somewhere on the tactical edge, you're going to realize, 'Holy cow, the latency here is horrible'…[or] the reliability and the uptime of the servers that are required is not sufficient."

Groen said bureaucratic, technical and cultural obstacles are expected, which is why involvement from DOD's CIOs and chief data officers is crucial to improving the networks and policies.

"If we learn what those obstacles are, then we can address the real problems [with] AI implementation," Groen said. "Until we can actually employ them on, in the environments that they're expected to operate in and then expect it to work, we're not going to know. And that's unacceptable to us."

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NOTABLE COMMENTARY

32. Biden Needs to Leave Afghanistan the Right Way
Bloomberg Opinion, June 28 (0800) | Editorial

As U.S. troops prepare to leave Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of combat, the situation on the ground could hardly be more disheartening. Taliban insurgents are already racking up battlefield gains; deprived of U.S. close air support and help maintaining its equipment, the Afghan military may well crumble against concerted onslaught. Al-Qaeda maintains ties to the Taliban and could pose a renewed threat to the U.S. in as little as two years. That timeline could shrink if the Kabul government falls to the Taliban or the country devolves into civil war.

At their meeting in the White House on Friday, with the U.S. withdrawal well underway, President Joe Biden told Afghan President Ashraf Ghani that the U.S. would continue to support his country, promising $266 million in humanitarian aid and $3.3 billion in security assistance. Ghani expressed his thanks but can be under no illusions. Biden is leaving him severely weakened, even if not (for the moment) entirely stranded.

Washington's ability to influence events will only diminish once the formal withdrawal is complete. Starting now, Biden needs to be clear about how bad things could get — while doing his best to mitigate the inevitable damage.

Without Americans on the ground, spies will lose direct contact with informants. Special-operations forces will only be able to launch raids in rare circumstances. Any access to bases in neighboring countries is likely to be heavily restricted. Flying missions from the Persian Gulf instead will take longer and dramatically shorten the time aircraft can spend on target. Stationing an aircraft carrier offshore would diminish capabilities elsewhere.

The question is how, given such constraints, the U.S. can protect its own vital interests. To start, the mission needs to be defined carefully. As one top U.S. commander has already suggested, that likely means limiting targets to global threats such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State. Even then, the U.S. won't be able to maintain constant pressure on such groups as it does now. The priorities should be to disrupt attacks on the U.S. and its allies, and to destroy bases and training camps where recruits might gather.

Achieving even those more modest goals will require new sources of intelligence, which need to be developed quickly. The U.S. should be investing now in increasing Afghan capabilities. It should also deepen relationships with local power brokers and ethnic leaders, who have their own reasons to oppose foreign extremists.

It might also be worth exploring a more formal intelligence-sharing arrangement with Afghanistan's neighbors in the region. Whatever their differences with the U.S., China, Russia, Iran and Pakistan all know that they are equally if not more vulnerable to attacks emanating from Afghanistan. Once U.S. troops are out of the region, they should be more willing to support targeted counterterrorism efforts.

Those neighbors can also do more to prevent a collapse in Afghanistan that would allow extremist groups to thrive — not to mention push refugees, drugs and terrorists across their borders. The U.S. should press them to use their influence with their Afghan proxies, including the Taliban, to revive the stalled intra-Afghan peace process. All should make clear that any government imposed by force will suffer international isolation and be starved of aid and development funds.

Finally, absent direct combat support, the U.S. should do what it can to sustain the Afghan military's ability to fight. The new funding commitment will help. U.S. and NATO forces should train Afghan troops outside the country, while pressing reforms to produce a leaner and more sustainable army. Most important, they should help the Afghan government pay for contractors to maintain its air force, which might otherwise be ineffective within months. Civil and humanitarian aid should also continue.

In all this, clarity is best. For weeks now, uncertainty about U.S. plans has been accelerating the spread of fears and doubts throughout Afghanistan's government, military and society. Further confusion will only heighten the risk of swift Taliban victories, and collapsing morale could cause a devastating brain drain.

One more thing. The Biden administration needs to move immediately to evacuate Afghans who face threats after working with the U.S. military. Leaving Afghanistan to its fate already represents a betrayal of sorts. Abandoning its most loyal allies there would leave a moral stain the U.S. might never eradicate.

--*Editors: Nisid Hajari, Tim Lavin*

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33. The Iran Deal May Still Be Dead

Wall Street Journal, June 29 (0200), Pg. A15 | Blaise Misztal and Jonathan Ruhe

'No deal is better than a bad deal," then-Secretary of State John Kerry opined during nuclear negotiations for the Obama administration with Iran before ultimately clinching the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015. Now, as discussions about returning to the JCPOA drag on, President Biden should prepare for a no-deal outcome.

Whether supportive of President Obama's agreement or President Trump's withdrawal from it in 2018, many assumed Tehran would rejoin some version of the deal, driven by a desire for economic benefits or diplomatic cooperation.

Yet getting back into the original agreement was never going to be so easy. Iran's nuclear program has advanced much further than the JCPOA accounted for. The original deal has no provisions regarding Iran's extra enrichment and centrifuge manufacturing facilities, nor the irreversible know-how Iranian scientists have gathered from operating advanced centrifuges in violation of the deal.

“The Iranian program has grown, become more sophisticated,” Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, warned last month. “Linear return to 2015 is no longer possible.” Tehran’s continued stonewalling of investigations into its nuclear weapons work will, “at a minimum, severely complicate” returning to the JCPOA, in the words of the Biden administration. Iran also insists it should be allowed to continue using advanced centrifuges for nuclear enrichment, well beyond what the JCPOA permitted. But the White House wants these machines destroyed.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has expanded its sanctions on Iran’s vital banking and energy sectors, as well as its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. These entities would remain blacklisted for ties to terrorism even if Washington lifts all the JCPOA’s nuclear-related sanctions. The Biden administration’s position that many U.S. sanctions -- hundreds, according to Secretary of State Antony Blinken -- will remain on the books is irreconcilable with Iran’s demand for total economic relief before rolling back its nuclear breaches.

It’s not surprising, therefore, that six rounds of deliberations in Vienna have been inconclusive. “It remains unclear whether Iran is willing and prepared to do what it needs to do to come back into compliance,” Mr. Blinken told the House Foreign Affairs Committee this month. Mr. Blinken’s top deputy and a key negotiator for the U.S., Wendy Sherman, said days later that “until the last detail is nailed down, and I mean nailed down, we will not know if we have an agreement.”

Even if both governments nail those details down, they may not stay that way. The winner of the June 18 Iranian presidential election, Ebrahim Raisi, is a hard-liner skeptical of the deal. He’ll assume office in early August and has already said he won’t meet with Mr. Biden even if an agreement is struck. In Washington the Democratic majority is slim enough that Congress could review and effectively block JCPOA re-entry.

To prepare for the looming possibility of a no-deal future, the Biden administration should start by reiterating Mr. Obama’s 2009 pledge that the White House will “use all elements of American power to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.” Specifically, the administration should convey unmistakably its readiness to use military options if necessary to stop Tehran from producing enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon.

The Pentagon can bolster the credibility of such statements with updated contingency plans and force deployments for neutralizing Iran’s nuclear facilities. This could include deploying Massive Ordnance Penetrator munitions and strategic bombers to the British territory Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, as well as boosting the U.S. Navy’s carrier and missile-defense presence in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea as part of a general strengthening of America’s global force posture and broader increase in defense spending. Military exercises with these capabilities, and strategic communications to publicize them, would help prove the seriousness of Washington’s intentions.

Given its diminishing presence in the region, America should also make clear that it backs Israel if it takes military action in self-defense against Iran, doubling down on the Biden administration’s recent support for the Jewish

state's freedom of action. Since July 2020 Israel's covert strikes have taken thousands of centrifuges off line and set back Tehran's mass-production of advanced centrifuges, delaying its breakout time. Building on the welcome replenishment of Israel's Iron Dome interceptors, Washington should also ensure Jerusalem has adequate precision-guided munitions to prevent a nuclear Iran and deter, or if necessary prevail against, reprisals from Tehran and Hezbollah.

It may not be what Mr. Biden wanted, but these steps are likely the best way to prevent a nuclear Iran, or a bad deal that enables it.

--*Messrs. Misztal and Ruhe are, respectively, vice president for policy and director of foreign policy at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America*

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34. China is not the cyber superpower that many people think
Critical weaknesses put Beijing well behind the U.S.
Nikkei Asia Online (Japan), June 29 (1600) | Greg Austin

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato recently warned that cyberattacks should be expected during the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, due to start on July 23. Yet Japan's defenses in this sphere remain somewhat immature, creating cause for concern given escalating threats and reports about shifting power balances, both in cyberspace and more broadly.

In this debate, China is often portrayed as a world-leading cyber power based on its massive and highly successful espionage operations. But for now, according to a new assessment by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the U.S. is still ahead of China on that front and has a much stronger track record.

Alongside political will, cyber power depends on three factors: how well organized each country is -- strategy and doctrine, and command and control; how well it can defend itself through its own cybersecurity or through international partnerships; as well as how effectively its digital economy can support its cyber needs and ambitions.

China's strategy is lagging, and its cyber defenses are weak, but it is the third area just mentioned -- the strength of its digital economy -- where the U.S. maintains its most powerful edge over China. This might come as a shock to many Americans in the political classes who see themselves as slipping into second place behind Beijing's cyber superpower ambitions. But it will not be so shocking to long-term students of national innovation systems, nor those who have experienced university life overseen by a self-confessed dictatorship.

Chinese universities have made great strides and the country's researchers are world leaders in some important advanced technologies, such as quantum communications.

But survey data from China's University Alumni Association indicates that it has no world-class universities in the field of cybersecurity, which is an essential foundation of cyber capability. The Chinese innovation system is struggling to adapt to the demands of security in cyberspace and universities may be its weakest link.

Several factors are combining to retard China's universities: higher education institutions globally are highly conservative; professors who control curricula, spending and organizational arrangements do not like new or expanded departments of cybersecurity; there are not enough university educators and dissertation supervisors to meet rising demand. Add to that the fact that the Chinese Communist Party is too intent on linking promotion to ideological activism, monitoring every email sent by professors and students.

Outside its universities, China has no answer for the highly successful U.S. formula of close collaboration -- for private profit -- among universities, industry and government. Yes, there have been great Chinese examples of private-sector success. Lenovo, now a top global brand in sales of personal computers, grew out of Legend, a company set up by researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences back in 1984.

But the three-way cooperation among government, industry and academia -- a so-called triple helix of national innovation -- is not yet the norm in China. President Xi Jinping's best response has been a so-called civil-military fusion policy that is proving to be as bureaucratic and sloganistic as it sounds.

Even if China could rise to the top rank of cyber power in a one-to-one comparison with the U.S., it still does not have the means to match American power arising from its position as the hub of the most powerful cyber intelligence alliance in history, the Five Eyes network.

The U.S. can also count on many other cyber-capable allies, such as France and Israel. It can also count on Japan, though in very different ways. But how useful could Japan's contribution to U.S. cyber power actually be if the Self Defense Forces and intelligence agencies have been slow to develop cyber capabilities?

Ironically, Japan makes a huge contribution to alliance power in the very field where China is not yet doing as well as it wants to -- the strength of its digital economy. Japan remains second only to the U.S. in important aspects of information and communication technology industrial performance and policy.

For example, it has more tech and telecoms companies in the 2020 Fortune Global 500 than China, 10 and eight respectively, compared with the U.S. at 16. Japan has arguably been at least as influential in fifth-generation, or 5G, mobile technology standard setting as China. Japan remains, along with the United States, the largest funder of the International Telecommunication Union.

Most importantly, Japan has been very active in its diplomacy to help ensure the U.S. and allied technological preeminence over China remains intact. It was an early advocate among U.S. allies of the idea of banning Huawei Technologies from the 5G rollout, ahead even of Washington's official position.

Thus, as Japan takes account of its cybersecurity dilemmas and very visible operational gaps in its national cyber power, either in advance of the Olympic Games or over the long term future, it can take quite some credit for executing successful diplomacy as an important line of defense.

If the worst were to happen, and Japan were to suffer a serious cyberattack, it will not have to depend only on its own weak cyber forces. It has many partners, led by the U.S., who will stand with it on the front lines of cyber defense.

--*Greg Austin is senior fellow for cyber, space and future conflict at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. He is based in Singapore*

RETURN TO TOP

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 10:22 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Cc: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Arkansas J3 Inquiry

Morning Sir,

At the request of the Arkansas TAG, COL [redacted] of the Arkansas - J3 telephoned this morning informing of the Governor of Arkansas' desire to assist in Operation Lone Star and inquiring about what South Dakota is providing to the effort. I let him know Governor Noem had approved up to 50 pax ISO SAD [strictly through the EMAC process] for a period of 30-45 days, roughly a dozen HMMWVs, weapons, optics/devices and IOTV/IBA. I suspect it is possible you may be getting a collaboration call from the Arkansas TAG reference this mission.

Respectfully,

COL [redacted]

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 9:02 AM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: FW: [Non-DoD Source] Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

Brig Gen Edwin A. VanDerWolde

Director, Joint Staff, SDNG

2823 W. Main Street

Rapid City, SD 57702

Office Phone: 605-737-6010

Cell Phone: 605-321-7425

From: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 8:58 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: FW: [Non-DoD Source] Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

Sir – FYSA

[redacted] just published the press release on the border mission. I'm sure you saw from [redacted] news articles this morning that the Governor did Tweet last night about her intent to deploy up to 50 troops for the mission.

From: Governor's Office PIO List <GOVPIOLIST@LISTSERV.SD.GOV <mailto:GOVPIOLIST@LISTSERV.SD.GOV> > On Behalf Of [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 8:21 AM
To: GOVPIOLIST@LISTSERV.SD.GOV <mailto:GOVPIOLIST@LISTSERV.SD.GOV>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

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For Immediate Release

June 29, 2021

Contact [redacted]

Governor Noem Deploys South Dakota National Guard to Texas for Border Security

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem announced that up to fifty South Dakota National Guard troops are being deployed to Texas to help the secure the border between the United States and Mexico. This is in response to Texas Governor Greg Abbott's request for help to respond to ongoing violations of state and federal law by illegal aliens crossing the unsecured border.

"The Biden Administration has failed in the most basic duty of the federal government: keeping the American people safe," said Governor Kristi Noem. "The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide. We should not be making our own communities less safe by sending our police or Highway Patrol to fix a long-term problem President Biden's Administration seems unable or unwilling to solve. My message to Texas is this: help is on the way."

The initial deployment to the border will last for between 30 and 60 days. South Dakota Adjutant General Jeff Marlette and the South Dakota Department of the Military are working with their counterparts in Texas to finalize the details of this mission. The deployment will be paid for by a private donation.

For operational security reasons, specific names of units, number of members, and mission specifics will not be released.

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Access the GOVPIOLIST Home Page and Archives < Caution-http://listserv.sd.gov/scripts/wa.exe?A0=GOVPIOLIST >

Unsubscribe from the GOVPIOLIST List < Caution-http://listserv.sd.gov/scripts/wa.exe?TICKET=NzM4MDAwIGFudGhvbnkuYS5kZWlzcy5taWxATUFJTC5NSUwgR09WUElPTElTVB9Y1NGpbiAA&c=SIGNOFF >

Copy__of___copies
153rd EN BN
Huron, SD
241900JUN21
21-05

153rd EN BN OPERATION ORDER 21-05 (Texas Response)

(U) Reference:
a) (U) South Dakota National Guard All Hazard Plan
b) (U) Texas Governor State of Emergency Declaration

(U) Time Zone Used Throughout the OPORD: TANGO

(U) Task Organization:
196th Maneuver Enhanced Brigade
153rd Engineer Battalion
HHC, 153rd EN BN
FSC, 153rd EN BN
200th EN CO (MRBC)
211th EN CO (MAC)

1. (U) Situation. The Governor of Texas has issued a proclamation certifying that the ongoing surge of individuals unlawfully crossing the Texas-Mexico border poses an ongoing and imminent threat of widespread and severe damage, injury, and loss of life and property, including property damage, property crime, human trafficking, violent crime, threats to public health, and a violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, in certain Texas counties and for all state agencies affected by this emergency declaration. South Dakota Governor, Kristi Noem, has ordered the South Dakota Department of Military to begin planning for a response force consisting of South Dakota National Guard personnel to respond and assist Texas State Agencies in a State Active Duty (SAD) status as needed.

2. (U) Mission. O/O, 153rd EN BN will establish Task Force Rushmore to alert, mobilize, deploy, and assist the State of Texas in response to the increasing immigrant population crossing the Texas Border NLT 061300JUL21 for a period of service up to 60 days.

3. (U) Execution.

a. (U) Commander's Intent. TF Rushmore Soldiers will report to Huron Readiness Center NLT 061300JUL21 to begin abbreviated mobilization/RSOI and draw appropriate equipment IOT complete final mobilization requirements and deploy to Texas to execute mission on or about 10 JUL 21.

b. (U) Concept of Operations. TF Rushmore will deploy in a State Active Duty status. Soldiers will complete abbreviated mobilization tasks to include weapon familiarization on

required response weapons. Once complete, TF Rushmore will conduct a ground movement to a specified location in Texas, conduct RSOI operations, and begin the mission assignment.

End State: SDARNG provides Soldiers and resources to support the State of Texas' emergency declaration and safely return to home station without incident to refit and prepare for follow on missions.

c. (U) Tasks to Subordinate Units.

(1) (U) HHC, 153rd EN BN

(a) (U) Provide the following Soldiers in a State Active Duty Status:

1 (U) Task Force CDR / LNO – O4 (CPT Delgado)

2 (U) 2 x Medic NCOIC – E5/E4

3 (U) 2 x Medic – E4

(b) (U) Provide the following vehicles and equipment for TF Rushmore:

1 (U) 2 x FLA

2 (U) 1 x LMTV w/ JCR/BFT

3 (U) 3 x 4-door up-armored HMMWV w/ JCR/BFT

4 (U) 19 x 2-way radios

5 (U) 9mm paper targets for all TF Rushmore familiarization fire.

(2) (U) FSC 153rd EN BN

(a) (U) Provide the following Soldiers in a State Active Duty Status:

1 (U) 1 x Log NCO – E6

2 (U) 1 x Log/Admin NCO – E5

(b) (U) Provide the following vehicles and equipment for TF Rushmore:

1 (U) 2 x 4-door up-armored HMMWV w/ JCR/BFT

2 (U) NVGs for all TF Rushmore Soldiers.

3 (U) 2 x 2-way radios

(3) (U) 200th EN CO (MRBC)

(a) (U) Provide the following Soldiers in a State Active Duty Status:

1 (U) 1 x TF PLT LDR – O2 (1LT Kyle Heyn)

2 (U) 1 x NCOIC – E7 (SFC Kelly Holzer)

3 (U) 1 x Squad Leader – E6

4 (U) 2 x Team Leader – E5

5 (U) 14 x E4/E5 (MOS Immaterial)

6 (U) 3 x Maintenance Personnel – E4/E5/E6

(b) (U) Provide the following vehicles and equipment for TF Rushmore:

1 (U) 1 x Maintenance Contact Truck

2 (U) 4 x 4-door up-armored HMMWV w/ JCR/BFT

3 (U) 5 x 2-way radios

(4) (U) 211th EN CO (MAC)

(a) (U) Provide the following Soldiers in a State Active Duty Status:

1 (U) 1 x Squad Leader – E6

2 (U) 2 x Team Leader – E5

3 (U) 14 x E4/E5 (MOS Immaterial)

4 (U) 2 x Maintenance Personnel – E4/E5

(b) (U) Provide the following vehicles and equipment for TF Rushmore:

1 (U) 1 x Maintenance Contact Truck

2 (U) 2 x 4-door up-armored HMMWV w/ JCR/BFT

3 (U) 4 x 2-way radios

d. (U) Tasks to Staff

(1) (U) S1

(a) (U) Collect alpha rosters from each company NLT 261300JUN21.

(b) (U) BPT consolidate and submit TF Rushmore alpha roster to G1 IOT publish State Active Duty orders for Soldier's employers.

(c) (U) Process all SAD packets for TF Rushmore.

(2) (U) S3

(a) (U) Submit Help Desk Ticket for 4 x Mifis and 4 x cellular phones.

(b) (U) Provide 6 x off-domain laptops, 1 x printer, and essential printing supplies to TF Rushmore NLT 6 July 2021.

(c) (U) BPT schedule and coordinate weapon familiarization in Mitchell for all TF Rushmore Soldiers.

(3) (U) S4

(a) (U) Collect Class VIII shortages NLT 261300JUN21 and submit to G4 IOT ensure all FLAs and CLS bags deploy with all required supplies.

(b) (U) BPT receive one Quadcon from G4 at Huron Armory to support TF Rushmore.

(c) (U) Coordinate OCIE shortages through USPFO to fill needs NLT 10 JULY 21.

(d) (U) BPT receive weapons, magazines, holsters, and locking weapon racks.

(e) (U) BPT receive vest w/sappi plates for all TF Rushmore Soldiers.

(f) (U) BPT receive sufficient ammunition for weapons familiarization.

(g) (U) Coordinate and issue Class I to TF Rushmore for emergency purposes.

e. (U) Coordinating Instructions

(1) (U) Alpha rosters due to S1 NLT 261300JUN21. See attached SAD roster.

(2) (U) Dispatch equipment IAW Appendix G of SMM SOP.

(3) (U) All vehicles consolidated at Huron motor pool NLT 061300JUL21.

(4) (U) All 200th EN CO and 211th EN CO Soldiers will take OCIE home from drill according to packing list.

(5) (U) All TF Rushmore personnel will deploy with all OCIE for a summer weather deployment. Packing list attached.

(6) (U) Vehicle operators need to be licensed on deploying vehicles. Vehicles are an up-armored HMMWV and LMTV. Medics will drive FLAs. Maintenance personnel will drive Contact Trucks.

(7) (U) No personal weapons or ammunition are authorized for this deployment.

(8) (U) Task Force will submit daily SITREPS to the JOC.

(9) (U) Soldiers will mobilize on State Active Duty orders. SAD packets will be processed in Huron.

(10) (U) Fueling Operations. Card type TBD. Each receipt will have the following items:

(a) (U) Printed Name

(b) (U) Signed Name

(c) (U) Bumper Number of vehicle

(d) (U) Annotate “SAD” on the receipt

(e) (U) Date

(f) (U) Mileage of vehicle

(g) (U) Dollar amount of fuel

(h) (U) Quantity of Fuel

(11) (U) All Soldier will be MRC 1 or 2.

(12) (U) RSOI will be conducted in Huron, SD and again upon arrival in Texas.

(13) (U) All Soldiers will draw ammo, vest w/sappi plates, and conduct a weapons familiarization prior to leaving SD.

4. (U) Sustainment.

a. (U) Logistics. TBP

b. (U) Personnel.

5. (U) Command and Signal.

a. (U) Command. TF CDR/LNO, 153rd EN BN, DOMS-SD, TAG-SD

b. (U) Control. TF Rushmore will be TACON to the DOMS-SD from notification to closure at SD-RSOI Site. Once SD-RSOI is complete, TF Rushmore will be OPCON to the Texas Army National Guard until released to travel back to South Dakota. Once released, TF Rushmore will be TACON back to the DOMS-SD until TF Rushmore is released at Huron Armory by property authority.

c. (U) Signal.

(5) (U) Primary: Military Cell Phone

(6) (U) Alternate: Email System

(7) (U) Contingency: State Radio, Channel 1SD JOC while in South Dakota

(8) (U) Emergency: Personal Cell phone.

ACKNOWLEDGE:

[redacted]
LTC

OFFICIAL:
[redacted]
S-3

DISTRIBUTION:
HHC, 153rd EN BN
FSC, 153rd EN BN
200th EN CO (MRBC)
211th EN CO (MAC)

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 8:21 AM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Fwd: Operation Texas Response (UNCLASSIFIED)
Attachments: 153rd EN BN OPORD 21-05 (Texas Response).pdf; Operation Texas Response Packing List.pdf; PERSTAT-blank.xlsx

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Date: June 24, 2021 at 8:21:00 PM MDT
To: "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (US) ([redacted]@mail.mil)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: Operation Texas Response (UNCLASSIFIED)

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Sir,

We've staffed the mission and attached is our FRAGO to our units to execute.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

[redacted]

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

South Dakota Army National Guard
153rd Engineer Battalion
Post Office Box 829
Huron, South Dakota 57350-0829
(605) 353-7237 (2200)
FAX: (605) 352-0220

NGSD-ENG-CSM 24 June 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: 2021 Operation Texas Response Packing List.

1. Listed below are items that are required for Operation Texas Response. Items not listed will remain locked in your wall locker at the armory. You are authorized to take any issued item on this mission.

Boots Combat 2pr
Cap, Patrol
Tactical vest Individual belt
Improved first aid kit
Driver's license (military&civilian)
ID Card
GOVCC (activated)
ID Tags
Bag, barrack
1ea Ammo pouches
ACH Helmet w/cover
Rucksack
Mat, sleeping
Overshoes, boot combat

Trouser, wet weather
Fleece Jacket
Flashlight
Ballistic Goggles
Ballistic Glasses
PT Uniform including coat and trousers
PT Shoes
Uniform ACU
4 sets Undershirts,
Coyote Sleep System
Ear Plugs w/case
Waterproof Bag
Bag, duffle-2
Gloves,

Black Socks
Canteen
Knee & Elbow Pads
Parka, wet weather
Camelbak(Hydration System)
Poncho
Poncho liner
Padlocks
Assault Pack
Cold weather jacket/pants
Cold weather undershirts and pants
Cot
M50 CBRN Mask

2. Personal Items: Personal clothing, socks, underwear, personal hygiene items (Hair/Hand soap, shaving kit, toothbrush, and toothpaste), contacts w/ solution, pen, paper, wash cloth, towel and shower shoes, sunglasses (conservative all black). Medications: 30-45 days of supply.

3. All personnel will have haircuts which meets regulation standards.

4. POC for the above is CSM [redacted].

[redacted]
CSM, USA
Command Sergeant Major

DOMESTIC OPERATIONS PERSTAT JFHQ

As of: 7-Apr-22

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	RANK	**Soldier Last, First MI**	**GRD**	**Unit**	**Air / Army**	**STATUS**	**Mission Location**	**START**	**END**	**PAY RATE**	**DAYS**	**TOTAL**		
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As of: 7-Apr-22

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As of: 7-Apr-22

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DOMESTIC OPERATIONS PERSTAT

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DOMESTIC OPERATIONS PERSTAT

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DOMESTIC OPERATIONS PERSTAT JFHQ

As of: 7-Apr-22

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[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:46 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Re: PA Update 29 June 2021

Yes.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 29, 2021, at 7:37 AM, [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil> wrote:

Sir,

What's the announcement is officially made by the governor and the EMAC is in place are we good to go with executing this mission starting 6 July as planned?

[redacted]

From: "Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 07:18:59
To: "Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)" <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil <mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto:[redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: Fwd: PA Update 29 June 2021

See article 1: As stated, the Governor will make a formal announcement today.

NGB is obviously aware now, but we will also need to start reporting them on our daily reports once they come on duty on the 5th.

Topic will also come up on the weekly call on Thursday, but I will be sending GEN Hokanson an email ahead of that.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Date: June 29, 2021 at 4:59:56 AM MDT
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: "[redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: PA Update 29 June 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, June 29, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson will host a media roundtable focused on Cyber Shield 2021 at 1130 a.m. EDT

- Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, commander, U.S. Cyber Command, provides the keynote address at 11 a.m. EDT, and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

- Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander, U.S. Africa Command, participates in a panel on European and U.S. military engagement in Africa at 10:45 a.m. EDT at the CSIS tenth annual EU Defense Washington Forum. Register at csis.org.

- Acting Chief Information Officer John Sherman testifies on cybersecurity posture and DoD digital modernization strategy at 4 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies and Information Systems hearing on DoD information technology, cybersecurity and information assurance for FY2022, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis. In a Tweet Monday evening,

Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

https://ngpa.us/14442

RELATED STORY :

SD, TX, AZ: KELO Land (Regional) – Gov. Noem sending National Guard members to Texas Border – By Mitch Klein

https://ngpa.us/14443

FULL STORY BELOW

2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) – Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar – By Associated Press

The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar. The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.

https://ngpa.us/14438

RELATED STORY:

NM: Air Force Magazine (National) – New Mexico RED HORSE Commander Dies at Al Udeid – By Brian W. Everstine

https://ngpa.us/14440

FULL STORY BELOW

3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage. … With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

https://ngpa.us/14444

FULL STORY BELOW

4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) – The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina – By Zea Capistrano

A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps. Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

https://ngpa.us/14445

FULL STORY BELOW

5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) – State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine – By Kate Sweigart

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine. Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.

https://ngpa.us/14446

FULL STORY BELOW

6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) – PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard – By Staff Reports

Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home. … A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need.

https://ngpa.us/14434

FULL STORY BELOW

7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) – National Guard remembers 2011 flood response – By Reporter

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.

https://ngpa.us/14435

FULL STORY BELOW

8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) – Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service – By Abbie Shull

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard. … Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.

https://ngpa.us/14441

FULL STORY BELOW

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FULL STORIES:

1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis.

In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

"Tomorrow morning I'm officially announcing up to 50 National Guard troops to Texas to help secure our border," she said. "The Biden Administration has failed to keep America safe. We shouldn't be making our own communities vulnerable by sending police to fix Biden's border crisis."

On June 10, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey sent a letter to other governors invoking the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a compact that allows states to get help from other states during a time of emergency. Abbott and Ducey are both Republicans.

The letter warned other governors that while Texas and Arizona were "ground zero" for the crisis, other states would see spillover. It warned of increases in human trafficking and deadly drugs, including fentanyl.

"Given the staggering number of violations now occurring in Texas and Arizona, additional manpower is needed from any state that can spare it," the letter said. "With your help, we can apprehend more of these perpetrators of state and federal crimes, before they can cause problems in your state."

Besides law enforcement, the two states are searching for other law enforcement resources, including helicopters and drones.

Once invoked, the compact affords out-of-state officers operating in Texas and Arizona with the same duties as domestic law enforcement personnel, including the power to make arrests.

"Crucially," the letter said, "this will include the power to arrest migrants who illegally cross the border into our territory. Many of these crossings involved state-law crimes, such as criminal trespassing or smuggling of persons."

Noem joins other Republican governors, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who have pledged dozens of additional law enforcement officers to help their counterparts in Texas and Arizona.

Noem's Tweet did not specify which units the Guard soldiers would be drawn from.

https://ngpa.us/14442

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2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) – Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar – By Associated Press

The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar.

The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.

The 55-year-old airman was providing support to military efforts against the Islamic State group of Iraq and Syria.

Willis had been assigned as commander of the 210th Red Horse Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base.

https://ngpa.us/14438

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3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage.

When asked if the strategies already in place have had an impact, Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes shakes his head.

"I don't see it working. But, you know, my suggestion has always been, let's get some sheriffs out here, where they see more police presence, or more law enforcement presence," Stokes said. "If that does not work, my

suggestion then was to move toward the National Guard. Now I'm at that point now, because we can't keep waiting, cause people keep losing lives."

With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

The most recent took place Monday morning, after a drive-by shooting led to 30-year-old Christopher Thomas losing control of his vehicle on Livingston Road.

Thomas ended up smashing into a building, startling the owner, who had just arrived for the day.

"I thought I had a break in. I look, I check my shop, I just, you know, no cars missing, no tubes missing. But the air conditioning wasn't working. So I went to the side of the building to see had anybody stole my air conditioner. Then I saw a car had jumped this ditch, came to Jackson Housing Authority and had landed on top of my AC unit and plowed inside of my building," said Ernest Stanton Sr., who owns Stanton Body Shop.

Stanton saw firsthand Monday morning the violence that has gripped the Capital City for months on end.

Thomas died shortly after crashing into the side of the structure.

"Somebody's life is gone for nonsense, something that could have been worked out. And so if we don't find a solution as to how to work out differently than with others, they're gonna continue to happen like this," Stanton said. "I'm gonna fix the building, but I hate it for the young man. I hate it for the family. I've been here 25 years and they've been a good location and I don't regret being here. I love the area. But I hate the crime."

Thomas' killing happened in Stokes' ward.

Though Stokes and other council members already approved and appropriated half a million dollars to bring extra Hinds County deputies to Jackson months ago, it has yet to materialize because legal staff from the city, county and sheriff's department still haven't hammered out an agreement.

"We cannot sit back, sit idly by and watch people keep dying in Jackson, Mississippi," Stokes said.

The longtime councilman said the resolution to bring the National Guard will be on Tuesday's council meeting, but he's unsure how the vote will go.

Tuesday's council meeting will be the first with newly-elected councilmembers Vernon Hartley and Brian Grizzell.

When asked what the turning point would have to be for the city and police department to get tougher on crime, Stokes said the "right people" haven't been hurt yet.

"As soon as the right people get hurt, all that will change. Right now, the majority of people getting hurt are poor and are Black. And it seems that no one cares but Kenny Stokes," he said. "You let the wrong person, somebody with some influence, get robbed or hurt, then all the money we put for jail space, all the money we put for sheriffs [deputies], that would be happening instantaneously."

https://ngpa.us/14444

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4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) – The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina – By Zea Capistrano

A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps.

Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

"But I've been a full-time chaplain since 2018," Boling told The Manila Bulletin in a virtual interview on Monday, June 28.

Boling was promoted to the rank of colonel in March this year. Her promotion ceremony was held on May 11 – which coincided with her 57th birthday.

"As a colonel, I'm the first Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) female colonel in the Hawaii Air National Guard. As a colonel, I'm also the first AAPI colonel chaplain for the US Air Force," Boling shared.

Before 2018, while serving as a part-time chaplain, Boling also had a full-time job as a mental health supervisor for one of the biggest nonprofit agencies in Hawaii. This year, she will be relocating to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland for a four-year stat tour overseeing the welfare of 108,100 Guardsmen.

Becoming a chaplain

Boling earned her degree in customs administration at the Holy Cross of Davao College here in Davao City. While doing her internship with the Bureau of Customs in Cagayan de Oro City, Boling was also active in the church. This eventually led her to pursue vocational ministry.

She finished her Master of Divinity at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City. She specialized in pastoral care and counseling.

"To get that degree, I had to do an internship as a hospital chaplain," Boling said. Later on, she was accepted at the Makati Medical Center as a chaplain for her internship and in 1991, she applied and got accepted as a hospital chaplain in Hawaii.

"My mind has always been for ministry, what I can do for the world, what I can do for other people."

Turning points

Boling said she never had any idea of military chaplaincy.

"Wala gyud military sa among pamilya. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the PNP but that was it (There was no military member in our family. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the Philippine National Police, but that was it)," she said.

Boling later met her husband, Jeff, who at that time was on active duty in the Air Force in Hawaii. Her husband invited her to serve as chaplain for the military, but Boling was hesitant.

“I was not really thrilled about it because I really thought that military chaplains would carry guns just like any military, and I’m not big on guns,” she said.

Her Sunday school teacher, who was also the head of the chaplain at the wing, also invited her to become a military chaplain.

But at that time, Boling said, she was still unsure since their only child, was only about two years old. “I really didn’t want to have two militaries in the family,” she said.

However, it was the 9-11 bombing in 2001 which made her decide to enter the military.

“Throughout that day I was shaking, and then I kept following the story and it really broke my heart. I was like these Airmen, these service members need someone to comfort them, to provide counseling, someone to pray with them,” she said.

After the incident, Boling’s resolve to join the Guard became stronger. In April 2002, Boling swore in as first lieutenant.

Boling said her deployment to Zamboanga in 2008 also paved the way for her to take on the full-time job as a military chaplain.

“In 2008, I was sent to Zamboanga, I was there for about five or six months for the Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines through the Joint Special Operations Task Force. While there, apparently, I did an awesome job that the Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) here in Hawaii offered me a full-time job,” she recalled.

“I became their command chaplain, full time, for almost four years. From there, I had more opportunities to be on order” she said.

Growing up in Mati City

Boling grew up in Mati City as a child and fondly recalled treating her friends in the restaurant which their family owned. Boling’s family were also active church members. She finished elementary at the Mati Central Elementary School.

Before the pandemic hit, Boling was still able to visit her family in Mati City in February last year.

“Prior to COVID, I usually go home once a year. I’m hoping to go back home before we went to D.C. but I don’t think that’s ever gonna happen because of COVID,” she said.

Currently, Boling said her focus now is to focus on her goal of doing what is best for the interest of the Corps.

“How can I help the Airmen, how can I help the wing. We call it 54/90/108,100. I am responsible for 50 states and four territories, I am responsible for 90 wings, and the 108,100 – the guard members that I am responsible for,” she said.

“That’s how big my responsibility is, so I really need God on my side,” Boling added.

Boling also had this to say to her fellow women: “Be the best version of you.”

“Don’t worry about things that you have no control over. What is it that you are passionate about, follow that – which means, do your homework and be the best you can be at that job,” she added.

"Ako lang mag-isa and (I am the only one) Leah Botona Boling. Nobody else can be Leah Botona Boling. So, I need to be the best version of myself, otherwise, I will miss the opportunity of being who I am," she said.

https://ngpa.us/14445

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5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) – State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine – By Kate Sweigart

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine.

Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.

"All of our neighboring states are further along in the vaccination of their eligible population," Phillips-Hill said. "The administration's failed unilateral rollout of the vaccine has further demonstrated that its go-it-alone approach has not worked. The unanimous support of this legislation shows people on both sides of the aisle are frustrated and seeking to be part of the solution."

According to the state Senate, the National Guard will operate under the Pa. Department of Health and Human Services to collect, secure, and transport doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. If requested, members who have the necessary training would also be able to administer the vaccine, as well.

"The bill could help improve Pennsylvania's troubled roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine," the state Senate said in a release.

Pennsylvania currently ranks 46th in the nation in terms of the percentage of distributed vaccines that have been administered.

House Bill 326 would also allow for the creation of mass vaccination sites throughout Pennsylvania.

https://ngpa.us/14446

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6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) – PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard – By Staff Reports

Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home.

"The Idaho National Guard's support has been integral in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and aiding PHD in the reduction of the loss of life and the sustainment of our community's health," said

Don Duffy, Health Services Administrator for PHD. “They have supported our COVID-19 response operations in the five northern counties in a variety of initiatives. We truly could not have done this without their support and we will miss having them as part of our team.”

A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need. Specifically, the IDNG assisted with the following:

- IDNG directly supported the COVID-19 vaccine operations and provided numerous operational functions such as: patient intake, quality control, vaccine loading, traffic control, and logistical support. Operations have been conducted 6 days a week resulting in over 39,000 vaccinations administered during their time in the community. Additionally, the Guard worked in conjunction with Panhandle Health District, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and numerous other agencies to support an international vaccination clinic for members of the Lower Kootenay Band of Canada at the US-Canadian border.

- Soldiers coordinated with local partners to store, process, and deliver over 110,000 vaccinations in the five northern counties.

- Numerous service members served at PHD’s COVID-19 call center. They worked closely with Medical Reserve Corps and PHD staff to provide the community with a direct line of support to answer questions and address concerns.

- The remainder of the assigned personnel supported PHD by providing operational planning, logistics planning and support, and National Guard administration.

Due to the decrease in demand and the reduction in available staffing, PHD will be closing the mass vaccine clinics at North Idaho College in Coeur d’Alene and Rathdrum and the University of Idaho Agriculture Center in Sandpoint effective July 8. Anyone who would like to receive a COVID-19 vaccine can schedule an appointment at any of our office locations in Hayden, Sandpoint, St. Maries, Bonners Ferry, and Kellogg.

https://ngpa.us/14434

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7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) – National Guard remembers 2011 flood response – By Reporter

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.

The North Dakota National Guard’s 2011 flood response consisted of 67,264 personnel workdays, which surpassed the 54,341 recorded during the 2009 flood response. This record was broken November 2020 when the Guard’s COVID-19 pandemic response surpassed that number, and is currently at 116,427 personnel days worked.

“The remarkable support provided by the dedicated men and women of the North Dakota National Guard during the 2011 flood – as well as in 2009 and 2010 – was a critical component of the massive efforts to protect lives and property in Minot, Bismarck and beyond,” said Gov. Doug Burgum, commander-in-chief of the North Dakota

National Guard. “Whether it’s flooding, pandemic or other disaster response, we can rely on our National Guard to be Always ready, Always there.”

“On this 10th anniversary of the historic flood that impacted Minot and surrounding communities, we remember the 4,100 homes that flooded, the more than 11,000 residents who were displaced and the hundreds of millions of dollars in damages sustained,” Burgum continued. ”And we honor the courage and resiliency of the residents, National Guard members, volunteers and leaders at the local, state and federal levels who fought the flood, picked up the pieces and worked together to secure permanent flood protection, including the more than $400 million committed by the State of North Dakota to the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection and $870 million for the Fargo-Moorhead Area Diversion projects.”

Eastern North Dakota missions

Flood response in 2011 for the North Dakota National Guard came in two phases. Phase one began in eastern North Dakota and lasted about 32 days. It saw more than 600 citizen-soldiers and -airmen on duty in a single day. North Dakota Guardsmen assisted communities from Cass County, up through the Red River Valley, and west to Ward County and the Valley City and Lisbon areas.

On April 5, 2011, Guard soldiers and airmen began assisting communities along the Red River, which included Pembina, Harwood, Drayton, Kindred, Fargo, north to Grand Forks and others. Within weeks, the National Guard support shifted attention to the Valley City area, where the local community reinforced levees, bracing for a second crest by the Sheyenne River. A reported 400,000 sandbags were transported by contractors and Guard members from Fargo to support this mission. At the end of the spring 2011 flood mission, nearly 9,800 individual personnel days were expended on flood suppression operations.

“Flood fighting missions like those undertaken in 2011 are examples of how our great soldiers and airmen serve our communities when the need arises,” said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, N.D. adjutant general. ”We are always appreciative of the tremendous support shown by our employers and families during state active duty and overseas deployments. This unyielding support allows us to concentrate on our jobs and successfully complete our missions at home and abroad.”

Central North Dakota missions

Phase two of flood support began on May 23, 2011, with the North Dakota National Guard assuming missions in Ward County, with 30 Guardsmen conducting levee patrols in Minot and Burlington. The following week, response surged to nearly 200 soldiers and airmen, who provided presence patrols in evacuated neighborhoods, evacuation teams, levee patrols and construction, traffic control points, as well as quick reaction force teams ready to respond immediately to any flood-related requests.

Minot-area flood support peaked at over 575 North Dakota National Guard personnel. As the situation stabilized, the National Guard drew down to 146 personnel by June 20, but severe flood conditions soon returned. As the waters of the Souris River Basin rose again, hundreds of additional Guard members returned to duty. On June 22, 2011, warning sirens in Minot sounded as water topped levees. Guard support grew to 870 soldiers and airmen by the end of June.

In Minot, the Souris River, also known as the Mouse, crested on June 26 at 1,561.7 feet, exceeding the record crest set in 1881 by 3.7 feet.

In Burleigh County, specifically in the Bismarck and Mandan areas, similar flood conditions were seen along the Missouri River when the upstream Garrison Dam, 75 miles to the north, released record volumes of water. At its peak, 150,000 cubic feet per second of water passed through the dam, surpassing the previous record release of

65,200 cubic feet per second in 1975. The Missouri River crested on July 1, 2011, at 19.25 feet. This was the highest level since Garrison Dam was built. The river stayed at flood stage until Aug. 18, 2011.

Guard missions in this area began a day after Ward County operations, with the establishment of traffic control points on May 24, 2011. Missions included filling, transporting and distributing sandbags, aviation support, levee patrol and establishment of quick reaction force teams with heavy equipment for assisting with water breaches. The Guard also ran civil-military assistance teams who went from house-to-house in flood-prone areas to provide literature on properly constructing flood protection.

Other National Guard support missions during the 2011 flood support included ambulance teams, erecting temporary levees with Hesco barriers and TrapBags, purifying and distributing potable water, transport of flood-fighting supplies, operating Zodiac raft boats and running borrow pits to provide material for dike construction.

The North Dakota National Guard's flood support missions ended on July 26, 2011.
By the Numbers – 2011 Flood Response:
(For the Red, Sheyenne, Souris and Missouri rivers)
– 3,047 individual Guard soldiers and airmen on flood response duty for at least one day.
– 114 calendar days of North Dakota National Guard on flood duty.
– 67,264 personnel work days on flood response duty.
– 169 aviation missions flown by North Dakota National Guard helicopters.

https://ngpa.us/14435

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8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) – Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service – By Abbie Shull

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard.

"I didn't really have the intent to win and go on to compete for Miss Washington. I just thought it would be a fun experience," Hoyt said. "When I ended up winning, I didn't know how I would do this and serve in the guard. COVID hit and I was able to go to basic training and advanced individual training. It gave me time to manage everything."

Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.

Hoyt says she never imagined she would become a soldier, but serving in the National Guard has made it easier for her to pay for school. Hoyt participated in Washington's Running Start program which means she graduated from South Kitsap High School with both her high school diploma and an associate of arts degree from Olympic College in Bremerton.

This fall, Hoyt will start classes at Washington State University where she's pursuing a degree in accounting while enrolled as part of the reserve officer training corps.

"I stumbled my way into a recruiter's office and thought, 'Well, that sounds cool,'" Hoyt said. "I didn't know you could serve while going to school. I thought all military was active-duty."

Hoyt is the first member of her family to serve in the military and says she was excited by the challenge. Now, she's planning a future as an officer in the Army.

"I'm excited by the prospect of being part of something bigger than myself," Hoyt said. "How long I want to stay in, I can't stay. If I like it, I'll continue to make it a part of my career."

On July 2 and 3, Hoyt will compete to serve as Miss Washington at the Little Creek Hotel and Casino in Shelton. She said there is more to the pageant world than most people think.

To win the Miss Pierce County title, Hoyt went through a private interview in addition to the live pageant that includes an evening-wear presentation, an on-stage question and showcasing a talent.

Hoyt has been competing in pageants since she was 12 years old. Over the years, her talent portion has evolved from playing the violin to acting and dramatic interpretation. Hoyt's talent for the Miss Washington pageant is a dramatic interpretation of "Our War" from "Visions of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War."

"They're looking for depth in a title-holder. Right now our Miss Washington has just graduated from Brigham Young University, and she's going on to get her master's," Hoyt said. "Being a title holder isn't what you'd expect from your average soldier, either, so I'm excited to bring that diversity to the competition."

As for her fellow soldiers, Hoyt said, there is a bit of healthy teasing but they're very supportive.

"Other soldiers in the guard have full-time jobs and I have this," Hoyt said. "They're always like, 'OK, go wear your crown and come back tomorrow in your uniform.'"

If crowned Miss Washington, Hoyt will win over $40,000 in scholarship money and go on to compete in the Miss USA pageant.

https://ngpa.us/14441

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]
[redacted]@mail.mil

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:35 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: RE: PA Update 29 June 2021

Sir,

Good copy. Thanks, [redacted]

COL [redacted]

Army Chief of Staff

South Dakota Army National Guard

2823 West Main Street

Rapid City, SD 57702-8186

☎ [redacted]

[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil>

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 6:19 AM
To: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; Petrik, Scott T COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <scott.t.petrik.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) < [redacted] @mail.mil>
Subject: Fwd: PA Update 29 June 2021

See article 1: As stated, the Governor will make a formal announcement today.

NGB is obviously aware now, but we will also need to start reporting them on our daily reports once they come on duty on the 5th.

Topic will also come up on the weekly call on Thursday, but I will be sending GEN Hokanson an email ahead of that.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Date: June 29, 2021 at 4:59:56 AM MDT
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil <mailto:daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil> >
Cc: "[redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: PA Update 29 June 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, June 29, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.

- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.

- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.

- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson will host a media roundtable focused on Cyber Shield 2021 at 1130 a.m. EDT

- Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, commander, U.S. Cyber Command, provides the keynote address at 11 a.m. EDT, and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

- Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander, U.S. Africa Command, participates in a panel on European and U.S. military engagement in Africa at 10:45 a.m. EDT at the CSIS tenth annual EU Defense Washington Forum. Register at csis.org.

- Acting Chief Information Officer John Sherman testifies on cybersecurity posture and DoD digital modernization strategy at 4 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies and Information Systems hearing on DoD information technology, cybersecurity and information assurance for FY2022, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis. In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

https://ngpa.us/14442

RELATED STORY :

SD, TX, AZ: KELO Land (Regional) – Gov. Noem sending National Guard members to Texas Border – By Mitch Klein

https://ngpa.us/14443

FULL STORY BELOW

2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) – Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar – By Associated Press

The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar. The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.

https://ngpa.us/14438

RELATED STORY:

NM: Air Force Magazine (National) – New Mexico RED HORSE Commander Dies at Al Udeid – By Brian W. Everstine

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FULL STORY BELOW

3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage. … With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

https://ngpa.us/14444

FULL STORY BELOW

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A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps. Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

https://ngpa.us/14445

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In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

"Tomorrow morning I'm officially announcing up to 50 National Guard troops to Texas to help secure our border," she said. "The Biden Administration has failed to keep America safe. We shouldn't be making our own communities vulnerable by sending police to fix Biden's border crisis."

On June 10, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey sent a letter to other governors invoking the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a compact that allows states to get help from other states during a time of emergency. Abbott and Ducey are both Republicans.

The letter warned other governors that while Texas and Arizona were "ground zero" for the crisis, other states would see spillover. It warned of increases in human trafficking and deadly drugs, including fentanyl.

"Given the staggering number of violations now occurring in Texas and Arizona, additional manpower is needed from any state that can spare it," the letter said. "With your help, we can apprehend more of these perpetrators of state and federal crimes, before they can cause problems in your state."

Besides law enforcement, the two states are searching for other law enforcement resources, including helicopters and drones.

Once invoked, the compact affords out-of-state officers operating in Texas and Arizona with the same duties as domestic law enforcement personnel, including the power to make arrests.

"Crucially," the letter said, "this will include the power to arrest migrants who illegally cross the border into our territory. Many of these crossings involved state-law crimes, such as criminal trespassing or smuggling of persons."

Noem joins other Republican governors, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who have pledged dozens of additional law enforcement officers to help their counterparts in Texas and Arizona.

Noem's Tweet did not specify which units the Guard soldiers would be drawn from.

https://ngpa.us/14442

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The 55-year-old airman was providing support to military efforts against the Islamic State group of Iraq and Syria.

Willis had been assigned as commander of the 210th Red Horse Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base.

https://ngpa.us/14438

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3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage.

When asked if the strategies already in place have had an impact, Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes shakes his head.

"I don't see it working. But, you know, my suggestion has always been, let's get some sheriffs out here, where they see more police presence, or more law enforcement presence," Stokes said. "If that does not work, my suggestion then was to move toward the National Guard. Now I'm at that point now, because we can't keep waiting, cause people keep losing lives."

With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

The most recent took place Monday morning, after a drive-by shooting led to 30-year-old Christopher Thomas losing control of his vehicle on Livingston Road.

Thomas ended up smashing into a building, startling the owner, who had just arrived for the day.

"I thought I had a break in. I look, I check my shop, I just, you know, no cars missing, no tubes missing. But the air conditioning wasn't working. So I went to the side of the building to see had anybody stole my air conditioner. Then I saw a car had jumped this ditch, came to Jackson Housing Authority and had landed on top of my AC unit and plowed inside of my building," said Ernest Stanton Sr., who owns Stanton Body Shop.

Stanton saw firsthand Monday morning the violence that has gripped the Capital City for months on end.

Thomas died shortly after crashing into the side of the structure.

"Somebody's life is gone for nonsense, something that could have been worked out. And so if we don't find a solution as to how to work out differently than with others, they're gonna continue to happen like this," Stanton said. "I'm gonna fix the building, but I hate it for the young man. I hate it for the family. I've been here 25 years and they've been a good location and I don't regret being here. I love the area. But I hate the crime."

Thomas' killing happened in Stokes' ward.

Though Stokes and other council members already approved and appropriated half a million dollars to bring extra Hinds County deputies to Jackson months ago, it has yet to materialize because legal staff from the city, county and sheriff's department still haven't hammered out an agreement.

"We cannot sit back, sit idly by and watch people keep dying in Jackson, Mississippi," Stokes said.

The longtime councilman said the resolution to bring the National Guard will be on Tuesday's council meeting, but he's unsure how the vote will go.

Tuesday's council meeting will be the first with newly-elected councilmembers Vernon Hartley and Brian Grizzell.

When asked what the turning point would have to be for the city and police department to get tougher on crime, Stokes said the "right people" haven't been hurt yet.

"As soon as the right people get hurt, all that will change. Right now, the majority of people getting hurt are poor and are Black. And it seems that no one cares but Kenny Stokes," he said. "You let the wrong person, somebody with some influence, get robbed or hurt, then all the money we put for jail space, all the money we put for sheriffs [deputies], that would be happening instantaneously."

https://ngpa.us/14444

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4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) – The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina – By Zea Capistrano

A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps.

Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

"But I've been a full-time chaplain since 2018," Boling told The Manila Bulletin in a virtual interview on Monday, June 28.

Boling was promoted to the rank of colonel in March this year. Her promotion ceremony was held on May 11 – which coincided with her 57th birthday.

"As a colonel, I'm the first Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) female colonel in the Hawaii Air National Guard. As a colonel, I'm also the first AAPI colonel chaplain for the US Air Force," Boling shared.

Before 2018, while serving as a part-time chaplain, Boling also had a full-time job as a mental health supervisor for one of the biggest nonprofit agencies in Hawaii. This year, she will be relocating to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland for a four-year stat tour overseeing the welfare of 108,100 Guardsmen.

Becoming a chaplain

Boling earned her degree in customs administration at the Holy Cross of Davao College here in Davao City. While doing her internship with the Bureau of Customs in Cagayan de Oro City, Boling was also active in the church. This eventually led her to pursue vocational ministry.

She finished her Master of Divinity at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City. She specialized in pastoral care and counseling.

"To get that degree, I had to do an internship as a hospital chaplain," Boling said. Later on, she was accepted at the Makati Medical Center as a chaplain for her internship and in 1991, she applied and got accepted as a hospital chaplain in Hawaii.

"My mind has always been for ministry, what I can do for the world, what I can do for other people."

Turning points

Boling said she never had any idea of military chaplaincy.

"Wala gyud military sa among pamilya. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the PNP but that was it (There was no military member in our family. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the Philippine National Police, but that was it)," she said.

Boling later met her husband, Jeff, who at that time was on active duty in the Air Force in Hawaii. Her husband invited her to serve as chaplain for the military, but Boling was hesitant.

"I was not really thrilled about it because I really thought that military chaplains would carry guns just like any military, and I'm not big on guns," she said.

Her Sunday school teacher, who was also the head of the chaplain at the wing, also invited her to become a military chaplain.

But at that time, Boling said, she was still unsure since their only child, was only about two years old. “I really didn’t want to have two militaries in the family,” she said.

However, it was the 9-11 bombing in 2001 which made her decide to enter the military.

“Throughout that day I was shaking, and then I kept following the story and it really broke my heart. I was like these Airmen, these service members need someone to comfort them, to provide counseling, someone to pray with them,” she said.

After the incident, Boling’s resolve to join the Guard became stronger. In April 2002, Boling swore in as first lieutenant.

Boling said her deployment to Zamboanga in 2008 also paved the way for her to take on the full-time job as a military chaplain.

“In 2008, I was sent to Zamboanga, I was there for about five or six months for the Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines through the Joint Special Operations Task Force. While there, apparently, I did an awesome job that the Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) here in Hawaii offered me a full-time job,” she recalled.

“I became their command chaplain, full time, for almost four years. From there, I had more opportunities to be on order” she said.

Growing up in Mati City

Boling grew up in Mati City as a child and fondly recalled treating her friends in the restaurant which their family owned. Boling’s family were also active church members. She finished elementary at the Mati Central Elementary School.

Before the pandemic hit, Boling was still able to visit her family in Mati City in February last year.

“Prior to COVID, I usually go home once a year. I’m hoping to go back home before we went to D.C. but I don’t think that’s ever gonna happen because of COVID,” she said.

Currently, Boling said her focus now is to focus on her goal of doing what is best for the interest of the Corps.

“How can I help the Airmen, how can I help the wing. We call it 54/90/108,100. I am responsible for 50 states and four territories, I am responsible for 90 wings, and the 108,100 – the guard members that I am responsible for,” she said.

“That’s how big my responsibility is, so I really need God on my side,” Boling added.

Boling also had this to say to her fellow women: “Be the best version of you.”

“Don’t worry about things that you have no control over. What is it that you are passionate about, follow that – which means, do your homework and be the best you can be at that job,” she added.

“Ako lang mag-isa and (I am the only one) Leah Botona Boling. Nobody else can be Leah Botona Boling. So, I need to be the best version of myself, otherwise, I will miss the opportunity of being who I am,” she said.

https://ngpa.us/14445

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5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) – State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine – By Kate Sweigart

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine.

Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.

"All of our neighboring states are further along in the vaccination of their eligible population," Phillips-Hill said. "The administration's failed unilateral rollout of the vaccine has further demonstrated that its go-it-alone approach has not worked. The unanimous support of this legislation shows people on both sides of the aisle are frustrated and seeking to be part of the solution."

According to the state Senate, the National Guard will operate under the Pa. Department of Health and Human Services to collect, secure, and transport doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. If requested, members who have the necessary training would also be able to administer the vaccine, as well.

"The bill could help improve Pennsylvania's troubled roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine," the state Senate said in a release.

Pennsylvania currently ranks 46th in the nation in terms of the percentage of distributed vaccines that have been administered.

House Bill 326 would also allow for the creation of mass vaccination sites throughout Pennsylvania.

https://ngpa.us/14446

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6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) – PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard – By Staff Reports

Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home.

"The Idaho National Guard's support has been integral in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and aiding PHD in the reduction of the loss of life and the sustainment of our community's health," said Don Duffy, Health Services Administrator for PHD. "They have supported our COVID-19 response operations in the five northern counties in a variety of initiatives. We truly could not have done this without their support and we will miss having them as part of our team."

A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need. Specifically, the IDNG assisted with the following:

- IDNG directly supported the COVID-19 vaccine operations and provided numerous operational functions such as: patient intake, quality control, vaccine loading, traffic control, and logistical support. Operations have been conducted 6 days a week resulting in over 39,000 vaccinations administered during their time in the community. Additionally, the Guard worked in conjunction with Panhandle Health District, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and numerous other agencies to support an international vaccination clinic for members of the Lower Kootenay Band of Canada at the US-Canadian border.

- Soldiers coordinated with local partners to store, process, and deliver over 110,000 vaccinations in the five northern counties.

- Numerous service members served at PHD's COVID-19 call center. They worked closely with Medical Reserve Corps and PHD staff to provide the community with a direct line of support to answer questions and address concerns.

- The remainder of the assigned personnel supported PHD by providing operational planning, logistics planning and support, and National Guard administration.

Due to the decrease in demand and the reduction in available staffing, PHD will be closing the mass vaccine clinics at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene and Rathdrum and the University of Idaho Agriculture Center in Sandpoint effective July 8. Anyone who would like to receive a COVID-19 vaccine can schedule an appointment at any of our office locations in Hayden, Sandpoint, St. Maries, Bonners Ferry, and Kellogg.

https://ngpa.us/14434

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7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) – National Guard remembers 2011 flood response – By Reporter

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.

The North Dakota National Guard's 2011 flood response consisted of 67,264 personnel workdays, which surpassed the 54,341 recorded during the 2009 flood response. This record was broken November 2020 when the Guard's COVID-19 pandemic response surpassed that number, and is currently at 116,427 personnel days worked.

"The remarkable support provided by the dedicated men and women of the North Dakota National Guard during the 2011 flood – as well as in 2009 and 2010 – was a critical component of the massive efforts to protect lives and property in Minot, Bismarck and beyond," said Gov. Doug Burgum, commander-in-chief of the North Dakota National Guard. "Whether it's flooding, pandemic or other disaster response, we can rely on our National Guard to be Always ready, Always there."

"On this 10th anniversary of the historic flood that impacted Minot and surrounding communities, we remember the 4,100 homes that flooded, the more than 11,000 residents who were displaced and the hundreds of millions of dollars in damages sustained," Burgum continued. "And we honor the courage and resiliency of the residents,

National Guard members, volunteers and leaders at the local, state and federal levels who fought the flood, picked up the pieces and worked together to secure permanent flood protection, including the more than $400 million committed by the State of North Dakota to the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection and $870 million for the Fargo-Moorhead Area Diversion projects."

Eastern North Dakota missions

Flood response in 2011 for the North Dakota National Guard came in two phases. Phase one began in eastern North Dakota and lasted about 32 days. It saw more than 600 citizen-soldiers and -airmen on duty in a single day. North Dakota Guardsmen assisted communities from Cass County, up through the Red River Valley, and west to Ward County and the Valley City and Lisbon areas.

On April 5, 2011, Guard soldiers and airmen began assisting communities along the Red River, which included Pembina, Harwood, Drayton, Kindred, Fargo, north to Grand Forks and others. Within weeks, the National Guard support shifted attention to the Valley City area, where the local community reinforced levees, bracing for a second crest by the Sheyenne River. A reported 400,000 sandbags were transported by contractors and Guard members from Fargo to support this mission. At the end of the spring 2011 flood mission, nearly 9,800 individual personnel days were expended on flood suppression operations.

"Flood fighting missions like those undertaken in 2011 are examples of how our great soldiers and airmen serve our communities when the need arises," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, N.D. adjutant general. "We are always appreciative of the tremendous support shown by our employers and families during state active duty and overseas deployments. This unyielding support allows us to concentrate on our jobs and successfully complete our missions at home and abroad."

Central North Dakota missions

Phase two of flood support began on May 23, 2011, with the North Dakota National Guard assuming missions in Ward County, with 30 Guardsmen conducting levee patrols in Minot and Burlington. The following week, response surged to nearly 200 soldiers and airmen, who provided presence patrols in evacuated neighborhoods, evacuation teams, levee patrols and construction, traffic control points, as well as quick reaction force teams ready to respond immediately to any flood-related requests.

Minot-area flood support peaked at over 575 North Dakota National Guard personnel. As the situation stabilized, the National Guard drew down to 146 personnel by June 20, but severe flood conditions soon returned. As the waters of the Souris River Basin rose again, hundreds of additional Guard members returned to duty. On June 22, 2011, warning sirens in Minot sounded as water topped levees. Guard support grew to 870 soldiers and airmen by the end of June.

In Minot, the Souris River, also known as the Mouse, crested on June 26 at 1,561.7 feet, exceeding the record crest set in 1881 by 3.7 feet.

In Burleigh County, specifically in the Bismarck and Mandan areas, similar flood conditions were seen along the Missouri River when the upstream Garrison Dam, 75 miles to the north, released record volumes of water. At its peak, 150,000 cubic feet per second of water passed through the dam, surpassing the previous record release of 65,200 cubic feet per second in 1975. The Missouri River crested on July 1, 2011, at 19.25 feet. This was the highest level since Garrison Dam was built. The river stayed at flood stage until Aug. 18, 2011.

Guard missions in this area began a day after Ward County operations, with the establishment of traffic control points on May 24, 2011. Missions included filling, transporting and distributing sandbags, aviation support, levee patrol and establishment of quick reaction force teams with heavy equipment for assisting with water breaches. The Guard

also ran civil-military assistance teams who went from house-to-house in flood-prone areas to provide literature on properly constructing flood protection.

Other National Guard support missions during the 2011 flood support included ambulance teams, erecting temporary levees with Hesco barriers and TrapBags, purifying and distributing potable water, transport of flood-fighting supplies, operating Zodiac raft boats and running borrow pits to provide material for dike construction.

The North Dakota National Guard's flood support missions ended on July 26, 2011.
By the Numbers – 2011 Flood Response:
(For the Red, Sheyenne, Souris and Missouri rivers)
– 3,047 individual Guard soldiers and airmen on flood response duty for at least one day.
– 114 calendar days of North Dakota National Guard on flood duty.
– 67,264 personnel work days on flood response duty.
– 169 aviation missions flown by North Dakota National Guard helicopters.

https://ngpa.us/14435

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8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) – Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service – By Abbie Shull

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard.

"I didn't really have the intent to win and go on to compete for Miss Washington. I just thought it would be a fun experience," Hoyt said. "When I ended up winning, I didn't know how I would do this and serve in the guard. COVID hit and I was able to go to basic training and advanced individual training. It gave me time to manage everything."

Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.

Hoyt says she never imagined she would become a soldier, but serving in the National Guard has made it easier for her to pay for school. Hoyt participated in Washington's Running Start program which means she graduated from South Kitsap High School with both her high school diploma and an associate of arts degree from Olympic College in Bremerton.

This fall, Hoyt will start classes at Washington State University where she's pursuing a degree in accounting while enrolled as part of the reserve officer training corps.

"I stumbled my way into a recruiter's office and thought, 'Well, that sounds cool,'" Hoyt said. "I didn't know you could serve while going to school. I thought all military was active-duty."

Hoyt is the first member of her family to serve in the military and says she was excited by the challenge. Now, she's planning a future as an officer in the Army.

"I'm excited by the prospect of being part of something bigger than myself," Hoyt said. "How long I want to stay in, I can't stay. If I like it, I'll continue to make it a part of my career."

On July 2 and 3, Hoyt will compete to serve as Miss Washington at the Little Creek Hotel and Casino in Shelton. She said there is more to the pageant world than most people think.

To win the Miss Pierce County title, Hoyt went through a private interview in addition to the live pageant that includes an evening-wear presentation, an on-stage question and showcasing a talent.

Hoyt has been competing in pageants since she was 12 years old. Over the years, her talent portion has evolved from playing the violin to acting and dramatic interpretation. Hoyt's talent for the Miss Washington pageant is a dramatic interpretation of "Our War" from "Visions of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War."

"They're looking for depth in a title-holder. Right now our Miss Washington has just graduated from Brigham Young University, and she's going on to get her master's," Hoyt said. "Being a title holder isn't what you'd expect from your average soldier, either, so I'm excited to bring that diversity to the competition."

As for her fellow soldiers, Hoyt said, there is a bit of healthy teasing but they're very supportive.

"Other soldiers in the guard have full-time jobs and I have this," Hoyt said. "They're always like, 'OK, go wear your crown and come back tomorrow in your uniform.'"

If crowned Miss Washington, Hoyt will win over $40,000 in scholarship money and go on to compete in the Miss USA pageant.

https://ngpa.us/14441

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.
Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]
[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil>

LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:12 AM
To: Jensen, Jon A LTG USARMY NG NGB ARNG (USA)
Subject: Re: SDNG TX Support

Interesting times we are living in.

Jeff

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 29, 2021, at 7:08 AM, Jensen, Jon A LTG USARMY NG NGB ARNG (USA) <jon.a.jensen.mil@mail.mil> wrote:

Jeff: This is like the old militia days. Let me know if we find Poncho Villa down there.

LTG Jon Jensen
Director ARNG

From: "Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 9:01:06 AM
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil <mailto:daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil> >
Cc: "Jensen, Jon A LTG USARMY NG NGB ARNG (USA)" <jon.a.jensen.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jon.a.jensen.mil@mail.mil> >
Subject: SDNG TX Support

Good Morning Sir,

As a quick follow up to the below article. We will bring on 50 soldiers on 6 July. They will in process, gear up, and depart for TX on 9 July. Our intent is for them to do 30 days on the ground. Decision on follow on rotations will be made down the road. Naturally, we are working closely with MG Norris and her team. We are very comfortable with the mission and life support they have in place.

One very interesting piece of this is that all States are paying their own costs. The State of SD received a $1 Million private donation to help support this effort. We will be on SAD through an EMAC with TX. The donation will roll into the State and will be transparent to us.

Please let me know if you have any questions questions. We will start reporting these soldiers up, once they come on duty.

Jeff

SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis. In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

https://ngpa.us/14442

Sent from my iPhone

PA Update
As of June 29, 2021, 0700

Today in the Department of Defense, June 29, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on her schedule.
- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.
- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.
- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.
- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson will host a media roundtable focused on Cyber Shield 2021 at 1130 a.m. EDT
- Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, commander, U.S. Cyber Command, provides the keynote address at 11 a.m. EDT, and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.
- Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander, U.S. Africa Command, participates in a panel on European and U.S. military engagement in Africa at 10:45 a.m. EDT at the CSIS tenth annual EU Defense Washington Forum. Register at csis.org.
- Acting Chief Information Officer John Sherman testifies on cybersecurity posture and DoD digital modernization strategy at 4 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies and Information Systems hearing on DoD information technology, cybersecurity and information assurance for FY2022, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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https://ngpa.us/14442

RELATED STORY :

SD, TX, AZ: KELO Land (Regional) – Gov. Noem sending National Guard members to Texas Border – By Mitch Klein

https://ngpa.us/14443

FULL STORY BELOW

2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) – Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar – By Associated Press

The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar. The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.

https://ngpa.us/14438

RELATED STORY:

NM: Air Force Magazine (National) – New Mexico RED HORSE Commander Dies at Al Udeid – By Brian W. Everstine

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FULL STORY BELOW

3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage. … With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

https://ngpa.us/14444

FULL STORY BELOW

4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) – The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina – By Zea Capistrano

A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps. Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

https://ngpa.us/14445

FULL STORY BELOW

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https://ngpa.us/14446

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In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

"Tomorrow morning I'm officially announcing up to 50 National Guard troops to Texas to help secure our border," she said. "The Biden Administration has failed to keep America safe. We shouldn't be making our own communities vulnerable by sending police to fix Biden's border crisis."

On June 10, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey sent a letter to other governors invoking the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a compact that allows states to get help from other states during a time of emergency. Abbott and Ducey are both Republicans.

The letter warned other governors that while Texas and Arizona were "ground zero" for the crisis, other states would see spillover. It warned of increases in human trafficking and deadly drugs, including fentanyl.

“Given the staggering number of violations now occurring in Texas and Arizona, additional manpower is needed from any state that can spare it,” the letter said. “With your help, we can apprehend more of these perpetrators of state and federal crimes, before they can cause problems in your state.”

Besides law enforcement, the two states are searching for other law enforcement resources, including helicopters and drones.

Once invoked, the compact affords out-of-state officers operating in Texas and Arizona with the same duties as domestic law enforcement personnel, including the power to make arrests.

“Crucially,” the letter said, “this will include the power to arrest migrants who illegally cross the border into our territory. Many of these crossings involved state-law crimes, such as criminal trespassing or smuggling of persons.”

Noem joins other Republican governors, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who have pledged dozens of additional law enforcement officers to help their counterparts in Texas and Arizona.

Noem’s Tweet did not specify which units the Guard soldiers would be drawn from.

https://ngpa.us/14442

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The 55-year-old airman was providing support to military efforts against the Islamic State group of Iraq and Syria.

Willis had been assigned as commander of the 210th Red Horse Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base.

https://ngpa.us/14438

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3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage.

When asked if the strategies already in place have had an impact, Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes shakes his head.

"I don't see it working. But, you know, my suggestion has always been, let's get some sheriffs out here, where they see more police presence, or more law enforcement presence," Stokes said. "If that does not work, my suggestion then was to move toward the National Guard. Now I'm at that point now, because we can't keep waiting, cause people keep losing lives."

With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

The most recent took place Monday morning, after a drive-by shooting led to 30-year-old Christopher Thomas losing control of his vehicle on Livingston Road.

Thomas ended up smashing into a building, startling the owner, who had just arrived for the day.

"I thought I had a break in. I look, I check my shop, I just, you know, no cars missing, no tubes missing. But the air conditioning wasn't working. So I went to the side of the building to see had anybody stole my air conditioner. Then I saw a car had jumped this ditch, came to Jackson Housing Authority and had landed on top of my AC unit and plowed inside of my building," said Ernest Stanton Sr., who owns Stanton Body Shop.

Stanton saw firsthand Monday morning the violence that has gripped the Capital City for months on end.

Thomas died shortly after crashing into the side of the structure.

"Somebody's life is gone for nonsense, something that could have been worked out. And so if we don't find a solution as to how to work out differently than with others, they're gonna continue to happen like this," Stanton said. "I'm gonna fix the building, but I hate it for the young man. I hate it for the family. I've been here 25 years and they've been a good location and I don't regret being here. I love the area. But I hate the crime."

Thomas' killing happened in Stokes' ward.

Though Stokes and other council members already approved and appropriated half a million dollars to bring extra Hinds County deputies to Jackson months ago, it has yet to materialize because legal staff from the city, county and sheriff's department still haven't hammered out an agreement.

"We cannot sit back, sit idly by and watch people keep dying in Jackson, Mississippi," Stokes said.

The longtime councilman said the resolution to bring the National Guard will be on Tuesday's council meeting, but he's unsure how the vote will go.

Tuesday's council meeting will be the first with newly-elected councilmembers Vernon Hartley and Brian Grizzell.

When asked what the turning point would have to be for the city and police department to get tougher on crime, Stokes said the “right people” haven’t been hurt yet.

“As soon as the right people get hurt, all that will change. Right now, the majority of people getting hurt are poor and are Black. And it seems that no one cares but Kenny Stokes,” he said. “You let the wrong person, somebody with some influence, get robbed or hurt, then all the money we put for jail space, all the money we put for sheriffs [deputies], that would be happening instantaneously.”

https://ngpa.us/14444

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4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) – The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina – By Zea Capistrano

A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps.

Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

“But I’ve been a full-time chaplain since 2018,” Boling told The Manila Bulletin in a virtual interview on Monday, June 28.

Boling was promoted to the rank of colonel in March this year. Her promotion ceremony was held on May 11 – which coincided with her 57th birthday.

“As a colonel, I’m the first Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) female colonel in the Hawaii Air National Guard. As a colonel, I’m also the first AAPI colonel chaplain for the US Air Force,” Boling shared.

Before 2018, while serving as a part-time chaplain, Boling also had a full-time job as a mental health supervisor for one of the biggest nonprofit agencies in Hawaii. This year, she will be relocating to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland for a four-year stat tour overseeing the welfare of 108,100 Guardsmen.

Becoming a chaplain

Boling earned her degree in customs administration at the Holy Cross of Davao College here in Davao City. While doing her internship with the Bureau of Customs in Cagayan de Oro City, Boling was also active in the church. This eventually led her to pursue vocational ministry.

She finished her Master of Divinity at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City. She specialized in pastoral care and counseling.

“To get that degree, I had to do an internship as a hospital chaplain,” Boling said. Later on, she was accepted at the Makati Medical Center as a chaplain for her internship and in 1991, she applied and got accepted as a hospital chaplain in Hawaii.

“My mind has always been for ministry, what I can do for the world, what I can do for other people.”

Turning points

Boling said she never had any idea of military chaplaincy.

“Wala gyud military sa among pamilya. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the PNP but that was it (There was no military member in our family. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the Philippine National Police, but that was it),” she said.

Boling later met her husband, Jeff, who at that time was on active duty in the Air Force in Hawaii. Her husband invited her to serve as chaplain for the military, but Boling was hesitant.

“I was not really thrilled about it because I really thought that military chaplains would carry guns just like any military, and I’m not big on guns,” she said.

Her Sunday school teacher, who was also the head of the chaplain at the wing, also invited her to become a military chaplain.

But at that time, Boling said, she was still unsure since their only child, was only about two years old. “I really didn’t want to have two militaries in the family,” she said.

However, it was the 9-11 bombing in 2001 which made her decide to enter the military.

“Throughout that day I was shaking, and then I kept following the story and it really broke my heart. I was like these Airmen, these service members need someone to comfort them, to provide counseling, someone to pray with them,” she said.

After the incident, Boling’s resolve to join the Guard became stronger. In April 2002, Boling swore in as first lieutenant.

Boling said her deployment to Zamboanga in 2008 also paved the way for her to take on the full-time job as a military chaplain.

“In 2008, I was sent to Zamboanga, I was there for about five or six months for the Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines through the Joint Special Operations Task Force. While there, apparently, I did an awesome job that the Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) here in Hawaii offered me a full-time job,” she recalled.

“I became their command chaplain, full time, for almost four years. From there, I had more opportunities to be on order” she said.

Growing up in Mati City

Boling grew up in Mati City as a child and fondly recalled treating her friends in the restaurant which their family owned. Boling's family were also active church members. She finished elementary at the Mati Central Elementary School.

Before the pandemic hit, Boling was still able to visit her family in Mati City in February last year.

"Prior to COVID, I usually go home once a year. I'm hoping to go back home before we went to D.C. but I don't think that's ever gonna happen because of COVID," she said.

Currently, Boling said her focus now is to focus on her goal of doing what is best for the interest of the Corps.

"How can I help the Airmen, how can I help the wing. We call it 54/90/108,100. I am responsible for 50 states and four territories, I am responsible for 90 wings, and the 108,100 – the guard members that I am responsible for," she said.

"That's how big my responsibility is, so I really need God on my side," Boling added.

Boling also had this to say to her fellow women: "Be the best version of you."

"Don't worry about things that you have no control over. What is it that you are passionate about, follow that – which means, do your homework and be the best you can be at that job," she added.

"Ako lang mag-isa and (I am the only one) Leah Botona Boling. Nobody else can be Leah Botona Boling. So, I need to be the best version of myself, otherwise, I will miss the opportunity of being who I am," she said.

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5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) – State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine – By Kate Sweigart

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine.

Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard's authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.

"All of our neighboring states are further along in the vaccination of their eligible population," Phillips-Hill said. "The administration's failed unilateral rollout of the vaccine has further demonstrated that its go-it-alone approach has not worked. The unanimous support of this legislation shows people on both sides of the aisle are frustrated and seeking to be part of the solution."

According to the state Senate, the National Guard will operate under the Pa. Department of Health and Human Services to collect, secure, and transport doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. If requested, members who have the necessary training would also be able to administer the vaccine, as well.

“The bill could help improve Pennsylvania’s troubled roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine,” the state Senate said in a release.

Pennsylvania currently ranks 46th in the nation in terms of the percentage of distributed vaccines that have been administered.

House Bill 326 would also allow for the creation of mass vaccination sites throughout Pennsylvania.

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6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) – PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard – By Staff Reports

Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home.

“The Idaho National Guard’s support has been integral in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and aiding PHD in the reduction of the loss of life and the sustainment of our community’s health,” said Don Duffy, Health Services Administrator for PHD. “They have supported our COVID-19 response operations in the five northern counties in a variety of initiatives. We truly could not have done this without their support and we will miss having them as part of our team.”

A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need. Specifically, the IDNG assisted with the following:

- IDNG directly supported the COVID-19 vaccine operations and provided numerous operational functions such as: patient intake, quality control, vaccine loading, traffic control, and logistical support. Operations have been conducted 6 days a week resulting in over 39,000 vaccinations administered during their time in the community. Additionally, the Guard worked in conjunction with Panhandle Health District, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and numerous other agencies to support an international vaccination clinic for members of the Lower Kootenay Band of Canada at the US-Canadian border.

- Soldiers coordinated with local partners to store, process, and deliver over 110,000 vaccinations in the five northern counties.

- Numerous service members served at PHD’s COVID-19 call center. They worked closely with Medical Reserve Corps and PHD staff to provide the community with a direct line of support to answer questions and address concerns.

- The remainder of the assigned personnel supported PHD by providing operational planning, logistics planning and support, and National Guard administration.

Due to the decrease in demand and the reduction in available staffing, PHD will be closing the mass vaccine clinics at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene and Rathdrum and the University of Idaho Agriculture Center in Sandpoint effective July 8. Anyone who would like to receive a COVID-19 vaccine can schedule an appointment at any of our office locations in Hayden, Sandpoint, St. Maries, Bonners Ferry, and Kellogg.

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7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) – National Guard remembers 2011 flood response – By Reporter

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.

The North Dakota National Guard's 2011 flood response consisted of 67,264 personnel workdays, which surpassed the 54,341 recorded during the 2009 flood response. This record was broken November 2020 when the Guard's COVID-19 pandemic response surpassed that number, and is currently at 116,427 personnel days worked.

"The remarkable support provided by the dedicated men and women of the North Dakota National Guard during the 2011 flood – as well as in 2009 and 2010 – was a critical component of the massive efforts to protect lives and property in Minot, Bismarck and beyond," said Gov. Doug Burgum, commander-in-chief of the North Dakota National Guard. "Whether it's flooding, pandemic or other disaster response, we can rely on our National Guard to be Always ready, Always there."

"On this 10th anniversary of the historic flood that impacted Minot and surrounding communities, we remember the 4,100 homes that flooded, the more than 11,000 residents who were displaced and the hundreds of millions of dollars in damages sustained," Burgum continued. "And we honor the courage and resiliency of the residents, National Guard members, volunteers and leaders at the local, state and federal levels who fought the flood, picked up the pieces and worked together to secure permanent flood protection, including the more than $400 million committed by the State of North Dakota to the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection and $870 million for the Fargo-Moorhead Area Diversion projects."

Eastern North Dakota missions

Flood response in 2011 for the North Dakota National Guard came in two phases. Phase one began in eastern North Dakota and lasted about 32 days. It saw more than 600 citizen-soldiers and -airmen on duty in a single day. North Dakota Guardsmen assisted communities from Cass County, up through the Red River Valley, and west to Ward County and the Valley City and Lisbon areas.

On April 5, 2011, Guard soldiers and airmen began assisting communities along the Red River, which included Pembina, Harwood, Drayton, Kindred, Fargo, north to Grand Forks and others. Within weeks, the National Guard support shifted attention to the Valley City area, where the local community reinforced levees, bracing for a second crest by the Sheyenne River. A reported 400,000 sandbags were transported by contractors and Guard members from Fargo to support this mission. At the end of the spring 2011 flood mission, nearly 9,800 individual personnel days were expended on flood suppression operations.

"Flood fighting missions like those undertaken in 2011 are examples of how our great soldiers and airmen serve our communities when the need arises," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, N.D. adjutant general. "We are always appreciative of the tremendous support shown by our employers and families during state active duty and overseas deployments. This unyielding support allows us to concentrate on our jobs and successfully complete our missions at home and abroad."

Central North Dakota missions

Phase two of flood support began on May 23, 2011, with the North Dakota National Guard assuming missions in Ward County, with 30 Guardsmen conducting levee patrols in Minot and Burlington. The following week, response surged to nearly 200 soldiers and airmen, who provided presence patrols in evacuated neighborhoods, evacuation teams, levee patrols and construction, traffic control points, as well as quick reaction force teams ready to respond immediately to any flood-related requests.

Minot-area flood support peaked at over 575 North Dakota National Guard personnel. As the situation stabilized, the National Guard drew down to 146 personnel by June 20, but severe flood conditions soon returned. As the waters of the Souris River Basin rose again, hundreds of additional Guard members returned to duty. On June 22, 2011, warning sirens in Minot sounded as water topped levees. Guard support grew to 870 soldiers and airmen by the end of June.

In Minot, the Souris River, also known as the Mouse, crested on June 26 at 1,561.7 feet, exceeding the record crest set in 1881 by 3.7 feet.

In Burleigh County, specifically in the Bismarck and Mandan areas, similar flood conditions were seen along the Missouri River when the upstream Garrison Dam, 75 miles to the north, released record volumes of water. At its peak, 150,000 cubic feet per second of water passed through the dam, surpassing the previous record release of 65,200 cubic feet per second in 1975. The Missouri River crested on July 1, 2011, at 19.25 feet. This was the highest level since Garrison Dam was built. The river stayed at flood stage until Aug. 18, 2011.

Guard missions in this area began a day after Ward County operations, with the establishment of traffic control points on May 24, 2011. Missions included filling, transporting and distributing sandbags, aviation support, levee patrol and establishment of quick reaction force teams with heavy equipment for assisting with water breaches. The Guard also ran civil-military assistance teams who went from house-to-house in flood-prone areas to provide literature on properly constructing flood protection.

Other National Guard support missions during the 2011 flood support included ambulance teams, erecting temporary levees with Hesco barriers and TrapBags, purifying and distributing potable water, transport of flood-fighting supplies, operating Zodiac raft boats and running borrow pits to provide material for dike construction.

The North Dakota National Guard's flood support missions ended on July 26, 2011.
By the Numbers – 2011 Flood Response:

(For the Red, Sheyenne, Souris and Missouri rivers)
– 3,047 individual Guard soldiers and airmen on flood response duty for at least one day.
– 114 calendar days of North Dakota National Guard on flood duty.
– 67,264 personnel work days on flood response duty.
– 169 aviation missions flown by North Dakota National Guard helicopters.

https://ngpa.us/14435

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8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) – Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service – By Abbie Shull

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard.

"I didn't really have the intent to win and go on to compete for Miss Washington. I just thought it would be a fun experience," Hoyt said. "When I ended up winning, I didn't know how I would do this and serve in the guard. COVID hit and I was able to go to basic training and advanced individual training. It gave me time to manage everything."

Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.

Hoyt says she never imagined she would become a soldier, but serving in the National Guard has made it easier for her to pay for school. Hoyt participated in Washington's Running Start program which means she graduated from South Kitsap High School with both her high school diploma and an associate of arts degree from Olympic College in Bremerton.

This fall, Hoyt will start classes at Washington State University where she's pursuing a degree in accounting while enrolled as part of the reserve officer training corps.

"I stumbled my way into a recruiter's office and thought, 'Well, that sounds cool,'" Hoyt said. "I didn't know you could serve while going to school. I thought all military was active-duty."

Hoyt is the first member of her family to serve in the military and says she was excited by the challenge. Now, she's planning a future as an officer in the Army.

"I'm excited by the prospect of being part of something bigger than myself," Hoyt said. "How long I want to stay in, I can't stay. If I like it, I'll continue to make it a part of my career."

On July 2 and 3, Hoyt will compete to serve as Miss Washington at the Little Creek Hotel and Casino in Shelton. She said there is more to the pageant world than most people think.

To win the Miss Pierce County title, Hoyt went through a private interview in addition to the live pageant that includes an evening-wear presentation, an on-stage question and showcasing a talent.

Hoyt has been competing in pageants since she was 12 years old. Over the years, her talent portion has evolved from playing the violin to acting and dramatic interpretation. Hoyt's talent for the Miss Washington pageant is a dramatic interpretation of "Our War" from "Visions of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War."

"They're looking for depth in a title-holder. Right now our Miss Washington has just graduated from Brigham Young University, and she's going on to get her master's," Hoyt said. "Being a title holder isn't what you'd expect from your average soldier, either, so I'm excited to bring that diversity to the competition."

As for her fellow soldiers, Hoyt said, there is a bit of healthy teasing but they're very supportive.

"Other soldiers in the guard have full-time jobs and I have this," Hoyt said. "They're always like, 'OK, go wear your crown and come back tomorrow in your uniform.'"

If crowned Miss Washington, Hoyt will win over $40,000 in scholarship money and go on to compete in the Miss USA pageant.

https://ngpa.us/14441

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[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 6:19 AM
To: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: Fwd: PA Update 29 June 2021
Attachments: PA Update 29 June 2021.pdf; Defense Morning Clips 29 June 2021.pdf

See article 1: As stated, the Governor will make a formal announcement today.

NGB is obviously aware now, but we will also need to start reporting them on our daily reports once they come on duty on the 5th.

Topic will also come up on the weekly call on Thursday, but I will be sending GEN Hokanson an email ahead of that.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] CIV NG NG PA (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Date: June 29, 2021 at 4:59:56 AM MDT
To: "Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA)" <daniel.r.hokanson.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: "[redacted] CIV NG NGB (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: PA Update 29 June 2021

GEN Hokanson,

Today in the Department of Defense, June 29, 2021

- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has no public or media events on her schedule.
- Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks has no public or media events on her schedule.
- Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark A. Milley has no public or media events on his schedule.
- Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten is traveling.
- Chief, National Guard Bureau Army Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson will host a media roundtable focused on Cyber Shield 2021 at 1130 a.m. EDT
- Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, commander, U.S. Cyber Command, provides the keynote address at 11 a.m. EDT, and other senior U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officials speak throughout the day, at the virtual U.S Naval

Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association thirty-first annual WEST Conference. Register at westconference.org.

- Army Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander, U.S. Africa Command, participates in a panel on European and U.S. military engagement in Africa at 10:45 a.m. EDT at the CSIS tenth annual EU Defense Washington Forum. Register at csis.org.

- Acting Chief Information Officer John Sherman testifies on cybersecurity posture and DoD digital modernization strategy at 4 p.m. EDT at the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies and Information Systems hearing on DoD information technology, cybersecurity and information assurance for FY2022, 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

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1. SD, TX, AZ: Argus Leader (Local) – Gov. Kristi Noem to deploy South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas Border – By Jonathan Ellis

Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday that she will be sending South Dakota National Guard troops to the nation's southern border to help law enforcement contend with a surging migrant crisis. In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

https://ngpa.us/14442

RELATED STORY :

SD, TX, AZ: KELO Land (Regional) – Gov. Noem sending National Guard members to Texas Border – By Mitch Klein

https://ngpa.us/14443

FULL STORY BELOW

2. NM: U.S. News and World Report (National) – Airman From Albuquerque Dies at Military Base in Qatar – By Associated Press

The Department of Defense says a member of the New Mexico Air National Guard has died at a military base in Qatar. The department said Sunday in a news release that Lt. Col. James C. Willis of Albuquerque died the previous day in events unrelated to combat that are under investigation.

https://ngpa.us/14438

RELATED STORY:

NM: Air Force Magazine (National) – New Mexico RED HORSE Commander Dies at Al Udeid – By Brian W. Everstine

https://ngpa.us/14440

FULL STORY BELOW

3. MS: WLBT (Regional) – Councilman proposes requesting Miss. National Guard to reduce violent crime in Jackson – By C.J. LeMaster

With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage. … With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

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https://ngpa.us/14445

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In a Tweet Monday evening, Noem said she would be announcing more details Tuesday morning, but that 50 soldiers would be part of the deployment.

“Tomorrow morning I’m officially announcing up to 50 National Guard troops to Texas to help secure our border,” she said. “The Biden Administration has failed to keep America safe. We shouldn’t be making our own communities vulnerable by sending police to fix Biden’s border crisis.”

On June 10, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey sent a letter to other governors invoking the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a compact that allows states to get help from other states during a time of emergency. Abbott and Ducey are both Republicans.

The letter warned other governors that while Texas and Arizona were “ground zero” for the crisis, other states would see spillover. It warned of increases in human trafficking and deadly drugs, including fentanyl.

“Given the staggering number of violations now occurring in Texas and Arizona, additional manpower is needed from any state that can spare it,” the letter said. “With your help, we can apprehend more of these perpetrators of state and federal crimes, before they can cause problems in your state.”

Besides law enforcement, the two states are searching for other law enforcement resources, including helicopters and drones.

Once invoked, the compact affords out-of-state officers operating in Texas and Arizona with the same duties as domestic law enforcement personnel, including the power to make arrests.

“Crucially,” the letter said, “this will include the power to arrest migrants who illegally cross the border into our territory. Many of these crossings involved state-law crimes, such as criminal trespassing or smuggling of persons.”

Noem joins other Republican governors, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who have pledged dozens of additional law enforcement officers to help their counterparts in Texas and Arizona.

Noem’s Tweet did not specify which units the Guard soldiers would be drawn from.

https://ngpa.us/14442

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The 55-year-old airman was providing support to military efforts against the Islamic State group of Iraq and Syria.

Willis had been assigned as commander of the 210th Red Horse Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base.

https://ngpa.us/14438

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With homicides surging 38 percent over the same period last year, a Jackson city councilman proposes bringing in Mississippi National Guard troops to help keep the peace and curb violent crime, a last-ditch effort to provide additional manpower to offset the Jackson Police Department's officer shortage.

When asked if the strategies already in place have had an impact, Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes shakes his head.

"I don't see it working. But, you know, my suggestion has always been, let's get some sheriffs out here, where they see more police presence, or more law enforcement presence," Stokes said. "If that does not work, my suggestion then was to move toward the National Guard. Now I'm at that point now, because we can't keep waiting, cause people keep losing lives."

With two more homicides in the last twenty-four hours, the month of June ties with other months in recent years as the third-deadliest month in the city's history, with 14 homicides taking place in the last 28 days.

The most recent took place Monday morning, after a drive-by shooting led to 30-year-old Christopher Thomas losing control of his vehicle on Livingston Road.

Thomas ended up smashing into a building, startling the owner, who had just arrived for the day.

"I thought I had a break in. I look, I check my shop, I just, you know, no cars missing, no tubes missing. But the air conditioning wasn't working. So I went to the side of the building to see had anybody stole my air conditioner. Then I saw a car had jumped this ditch, came to Jackson Housing Authority and had landed on top of my AC unit and plowed inside of my building," said Ernest Stanton Sr., who owns Stanton Body Shop.

Stanton saw firsthand Monday morning the violence that has gripped the Capital City for months on end.

Thomas died shortly after crashing into the side of the structure.

"Somebody's life is gone for nonsense, something that could have been worked out. And so if we don't find a solution as to how to work out differently than with others, they're gonna continue to happen like this," Stanton said. "I'm gonna fix the building, but I hate it for the young man. I hate it for the family. I've been here 25 years and they've been a good location and I don't regret being here. I love the area. But I hate the crime."

Thomas' killing happened in Stokes' ward.

Though Stokes and other council members already approved and appropriated half a million dollars to bring extra Hinds County deputies to Jackson months ago, it has yet to materialize because legal staff from the city, county and sheriff's department still haven't hammered out an agreement.

"We cannot sit back, sit idly by and watch people keep dying in Jackson, Mississippi," Stokes said.

The longtime councilman said the resolution to bring the National Guard will be on Tuesday's council meeting, but he's unsure how the vote will go.

Tuesday's council meeting will be the first with newly-elected councilmembers Vernon Hartley and Brian Grizzell.

When asked what the turning point would have to be for the city and police department to get tougher on crime, Stokes said the "right people" haven't been hurt yet.

"As soon as the right people get hurt, all that will change. Right now, the majority of people getting hurt are poor and are Black. And it seems that no one cares but Kenny Stokes," he said. "You let the wrong person, somebody with some influence, get robbed or hurt, then all the money we put for jail space, all the money we put for sheriffs [deputies], that would be happening instantaneously."

https://ngpa.us/14444

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4. HI: Manila Bulletin (Local) – The first woman to lead Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps is a Filipina – By Zea Capistrano

A Filipina who grew up in Mati City, Davao Oriental province is making waves in the western side of the globe after she became the first female Asian Pacific Islander to be selected as the new Director of the Hawaii Air National Guard Chaplain Corps.

Col. Leah Botona Boling currently serves as a full-time chaplain at the 154th Wing in Hawaii Air National Guard for 19 years.

"But I've been a full-time chaplain since 2018," Boling told The Manila Bulletin in a virtual interview on Monday, June 28.

Boling was promoted to the rank of colonel in March this year. Her promotion ceremony was held on May 11 – which coincided with her 57th birthday.

"As a colonel, I'm the first Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) female colonel in the Hawaii Air National Guard. As a colonel, I'm also the first AAPI colonel chaplain for the US Air Force," Boling shared.

Before 2018, while serving as a part-time chaplain, Boling also had a full-time job as a mental health supervisor for one of the biggest nonprofit agencies in Hawaii. This year, she will be relocating to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland for a four-year stat tour overseeing the welfare of 108,100 Guardsmen.

Becoming a chaplain

Boling earned her degree in customs administration at the Holy Cross of Davao College here in Davao City. While doing her internship with the Bureau of Customs in Cagayan de Oro City, Boling was also active in the church. This eventually led her to pursue vocational ministry.

She finished her Master of Divinity at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City. She specialized in pastoral care and counseling.

“To get that degree, I had to do an internship as a hospital chaplain,” Boling said. Later on, she was accepted at the Makati Medical Center as a chaplain for her internship and in 1991, she applied and got accepted as a hospital chaplain in Hawaii.

“My mind has always been for ministry, what I can do for the world, what I can do for other people.”

Turning points

Boling said she never had any idea of military chaplaincy.

“Wala gyud military sa among pamilya. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the PNP but that was it (There was no military member in our family. Even when I was there in the Philippines. My uncle was in the Philippine National Police, but that was it),” she said.

Boling later met her husband, Jeff, who at that time was on active duty in the Air Force in Hawaii. Her husband invited her to serve as chaplain for the military, but Boling was hesitant.

“I was not really thrilled about it because I really thought that military chaplains would carry guns just like any military, and I’m not big on guns,” she said.

Her Sunday school teacher, who was also the head of the chaplain at the wing, also invited her to become a military chaplain.

But at that time, Boling said, she was still unsure since their only child, was only about two years old. “I really didn’t want to have two militaries in the family,” she said.

However, it was the 9-11 bombing in 2001 which made her decide to enter the military.

“Throughout that day I was shaking, and then I kept following the story and it really broke my heart. I was like these Airmen, these service members need someone to comfort them, to provide counseling, someone to pray with them,” she said.

After the incident, Boling’s resolve to join the Guard became stronger. In April 2002, Boling swore in as first lieutenant.

Boling said her deployment to Zamboanga in 2008 also paved the way for her to take on the full-time job as a military chaplain.

“In 2008, I was sent to Zamboanga, I was there for about five or six months for the Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines through the Joint Special Operations Task Force. While there, apparently, I did an awesome job that the Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) here in Hawaii offered me a full-time job,” she recalled.

“I became their command chaplain, full time, for almost four years. From there, I had more opportunities to be on order” she said.

Growing up in Mati City

Boling grew up in Mati City as a child and fondly recalled treating her friends in the restaurant which their family owned. Boling’s family were also active church members. She finished elementary at the Mati Central Elementary School.

Before the pandemic hit, Boling was still able to visit her family in Mati City in February last year.

“Prior to COVID, I usually go home once a year. I’m hoping to go back home before we went to D.C. but I don’t think that’s ever gonna happen because of COVID,” she said.

Currently, Boling said her focus now is to focus on her goal of doing what is best for the interest of the Corps.

“How can I help the Airmen, how can I help the wing. We call it 54/90/108,100. I am responsible for 50 states and four territories, I am responsible for 90 wings, and the 108,100 – the guard members that I am responsible for,” she said.

“That’s how big my responsibility is, so I really need God on my side,” Boling added.

Boling also had this to say to her fellow women: “Be the best version of you.”

“Don’t worry about things that you have no control over. What is it that you are passionate about, follow that – which means, do your homework and be the best you can be at that job,” she added.

“Ako lang mag-isa and (I am the only one) Leah Botona Boling. Nobody else can be Leah Botona Boling. So, I need to be the best version of myself, otherwise, I will miss the opportunity of being who I am,” she said.

https://ngpa.us/14445

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5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) – State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine – By Kate Sweigart

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania State Senate approved legislation allowing members of the Pa. National Guard to aid in the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine.

Supported by Pa. Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), the bill expands the National Guard’s authority in distributing and administering the vaccine to group 1A individuals, in addition to maintaining facilities and providing support to healthcare providers during the pandemic.

“All of our neighboring states are further along in the vaccination of their eligible population,” Phillips-Hill said. “The administration’s failed unilateral rollout of the vaccine has further demonstrated that its go-it-alone approach has not worked. The unanimous support of this legislation shows people on both sides of the aisle are frustrated and seeking to be part of the solution.”

According to the state Senate, the National Guard will operate under the Pa. Department of Health and Human Services to collect, secure, and transport doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. If requested, members who have the necessary training would also be able to administer the vaccine, as well.

“The bill could help improve Pennsylvania’s troubled roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine,” the state Senate said in a release.

Pennsylvania currently ranks 46th in the nation in terms of the percentage of distributed vaccines that have been administered.

House Bill 326 would also allow for the creation of mass vaccination sites throughout Pennsylvania.

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6. ID: Bonners Ferry Herald (Local) – PHD Express Gratitude and Farewell to National Guard – By Staff Reports

Since December 2020, Panhandle Health District and other healthcare providers in the area were supported by the Idaho National Guard for the COVID-19 response. With case counts shrinking and a decreased demand for the vaccine, it is time for these service men and women to head home.

"The Idaho National Guard's support has been integral in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and aiding PHD in the reduction of the loss of life and the sustainment of our community's health," said Don Duffy, Health Services Administrator for PHD. "They have supported our COVID-19 response operations in the five northern counties in a variety of initiatives. We truly could not have done this without their support and we will miss having them as part of our team."

A total of 74 National Guardsmen served the north Idaho community as a part of a larger, statewide COVID-19 response initiative. This was an all-volunteer team of Idahoans who raised their hand to help their neighbors in a time of need. Specifically, the IDNG assisted with the following:

- IDNG directly supported the COVID-19 vaccine operations and provided numerous operational functions such as: patient intake, quality control, vaccine loading, traffic control, and logistical support. Operations have been conducted 6 days a week resulting in over 39,000 vaccinations administered during their time in the community. Additionally, the Guard worked in conjunction with Panhandle Health District, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and numerous other agencies to support an international vaccination clinic for members of the Lower Kootenay Band of Canada at the US-Canadian border.

- Soldiers coordinated with local partners to store, process, and deliver over 110,000 vaccinations in the five northern counties.

- Numerous service members served at PHD's COVID-19 call center. They worked closely with Medical Reserve Corps and PHD staff to provide the community with a direct line of support to answer questions and address concerns.

- The remainder of the assigned personnel supported PHD by providing operational planning, logistics planning and support, and National Guard administration.

Due to the decrease in demand and the reduction in available staffing, PHD will be closing the mass vaccine clinics at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene and Rathdrum and the University of Idaho Agriculture Center in Sandpoint effective July 8. Anyone who would like to receive a COVID-19 vaccine can schedule an appointment at any of our office locations in Hayden, Sandpoint, St. Maries, Bonners Ferry, and Kellogg.

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7. ND: Minot Daily News (Local) – National Guard remembers 2011 flood response – By Reporter

The U.S. Geological Survey recorded 22 record crests state-wide in 2011, which in turn saw more than 3,000 North Dakota National Guard members serving on flood response duty. Citizen-soldiers and -airmen worked alongside members of local communities and with state and federal agencies such as the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fighting rising waters.

The North Dakota National Guard's 2011 flood response consisted of 67,264 personnel workdays, which surpassed the 54,341 recorded during the 2009 flood response. This record was broken November 2020 when the Guard's COVID-19 pandemic response surpassed that number, and is currently at 116,427 personnel days worked.

"The remarkable support provided by the dedicated men and women of the North Dakota National Guard during the 2011 flood – as well as in 2009 and 2010 – was a critical component of the massive efforts to protect lives and property in Minot, Bismarck and beyond," said Gov. Doug Burgum, commander-in-chief of the North Dakota National Guard. "Whether it's flooding, pandemic or other disaster response, we can rely on our National Guard to be Always ready, Always there."

"On this 10th anniversary of the historic flood that impacted Minot and surrounding communities, we remember the 4,100 homes that flooded, the more than 11,000 residents who were displaced and the hundreds of millions of dollars in damages sustained," Burgum continued. "And we honor the courage and resiliency of the residents, National Guard members, volunteers and leaders at the local, state and federal levels who fought the flood, picked up the pieces and worked together to secure permanent flood protection, including the more than $400 million committed by the State of North Dakota to the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection and $870 million for the Fargo-Moorhead Area Diversion projects."

Eastern North Dakota missions

Flood response in 2011 for the North Dakota National Guard came in two phases. Phase one began in eastern North Dakota and lasted about 32 days. It saw more than 600 citizen-soldiers and -airmen on duty in a single day. North Dakota Guardsmen assisted communities from Cass County, up through the Red River Valley, and west to Ward County and the Valley City and Lisbon areas.

On April 5, 2011, Guard soldiers and airmen began assisting communities along the Red River, which included Pembina, Harwood, Drayton, Kindred, Fargo, north to Grand Forks and others. Within weeks, the National Guard support shifted attention to the Valley City area, where the local community reinforced levees, bracing for a second crest by the Sheyenne River. A reported 400,000 sandbags were transported by contractors and Guard members from Fargo to support this mission. At the end of the spring 2011 flood mission, nearly 9,800 individual personnel days were expended on flood suppression operations.

"Flood fighting missions like those undertaken in 2011 are examples of how our great soldiers and airmen serve our communities when the need arises," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, N.D. adjutant general. "We are always appreciative of the tremendous support shown by our employers and families during state active duty and overseas deployments. This unyielding support allows us to concentrate on our jobs and successfully complete our missions at home and abroad."

Central North Dakota missions

Phase two of flood support began on May 23, 2011, with the North Dakota National Guard assuming missions in Ward County, with 30 Guardsmen conducting levee patrols in Minot and Burlington. The following week, response surged to nearly 200 soldiers and airmen, who provided presence patrols in evacuated neighborhoods, evacuation teams, levee patrols and construction, traffic control points, as well as quick reaction force teams ready to respond immediately to any flood-related requests.

Minot-area flood support peaked at over 575 North Dakota National Guard personnel. As the situation stabilized, the National Guard drew down to 146 personnel by June 20, but severe flood conditions soon returned. As the waters of the Souris River Basin rose again, hundreds of additional Guard members returned to duty. On June 22, 2011, warning sirens in Minot sounded as water topped levees. Guard support grew to 870 soldiers and airmen by the end of June.

In Minot, the Souris River, also known as the Mouse, crested on June 26 at 1,561.7 feet, exceeding the record crest set in 1881 by 3.7 feet.

In Burleigh County, specifically in the Bismarck and Mandan areas, similar flood conditions were seen along the Missouri River when the upstream Garrison Dam, 75 miles to the north, released record volumes of water. At its peak, 150,000 cubic feet per second of water passed through the dam, surpassing the previous record release of 65,200 cubic feet per second in 1975. The Missouri River crested on July 1, 2011, at 19.25 feet. This was the highest level since Garrison Dam was built. The river stayed at flood stage until Aug. 18, 2011.

Guard missions in this area began a day after Ward County operations, with the establishment of traffic control points on May 24, 2011. Missions included filling, transporting and distributing sandbags, aviation support, levee patrol and establishment of quick reaction force teams with heavy equipment for assisting with water breaches. The Guard also ran civil-military assistance teams who went from house-to-house in flood-prone areas to provide literature on properly constructing flood protection.

Other National Guard support missions during the 2011 flood support included ambulance teams, erecting temporary levees with Hesco barriers and TrapBags, purifying and distributing potable water, transport of flood-fighting supplies, operating Zodiac raft boats and running borrow pits to provide material for dike construction.

The North Dakota National Guard's flood support missions ended on July 26, 2011.
By the Numbers – 2011 Flood Response:
(For the Red, Sheyenne, Souris and Missouri rivers)
– 3,047 individual Guard soldiers and airmen on flood response duty for at least one day.
– 114 calendar days of North Dakota National Guard on flood duty.
– 67,264 personnel work days on flood response duty.
– 169 aviation missions flown by North Dakota National Guard helicopters.

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8. WA: The News Tribune (Local) – Miss Pierce County balances life as a pageant queen with military service – By Abbie Shull

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on most activities in the last year, it gave 19-year-old Maria Hoyt the ability to better balance her time between her duties as Miss Pierce County and her service in the National Guard.

"I didn't really have the intent to win and go on to compete for Miss Washington. I just thought it would be a fun experience," Hoyt said. "When I ended up winning, I didn't know how I would do this and serve in the guard. COVID hit and I was able to go to basic training and advanced individual training. It gave me time to manage everything."

Since returning in March 2021 from training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Hoyt has been working full-time as an Army unit supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She manages inventory and logistics for the unit.

Hoyt says she never imagined she would become a soldier, but serving in the National Guard has made it easier for her to pay for school. Hoyt participated in Washington's Running Start program which means she graduated from South Kitsap High School with both her high school diploma and an associate of arts degree from Olympic College in Bremerton.

This fall, Hoyt will start classes at Washington State University where she's pursuing a degree in accounting while enrolled as part of the reserve officer training corps.

"I stumbled my way into a recruiter's office and thought, 'Well, that sounds cool,'" Hoyt said. "I didn't know you could serve while going to school. I thought all military was active-duty."

Hoyt is the first member of her family to serve in the military and says she was excited by the challenge. Now, she's planning a future as an officer in the Army.

"I'm excited by the prospect of being part of something bigger than myself," Hoyt said. "How long I want to stay in, I can't stay. If I like it, I'll continue to make it a part of my career."

On July 2 and 3, Hoyt will compete to serve as Miss Washington at the Little Creek Hotel and Casino in Shelton. She said there is more to the pageant world than most people think.

To win the Miss Pierce County title, Hoyt went through a private interview in addition to the live pageant that includes an evening-wear presentation, an on-stage question and showcasing a talent.

Hoyt has been competing in pageants since she was 12 years old. Over the years, her talent portion has evolved from playing the violin to acting and dramatic interpretation. Hoyt's talent for the Miss Washington pageant is a dramatic interpretation of "Our War" from "Visions of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War."

"They're looking for depth in a title-holder. Right now our Miss Washington has just graduated from Brigham Young University, and she's going on to get her master's," Hoyt said. "Being a title holder isn't what you'd expect from your average soldier, either, so I'm excited to bring that diversity to the competition."

As for her fellow soldiers, Hoyt said, there is a bit of healthy teasing but they're very supportive.

"Other soldiers in the guard have full-time jobs and I have this," Hoyt said. "They're always like, 'OK, go wear your crown and come back tomorrow in your uniform.'"

If crowned Miss Washington, Hoyt will win over $40,000 in scholarship money and go on to compete in the Miss USA pageant.

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Very respectfully,

[redacted]
Media Operations Branch
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs
111 S. George Mason Dr.

Arlington, VA 22204
Mobile: [redacted]
Press Desk: [redacted]
[redacted]@mail.mil

DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, June 29

OVERVIEW

President Biden cited his constitutional authority to approve "retaliatory airstrikes against Iran-linked targets in Iraq and Syria" under Article II, adding that even Congressional members "who are reluctant to acknowledge that have acknowledged that is the case," according to the *Washington Post*. In northeast Syria, hours after the U.S. airstrikes, multiple rockets targeted a facility housing U.S. troops near al-Omar oil field, but U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria spokesperson Army Col. Wayne Marotto confirmed there were no casualties, the *Washington Post* reported. Also of note, NATO Resolute Support Commander Gen. Austin Miller told *ABC News* in an interview that the security situation in Afghanistan is "not good," but the U.S. would try to "ensure that the security assistance that can continue does continue."

TOP STORIES

1. Biden defends authority to launch airstrikes in Iraq and Syria

Washington Post Online, June 28 (1817) | Anne Gearan

President Biden said Monday that he acted within his constitutional authority to order what his administration calls retaliatory airstrikes against Iran-linked targets in Iraq and Syria, which came as the White House has backed efforts to rewrite congressional authorization for such actions.

2. U.S. forces come under fire after airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Syria, Iraq

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A9 | Louisa Loveluck, John Hudson and Alex Horton

U.S. forces said Monday that they came under rocket attack hours after they carried out airstrikes against Iran-backed militia targets in Syria and Iraq in what officials had described as an effort to deter mounting violence by anti-American groups.

3. An inside look at the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan

ABCNews.com (Exclusive), June 28 (1754) | Luis Martinez and Martha Raddatz

The top U.S. general directing the full withdrawal of all 2,500 American troops from Afghanistan acknowledged in an exclusive interview with ABC News chief Global Affairs correspondent Martha Raddatz that the security situation in the country is "not good" and that the Taliban's push to seize parts of the country is "concerning." Gen. Austin Scott Miller said he stands by his belief that there cannot be a military victor in Afghanistan, but he told Raddatz that as the Taliban continues with its military operations across the country, while also engaging in peace talks, "you're starting to create conditions here that doesn't -- won't look good for Afghanistan in the future if there is a push for a military takeover" that could result in a civil war.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. Top Pentagon Cyber Official Probed Amid Disclosure Concerns

Bloomberg News, June 29 (0200) | Tony Capaccio

The Pentagon official who has been overseeing its new cybersecurity initiative for defense contractors has been placed on leave in connection with a suspected unauthorized disclosure of classified information from a military intelligence agency, according to an official document.

COVID-19

5. Perna Retiring From Covid Task Force as U.S. Response Shifts

Bloomberg News, June 28 (1549) | Riley Griffin and Josh Wingrove

U.S. Army General Gustave Perna, a top official in the Covid-19 vaccine rollout in both the Trump and Biden administrations, is set to retire July 2. Robert Johnson, an official at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, will serve as interim chief operating officer for the pandemic effort, according to Jeffrey Zients, President Joe Biden's Covid-19 coordinator.

EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

6. New Middle East airstrikes inflame Democratic war powers debate

Politico Online, June 28 (1331) | Andrew Desiderio and Lara Seligman

President Joe Biden's weekend airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria are rankling Democrats frustrated by his decision to sidestep Congress — a dynamic that promises to fuel the party's long-running push to rein in presidential war powers. But some in Biden's party are sounding the alarm about possible abuses of that power, which presidents of both parties have employed to circumvent Congress and legally justify various military operations. The airstrikes come as lawmakers are already working to repeal the two-decade-old authorizations for the use of military force in Iraq, an effort that Biden supports.

7. Assault victims demand military justice

Los Angeles Times, June 29 (0300) | David S. Cloud

Among other shortcomings in the system, critics say, victims are too often doubted or pressured not to bring formal charges, even more than in the civilian world. Senior officers who have responsibility for prosecuting offenders too often side with the accused, rather than the victim. Some victims find their lives destroyed while some perpetrators face little or no punishment. And many assaults go unreported, according to reports even from within the military. Now, a push in Congress to overhaul military prosecution procedures -- started by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) nearly a decade ago -- is finally gaining traction after years of opposition from the Pentagon and its supporters in Congress.

8. GOP senator jams up Pentagon pick over Biden's Navy plan

Politico Online, June 28 (1720) | Paul McLeary and Connor O'Brien

Republican Sen. Roger Wicker is holding up a high-level Pentagon nominee in an attempt to push the Navy to commit to buying more amphibious ships, according to two people familiar with the situation. The nominee, Susanna Blume, had been tapped to run the Pentagon's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office, which would give her a central role in assessing new weapons systems proposed by the armed services. The veteran of the Obama Pentagon largely sailed through her confirmation hearing in May, and her nomination has been sent to the full Senate for a vote with several other top picks for the department.

9. Moderate Democrats rebuke defense budget cuts

Defense News Online, June 28 (0500) | Joe Gould

In the upcoming budget debate, a group of moderate Democrats are trying to set a floor for 2022 defense spending before progressive Democrats try to push it lower.

MIDDLE EAST

10. Biden vows to Israel: No nuclear weapon for Iran on my watch

Reuters, June 28 (1918) | Andrea Shalal and Steve Holland

U.S. President Joe Biden, in a meeting on Monday with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, said his commitment to Israel is "iron-clad" and he looks forward to meeting with new Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett soon. Biden, in his first meeting as president with a top Israeli official, also said Iran would not come to possess a nuclear weapon during his time in office.

11. Baghdad Is Caught in the Middle as the U.S. and Iran Spar on Iraqi Territory

New York Times, June 29 (0300), Pg. A10 | Jane Arraf

American airstrikes against two Iranian-backed militias on Monday were just the latest skirmish in a conflict between the United States and Iran that is playing out on Iraqi soil.

12. US airstrikes follow a spate of sophisticated attacks by Iran using new drones that can avoid US surveillance

CNN.com, June 28 (1750) | Katie Bo Williams

President Joe Biden's decision to conduct airstrikes against Iran-backed militia groups on the Iraq-Syria border Sunday night follows a recent spate of attacks against US military assets in Iraq by a new class of Iranian-made drones that US officials say can evade US surveillance and defenses.

13. Number of ISIS members detained in Syria is 'untenable,' Blinken says

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A11 | Karen DeYoung

More than two years after they last met in person, top diplomats representing the 78-nation coalition to defeat the Islamic State gathered here Monday to assess what has happened in the interim and position themselves for the future. The news, in many respects, was not good. While the caliphate in Syria was declared dead in 2019, "there is still more work to be done," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his global counterparts as he opened the meeting co-hosted by the United States and Italy.

AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

14. It's imminent: After nearly 20 years U.S. to leave Bagram

Associated Press, June 29 (0209) | Kathy Gannon

For nearly 20 years, Bagram Airfield was the heart of American military power in Afghanistan, a sprawling mini-city behind fences and blast walls just an hour's drive north of Kabul. Initially, it was a symbol of the U.S. drive to avenge the 9/11 attacks, then of its struggle for a way through the ensuing war with the Taliban. In just a matter of days, the last U.S. soldiers will depart Bagram. They are leaving what probably everyone connected to the base, whether American or Afghan, considers a mixed legacy.

15. Taliban assaults motivate Afghans to rally and stand up

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A10 | Pamela Constable and Ezzatullah Mehrdad

As Afghan President Ashraf Ghani met with President Biden and members of Congress last week, his country faced a dramatic surge in Taliban attacks that began in the north but rapidly spread to other regions. The defense forces have been unable to stem the offensive, and Afghan officials are concerned that the planned pullout of U.S. troops by September could leave the country dangerously vulnerable to a Taliban takeover. At the same time, the Kabul government's call for able-bodied Afghans to join in the fight - an extraordinary appeal to former armed rivals and local renegades that has so far met with surprising success - seems partly aimed at convincing U.S. officials that despite its failures on the battlefield, Ghani's government and its anti-Taliban cause enjoy strong public support and deserve more help.

16. Violence intensifies across Afghanistan's central and northern provinces

Reuters, June 28 (1025) | Not Attributed

Taliban militants have taken over a district, launched attacks on checkpoints and cemented control over a border trade crossing, officials said on Monday, as clashes intensify in Afghanistan's central and northern provinces.

17. Reagan carrier strike group now operating in 5th Fleet amid Afghanistan withdrawal

Military Times Online, June 28 (1828) | Diana Stancy Correll

The aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan and its carrier strike group are now operating in the 5th Fleet — a first for the carrier since 2012. The Navy said that the Reagan carrier strike group will "operate and train alongside regional

and coalition partners" and provide airpower to assist U.S. and coalition forces while the U.S. withdraws troops from Afghanistan.

INDO-PACIFIC

18. Outgoing USFK commander vows to continue support for alliance

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 29 (0103) | Choi Soo-hyang

Outgoing U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) Commander Gen. Robert Abrams on Tuesday vowed to continue supporting the "ironclad" alliance between South Korea and the United States, describing his time here as a "personal honor and privilege."

19. Can Biden Solve the North Korea Puzzle?

ForeignPolicy.com (Report), June 28 (1639) | Robbie Gramer

Five months into office, U.S. President Joe Biden has his hands full with foreign-policy crises. But there's one conspicuously missing from the headlines: North Korea. It's only a matter of time before that changes, according to current and former U.S. officials and other experts. North Korea has a penchant for turning up the heat on Washington and its Asian allies through saber-rattling or provocative missile tests. Most analysts agree the next major North Korea crisis is a matter of when, not if.

20. Japan minister says necessary to 'wake up' to protect Taiwan

Reuters, June 28 (1657) | Not Attributed

Japan's deputy defense minister on Monday warned of the growing threat posed by Chinese and Russian collaboration and said it was necessary to "wake up" to Beijing's pressure on Taiwan and protect the island "as a democratic country." Nakayama said democratic countries had to protect each other and noted that he had in the past referred to Taiwan as a "red line."

CHINA

21. Russia, China declare friendship treaty extension, hail ties

Associated Press, June 28 (0807) | Vladimir Isachenkov

The leaders of Russia and China on Monday hailed increasingly close ties between their countries and announced the extension of a 20-year-old friendship treaty, a show of unity amid their tensions with the West. Speaking in a video call with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the treaty signed in July 2001 in Moscow helped take relations between Moscow and Beijing to an "unprecedented height" and would be extended for another five years.

EUROPE

22. Ukraine, US launch Black Sea drills after warship incident

Agence France-Presse, June 28 (1236) | Dmytro Gorshkov

Ukraine and the United States launched joint naval exercises in the Black Sea on Monday in a show of Western cooperation with Kiev as it faces off with Russia. The Sea Breeze drills -- which have taken place 21 times since 1997 -- will involve some 5,000 military personnel from more than 30 countries.

RUSSIA

23. Russian snipers are picking off Ukrainian soldiers

Washington Examiner Online, June 28 (0700) | Abraham Mahshie

The war between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists in the semi-states known as the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics is largely contained to a no man's land in empty fields on the outskirts of small villages like this. Tree lines are where the opposing sides establish their positions, digging trenches to store weapons and provisions and to hide armored vehicles, should they be necessary. In this low-intensity conflict, most soldiers are dying from sniper fire.

AFRICA

24. Blinken Urges Stronger Focus Against Islamist Groups in Africa

Bloomberg News, June 28 (0638) | John Follain

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged an 83-member alliance against Islamic State to step up its focus on operations in Africa, while working to prevent a resurgence of the militant organization in Iraq and Syria.

25. Tigray rebels in Ethiopia claim control of region's capital

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A11 | Max Bearak

The former leaders of Ethiopia's Tigray region claimed Monday to have regained control over the regional capital seven months after being driven out by the Ethiopian military, marking what could be a major turning point in a deadly civil war.

26. UN panel accuses Russia of Africa killings; Moscow says no

Associated Press, June 28 (1722) | Edith M. Lederer

U.N. experts are accusing Russian military instructors and the Central African Republic forces they are supporting of "excessive use of force, indiscriminate killings, the occupation of schools and looting on a large scale" -- allegations Moscow strongly rejected Monday. The panel of experts monitoring sanctions on the conflict-torn African nation said in a 40-page report obtained Monday by The Associated Press that it collected "testimonies" from a large number of local officials, government military and internal security forces, and community-level sources in multiple locations in the country who reported "the active participation of Russian instructors in combat operations on the ground."

AMERICAS

27. Severe Weather Swings Disrupt Panama Canal

Wall Street Journal, June 29 (0200), Pg. A9 | Santiago Pérez

The Panama Canal faces a creeping threat from climate change, including droughts so intense that ships sometimes reduce their cargo so as not to run aground, and giant storms that almost overwhelm its dams and locks, canal officials say.

ARCTIC

28. Coast Guard in Talks to Add Ships to Heavy Icebreaker Program

National Defense Magazine Online, June 28 (1721) | Jon Harper

The Coast Guard is in talks with the Biden administration about adding additional heavy icebreakers to its Polar Security Cutter program, the head of the sea service said June 28.

AIR FORCE

29. Air Force previews new exercises on fitness test 'menu'

Air Force Times Online, June 28 (1715) | Rachel Cohen

The Air Force is preparing to launch a customizable physical fitness test where airmen and guardians can mix and match the exercises they prefer, a service official said Monday. Starting early next year, the Air Force will offer a menu of options that fall into three categories: aerobic exercise, core strength and upper body strength.

NAVY

30. Six Littoral Combat Ships to Deploy by Year's End as Navy Continues to Refine Operations

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 28 (0918) | Sam LaGrone

The Navy will have six Littoral Combat Ships deployed by the end of the year – a record for the program, several Navy officials have confirmed to USNI News. Later this year, two Independence-class LCS will join USS Tulsa (LCS-16) and USS Charleston (LCS-18) in the Western Pacific. The two ships kicked off an expansive deployment across the Western Pacific earlier this year that began in Oceana and has ranged to as far as the Indian Ocean. Two other LCS will deploy soon to U.S. Southern Command later this year.

CYBER

31. DOD to send AI data teams to combatant commands this summer

Federal Computer Week Online, June 28 (1606) | Lauren C. Williams

The Defense Department will start sending out teams of data and artificial intelligence experts in the next month to help combatant commands speed AI implementation efforts as part of a new initiative.

NOTABLE COMMENTARY

32. Biden Needs to Leave Afghanistan the Right Way

Bloomberg Opinion, June 28 (0800) | Editorial

As U.S. troops prepare to leave Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of combat, the situation on the ground could hardly be more disheartening. Taliban insurgents are already racking up battlefield gains; deprived of U.S. close air support and help maintaining its equipment, the Afghan military may well crumble against concerted onslaught. Al-Qaeda maintains ties to the Taliban and could pose a renewed threat to the U.S. in as little as two years. That timeline could shrink if the Kabul government falls to the Taliban or the country devolves into civil war.

33. The Iran Deal May Still Be Dead

Wall Street Journal, June 29 (0200), Pg. A15 | Blaise Misztal and Jonathan Ruhe

'No deal is better than a bad deal," then-Secretary of State John Kerry opined during nuclear negotiations for the Obama administration with Iran before ultimately clinching the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015. Now, as discussions about returning to the JCPOA drag on, President Biden should prepare for a no-deal outcome.

34. China is not the cyber superpower that many people think

Nikkei Asia Online (Japan), June 29 (1600) | Greg Austin

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato recently warned that cyberattacks should be expected during the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, due to start on July 23. Yet Japan's defenses in this sphere remain somewhat immature, creating cause for concern given escalating threats and reports about shifting power balances, both in cyberspace and more broadly. In this debate, China is often portrayed as a world-leading cyber power based on its massive and highly successful espionage operations. But for now, according to a new assessment by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the U.S. is still ahead of China on that front and has a much stronger track record.

TOP STORIES

1. Biden defends authority to launch airstrikes in Iraq and Syria
Washington Post Online, June 28 (1817) | Anne Gearan

President Biden said Monday that he acted within his constitutional authority to order what his administration calls retaliatory airstrikes against Iran-linked targets in Iraq and Syria, which came as the White House has backed efforts to rewrite congressional authorization for such actions.

The strikes also came as nuclear negotiations with Iran appear at an impasse.

"I directed last night's airstrikes, targeting sites used by the Iranian-backed militia group responsible for recent attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq, and I have that authority under Article II, and even those up in the Hill who are reluctant to acknowledge that have acknowledged that is the case," Biden said.

The airstrikes Sunday evening led to warnings from some Democrats that Biden risked flouting the constitutional requirement to consult Congress. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), a Biden ally and senior member of the Foreign Relations Committee, was blunt in his concern.

"There is no doubt that President Biden possesses the ability to defend our forces abroad, and I continue to trust inherently the national security instincts of this White House," Murphy said in a statement issued late Sunday.

"My concern is that the pace of activity directed at U.S. forces and the repeated retaliatory strikes against Iranian proxy forces are starting to look like what would qualify as a pattern of hostilities under the War Powers Act. Both the Constitution and the War Powers Act require the president to come to Congress for a war declaration under these circumstances."

Biden cited his authority under Article II of the Constitution, which allows him to act on behalf of U.S. military service members in self-defense, for the strikes Sunday and an earlier set in February.

The White House supports an effort in Congress to repeal the emergency authorization of force approved after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. That authorization has been used ever since as justification for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as other military actions.

"The United States selected these targets because Iran-backed militias used them to conduct at least five [drone] attacks against U.S. facilities in Iraq since April," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters Monday.

The White House maintains that the action abides by domestic and international law.

“The president has been clear that there will be serious consequences if Iranian leaders continue to arm, fund and train militia groups to attack our people,” Psaki said.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said two Iranian-linked militia locations in Syria were attacked, along with one in Iraq, and described the strikes as defensive. The locations were used by the Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada groups, which both have ties to Iran. Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada said four of its militiamen were killed.

Iraq condemned the U.S. airstrike on its soil Monday, describing the overnight attack as a “blatant” violation of national sovereignty that breached international conventions.

The White House sidestepped the unusually harsh condemnation from a military ally.

“The prime minister is a partner. He has a tough job,” Psaki said. “His statement calls for a de-escalation from all sides and we agree with that. But the attacks against our troops need to stop and that is why the president ordered the operation last night in self-defense of our personnel.”

Biden spoke alongside visiting Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, whose government remains firmly opposed to the 2015 international nuclear deal with Iran and skeptical of Biden’s efforts to rejoin it.

Rivlin presided over creation of a new coalition government in Israel this month, but he will leave office himself July 7 after a seven-year term. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has taken a less confrontational tone over the Iran deal than his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Biden stressed the main area of agreement with Israel over Iran and said he intends to soon meet with Bennett at the White House.

“What I can say to you: Iran will never get a nuclear weapon on my watch,” Biden said.

Rivlin smiled as he said that the strong bond between Israel and the United States can withstand some strains.

“We, according to a real friendship, can from time to time discuss matters and even … agree not to agree about everything,” Rivlin said. “But we count on you.”

Six rounds of negotiations in Vienna have yet to reach agreement on a deal both the Biden administration and Iran’s leadership are eager to restore.

Iran is seeking the lifting of hundreds of U.S.-imposed sanctions that have throttled its economy. The Biden administration wants Iran to return to compliance with the terms of the nuclear deal and to hold talks aimed at curbing Tehran’s support for proxy forces in the Middle East as well as its development of ballistic missiles.

The victory this month in Iran of Ebrahim Raisi, a hard-line cleric who opposes negotiations with the United States, has added to the sense of urgency hovering over the talks. Raisi, who replaces President Hassan Rouhani, a political moderate, will assume office in August.

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2. U.S. forces come under fire after airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Syria, Iraq

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A9 | Louisa Loveluck, John Hudson and Alex Horton

U.S. forces said Monday that they came under rocket attack hours after they carried out airstrikes against Iran-backed militia targets in Syria and Iraq in what officials had described as an effort to deter mounting violence by anti-American groups.

A spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria, Army Col. Wayne Marotto, said that multiple rockets had targeted a facility housing U.S. troops near al-Omar oil field in northeast Syria. No casualties were reported. Marotto said U.S. forces responded in self-defense with artillery fire targeting positions where the rockets were launched.

No one claimed responsibility for the rocket attacks, but video of the assault was shared on Telegram social media channels used by the militias.

U.S. officials have said the American airstrikes carried out a night earlier were meant to stem militia attacks on U.S. forces, but the Iran-backed groups have sworn revenge, raising the prospect of a further escalation.

The Iraqi government condemned the U.S. airstrike against Iranian-linked militias on Iraqi soil early Monday, underscoring how combustible the situation has become. Iraq described the overnight strike as a “blatant” violation of national sovereignty that breached international conventions.

“Iraq reiterates its refusal to be an arena for settling scores,” Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi said in a statement, urging both sides to refrain from escalation.

The latest violence comes amid rising U.S. concern over the use of small, explosive-laden drones by Iran-backed groups targeting American and Iraqi personnel in Iraq. U.S. officials describe the emerging drone threat as one of the chief concerns for the small U.S. military mission remaining in the country.

The U.S. airstrikes followed a spate of drone strikes early Saturday in Iraq’s Kurdish region. A congressional aide with knowledge of the Biden administration’s decision-making said the attacks involved Iranian-manufactured drones similar to those that have prompted alarm in Washington as they evade detection systems and strike sensitive targets.

Kadhimi is under pressure from Washington to rein in attacks on U.S.-linked targets. But in practice, Iraq's network of militia groups, some of them backed by Iran, often hold more power than the prime minister does, experts say, heightening the stakes for any confrontation with them.

As if to underscore the point, thousands of Iraqi paramilitary fighters marched Saturday in the eastern province of Diyala as part of an annual parade, attended this year by Kadhimi, that showcased the range of tanks and rocket launchers in their disposal.

Hours earlier in Iraq's Irbil province, two of the Iran-linked drones landed roughly a mile from where a new U.S. Consulate is being built, according to the congressional aide and the area's governor.

In the airstrikes that followed, U.S. forces hit one site used in the launch and recovery of armed unmanned aircraft and another targeted site was a logistics hub, said an official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation.

Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, an Iran-backed group largely based in Iraq, said that four of its militiamen were killed. Photographs suggested that the youngest among them was in his early 20s.

A U.S. official with knowledge of the strikes said that the deaths appeared to have happened in Syria and that the strike in Iraq had targeted a storage facility with nobody on-site.

Separately, Syrian state media said, without providing evidence, that U.S. strikes hit residential buildings near the border around 1 a.m. local time, killing a child and wounding three residents.

The militia groups that were targeted said they would seek revenge. "We will not remain silent about the continued presence of the American occupation forces," groups calling themselves the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Commission said in a statement. "We will make the enemy taste the bitterness of revenge."

During a visit to Rome on Monday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he hoped the U.S. airstrikes would deter future attacks by Iraqi militias. "I think we've demonstrated both with the actions taken last night and actions taken previously that the president is fully prepared to act and act appropriately and deliberately to protect U.S. interests, to protect our people, to protect our personnel," he said, referring to an earlier set of strikes on the Syrian side of the border.

U.S. officials have counted at least six attacks since April that use drones that appear to have been manufactured by Iran or by its proxies.

"President Biden has been clear that he will act to protect U.S. personnel," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said. "Given the ongoing series of attacks by Iran-backed groups targeting U.S. interests in Iraq, the president directed further military action to disrupt and deter such attacks."

Iraqi officials have lobbied their U.S. counterparts to avoid retaliatory strikes on Iraqi soil, arguing that they would complicate the already delicate politics surrounding the remaining U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq.

That force has been cut in half to roughly 3,000 troops since the start of last year, after the U.S. assassination of Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani and senior Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis outside Baghdad Airport prompted Iraq's parliament to urge the expulsion of all U.S. troops.

The U.S. strikes came after increasingly brazen and sophisticated attacks by Iranian-backed militias on U.S.-linked forces. Officials in Washington say these are probably linked to Kataib Hezbollah, a group that U.S. forces have bombed on several occasions in Iraq.

--*Loveluck reported from London. Mustafa Salim in Baghdad, Dan Lamothe in Washington and Sarah Dadouch in Beirut contributed to this report*

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3. An inside look at the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan

ABC News' Martha Raddatz interviews the top general directing the withdrawal

ABCNews.com (Exclusive), June 28 (1754) | Luis Martinez and Martha Raddatz

The top U.S. general directing the full withdrawal of all 2,500 American troops from Afghanistan acknowledged in an exclusive interview with ABC News chief Global Affairs correspondent Martha Raddatz that the security situation in the country is "not good" and that the Taliban's push to seize parts of the country is "concerning."

Gen. Austin Scott Miller said he stands by his belief that there cannot be a military victor in Afghanistan, but he told Raddatz that as the Taliban continues with its military operations across the country, while also engaging in peace talks, "you're starting to create conditions here that doesn't -- won't look good for Afghanistan in the future if there is a push for a military takeover" that could result in a civil war.

"I think what you're seeing -- just if you look at the security situation -- it's not good," Miller told Raddatz. "The Afghans have recognized it's not good. The Taliban are on the move."

Miller explained that while the Taliban are participating in peace talks in Qatar with the government of Afghanistan and expressing sentiments favoring a political settlement "you have an offensive operation going on across the country by the Taliban."

He has previously said neither side can win militarily in Afghanistan.

"I still stand by those words," Miller said. "You're starting to create conditions here that doesn't won't look good for Afghanistan in the future if there is a push for a military takeover.

Miller said “we should be concerned” by reports of increasing Taliban violence as Taliban fighters have seized dozens of Afghan government district centers throughout Afghanistan.

“The loss of terrain and the rapidity of that loss of terrain has to be a concerning one,” Miller said, noting that it can lower morale among military forces and civilians. “So as you watch the Taliban moving across the country, what you don’t want to have happen is that the people lose hope and they believe they now have a foregone conclusion presented to them.”

Miller said Afghanistan’s new Defense Minister Bismillah Mohammadi “understands the gravity of the situation” and is moving to strategically consolidate Afghan security forces to maintain the fight against the Taliban and not necessarily defend every district center.

“They’re going to need to do that” Miller said, and “they’re going to have to choose where they want to fight the Taliban as they continue to move forward.”

Miller also said he understood concerns by residents in Kabul that the Taliban would like to attack Afghanistan’s capital in the future.

“If you go back to what the Taliban’s objectives are, they want to take over and so at some point that implies that at some point they are in Kabul,” he said. “And certainly some of them remember what it was like the last time under with the Taliban regime.”

Departing Bagram

ABC News accompanied Miller to the sprawling Bagram Air Base located 40 miles east of Kabul that is the main transportation hub for the hundreds of cargo flights that have taken out U.S. military equipment and personnel over the past two months.

“Where we’re standing right now is this equipment that’s waiting to get on aircraft and that will redeploy from Afghanistan as part of our order in retrograde,” Miller told Raddatz, using the military’s official term for the full withdrawal.

“What’s happening here is also happening at other airfields around the country, particularly in the north,” said Miller, who stressed that the objective is for a safe and orderly withdrawal that will protect American and coalition forces as they depart the country.

Ultimately Miller said that the base would be turned over to Afghan security forces, much as is happening with other U.S. inventory in the country.

“The idea is that there is equipment that stays here that supports them, certainly in a strategic airfield,” said Miller. “But again, we’re looking to make sure that they have the ability to absorb it and secure it as we go forward.

More than half of the U.S. military equipment in Afghanistan has already been shipped out of the country as the U.S. forces quickly move towards pulling out all U.S. troops from Afghanistan by Sept. 11, as ordered by President Joe Biden. But it appears that the withdrawal could be completed much sooner than that with one U.S. official telling ABC News that it could be completed as soon as July.

The pace of the operations at Bagram has been eye-opening for the experienced logistics officers in charge of the operation.

“It’s a little surreal to see things very bare and empty,” said Col. Erin Miller, a logistics officer overseeing the withdrawal. “And as we continue to move forward with the retrograde, seeing the equipment leave out, it truly is surreal.”

Maintaining security

With all the billions of dollars the United States has invested in training and equipping Afghanistan’s security forces, it will be up to them to maintain security.

“What we’ve said is this is Afghanistan, this is their country,” said Miller. “The Afghan security forces have to hold.”

The U.S. military will continue to provide Afghan forces with financial support and continued assistance for Afghan air force maintenance crews, but as the U.S. completes its withdrawal, there will not be a physical U.S. military presence in Afghanistan aside from the hundreds of personnel who will be stationed at the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

Americans will also continue to fly “over-the-horizon” reconnaissance missions and counterterrorism missions from countries in the Persian Gulf area focused on al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, not the Taliban.

While the U.S. is continuing to provide defensive airstrikes in support of Afghan ground troops during the withdrawal, U.S. Central Command’s Gen. Frank McKenzie has indicated that airstrikes later will only be directed against the two terror groups if they are planning to attack the American homeland or allies.

Miller praised the effectiveness of Afghanistan’s Air Force but indicated that the possibility of U.S. defensive airstrikes in the future will continue “to be discussed as we move forward.”

“I think we need to see how that how that lands,” he told Raddatz.

The withdrawal in Afghanistan after an almost 20-year presence has drawn comparisons to the 2011 U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, which created a security vacuum that led to the rise of ISIS and the eventual return of U.S. forces in 2014.

“Do you think about Iraq when we’re leaving here and what happened in Iraq when we left?” Raddatz asked Miller.

“Absolutely, I mean that’s on everybody’s mind,” said Miller. “These are judgments that we have to make balanced against our national interests.”

Friends in need

Miller first served in Afghanistan in December, 2001 as a special operations commander and has deployed at least eight other times to Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations.

As he prepares to leave Afghanistan for the final time Miller described mixed feelings both professionally and personally.

“On the professional side, what you’re seeing is a -- what I would call -- a historic retrograde being done under at least the threat of conflict,” said Miller. “So far, it has not been contested, at least to date. So you see that and you know the goodness that’s taking place there, watching our service members as well as our allies doing this as professionally as possible.”

He said that after 20 years he has developed friends in Afghanistan, but “I don’t like leaving friends in need and I know my friends are in need.”

“As we continue to move down the retrograde and withdraw forces, there’s less and less I can directly offer them in terms of assistance,” he said. “So that’s hard.”

For example, he said Afghan Defense Minister Mohammadi has asked him occasionally for some type of assistance -- provided in years past -- and “there’s points where I have to tell him I won’t be able to do that.”

“It’s a tough, tough business, it is tough,” said Miller.

“We knew we were going to have to leave at some point,” he continued. “I don’t know that you could find a right time, but so know what you are trying to do is, as you depart, ensure that the security assistance that can continue does continue; that you keep those lines open. So even as we discuss -- we call it ‘departure’ -- it doesn’t mean a full break of the relationship.”

Gen. Haibatullah Alizai, the commander of the Afghan Army's Special Operations Command acknowledged that there will be challenges ahead for Afghanistan's military, but he expressed confidence that his forces and Afghanistan will be able to endure after all U.S. troops have left Afghanistan.

"Absolutely, we will survive," said Alizai. "Afghanistan will survive."

"We have learned a lot from our friends and partners in the last two decades," he said. "Based on those lessons we are going to expand and extend and make our army great to make Afghanistan keep the situation in Afghanistan the same or better than today."

"I'm really optimistic about this and we are really committed to this fight against terrorism and to keep Afghanistan safe for the future," said Alizai.

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DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. Top Pentagon Cyber Official Probed Amid Disclosure Concerns
Bloomberg News, June 29 (0200) | Tony Capaccio

The Pentagon official who has been overseeing its new cybersecurity initiative for defense contractors has been placed on leave in connection with a suspected unauthorized disclosure of classified information from a military intelligence agency, according to an official document.

Katie Arrington, chief information security officer for the Pentagon's acquisition and sustainment office, was informed May 11 that "her security clearance for access to classified information is being suspended" as "a result of a reported Unauthorized Disclosure of Classified Information and subsequent removal of access by the National Security Agency," according to a memo made available to Bloomberg News.

The National Security Agency, which is part of the Defense Department, gathers some of the nation's most sensitive signals and eavesdropping intelligence from foreign adversaries, mostly via satellite. "If this preliminary decision becomes final, you will not be eligible for access to classified information" or "assignments to duties that have been designated national security sensitive," the memo from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment said.

The memo to Arrington provided no details about the possible disclosure of information. Pentagon acquisition spokesperson Jessica Maxwell said the department can't comment on any questions about Arrington's status.

'No Decisions'

“Absolutely no decisions have been reached regarding any aspect,” Arrington’s attorney, Mark Zaid, said in an email. He confirmed the content of the memo, saying that “when faced with such programmatic allegations DoD would routinely open an investigation as a matter of course. This is how the system works. Accepting an investigation, however, doesn’t prejudge the merits.”

Arrington is on administrative leave during the “preliminary investigation,” the “specific details of which have not been made known to us,” Zaid said.

“She has neither been fired nor had her security clearance revoked,” he said. “We look forward to an opportunity to completely clear her name and her return to work.”

Arrington is a former two-term Republican state representative from South Carolina who ran an unsuccessful campaign for Congress in 2018 that emphasized her private-sector cyber experience. She was brought into the Pentagon in 2019 under the category of “Highly Qualified Expert” and later competed for and attained the nonpartisan Senior Executive Service status, Zaid said.

Her official Pentagon biography says she has more than 15 years of cyber experience “through positions at Booz Allen Hamilton, Centuria Corporation, and Dispersive Networks. These positions have given her a unique experience of supporting and work with the government at large, small, and non-traditional contracting firms.”

A U.S. official familiar with the case said Arrington’s politics -- as a Republican under a Democratic president -- aren’t a factor in the investigation, and it’s not an attempt to force her from the Pentagon. The official, who discussed the case on condition of anonymity because of its sensitivity, also said the disclosure investigation isn’t connected to Arrington’s management of the Pentagon’s ambitious Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification system, or CMMC, which is being slowly implemented as Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks reviews the program inherited from the Trump administration.

Cybersecurity Certification

In 2019, Arrington took over implementing the program and attempting to build industry support for its complex certification process. She quickly emerged as a skillful ambassador, speaking at dozens of events to sell the program to the defense industry, according to Bloomberg Government analyst Chris Cornillie, who has studied the program.

Under the certification program, every company in the defense supply chain –- as many as 300,000 American companies producing everything from F-35 fighter jets to computer microprocessors to office supplies and plumbing equipment –- must undergo a cybersecurity audit performed by a third party about every three years overseen by an “accreditation board,” Cornillie said. It’s “proceeding at a halting pace.”

The proposed program "sets the standard for our defense industrial base" and "must be the first step in establishing a framework of safeguards" for industry, Senator Joe Manchin said in an email. The West Virginia Democrat, who's chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee's cyber panel, said during a May 19 hearing that Hicks "will be making significant modifications" to the certification process.

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COVID-19

5. Perna Retiring From Covid Task Force as U.S. Response Shifts

Bloomberg News, June 28 (1549) | Riley Griffin and Josh Wingrove

U.S. Army General Gustave Perna, a top official in the Covid-19 vaccine rollout in both the Trump and Biden administrations, is set to retire July 2.

Robert Johnson, an official at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, will serve as interim chief operating officer for the pandemic effort, according to Jeffrey Zients, President Joe Biden's Covid-19 coordinator.

Perna has "been helping lead our nation through a war he probably did not envision when he joined the army in 1981," Zients said in an interview. "He's been a key driver of the success that we've had."

The four-star general's departure marks yet another shift in the leadership and vision of the U.S. pandemic response. In July 2020, Perna became the co-leader of Operation Warp Speed, the Trump administration's multi-billion-dollar coronavirus vaccine and treatment effort. Working alongside Moncef Slaoui, the program's former chief scientific adviser, Perna was responsible for logistical issues, such as manufacturing and distribution of rapidly developed pharmaceutical products.

In the wake of Biden's election, the White House dropped the Warp Speed name. The program now holds a new designation, the Countermeasures Acceleration Group. Biden asked that Perna stay on as chief operations officer, according to Zients. Slaoui, meanwhile, was let go.

Assuming responsibility for the vaccine rollout posed a challenge for the new administration, Zients said.

"The way we were prepared for that was to have General Perna in his seat," he said.

Perna's departure signals a transition away from the Defense Department's outsized role in coordinating the rollout. The Countermeasures Acceleration Group will soon become part of the Department of Health and Human Services, according to Zients.

Shifting Response

Since the origin of Warp Speed, U.S. pandemic response leaders have adapted to new missions. Last summer, the effort was focused on developing vaccines and therapeutics. That shifted to securing manufacturing and distribution capabilities, and then getting millions of doses quickly into arms around the nation.

Roughly half the U.S. population has now received at least one dose, and states are flush with supply as fewer people rush to clinics. The mass-vaccination phase of the rollout is nearly complete, Zients said, and the U.S. will focus on immunizing children and developing more antiviral medicines to treat those who contract Covid-19.

HHS took a step in that direction earlier this month, announcing it would invest $3.2 billion in developing antiviral medicines to combat Covid and other viruses with pandemic potential.

Johnson, Perna's temporary replacement, is currently director of Influenza and Emerging Infectious Disease within Barda. Among his tasks will be getting doses of the vaccine from Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE to teenagers through doctor's offices and clinics.

David Kessler, a former head of the Food and Drug Administration who replaced Slaoui, will remain as as chief scientific officer of the countermeasures group.

Central Role

Perna, 61, had planned for retirement prior to the pandemic. He earlier served as commanding general of the U.S. Army Materiel Command, overseeing the fighting force's global supply chain.

His leadership and expertise have been critical to the Covid-19 response, said of Defense Lloyd J. Austin II who served with Perna in Iraq, dealing with logistics. "Thanks to his unrelenting efforts and leadership in the fight against Covid, we are one step closer to returning to a normal way of life," he said in a statement.

The general's participation was key to the success of Warp Speed, said Paul Mango, a senior HHS official under the Trump administration.

"I wish the current administration had embraced his role as vigorously as we had," he said

Zients said that Perna remained central to the vaccine rollout even after the transition to the new administration.

"When I think about the people we rely on most, General Perna is one of a very small handful," he said. "A day doesn't go by when I'm not getting his counsel and advice."

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EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

6. New Middle East airstrikes inflame Democratic war powers debate

Amid President Joe Biden's latest operations on the Iraq-Syria border, members of his party want answers

Politico Online, June 28 (1331) | Andrew Desiderio and Lara Seligman

President Joe Biden's weekend airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria are rankling Democrats frustrated by his decision to sidestep Congress — a dynamic that promises to fuel the party's long-running push to rein in presidential war powers.

Democratic lawmakers are in familiar territory over Biden's latest retaliatory airstrikes after criticizing him for striking the same Iranian proxies in the region earlier this year without first seeking congressional approval. In both instances, the president cited his authority under Article II of the Constitution, which allows him to take steps to protect U.S. service members in self-defense.

But some in Biden's party are sounding the alarm about possible abuses of that power, which presidents of both parties have employed to circumvent Congress and legally justify various military operations. The airstrikes come as lawmakers are already working to repeal the two-decade-old authorizations for the use of military force in Iraq, an effort that Biden supports.

"The danger here is that you fall into a pattern of military escalation that becomes war without voters ever having a say," Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), a top member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said in an interview. "The safest bet for a president is to just claim broad Article II authority."

Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), the Foreign Relations panel's chair, suggested he wants a broader examination of Biden's legal rationale for the strikes. The president's Article II powers have long been viewed as expansive and broad by Democratic and Republican administrations alike.

"Congress has the power to authorize the use of military force and declarations of war, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is planning to hear from the administration more on these strikes," Menendez said in a Monday statement on the airstrikes.

Complicating matters further for the Biden administration, the Iraqi government condemned the strikes on its soil on Monday, with officials calling the attack a "blatant" violation of its sovereignty.

Additionally, U.S. forces in Syria came under rocket fire late Monday in what was likely a retaliation for the strikes by the militia groups, Lt. Col. Wayne Marotto, a spokesperson for the coalition, said on Twitter. There are no injuries and the damage is still being assessed, Marotto said.

Iran-backed militia groups in Iraq and Syria have stepped up their attacks against Americans in the region in recent months, prompting Biden to approve what Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby described as "defensive precision airstrikes" targeting the groups' weapons storage facilities near the Iraq-Syria border.

"Given the ongoing series of attacks by Iran-backed groups targeting U.S. interests in Iraq, the president directed further military action to disrupt and deter such attacks," Kirby added.

The Pentagon concluded that each strike hit its intended target, and officials are currently assessing the full effects of the operation, Pentagon spokesperson Cmdr. Jessica McNulty told POLITICO on Monday. Air Force jets from U.S. Central Command bases carried out the strikes, according to a defense official.

The groups have changed tactics from using rockets to deploying unmanned aerial systems or UAS in recent months, a move that U.S. officials see as escalation. The militias have launched at least five UAS attacks against facilities used by U.S. and coalition personnel in Iraq since April, McNulty said.

But those explanations from the Pentagon might not be enough for Democrats who are already demanding classified briefings about the nature of the threat. Several already view the airstrikes as "hostilities" under the War Powers Act that thus require congressional approval.

"The administration would be better off coming to Congress and asking for a debate on a declaration of war if they foresee a need to continue to go back and forth with … Iranian proxy groups," Murphy said.

Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-Va.), a former CIA officer who has pushed to repeal aging war authorizations, said she hasn't read the administration's justification for the airstrike yet but didn't foresee the move spurring a protracted war powers debate.

"We're pretty far away from authorizing or moving towards an authorization of use of military force specific to Iranian-backed militia[s]," Spanberger said in an interview. "There's a lot that happens throughout the world, and I think that there would be significant, significant debate … within Congress, before we would look at writing such an authorization."

Since Biden directed an airstrike on a border crossing used by Iran-backed militia groups in eastern Syria in February, he has refrained from launching additional retaliatory operations amid repeated militia attacks on U.S. and Iraqi personnel. Officials said the February move was calculated to signal to Iran that the Biden administration would not tolerate such attacks through proxies in the region, while avoiding escalation into a wider conflict.

But the administration sees the growing number of UAS attacks as an escalation designed to increase pressure on Washington to withdraw troops from Iraq, said one senior defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive operations. The drones are now carrying larger and more precise payloads, this official said.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), who has led the effort in the upper chamber to repeal the 1991 and 2002 Iraq war authorizations, said the White House's Middle East coordinator Brett McGurk was planning to brief him about the strikes on Monday.

Kaine said he was concerned that the conflict would "escalate without a congressional discussion" but added that Biden's actions were a "classic" self-defense mechanism.

"I have a much more constrained view of Article II powers than most around here," Kaine added. "I think it has to be defense against attacks or imminent attacks."

Democrats also raised concerns about whether U.S. strikes against the Iran-backed militia groups are actually having a deterrent effect. The administration has described the strikes as targeted and precise in nature, but the attacks on Americans have not abated.

"Protecting American troops is a priority, but clearly continuing airstrikes is not deterring Iran-backed militias from attacking our troops in Iraq," Rep. Sara Jacobs (D-Calif.) said. "I look forward to hearing a realistic plan from the Biden administration to de-escalate — as we discussed back in February — because we can't keep launching strikes over and over again and expecting a different result."

Biden's airstrikes got a key endorsement from at least one top Democrat, though. House Intelligence Committee Chair Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) said in a statement that the strikes "were an appropriate and reasonable use of force intended for defensive purposes." Schiff added that he has asked the administration for "an assessment of whether this action will truly deter or prevent further attacks."

Republicans were mostly mum about the airstrikes as of Monday morning, but Oklahoma Sen. Jim Inhofe, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said Biden did the right thing and that the decision highlights the need to keep the 2002 Iraq war authorization on the books.

"I believe these actions are overdue and highlight the continued need for the 2002 AUMF, or — at a minimum — the need for a comprehensive replacement before a repeal can be considered, especially given that Iranian-backed militias in Iraq are an ongoing threat to American troops," Inhofe said in a statement.

Iraq's government has long been in a tough spot as it has tried to maintain good relations with both Tehran and Washington, which are adversaries. Both U.S. troops and Iranian-backed forces have aided the Iraqi government in fighting against the Islamic State terrorist group, and Iran has significant economic, cultural and religious ties with Iraq.

--*Nahal Toosi and Connor O'Brien contributed to this report*

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7. Assault victims demand military justice

Support grows in Congress for overhaul of how sexual offense cases are prosecuted

Los Angeles Times, June 29 (0300) | David S. Cloud

Amy Marsh had never seen so much alcohol consumed at a work affair when she and her husband hosted a 2018 holiday party at Travis Air Force Base in Northern California, she said. By the time she left for an off-base after-party, she said, she was drunk.

Marsh said she wasn't worried, though. The 25-year-old, who is married to an Air Force junior officer, went with a noncommissioned officer who had been a mentor to her husband since he'd moved to the base a year earlier, according to Marsh.

What happened that night and in the months afterward nearly destroyed her marriage, ruined her husband's Air Force career and left her to suffer in silence -- her husband's military colleague sexually assaulted her, she said.

"I didn't consent to anything, and I was too intoxicated to do anything about it," Marsh said in an interview.

Marsh says her treatment by the Air Force after reporting the incident two months later exemplifies what advocates and members of Congress say are long-standing deficiencies in the military system for handling sexual assault allegations.

Among other shortcomings in the system, critics say, victims are too often doubted or pressured not to bring formal charges, even more than in the civilian world. Senior officers who have responsibility for prosecuting offenders too often side with the accused, rather than the victim. Some victims find their lives destroyed while some perpetrators face little or no punishment. And many assaults go unreported, according to reports even from within the military.

Now, a push in Congress to overhaul military prosecution procedures -- started by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) nearly a decade ago -- is finally gaining traction after years of opposition from the Pentagon and its supporters in Congress.

Gillbrand's legislation would take decisions about whether to prosecute rape, murder, child pornography and other felony offenses out of the hands of commanders, instead turning them over to independent prosecutors outside the chain of command. Other uniquely military crimes such as desertion would remain under commanders' purview.

On June 22, the secretary of Defense for the first time endorsed taking decisions about prosecuting sexual assault and related crimes away from military commanders, though he stopped short of endorsing Gillibrand's more far-reaching proposal.

Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III vowed to work with Congress to enact the change, saying the reform offered "real opportunities to finally end the scourge of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the military."

In Marsh's case, the commander of her husband's unit "decided not to prosecute the alleged assailant" because "he determined that the investigation yielded insufficient evidence to prove Ms. Marsh was too intoxicated to consent to sexual activity," William E. Orr Jr, associate director of the Air Force Judiciary, said in a 2020 letter to a senator from Arizona, where Marsh's husband is now based.

The letter said "marital difficulties" between Marsh and her husband were "likely to undermine" her claims that the "alleged acts were nonconsensual." Marsh called the response "victim blaming."

The noncommissioned officer who Marsh says assaulted her refused to talk to investigators, citing his constitutional right to remain silent, according to the letter. He received "administrative action" for "misconduct" unrelated to sexual assault, it said. The man did not respond to an email and phone calls seeking comment. The Air Force said it would not comment on the case, and Marsh's military lawyer said she is not authorized to speak publicly.

The Pentagon has acknowledged for years that the number of rapes and sexual assaults in the ranks is too high. An annual Defense Department report released in May found that 6,290 service members had reported sexual assaults, rapes and other incidents of unwanted sexual contact during military service in 2020, a 1% increase from a year earlier.

The Pentagon also acknowledges that the actual number of incidents is estimated to be more than three times higher -- as many as 20,500 a year in 2018, the most recent estimate.

For women in the military, the estimated rate of sexual assaults and rapes is at its highest level since 2006, despite repeated pledges by the heads of each military service to combat the problem, according to Col. Don Christensen, a retired Air Force prosecutor and president of Protect Our Defenders, a policy and legal assistance organization that advocates on behalf of military sexual assault victims. The estimates are based on an annual Defense Department poll on the question.

In 2019, only 363 military members were charged with sexual assault or other related offenses and only 138 were convicted, a 50% reduction in prosecution and conviction rates, he said.

"Survivors have been reporting at record rates," Christensen said. "But rather than see their offenders held accountable, they are the ones who suffer the price for reporting."

Gillibrand says the armed services have failed to eradicate a "significant scourge" of sexual violence.

“Despite every promise by the Defense Department to have zero tolerance, we’ve seen a continuing decline in the number of cases going to trial and in guilty verdicts, while the number of cases continues to grow,” she said in an interview.

The bill, which she introduced with Republican Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa, a former Army officer who said she was sexually assaulted in college, would mandate training on preventing sexual assault for all members of the military. It would also give commanders the option of reviewing a prosecutor’s decision not to seek felony charges.

The measure has attracted 65 co-sponsors in the Senate, including 21 Republicans, giving it a strong chance of passing for the first time since Gillibrand introduced it in 2013. Support for a similar bill in the House introduced by Bay Area Democratic Rep. Jackie Speier has also increased.

The surge is due at least in part to the killing of Army Spc. Vanessa Guillen, a 20-year-old soldier at Ft. Hood in Texas who disappeared in April 2020; her mutilated and burned remains were found two months later.

Authorities believe another soldier, Spc. Aaron Robinson, bludgeoned Guillen to death on base. Robinson killed himself when confronted by police days before a murder charge was announced. Guillen’s family said she had been sexually harassed before her death. A subsequent investigation confirmed she had been harassed, but not by Robinson, though he had been accused in a separate harassment case.

The Army investigation into Ft. Hood, released in December, found major flaws at the sprawling base in central Texas. Commanders there allowed a “permissive environment for sexual assault and sexual harassment,” the report concluded.

Among the more than 500 female soldiers interviewed, investigators found 93 credible accounts of sexual assault from 2018 to 2020 -- but only 59 had been reported to commanders, the report said. Of 135 credible instances of sexual harassment, 72 were reported, according to the findings.

In part because of the report’s findings, Austin, in his first directive after becoming Defense secretary in January, gave senior leaders two weeks to send him reports on sexual assault prevention programs, and the next month created an independent review commission.

Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last month that he was reconsidering his opposition to removing decisions on sexual assault prosecution from the chain of command. Top commanders have long defended the system, saying it is important for maintaining discipline and readiness for a commander to have final decision-making authority over prosecution decisions.

President Biden has so far been silent on the Gillibrand bill, but as a candidate he appeared to endorse the idea. Asked at a campaign event in April 2020 whether he supported “empowering experienced military prosecutors to

make prosecution decisions for nonmilitary crimes -- serious felonies like rape, murder, and child abuse," Biden said, "Yes, yes, yes."

He added: "When I was vice president, that was my position as well. As a matter of fact, I had a real run-in with one of the members of the Joint Chiefs in the Cabinet Room on that issue," he said. "We have to change the culture of abuse in this country, especially in the armed services."

But for all the high-level support, the bill's future remains uncertain.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jack Reed (D-R.I.) said last month that he supports shifting the decision-making power only for sexual assault cases, not all felony-level charges. The Army veteran has proposed including the provision in the annual defense authorization, instead of in a stand-alone bill. The defense authorization is due to be taken up in committee in July.

Gillibrand sought to have her broader bill brought up on the Senate floor for a vote, bypassing the committee, but Reed has objected to her request. Oklahoma Sen. James M. Inhofe, another Army veteran and the top Republican on the panel, calls the measure an "imperfect, overly broad bill."

"I do not support removing the chain of command from the decision-making process on these crimes," he said, "but I do support having a debate about how to address and fix these issues at our [defense authorization] markup."

Inhofe on June 22 made public letters he solicited from the Joint Chiefs, who outlined their reservations about Gillibrand's bill while acknowledging the need for a better military response.

"I do not know if removing the commanders' authority to act on certain offenses will affect the occurrence of sexual assault," said Gen. Charles Q. Brown, the Air Force chief of staff. If Congress does remove commanders' role in prosecutions, "the scope of the offenses covered should be specific to sexual assault and harassment," he added.

The other members of the Joint Chiefs had similar views. Gillibrand in a statement called the letters "disappointing but not surprising."

The system now in place, she says, allows some commanders to show favoritism to popular or senior members of their units accused of sexual assault, or to cover up cases so their own prospects for promotion are not affected by evidence that discipline is lacking.

"It's related to command control. If the accused is more valuable to the unit than the accuser, then they may not prosecute the case," she said. "That is bias, and I believe it has no place in the decision."

Limiting the bill to sexual abuse, assault and rape would create a two-tier system of prosecution in the military, Gillibrand said. Plus, removing most felonies from commander control would make it more likely that cases like Guillen's death would be fully investigated and not just in response to public outcry, she added. Guillen's sexual harassment came to light only after her death.

Even if the broader Gillibrand proposal passes in the Senate committee and is included in the authorization bill, it could be revised when a final version of the legislation is worked out in closed-door negotiations between the House and Senate, she warns.

"I believe that if it goes through the committee, it will either be watered down or eliminated entirely," said Gillibrand. "This has been done to us before."

The Senate panel that Gillibrand chairs, the Armed Services subcommittee on personnel, asked Marsh to testify in March about what happened to her at Travis, a base southwest of Sacramento.

"The Air Force promises survivors 'maximum support' after reporting sexual assault," Marsh told the senators, "but that is not what I felt following my decision to come forward."

At first, she decided against reporting the incident, fearing retaliation in the insular and rumor-ridden world she found at the base, Marsh said in an interview. Months later, after speaking with a clergy member, she reported what happened -- but her efforts to gain justice were repeatedly frustrated, she said.

The Air Force took administrative steps to discipline the man but not for sexual assault, according to a letter it sent in 2020 to then-Sen. Martha McSally (R-Ariz.) about the case. A copy of the letter was provided to The Times by Marsh.

"The alleged assailant received administrative action for his misconduct on the night of the alleged sexual assault," the letter said. The action taken "did not involve allegations of sexual assault or nonconsensual activity," it added.

Administrative action is a procedure for handling disciplinary issues not serious enough to merit a court-martial.

The Air Force declined to comment on the action it took against the noncommissioned officer, citing privacy rules.

"Sexual assault and harassment of any kind are inconsistent with the Department of the Air Force's core values," said Ann Stefanek, an Air Force spokesperson. "Allegations of sexual assault are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly."

The Air Force's letter to McSally described its decision not to charge the noncommissioned officer who accompanied Marsh to the after-party.

It said the man touched her and "made sexualized comments" at her house before they and other members of the unit left to go to the off-base party. In addition to asserting there was insufficient evidence that Marsh was too intoxicated to give her consent, the letter said she and the noncommissioned officer engaged in "consensual sexual intercourse upon waking up the next morning."

Marsh disputed that account. "I was way too intoxicated to make any kind of decision," she said of the first encounter. Investigators later asked her how many drinks she had, but had no other way of knowing how intoxicated she was, Marsh said.

As for the incident the next morning, "I wouldn't say it was consensual. I knew it was happening. It was traumatic," she said.

Marsh said she feared repercussions for herself and her husband if she filed a complaint against the popular senior noncommissioned officer. "I knew people wouldn't believe me because everybody loved him," she said. The Times is not naming the man because he was not charged with a crime.

After speaking with an Air Force chaplain, Marsh told her husband what had happened and they decided to file a formal complaint, she said.

Marsh said she didn't initially consider filing a report with the local police, thinking the military would be "equitable." After she learned the military was unlikely to prosecute, she asked her lawyer about filing charges with civilian authorities and was told "at that point it was not possible," she said.

After her husband's commander decided against bringing sexual assault charges against the member of his unit, the base commander at Travis denied her request to open an inquiry that could lead to a court-martial, according to Marsh.

She filed multiple appeals, all of which were turned down over the next two years, she said. In one case, Marsh was told that a court-martial was impossible because she and her husband had been in marriage counseling and that would "likely undermine my case," she said. The couple requested and received a transfer to a different Air Force base; they're now in Arizona.

Meanwhile, the letter says, her husband's commander opened disciplinary proceedings against him for improper "fraternization" with enlisted personnel the night of the holiday party. A letter of reprimand was put in his personnel file and he has yet to be promoted. He now plans to leave the Air Force, Marsh said.

"After it was all over, we felt the repercussions for reporting had been worse for us," Marsh testified to senators.

"If the status quo remains unchanged, bad actors will be able to continue their military careers while victims suffer in silence."

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8. GOP senator jams up Pentagon pick over Biden's Navy plan

The nominee on hold, Susanna Blume, had been tapped to run the Pentagon's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office

Politico Online, June 28 (1720) | Paul McLeary and Connor O'Brien

Republican Sen. Roger Wicker is holding up a high-level Pentagon nominee in an attempt to push the Navy to commit to buying more amphibious ships, according to two people familiar with the situation.

The nominee, Susanna Blume, had been tapped to run the Pentagon's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office, which would give her a central role in assessing new weapons systems proposed by the armed services. The veteran of the Obama Pentagon largely sailed through her confirmation hearing in May, and her nomination has been sent to the full Senate for a vote with several other top picks for the department.

Wicker, the second-most senior Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, slowed down her nomination in an effort to pressure the Pentagon into following through with a congressionally mandated rule to buy four amphibious ships in a single "block buy," which proponents say would be cheaper than acquiring the ships individually, the people said. Defense policy legislation enacted in January mandated the contract, but the four ships were left out of President Joe Biden's fiscal 2022 budget submission. Recent comments from Navy officials make the contract's eventual award far from a sure thing.

In a statement to POLITICO, Wicker blamed the White House and professional budgeteers for undercutting Navy plans to significantly expand the fleet that have the support of shipbuilding boosters on Capitol Hill.

"Congress provided the Navy the authority and direction to pursue a block buy of amphibious ships to save hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars and help to stabilize the industrial base," said Wicker, who did not mention the hold on Blume in his statement. "But the Biden Administration has chosen to ignore this direction and the advice of Navy and Marine Corps leaders in its recent budget and shipbuilding plans. The United States doesn't need bureaucrats putting their 'armchair opinions' on warfighting above those of our men and women in uniform."

Wicker's action alone isn't enough to block Blume's confirmation if Senate Democrats want to force the issue on the Senate floor. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer could file cloture — a procedural motion to shut of debate on a nominee or bill — and force a vote that requires only a majority of senators to agree to advance her nomination.

Acting Navy chief acquisition executive Frederick Stefany recently suggested the four-ship contract might come in the fiscal 2023 budget submission, though that decision is contingent on the results of a new fleet assessment that will be conducted this summer and fall — in part by the same CAPE office that Blume has been tapped to lead.

Stefany told the Senate Armed Services Committee's Seapower subpanel on June 9 that the Navy had reached a "handshake agreement" with shipbuilder Huntington Ingalls Industries for the four-ship procurement to happen possibly by 2023.

"It's not a done deal," he said. "It's going through the process within the department for a final decision."

Wicker, whose state of Mississippi is home to Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula that builds Navy destroyers and amphibious ships, is an advocate for increasing the size of the Navy to at least 355 ships and warned that Biden's budget proposal "doesn't get us anywhere near back on the path to do that."

The block buy would involve one America-class and three San Antonio-class amphibious ships.

The Mississippi Republican, like many defense hawks on Capitol Hill, has slammed the Biden administration's $715 billion defense budget request as underfunding the military's needs. He's called out the Navy's failure to fund a second destroyer and execute the block purchase of amphibious warships, which Pentagon officials have chalked up to tough budget calls.

Wicker needled Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on the flat budget at a Senate Armed Services hearing this month, blaming "bean counters" at the White House Office of Management and Budget for limiting Pentagon resources.

"While we appreciate the suggestion by OMB budget crunchers, it is our obligation to defend this nation, and this proposed budget does not do so," Wicker said.

A Senate aide said Wicker wants the Pentagon to agree to follow through and agree to execute the package deal Congress authorized before the authority for the block purchase expires in the fall, but warned the potential savings would diminish over time if the deal is delayed. Once the Pentagon seals the deal, lawmakers will be able to allocate money to begin work on the new ships in annual defense policy and spending legislation.

The amphibious ship bundle has drawn bipartisan concerns in the Senate. Wicker and Virginia Democrat Tim Kaine sent a letter to Austin in May urging him to act immediately, extolling the budget savings and certainty to the shipbuilding industry the deal would provide. The pair warned that inaction "is causing uncertainty in the already-fragile industrial base."

Blume was part of a raft of nominees approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee on June 10, but the full Senate must consider them before they can be confirmed. Included in the vote was nominee for Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall, whose nomination has also been placed on hold by several senators.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Gary Peters (D-Mich.) — Senate Armed Services Committee members — and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) slapped procedural holds on Kendall this month. Warren is looking to extract several ethics pledges from Kendall, who previously worked for Raytheon and sits on the board of directors of Leidos. He has also consulted for various defense companies. At the same time, Peters opposes the Air Force's decision to pass over Michigan's Selfridge Air National Guard Base as the location for a new international training center for the F-35 fighter.

Also awaiting a full Senate vote are Heidi Shyu for undersecretary of defense for research and engineering, Jill Hruby for administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, Frank Rose for principal deputy administrator of the NNSA, Deborah Rosenblum for assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical and biological defense, and Christopher Maier for assistant secretary of defense for special operations/low-intensity conflict.

The two holds come as the Biden administration slowly fills in political appointees across the government, and as the Pentagon works on a new National Defense Strategy and Nuclear Posture Review, both of which are expected to be released next year.

The hold on Blume also comes at a critical time as the military rushes to modernize and innovate with new technologies to stay ahead of Chinese and Russian advances in areas such as hypersonic missiles, electronic warfare and long-range precision weapons. Blume has been working as CAPE's acting director since Jan. 20, and played a role in the fiscal 2022 defense budget request, the Biden administration's first.

Blume had previously served in the Obama administration as deputy chief of staff for programs and plans in the office of the deputy secretary of defense, and was also director of the Center for a New American Security's Defense Program until January.

Asked about the holdup, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said, "we are eager for the Senate to act on all our pending nominees. ...This certainly would include Ms. Bloom, who is eminently qualified to direct the efforts of the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office. The Secretary looks forward to serving with her."

Overall, the Navy sought to buy two amphibious ships in the fiscal 2022 budget request, a San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship along with an America-class amphibious assault ship.

The CAPE office was directly involved in last year's "Battle Force 2045" shipbuilding plan put together by then-Defense Secretary Mark Esper, and was central to building the Navy's fiscal 2022 budget submission. The plan

has found few friends on Capitol Hill because it cuts the number of ships the service planned to buy and punts on any long-range reassessment of the fleet until 2023 or after.

The push for more amphibious ships — which can transport Marines and aircraft including F-35s to hot spots quickly — and frustration with CAPE have become increasingly intertwined.

On June 14, Reps. Rob Wittman (R-Va.) and Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.) introduced legislation to withhold 50 percent of CAPE's budget until the Navy executes a "bundle-buy contract" for the four amphibious ships.

Packaging the ships in one large contract would save $720 million, they contend. "The Navy still wants these ships and has signaled they will build them," Wittman said in a statement, slamming "faceless political bureaucrats" for kicking the contracts down the road.

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9. Moderate Democrats rebuke defense budget cuts

Defense News Online, June 28 (0500) | Joe Gould

WASHINGTON -- In the upcoming budget debate, a group of moderate Democrats are trying to set a floor for 2022 defense spending before progressive Democrats try to push it lower.

Leaders of the House's Blue Dog Coalition say they oppose calls to fund any less than the requested $753 billion national defense budget for fiscal 2022—which included $715 billion for the Pentagon. The stance adds fuel to an already complicated budget debate, where Democrats are split and key Republicans are pushing for a boost.

"We believe this is a strong and sensible funding request, and we oppose calls to authorize or appropriate funding below this level," the six lawmakers said in a June 24 letter to leaders of the House Armed Services Committee and House Appropriations Committee.

The lawmakers on the letter are Reps. Mikie Sherrill, of New Jersey; Tom O'Halleran, of Arizona; Stephanie Murphy, of Florida; Ed Case, of Hawaii; Abigail Spanberger, of Virginia, and Kurt Schrader, of Oregon.

A group of six is significant in the House, where the 220-211 partisan split means Democrats can only lose four members on any party-line vote. The letter comes as some Democrats are worrying that appropriations bills will have difficulty garnering the necessary support to advance before the August recess.

"My understanding is that it isn't just my bill that's in trouble, just appropriations across the board," Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman Lucille Roybal-Allard told CQ on Wednesday. "A lot of the subcommittees are having problems for different reasons."

The House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Defense is set to release its proposed defense spending bill this week.

The letter from the Blue Dog bloc emphasizes President Joe Biden's budget request, which sets them at odds with a group of 50 House progressives who have called on Biden to "significantly" slash defense. However, it does not rule out an alliance with key Republicans, who have have said defense must rise 3-5 percent above inflation to counter a rising China.

The lawmakers joined bipartisan pushback against the Biden request's formulation of the China-focused Pacific Deterrence Initiative, saying Congress should "provide no less than $4.68 billion," for FY22, as outlined by Indo-Pacific Command's Section 1251 report. (Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has acknowledged the criticism and said the Pentagon will work with Congress to correct them.)

Also on Thursday, several Senate Republicans held a press conference to say Biden's defense spending proposal is too low, and they challenged moderate Democrats to join them. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, said moderate Democrats, and Pentagon leaders, have told him privately that they are unhappy with the budget.

"We think national defense should be the top priory of the Congress, not the last priority, and I think we have the American people behind us on this," he said. "I think there'll be tough votes for Democratic senators from states — Virginia, Georgia, Arizona — think about those states, very pro-military states."

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MIDDLE EAST

10. Biden vows to Israel: No nuclear weapon for Iran on my watch
Reuters, June 28 (1918) | Andrea Shalal and Steve Holland

WASHINGTON -- U.S. President Joe Biden, in a meeting on Monday with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, said his commitment to Israel is "iron-clad" and he looks forward to meeting with new Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett soon.

Biden, in his first meeting as president with a top Israeli official, also said Iran would not come to possess a nuclear weapon during his time in office.

"My commitment to Israel is ... ironclad," Biden told Rivlin at the start of their meeting in the Oval Office. He said the two officials would discuss a range of topics, including Iran.

"What I can say to you is that Iran will never get a nuclear weapon on my watch," Biden said.

The meeting took place just weeks after Bennett took over as Israel's new prime minister, replacing Benjamin Netanyahu. U.S. officials are working on setting up a meeting between Biden and Bennett in the coming weeks.

"He's going to invite the prime minister of Israel in the very next days in order to find a way to go forward and to exchange ideas," Rivlin said of Biden after their meeting.

The get-together comes amid concerns in Israel and Arab capitals about U.S. efforts to re-enter the Iran nuclear deal because of fears a resumption of the accord may eventually allow Tehran to acquire atomic weapons that would leave them vulnerable to Iranian intimidation or military threat.

U.S. attempts to revive the Iran nuclear deal, after then-President Donald Trump abandoned it in 2018, have been slow to make progress with Tehran insisting the United States lift all economic sanctions.

A source familiar with the Biden-Rivlin meeting said Biden was expected to tell Rivlin that the United States and Israel share the same objective, that Iran not be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon, and that Biden would stress U.S. support for Israel's right to defend itself.

The two leaders are also expected to discuss Israel's 11-day war with Gaza. The United States has pledged to resupply Israel's Iron Dome defense system, which got heavy usage during the Gaza conflict.

Rivlin is to leave office on July 7 after a seven-year term, with Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog taking over as Israeli president.

Rivlin is on his final foreign trip as president. He will meet officials at the United Nations in New York and congressional lawmakers in Washington.

--*Reporting by Andrea Shalal and Steve Holland*

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11. Baghdad Is Caught in the Middle as the U.S. and Iran Spar on Iraqi Territory

Baghdad condemned American airstrikes on Iranian-controlled militias that have been harrying U.S. operations in Iraq, fearing an escalation

New York Times, June 29 (0300), Pg. A10 | Jane Arraf

American airstrikes against two Iranian-backed militias on Monday were just the latest skirmish in a conflict between the United States and Iran that is playing out on Iraqi soil.

Iran has relied on the militias to attack American assets in Iraq, putting pressure on the United States while the two countries engage in indirect talks over their nuclear deal in Vienna. Monday's airstrikes were the second time the Biden administration has responded militarily to the harassment.

But the conflict between its two powerful allies has put Iraq squarely in the middle. Unable to rein in the Iranian-backed forces or to stop the United States from retaliating, Iraq now faces the biggest threat to its stability since the Islamic State was marching toward Baghdad in 2014.

On Monday, it strongly protested the U.S. attack on its soil.

The Iraqi government described the strikes as a “blatant and unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty and national security.” Maj. Gen. Yahya Rasool, military spokesman for Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, urged de-escalation and said Iraq did not want to be turned into an “arena for settling accounts.”

The strikes hit facilities used by two militias that the Pentagon accused of involvement in recent drone attacks on American bases in Iraq. The Pentagon said Monday that the overnight airstrikes were meant to send a message while avoiding escalation.

But Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said the United States was disrupting the security of the region.

The strikes also revived questions about the future of about 2,500 U.S. troops remaining in Iraq, where they serve as one of the country’s main security partners.

The government in Baghdad has been unable to stop attacks on its U.S. allies by the Iranian-backed militias, even though they are on the government payroll as the country tries to integrate them into its regular security forces.

The Pentagon said the strikes had hit both sides of the Iraqi-Syrian border. Two of the targets were just across the border into Syria and the third was inside Iraq.

Mr. al-Kadhimi, the prime minister, called an emergency meeting of security advisers to discuss the airstrikes. The Iraqi cabinet called them “a flagrant violation” of international law and said Iraq was in the advanced stages of dialogue with the United States on what it said were the logistical details of removing American combat forces from the country.

The United States and Iraq have been negotiating a new framework agreement governing security and other cooperation. Similar statements by the Iraqi government about an agreement to withdraw U.S. combat forces have been aimed at catering to Iranian-backed political parties and militias demanding their removal.

The American troops are in Iraq at the invitation of the government, which still relies on U.S. air power, intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance to help fight remnants of the Islamic State.

The American strikes were the latest escalation in tensions over recent revelations that Iranian-backed militias in Iraq had increasingly been using small, explosive-laden drones in late-night attacks on Iraqi bases, including those used by the C.I.A. and U.S. Special Operations units, according to American officials.

“There are clear signs of escalation,” said Farhad Alaaldin, head of the Iraq Advisory Council think tank, referring to recent attacks by the Iran-backed groups. “Really, the question for the U.S. is: ‘What does it take to say we have had enough, let’s go home?’”

The two militias that were targeted in the strikes, Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada and Kata’ib Hezbollah, are part of the Popular Mobilization Forces umbrella group, which formed to fight the Islamic State in Iraq in 2014. The forces mobilized following a fatwa, or religious edict, from Iraq’s most revered Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, when the Islamic State was nearing Baghdad in 2014.

Most but not all of the groups are Shiite Muslim, who are a majority in Iraq, and the most powerful ones are backed by Shiite Iran. In 2016, they were merged into the Iraqi government’s security force.

Despite that, the most powerful militias on the Iraqi government payroll are only nominally under control of Baghdad. The Popular Mobilization Forces are made up of more than 50 different paramilitary groups with an estimated 160,000 fighters.

Iran over the last two years has decreased its financial support for proxy paramilitary groups in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon because of the effect of U.S. sanctions, lower oil prices and the pandemic. So the dozens of militia forces under the umbrella of the Popular Mobilization Forces have relied more on Iraqi government funding and moneymaking schemes that include oil smuggling and extortion at Iraqi borders and ports, according to security analysts and government officials.

American officials said they had not relied on Iraqi intelligence to identify and monitor the targets hit overnight, and had not consulted with the Iraqi government in advance. It was not known whether the United States notified Russia in advance of the airstrikes on the Syrian side of the border, but both countries operate in the same airspace in Syria.

The group Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada said four of its fighters stationed along the border had been killed in the strikes.

“From now on, we will go to open war with the American occupation, the first action of which is targeting the enemy planes in beloved Iraq’s sky,” the group said in a statement.

Another little-known Iran-backed group, Guardians of Blood, said the first target would be American aircraft in Iraq’s Kurdish capital, Erbil.

The Popular Mobilization Forces denied Pentagon claims that weapons storehouses were targeted and said the airstrikes had targeted its fighters.

A front organization for Iranian-backed armed groups in Iraq, the Iraqi Resistance Coordination, vowed revenge and said it would continue to target U.S. forces.

“We will avenge the blood of our righteous martyrs against the perpetrators of this heinous crime and with God’s help, we will make the enemy taste the bitterness of revenge,” the group said in a statement.

Later on Monday, suspected Iranian-backed militias fired rockets at American forces in Syria, according to a U.S. military spokesman, Col. Wayne Marotto. Kurdish-Syrian media said the targets were U.S. troops near an oil field.

The U.S. airstrikes overnight Sunday were the second in the same area authorized by Mr. Biden since he came to power and the first since elections in Iran this month in which the hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi become president.

Although bodies are normally buried the same day under Islamic tradition, the Popular Mobilization Forces said it would hold a public ceremony in Baghdad on Tuesday morning to transport the remains of those killed in the airstrike and to express condemnation of the attack.

The normally calm Kurdish-led region has also come under increased attack from fighters suspected to be from the Iranian-backed militias. The latest incident was on Saturday when an explosive-laden drone landed in a village near Erbil, causing damage but no casualties.

The Kurdish region’s counterterrorism directorate on Saturday released photos of what it said were recovered drone pieces from an attack with an inscription referring to Abdu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the Iraqi militia leader killed in Baghdad in a U.S. drone strike last year along with Iranian general Qassim Suleimani, commander of the country’s Quds Force.

Iran has said it has not yet avenged the killing of General Suleimani, who helped direct wars in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen and became the face of Iran’s efforts to build a regional bloc of Shiite power well beyond Iran’s borders.

--*Eric Schmitt contributed reporting from Washington*

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12. US airstrikes follow a spate of sophisticated attacks by Iran using new drones that can avoid US surveillance

CNN.com, June 28 (1750) | Katie Bo Williams

President Joe Biden's decision to conduct airstrikes against Iran-backed militia groups on the Iraq-Syria border Sunday night follows a recent spate of attacks against US military assets in Iraq by a new class of Iranian-made drones that US officials say can evade US surveillance and defenses.

The latest of these attacks occurred earlier this month when an armed drone detonated at a dining facility at a key entry point in the Baghdad airport used by American soldiers and diplomats, a US military official told CNN. In April, a drone damaged a CIA drone hanger near Erbil.

The American airstrikes Sunday night hit operational and weapons storage facilities at two locations in Syria and one in Iraq, according to the Pentagon, targets that were "selected because these facilities are utilized by Iran-backed militias that are engaged in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq."

The strikes were initially contemplated after the April attack in Erbil, according to one source briefed on the decision, but were put on hold until this weekend, when another attack by four of the more precise Iranian drones hit the northern Iraqi city -- including one that landed near the building site for a new US consulate. There were no Americans killed or injured in the strike.

For months, US intelligence and military personnel in Iraq have been raising alarms about the risk to American forces from these newer, more sophisticated Iranian-made drones. Rather than being guided by a pilot from a remote location, some of these small, fixed-wing drones use GPS navigation, making them far less visible to US surveillance systems and impervious to jamming.

"Suffice it to say the (CIA) is now paying a great deal of attention to this issue, because those things tend to wake you up a little bit," said one former intelligence official with experience in the region.

While rocket attacks against US personnel in Iraq have become almost routine, these new Iranian-made drones, so-called suicide drones, are viewed by US intelligence and military personnel as a clear escalation by Iran — and a worrying signal to intelligence officials that the US no longer enjoys autonomy in the skies over Iraq.

New drone technology

Packed with explosives, the new drones come in varying sizes -- anywhere from a five-foot wingspan to a 12 to 15 feet, according to one US military official -- with the larger iterations carrying up to 30 kilograms of explosives.

That's far smaller and less lethal than the American-made MQ-9 Reaper drones. But current and former officials say these new Iranian-made drones pose a unique threat in part because Tehran has no deniability -- since no one else is known to have the technology. Unlike the more commonly-available Katyusha rockets often fired at US troops in Iraq, US officials say there's no question that Iran is providing them to the complex web of militia groups who seek to oust the United States from Iraq.

They are also substantially more dangerous, these sources say.

"Someone could get killed, and more so than in the past, because things are accurate," said one US military official who spoke to CNN on the condition of anonymity. "We think they're actually aiming them -- and the warheads on these things are pretty substantial."

Critical for officials tracking the threat from these new drones is that many use GPS to find their target, making them much harder to defend against.

"What we used to do in the past is try to jam the link between the person flying it and the aircraft or take it over," the former intelligence official told CNN. "That is still what we try to do, but ... now they just send it to a GPS. There's no link, there's nothing to jam, there's nothing to take over."

It also "makes them less visible," that person said. "If they're talking to somebody then they emit something, it's easier for us to find. It allows us to take it back to the point of origin."

These smaller drones are also "increasingly used by enemy forces for intelligence-gathering on US and allied bases," a spokesman for the US mission in Iraq confirmed to CNN.

Heightened political tensions

The rising attacks using these more sophisticated drones is part of an ongoing effort by Iran to use proxy militias in Iraq to try to oust the United States from the region, sources tell CNN. Complicating matters, they also come as the Biden administration is pursuing delicate negotiations with Tehran over a new nuclear deal.

The strikes also come just over a week after Iran elected a new hardline president, Ebrahim Raisi. Last week, Raisi said he would not would not meet with Biden, even if both sides agreed on terms to revive the 2015 nuclear deal under which Iran agreed to stop uranium enrichment in return for the lifting of crippling US sanctions.

Sunday's strikes are the second time Biden has chosen to use force in the region. In February, he launched airstrikes in eastern Syria against buildings that he said were used by Iranian-backed militia groups to launch attacks on US forces in Iraq.

Military officials have raised concerns about the proliferation of drones in the region for more than a year, in particular after they were used in the attack on a Saudi oil refinery in 2019. Multiple suicide drone strikes on Riyadh launched by Iranian-supplied Houthi fighters have also raised concerns.

Unlike a rocket, which must be launched from nearby the target, the drones can fly a much farther range and can be launched from anywhere. Smaller ones can simply be dropped off of a roof. The larger ones can take flight from the back of a pick-up truck, according to sources familiar with the technology.

Gen. Frank McKenzie, the top US general in the Middle East, earlier this year said "drones are the biggest threat to US forces in the region."

Then, in April, one of these drones damaged a CIA hangar in Erbil. Although officials don't necessarily believe the perpetrators knew the hanger belonged to the agency -- hangars are high-value targets no matter which government agency owns them -- the attack was still an unnerving escalation.

These drones have been used in at least five attacks since April, although in some cases, the drone has hit short of its target or been shot down by US defenses. At least some military officials have been pushing for the US to respond to the attacks.

"We don't have definitive evidence to say, it's that Iran is saying, 'do this' or 'don't do this,'" the US military official said, adding that there is "a growing belief" that some of the attacks are carried out by "rogue elements" without Iranian direction or permission.

"But who provided the weapon systems, who provided the training -- absolutely none of that is in doubt," this person said. There is "zero doubt" the technology comes from Iran.

--*CNN's Zachary Cohen contributed to this report*

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13. Number of ISIS members detained in Syria is 'untenable,' Blinken says
Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A11 | Karen DeYoung

ROME -- More than two years after they last met in person, top diplomats representing the 78-nation coalition to defeat the Islamic State gathered here Monday to assess what has happened in the interim and position themselves for the future. The news, in many respects, was not good.

While the caliphate in Syria was declared dead in 2019, "there is still more work to be done," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his global counterparts as he opened the meeting co-hosted by the United States and Italy.

Rapidly expanding in Africa, the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, is also regrouping in Iraq and Syria, where U.S. military commanders have said the potential for new recruitment is high among tens of thousands of displaced youths and children being held in detention camps run by U.S.-allied Kurds in northeastern Syria.

At least 10,000 captured Islamic State fighters - 2,000 of them foreigners from around the world, most of whose homelands have refused to take them back, even for prosecution - are in separate, makeshift Kurdish prisons.

The situation, Blinken said in remarks opening the conference, is “simply untenable.”

At a later news conference with Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, Blinken said that “there is a need for countries to take action to repatriate” their citizens among both Islamic State members and their families, “to prosecute where appropriate, to rehabilitate and reintegrate where appropriate.”

The United States, Italy and some others have repatriated and prosecuted some of their nationals. But “the strong message coming out of today’s meeting was for countries to do more,” Blinken said. “We’ll see the results in the weeks and months ahead.”

The meeting was held at the Fiera di Roma, a cavernous event complex outside the Italian capital. Shortly after it ended, many of the same diplomats reconvened in a separate meeting of the international coalition on Syria. It, too, had suspended in-person meetings during the coronavirus pandemic.

At the Syria event, discussion centered on how to persuade or pressure Russia not to veto an upcoming U.N. Security Council vote on a resolution to continue to allow the United Nations to convoy food and medicine across a single corridor on the Turkish border into Syria. From there it is distributed to millions more displaced, not by the Islamic State, but by Syria’s decade-old civil war.

That war has been more or less won by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, with massive assistance from Russian airstrikes and Iranian-backed militias. Remaining opposition forces, including some affiliated with al-Qaeda, have been pushed into a northwest corner of the country, along with millions of refugees who ended up there after fleeing fighting elsewhere.

When the United Nations started delivering humanitarian aid in 2014, there were four border crossings. In 2020, however, Russia twice used its veto threat to insist the other three be closed, and limit the one remaining, at Bab al-Hawa, to a six-month mandate that ends at midnight July 10. The United Nations has warned that millions inside Syria are at risk of starvation, and desperately need medical aid, including for the coronavirus.

Russia has accused the Americans and their allies of trying to undercut Syria’s territorial sovereignty, and has said aid should only be delivered across the lines of internal fighting - meaning it should all come through Damascus.

Asked how the administration would pressure the Russians, and what officials would do in the event of another veto, a senior State Department official said that "what's been made clear all the way from the president on down ... is that we want to have a constructive relationship with Russia on areas where we can work together, and Syria is one of them."

In his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva this month, Biden "raised the issue directly" and made it clear the administration wants not only for the Bab al-Hawa crossing to remain open, but also for others to be reopened, said the official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks.

"If we are not able to work together on this basic human need," the official said, "that would make it difficult to work with the Russians on anything else with regard to Syria more broadly."

Blinken also announced that the administration would provide an additional $436 million in humanitarian assistance to Syrians inside the country, and to countries in the region hosting millions of Syrians who fled during the civil war.

Blinken and Di Maio were asked at their news conference whether they had discussed Italy's relationship with China during bilateral talks. In 2019, despite U.S. and European warnings, a previous Italian government signed on to China's Belt and Road initiative in hopes of increased trade and investment.

But since Beijing's crackdown on Hong Kong, and its more recent underperformance in providing promised covid-19 aid to Italy, Rome has eased away from the agreement.

"Italy is a strong trade partner of China," Di Maio said. "We've enjoyed relations that have lasted for years. But they cannot and do not interfere with the alliance of values we have with the United States, with NATO and the European Union."

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AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

14. It's imminent: After nearly 20 years U.S. to leave Bagram
Associated Press, June 29 (0209) | Kathy Gannon

BAGRAM, Afghanistan -- For nearly 20 years, Bagram Airfield was the heart of American military power in Afghanistan, a sprawling mini-city behind fences and blast walls just an hour's drive north of Kabul. Initially, it was a symbol of the U.S. drive to avenge the 9/11 attacks, then of its struggle for a way through the ensuing war with the Taliban.

In just a matter of days, the last U.S. soldiers will depart Bagram. They are leaving what probably everyone connected to the base, whether American or Afghan, considers a mixed legacy.

“Bagram grew into such a massive military installation that, as with few other bases in Afghanistan and even Iraq, it came to symbolize and epitomize the phrase ‘mission creep’,” said Andrew Watkins, Afghanistan senior analyst for the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

U.S. Central Command said last week that it’s well past 50% done packing up Bagram, and the rest is going fast. American officials have said the entire pullout of U.S. troops will most likely be completely finished by July 4. The Afghan military will then take over Bagram as part of its continuing fight against the Taliban — and against what many in the country fear will be a new eruption of chaos.

The departure is rife with symbolism. Not least, it’s the second time that an invader of Afghanistan has come and gone through Bagram.

The Soviet Union built the airfield in the 1950s. When it invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to back a communist government, it turned it into its main base from which it would defend its occupation of the country. For 10 years, the Soviets fought the U.S.-backed mujahedeen, dubbed freedom fighters by President Ronald Reagan, who saw them as a front-line force in one of the last Cold War battles.

The Soviet Union negotiated its withdrawal in 1989. Three years later, the pro-Moscow government collapsed, and the mujahedeen took power, only to turn their weapons on each other and kill thousands of civilians. That turmoil brought to power the Taliban who overran Kabul in 1996.

When the U.S. and NATO inherited Bagram in 2001, they found it in ruins, a collection of crumbling buildings, gouged by rockets and shells, most of its perimeter fence wrecked. It had been abandoned after being battered in the battles between the Taliban and rival mujahedeen warlords fleeing to their northern enclaves.

After dislodging the Taliban from Kabul, the U.S.-led coalition began working with their warlord allies to rebuild Bagram, first with temporary structures that then turned permanent. Its growth was explosive, eventually swallowing up roughly 30 square miles.

“The closure of Bagram is a major symbolic and strategic victory for the Taliban,” said Bill Roggio, senior fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

“If the Taliban is able to take control of the base, it will serve as anti-U.S. propaganda fodder for years to come,” said Roggio who is also editor of the foundation’s Long War Journal.

It would also be a military windfall.

The enormous base has two runways. The most recent, at 12,000 feet long, was built in 2006 at a cost of $96 million. There are 110 revetments, which are basically parking spots for aircraft, protected by blast walls. GlobalSecurity, a security think tank, says Bagram includes three large hangars, a control tower and numerous support buildings. The base has a 50-bed hospital with a trauma bay, three operating theaters and a modern dental clinic. There are also fitness centers and fast food restaurants. Another section houses a prison, notorious and feared among Afghans.

Jonathan Schroden, of the U.S.-based research and analysis organization CNA, estimates that well over 100,000 people spent significant time at Bagram over the past two decades. “Bagram formed a foundation for the wartime experience of a large fraction of U.S. military members and contractors who served in Afghanistan,” said Schroden, director of CNA’s Center for Stability and Development.

“The departure of the last U.S. troops from there will likely serve as the final turn of the page for many of these folks with respect to their time in that country,” he said.

For Afghans in Bagram district, a region of more than 100 villages supported by orchards and farming fields, the base has been a major supplier of employment. The U.S. withdrawal effects nearly every household, said Darwaish Raufi, district governor.

The Americans have been giving the Afghan military some weaponry and other material. Anything else that they are not taking, they are destroying and selling it to scrap dealers around Bagram. U.S. officials say they must ensure nothing usable can ever fall into Taliban hands.

Last week, the U.S. Central Command said it had junked 14,790 pieces of equipment and sent 763 C-17 aircraft loaded with material out of Afghanistan. Bagram villagers say they hear explosions from inside the base, apparently the Americans destroying buildings and material.

Raufi said many villagers have complained to him about the U.S. leaving just their junk behind.

“There’s something sadly symbolic about how the U.S. has gone about leaving Bagram. The decision to take so much away and destroy so much of what is left speaks to the U.S. urgency to get out quickly,” said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the U.S.-based Wilson Center.

“It’s not the kindest parting gift for Afghans, including those taking over the base,” he said.

Inevitably, comparisons to the former Soviet Union have arisen.

Retired Afghan Gen. Saifullah Safi, who worked alongside U.S. forces at Bagram, said the Soviets left all their equipment when they withdrew. They “didn’t take much with them, just the vehicles they needed to transport their soldiers back to Russia,” he said.

The prison in the base was handed over to the Afghans in 2012, and they will continue to operate it. In the early years of the war, for many Afghans, Bagram became synonymous with fear, next only to Guantanamo Bay. Parents would threaten their crying children with the prison.

In the early years of the invasion, Afghans often disappeared for months without any reports of their whereabouts until the International Red Committee of the Red Cross located them in Bagram. Some returned home with tales of torture.

“When someone mentions even the word Bagram I hear the screams of pain from the prison,” said Zabihullah, who spent six years in Bagram, accused of belonging to the faction of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a warlord designated a terrorist by the U.S. At the time of his arrest it was an offense to belong to Hekmatyar’s party.

Zabihullah, who goes by one name, was released in 2020, four years after President Ashraf Ghani signed a peace deal with Hekmatyar.

Roggio says the status of the prison is a “major concern,” noting that many of its prisoners are known Taliban leaders or members of militant groups, including al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. It’s believed about 7,000 prisoners are still in the prison.

“If the base falls and the prison is overrun, these detainees can bolster the ranks of these terror groups,” Roggio said.

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15. Taliban assaults motivate Afghans to rally and stand up

Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A10 | Pamela Constable and Ezzatullah Mehrdad

KABUL -- Just a few miles north of the Afghan capital, a sleepy village of apple and grape orchards sprang to attention last week. Old rifles were brought out from closets and several hundred men gathered excitedly on the main street, hoisting their battered weapons and raising war whoops for the news cameras.

There was no danger of imminent attack, but the villagers were caught up in the spirit of a government call to action that has sounded across the country. In less than a week, militia members and armed citizens in more than a dozen provinces have rushed to join Afghan security forces battling the Taliban.

“We have buried hundreds of young men during this war, many in uniform,” said Sayed Mahmoud Sadat, 52, an agricultural worker and longtime loyalist of the local ex-militia commander who orchestrated Wednesday’s rally in Khodaman village. Such seasoned fighters, he said, were “sidelined for a long time, but I always knew our generation would be needed sooner or later.”

Jamshid Wahdat, 32, a law school graduate who helped to arrange the event, was a child when his family returned to the village after the Taliban regime was overthrown in 2001. It is a community of ethnic Tajiks that fiercely opposed the takeover by the ethnic Pashtun Taliban.

“I couldn’t recognize our house. They had burned everything to ashes,” he said. The rally, he added, was “to show the armed forces that they are not alone. We need to defend our lands, our houses and ourselves.”

As Afghan President Ashraf Ghani met with President Biden and members of Congress last week, his country faced a dramatic surge in Taliban attacks that began in the north but rapidly spread to other regions. The defense forces have been unable to stem the offensive, and Afghan officials are concerned that the planned pullout of U.S. troops by September could leave the country dangerously vulnerable to a Taliban takeover.

At the same time, the Kabul government’s call for able-bodied Afghans to join in the fight - an extraordinary appeal to former armed rivals and local renegades that has so far met with surprising success - seems partly aimed at convincing U.S. officials that despite its failures on the battlefield, Ghani’s government and its anti-Taliban cause enjoy strong public support and deserve more help.

Some critics have warned that relying on former ethnic militia leaders and informal local fighting groups could weaken government control of the military effort and risk a revival of abusive and predatory behavior that marred past anti-Taliban campaigns, such as the suffocation of hundreds of Taliban prisoners inside shipping containers by an ethnic Uzbek warlord whose forces have now been invited to join the national campaign.

“Ghani came to power with an anti-warlord narrative and plan for disarming the people. Now his government is arming people,” said Hafiz Mansour, a legislator from the opposition Jamiat-i-Islami party that once led the anti-Taliban fight. “The government should show leadership and manage guns in a useful way. These forces should not become lawbreakers.”

But some government advisers said that many onetime militia bosses have now become invested in the country’s stability and economic success and that like other Afghans who have experienced the fruits of democracy since the Taliban regime fell in 2001, they don’t want to see it collapse or be replaced by repressive religious rule again.

“Everyone has a stake in the system now,” said one senior government security adviser, speaking on the condition of anonymity to speak freely. “Even our strongest critics have enjoyed the freedoms that came with civilian rule. Nobody wants things to go backwards. Our forces can’t be in every village, and we are counting on the people to help. They are not trying to grab power. They are defending the system.”

Despite the enthusiastic response to the government’s call to arms, however, the Taliban is still gaining ground. In the past week, fighters have reportedly seized more than 20 districts and attacked more than 80. In Kunduz province, a critical gateway to the northern border, militia fighters have swarmed the capital city to help besieged government troops, but the fighting has continued unabated and the surrounding districts are in Taliban hands.

Taliban officials, who signed a peace deal with U.S. negotiators last year, have dropped out of follow-up talks with Afghan leaders and now boast that they have triumphed on the battlefield. In a long online statement last week, a Taliban spokesman said that the group has cleared “large regions” of the country with local cooperation, and that it hopes that “recent developments” will restore peace and security to the country.

The statement said the group “reassures all citizens” that none will be mistreated and invited all members of the armed forces to “embrace the open arms” of their Islamic government and live safely in “liberated” zones under its control. It said that no markets, schools, hospitals, private property or other facilities would be harmed, and that women would be granted “due Islamic rights” and opportunities.

The Taliban statement also fiercely criticized the local fighters who have been newly encouraged by the government, referring to them as “arbakis,” or former local militia members who were notoriously abusive, and accusing them of “fanning the flames of war” to maintain a grip on power. It said such groups will receive “stern” treatment from their Islamic authorities.

But the actual picture in many parts of the country under Taliban assault and control, as reported by Afghan officials and media, is one of increasing conflict and fear. In the past week, the pattern of insurgent attacks has both widened and intensified, with frequent reports that they now involve military vehicles and weaponry that were once in the hands of U.S. or Afghan forces.

Officials and international observers have warned that more than half a dozen provincial capitals could fall into Taliban hands. Perhaps even more disturbing, the insurgents made new inroads as they moved south last week through a corridor of provinces where former ethnic Tajik militias once battled them ferociously.

The major U.S. military base is located in this region, known as the Shomali Plain, and so is the village of Khodaman. The capital lies just a half-hour drive farther south.

Mir Adil Shah, 57, a lifelong village resident, said he first fought against occupying Soviet troops when he was 17, fought the Taliban at home before they seized power in 1996, then fled north to the Panjshir Valley and fought the extremists under the command of Afghanistan’s late militia leader Ahmed Shah Massoud. He said he had lost “dozens of relatives” in those years at war.

“This is my motherland. I have been fighting for it since I was a kid,” Shah said Thursday. Now that they have been called to arms by the government, he said, “all our people stand ready to fight them again.”

“As long as I am alive,” he said, “I will never lay down my gun.”

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16. Violence intensifies across Afghanistan's central and northern provinces
Reuters, June 28 (1025) | Not Attributed

KABUL -- Taliban militants have taken over a district, launched attacks on checkpoints and cemented control over a border trade crossing, officials said on Monday, as clashes intensify in Afghanistan's central and northern provinces.

Violence has risen sharply around the country as foreign forces work towards withdrawing by Sept. 11 and peace talks in Qatar have failed to make significant progress.

The Taliban have launched a wave of offensives around the country, particularly in the north, outside of their southern strongholds.

In central Bamiyan province, normally relatively free of conflict, Taliban fighters attacked several security checkpoints, resulting in heavy clashes overnight, according to Humayoon Elkhani, spokesman for Bamiyan's provincial police.

In central Ghazni province, Muqur district fell to the Taliban after months of being under siege, according to a member of the provincial council and a security source. A health centre in the district was bombed on Monday morning, according to provincial health director Zaher Shah Nekmal, injuring five health workers.

In northern Badakhshan province, the Taliban launched coordinated attacks on five districts overnight but were fought back by Afghan security forces, according to a spokesperson for the provincial government.

The Taliban also still has maintained control of Shir Khan Bandar, a significant border crossing town with Tajikistan, after seizing it last week.

Shafiqullah Atayi, chairman of Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said the Taliban had appointed their own members to run the administration offices but that trade had stopped. A Taliban spokesman said they had appointed officials to run the transit point and it was open for people to cross.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's capital Kabul suffered severe power outages in recent days after a power pylon in central Parwan province was blown up on the weekend by unknown attackers.

A spokesperson for national power utility Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat said around 35 power pylons had been blown up in the last six months, but they were not clear on who was behind the explosions.

--*Reporting by Kabul bureau*

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17. Reagan carrier strike group now operating in 5th Fleet amid Afghanistan withdrawal
Military Times Online, June 28 (1828) | Diana Stancy Correll

The aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan and its carrier strike group are now operating in the 5th Fleet — a first for the carrier since 2012.

The Navy said that the Reagan carrier strike group will "operate and train alongside regional and coalition partners" and provide airpower to assist U.S. and coalition forces while the U.S. withdraws troops from Afghanistan.

"Ronald Reagan's flexible presence is a key element in helping assure our regional partners that the United States remains committed to ensuring freedom of the seas," Capt. Fred Goldhammer, Ronald Reagan's commanding officer, said in a Navy news release. "The crew aboard Ronald Reagan seeks to preserve 'peace through strength' and remains ready to answer the call."

The Wall Street Journal first reported in May that the Reagan was poised to head to CENTCOM's area of operations to assist with the Afghanistan withdrawal, and that the aircraft carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower would depart the region in July to return to Norfolk, Virginia.

The report said that the carrier is unable to operate safely if it exceeds the July timeframe, given that the carrier was deployed in 2020 and subsequently deployed again in February 2021, according to unnamed defense officials.

Earlier this month, the Reagan and its carrier strike group headed into the South China Sea for the first time during its 2021 deployment to conduct maritime security operations, flight operations, maritime strike exercises, and coordinated tactical training between surface and air units.

"Our commitment to regional stability strengthens those we sail with and discourages anyone who would seek to disrupt international norms, no matter where we deploy in the world," Rear Adm. Will Pennington, commander of Task Force 50 and Carrier Strike Group 5, said in a Navy news release.

The Reagan's carrier strike group includes guided-missile cruiser Shiloh, guided-missile destroyer Halsey, along with Carrier Air Wing 5 and the embarked staffs of Task Force 70 and Destroyer Squadron 15.

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INDO-PACIFIC

18. Outgoing USFK commander vows to continue support for alliance
Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 29 (0103) | Choi Soo-hyang

SEOUL -- Outgoing U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) Commander Gen. Robert Abrams on Tuesday vowed to continue supporting the "ironclad" alliance between South Korea and the United States, describing his time here as a "personal honor and privilege."

Abrams made the remarks during an honor guard ceremony hosted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Won In-choul ahead of USFK's change of command slated for Friday, according to the military.

Expressing gratitude to "28,500 men and women of USFK for their service and dedication away from home for the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula," Abrams said he will continue to "actively support and back the alliance."

The U.S. general said his "time as a member of the ironclad ROK-U.S. alliance was a personal honor and privilege, and full of indelible memories," adding that he is "certain this alliance will emerge greater and stronger going forward." ROK stands for South Korea's official name, the Republic of Korea.

Won said Abrams showed "tremendous leadership during the extremely difficult circumstances of COVID-19 to maintain the utmost ROK-U.S. combined defense posture," and asked for his continued support for the advancement of the alliance.

Abrams led the USFK since November 2018.

Gen. Paul LaCamera, who most recently served as Army Pacific commander, will replace Abrams to lead the USFK. The USFK commander also heads the United Nations Command and the South Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command.

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19. Can Biden Solve the North Korea Puzzle?
Biden opened the door for talks with Kim Jong Un, but Pyongyang is playing hard to get
ForeignPolicy.com (Report), June 28 (1639) | Robbie Gramer

Five months into office, U.S. President Joe Biden has his hands full with foreign-policy crises. But there's one conspicuously missing from the headlines: North Korea.

It's only a matter of time before that changes, according to current and former U.S. officials and other experts. North Korea has a penchant for turning up the heat on Washington and its Asian allies through saber-rattling or provocative missile tests. Most analysts agree the next major North Korea crisis is a matter of when, not if.

All the while, U.S. diplomacy toward North Korea seems to be stuck in the mud, with no clear opportunities on the horizon for Biden to curtail North Korea's nuclear weapons program—a national security problem that has vexed many of his predecessors. Like them, Biden faces the same problem: how to convince the world's most insular and recalcitrant regime to give up its nuclear weapons program when that regime appears to base its very survival on having the bomb. Former U.S. President George W. Bush labeled North Korea as part of an "axis of evil" and then engaged the regime in so-called "six-party talks" that ultimately foundered. Former U.S. President Barack Obama tried a strategy of "strategic patience"—sanctioning North Korea while holding out for talks and a possible easing of sanctions if it behaved better—to no avail. Former U.S. President Donald Trump tried personal diplomacy: high-profile summits, complete with flashy photo ops with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and follow-up "love letters." That, too, failed to get North Korea to renounce its nuclear weapons program.

Top Biden administration officials have opened the door to talks in recent weeks, only to see those overtures slapped down by North Korean officials. That could leave the administration in limbo on North Korea as the hermit kingdom continues to make advances on its ballistic missile and nuclear program. In January, North Korea displayed a new submarine-launched ballistic missile during a military parade that showcased its rapidly advancing missile capabilities.

Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, said he saw an "interesting signal" from Kim in a recent speech, where the North Korea leader said the country would prepare for both "dialogue and confrontation." In a more direct overture to Pyongyang, Biden's new special envoy for North Korea, Sung Kim, said the United States is willing to meet with North Korea "anywhere, anytime, without preconditions" during a visit to South Korea last week.

In a scornful and oblique statement, Kim Yo Jong, a senior North Korean official and sister of leader Kim Jong Un, seemed to dismiss the prospect of talks with the United States—at least for now. "It seems that the U.S. may interpret the situation in such a way as to seek a comfort for itself," she said in a statement sent to the state-run Korean Central News Agency. "The expectation, which they chose to harbor the wrong way, would plunge them into a greater disappointment."

The U.S. State Department declined to comment, including regarding whether North Korea responded through formal channels to Sung Kim's invitation to talk, instead referring the matter to the White House. A White House National Security Council (NSC) spokesperson said the administration is "under no illusions" about the challenges of diplomacy with North Korea. The spokesperson stressed that the administration's goal remained the "complete denuclearization" of the Korean Peninsula, and diplomacy remains the best way to achieve that objective. "We will wait to see if comments from [North Korea] are followed up with any more direct communications about a potential path forward," the spokesperson added.

Getting North Korea to the negotiating table is one matter, but making any progress on talks is an entirely different uphill battle. When South Korean President Moon Jae-in visited the White House last month, Biden outlined the difficulties of diplomacy with North Korea. “We closely studied what others have tried and what worked and what hasn’t worked. And, you know, we’re under no illusions how difficult this is. None whatsoever,” Biden said. “The past four administrations have not achieved the objective. It’s an incredibly difficult objective.”

If North Korea changes its tune and signals a willingness to talk, there is another complicating factor at play: the pandemic. U.S. and South Korean officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, concede little is known about the spread of the coronavirus in North Korea, considered the most secretive and closed-off country in the world. “Because of a lot of unknowns of COVID in North Korea, the option for in-person meetings could be very limited,” said one South Korean official.

The administration in April announced it concluded a monthslong policy review on North Korea. It gave few details publicly on the review but said it would pursue “calibrated diplomacy” with North Korea.

Among the officials driving this policy are Sung Kim; Kurt Campbell, the NSC’s top official overseeing Indo-Pacific affairs; Edgard Kagan, another top NSC official for East Asia; and Jung Pak, a former CIA analyst and expert on North Korea who joined the Biden administration as deputy assistant secretary of state. Biden’s pick to be his top diplomat on Asia, Daniel Kritenbrink, is still awaiting Senate confirmation, and Biden has yet to name his ambassador to South Korea.

With diplomacy stalled, pressure has ramped up on the administration to toughen its military posture in the region. Trump froze large-scale military exercises with South Korea in 2018 to pave the way for diplomacy with Kim. The Biden administration has not yet indicated how it will move forward with major annual joint military exercises with South Korea this year, which usually take place in August.

“Military readiness is a top priority. Our combined military training events are a principal method of ensuring our combined Alliance readiness,” John Supple, a U.S. Department of Defense spokesperson said when approached for comment. “These training events are non-provocative, defensive in nature, and are intended to maintain alliance readiness to ensure we are ready to ‘fight tonight.’ Any decision on the scope, scale, and timing of exercises will be made bilaterally with these factors in mind.”

“We really need to beef up missile defense capabilities to keep pace with how quickly North Korea’s missile capability is improving and diversifying and expanding in terms of numbers and types of systems,” said Markus Garlauskas of the Atlantic Council and formerly a top U.S. intelligence analyst on North Korea at the National Intelligence Council. He said the United States should consider restarting large-scale military exercises and sending more missile radar and missile defense systems to the region.

“At the rate the North Korea threat is evolving, we not only have to get back to where we were, [but] we have to improve our posture to stay ahead.”

--*Foreign Policy reporter Jack Detsch contributed to this report*

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20. Japan minister says necessary to ‘wake up’ to protect Taiwan
Reuters, June 28 (1657) | Not Attributed

WASHINGTON -- Japan’s deputy defense minister on Monday warned of the growing threat posed by Chinese and Russian collaboration and said it was necessary to “wake up” to Beijing’s pressure on Taiwan and protect the island “as a democratic country.”

Speaking to the Hudson Institute think tank, State Minister of Defence Yasuhide Nakayama questioned whether the decision of many countries, including Japan and United States, to follow a “one-China” policy that has recognized Beijing rather than Taipei since the 1970s would stand the test of time.

“Was it right?” he asked at the online event, referring to how future generations will judge policymakers on the issue. “I don’t know.”

Nakayama said democratic countries had to protect each other and noted that he had in the past referred to Taiwan as a “red line.”

“So we have to protect Taiwan as a democratic country.”

Nakayama noted that Japan and Taiwan were geographically close, and added that if something happened in Taiwan it would affect Japan’s Okinawa prefecture, where U.S. forces and their families are based.

Nakayama highlighted growing threats posed by China in space, in missile technology, in the cyber domain and in nuclear and conventional forces, and said that under Xi Jinping’s leadership it had “aggressive, aggressive ... thought and will.”

“So wake up. We have to wake up,” he said.

Nakayama said it was necessary to show deterrence to China and also Russia, which had stepped up exercises in Japanese-claimed territory and near the U.S. territory of Hawaii.

“You can see China and Russia collaborating together, when they are doing some military exercise around our neighbors,” Nakayama said, adding that he wanted to see the United States “stronger, stronger and stronger.”

Nakayama referred to Tokyo's decision to scrap its one-percent-of-GDP cap on defense spending. He said Japan needed to spend more on weapons, including missiles, and cut costs, given that 50 percent of its budget went on personnel.

Washington and Tokyo should boost technological collaboration in the face of closer Chinese and Russian cooperation, he said.

--*Reporting by David Brunnstrom*

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CHINA

21. Russia, China declare friendship treaty extension, hail ties
Associated Press, June 28 (0807) | Vladimir Isachenkov

MOSCOW -- The leaders of Russia and China on Monday hailed increasingly close ties between their countries and announced the extension of a 20-year-old friendship treaty, a show of unity amid their tensions with the West.

Speaking in a video call with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the treaty signed in July 2001 in Moscow helped take relations between Moscow and Beijing to an "unprecedented height" and would be extended for another five years.

The Russian leader noted that the coordination of foreign policy efforts by Russia and China has played a "stabilizing role in global affairs."

Xi in his opening remarks emphasized the importance of a "strategic cooperation" between Moscow and Beijing in defending their common interests on the global stage. He added that Russia and China have worked to uphold a "true multilateralism and global justice."

Putin and Xi have developed strong personal ties to bolster a "strategic partnership" between the two former Communist rivals as they vie with the West for influence and face soaring tensions in relations with the U.S. and its allies. While Moscow and Beijing in the past rejected the possibility of forging a military alliance, Putin said last fall that such a prospect can't be ruled out entirely.

During Monday's call, Putin congratulated Xi on the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China celebrated Thursday, saying that China is marking it with "new achievements in the country's social-economic development and on the international stage" and recalling Soviet support for the Chinese communists.

Moscow marked the CPC's centennial by sharing historic documents on Soviet-Chinese links with Beijing.

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EUROPE

22. Ukraine, US launch Black Sea drills after warship incident
Agence France-Presse, June 28 (1236) | Dmytro Gorshkov

Ukraine and the United States launched joint naval exercises in the Black Sea on Monday in a show of Western cooperation with Kiev as it faces off with Russia.

The drills come just days after the British navy's HMS Defender passed near Russian-annexed Crimea in the Black Sea, with Moscow saying it fired warning shots at the destroyer to ward it off.

The Sea Breeze drills -- which have taken place 21 times since 1997 -- will involve some 5,000 military personnel from more than 30 countries.

The exercises will last two weeks and involve around 30 ships, including the missile destroyer USS Ross.

Ukrainian navy commander Oleksiy Neizhpapa said during an opening ceremony in Odessa that the exercises would send a "powerful message to maintain stability and peace in our region."

Russia on Monday denounced "the scale and aggressiveness" of the drills which "hardly contribute to security in the Black Sea region".

The Russian arms control delegation in Vienna on Twitter urged the US to "show transparency in withdrawing modern weapons, ammunition and equipment from Ukraine" after the exercises are over.

Russia said it fired warning shots last Wednesday at the HMS Defender after what it said was a violation of its territorial waters.

Britain said it was making "an innocent passage through Ukrainian territorial waters in accordance with international law".

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and claims the waters around the peninsula as part of its territory. Most countries do not recognise the takeover and stand behind Ukraine's claims to the waters.

Washington is a key ally of Kiev in its conflict with Moscow over Crimea and pro-Moscow separatist regions in eastern Ukraine.

In 2018 Russian forces boarded and took control of three Ukrainian naval ships off the Black Sea peninsula.

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RUSSIA

23. Russian snipers are picking off Ukrainian soldiers
Washington Examiner Online, June 28 (0700) | Abraham Mahshie

HRANITNE VILLAGE, Ukraine front line -- Ukrainian soldiers are taught to drop in their trench position and stay down for at least 15 minutes if a sniper's bullet misses them. The hope is the sniper will believe them dead. But elite Russian snipers usually don't miss.

In a hand-dug trench a half-mile from the front line in the restive Donbas region on eastern Ukraine, bright green grass grows and red poppies flower just inches above the heads of Ukrainian soldiers manning their position.

The nearby village of Hranitne is like many in post-industrial eastern Ukraine. A showy, Soviet-era rectangular City Hall, an abandoned agricultural factory converted to a military installation, and a central plaza with a stepped platform where a statue of Lenin once stood.

But this village is different.

Schoolchildren cross a military checkpoint from occupied territory to Ukrainian-controlled territory so they can continue attending the same school. Young soldiers walk the streets. Many of them volunteered from wealthier western Ukraine to fight Russian officers and commandos and their own Ukrainian brethren who have taken sides with Vladimir Putin in yet another protracted conflict spurred by the Russian president.

The war between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists in the semi-states known as the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics is largely contained to a no man's land in empty fields on the outskirts of small villages like this. Tree lines are where the opposing sides establish their positions, digging trenches to store weapons and provisions and to hide armored vehicles, should they be necessary.

In this low-intensity conflict, most soldiers are dying from sniper fire.

"At night, you see nothing," said a Ukrainian soldier who gave his name as Unit Commander "Marhanets" to the Washington Examiner for operational security.

"Right now, there is no sniper at this position, but they are there. We received a warning because their intelligence position is nearby," Marhanets said, a green face mask pulled up just below his eyes to conceal his identity.

All day, every day, he and the other dozen or so troops in his unit take turns peering through periscope binoculars positioned just below camo netting and fixed on the enemy front line.

They used to watch the enemy dig trenches until spring rains came and the grass grew taller. Now, they stare at a tree line across the field, looking for movement.

Marhanets knows two comrades hit by sniper fire. One died. One survived. The one who survived is still in the hospital, paralyzed from the neck down.

In the underground network of sandbag positions and lookout spots, any peek above ground level is potentially lethal.

“There’s a little window where you look up, and the sniper hits exactly where you look,” he said.

In 2015, shortly after the conflict broke out, Marhanets was on the front line with no night-vision goggles or thermal vision technology.

“We were in a position at the north, and on the radio, we captured a signal, that’s how we knew a diversion group was moving towards our direction,” he said. “But what can you do? You cannot make your eyes see better, you cannot make your ears hear better. You are just sitting and waiting, and there’s nothing you can do to know when they will arrive. And when you have this vision, it really helps to see the situation.”

Russian snipers with night-vision technology can see Ukrainian movements and kill the soldiers one by one. Enemy intelligence groups known as “sabotage groups” can walk right up to a position, shielded by darkness, and kill soldiers directly in the trench.

Then, American assistance began to arrive.

It included sniper rifles, thermal optics, laser rangefinders, optical detection systems, and electronic warfare systems.

“There’s actually a very dangerous situation in eastern Ukraine in terms of the sniper attacks that we see on Ukrainian forces,” Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia Laura Cooper told the Washington Examiner in a May Pentagon interview.

“There’s also a number of other systems that we’re providing that are effective and fill critical requirements for the Ukrainian armed forces. That includes sniper rifles, counter-artillery radars, grenade launchers,” she added, noting that nonlethal assistance includes military medical equipment and armored Humvees. “I want to also be clear that this isn’t something we invent in Washington. This is something that responds to what the Ukrainian armed forces themselves have identified.”

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba underscored the importance of the American support in a meeting with the Washington Examiner in Kyiv.

“Almost every week, we lose soldiers in the east, and almost every day, some young Ukrainian man enlists in the Ukrainian army willing to defend it,” Kuleba said.

“All of us have friends or relatives or someone who has been affected by the war, either as an internally displaced person or as a soldier or as a civilian. I mean, this is part of our life,” he said. “We know that no one is going to fight this war for us. We’re going to fight it, but it’s much easier to fight and prevail when you have reliable friends next to you, standing by you and behind you. And that’s the role of the United States of America.”

In late March, Russia built up 100,000 troops on the border of eastern Ukraine, threatening another invasion and escalation in the conflict. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited front-line positions, calling for international assistance and a path to entry into NATO.

Leaders of NATO, the European Union, and President Joe Biden condemned the Russian move.

The U.S. spoke of support for a path to eventual NATO entry, but needed reforms would have to come first. Secretly, the National Security Council prepared a $100 million contingency aid package, the NSC confirmed to the Washington Examiner.

“In addition to the $275 million that has already been authorized for aid to Ukraine this fiscal year, as has been reported, a $100 million contingency package was prepared given escalating tensions on Ukraine’s border in April 2021,” a U.S. official said. “That contingency package is prepared for whenever it is needed.”

U.S. assistance to Ukraine since Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014 has totaled $2.5 billion.

Kuleba said absent NATO entry, his country seeks a broader defense agreement with the U.S.

“Ukraine exists in a security void. We are not members of NATO. We do not have a single security guarantee agreement,” he said.

“If NATO membership is not an immediate answer, then a defense partnership with the United States could be an answer,” he suggested. “We are buying the military equipment from you. You are giving us some of the equipment, but what we need is an agreement that would kind of certify that relationship that would bring it to the next level.”

Kuleba said his government envisions tying up disparate programs so that U.S. departments from the State Department to USAID to the Defense Department are working in concert to secure Ukraine's democracy against Russian aggression.

Meanwhile, 600 miles from the capital, over muddy tracks on gently rolling hills outside an otherwise peaceful village, young Ukrainian soldiers forfeit rotations back home to serve repeat tours on the front line.

Here, they live in a sort of primitive brotherhood but with the sophisticated tools they need to survive.

"Right now, many people die from snipers," Marhanets said. "When there is a ceasefire, when there is no heavy artillery working, then snipers are working."

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AFRICA

24. Blinken Urges Stronger Focus Against Islamist Groups in Africa
Bloomberg News, June 28 (0638) | John Follain

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged an 83-member alliance against Islamic State to step up its focus on operations in Africa, while working to prevent a resurgence of the militant organization in Iraq and Syria.

Blinken, speaking in Rome on Monday at a ministerial meeting he co-hosted of the Global Coalition to Defeat Isis, said the group had been a critical element in achieving the "territorial defeat" of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

"Ensuring the enduring defeat of Isis also means effectively confronting Isis threats outside of Iraq and Syria, in places where Isis has recently focused its efforts," he said, mentioning "countries on the front-lines of the Isis threat in Africa."

"Let's use today's discussion to try and expand on Coalition plans for effective dealing with the threat in Africa," Blinken told the foreign ministers and senior government officials at the meeting. He also called for stabilization assistance across Iraq and Syria "to ensure that Isis does not have a resurgence in these countries."

Nations including France have been fighting Islamist insurgents who have threatened state authority and investors' interests in West Africa's Sahel region, at the southern fringe of the Sahara desert.

Blinken also announced new sanctions against a senior leader of an affiliate known as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara. That group, operating along Niger's border with Mali, has been targeting civilians, fueling

concerns that local self-defense militias are engaging in the fight against the jihadists, the International Crisis Group said last month.

Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, co-hosting the gathering with Blinken, also called for a stronger focus on Africa.

“Even if the Daesh threat in Iraq and Syria remains central to the Coalition’s task, we cannot avoid tackling its global ramifications especially in the African continent, and specifically in Sahel whose stability is crucial for Europe and the broader Mediterranean,” Di Maio said, using another term for Islamic State.

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25. Tigray rebels in Ethiopia claim control of region’s capital
Washington Post, June 29 (0115), Pg. A11 | Max Bearak

The former leaders of Ethiopia’s Tigray region claimed Monday to have regained control over the regional capital seven months after being driven out by the Ethiopian military, marking what could be a major turning point in a deadly civil war.

In a statement, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front said Mekele was under its “complete control.” The statement said the group anticipated retaliation from the government and called on the city’s residents to rally behind the group.

An official in Tigray’s Addis Ababa-appointed interim government, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the situation, said celebrations broke out Monday.

“People are firing fireworks, hooting horns, shouting in groups,” he said.

He added that the interim government’s top leadership had all left Mekele.

Amid the developments in Mekele, Ethiopia’s government unilaterally declared a cease-fire Monday, claiming that it would last until the end of Tigray’s planting season in September.

“An unconditional, unilateral ceasefire has been declared starting from today, June 28,” read a statement published by state media Monday night.

A cease-fire had long been sought by humanitarian groups and Western governments. Tigrayan officials did not immediately or publicly respond to the cease-fire announcement.

The United Nations and humanitarian organizations have warned that nearly 1 million people could be facing famine conditions. Fighting, and alleged incidents of outright theft of humanitarian vehicles and cargo by combatants, have severely hindered aid delivery.

U.N. Secretary General António Guterres said that he had spoken with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and that he was "hopeful an effective cessation of hostilities will take place."

Last week, an Ethiopian airstrike hit a bustling market in a town near Mekele, killing at least 60, according to the interim government official. Ethiopia's military claimed that all the dead were rebel fighters, despite numerous reports of children being among the casualties.

Days later, three Doctors Without Borders employees were killed in an ambush. The Ethiopian government and Tigrayan forces traded blame.

On Monday morning, Ethiopian soldiers allegedly entered the offices of UNICEF in Mekele and dismantled a satellite communication device, according to the organization's top official. Agence France-Presse cited witness reports from Mekele of federal soldiers and police raiding banks and commandeering vehicles belonging to private citizens while fleeing the city ahead of the rebel advance.

Ethiopian troops have fought alongside ethnic militias and neighboring Eritrea's military. Tigray's western portion, which also borders Sudan, has been under administration for months by officials from Ethiopia's Amhara region.

While Abiy had claimed at the outset of the conflict in November that it would be brief and that Tigray's rebellious leadership would be eliminated with surgical precision, it long ago became clear that a protracted battle for the region was unfolding. Tigray's rebel leaders ran Ethiopia for decades as part of the regime that preceded Abiy's.

Large-scale atrocities have accompanied the fighting, including allegations of door-to-door killings and rapes by Eritrean troops, massacres carried out by both Tigrayan and Amhara militias, and scores of extrajudicial killings by Ethiopian troops.

The Tigrayan militia, known as the Tigray Defense Forces, had been gaining momentum in moving back toward Mekele in recent weeks, according to U.N. security reports. Tigray's interim government leaders, who are ethnic Tigrayans but appointed by the federal government, quietly left the city last week, telling colleagues it was related to recently concluded voting in national elections - even though no voting took place in Tigray.

"A lot of young people, merchants, farmers have joined the TDF," said the interim government official. "They feel that they are fighting for survival. They will fight forever, that's for sure. It is now irreconcilable."

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26. UN panel accuses Russia of Africa killings; Moscow says no
Associated Press, June 28 (1722) | Edith M. Lederer

UNITED NATIONS -- U.N. experts are accusing Russian military instructors and the Central African Republic forces they are supporting of "excessive use of force, indiscriminate killings, the occupation of schools and looting on a large scale" -- allegations Moscow strongly rejected Monday.

The panel of experts monitoring sanctions on the conflict-torn African nation said in a 40-page report obtained Monday by The Associated Press that it collected "testimonies" from a large number of local officials, government military and internal security forces, and community-level sources in multiple locations in the country who reported "the active participation of Russian instructors in combat operations on the ground."

The panel said many of the officials and other sources reported that Russian instructors "often led rather than followed" Central African Republic troops as they advanced on different towns and villages in a counter-offensive against rebels linked to former President Francois Bozize. Bozize tried to prevent elections in December and then attempted to seize power from President Faustin Archange Touadera.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov categorically denied the allegations, first reported in The New York Times, that Russian instructors were involved in killing civilians and looting homes.

"Russian military advisers couldn't take part and didn't take part in any killings or lootings," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. "This is yet another lie."

The mineral-rich Central African Republic has faced deadly inter-religious and inter-communal fighting since 2013. A peace deal between the government and 14 rebel groups was signed in February 2019, but violence blamed on Bozize and his allies threatens to nullify the agreement.

It erupted after the constitutional court rejected Bozize's candidacy to run for president in December and has continued since Touadera won a second term later that month with 53% of the vote.

The experts said Russia informed the U.N. Security Council committee monitoring sanctions on the Central African Republic in December that it would send 300 unarmed instructors to support the training of the country's infantry and motorized forces and that those deployed did not take part in military operations carried out by the security forces.

The coordinator of the Russian instructors told the panel they were all Russians, recruited from an association of primarily former military officers, and had not been hired by "a private company," contrary to reports by a U.N. human rights commission working group and a number of media outlets, the report said.

Last week, the U.S., Britain and France accused Russian personnel in Central African Republic of committing abuses against civilians and obstructing U.N. peacekeeping — accusations Russia angrily denied.

The Western powers linked the Russian personnel to the notorious Wagner Group, a private security company allegedly tied to Yevgeny Prigozhin, a businessman who has been indicted in the United States on charges of meddling in the 2016 presidential election and whose companies have reportedly secured lucrative mining contracts in Central African Republic.

According to the experts' findings, Russia confirmed on April 18 that it had 532 instructors in the African country, and had never exceeded 550. But the panel noted multiple sources estimated the number of Russian instructors at between 800 and 2,100, and said multiple sources reported the instructors included individuals who identified themselves as nationals of Libya, Syria and other countries.

Although the sanctions committee was informed that the instructors would be unarmed, the panel said it "directly observed and received testimonies that Russian instructors" supporting government military operations and providing close protection to Central African Republic officials "were armed."

It said Russian officials confirmed that instructors were armed, saying that it was for their own protection and that weapons were only used "when fired upon." It said the arms and ammunition came from stocks Russia provided to the Ministry of Defense, a breach of end-user commitments to the sanctions committee by Central African Republic's president in 2018 and 2019.

The panel said that in several areas it visited its experts received confidential information and found evidence of excessive use of force by Central African Republic's military and Russian instructors.

As one example, it said a commercial truck driving to the capital, Bangui, was arriving at a temporary checkpoint on Dec. 28, 2020, in Grimari in south-central Ouaka Prefecture when soldiers appeared and ordered the driver to stop. According to eyewitnesses, as he was trying to stop, the soldiers started shooting from both sides and Russian instructors opened fire from the front, it said.

The panel said three civilians were killed and 15 were injured, including six women and a minor, many with multiple bullet wounds. Local officials found no evidence of a connection in the truck to armed groups, it said, and the Russian coordinator denied any involvement.

The panel said that during an operation against rebels backing Bozize in Bambari, the capital of Ouaka Prefecture, on Feb. 15, government troops and Russian instructors entered Al-Takwa mosque, shooting without respect to its religious nature or making any effort to distinguish between fighters and civilians. According to local sources there were 17 victims, including some fighters, but the panel said it was able to confirm that at least six people who died were civilians.

The experts said they received “numerous reports of indiscriminate killings against unarmed civilians by Russian instructors. They said they were able to confirm with local officials or eyewitnesses a number of such incidents, including the shooting of an unarmed man Feb. 21, the killings of two disabled civilians, and the shooting of two civilians from the Fulani tribe March 8.

In many locations where government soldiers and Russian instructors passed through or deployed, the panel said, it received accounts of looting of houses and buildings with items ranging from livestock to mattresses as well as money and motorbikes.

It said humanitarian groups were also targeted, citing as an example statements about the March 18 looting of an unnamed humanitarian organization in the capital of northwest Ouham prefecture, where goods taken included kits for victims of sexual violence worth about $1,850.

--*Associated Press writer Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report*

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AMERICAS

27. Severe Weather Swings Disrupt Panama Canal
Alternating heavy rain, extreme drought hinder 50-mile channel’s operation
Wall Street Journal, June 29 (0200), Pg. A9 | Santiago Pérez

PANAMA CITY -- The Panama Canal faces a creeping threat from climate change, including droughts so intense that ships sometimes reduce their cargo so as not to run aground, and giant storms that almost overwhelm its dams and locks, canal officials say.

The canal hasn’t had a major disruption like the one suffered by the Suez Canal in late March, when a container megaship ran aground for almost a week, tying up a chunk of global shipping at a time of rising bottlenecks in the world’s supply chains.

But the Panama waterway faces more serious long-term challenges that could also disrupt global shipping. The biggest problem is diminishing rainwater needed to operate the 50-mile waterway, through which 4% of global trade passes. Four of the past seven years have been among the driest since 1950, according to estimates from the state-run Panama Canal Authority.

“Our challenge is how to solve the water problem,” said Ricaurte Vasquez, chief of the Panama Canal Authority. There is too little water during the dry months, or too much all at once as warmer weather causes bigger storms to hit the area, including nearby hurricanes.

Canal authorities are working on a $2 billion plan to build infrastructure to manage and preserve freshwater reserves -- an amount equal to the canal's annual contributions to Panama's government coffers. On Monday, officials said they would choose from among 30 proposed solutions and put those out for bids in about two years. The projects, with a completion target of 2028, are expected to be a combination of new dams and reservoirs, using treated sewage water, or finding alternative freshwater sources like diverting flows from other rivers. Authorities have also considered pumping desalinated seawater.

Several countries, such as the U.S., have developed large reservoirs and river transfers to offset growing water shortages. Cities such as New Orleans or Italy's Venice have developed levees and barriers to contain flooding and sea-level rise. Miami Beach is planning to invest $1 billion to raise roads, lift sea walls and install pump stations to drain storm water.

But a project of the size planned by the Panama Canal doesn't exist anywhere else in the world, said Daniel Muschett, who heads the canal's environment and water division.

Trade Artery Grows Increasingly Vital

The Panama Canal's importance to global shipping grows as skyrocketing demand for consumer goods has sparked congestion in the world's busiest shipping routes.

"The pandemic meant less shopping and more shipping," said Carlos Urriola, executive president of Manzanillo International Terminal, a Panama-based logistics and port operator. "The boom in maritime trade increases the strategic value of the canal at a time when you can't find space on ships, or empty containers for that matter."

A disruption in the canal's operations can hurt exporters and consumers.

Chilean wines and Ecuadorean bananas are shipped to the U.S. East Coast through the canal, as is copper from Chile to Europe and liquefied natural and petroleum gas from one U.S. coast to the other.

Unlike Suez, a flat seawater canal whose stream flow is defined by the tide, the Panama Canal is a much more complex infrastructure that relies on freshwater and uses a system of locks as aquatic elevators, lifting ships almost 90 feet above sea level onto a navigable waterway, and then lowering them down the other end.

The Panama waterway depends on rainwater to fill reservoirs and lakes that provide trillions of gallons of freshwater to fill the locks, which empty into the sea after every use. Its daily water consumption is triple that of New York City. Every time a ship traverses the waterway, the canal uses between 200 million and 350 million gallons of water -- enough to fill as many as 500 Olympic pools.

Fortunately for the canal, Panama is the world's fifth-rainiest country. But the supply of freshwater is no longer steady, with very strong storms at the end of the wet season or long spells of dryness. Canal officials say they have faced more challenges during the past 12 years than the rest of the canal's existence since 1914.

"We are seeing more frequent and more severe extreme weather events, and the past isn't a good prediction of the future anymore," said Jefferson Hall, a scientist at the Panama-based Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute who studies how different landscapes in the rural tropics affect ecosystems and climate change.

The Panama Canal Authority, which charges tolls as high as $1 million for the biggest cargo ships, last year introduced a freshwater surcharge of more than 10% depending on the depth of Lake Gatun. The artificial lake carries ships for about 20 miles of their transit across the isthmus and is the main reservoir to fill its locks.

A decline in Lake Gatun's depth means ships can't go through fully loaded. Authorities also face the possibility of reducing the number of ships that cross the canal. Monster storms test the resistance of dams and increase the risk of landslides and sedimentation that can clog narrow passages of the waterway such as the difficult Culebra Cut.

In 2010, a giant storm forced the canal to close temporarily for the first time since the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989.

Hurricanes are now inching closer to the canal. Eta and Iota pounded Central America at the end of the Atlantic hurricane season late last year.

"The locks were designed for more homogeneous and less volatile weather. Because of a new reality, we have to change the water-storage and management process," Mr. Vasquez said.

When water levels drop, that is problematic for ships that sometimes carry as many as 13,000 containers at a time. Reducing cargo during the dry season means higher costs, lower fuel efficiency and more pollution, said Lars Nielsen, chief of operations for the Americas for A.P. Moller-Maersk A/S, the Danish shipping firm.

Pressure on Panama's watershed intensified after a $5 billion expansion of the canal's system of locks in 2016 to accommodate larger vessels. A growing urban population and agriculture have also drawn water away from the area.

Deforestation adds to the threat. A rainforest that surrounds the canal is now about half its original size, diminishing its ability to act as a sponge and store excess water, which regulates water levels for the area during the dry months. The canal authority, along with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, has reforested more than 20,000 acres along the watershed.

But reforestation won't solve the problem, canal officials say.

“If you don’t start the dry season with maximum water levels, you already have problems, and this has been more frequent in the last five to seven years,” Mr. Muschett said.

--*Jose de Cordoba contributed to this article*

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ARCTIC

28. Coast Guard in Talks to Add Ships to Heavy Icebreaker Program
National Defense Magazine Online, June 28 (1721) | Jon Harper

The Coast Guard is in talks with the Biden administration about adding additional heavy icebreakers to its Polar Security Cutter program, the head of the sea service said June 28.

The current program of record is to build three new vessels. Congress has already provided funding for the first two. President Joe Biden’s fiscal year 2022 budget request asks for an additional $170 million in procurement funding for the program, including for long-lead time materials for a third vessel.

“There’s probably a conversation for more than three Polar Security Cutters,” Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said during a Brookings Institution event. “We’ve done some work with … the current National Security Council about broadening that conversation.”

“I am encouraged that after a decade-plus of talking about the need for new ships, we’ve got funding for the first two, on track for the third, and having conversations about additional ships,” he added. “That’s a much better place for our nation to be in. But it takes time to build those ships, and it takes money.”

Schultz reiterated his call for 3 to 5 percent annual growth in Coast Guard funding to help with modernization and other service needs.

Schultz said concerns about climate change and melting sea ice could bolster the case for building more icebreakers in coming years.

Currently, the Coast Guard only has one operational heavy icebreaker in its inventory, the aging Polar Star, that is capable of operating in the Arctic region — an area of growing strategic importance as the United States competes with Russia.

“Presence equals influence in the Arctic. And right now ... we’re woefully lacking as a nation in terms of our capacity,” Schultz said.

In 2019, VT Halter Marine was awarded a $745.9 million fixed-price, incentive-firm contract for the detail design and construction of the first Polar Security Cutter, which is scheduled to start construction this year in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and be delivered in 2024.

The company is expected to begin “cutting steel” in the coming months, Schultz said.

“We have not built a heavy icebreaker in this nation ... for a good part of a half a century,” he said. “But we’re guardedly encouraged that the Polar Security [Cutter] program is moving ahead on pace.”

Additionally, the Coast Guard plans to acquire up to three medium icebreakers known as Arctic Security Cutters.

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AIR FORCE

29. Air Force previews new exercises on fitness test ‘menu’
Air Force Times Online, June 28 (1715) | Rachel Cohen

The Air Force is preparing to launch a customizable physical fitness test where airmen and guardians can mix and match the exercises they prefer, a service official said Monday.

Starting early next year, the Air Force will offer a menu of options that fall into three categories: aerobic exercise, core strength and upper body strength.

In addition to the current 1.5-mile run to test cardiovascular health, troops can pick a back-and-forth shuttle run if they prefer sprinting instead of endurance running. The faster someone finishes the shuttle run, the better their score, Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, said during a question-and-answer session on Facebook.

Service members will also be allowed to walk without first getting a medical waiver. Cardio will still count for 60 percent of a person’s total physical training score.

Pushups will remain as one option to measure upper-body strength, but airmen and guardians could choose variations on that exercise, Kelly said. For the abdominal portion, the Air Force will allow situp variations as well as planks. Each category will count as 20 percent of the total score.

Officials considered other exercises, like swimming, rowing and biking, but likely won’t add those to the menu because not all bases have the facilities or equipment to accommodate them. The tests should be equitable for any airman, no matter where they are.

“When we release this and introduce the other components, we’re going to have about a six-month break-in period, so people can test them out, can see, get feedback, but they won’t be able to count those,” he said. “If we have to make any adjustments, we’ll make those adjustments.”

Body composition measurements will resume on Oct. 1, but will no longer contribute toward the fitness test score. Decoupling waist circumference or another metric from the PT score is meant to discourage unhealthy behavior like calorie restriction and purging.

“Weight will not be a part of your PT test,” Kelly added. “That body composition, your weight will impact that.”

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne Bass noted the Air Force also wants to give noncommissioned officers the ability to administer PT tests instead of asking people to go to a fitness assessment site.

Pushing back on criticism that the changes are watering down high military standards with a laissez-faire attitude, Bass said the Air Force must strike a balance between what bolsters readiness and what works best for members.

“We ought to be mindful when we’re characterizing changes that we’re making,” she said. “What are the standards that are non-negotiable, but what are some things we need to evaluate as we become that Air Force of 2030?”

Regular PT tests resume July 1 after multiple delays due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Space Force will continue following Air Force fitness requirements until it comes up with its own PT policies.

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NAVY

30. Six Littoral Combat Ships to Deploy by Year’s End as Navy Continues to Refine Operations
U.S. Naval Institute News, June 28 (0918) | Sam LaGrone

The Navy will have six Littoral Combat Ships deployed by the end of the year – a record for the program, several Navy officials have confirmed to USNI News.

Later this year, two Independence-class LCS will join USS Tulsa (LCS-16) and USS Charleston (LCS-18) in the Western Pacific. The two ships kicked off an expansive deployment across the Western Pacific earlier this year that began in Oceana and has ranged to as far as the Indian Ocean. Two other LCS will deploy soon to U.S. Southern Command later this year.

The deployments come as the service has begun to better understand how to use the two LCS variants. Two commanders recently told USNI News how they are improving the reliability of the platforms and refining how to deploy the ships.

Within the last year, seven LCS have operated in U.S. 4th Fleet as part of a counter-narcotics force expansion that began in 2020, 4th Fleet Commander Rear Adm. Donald Gabrielson told USNI News in a June interview.

"As a platform, [LCS] got a lot of utility in the kind of work that we're doing, which from a naval perspective is about building the capacity and the capability of our partners in the region," Gabrielson said.

"We've got lot of successes on that front. The ships are doing the other things that people would expect here as well – the detection and monitoring with the [Joint Interagency Task Force] South counter-narcotic mission, which also includes a lot of partner interaction. We've got 23 different nations that are connected to that effort."

In addition to the counter-narcotic effort, LCS was key to expanding how the U.S. worked with partners in the region. Most of the forces the U.S. operates with in the region have smaller ships that work more easily with LCS than the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers that are three times the tonnage of both classes of LCS, he said.

"If you look at how our partners are operating, it's kind of amazing. They have these tiny boats that are out there for weeks at a time – pretty far off the coast, even, you know, several hundred miles in some cases for a couple of them," Gabrielson said.

"The advantage that LCS has is the size and the draft of the ship. [Those] enabled it to get into places where other ships cannot."

In the Western Pacific, the Navy has found that the Independence-class ships USS Montgomery (LCS-8) and USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS-10) have opened up places for the Navy to operate where they had not been for years, Capt. Tom Ogden, commander of the Singapore-based Destroyer Squadron 7, told reporters earlier this month.

"Gabby Giffords and Montgomery did stops, pre-COVID, in ports that we hadn't been in a number of years. Puerto Princesa in the Philippines was one of them," he said.

"The ability for the ship, with the steerable water jets that they have, even with less powerful tugs, you can do a lot of things on your own. Getting a DDG in and out of an austere port requires a little bit more support."

In U.S. 7th Fleet, the Navy has operated its LCS out of the Changi base in Singapore, but is looking to expand to other places in the region, Japan-based fleet commander Vice Adm. Bill Merz said in May.

“Do we want to keep them in Sasebo, [Japan]? We’re kind of done parking things in the first island chain if I can avoid it,” he said.

“Right now, it’s still Singapore because that’s where the maintenance model is.”

As originally envisioned, LCS would be supported by contractor-led maintenance while they were forward deployed, but the service is moving toward more sailor-led maintenance. For example, the service positioned a maintenance team in Guam, Ogden said.

“The last two availabilities that we had on Tulsa and Charleston on Guam, we had maintenance execution teams from the LCS division 12 in San Diego. They came out and conducted maintenance on the ship,” he said.

“Not only did they do all the checks that were scheduled for them to complete, they completed checks that had been deferred in availabilities in the past … They’re building a level of knowledge and understanding of the equipment, which allows them to not only need new preventive maintenance, but then corrective maintenance as needed. The maintenance execution team expansion is a huge step forward.”

While maintenance is improving, it’s still not perfect, Merz said in May.

“I’m [not] okay or happy with the sustainability of LCS. That has to be fixed,” he said.

In 4th Fleet, maintenance is at the forefront of operating in the region. “The challenge for us or the, or the necessity for us is to develop the facilities piece of this in terms of the footprint for the maintenance,” Gabrielson said.

The Navy is beginning to slowly bring additional mine countermeasures and surface warfare capabilities into the Western Pacific.

For the Independence-class ships headed to 7th Fleet, that means each ship would deploy with the capability to field the anti-ship Naval Strike Missile and parts of the MCM mission package – a grab-bag of anti-sea mine capabilities that are being developed for LCS to replace several legacy MCM platforms.

Every ship that deploys to 7th Fleet now has some combination of the MCM mission package board and works in coordination with MCM Squadron 7 based in Japan, Ogden said.

“Tulsa and Charleston both deployed with versions of the mine warfare, or the mine-countermeasure mission module. They have systems onboard that allow them to do mine hunting, and mine warfare,” he said.

“We’re able to think through the command and control, the tactical availability, and how we would use a multi-mission ship to do maritime warfare, and mine warfare, at the right time and in the right spot. And so, [we’re]

integrating with the capabilities that come with LCS, the expertise that MCMRON 7 has, then I would say the expertise and the capabilities that some other [larger] task forces have."

The Navy has backed away from its previous plan to have mission package sailors augment a core crew of sailors trained to just run the ship.

"When a crew is on board it's not separate from the core crew and the mission package, they are one, and they are a team that stays through no matter which ship they're on or which hull they're on at the time they are one crew," he said.

Ogden would not go into detail on the crew makeup, but LCS deploy with a total of 94 sailors – 70 for the core crew, including the MCM force, and an additional 24 that make up the aviation detachment for the MH-60 aboard, a Navy official confirmed to USNI News.

With more LCS moving into the fleet, Gabrielson said that the ships' experiences in SOUTHCOM – particularly in counter-narcotics missions – are offering new lessons for LCS in other places around the globe.

"We spend every single day trying to find people that are trying to not be found in waters that are not easy to always operate in," he said.

"They're trying to take advantage of the terrain and the geography and they're well-resourced. If we can find those guys, well, it's going to make problems in other parts of the world much more solvable for us."

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CYBER

31. DOD to send AI data teams to combatant commands this summer
Federal Computer Week Online, June 28 (1606) | Lauren C. Williams

The Defense Department will start sending out teams of data and artificial intelligence experts in the next month to help combatant commands speed AI implementation efforts as part of a new initiative.

"Our combatant commanders have some of the most intense decision-making environments, but have yet to have the opportunity to apply the latest tools to responsive decision support. And we want to correct that. And we want to do that in a repeatable way," Lt. Gen. Michael Groen, the director of the Defense Department's Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, told reporters June 24.

DOD announced it was launching the AI and data accelerator (ADA) initiative during its AI symposium earlier that week. The goal, Groen said, is to test algorithms in real warfighter scenarios to uncover potential barriers to adoption, from latency issues to policy constraints.

The JAIC is also working with the individual services on their efforts from the Army's Project Convergence to the Navy's Project Overmatch and the Air Force's Advanced Battle Management System, but it aims to address data readiness challenges from cleaning data to workflows and so allow combatant commanders to "experiment with data driven decision-making," Groen said.

The first data reinforcement teams will likely be deployed over the next 30 days with the JAIC helping combatant commands build flyaway teams within the next 90 days, he said.

"We also want to do that in a way that scales. If we make progress at one combatant command and help their decision processes, we expect to be able to rapidly scale those capabilities across other combatant commands to help their decision-making as well," Groen said.

The general said the initiative will help the DOD rethink development and infrastructure as it tries to shift to more software-defined capabilities as part of a "new operating model" with "pieces that purposely fit together."

"You can do it in a lab. But when you bring that lab-tested capability out to the combatant commander or out somewhere on the tactical edge, you're going to realize, 'Holy cow, the latency here is horrible'…[or] the reliability and the uptime of the servers that are required is not sufficient."

Groen said bureaucratic, technical and cultural obstacles are expected, which is why involvement from DOD's CIOs and chief data officers is crucial to improving the networks and policies.

"If we learn what those obstacles are, then we can address the real problems [with] AI implementation," Groen said. "Until we can actually employ them on, in the environments that they're expected to operate in and then expect it to work, we're not going to know. And that's unacceptable to us."

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NOTABLE COMMENTARY

32. Biden Needs to Leave Afghanistan the Right Way
Bloomberg Opinion, June 28 (0800) | Editorial

As U.S. troops prepare to leave Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of combat, the situation on the ground could hardly be more disheartening. Taliban insurgents are already racking up battlefield gains; deprived of U.S. close air support and help maintaining its equipment, the Afghan military may well crumble against concerted onslaught. Al-Qaeda maintains ties to the Taliban and could pose a renewed threat to the U.S. in as little as two years. That timeline could shrink if the Kabul government falls to the Taliban or the country devolves into civil war.

At their meeting in the White House on Friday, with the U.S. withdrawal well underway, President Joe Biden told Afghan President Ashraf Ghani that the U.S. would continue to support his country, promising $266 million in humanitarian aid and $3.3 billion in security assistance. Ghani expressed his thanks but can be under no illusions. Biden is leaving him severely weakened, even if not (for the moment) entirely stranded.

Washington's ability to influence events will only diminish once the formal withdrawal is complete. Starting now, Biden needs to be clear about how bad things could get — while doing his best to mitigate the inevitable damage.

Without Americans on the ground, spies will lose direct contact with informants. Special-operations forces will only be able to launch raids in rare circumstances. Any access to bases in neighboring countries is likely to be heavily restricted. Flying missions from the Persian Gulf instead will take longer and dramatically shorten the time aircraft can spend on target. Stationing an aircraft carrier offshore would diminish capabilities elsewhere.

The question is how, given such constraints, the U.S. can protect its own vital interests. To start, the mission needs to be defined carefully. As one top U.S. commander has already suggested, that likely means limiting targets to global threats such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State. Even then, the U.S. won't be able to maintain constant pressure on such groups as it does now. The priorities should be to disrupt attacks on the U.S. and its allies, and to destroy bases and training camps where recruits might gather.

Achieving even those more modest goals will require new sources of intelligence, which need to be developed quickly. The U.S. should be investing now in increasing Afghan capabilities. It should also deepen relationships with local power brokers and ethnic leaders, who have their own reasons to oppose foreign extremists.

It might also be worth exploring a more formal intelligence-sharing arrangement with Afghanistan's neighbors in the region. Whatever their differences with the U.S., China, Russia, Iran and Pakistan all know that they are equally if not more vulnerable to attacks emanating from Afghanistan. Once U.S. troops are out of the region, they should be more willing to support targeted counterterrorism efforts.

Those neighbors can also do more to prevent a collapse in Afghanistan that would allow extremist groups to thrive — not to mention push refugees, drugs and terrorists across their borders. The U.S. should press them to use their influence with their Afghan proxies, including the Taliban, to revive the stalled intra-Afghan peace process. All should make clear that any government imposed by force will suffer international isolation and be starved of aid and development funds.

Finally, absent direct combat support, the U.S. should do what it can to sustain the Afghan military's ability to fight. The new funding commitment will help. U.S. and NATO forces should train Afghan troops outside the country, while pressing reforms to produce a leaner and more sustainable army. Most important, they should help the Afghan government pay for contractors to maintain its air force, which might otherwise be ineffective within months. Civil and humanitarian aid should also continue.

In all this, clarity is best. For weeks now, uncertainty about U.S. plans has been accelerating the spread of fears and doubts throughout Afghanistan's government, military and society. Further confusion will only heighten the risk of swift Taliban victories, and collapsing morale could cause a devastating brain drain.

One more thing. The Biden administration needs to move immediately to evacuate Afghans who face threats after working with the U.S. military. Leaving Afghanistan to its fate already represents a betrayal of sorts. Abandoning its most loyal allies there would leave a moral stain the U.S. might never eradicate.

--*Editors: Nisid Hajari, Tim Lavin*

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33. The Iran Deal May Still Be Dead

Wall Street Journal, June 29 (0200), Pg. A15 | Blaise Misztal and Jonathan Ruhe

'No deal is better than a bad deal," then-Secretary of State John Kerry opined during nuclear negotiations for the Obama administration with Iran before ultimately clinching the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015. Now, as discussions about returning to the JCPOA drag on, President Biden should prepare for a no-deal outcome.

Whether supportive of President Obama's agreement or President Trump's withdrawal from it in 2018, many assumed Tehran would rejoin some version of the deal, driven by a desire for economic benefits or diplomatic cooperation.

Yet getting back into the original agreement was never going to be so easy. Iran's nuclear program has advanced much further than the JCPOA accounted for. The original deal has no provisions regarding Iran's extra enrichment and centrifuge manufacturing facilities, nor the irreversible know-how Iranian scientists have gathered from operating advanced centrifuges in violation of the deal.

“The Iranian program has grown, become more sophisticated,” Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, warned last month. “Linear return to 2015 is no longer possible.” Tehran’s continued stonewalling of investigations into its nuclear weapons work will, “at a minimum, severely complicate” returning to the JCPOA, in the words of the Biden administration. Iran also insists it should be allowed to continue using advanced centrifuges for nuclear enrichment, well beyond what the JCPOA permitted. But the White House wants these machines destroyed.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has expanded its sanctions on Iran’s vital banking and energy sectors, as well as its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. These entities would remain blacklisted for ties to terrorism even if Washington lifts all the JCPOA’s nuclear-related sanctions. The Biden administration’s position that many U.S. sanctions -- hundreds, according to Secretary of State Antony Blinken -- will remain on the books is irreconcilable with Iran’s demand for total economic relief before rolling back its nuclear breaches.

It’s not surprising, therefore, that six rounds of deliberations in Vienna have been inconclusive. “It remains unclear whether Iran is willing and prepared to do what it needs to do to come back into compliance,” Mr. Blinken told the House Foreign Affairs Committee this month. Mr. Blinken’s top deputy and a key negotiator for the U.S., Wendy Sherman, said days later that “until the last detail is nailed down, and I mean nailed down, we will not know if we have an agreement.”

Even if both governments nail those details down, they may not stay that way. The winner of the June 18 Iranian presidential election, Ebrahim Raisi, is a hard-liner skeptical of the deal. He’ll assume office in early August and has already said he won’t meet with Mr. Biden even if an agreement is struck. In Washington the Democratic majority is slim enough that Congress could review and effectively block JCPOA re-entry.

To prepare for the looming possibility of a no-deal future, the Biden administration should start by reiterating Mr. Obama’s 2009 pledge that the White House will “use all elements of American power to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.” Specifically, the administration should convey unmistakably its readiness to use military options if necessary to stop Tehran from producing enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon.

The Pentagon can bolster the credibility of such statements with updated contingency plans and force deployments for neutralizing Iran’s nuclear facilities. This could include deploying Massive Ordnance Penetrator munitions and strategic bombers to the British territory Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, as well as boosting the U.S. Navy’s carrier and missile-defense presence in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea as part of a general strengthening of America’s global force posture and broader increase in defense spending. Military exercises with these capabilities, and strategic communications to publicize them, would help prove the seriousness of Washington’s intentions.

Given its diminishing presence in the region, America should also make clear that it backs Israel if it takes military action in self-defense against Iran, doubling down on the Biden administration’s recent support for the Jewish

state's freedom of action. Since July 2020 Israel's covert strikes have taken thousands of centrifuges off line and set back Tehran's mass-production of advanced centrifuges, delaying its breakout time. Building on the welcome replenishment of Israel's Iron Dome interceptors, Washington should also ensure Jerusalem has adequate precision-guided munitions to prevent a nuclear Iran and deter, or if necessary prevail against, reprisals from Tehran and Hezbollah.

It may not be what Mr. Biden wanted, but these steps are likely the best way to prevent a nuclear Iran, or a bad deal that enables it.

--*Messrs. Misztal and Ruhe are, respectively, vice president for policy and director of foreign policy at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America*

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34. China is not the cyber superpower that many people think
Critical weaknesses put Beijing well behind the U.S.
Nikkei Asia Online (Japan), June 29 (1600) | Greg Austin

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato recently warned that cyberattacks should be expected during the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, due to start on July 23. Yet Japan's defenses in this sphere remain somewhat immature, creating cause for concern given escalating threats and reports about shifting power balances, both in cyberspace and more broadly.

In this debate, China is often portrayed as a world-leading cyber power based on its massive and highly successful espionage operations. But for now, according to a new assessment by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the U.S. is still ahead of China on that front and has a much stronger track record.

Alongside political will, cyber power depends on three factors: how well organized each country is -- strategy and doctrine, and command and control; how well it can defend itself through its own cybersecurity or through international partnerships; as well as how effectively its digital economy can support its cyber needs and ambitions.

China's strategy is lagging, and its cyber defenses are weak, but it is the third area just mentioned -- the strength of its digital economy -- where the U.S. maintains its most powerful edge over China. This might come as a shock to many Americans in the political classes who see themselves as slipping into second place behind Beijing's cyber superpower ambitions. But it will not be so shocking to long-term students of national innovation systems, nor those who have experienced university life overseen by a self-confessed dictatorship.

Chinese universities have made great strides and the country's researchers are world leaders in some important advanced technologies, such as quantum communications.

But survey data from China's University Alumni Association indicates that it has no world-class universities in the field of cybersecurity, which is an essential foundation of cyber capability. The Chinese innovation system is struggling to adapt to the demands of security in cyberspace and universities may be its weakest link.

Several factors are combining to retard China's universities: higher education institutions globally are highly conservative; professors who control curricula, spending and organizational arrangements do not like new or expanded departments of cybersecurity; there are not enough university educators and dissertation supervisors to meet rising demand. Add to that the fact that the Chinese Communist Party is too intent on linking promotion to ideological activism, monitoring every email sent by professors and students.

Outside its universities, China has no answer for the highly successful U.S. formula of close collaboration -- for private profit -- among universities, industry and government. Yes, there have been great Chinese examples of private-sector success. Lenovo, now a top global brand in sales of personal computers, grew out of Legend, a company set up by researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences back in 1984.

But the three-way cooperation among government, industry and academia -- a so-called triple helix of national innovation -- is not yet the norm in China. President Xi Jinping's best response has been a so-called civil-military fusion policy that is proving to be as bureaucratic and sloganistic as it sounds.

Even if China could rise to the top rank of cyber power in a one-to-one comparison with the U.S., it still does not have the means to match American power arising from its position as the hub of the most powerful cyber intelligence alliance in history, the Five Eyes network.

The U.S. can also count on many other cyber-capable allies, such as France and Israel. It can also count on Japan, though in very different ways. But how useful could Japan's contribution to U.S. cyber power actually be if the Self Defense Forces and intelligence agencies have been slow to develop cyber capabilities?

Ironically, Japan makes a huge contribution to alliance power in the very field where China is not yet doing as well as it wants to -- the strength of its digital economy. Japan remains second only to the U.S. in important aspects of information and communication technology industrial performance and policy.

For example, it has more tech and telecoms companies in the 2020 Fortune Global 500 than China, 10 and eight respectively, compared with the U.S. at 16. Japan has arguably been at least as influential in fifth-generation, or 5G, mobile technology standard setting as China. Japan remains, along with the United States, the largest funder of the International Telecommunication Union.

Most importantly, Japan has been very active in its diplomacy to help ensure the U.S. and allied technological preeminence over China remains intact. It was an early advocate among U.S. allies of the idea of banning Huawei Technologies from the 5G rollout, ahead even of Washington's official position.

Thus, as Japan takes account of its cybersecurity dilemmas and very visible operational gaps in its national cyber power, either in advance of the Olympic Games or over the long term future, it can take quite some credit for executing successful diplomacy as an important line of defense.

If the worst were to happen, and Japan were to suffer a serious cyberattack, it will not have to depend only on its own weak cyber forces. It has many partners, led by the U.S., who will stand with it on the front lines of cyber defense.

--*Greg Austin is senior fellow for cyber, space and future conflict at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. He is based in Singapore*

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SD-JFHQ
Rapid City, SD
241700TJUN21
21-07

OPERATION ORDER 21-08 (Texas Response)

(U) Reference:

a) (U) South Dakota National Guard All Hazard Plan.

b) (U) Texas Governor State of Emergency Declaration

(U) Time Zone Used Throughout the OPORD: TANGO

(U) Task Organization:
SD-JFHQ
JFHQ
109th Regional Support Group (RSG)
196th Maneuver Enhanced Brigade (MEB)
196th Regional Training Institute (RTI)

1. (U) Situation. The Governor of Texas has issued a proclamation certifying that the ongoing surge of individuals unlawfully crossing the Texas-Mexico border poses an ongoing and imminent threat of widespread and severe damage, injury, and loss of life and property, including property damage, property crime, human trafficking, violent crime, threats to public health, and a violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, in certain Texas counties and for all state agencies affected by this emergency declaration. South Dakota Governor, Kristi Noem, has ordered the South Dakota Department of Military to begin planning for a response force consisting of South Dakota National Guard personnel to respond and assist Texas State Agencies in a State Active Duty (SAD) status as needed.

2. (U) Mission. On order, 153rd EN BN will establish Task Force Rushmore to alert, mobilize, deploy, and assist the State of Texas in response to the increasing immigrant population crossing the Texas Border NLT 06000JUL21.

3. (U) Execution.

a. (U) Commander's Intent. TF Rushmore Soldiers will report to their designated armories, begin abbreviated mobilization, draw appropriate equipment, move to designated consolidation facility (Huron Armory) to complete final mobilization requirements and deploy to Texas to execute mission on or about the 10 JUL 21.

b. (U) Concept of Operations. Task Force Rushmore will deploy volunteers in a State Active Duty status. Soldiers will complete abbreviated mobilization tasks to include weapon familiarization on required response weapons. Once complete, Task Force Rushmore will

conduct a ground movement to a specified location in Texas and conduct RSOI operations and begin the mission assignment.

End State: SDARNG provides Soldiers and resources to support the State of Texas' emergency declaration and safely return to home station without incident to refit and prepare for follow on missions.

c. (U) Tasks to Subordinate Units.

(1) (U) JFHQ.

(2) (U) 109th RSG.

i. (U) BPT plan transportation of the following Task Force Rushmore vehicles and container to Texas (destination TBD):

a. (U) 11 x Uparmored Humvees

b. (U) 1 x LMTV

c. (U) 2 x FLA

d. (U) 1 x Quadcon

e. (U) 2 x Maintenance Contact Truck

ii. (U) BPT to provide drivers for Bluebird buses should the Task Force conduct ground transportation by government bus.

(3) (U) 153rd EN BN.

i. (U) BPT conduct the following tasks.

ii. Provide the following Soldiers in a State Active Duty Status:

a. Task Force CDR / LNO – O4

a. (U) 1 x TF PLT LDR – O2

b. (U) 1 x NCOIC – E7

c. (U) 2 x Squad Leader – E6

d. (U) 4 x Team Leader – E5

e. (U) 28 x E4/E5 (MOS Immaterial)

f. (U) 2 x Medic – E5

g. (U) 2 x Medic – E4

h. (U) 1 x Log NCO – E7

i. (U) 1 x Log/Admin NCO – E5

j. (U) 5 x Maintenance Personnel – E5/E6

ii. (U) Provide the following vehicles for Task Force Rushmore:

a. (U) 11 x 4-door, uparmored Humvees

b. (U) 1 x LMTV

c. (U) 2 x Maintenance Contact Truck

d. (U) 2 x FLA

iii. (U) BPT facilitate a weapons familiarization shoot for all deploying personnel for their assigned weapon.

(4) (U) 196th RTI.

(5) (U) Tasks to Staff.

(a) (U) G1

i. (U) BPT publish a State Active Duty order for Soldier's employers as required.

ii. (U) BPT forward a Task Force manifest to Texas G1 for designated personnel.

iii. (U) Brief all Task Force on medical situation and other coverages since the Task Force will not be in a military status.

(b) (U) G3.

i. (U) BPT schedule and coordinate weapon familiarization for all responding Task Force Soldiers.

ii. (U) BPT draw sufficient amount of ammunition from the SDNG Operational Load. These rounds will be used for familiarization only.

iii. (U) BPT coordinate with Texas agencies for basic ammo load.

(c) (U) G4

iii. (U) provide refueling procedures and procurement instructions for the purchase of fuel while deployed in Texas and to RSG forces line hauling the equipment.

iv. (U) If required, provide Task Force Supply Sergeant with a Government Purchase Card for the Texas response and specific instructions outlining restrictions while on State Active Duty.

v. (U) Coordinate the issue of CL I to the Task Force for emergency purposes.

vi. (U) Provide a maintenance POC to coordinate requirements while enroute to and from Texas as required.

vii. (U) Coordinate to ensure that all FLAs and CLS bags deploy with all required supplies. BPT to procure items that are needed with a short suspense to meet mission requirements.

viii. (U) Coordinate for the use of one quadcon for Taskforce Rushmore. The Quadcon needs to be positioned at the Huron armory.

iv. (U) Coordinate either military buses or commercial charter buses for ground transportation to Texas.

x. (U) Coordinate with units to ensure that TF Rushmore departs with sufficient weapons racks and locks to properly secure their weapons as needed.

xi. (U) Ensure that Task Force Rushmore has sufficient M9 pistols, magazines, and holsters if required.

(d) (U) G6.

i. (U) BPT provide sufficient hand-held radios for individual communications

ii. (U) BPT provide four mifi devices to Task Force to enable redundant communications

iii. (U) BPT provide one cellular phone to the TF CDR, TF PLT LDR, TF NCOIC, LOG NCOIC

(e) (U) USPFO.

i. (U) BPT size and issue a vest w/sappi plates to each TF Rushmore Member at the Huron Armory during the mobilization process.

ii. (U) BPT to fill any OCIE shortages prior to departure of TF Rushmore to Texas.

(f) (U) SJA BPT coordinate with Texas SJA to receive Rules for the Use of Force (RUF) and brief to Task Force if required.

d. (U) Coordinating Instructions.

(1) (U) All Task Force Rushmore personnel will deploy with all OCIE for a summer weather deployment. Specific Packing list will be published by the TF NCOIC.

(2) (U) Volunteers will need to be licensed on deploying vehicles if possible. Vehicles are an uparmored Humvee and LMTV. Medics will drive FLAs. Maintenance personnel will drive Contact Trucks.

(3) (U) No personnel weapons or ammunition are authorized for this deployment.

(4) (U) Task Force will submit Daily SITREPS to the JOC.

(5) (U) Soldiers will mobilize on State Active Duty orders.

(6) (U) Fueling Operations. All vehicles used both by Task Force personnel and support units during the mobilization process and travel to Texas will use that vehicle's fuel card. On the back of the receipt will have the following items:

i. (U) Printed Name

ii. (U) Bumper Number of vehicle

iii. (U) Annotate "SAD" on the receipt

iv. (U) Date

v. (U) Mileage of vehicle

vi. (U) Dollar amount of fuel

vii. (U) Quantity of Fuel

4. (U) Sustainment.

a. (U) Logistics. TBP

b. (U) Personnel.

5. (U) Command and Signal.

a. (U) Command. TF CDR/LNO, DOMS-SD, TAG-SD

b. (U) Control. TF Rushmore will be TACON to the DOMS-SD from notification to closure at SD-RSOI Site. Once SD-RSOI is complete, TF Rushmore will be OPCON to the Texas Army National Guard until released to travel back to South Dakota. Once released, TF Rushmore will be TACON back to the DOMS-SD until TF Rushmore is released at Huron Armory by property authority.

c. (U) SD Directorates will coordinate all support through DOMS-SD.

d. (U) Signal. Primary: Phone, Alternate: Email System, Contingency: State Radio, Channel 1SD JOC while in South Dakota, Emergency: Personal Cell phone.

ACKNOWLEDGE:

OSTER
BG

OFFICIAL:

[redacted]
DCSOPS

DISTRIBUTION:
109th RSG, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57702-8186
196th MEB, 801 West National Guard Dr, Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57104-0117
196th Regiment (RTI), 60 Sheridan Road, Fort Meade, SD 57741-0317
JFHQ, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57701-8186

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 3:58 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Fwd: Bus for movement
Attachments: OPORD 21-08 (Texas Response).docx

From: "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 at 3:46:24 PM
To: "[redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: RE: Bus for movement

48, not 49. My mistake. This is the number that the TAG briefed the Governor. Attached is the order that went out to the 153rd Cdr. Still close hold

Task Force CDR / LNO – O4

1 x TF PLT LDR – O2

1 x NCOIC – E7

2 x Squad Leader – E6

4 x Team Leader – E5

28 x E4/E5 (MOS Immaterial)

2 x Medic – E5

2 x Medic – E4

1 x Log NCO – E7

1 x Log/Admin NCO – E5

5 x Maintenance Personnel – E5/E6

v/r

[redacted]

COL, IN

Deputy G3

South Dakota National Guard

[redacted] (office)

[redacted] (cell)

NIPR: [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil>

SIPR: [redacted] @mail.smil.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.smil.mil>

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

CONTROLLED UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION (CUI)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 3:12 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil>; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil>
Subject: Re: Bus for movement

I see your number is 49 pax. It was 43 last week. Can you give me the new break down of personnel? Thank you

From: "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 at 2:44:42 PM
To: "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.mil> >, "[redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" <[redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Cc: "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >

Subject: Bus for movement

[redacted]

We are going to need a to transport 49 PAX for our Texas contingent. Once the Governor makes her statement and notifies OEM, [redacted] please coordinate for two charter buses. Pickup will be at the Huron Armory on the 9th. Address in Texas is 1100 VoTec Drive, Weslaco, TX 78596. [redacted], if [redacted] comes back with the state wants us to coordinate this then your folks will have to do a quick contract. State will have to reimburse us.

Of note, all baggage will have to go under the bus so better figure two duffle bags per Soldier.

Please keep me updated as information comes in.

Thanks

[redacted]

v/r

[redacted]

COL, IN

Deputy G3

South Dakota National Guard

[redacted] (office)

[redacted] (cell)

NIPR: [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil>

SIPR: [redacted]@mail.smil.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.smil.mil>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 3:15 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Fwd: Bus for movement

FYSA. I see a request for 49 pax below from Pete. Any knowledge on the 6 add? We were at 43 last week.

From: "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil
<mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 at 2:44:42 PM
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>, "[redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
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v/r

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COL, IN

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NIPR: [redacted] @mail.mil <mailto [redacted] @mail.mil>

SIPR: [redacted] @mail.smil.mil <mailto: [redacted] @mail.smil.mil>

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

CONTROLLED UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION (CUI)

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted]@state.sd.us>
Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2021 1:26 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: TF Salerno Initial Information

Sounds good. Thanks.

On Jun 27, 2021, at 12:50 PM, Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> wrote:

For your awareness.

I am not sending this to the Governor yet, as I am sure it will continue to be fine tuned over the next couple days.

TX EMAC is headed your way. Probably arrive tomorrow or Tuesday.

We will cap our initial response at 50 soldiers.

Plan to assemble them on July 6th, with departure for TX on July 9-10.

Planning on 30 days on the ground in TX for first group. Further support decisions will be made later.

I will keep you posted as we learn more.

Jeff

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil>
Date: June 27, 2021 at 9:00:07 AM MDT
To: "Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: "Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil>, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>, "Pardy, Patrick T BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil>, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil>, "[redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil>, "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil>
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MG Marlette,

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What: If the mission is approved, we will support TF Salerno run by the TXARNG in a SAD duty status. Texas is currently working on the EMAC and it should be sent to the SD OEM Monday afternoon.

Mission:

The mission is to support local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies with the security of the U.S./Mexico border. I believe the lead agency is the Texas Department of Emergency Management. Our Soldiers will provide LP/OP coverage for Law Enforcement. They will observe and report any illegal border crossing activity and report to civilian law enforcement to take appropriate action. Our LP/OPs will directly overlook the Rio Grande River between the cities of Del Rio, TX and McAllen, TX. More specifically our Soldiers will most likely augment a TXNG company with responsibility of the Rio Grande City Area. (It will not include the Laredo or Brownsville sectors.) I have added a .PPT to give a better visual of the AOR. LP/OP positions are not static. Soldiers will use Humvees for mobility and protection from the elements. Mission are 24-hours on/48 hours off. Soldiers are normally on the border 8-10 hours at a time within their 24-hour rotation.

Equipment:

Soldiers will be armed. It is recommend that Soldiers in the squads carry M4 rifles. Squad leaders, admin/maintenance support, and leadership should carry M9s. All weapons will be stored at the BN HQs when Soldiers are not on duty. Weapons will be drawn before each shift and turned in after each shift. All Soldiers must be familiarized with their weapon. Anyone not currently "qualified" will get qualified in Texas. Texas noted they will probably have all Soldiers shoot after TX-RSOI either way. TX will provide all ammunition while in Texas. TX JAG will provide RUF Brief in RSOI. Humvees are recommended if we can bring them. I shared our plan of bringing 11 Humvees, and 2 contact trucks and that was well received. They will provide a large motor pool for our equipment to be secured and maintained. SD will need to bring fuel cards to fuel our vehicles.

Texas will provide non-tactical vehicles as needed. No need for SD to provide.

Night vision Gogs are recommended. Recommend 12-15 sets for our mission.

All radios will be provided by Texas.

Our Soldier packing list is appropriate. Kevlar, LBE, Vest with Sappis, etc. No civil disturbance gear is needed.

Lodging/Meals:

Soldiers will be lodged in hotel in Rio Grande approximately 25-30 minutes from the work sites. Coordination will be to be completed to determine the number of rooms needed. All soldiers are on Per Diem for meals, no meals or DFAC are provided. (Recommend SMs bring a small cooler to keep water/food while on their shift)

Misc:

Texas loved the idea of sending a LNO/TF Cdr down with a law enforcement background. The TF Cdr said they would provide the LNO with an office in their BN HQ located in Roma, TX and integrate the LNO into the Joint Interagency cell. The TXNG is excited to have us come down and truly appreciate the support we can provide them. They want to roll out the red carpet and would welcome multiple rotations to fully support the missions. More to follow when I receive it.

I will be TDY in Ft. Sill Mon-Wed, but will be available on my cell/email. COL [redacted] is fully read in on the mission and I will push additional information as soon as it is available.

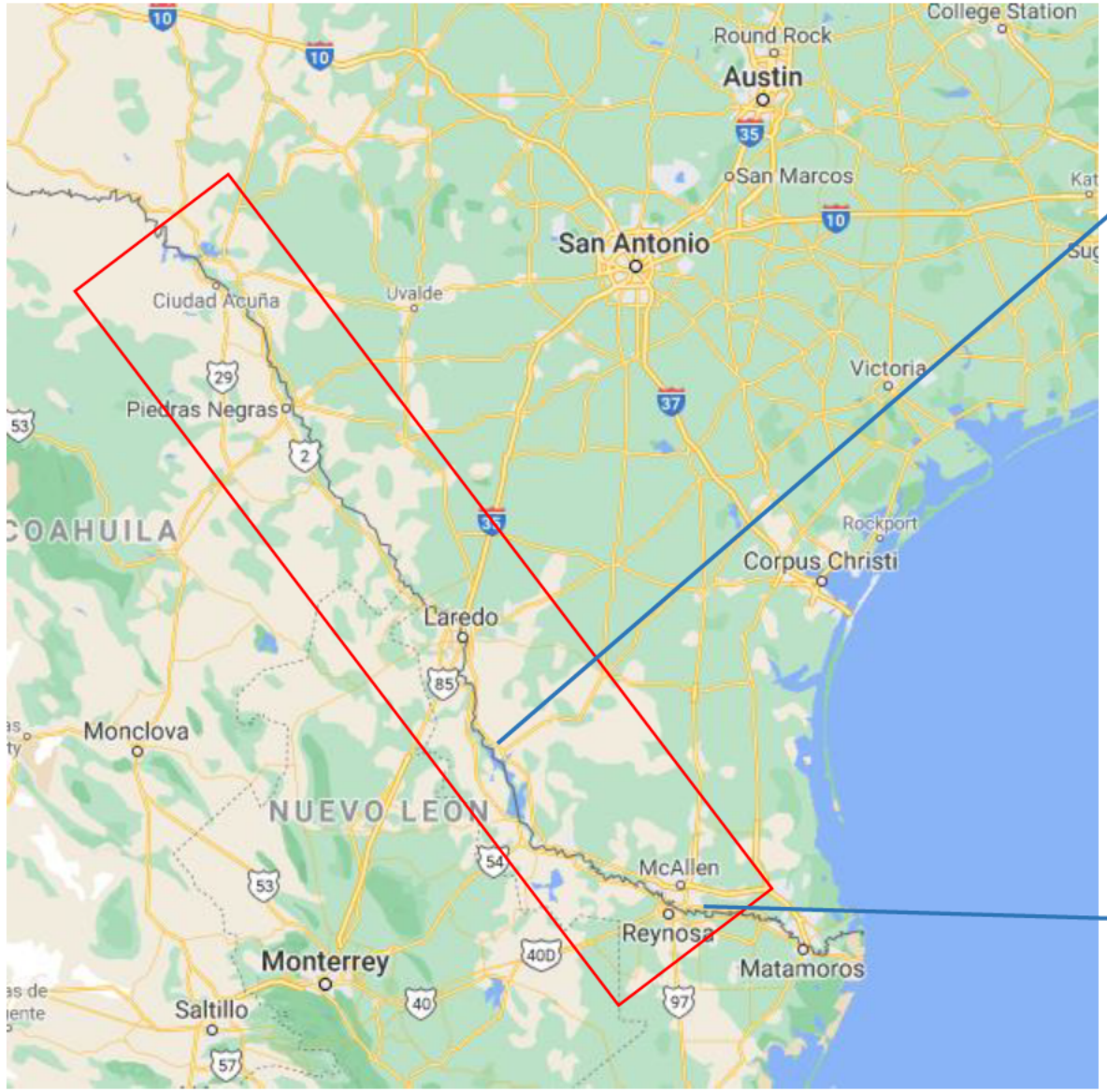
V/r,

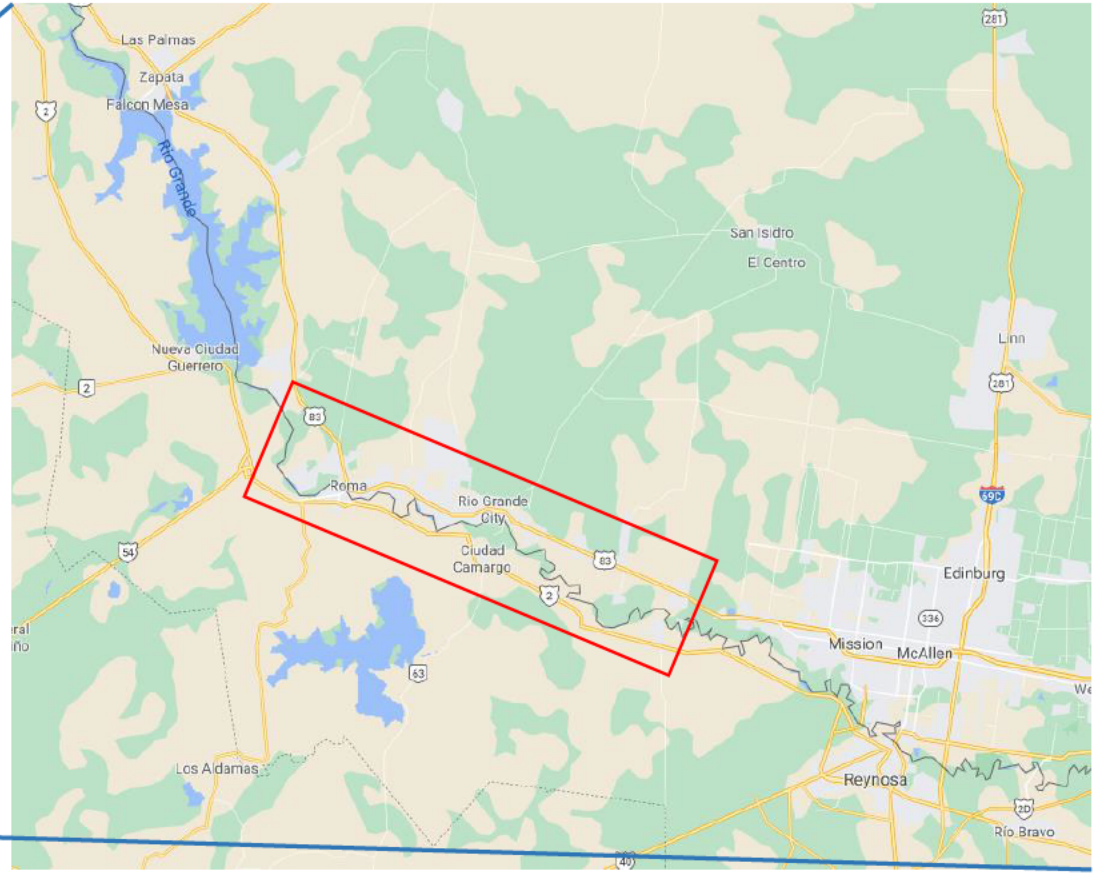
[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

<TF Salerno AOR.pptx>

TF Salerno AO





Zoom in of the projected AOR of Task Force Rushmore

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2021 11:51 AM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Fwd: TF Salerno Initial Information
Attachments: TF Salerno AOR.pptx

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Cc: "Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil>, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>, "Pardy, Patrick T BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil>, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>, "[redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil>, "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
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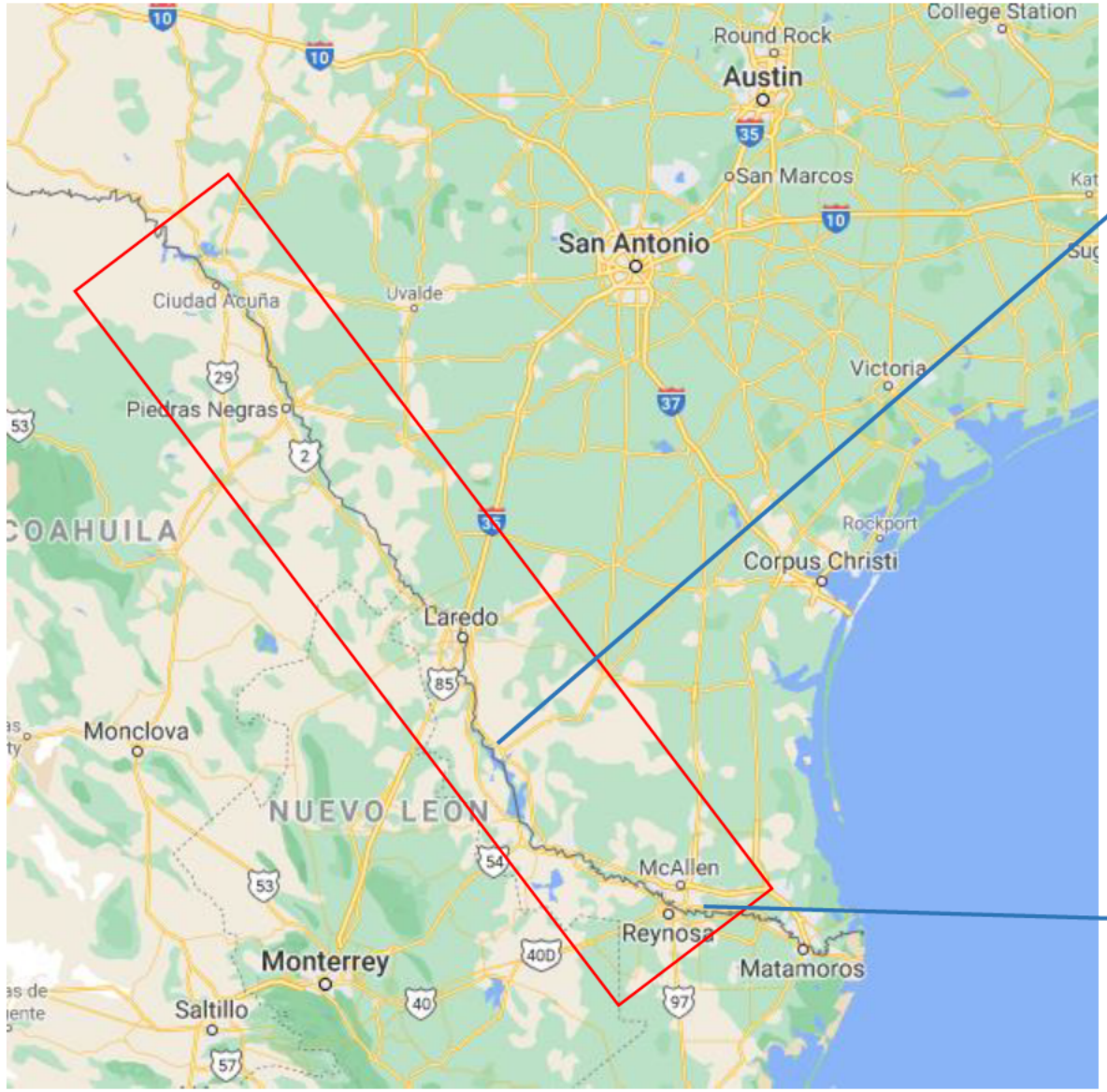
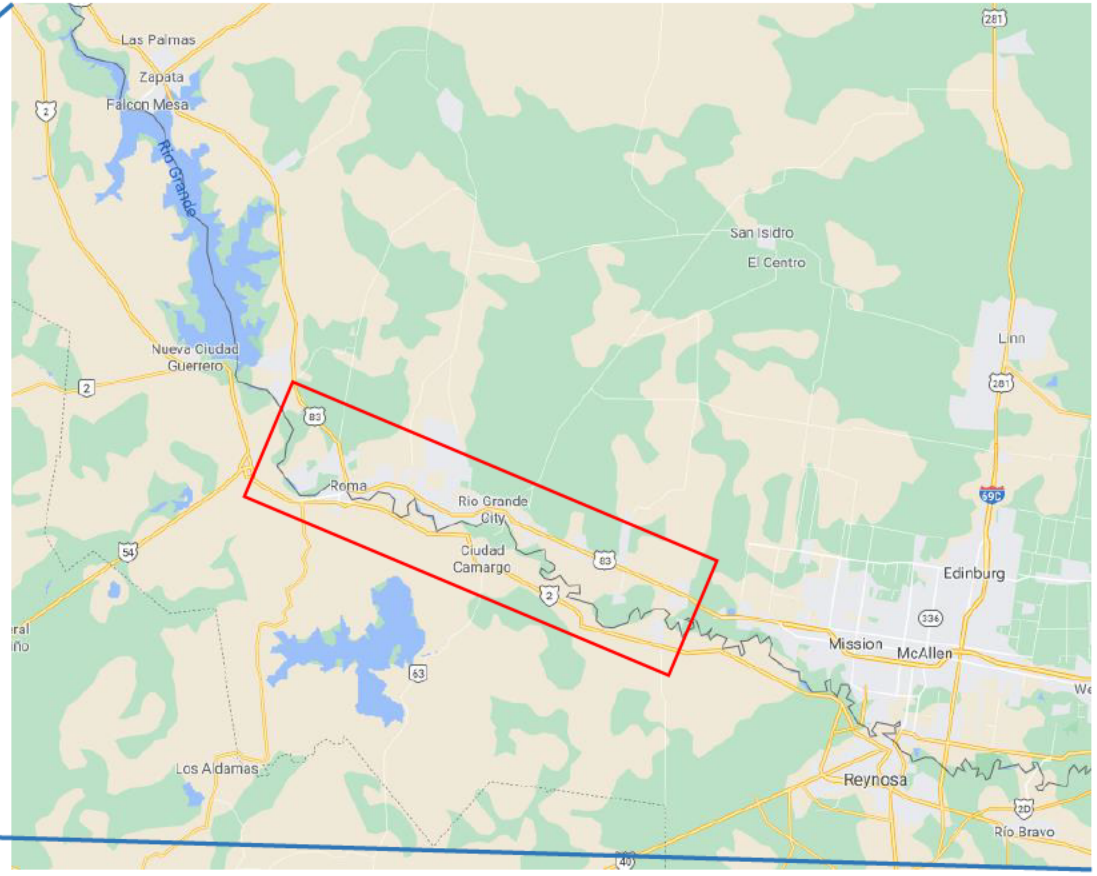
[redacted]

COL [redacted]

DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

TF Salerno AO





Zoom in of the projected AOR of Task Force Rushmore

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2021 11:32 AM
To: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Fwd: TF Salerno Initial Information
Attachments: TF Salerno AOR.pptx

FYI

Sent from my iPhone

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Date: June 27, 2021 at 9:00:07 AM MDT
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Cc: "Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil>, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil>, "Pardy, Patrick T BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil>, "[redacted] J COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil>, "[redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil>, "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil>
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Night vision Gogs are recommended. Recommend 12-15 sets for our mission.

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Misc:

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V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2021 9:40 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Cc: Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); Pardy, Patrick T BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: Re: TF Salerno Initial Information

Good copy sir.

From: "Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Date: Sunday, June 27, 2021 at 09:28:15
To: "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil <[redacted]@mail.mil> >
Cc: "Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil <mailto:michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, "Pardy, Patrick T BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil <mailto:patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, [redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: Re: TF Salerno Initial Information

All looks good. Continue moving forward with our planning. We should plan to have them report on July 6th with a departure for TX on July 9-10, depending on what we identify as task/training we need to accomplish in SD and what orientation training TX will provide once we are on the ground.

Governor is planning a press release soon. We are capped at 50 Pax total.

JPM

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 27, 2021, at 9:00 AM, [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil> wrote:
>
> MG Marlette,
>
> I am awaiting additional information from the TXARNG regarding our potential SAD mission in support of the Law Enforcement mission in Texas. From my briefing yesterday with the TX G3 and TF Battalion Commander, this is what I can tell you right now.
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> V/r,
>
> [redacted]
>
> COL [redacted]
> DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
> Office: [redacted]
> Cell: [redacted]
> 2823 W. Main Street

> Rapid City, SD 57702
>
>
> <TF Salerno AOR.pptx>

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2021 9:40 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: Re: TF Salerno Initial Information

Please identify our LNO options so we can get them on board from the start.

Sent from my iPhone

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>
> MG Marlette,
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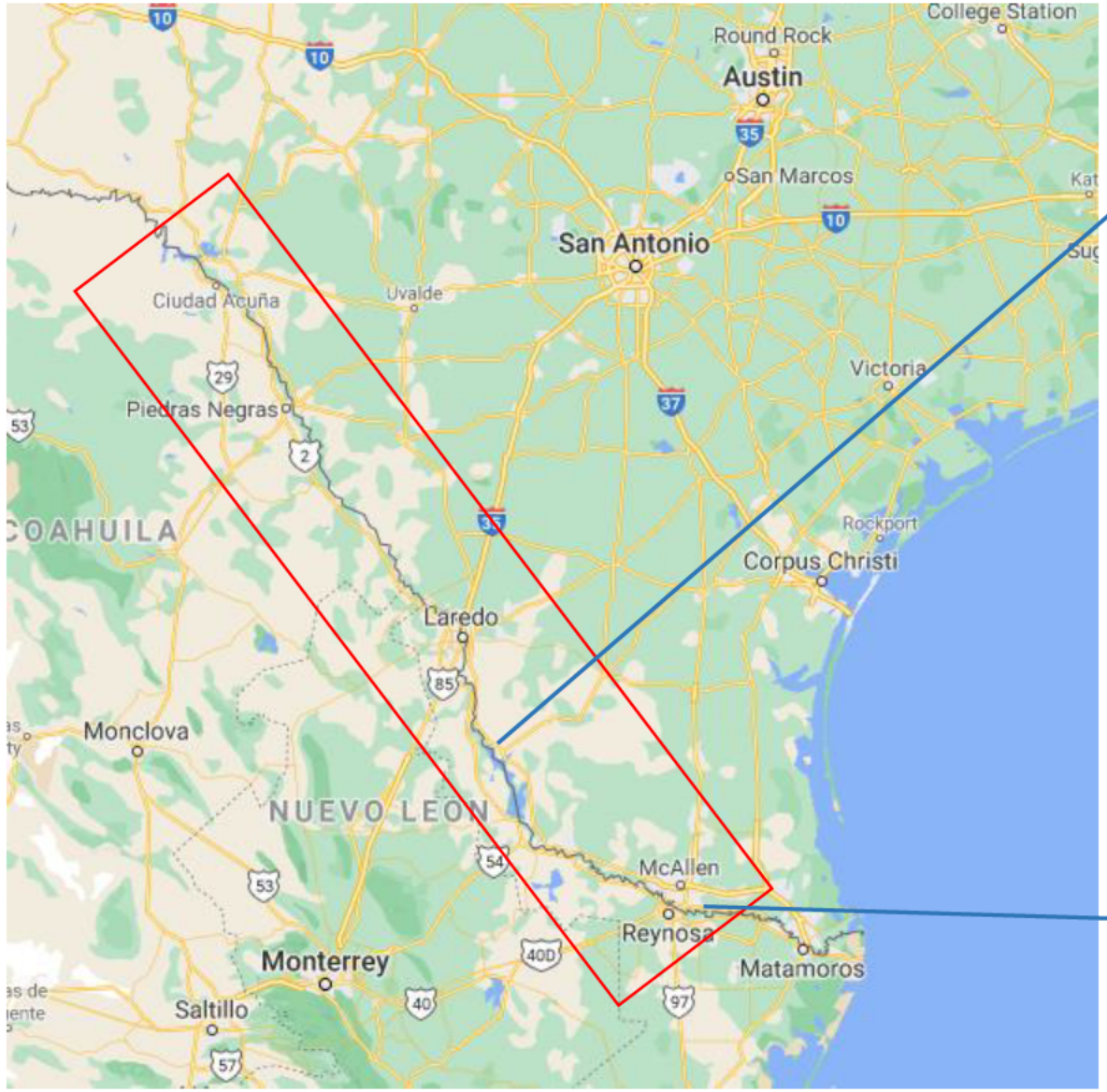
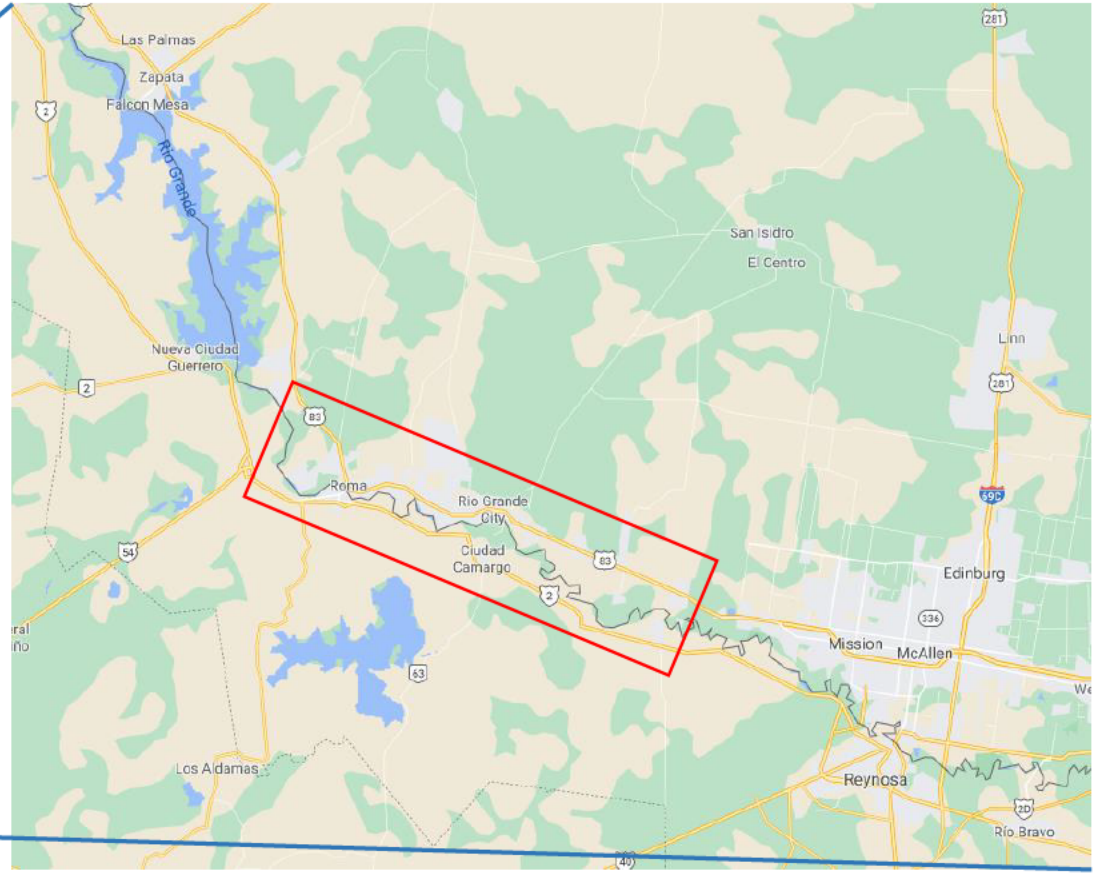
> <TF Salerno AOR.pptx>

TF Salerno AO





Zoom in of the projected AOR of Task Force Rushmore

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2021 9:36 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: Fwd: TF Salerno Initial Information
Attachments: TF Salerno AOR.pptx

[redacted],

I forgot to add you to this email. Sorry.

[redacted]

From: "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Date: Sunday, June 27, 2021 at 09:00:00
To: "MG Jeff Marlette (USA) " <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Cc: "Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil <mailto:michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, "Pardy, Patrick T BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil <mailto:patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil> >, [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] SGM USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >, "[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG [redacted] - NG ([redacted]@mail.mil)" [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: TF Salerno Initial Information

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V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: AGR reference
Date: Monday, March 16, 2020 3:58:03 PM

All:
Here is the reference for AGRs on SAD. Thanks :)

Referenced Guidance:

Army Specific Reference
Per NGR 600-5 Para 3-4

When a unit is ordered to operational 32 USC 502(f) status or state active duty status to support an emergency situation, its AGR members may accompany the unit and continue to perform their normal AGR duties. Because AGR duty is year-round military duty, an AGR member may not, by taking leave, be placed in a different military duty status to be used as an individual augmentee.

a. If an AGR member has a critical skill set needed by another unit, that individual may be attached or cross-leveled to the deploying unit if no other reasonable option exists.

b. This authority cannot be used to cross-level significant numbers of AGRs from nondeploying units to deploying units. In addition, if an AGR member's unit is performing operational 32 USC 502(f) duty (for example, at the request of the President or the Secretary of Defense), the member may, pursuant to 32 USC 328(b) and 32 USC 502(f) (2) (A), support the operation or mission to the extent that doing so does not interfere with the performance of their primary AGR duties.

c. A request from the President or Secretary of Defense is not required for units composed entirely of AGR members or units established by

law performing specific functions in emergency situations, such as Civil Support Teams. Performing those functions in response to the specified emergency situations falls within their normal AGR duties.

d. AGR Soldiers serving in Command Leadership and Staff Assignment Policy (CLASP) leader assignments may perform their command or leadership duties if ordered to support an emergency situation.

Air Specific Reference
Per ANGI 36-101 Para7.10

7.10. Emergency Domestic and ―Immediate Response Situations.

7.10.1. Emergency Situations. States should be cognizant of the fact that using AGR Airmen for emergency domestic situations has fiscal law and Anti-Deficiency Act implications and must be governed judiciously.

7.10.1.1. When an AGR Airman's unit is ordered to operational Title 32 U.S.C. Section 502(f)(2), Title 32 U.S.C. Section 502 (a), or State Active Duty (SAD) status to support an emergency domestic situation, the AGR Airman may accompany his or her unit and continue to perform his or her normal AGR duties.

7.10.1.2. Since AGR duty is year round military duty, and AGR Airman may not, by taking leave, be placed in another military status.

7.10.1.3. If an AGR Airman has a critical skill set that may be needed by another unit, that AGR Airman may be attached to the deploying unit if no other reasonable option exits.

7.10.1.4. This authority applies to individual AGR Airmen and does not constitute authority to cross-level significant numbers of AGR Airmen from non-deploying units to deploying units.

7.10.1.5. Support of the operation or mission must be to the extent that doing so does not interfere with the performance of his or her primary AGR duties.

7.10.1.6. For units composed entirely of AGRs and established by law to perform specific functions in response to specific emergency domestic situations, such as Civil Support Teams (CST), response to those contingency situations by performing those functions falls within their normal AGR duties and a request from the President or Secretary of Defense is not required to provide this operational response.

7.10.2. ―Immediate Response‖ Situations. ―Immediate Response‖ is defined by DoDD 3025.15, paragraph 4.7.1. as ―any form of immediate action taken by a DoD Component or military commander to save lives, prevent human suffering, or mitigate great property damage under imminently serious conditions when time does not permit approval from higher headquarters.

[redacted]
COL, NGB
USPFO for Illinois

[redacted] - office
- cell

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Saturday, June 26, 2021 2:41 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] CIV NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: Re: Texas Response OPORD (UNCLASSIFIED)
Attachments: AGR reference 16Mar20_.pdf

Concur on all. Workshop/tabletop will clarify different statuses and left and right limit. Obviously after 01 Oct would've realistic

v/r

[redacted]
COL, IN
Deputy G3
South Dakota National Guard
([redacted] office
[redacted] cell
NIPR: [redacted]@mail.mil
SIPR: [redacted]@mail.smil.mil

On Jun 26, 2021, at 2:28 PM, [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil> wrote:

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

[redacted]: Thanks. Agree and understand this is a unique mission. Will visit with COL [redacted] and team Tuesday morning to get caught up on the possible SAD mission.

Use of AGRs in support of a SAD requirement fall under 3 categories. One, if there unit is called up for SAD they can be used. Not the case with this mission since you're looking for volunteers. The second is under Immediate Response Authority which this also doesn't apply. Third, is if they have a critical skill set needed to support the SAD mission. I believe this would fit this particular mission. The TF needs someone with knowledge of property accountability and other logistics related skills.

Next up, I would like to recommend that this fall we conduct a SAD training workshop. Audience would be unit, battalion, group/brigade and directorate full-time staff. We've had a lot of turnover in FTS personnel and it seems every time we have a SAD mission most treat it like it's just another T32 mission. Would be a 1 day workshop. Could do one east and one west river or conduct it in Pierre.

COL

USPFO for South Dakota

Email: @mail.mil <mailto: @mail.mil>

Phone:

Cell:

Fiscal Stewardship Starts With You

From: COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < @mail.mil>
Sent: Saturday, June 26, 2021 9:18 AM
To: COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) < @mail.mil>; COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < @mail.mil>; CIV NG SDARNG (USA) < @mail.mil>; LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) < @mail.mil>
Cc: Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) < @mail.mil>; COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) @mail.mil>
Subject: RE: Texas Response OPORD (UNCLASSIFIED)

This is a unique SAD mission, we can explain further next week. I am TDY Mon-Wed, has the Con and can brief you up on the details and also sit in the reimbursement meeting.

The SAD statement that clarified below was appreciated. However, I spoke with prior to the order being sent out and I repeated what I understood. It was probably an error on my part, but either way we can get the correct information out to the field prior to the go date. has been in contact with the state on the EMAC, he will have better information next week. It will all be under SAD with 100% FED reimbursement as required.

We do need to discuss 1 AGR supply sergeant possibly going with the TF to support the 153rd. We can discuss next week.

V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]

DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG

Office: [redacted]

Cell: [redacted]

2823 W. Main Street

Rapid City, SD 57702

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 4:59 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >; [redacted] CIV NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >; [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >; [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) [redacted]@mail.mil <mailto [redacted]@mail.mil> >
Subject: RE: Texas Response OPORD (UNCLASSIFIED)

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

As a follow-up. The EMAC between S.Dakota and Texas should address this issue! If this is a highly likely mission, the state of South Dakota EOM with Lt Col [redacted] assistance should begin working the EMAC. An EMAC is required and should be signed before any elements depart the state of South Dakota or start incurring expenses.

[redacted]

COL [redacted]

USPFO for South Dakota

Email: [redacted]

Phone: [redacted]

Cell: [redacted]

Fiscal Stewardship Starts With You

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[redacted] @mail.mil
<mailto [redacted] @mail.mil> >
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 9:49 AM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: Texas Response OPORD

Agree, my team in G4 has the same question!!

[redacted]

From: "[redacted] >
Date: Friday, June 25, 2021 at 9:16:43 AM
To: [redacted]
Cc: "[redacted] >
Subject: RE: Texas Response OPORD

All,

From a PFO perspective this statement may need to be clarified with help from [redacted] (I didn't know if it was ok to include [redacted] on this email so I left him off):

iv. (U) If required, provide Task Force Supply Sergeant with a Government Purchase Card for the Texas response and specific instructions outlining restrictions while on State Active Duty.

It is my understanding our GPC's are not authorized for use while on SAD. I believe the correct procedure is for the State of SD to issue the AGR Supply Sergeant their own version of a GPC that's tied to the State of SD funding as opposed to our federal funding…but I may be wrong on that detail.

I recommend discussing the correct procedures regarding GPC use while on SAD w/ [redacted] and the G4 this morning if possible.

VR,

[redacted]

Financial Manager

USPFO SDARNG

[redacted] (o)

[redacted] (c)

[redacted]

From: [redacted]

Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 8:56 AM

To: [redacted]

Subject: Fwd: Texas Response OPORD

From: "[redacted] > >
Date: Thursday, June 24, 2021 at 5:04:23 PM
To: [redacted] >
Cc: [redacted] > >
Subject: FW: Texas Response OPORD

Directors,

Attached you will find the Be Prepared TO OPORD for the Texas Response that we pushed to LTC [redacted] and the 153rd Task Force this afternoon to allow the 153rd staff to begin planning for the upcoming potential SAD mission.

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Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks and have a great NG day.

V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Thursday, June 24, 2021 3:59 PM
To: MG Jeff Marlette (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >
Cc: Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil <mailto:michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil> >; Pardy, Patrick T BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil <mailto:patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil> >; [redacted] >; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil <mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >
Subject: Texas Response OPORD

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V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

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[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 4:56 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] CIV NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: RE: Texas Response OPORD (UNCLASSIFIED)

Importance: High

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

You are not authorized to use any federal procurement resources (GPC, contracting, etc.) to support a SAD requirement. In the past, we've been able to access state refueling sites and cards to meet this need. Obviously that only would provide support while in the state of South Dakota. No exceptions.

V/R

[redacted]

COL [redacted]

USPFO for South Dakota

Email: [redacted]>

Phone: [redacted]

Cell: [redacted]

Fiscal Stewardship Starts With You

From: [redacted]
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 9:49 AM
To: [redacted]

Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: Texas Response OPORD

Agree, my team in G4 has the same question!!

[redacted]

From: "[redacted] >
Date: Friday, June 25, 2021 at 9:16:43 AM
To: [redacted] >
Cc: "[redacted] > >
Subject: RE: Texas Response OPORD

All,

From a PFO perspective this statement may need to be clarified with help from [redacted] (I didn't know if it was ok to include [redacted] on this email so I left him off):

iv. (U) If required, provide Task Force Supply Sergeant with a Government Purchase Card for the Texas response and specific instructions outlining restrictions while on State Active Duty.

It is my understanding our GPC's are not authorized for use while on SAD. I believe the correct procedure is for the State of SD to issue the AGR Supply Sergeant their own version of a GPC that's tied to the State of SD funding as opposed to our federal funding…but I may be wrong on that detail.

I recommend discussing the correct procedures regarding GPC use while on SAD w/ [redacted] and the G4 this morning if possible.

VR,

[redacted]

Financial Manager

USPFO SDARNG

[redacted] (o)

[redacted] (c)

[redacted]

From: [redacted] > >
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 8:56 AM
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[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 6:28 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA)
Subject: RE: Texas Response OPORD

I will, once given the green light to do so. Not sure how much, or if OEM is read in on this yet.

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG NG J8 (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 4:07 AM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[redacted]@mail.mil>
Subject: Fwd: Texas Response OPORD

Assume you are working with the state EOM for an EMAC

[redacted]

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DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office:
Cell:
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

Copy__of___copies
SD-JFHQ
Rapid City, SD
241700TJUN21
21-07

OPERATION ORDER 21-08 (Texas Response)

(U) Reference:

a) (U) South Dakota National Guard All Hazard Plan.

b) (U) Texas Governor State of Emergency Declaration

(U) Time Zone Used Throughout the OPORD: TANGO

(U) Task Organization:
SD-JFHQ
JFHQ
109th Regional Support Group (RSG)
196th Maneuver Enhanced Brigade (MEB)
196th Regional Training Institute (RTI)

1. (U) Situation. The Governor of Texas has issued a proclamation certifying that the ongoing surge of individuals unlawfully crossing the Texas-Mexico border poses an ongoing and imminent threat of widespread and severe damage, injury, and loss of life and property, including property damage, property crime, human trafficking, violent crime, threats to public health, and a violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, in certain Texas counties and for all state agencies affected by this emergency declaration. South Dakota Governor, Kristi Noem, has ordered the South Dakota Department of Military to begin planning for a response force consisting of South Dakota National Guard personnel to respond and assist Texas State Agencies in a State Active Duty (SAD) status as needed.

2. (U) Mission. On order, 153rd EN BN will establish Task Force Rushmore to alert, mobilize, deploy, and assist the State of Texas in response to the increasing immigrant population crossing the Texas Border NLT 06000JUL21.

3. (U) Execution.

a. (U) Commander's Intent. TF Rushmore Soldiers will report to their designated armories, begin abbreviated mobilization, draw appropriate equipment, move to designated consolidation facility (Huron Armory) to complete final mobilization requirements and deploy to Texas to execute mission on or about the 10 JUL 21.

b. (U) Concept of Operations. Task Force Rushmore will deploy volunteers in a State Active Duty status. Soldiers will complete abbreviated mobilization tasks to include weapon familiarization on required response weapons. Once complete, Task Force Rushmore will

conduct a ground movement to a specified location in Texas and conduct RSOI operations and begin the mission assignment.

End State: SDARNG provides Soldiers and resources to support the State of Texas' emergency declaration and safely return to home station without incident to refit and prepare for follow on missions.

c. (U) Tasks to Subordinate Units.

(1) (U) JFHQ.

(2) (U) 109th RSG.

i. (U) BPT plan transportation of the following Task Force Rushmore vehicles and container to Texas (destination TBD):

a. (U) 11 x Uparmored Humvees

b. (U) 1 x LMTV

c. (U) 2 x FLA

d. (U) 1 x Quadcon

e. (U) 2 x Maintenance Contact Truck

ii. (U) BPT to provide drivers for Bluebird buses should the Task Force conduct ground transportation by government bus.

(3) (U) 153rd EN BN.

i. (U) BPT conduct the following tasks.

ii. Provide the following Soldiers in a State Active Duty Status:

a. Task Force CDR / LNO – O4

a. (U) 1 x TF PLT LDR – O2

b. (U) 1 x NCOIC – E7

c. (U) 2 x Squad Leader – E6

d. (U) 4 x Team Leader – E5

e. (U) 28 x E4/E5 (MOS Immaterial)

f. (U) 2 x Medic – E5

g. (U) 2 x Medic – E4

h. (U) 1 x Log NCO – E7

i. (U) 1 x Log/Admin NCO – E5

j. (U) 5 x Maintenance Personnel – E5/E6

ii. (U) Provide the following vehicles for Task Force Rushmore:

a. (U) 11 x 4-door, uparmored Humvees

b. (U) 1 x LMTV

c. (U) 2 x Maintenance Contact Truck

d. (U) 2 x FLA

iii. (U) BPT facilitate a weapons familiarization shoot for all deploying personnel for their assigned weapon.

(4) (U) 196th RTI.

(5) (U) Tasks to Staff.

(a) (U) G1

i. (U) BPT publish a State Active Duty order for Soldier's employers as required.

ii. (U) BPT forward a Task Force manifest to Texas G1 for designated personnel.

iii. (U) Brief all Task Force on medical situation and other coverages since the Task Force will not be in a military status.

(b) (U) G3.

i. (U) BPT schedule and coordinate weapon familiarization for all responding Task Force Soldiers.

ii. (U) BPT draw sufficient amount of ammunition from the SDNG Operational Load. These rounds will be used for familiarization only.

iii. (U) BPT coordinate with Texas agencies for basic ammo load.

(c) (U) G4

iii. (U) provide refueling procedures and procurement instructions for the purchase of fuel while deployed in Texas and to RSG forces line hauling the equipment.

iv. (U) If required, provide Task Force Supply Sergeant with a Government Purchase Card for the Texas response and specific instructions outlining restrictions while on State Active Duty.

v. (U) Coordinate the issue of CL I to the Task Force for emergency purposes.

vi. (U) Provide a maintenance POC to coordinate requirements while enroute to and from Texas as required.

vii. (U) Coordinate to ensure that all FLAs and CLS bags deploy with all required supplies. BPT to procure items that are needed with a short suspense to meet mission requirements.

viii. (U) Coordinate for the use of one quadcon for Taskforce Rushmore. The Quadcon needs to be positioned at the Huron armory.

iv. (U) Coordinate either military buses or commercial charter buses for ground transportation to Texas.

x. (U) Coordinate with units to ensure that TF Rushmore departs with sufficient weapons racks and locks to properly secure their weapons as needed.

xi. (U) Ensure that Task Force Rushmore has sufficient M9 pistols, magazines, and holsters if required.

(d) (U) G6.

i. (U) BPT provide sufficient hand-held radios for individual communications

ii. (U) BPT provide four mifi devices to Task Force to enable redundant communications

iii. (U) BPT provide one cellular phone to the TF CDR, TF PLT LDR, TF NCOIC, LOG NCOIC

(e) (U) USPFO.

i. (U) BPT size and issue a vest w/sappi plates to each TF Rushmore Member at the Huron Armory during the mobilization process.

ii. (U) BPT to fill any OCIE shortages prior to departure of TF Rushmore to Texas.

(f) (U) SJA BPT coordinate with Texas SJA to receive Rules for the Use of Force (RUF) and brief to Task Force if required.

d. (U) Coordinating Instructions.

(1) (U) All Task Force Rushmore personnel will deploy with all OCIE for a summer weather deployment. Specific Packing list will be published by the TF NCOIC.

(2) (U) Volunteers will need to be licensed on deploying vehicles if possible. Vehicles are an uparmored Humvee and LMTV. Medics will drive FLAs. Maintenance personnel will drive Contact Trucks.

(3) (U) No personnel weapons or ammunition are authorized for this deployment.

(4) (U) Task Force will submit Daily SITREPS to the JOC.

(5) (U) Soldiers will mobilize on State Active Duty orders.

(6) (U) Fueling Operations. All vehicles used both by Task Force personnel and support units during the mobilization process and travel to Texas will use that vehicle's fuel card. On the back of the receipt will have the following items:

i. (U) Printed Name

ii. (U) Bumper Number of vehicle

iii. (U) Annotate "SAD" on the receipt

iv. (U) Date

v. (U) Mileage of vehicle

vi. (U) Dollar amount of fuel

vii. (U) Quantity of Fuel

4. (U) Sustainment.

a. (U) Logistics. TBP

b. (U) Personnel.

5. (U) Command and Signal.

a. (U) Command. TF CDR/LNO, DOMS-SD, TAG-SD

b. (U) Control. TF Rushmore will be TACON to the DOMS-SD from notification to closure at SD-RSOI Site. Once SD-RSOI is complete, TF Rushmore will be OPCON to the Texas Army National Guard until released to travel back to South Dakota. Once released, TF Rushmore will be TACON back to the DOMS-SD until TF Rushmore is released at Huron Armory by property authority.

c. (U) SD Directorates will coordinate all support through DOMS-SD.

d. (U) Signal. Primary: Phone, Alternate: Email System, Contingency: State Radio, Channel 1SD JOC while in South Dakota, Emergency: Personal Cell phone.

ACKNOWLEDGE:

OSTER
BG

OFFICIAL:

[redacted]
DCSOPS

DISTRIBUTION:
109th RSG, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57702-8186
196th MEB, 801 West National Guard Dr, Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57104-0117
196th Regiment (RTI), 60 Sheridan Road, Fort Meade, SD 57741-0317
JFHQ, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57701-8186

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Copy__of___copies
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a. (U) Logistics. TBP

b. (U) Personnel.

5. (U) Command and Signal.

a. (U) Command. TF CDR/LNO, DOMS-SD, TAG-SD

b. (U) Control. TF Rushmore will be TACON to the DOMS-SD from notification to closure at SD-RSOI Site. Once SD-RSOI is complete, TF Rushmore will be OPCON to the Texas Army National Guard until released to travel back to South Dakota. Once released, TF Rushmore will be TACON back to the DOMS-SD until TF Rushmore is released at Huron Armory by property authority.

c. (U) SD Directorates will coordinate all support through DOMS-SD.

d. (U) Signal. Primary: Phone, Alternate: Email System, Contingency: State Radio, Channel 1SD JOC while in South Dakota, Emergency: Personal Cell phone.

ACKNOWLEDGE:

OSTER
BG

OFFICIAL:

[redacted]
DCSOPS

DISTRIBUTION:
109th RSG, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57702-8186
196th MEB, 801 West National Guard Dr, Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57104-0117
196th Regiment (RTI), 60 Sheridan Road, Fort Meade, SD 57741-0317
JFHQ, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57701-8186

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Thursday, June 24, 2021 4:04 PM
To: [redacted] (USA)
Cc: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: FW: Texas Response OPORD
Attachments: OPORD 21-08 (Texas Response).docx

Directors,

Attached you will find the Be Prepared TO OPORD for the Texas Response that we pushed to LTC [redacted] and the 153rd Task Force this afternoon to allow the 153rd staff to begin planning for the upcoming potential SAD mission.

This information is close hold and should not be shared outside of your immediate staff. Please ensure it's not released to social media or discussed outside of your section until after it is announced by the GOV-SD.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks and have a great NG day.

V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Thursday, June 24, 2021 3:59 PM
To: MG Jeff Marlette (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <michael.j.oster4.mil@mail.mil>; Pardy, Patrick T BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <patrick.t.pardy.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted]>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>
Subject: Texas Response OPORD

Sir,

Attached you will find the Be Prepared TO OPORD for the Texas Response that we pushed to the LTC [redacted] and the 153rd Task Force this afternoon to allow the 153rd staff to begin planning. For planning purposes, we added a small maintenance team in the event they bring vehicles/equipment. As the mission becomes more defined we will FRAGO

any changes needed to meet mission requirements. This includes adding or removing equipment and/or personal gear. I reminded the 153rd that the OPORDER is planning only and the information should be close hold. Please let me know if you have any questions.

V/r,

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

Copy__of___copies
SD-JFHQ
Rapid City, SD
241700TJUN21
21-07

OPERATION ORDER 21-08 (Texas Response)

(U) Reference:

a) (U) South Dakota National Guard All Hazard Plan.

b) (U) Texas Governor State of Emergency Declaration

(U) Time Zone Used Throughout the OPORD: TANGO

(U) Task Organization:
SD-JFHQ
JFHQ
109th Regional Support Group (RSG)
196th Maneuver Enhanced Brigade (MEB)
196th Regional Training Institute (RTI)

1. (U) Situation. The Governor of Texas has issued a proclamation certifying that the ongoing surge of individuals unlawfully crossing the Texas-Mexico border poses an ongoing and imminent threat of widespread and severe damage, injury, and loss of life and property, including property damage, property crime, human trafficking, violent crime, threats to public health, and a violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, in certain Texas counties and for all state agencies affected by this emergency declaration. South Dakota Governor, Kristi Noem, has ordered the South Dakota Department of Military to begin planning for a response force consisting of South Dakota National Guard personnel to respond and assist Texas State Agencies in a State Active Duty (SAD) status as needed.

2. (U) Mission. On order, 153rd EN BN will establish Task Force Rushmore to alert, mobilize, deploy, and assist the State of Texas in response to the increasing immigrant population crossing the Texas Border NLT 06000JUL21.

3. (U) Execution.

a. (U) Commander's Intent. TF Rushmore Soldiers will report to their designated armories, begin abbreviated mobilization, draw appropriate equipment, move to designated consolidation facility (Huron Armory) to complete final mobilization requirements and deploy to Texas to execute mission on or about the 10 JUL 21.

b. (U) Concept of Operations. Task Force Rushmore will deploy volunteers in a State Active Duty status. Soldiers will complete abbreviated mobilization tasks to include weapon familiarization on required response weapons. Once complete, Task Force Rushmore will

conduct a ground movement to a specified location in Texas and conduct RSOI operations and begin the mission assignment.

End State: SDARNG provides Soldiers and resources to support the State of Texas' emergency declaration and safely return to home station without incident to refit and prepare for follow on missions.

c. (U) Tasks to Subordinate Units.

(1) (U) JFHQ.

(2) (U) 109th RSG.

i. (U) BPT plan transportation of the following Task Force Rushmore vehicles and container to Texas (destination TBD):

a. (U) 11 x Uparmored Humvees

b. (U) 1 x LMTV

c. (U) 2 x FLA

d. (U) 1 x Quadcon

e. (U) 2 x Maintenance Contact Truck

ii. (U) BPT to provide drivers for Bluebird buses should the Task Force conduct ground transportation by government bus.

(3) (U) 153rd EN BN.

i. (U) BPT conduct the following tasks.

ii. Provide the following Soldiers in a State Active Duty Status:

a. Task Force CDR / LNO – O4

a. (U) 1 x TF PLT LDR – O2

b. (U) 1 x NCOIC – E7

c. (U) 2 x Squad Leader – E6

d. (U) 4 x Team Leader – E5

e. (U) 28 x E4/E5 (MOS Immaterial)

f. (U) 2 x Medic – E5

g. (U) 2 x Medic – E4

h. (U) 1 x Log NCO – E7

i. (U) 1 x Log/Admin NCO – E5

j. (U) 5 x Maintenance Personnel – E5/E6

ii. (U) Provide the following vehicles for Task Force Rushmore:

a. (U) 11 x 4-door, uparmored Humvees

b. (U) 1 x LMTV

c. (U) 2 x Maintenance Contact Truck

d. (U) 2 x FLA

iii. (U) BPT facilitate a weapons familiarization shoot for all deploying personnel for their assigned weapon.

(4) (U) 196th RTI.

(5) (U) Tasks to Staff.

(a) (U) G1

i. (U) BPT publish a State Active Duty order for Soldier's employers as required.

ii. (U) BPT forward a Task Force manifest to Texas G1 for designated personnel.

iii. (U) Brief all Task Force on medical situation and other coverages since the Task Force will not be in a military status.

(b) (U) G3.

i. (U) BPT schedule and coordinate weapon familiarization for all responding Task Force Soldiers.

ii. (U) BPT draw sufficient amount of ammunition from the SDNG Operational Load. These rounds will be used for familiarization only.

iii. (U) BPT coordinate with Texas agencies for basic ammo load.

(c) (U) G4

iii. (U) provide refueling procedures and procurement instructions for the purchase of fuel while deployed in Texas and to RSG forces line hauling the equipment.

iv. (U) If required, provide Task Force Supply Sergeant with a Government Purchase Card for the Texas response and specific instructions outlining restrictions while on State Active Duty.

v. (U) Coordinate the issue of CL I to the Task Force for emergency purposes.

vi. (U) Provide a maintenance POC to coordinate requirements while enroute to and from Texas as required.

vii. (U) Coordinate to ensure that all FLAs and CLS bags deploy with all required supplies. BPT to procure items that are needed with a short suspense to meet mission requirements.

viii. (U) Coordinate for the use of one quadcon for Taskforce Rushmore. The Quadcon needs to be positioned at the Huron armory.

iv. (U) Coordinate either military buses or commercial charter buses for ground transportation to Texas.

x. (U) Coordinate with units to ensure that TF Rushmore departs with sufficient weapons racks and locks to properly secure their weapons as needed.

xi. (U) Ensure that Task Force Rushmore has sufficient M9 pistols, magazines, and holsters if required.

(d) (U) G6.

i. (U) BPT provide sufficient hand-held radios for individual communications

ii. (U) BPT provide four mifi devices to Task Force to enable redundant communications

iii. (U) BPT provide one cellular phone to the TF CDR, TF PLT LDR, TF NCOIC, LOG NCOIC

(e) (U) USPFO.

i. (U) BPT size and issue a vest w/sappi plates to each TF Rushmore Member at the Huron Armory during the mobilization process.

ii. (U) BPT to fill any OCIE shortages prior to departure of TF Rushmore to Texas.

(f) (U) SJA BPT coordinate with Texas SJA to receive Rules for the Use of Force (RUF) and brief to Task Force if required.

d. (U) Coordinating Instructions.

(1) (U) All Task Force Rushmore personnel will deploy with all OCIE for a summer weather deployment. Specific Packing list will be published by the TF NCOIC.

(2) (U) Volunteers will need to be licensed on deploying vehicles if possible. Vehicles are an uparmored Humvee and LMTV. Medics will drive FLAs. Maintenance personnel will drive Contact Trucks.

(3) (U) No personnel weapons or ammunition are authorized for this deployment.

(4) (U) Task Force will submit Daily SITREPS to the JOC.

(5) (U) Soldiers will mobilize on State Active Duty orders.

(6) (U) Fueling Operations. All vehicles used both by Task Force personnel and support units during the mobilization process and travel to Texas will use that vehicle's fuel card. On the back of the receipt will have the following items:

i. (U) Printed Name

ii. (U) Bumper Number of vehicle

iii. (U) Annotate "SAD" on the receipt

iv. (U) Date

v. (U) Mileage of vehicle

vi. (U) Dollar amount of fuel

vii. (U) Quantity of Fuel

4. (U) Sustainment.

a. (U) Logistics. TBP

b. (U) Personnel.

5. (U) Command and Signal.

a. (U) Command. TF CDR/LNO, DOMS-SD, TAG-SD

b. (U) Control. TF Rushmore will be TACON to the DOMS-SD from notification to closure at SD-RSOI Site. Once SD-RSOI is complete, TF Rushmore will be OPCON to the Texas Army National Guard until released to travel back to South Dakota. Once released, TF Rushmore will be TACON back to the DOMS-SD until TF Rushmore is released at Huron Armory by property authority.

c. (U) SD Directorates will coordinate all support through DOMS-SD.

d. (U) Signal. Primary: Phone, Alternate: Email System, Contingency: State Radio, Channel 1SD JOC while in South Dakota, Emergency: Personal Cell phone.

ACKNOWLEDGE:

OSTER
BG

OFFICIAL:

[redacted]
DCSOPS

DISTRIBUTION:
109th RSG, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57702-8186
196th MEB, 801 West National Guard Dr, Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57104-0117
196th Regiment (RTI), 60 Sheridan Road, Fort Meade, SD 57741-0317
JFHQ, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, South Dakota 57701-8186

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Thursday, June 24, 2021 3:54 PM
To: [redacted] MAJ USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Cc: Oster, Michael J BG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted]
Subject: Texas Response OPORD
Attachments: OPORD 21-08 (Texas Response).docx

ALCON,

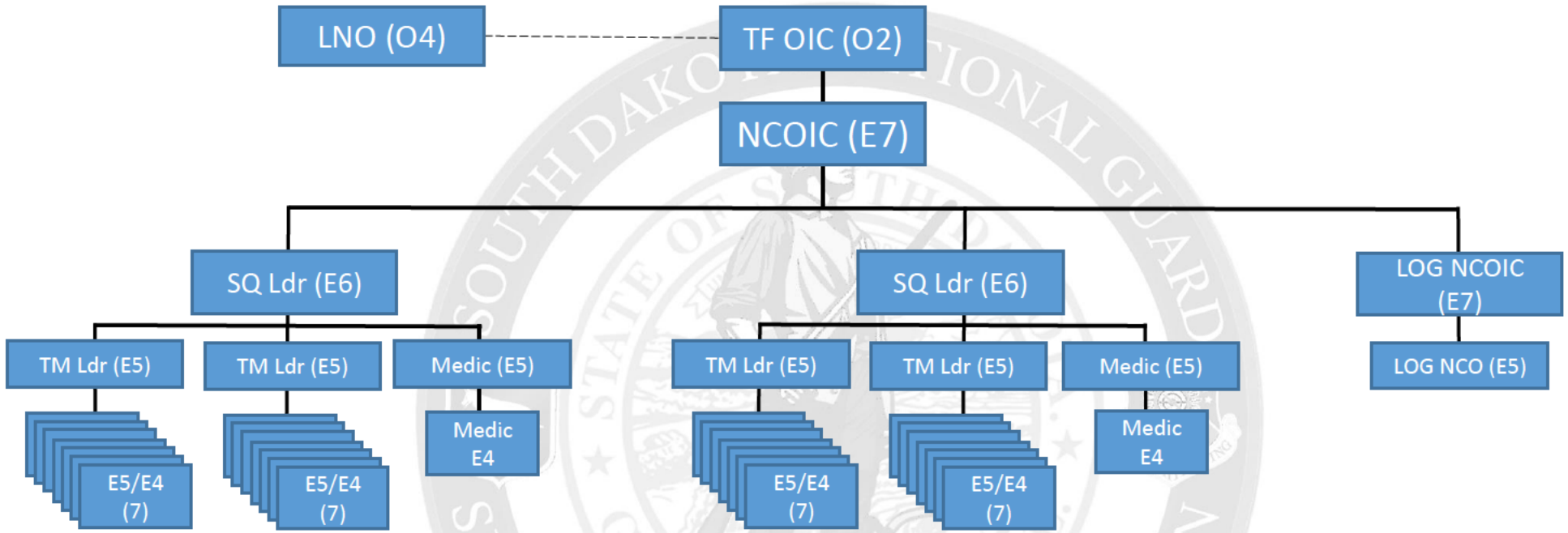
See attached ORORD for the potential SAD mission to support Texas. As a reminder, this is close hold at this point. We will FRAGO as needed, please use this document as your initial planning guidance. The G3 is available for questions.

V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

SDARNG Full Platoon COA 1



Personnel: 43
Pax cost per day: $10,418
Equipment cost per day: $800
Total cost per 30 days:
Personnel only: $312,540
Personnel and equipment: $336,551

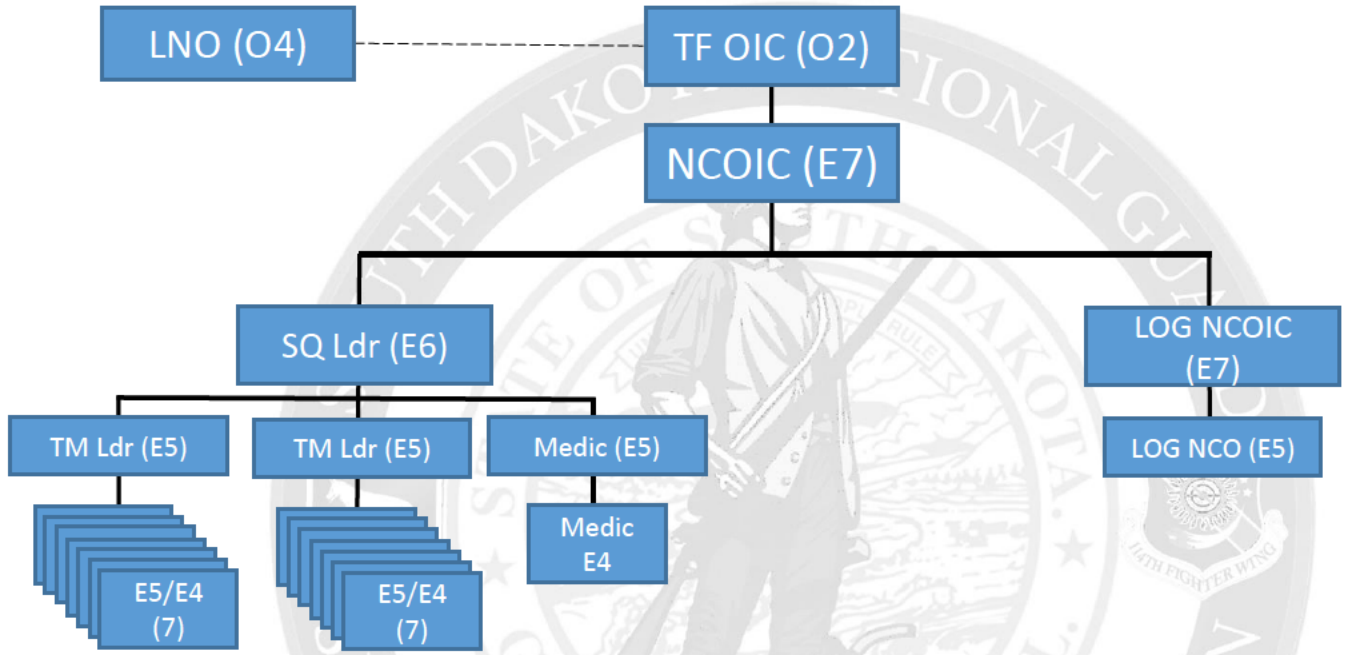
<u>Required gear</u>
OCIE
CD Gear
Assigned Weapon
CLS Bags (Medics)

<u>Equipment</u>
11 - Humvees
1 - LMTV
2 - FLAs

<u>Lift package</u>
8 - M915 semis with 872 trailers
1 - Quadcon
1 - Bus for personnel movement

- Additional roundtrip cost to move equipment and personnel to/from Texas: $72,033

SDARNG Squad Formation COA 2



Personnel: 24
Pax cost per day: $5,894
Equipment cost per day: $800
Total cost per 30 days:
Personnel only: $176,820
Personnel and equipment: $190,481

Required gear
OCIE
CD Gear
Assigned Weapon
CLS Bags (Medics)

Equipment
6 - Humvees
1 - LMTV
1 - FLA

Lift package
5 - M915 Semis with 872 trailers
1 - Quadcon
1 - Bus for personnel movement

- Additional roundtrip cost to move equipment and personnel to/from Texas: $47,142

Request for Information

- What is the Chain of Command?
- What personal weapons are required: M4 and M9?
- Will Soldiers be deputized by local Sherriff Office/Texas Attorney General
  - Texas will provide RUF brief.
- How long will mission set be required.
  - 60 day rotations with 45 days on the ground in Texas.

Class I

- Where do we draw rations or will it be 100% Per Diem?
- Where will Soldiers lodge?

Class III

- Where do we draw fuel from?
- How do we pay for fuel for vehicles while on mission? State cards/GPCs?

Class V

- How do we draw ammo?
  - Can we move ammo across state lines?

Class VIII

- How do we refill CLS bags

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 2:05 PM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Cc: [redacted]
Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)
Subject: RE: TX SAD Mission Brief
Attachments: State Response COAs for TX.pptx

Sir,

If you received this email twice, please delete the previous email and use this attached .PPT. We calculated the proper cost, but forgot to change the pax number to account for the LNO.

Attached you will find the .PPT with our two courses of action to support the SW border and the State of Texas. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you.

V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 12:48 PM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Attachments: Copy of Border Patrol Force Package (004).xlsx

[redacted] Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [redacted]
DSN: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

BORDER PATROL FORCE PACKAGE (BPFP)

a.	**TASK & PURPOSE:** Provide transportation services to deliver personnel and equipment from South Dakota to a requesting state to support local Law Enforcement for border support	b.	**CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS:** SD NGRF deploy to provide personnel and Civil Disturbance assets to support a requesting state in Border support.
c.	**SUPPORTED ESFs:** 7	d.	**LIMITATIONS:** Do not have cargo van trailers, only flat beds.

e. **PERSONNEL**

DUTY POSITION	RANK	QTY	PAY	TOTAL
TF OIC	O2	1	$ 217.79	$217.79
NCOIC	E7	2	$208.80	$417.60
Squad Leaders/Logistics NCOIC	E6	2	$198.00	$396.00
Team Leaders/Logistics/Medical	E5	3	$198.00	$594.00
Team Members	E4	15	$198.00	$2,970.00
Meal Rate (SD Rate per Person)	All		$40.00	$920.00
	Total	23		$5,515.39

f. **EQUIPMENT**

TYPE	QTY	NOTES
Trailer Landing Gear support (wood blocks)	20	
Civil Disturbance Capability Set	1	30 in a set
OCIE		
Assigned Weapons		
CLS Bags (Medics)		

VEHICLES

Vehicle Type	QTY	COST	TOTAL
HMMWV	6	$50.42	$302.52
LMTV	1	$59.84	$59.84
HMMWV AMB (FLA)	1	$93.05	$93.05
Passenger Bus	1	$38.69	$38.69
M-915 Tractor	5	$98.07	$490.35
M871/2 SERIES-TRL (Flatbed Trailer)	5	$18.59	$92.95

g.	**REQUIRED SUPPORT:** Billeting, Meals, Fuel, MHE, leased cargo trailers.	h.	**WORKS WITH:** SD OEM Logistics and operations
i.	**N-HOUR SEQUENCE:** N+24	j.	**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:** GSA Bus is reimbursed by daily rate and mileage (mileage not included in above estimate; 79 cents a mile)

k.	PERSONNEL COST PER DAY:	$5,515.39
	EQUIPMENT COST PER DAY:	$1,077.40
	TOTAL COST PER DAY:	**$6,592.79**

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 12:48 PM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: TX SAD Mission Brief

Great job with this mission planning! I really like this.

COL [redacted]
Army Chief of Staff
South Dakota Army National Guard
2823 West Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702-8186
☎ [redacted]

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [redacted] @mail.mil>
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 11:23 AM
To: [redacted] ; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] >
Subject: TX SAD Mission Brief

Attached is the presentation with costs that we will brief at 1300.

V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] >
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 11:21 AM
To: [redacted] >
Subject:

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 10:33 AM
To: [redacted] ; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Col USAF 114 MSG (US) (edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted] >
Subject: SAD Costs

BLUF:

COA 1:
42 pax to include wage, BAH, meal per diem at SD rate (daily) = $10,037.39
30 days total rate = $301,121.70
Equipment Cost (daily) = $1772.53
30 days total rate on equipment will vary as a tractor/trailer combo would only be needed to deliver equipment to TX and return to SD. HMMVW and FLA may incur a daily charge

COA 2:
23 pax to include wage, BAH, meal per diem at SD rate (daily) = $5515.39
30 days total rate = $165,461.70
Equipment Cost (daily) = $1077.40
30 days total rate on equipment will vary as a tractor/trailer combo would only be needed to deliver equipment to TX and return to SD. HMMVW and FLA may incur a daily charge

Daily cost per pax does NOT include lodging.

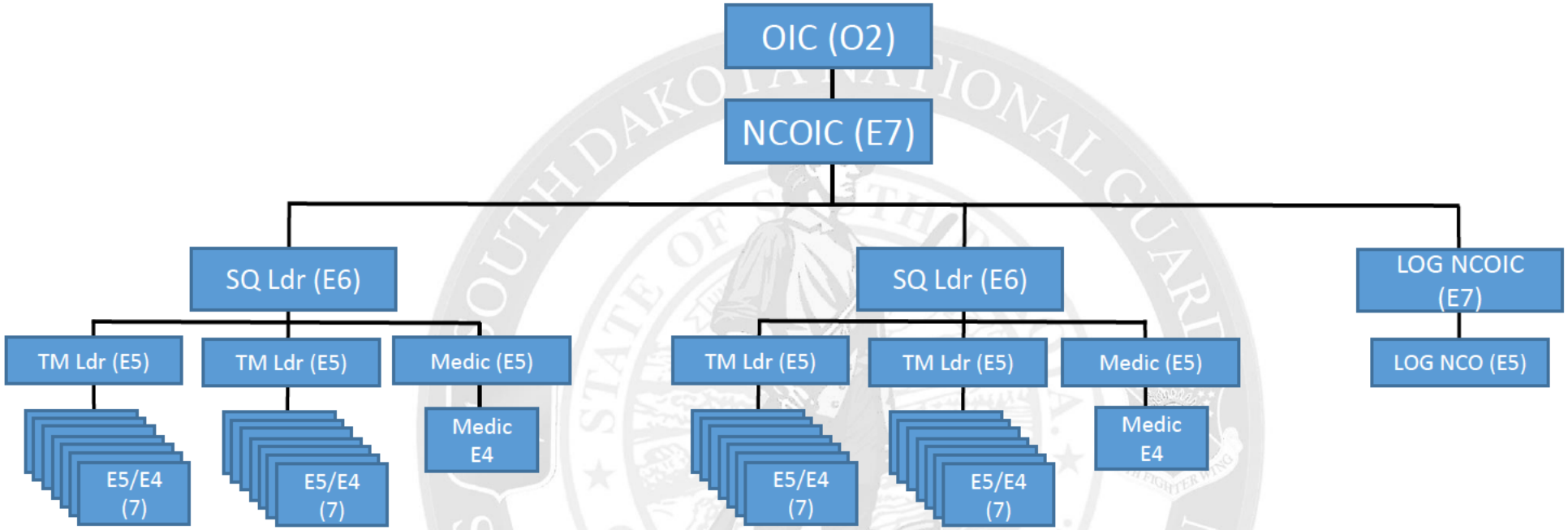
Let me know if you need anything further or to clarify.

[redacted]

[redacted] Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [redacted]
DSN: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

[redacted], Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [redacted]
DSN: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

SDARNG Full Platoon COA 1



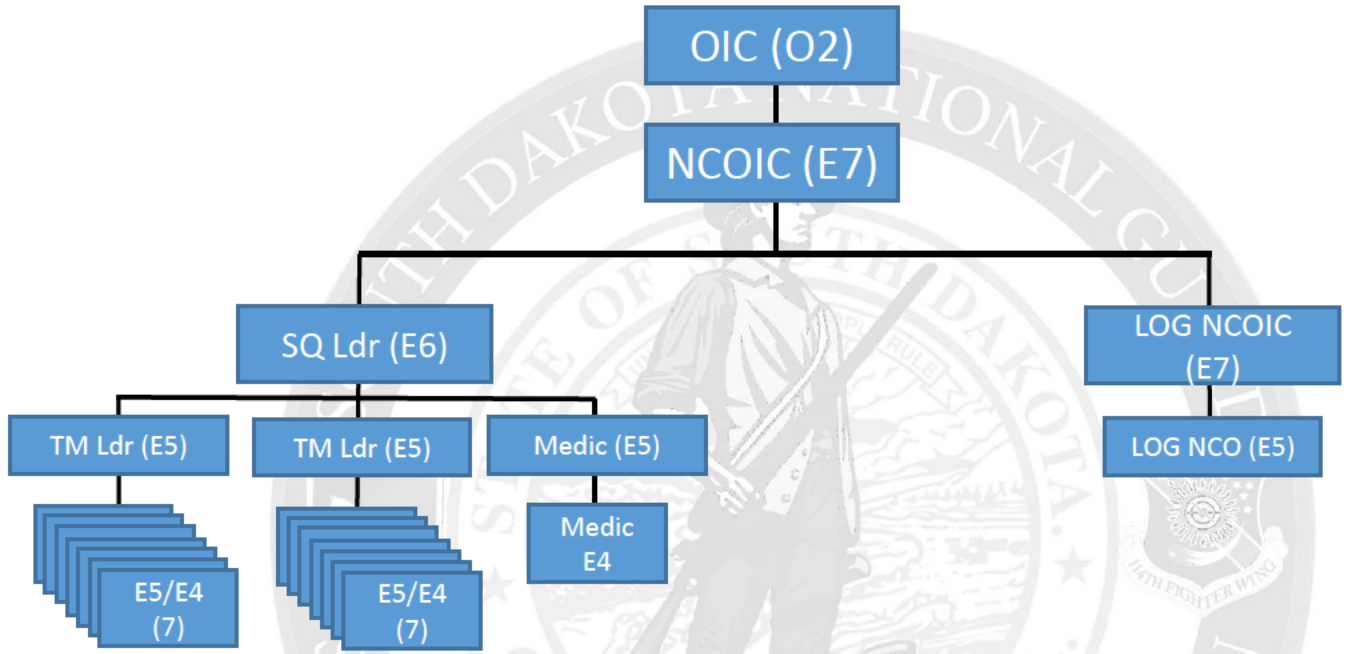
Personnel: 42
Pax cost per day: $10,039
Equipment cost per day: $800
Total cost per 30 days: $325,170

<u>Required gear</u>
OCIE
CD Gear
Assigned Weapon
CLS bags (Medics)

<u>Equipment</u>
11 - Humvees
1 - LMTV
2 - FLAs

<u>Lift package</u>
8 - M915's with 872 Trailers
1 - Quadcon
Bus for personnel movement
Cost for deployment:$71,006

SDARNG Squad Formation COA 2



Personnel: 23
Pax cost per day: $5,515
Equipment cost per day: $455
Total cost per 30 days: $179,100

<u>Required gear</u>
OCIE
CD Gear
Assigned Weapon
CLS bags (Medics)

<u>Equipment</u>
6 - Humvees
1 - LMTV
1 - FLAs

<u>Lift package</u>
8 - M915's with 872 Trailers
1 - Quadcon
Bus for personnel movement
Cost for deployment: $46,112

Request for Information

- What is the Chain of Command?
- What personal weapons are required: M4 and M9?
- Will Soldiers be deputized by local Sherriff Office/Texas Attorney General
  - Texas will provide RUF brief.
- How long will mission set be required.
  - 60 day rotations with 45 days on the ground in Texas.

Class I

- Where do we draw rations or will it be 100% Per Diem?
- Where will Soldiers lodge?

Class III

- Where do we draw fuel from?
- How do we pay for fuel for vehicles while on mission? State cards/GPCs?

Class V

- How do we draw ammo?
  - Can we move ammo across state lines?

- Class VIII
  - How do we refill CLS bags

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 11:23 AM
To: [redacted] Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA)
Cc: [redacted] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: TX SAD Mission Brief
Attachments: State Response COAs for TX.pptx

Attached is the presentation with costs that we will brief at 1300.

V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted]>
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 11:21 AM
To: [redacted]>
Subject:

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 10:33 AM
To: [redacted] ; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Col USAF 114 MSG (US) (edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: [redacted]>
Subject: SAD Costs

BLUF:

COA 1:
42 pax to include wage, BAH, meal per diem at SD rate (daily) = $10,037.39
30 days total rate = $301,121.70
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30 days total rate on equipment will vary as a tractor/trailer combo would only be needed to deliver equipment to TX and return to SD. HMMVW and FLA may incur a daily charge

COA 2:

23 pax to include wage, BAH, meal per diem at SD rate (daily) = $5515.39

30 days total rate = $165,461.70

Equipment Cost (daily) = $1077.40

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Daily cost per pax does NOT include lodging.

Let me know if you need anything further or to clarify.

[redacted]

[redacted], Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office [redacted]
DSN: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

[redacted], Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [redacted]
DSN: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@mail.mil

TF OIC - 1LT — 1
TF NCOIC - E7 — 1

2 Squads of 4 teams Each

Each Squad consists of...

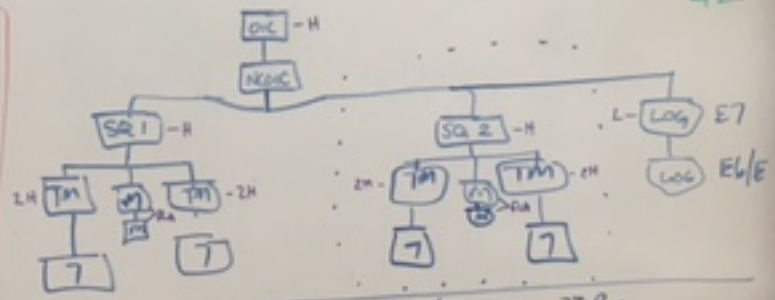
1 Squad Ldr E6	1
2 Team Ldrs E5	2
14 Soldiers E5↓	14
2 MEDIC E5↓	2
19 x 2 squads =	38
	40
2 Log Pax Per TF (E7/E5)	2
	42

1-1LT
2-E7
3-E6
6-E5
30-E4

42 Pax

H-11
L-1
FLA-2

+ Lift Package
8 M915
1 Gun/Crew
+ Pax/Aviation - Pax

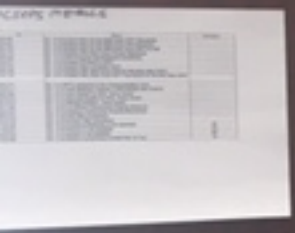


OCIE
CD GEAR
Weapons
Ammo - CL V
MED Bags - CL VIII
Fuel - III
Class IX

Per Diem
↳ Class 1
↳ Lodging

COA - 23 Pax
#2

1 1LT
2 E7
2 E6
3 E5
15 E4
23



[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 22, 2021 4:35 PM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: FW: [Non-DoD Source] SW Border Mission
Attachments: IMG_1928.JPG; ATT00001.txt

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] @gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 22, 2021 4:34 PM
To: [redacted] >
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] SW Border Mission

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: VANDERWOLDE, EDWIN A Brig Gen USAF ANG HQ SDANG/COS <edwin.vanderwolde@us.af.mil>
Sent: Monday, June 21, 2021 11:06 AM
To: [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA); [redacted] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Subject: FW: Governor Noem would love to help Texas with border

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: [redacted] > >
Date: Monday, Jun 21, 2021, 10:08 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil <mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil> >, [redacted] > >
Cc: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil <mailto:edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil> >, [redacted] >
Subject: RE: Governor Noem would love to help Texas with border

Sir,

A few bullet points for your discussion. These are all SDNG specific:

FACTS:
- Texas GOV has declared a State of Emergency. The request was for Law Enforcement (LE) and was sent to "All States"
    - SD OEM has not responded the request at this time
    - As of this AM, SD OEM has not received a formal OEM/EMAC request from any state

SDNG
- A request for any SDNG support would fall under an EMAC between SD and requesting state
- Soldiers would serve in a State Active Duty (SAD) status
- All EMAC expense request would be paid for by the requesting state (most likely via reimbursement)
- Depending on the request of the GOV-TX, SDNG would evaluate what resources (Personnel, Equipment, and Supplies) we have to support
- SDNG could request for volunteers or activate a unit to support any mission request
- The 235th MP CO is not available to support a LE mission. The 200th, our back up response unit, could be the unit we request volunteers from first
- It would take approximately 5-7 days to activate/train/qualify/move a unit to the requesting state
- Although the equipment set would most likely be light infantry, the SDNG has approximately 225 sets of CD gear. The decision would have to be made if we would be willing to send these to another state

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information.

V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

-----Original Message-----
From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Monday, June 21, 2021 8:51 AM
To: [redacted]
Cc: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] >
Subject: Governor Noem would love to help Texas with border

FYI - What does this mean to us? Best Options?

TV Clip: Governor Noem would love to help Texas with border
http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=669b9774-7f97-48c3-8646-f3231a72db95

Jeffrey P. Marlette
Major General, SDNG
The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700
Cell: (605) 484-7777

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Monday, June 21, 2021 10:32 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Cc: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA); [redacted] NFG NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: Governor Noem would love to help Texas with border

Thank You!

COL [redacted]
Army Chief of Staff
South Dakota Army National Guard
2823 West Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702-8186
☎ [redacted]

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted]>
Sent: Monday, June 21, 2021 10:08 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted]
Cc: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted]>
Subject: RE: Governor Noem would love to help Texas with border

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V/r,

[redacted]

COL [redacted]
DCSOPS (G3), SDARNG
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

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From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
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FYI - What does this mean to us? Best Options?

TV Clip: Governor Noem would love to help Texas with border
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Jeffrey P. Marlette
Major General, SDNG
The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700
Cell: (605) 484-7777

[redacted] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Sent: Monday, June 21, 2021 10:17 AM
To: [redacted] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: Governor Noem would love to help Texas with border

Thank you

Jeffrey P. Marlette
Major General, SDNG
The Adjutant General

Office: (605) 737-6700
Cell: (605) 484-7777

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted]
Sent: Monday, June 21, 2021 10:08 AM
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted]
Cc: Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>; [redacted] >
Subject: RE: Governor Noem would love to help Texas with border

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