

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 Oceania 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.

Gillibrand'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 off 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’Halloran, 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 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 priority 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 became 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 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 hangar 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 affects 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.

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 Oceania 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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From: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
To: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] Lt Col USAF 114 MDG (USA); [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] MAJ USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] CPT USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] MAJ USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] CPT USARMY (USA); [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA); [REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: FW: PA Update 29 June 2021
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:36:00 AM
Attachments: PA Update 29 June 2021.pdf
Defense Morning Clips 29 June 2021.pdf

Texas mission is a go, see first article.

COL [REDACTED]
Army Chief of Staff
South Dakota Army National Guard
2823 West Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702-8186
[REDACTED] (w), [REDACTED] (c)
[REDACTED] mil@mail mil

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] CIV NG NG PA (USA) <[REDACTED].civ@mail mil>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 5:00 AM
To: Hokanson, Daniel R GEN USARMY NG OCNGB (USA) <daniel.r.hokanson@mail mil>
Cc: [REDACTED] CIV NG NGB (USA) <[REDACTED].civ@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

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

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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

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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NM: Air Force Magazine (National) – New Mexico RED HORSE Commander Dies at Al Udeid – By Brian W. Everstine

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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.

<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

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>

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>

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>

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>

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>

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>

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>

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>

Very respectfully,

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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.

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>

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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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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

UNCLASSIFIED

Prepared by NGB Public Affairs

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>

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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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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>

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>

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.

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Prepared by NGB Public Affairs

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>

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>

5. PA: My Twin Tiers (Regional) – State Senate approves legislation allowing Pa. National Guard to distribute COVID-19 vaccine – By Kate Sweigart

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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."

Prepared by NGB Public Affairs

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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>

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:

Prepared by NGB Public Affairs

UNCLASSIFIED

(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>

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>

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED] [MSgt USAF NG SDARNG \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] South Dakota Travel Request UPDATED.docx
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 1:53:09 PM
Attachments: [South Dakota Travel Request UPDATED.docx](#)

South Dakota Travel Request										Bureau or Department DPS					Program Emergency Management																			
BOA Fleet & Travel Management										Division Emerg. Mgmt. Service					Indicate One: In-state <input type="checkbox"/> Out-of-State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>																			
SFN 01239-0002																																		
Billing Center Code (Last Two Digits Optional)										Method of Travel					Est. Miles (Personal Vehicle)																			
1	4	3	0	0			1	1		Airline																								
Travelers Name (Last, First, MI)										Office Phone 773-3231					Home Phone																			
Purpose of Travel															License Number																			
JOURNEY INFORMATION																																		
Journey Number					Origin Pierre					Odometer Reading					Departure Date / /					Departure Time					Indicate One: AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/>									
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REQUIRED: Return to Origin										Final Odometer Reading					Return Date and Time / /					AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/>														
Comments/Vehicle Problems/Repairs																																		
If Lodging is over \$175.00 per nite: <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Denied																																		

COST ESTIMATES FOR OUT OF STATE TRAVEL

Transportation \$			Meals \$			Lodging \$			Misc. Fees \$			Total \$			
General Funds \$				Federal Funds \$				Other Funds \$				Non-State Funds \$			

NOTE: Driver MUST sign to certify he/she holds a valid driver license

SIGNATURES

Traveler Signature			Date			Driver License Number			Expiration Date / /		
Approving Officer			Date			Approving Officer			Date		

AGENCY TRAVEL COORDINATOR USE

Coordinator Name						Date of Entry						Mode					
Comments																	
Ride Share Contact									Office Phone						Home Phone		

FLEET AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT USE - FOR HIGH MILEAGE REQUEST ONLY

Approval Signatures						Date						Comments					
Authorization Number																	

From: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
To: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
Subject: RE: Operation Lone Star Overview (UNCLASSIFIED)
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 11:21:46 AM

Sir,

I noticed that also and sent it to BG Vanderwolde and also sent [REDACTED] a text message to ensure to include him on future emails.

Scott

COL [REDACTED]

Army Chief of Staff

South Dakota Army National Guard

2823 West Main Street

Rapid City, SD 57702-8186

[REDACTED] (w), [REDACTED] (c)

[REDACTED] [.mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)>

From: Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 10:46 AM
To: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)>
Subject: Fwd: Operation Lone Star Overview (UNCLASSIFIED)

Not seeing Ed on this?

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "[REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)> >
Date: June 28, 2021 at 10:39:09 AM MDT
To: "Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>
<<mailto:jeffrey.p.marlette.mil@mail.mil>> >, "[REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)"
[REDACTED] Lt Col USAF 114 FW
(USA)" [REDACTED] COL USARMY
NG SDARNG (USA)" [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)> >
Cc: "[REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" <[\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)>

<[mailto:\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)> >

Subject: Fwd: Operation Lone Star Overview (UNCLASSIFIED)

Gentlemen,

I just received this from TX. Excellent brief on the mission and personal equipment.

■

From: "[REDACTED] MAJ USARMY NG TXARNG (USA)"

[\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil) > >>

Date: Sunday, June 27, 2021 at 23:38:01

To: "[REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)"

<[\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)> >>>

Cc: "[REDACTED] CPT USARMY NG TXARNG (USA)"

[\[REDACTED\] CPT USARMY NG TXARNG \(USA\)](mailto:[REDACTED] CPT USARMY NG TXARNG (USA))

[\[REDACTED\] CPT USARMY NG TXARNG \(USA\)](mailto:[REDACTED] CPT USARMY NG TXARNG (USA))

[\[REDACTED\]@dps.texas.gov](mailto:[REDACTED]@dps.texas.gov)<[mailto:\[REDACTED\]@dps.texas.gov](mailto:[REDACTED]@dps.texas.gov)

[\[REDACTED\] LTC USARMY NG TXARNG \(USA\)](mailto:[REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG TXARNG (USA))" [\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)<[mailto:\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)

>>

Subject: Operation Lone Star Overview (UNCLASSIFIED)

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Good Evening Sir,

Attached is an overview of Operation Lone Star and Task Force Salerno. We are continuing to refine the product as the operation has changed but I hope this provides some answers for any RFIs you may have. I will send an update tomorrow.

Thank you and let me know if you have any questions.

Very Respectfully,

[\[REDACTED\] MAJ, IN, TXARNG](mailto:[REDACTED] MAJ, IN, TXARNG)

[\[REDACTED\] 3-141 IN, S3](mailto:[REDACTED] 3-141 IN, S3)

[\[REDACTED\] FTUS OIC](mailto:[REDACTED] FTUS OIC)

[\[REDACTED\] HQ 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Battalion "Come And Take It!"](mailto:[REDACTED] HQ 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Battalion 'Come And Take It!')

[\[REDACTED\] 1100 Vo Tech Dr.](mailto:[REDACTED] 1100 Vo Tech Dr.)

[\[REDACTED\] Weslaco, TX 78599](mailto:[REDACTED] Weslaco, TX 78599)

Office: [\[REDACTED\]](mailto:[REDACTED])

(Primary)Personal Cell Phone: [\[REDACTED\]](mailto:[REDACTED])

(Alternate)Gov Cell Phone: [\[REDACTED\]](mailto:[REDACTED])

[\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)>

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT - Data contained in this communication is for use by authorized personnel and will not be disclosed to any person not otherwise authorized to receive this information IAW AFI 33-322 and DOD 5400.11R.

This communication is designated For Official Use Only (FOUO)

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

From: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
To: [Marlette, Jeffrey P MG USARMY NG SDARNG \(USA\)](mailto:Jeffrey.P.Marlette.mil@mail.mil)
Subject: Re: TF Salerno Initial Information
Date: Sunday, June 27, 2021 12:02:34 PM

[REDACTED] speaks highly of him.

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 11:29:43
To: " [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [.mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)> >
Subject: Re: TF Salerno Initial Information

Don't know him, but will trust [REDACTED] judgment.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 27, 2021, at 10:22 AM, [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
[REDACTED] [.mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)> wrote:

LTC [REDACTED] recommends the following for the LNO. CPT [REDACTED] (Law Enforcement in Vermillion, will be in an O-4 slot on 1 OCT at the MEB)

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 09:39:44
To: " [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)" [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [.mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil)> >
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

> On Jun 27, 2021, at 9:00 AM, [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
< [REDACTED] [.mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@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.
>
> 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>



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

May 31, 2021

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
8PM O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

Secretary of State

The Honorable Ruth R. Hughs
Secretary of State
State Capitol Room 1E.8
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Secretary Hughs:

Pursuant to his powers as Governor of the State of Texas, Greg Abbott has issued the following:

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 disaster.

The original proclamation is attached to this letter of transmittal.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Davidson
Executive Clerk to the Governor

GSD/gsd

Attachment

PROCLAMATION

BY THE

Governor of the State of Texas

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME:

WHEREAS, securing the international border is the federal government's responsibility, but the State of Texas has consistently taken action to ensure the safety of all Texans by augmenting federal border security efforts at the Texas-Mexico border; and

WHEREAS, since 2014, Texas has spent roughly \$3.5 billion to help secure the border and protect public safety; and

WHEREAS, in 2021 alone, I have deployed 1,000 troopers from the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and hundreds of soldiers from the Texas National Guard to the border; and

WHEREAS, on March 6, 2021, amidst escalating border crossings, I directed DPS to initiate Operation Lone Star and devote additional law enforcement resources towards deterring illegal border crossings and protecting our border communities; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2021, I expanded Operation Lone Star to have DPS interview unaccompanied alien children to identify victims of human trafficking and gain actionable intelligence that will aid in the arrest of traffickers; and

WHEREAS, in fewer than three months since Operation Lone Star began, DPS has made over 1,300 criminal arrests, apprehended over 35,000 illegal migrants, and seized over 10,000 pounds of drugs and over 100 firearms; and

WHEREAS, the federal government used to take seriously its responsibility to enforce federal immigration laws and secure the international border, which allowed Texas to collaborate on law enforcement and related activities along the border; and

WHEREAS, under the Biden Administration, however, the federal government has shown unwillingness, ambivalence, or inability to enforce federal immigration laws, to deter and stop illegal border crossings into the United States, or to meaningfully partner with Texas in pursuing these goals; and

WHEREAS, my calls for the federal government to do its job and secure the border have gone unanswered; and

WHEREAS, the Biden Administration's inaction, whether intentional, reckless, or negligent, is causing a dramatic increase in the number of individuals unlawfully crossing the international border into Texas; and

WHEREAS, the Biden Administration's immigration policies are failing Texans, causing a humanitarian crisis in many Texas communities along the border; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous reports of farmers, ranchers, and other Texans suffering property damage as a result of the increase in unlawful crossings, including damage to crops, livestock, ranch fences, and homes; and

WHEREAS, the Biden Administration's open-border policies have enabled escalating violence from the cartels, dramatically increased the risk of human trafficking, and created a severe crisis of illegal drugs crossing into the United States, including 21.5

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
9pm O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

million lethal doses of fentanyl that were intercepted by DPS from January through April 2021, all of which threatens harm throughout Texas and in other states; and

WHEREAS, the arrest of human smugglers by state and local law enforcement, combined with increased arrests connected with other border-related crime, threatens to substantially increase inmate population in jails to the extent that there may not be an adequate number of jail beds available; and

WHEREAS, the federal government's failure to secure the border has led to so many individuals unlawfully crossing the border that it has unilaterally established roughly ten new migrant detention facilities in Texas that are operated exclusively by the federal government, without any state regulation or oversight; and

WHEREAS, while Texas previously licensed certain residential facilities that house unaccompanied alien children or families, the U.S. Constitution prohibits the federal government from commandeering the State of Texas or its officials to continue administering state-licensed facilities in response to a federal migrant detention crisis caused by the acts or omissions of the federal government; and

WHEREAS, the unabated influx of individuals resulting from federal government policies threatens to negatively impact state-licensed residential facilities, including those that serve Texas children in foster care; and

WHEREAS, in the Texas Disaster Act of 1975, the Legislature charged the Governor with the responsibility "for meeting . . . the dangers to the state and people presented by disasters" under Section 418.011 of the Texas Government Code, and expressly granted the Governor broad authority to fulfill that responsibility; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature has, in Section 418.004(1), defined a "disaster" as "the occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural or man-made cause;" and

WHEREAS, under Texas law, declaring a disaster allows the use of all available state and local resources needed to manage the situation, activates the state emergency management plan, and empowers the Texas Division of Emergency Management to reassign and fully utilize appropriate personnel where they are needed most; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature has also, in Section 12.50 of the Texas Penal Code, increased the punishments available for certain criminal offenses committed in an area for which a disaster has been declared, including for criminal trespass, burglary, and theft; and

WHEREAS, declaring a disaster also allows the State of Texas to request federal funding for costs related to the disaster, and a number of counties have already declared a local disaster and started accounting for costs that can be made part of a request (Crockett, Edwards, Goliad, Gonzales, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Kinney, Lavaca, La Salle, Maverick, Presidio, Uvalde, Real, and Val Verde counties); and

WHEREAS, declaring a disaster also allows the State of Texas to request federal funding for costs related to the disaster, and a number of counties have already declared a local disaster and started accounting for costs that can be made part of a request (Crockett, Edwards, Goliad, Gonzales, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Kinney, La Salle, Lavaca, Maverick, Presidio, Real, Uvalde, and Val Verde counties);

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GREG ABBOTT, Governor of the State of Texas, in accordance
FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
8pm O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

with the authority vested in me by Section 418.014 of the Texas Government Code, do hereby certify 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 Brewster, Brooks, Cameron, Crockett, Culberson, Dimmit, Duval, Edwards, El Paso, Goliad, Gonzales, Hidalgo, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, Kinney, La Salle, Lavaca, Maverick, McMullen, Pecos, Presidio, Real, Reeves, Starr, Sutton, Terrell, Uvalde, Val Verde, Webb, Willacy, Zapata, and Zavala counties, and for all state agencies affected by this disaster. I do hereby declare a state of disaster for all listed counties covered by this disaster declaration and for all state agencies affected by this disaster.

Pursuant to Section 418.017, I authorize the use of all available resources of state government and of political subdivisions that are reasonably necessary to cope with this disaster, including the use of all available resources of state and local law enforcement to assist and protect Texans from criminal activity and property damage.

I hereby direct DPS to use available resources to enforce all applicable federal and state laws to prevent the criminal activity along the border, including criminal trespassing, smuggling, and human trafficking, and to assist Texas counties in their efforts to address those criminal activities.

I hereby direct the Texas Commission on Jail Standards and the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement to work with Texas counties, to provide appropriate guidance, and to request from the Office of the Governor any necessary suspensions of law, in order to ensure that the counties have the flexibility needed to establish adequate alternative detention facilities or otherwise add or expand capacity; to streamline procedures for licensing and transfers; and to address any staffing issues that may arise in expanding capacity.

I hereby direct the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to take all necessary steps to discontinue state licensing of any child-care facility in this state that shelters or detains unlawful immigrants or other individuals not lawfully present in the United States under a contract with the federal government. Pursuant to Section 418.016 of the Texas Government Code, I hereby suspend Sections 42.046 and 42.048 of the Texas Human Resources Code, and all other relevant laws, to the extent necessary to allow HHSC to deny a license application for any new child-care facility that shelters or detains unlawful immigrants or other individuals not lawfully present in the United States under a contract with the federal government, to renew any existing such licenses for no longer than a 90-day period following the date of this order, and to provide notice and initiate a 90-day period beginning on the date of this order to wind down any existing such licenses.

Pursuant to Section 418.016, any regulatory statute prescribing the procedures for conduct of state business or any order or rule of a state agency that would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with this disaster shall be suspended upon written approval of the Office of the Governor. However, to the extent that the enforcement of any state statute or administrative rule regarding contracting or procurement would impede any state agency's emergency response that is necessary to protect life or property threatened by this declared disaster, I hereby authorize the suspension of such statutes and rules for the duration of this declared disaster.

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
SPM O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

In accordance with the statutory requirements, copies of this proclamation shall be filed with the applicable authorities.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto signed my name and have officially caused the Seal of State to be affixed at my office in the City of Austin, Texas, this the 31st day of May, 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Abbott".

GREG ABBOTT
Governor

ATTESTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth R. Hughs".

RUTH R. HUGHS
Secretary of State

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
8pm O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

From: [REDACTED] [Lt Col USAF 114 FW \(USA\)](#)
To: [REDACTED] [COL USARMY NG SDARNG \(USA\)](#); [REDACTED] [LTC USARMY NG SDARNG \(US\)](#)
[REDACTED] [COL USARMY NG SDARNG \(USA\)](#); [Vanderwolde, Edwin A Col](#)
[USAF 114 MSG \(US\)](#) (edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil)
Cc: [REDACTED] [TSgt USAF NG SDANG \(US\)](#) ([\[REDACTED\].mil@mail.mil](mailto:[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil))
Subject: TX Gov Abbott's Emergency Declaration
Date: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 2:54:00 PM
Attachments: [DISASTER border security IMAGE 05-31-2021.pdf](#)

Gentlemen,

FYSA. See attached for reference if needed.

[REDACTED], Lt Col, SDANG
Director of Military Support
Deputy J3/7
South Dakota National Guard
Office: [REDACTED]
DSN: [REDACTED]
Cell: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED].mil@mail.mil

From: [REDACTED] [Lt Col USAF 114 FW \(USA\)](#)
To: [REDACTED] [CW3 USARMY NG NGB OSAA \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: Governor Abbott's Disaster Declaration for the Texas-Mexico border
Date: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 2:54:00 PM

That was quick, well done!

From: [REDACTED] CW3 USARMY NG NGB OSAA (USA) <[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil>
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 2:53 PM
To: [REDACTED] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil>
Cc: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil>; NG SD SDARNG List J3 JOC <ng.sd.sdarng.list.j3-joc@mail.mil>
Subject: FW: Governor Abbott's Disaster Declaration for the Texas-Mexico border

FYSA

From: NG TX TXARNG Mailbox JOC <ng.tx.txarng.mbx.joc@mail.mil> <<mailto:ng.tx.txarng.mbx.joc@mail.mil>>
>
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 2:52 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>> >
Cc: NG TX TXARNG Mailbox JOC <ng.tx.txarng.mbx.joc@mail.mil> <<mailto:ng.tx.txarng.mbx.joc@mail.mil>> >
Subject: Governor Abbott's Disaster Declaration for the Texas-Mexico border

ALCON,

Governor Abbott's Declaration of Emergency for the border crisis is attached as requested.

V/R,

SSG [REDACTED]

Battle NCO

Joint Operations Center

Unsecure

[REDACTED]/DSN [REDACTED]

ng.tx.txarng.mbx.joc@mail.mil <<mailto:ng.tx.txarng.mbx.joc@mail.mil>>



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

May 31, 2021

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
8PM O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

Secretary of State

The Honorable Ruth R. Hughs
Secretary of State
State Capitol Room 1E.8
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Secretary Hughs:

Pursuant to his powers as Governor of the State of Texas, Greg Abbott has issued the following:

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 disaster.

The original proclamation is attached to this letter of transmittal.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Davidson
Executive Clerk to the Governor

GSD/gsd

Attachment

PROCLAMATION

BY THE

Governor of the State of Texas

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME:

WHEREAS, securing the international border is the federal government's responsibility, but the State of Texas has consistently taken action to ensure the safety of all Texans by augmenting federal border security efforts at the Texas-Mexico border; and

WHEREAS, since 2014, Texas has spent roughly \$3.5 billion to help secure the border and protect public safety; and

WHEREAS, in 2021 alone, I have deployed 1,000 troopers from the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and hundreds of soldiers from the Texas National Guard to the border; and

WHEREAS, on March 6, 2021, amidst escalating border crossings, I directed DPS to initiate Operation Lone Star and devote additional law enforcement resources towards deterring illegal border crossings and protecting our border communities; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2021, I expanded Operation Lone Star to have DPS interview unaccompanied alien children to identify victims of human trafficking and gain actionable intelligence that will aid in the arrest of traffickers; and

WHEREAS, in fewer than three months since Operation Lone Star began, DPS has made over 1,300 criminal arrests, apprehended over 35,000 illegal migrants, and seized over 10,000 pounds of drugs and over 100 firearms; and

WHEREAS, the federal government used to take seriously its responsibility to enforce federal immigration laws and secure the international border, which allowed Texas to collaborate on law enforcement and related activities along the border; and

WHEREAS, under the Biden Administration, however, the federal government has shown unwillingness, ambivalence, or inability to enforce federal immigration laws, to deter and stop illegal border crossings into the United States, or to meaningfully partner with Texas in pursuing these goals; and

WHEREAS, my calls for the federal government to do its job and secure the border have gone unanswered; and

WHEREAS, the Biden Administration's inaction, whether intentional, reckless, or negligent, is causing a dramatic increase in the number of individuals unlawfully crossing the international border into Texas; and

WHEREAS, the Biden Administration's immigration policies are failing Texans, causing a humanitarian crisis in many Texas communities along the border; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous reports of farmers, ranchers, and other Texans suffering property damage as a result of the increase in unlawful crossings, including damage to crops, livestock, ranch fences, and homes; and

WHEREAS, the Biden Administration's open-border policies have enabled escalating violence from the cartels, dramatically increased the risk of human trafficking, and created a severe crisis of illegal drugs crossing into the United States, including 21.5

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
9pm O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

million lethal doses of fentanyl that were intercepted by DPS from January through April 2021, all of which threatens harm throughout Texas and in other states; and

WHEREAS, the arrest of human smugglers by state and local law enforcement, combined with increased arrests connected with other border-related crime, threatens to substantially increase inmate population in jails to the extent that there may not be an adequate number of jail beds available; and

WHEREAS, the federal government's failure to secure the border has led to so many individuals unlawfully crossing the border that it has unilaterally established roughly ten new migrant detention facilities in Texas that are operated exclusively by the federal government, without any state regulation or oversight; and

WHEREAS, while Texas previously licensed certain residential facilities that house unaccompanied alien children or families, the U.S. Constitution prohibits the federal government from commandeering the State of Texas or its officials to continue administering state-licensed facilities in response to a federal migrant detention crisis caused by the acts or omissions of the federal government; and

WHEREAS, the unabated influx of individuals resulting from federal government policies threatens to negatively impact state-licensed residential facilities, including those that serve Texas children in foster care; and

WHEREAS, in the Texas Disaster Act of 1975, the Legislature charged the Governor with the responsibility "for meeting . . . the dangers to the state and people presented by disasters" under Section 418.011 of the Texas Government Code, and expressly granted the Governor broad authority to fulfill that responsibility; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature has, in Section 418.004(1), defined a "disaster" as "the occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural or man-made cause;" and

WHEREAS, under Texas law, declaring a disaster allows the use of all available state and local resources needed to manage the situation, activates the state emergency management plan, and empowers the Texas Division of Emergency Management to reassign and fully utilize appropriate personnel where they are needed most; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature has also, in Section 12.50 of the Texas Penal Code, increased the punishments available for certain criminal offenses committed in an area for which a disaster has been declared, including for criminal trespass, burglary, and theft; and

WHEREAS, declaring a disaster also allows the State of Texas to request federal funding for costs related to the disaster, and a number of counties have already declared a local disaster and started accounting for costs that can be made part of a request (Crockett, Edwards, Goliad, Gonzales, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Kinney, Lavaca, La Salle, Maverick, Presidio, Uvalde, Real, and Val Verde counties); and

WHEREAS, declaring a disaster also allows the State of Texas to request federal funding for costs related to the disaster, and a number of counties have already declared a local disaster and started accounting for costs that can be made part of a request (Crockett, Edwards, Goliad, Gonzales, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Kinney, La Salle, Lavaca, Maverick, Presidio, Real, Uvalde, and Val Verde counties);

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GREG ABBOTT, Governor of the State of Texas, in accordance
FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
 O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

with the authority vested in me by Section 418.014 of the Texas Government Code, do hereby certify 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 Brewster, Brooks, Cameron, Crockett, Culberson, Dimmit, Duval, Edwards, El Paso, Goliad, Gonzales, Hidalgo, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, Kinney, La Salle, Lavaca, Maverick, McMullen, Pecos, Presidio, Real, Reeves, Starr, Sutton, Terrell, Uvalde, Val Verde, Webb, Willacy, Zapata, and Zavala counties, and for all state agencies affected by this disaster. I do hereby declare a state of disaster for all listed counties covered by this disaster declaration and for all state agencies affected by this disaster.

Pursuant to Section 418.017, I authorize the use of all available resources of state government and of political subdivisions that are reasonably necessary to cope with this disaster, including the use of all available resources of state and local law enforcement to assist and protect Texans from criminal activity and property damage.

I hereby direct DPS to use available resources to enforce all applicable federal and state laws to prevent the criminal activity along the border, including criminal trespassing, smuggling, and human trafficking, and to assist Texas counties in their efforts to address those criminal activities.

I hereby direct the Texas Commission on Jail Standards and the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement to work with Texas counties, to provide appropriate guidance, and to request from the Office of the Governor any necessary suspensions of law, in order to ensure that the counties have the flexibility needed to establish adequate alternative detention facilities or otherwise add or expand capacity; to streamline procedures for licensing and transfers; and to address any staffing issues that may arise in expanding capacity.

I hereby direct the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to take all necessary steps to discontinue state licensing of any child-care facility in this state that shelters or detains unlawful immigrants or other individuals not lawfully present in the United States under a contract with the federal government. Pursuant to Section 418.016 of the Texas Government Code, I hereby suspend Sections 42.046 and 42.048 of the Texas Human Resources Code, and all other relevant laws, to the extent necessary to allow HHSC to deny a license application for any new child-care facility that shelters or detains unlawful immigrants or other individuals not lawfully present in the United States under a contract with the federal government, to renew any existing such licenses for no longer than a 90-day period following the date of this order, and to provide notice and initiate a 90-day period beginning on the date of this order to wind down any existing such licenses.

Pursuant to Section 418.016, any regulatory statute prescribing the procedures for conduct of state business or any order or rule of a state agency that would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with this disaster shall be suspended upon written approval of the Office of the Governor. However, to the extent that the enforcement of any state statute or administrative rule regarding contracting or procurement would impede any state agency's emergency response that is necessary to protect life or property threatened by this declared disaster, I hereby authorize the suspension of such statutes and rules for the duration of this declared disaster.

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
SPM O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

In accordance with the statutory requirements, copies of this proclamation shall be filed with the applicable authorities.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto signed my name and have officially caused the Seal of State to be affixed at my office in the City of Austin, Texas, this the 31st day of May, 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Abbott".

GREG ABBOTT
Governor

ATTESTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth R. Hughs".

RUTH R. HUGHS
Secretary of State

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
8pm O'CLOCK

MAY 31 2021

From: [NG TX TXARNG Mailbox JOC](#)
To: [NG SD SDARNG List J3 JOC](#)
Cc: [NG TX TXARNG Mailbox JOC](#)
Subject: Governor Abbott's Disaster Declaration for the Texas-Mexico border
Date: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 2:51:52 PM
Attachments: [DISASTER border security IMAGE 05-31-2021.pdf](#)

ALCON,

Governor Abbott's Declaration of Emergency for the border crisis is attached as requested.

V/R,

SSG [REDACTED]

Battle NCO

Joint Operations Center

Unsecure

[REDACTED]/DSN [REDACTED]

ng.tx.txarng.mbx.joc@mail mil <<mailto:ng.tx.txarng.mbx.joc@mail.mil>>

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					f.	EQUIPMENT			
	DUTY POSITION	RANK	QTY	PAY	TOTAL		TYPE	QTY	NOTES	
	LNO	O4	1	\$ 339.38	\$339.38		Trailer Landing Gear support (wood blocks)	20		
	TF OIC	O2	1	\$ 217.79	\$217.79		Civil Disturbance Capability Set	1	30 in a set	
	NCOIC	E7	2	\$208.80	\$417.60		OCIE			
	Squad Leaders/Logistics NCOIC	E6	3	\$198.00	\$594.00		Assigned Weapons			
	Team Leaders/Logistics/Medical	E5	7	\$198.00	\$1,386.00		CLS Bags (Medics)			
	Team Members	E4	29	\$198.00	\$5,742.00					
	Meal Rate (SD Rate per Person)	All		\$40.00	\$1,720.00					
		Total	43		\$10,416.77					
VEHICLES										
	Vehicle Type		QTY	COST	TOTAL					
	HMMWV		11	\$50.42	\$554.62					
	LMTV		1	\$59.84	\$59.84					
	HMMWV AMB (FLA)		2	\$93.05	\$186.10					
	Passenger Bus		1	\$38.69	\$38.69					
	M-915 Tractor		8	\$98.07	\$784.56					
	M871/2 SERIES-TRL (Flatbed Trailer)		8	\$18.59	\$148.72					
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:					\$10,416.77				
	EQUIPMENT COST PER DAY:					\$1,772.53				
	TOTAL COST PER DAY:					\$12,189.30				

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					f.	EQUIPMENT		
	DUTY POSITION	RANK	QTY	PAY	TOTAL		TYPE	QTY	NOTES
	LNO	O4	1	\$ 339.38	\$339.38		Trailer Landing Gear support (wood blocks)	20	
	TF OIC	O2	1	\$ 217.79	\$217.79		Civil Disturbance Capability Set	1	30 in a set
	NCOIC	E7	2	\$208.80	\$417.60		OCIE		
	Squad Leaders/Logistics NCOIC	E6	2	\$198.00	\$396.00		Assigned Weapons		
	Team Leaders/Logistics/Medical	E5	4	\$198.00	\$792.00		CLS Bags (Medics)		
	Team Members	E4	14	\$198.00	\$2,772.00				
	Meal Rate (SD Rate per Person)	All		\$40.00	\$960.00				
		Total	24		\$5,894.77				
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:				\$5,894.77				
	EQUIPMENT COST PER DAY:				\$1,077.40				
	TOTAL COST PER DAY:				\$6,972.17				

FY21 Army Fixed Wing Aviation Reimbursable Rates													
Aircraft	DoD	Federal Agency			FMS			All Other Users				State Active Duty	
	O&M	O&M	MilPers	Total	O&M	MilPersFMS	Total	O&M	MilPers	Asset Util 4%	Total	Non-Emergency	Emergency
C-12	\$2,121	\$2,121	\$173	\$2,294	\$2,121	\$178	\$2,300	\$2,121	\$173	\$92	\$2,386	\$2,213	\$2,121

FY21 Army Rotary Wing Aviation Reimbursable Rates														
Aircraft	DoD	Federal Agency			FMS			All Other Users				State Active Duty		
	O&M	O&M	MilPers	Total	O&M	MilPers	FMS	Total	O&M	MilPers	Asset Util 4%	Total	Non-Emergency	Emergency
UH-60M	\$3,407	\$3,407	\$229	\$3,636	\$3,407		\$237	\$3,644	\$3,407	\$229	\$145	\$3,782	\$3,553	\$3,407
UH-72A	\$2,434	\$2,434	\$143	\$2,577	\$2,434		\$148	\$2,583	\$2,434	\$143	\$103	\$2,680	\$2,537	\$2,434

References:

1. DoD rates IAW ASA (FM&C) Army Cost and Economics (C&E) -<https://www.asafm.army.mil/offices/ce/>
2. Formulation of Reimbursement Rates I/A/W FMR DoD 7000.14-R, Vol 11A, Ch 6, APP E and G, Figure 1, Dated November 2019.
3. Policy for reimbursement for use of ARNG aircraft is contained in NGB PAM 95-5, Chapter 10, Dated 4 November 2011.
4. Policy for reimbursement for transport on DoD aircraft I/A/W DoD Directive 4500.9E, para. E4.3.2, Dated 11 September 2007 Incorporating Change 1, July 31, 2017
5. FY21 ARNG Comptroller Budget Execution Guidance states Class IX, DLR and Depot portion of reimbursement be forwarded to the TASM-Gs
6. Reference detailed comments for key columns listed above are labeled with red corners.
7. Memorandum for Record SUBJECT: Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Army Fixed Wing and Helicopter Reimbursement Rates sign by Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army DTD 11 Sep 2020
8. Memorandum for Record SUBJECT: Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Army Fixed Wing and Helicopter Reimbursement Rates sign by Director of Safety and Aviation ARNG DTD 19 Nov 2020
9. ARNG-AVP POC: Mr. [REDACTED], DSN [REDACTED], [REDACTED].civ@mail.mil

FY 21 Army Ground Reimbursable Rates							
LIN	MDS Name	REPARABLE (per mile)	CONSUMABLE (per mile)	POL (per mile)	Total Rep, Cons & POL or System Cost Per Day	LOGSA Veh Cost	Vehicle Depreciated Usage Factor per Day
C11158	CARRIER ARMORED COMMAND POST: FULL TRACKED	70.44	43.43	2.12	133.07	\$ 322,946.00	\$ 70.89
C11280	SUSV	0.25	24.56	1.16	11.74	\$ 125,969.00	\$ 27.65
C18234	CARRIER PERSONNEL FULL TRACKED: ARMORED (RISE)	51.62	31.42	2.12	88.78	\$ 405,815.00	\$ 89.08
C36586	CRANE: WHEEL MOUNTED HYDRAULIC 25 TON ALL TERRAIN AT422T				0.31	\$ 313,521.00	\$ 68.82
D11538	CARRIER COMMAND POST: LIGHT TRACKED	80.65	42.80	2.12	118.34	\$ 345,787.00	\$ 75.90
E27792	EXCAVATOR: HYDRAULIC (HYEX) TYPE I MULTIPURPOSE CRAWLER MOUNT (Use LIN T34437)				19.71	\$ 223,957.00	\$ 49.16
E27860	EXCAVATOR: HYDRAULIC (HYEX) TYPE III MULTIPURPOSE CRAWLER MOUNT (Use LIN T34437)				19.71	\$ 259,667.00	\$ 57.00
E41791	EXCAVATOR: HYDRAULIC (HYEX) TYPE II MULTIPURPOSE CRAWLER MOUNT (Use LIN T34437)				19.71	\$ 435,755.00	\$ 95.65
E61618	COMPACTOR HIGH SPEED: TAMPING SELF-PROPELLED (CCE)				0.80	\$ 171,438.00	\$ 37.63
F42612	PAWS				19.20	\$ 3,417.00	\$ 0.75
H53576	HIGH MOBILITY ENGINEER EXCAVATOR (HMEE): TYPE I (Use LIN T34437)				19.71	\$ 185,000.00	\$ 40.61
L15041	LOADER SCOOP TYPE: HEAVY TYPE II LOADER (Use LIN L76556)				20.07	\$ 195,521.00	\$ 42.92
L43664	LAUNCH M60 SERIES TANK CHASS TRNSPTG: 40 AND 60 FT BRDGE TY CL60	387.56	140.30	7.70	115.77	\$ 527,126.00	\$ 115.70
L76305	LOADER SCOOP DED/GED				20.07	\$ 128,900.00	\$ 28.29
L76556	LOADER SCOOP TYPE: DSL 2-1/2CU YD HINGE FRME W/MULTI PURP BUCKET				20.07	\$ 58,890.00	\$ 12.93
L77147	LOADER SKID STEER: TYPE II (Use LIN L76556)				20.07	\$ 31,390.00	\$ 6.89
L77215	LOADER SKID STEER: TYPE III (Use LIN L76556)				20.07	\$ 26,395.00	\$ 5.79
L77568	LOADERS: SCOOP TYPE				48.25	\$ 196,534.00	\$ 43.14
M05001	MOTORIZED GRADER: (Use J74920)				19.71	\$ 209,951.00	\$ 46.08
M11442	MRAP M-ATV	0.54	11.67	1.07	37.93	\$ 430,408.00	\$ 94.47
P63462	Medium Drash system				26.04	\$ 135,000.00	\$ 29.63
R11127	ROLLER MOTORIZED: VIBRATORY ROLLER TYPE II				5.95	\$ 108,756.24	\$ 23.87
R13167	ROLLER VIBRATORY: SELF-PROPELLED DED W/PADFOOT SHELL KIT TYPE I (Use LIN S30039)				5.95	\$ 53,248.00	\$ 11.69
R50681	RECOVERY VEHICLE FULL TRACKED: MEDIUM	479.90	129.26	7.35	388.90	\$ 1,210,755.00	\$ 265.76
S30039	SCRAPER ELEVATING: SELF PROPELLED 9-11 CU YD SECTIONALIZED				5.95	\$ 324,218.00	\$ 71.17
S56246	SCRAPER EARTH MOVING SELF-PROPELLED: 14-18 CU YD (CCE)				5.95	\$ 149,523.00	\$ 32.82
S70159	M871/2 SERIES-TRL				9.10	\$ 43,252.00	\$ 9.49
T05026	TRACTOR FL TRKD: LOW SPD T-5 TYPE II W/RIPPER (Use LIN W83529)				11.81	\$ 188,638.00	\$ 41.41
T05029	TRACTOR FULL TRCKD LOW SPD: T5 (Use LIN W83529)				11.81	\$ 199,262.00	\$ 43.74
T07679	HEAVY HMMWV	0.87	1.39	0.28	18.27	\$ 89,900.00	\$ 19.73
T34505	TRACTOR WHEELED: INDUSTRIAL				19.71	\$ 78,000.00	\$ 17.12
T34704	HMMWV ECV	1.02	1.10	0.28	19.74	\$ 213,578.00	\$ 46.88
T37588	TRUCK UTILITY EXPANDED CAPACITY ENHANCED: M1152A1	1.02	1.10	0.28	19.74	\$ 157,822.00	\$ 34.64
T38844	HMMWV AMB	1.36	1.56	0.28	30.40	\$ 285,417.00	\$ 62.65
T40999	PLS SERIES	1.04	3.34	0.28	23.97	\$ 360,139.00	\$ 79.05
T41271	TRUCK VAN: EXPANSIBLE MTV W/E M1087A1	0.73	3.30	0.69	31.73	\$ 218,378.00	\$ 47.93
T41515	TRUCK CARGO: 5 TON WO/WINCH	0.73	3.30		27.09	\$ 205,000.00	\$ 45.00
T45465	M989 SERIES-TRL				1.28	\$ 34,714.00	\$ 7.62
T55054	TRUCK PALLETIZED (LHS): M1120A4	1.21	3.05	1.55	47.10	\$ 321,057.00	\$ 70.47
T56383	TRUCK UTILITY EXPANDED CAPACITY ENHANCED 4X4: M1165A1	1.02	1.10	0.55	17.46	\$ 212,255.00	\$ 46.59
T58318	TRUCK TANK: WO/WINCH	1.21	3.05	0.55	34.56	\$ 384,130.00	\$ 84.32
T59048	HET	3.87	9.20	1.32	123.83	\$ 256,704.00	\$ 56.35
T59380	TRUCK CARGO: M985A4				8.11	\$ 361,629.00	\$ 79.38
T59448	TRUCK CARGO: WO/WINCH	0.66	2.07	0.58	21.11	\$ 185,000.00	\$ 40.61
T60081	LMTV SERIES	0.66	2.07	0.58	21.11	\$ 176,428.00	\$ 38.73
T60946	TRUCK TRACTOR: (LET)	1.21	3.05	0.55	34.56	\$ 289,352.00	\$ 63.51
T61103	M915/6 SERIES	0.20	0.48	0.65	42.41	\$ 162,968.00	\$ 35.77
T61494	HMMWV SERIES	0.75	3.26	0.28	40.10	\$ 47,023.00	\$ 10.32
T61908	MTV SERIES	0.73	3.30	0.69	31.73	\$ 184,333.00	\$ 40.46
T62359	TRUCK VAN: M1079A1P2 WO/WINCH	0.73	3.30	0.55	27.09	\$ 280,000.00	\$ 61.46
T63093	HEMITT WRECKER	1.31	2.63	1.55	43.55	\$ 491,382.00	\$ 107.86
T63161	TRUCK WRECKER: M984A4	1.31	2.63	1.55	43.55	\$ 491,382.00	\$ 107.86
T65342	TRUCK DUMP: 10 TON WO/WINCH				6.72	\$ 240,000.00	\$ 52.68
T73347	TRUCK LIFT: FORK VARIABLE REACH ROUGH TERRAIN				13.60	\$ 153,000.00	\$ 33.58
T76541	TRACTOR FULL TRACKED HIGH SPEED: DEPLOYABLE LT ENGINEER (DEUCE)				34.52	\$ 432,799.00	\$ 95.00
T81874	TRUCK: PALLETIZED LOADING	1.04	3.34	1.55	30.51	\$ 360,000.00	\$ 79.02
T87243	HEMITT TANKER	1.91	2.65	1.55	42.33	\$ 384,130.00	\$ 84.32
T88983	TRUCK TRACTOR: WO/WINCH	0.73	3.30	0.55	27.09	\$ 205,000.00	\$ 45.00
T91656	TRUCK TRACTOR: LET 6X6 66000 GVW W/W C/S	0.20	0.48	0.65	42.41	\$ 166,223.00	\$ 36.49
T93271	TRUCK CARGO: LWB WO/WINCH	0.73	3.30		27.09	\$ 205,000.00	\$ 45.00
T94709	MTV WRECKER	1.46	12.24	0.69	36.60	\$ 331,680.00	\$ 72.80
T96496	HEMITT SERIES	1.21	3.05	1.55	47.10	\$ 321,057.00	\$ 70.47
W76473	TRACTOR FULL TRACKED HIGH SPEED: ARMORED COMBAT EARTHMOVER (ACE)	41.73	108.72	4.95	55.67	\$ 887,050.00	\$ 194.71
W76816	TRACTOR FULL TRCKD LOW SPD: DSL MED DBP W/BULDOZ W/SCARIF WINCH				11.81	\$ 205,000.00	\$ 45.00
W83529	TRACTOR FULL TRCKD LOW SPD: DSL MED DBP W/BULDOZ W/SCARIF RIPPER				11.81	\$ 245,275.00	\$ 53.84
W98825	M149 SERIES-TRL				2.12	\$ 16,000.00	\$ 3.51
X40794	M939 SERIES	1.15	17.22	0.69	32.01	\$ 74,450.00	\$ 16.34
X44403	TRUCK DUMP: 20 TON DSL DRVN 12 CU YD CAP (CCE)	0.39	4.41	0.65	11.80	\$ 211,764.00	\$ 46.48

DoD Crew per Day Rate (2 pax)	Army Reimbursable Rate per Day w/out Crew Pay	Army Reimbursable Rate per Day w/ Crew Pay
\$ 678.29	\$ 203.96	\$ 882.24
\$ 678.29	\$ 39.39	\$ 717.67
\$ 678.29	\$ 177.86	\$ 856.14
\$ 678.29	\$ 69.13	\$ 747.41
\$ 678.29	\$ 194.24	\$ 872.53
\$ 678.29	\$ 68.87	\$ 747.15
\$ 678.29	\$ 76.71	\$ 754.99
\$ 678.29	\$ 115.36	\$ 793.64
\$ 678.29	\$ 38.43	\$ 716.72
\$ 678.29	\$ 19.95	\$ 698.24
\$ 678.29	\$ 60.32	\$ 738.60
\$ 678.29	\$ 62.99	\$ 741.27
\$ 678.29	\$ 231.47	\$ 909.76
\$ 678.29	\$ 48.36	\$ 726.65
\$ 678.29	\$ 33.00	\$ 711.29
\$ 678.29	\$ 26.96	\$ 705.25
\$ 678.29	\$ 25.86	\$ 704.15
\$ 678.29	\$ 91.39	\$ 769.67
\$ 678.29	\$ 65.80	\$ 744.08
\$ 678.29	\$ 132.41	\$ 810.69
\$ 678.29	\$ 55.67	\$ 733.96
\$ 678.29	\$ 29.82	\$ 708.11
\$ 678.29	\$ 17.64	\$ 695.92
\$ 678.29	\$ 654.67	\$ 1,332.95
\$ 678.29	\$ 77.12	\$ 755.40
\$ 678.29	\$ 38.77	\$ 717.06
\$ 678.29	\$ 18.59	\$ 696.88
\$ 678.29	\$ 53.22	\$ 731.50
\$ 678.29	\$ 55.55	\$ 733.83
\$ 678.29	\$ 38.00	\$ 716.29
\$ 678.29	\$ 36.83	\$ 715.12
\$ 678.29	\$ 66.62	\$ 744.91
\$ 678.29	\$ 54.38	\$ 732.67
\$ 678.29	\$ 93.05	\$ 771.33
\$ 678.29	\$ 103.02	\$ 781.31
\$ 678.29	\$ 79.67	\$ 757.95
\$ 678.29	\$ 72.09	\$ 750.37
\$ 678.29	\$ 8.90	\$ 687.18
\$ 678.29	\$ 117.57	\$ 795.85
\$ 678.29	\$ 64.05	\$ 742.34
\$ 678.29	\$ 118.88	\$ 797.16
\$ 678.29	\$ 180.17	\$ 858.46
\$ 678.29	\$ 87.49	\$ 765.78
\$ 678.29	\$ 61.72	\$ 740.01
\$ 678.29	\$ 59.84	\$ 738.13
\$ 678.29	\$ 98.07	\$ 776.36
\$ 678.29	\$ 78.18	\$ 756.47
\$ 678.29	\$ 50.42	\$ 728.70
\$ 678.29	\$ 72.20	\$ 750.48
\$ 678.29	\$ 88.55	\$ 766.83
\$ 678.29	\$ 151.41	\$ 829.69
\$ 678.29	\$ 151.41	\$ 829.69
\$ 678.29	\$ 59.40	\$ 737.69
\$ 678.29	\$ 47.19	\$ 725.47
\$ 678.29	\$ 129.52	\$ 807.80
\$ 678.29	\$ 109.53	\$ 787.81
\$ 678.29	\$ 126.65	\$ 804.94
\$ 678.29	\$ 72.09	\$ 750.37
\$ 678.29	\$ 78.90	\$ 757.18
\$ 678.29	\$ 72.09	\$ 750.37
\$ 678.29	\$ 109.40	\$ 787.69
\$ 678.29	\$ 117.57	\$ 795.85
\$ 678.29	\$ 250.37	\$ 928.66
\$ 678.29	\$ 56.81	\$ 735.09
\$ 678.29	\$ 65.65	\$ 743.93
\$ 678.29	\$ 5.63	\$ 683.91
\$ 678.29	\$ 48.35	\$ 726.64
\$ 678.29	\$ 58.29	\$ 736.57

FY2021 Inventory Report - Customize

Your Customer 08-02-00-218180-001

On Screen:

Class-Tag	VIN	Vehicle Type
G10-1569W	3FA6P0LUXKR258233	Sedan/St Wgn Compact
G13-1521V	1FADP3F20JL328824	Sedan/St Wgn Subcompact
G13-4148X	5NPD74LF5LH613193	Sedan/St Wgn Subcompact
G32-0734V	1BABLCSA5LF360710	HD Bus
G32-0735V	1BABLCSA7LF360708	HD Bus
G32-0736V	1BABLCSA9LF360709	HD Bus
G32-0737V	1BABLCSA7LF360711	HD Bus
G41-0872X	NM0GE9E22L1479323	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-0873X	NM0GE9E24L1479324	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-1346V	2C4RDGBG6JR288760	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-1347V	2C4RDGBG8JR288758	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-1348V	2C4RDGBGXJR288759	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-1349V	2C4RDGBG8JR288761	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-1425W	2C4RDGBG2KR671161	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-1426W	2C4RDGBG4KR671162	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-4892R	2C4RDGBG4GR101802	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5536W	2C4RDGBG3KR793155	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5537W	2C4RDGBG8KR793149	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5538W	2C4RDGBG2KR793146	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5539W	2C4RDGBG6KR793148	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5540W	2C4RDGBG4KR793150	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5541W	2C4RDGBG4KR793147	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5542W	2C4RDGBGXKR793153	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5543W	2C4RDGBG6KR793151	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5544W	2C4RDGBG1KR793154	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G41-5545W	2C4RDGBG8KR793152	LD Minivan 4x2 (Passenger)
G43-1209W	1GAZGNFG3K1294116	MD Van (Passenger)
G43-1210W	1GAZGNFG9K1293312	MD Van (Passenger)
G43-1484U	1GAZGPF0H1294272	MD Van (Passenger)
G43-1485U	1GAZGPF5H1290816	MD Van (Passenger)
G43-2182R	1FBZX2YM4FKB27714	MD Van (Passenger)
G43-2198X	1GAZGNFP2L1254157	MD Van (Passenger)
G62-1340N	1GCRKPEA1DZ332753	LD Pickup 4x4
G62-1735S	1C6RR7KG7GS327744	LD Pickup 4x4
G62-3100W	1C6RR7FG8KS629546	LD Pickup 4x4
G62-4835X	1FTEW1EB9LKF21117	LD Pickup 4x4
G63-1033S	1FT8W3BT4HEB30565	MD PICKUP
G63-3842W	1FT7W2BT6BEC54253	MD PICKUP

Make (Manf Name)	Model Name	Model Year	Monthly Rate	Mileage Rate
FORD	FUSIONHEV	2019	253	0.105
FORD	FOCUS	2018	217	0.118
HYUNDAI	ELANTRA	2020	217	0.118
BLUE BIRD	BB ALAM FE	2020	1160.58	0.793
BLUE BIRD	BB ALAM FE	2020	1160.58	0.793
BLUE BIRD	BB ALAM FE	2020	1160.58	0.793
BLUE BIRD	BB ALAM FE	2020	1162.78	0.793
FORD	TRANSCON	2020	275	0.182
FORD	TRANSCON	2020	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2018	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2018	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2018	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2018	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2016	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
DODGE	GRCARAVAN	2019	275	0.182
CHEVROLET	CG3300	2019	258	0.249
CHEVROLET	CG3300	2019	258	0.249
CHEVROLET	CG3300	2017	258	0.249
CHEVROLET	CG3300	2017	258	0.249
FORD	TRANSIT350	2015	258	0.249
CHEVROLET	CG3300	2020	258	0.249
CHEVROLET	K1500	2013	201	0.237
RAM	1500	2016	217	0.236
RAM	1500	2019	201	0.237
FORD	F150	2020	217	0.236
FORD	F350	2017	233	0.325
FORD	F250	2011	233	0.325

In-State Active Duty Per Diem Rates Effective 01 JAN 2021

State Rate's

\$40.00
\$75.00

per Night

\$ 0.4200 per Mile

ANG Rank	ARNG Rank	Grade	Daily Base Pay	Daily BAH	Daily SAD Meal EXP	Daily SAD Hotel EXP	Daily (BP,BAH,MEAL) Total	Single Round Trip Milage	Total Mileage Value	Daily Phones	Daily TOTAL	Daily EMAC Cost
Maj Gen	MG	O8	\$ 517.42	\$ 70.07	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 587.49		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 587.49	\$ -
Brig Gen	BG	O7	\$ 467.90	\$ 70.07	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 537.97		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 537.97	\$ -
Col	COL	O6	\$ 373.92	\$ 63.07	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 436.99		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 436.99	\$ -
Lt Col	LTC	O5	\$ 327.19	\$ 60.80	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 387.99		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 387.99	\$ -
Maj	MAJ	O4	\$ 285.79	\$ 53.59	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 339.38		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 339.38	\$ -
Capt	CPT	O3	\$ 244.84	\$ 44.34	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 289.18		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 289.18	\$ -
1Lt	1LT	O2	\$ 179.95	\$ 37.84	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 217.79		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 217.79	\$ -
2Lt	2LT	O1	\$ 142.00	\$ 33.87	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00	\$ -
Air Force does not have Warrant Officers	CW5	W5	\$ 276.54	\$ 51.76	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 328.30		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 328.30	\$ -
	CW4	W4	\$ 250.94	\$ 47.45	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 298.39		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 298.39	\$ -
	CW3	W3	\$ 230.50	\$ 43.49	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 273.99		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 273.99	\$ -
	CW2	W2	\$ 202.22	\$ 39.95	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 242.17		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 242.17	\$ -
	WO1	W1	\$ 190.62	\$ 34.59	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 225.21		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 225.21	\$ -
CMSgt (1CMSgt & CCMSgt)	SGM (CSM)	E9	\$ 220.42	\$ 45.52	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 265.94		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 265.94	\$ -
SMSgt (1SMSgt)	MSG (1SG)	E8	\$ 190.21	\$ 41.98	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 232.19		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 232.19	\$ -
MSgt (1Sgt)	SFC	E7	\$ 169.84	\$ 38.96	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 208.80		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 208.80	\$ -
TSgt	SSG	E6	\$ 143.24	\$ 36.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00	\$ -
SSgt	SGT	E5	\$ 120.23	\$ 32.40	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00	\$ -
SrA	SPC	E4	\$ 94.30	\$ 28.16	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00	\$ -
A1C	PFC	E3	\$ 79.06	\$ 26.18	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00	\$ -
Amn (Airman)	PV2	E2	\$ 66.69	\$ 24.96	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00	\$ -
AB (Airman Basic)	PVT	E1	\$ 59.49	\$ 24.96	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 198.00	\$ -

From: [REDACTED] [Lt Col USAF 114 FW \(USA\)](#)
To: [REDACTED] [COL USARMY NG SDARNG \(USA\)](#)
Subject: FW: SAD Costs (UNCLASSIFIED)
Date: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 2:29:00 PM
Attachments: [Border Patrol Force Package.xlsx](#)
[FY21 OEM SAD Pay Rates.xlsx](#)

Disregard last, here is an updated copy

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA) <[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil>

Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 2:27 PM

To: [REDACTED] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil>

Subject: RE: SAD Costs (UNCLASSIFIED)

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Sir,

Attached is the cost estimate to include an LNO and the FY21 SAD rates with OEM.

Respectfully,

MSgt [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil>

Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 12:24 PM

To: [REDACTED] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil>

Cc: [REDACTED] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA) <[REDACTED].mil@mail.mil>

Subject: RE: SAD Costs

Equipment cost clarification:

COA 1:

Tractor and trailer combo 14 days total (7 days for delivery of equipment to TX on the front end of mission and 7 days for pickup on back end) =

Daily \$933.28

14 total haul mission = \$13,065.92

16 truck drivers, 14 days SAD @ \$238 daily (not including lodging) =

\$53,312 total

Total mission cost tractor/trailer and drivers = \$66,377 HMMVW, FLA, LMTV

Daily \$800.56

30 days \$24,016.8

Does NOT include fuel cost which is a reimbursable expense. No mileage rate as a daily rate is cheaper.

COA 2:

Tractor and trailer combo 14 days total (7 days for delivery of equipment to TX on the front end of mission and 7 days for pickup on back end) =

Daily \$583.30
14 day total haul mission \$8166.20
10 truck drivers, 14 days SAD @ \$238 daily (not including lodging) =
\$33320
Total mission cost tractor/trailer and drivers = \$41,486

HMMVW, FLA LMTV

Daily \$455.41
30 days \$13,662.30

Does NOT include fuel cost which is a reimbursable expense. No mileage rate as a daily rate is cheaper.

GSA Bus

Fuel is included in daily rate of \$38.69 + .79 per mile
1300 mile one way trip to TX @ .79 = \$1027
7 days round trip @ 38.69 = \$270.83
2 bus drivers, 7 days SAD @ \$238 daily (not including lodging) =
\$3332 total
Total mission for bus and drivers = \$4629.83

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 10:33 AM
To: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA)
[REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG
(US) [REDACTED] mil@mail.mil>;
Vanderwolde, Edwin A Col USAF 114 MSG (US)
(edwin.a.vanderwolde mil@mail.mil) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>
Cc: [REDACTED] TSgt USAF NG SDANG (US) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].mil@mail mil>
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].mil@mail mil

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

From: [REDACTED] [Lt Col USAF 114 FW \(USA\)](#)
To: [REDACTED] [COL USARMY NG SDARNG \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: TX SAD Mission Brief
Date: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 11:31:00 AM

COA 2 I believe you wanted 5 M915's with trailers. The math is right for cost.

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [REDACTED].mil@mail mil>
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 11:23 AM
To: [REDACTED] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) <[REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) [REDACTED] mil@mail.mil>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG (USA) <edwin.a.vanderwolde mil@mail mil>
Cc: [REDACTED] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG (USA) [REDACTED].mil@mail.mil>
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] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA) [REDACTED] mil@mail mil>
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 11:21 AM
To: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[REDACTED] mil@mail mil>
Subject:

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] Lt Col USAF 114 FW (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 10:33 AM
To: [REDACTED] COL USARMY NG SDARNG (USA) <[REDACTED] mil@mail.mil>; [REDACTED] LTC USARMY NG SDARNG (US) [REDACTED] mil@mail.mil>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Col USAF 114 MSG (US) (edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil) <edwin.a.vanderwolde mil@mail mil>
Cc: [REDACTED] TSgt USAF NG SDANG (US) [REDACTED] [REDACTED].mil@mail mil>
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].mil@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].mil@mail mil

From: [Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG \(USA\)](#)
To: [\[REDACTED\] Lt Col USAF 114 FW \(USA\); \[REDACTED\] COL USARMY NG SDARNG \(USA\); \[REDACTED\] COL USARMY NG SDARNG \(USA\)](#)
Cc: [\[REDACTED\] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: SAD Costs
Date: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 10:55:14 AM

I'm guessing we will have 2 groups on at the same time while training and getting ready to go so the cost may even be double for 1 week.

Brig Gen Edwin A. VanDerWolde
Director, Joint Staff, SDNG
2823 W. Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702
Office Phone: 605-737-6010
Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

-----Original Message-----

From: [\[REDACTED\] Lt Col USAF 114 FW \(USA\) <\[REDACTED\] mil@mail.mil>](#)
Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 10:33 AM
To: [\[REDACTED\] COL USARMY NG SDARNG \(USA\); \[REDACTED\] COL USARMY NG SDARNG \(USA\); \[REDACTED\] mil@mail.mil>; Vanderwolde, Edwin A Brig Gen USAF 114 MSG \(USA\) <edwin.a.vanderwolde.mil@mail.mil>](#)
Cc: [\[REDACTED\] MSgt USAF NG SDARNG \(USA\) <\[REDACTED\] mil@mail.mil>](#)
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].mil@mail mil