

## **2019 SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION TO NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

E.C. Toppin, National Security Commission, Chairman

The American Legion's National Security Commission is at the forefront of advocating for a strong national defense and a viable foreign policy, as well as homeland security and global force military force to safeguard America. Foremost among our advocacy is to provide support to the men and women in uniform who risk their lives to protect our freedoms.

During the 100<sup>th</sup> National Convention in Minneapolis, commission members reviewed a combination of 25 new resolutions which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. Key among the resolutions were measures addressing military quality-of-life standards, national defense funding and the fight against cybersecurity threats.

At the Fall National Executive Committee meeting six resolutions referred to the standing commission from the national convention were reviewed, and two from department executive committees. Two resolutions were recommended to be approved: 1) Survivor Benefit Plan; 2) Exclude TRICARE election from the federal employees health benefits program. The commission recommended actions for the six resolutions that were not approved.

Throughout the year, the National Security Division worked closely with the Legislative Division to keep members of Congress educated and informed on the significance of American Legion resolutions, and the positive impact the resolutions are having on current serving military members, veterans and their families.

During the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington Conference, Chairman Toppin collaborated to have dynamic speakers who provided an in-depth presentation on the national security outlook covering the following areas:

The program proceeded in the following four sections: 1) An overview from the adjutant general of the D.C. National Guard; 2) Selective Service System brief; 3) Future of Military Health System briefing; 4) Valor Medals Review Task Force briefing. An Awards Selection Committee composed of members of the National Security Commission and headed by the Committee on Law and Order and Homeland Security met in the afternoon of Monday, February 25, for the purpose of selecting the Regional and National Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year.

Two foreign policy panels were hosted in partnership with the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition and the U.S. Department of State. The panels discussed U.S. national security issues relating to international development and regional conflicts in Europe and Asia, with a particular focus on Russia, China and the re-emergence of long-term, strategic competition by these revisionist powers.

During the Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee, one resolution on national security was considered and approved as policy of the organization. Chairman Toppin provided the NEC with a summary of the current global threat environment that was in line with the Department of Defense's National Security Strategy. The report included an update on North Korea denuclearization since the summit that took place in Vietnam early this year. Other countries discussed included China, Iran, Syria and Russia. Also included was a summary of DoD's challenge to grapple with violent extremism, including ISIS and a resurgent al-Qaida force. Our strategy remains focused on cutting the flow of finances, foreign fighters and their disruptive narrative, while working by, with and through local partners to sustain pressure on their networks, disrupt attacks and dismantle their capabilities.

There are several other areas the National Security Commission has been reporting and advocating on throughout the year. A summary of some of these items:

### **READINESS**

The Department of Defense (DoD) faces a strategic choice: whether to focus on modernization for high-tech conflicts with China and Russia, or expand forces and improve readiness to meet a superpower's commitments for ongoing conflicts and crisis response. In their FY 2019 budgets, the services all complain that they are too small for the demands being put on them and hedge toward expanding forces and readiness.

In 2013, readiness took a hit as a result of sequestration. Because cuts had to be made late in the fiscal year, the services were forced to cut facility maintenance, international exercises and, most significantly, training activities. The services have been digging out of that hole ever since.

The administration emphasized readiness in its FY 2018 and FY 2019 budgets. Nevertheless, readiness data are conflicting. Some metrics, like Army rotations to combat training centers, service flying hours, and Navy ship steaming days, have recovered from post-2013 lows, but others, like Navy and Marine Corps aircraft availability, remain depressed. With overall DoD budgets rising, targeted readiness increases, such as aviation spare parts, may be better investments than across-the-board increases.

High ops tempo is a policy choice, though often not in the branches' hands. The United States could reduce deployments, and the new National Defense Strategy proposes doing that, but such reductions are often regarded as detrimental to alliances. DoD could build more forces, and the administration plans to do some of that, but such expansion is expensive, and DoD's current plan is to emphasize modernization. The services sometimes argue that replacing "tired iron" with new equipment will help readiness. While such modernization may increase capability, it may not improve readiness. Flying hour costs for an existing F-18, for example, are about half that of a new F-35B/C.

High readiness is desirable in forces and equipment. However, readiness is also very expensive and highly perishable—it must be renewed constantly. Buying more means that DoD cannot buy something else, for example, modernization or force structure. In the new DoD strategy being developed for 2019 and beyond, the services hope to pursue all three goals—expand forces, improve readiness and increase modernization—but the fiscal future is highly uncertain, and they will likely have to make difficult trade-offs.

Army Recruiting Shortfall - For the first time since 2005, the U.S. Army missed its recruiting goal last year, falling short by about 6,500 soldiers despite pouring an extra \$200 million into bonuses and approving some additional waivers for bad conduct or health issues.

Army leaders said they signed up about 70,000 new active-duty recruits in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30 - well below the 76,500 they needed. The Army National Guard and Army Reserves also fell far short of their goals, by more than 12,000 and 5,000 respectively. The Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, meanwhile, all met their recruiting goals for 2018.

The Army has stated that the shortfall was fueled by a strong American economy and increased competition from private-sector employers who can pay more. The Army has since increased its number of recruiters. Army leadership has stated that they will not lower standards to meeting higher recruiting goals and are confident that they can meet future goals.

### **DEFENSE BUDGETING**

**FY19 NDAA** - The 2020 defense budget request has been submitted by the president and includes a 2.8 percent pay increase, the largest in a decade, and a \$718.3 billion national defense budget. 2019 was the first year in more than a decade that DoD was able to begin a fiscal year with an enacted appropriation instead of operating under a continuing resolution. We hope to see Congress approve the FY20 budget to ensure DoD can operate with a guaranteed budget again. The funding level is subject to the Budget Control Act and the actual appropriations are expected to be affected by sequestration.

The topline budget differences between the bills and the Presidential Budget Request (PBR) are as follows:

<b>Department of Defense Budget \$ in billions</b>	<b>FY 2017 Actuals</b>	<b>FY 2018 Actuals</b>	<b>FY 2019 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2020 Request</b>
Base	523.5	599.6	616.1	544.5
Overseas Contingency Operations	82.5	65.2	68.8	66.7
OCO for Base	--	--	--	97.9
Emergency	--	5.8	--	9.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>606.0</b>	<b>670.6</b>	<b>685.0</b>	<b>718.3</b>

The president's FY 2020 budget request for defense is for \$718 billion. This budget represents 4.9 percent nominal growth (2.8 percent real growth) over the current FY 2019 enacted appropriation. Total DoD five-year program settles at \$747 billion in FY 2024.

The FY 2020 budget request continues to advance the objectives of the National Defense Strategy by sustaining the gains in FY 2017, FY 2018 and FY 2019 and continuing to build a bigger, more lethal and ready force. Military pay and benefits funding grows by more than \$3.4 billion over the FY 2019 request. This increase includes funding for a 3.1 percent military pay raise, the largest in a decade, and an end strength increase of approximately 7,700 over the currently projected FY 2019 levels, which is designed to increase overall capacity and improve readiness through reduced operational and personnel tempo. In addition, these end strength increases will allow the services to better support advanced capabilities like cyber, electronic warfare, and special operations

needed to contend with our most capable, potential adversaries and fulfill the National Security Strategy charter to preserve peace through strength.

The FY 2020 budget request includes \$9.2 billion of emergency funding for unspecified military construction to build border barriers, backfill funding reallocated in FY 2019 to build border barriers and rebuild facilities damaged by hurricanes Florence and Michael. This funding and the required transfer authority would be provided through a general provision.

### **INDO-PACIFIC TOUR**

While in Washington, D.C., in September the National Security Division staff coordinated for the national commander to receive several briefings from desks within the Far East offices of the Department of Defense and Department of State in preparation for the upcoming Far East tour. Additionally, the national commander met with Defense Assistant Secretary of Defense Joe Felter to discuss the position of the Secretary of State on the return of the Bells of Balangiga. The American Legion passed a resolution at the national convention supporting the secretary's position.

The first location the party visited was Hawaii and included a tour of the new Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency headquarters and forensic lab, as well as an update on the progress of the 55 boxes of remains turned over by North Korea this summer. In preparation for the rest of the tour, the national commander received a command briefing from Pacific Command headquarters on readiness, troop quality of life, and current focuses of the Major Command.

The trip also included visits to Department of Defense installations, American Legion posts, and meetings with heads of state throughout Taiwan, South Korea and Japan before returning to the United States, totaling almost a full month of travel. National Security Division staff have created a post-trip briefing booklet that is available upon request.

On March 26 the National Security Division in coordination with the Embassy of Japan held a reception to honor the future of U.S. and Japan cooperation and friendship at the Capitol Building. The event included remarks from the national commander, the Ambassador of Japan and several congressmen on the importance of this alliance in a time of international uncertainty.

### **POW/MIA**

On Wednesday, September 26, at the American Legion headquarters in Washington, D.C., the director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Mr. Kelly McKeague, presented National Commander Brett Reistad with one of the two flags from the first two U.S. servicemembers identified from the remains turned over by North Korea this summer.

The two soldiers were Master Sgt. Charles Hobart McDaniel and Private First Class William H. Jones, who both went missing in November 1950. Two of the 55 boxes contained two partial skulls that had dental remains, along with two clavicles. DPAA researchers used dental records, chest X-rays and DNA samples to conclusively identify the remains of the two soldiers.

Full funding of DPAA is something we continue to be concerned about. The effects of continuing resolutions and threats of government shutdowns are crippling to DPAA efforts. Without guaranteed funding, recovery teams are threatened with having to end their mission and return

stateside short of mission dates. Mission planning is impacted as well. The difficult mountains of Vietnam can only be excavated during the warm months, and without guaranteed funding opportunities may be missed.

**Unaccounted for From Past Conflicts**

<b>WWII</b>	<b>Korean War</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>Cold War</b>	<b>Iraq &amp; Other Conflicts</b>
72,000+	7,800+	1600+	126	6

**National and Regional Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year Selection Committee**

Prior to the Washington Conference, the chairman of the Law and Order and Homeland Security Committee appointed an awards selection subcommittee to review all the nominations that had been received during 2018 from the departments for the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year award programs. The subcommittee met Monday, February 25, in the International Ballroom East in the Washington Hilton Hotel to select the five regional Firefighter of the Year Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Winners. There were 13 law enforcement officer nominees and 15 firefighter nominees submitted.

The selections for the Regional Firefighter of Year Award-winning departments were:

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|---------------------|--|
| <b>NEW ENGLAND:</b> | <b>Jason Tumbauer<br/>Department of Pennsylvania</b> |
| <b>CENTRAL:</b>     | <b>Jan Rader<br/>Department of West Virginia</b>     |
| <b>SOUTHERN:</b>    | <b>Jeffery Cash<br/>Department of North Carolina</b> |
| <b>MIDWESTERN:</b>  | <b>Matthew Gibbons<br/>Department of Nebraska</b>    |
| <b>WESTERN:</b>     | <b>Andrew Lowe<br/>Department of Colorado</b>        |

The selection for the Regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award-winning departments were:

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|---------------------|---|
| <b>NEW ENGLAND:</b> | <b>Matthew Neidinger<br/>Department of Pennsylvania</b>     |
| <b>CENTRAL:</b>     | <b>Christopher Chiaravalloti<br/>Department of Maryland</b> |

**SOUTHERN:**

**Stephen Lanier  
Department of North Carolina**

**MIDWESTERN:**

**Bradley Wagner  
Department of Nebraska**

**WESTERN:**

**Jane Anderson  
Department of Colorado**

The subcommittee then reviewed the regional winners to select one National Firefighter of the Year and one National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

The selection for the National Firefighter of the Year for 2019:

**NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR:**

**Jan Rader  
Department of West Virginia**

The selection for the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for 2019:

**NATIONAL LAW OFFICER OF THE YEAR:**

**Jane Anderson  
Department of Colorado**