

**NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
2019 - 2020
REPORT TO CONGRESS**



NATIONAL SECURITY

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE

E.C. Toppin (NC), Chairman

Ken Trumbul (IL), Secretary

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 25, 2019, 299 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Indianapolis Convention Center, Level 1, Rooms 120-126 with Mr. E.C. Toppin (North Carolina) as Chairman, and Ken Trumbul as Secretary. After the initial meeting, the following convention committees met, held elections, and discussed the resolutions assigned to their respective convention committees:

Aerospace

Rick Oertel (VA), Chairman

Ted DeMicchi (WI), Secretary

Conventional Armed Forces

Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman

Alvin Diaz (AK), Secretary

Foreign Relations

Paul Espinoza (NM), Chairman

Michael Landkamer (NE), Secretary

Law and Order & Homeland Security

George Wehrli (FL), Chairman

Richard Keiser (NY), Secretary

Military Benefits & Quality of Life

Steven Brennan (MD), Chairman

Shirley Douglas (FL), Secretary

National Guard and Reserve Forces

William Goede (MN), Chairman

Thomas Saunders (VA), Secretary

Unconventional Forces and Intelligence

Doug Haggan (FR) Chairman

Jeremy Ehart (KS), Secretary

At 10:30 am, Sunday, August 25, 2019, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security met in the Indianapolis Convention Center, Sagamore Ballroom, Level 2, Sections 1 and 2. The seven committees attended breakout sessions in the Indianapolis Convention Center, Level 1, Rooms 120-126. The convention committee reconvened in Sagamore Ballroom 1 and 2. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of eight resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet issues which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates and make technical and administrative corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee.

AEROSPACE COMMITTEE

Rick Oertel (VA), Chairman

NO RESOLUTIONS

CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES COMMITTEE

Charles Kruger (MN), Chairman

REFERRED TO STANDING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. 10

SUBJECT: ROLE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION IN ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE DEFENSE

ORIGIN: Montana

RECEIVED AND RECORDED

RESOLUTION NO. 46

SUBJECT: STATE FUNNERAL FOR THE LAST WORLD WAR II MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT

ORIGIN: Virginia

FOREIGN RELATIONS
Paul Espinoza (NM), Chairman

RECEIVE AND RECORD

RESOLUTION NO. 14
SUBJECT: TAIWAN STRAITS DIALOGUE
ORIGIN: Alaska

APPROVED

RESOLUTION NO. 41
SUBJECT: PROTECTION OF THE POW/MIA FLAG
ORIGIN: Ohio

WHEREAS, In 1970, Mrs. Michael Hoff, an MIA wife and member of the National League of POW/MIA Families, recognized the need for a symbol of our POW/MIAs, following approval by the League's Board of Directors at a meeting held January 22-23, 1972, POW/MIA flags were manufactured for distribution; and

WHEREAS, On March 9, 1989, an official League flag – flown over the White House on National POW/MIA Recognition Day 1988 – was installed in the US Capitol Rotunda as a result of legislation passed overwhelmingly during the 100th Congress; and

WHEREAS, The League's POW/MIA flag is the *only* flag ever displayed in the US Capitol Rotunda where it stands as a powerful symbol of America's determination to account for US personnel still missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, On August 10, 1990, the 101st Congress passed US Public Law 101-355, which recognized the League's POW/MIA flag and designated it "the symbol of our Nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, thus ending the uncertainty for their families and the Nation"; and

WHEREAS, The importance of the POW/MIA flag lies in its continued visibility, a constant reminder of the plight of America's UNRETURNED VETERANS, other than "Old Glory," the League's POW/MIA flag is the only flag ever to fly over the White House, displayed since 1982 in this place of honor on National POW/MIA Recognition Day; and

WHEREAS, Passage by the 105th Congress of Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act required that the League's POW/MIA flag fly six days each year: Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day and Veterans Day. It must be displayed at the White House, the US Capitol, the Departments of State, Defense and Veterans Affairs, the headquarters of the Selective Service System, major

military installations as designated by the Secretary of Defense, all Federal cemeteries and all offices of the US Postal Service; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the specific dates stipulated, the Department of Veterans Affairs voluntarily displays our POW/MIA flag 24/7. The National Vietnam Veterans, Korean War Veterans and World War II Memorials are now also required by law to display the POW/MIA flag daily - most State Capitols have adopted similar laws, as have local governments nationwide; and

WHEREAS, It has been reported in the news and on social media outlets that the POW/MIA flag has been taken down and replaced by another supplemental flag which is a disgrace to America's UNRETURNED VETERANS and their families; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 27, 28, 29, 2019, That the American Legion takes a stand in protecting the integrity of the POW/MIA Flag; and, be it further,

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the U.S. Congress to pass resolution for not replacing the POW/MIA flag with any other symbol.

LAW AND ORDER & HOMELAND SECURITY

George Wehrli (FL), Chairman

APPROVED W/ AMENDMENT

RESOLUTION NO.16

SUBJECT: COAST GUARD PAY DISCRIMINATION

ORIGIN: Montana

WHEREAS: The longest government shutdown in American history caused undue hardship in a discriminating manner by withholding pay to thousands of United States Coast Guard members, chartered in the Department of Homeland Security, while continuing to pay all other active duty members of the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS: 14 U.S. Code § 1 - Establishment of Coast Guard states: "The Coast Guard, established January 28, 1915, shall be a military service and a branch of the Armed Forces of the United States at all times."; and

WHEREAS: Every member of the Armed Forces of the United States shall complete a DD Form 4, Enlistment/Reenlistment Document Armed Forces, including Section H, Paragraph 22A

22a. IN A REGULAR COMPONENT OF THE ARMED FORCES:

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend

The Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God; and

WHEREAS: U. S. Coast Guard members are members of a military service and a branch of the Armed Forces of the United States at all times; and

WHEREAS: U. S. Coast Guard members affirm the Confirmation of Enlistment Oath (DD Form 4); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 27, 28, 29, 2019, That The American Legion advocates for the President of the United States and the United States Congress take measures to ensure all active duty members, of the U. S. Coast Guard, Armed Forces of the United States, shall not experience discrimination in the future. To include pay and benefits the same as the other Armed Forces received.

REFERRED TO STANDING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO.20

SUBJECT: OPPOSE DEPORTATION OF NON-CITIZEN IMMIGRANT VETERANS

ORIGIN: Texas

REJECTED

RESOLUTION NO.45

SUBJECT: PENALTES FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ILLEGAL DRUGS

ORIGIN: Ohio

MILITARY BENEFITS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Steven Brennan (MD) Chairman

APPROVED

RESOLUTION NO. 40

SUBJECT: GOLD STAR CHILDREN ACCESS TO BASE EXCHANGE

ORIGIN: Florida

WHEREAS, The American Legion (TAL) and the nation have a responsibility to ease the grief of children who have survived the loss of a parent that died in the performance of military service; and

WHEREAS, A historic role of TAL has been to support the entire military "family", including widows and surviving children; and

WHEREAS, The Headquarters, Defense Human Resources Activity, has informed TAL, that the current policy of the Department of Defense (DoD) is to end their access to Base Exchange, Commissary and Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities upon the survivor's attaining an age of 21 to 23 years; and (DoD Manual 1000.13, Vol.1 attached)

WHEREAS, The death of a military parent is a permanent loss to the surviving dependent, the current policy merely extends benefits temporarily; and

WHEREAS, These benefits aiding the children of our fallen comrades will support the morale of active troops and support the military family; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 27, 28, 29, 2019, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support efforts to ensure the Base Exchange, Commissary and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) access for all (Gold Star) children of service members who died on active military duty, regardless of age will not cease.

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES
William Goede (MN), Chairman

NO RESOLUTIONS

UNCONVENTIONAL FORCES & INTELLIGENCE
Doug Haggan (FR), Chairman

NO RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Commander, National Officers, and Fellow Delegates. I am particularly pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Category I - Departments with 100,000 or more members

Post & Individual Participation: Florida

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Massachusetts

Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Montana

Category VI - less than 10,000 members

Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. 879 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2018-2019 are the Departments of Connecticut, Montana, and Florida. On behalf of The American Legion and its nearly 2 million members, job well done to the Departments and to our youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 14-15, 2019

The meeting of the National Security Commission took place during the 101st National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana on August 27th-29th. The National Security Commission and its seven committees along with the council continue to review developments in the national security and foreign relations arenas. The 101st National Convention adopted 3 resolutions which, when added to the more than 80 existing resolutions, comprise the Commission's policy and legislative agendas for the year ahead.

On Tuesday, October 1st and Wednesday, October 8th extensive conference call meetings took place with the members of the National Security Commission and staff. On the calls for the commission were E.C. Toppin (MD), Commission Chairman; E. C. Toppin (NC), George W. Wehrli (FL), Chairman, Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee; and Douglas C.

Haggan, (IN), Unconventional Forces & Intelligence Committee. Staff on the call was Freddy Gessner, Deputy Director and Thomas Good, National Security Policy Advisor.

Reviewed were six (6) resolutions which were referred to the standing Commission from the National Convention and two (2) from Department Executive Committees. Three resolutions were recommended to be approved: Funding of the Department of Defense STARBASE Program; Oppose Deportation of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans; and To Oppose the Exclusion of Transgender American from the Military. The recommended actions for the one resolution that was not recommended for approval is noted on Addendum A.

The Commission Chairmen were also provided an update with highlights of the National Security Division's activities since National Convention. Noteworthy items include coordinating for the National Commander several desk briefings with specialists at the Pentagon in preparation for the upcoming Indo-Pacific travel engagements. The Division has hosted and visited the Japanese embassy on several occasions to coordinate a Congressional reception this Spring. The Division has also met with officials from the Australian Government and the American Australian Association to include the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister Scott Morrison in preparation for the National Commander's upcoming travel engagements.

National Security Strategy:

1. **Protect the homeland, the American people, and the American way of life**
2. **Promote American prosperity**
3. **Preserve peace through strength**
4. **Advance American influence**

National Defense Strategy:

1. **Rebuilding military readiness as we build a more lethal Joint Force**
2. **Strengthening alliances as we attract new partners**
3. **Reforming the Department's business practices for greater performance and affordability**

The following are brief updates on several critical areas for your review:

CURRENT THREAT ENVIRONMENT

It is increasingly clear that China and Russia want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model—gaining veto authority over other nations' economic, diplomatic, and security decisions. China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage. As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that

seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future. The most far-reaching objective of this defense strategy is to set the military relationship between our two countries on a path of transparency and non-aggression.

China:

China's rising military capabilities and increased assertiveness in the East China Sea pose a challenge to the Japanese Ryukyu Islands and by extension the United States, which maintains a strategic military presence on the largest island of Okinawa. Along with the islands of Taiwan and the Philippines, the Ryukyu Islands represents a geographic chokepoint for China's naval and civilian activities. As a strategic impediment to China's power projection, the island chain has been a major focal point of Beijing's recent military modernization and expansion.

The PRC's rising military capabilities coincide with increasing Chinese aggression beyond the country's borders. China has unilaterally attempted-successfully to this point-to change the status quo in the South China Sea. It has constructed artificial islands on reef to assert territorial and military claims and argued, contrary to international law and custom, that the entire sea falls under its exclusive economic zone. The United States has conducted freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, and the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague has ruled against China's territorial claims. Nevertheless, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has nearly completed construction of military facilities on the artificial islands and stationed PLA forces to include nuclear-capable bombers. It has even quietly installed defensive anti-ship cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles, and electromagnetic communications-jamming systems on the reefs.

Russia: The Post-INF Treaty Crisis

Russia seeks veto authority over nations on its periphery in terms of their governmental, economic, and diplomatic decisions, to shatter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and change European and Middle East security and economic structures to its favor. The use of emerging technologies to discredit and subvert democratic processes in Georgia, Crimea, and eastern Ukraine is concern enough, but when coupled with its expanding and modernizing nuclear arsenal the challenge is clear.

The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, negotiated and signed by U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, was one of the most far-reaching and successful nuclear arms reduction agreements in history. The treaty led to the verifiable elimination of 2,692 U.S. and Soviet missiles based in Europe. It helped bring an end to the Cold War nuclear arms race and paved the way for agreements to slash bloated strategic nuclear arsenals and withdraw thousands of tactical nuclear weapons from forward-deployed areas.

The pact served as an important check on some of the most destabilizing types of nuclear weapons that the United States and Russia could deploy. INF-class missiles, whether nuclear-armed or conventionally armed, are destabilizing because they can strike targets deep inside Russia and in Western Europe with little or no warning. Their short time-to-target capability increases the risk of miscalculation in a crisis.

Despite its success, the treaty has faced problems. A dispute over Russian compliance has festered since 2014, when the United States first alleged a Russian treaty violation, and has worsened since

2017 when Russia began deploying a ground-launched cruise missile, the 9M729, capable of traveling in the treaty's prohibited 500-5,500 kilometer range.

The Trump administration developed a response strategy in 2017 designed to put pressure on Russia to address the U.S. charges, but in October 2018, President Trump abruptly shifted tactics and announced the United States would leave the agreement. On Feb. 2, 2019, the Trump administration formally announced that the United States would immediately suspend implementation of the INF Treaty and would withdraw in six months if Russia did not return to compliance by eliminating its 9M729 missile.

U.S. intelligence agencies have assessed that the Russians possess four battalions of 9M729 missiles (including one test battalion). The missiles are "nuclear-capable," according to the Director of National Intelligence, but they are probably conventionally armed.

Without the INF Treaty, the potential for a new intermediate-range missile arms race in Europe and beyond becomes increasingly real. Furthermore, in the treaty's absence, the only legally binding, verifiable limits on the world's two largest nuclear arsenals come from the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which is due to expire in February 2021 unless Presidents Trump and Putin agree to extend it by up to five years.¹

On Aug. 18, less than two weeks after the official collapse of the INF Treaty, the United States tested a ground-launched variant of the Tomahawk sea-launched cruise missile that would have been prohibited by the treaty. The test was a clear signal that the United States can and will pursue such systems in the absence of the INF Treaty.

In a statement, the Defense Department said the "test missile exited its ground mobile launcher and accurately impacted its target after more than 500 kilometers of flight. Data collected and lessons learned from this test will inform the Department of Defense's development of future intermediate-range capabilities."

The launcher used in the test is the same one, though in a different configuration, that is currently fielded in Romania and is soon to be deployed in Poland as part of NATO's Aegis Ashore missile defense system. The INF Treaty banned the possession or testing of all nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers.

Putin stated that in light of the test and comments from U.S. officials calling for the deployment of new intermediate-range missiles, "I instruct the Defense Ministry, the Foreign Ministry and other competent agencies to analyze the level of threat posed to our country by the above actions of the United States, and take exhaustive measures for a reciprocal response."

China also expressed its concerns about the U.S. test. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said Aug. 20, "We advise the U.S. side to abandon outdated notions of Cold War thinking and zero-sum games, and exercise restraint in developing arms."

¹ <https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2019-08/post-inf-treaty-crisis-background-next-steps>

At the request of Russia and China, the United Nations Security Council met Aug. 22 to discuss the collapse of the treaty and the U.S. missile test.

Russia's First Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said that “because of the U.S.'s geopolitical ambitions, we are all one step from an arms race that cannot be controlled or regulated in any way.”

Acting U.S. Ambassador to the UN Jonathan Cohen responded by saying, “We are here today because the Russian Federation preferred a world in which the United States continued to fulfill its INF Treaty obligations, while the Russian Federation did not.”

The Trump administration’s push for new intermediate-range missiles has been controversial in Congress. The House version of the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) would prohibit the Pentagon from spending money to develop new missiles until it meets several conditions. The Senate version does not have a similar provision, and the two versions are currently being reconciled.

In addition to the test of a ground-launched cruise missile, the Defense Department is also planning to test later this year an intermediate-range ballistic missile with a range of about 3,000 to 4,000 kilometers.²

Jon Huntsman Jr., the U.S. ambassador to Russia, announced his resignation effective Oct. 3.³

North Korea: Style vs. Substance

North Korea is destabilizing regions through their pursuit of nuclear weapons or sponsorship of terrorism. North Korea seeks to guarantee regime survival and increased leverage by seeking a mixture of nuclear, biological, chemical, conventional, and unconventional weapons and a growing ballistic missile capability to gain coercive influence over South Korea, Japan, and the United States.

Earlier this year, President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un meet in Hanoi, Vietnam for their second summit. The talks end without a signed agreement; however, Trump and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that the two sides had made progress but that North Korea had called for sanctions to be lifted "in their entirety" in exchange for partial denuclearization which the United States rejected. North Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs Ri Yong Ho later deliver a statement at a press conference stating that North Korea had requested the partial removal of sanctions in exchange for a permanent halt of nuclear and ballistic missile testing and the full and verifiable dismantment of the facilities at the Yongbyon nuclear complex.

Later in March, South Korea and the United States decided to terminate the annual Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint military drills. A UN Panel of Experts reports that North Korea continues to evade sanctions. President Trump then tweeted that he ordered the removal of additional large-scale sanctions on North Korea.

² <https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2019-09-13/us-russian-nuclear-arms-control-watch>

³ <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-09/news-briefs/us-ambassador-russia-resigns>

In an April meeting between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and President Trump in Washington, D.C. Trump reiterates his preference for a “big deal” with North Korea to “get rid of the nuclear weapons” in comments to press, but kept the door open for “various small deals that could happen.” Trump also says that he would support joint economic projects between the two Koreas at the right time, but that now is not that time and that sanctions would “remain in place” until denuclearization is complete. Also during April, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin meet in Vladivostok, Russia and agree to forge closer ties.

Shortly after in May, North Korea tested a salvo of rockets and a short-range ballistic missile that has not been tested before and test fired two short-range ballistic missiles, including the new missile tested in May. President Trump said he did not consider North Korea's missile tests a "breach of trust" by Kim Jong Un or a violation of UN Security Council resolutions. The United States announces that it seized a North Korean vessel, the *Wise Honest*, for sanctions evasion. The vessel was detained in 2018. North Korea describes the seizure as a "complete denial" of the Singapore summit statement.

Iran: On the Brink. U.S. Unilateral in Approach

Iran is competing with its neighbors, asserting an arc of influence and instability while vying for regional hegemony, using state-sponsored terrorist activities, a growing network of proxies, and its missile program to achieve its objectives.

Recent events within the Straits of Hormuz and Saudi Arabia oil refinery attack show a new emboldened approach to sanctions. Earlier this year, Iran attempted to launch a satellite using its Simorgh launch vehicle, but the satellite failed to enter orbit. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo characterizes the launch as “continued defiance of the international community and UN Security Council Resolution 2231,” although the launch did not violate the resolution. The annual Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community assessed that "Iran is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activities we judge necessary to produce a nuclear device." It added that "Iran's continued implementation of the JCPOA has extended the amount of time Iran would need to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon from a few months to about one year."

IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano reiterated that Iran was implementing its nuclear-related obligations under the JCPOA and stated that attempts to "micro-manage or put pressure on the agency in nuclear verification" are "counter-productive and extremely harmful" in remarks to the IAEA staff. Although Amano didn't name who was putting pressure on the agency, he was likely referencing Israeli and U.S. efforts to persuade the IAEA to investigate what they deem a "secret atomic warehouse" in Iran, which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described in his September UN General Assembly speech.

Germany, France and the United Kingdom established a "special purpose vehicle" to facilitate transactions for non-sanctioned trade with Iran, called the "Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges" (INSTEX). The United States and Poland host a ministerial summit on the Middle East in Warsaw where U.S. Vice President Mike Pence explicitly calls on “our European partners to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal.” Several European foreign ministers boycott the summit.

In March, The International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iran was implementing its nuclear-related commitments. The IAEA's quarterly report finds that Iran's stockpile of heavy water is 124.8 metric tons, below the 130-ton limit and that Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched to 3.67 percent uranium-235 is 163.8 kilograms, below the 300-kilogram limit. Iran announced that it registered its counterpart to the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX).

The U.S. Treasury Department designated 31 Iranian entities and individuals for past involvement in Iran's nuclear weapons program under an executive order targeting the proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and then designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the United States will not issue any additional sanctions waivers for states to continue importing Iranian oil on May 2. The United States also announced that it would extend waivers to allow certain nuclear cooperation projects in Iran to proceed, but end others. The United States extended waivers for the Arak reactor conversion, the Fordow facility conversion, the Bushehr nuclear reactor and the Tehran research reactor for 90 days, but ended waivers for the transfer of enriched uranium out of Iran, the transfer and storage of heavy water outside of Iran and the construction of additional reactor units at Bushehr.

In May, U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton announced that the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and a bomber task force are being deployed to the U.S. Central Command region to "send a clear and unmistakable message to the Iranian regime that any attack on United States interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force." Some news outlets reported that officials in the intelligence community claim Bolton is exaggerating the threat posed by Iran.

Shortly after, Iran announced that it will no longer be bound by stockpiles limitations on enriched uranium and heavy water reserves in the JCPOA and could restart construction on its unfinished heavy water reactor at Arak and resume higher level enrichment in the future if the other parties to the agreement do not deliver on sanctions relief. The United States then announced new sanctions targeting Iran's industrial metal exports.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and the French, German and UK foreign ministers urged Iran to continue to meet its commitments under the JCPOA and reject "any ultimatums" in a joint statement. The leaders also urge countries not party to the JCPOA "to refrain from taking any actions that impede the remaining parties' ability to fully perform their commitments."

Iran announced it will quadruple uranium enrichment output at Natanz and says it would surpass the 300-kilogram limit on uranium gas enriched to 3.67 percent set by the deal.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Tehran and delivered a message from U.S. President Donald Trump to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Khamenei says Trump is "not deserving to exchange messages with" and says he will not send a response. Khamenei says that there is no sense in negotiating with the United States after Trump has "thrown away everything that was agreed upon."

The United States accused Iran of attacking two tankers in the Gulf of Oman. Iran denied that it was behind the attack. Iran announced it will breach the 300-kilogram limit on uranium gas enriched to 3.67 percent within 10 days. Iran then shot down a U.S. surveillance drone, claiming the drone was in Iranian airspace. The United States said the drone was in international airspace. Shortly after, the United States sanctioned the Supreme Leader of Iran and his office.

Violent Extreme Organization:

We will be forever vigilant and keep the fight from the Homeland. We must use the whole of Government approach to dissuade and prevent terrorist organizations and ideology against the United States Homeland and our citizens, allies and partners overseas.

REBUILDING MILITARY READINESS AS WE BUILD A MORE LETHAL FORCE

DEFENSE BUDGETING

Congress did not complete the actions on appropriations before the end of the fiscal year on 30 September 2019. The house passes a Continuing Resolution (CR) in September 2019 that funds the Government through 21 November 2019, which the Senate passed on 26 Sept and President Trump signed on 27 September 2019.

FY20 NDAA - When passed, the FY20 NDAA will mark the fifty-ninth consecutive year the Congress has enacted sweeping legislation in support of a strong, comprehensive national defense. The NDAA is the primary vehicle to execute Congress’s important constitutional obligation to “provide for the common defense.” To do so, the NDAA must take care of our greatest asset: Our service members.

The Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee’s proposal focuses on improving the lives of our men and women in uniform, authorizing a 3.1 percent pay increase and implementing reforms to improve the quality of military housing.

Beyond the budget numbers exists a need to increase the accountability of how defense resources are allocated and spent. Over the last year, the principle has been simple – funding allocated for defense programs should be spent on defense programs. Building and modernizing military capabilities and overall military readiness has been jeopardized by the threat or willful diversion of fiscal support from authorized and appropriated military construction projects, critical training and maintenance functions, and overseas contingency operations.

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

	FY19 PBR	FY19 HASC NDAA	FY19 SASC NDAA	FY19 HAC-D Defense Appropriations
Base budget	\$750 billion	\$655.9 billion	\$655.7 billion	\$622.1 billion

Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)	\$165 billion	\$69 billion	\$75.9 billion	\$68.1 billion
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The defense appropriations bill has more than \$622 billion in base defense spending and nearly \$68 billion in overseas contingency funds, which is well below the White House request and in line with spending targets outlined in the annual defense authorization bill approved earlier this summer.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The administration’s FY 2020 budget proposal continues defense spending increases to align U.S. military forces with a national defense strategy (NDS) focused on great power competition. This strategy prioritizes capability over capacity.
- Thus, the FY 2020 budget prioritizes modernization to compete with China and Russia and maintains the higher readiness levels achieved in the FY 2017-FY 2019 budgets. It expands force structure only a little. Even defense buildups have limits and require trade-offs.
- However, day-to-day operations for ongoing conflicts, crisis response, and allied engagement continue to put high demands on forces.
- These unrelenting operational demands require force structure and drive the services to a high-low mix: high for great power conflict, low (or less high) for day-to-day deployments and regional conflicts.
- Although widely supported, the NDS has been criticized by some for being underfunded and by others for being too aggressive, while the proposed FY 2020 budget has been criticized for not making sufficient changes to align with the NDS.
- The future presents two major risks for sustaining force plans: (1) a lack of real growth in future budgets; and (2) softening public support.
- The measure funds a 3.1 percent pay raise for troops starting next January.

STRENGTHENING ALLIANCES AS WE ATTRACT NEW PARTNERS

INDO-PACIFIC ENGAGEMENTS

Following initial briefings from INDO-PACOM in Hawaii, the National Commander will travel to Taiwan to reaffirm our Nation’s continued partnership with Taiwan. Since the Taiwan Relations Act, enacted by the United States Congress in April 1979, authorized continued “commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people of Taiwan” in the wake of the U.S. decision to establish diplomatic ties with the People’s Republic of China.

By authorizing the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and other provisions, the TRA created a framework for relations between the U.S. and Taiwan which has enabled their partnership and friendship to thrive in the absence of diplomatic relations.

This year the National Commander will travel to Australia and will engage with U.S. and Australian senior government Ministers and business leaders. The relationship between Australia and the United States is unique in its breadth, depth, and length, and is characterized by genuine cultural affinity and a spirit of collaboration. The American Legion will strive to be a responsible partner for the next one hundred years of Mateship.

The two countries' contemporary relationship encompasses many shared fields of endeavor: including defense and security cooperation, extensive trade and investment links creating jobs for Australians and Americans, cultural exchanges, sporting rivalry, education participation, research and development, and tourism.

There is no doubt that the mateship between Australia and the United States will further develop and strengthen over the next hundred years.

EUCOM ENGAGEMENTS

From May through June of 2020 the National Commander will visit the European theater and will reengage with current partners and new. Germany hosts a large U.S. military presence as well as Landstuhl Military Hospital, both will be revisited.

Poland and the United States are joined by a strategic partnership based on commonly professed values, traditional ties of friendship and respect for mutual interests. The strengthening of the alliance with the United States and the increase of American forces in Poland is one of the top priorities of the Secretary of Defense and will host the 3rd largest military exercise in Europe since the Cold War. The National Commander has been invited to engage the troops and military leaders around the time of the exercise.

Italy hosts U.S. military installations which support the missions of EUCOM, AFRICOM and CENTCOM. It provides a platform for readiness and power projection throughout the AOR. The National Commander will engage with U.S. forces in Italy to gain a better understanding of their mission as well as engage with commanders to inform them of how The American Legion supports their mission.

CONGRESSIONAL RECEPTION

The National Security Division has held several meetings with officials from the Embassy of Japan in preparation for two events including a panel that will take place during Washington Conference, focusing on military families. Japan hosts more deployed U.S. servicemembers than any other country, more than 19,000 plus families.

Additionally, the National Security Division is working with the Legislative Division and the Embassy of Japan to host a Congressional reception, in early 2020. The reception will provide a forum for Japanese and Congressional officials to discuss how they can better assist deployed U.S. servicemembers and learn best practices to share with their own government.

POW/MIA UPDATE

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

WWII	Korean War	Vietnam War	Cold War	Iraq & Other Conflicts
72,0652	7,608	1587	126	5

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Bill Oxford, our NEC Liaison and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support for Commission efforts to take care of troops and "provide for the common defense."

ADVANCE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

March 9, 2020 – March 11, 2020

Steven A. Brennan (Maryland), Chairman

The National Security Commission convened on March 9th during the 60th Annual Washington Conference at the Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C. The following report is a summary of this session:

The Commission was honored to welcome National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford; who addressed our Commission with a simple message "This information you are receiving today is inspiring, because when we think about whom we are and what we do, National Security is one of our primary pillars..." He stressed, "I hope you realize the value of the contributions that you all are making to the American Legion and to this Country."

National Commander Oxford addressed some key policy areas that the National Security Commission covers, particularly the importance of his recent trips to the Far East and the Indo-

Pacific Region (South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Hawaii), with National Security discussions related to China and North Korea; all supported by our National Security Division.

The program proceeded in the following sections:

- Opening remarks and roll call
- U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC) and the future of American conflicts
- Army Lieutenant General Karen H. Gibson and the state of present-day national security
- Ms. Fern Sumpter Winbush, Principal Deputy Director for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Ms. Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairperson of the Board, National League of POW/MIA Families
- Director Donald M. Benton, Selective Service Administration

Chairman Steven Brennan (Maryland), National Security Commission, discussed resolutions that will be considered by the National Executive Committee during the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis. These resolutions include the American Legions position on support for Georgian Conflict and the pharmaceutical independence long-term readiness reform. Other resolutions that are being urged to come to a vote are: the opposition to excluding transgender Americans from the military; funding for protection of the national power grid against electromagnetic pulse attack; and oppose deportation of non-citizen immigrant veterans.

I. USGLC: Strengthening Diplomacy and Development alongside Defense (and the future of American conflicts)

Sean Sorbie, Director of Veterans Outreach, USGLC moderated a panel with Retired Air Force General Richard Hawley and Craig Wold, General Counsel, US Aid for International Development (USAID) on a verity of national security topics; including the costs and ramifications of pulling out of our current conflicts; focused mostly on the Middle East region and Africa. The panel had major discussions on the discrepancy between what is actually spent on the U.S. International Affairs Budget and what Americans think is spent – and the importance of this since the U.S. is currently facing numerous threats from terrorism to pandemics, and that these threats cannot be solved by the military alone, but requires diplomacy and USAID to adequately address such challenges.

Experts in the field continue to implement a strategy that will develop diplomacy in future engagements. Many of these strategies include the “hearts and minds” approach, although mostly ineffective in Afghanistan it had short term gains in Iraq. While war is destructive, chaotic, and at times unpredictable we as Americans must push for a better tomorrow and a greater good for the world. Gen. Hawley opined that, “I can’t imagine how bad things could get” if the U.S. diminished and retreated on the global scene. “In almost every case where we end up with problems, it was because we didn’t adequately invest in diplomacy and development assistance.”

While America has been largely bogged down in conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan other peer or soon to be peer adversarial nations are setting up military installations and ports of entry. China has been particularly unsettling to the United States in recent memory. While America is shifting

away from large conflicts in the Middle East, we must be vigilant to avoid a power vacuum, blow back, and a possible terrorist haven. It was such havens that orchestrated the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Looking to the future America must build, maintain, and harbor good relations with our allies and potential allies. There are more than two billion people that live in conflict areas around the world, whether that be in war zones, civil unrest, and natural disasters. These people and areas are much more susceptible to extremism and future wars.

II. The state of present-day national security

Army Lieutenant General Karen Gibson addressed the commission on a verity of National Security topics. LTG Gibson served in the U.S. Army for more than 30 years. While doing so she has served in a multitude of joint and operational intelligence duty assignments in the U.S., Middle East, Afghanistan, Africa and Korea and commanded from the company level to the brigade.

Later in LTG Gibson's career she had a heavy focus on ISIS in Iraq from 2014-2017. She discussed the most likely dangerous actors and non-state actors that posed a serious threat to America. One area that has been dubbed the "new wild west" is the cyber sphere. There are millions and even billions of dollars lost each year to cyber pirates that are state sponsored and non-state led actors. While it is necessary to secure our borders, they are not always physical in nature. America must remain diligent in securing our critical cyber infrastructure. One of the main players is China. They have consistently stolen and hampered other nations in copyright infringement, currency, and data. While it is nothing new and has been a factor for the past 20 years, other threats come from North Korea, Iran, and Russia.

Other topics discussed included weapons of mass destruction (WMD) attacks. The main threat pertaining to Russia and the United States, emerging and disruptive technologies, artificial intelligence, 5G, space force, and pandemics. While we go into the new decade we must remain steadfast with our allies, invest in our future, and continue to safeguard the United States.

III. POW/MIA update

The Commission was provided an update on the POW/MIA mission by Ms. Fern Sumpter Winbush, Principal Deputy Director for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) and Ms. Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairperson of the Board, National League of POW/MIA Families.

DPAA's mission statement since its inception has always been to provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation. This mission is encompassed by their core values which consist of compassion, integrity, teamwork, respect, and innovation.

The DPAA can make this possible by a cloud-based case management system (CMS) and public portal. This includes the pace and scope of wars and conflicts throughout our nation's history to pinpoint locations and battle spaces.

Ms. Winbush thanked the American Legion "for your steadfast support, especially your continued march on the Hill to ensure that DPAA is fully funded every year... We could not do what we do every single day without organizations like you that will stand up and fight." With the help of the

U.S. Congress, the DPAA is increasing their field and laboratory operations because of a budget increase of \$30 million in 2019, and \$24 million in 2020.

IV. Selective Service System update

The Commission was provided an updated on the Selective Service System by Director Donald Benton, appointed the 13th Director of Selective Service by President Donald J. Trump on 11 April 2017. In this capacity, Director Benton directs an independent agency of the Executive Branch to provide trained and untrained manpower to the Department of Defense when directed by the President and the United States Congress, supporting America's all volunteer force during a national emergency.

Mr. Benton began his presentation by briefing the Commission on the importance of the Selective Service to the nation. The Selective Service System and the registration requirement for America's young men provide our Nation with a structure and a system of guidelines which will provide the most prompt, efficient, and equitable draft possible, if the country should need it. America's leaders agree that despite the success of the All-Volunteer Force, registration with Selective Service must continue as a key component of national security strategy.

He also provided an update on the National Commission on Military, National and Public Service which is scheduled to release its final report on March 25th. The report will provide a recommendation to Congress on whether the national needs the Selective Service. It will also provide a recommendation on whether women should be required to register for the Selective Service. As of writing this report to the NEC, the final report can be downloaded at: <https://inspire2serve.gov/reports>.

V. National and Regional Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year Selection Subcommittee

Prior to the Washington Conference, the Chairman of the Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee (Chairman George W. Wehrl, Florida) appointed an awards selection subcommittee to review all the nominations that had been received during 2019 from the Departments for the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year award programs. The Subcommittee met Monday, March 9th, in the International Ballroom West in the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C., to select the 5 Regional Firefighter of the Year winners and the 5 Regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Winners. From the Regional winners the National Law Enforcement Officer and National Firefighter of the year winners were selected.

The winners and runners-up have been contacted and the Regional winners will receive their awards during their respective Department Conventions. The National winners were scheduled to receive their awards on stage from the National Commander during the National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. The American Legion took the extraordinary step of cancelling this year's 2020 National Convention in the Commonwealth of Kentucky in compliance with state and federal public-health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Alternate measures are being considered by leadership for the appropriate and safe presentation of the awards.

VI. Joint American Legion / Embassy of Japan Panel and Reception

On Monday evening, March 9, 2020, The American Legion cohosted two events on Capitol Hill with the Embassy of Japan. Titled: "Friends and Partners: The Diamond Jubilee of the U.S. - Japan Alliance," it served to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan. The panel discussion focused on the challenges and opportunities, as well as the pride and solidarity, of military families from both the U.S. and Japanese perspectives. A reception followed. A summary of the two events is below:

Gathering at the U.S. Capitol Visitors Center, U.S. and Japanese military veterans and their spouses took part in a panel discussion that focused on the challenges faced by military families. The panel consisted of: Retired U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George Casey Jr. and his wife Sheila Casey, and former Chief of Staff for the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Admiral Yutaka Murakawa and his wife Noriko Murakawa.

The panel was moderated by Kathy Roth-Douquet, the founder and CEO of Blue Star Families, which has more than 150,000 members in their network, including chapters all over the world. Blue Star Families claims to touch more than 1.5 million military family members every year.

Roth-Douquet said that her organization believes that "in the 21st century, supporting our troops means supporting military families," noting stressors on military families includes those related to finances, feelings of isolation and the difficulties of being separated during deployments.

Noriko Murakawa, who served as the Chairwoman of the Association for Spouses of Executives of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense from 2016 to 2019, said through a translator that having to move around frequently was difficult, and when she was younger her husband often had to go to work right after the move. "Oftentimes he was not there for us when we moved in the furniture," she said. "It was hard not having him around as we settled into our new home."

GEN. George Casey – who served 41 years in the Army, including as the 36th U.S. Army Chief of Staff from 2007-2011 – was born into a military family. "As an Army brat, I've been a member of the military my entire life," he said. "There are inconveniences. But there are, in fact, serious challenges, and my family experienced both.

"Inconveniences are like I went to four high schools in three different countries. That was a lot of moving around, but I had a very strengthening experience. The separations are more than an inconvenience."

GEN. Casey's father, George Sr., was an Army Major General and in command of the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam when he died in 1970 in a helicopter crash in South Vietnam. George remembered driving his father to the airport for what would be his last tour in Vietnam. Casey remembered his mother having tears in her eyes as her husband left.

"I looked at my mother and I said, 'You've been doing this your whole marriage. It must get easier,'" GEN. Casey said. "And with tears in her eyes, she looked at me and said, 'No dear, it only gets harder.'"

Sheila Casey, the current Chief Operating Officer of The Hill, said her family moved 25 times during George's military career. "With each of those moves early on, it's finding a place to live, finding schools for your children ... relocating your job and hoping you can find one comparable or better," she said. "Moving can be stressful, but it also opens up the door to new adventures."

Early on, Sheila said, there were many separations for short periods of time. But when her husband served as the senior coalition commander in Iraq from June 2004 to February 2007, the separation was almost three years.

"When he first left for Iraq he was supposed to be gone for a year," Sheila said. "I was not looking down the barrel of 32 months. With those separations, in some instances there can be an isolation as well. When George went to Iraq for 32 months, I was the only one on the base where I lived on whose husband was gone."

"But the things I learned early on ... is that you learn to depend on your friends around you, and how that group unites and becomes a family."

Through a translator, Adm. Yutaka Murakawa – who served as the 33rd Chief of Staff for the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force from 2016 to 2019 – said moving around regularly could be burdensome, but "it was wonderful to gain rich experience through living in different places. My wife and I will never forget our interactions (in different locations)."

Noriko Murakawa said she remembers a time when military service in Japan was considered dishonorable. She even remembered asking Yutaka shortly after they first met why he prepared for war and trained to kill.

"He answered, 'Nobody wants war. War is the worst date of the world, and somebody has to be ready for the worst,'" Noriko said. "At that time it was all clear to me. That was something nobody taught me in school."

GEN. Casey said that despite the moving and separations, "aside from having my dad around for longer, I wouldn't have changed a minute of it. I feel like as a family we grew significantly."

Sheila said that in being part of a military family, you don't think of the challenges on a daily basis. "But as I look back and think about the people we served with, the friends that we made and the friends that we still have – the fact that you really are a part of an organization that is bigger than yourself," she said. "It's filled with people who really are working as a team. It's not about yourself. It's about the collective. I think I'm most proud ... that I was a part of that group."

A reception followed the roundtable and was attended by Japanese ambassador to the United States Shinsuke J. Sugiyama, as well as members of Congress that included Rep. Mark Takano, the Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; and Sen. Angus King, who sits on the Senate Committee on Armed Services.

Rep. Takano said the relationship between Japan and the United States is "deeply personal" to him because his great uncles served in the 442nd Regiment in World War II. The unit was composed

almost entirely of second-generation American soldiers of Japanese ancestry and is the most decorated unit in U.S. military history.

“In the decades since World War II, the United States and Japan have come together to forge a better and brighter future for the citizens of both our countries,” Rep. Takano said. “Our partnership should serve as a model to the world that when shells, ships and planes’ roar have fallen silent, economic trade, cultural exchanges and a shared vision for our peoples creates an unbreakable bond.”

Noting he’s visited Japan multiple times, Sen. King said “the important thing to emphasize is the strength and importance of the alliance between the United States and Japan. Japan is the cornerstone of the alliance in the Indo-Pacific region, which is becoming more and more and more important ... to maintaining peace in the world.

“If you look at world politics, one of the things that distinguishes us from the Chinese and the Russians is allies. They have clients, but they don’t have allies. We have allies, bound together with bonds of friendship and mutual interests.”

Ambassador Sugiyama thanked The American Legion for co-hosting the event. “It is a very good feeling when The American Legion and government of Japan host an event together. It shows how far our friendship has come.”

American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford attended both the panel and the reception, and while doing so referenced the “special relationship” the United States has with Japan, referring to it as “an alliance that has been called a gold standard of defense treaties. But it’s more than just an alliance. It’s a tried-and-true friendship.”

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
SPRING 2020**

The American Legion took the extraordinary step of cancelling this year’s 2020 Spring National Executive Committee Meeting in compliance with state and federal public-health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the Report of the National Security Commission to the National Executive Committee was not generated. The safety of our members and compliance with state and federal public-health restrictions and guidelines made this decision not only prudent but necessary. The American Legion has taken copious actions to prevent the spread of infections by adhering to federal guidance that restrict large public gatherings and urge social distancing. Local American Legion services such as Buddy Checks, blood drives, meal delivery and volunteer assistance remain the top priority of the organization as we navigate during these challenging times of uncertainty. Because no one can say with any certainty when and in what manner these measures will be lifted, a virtual platform has been established to assist with communicating and carrying out the business of The American Legion.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

One of the most important parts of the work of the National Security Division is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony as well as letters of support on issues on servicemembers quality of life, national security, and foreign relations. The National Security Division has submitted the following five (5) letters of support.

Dear Conferees:

As you and your colleagues conference the FY 2020 National Defense Appropriations Act, The American Legion urges your support for the inclusion of *Section 516* of the House bill in the final conference report. *Section 516* authorizes the Secretary of Defense to carry out a program to enhance the preparation of students in the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) for careers in computer science and cybersecurity.

Through American Legion Resolution No. 20, *National Cybersecurity Strategy*, our nearly 2 million members support legislation to develop policies to enhance interagency cybersecurity, develop programs that educate citizens on cybersecurity, and grow the U.S. cybersecurity workforce. The Department of Labor projects that by 2026, the United States education system will only be able to fill 19 percent of computer-related job openings. *Section 516* would prepare JROTC students for employment in these fields while ensuring that the future workforce can meet defense industry demands. The American Legion believes that promoting cybersecurity training and education is vital to ensuring the protection of the United States from cyber and other electronic attacks.

We respectfully request you support the inclusion of *Section 516* in the 2020 NDAA, and thank you again for your continued commitment to the men and women who have served our nation in uniform.

Dear Conferees:

As you and your colleagues work to finalize the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Consolidated Appropriations bill, on behalf of nearly the 2 million members of The American Legion, I urge your support for the inclusion of Senate Appropriations Committee-passed language authorizing 4,000 visas for the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program.

Since 2009, this program has been a critical lifeline for those Afghan interpreters who have risked their lives supporting U.S. forces and diplomats. They have played an indispensable role during the U.S. mission in Afghanistan by serving as bridges to the local populace. It is vital that this program continue in order to properly honor the service of these individuals and encourage others to assist the U.S. in future conflicts.

Through American Legion Resolution No. 16, Recognition for Afghan and Iraqi Combat Translators, our nearly 2 million members support legislation that would recognize the efforts of these Afghan interpreters, "who stood shoulder to shoulder with, assisted and protected U.S. military service members, U.S. diplomats and government agents."

We respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the Senate Appropriations Committee-passed language authorizing 4,000 additional visas for the Afghan SIV program. Thank you again for your continued commitment to the men and women who have served our nation in uniform.

Representative Yoho,

On behalf of the nearly 2 million members of The American Legion, I am pleased to express support for House Resolution 910 - *A resolution commending the people of Taiwan on holding free and fair*

democratic presidential and legislative elections, and congratulating Madame Tsai Ing-wen on her re-election to the presidency of Taiwan.

The people of United States and Taiwan have enjoyed a close friendship that has been buttressed by our shared commitment to democratic values. Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special appreciation for these values. The free and fair democratic elections conducted by the Republic of China are commendable and serves as a reaffirmation to our mutual commitment to the principals of self-government.

American Legion Resolution No. 38: *Taiwan Straits Dialogue*, recognizes Taiwan as, “*a long-time friend, ally, and major trading partner of the United States.*” Thus, we strongly support House Resolution 910, as it recognizes the mutual friendship with an important ally and is consistent with America’s interest in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The American Legion sincerely appreciates your leadership on this matter.

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Reed,

As advocates of our nearly 2 million members, we remain committed to helping military family’s transition from the Armed Forces to civilian life. We write to express our support for Section 570F in the House-passed NDAA (H.R. 2500), which would establish a pilot program for the purposes of creating a one-stop online application for members of the Armed Forces and veterans participating in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

The current iteration of TAP offered to transitioning servicemembers, their families, and caretakers has evolved over time to address contemporary needs. Recently identified inefficiencies now call for another evolution of TAP to further streamline the program.

The existing program is primarily in-person and often during the final days in the military, which has led many separating military personnel to feel as if they are “drinking from a firehose,” as quoted in a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report. Additionally, reporting for TAP is currently processed by paper, which leads to many inaccuracies. The GAO report cited that the Department of Defense (DoD) lacked data for nearly half of National Guard and Reserve members, which has resulted in DoD misstating the actual performance of TAP in its public reporting. Lastly, since TAP is administered during their time in service, many servicemembers are not given adequate time to take part in the program by their commanders, as they feel it interferes with mission readiness.

This provision is designed to address the gaps in TAP by introducing a technological solution that provides a personalized transition dashboard for veterans to access on their desktop or via a mobile device application. This dashboard will provide veterans with employment opportunities, education, health care, financial benefits, and more. Moreover, the platform will provide employers with much needed resources to help them connect with veterans and expand on the skills learned while in service that would translate to their chosen industry.

Through American Legion Resolution No. 102, *Expansion of the Department of Defense’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to Include Ancillary Programs and Services*, our nearly 2 million members support legislation to encourage, “technology innovations in support of the Transition Assistance Program.” It is critical that this process be brought into the 21st century to ensure the success of servicemembers who are transitioning.

We respectfully request you support the inclusion of Section 570F in the House-passed NDAA and request that it remain as the House and Senate negotiate in conference. Thank you again for your continued commitment to the men and women who have served our nation in uniform.

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the nearly two million members of The American Legion, we are pleased to express support for Section 221 of S. 2297 *Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2019*. This provision, known as the “Pay Our Coast Guard” provision, ensures appropriations for Coast Guard pay in the event an appropriations act expires. Presently, the Coast Guard is the only military branch working without pay during a government shutdown. We urge you to address this issue immediately and permanently by ensuring this provision is included in the Coast Guard Authorization Act.

On a daily basis our Coast Guard personnel carry out missions that are vital to our national security. It is an absolute necessity that they be able to operate without distraction during these repeated, and all too common, government shutdowns. In order to conduct operations as normal, this provision provides funding to ensure Coast Guard members receive pay and allowances during government shutdowns.

Last year, The American Legion distributed more than \$1 million in grants to Coast Guard families through its Temporary Financial Assistance program. This attempt to ameliorate the financial hardship of our service members, while welcomed, was not enough to assist all those in need. The repeated and ubiquitous threat of government shutdowns brings severe hardship on our Coast Guard men and women who do not have the same assurances of being paid in these situations as the members of the other armed services. No member of our military service should ever live in fear of not being paid.

Through American Legion Resolution No. 23, *Support for the Department of Homeland Security and Coast Guard*, passed in 2017, we support legislation that fully funds the United States Coast Guard to achieve its numerous vital missions. It is imperative that we address this issue permanently, as it is becoming an unacceptable norm for the men and women that protect our nation. The American Legion sincerely appreciates your leadership and support of our servicemembers.