

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
2022 - 2023
REPORT TO CONGRESS

From October 2022 through September 2023, the National Security Commission, its seven Committees and Council participated in myriad activities involving defense, foreign relations, homeland security and military quality of life-related matters. Focusing on The American Legion's priorities, the National Security Commission continues to improve and expand its influence across a multitude of portfolios that contribute to America maintaining a strong national security posture.

REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

OCT. 12-13, 2022

This report summarizes the commission's actions since the 103rd National Convention on issues important to the National Executive Committee.

The commission, NEC Liaison team and division staff met virtually on Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2022, a quorum was met and Steven A. Brennan chaired the meeting. The commission discussed our priorities, the progress we are making and other matters of importance to National Security. We reviewed six resolutions: one held over from the spring NEC; four referred from the national convention; and one new resolution from the Department of Michigan.

Resolution No. 14

Subject: Correction of Military Records

Origin: Convention 2022 (CA)

Recommend transferring to the Internal Affairs Commission.

Resolution No. 2

Subject: Policy on Taiwan

Origin: Convention 2022 (AK)

Recommend "Hold for Further Study."

Resolution No. 22

Subject: Clarifying Definition of Incident to Service

Origin: Convention 2022 (CA)

Recommend "Hold for Further Study."

Resolution No. 45

Subject: Establish Separate Paramedic/Emergency Medical Technician Award

Origin: Convention 2022 (SD)

Recommend "Hold for Further Study."

Register Resolution No. 2824

Subject: Full Funding of the United States Military
Origin: Department of Michigan DEC
Recommend "Hold for Further Study."

Resolution No. 24

Subject: Revocation of U.S. Military Awards to Russian Military Personnel
Origin: Spring NEC 2022 (National Security Commission)
Recommend "Withdraw."

Since the 2022 national convention, the commission held discussions with various departments on why their resolutions were rejected at the convention and ways forward (if the department still feels strongly about the issue). When a department submits a resolution, Chairman Brennan wants to ensure there is closure on the hard work the department did.

To support the commission, the National Security Division staff worked diligently on various resolutions referred for study to the commission. As an example: staff members traveled to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., to conduct research involving the U.S. Navy and issues surrounding the correction of military records for incidents that occurred during World War II for two incidents: the "Port Chicago Fifty" and the "Philadelphia Fifteen."

During this same period (which is a high priority for the commission), the staff completed administrative edits on The American Legion's Quality of Life Assessment Program procedural handbook. The handbook, similar to the "System Worth Saving Program" procedural manual, will guide the commission in the execution of quality-of-life assessments we plan to conduct at U.S. military installations across the United States, tentatively beginning during 2023. Additionally, staff continued to compile research and information involving the most common issues that impact military quality of life.

Engaging with the military community is critical to The American Legion's efforts in leading advocacy for quality-of-life matters. On Sept. 27, 2022, Director Marquez attended the North Carolina (NC) Defense Summit in Raleigh, hosted by the NC Military Affairs Commission. During the summit he attended briefs on issues ranging from military construction and privatized housing to discussions involving the best practices when advocating for the military installation community. Events such as this will be key to not only build relationships with those engaged in the military community, but also to maintain currency on the multitude of issues that impact quality of life.

Relations between The American Legion and the Republic of China (Taiwan) date back approximately seven decades, but engagement between the two has significantly increased over the past five years, when several national commanders visited Taiwan. The rock-solid relationship was demonstrated during the COVID pandemic in 2020 when National Commander Oxford accepted a donation of 250,000 masks from Ambassador Bi-khim Hsiao at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Washington, D.C.

More recently, National Vice Commander (NVC) Paul Kennedy, supported by the division staff, attended the Taiwan 111th National Day, where Representative to the United States Bi-khim Hsiao and NVC Kennedy exchanged gratitude for the great relationship and support between both organizations.

Our priorities moving forward are: researching resolutions listed on Addendum A and have recommendations for the spring NEC; continuing development of the commission's Quality of Life program; continuing discussions with key subject matter experts in the field of national security so we can have a true group of experts; and reviewing eligibility and criteria for our National Law Enforcement and National Firefighter of the Year Awards (based upon numerous resolutions written by departments).

Conclusion: The National Security Commission (including our seven committees and council) are excited on the progress we are making and how there is more interest in our National Security Pillar. We will continue to work with our National Security "Council" on getting pertinent information to the departments, districts, counties and posts. We sincerely appreciate the support this commission is getting and the participation by our Legionnaires. I would also like to thank the national commander, the national adjutant and the Washington and Indianapolis staff for their outstanding support and cooperation during the past year.

The American Legion National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola Official Travel to the Pacific December 4-15, 2022

American Legion National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola led a delegation on official travel to Hawaii and Okinawa, Japan, from Dec. 4-15, 2023. The delegation went to several Pearl Harbor attack commemorative events, visited the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, visited with Department of Hawaii and Philippine Legionnaires, and conducted office calls with military leaders in Okinawa.

In Hawaii, Commander Troiola attended two ceremonies in remembrance of the attack at Pearl Harbor. Commander Troiola visited Tripler Army Medical Center and the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Headquarters. He also visited USS *Arizona* and a wreath-laying ceremony at the Punchbowl Cemetery of the Pacific. The delegation then flew to Okinawa, Japan, where Commander Troiola met with the Commanding General, III Marine Expeditionary Force and received operational and quality of life briefings. He met with veterans from the Okinawa and South Korea Legion posts as well as the USO and other support organizations. Commander Troiola spent his final days in Okinawa talking to Navy sailors at White Beach and touring the Marine Corps' Jungle Warfare Training Center.

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

Feb. 26 – March 1, 2023

The National Security Commission, chaired by newly appointed Matthew Shuman of Arizona, convened on Feb. 27 during the 63rd 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 Vincent Troiola. The commission was honored by his attendance and very appreciative of his participation.

National Commander Troiola shared his enthusiasm and support for National Security's Quality of Life program. He spoke briefly about his visit to Red Hill, Hawaii, where he saw firsthand the effect the contaminated water has had on servicemembers and their families. Stressing the importance of quality of life, the commander closed his remarks with, "How can you focus on the mission abroad if you can't fight the missions at home?"

The program proceeded in the following sections:

Morning:

- Opening remarks and roll call
- Pat McGuigan, Military and Veterans Legislative Assistant, Office of U.S. Sen. John Boozman
- Hon. R. Clarke Cooper, Former Assistant Secretary of State
- Vickie Koutz, American Legion Auxiliary National President

Afternoon:

- Division Legislative Update, Jeff Steele, National Security Policy Analyst, National Security Division
- The commission reviewed four resolutions
- Business for the good of The American Legion

I. Pat McGuigan, Military and Veterans Legislative Assistant, Office of U.S. Sen. John Boozman

McGuigan opened his remarks by stating that military quality of life is what's most important as a part of national security. He also stressed the importance that volunteers have in advocating for servicemembers and veterans. In an anecdotal example, McGuigan explained how a volunteer from Mena, Ark., brought to Boozman's attention that a certain herbicide used in Thailand by the military should be included in the PACT Act legislation under consideration by Congress. Before the bill's passage, McGuigan and his colleagues worked to conduct research and ultimately

conclude the herbicide use at that location should be listed under the toxic exposure list. In conclusion, he reiterated that voices and votes matter.

II. Hon. R. Clarke Cooper, Former Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs at the U.S. Department of State; Atlantic Council Non-resident Senior Fellow

Cooper discussed America's role in the world and the navigation of global interests. Cooper argued that the United States has a global role and must prove to be the preferred partner. He stated that the world is currently in a state of disruption, with many nations looking to partner with America on matters of defense and security not as an imperative, but as one of several options. He also noted that the NATO alliance is being tested by Russia's aggression in Ukraine, China's growing influence and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. Cooper argued that the United States must act to restore its position as the world's preferred partner. He called for the U.S. to take concrete actions to demonstrate its commitment to its allies and partners, such as by providing them with security assistance and supporting their economic growth. He also called for the U.S. to work to resolve global challenges such as climate change and poverty. Cooper's speech was a call to action for the United States to reassert its global leadership role. He argued that the U.S. must take concrete actions to demonstrate its commitment to its allies and partners, and to work to resolve global challenges. He concluded by saying that the U.S. can offer other nations something a transactional purchase from Russia or China never will: friendship. Noting that security assistance to fellow democratic states like Ukraine is not limitless or that burden-sharing by treaty allies like NATO states is not only a concept, "looking further into 2023 and at the current Congress, there are leadership affirmations of support for our partners and allies to blunt the narrowminded noise of isolationism, but there will also be fair expectations of shared efforts to address shared adversity."

III. Vickie Koutz, American Legion Auxiliary National President

Koutz, a strong advocate of POW/MIA outreach, opened her remarks by asking the room to take the time to stop and think about the families who are still waiting for their loved ones to return home. "Those who don't understand what it means think that everyone has returned home and is buried in a cemetery," she said. "But that is not the case. Our members have been raising awareness for our nation's prisoners of war and missing in action. (Troops') remains from previous wars are still being found to this day. And those families are getting the closure they so desperately deserve." She implored volunteers to continue to spread awareness of the efforts made by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), which is currently working to identify and retrieve the remains of over 81,000 servicemembers. Last November, Koutz joined Team Long Road, a pair of veterans who embarked on a cross-country endeavor to raise awareness for POWs/MIAs. In her closing remarks, she expressed the need for family members to contact DPAA at DPAA.mil to assist in the efforts by providing pictures, DNA and any supporting documents that can help in identifying our servicemembers.

IV. Division Legislative Update, Jeff Steele, National Security Policy Analyst, National Security Division

Steele provided a legislative update on the 118th Congress and American Legion legislative priorities with national security implications relevant to the National Security Commission. He mentioned that gridlock will likely complicate the passage of major legislative initiatives in Congress, but there are areas of consensus, particularly in foreign policy and defense, where progress is likely. He also called attention to three legislative priorities: foreign assistance to Ukraine, the war in Ukraine and issues in the U.S. defense-industrial base, and tensions between China and the U.S. Steele stressed the importance of providing for the common defense, maintaining strategic readiness and confronting Russian aggression, while urging both parties to find common ground on these issues.

V. Resolutions Review & Discussion

Shuman recognized Chairman Liz Hartman (NC) from the Foreign Relations Committee, who introduced **Resolution No. 2: Policy on Taiwan** from the Department of Alaska. Hartman read the resolve clauses and recommended rejection of the resolution. Steele explained that the position to reject the resolution is based off advice from conversations between American Legion National Security staff and the Taiwanese embassy, who advised that we maintain the status quo and furthermore that the Legion needs to be a voice of constraint. Hartman made a move to open the floor for debate. There was no debate on the topic. Hartman made a motion to vote to reject Resolution No. 2. The motion was seconded. Hartman called for a voice vote in the affirmative “aye” votes. The commission unanimously voted “aye” to reject. There were no “nay” votes. Resolution was recommended for rejection.

Shuman recognized Hartman on **Resolution X: Support of the Afghan War Commission**. Hartman read the resolve clauses and recommended adoption of the resolution Steele explained that the panel will consist of 14 policy experts and will meet over the course of four years to study the entirety of the war in Afghanistan, the Authorization of Use of Military Force (AUMF), and also include the leadup to the war and the pullout in August 2021. Additionally, he explained that the Legion’s support for the commission is important because we would like to have Marquez testify on the record before the commission. There was no debate on the resolution. Hartman made a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion was seconded. Hartman called for a voice vote. The commission unanimously voted “aye” to adopt. There were no nay votes. Resolution was recommended for adoption.

Resolution No. 22: Clarifying Definition of Incident to Service. Shuman read the resolve clauses, then recognized Marquez. Marquez read from the fact sheet provided by the Department of California. He explained that the Feres doctrine places restraints on the Federal Torts Claim Act (FTCA), which states a servicemember cannot sue the government for injuries sustained during war. He further explained that this is unlikely to get support from Congress and that by changing the law it could open the door to fraudulent lawsuits against the U.S. military. Arizona member Hanely asked if this is similar to the Camp Lejeune incident. Legislative Director Montreuil explained that they are different and that the FTCA has caps on fees ranging from 22-25% and would not impact those issue areas. Shuman called for debate on the resolution. There

was no debate. Shuman called for a vote. The commission unanimously voted “aye” to adopt. There were no nay votes. Resolution was recommended for adoption.

Shuman recognized Chairman Wehrli (FL) of the Homeland Security and Law & Order Committee, who introduced **Resolution No. 45: Establish Separate Paramedic/Emergency Medical Technician Award**. Wehrli read the resolve clauses and recommended rejection of the resolution. Wehrli explained that the Firefighter/EMT award was established in 2012 and EMTs are already eligible for this award. Another factor is that the Finance Commission may not fund the establishment of another award. Wehrli made a motion to open the floor for debate. The first comment from John Digilio Jr. (NY) mentioned stand-alone fire departments. Angela Gomon (LA) said that paramedics and EMTs are different from firefighters and those three entities work together. Sara Tobin (CO) said EMTs have higher training and are different than a paramedic. Dennis Fitzgerald (GA) voiced support for all three awards. Dave Johnson (IL) said that without private-sector medical companies that provide paramedic/EMT services, fire departments would suffer. Shuman asked that volunteers who support the establish of a separate award get in contact with Wehrli and show how the award is different than the existing Firefighter/EMT of the Year award. Given the debate, Shuman made a motion to hold the resolution for further study. The commission voted in favor of holding for further study.

VI. George Wehrli (FL), Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee Chairman, update on the Regional and National Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year Awards

On Feb. 27, 2023, the Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee convened to vote on the annual Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year awards, where it selected the regional winners. The committee, chaired by George Wehrli (FL), selected five recipients for each category as follows:

Regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Winners for 2023:

- New England Region - Andrew Sheffer of New Hampshire
- Southern Region - Steven Holt of Tennessee
- Central Region - Tyler Dailey of Maryland
- Western Region - Tammy Bozarth of Colorado
- Midwest Region - Audrey Arbuckle of Nebraska

Regional Firefighter of the Year Winners for 2023:

- New England – John DeBisschop III of Connecticut
- Southern Region - Erick Ubiles of Florida
- Central Region - Marcus Collins of Indiana
- Western Region - Anthony Saccente of Oregon
- Midwest Region - Brian Maas of North Dakota

The national winners will be announced at the 2023 American Legion National Convention.

VII. Commander's Call National Security Speakers

The National Security Division arranged for and facilitated four national security-related speakers for the Commander's Call on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023. Summaries of their remarks follows:

Oksana Markarova, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the United States

Markarova thanked The American Legion for their support of Ukraine's resistance efforts against the Russian invasion of her country. The Legion passed Resolution No. 1 in February 2022, which called for continued aid to Ukrainian forces and a peaceful conflict resolution. Markarova praised the Legion's support, including specific help from individual Legionnaires, and stressed that Ukrainians want to live in a free and independent country. She also praised the current and former members of the Ukrainian military who have fought against the invasion. Markarova emphasized that Ukraine will fight until it wins, despite the fear caused by the atrocities committed by Russian forces.

Brig. Gen. Stephen J. Lightfoot, Director of Capabilities Development Directorate, U.S. Marine Corps

Lightfoot emphasized the importance of recruiting and retaining the best young men and women for the success of the military during The American Legion's Washington Conference. He highlighted the need to provide Marines with what they need to fight and win any mission and sought the Legion's assistance in engaging with the nation's youth and talking about the benefits of service. Lightfoot also mentioned that less than a quarter of those wanting to enlist actually qualify, and The American Legion can help by providing a spark of motivation to young people. He listed the urgency of modernization and strengthening amphibious capabilities as two pressing needs for the Marines. Lightfoot expects that the next major conflict will not be the USMC vs. China, but a joint and partnered force bringing the hammer down on those that seek to do the U.S. and its allies harm.

Hon. Earl Blumenauer, U.S. representative for Oregon's 3rd congressional district

The American Legion is urging Congress to reintroduce and pass the Afghan Adjustment Act, which would grant permanent legal status to Afghan refugees and improve the Special Immigrant Visa process for Afghans who served alongside U.S. servicemembers. Last year, Blumenauer introduced this bipartisan legislation, which The American Legion supports. Blumenauer thanked the Legion for their support and emphasized the obligation to those who risked their lives to help Americans. He recalled a moment at an airport with an Afghan interpreter and an American captain, demonstrating the importance of not turning our back on those who put their lives on the line for us.

Matthew Shuman (AZ), Chairman, American Legion National Security Commission

Shuman gave remarks regarding the commission's commitment to policies and initiatives that aim to protect the national security of the United States and its citizens. The commission supports a

strong national defense, and advocates for the well-being and support of military personnel. Legislative advocacy plays a major role in their work, and they have identified three priorities with national security implications for the 118th Congress: ensuring an excellent military quality of life, supporting Afghan allies and ensuring the Coast Guard is paid during government shutdowns. The commission urges Congress to pass legislation to address these priorities.

VIII. Other Washington Conference-Associated Activities

The National Security Division helped plan, facilitate and staff the ANAVICUS breakfast and related wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. National Security staff assisted the Legislative Division with escort duties for assigned Commander's Call guest speakers. National Security staff also assisted the Legislative Division with activities associated with National Commander Troiola's testimony before the Joint House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing, as well as attending the hearing.

REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MAY 10-11, 2023

The 63rd Annual Washington Conference was addressed in our Advanced Report. After the Washington Conference, the National Security Commission, its seven committees and the council continued to stay updated on issues involving the national security portfolio. The National Security Resolution Screening Committee and Commission met on Wednesday, April 26, and Monday, May 1, respectively, to review resolutions to be brought forward to the National Executive Committee for consideration.

National Security Resolution Screening Committee

- Matthew Shuman (AZ), Committee Chairman
- James Grenier Jr (VA)
- Devell Durham Jr. (NC)
- Gary Walker (WA)
- Elizabeth Hartman (NC)
- Theresa L. Pucket (VA)
- Richard Keiser (NY)

The National Security Resolution Screening Committee reviewed and provided recommendations on the following resolutions:

- **Register Resolution 2824:** *Support Full Funding of All Branches of the Military, to Include National Guard and the Reserve Forces - Receive & Record*
- **Resolution 2829:** *Expand the Reduced Retirement Age for Reserve Component Servicemembers - Approve*

- **Resolution 2831:** *U.S. Border Patrol and National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year – Receive & Record*
- **Resolution 2837:** *Department of Defense Budget – Approve*

Additionally, the committee was briefed by staff and reviewed resolutions heard by the commission during the Washington Conference.

- **Resolution No. 2: Policy on Taiwan** - The commission unanimously voted “aye” to reject. There were no nay votes. The commission voted to reject.
- **Resolution No. 22: Clarifying Definition of Incident to Service** - The commission unanimously voted “aye” to adopt. There were no nay votes. The resolution was recommended for adoption.
- **Resolution No. 45: Establish Separate Paramedic/Emergency Medical Technician Award** - The commission voted to recommend hold for further study.
- **Resolution X: Support of the Afghan War Commission** - The commission unanimously voted “aye” to adopt. There were no nay votes. The resolution was recommended for adoption.

National Security Commission Meeting

Presiding was Chairman Matthew Shuman (AZ)

Vice Chairman: Kenneth Trumbull (IL)

The committee chairmen present included: James Grenier Jr (VA), Thomas Schottenbauer (MN), William Flanagan (IL), George Wehrli (FL), Elizabeth Hartman (NC), and 18 commission members.

RESOLUTIONS

Commission Chairman Matthew Shuman (AZ) led a discussion on the following resolutions to make recommendations to the spring 2023 National Executive Committee:

Title: Clarifying Definition of Incident to Service

Origin: Resolution No. 22 (CA) 2022 National Convention

National Security Commission recommendation: The commission moved and seconded to present this resolution to the 2023 spring National Executive Committee for consideration. Motion carried.

Title: Expand The Reduced Retirement Age For Reserve Component Servicemembers

Origin: Register Resolution No. 2829 (IN) DEC

National Security Commission recommendation: The commission moved and seconded to present this resolution to the 2023 spring National Executive Committee for consideration. Motion carried.

Title: Department of Defense Budget

Origin: Register Resolution No. 2837 (MI) DEC

National Security Commission recommendation: The commission moved and seconded to present this resolution to the 2023 spring National Executive Committee for consideration. Motion carried.

Title: Afghanistan War Commission

Origin: National Security Commission

National Security Commission recommendation: The commission moved and seconded to present this resolution to the 2023 spring National Executive Committee for consideration. Motion carried.

Key Commission Updates:

Military Quality of Life's Base Assessment and Servicemembers Experience (BASE) Program

Since the Washington Conference, the National Security Commission has made progress in formulating the BASE Program founding documentation. To start, we have created a BASE Program pamphlet that has been reviewed by Legion leadership and is being printed for distribution at the spring NEC meeting. Additionally, we have drafted the BASE program guidebook, which contains the necessary information on how to conduct a BASE visit. Intended for internal American Legion staff use, the finished product will inform current and new staff on how to perform a BASE visit from the ground up, including preparation, execution and follow-on reports. The National Security Division has also drafted a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for each military branch that guides the responsibilities of both The American Legion and the service branch. The MOU is currently in the process of being reviewed by our national judge advocate. Once approved, they will be reviewed by the respective military branches for signatures.

The National Security Division has created a site-selection criteria document that outlines six different metrics to consider when choosing an installation to visit. In coordination with military department leadership, we have drafted site selections for 2023, which will include three to four base visits: one remote location, one urban/large-city location, and one or two bases in rural/suburban. To accompany the shortlist of 2023 base visits, we have put together a more extensive list of 10 installations that include each military branch (and the Coast Guard), including locations senior military leaders recommended.

In preparation for informing our base installation visits, the staff has written research papers on various topics, including military health care, housing, recruitment and retention, child care and food insecurity. These research papers are crucial to giving the staff and future department-level participants a full-understanding of the current quality-of-life challenges, so that we can ask the right questions when visiting installations.

The National Security Commission and division will continue research to capture the impact quality-of-life issues continue to have on the readiness and combat effectiveness of our military. Staff will continue building the research and data in the military quality-of-life portfolio with the intent of testifying on appropriate matters when the opportunity arises during 2023.

Efforts in supporting our Afghan allies

In the U.S. military, there is a code: “No one left behind.” For two decades, members of the U.S. Armed Forces fought shoulder-to-shoulder with brave Afghan allies who served with and protected Americans, fighting for the freedom of Afghanistan and its people. The United States must honor its promises and provide genuine, lasting protection for the Afghans who have made it safely to the United States and those who were left behind. The American Legion urges Congress to reintroduce and pass legislation granting permanent legal status to Afghan refugees and improving the Special Immigrant Visa process for Afghans who served alongside U.S. servicemembers. National Security staff remain engaged in the advocacy and reintroduction of updated legislation to address this important matter.

Iraq AUMF Repeal Advocacy and Press Conference

On March 29, 2023, the U.S. Senate passed Legion-supported legislation to repeal the 1991 and 2002 Iraq Authorizations for the Use of Military Force (AUMFs). Before the final vote, The American Legion held a press conference on Capitol Hill with Sen. Todd Young of Indiana and Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia, who led the bipartisan effort. Leading the press conference was American Legion National Security Director Mario Marquez, who served four combat tours in Iraq. The bill goes next to the House of Representatives, which has passed similar legislation several times in recent years.

2023 marks the 20th anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. The conflict was declared over in 2011, but the law that authorized it is still on the books, as is the one authorizing the Persian Gulf War, the 1990–1991 campaign in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Repealing the Iraq War AUMFs is an important step toward rebalancing the division of constitutional war powers between an executive branch that has often usurped Congress’ war powers and a legislative branch that has all too often ceded them. It is also a way to honor the service and sacrifices of our brave servicemembers who fought and died in these wars.

Legislative updates

The legislative focus of the National Security Division in the 118th Congress, which convened on Jan. 3, 2023, has been along two tracks: development of national security legislative priorities for the current Congress, and bill reviews relevant to the national security portfolio. Each is addressed below.

National Security Legislative Priorities

Two National Security priorities are included in the Legion’s main legislative agenda for the first session of the 118th Congress:

1. Military Quality of Life

The U.S. military's greatest resources are individual servicemembers and their families. Without highly qualified and committed men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent necessary to defend our nation. Factors contributing to the quality of life include proper compensation, career development, appropriate housing, quality health care, reasonably priced commissaries and access to affordable daycare. The American Legion urges Congress to pass legislation that would increase access to child care for military families, increase appropriations to address matters involving servicemember food insecurity, and increase funding to renovate military housing.

2. Pay the Coast Guard

U.S. Coast Guard personnel carry out vital national security missions. Still, they are the only U.S. branch of the Armed Forces that works without pay during government shutdowns due to their status under the Department of Homeland Security. The common threat of government shutdowns brings severe and unnecessary hardship on these men, women and their families. The American Legion urges Congress to reintroduce and pass the *Unwavering Support for Our Coast Guard Act*, which would guarantee that Coast Guard personnel are paid without delay, even in the case of a government shutdown.

Bill reviews

- H.R.2537 - BAH Restoration Act

The bill would mandate that the Department of Defense restore the full basic housing allowance (BAH) benefit from covering 95% to 100% of housing costs and increase access to affordable housing, on and off base.

Legion position: Recommended Support

- S. 497 – Military Family Nutrition Access Act

This bill aims to reduce hunger in the military by amending the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and directing the U.S. Department of Agriculture to exclude Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) when calculating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for military members and their families.

Legion position: Recommended Support

- S. XX – Military Housing Readiness Council Act

This bill would amend Title 10, United States Code, to create a Department of Defense Military Housing Readiness Council. The Council would comprise various interested parties such as representatives of the armed services, spouses and MSO/VSO groups. These members would be mandated to conduct oversight of military housing, collect public complaints and report their work to Congress.

Legion position: Recommended Support

- H.R. XX – Jax Act

This bill provides service credit for military members who served in female Cultural Support Teams (CST) in Afghanistan and Iraq between 2010 and 2021. CSTs were female soldiers who supported Army Special Operations combat forces with the primary task of engaging the female population in an area where it was deemed culturally inappropriate if performed by male counterparts.

Legion position: Under review

**American Legion National Commander Vincent J. “Jim” Troiola
Official Travel to Europe June 1-15, 2023**

American Legion National Commander Vincent J. “Jim” Troiola led a delegation on official travel to France, Belgium and Germany from June 1-15, 2023. The delegation went to Normandy to honor World War II heroes, engaged with NATO leadership in Brussels and visited U.S. military bases in Germany.

In Normandy, Troiola paid homage, in ceremonies commemorating the 79th D-Day anniversary, to combat officers who led U.S. troops in the World War II liberation of Normandy, France. He did so in the company of multiple U.S. officers leading America’s military today, including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley. In Brussels, Belgium, the delegation met with NATO officials to discuss the rapidly evolving security challenges in Europe and how The American Legion can support those efforts. In Germany, the delegation made visits to military bases to take a first-hand look at how U.S. servicemembers and their families are being supported.

-End of Report-