

**NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION  
2020 - 2021  
REPORT TO CONGRESS**



**NATIONAL SECURITY**

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

**SEPT. 18, 2020**

This year, The American Legion took the unprecedented step of canceling this year's 2020 national convention in compliance with state and federal public-health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, you have not received a copy of the Report of the Commission on National Security that would have been generated during the 2020 National Convention in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. 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.

On Sept. 18, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, the National Security Commission, its seven committees, along with the council and consultants, met virtually for the safety of our members in compliance with state and federal public-health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In carrying out the business of The American Legion, the attendees continued conversing, developing and reviewing pertinent matters in the national security and foreign relations arenas. The National Security Commission adopted six resolutions which, when added to the 2016-current 68 existing resolutions, comprise the commission's policy and legislative agendas for the year ahead.

The Legislative Division addressed the commission and provided a detailed update on the current legislative initiatives. Of importance were the House Majority Leader's announcement that the House will vote on a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government open past October 1, 2020, the president expressed support for the higher levels of COVID-19 relief fund proposed by the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, and Congress will not hold the conference on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to start until the lame duck session after the election.

The commission chairmen were also provided an update with highlights of the National Security Division's activities. Noteworthy items include the following activities and updates on National Security and Foreign Relations, for your review.

**A GESTURE OF GOOD WILL**

Taiwan donates 250,000 medical masks to The American Legion due to persistent staff efforts.

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford accepted a donation of 250,000 masks from Ambassador Bi-khim Hsiao, Taiwan's representative to the United States. A ceremony celebrating the gesture of goodwill took place July 28 at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Washington, D.C.

"This gift of masks will save lives," Oxford said in his remarks. "Even before COVID-19, it was not unusual to see people – mostly in the Far East – wear facemasks out of consideration for others. It truly is a selfless act. We will ensure that veterans across the country receive these masks."

"We are proud of our longstanding friendship with the American Legion," Hsiao said. "Last August, President Tsai addressed the 101st American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis, where she spoke about our joint values, as well as the sacrifices our veterans have made for democracy and freedom in both our countries."

Rep. Ted Yoho, R-Fla., also attended the event. He addressed the audience on the importance of the relationship between the United States and Taiwan and the commitment of both nations to freedom, democracy and human rights. "I stand here between two flags of two countries that represent peace, democracy, liberty and freedom," he said. "Those will never waiver."

The relationship between Taiwan and The American Legion was furthered during the national commander's trip to the Far East in 2019, when the delegation from The American Legion traveled to Taiwan. While there, Oxford met with President Tsai Ing-Wen to discuss relations between the two nations and the shared values of freedom and democracy.

"When we think about the world situation as it is today...we come to understand the value of our alliances and our friendship," Oxford said during the ceremony. This event was about more than the masks, said Hsiao. It's about a shared commitment between Taiwan and the U.S., as well as a commitment to those who serve in the armed forces of both countries. "Today, we have brought 250,000 medical masks from Taiwan to donate to The American Legion, in part to thank them for their service to veterans and many communities here in the United States," she said, "but also as a symbol of friendship to jointly work to keep our communities and our veterans safe and healthy. "We all owe a debt of gratitude to those that have served in defense of our many shared values."

### **COMMEMORATION OF THE 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF VJ DAY**

American Legion Past National Commander Daniel Dellinger and National Security Commission Chairman Steven Brennan presented a wreath commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Allied Forces Victory in the Pacific at the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 2.

On Sept. 2, 1945, Japan surrendered to the Allied Powers, when documents were signed aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, officially ending the deadliest military conflict in human history. An estimated 30 to 35 million people died during the war, including 400,000 Americans.

"When America entered the war, they were ill-prepared for what was to come," Dellinger said. "Only through the leadership exhibited by civilian and military leaders were we able to work together as a nation for the common goal of preserving our democracy."

“The Greatest Generation ... through their shared grit and determination, were able to defeat two of the most powerful militaries in the world and preserve the freedoms that we enjoy today.”

Military leaders lauded World War II veterans during the day’s events hosted by Friends of the National World War II Memorial.

“The Greatest Generation took up arms against tyranny,” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley said. “From the ashes of destruction, death and bloodshed of that war, you established a rules-based global order rooted in political and economic liberty that has maintained Great Power peace for over seven decades.”

Milley was joined by representatives from the Embassies of Pacific Theater Allied Nations marking the occasion at the “Freedom Wall,” which is adorned by 4,048 sculpted gold stars, each representing 100 American military deaths during World War II.

### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC RAISE AWARENESS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY**

While the components of foreign policy include trade, economics and national security, the coronavirus pandemic has brought another component critical to developing and maintaining policy into the limelight: health, defined by experts as health security – a developing but critical part of global relations.

That information was shared during an August 29 National Security Forum conducted through Zoom and open to members of The American Legion’s National Security Commission and Committees, as well as department National Security chairpersons. American Legion National Commander James “Bill” Oxford also took part in the forum. The forum featured guest speakers from the National Security and Foreign Affairs community discussing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on National Security and Defense Global Affairs.

A panel discussion with representatives of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency/Defense Institute for Medical Operations (DIMO) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) discussed the need for health security, especially during the coronavirus pandemic...

The forum’s viewers also heard from former U.S. Ambassador (Ret.) Robert M. Beecroft, whose foreign service included serving as U.S. ambassador in Bosnia, as well as postings in Sarajevo, Brussels, Belgium, Paris, Amman and other stops...

Beecroft said there are three definitions of diplomacy he prefers. “Diplomacy is the art of letting someone else have your way,” he said. “Diplomacy is the art of saying ‘nice doggy’ until you can find a rock. And ... more seriously, diplomacy is disguised war in which states seek to gain by barter and intrigue the objectives they would have to gain more clumsily by means of war.”

U.S. diplomats are tasked with being able to think on the fly and look at a wide range of possibilities. “Diplomats appreciate nuance. Instead of an automatic ‘can do’, we’re trained to ask, “what are our options and how can we exploit them in the U.S. interest?” Beecroft said. “To some, asking probing questions at times of crisis and confusion may seem like a weakness. Diplomats see it as a strength. It’s sometimes necessary to talk to adversaries, not only friends.”

The forum’s viewers finally heard from Dr. Alton Frye, Presidential Senior Fellow Emeritus at the Council on Foreign Relations, an independent, nonpartisan member organization, think tank and publisher. He said the United States is best served in advancing its own interests by “understanding and taking account of the interests of other (countries). Not by always agreeing with them. We do not expect identical interests or common interests in every case. But the first task that I find before us ... is to define a compatible interest among (nations). The objective is not to defer to the interests of others, but to identify those interests that we can accommodate, rather than to assume that we have to be incompatible.”

Frye said the coronavirus has served to divert attention to what he called “the most protracted, long-term threats that we face. There’s a familiar list: China becoming a global strategic power. Russia. (North) Korea. Iran. Others fall into lower categories.”

Frye said the over-arching danger remains the “nuclear menace.” Great clarity, he said, is needed in the essential goals of managing the nuclear danger. “Mutual assured destruction ... is not a rational policy,” he said. “It is a caricature. It is a technological condition that if nuclear warfare breaks out, the destruction will be on a historic scale.”

## **FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Participation in the Iowa Department Leadership School with Commander James D. Kessler, Adjutant John A. Derner, and PNC David K. Rehbein was exciting and of critical importance. An inquiry on the posture of the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel peace agreement was presented. As a result, staff moved forward with setting up desk-side briefings with the Department of State and the Department of Defense on the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement - a Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization between those countries.

In a historic signing ceremony hosted by President Donald Trump at the White House, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain on Tuesday became the third and fourth Arab nations to move toward establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel.

"We're here this afternoon to change the course of history," Trump said, speaking from the South Lawn of the White House ahead of the signing, presenting himself as a diplomat and dealmaker weeks ahead of the election. "After decades of division and conflict we mark the dawn of a new Middle East."

Representatives for Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain similarly heralded the historic nature of the agreements between their countries, making slight nods to the absent Palestinians and using soaring rhetoric to portray the dawn of a new era in the Middle East.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented himself as a peacemaker while speaking about strength, declaring "this day is a pivot of history. It heralds a new dawn of peace."

"This peace will eventually expand to include other Arab states and, ultimately, it can end the Arab-Israeli conflict once and for all," Netanyahu said.

### **LEADING THE WAY WHILE PAYING IT FORWARD**

A Microsoft Teams call with a U.S. military staffer in the Defense Attaché's Office of the U.S. Embassy in Botswana was conducted as a result of a servicemember reaching out to the staff for assistance in lending our experience and lessons learned to begin the works in establishing a VSO. The servicemember is currently assisting the Government of Botswana Veterans Affairs Team develop their own veterans engagement program(s) akin to The American Legion. More background follows in the Defense Ministry Ex-Military 'Paupers' Bill:

The permanent secretary in the defense ministry, Matshidiso Bokole, said a majority of the ex-military officers are currently struggling, something that has forced the ministry to come up with a Military Veterans Act to address challenges bedeviling them.

Bokole revealed the plan when addressing the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) recently. She went on to share with the committee one of the ministry's achievements being the introduction of the Military Veterans Affairs Unit meant to address the welfare of retired soldiers.

She revealed that a majority of ex-soldiers are currently in the streets struggling because they were previously forced to retire early, especially those of lower ranks, and tend to suffer economic hardships.

"Those are issues that even honorable members are aware of through their constituencies.

"We are currently working on a military veterans bill in order to take care of them as the bill will be taking care of their welfare and management of military personnel," Bokole said.

She added it is possible to do so because in some countries ex-military officers are assisted to start businesses to empower them to take care of their families.

Matshidiso Bokole, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Defense in Gaborone, Botswana said through the use of the military veterans' unit, the ministry would explore issues of bringing them together and help them to empower themselves.

She added that it is feasible, especially that in some neighboring countries like Zambia, with military veterans participating in the development of the economy. "Most of them are still active because in the past, especially of lower ranks, they were forced to retire whilst in their 40s with very low pensions to invest in their future.

We have been receiving a lot of such complaints against the Botswana Defense Force (BDF) from some ex-soldiers. Those are issues that we will be following in order to put the matter to rest,” she said. She added that some ex-soldiers claim that during their active duty they served under the United Nations (UN) and those are some of the issues the plan intends to address.

Commenting on the matter, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Tonota constituency, Pono Moathodi said ex-military officers are struggling and are unable to feed their families. He went on to ask the PS if she was aware that ex-militia are suffering with some of them having permanent injuries they incurred during their time as soldiers.

I am reliably informed that from the rank of sergeant downwards they are not pensionable. Some of them represented us very well during the Somalia wars, some represented the United Nations in past wars, but they are paupers,” Moathodi said.

Sharing the same sentiments, Francistown South MP, Wynter Mmolotsi said this is a longstanding matter pleading with the permanent secretary to consider meeting with the BDF commander to resolve it. Mmolotsi said the matter has agitated them.

“This is a matter that we should not take lightly anymore. I do not know when it will be put to rest because it has brought a lot of agitation amongst retired soldiers. I believe that it is a matter that the ministry and BDF should interact closely on and put the issues to bed,” Mmolotsi said.

### **REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS OF THE YEAR**

The American Legion recognizes our nation’s finest of our Law Enforcement Officers. With their steadfast devotion and dedication to duty The American Legion is proud to recognize our Regional Law Enforcement of the Year Award for a job well done from a grateful nation.

This award recognizes those Law Enforcement Officers who have selflessly distinguished themselves over and above their normal duties predominately through community service activities and professional achievement.

The Regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Awards go to, Curt Andrick of Maine in the New England region, Jeffery S. Ginn of Michigan in the Central region, Brandon Medina of North Carolina of the Southern region, and Bradley K. Walther of Oregon in the Western region.

It is my pleasure to present these awards of behalf of The American Legion and a grateful nation. Job well done.

### **REGIONAL FIREFIGHTERS OF THE YEAR AWARD**

The American Legion recognizes the sacrifices and bravery of our nations Fire Fighters. With their steadfast devotion and dedication to duty The American Legion is proud to recognize our Regional Fire Fighters of the Year Award for a job well done from a grateful nation.

This award recognizes those firefighters who have selflessly distinguished themselves over and above their normal duties predominately through community service activities and professional achievement.

The Regional Firefighter of the Year Awards go to, Donald V. Fletcher of Maryland in the central region, Jeremiah Chisolm of Georgia of the Southern region, Robert Gottbreht of Washington in the western region, and no recipient received from the New England region this year.

It is my pleasure to present these awards of behalf of The American Legion and a grateful nation. Job well done.

### **POW/MIA UPDATE**

National POW/MIA Recognition Day was established in 1979 through a proclamation signed by President Jimmy Carter. Since then, each subsequent president has issued an annual proclamation commemorating the third Friday in Sept. as National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

Our participation in a socially distanced ceremony at the Pentagon, a traditionally national-level ceremony on every National POW/MIA Recognition Day was paramount. It featured members from each branch of military service.

In addition to the national-level ceremony, observances of National POW/MIA Recognition Day were held across the country on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools and veterans' facilities.

No matter where they are held, these National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies share the common purpose of honoring those who were held captive and returned, as well as those who remain missing.

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

March 1, 2021 – March 5, 2021

Steven Brennan (Maryland), Chairman

The National Security Commission (including its seven committees and council) virtually convened on March 1 during the 61st Annual Washington Conference. National Security Commission Chairman Steven Brennan of Maryland opened the meeting by acknowledging the difficulties of not convening in person this year. "This year is a challenge because of the restrictions COVID brought upon us," he said. "Despite this being virtual, please understand this is equally important. The speakers we bring to this conference are always important to our work and our national resolutions, which steer what our Washington office does with our government's legislative and executive branches. This year is no different." The program proceeded in the following sections:



### **Morning:**

- Opening remarks and roll call virtually
- Major General William Walker, the 23rd Commanding General of the District of Columbia National Guard on the posture of the National Guard
- Brigadier General Aaron Dean, II The Adjutant General of the District of Columbia National Guard on the State Partnership Program
- Mr. Kelly McKeague, Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), and Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush, Principal Deputy Director of the DPAA, updated us on their Agency's posture.

### **Afternoon:**

- Steven Brennan (Maryland) led a discussion on the National Security Commission, the Commission's priorities for the next six months, and a class on the Commission's purpose, its seven committees, and the council.
- George Wehrli (Florida), Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee Chairman, hosted the Regional and National Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year Awards selection committee.
- Joint Panelist Webinar discussion with National Security and Veteran Employment and Education Commission's Guest Speakers – Securing the Industrial Base: Economic Security is a Matter of 21<sup>st</sup> Century National Security

Steven Brennan (Maryland) thanked the more than 170 Legionnaires for attending the Washington Conference and discussed upcoming resolutions. He also addressed the Commission's goal of reviewing all "active" resolutions dating back to 1941 (and how he assigned each resolution to the appropriate committee). Separately on March 4, Chairman Brennan presented the new resolutions to the Commission for recommendations on the disposition. These resolutions include: Oppose Deportation of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans (RES 20) that would seek to help non-citizen immigrant veterans who honorably served in the military from being deported for reasons other than a felony, thereby honoring the pathway to citizenship; Oppose the Exclusion of Transgender Americans from the Military (RES 2770) that would seek to support lifting the ban on transgender Americans to serve in our armed forces; Support for First Responders and Law Enforcement Officers (RES 2796) to seek further support for our First Responders and Law Enforcement Officers pertaining to internal threats; Review Support to the Republic of China - Taiwan (RES 2797) to promote peaceful dialogue on both sides of the Taiwan Strait; Update The American Legion Spirit of Service Award (RES 23) to include the Space Force as the sixth branch of the United States Armed Forces.

Our morning speakers were:

#### **I. Major General (MG) William Walker, the 23rd Commanding General of the District of Columbia National Guard on the posture of the National Guard**

MG Walker, a Paid Up For Life Legionnaire, serves as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Commanding General of the District of Columbia National Guard, a Presidential Appointment. He is responsible for

strategic leadership, training, readiness, operational employment, and performance of the District of Columbia National Guard's army and air force components. MG Walker reports to the Army's Secretary and is charged with ensuring units are manned, trained, equipped, and ready for war and any national emergency. Noted was how particularly proud MG Walker was to serve at our Nation's helm for the last 18 months, where the Nation experienced some of the most challenging times in his 40 years of being a member of the National Guard.

Major General William J. Walker updated attendees about the National Guard's work during these unprecedented times. "We've had some of the most challenging times in my almost 40 years of being in the National Guard," Walker told the Legionnaires. "But I'm especially proud to have had approximately 26,700 Guardsmen come to the Nation's capital that helped ensure the peaceful transition of Presidential power on January 20. I could not be prouder of the men and women of the National Guard of the District of Columbia."

The Nation endured many challenges during the summer, and more recently, here in the nation's capital, as the District of Columbia experienced much civil unrest. MG Walker expressed the National Guard's posture, the Joint Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, Integration (JRSOI), and the legal rules for using force. Logistically guardsmen arrived in the nation's capital from all three airports, by bus, train, and automobile. MG Walker expressed how proud he was of the magnificent job implemented and accomplished by all guardsmen. Around 5,200 Guardsmen remain on duty in the Capitol to provide security and ensure Congress remains safe. Task Force Capitol Response includes the Capitol complex, House, Senate, Supreme Court, and the Library of Congress.

"We're a community-based organization," Walker said. "We have a dual mission to fight and win America's wars along with our active-duty counterparts, and also to be that first military response to homeland security and disasters." He added their next mission to supporting Operation Warp Speed — President Biden's initiative to get Americans vaccinated against the novel coronavirus.

## **II. Brigadier General Aaron Dean II, the Adjutant General of the District of Columbia National Guard; States Partnership Program (SPP).**

BG Dean opened by thanking National Guard members for their response to the January 6 attack. "It was just a tremendous effort and tremendous Americans coming together to protect the Capitol." He led a discussion on the importance of the SPP and what the program is.

The SPP connects a state's National Guard component with an equivalent partner in a different country. These arrangements have built mutually beneficial relationships around the globe and now include 89 allied nations.

"What we do, is we team up with other countries to provide lasting and enduring relationships that further strategic objectives of the United States," he said during his presentation.

“The DoD supports and executes the security cooperation programs, that's a state partnership program on a geographical combatant command.” The program began after the fall of the Soviet Union to assist Eastern European countries and currently has a growth rate of about two countries per year.

“The vision at the time was to create as pertain to strategic alignment using a small footprint and non-intimidating engagements to build relationships, to facilitate access to infrastructure, information, and leadership.” Countries must apply to become state partners. “These are countries that want to be partners with the United States and establish enduring relationships for everything to include training opportunities, educational opportunities, and other operational capabilities and capacities that the United States has that they want to learn about,” BG Dean said.

One of the most significant regions for partnership growth has been in Africa. DC. National Guard has an SPP with Burkina Faso. This SPP supports the United States Africa Command’s (AFRICOM) mission in the region regarding peacekeeping and defense institution building. The Office of the Secretary of Defense initially approved the partnership in 2017, and it was signed into agreement in Burkina Faso in February 2019. In the Fiscal Year 2019, DC. National Guard completed five engagements with the country. Their focus areas included medical and logistics sustainment, military intelligence, the rule of law, and family support.

“We talked about our institution building, readiness and peacekeeping,” said BG Dean. “What we wanted to do was allow them to support themselves as they combatted terrorism along their northern and western border. So we tried to enhance their capability to do that.

“But what we found with Burkina Faso is that they were hesitant to engage outside of cities because they didn't have the medical infrastructure actually to treat patients in that golden hour,” he continued. “So what we did was we expanded their medical knowledge and capability on certain methods that they could use to expand that golden hour, to give them confidence, to go outside their city, to discourage terrorists and other groups that are anti-government from going into the cities on the outskirts of their major cities and disrupting government operations.”

The SPP is more than just an exchange of military knowledge and capabilities. It’s also an exchange of culture. “As we blend to understand each other's cultures, it gives better insight into future engagements and understanding their capabilities and how they use their capabilities as they try to engage and support that then the national government.”

One of the most significant values of the SPP is making a call and learning what’s going on in a particular country. “You build these enduring relationships,” Dean said. “So when there's something that we need to do together, we're not exchanging business cards. And when something happens, we know each other, we make phone calls, we assist each other, and we can move along with enhancing each other's capabilities.”

### **III. Kelly McKeague Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA); An unwavering commitment to bring home missing servicemembers**

The efforts to bring home men and women missing in action are a sacred obligation, according to Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) Director Kelly McKeague.

“This mission serves as a marker for those currently in uniform today that their nation will never forget them should they go missing,” McKeague told the National Security Commission at The American Legion’s annual Washington Conference on March 1. He updated Legionnaires on his agency’s progress and the impact the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has had on their efforts.

Nearly 82,000 US servicemembers are still considered to be missing in action, according to the DPAA. Whose mission is to provide the fullest possible accounting for the missing US servicemembers. They are searching for missing personnel from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Gulf Wars, and other recent conflicts. Their efforts include coordination with hundreds of countries and municipalities around the world.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted DPAA across all areas from the outset,” he said. “We brought multiple teams home who were deployed, we maximized our telework in our eight locations, and we’ve adjusted our work schedules to optimize access to our laboratory.” The agency’s efforts to protect their employees paid off — out of 725 personnel, only 23 have tested positive for COVID-19, and all have recovered. “Despite having had to cancel or postpone numerous missions last year, it was important for us to build an ambitious operations plan for this fiscal year,” McKeague said. “Not knowing where COVID would take us, most of these missions were either postponed or canceled from October to today.” Many of the cancellations occurred due to partner nations restricting entry. “For us, it’s important that we are ready to resume operations whenever and wherever COVID restrictions allow,” he added.

Despite these obstacles, efforts to recover and repatriate the remains of US servicemembers have pressed on. In Vietnam, three U.S.-trained recovery teams agreed to conduct three consecutive missions when DPAA staff members could not travel. “With over six months of canceled Vietnam missions, there were nine recoveries, nine excavations that were accomplished by these Vietnamese teams,” McKeague said, expressing his gratitude for the Vietnamese government. Another team has been able to travel to Cambodia, and after completing a 14-day quarantine, they began operations two weeks ago. Additionally, six teams deployed last week to Vietnam, and after quarantining and testing for COVID, they will start their operations. “We’re very encouraged again by countries starting to open up their borders to us and allow us entry with which to conduct this important mission,” said McKeague.

Efforts to recover 15 servicemembers whose deaths span four different wars have been progressing with China. A virtual conference held in January with the Chinese Army archival department showed promise. “Despite the challenges that we do have with China, we can discuss these 15 cases from a strategic perspective,” he said. “We also talked about the potential for a joint

investigation with our Chinese counterparts.” Most notably is the completion of DPAA’s most successful disinterment project. In 2015, the mission began to disinter and identify the 388 unknowns from the USS Oklahoma, which sank on December 7, 1941, during the attack on Pearl Harbor. “I’m pleased to report that as of today, we have identified and returned to their families, 313 of these sailors and Marines. For these families — not knowing for over 70 years where their loved one was — these 313 families now have answers.”

The American Legion has long advocated for the return of remains from the Korean Peninsula. It is dedicated to a full accounting of the US military classified as missing in action or prisoners of war. About 5,300 of the 7,600 of those missing from the Korean War are believed to be in North Korean territory. Unfortunately, North Korea's communication has ceased following the most significant single turnover of remains in 2018 and the first since 2007. Of the 55 cases of remains repatriated in 2018, 70 sets of remains of US servicemembers have been identified, and the US returned the remains of 80 additional people to our South Korean partners. “Please let me say thank you to the Legion for your steadfast support to our MIAs,” said McKeague. “You continue to have the impact, and your engagements with members of Congress and advocating the POW/MIA mission to Congress has made a difference.” The American Legion’s advocacy has paid off, he said. This year, Congress awarded DPAA an additional \$25 million in funding, which McKeague said goes toward increasing operations, both in the field and in the laboratory. “You all know that when America sent its sons and daughters off to combat, we have that moral imperative, that sacred obligation to do everything we can to bring them home, to ensure they do come home.”

#### **IV. Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) welcoming remarks**

The American Legion is one of the largest and oldest Veterans’ service organizations in the country and has been an essential advocate for the past conflict accounting mission. Your consistent messages of support resonate across our government, and for that, we are incredibly grateful. I sincerely appreciate the American Legion for ensuring this humanitarian effort, so essential to us and most importantly, to the families of our fallen, remains a priority for our Nation, even as we come together in this virtual environment.

Covid-19 presented challenges for how DPAA operates, communicates, and conducts its mission. However, as many of you know, it did not completely shut us down, as you heard described by our director today; even as we recalled our teams, preparations continued for eventual re-entry into a planned field and disinterment locations. As restrictions lessened or as exceptions to the policy were granted, we were ready.

Thanks, American Legion, for your longstanding and unwavering support, and I look forward to us reuniting in person shortly! Thank you.

## V. Joint Panelist Webinar Discussion with National Security and Veteran Employment and Education Division Guest Speakers – Securing the Industrial Base: Economic Security is a Matter of 21<sup>st</sup> Century National Security

**Moderator:** **John Berry**, *President, The American & Australia Association; Former US Ambassador to Australia*

### Panel Speakers:

- **Brad Markell**, *Executive Director, AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council, AFL-CIO Working for America Institute*
- **Thomas Pickering**, *Vice Chairman, Hills, and Company. Former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, former US Ambassador to the United Nations, Russia, India, Israel, and Jordan.*
- **Joshua Walker, Ph.D.**, *President & CEO, Japan Society*
- **Richard Passarelli**, *Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA), National Director of Veterans Affairs*

Moderator John Berry started the discussion by asking panelists for their thoughts on strengthening national security. Concerning this, he mentioned two executive orders that President Biden signed on buying American products and securing America's supply chain; both executive orders call for a 100-day study and a one-year review for all agencies to build the resilience of US supply chains that will protect the United States from facing shortages of critical products. Thomas Pickering opened as the first panelist to address Berry's question. "R&D (research and development) is at the heart of our technological development," Pickering said. "And our technological development is the heart of providing us with the goods and services that are very, very important in our strategic economy. How do we support the warfighter, how do we support our national security objectives, whether in space, air, land, or sea? These are all valuable and significant imports. We need to stay on top of the development of that part of our economy. It is in that sense precious and imperative that we have in effect a government-private sector partnership that works there, in many cases informally, but in most cases complementary. Our competition in this area is excellent, and it is increasing. "And both China and the European Union are also major spenders on the question of research and development. We need to be acutely conscious of that competition. And acutely concerned in my humble view about the necessity to remain on top and stay there in terms of those essential technologies."

Brad Markell added that "the United States in many areas still has the best R&D in the world. And our competitive advantage concerning our defense posture and industrial competitiveness can key off that R&D – batteries for grid security and electric vehicles. We have the best research; we can make sure that we create jobs here through the right policies. We can't make everything here, but I think we need to tighten up quite a bit how we're thinking about the make-buy decisions, where we want to work with our allies, how do we make sure that we have the technology." It's working with our allies and the private sector that Dr. Joshua Walker believes

is needed to succeed in securing our economic security. “When I look at Asia, it’s clear that the US and China are on a collision course,” Walker said. “And here’s the bottom line, we can’t win this competition with just government ... it’s going to take the private sector. When I think about the largest area of competition, it’s not necessarily in the military domain. It’s going to be internet hacking; it’s going to be used in a way that our tech companies are going to have to step up. “As we build back stronger and as we think about our economic security, how are we preparing for the next pandemic. This pandemic has made it brutally clear that we can’t do this with just one person ... I believe that we need to bring in our Japanese, our other counterparts across Europe and Asia if we are going to be able to succeed in securing our economic security.” Walker provided a positive example of working with our allies.

The Japan Society “is an American organization that tries to focus on how countries like the US and Japan that had such a troubled past can now be allies,” Walker said. His grandfathers from both sides of his family fought in World War II, and now “a story that we cannot forget is how in 75 years my grandfathers could go from mortal enemies of the Japanese to my parents who serve as Southern Baptist missionaries there, to their grandson and son being the president of the Japan Society.” The national security issue behind organized labor is a statistic that Richard Passarelli shared during the discussion. He said that around 50 percent of the membership in organized labor across the country will be eligible for retirement between seven and ten years from now. Passarelli said they are working on programs “to capture that intrinsic value (that will be lost from those retiring) to be able to pass this on so we can focus on infrastructure, the grid, the cybersecurity teams that we have.” To help fill the gap that will be faced in organized labor, Passarelli said licensing and credentialing is vital to UWUA, “getting credit for veterans who are serving in a capacity to date in the military and transitioning those skillsets directly into what our employer needs are. Another big part is trying to find what those gaps are within the industry so we can work on filling those gaps and work with our partners at the Department of Defense to hone those skills when folks are transitioning out to get veterans employed in these companies.”

### **Strength in the 21st Century**

Another question posed by Berry was how the United States remains strong while retaining leadership in the 21st century. Passarelli said it would be through investing in research and development. He provided the example that California is moving toward no fossil fuel within the next couple of years. “Those jobs that we believe will be lost due to fossil fuels going away ... we believe that research and development in the American people is one of the keys for us trying to change what would be doom and gloom of losing jobs, especially in the organized labor side of the house for renewable energies, into positives by pouring a lot of money, time and effort into research and development on hydro, solar, wind energy projects,” he said. Walker said the question is, “how do we turn technology into an asset for us. How do we address the issues that matter to the American people? How do we make sure we have good jobs? How do we make sure those jobs continue to occur in America if those jobs are being transformed by technology to equip our

workforce? We have to make sure that everybody is trained to be able to compete in a world in which a lot of other countries have gotten a head start on us.”

### **Energy Security and Cyber Security**

The ability to remain strong ties in with maintaining our energy security and possible cyber-attacks on our grid or healthcare system is vital. Markell took on the energy security topic. "The energy independence that we have achieved over the past 12 years is itself due to an R&D and tech investment made by the government," he said. "We need to figure out how to use that fossil resource that we have that is less polluting, in a way that leads to hydrogen, leads to carbon capture. And in the end, energy is a big strategic deal. We have to secure our energy supply and our energy future as we reduce our emissions. Because if we don't reduce our emissions, then we all have serious problems ... the military has done an outstanding job with laying out what the potential threat is from climate change in terms of our security posture.”

For cyber-security, Passarelli said it's working with utility employers and encouraging them to utilize military veterans. “We believe we have the brightest military folks that are transitioning out to date that will make a major impact on grid security,” Passarelli said UWUA is also working with veteran-owned businesses focused on cybersecurity. But a “problem that we are running into is that while supply chains for utility companies across the country are prevalent, our veterans that are trying to get into those supply chains to bid for some of that work have a lot of obstacles in front of them.” UWUA is working on this obstacle by creating education components for veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses to access the supply chain in bidding for some of those contracts.

### **Security of the United States**

Berry concluded the panel discussion with the panelists' thoughts on the best base for the United States' security. “A strong economy, a strong technical advantage, and understanding our position of leadership in the world,” Markell said. “We are going to have to pay a lot of attention to really understanding where the competition is, where the technology is, and how we're investing – investment in R&D, economic strength is the key to the whole thing.”

Walker added that “we are an immigrant nation that embraces that greatness, not just on behalf of ourselves but for that next generation to come. I think that we have to make ourselves stronger together while remaining true to our core. I believe you can't do that without having a strong economy, and you can't do that without leading in innovation. We need to invest in ourselves. We need to look and find that inner strength.”



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

**MAY 5-6, 2021**

The National Security (NS) Commission (along with our seven committees and council) met at the “Virtual” 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Washington Conference on Monday, March 1, and Thursday, March 4, 2021; details of the conference are provided in the Advanced Report.

The NS Commission met virtually via Zoom on Thursday, April 15, 2021, to discuss the proposed resolutions for presentation to the National Executive Committee (NEC) Spring Meeting. This Commission meeting was also the highlight of a six-month study our seven committees conducted - by reviewing 220 resolutions between the years 1941 and 2015 and recommending to the Commission which resolutions should be marked as accomplished, obsolete, or superseded.

Resolutions: Eight resolutions were reviewed (to include the commission resolution to rescind 98 previous resolutions). Four resolutions were submitted to the Resolutions Subcommittee of the NEC for consideration; The American Legion Spirit of Service Award; Oppose Deportation of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans; Oppose Deportation Of Immediate Family Members Of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans; Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with National Security. The remaining four resolutions were placed on Addendum A.

Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year & Spirit of Service Award Program:

On January 20, 2021, because we weren't able to provide these awards during last year's National Convention, we flew all the 2020 winners to Washington DC of the Spirit of Service Awards and the National Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year. This was timed for these outstanding individuals to be here for the President's Inauguration. During the virtual Washington Conference, our Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee Chairman George W. Wehrli, Florida, appointed an awards selection subcommittee for the 2021 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year Awards program. The subcommittee selected the five Regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year winners and the five Regional Firefighter of the Year winners.

The 2021 American Legion Regional Law Enforcement Officer Winners are:

- New England - Lucas White NH
- Southern - Charles Conyers SC
- Central - David Hines VA
- Western - Larry Morgan CO
- Midwest - Daniel Martin NE

The 2021 American Legion Regional Fire Fighter Winners of 2021 are:

- New England - Robert Nagle PA

- Southern - Thomas Malone TN
- Central - Michael Steele MD
- Western - No entry
- Midwest - Peter Boizer SD

The 2021 National Law Enforcement Officer and the National Firefighter of the year were selected from the regional winners and announced at the National Convention.

## **READINESS**

The Department of Defense (DOD) faces a strategic choice: focusing on modernization for high-tech conflicts with China and Russia or expanding forces and improving readiness to meet a superpower’s commitments for ongoing conflicts and crisis response. In their FY 2021 budgets, the services all complain that they are too small for the demands being put on them and hedge toward expanding forces and readiness. While 2020 brought its own set of challenges with COVID-19, the Department of Defense (DoD) played a central role in developing vaccines through Operation Warp Speed. DoD augmented civilian hospitals, mobilizing National Guard personnel to provide logistical support and rapid contracting capabilities to tap into the civilian economy. While the effects of sequestration have subsided, many branches look to bolster technology and upgrade weapon systems - to make a more combat-effective fighting force capable of facing global challenges that can arise. The Marine Corps is shifting away from large land operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to a more agile force in the sea. This has been seen in UDPs (Unite Deployment Programs) and MEUs (Marine Expeditionary Unit) increases in operation tempos throughout the Indo Pacific and Europe.

The new administration emphasized readiness in its FY 2021 and FY 2022 budgets. Nevertheless, readiness data are conflicting. Like Army rotations to Combat Training Centers, service flying hours, and Navy ship steaming days, some metrics have recovered from post-2013 lows, but others, like Navy and Marine Corps aircraft availability, remain depressed. High readiness is desirable in forces and equipment; however, readiness is also very expensive and highly perishable --- it must be renewed constantly. In the new DOD strategy developed for 2021 and beyond, the services hope to pursue all three goals—expand forces, improve readiness, and increase modernization—but the fiscal future is highly uncertain. They will likely have to make difficult trade-offs. Military recruiting was hit particularly hard since the COVID-19 pandemic. Recruiters relied on face-to-face interactions with potential recruits for years. Recruiters have also depended on heavily trafficked locations such as malls, schools, and sporting events that have been shut down for the better part of 2020. In response, recruiters have pivoted to more modern, digital approaches typically viewed as secondary to face-to-face efforts (phone, social media, and outreach).

Reports indicate that Army enlistments fell to about half of their typical levels during the early stages of the pandemic, though they have moved back up to about 80% of mission targets in June. Still, the armed services have expressed optimism in their ability to meet year-end recruiting goals. The Marine Corps noted that it was ahead of schedule on contracts before the pandemic and adjusted sufficiently to the new environment to be on track to achieve its annual recruiting mission. The Navy has tapped into a reserve of last recruits waiting in the Delayed Entry Program to keep up with shipping requirements and expects to meet its year-end goals.

## **MILITARY AND VETERAN QUALITY OF LIFE**

### **Military Family Housing**

Several hearings took place earlier this year to discuss the state of housing for military families. A Military Family, Advisory Network survey, was released just before the first hearing. It reported more than half of military families surveyed about their privatized housing reporting a negative experience with problems ranging from mold, vermin, and lead paint.

The staff has participated in several meetings, and conference calls with senior defense officials to receive updates on how DoD addresses this issue. At this point, rush works orders have been fulfilled on life emergency repairs. Commanders have been mandated to get involved and have held town halls at all installations to address issues. Customer service has been discussed where families should have a more accurate date when their maintenance repairs are made. We will continue to track this issue closely as our service members and their families deserve to live in safe and affordable housing.

### **Defense Health**

The staff has attended bi-monthly meetings with senior defense officials from the Defense Health Agency and discussed Tricare changes that have been implemented since 2020, and ushering in fee changes for almost all beneficiaries, a new plan name, a new regional map, and new regional contractors. The plan would have also closed about 50 MTFs and moved approximately 200,000 patients from getting care using their TRICARE insurance to get assistance from private providers.

### **Impacts for All Users**

After a tumultuous year of pauses and reconsiderations, military hospitals and clinics are still on track to move under the management of the Defense Health Agency by the end of the year. How that will affect patients of those facilities may change from the original plan, though, after the military's centralized medical administrator was forced to rethink what role private healthcare providers can play in the plan after COVID-19. "We are absolutely on track to meet our timelines, and that's our expectation with us," Dr. Brian Lein, DHA assistant director for healthcare administration, told Federal News Network. The transition includes 721 MTFs and 174,000 healthcare personnel, including active-duty service members, civilian employees, and contractors, which provide care to 9.5 million TRICARE beneficiaries. The facilities are clustered into 21 large markets that encompass about two-thirds of patient interactions. The rest are in 16 small market regions or stand-alone hospitals and clinics (rural areas with a sizeable military presence).

Congress initiated the transition in the 2017 defense authorization bill to better integrate healthcare instead of continuing the decentralized system of each military service overseeing its MTFs. "What we found in our review is that many of these facilities do not have the type of patient caseload, volume, acuity that we need for our providers to be proficient in what they do downrange," Thomas McCaffery said in early 2020 when he was the assistant secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. "And so by limiting the scope of services, that will allow us to take some of those providers and place them at other MTFs that do have that direct match for their readiness requirements."

### **TRICARE Prescription Drug Categories**

- Generic formulary drugs: These drugs are widely available. You have the lowest out-of-pocket costs for these drugs.
- Brand-name formulary drugs: These drugs are generally available to you. Plus, they offer you the second-lowest copayment.
- Non-formulary drugs: These drugs may have limited availability. You have higher copayments for these drugs. Also, there's generally an alternative formulary drug that you can get. It's often more cost-effective and equally or more clinically practical.
- If you choose to purchase a non-covered drug, you'll pay 100% of the drug's cost. These drugs are either not clinically effective or as cost-effective as other drugs offered. They may also pose a significant safety risk that may outweigh any potential clinical benefit.

### **Military Treatment Facility Pharmacy Copayment Changes**

- Beneficiaries can still fill their prescriptions for a \$0 copay at MTF pharmacies.

The American Legion's Position: The National Security Commission has Resolution No. 102: Oppose Tricare Fee Increases which states that the American Legion is strongly opposed to hikes in premiums and enrollment fees paid by enrollees in TRICARE. The American Legion urges Congress to decisively reject these unjust proposed increases in the military retirees' TRICARE enrollment fee, deductibles, or premiums.

### **APPROVED RESOLUTIONS (2020-2021)**

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 26:**

TITLE: Support For The United States Space Force

Origin: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Executive Committee assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriately support the United States Space Force's commitment to attract, retain, and train quality people and to mold them into a force capable of flexibly responding to threats to America's national and economic security; to enhance readiness through its continued focus on total force integration and modernization programs that will maintain America's dominance space well into the 21st century.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 24:**

TITLE: Support For Peaceful Conflict Resolution In The Country Of Georgia

Origin: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That the American Legion support peaceful conflict resolution in the country of Georgia, in conjunction with the Russian Federation, and urges the Russian Federation to fully implement the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress mandate a detailed assessment of Russian disinformation and propaganda efforts across all media platforms targeting Georgia, to include an assessment of Georgia's capabilities to deter and combat Russian disinformation campaigns.

**RESOLUTION NO. 24:**

TITLE: Funding For Protection Of The National Power Grid Against Electromagnetic Pulse Attack

Origin: Resolution No. 2778 (IL) 2020 Department Convention

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion, in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That the American Legion urge Congress to approve funding to harden and protect the deteriorating US Power Grid, such action being necessary for the continued defense of the US should an EMP attack on the US occur.

**RESOLUTION NO. 23:**

TITLE: Pharmaceutical Independence Long-Term Readiness Reform

Origin: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion support efforts to provide a more stable and sustainable American-made and sourced raw materials, medications, and vaccines to ensure no shortages impact combat readiness and force protection while diversifying our supply chain to safeguard against potential threats from peer threats, state actors, and non-state actors.

**RESOLUTION NO. 22:**

TITLE: Addressing The 'Forever War'

Origin: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion urge a renewal of a proper Constitutional balance to American foreign policy decision-making by encouraging Congress to repeal and replace outdated Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMF); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion advocate for the importance of a civilian-led approach of elevating development and diplomacy alongside a strong defense in order to build a better, safer world.

**RESOLUTION NO. 27:**

TITLE: Sustaining Counterterrorism Efforts

Origin: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Executive Committee assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion fully supports the men, women, and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in ongoing counterterrorism efforts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion fully supports a Joint Force with a long-term strategic plan, ability to rapidly disperse new technologies, and devise new concepts of warfare that span the entire spectrum of conflict; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion fully supports a more effective lethal, resilient, and rapidly innovative Joint Force, combined with a robust constellation of allies and partners, to sustain American influence and ensure favorable balances of power in order to safeguard the free and open international order.

**RESOLUTION NO. 19:**

TITLE: Oppose Deportation of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans  
Origin: Resolution No. 20 (TX) 2019 National Convention

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on May 5-6, 2021, That The American Legion supports proposed legislation allowing a military veteran immigrant patriot who either separated or retired and was honorably discharged not be deported for any non-felony, or if they were deported for a non-felony, that they are allowed to return to the United States; and, be it finally RESOLVED, That non-citizen immigrant veterans should be permitted to complete the process, as if they were still in the military toward lawful permanent residence and citizenship

**RESOLUTION NO. 23:**

TITLE: The American Legion Spirit of Service Award  
Origin: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on May 5-6, 2021, That The American Legion shall provide each of the seven The American Legion Spirit of Service Award recipients of the year with one roundtrip coach airfare or vehicle mileage under its employee mileage reimbursement rates within the continental United States to the National Convention and four nights lodging at a convention hotel; one ticket (two tickets if accompanied by spouse or supervisor) for the national commander's banquet; staff per diem for five days; and an engraved glass and marble award-trophy not exceeding the cost of \$350, adjusted as needed for inflation; and, be it further RESOLVED, That the total number of awards each year shall not exceed seven: one from each branch of service, and the National Guard Bureau; and, be it further RESOLVED, That the national commander will provide each of the seven recipients one-year membership in The American Legion; and, be it further RESOLVED, That the Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Manual be updated following this change in eligible candidates; and, be it finally RESOLVED, That National Executive Committee Resolution No. 23, October 2011, titled "The American Legion Spirit of Service Award," and National Executive Committee Resolution No. 6, October 2015, titled "Include National Guard and Reserve Members in the Spirit of Service Awards" are hereby superseded and rescinded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 20:**

Title: Oppose Deportation Of Immediate Family Members Of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans  
Origin: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on May 5-6, 2021, That The American Legion supports legislation opposing the deportation of immediate family members of non-citizen immigrant veterans who served honorably, provided those family members have not committed a felony; and, be it further RESOLVED, That family members of non-citizen immigrant veterans and servicemembers should be allowed the opportunity to apply for Parole in Place and Deferred Action while in removal proceedings; and, be it finally RESOLVED, That the pathway to lawful permanent residence and

citizenship for family members of non-citizen immigrant veterans and servicemembers should be strengthened.

**RESOLUTION NO. 37:**

Title: Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel

Origin: Convention Committee on National Security

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, Sept. 1, 2, 2021, That the administration continue to pursue agreements between Israel and other Middle East countries similar to those developed under the name 'Abraham Accords'; and, be it further RESOLVED, That the administration and the United States Congress maintain a tough stance and resist any agreement that could undermine the strategic rationale for the normalization agreements between Israel and the Middle Eastern Gulf states; and, be it finally RESOLVED, That the administration and the United States Congress maintain and enhance the normalization pacts between Israel and a number of Arabs states in the Middle East, easing Israel's economic and diplomatic isolation and building a regional coalition of allies.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATES**

One of the essential parts of the work of the National Security Division is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony and letters of support on issues of national security and the quality of life of service members. This year, the National Security Commission supported H.R. 256 which would repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002, S.J. Res. 10 which is a joint resolution to repeal the Authorizations for Use of Military Force against Iraq, a letter to the President of the United States and a letter the Secretary of State to express serious concerns regarding the plight of present and former Afghan interpreters, who assisted the United States in the Global War on Terrorism, and to express our unwavering support for the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for Afghan civilians, hosted a press conference on capitol hill highlighting demands that the U.S. government act now to extract Afghan interpreters who assisted U.S. troops during the Global War on Terrorism, a statement for the record on veteran deportation and support for the military naturalization process regarding citizenship for honorable service, and a letter of support to reauthorize funding for the Department of Defense Troops To Teachers (TTT) program.



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
*Veterans Strengthening America*

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

WWW.LEGION.ORG • 1608 K ST. N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-2801 • P: (202) 861-2700

April 7, 2021

The Honorable Barbara Lee  
United States House of Representative  
2470 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lee:

On behalf of the nearly two million members of The American Legion, I am pleased to express support for H.R.256, which would repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002. Congress passed the 2002 AUMF to authorize force against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime in order to defend the United States against the threat posed by the regime's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction. This threat proved unfounded and the mission undertaken pursuant to the 2002 Iraq AUMF – designated "Operation Iraqi Freedom" – officially ended on December 11, 2011.

Our servicemembers have accomplished their original objectives in Iraq, a dangerous regime was removed, and the authorization for the war should end. With the understanding that complex global threats cannot be solved by military power alone, we value the importance of sustaining a civilian-led approach of elevating diplomacy and development alongside a strong defense. The American Legion stands ready to assist members of Congress with strengthening our nation's interests and ensuring that diplomacy is the first instrument of national power considered at the highest level.

In accordance with American Legion Resolution No. 22: *Addressing the 'Forever War'*, passed unanimously by our National Executive Committee in meetings held October 14-15, 2020, which urges a renewal of a proper constitutional balance to American foreign policy decision-making by encouraging Congress to repeal and replace outdated Authorizations for Use of Military Force, we strongly support this bill.

We applaud your leadership in addressing this critical issue facing our nation's servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

For God & Country,

James W. "Bill" Oxford  
National Commander





# THE AMERICAN LEGION

*Veterans Strengthening America*

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

WWW.LEGION.ORG • 1608 K ST. N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-2801 • P: (202) 861-2700

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC

Dear President Biden:

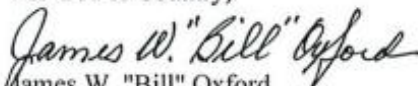
On behalf of the nearly two million members of The American Legion, I write to express serious concerns regarding the plight of present and former Afghan interpreters, who assisted the United States in the Global War on Terrorism, and to express our unwavering support for the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for Afghan civilians. Given your announcement that all American troops are to be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, quick action is required to protect the Afghans who have risked their lives in service to this country and utmost consideration must be given for the price they have already paid for an opportunity in our country. Time is of the greatest essence.

As you know, the United States employed thousands of local Afghan translators following the September 11<sup>th</sup> terror attacks. Our wartime allies saved countless American lives and directly contributed to every level of tactical, operational, and strategic accomplishment during the mission in Afghanistan despite grave danger to themselves and their families. Unfortunately, these men, women, and their families now face death threats from ISIS, the Taliban, al Qaeda, and other hostile groups because of their service to the U.S. and our allies. That is why Congress created the SIV program, which provides a life-saving path to safety for those who worked alongside U.S. troops, diplomats, and contractors. SIV recipients go through the strictest vetting and approval process of any category of person coming to the U.S. already, but we must balance security concerns with a commitment to those who fought alongside us.

The American Legion foresaw this issue in 2018 when our National Executive Committee unanimously passed Resolution No. 16, which called for Congress and the president to recognize Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa recipients who "stood shoulder to shoulder" with U.S. troops and diplomats. Right now, military equipment is being removed from Afghanistan. But people are our greatest asset. No one will help us in future fights if we leave them behind to be killed.

We strongly urge your Administration to prioritize the protection of our heroic allies and their families by developing a plan to significantly increase SIV slots for Afghans. The American Legion has confidence that you will not fail or forsake the heroes who have sacrificed so much for our nation. The American Legion is full of veterans who served alongside these Afghan interpreters and we stand ready and willing to assist in the development of plans and policies to ensure we take care of America's partners in Afghanistan. Allies make this nation's military stronger and it is only right and just that we fulfill our promise to them. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

For God & Country,

  
James W. "Bill" Oxford  
National Commander



# THE AMERICAN LEGION

*Veterans Strengthening America*

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

WWW.LEGION.ORG • 1608 K ST. N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-2801 • P: (202) 861-2700

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Antony J Blinken  
United States Secretary of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary, Blinken:

On behalf of the nearly two million members of The American Legion, I write to express serious concerns regarding the plight of present and former Afghan interpreters, who assisted the United States in the Global War on Terrorism, and to express our unwavering support for the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for Afghan civilians. Given your announcement that all American troops are to be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, quick action is required to protect the Afghans who have risked their lives in service to this country and utmost consideration must be given for the price they have already paid for an opportunity in our country. Time is of the greatest essence.

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We strongly urge your Department to prioritize the protection of our heroic allies and their families by developing a plan to significantly increase SIV slots for Afghans. The American Legion has confidence that you will not fail or forsake the heroes who have sacrificed so much for our nation. The American Legion is full of veterans who served alongside these Afghan interpreters and we stand ready and willing to assist in the development of plans and policies to ensure we take care of America's partners in Afghanistan. Allies make this nation's military stronger and it is only right and just that we fulfill our promise to them. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

For God & Country,

James W. "Bill" Oxford  
National Commander

thousands of Kurds at the end of the Iraqi Kurdish Civil War, also temporarily holding them in Guam.

“Despite those efforts, thousands were still left behind and killed in Vietnam and Iraq. "We have experience with this type of evacuation in times of crisis," Brennan added. "The current environment in Afghanistan clearly merits similar action but with even better results."

**Statement of Ariel A. DeJesus, Senior National Security Policy Adviser, National Security Division, The American Legion, Before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety on:**

**“HONORING VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES: AN EXAMINATION OF IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP POLICIES FOR US MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES”**

**JUNE 23, 2021**

Chairman Padilla, Ranking Member Cornyn, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of our National Commander, James W. “Bill” Oxford, and our nearly 2 million members, we thank you for inviting The American Legion to submit a statement for the record on veteran deportation and the military naturalization process.

The American Legion believes in and endorses naturalization – the legal act or process by which a non-citizen of this country may acquire citizenship or nationality of this country. Providing assistance and instruction to those following the legal path to citizenship has been a longstanding and proud American Legion tradition since our founding. The American Legion has fought for servicemembers and veterans to receive U.S. citizenship through military service for more than 100 years. The American Legion’s first position on U.S. citizenship through honorable military service is stated in a 1919 resolution which recommends “that American Indians who honorably served in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps of the United States during the World War be given the full rights of citizenship.” Over the next century, numerous resolutions were passed urging the federal government to continue providing naturalization classes open to all who are seeking citizenship instruction, urging Legion posts to assist with naturalization programs, and several more which will be noted in more detail below.

In short, The American Legion believes in honoring the promise this nation makes to immigrants who seek naturalization through military service: if you enlist and serve honorably, this nation will make you a citizen.

## Background

Since the founding of our nation, non-citizen immigrants have served in the United States military and have served faithfully in every major conflict. Around 760,000 immigrants have gained U.S.

citizenship through military service during the past century.<sup>1</sup> The *Lodge Act of 1950* permitted non-citizen Eastern Europeans to enlist between 1950 and 1959, and in the late 1940s the United States recruited Filipinos to enlist in the Navy. Under a July 2002 Executive Order, military branches have worked closely with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to streamline citizenship processing for servicemembers since Sept. 11, 2001.<sup>2</sup> Following Sept. 11, 2001, over 109,250 members of the Armed Forces have attained their citizenship through honorable service.<sup>3</sup> Each year, around 24,000 non-citizen immigrants actively serve in the military and 5,000 join. These servicemembers come from a wide range of countries like Mexico, the Philippines, South Korea, and Jamaica.<sup>4</sup>

## Veteran Deportation

In recent years, it has been reported from citizenship organizations, national and local news sources, and members of Congress that hundreds, possibly thousands, of veterans have been deported. Many of those deported who were interviewed said they were led to believe that citizenship was automatically granted due to their service. In reality, the branches of the Armed Services must work with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to begin the process of establishing citizenship for the servicemember. As such, the servicemember was unaware of the need to begin the process through USCIS and the individual service branches failed to inform the servicemember while on active duty. Many of the veterans deported are as a result of minor, non-violent, and/or substance related crimes. According to the Texas Civil Rights Project, substance abuse is highest amongst veterans.<sup>5</sup> Substance abuse is often related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health concerns resulting from military service.<sup>6</sup>

The *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996* toughened U.S. immigration laws, adding penalties for undocumented immigrants who commit crimes while in the United States. The Act also allows for the deportation of non-citizen servicemembers who commit a misdemeanor or a felony.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, despite their honorable service, non-citizen immigrant veterans are not shielded from deportation. Between 2013 and 2018, 250 non-citizen

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<sup>1</sup> Jeanne Batalova Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova Jie Zong, “Immigrant Veterans in the United States,” migrationpolicy.org, February 2, 2021, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigrant-veterans-united-states-2018>.

<sup>2</sup> “Expedited Citizenship Through Military Service: Current Law, Policy, and Issues.” EveryCRSReport.com. Congressional Research Service, February 25, 2009. [https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL31884.html#\\_Toc223754272](https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL31884.html#_Toc223754272).

<sup>3</sup> “DOD Fact Sheet on MAVNI Recruitment Pilot Program,” American Immigration Lawyers Association, accessed June 17, 2021, <https://www.aila.org/infonet/dod-fact-sheet-mavni-recruitment-pilot-program>.

<sup>4</sup> “Naturalizations for Non-Citizens in Military Service.” AAF, October 29, 2020. <https://www.americanactionforum.org/insight/naturalizations-for-non-citizens-in-military-service>

<sup>5</sup> “Land of the Free, No Home of the Brave, A Report on the Social, Economic, and Moral Cost of Deporting Veterans.” txcivilrights.org. Accessed June 17, 2021. <https://txcivilrights.org/reports-and-publications/report-land-of-the-free-no-home-of-the-brave/>.

<sup>6</sup> “PTSD and Substance Abuse in Veterans.” VA.gov. [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/related/substance\\_abuse\\_vet.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/related/substance_abuse_vet.asp).

<sup>7</sup> “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act.” Legal Information Institute. Legal Information Institute. Accessed June 17, 2021. [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/illegal\\_immigration\\_reform\\_and\\_immigration\\_responsibility\\_act](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/illegal_immigration_reform_and_immigration_responsibility_act).

immigrant veterans were placed in extradition proceedings resulting in the deportation of 92 US veterans.<sup>8</sup>

Roughly 200,000 servicemembers transition from the military each year. Transitioning veterans can face multi-layered challenges, including unemployment, poor mental health, and other factors which could result in criminal charges. The process is exacerbated when a non-citizen immigrant veteran transitions from the military, has encounters with law enforcement agencies, and faces deportation. Many veterans are deported due to non-felony crimes. Some of these crimes may even result in being barred from naturalization for life, despite meeting all the other criteria.

Those deported face significant hurdles applying for citizenship or having their cases appealed. Some crimes permanently bar deported veterans from ever returning to the United States. Those not permanently barred must go through the already complicated immigration process to remedy their status. Very few of those deported are allowed to return and receive their citizenship. The toll on these veterans and their families can be severe.<sup>9</sup>

## **Immigration and Customs Enforcement Deportation Process Problems**

If a non-citizen veteran violates immigration law, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) may seek to remove the veteran from the country. However, ICE policies require it to take additional steps prior to removal actions, such as considering their service record.<sup>10</sup> A 2019 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report indicates ICE agents were largely unaware of their own policies regarding veterans and did not consistently follow these policies from 2013-2018.<sup>11</sup> The GAO report found over 20 percent of immigration interview cases involving veterans failed to note their veteran status.<sup>12</sup> Not designating potential deportees as veterans prevents those veteran’s honorable service from being considered during deportation



proceedings. Between 2013 and 2018 the United States knowingly deported 92 U.S. veterans.<sup>13</sup> It is highly likely the actual number of veterans deported during this time far exceed the numbers reported, due to a lack of tracking by ICE.

## Naturalization Problems

At its root, the problem is that immigrant servicemembers who served honorably are at risk of deportation if they did not receive citizenship prior to leaving service. It is a failure of all those involved that servicemembers do not receive citizenship, unless they specifically do not desire citizenship or had done something during their service which resulted in a dishonorable discharge.

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Government Accountability. "Immigration Enforcement - Actions Needed to Better Handle, Identify, and Track Cases Involving Veterans." GAO, June 2019.

<https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-416>

<sup>9</sup> "Thank You & Goodbye," The American Legion Magazine, June 2021.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12knzujMrNBRSx4J2mMYjuPDJ8F6ERZWA/view?usp=sharing>.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Government Accountability. Immigration Enforcement: Actions Needed to Better Handle, Identify, and Track Cases Involving Veterans, April 15, 2021.

<https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-416>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

New policies have made naturalization more difficult for immigrant recruits. By extending the amount of time the Department of Defense (DoD) is required to wait before servicemembers can begin the process, they are no longer able to begin applying during basic training. This Basic Training Initiative, administered by USCIS, provided on site resources so enlistees could begin naturalization during basic training was terminated in 2018.<sup>14</sup> Prior to its elimination, the Basic Training Initiative allowed a single controlled point where all immigrant soldiers could learn about and begin the naturalization process.

Access to continue the naturalization process have caused problems as well. Deployments abroad, lost applications, unit transfers, lack of access to facilities and other factors affect how quickly servicemembers can apply for naturalization. For example, in 2019 USCIS reduced the number of locations overseas where non-citizen servicemembers can be naturalized from 23 to four. Those deployed may not have any ability to continue the naturalization process at all until they return from their deployment. This could delay their application for months or years through no fault of their own as they serve in the U.S. military.

Some immigrants, particularly those who entered the U.S. Armed Forces in the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program, have had the rules change on them.<sup>15</sup> Not only does this cause confusion in the process but leaves them in danger of losing

their legal status and subsequent deportation while they wait for their application and security clearances to receive final approval.

There is also a fundamental misunderstanding among immigrant servicemembers on how the naturalization process operates. Many servicemembers and veterans did not receive appropriate information about the application process such as misunderstanding that their oath of enlistment constituted them becoming citizens.

These new policies and the pre-existing barriers have caused a severe decline in naturalizations among military personnel. The latest data from 2018, shows that 4,135 service members were naturalized that year, down 43 percent from 2017.<sup>16</sup> 2018 saw the lowest number of naturalizations since 2002, when 2,434 service members were naturalized. USCIS has denied military naturalization applications at a higher rate than civilian applications for every quarter since the beginning of FY2018.<sup>17</sup> This exacerbates the abovementioned issue which is the deportation of immigrant servicemembers who did not receive their citizenship prior to discharge.

## Recommended Solutions

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<sup>14</sup> “Immigrants in the Military: 5 Things To Know.” FWD.us, May 27, 2021. <https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrants-in-the-military/>.

<sup>15</sup> Lolita C. Baldor, The Associated Press. “How Trump Administration Policies Stymie the Pentagon's Immigrant Recruit Program.” Military Times. Military Times, Sept. 30, 2018. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2018/09/30/how-trump-administration-policies-stymie-the-pentagons-immigrant-recruit-program/>.

<sup>16</sup> “Naturalizations for Non-Citizens in Military Service.” AAF, October 29, 2020. <https://www.americanactionforum.org/insight/naturalizations-for-non-citizens-in-military-service/>.

<sup>17</sup> “Immigrants in the Military: 5 Things To Know.” FWD.us, May 27, 2021. <https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrants-in-the-military/>.

Men and women who served honorably should not face barriers to citizenship or face deportation from the country they served or fought to defend. That is why The American Legion has passed many resolutions as part of our advocacy on the issue of immigrant and deported veterans. Most recently, these include: Resolution No. 15: *Expedited Citizenship Through Military Service*;<sup>18</sup> Resolution No. 10: *Expedited Citizenship Applications For Deported Veterans*;<sup>19</sup> Resolution No. 19: *Oppose Deportation of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans*;<sup>20</sup> and Resolution No. 20: *Oppose Deportation of Immediate Family Members of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans*.<sup>21</sup> Together these resolutions urge Congress to pass legislation to stop deporting veterans, ensure immigrant servicemembers can expeditiously become citizens, and bring deported veterans home.

Based on these resolutions, The American Legion recommends the following changes:

- Implement measures within the DoD to ensure the process of naturalization through honorable military service is completed prior to discharge.
- Maintain the requirement that immigrants must have a completed background check prior to going to basic training but reinstitute the USCIS Naturalization at Basic Training Initiative to provide onsite immigration resources and staff to support recruits beginning the naturalization process.
- Reopen the 19 field offices abroad to support the naturalization process for deployed service members.
- Permit the reopening of naturalization applications that were denied or abandoned when an applicant was unable to follow the naturalization process through to completion.
- Provide training to military recruiters and military chain of command about the naturalization process for servicemembers and veterans.
- Provide expedited citizenship applications and the resources to complete the applications to deported veterans if their discharge is honorable and they do not have a felony conviction.
- On an annual basis, mandate the DoD and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to report to Congress the number of non-citizens serving at that time in the U.S. Armed Forces, including in each branch of the military, the numbers of naturalization applications filed by U.S. servicemembers, and the status and results of those applications.
- Cease the deportation of immediate family members of non-citizen servicemembers and veterans who have not been convicted of a felony.
- Allow immediate family members of noncitizen servicemembers and veterans who are at risk of deportation to apply for Parole in Place and Deferred Action while in removal proceedings.
- Establish a pathway to lawful permanent residence for immediate family members of noncitizen servicemembers and veterans and strengthen the pathway to citizenship.

The American Legion supports two bills which would implement some of these recommendations. In the Senate, we support the *Veterans Visa and Protection Act of 2021*. It amends the *Immigration and Nationality Act* to adjust the treatment of eligible noncitizen veterans by the DHS:

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<sup>18</sup> <https://archive.legion.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12203/9912>

<sup>19</sup> <https://archive.legion.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12203/9277>

<sup>20</sup> <https://archive.legion.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12203/14650>

<sup>21</sup> <https://archive.legion.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12203/14652>

- Prohibits the deportation of noncitizen veterans.
- Establishes a visa program through which deported veterans may enter the United States as legal permanent residents and allows noncitizen veterans in the U.S. who are ordered for removal to adjust their immigration status to that of a legal permanent resident.
- Enables legal permanent residents to obtain naturalization through military service.
- Extends military and veterans benefits to those who were deported who would otherwise



be eligible for those benefits.

In the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, we support H.R. 1182, the *Veteran Deportation Prevention and Reform Act*. This legislation is a comprehensive reform package that would implement critical reforms across agencies for noncitizen veterans and prevent their deportation. The bill would specifically direct the DHS to create a program and application process to allow eligible deported veterans residing outside of the U.S. to return to the country as noncitizens lawfully admitted for permanent residence. The package also calls for the DoD and DHS to jointly establish a program to ensure members of the Armed Services and their spouses and children have a pathway to citizenship.

Currently, the U.S. lacks consistent statistics on the scope and magnitude of the deportation of U.S. military veterans. Under this bill, the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security would be mandated to conduct a joint study and report on all veterans that have been deported in the past two decades. In June 2019, the GAO found that ICE has not been tracking the number of veterans who have been deported, or adhering to internal policies regarding potentially removable veterans. This study would allow Congress to better understand how many veterans have been forcibly removed. In addition, it directs DHS to establish a Military Family Immigration Advisory Committee that would provide recommendations on whether an individual should be granted a stay of removal, deferred action, parole, or be removed from the country. It also provides a pathway to citizenship for spouses and children of members of the Armed Services through a joint program between DoD and DHS.

## **Conclusion**

Immigrants have served in the United States Military since the founding of our nation. In recognition of their honorable service, we have promised the opportunity to become American citizens. Although the pathway to citizenship has been accomplished for many non-citizen immigrant servicemembers and veterans, there are still many barriers. The American Legion's position is clear. These brave men and women served our nation honorably. It is only right that we recognize their service with the pathways to citizenship they deserve.

The American Legion thanks this subcommittee for the opportunity to explain the position of the nearly 2 million veteran members of this organization.



## THE AMERICAN LEGION *Veterans Strengthening America*

WASHINGTON OFFICE

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July 13, 2021

The Honorable Todd Young  
United States Senate  
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Young:

On behalf of the nearly two million members of The American Legion, I am pleased to express support for S.J.Res.10 - a joint resolution to repeal the authorizations for use of military force (AUMFs) against Iraq.

Congress passed the 1991 and 2002 AUMFs to authorize force against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime. These AUMFs are no longer relevant. Saddam's regime was overthrown in 2003, and a formal end to the U.S. mission in Iraq was declared at the end of 2011. According to the State Department, Iraq "is now a key partner" in the Middle East.

The vast majority of military actions overseas rely on the 2001 AUMF for approval. In the rare occasions that presidents have cited the 2002 AUMF—like the 2014 airstrikes in Syria or 2020 killing of Qassem Soleimani—it was in combination with other legal authorities. Thus, the 2002 AUMF is legally irrelevant for any modern operations and allowing it to stay on the books allows for future abuse. Too often, the Executive Branch interprets congressional authorizations in a way that maximizes executive power while minimizing congressional responsibility. This is contrary to Congress's constitutional role of deciding when the country goes to war.

In accordance with American Legion Resolution No. 22: *Addressing the 'Forever War'*, which urges a renewal of a proper constitutional balance to American foreign policy decision-making by encouraging Congress to repeal outdated AUMFs, we strongly support this bill.

We applaud your leadership in addressing this critical issue facing our nation's servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

For God & Country,

James W. "Bill" Oxford  
National Commander



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
*Veterans Strengthening America*  
OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

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July 13, 2021

The Honorable Tim Kaine  
United States Senate  
231 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510

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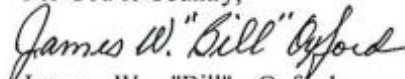
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The Honorable Adam Smith  
The Honorable Mike Rogers  
House Committee on Armed Services  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Rogers:

We write you to reauthorize funding for the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program through the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Reauthorization Act (NDAA). Congressionally authorized under the 1993 NDAA as an official Department of Defense (DOD) program, the program has successfully supported veterans transitioning to careers in education for over 27 years.

We believe the value of Troops to Teachers cannot be understated. It provides employment assistance to transitioning veterans including those retiring with service disabilities, which aids in lowering veteran unemployment; it alleviates nationwide teaching shortages, which improves education quality; and it increases access and representation among traditionally less-represented groups to teaching careers. DOD reported that the program placed over 21,000 veteran teachers in classrooms since its inception.

Studies have shown that Troops to Teachers educators fill thousands of vacancies in high-needs schools and subject areas; are more likely to not relocate after they are employed as teachers; are considered effective instructors; have high job and life satisfaction; and even have a positive effect on increasing student likelihood to serve.

Allowing the Troops for Teachers program to sunset would go against America's critical need to support our children's education. We implore you to champion this established program and stand with veterans by protecting Troops to Teachers from termination.

Sincerely,

James W. "Bill" Oxford  
National Commander  
The American Legion

Vincent "BJ" Lawrence  
Executive Director  
VFW Washington Office

Jared Lyon  
CEO & President  
Student Veterans of America

Joy J. Ilem  
National Legislative Director  
Disabled American Veterans

Carrie  
Wofford  
President  
Veterans Education Success

**NATIONAL SECURITY LEGISLATIVE BILL TRACKER**

<b>Bill #</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<u>S10</u>	A bill to repeal the 1991 and 2002 Iraq AUMF.
<u>S 21</u>	A bill to extend the period of the temporary authority to extend contracts and leases under the ARMS Initiative.
<u>S70</u>	A bill to amend title 32, United States Code, to authorize cybersecurity operations and missions to protect critical infrastructure by members of the National Guard connected with training or other duty.
<u>S130</u>	A bill to extend to the Mayor of the District of Columbia the same authority over the National Guard of the District of Columbia as the Governors of the several States exercise over the National Guard of those States concerning the administration of the National Guard and its use to respond to natural disasters and other civil disturbances, and for other purposes.
<u>S781</u>	A bill to provide for the continuation of paid parental leave for members of the Armed Services in the event of the death of the child.
<u>S1488</u>	A bill to give the proper financial assistance to low-income active military families as well as active service members to fight food insecurity.
<u>SXXX</u>	A bill to provide clarification and limitations with respect to the exercise of national security powers, and for other purpose.
<u>HJ 29</u>	A bill to direct forgiveness or offset of an overpayment of retired pay paid to joint account for a period after the death of the retired member of the Armed Forces.
<u>HR 256</u>	To repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002
<u>HR 350</u>	A bill to authorize dedicated domestic terrorism offices within the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to analyze and monitor domestic terrorist activity and require the Federal Government to take steps to prevent domestic terrorism.
<u>HR 464</u>	A bill to realign the Federal Government's nuclear forensics and attribution activities from the Department of Homeland Security to the National Nuclear Security Administration.

<u>HR 467</u>	A bill that would prohibit the Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) from clawing back the final retirement benefit paid to a veteran the month they pass away.
<u>HR 475</u>	A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, improve dependent coverage under the TRICARE Young Adult Program, and for other purposes.
<u>HR 567</u>	A bill provides statutory authority for the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program.
<u>HR 598</u>	Georgia Support Act, to support Georgia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and for other purposes.
<u>HR 624</u>	A bill to prohibit the use of Federal funds to close or realign the Marine Corps Recruit Depot located at Parris Island, South Carolina.
<u>HR 923</u>	A bill that allows the President to impose entry and property-blocking sanctions against foreign persons responsible for or complicit in serious human rights abuse in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia that are occupied by Russia.
<u>HR 1088</u>	A bill to direct the Secretary of Defense to implement specific recommendations regarding screening individuals who seek to enlist in the Armed Forces.
<u>HR 1119</u>	A bill that provides statutory authority for Executive Order 13920, which set forth requirements related to securing the US bulk-power system.
<u>HR 1182</u>	A bill to provide benefits for non-citizen members of the Armed Forces and other purposes.
<u>HR 1183</u>	A bill to establish a military family immigration advisory committee, and for other purposes.
<u>HR 1186</u>	A bill that modifies the application of requirements for drug packaging to include certain information, such as the products lot number and expiration date.
<u>HR 1938</u>	A bill to amend title 37, United States Code, to ensure that a member of a reserve component of a uniformed service, who performs active service for more than 30 consecutive days under multiple calls or orders to active service that specify periods of 30 days or less, is paid the same basic allowance for housing as a similarly situated member of a reserve component called or ordered to active service for a period of more than 30 days.

<u>HR</u> <u>2336</u>	A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a communications and outreach campaign to educate veterans about cyber risk, and for other purposes.
<u>HR</u> <u>2339</u>	A bill to give proper financial assistance to low-income active military families as well as active service members to fight food insecurity.
<u>HR</u> <u>3261</u>	A bill to repeal the 1991 Iraq AUMF.