

## NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION

G. Michael Schlee  
Maryland  
Chairman

Rhonda Powell  
Alabama  
Director

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

During the 97<sup>th</sup> National Convention in Baltimore, commission members reviewed a combination of 25 new and established resolutions which focused on America's national defense. Key among the resolutions were measures addressing military quality-of-life standards, national defense funding and the fight against cybersecurity threats.

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

At the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee (NEC), National Security Commission Chairman Mike Schlee provided an update on the National Defense Authorization Act of 2016, to include the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission's (MCRMC) recommendation to change the existing military retirement system to a blended system where 20 percent of the benefit would depend on the retiree's own investments over the course of their military career. The briefing to the NEC also included an update on the progress of the new POW/MIA accounting effort.

During the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington Conference, Schlee collaborated to have dynamic speakers who provided an in-depth presentation on the national security outlook.

The program proceeded in four sections: 1) Department of Defense Force Strength Update by Christopher Skaluba, Principal Director for Strategy and Force Development in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. 2) Marine Corps Recruiting by Lt. Gen. Mark Andrew Brilakis, Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. 3) Cybersecurity by Gregory J. Touhill, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity and Communications within the National Protections and Programs Directorate (NPPD) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). 4) POW/MIA Update by Michael S. Linnington, Director of the of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, and Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairman of the Board, National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia.

During the business session at the Washington Conference on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, two resolutions were considered: Resolution #25 Merge PX/BX Commissaries; and Resolution #92 Retirement Benefits and Survivor Benefit (SBP) Gap. Our recommended action was to reject #25 and dispose of administratively #92.

At the Spring Meeting of the National Executive Committee, the above two resolutions were acted upon as recommended. Also, Schlee provided an update on the impact that sequestration has on defense resourcing. He highlighted issues related to the health of our military force with increased operations tempo due to re-emerging threats from Russia and North Korea, threats from China and Iran, and current and imminent threats from Islamic extremism in the Middle East.

Throughout the year, the National Security Commission provided continued support of its ongoing programs. to include the Blood Donor Program where Legionnaires and American Legion Auxiliary members continued to supply donated blood to hospitalized veterans and, under cooperative agreements, to patients in civilian hospitals; the ROTC/JROTC Medal Program, where several deserving ROTC college students and JROTC high school students in the United States and overseas earned the exclusive award; and the National Law Enforcement Officer and National Firefighter of the Year awards, given to individuals who have demonstrated their heroic dedication to public safety.