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From: Kirby, John F SES (USA)
Sent: Thursday, August 5, 2021 2:22 PM
To: (b) (6) CIV (USA); (b) (6) CIV (USA)
Subject: RE: FYSA: "A Near Press Blackout in Afghanistan" (The New Yorker)
Signed By: (b) (6)

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[REDACTED]

From: (b) (6) CIV (USA) (b) (6)
Sent: Wednesday, August 4, 2021 5:57 PM
To: Kirby, John F SES (USA) (b) (6) CIV (USA)
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Subject: FW: FYSA: "A Near Press Blackout in Afghanistan" (The New Yorker)

From: OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Media Analysis (b) (6)
Sent: Wednesday, August 4, 2021 5:52 PM
To: OSD Pentagon PA List Press Officers (b) (6)
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Subject: FYSA: "A Near Press Blackout in Afghanistan" (The New Yorker)

A Near Press Blackout in Afghanistan
The war that Americans forgot is ending in chaos and secrecy.
The New Yorker | Megan K. Stack

The exit of the last American commander from Afghanistan was marked by a strange and sombre ceremony. Standing outside the military headquarters in Kabul, among flagpoles left bare by nations that had already pulled down their banners and gone home, Austin Scott Miller, the longest-serving general of America's longest foreign war, spoke to a smattering of Afghan and U.S. officials and a handful of journalists.

He gave no declaration of victory, nor promise of return. The brief, formal event sounded, at times, like a eulogy. "Our job now is just not to forget," Miller said. "It will be important to know that someone remembers, that someone cares, and that we're able to talk about it in the future."

The mission flag was rolled and handed off from Miller to Marine Corps General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., who will oversee the Afghan operation from Tampa. The guests wandered back into the city; the reporters peeled off. Miller's travel plans were secret, and there had been quiet warnings against capturing images of the general boarding a helicopter. Gordon Lubold, who covers the Pentagon for the Wall Street Journal, circled back to the headquarters later

that day for a meeting, so he happened to hear Miller's Blackhawk churning up into the Afghan skies, followed by a Chinook carrying members of Miller's staff.

"They choreographed it so the media would all but leave," Lubold said. "We didn't even know he was leaving that day."

As the United States rushes to remove its troops from Afghanistan this summer, the Pentagon has imposed a de-facto press blackout on their departure. The military has ignored requests for embeds, denied pleas for even perfunctory interviews with troops, and generally worked to obstruct the public's view of the United States pulling up stakes. Journalists submitted letters of appeal and protest, but they had no effect. The Times editor Dean Baquet intervened, pressing the Pentagon to allow journalists access to troops and requesting a meeting with Miller to make his case. But the general ignored Baquet's overture, according to people involved in the incident. Martha Raddatz, the longtime ABC military reporter with a track record of Pentagon exclusives, got access to the troops; others did not.

In a sense, the obfuscation was predictable. Leaving a country that many expect will now collapse into civil war, the United States has no victory to declare; it can only acknowledge the reality of relinquishment and retreat. "A military that's withdrawing from battle, whether it's an organized withdrawal or a retreat, doesn't want any media nearby," said the Getty combat photographer John Moore. "The military wants to show itself in a victorious way. When you're leaving a field of battle, it never looks victorious."

Moore, who covered Afghanistan before 2001 and has completed dozens of military embeds there, was among the journalists whose requests to document the withdrawal went ignored. When I messaged the Los Angeles Times reporter Nabih Bulos to ask whether he'd got an embed or a chance to interview troops during a recent trip to Afghanistan, he replied tersely. "I tried. Failed," he wrote. "They weren't very accommodating."

The Pentagon press secretary John Kirby acknowledged the discontent. "I'm not insensitive to that criticism," he said. He explained that commanders were on guard against Taliban attacks and therefore "miserly" with details of troop movements. He added that a shortage of press officers in Afghanistan made it difficult to arrange embeds and interviews.

To pretend that any war is won or lost is to impose an infantile logic on a complex tangle of murder, primal emotion, and money. Some wars end in mutual exhaustion; others simply go into remission or slip out of our attention range. But it is certainly true that a nation may emerge more or less triumphant from the fray and, along that spectrum, the outcome in Afghanistan was ignominious. The conflict will cost taxpayers more than two trillion dollars, including veteran care and interest on war borrowing, according to the Costs of War project at Brown University, which also estimates that more than a hundred and seventy thousand people died in the conflict, counting Afghan forces, Taliban fighters, and contractors. That figure includes twenty-four hundred U.S. troops and forty-seven thousand civilians who died in a project that failed at its most basic goal of defeating the Taliban, who are now surging back to seize control of districts and, according to human-rights groups, carrying out organized revenge killings.

I went to Afghanistan in 2001, as a young reporter for the Los Angeles Times, and I've recently been talking with others who fought, documented, and studied the war. I spoke with old friends and journalism colleagues, with academics, with people in the military and retired from it. I asked everyone the same question: How will the war be remembered? And, strikingly, they all said the same thing: they don't know, because an answer requires a coherent understanding of the war's overarching purpose, which nobody has possessed for more than a decade. An occupation that began as an act of vengeance against the planners of September 11th and their Taliban protectors evolved into something more abstract and impossibly ambitious, a sort of wholesale rebirth of Afghanistan as a stable and thriving country. It was a project that few U.S. leaders knew how to complete, but nobody had the strength to stop. And so the United States will end the longest foreign war in its history, and few can articulate what it was for. Naturally, there is dysfunction among the propagandists.

"How can you turn the page on a book when you don't even know what was written?" Catherine Lutz, a co-founder of the Costs of War project, asked. "We still haven't done an accounting of all the losses and of all the fraud and abuse."

The most optimistic assessment of the conflict came from Steve Warren, a longtime Pentagon spokesman who got pushed out of his job early in the Trump Administration. He predicted that the U.S. public would recall the war as having been more successful than Vietnam, though hardly a victory. "The goal was to kill Osama bin Laden. We killed that son of a bitch. He's dead," Warren said. "So, win."

But Warren also spoke of his own disillusionment with the war in Afghanistan, a kind of disgusted fatigue that descended upon him so abruptly and absolutely he compared it to Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus. It came upon him years ago, when he'd been assigned to work on the issue of veteran suicides. One day, he simply hit a wall. "I just got so sick of it all," he said. "What are we doing? Stop. Enough. It's time to go home."

The post-September 11th wars have been notable for repackaging invasion and occupation as "nation-building," a charitable undertaking in which the United States would teach a foreign country how to function better. But the Americans could never present a stable or convincing new reality to ordinary Afghans, who watched as security crumbled and new forms of corruption flowed from the slosh of cash and contracts that came with the occupation. Meanwhile, the Taliban, bolstered by Pakistan, mounted an increasingly effective campaign of insurgency, killing U.S.-backed Afghan troops and police officers at a staggering rate. This uneasy combination of violence and quixotic civic engagement led to genuine confusion among those who served, as well as the American public, who sometimes expressed indignation that invaded countries were not more grateful to the United States. "Are we helping people or are we killing people?" as Warren put it.

As time went on, American interest in reports from the Afghan war seemed to dwindle dramatically. "I didn't sense a great, strong interest in the Afghanistan story," Kirby pointed out, until the withdrawal announcement led to a "spike" in journalists eager to rush back to Kabul. Within two years of the invasion, the nation's magazines and newspapers had started referring to Afghanistan as a "forgotten war." Soon the phrase "war weary" became a staple in writing about Afghanistan.

If it is, indeed, a forgotten war, perhaps it's because nobody wants to dwell on the inglorious exploits and depraved alliances that have punctuated it. To single out any one of them is to undersell the others, but to list them all you'd need a book. In Afghanistan, the U.S. and its proxies rounded people up and shipped them off to Guantánamo. It was the country that came under more fire than any other through the controversial program of U.S. drone strikes. In Afghanistan, through a tangle of enemy-of-my-enemy pacts and dubious compromises, the United States found itself backing vicious warlords, including the former military commander Abdul Rashid Dostum, who, early in the war, tortured and then packed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Taliban prisoners into transport containers. In their dying hours, Dostum's captives licked the sweat off their neighbors' skin in a desperate attempt to slake their thirst. Dostum now controls a heavily fortified hilltop base in Kabul and a feared militia in his northern birthplace of Jowzjan Province; he is a close ally of Turkey, whose troops are now expected to defend the Kabul airport from Taliban onslaught.

Perhaps no single site better symbolized the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, from beginning to end, than Bagram Airfield. Built by the Soviet Union and occupied by Soviet troops during an earlier, similarly ill-fated intervention, it was lavishly refurbished and expanded by the U.S. as the war dragged along.

Last month, however, when it came time to leave, the military simply turned off the electricity and spirited the last troops away in the dead of night. Looters from surrounding villages, realizing that the Americans had left, climbed over the walls and laid waste to the abandoned stocks of Gatorade and Pop-Tarts. The following morning, the Afghan commander caught on that his allies had vanished. Hearing rumors that the last U.S. troops had pulled out of Bagram without informing local officials, the Associated Press reporter Kathy Gannon repeatedly called Colonel Sonny Leggett, then a Kabul-based U.S. military spokesman. According to Gannon, Leggett at first declined her calls. (Leggett, who has left Kabul and is in the process of retiring, said he was no longer authorized to comment and referred questions to the U.S. Central Command; a spokesman, Bill Urban, said that he didn't know what had happened with Gannon's calls but that he was sure Leggett was committed to "maximum disclosure with minimum delay.") The military later said that it

had discussed the departure from Bagram with higher-ranking Afghan officials, blaming the confusion on a misunderstanding.

A few days later, Gannon, who has covered Afghanistan since 1986, visited Bagram and spoke with an Afghan commander and his soldiers as they took stock of the abandoned airfield. "These soldiers were just sort of wandering around inside this massive compound. It was their first time there," she said. "A lot of them were a little bit angry and had a bad taste in their mouth about how it had happened, the fact that the electricity had gone out like that. . . . They felt they were veterans of this war and here they were being left with a skeleton of what was there."

As I listened to Gannon's story, I realized that I, too, have pawed through the leavings at a base in Afghanistan. I still have the Pashto-English dictionary I lifted from a hastily abandoned Al Qaeda compound in Jalalabad in 2001. The terrorists had taken their wives and children and fled to the mountains, leaving behind a jumble of baby shoes and bomb-mixing chemicals, fake passport stamps, and a French cookbook. Teen-aged Afghan soldiers wandered the rooms with roses from the garden tucked behind their ears, shooting left-behind chickens for food and shoving plastic toys into their pockets. The neighbors grumbled that the vanished families, whom they called "the Arabs," were rich and haughty; they had resented the foreigners' power over local officials and feared angering them.

I recall rooting through the papers like a greedy child shredding Christmas wrappings, and having the sense of not finding what I'd somehow expected. I'd go into rooms, portentous rooms that had been occupied by killers, looking for evidence of violent minds but finding, every time, the dull possessions of human beings.

Now it all loops back on itself. Now the Americans are the ones who came in, walled themselves off, and then vanished in the night.

Between these two withdrawals, there was a stretch when the military thought it could salvage the Afghan story. As it prepared for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Pentagon had announced a large-scale program to embed hundreds of journalists with the troops advancing toward Baghdad; the strategy of embedding rotations of reporters to embed with military units soon spread to Afghanistan, puncturing some of the secrecy that had characterized the early days of the war.

Embedded journalists would see things from the perspective of the troops, or so the military planners believed. They'd photograph and write about brave young soldiers. And, of course, reporters tagging along on foot patrols or hanging around on bases would have less time to poke around in the bigger questions of the war, about the money and lives spent, the abuses unfolding in places they would not be escorted to visit.

In the latter Bush and early Obama years, embeds were easy to get and wildly popular for all concerned. Fashion and sports writers came to find their combat angles; local TV crews caught free rides to war zones on military planes; press officers called up their favorite photographers and told them to block off their calendars. You won't want to miss this.

But, eventually, all of that mutual benefit went sour. The embed program never formally or completely ended, but slowly, during the Obama years, interest from journalists and opportunities from the military dwindled away in tandem. Obama was breaking his promise to withdraw all U.S. troops. Afghan poverty and corruption were getting worse, and the Taliban were resurgent. Trust was so eroded that U.S. trainers wouldn't step onto a firing range to work with Afghan sharpshooters unless the Afghans' guns were loaded with blanks.

There wasn't much to showcase, and the U.S. public was amenable to ignoring it. If it's true that the military kept the war shrouded when it was convenient, it's also true that very few Americans went looking for it.

"One of the guiding principles is to keep the American people on our side at all costs," Warren told me. "Controlling the imagery, controlling the message, controlling the sentiment is always geared toward that singular goal—don't let the American people think we failed. Don't let them think that, no matter what."

So maybe it all worked out: they didn't have to show us, and we didn't have to look.

(b) (6)

Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
Media Analysis (Gryphon Technologies)

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From: (b) (6) Lt Col USAF AFELM OSD (USA)
Sent: Tuesday, August 17, 2021 6:50 PM
To: Kirby, John F SES (USA); (b) (6) CIV OSD PA (USA)
Cc: (b) (6) CIV (USA); (b) (6) CAPT USN OSD PA (USA); (b) (6) CIV OSD PA (USA); OSD Pentagon PA List Press Officers; OSD Pentagon PA Mailbox Duty Officer Press Operations
Subject: Football, 17 Aug
Attachments: ATSD Briefing Book 17 August as of 1600.pdf

Mr. Kirby and (b) (6),

Attached is today's Football. Only addition after the prep is BadAlloc Cyber Vulnerability related to the Blackberry software vulnerability. It is pronounced "bad-al-lock" kind of like "battle-lock" with a d instead of t.

(b) (6) is the RB tomorrow. Standing by for any questions.

v/r

(b) (6)

(b) (6), Lt Col, USAF
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ATSD(PA)
AND
PENTAGON PRESS SECRETARY



BRIEFING BOOK

17 August 2021
AS OF: 1600

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17 August 2021 as of 1600

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Topper

Good afternoon everyone.

Topper

Now I'll open up for questions.



Afghanistan Withdrawal

- Committed to **supporting ANDSF** well into the future.
 - President Biden is asking for **\$3.3 billion in his budget** for the support of the Afghan security forces.
- Main Effort is **safe & deliberate retrograde**.
- The **President made clear**: After 20 years at war, it's time for American **troops to come home**.
- As the President said - The **status quo is not an option**.
- The Afghan government and the ANDSF **have the training, equipment, and numbers** to prevail.

Afghanistan Withdrawal

DoD Assistance to ANDSF since April Drawdown Announcement

- DoD continues to fund a 300,000 person ANDSF.
- DoD continues maintenance support to ANDSF equipment both in-country and outside Afghanistan.
- Will provide another 37 UH-60 helicopters, 3 A-29 strike aircraft, and 15 MD-530 helicopters.
- DoD delivered seven UH-60 helicopters in the last 30 days (3 in June, 4 in August). DoD will manage the overhaul of 21 Mi-17s in the Afghan inventory that are currently not flyable.
- The US manages the NATO ANA Trust Fund which has over 270 active projects in support of the ANDSF.

Afghanistan Withdrawal

DoD Assistance Since 2005 (ASFF Established)

- The DoD-managed ASFF has appropriated more than \$84.3 billion ANDSF since 2005.
 - \$9.2B-- **training** in support of improving their operational capacity.
 - \$18.56B-- **equipment** for ANDSF forces
- ASFF and international community have funded a force of over 350K ANDSF
- Purchased over 100K vehicles, 400K weapons and more than 221 aircraft.
- Since 2002, the US has contributed over \$1.6 billion to the UN Development Program's Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA) to pay Afghan National Police salaries.

Afghanistan Withdrawal

SIV / OPN ALLIES REFUGEE

- Fort Lee is prepared to support up to 3,500 SIV applicants as required.
- We will continue to support the State Department led efforts.
- NSC: Committed to supporting those who have helped U.S. military... often at great personal risk to themselves & their families.

RFA OVERVIEW

- Ft Lee: NORTHCOM Lead for DoD
- Funding: *"State will work w/ OMB & all applicable Depts. / Agencies to identify other appropriate authorities & sources of funding from such Departments and Agencies."*
- CONUS: Up to 3,500 ~ DHS 'Parole Authority'
- OCONUS: Up to 20K
- DoD to Provide: Housing (Ind. & Family), Sustainment, Medical, Admin & Religious Space, Recreation, IT Access

ROK (Training Events)

Confirm U.S. ROK exercises have begun?

- Yes. Following **comprehensive discussions on the current environment** including the COVID-19 situation, maintenance of a robust combined defense posture, supporting diplomatic efforts to denuclearize the Korean peninsula and support a lasting peace, the **ROK-U.S. Alliance has decided to conduct its semi-annual Combined Command Post Training event beginning on August 16 for 9 days.**
- This training is defense-focused utilizing computer simulation and will not include field training maneuvers.
- Due to the COVID-19 situation, only the minimum number of essential personnel will participate under strict restrictions and in distributed locations.

ROK (Training Events)

Comment on DPRK / PRC criticism of U.S. & ROK training events?

- We don't have a comment on the DPRK statements.
- The ROK-U.S. Alliance remains at a high level of readiness, and continues to maintain a robust combined defense posture to protect the Republic of Korea against any threat or adversary while implementing and maintaining prudent preventive control measures to protect the force.

How many service members? FOC measures? COVID measures? Etc...

- We refer you to U.S. Forces Korea.

ROK (Training Events)

What signal does this reduced joint exercise send to North Korea?

- I think that's a question for the North Koreans.
- Our combined training demonstrates, as we have for decades, that the ROK-U.S. Alliance remains at a high level of readiness, and continues to maintain a robust combined defense posture to protect the Republic of Korea against any threat or adversary.
- Combined training events are a ROK-U.S. bilateral decision, our commitment to the security of the ROK is ironclad, and the U.S.-ROK Alliance is the linchpin of peace and security in the region.

Haiti Relief Operations

- U.S. Southern Command is working to assess damage, develop common operational picture, and provide lifesaving support for the people of Haiti
- In support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)
- JTF Haiti, led by RADM Keith Davids (SOCSOUTH CDR), is currently operating from Homestead Air Reserve Base. The JTF HQ is moving forward to Haiti today.
- JTF-BRAVO's 8 helicopters are getting underway to Haiti later this morning.

Haiti Relief Operations

- The **USS Arlington** (LPD 24) will get underway today and has two (2) MH-60 helos; it also has:
 - A surgical team
 - An LCU - Landing Craft, Mechanized and Utility capability
- **USNS Burlington** has been providing **aerial footage** to assist w/ assessment
- **2x P-8's** (from VP-10 out of El Salvador) have also been providing **aerial coverage** to assist in assessments.
- The **assessment team on the ground** continues to **assess and report** to enable SOUTHCOM to work with USAID/BHA to best direct assistance

Haiti Relief Operations

- **2 USCG cutters** are on station in southern Haiti (with 7 USCG Cutters moving toward Haiti)
- **1 USCG Fixed Wing aircraft** is operating out of Guantanamo Bay
- **4 SOUTHCOM field hospitals** that were donated to Haiti will be set up in southern Haiti.
- The **U.S. military continues to provide unique air, medical, logistical and engineering capabilities** in support of the USAID/BHA-led assistance missions to save lives and alleviate human suffering in the critical early stages of a disaster relief operation

FEMA / Medical assistance teams

- In response to the latest surge in coronavirus cases, the **Department is identifying medical assistance teams for future FEMA support.**
- At the **request of FEMA**, the Department will **provide a medical assistance team to a hospital in Lafayette, Louisiana.**
- The teams will be comprised of **about 20 medical personnel, including doctors, nurses and respiratory therapists.**
- **Additional teams will be available to deploy if requested** by FEMA.
- DoD continues to work closely with the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Health and Human Services to provide defense support in addressing the coronavirus pandemic.

EXERCISES

Exercises

Name	CCMD	Dates
Pacific Forager 21	INDOPACOM	11 July – 6 Aug
Defender Pacific	INDOPACOM	11 July – 15 Aug
Dalan Ba Dame 21	INDOPACOM	26 July – 6 Aug
Task Force Koa Mona 21	INDOPACOM	July – Dec 2021
Pacific Partnerships 21	INDOPACOM	26 July - Aug
Tamiok Strike 21	INDOPACOM	26 July – 6 Aug
Cutlass Express	AFRICOM	26 JUL-6 AUG
Agile Spirit	EUCOM	26 JUL-6 AUG
Garuda Shield 21	INDOPACOM	1-14 Aug
Cobra Gold 21	INDOPACOM	1-15 Aug
Palawan Warrior 21	INDOPACOM	2-15 Aug
Large Scale Global Ex 21	INDOPACOM	2-27 Aug
Koolendong 21	INDOPACOM	16-31 Aug
Operation Deep Freeze 21	INDOPACOM	1 Aug – 31 July 22

INDOPACOM Exercises

Pacific Forager (Oceania) July 11 – August 6

- U.S. Army Pacific's Forager 21 is the primary training exercise in support of Defender Pacific 21.
- Forager 21 is designed to test and refine the Theater Army ability to deploy land power forces to the Pacific, execute command and control, and effectively conduct multi-domain operations throughout Oceania.
- Approximately 4,000 U.S. personnel are directly participating in Forager 21. This exercise will consist of several major events, to include: an 82nd Airborne operation, a bilateral airborne operation with the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and 1st Special Forces Group, an AH-64 live fire exercise, multi-domain operations including movements of Strykers, Avengers, and High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, and modernization efforts in the space and cyber domains.

INDOPACOM Exercises

Defender Pacific 21 (Regional) 11 July – 15 August

- Defender Pacific 21 is an overarching U.S. Army Pacific exercise that demonstrates USARPAC's ability to command and control strategic deployment and joint operational maneuver of forces into and across the Indo-Pacific Theater. Defender Pacific enhances our ability to dynamically employ forces to address the full range of security concerns in support of our regional alliances and international agreements.
- Unless approved by USARPAC PAO, the numerous bilateral and multilateral exercises occurring roughly the same time as DP21 will NOT be publicly associated with DP21 but will be publicly communicated IAW long-standing practices for each bilateral and multilateral exercise; each with its own public communication guidance.

INDOPACOM Exercises

Dalan Ba Dame (Timor Leste) 26 July – 6 August

- Soldiers from the U.S. and the Forças de Defesa de Timor Leste (F-FDTL) will participate in DbD 21 from July 26th thru August 6th, 2021, at the F-FDTL Land Component Base in Baucau, TLS
- This U.S. Army Pacific-sponsored exercise, which involves approximately 70 U.S. and 150 F-FDTL Soldiers, will enhance combined interoperability capabilities through training and cultural exchange.
- This exercise continues to solidify the U.S. and F-FDTL partnership and advances security cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- Training commences with subject matter expert exchanges and professional development workshops that focus on basic infantry skills; security operations such as traffic control points and detainee handling training at the company level and below.

INDOPACOM Exercises

Task Force Koa Moana (Palau) July-December 2021

- Task Force Koa Moana 21, comprised of U.S. Marines and Sailors from I Marine Expeditionary Force, partnered with the U.S. Coast Guard, is deploying to the Indo-Pacific to conduct theater security cooperation activities in the Republic of Palau from July to December 2021.
- Task Force Koa Moana 21 is comprised of approximately 200 U.S. Marines and Sailors from, and Coast Guardsmen from Coast Guard District 14, who will task-organize into multiple detachments with expertise in providing engineering, medical, maritime law enforcement, and EOD capabilities.
- Koa Moana, which means “Ocean Warrior,” is designed to strengthen and enhance relationships between the U.S. and partner nations in the Indo-Pacific region and improve interoperability with local security establishments.

INDOPACOM Exercises

Pacific Partnership 21 (Philippines & Palau) 26 July – August 2021

- The expeditionary fast transport ship USNS City of Bismarck (T-EPF-9) will serve as the mission platform for PP21.
- Pacific Partnership brings nations together to prepare during calm periods to effectively respond in times of crisis, throughout the Indo-Pacific.
- Led by the U.S. Navy, at the invitation of host nations, Pacific Partnership military and civilian organizations work collectively to conduct tailored medical, dental, veterinary, engineering civic action projects and subject matter expert exchanges that strengthen partnerships and ensure the international community is better prepared to synchronize and function together when executing effective disaster response in the aftermath of a disaster emergency.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our mission stops transitioned into virtual subject matter exchanges with host nations.

INDOPACOM Exercises

Tamiok Strike (Papua New Guinea) 26 July – 6 August

- Soldiers from U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) and the Papua New Guinea Defense Force (PNGDF) will participate at Goldie River Training Depot, Port Moresby, and Igam Barracks, Lae.
- This USARPAC-sponsored exercise, which involves approximately 130 U.S. and 150 PNGDF participants, aims to enhance combined interoperability capabilities through training and cultural exchange. This exercise continues to solidify the U.S. and PNGDF partnership and advances security cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- Training commences with expert academic exchanges and professional development workshops that focus on tactical Infantry and Engineer training at the company level and below.

AGILE SPIRIT

- Agile Spirit 2021 is a **Georgian Defense Forces and U.S. Army Europe and Africa cooperatively-led, joint multinational exercise** occurring **July 26 through Aug 6.**
- The joint training promotes ***“Strength through Partnership.”***
- Agile Spirit 2021 **enhances** U.S., Georgian, allied and regional partner forces’ **readiness and interoperability** in a realistic training environment.
- The **brigade-level exercise** will incorporate a simulated command post exercise, field training, and joint multinational, battalion-level combined arms live-fire exercises.
- This is the **10th Agile Spirit exercise.**

AGILE SPIRIT

- Two major objectives have stayed consistent throughout each iteration - increasing interoperability among participating nation militaries and strengthening regional security cooperation.
- Approximately 2,500 military personnel - 700 US service members - from 15 allied and partner forces will participate from the following nations: Georgia (host nation), Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Italy, and Azerbaijan.

Exercise CUTLESS EXPRESS

USAFRICOM's multi-national maritime exercise **CUTLESS EXPRESS 2021** **commenced July 26 and will run until Aug. 6.**

Now in it's 20th year, CUTLESS EXPRESS is led by **U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/US Sixth Fleet.**

CUTLESS EXPRESS is being conducted in the vicinity of Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, and Seychelles (say-shells).

In addition to the US, thirteen nations are scheduled to participate in CUTLESS EXPRESS

Exercise CUTLESS EXPRESS

Q. What countries are participating in CUTLESS EXPRESS?

A. Comoros (komo-ross), Djibouti, Georgia, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, the U.S. and U.K.

Q. What is the purpose of CUTLESS EXPRESS?

A. US forces work alongside other participating nations to improve combined maritime law enforcement capacity, promote national and regional security in East Africa, and increase interoperability between US, African, and multi-national partners.

Exercise CUTLESS EXPRESS

Q. Is CUTLESS EXPRESS conducted as a result of recent events?

A. The US routinely exercises with our partners in Africa to build enduring relationships and combined capacity to ensure the safety and security of the maritime environment.

INDOPACOM Exercises

Garuda Shield (Indonesia) 1-14 August

- This U.S. Army Pacific-sponsored exercise, which involves approximately 1,000 U.S. and 850 Indonesian Army Soldiers, enhances combined interoperability capabilities through training and cultural exchange.
- This exercise continues to solidify the U.S.-Indonesia Major Defense Partnership and advances cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- Training commences with expert academic exchanges and professional development workshops that focus on training at the corps-level and below; combat against conventional, unconventional and hybrid threats; and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.
- The command post exercise (CPX) will focus on U.N. peacekeeping operation staff tasks in a combined military setting. A field training exercise (FTX) will involve company-strength elements from each nation exercising combined, fundamental war-fighting skills to enhance interoperability and combined operational capacity.

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INDOPACOM Exercises

Cobra Gold 21 (Thailand) 1-15 August

- Cobra Gold (CG) is a Thailand and United States co-sponsored Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) and Joint Theater Security Cooperation (JTSC) exercise, annually conducted in the Kingdom of Thailand.
- Cobra Gold is an important element of the United States and participating nations' regional military to military (mil-to-mil) engagement efforts to maintain readiness and increase the capability, capacity and interoperability of partnered nations while simultaneously reinforcing our commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- *Cobra Gold is expected to be significantly reduced this year due to COVID.*

INDOPACOM Exercises

Palawan Warrior (Brunei) 2-15 August

- Palawan Warrior 21 is a bilateral military-to-military staff exercise between the U.S. Army and Brunei.
- *To minimize the impacts of COVID-19, Palawan Warrior will be conducted virtually this year.*

INDOPACOM Exercises

Large Scale Global Exercise (Regional) 2-27 August

- LSGE21 is a DOD exercise sponsored by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and includes partners and allies from U.K., Australia, and Japan.
- Throughout numerous locations, the exercise will include a field training exercise, logistical support activities, amphibious landings, land force maneuvers, urban operations, air and maritime operations, and special operations activities for mutual training with allies and partners.
- The U.S. is committed to working with our unmatched network of alliances and partnerships in this complex operating environment to ensure regional stability, strengthen a rules-based order, and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- *The first iteration is not “global” – it is a regionally focused pilot exercise that supports future plans to expand the exercise globally.*

INDOPACOM Exercises

Koolendong 21 (Australia) 16-31 August

- U.S. Marines with Marine Rotational Force – Darwin (MRF-D) and the Australian Defence Force will conduct Exercise Koolendong 2021 in Northern Territory training areas Aug. 16-31, 2021.
- Koolendong is a planning and field training exercise that integrates Australian Defence Force elements into the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, increasing the capacity to mutually support one another during combined operations.
- Activities that will occur during the exercise include live-fire ground maneuvers, aerial insertion of forces, artillery and close air support and the firing of the high-mobility artillery rocket system.

INDOPACOM Exercises

- **Operation Deep Freeze (Antarctica) 1 August 21 – 31 July 22**
- Operation Deep Freeze is a joint service, inter-agency support for the National Science Foundation, which manages the United States Antarctic Program. Joint Task Force-Support Forces Antarctica, provides Department of Defense support to the NSF and the USAP through ODF.
- Joint Task Force-Support Forces Antarctica (Pacific Air Forces) coordinates strategic inter-theater airlift, tactical deep field support, aeromedical evacuation support, search and rescue response, sealift, seaport access, bulk fuel supply logistics, port cargo handling, and transportation requirements for the NSF mission.
- Other participants = C-17 Globemaster III, LC-130 Hercules, a Military Sealift Command tanker, a Military Sealift Command-chartered container ship, a U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker, and U.S. Navy Cargo Handling, Battalion One.

AFRICOM Exercises

- **Flintlock (February)** is an annual, African-led, integrated military and law enforcement exercise that has strengthened key partner-nation forces throughout North and West Africa as well as Western Special Operations Forces since 2005. The exercise advances interoperability between participating nations and strengthens the ability of key partner nations in the region to counter violent extremist organizations, protect their borders and provide security for their people.
- **Obangame Express (March)** is an annual, multinational, at-sea exercise designed to improve regional cooperation and increase maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea and West Africa. It focuses on Maritime interdiction operations, as well as visit, board, search and seizure techniques.

AFRICOM Exercises

- **Phoenix Express (May)** is an annual, large-scale, multinational maritime exercise designed to improve regional cooperation, maritime domain awareness, information-sharing practices and operational capabilities in order to enhance efforts to promote safety and security in the Mediterranean Sea and territorial waters of participating North African nations.
- **African Lion (June)** is an annual large-scale, multinational, all-domain exercise spearheaded by the U.S. Army Africa to improve interoperability and mutual understanding of partner-nation tactics, techniques and procedures.

AFRICOM Exercises

- **Cutlass Express (July/August)** is an annual, large-scale, multinational maritime exercise designed to assess and improve combined maritime law enforcement capacity and promote national and regional security in East Africa and to increase interoperability between the U.S., African and international partners.
- **Justified Accord (August)** is an annual, multinational, all-domain military exercise focusing on African partner capability and interoperability in support of the United Nations and Africa Union Peace Keeping Operations (PKO). The exercise seeks to assess participant abilities in conducting PKO and to enhance positive bilateral and regional relationships in austere environments with coalition partners.

BACKUP

COVID Cases Data

- As of **13 August**:
- Total DoD cumulative cases: **329,541**
- Total DoD deaths: **401**
- Includes Military, Civilians, Dependents and Contractors

COVID Vaccine Data

- As of **17 August**:

We continue our push to get shots in arms:

- Doses **Delivered** to Sites: **4,219,610**
- Doses **Administered**: **4,753,002**

Vaccinated:

USA:	Partial	174,385	Full	387,250
USMC:	Partial	15,908	Full	111,750
USN:	Partial	22,752	Full	288,149
USAF:	Partial	31,744	Full	288,228
TOTAL:	Partial	244,789	Full	1,075,377
DOD Civ:	Partial	46,221	Full	301,462

Active Duty personnel with at least one dose administered: **75.29%**

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

ADVICE AND COUNSEL

Q. Why release this memo now? Did the White House force you to do this?

- After consultation with medical professionals, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and senior leaders of the Department, Secretary Austin determined that mandatory vaccination was the most effective way to address the increased threat to the force posed by the surge we are seeing in COVID-19 cases due to the lethality and the highly transmissible nature of the Delta variant.

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

Q. Why are you not mandating vaccination immediately? Won't more military personnel become sick or die because of this delay?

- Given the size, scale and geographic dispersal of the Department of Defense's workforce, it was determined that the Services and Combatant Commands would need time to develop an implementation plan that would be most feasible for fully vaccinating their personnel.

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

Q. Does Secretary Austin's direction to the Services apply to all Service members?

- Yes, **all members of the Active and Reserve Components**, including the National Guard, **will be required** to get the COVID-19 vaccine along with the list of other vaccines they are already required to receive as part of their individual medical readiness requirements.

Q. What if a Service member has religious objections to the vaccine or has a health condition that would make vaccination inadvisable?

- A Service member may be exempt from the vaccination requirement for reasons of **religious accommodation** or if the Service member has a **health issue** for which vaccination is contraindicated, as determined by a DoD physician.

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

Q. Why are you doing this before the COVID-19 vaccine is fully authorized?

- As the President noted in his remarks on July 29, the facts on the ground have changed. The Delta variant is spreading rapidly across the United States, putting our Service members and our readiness at greater risk. It's imperative that we vaccinate our force to mitigate these impacts. Vaccination is the best way to protect our force against COVID-19.

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

IMPLEMENTATION

Q. What is the process to implement the Secretary's directive? How are you preparing for the transition to mandatory vaccination?

- The Department and the Services are **currently updating their vaccination policy and execution plans** for when any of the vaccines are required. The Department requires many vaccines for its Service members and execute these events frequently, so the Services will be able to quickly put shots in arms when any of the vaccines are required.

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

Q. What other COVID-19 precautions are in place, i.e. mask mandates, travel restrictions? How do these procedures change for unvaccinated personnel? If vaccination is so important, why aren't you apply increased restrictions to unvaccinated troops?

- DoD currently **requires social distancing and masking indoors for all individuals**, regardless of vaccination status or the level of community spread. Unvaccinated individuals are also subject to restrictions on travel. The Department is also working to implement the new federal guidance issued on July 29th that will require all DoD personnel attest to their vaccination status. Unvaccinated individuals will need to be tested 1-2 times per week.

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

AUTHORITIES

Q. What authorities does the President have to grant approval of a vaccine?

- The authority of the Government (President, Secretary of Defense, Military Department Secretaries, commanders) to ensure the health and readiness of Service members is **inherent in command**. Such authority includes the power to order Service members to **receive necessary medical care**, including vaccinations, consistent with applicable law. This question may go to the authority of the President to exercise the authority to waive compliance with the requirement members of the armed forces be informed of an option to refuse administration of an emergency use authorized product, which in turn enables the Secretary to use his existing authority to order Service members to take vaccines that have only an Emergency Use Authorization from the FDA.

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

Q. What happens if a Service member refuses to get the vaccine?

- Required vaccinations are nothing new to the U.S. military. As Secretary Austin said, “we are confident the men and women of our military – even the ones who have been hesitant – will comply with this requirement, just as they do when given any other mission-essential order.”
- That said, should a member of the military decline to accept it, we will make available to him/her a full range of resources – to include individual and professional medical advice – to demonstrate the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine. We want our people to be fully informed about any medical procedure, this one included.

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

- If counseling and informal efforts fail to convince, a member's chain of command could, as a last resort, take appropriate administrative or appropriate disciplinary action commensurate to the alleged offense. But again, we view it as highly unlikely that commanders will find it necessary to take action under the UCMJ. They have a range of other tools available to them and will ultimately make judgments based on the circumstances of each case in consultation with legal and medical professionals.

Mandatory Vaccination Guidance

EXEMPTION FOR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

- Requests for religious exemption **must comply with the provisions of the applicable policy and/or regulation** for the Service member requesting religious accommodation.
- Requests for the accommodation of religious practices **will be reviewed and acted on as soon as practicable.**
- Individuals will **be counseled on noncompliance** with immunization requirements **may adversely impact deployability, assignment, or international travel.**
- Religious exemptions may be revoked, in accordance with Service-specific policies and procedures, if the individual and/or unit are at imminent risk of exposure to a disease for which an immunization is available.

No First Use Policy

- President Biden's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance directed the U.S. Government to take steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy while ensuring our strategic deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective. We are committed to consulting with allies throughout the Nuclear Posture Review, and our extended deterrence commitments to our allies remain strong and credible.
- Not going to get ahead of the Nuclear Posture Review process.

No First Use Policy

[In response to qualitative proliferation with China]:

- These decisions will be informed by the threat environment as China increases the number and types of its nuclear weapons and Russian increases the role of nuclear weapons in their national security strategy.

SW Border CANX Cost

Q. How much has the DoD had to pay in cancellation costs?

- The Department will not comment publicly on matters that are in active litigation or settlement discussions.

SWB mission extension

- Secretary Austin recently approved a request from the DHS to extend DoD support to Customs and Border Protection into fiscal year 2022.
- The Department will provide **up to 3K personnel** to support DHS through the end of September, 2022. (Down from 4,000)
- The **majority of these will be federalized National Guard personnel** under the control of USNORTHCOM. Support coming from across the nation – **23 states in all**.
- These personnel **will assist DHS/CBP** in identifying, monitoring, and analyzing patterns of unauthorized entry into the United States undetected, which includes migrants infected with COVID-19.

SWB mission extension

- **No DoD personnel will be involved in the physical interdiction** of the undocumented non-U.S. citizens.
- The total cost of this mission is expected to be **approximately \$500M** in FY22.

Border Wall Make Safe Activities

- **Background:** as early as Tuesday, Aug. 3, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to announce the start of safety work at nine former DOD-funded border wall construction sites in Arizona, California and Texas. Will not involve expanding the border barrier.
- **The project sites beginning work on Aug. 3 are:** El Paso 5, Tucson 1, Tucson 2, Tucson 3, Tucson 9, Tucson 10/28, El Centro 1, Yuma 1 and Yuma 8/23.
- **After the start of these nine project sites this week, there will be 11 sites remaining** – 9 project sites are slated to begin work next week at Del Rio 7, Del Rio 14, El Paso 1, El Paso 2-2, El Paso 2-3, El Paso 6-6, El Paso 8, El Paso 11/16 and Yuma 6. Two sites, San Diego 15 and El Centro 2, are TBD due to tribal and DOJ concerns. Another announcement is planned for next week, to cover the nine sites.

Border Wall Make Safe Activities

USACE Statement.

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Border District contractor crews will begin safety work this week at nine additional DoD-funded former wall construction sites in the U.S. Border Patrol's Yuma, El Centro, Tucson and El Paso sectors.
- **This work will not involve expanding the border barrier, and specific activities will include filling open trenches, cutting and capping conduit, making gate foundations safe, making maintenance roads safe, and grading around handholds and manholes.**
- These limited activities are **specific life and health safety measures consistent with the Administration's plans to terminate the redirection of Defense Department funds for a border wall.**

Border Wall Site Repairs

- **Background:** On Tuesday, July 27, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced the start of safety work at former DOD-funded border wall construction site (San Diego 4) in California, and at the former DOD-funded border wall construction site (Yuma 3) in Arizona.
- The work will not involve expanding the border barrier.
- Specific activities will include filling open trenches, cutting and capping conduit, making gate foundations safe, making maintenance roads safe, and grading around handholds and manholes.

Goals:

- Make clear there will be no wall expansion.
- Ensure relevant stakeholders are briefed.
- Get ahead of speculation.

Border Wall Site Repairs

USACE Statement.

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Border District contractor crews will **begin safety work on July 27** at the at the **San Diego 4 former wall construction site** in the **U.S. Border Patrol's San Diego sector**, and the **Yuma 3 former wall construction site** in the **U.S. Border Patrol's Yuma sector in Arizona**.
- This work **will not involve expanding the border barrier**, and specific **activities** will **include filling open trenches, cutting and capping conduit, making gate foundations safe, making maintenance roads safe, and grading around handholds and manholes**.
- These limited activities are **specific life and health safety measures** consistent with the Administration's plans to terminate the redirection of Defense Department funds for a border wall.

Border Wall Funding

- Department of Defense has developed a plan for redirecting funds and repurposing contracts as appropriate and consistent with applicable law.
- This plan returns \$2.2B in military construction funds to projects that support military personnel and their families in 11 states, 3 territories, and 16 countries.
- The decision to restore funding for well-designed and executable projects was based on operational and component priorities.

Border Wall Funding

- The Department's plan, consists of two parts – cancellation of projects and redirection of funds.
- Cancellation of projects
As announced on April 30, 2021, the Department of Defense has cancelled all border barrier construction projects paid for with funds originally appropriated for other military missions and functions.
- Redirection of funds:
Deputy Secretary Hicks has approved a plan to use the \$2.2 billion of unobligated military construction funds previously made available for border barrier construction to restore funding in FY 2021 for 66 projects in 11 States, 3 territories, and 16 countries.

Unaccompanied Minors

To date, DoD's support to the Department of Health and Human Services in their efforts to temporarily house unaccompanied children has been to provide land, buildings and limited contracting support at Fort Bliss and Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

- At **Fort Bliss**, my understanding is that HHS is temporarily housing roughly **2,130** unaccompanied minors there to date.
- HHS is no longer housing unaccompanied minors at **Lackland Air Force Base**.
- **HHS Lackland Ops Mission Complete:**
 - Operational Dates: April 17 to June 14, 2021; HHS closed out remediation of the site on July 16, 2021
 - Total UC Housed: 455
- I refer you to HHS for further details.

Unaccompanied Minors

- DoD provides the land and facilities to support HHS in this operation, as well as contracting support, if needed. **HHS will provide all care for the children, including supervision, meals, clothing, medical services, access to legal services, security, and other daily needs, as well as transportation.**
- DoD has provided such support to HHS under both of the most recent administrations, dating back as far as 2012, and most recently in February 2017.

Unaccompanied Minors

Approved Requests for Installation Use:

Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas

Fort Bliss, Texas

Camp Roberts, California

Previous assessment visits:

Fort Lee, VA (Mar 4)

Joint Base San Antonio, TX (Mar 17)

Fort Bliss, TX (Mar 23)

Peterson AFB, CO (Mar 24)

Camp Roberts (Mar 29)

Fort Benning (Mar 31)

NTC Great Lakes (April 7)

DoDEA Schools Mask Requirements

Masks Inside Schools:

- Individuals, **regardless of vaccination status**, must wear masks consistently while indoors **except**: (1) when an individual is **alone in an office with floor-to-ceiling walls and closed doors**; (2) for **brief periods of time when eating and drinking** while maintaining at least **six-feet distance** and in accordance with instructions from commanders and supervisors; (3) when the mask is required to be lowered briefly for **identification or security purposes**; and (4) when necessary **to reasonably accommodate an individual with a disability**.

Outdoors/Recess:

- In general, students and staff **do not need to wear masks when outdoors AND social distancing of six-feet can be maintained** (e.g., participating in outdoor play, recess, and physical education activities). **When** physical education activities or recess are **held indoors**, **masks must be worn at all times**, social distancing of six-feet must be maintained, and only low intensity activities should be conducted.

All COVID-19 related guidance for DoDEA schools can be found on their website at:

www.dodea.edu/covid-operations.cfm

Anomalous Health Incidents

- The Department is **heavily engaged** on this issue as a part of the **NSC-led interagency process** across the federal government.
- The Department is **fully committed** to **determining** both the **causes and source**.
- The **safety, health and welfare** of our personnel remains **a top priority** for the Department.
- DoD is **dedicated** to ensuring that affected members of our workforce who experience AHI **receive appropriate medical care** as quickly as possible.

Anomalous Health Incidents

Q. What is the Secretary doing to communicate with the DoD workforce?

- The Secretary is focused on **ensuring resources** are available to **support** and care for our personnel who have experienced anomalous health incidents.
- The Secretary is **committed to ensuring** that affected members of our workforce **receive appropriate medical** care as quickly as possible.

Anomalous Health Incidents

**Q. Are there any early indications?
Have additional force protection
measures been taken?**

- We **cannot discuss** specific force protection measures.
- The Department is **fully committed** to **determining** both the **causes and source**.
- DoD is **dedicated** to ensuring that affected members of our workforce who experience AHI **receive appropriate medical care** as quickly as possible.

Anomalous Health Incidents

Q. Are any DoD personnel included in the recent reporting of incidents in Vienna or Central Asia?

- For security reasons, I **cannot get into the details** of the investigation at this time.
- We are **aware of reports** of these incidents and are **investigating possible causes** with our interagency partners.
- The **safety, health and welfare** of our personnel remains **a top priority** for the Department.

Advisory Board ZBR

- The Secretary is considering the recommendations resulting from the review, but we have nothing to announce at this time.
- The Zero Base Review (ZBR) Board has concluded its review, and DA&M is finalizing recommendations on each advisory committee for consideration by the SECDEF and DEPSECDEF.
- Key stakeholders within the Department are reviewing and providing additional comments on the ZBR Board's findings and proposed recommendations.
- The Department reviewed all committees to focus committee efforts on our most pressing strategic priorities and the National Defense Strategy.

CMMC Assessment

- The Department regularly conducts internal programmatic assessments to ensure our programs are meeting their goals.
- The CMMC program was designed with scalable implementation in mind, and we regularly identify opportunities to improve the program.
- DoD recognizes and understands the concerns of small business and fully anticipates that the majority of small businesses will only need to obtain CMMC Level 1 certification.
- During our internal review, DoD will look for ways to reduce the costs to small businesses while keeping the integrity of the cybersecurity requirements.

CMMC Assessment

- The goal is for CMMC to be cost-effective and affordable for small businesses to implement.
- The theft of intellectual property and sensitive information from all U.S. industrial sectors due to malicious cyber activity threatens both economic and national security.

F-35 Schedule

- The **F-35 joint program office continues to work on a revised acquisition program baseline**, or APB, for submission to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment.
- As you know, the independent technical assessment of the Joint Simulation Environment completed in May and those results are informing the JPO's proposed revision to the APB.
- **Updated timelines and threshold dates will be official when the APB is approved and finalized by the USD(A&S).**

F-35 Schedule

Q. What is the status of DoD's renew of a new test schedule for the world's most expensive weapons program? A new schedule was to be presented by the program office to OSD this month. When will that happen and meeting take place?

- Updated timelines and threshold dates will be official when the acquisition program baseline is approved and finalized by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment.

Juniper NetScreen

Q. Does DoD have any comment on reports that the NSA was involved in recommending that Juniper Networks install backdoors into their Netscreen products in the 2006-2008 timeframe, as a way to monitor systems, potentially American's, and the backdoors were then exploited by Chinese malicious actors in 2015?

You will need to **contact the NSA** on this but I can say that in light of increasingly frequent and complex cyber intrusion efforts by adversaries and non-state actors, the **Department is constantly applying mitigations, improving defenses, and closing vulnerabilities in our global information network.** The Department **remains deeply committed to improving our cybersecurity posture** to ensure our robust systems are available for national defense at all times.

Juniper NetScreen

Q. U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore, and others, are trying to reform NSA surveillance and protect Americans' privacy rights, what is the DoD/NSA policy on privacy for Americans?

- **Intelligence agencies are required by law to protect the freedoms, civil liberties, and privacy rights of Americans** while accomplishing important national security missions. **Compliance and adherence to law is in the very foundation of intelligence practices for the US and our allies.** For any further specifics, I'd ask you to follow up with the IC/NSA.

NSA Cloud Computing Contract

Q. Did Microsoft protest the award of a cloud computing contract by NSA to Amazon?

- **NSA recently awarded a contract for cloud computing services** to support the Agency.
- The **unsuccessful offeror (Microsoft) has filed a protest** with the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The Agency **will respond to the protest in accordance with appropriate federal regulations.**
- Please **contact NSA** for additional information.

BadAlloc Cyber Vulnerability

EXSUM: BlackBerry Limited publicly disclosed Aug. 17 that its QNX Real Time Operating System (RTOS) **contains the BadAlloc vulnerability**, affecting a wide range of products whose compromise could result in a malicious actor performing a denial of service or executing arbitrary code leading to increased risk to the Nation's critical functions and systems that support life, health, or safety.

Q. Does DoD have any comment on this report?

- **DoD will continue to work with the DHS' Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency** as we learn more about this potential vulnerability. **As of Aug. 17, 2021, CISA was not aware of any exploitation of this vulnerability.**

BadAlloc Cyber Vulnerability

Q. Has DOD informed their industry partners of this vulnerability?

- **The DoD Cyber Crime Center (DC3) has issued an Alert to the Defense Industrial Base companies participating in DoD's Defense Industrial Base Cybersecurity program.** It is important that **any devices using a vulnerable version of the operating system should be patched as quickly as possible** to avoid exploitation.

Countries

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AFRICOM

Manda Bay Update

- We are aware of the request from the Subcommittee on National Security for information pertaining to the USAFRICOM Manda Bay AR 15-6 investigation of the Jan 5, 2020 attack.
- To protect the integrity of the SECDEF directed independent review of USAFRICOM's AR 15-6 investigation, we will not make any public announcements or release any findings until this review is complete.
- We will provide updates to the family members impacted by this tragic attack and will ensure that Congress is appropriately informed when the review is complete.

Manda Bay Update

- This independent review will provide added insight, perspective, and the ability to assess the totality of this tragic event involving multiple Military Services and Department of Defense (DoD) components.
- It is the Secretary's desire to ensure there is a full examination and consideration of the contributing factors that led to this attack and that appropriate action is taken to reduce the risk of future occurrence. The families impacted deserve nothing less.
- The review is welcomed by USAFRICOM as work continues within the USAFRICOM area of responsibility to improve security and implement lessons learned from this attack.

Manda Bay Update

Q. Why hasn't DoD shared info with Congress?

- Congress has been kept informed. On at least four occasions, members, including key leaders of our oversight committees have been briefed by the DoD on the progress of the investigation.
- Specifically, in April 2021, Gen. Townsend, as part of his House Armed Services testimony, provided an update to the HASC. He essentially informed them that AFRICOM concluded its investigation in Dec. 2020. However, with the change of SECDEF late during the last Administration, followed by a change in Administration, Secretary Austin wanted to make sure an independent review was conducted before making any decisions. We will continue to keep all parties informed as appropriate.

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Manda Bay Update

Q. Was the USAFRICOM investigation flawed?

- It is the SECDEF's desire to ensure that **there is a full examination and consideration of the contributing factors** that led to this attack and that appropriate action is taken to reduce the risk of future occurrence. **The families impacted deserve nothing less.**
- What is the timeline expected for Gen. Funk?
- Gen. Funk will take the time **he deems appropriate** to complete the tasks assigned to him.

Manda Bay Update

(BACKGROUND)

SECDEF completed an initial review of USAFRICOM's AR 15-6 investigation into the January 5, 2020, al-Shabaab attack on Cooperative Security Location Manda Bay, Kenya.

SECDEF directed the Acting Secretary of the Army to appoint a four-star general officer **to conduct an independent review** of the USAFRICOM AR 15-6 investigation.

The Acting Secretary of the Army appointed U.S. Army **General Paul Funk**, the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (**TRADOC**) to conduct the review

Sahel: Counterterrorism

- DoD's strategic objectives in Africa focus on protecting the homeland and U.S. personnel, countering malign influences that seek to further destabilize the continent, and responding to regional crises.
- DoD supports the militaries of our African & European partners supporting them in their fight against VEOs through security cooperation, intel sharing, & capacity building efforts.
- We also work closely with international partners to coordinate security and civilian protection efforts, including MINUSMA, France's Operation Barkhane, G5 Sahel, and bilateral security forces.

Sahel: Counterterrorism

- We recognize that security is only achievable through a holistic approach that balances military, development, and diplomatic solutions.

(b) (5)

Q. Is the New Administration going to change the US posture and support in the Sahel?

- The DoD is undergoing a Global Force Posture Review that will include a review of U.S. posture in Africa.
- The review is in the early stages as our senior leadership gets onboard in the Department.
- It's important that we don't get ahead of the process and maintain decision space for our leaders.

(b) (5)

Somalia Site Survey

Q1. Are troops back in the region?

A1. The Department is reviewing our U.S. objectives in Somalia and whether the repositioning of U.S. personnel and assets in neighboring countries is the most appropriate course of action to meet our objectives.

We acknowledge that the military tool alone will not stabilize the region. DoD activities must be nested within a U.S. Government strategy to advance development, health security, environmental sustainability, democratic progress, and rule of law in Somalia.

Somalia Policy

- While U.S. force posture changed, U.S. policy did not and our counterterrorism operation against threats have continued.
- A partner-centric strategy has always been a core component to the U.S. mission. We will continue helping our partners strengthen defensive capabilities to counter shared threats IOT create opportunities for political & economic development. The military alone is not the solution.
- The DoD routinely reviews its military presence globally to ensure alignment with stated priorities, and is undertaking this effort through a President-directed Global Posture Review.

Somalia Policy

Q. Are troops back in the region?

A. The Department is reviewing our U.S. objectives in Somalia and whether the repositioning of U.S. personnel and assets in neighboring countries is the most appropriate course of action to meet our objectives. We acknowledge that the military tool alone will not stabilize the region. DoD activities must be nested within a U.S. Government strategy to advance development, health security, environmental sustainability, democratic progress, and rule of law in Somalia.

Somalia Policy

Q. What are the monetary cost of conducting a periodic engagement versus the previous year-round presence in Somalia?

A. While the monetary costs of periodic engagements in Somalia vary, it is too soon to truly and accurately assess the cost differences between periodic engagement we are doing now versus vice the previous force posture in Somalia.

Somalia Strike Policy

The Department's policy and activities in Somalia **remain integrated into the diplomatic and development efforts** to support the advancement of the Somali people's peace and security as well as to continue to counter al-Shabaab and ISIS.

DOD **remains committed** to providing critical support to our Somali partners, U.S. departments and agencies in Somalia, and our international and regional partners in the Horn of Africa.

We also remain focused on **disrupting threats to the United States through a variety of tools, including, but not limited to, military actions.**

Somalia Strike Policy

Q. Since there has been a reduction in strikes, does that mean a change in strike policy?

A. Strikes against violent extremist organizations like al-Shabaab or ISIS are **just one type of military operation**, but a reduction in those strikes does not reflect a change of U.S. policy in Somalia.

(b) (5)

Airstrikes in Somalia

In coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia, USAFRICOM conducted an airstrike against al-Shabaab in the vicinity of Qeucad, Somalia, on Aug. 1.

The strikes were taken to defend Somali partner forces who had come under attack in the course of an operation against al-Shabaab.

U.S. forces were advising and assisting designated Somali partner forces remotely in their operations against al-Shabaab.

The command's initial assessment is that no civilians were injured or killed as a result of these strikes.

Airstrikes in Somalia

Q. What authority was used in the this airstrike in addition to the ones on July 20 in vicinity Galkaya and July 23 in vicinity Galmudug?

A. These operations were conducted under the authority of the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force and a delegation of authority to Commander, U.S. Africa Command, to use necessary force to defend designated partner forces from attack or threat of imminent attack. This strike was conducted with the consent of the Federal Government of Somalia.

CENTCOM

Afghanistan Withdrawal

- Committed to supporting ANDSF well into the future.
 - President Biden is asking for \$3.3 billion in his budget for the support of the Afghan security forces.
- Main Effort is safe & deliberate retrograde.
- The President made clear: After 20 years at war, it's time for American troops to come home.
- As the President said - The status quo is not an option.
- The Afghan government and the ANSDF have the training, equipment, and numbers to prevail.

Afghanistan Withdrawal

DoD Assistance to ANDSF since April Drawdown Announcement

- DoD continues to fund a 300,000 person ANDSF.
- DoD continues maintenance support to ANDSF equipment both in-country and outside Afghanistan.
- Will provide another 37 UH-60 helicopters, 3 A-29 strike aircraft, and 15 MD-530 helicopters.
- DoD delivered seven UH-60 helicopters in the last 30 days (3 in June, 4 in August). DoD will manage the overhaul of 21 Mi-17s in the Afghan inventory that are currently not flyable.
- The US manages the the NATO ANA Trust Fund which has over 270 active projects in support of the ANDSF.

Afghanistan Withdrawal

DoD Assistance Since 2005 (ASFF Established)

- The DoD-managed ASFF has appropriated more than \$84.3 billion ANDSF since 2005.
 - \$9.2B-- **training** in support of improving their operational capacity.
 - \$18.56B-- **equipment** for ANDSF forces
- ASFF and international community have funded a force of over 350K ANDSF
- Purchased over 100K vehicles, 400K weapons and more than 221 aircraft.
- Since 2002, the US has contributed over \$1.6 billion to the UN Development Program's Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA) to pay Afghan National Police salaries.

Afghanistan Withdrawal

SIV / OPA ALLIES REFUGEE

- Fort Lee is prepared to support up to 3,500 SIV applicants as required.
- We will continue to support the State Department led efforts.
- NSC: Committed to supporting those who have helped U.S. military... often at great personal risk to themselves & their families.

RFA OVERVIEW

- Ft Lee: NORTHCOM Lead for DoD
- Funding: *"State will work w/ OMB & all applicable Depts. / Agencies to identify other appropriate authorities & sources of funding from such Departments and Agencies."*
- CONUS: Up to 3,500 ~ DHS 'Parole Authority'
- OCONUS: Up to 20K
- DoD to Provide: Housing (Ind. & Family), Sustainment, Medical, Admin & Religious Space, Recreation, IT Access

Iran

- Iran remains a source of major instability who's **malign activities continue to threaten global commerce, violate human rights, and ignore regional sovereignty.**
- U.S. Policy is clear- **Iran should not be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon.** As you've heard from the President, diplomacy remains the first tool of choice in this endeavor.
- DoD will ensure our diplomats engage **from a position of strength and credibility.**

Iran

- **The United States does not seek war with Iran.**
- U.S. Posture in the region remains **defensive in nature.**
- The US will take all necessary measures to **protect and defend our forces, our allies and partners and our interests.**
- We call on Iran to take continued action to **de-escalate tensions in the region.** Iran needs to act like a normal country.

Iran

Q1. Any updates on the Iranian Ships that appear to be heading for Venezuela?

- As you heard from NORAD & NORTHCOM:
- Aware & Monitoring.
 - Makran ('staging' vessel)
 - Sahand (New Frigate)
 - Apparent cargo of 7x small boats
- Not commenting on intelligence matters
- POLICY: Delivery of such weapons would be a **provocative act**
 - Threat to U.S. & partners
 - U.S. reserves right to take appropriate measures to deter delivery / transit.

NOTE: Venezuela has a history of purchasing weapons from Iran

NOTE: 2020 seizure of Iranian fuel found to be in violation of U.S. sanctions

Iran

Q7. What is DoD's reaction to the apparent failed Iranian Satellite launch?

- Aware ~ Another failure.

APR 2020:

- Successfully placed a simple microsatellite (NOUR-1) into orbit... *BUT*
 - Assessed as uncontrolled & not operational.
 - U.S. Space Command continues to track
- Refer to U.S. Space Command for more.

Iran's Space Program vs. Missile Program

- DOD has and will continue to **closely monitor** Iran's pursuit of viable space launch technology and how it may relate to advancements in its ballistic missile program.
- Iran's ballistic missile program **remains a regional threat** to U.S. interests and those of our allies and partners. We remain **confident in our ability to deter or defend** against threats posed by Iran and its proxies."

Iran

Q1a. What is DoD's reaction to election of Ebrahim Raisi as Iran's next President?

- Aware
- Validity of Elections in doubt:
 - Iranians denied right to choose
 - NOT a free and fair electoral process
- U.S. Policy in the region remains focused on safeguarding and advancing U.S. interests, regardless of who is in power.

Q1b. Are you concerned this will result in increased provocation in the region?

- Confidence in forces
- Commander's exercise continual assessments & adjustments as necessary
- No one wants to see provocation / escalation

Iran-backed Militia Attacks in Iraq

- U.S. and Coalition military trainers and advisors are in Iraq at the invitation of the Iraqi government to support its fight against ISIS and for no other reason.
- These militia groups that are backed and armed by Iran are an equal threat to Iraqi civilians, responsible for threatening and assassinating Iraq protestors and activists.
- We fully support the ongoing efforts of the Iraqi government under the leadership of Prime Minister Kadhimi to restore the rule of law and hold outlaw groups to account.

Iran-backed Militia Attacks in Iraq

- **Are you going to do anything about these attacks?**
- We will not discuss internal deliberations. President Biden has demonstrated that he will act to protect our people.
- **Are these attacks by Iran? By Iraqi militias? Both?**
- We consider attacks by armed groups with Iranian-supplied weapons to be attacks by Iran itself and reserve the right to respond in self-defense.

Iraq

- The **current troop level is 2,500** troops in Iraq. We remain committed to supporting Iraq's long-term security, stability, and prosperity. Our **mission** in Iraq is to **ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS**.
- The Iraqi people desire a **secure, stable and prosperous Iraq**, able to defend itself against violent extremist groups and against those who would undermine Iraq's security.
- We **share the Iraqi goal** of having its Security Forces capable of defending Iraq's own sovereignty and of denying terrorist groups the use of Iraq as a base for operations. The Coalition **continues to support partner forces** in Iraq and Syria with high-level advising, air support, provision of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, and conditions-based equipment divestments.

Iraq

Q. Iraqi Security officials and local populations say that the Iran-backed militias have become emboldened by the U.S. troop reduction and expect them to entrench in areas they've controlled since ISIS was driven out. They say that not only ISIS but the Iran-backed groups stand to gain from the gap left by departing US forces. What is the Pentagon's strategy to deal with Iraqi-armed groups backed by Iran? And what is your comment about violence levels?

- The new administration will want to better understand the status of operations and the resources being applied to those missions.
- Nothing has changed about our desire to defend the American people from the threat of terrorism, while also making sure we are appropriately resourcing our strategy.

Iraq

- Our ongoing mission in Iraq is to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS, and the Defense Department remains committed to supporting Iraq's long-term security and stability.
- The ISIS suicide bombings in Baghdad last month were a reminder that although ISIS no longer holds territory, they are still able to carry out violence. Last week, U.S. and Iraqi forces conducted a partnered air strike that killed the most senior ISIS leader in Iraq. This successful strike is yet another significant blow to ISIS resurgence efforts in Iraq.

Iraq - Rocket Attack

- Initial report: At 1335 local time, Ain Al-Asad Air Base (AAAB) was attacked by one rocket round. No injuries were reported. Damage is being assessed.
- The attack is under investigation. For more information, please contact the Iraq Security Media Cell and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense Spokesperson.
- Each attack against the Government of Iraq, KRG and Coalition undermines the authority of Iraqi institutions, the rule of law and Iraqi national sovereignty.

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Israel

- The U.S. is **strongly committed to the defense of Israel**, and **supporting Israel's qualitative military edge** (QME).
- The U.S. and Israel **enjoy a strong and enduring mil-to-mil partnership** built on trust developed over decades of cooperation.
- The U.S. and Israel will **continue to consult and work together** to advance shared defense priorities and support mutual security interests.

Situation in Jerusalem, Israel

- The Department and the United States welcome the Israeli Cabinet's decision to agree to a ceasefire.
- Secretary Austin spoke with the Israeli Minister of Defense five times since May 12. His calls were among more than 60 from across the administration with senior leaders in Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and across the region.
- During their last call, Secretary Austin shared Minister Gantz's hope that there will be a complete restoration of calm.
- The Department supports Israel having the capabilities it needs to defend itself from rocket and missile attacks.

Situation in Jerusalem, Israel

- **Q: Is it true that the Administration has notified Congress re a \$735M arms sale to Israel? Would the Administration consider using this as leverage to press for a ceasefire?**
- I refer you to the State Department since they handle Arm Sales.

Saudi Arabia

- Saudi Arabia is a **pillar of the regional security** architecture, and a core stakeholder with respect to counterterrorism and combating Iran's destabilizing activities.
- Given the **shared threat** we face in the region, the DOD seeks to further cultivate strong partners to help **share the burden** for regional security and stability.
- We are **committed to assisting Saudi Arabia with defense of its borders** in light of emergent and credible threats.
- As our citizens expect that our partnership with Saudi Arabia **prioritize the rule of law and respect for human rights**, we will elevate the role of human rights for all people in the U.S.-Saudi defense relationship.

Saudi Arabia

- **Arms Sales**: It is **typical** at the beginning of any administration **to review pending arms sales to ensure they advance our objectives** and are consistent with U.S. policy.
- **U.S. Force Posture**: DoD continues to assess our posture in the Middle East to ensure balance among operational requirements, risk, readiness, and global commitments.
- Continue **conversations w/regional partners**, re: **capabilities required** to deter **Iran** and support regional stability, while also increasing the DOD's focus on **China** and **readiness**.

Saudi Arabia

Q. Many in the U.S. and throughout the world question why the U.S. continues to support the KSA. Why does DoD invest and support the Saudis and their military?

- KSA is a **key partner** in the ME, and an important pillar of the regional security architecture **(i.e. Iranian Deterrence)**.
- This **relationship will reflect and be respectful of the values and interests** the U.S. brings to that partnership.
- **Our citizens expect** that U.S. policy towards its strategic partnership with KSA **prioritizes the rule of law and respect for human rights**.

Saudi Arabia

Q. According to Gen McKenzie, the US is looking to expand its presence in Saudi Arabia. Is this true?

- We **continue to assess our posture** in the Middle East to ensure balance among operational requirements, risk, readiness, and global commitments.
- As Secretary Austin expressed in his SASC testimony, **DoD needs to match its resources to strategy.**
- This will involve **conversations with our regional partners, and a determination of what capabilities are required** to deter Iran and support regional stability, while also increasing the Department's focus on China and readiness.

Saudi Arabia

Q. Many say there were a lot of shady foreign military sales deals - with the Saudis and others in the region - pushed through at the end of the last administration. Are those deals going to be honored by the current Administration?

- The **Administration is examining** whether foreign military sales meet our objectives and policies.
- DoD is **not going to get ahead of the review process** or comment on hypotheticals.

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Saudi Arabia

Q. What is the United States doing about cross-border attacks against Saudi Arabia, as recently?

- The U.S. **strongly condemns** attacks against Saudi Arabia. As President Biden has made clear, **we remain committed to helping Saudi Arabia defend itself.**
- **Attacks violate international law & undermine efforts** to promote peace & stability.
- We will continue our **work together and look for better ways to defend** the Kingdom from external threats, while revitalizing diplomacy to end the Yemen conflict.

Saudi Arabia

Q. What is the U.S. Laydown in KSA?

- We have roughly 3,000 troops in Saudi Arabia, primarily at Prince Sultan Air Base plus a variety of advisors at other locations.
- The troops at PSAB provide mainly missile defense and an expeditionary aviation capability.
- The advisors advance bilateral security cooperation and assist our Saudi partners in developing the capability and capacity to defend the Kingdom.
- This mutually-beneficial relationship has been established for decades.

Syria

- There's been **no change** to the U.S. force level in Syria, about **900** troops.
- Our military mission in Syria is to enable the **enduring defeat of ISIS**. U.S. forces, along with Coalition partners, continue to **work by, with, and through local partner forces in northeast Syria and out of at-Tanf Garrison (ATG) in southeast Syria to maintain pressure on ISIS**. As part of the Defeat-ISIS effort, the **Syrian Democratic Forces**, with the support of U.S. forces, **secures critical petroleum infrastructure in northeast Syria to deny ISIS access to critical resources and revenue** that could be used to buy arms and conduct operations.

Syria

- The Coalition **continues to support partner forces** in Iraq and Syria with high-level advising, air support, provision of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, and conditions-based equipment divestments.
- We also **continue to maintain a counterterrorism platform** in Iraq and Syria. It is important to note that most operations are already being conducted by our Iraqi and SDF partners.

Syria

- **Q. Are American forces in Syria solely in country to secure the oil? Is the oil field mission in northeast Syria still happening?**
- About **900** U.S. service members serve in Syria, with numbers fluctuating daily due to operational requirements.
- **Our military mission in Syria is to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS. U.S. forces, along with Coalition partners, continue to work by, with, and through local partner forces in northeast Syria and out of at-Tanf Garrison (ATG) in southeast Syria to maintain pressure on ISIS. As part of the Defeat-ISIS effort, the **Syrian Democratic Forces**, with the support of U.S. forces, secures critical petroleum infrastructure in northeast Syria to deny ISIS access to critical resources and revenue that could be used to buy arms and conduct operations.**

Syria

Q. What is the Defense Department's position on private oil companies – like Delta Crescent Energy? Will DOD protect DCE's facilities?

- The Department does not have an affiliation with any private companies regarding the for-profit development of oil infrastructure in northeast Syria.
- DoD support to the private, for-profit exploitation of Syrian oil **has not been authorized.**
- Except where appropriate under certain existing authorizations to protect civilians, **DoD personnel or DoD contractors are not authorized to provide assistance to DCE or any other private company,** including its employees or agents, seeking to develop oil resources in northeast Syria.

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Syria

- **Q. Will the US take action if Russian and Iranian-supported militias engage the SDF?**
- **The United States maintains a force in the region that we believe is sufficient to deter actions by a range of potential actors.** Whether in Syria or elsewhere around the world, the operational security of our partner forces is critical to mission success.

Syria

- **Q. What is the DoD assessment of relationship with SDF and Kurds?**
- Department of Defense continues to work **by, with, and through** local partner forces in northeast Syria and Iraq in the campaign to defeat ISIS. **This partnership remains essential.**
- There's been **no change in policy** in this regard.
- Partner forces include the Syrian Democratic Forces, a multi-ethnic group with a large contingent of Kurdish forces, and the Kurdish Peshmerga in northern Iraq.
- The **SDF fought bravely to liberate vast stretches of their countries** from ISIS control and are capable and committed partners.
- I refer you to the State Department on further information regarding U.S. outreach to minority groups in Iraq and Syria.

Syria

Q. Is the Coalition still facing bad Russian behavior in Syria? GEN McKenzie mentioned the Russians are still regularly disrupting our efforts in the region.

- The Coalition **maintains air and ground de-confliction channels** with the Russian military to **protect our forces and reduce the risk of inadvertent escalation.**
- The **US continues to urge Russia** to adhere to **mutual de-confliction processes** and **NOT to take any provocative action.**
- With the **confluence of numerous actors in the region**, we expect **all militaries to conduct themselves in a professional manner.**

Syria

- Wherever possible, **we de-conflict our movements to ensure our forces are protected.** Movements and interactions that are not properly de-conflicted are a concern, but the **professionalism of our service members in Syria has been essential** to preventing these interactions from escalating.

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Syria

ISIS Assessment

- The ISIS suicide bombings last month in Iraq demonstrate that **ISIS remains a formidable enemy.**
- U.S. and Coalition forces continue to work by, with, and through our local partners to maintain relentless pressure and prevent a reemergence of ISIS.
- It is important to acknowledge that attacks remain historically low and less lethal and ISIS's capabilities - **militarily, financially, and virtually - remain severely diminished.**
- In short, though not yet defeated, **ISIS is a shell of the organization it once was.**

Syria

ISIS Detainees

- While ISIS's **fraudulent “caliphate”** has **been shattered** and Baghdadi is no longer here to spread his **hateful ideology**, there is still much work to do to ensure an enduring defeat of ISIS.
- Following its territorial defeat, an adaptive and determined enemy is exactly what we expected, but its capabilities remain severely limited and **we do not see ISIS as resurgent.**
- The Coalition continues to support **partner forces in Iraq & Syria with high-level advising, intelligence sharing, air support, and conditions-based equipment divestments.**

Syria

ISIS Detainees

- The SDF continues to maintain control of approximately **10,000 ISIS fighters at detention facilities** in northeast Syria, including approximately **2,000 third country nationals** (non-Syrian, non-Iraqi).
- U.S. military provides **a range of support** to help ensure the SDF is able to **detain** these ISIS fighters **securely and humanely**, including support to repair & renovate SDF detention facilities, very few of which are purpose-built. **We continue to evaluate the situation in Syria and to work by, with, and through our SDF partners to identify further requirements for detention security.**

Syria

ISIS Detainees

- The U.S. maintains that **detained foreign terrorist fighters' home countries should repatriate, prosecute, and, where appropriate, incarcerate them.**

Syria

Al Hol/IDP Camps

- DoD has no role in the administration, supply of humanitarian assistance, or camp operations at Al Hol. These functions are managed entirely by intl organizations and NGOs.
- Because of the **camp's location in northeast Syria**, the SDF, and affiliated Asayish security forces, provide the external security and some level of internal security.

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- Coalition forces are in constant dialogue with their SDF counterparts and the U.S. military has provided a range of support.

Syria

- **Q. GEN McKenzie warned about the dire conditions in the Al Hol refugee camp in Syria. The short-term risk is an outbreak of cholera or COVID – long-term is the "systemic indoctrination" of the young population to ISIS ideology.**
- The US, working in tandem with local and Coalition partners, is pursuing a multi-pronged approach to reduce the risks associated w/ISIS fighters in detention and radicalized individuals in IDP camps in northeast Syria.
- U.S. forces do not participate in activities inside IDP camps. Humanitarian organizations administer the camps, and the SDF provides external security. The international community must work together to find a local solution.

Syria

- **I refer you to the Department of State and USAID for further information** on U.S. policy regarding al-Hol and other IDP camps in northeast Syria.

Yemen

- The U.S. is committed to a negotiated, UN-led political settlement to end the civil war & the humanitarian crisis.
- The U.S. continues to **work with partner nations and the U.N.** towards an end to the conflict in Yemen.
- The primary U.S. security objective remains to **defend against threats to U.S. citizens, allies and partners by conducting counterterrorism operations** against al-Qa'ida and ISIS-Y.
- We are **committed to assisting Saudi Arabia and our other Gulf partners with defense of their borders** in light of emergent and credible threats from Yemen and other regional adversaries.

Yemen

Q. Does the U.S. still support Saudi operations in Yemen?

- As the President directed, U.S. support for Saudi-led Coalition offensive operations in Yemen ended in February, including relevant arm sales.
- Saudi Arabia faces genuine security threats from Yemen and elsewhere in the region. They've endured over **150** cross-border air attacks just from Yemen since January.

Q. Does the U.S. provide maintenance to the Saudi Air Force?

- The U.S. continues to provide maintenance support to Saudi Arabia's Air Force given the critical role it plays in Saudi air defense + our longstanding security partnership.
- We've ceased in-air refueling since 2018.

Yemen

Q. Does the U.S. still provide Saudi with intelligence support?

- The Department of Defense provides limited intelligence support to Saudi Arabia for defensive [purposes only.
- This includes info on threats to Saudi territory and providing early warning in advance of attacks on their territory, when available.

(b) (5)

Yemen

Q. Hasn't the U.S. been complicit with the Saudi-led Coalition in committing war crimes? And what about the removal of terrorist designations?

- The U.S. has consistently urged, and will continue to urge the Saudi-led coalition to comply with their obligations under international law, to implement measures to reduce the risk of harm to civilians, to take appropriate measures when such casualties occur, and to draw lessons from operations to reduce the risk of harm to civilians.
- U.S. remains very concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.
- We defer to the State Department on the removal of terrorist designations.

Yemen

Q. What is the United States doing about cross-border attacks against Saudi Arabia?

- The U.S. **strongly condemns** attacks against Saudi Arabia. As President Biden has made clear, **we remain committed to helping Saudi Arabia defend itself.**
- **Attacks violate international law & undermine efforts** to promote peace & stability.
- We will continue our **work together and look for better ways to defend** the Kingdom from external threats, while revitalizing diplomacy to end the Yemen conflict.

Yemen

Q. What about allegations of civilian deaths in Yemen as a result of U.S. CT air strikes and the recent complaint filed with the Inter-Agency Commission on Human Rights?

- While we cannot comment on the specific allegations, we want to be clear that we always focus on ways to minimize civilian casualties when conducting operations.
- We routinely share the results of our assessments in DoD reports to Congress, with the media, and to the general public to inform and counter misinformation and propaganda.

(b) (5)

Yemen

Q. What are your views on the Houthi offensive in Marib?

- As the State Department has said, we **demand the Houthis halt their offensive on Marib**, a city that has grown in population during the war as people fled fighting in the north. **Yemeni civilians do not need any further displacement** as a result of the Houthi's aggressive acts.
- Not only are acts like this devastating to the people of Yemen, they **contribute to the instability and further prolong the conflict.**
- The **U.S. was foremost donor of aid** to Yemen (2020) & remains **committed** to working with our international partners to **bring peace, prosperity, & security to Yemen.**

EUCOM

PRC / Russian Exercises

- We refer you to Russia or the PRC for questions about their exercises.
- Generally speaking, we do not have an issue with exercises. That's a normal function of a military organization. However, all **countries need to be transparent, and communicate their military exercises via the appropriate international channels to avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation.**
- We believe compliance with international laws, rules and norms, will lead to more *predictable and stable* relationships.

(b) (5)

How will this impact U.S. training in the region?

- The United States will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows.

Russia Aggression - Ukraine

Troop Build-Up

- We are not going to comment on estimated Russian troop numbers.
- We do hope that Russia will withdraw all of its forces to de-escalate the situation in the region.
- However, Moscow has a history of not living up to its commitments on Ukraine and elsewhere, so we continue to monitor the situation closely.
- The Administration has expressed that we desire a relationship that is stable and predictable. For this to happen, Russia needs to refrain from further aggressive actions.

Russia Aggression - Ukraine

- We reiterate our call for Russia to fully implement its Minsk commitments and return full control of Crimea to Ukraine.
- The U.S. reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.
- We have expressed that we desire a relationship with Russia that is stable and predictable.

Russia Aggression - Ukraine

NATO/Membership Action Plan (MAP):

- The Biden Administration fully supports the declaration made by Allies at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine will join the Alliance, which was reaffirmed by President Biden at the 2021 Brussels Summit, when they are ready to meet the commitments and obligations of membership.
- No third country has a veto over NATO membership decisions.
- We remain committed to assisting Ukraine with the implementation of critical reforms to modernize its defense sector in line with NATO principles and standards. These efforts advance Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations in support of a secure, prosperous, democratic, and free Ukraine.

Russia Aggression - Arctic

Arctic Militarization

- The U.S. does not seek conflict or escalatory actions in the Arctic.
- However, Russia is continuing to strengthen its military presence in the Arctic.
- Russia claims the right to regulate Arctic waters in excess of the authority permitted under international law.
- The U.S. does not recognize this overstep of authority in the region, and we ask other nations to express their similar concerns to the Russian Federation.

Russia Aggression – Black Sea

- We continue to be deeply concerned by Russia's stated intent to block foreign naval ships and State vessels from certain parts of the Black Sea, including near occupied Crimea.
- We urge Russia to respect the navigational rights and freedoms of all States as provided under international law.
- There has been no change to our operational capability or deterrence posture in the Black Sea and we will continue to routinely operate in the region in accordance with the Montreux Convention and international law.

Russia Aggression – Open Skies

Open Skies Treaty

- The US completed its review of the Open Skies Treaty and does not intend to rejoin it, given Russia's failure to return to compliance.
- Russia's violations and its aggressive behavior toward neighboring states, undermined the treaty and confidence and security in Europe.
- We value arms control, as demonstrated by the agreement to extend the New START Treaty for five years, and remain committed to enhancing security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region, which is why we have offered to engage Russia in strategic-stability discussions on arms control and emerging security issues.

Turkey

- **Our position has not changed.**
- The S-400 is incompatible with the F-35 and Turkey has been suspended from the program. **We continue to move forward with the process of formally removing Turkey from the F-35 partnership, as announced in July 2019.**
- Turkey is **longstanding and valued NATO Ally**, but their decision to purchase the S-400 is **inconsistent with Turkey's commitments** as a U.S. and NATO Ally.
- Turkey had multiple opportunities over the last decade to purchase the Patriot defense system from the U.S. and instead chose to purchase the S-400, which provides Russia revenue, access and influence.

Turkey

Q. Does the Department believe that additional CAATSA sanctions are necessary?

- I'd refer you to the State Department for questions on CAATSA sanctions.
- We encourage Turkey not to retain the system and to not make additional purchases of Russian equipment.
- Turkey had multiple opportunities to purchase the Patriot Air Defense System but chose to purchase the S-400.
- These purchases provide Russia revenue, access and influence.

Turkey in Syria

- Turkey is an **important NATO Ally** and we **recognize** their concerns about **border security**.
- As members of the Global Coalition to **defeat ISIS**, both Turkey and the U.S. **agree** on the need to **defeat ISIS**, but we have **different approaches** to prosecuting the campaign.
- As NATO Allies we work together to **manage these differences**.
- We **support UN resolution 2254** in Syria, which provides a roadmap to peace in Syria.

Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative

Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative

- The Department announced the latest Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative package on June 11th for \$150 million.
- This is on top of the \$125 million announced back in March, bringing the total to \$250 million for the fiscal year.
- The U.S. has **committed more than \$2.5 billion** in security assistance to Ukraine since 2014.
- We are committed to strengthening our **strategic defense partnership** - through robust **security assistance** to support Ukraine's forces preserve territorial integrity and progress toward **NATO interoperability**.

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Ukraine Security Assistance

Can you provide more details on the package? Does it include lethal assistance?

Refer you to defense.gov announcement.

The U.S. remains committed to providing defensive lethal assistance to enable Ukraine to more effectively defend itself against Russian aggression.

What is the delivery timeline of the new equipment?

A timeline for delivery and fielding of equipment will be determined at a later date.

Three Swords (Ukraine)

- The **Three Swords defensive exercise is Ukrainian-led** and focused on further enhancing defense relationships with **Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine.**
- **The US will participate as observers.**
- The **multi-national exercise will include approximately 1200 military members** and will **focus on NATO stability operations, interoperability** and, ultimately, **provide an opportunity for participating nations to learn from each other** as they prepare for the challenging global security environment.
- Further questions should be directed to Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania.

PACOM

Bangladesh

- The U.S. and Bangladesh Armies **share a close partnership**, characterized by **regular combined training exercises, education and training exchanges**, and support to U.N. Peace Keeping Operations.
- Both of our countries share a **commitment to ensuring peace and stability** in the region.
- Chief of Army Staff of the Bangladesh Army, Gen. Aziz Ahmed, is **visiting the United States beginning 30 Jan.** During his visit, Gen. Aziz will meet with the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, other Department of the Army leaders and Army organizations, as well as Department of Defense staff. For security reasons, **we are not releasing specific dates, times, and locations** related to his itinerary.

Bangladesh

Q. Comment on Al Jazeera criminal / corruption allegations against Bangladesh Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Aziz Ahmed?

- As part of our ongoing defense and security cooperation, we host visitors from partner nation armies.
- Gen. Ahmed visiting U.S. this week to meet senior military & defense officials.
- We are not releasing specific itinerary information.

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Burma

- U.S. military interactions with Burma are heavily constrained by law, including statutory restrictions on military assistance, due to Burma's human rights record.
- The United States does not have foreign assistance programs that directly benefit the Burmese military as an institution, and our minimal interactions have supported humanitarian response capability and human rights.
- As President Biden has said, the reversal of Burma's democratic transition will necessitate an immediate review of our sanction laws and authorities, followed by appropriate action.

PRC / Russian Exercises

- We refer you to Russia or the PRC for questions about their exercises.
- Generally speaking, we do not have an issue with exercises. That's a normal function of a military organization. However, all **countries need to be transparent, and communicate their military exercises via the appropriate international channels to avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation.**
- We believe compliance with international laws, rules and norms, will lead to more *predictable and stable* relationships.

(b) (5)

How will this impact U.S. training in the region?

- The United States will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows.

China

- The Department is committed to defending the **free and open rules-based international order**, an order from which the U.S., our allies, our partners, and even the People's Republic of China has enjoyed great benefit, but which Beijing, through its actions, is undermining for its own interests. **Strategic competition with China** is a defining feature of the 21st century.
- The Department continues to take steps to address the strategic challenges posed by the PRC as we implement the NDS, including the **modernization of our forces, strengthening our alliances and partnerships**, to include promoting interconnected security partnerships to advance our shared interests.

China

- The Department's seeks a **constructive, stable, results-oriented relationship** with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) that helps set U.S.-PRC relations on a path of transparency and non-aggression.
- Our **efforts encourage the PRC to act** in a manner consistent with the free and open, rules-based, international order.
- DoD **maintains defense relations** with the PRC to prevent and manage crisis, reduce risk, and cooperate where national interests align.

CHINA: SECDEF Call

Q. Has the Secretary spoken with anyone from the PRC?

Q. Has he tried three times, unsuccessfully, to speak with Xu Qiliang, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission?

Q. Should he be speaking with Wei Fenghe, who is a Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister?

- The Secretary has not had any conversations with the PRC.
- We look forward to dialogue with them but have nothing specific to announce at this time.

China TF & Named Operation

Q. Did China Task Force recommend a new Joint Naval Task Force for the Indo-Pacific? Or a new “named operation” in the Indo-Pacific?

- We don't have anything new to announce regarding the China Task Force.
- We are looking at a number of proposals in the Indo-Pacific and across the Department, to better synchronize and coordinate our activities.
- However, as the Secretary said, now is the time to get to work, there are many details and specifics still to be finalized.

DPRK

- North Korea's continued development of ballistic missiles and **weapons of mass destruction represent a threat** to U.S. interests and the security of our allies and partners.
- We anticipate a review of the U.S. government's entire approach to North Korea and the (DoD) **will certainly support that review**.
- In the near term, DoD, in close coordination with allies and partners, will **seek to deter negative behavior** from North Korea.
- DEFER: Discussion on full denuclearization, pending further guidance from NSC/WH.

DPRK

Q. Comment reports of camouflaging “known nuclear site Tongdoktong?”

- We have **no comment on intelligence matters**, but we will say that North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs **constitute a serious threat to the United States and our allies and partners.**
- Pyongyang’s proliferation of weapons and advanced technology is a **threat to international peace and security, and undermines the global nonproliferation regime.** We remain committed to the denuclearization of North Korea and the **maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.**

DPRK

Q. Comment on President Moon saying “South and North Korea can discuss joint military exercises between Seoul and Washington through a joint military committee”?

- The U.S. is in close contact with our ally on this issue. As a matter of policy, we do not comment on planned or executed training.

Q. Comment on NK military parade unveiling new Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile? Kim Jong Un speech about Nuclear Submarine & Hyper sonic glide war head?

- We have no comment on this (per DOS, 14 Jan.)

UN Report on NK / Iran

Comment on recent UN sanctions committee report, that points to nuclear weapons cooperation between North Korea and Iran in violation of sanctions?

- We have nothing to add on this topic. I would **refer you to the UN** for any additional comment.

Japan

- The U.S.-Japan Alliance has never been more resolute and resilient – the cornerstone of peace and security in a free and open Indo-Pacific in the face of long-term competition with China.
- Deepening our defense relationship is a top priority for both nations
- We continue to train and exercise together to improve interoperability, share information, and strengthen our capabilities.
- U.S. is opposed to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea

Japan

- Deepening our defense relationship is a top priority for both nations and we continue to train and exercise together to improve interoperability, share information, and strengthen our capabilities.
- The United States remains opposed to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea, reaffirms that Article V of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty applies to Japan's administration of the Senkaku Islands, and thanks Japan for its leadership in enforcing United Nations Security Council Resolutions regarding North Korea.

Japan

- The U.S.-Japan Alliance has never been more resolute and resilient – the cornerstone of peace and security in a free and open Indo-Pacific in the face of long-term competition with China.
- North Korea's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs constitute a serious threat to the United States and our allies and partners. We will continue our review of North Korea policy in close coordination with close allies like Japan, given that we share many of the same concerns, including resolution of the Japanese abductee issue.

Philippines

- The **U.S.-Philippine alliance is strong**; we support a resilient and independent Philippines with the capability to protect its sovereignty and defend its security interests on its own terms.
- The United States **commends the strong measures the Philippines has taken in its COVID response** and remains committed to helping the Philippine Government fight the pandemic through both bilateral assistance and assistance through COVAX.
- We are committed to helping the Armed Forces of the Philippines address their modernization needs. **Interoperability between our two militaries is essential for deterrence and for success in future contingencies**, including the territorial defense of the Philippines.

Philippines

- Our alliance commitments are iron clad. **An armed attack against the Philippine armed forces**, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific, including in the South China Sea, **will trigger our obligations under the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty**.
- The **United States stands with our ally, the Philippines, in the face of the PRC's maritime militia amassing at Whitsun Reef**. We will always stand by our allies and stand up for the rules-based international order.
- Our South China Sea policy clarification from last year rejected excessive and unlawful PRC maritime claims that have been used to restrict countries from accessing offshore resources in their own exclusive economic zones, including in the Philippines.
- We do not discuss future U.S. ship movements, but we are committed to the security of our alliance.

Philippines (VFA)

Comment on President Duterte decision to maintain VFA?

- DOD welcomes the Philippine government's decision to maintain the Visiting Forces Agreement, which enables us to respond swiftly and seamlessly to disasters or crisis.
- Thanks to the VFA, the Department of Defense can conduct more than 300 bilateral engagements a year with the armed forces of the Philippines, from expert exchanges to ship visits to component exercises and major training exercises such as Balikatan, which was held this April.
- We strongly believe that the VFA, and the broader alliance that the VFA enables, strengthens not only the security of our two nations, but also the rules-based order that benefits all nations in the Indo-Pacific.

Philippines (Face Mask)

Comment on SECDEF wearing face mask despite being fully vaccinated?

- The Secretary and his traveling party are wearing masks and face shields in accordance with health protection guidelines directed by the Philippine government in coordination with the U.S. Embassy.
- All DOD travelers observe appropriate CDC guidelines, in addition to health guidance as required by each host nation.
- As the Secretary has said, nothing is more important than the health and well-being of our people, and that includes our partners and allies.

(b) (5)

Republic of Korea (Exercises)

Kim Jong Yo's criticism of exercises?

- As Ned Price said yesterday, the U.S. harbors no hostile intent towards the DPRK. We support inter-Korean dialogue and engagement, and we will continue to work with our ROK partners to that end.
- Training events are **non-provocative and defensive in nature**.
- **Combined training events are a ROK-U.S. bilateral decision, and any decisions will be a mutual agreement**.
- Military readiness is a top priority of the Secretary of Defense. Our combined military training events are a principal method of ensuring our combined Alliance readiness.
- The **ROK-U.S. Alliance remains at a high level of readiness, and continues to maintain a robust combined defense posture** to protect the Republic of Korea against any threat or adversary.

Republic of Korea (Hotline)

Comment on North Korea not answering military hotlines with South Korea?

- As Ned Price said yesterday, we support inter-Korean dialogue and engagement, and we will continue to work with our ROK partners to that end.
- **Diplomacy and dialogue are essential to achieving the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.**

Republic of Korea (ROK)

- Our **commitment** to the security of the ROK is **ironclad**, and the U.S.-ROK Alliance is the **linchpin of peace and security** in the region.
- On a Jan. 23 call with his counterpart, Secretary Austin underscored the U.S. **commitment to defend the ROK** through both the U.S.-ROK combined defense posture and the U.S. extended deterrent.
- Both sides noted the need to maintain the **readiness of Alliance** combined forces, affirmed the importance of maintaining the **rules-based international order**, and agreed to enhance **cooperation** on shared threats.

ROK: Revised Missile Guidance

- The U.S.-ROK alliance is the linchpin of peace, security, and prosperity for Northeast Asia, a free and open Indo-Pacific, and across the world.
- We refer you to the ROK government to discuss their defense capabilities.
- Nothing about this changes the alliance between South Korea and the United States or our commitments to that alliance, which as you know, is a defensive alliance.

ROK: Training Events

South Korean President said it would be hard to hold a large-scale military exercise given the COVID-19 situation. Will ROK COVID vaccinations lead to a change in combined exercises?

- Military readiness is a top priority of the Secretary of Defense. Our combined military training events are a principal method of ensuring our combined Alliance readiness.
- These training events are non-provocative, defensive in nature, and are intended to maintain alliance readiness to ensure we are ready to “fight tonight.”
- Any decision on the scope, scale, and timing of exercises will be made bilaterally with these factors in mind.

South China Sea

- Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations.
- The PRC's more assertive behavior has brought strategic competition into focus for the United States, and DoD remains committed to upholding a rules-based international order and free and open Indo-Pacific region, including by opposing Beijing's attempts to coerce neighbors and assert excessive claims in the South China Sea.
- Strategic competition, however, does not mean that conflict is inevitable. Even as the United States competes with the PRC, we welcome cooperation where our interests align.

South China Sea

What military channels of dialogue are there between the Pentagon and the Chinese Ministry of Defense?

- The DoD seeks a constructive, stable, results-oriented defense relationship with the People's Liberation Army that helps set U.S.-PRC relations on a path of transparency and non-aggression.
- DoD priorities for defense engagement with the PRC are to: prevent and manage crisis; reduce risk to forces operating in proximity to each other; and cooperate where interests align.

South China Sea

Which military role do the pioneering states of the South China Sea play in the US-American Policy related to China?

- Our allies and partners remain a key advantage against PRC coercion of neighbors and subversion of the international rules-based order, and the U.S. will strengthen its global relationships to ensure our collective ability to deter aggression and meet shared challenges.
- DoD calls on its allies and partners to unite in countering PRC activity that undermines the international rules-based order and adversely impacts our collective security.

South China Sea (Blinken)

- Antony Blinken Statement, 11 July: Fifth Anniversary of the Arbitral Tribunal Ruling on the South China Sea
- **Freedom of the seas is an enduring interest of all nations and is vital to global peace and prosperity.** The international community has long benefited from the rules-based maritime order, where international law, as reflected in the UN Law of the Sea Convention, sets out the legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas. **This body of international law forms the basis for national, regional, and global action and cooperation in the maritime sector** and is vital to ensuring the free flow of global commerce.
- **Nowhere is the rules-based maritime order under greater threat than in the South China Sea.** The People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to coerce and intimidate Southeast Asian coastal states, threatening freedom of navigation in this critical global thoroughway.

South China Sea (Blinken)

- Five years ago, an Arbitral Tribunal constituted under the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention delivered a unanimous and enduring decision **firmly rejecting the PRC's expansive South China Sea maritime claims** as having no basis in international law.
- The Tribunal stated that the **PRC has no lawful claim to the area** determined by the Arbitral Tribunal to be part of the Philippines' exclusive economic zone and continental shelf. The PRC and the Philippines, pursuant to their treaty obligations under the Law of the Sea Convention, are legally bound to comply with this decision.

South China Sea (Blinken)

- The United States **reaffirms its July 13, 2020 policy regarding maritime claims in the South China Sea.**
- We also reaffirm that an armed attack on Philippine armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea would invoke U.S. mutual defense commitments under Article IV of the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty.
- We **call on the PRC to abide by its obligations under international law, cease its provocative behavior,** and take steps to reassure the international community that it is committed to the rules-based maritime order that respects the rights of all countries, big and small.

Weapon Sales to Taiwan

- The **State Department** on Aug 4 has notified Congress of a sale of 40 M109A6 Howitzer systems and related equipment for an **estimated cost of \$750 million.**
- Questions about **Foreign Military Sales** should be directed to the **State Department's Bureau of Political Military Affairs.**
- The United States will **continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues**, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people on Taiwan.
- Our commitment to Taiwan is **rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability** across the Taiwan Strait and within the region.

Weapon Sales to Taiwan

Comment on weapon sales to Taiwan?

- We have refer you to the State Department.
- Pursuant to the Taiwan Relations Act, DOD continues to make available to Taiwan such defense articles and services as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense.
- Our commitment to Taiwan is rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region.

Taiwan

- For four decades, the **U.S. One-China policy has been guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances** provided to Taipei.
- The U.S. has **long abided by our One-China policy**. This is distinct from Beijing's "One China Principle" under which the Chinese Communist Party asserts sovereignty over Taiwan. The **United States takes no position on sovereignty over Taiwan**.
- The United States will **continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues**, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people on Taiwan.
- Our commitment to Taiwan is **rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability** across the Taiwan Strait and within the region.

Taiwan

Comment on PRC aggression toward Taiwan?

- U.S. notes with concern PRC attempts to intimidate its neighbors, including Taiwan.
- We will stand with friends and allies to advance our shared prosperity, security, and values in the Indo-Pacific
- The United States will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people on Taiwan.
- The United States maintains its longstanding commitments in line with the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances.
- We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability.
- Our commitment to Taiwan is rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region.

TAIWAN – U.S. Special Forces

Comment on reporting of “US special forces to train Taiwan soldiers after annual war-games”?

- We have **nothing for you on this.**
- Pursuant to the Taiwan Relations Act, DOD continues to make available to Taiwan such defense articles and services as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense.
- Our commitment to Taiwan is **rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability** across the Taiwan Strait and within the region.

Taiwan – CODEL (Mil. Air)

- DOD frequently supports official Congressional Delegations with military assets, including C-17s, upon request from Congress and availability of transport.
- For further comment we refer you to NSC/WH
- For four decades, the **U.S. One-China policy has been guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances** provided to Taipei.

SOUTHCOM

DOD Priorities – WHA

- The Department's vision for the Western Hemisphere is a democratic, middle class, and secure region where defense partnerships can advance shared security interests regionally and globally.
- The Department has a strong interest in expanding our regional partnerships to realize this future for all of our hemisphere's citizens, a viewpoint long-championed by President Biden.
- We are united with our regional partners by a shared responsibility to defend our common values: human rights, free and open societies, respect for the rule of law, and a commitment to peace.
- DOD is committed to strengthening partnerships throughout the region and investing in new relationships that will advance our vision for the Western Hemisphere and ensure our success in prevailing against security challenges for generations to come.

Colombia

Colombia

- Colombia is a **vital strategic partner**, and the United States is **proud to stand with the Colombian people** as they continue on the path to just and lasting peace and prosperity.
- The United States and Colombia **share many priorities, including supporting sustainable peace and reconciliation; combatting narcotics trafficking and transnational crime**; coordinating a regional **response to the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela**; and **promoting and protecting human rights**.
- Under President Duque, **Colombian police and military** have **increased eradication and interdiction efforts and more effectively targeted cocaine labs, precursor chemicals, and traffickers**, to include **meeting the Colombian 2020 goal to eradicate manually 130,000 hectares**.

Colombia

Colombia

- We have much more to do, together. The partnership between our two countries will remain strong as we fight to meet our objectives, crack down on those profiting off the drug trade, and stop the flow of deadly drugs affecting the people of both countries.

Colombian Troops // Training

- **Can you say specifically what US military training courses the former Colombian troops attended?**
- Yes. Based on the review of our training database, we have the complete list of courses for all seven individuals. I have that list broken out by country. To be clear, not every individual attended every course listed. This is the combined list of courses based on what we found in each individual's record.
- **Can you confirm if [NAME] attended [COURSE NAME]?**
- We're not going to release or confirm the names of the individuals or details about their background.
- For anything further, I'll refer you to the State Department.

Colombian Troops // Training

UNITED STATES

- Cadet Leadership Development
 - *Location: Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), Fort Benning, GA*
- Counter Drug Operations
 - *Location: WHINSEC*
- NCO Professional Development
 - *Location: WHINSEC*
- Small Unit Leader Training
 - *Location: WHINSEC*
- Training Seminars
 - *Location: Washington, DC*
 - *Description on next slide*

NOTE: All WHINSEC courses include Human Rights and Ethics Training

Colombian Troops // Training

COLOMBIA

- Human Rights Training
- Emergency Medical Training
- Helicopter Pilot & Helicopter Maintenance Training
- Training Seminars
 - Similar to courses already mentioned, though less formal (not in a classroom or lab setting)
 - Focused on specific areas of expertise (e.g. medical, engineering, logistics, operations, maintenance or other support of weapon systems and support equipment, as well as training for general military operations)

Haiti Request for US Troops

Update on Troops/Assistance?

- The United States continues to evaluate the Haitian government's requests for assistance and assess how we can best address them.
- As President Biden said, the idea of sending U.S. forces into Haiti is not on the agenda at this moment.
- Right now our focus is on assisting the Haitian government with the investigation and taking a multilateral approach to support Haiti, through the UN, with our international partners, and with other international organizations.

Latin America Regional Challenges

- We are concerned about challenges to the free and open international order.
- China has increased economic and diplomatic engagement in the region to set conditions for the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) global ambitions that include eroding principles of democracy, rule of law, and human rights, as well as U.S. leadership and influence.
- China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) economic initiative seeks to build a network of countries and markets aligned with the CCP's foreign policy objectives and ideology by leveraging corruption and unfavorable trade dealings.
- Russia pursues an increased presence in Latin America to undermine U.S. interests through propaganda, military arms and equipment sales, counterdrug agreements, and trade, but has shown minimal capacity to deliver on assistance and investment.

Latin America Regional Challenges

- The **U.S. does not oppose high-quality development based on fair, transparent standards.**
- Our **concern is investments that do not meet those standards** or that **compromise sovereignty.**
- We **encourage allies and partners to consider carefully the strategic and security risks** prior to committing to the CCP's BRI projects and other economic initiatives.

Panama

Panama

- The neutrality of the Panama Canal remains critical to the interests of peace and free and fair trade of global commerce.
- U.S. assistance to Panama aims to ensure Panama remains a secure, prosperous, and democratic country that continues to work with the United States as its principal partner in the region.
- The Department will continue to prioritize our cooperation efforts with Panama in support of mutual security and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief interests.

Venezuela

Venezuela

- DoD is committed to supporting the whole-of-government effort to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and reach a political agreement on free and fair elections.

Direct all other questions/inquiries to State Department