

**VETERANS STRENGTHENING AMERICA**

**NATIONAL SECURITY DIVISION'S WEEKLY REPORT**

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**March 27 – 31, 2023**

**STAFF ACTIVITY**

* NS Director and Executive Director met with the Director of the Army Staff, Lieutenant General Piatt. The discussion included addressing issues that the American Legion can assist the Army with to include: identifying military quality of life (QOL) issues that need immediate attention, The National Commander’s message promoting military service and assistance to recruiting efforts, U.S. Army support for the QOL program and our pending submission of a memorandum of understanding, as well as discussing the multitude of programs the Legion has in our communities.
* NS and Legislative Division Staff worked together to support passage of S.316 that repeals the 1991 and 2002 Authorizations for the Use of Military Force (AUMFs) to formally end the Gulf and Iraq wars, with a successful vote taking place in the Senate on Wednesday. The NS Director was featured in a [Marine Corps Times story](https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2023/03/29/senate-votes-to-repeal-iraq-war-authorizations/) on the Senate vote. The American Legion has long supported the repeal and [held a press conference](https://www.legion.org/legislative/258394/senate-advances-legislation-repeal-iraq-aumfs) following a March 16 procedural vote to advance the legislation. The Legion.org story on the vote is [here](https://www.legion.org/legislative/258484/senate-passes-bill-repeal-iraq-war-authorizations). NS and Legislative Division Staff focus will now shift to the House of Representatives, which also must pass a repeal bill before it can go to the President’s desk.
* NS Staff met to finalize the draft QOL program guidebook and site-selection criteria for military base visits.
* NS Staff met with the National Commander and all pertinent staff / volunteer leadership to finalize logistics and complete the approved schedule for the upcoming visit to Europe.
* NS Staff attended a House Armed Services Committee Hearing titled *“Fiscal Year 2024 Defense Budget Request”* with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Milley and Secretary of Defense Llyod Austin. Video of the hearing can be viewed [here.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu6j7gNk_qM&t=11640s)
* NS Staff attended a House Oversight Committee Hearing titled *“Ensuring Force Readiness: Examining Progressivism’s Impact on an All-Volunteer Military.”* Video of the hearing can be viewed [here.](https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/ensuring-force-readiness-examining-progressivisms-impact-on-an-all-volunteer-military/)
* NS Staff are finalizing final draft research papers on a variety of QOL related topics for the Director’s review and submission to the Executive Director for eventual approval /publishing.
* NS Staff reached out to the VSO liaison at DoD to inquire about the status of policy decisions involving access to post office boxes on military installations for overseas veterans, and to verify that DoD policies that allow VSOs to access military installations in support of service members and their families remain current. Additionally, Staff asked for subject matter expert participation from DoD in support of an upcoming TAL podcast on military sexual trauma for which we are awaiting a response.
* NS Staff continues to receive detailed feedback from the National Commander on his visits to military installations as he conducts American Legion Department visits.
* NS Staff is in the process of finalizing reference and training materials for our QOL Program.
* NS Director met (virtually) with the Senior Enlisted Advisor for the National Guard Bureau’s office to request a formal meeting regarding the QOL program and related matters.
* NS Staff assisted the departments of Arizona, California, and Missouri in acquiring static displays to include artillery displays, tanks, and mortar systems.

**POW/MIA**

March 28, 2023

Soldier Accounted for From Korean War (Carrillo, C.)

Soldier Accounted for From World War II (Slenker, L.)

March 27, 2023

Airman Accounted for From WWII (Ropp, J.)

Airman Accounted for From World War II (Mills, E.)

DPAA has identified/repatriated 45 servicemembers this year.

**PROGRAMS (The American Legion Military Surplus Equipment)**

* Processed request: Ammo – 14,880; Rifle – 47; Clips – 50; Static Display – 3
* Participants: Post – 15; Department – 13

**ROTC/JROTC Awards**

**Department of Missouri**

* Scholastic Excellence Award – 1
* Military Excellence Award – 1

**Department of Texas**

* Military Excellence Award – 1

**TIP OF THE WEEK**

Why Does the U.S. Spend So Much on Defense?

It is common in nearly every election cycle for candidates to claim that the U.S. spends too much on defense. Unfortunately, these claims almost always fail to explain why it traditionally spends as it does, or what a major budget cut really entails. To put U.S. military spending in context, it is useful to compare what it spends to that of others. In fiscal year 2023, the Defense Department’s budget of $816 billion was larger than the combined spending of the next seven largest militaries: China, Saudi Arabia, India, France, Russia, UK, Germany.

The US military budget is large for a variety of reasons. Some of the most important factors include:

* **The US is a global power with interests around the world.** The US military is involved in a variety of missions, including global presence/deterrence, combat operations, peacekeeping, and humanitarian aid/disaster relief. This requires a large and well-equipped military. The US is the only country in the world that designs its military to be able to depart one hemisphere, cross broad expanses of ocean and air space, and then conduct sustained, large-scale operations upon arrival in another hemisphere.
* **The US has global security commitments.** The US has treaties obligating it to the defense of approximately 51 nations across four continents/bodies of water. In addition, the US also has close relationships with, security interests in, and in some cases, troops deployed to nations with whom we have no formal treaty.
* **The US faces a variety of threats, both conventional and unconventional.** These threats include peer and near-peer competitors, transnational terrorist organizations, rogue states, and unconventional / cyber-attacks. The US military must be prepared to respond to these threats.
* **The US is a major arms exporter.** The US military industry is a major source of jobs and economic growth. The US government subsidizes the cost of military exports, which makes them more competitive in the global market.
* **The US military is a major driver of technological innovation.** The US military is a major funder of research and development. This research and development has led to the advances in new technologies, such as GPS, drones, advanced medical practices, and stealth aircraft.

The US military budget is controversial. Some people argue that it is too large, and that the US should focus on other priorities such as rebuilding our national infrastructure and the economy. Others argue that the US military is essential for the security of the US and its allies. The debate over the US military budget is likely to continue for many years to come.

For more on this topic, see this CRS [Defense Primer: Geography, Strategy, and U.S. Force Design](https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/IF10485.pdf)