

National Security Division Report

Week ending 15, May 2020



Five Ways the U.S. Military Will Change After the Pandemic

(Courtesy of War on the Rocks) The global pandemic is about to profoundly change the U.S. military's role in defending the United States — even if Pentagon leaders don't know it yet. As we noted in our last [column](#), many Americans will look at the immeasurable damage wrought by the pandemic and conclude that defending the homeland from catastrophic threats is far more urgent than defending against foreign threats far from American shores. That fundamental shift is rapidly ushering in a new era for the Department of Defense, which will upend some of its bedrock assumptions about when, where, and how the U.S. military contributes to national security.

The Department of Defense has been operating under a broad national security strategy that has remained remarkably unchanged since the end of World War II. The United States has maintained a large standing military that has been forward deployed around the world to prevent direct attacks on the United States and to secure the global commons. Though the Trump administration has challenged some parts of this strategy (especially its emphasis on global allies and partners), the most recent versions of the [National Security Strategy](#) and the [National Defense Strategy](#) nevertheless reaffirmed most of its core principles.

Yet the pandemic has now suddenly and vividly demonstrated that a large, forward deployed military cannot effectively protect Americans from nontraditional threats to their personal security and the American way of life. In a deeply interconnected world, geography matters far less, and the security afforded by America's far-flung military forces has been entirely irrelevant in this disastrous crisis. The number of Americans [killed by the virus](#) is about to exceed the number of U.S. troops [killed in Vietnam](#), [unemployment](#) is higher than it has been since the [Great Depression](#), and the social and human toll is simply incalculable. The ultimate damage will be so great that after the pandemic, the urgent need to defend the American people from devastating threats inside the homeland will quickly displace foreign threats atop the hierarchy of national security concerns.

The inevitable national security reckoning after the pandemic will pose tremendous challenges for the Department of Defense. Since the vast majority of its efforts and its enormous budget focus on deterring and defending against external threats as far away from the homeland as possible, it will need to adapt to a deeply changed environment where serious threats inside the homeland matter far more to most Americans. There are at least five key changes that will shape the choices and decisions that lie ahead for Pentagon leaders: cyber and space will be higher priorities than land, sea, and air; reliance on forward presence will diminish; the reserve component will become much more important; legacy programs and end strength will be cut — by a lot; and the prestige of the U.S. military will be dimmed.

[Read the rest here](#)

U.S. Officials: Beware Of China And Others Trying To Steal COVID-19 Research

As researchers around the globe race to develop a coronavirus vaccine, U.S. authorities are warning American firms to exercise extreme caution in safeguarding their research against China and others with a track record of stealing cutting-edge medical technology.

"We are imploring all those research facilities and hospitals and pharmaceutical companies that are doing really great research to do everything in their power to protect it," Bill Evanina, the director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, said in an interview with NPR.

"We don't want that company or the research hospital to be the one a year from now, two years from now, identified as having it all stolen before they finished it," said Evanina, whose center falls under the director of national intelligence.

The statement did not name China or any other country. Reuters reported that hackers linked to Iran tried to break into email accounts at the U.S. drugmaker Gilead Sciences, which has a potentially promising drug to treat the COVID-19 virus. Iran denied the report.

"We have full expectation that China will do everything in their power to obtain any viable research that we are conducting here in the U.S.," Evanina said. "That will be in line with their capabilities and intent the last decade plus, and we are expecting them to continue to do so."

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Philanthropy & the Humanitarian Crisis in Northeast Nigeria

Nigeria's philanthropists respond inconsistently to national crises. By examining the private sector's robust Covid-19 pandemic intervention, this piece provides recommendations for a stronger multisectoral response to the humanitarian disaster in northeast Nigeria.

Nigerian philanthropy is a growth industry. Wealthy Nigerians—there are at least four billionaires and hundreds of millionaires—are establishing foundations and donating money and material to a range of causes.

In March, Aliko Dangote, Africa's richest man, teamed up with Access Bank to launch the Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID) to support the Nigerian government in combating the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Within days, CACOVID received almost \$40 million in donations from 37 individuals, banks, and corporations. The philanthropic response to the humanitarian crisis in northeast Nigeria, in contrast, has received far less fanfare and sustained support at home or abroad.

Ongoing violent hostilities between the government of Nigeria, Boko Haram (also known as Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād or JAS), and the Islamic State – West Africa Province (ISWAP) have led to devastating consequences for the civilian population in the northeast Nigerian states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. Over a decade of armed violence has decimated the lives and livelihoods of civilians, with massive displacements fundamentally altering life in the region.

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US says ISIL was responsible for Kabul hospital attack



The United States on Thursday blamed ISIL (ISIS) - not the Taliban - for an attack on a maternity ward in Afghanistan this week in which 24 people died, including two newborn babies and urged the government to embrace a troubled peace effort with the Taliban.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani ordered the military on Tuesday to switch to "offensive mode" against the Taliban following the hospital attack in Kabul and a suicide bombing in Nangarhar province that killed scores of people.

US Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad blamed ISIL for both attacks in a statement issued on Twitter, saying the group opposed any Taliban peace agreement and sought to trigger an Iraq-style sectarian war in Afghanistan.

"Rather than falling into the ISIS trap and delay peace or create obstacles, Afghans must come together to crush this menace and pursue a historic peace opportunity," Khalilzad said.

"No more excuses. Afghans, and the world, deserve better."

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Lead Inspector General for Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines I Quarterly Report to the United States Congress I January 1, 2020 - March 31, 2020

This Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) report to the United States Congress is the 10th quarterly report on Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P), the overseas contingency operation to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines' fight against ISIS-East Asia (ISIS-EA) and other terrorist organizations. This report summarizes significant events related to this operation and describes ongoing and planned Lead IG and partner agency oversight work, and covers the period from January 1, 2020, to March 31, 2020.

The Philippine government announced that it would terminate its Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with the United States effective August 9, 2020, absent any action in the interim to reverse this decision. The VFA has provided for expedited, visa-free entry into the Philippines for U.S. military personnel and equipment since 1999. The VFA also governs criminal jurisdictions for U.S. service members accused of criminal acts in country. The full implications of VFA termination are not yet known, but it will likely present new challenges for U.S. counterterrorism operations.

The U.S. Government committed \$4 million to COVID-19 response efforts in the Philippines this quarter. These efforts include assisting the Philippine government with infectious disease prevention and response strategies, COVID-19 testing, and the delivery and management of medical supplies, including personal protective equipment.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the AFP engaged in minor clashes with ISIS-EA in the southern Philippines. A week-long AFP offensive resulted in the deaths of at least 14 ISIS-EA militants and 4 AFP soldiers. In a follow-on assault against a nearby ISIS-EA camp, AFP troops seized firearms, ammunition, and improvised explosive devices. U.S. special operations forces provided casualty evacuation assistance to the AFP this quarter, rescuing five AFP soldiers who were wounded while conducting operations on Mindanao.

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POW/MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency made no new announcements.

Staff Activity:

- On Tuesday, May 12, the minutes of last week's National Security Commission conference call were emailed to Commission/Committee leadership and Commission members. The minutes are available [here](#).
- National Security Policy Advisor (NSPA) Nick Riffel continues work on several award programs: Law Officer & Fire Fighter of the Year and Spirit of Service.
- NSPA Nick Riffel continues work on drafting a Commander's letter to the North Macedonian ambassador offering congratulations to his country on the accession of North Macedonia as the newest member of NATO. With their addition, NATO now has 30 members and this letter would be consistent with Legion resolutions in support of this nation's allies and partners.
- NSPA Nick Riffel continues work on drafting a memo to the National Security Commission proposing that The American Legion join the [World Veterans Federation](#) (WVF), the world's largest international veteran organization. The federation consists of 172 veterans organizations from 121 countries representing some 45 million veterans worldwide. DAV and PVA are members of the federation already, as are the Royal British Legion and Korean Veterans Associations, two overseas organizations the Legion National Commander meets with on foreign engagements. Benefits of membership, which has a low yearly cost, include expanding the network of veterans organizations the National Commander could meet with during foreign engagements and increasing the credibility and brand of the Legion in the national security and foreign affairs space.
- NSPA Jeff Steele continues work on updating the National Security Commission roster, to include email addresses, for dissemination to Commission and Committee leadership. The goal is to improve communication among the Commission and to facilitate the conduct of business in the absence of the Spring NEC and National Convention, both cancelled.
- On Tuesday, May 12, NSPA Jeff Steele participated in the Conservative Working Group weekly teleconference hosted by Republican leadership in the Senate.
- On Wednesday, May 13, NSPA Jeff Steele participated in a DoD/VA Survivors Forum, held quarterly, which works as a clearinghouse for information on government and private sector programs and policies affecting surviving families. The three hour event included multiple government agencies, VSOs, and non-profit organizations that presented various legislative and procedural changes to Survivor Benefits. The Department of Defense (DoD) participated in the forum by presenting on DoD Casualty & Mortality Programs and Policies, military Retired pay in conjunction with Survivor Benefits. Other topics consisted of future changes that will be applied to School Certification and mental health services. A healthy conversation surrounding grief management and emotional healing tools were also discussed by non-profit organizations that were found to be helpful from participants on the call.
- On Thursday, May 14, DC Executive Director Chanin Nuntavong and NSPA Jeff Steele participated in a MSO/VSO conference call with DOD Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Matthew P. Donovan. Provided was update on DOD's response to COVID-19, including efforts to ensure readiness, force protection, and health of service

members, their families, the civilian workforce, and the American public across the nation and world. 61,000 service members are currently engaged in the fight and there are encouraging signs. Also discussed was how strategic competitors like China are continuing to exploit the crisis. Finally, concern was expressed that the very expensive legislation to address the crisis will put downward pressure on the DOD budget going forward. The Pentagon has requested top line growth of 4 to 5 % in order to implement the National Defense Strategy. However, budget cuts in military spending are likely as a \$4 trillion deficit looms for FY20. DOD was already looking at flat budgets through 2021, which has caused it to have to take some risks as it tries to juggle divesting in high-maintenance legacy systems with military spending for future programs while maintaining readiness to handle a possible peer conflict with Russia and/or China.

- On Thursday, May 14, NSPA Jeff Steele participated in a new virtual program entitled "SITREP Speaker Series," which provides the opportunity for senior Navy leadership to address a national audience, and take questions on the record, about what the Navy is doing to defend our freedom and protect our way of life. It featured the Assistant Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans and Strategy (N3/N5), Rear Admiral Karl Thomas, and the Surgeon General of the Navy, Rear Admiral Bruce Gillingham. During the event, the speakers provided an update on what has been learned during the COVID pandemic and how the Navy is adjusting. Specifically, Rear Admiral Thomas elaborated on the changes to Navy operations, both ashore and afloat. Rear Admiral Gillingham discussed how Navy's medical providers have adjusted to confront the pandemic and how medical guidance has changed based on lessons learned.

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division