

## **Weekly Report**

National Security Division

*Week ending 20 Dec 2019*

### **National Security Strategy:**

1. **Protect the homeland, the American people, and the American way of life**
2. **Promote American prosperity**
3. **Preserve peace through strength**
4. **Advance American influence**

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### **National Defense Strategy:**

1. **Rebuilding military readiness as we build a more lethal Joint Force**
2. **Strengthening alliances as we attract new partners**
3. **Reforming the Department's business practices for greater performance and affordability**

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## **Milley Details DOD Operations Throughout the Middle East**

(Readiness)



Live Mortar during operations in Southern Afghanistan, Oct 2019

The Defense Department adheres to clear goals in the region that are set forth in the National Security Strategy, GEN Milley (Chairman Joint Chiefs Of Staff) said:

- A stable and secure Middle East;
- A Middle East that is not a safe haven and breeding ground for violent extremists;
- A Middle East that is not dominated by a nation hostile to the United States; and
- A Middle East that contributes to a stable, global energy market.

The National Defense Strategy provides military objectives to deter destabilizing activities by Iran and violent extremist organizations, the general said. In turn, he told the panel, the National Military Strategy describes how the joint force achieves NDS objectives with five areas of focus:

- Responding to threats;
  - Deterring strategic attack, including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;
  - Deterring conventional attack;
  - Assuring allies and partners; and
  - Competing below the level of armed conflict.
- Milley gave the committee an overview of DOD's current operations in the Middle East.

In Syria, he said, combined operations with the Syrian Democratic Forces continue toward completing the enduring defeat of ISIS and preventing its reemergence, he said.

"We will maintain the strategic depth of the joint force in the region in order to deter Iran, assure our partners, and if necessary, respond if deterrence fails," he said. In broad terms, Milley said, the military strategy in the Middle East is part of an interagency, international effort to sustain the conditions-based approach.

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## **U.S., Czech Republic Agree to Sale of Helicopters**

(Department of Defense: Partnership)

Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper and Czech Defense Minister Lubomir Metnar met at the Pentagon to finalize the sale of eight UH-1Y Venom utility helicopters and four AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters.

The sale, which Esper said was a "historic moment," totals about \$650 million and is the Czech Republic's largest military purchase from the U.S.

This procurement supports the National Defense Strategy objectives of strengthening alliances as well as countering Russian influence, highlights consolidated gains made over the past 30 years as the Czech Republic modernizes its armed forces and demonstrates the strength of the U.S.-Czech Republic defense relationship, a defense official said. Both leaders said the U.S. and the Czech Republic share many security interests.

"We continue to stand united as NATO allies to deter an increasingly aggressive Russia. We will also continue to work together to address the threats and challenges posed by China, especially with regard to 5G technology," Esper said. He noted the department's appreciation for the Czech Republic's leadership in calling attention to the security of 5G networks in Europe.

### **Things to Know About the U.S.-Czech Relationship:**

1. This year marked the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution — which began Nov. 17, 1989 — and the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia.
2. The Czech Republic joined NATO on March 12, 1999, alongside former Soviet states Poland and Hungary.
3. In 2018, the Czech Republic marked 25 years of partnership with the Nebraska and Texas National Guards.

4. The Czech Republic contributes forces in Afghanistan, to the enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia and Lithuania, the Kosovo Force, and to the coalition to defeat ISIS.
5. The Czech Republic has increased its defense spending by about 13% annually since 2017. It is on track to reach 1.4% of its gross domestic product for defense spending by 2021 and has announced a plan to reach the committed 2% by 2024.

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## **U.S. Will Withdraw From Syria When Local Forces Can Keep ISIS in Check**

(National Defense Strategy: Strengthening alliances)

U.S. forces in Syria will leave when local forces are capable of keeping ISIS in check on their own, Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper said.

"In short, the mission remains the enduring defeat of ISIS," Esper told the House Armed Services Committee today during a hearing on U.S. policy in Syria and the broader region. U.S. forces in Syria are working in partnership with the Syrian Democratic Forces, he noted.

"The SDF has been a great partner in the sense of providing very capable ground forces," Esper told the panel. "What we provide for them are the enablers — principally, the air support and intelligence, things like that — that help us defeat ISIS as we see ISIS pops up."

U.S. forces are fighting ISIS from Africa into Afghanistan, Esper said. "The metric we have set out for this in terms of when we could consider redeploying ... would be when we feel confident that local security and police forces are capable of handling any type of resurgence ... of ISIS," he added.

"The Department of Defense remains committed to working with our partners to ensure ISIS is unable to mount a resurgence," the secretary said.

### **The secretary laid out six objectives for the U.S. military in the Middle East:**

1. Using dynamic U.S. military presence with strategic depth to deter and, if necessary, respond to aggression;
2. Strengthening the defensive capabilities of regional partners;
3. Advancing partnerships and burden-sharing with allies and partners to address shared security concerns;
4. Protecting freedom of navigation;
5. Denying safe haven to terrorists that threaten the homeland; and
6. Mitigating threats posed by weapons of mass destruction.

"As the DOD continues to implement the [National Security Strategy], the stability of the Middle East remains important to our nation's security," Esper said. "As such, we will continue to calibrate all of our actions to deter conflict, to avoid unintended escalation, and to enable our partners to defend themselves against regional aggressors. In doing so, we will preserve the hard-won gains of the past and ensure the security of the United States and our vital interests."

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## **US says it won't accept North Korea-set nuclear deadline**

A senior U.S. diplomat from Seoul, South Korea stated Washington will not accept a year-end deadline set by the North Koreans. The dead line pertains to Pyongyang and the nuclear concessions and a return to negotiating immediately. "On this point, let me be absolutely clear: The United states does not have a deadline," Stephen Biegun, the U.S. special representative for North Korea, told reporters. "We are fully aware of the strong potential for North Korea to conduct a major provocation in the days ahead. To say the least, such an action will be most unhelpful in achieving lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula." Biegun went on to say, "Let me speak directly to our counterparts in North Korea: It is time for us to do our jobs. Let's get this done. We are here. And you know how to reach us."

It is at this point and time the U.S. and North Koreans widening differences are becoming more apparent. It is unclear is the North Koreans are willing to even entertain peace talks let alone the U.S. and its pursuit of denuclearization of North Korea. Senior officials in North Korean have recently said denuclearization is already off the negotiating table and have even threatened a lift on self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests.

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## **AFRICOM's 60<sup>th</sup> airstrike in Somalia this year takes out terrorist**

The U.S. Africa Command and the government in of Somalia in conjunction, conducted an airstrike targeting an al-Shabaab terrorist in Dujuma, Somalia (southwest of Mogadishu) Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>. During the airstrike one terrorist has been confirmed dead and zero civilian casualties.



“The removal of al-Shabaab terrorist increases the security of the Somali people as these terrorists indiscriminately attack and extort innocent civilians and destabilize the elected government,” said Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Bradford J. Gering, AFRICOM’s deputy director of operations. “The Somali National Army and their partners have made significant strides in targeting al-Shabaab terrorists in order to deny them the ability to plot attacks against the people of Somalia.”

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## Historical perspective

### Esper, Milley Commemorate Battle of the Bulge 75th Anniversary

Military and civilian dignitaries from Europe and the United States were in Belgium (127 December 2019) to mark the anniversary of one of the most important battles of World War II: the Battle of the Bulge.

"There are times we must say, 'No,'" King Philippe of Belgium said in Bastogne, Belgium. "'No' to the extreme evil perpetrated by a hateful ideology. This is what we did together 75 years ago."

Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper and Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, attended the ceremony at Belgium's Mardasson Memorial. They met six veterans of the famed battle at the ceremony.

The battle marked the second time in World War II that Nazi forces stormed through the Belgian Ardennes forest. In May 1940, the first attack broke through and resulted in the British being chased from Europe and France being defeated.

In 1944, the Nazis' tanks ran into the U.S. Army.



More than 5,000 U.S. Service members who fought in the Battle of the Bulge are buried in the Luxembourg American Cemetery.

**The battle was the largest Army operation of the war. By its end in January, 10,733 Allied soldiers were dead, 42,316 had been wounded and 22,636 were missing in action.**

The German attack began the night of Dec. 16, 1944, with a German artillery barrage followed by multiple Panzer divisions. It was a complete surprise to the divisions holding the line in the Ardennes. Hitler's vision was to split the Allied force and drive to Antwerp, Belgium.

Adding to the Germans' advantage was the weather: Because it was cloudy and foggy, Allied planes could not fly.

The U.S. formations were splintered, and many units lost cohesion. Yet, many more stood their ground and fought until they were overwhelmed. Each battle delayed the German timetable and gave time for reinforcements to come in.

One of those units was the 101st Airborne Division, which was rushed to Bastogne to stop the Wehrmacht — Germany's collective armed forces — from taking that crucial road junction.

The division, known as the "Screaming Eagles," were completely besieged by German forces and carried out one of the most heroic defenses ever recorded in history, Esper said at the Bastogne memorial.

The Germans called on the 101st to surrender, but the commander — then Brig. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe — just replied, "Nuts."

"The American troops beat back repeated infantry attacks from all directions," Esper said. "News of their fierce defense quickly spread, boosting morale of Allied forces all along the Western Front."

The history of the battle is full of superlatives. Tanks broke through to Bastogne on Dec. 26, 1944. The weather cleared, and allied aircraft ripped the German armor and supply lines.

But the real reason for victory wasn't the technology or the plan; it was the heroism and fortitude of American soldiers. "The Americans who fought here were led by some of our most revered military leaders of the time, but it was ultimately the intrepid and indomitable spirit of the American soldier that fueled us to victory," Esper said. "In World War II, America was willing to commit everything we had to preserve freedom," the secretary continued. "And on this ground, where the outcome of the Battle of the Bulge hung in the balance, American troops forged an incredible victory that assured the Nazi regime's defeat."

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## ***POW/MIA Update***

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency made 5 new announcements. Click on the links to read more:

News Releases

December 17, 2019

[\*Soldier Accounted For From Korean War \(Hummel, J.\)\*](#)

[\*Soldier Accounted For From Korean War \(Blosser, J.\)\*](#)

December 16, 2019

[\*Pilot Accounted For From World War II \(Johnson, G.\)\*](#)

[\*Soldier Accounted For From World War II \(Phillips, J.V.\)\*](#)

December 13, 2019

[\*Pilot Accounted For From World War II \(Twedt, L.\)\*](#)

## ***Staff Activities***

- This week staff continued to developed briefing and sponsor pages for National Security Commission programs. These sheets will be used by the Marketing Division to seek corporate donors to fund The American Legion's National Security programs that promote community
- Friday, staff attending a round table meeting at the Pentagon hosted by the Secretary of the Air Force and senior leadership from the Air Force. The discussion covered an array of topics to include quality of life for Airmen, changes to healthcare, addressing toxic exposures, recruiting and retention, cybersecurity, and the Secretary's vision for the Air Force.
- Staff attended a briefing on Americas longest war Afghanistan at the Brookings Institute. Following the collapse of peace talks with the Taliban in September, the U.S. military has scaled up attacks on the Taliban in Afghanistan, with allied warplanes dropping bombs and firing missiles at a record pace in the 18-year-old war. Despite enduring and broad consensus that the protracted stalemate in Afghanistan will be resolved through negotiations with the Taliban, the contours of an agreement remain elusive. Moreover, with President Trump eager to fulfill his campaign promise to draw back U.S. military personnel in the Middle East and a public ever-wary of America's longest war, U.S. policy toward Afghanistan in the final year of President Trump's first term in office is unclear, and the risk of spiraling violence and instability remains high.

***Freddy Gessner, Acting Director, National Security Division***