



CHINFO NEWS CLIPS

Navy and Marine Corps Daily Media Report

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

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This Day in Navy and Marine Corps History:

1967 - The first woman Marine to report to Vietnam for duty, Master Sergeant Barbara J. Dulinsky, began her 18-hour flight to Bien Hoa, 30 miles north of Saigon. MSgt Dulinsky and the other officer and enlisted Women Marines that followed were assigned to the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) based in Saigon. Most worked with the Marine Corps Personnel Section providing administrative support to Marines assigned as far north as the DMZ, but two Lieutenant Colonels, Ruth Reinholz and Ruth O'Holleran, served as historians with the Military History Branch, Secretary Joint Staff, MACV.

Executive Summary:

- Trade press reported about the release of the Department of the Navy Unmanned Campaign Framework.
- National and trade press coverage of Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken's trip to the Indo-Pacific continued.
- OSD published a memo on the promotion and protection of the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons.

SECDEF:

1. Promoting and Protecting the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World

Memorandum For Senior Pentagon Leadership, Commanders Of The Combatant Commands, Defense Agency And DoD Field Activity Directors

(DEFENSE.GOV 16 MAR 21)

On February 4, 2021, the President issued a memorandum (TAB A) directing all U.S. departments and agencies that engage abroad or are involved in foreign aid, assistance, and development programs to undertake a number of actions related to promoting and protecting the human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI+) persons.

GREAT POWER COMPETITION:

2. In Tokyo, U.S. Officials Adopt Harsh Language On Beijing's Activities

American and Japanese officials issued a two-page statement that left little doubt that President Biden would defy Beijing in territorial disputes, challenges to democracy and other regional crises.

(NEW YORK TIMES 17 MAR 21) ... Lara Jakes, Motoko Rich and John Ismay

TOKYO — Just days before the Biden administration's first face-to-face encounter with Beijing, two senior American envoys used a visit to Tokyo on Tuesday to set a confrontational tone for the talks, rebuking what they called "coercion" and "destabilizing actions" by China in its increasingly aggressive military forays in the region.

3. Japan, U.S. Officials Share Their Challenges With China In Tokyo Talks

(ASSOCIATED PRESS 16 MAR 21) ... Mari Yamaguchi

TOKYO — Japan and the United States joined forces Tuesday to criticize China's "coercion and aggression" in Asia as senior ministers from both countries held their first in-person talks since President Joe Biden took office in January.

4. SOUTHCOM's Faller: China Used Pandemic to Expand 'Corrosive, Insidious Influence' in Central, South America, U.S. Influence 'Eroding'

(USNI NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... John Grady

China has used the COVID-19 pandemic to rapidly expand its "corrosive, insidious influence" – from money laundering for transnational gangsters to using its own ships to illegally fish protected waters and benefit from illegal logging and mining – "in our neighborhood," U.S. Southern Command's top officer said Tuesday.

5. Four-Stars Tell Senators More Resources Are Needed To Compete With China, Russia In Latin America, Arctic

(STARS AND STRIPES 16 MAR 21) ... Corey Dickstein

The U.S. military needs more resources in Central and South America and the Arctic region to counter increasing Chinese and Russian activities in those areas, the top U.S. military officers in charge of operations in the Western Hemisphere testified Tuesday.

6. Taiwan Bolsters South China Sea Deployments, Gets U.S. Submarine Parts Approval

(REUTERS 16 MAR 21) ... Yimou Lee and Ben Blanchard

TAIPEI -- Taiwan's newly-appointed defence minister said on Wednesday it has strengthened deployments in the disputed South China Sea and that the United States has approved the export of sensitive technology to equip Taiwan's new submarine fleet.

7. Japan, U.S. Express "Serious Concerns" Over China Coast Guard Law

(KYODO NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... Junko Horiuchi

Japanese foreign and defense ministers and their U.S. counterparts expressed Tuesday "serious concerns" about a Chinese law that took effect recently enabling its coast guard ships to fire on vessels around the Beijing-claimed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

8. Pentagon Pushes For Bigger Effort To Deter China's Growing Military Might

(NPR 16 MAR 21) ... Tom Bowman

The Chinese pilots push the throttles on their heavy bombers as the music in the video builds to dramatic, Hollywood-style swirling strings. Radios crackle while the planes rise and stream across the ocean. Suddenly, missiles unleash with a whoosh. Fireballs and bouncing debris rise from the targets: Hawaii and Guam.

9. Ukraine Scraps Deal With China, In a Nod to U.S.

Washington had urged Kyiv to halt Chinese acquisition of Motor Sich; move risks backlash from Beijing

(WALL STREET JOURNAL 17 MAR 21) ... Brett Forrest and Alan Cullison

Ukraine plans to nationalize a prominent aerospace manufacturer and cancel its acquisition by China, after the U.S. opposed the deal to keep critical defense technology out of Beijing's hands.

FLEET READINESS:

10. USS Monterey Conducts Joint Patrol Exercise With Israeli Ships

(UPI 16 MAR 21) ... Christen McCurdy

The guided missile cruiser USS Monterey conducted joint maritime security patrol with the Israeli Sa'ar 4.5 ships in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea this week.

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT:

11. With Top U.S. Officials in Asia, North Korea Warns Against 'Causing a Stink'

The country took a confrontational stance against the United States in its first official remark directed at President Biden's administration.

(NEW YORK TIMES 17 MAR 21) ... Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL — North Korea issued its first warning shot against the Biden administration on Tuesday, denouncing Washington for going forward with joint military exercises with South Korea and raising "a stink" on the Korean Peninsula.

12. Austin, Blinken Travel To South Korea For Talks Expected To Cover North's Nuclear Ambitions

(STARS AND STRIPES 17 MAR 21) ... Seth Robson

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — North Korea's nuclear arsenal will likely be the focus of talks when the U.S. secretaries of Defense and State meet their South Korean counterparts Thursday in Seoul.

13. Defense Minister Expresses Regret Over N. Korea's Criticism Of Military Exercises

(YONHAP NEWS AGENCY 16 MAR 21) ... Oh Seok-min

SEOUL – South Korean Defense Minister Suh Wook said Tuesday North Korea's criticism of Seoul's military exercise with the United States was "regrettable."

14. U.S. General Says North Korea Might Flight Test New ICBM Design 'In The Near Future'

(REUTERS 16 MAR 21) ... Phil Stewart, Idrees Ali

WASHINGTON - North Korea might begin flight testing an improved design for its inter-continental ballistic missiles “in the near future,” the head of the U.S. military’s Northern Command said on Tuesday, a move that would sharply increase tensions between Pyongyang and Washington.

15. Iran Enriching Uranium With New Advanced Machine Type At Underground Plant -IAEA

(REUTERS 16 MAR 21) ... Francois Murphy

VIENNA - Iran has started enriching uranium at its underground Natanz plant with a second type of advanced centrifuge, the IR-4, the U.N. nuclear watchdog said in a report reviewed by Reuters on Tuesday, in a further breach of Tehran’s deal with major powers.

MARINE CORPS:

16. USMC Commandant Visits FRCE

(WCTI-TV ABC NEW BERN 16 MAR 21) ... Annette Weston

Fleet Readiness Center East — The high-ranking United States Marine Corps officer paid a visit to Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point on Monday.

17. Marine Veteran, Once Held In Iranian Jail, Fights Espionage Claims

(ASSOCIATED PRESS 16 MAR 21) ... Eric Tucker

After Amir Hekmati was released from Iranian custody in a 2016 deal trumpeted as a diplomatic breakthrough, he was declared eligible for \$20 million in compensation from a special U.S. government fund.

18. Marine Corps Looks To Stabilize Shore At Sinking Hawaii Range

(MARINE CORPS TIMES 16 MAR 21) ... Philip Athey

Rising sea levels has put the Pu’uloa Range Training Facility on Marine Corps Base Hawaii at risk of going underwater — and has the Marine Corps weighing its options.

CORONAVIRUS:

19. About One-Third Of Troops And Residents At Guantánamo Bay Are Fully Vaccinated

(NEW YORK TIMES 16 MAR 21) ... Carol Rosenberg

More than two months into a campaign to give shots to troops and other essential residents at Guantánamo Bay, about one-third of the people who live at the remote naval station in Cuba have been fully vaccinated, according to Department of Defense figures.

20. Naval Medical Center Portsmouth Ramps Up Efforts To Vaccinate Military Personnel

(WAVY-TV 16 MAR 21) ... Tamara Scott

PORTSMOUTH, Va. — Efforts to get members of the military vaccinated against COVID-19 are ramping up.

21. Naval Academy Sets Punishments to Stop Mids Violating Strict COVID Restrictions

(CAPITAL GAZETTE 16 MAR 21) ... Heather Mongilio

The first time a midshipman violated the Naval Academy’s rules intended to slow the spread of COVID 19 they face getting demerits, enough to be considered a major discipline offense but something like a parking ticket.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE:

22. Top Pentagon Research Arm Combats ‘Aggressive’ Foreign Investors

(CAISRNET 16 MAR 21) ... Andrew Eversden

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon’s lead innovation office expanded its business accelerator to compete against “aggressive” foreign investment possibly tied to unfriendly governments and instead is courting U.S. investors to push its desired products to market.

23. Army Focuses On Defending And Fighting In Arctic Region With New Strategy

(STARS AND STRIPES 16 MAR 21) ... Caitlin M. Kenney

WASHINGTON — The Army needs to reinvigorate how it trains, equips and positions troops in the Arctic region as competition with Russia and China grows, according to the service’s new strategy document released Tuesday.

ALLIES & PARTNERS:

24. Britain Will Boost Nuclear Stockpile

After its departure from the European Union, the U.K. seeks more sway in the Indo-Pacific region

(WALL STREET JOURNAL 17 MAR 21) ... Max Colchester

LONDON—The British government laid out plans to increase its stockpile of nuclear weapons as part of a shift in defense policy that recognizes that the world order it helped forge in the wake of World War II is crumbling.

EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE:

25. Dual Letters From Congress Signal Hill Headed for Defense Spending Showdown

(USNI NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... Mallory Shelbourne

A debate between lawmakers over defense spending is brewing, as a group of progressive House members push for cuts to the defense budget while others argue for a boost to shipbuilding.

26. Luria: Navy Should Not Decommission Ships Early In Favor Of New Construction

(USNI NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... John Grady

Decommissioning ships that have viable service life at a faster rate than industry can build new ones is not how the Navy should grow the fleet, the vice chairwoman of the House Armed Services Committee said Monday.

27. House Democrats Want A Fast Repeal Of 2002 Iraq War Authorization

(VIRGINIAN-PILOT 16 MAR 21) ... Rachel Oswald

WASHINGTON — Leading House Democrats are making plans to begin repealing and replacing the anti-terrorism authorizations to use military force that have been on the books for nearly two decades.

CAPABILITIES (ACQUISITION AND INNOVATION):

28. Why You Should Trust Drone Ships And Unmanned Tech, According To The Navy

(MILITARY.COM 16 MAR 21) ... Gina Harkins

Navy and Marine Corps leaders have produced a new 40-page "campaign plan" to better explain to Congress, the public and even members of their own forces why unmanned ships and aircraft are not to be feared.

29. Navy, Marines Unveil How They Will Buy and Operate Future Pilotless Aircraft and Crewless Ships

(USNI NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... Megan Eckstein

The sea services see themselves moving toward a future where they are just as likely to perform a mission with an unmanned platform as a manned one, based on the specifics of the mission and what assets are available. A third of the Navy's fleet and half of Marine Corps aviation could be unmanned under this hybrid vision the two services are pursuing, which they argue in a new Department of the Navy Unmanned Campaign Framework is necessary to stay ahead of adversary capabilities without breaking the bank.

30. Navy, Marine Corps Release Unmanned Campaign Plan

(SEAPOWERS MAGAZINE 16 MAR 21)

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps released on March 16 the Unmanned Campaign framework, which presents their strategy for making unmanned systems a trusted and integral part of warfighting.

31. U.S. Navy Conducts First Aircraft Carrier F135 Module VERTREP At Sea

(NAVAL TECHNOLOGY 16 MAR 21)

The US Navy has successfully conducted the first aircraft carrier F135 engine power module proof-of-concept vertical replenishment (VERTREP) at sea.

PERSONNEL READINESS & VETERANS:

32. Sailor Dies From Apparent Self-Inflicted Gunshot Wound Aboard Submarine In Pearl Harbor

(STARS AND STRIPES 16 MAR 21) ... Wyatt Olson

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A sailor died Monday from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound while on duty aboard a submarine at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, the Navy said in a news release Tuesday.

ENVIRONMENTAL/INSTALLATIONS:

33. Coast Guard, Navy Help Rescue Cold-Stunned Turtles, Return Them to Warmer Waters

(SEAPOWERS MAGAZINE 16 MAR 21) ... Edward Lundquist

Texas recently experienced record-breaking cold temperatures, causing the largest cold-stunning event for sea turtles in the state's history. As the water temperature dropped to the mid-30s Fahrenheit, thousands of turtles were found stranded on beaches or floating in the water.

NAVAL HISTORY:

34. What It Was Like For Marines Responding To One Of The Worst Nuclear Disasters In History

"This set the conditions on how we were going to take care of our friends."

(TASK & PURPOSE 16 MAR 21) ... David Roza

Lt. Col. Giuseppe Stavale was in a situation no parent wants to be in. It was early afternoon on March 11, 2011, and a massive earthquake, followed by a 140-foot tall tsunami, had just struck the coast of northeast Japan. The city of Tokyo, where Stavale was stationed, was shaking around him, and he could not find his teenage daughter.

35. Repairs Underway To Save The Decommissioned Destroyer The Sullivans From Taking On Water

(ASSOCIATED PRESS 16 MAR 21) ... Carolyn Thompson

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Keeping the Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park from going under during the pandemic has been hard enough without also having to worry about keeping one of its star attractions afloat.

COMMENTARY:

36. The Next World War Won't Be Like The Last

(WASHINGTON POST 17 MAR 21) ... James Stavridis and Elliot Ackerman

Imagine a crisis with China that escalates into a world war 10 years or so from now. Would the United States stand a chance in such a conflict?

37. The Military Could Soon Face a Flag Officer Talent Crisis

Senior leader pay is seriously out of sync with the risks and responsibilities that come with the positions.

(DEFENSE NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... Col. Charles Luke

Military service members received a heralded 3% pay increase under the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, but this increase camouflaged the continued stagnation in general and flag officer pay stemming from provisions in the 2015 NDAA six years prior. That law limits the pay of generals and admirals (officers in pay grades O7 and above) to the Executive Level II salary level for civilians.

38. Biden Hopes "Alliance Math" Adds Up To Security And Stability

(KYODO NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... James L. Schoff

U.S. President Joe Biden and his administration are breaking out onto Asia's diplomatic stage in a big way, beginning with the first-ever leaders' meeting of the "Quad" (the United States, Japan, Australia and India) last Friday and followed by back-to-back foreign and defense minister meetings ("two-plus-two") this week in Tokyo and Seoul featuring Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. Never have two-plus-twos been arranged so early in a new administration, and they were not held even once during the Trump administration with South Korea.

SECDEF:

1. Promoting and Protecting the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World

Memorandum For Senior Pentagon Leadership, Commanders Of The Combatant Commands, Defense Agency And DoD Field Activity Directors

(DEFENSE.GOV 16 MAR 21)

On February 4, 2021, the President issued a memorandum (TAB A) directing all U.S. departments and agencies that engage abroad or are involved in foreign aid, assistance, and development programs to undertake a number of actions related to promoting and protecting the human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI+) persons.

The DoD is defined in the Presidential Memorandum as both an agency engaged abroad and an agency involved in foreign aid, assistance, and development programs. In accordance with the Presidential Memorandum, it is the policy of the DoD to pursue an end to violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics, and DoD will lead by example in the cause of advancing the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons around the world. To effect this policy and as directed in the Presidential Memorandum, as consistent with applicable law and within their responsibilities, DoD Components shall:

- Strengthen existing efforts to combat the criminalization by foreign governments of LGBTQI+ status or conduct and expand efforts to combat discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, and intolerance on the basis of LGBTQI+ status or conduct.
- Expand ongoing efforts to ensure regular DoD engagement with governments, citizens, civil society, and the private sector to promote respect for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons and combat discrimination.

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- Consider the impact of programs funded by DoD on human rights, including the rights of LGBTQI+ persons, when making funding decisions.
- Strengthen the work DoD has done and initiate additional efforts with other nations, bilaterally and within multilateral fora and international organizations, to: counter discrimination on the basis of LGBTQI+ status or conduct; broaden the number of countries willing to support and defend the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons; strengthen the role, including in multilateral fora, of civil society advocates on behalf of the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons; and strengthen the policies and programming of multilateral institutions, including with respect to protecting vulnerable LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers.

By April 15, 2021, all DoD Components shall: (1) review and, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, take steps to rescind any directives, orders, regulations, policies, or guidance inconsistent with the President's Memorandum and (2) shall review and report on the progress of implementation of the President's Memorandum and recommend additional opportunities and actions to advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons around the world. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy will provide further guidance to support the above requirements.

<https://media.defense.gov/2021/Mar/16/2002601566/-1/-1/0/PROMOTING-AND-PROTECTING-THE-HUMAN-RIGHTS-OF-LGBTQI+-PERSONS-AROUND-THE-WORLD.PDF>

GREAT POWER COMPETITION:

2. In Tokyo, U.S. Officials Adopt Harsh Language On Beijing's Activities

American and Japanese officials issued a two-page statement that left little doubt that President Biden would defy Beijing in territorial disputes, challenges to democracy and other regional crises.

(NEW YORK TIMES 17 MAR 21) ... Lara Jakes, Motoko Rich and John Ismay

TOKYO — Just days before the Biden administration's first face-to-face encounter with Beijing, two senior American envoys used a visit to Tokyo on Tuesday to set a confrontational tone for the talks, rebuking what they called "coercion" and "destabilizing actions" by China in its increasingly aggressive military forays in the region.

Following a flurry of meetings, U.S. and Japanese officials issued a two-page statement that left little doubt that President Biden would defy China in territorial disputes, challenges to democracy and other regional crises. Its robust censure of Beijing represented the kind of vigorous approach that Japan has been seeking from the United States after four years of skepticism worldwide about whether America would remain a reliable ally.

Accusing Beijing of violating the "international order" with maritime claims and activities, the statement defended Japan's right to administer the uninhabited Senkaku Islands, which are also claimed by China. It also called for stability in the Taiwan Strait, as some U.S. military officials see a growing chance that China will move to assert sovereignty over self-governing Taiwan in the coming years.

After the Japanese defense minister, Nobuo Kishi, referred to an "increasingly tense security environment" at the start of a meeting on Tuesday, the two U.S. officials, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, offered reassurance.

"We will push back when necessary when China uses coercion or aggression to try to get its way," Mr. Blinken said.

Mr. Austin noted Beijing's "destabilizing actions" in the South and East China Seas, saying, "Our goal is to make sure that we maintain a competitive edge over China or anyone else that would want to threaten us or our alliance."

Taken together, the Americans' statements amounted to the most explicit admonishment in recent years by U.S. diplomats of Chinese provocations toward Japan and the rest of the region. They offered a taste of what is likely to come on Thursday, when Mr. Blinken is to meet in Alaska with two top Chinese officials in the Biden administration's opening bid to define the limits of its relationship with Beijing.

For Japan, the meetings — the highest-level foreign travel so far by the new administration — offered comfort for those who had worried that Mr. Biden might back down from the Trump administration's tough stance against Beijing.

"I think the message is directed to the Japanese people," said Toshiyuki Ito, a retired vice admiral who is now a professor of crisis management and international relations at Kanazawa Institute of Technology. He added that the visit by Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin signaled that "America has changed from 'America First' to putting importance on the alliance."

Near the top of the agenda for Japan was the Senkaku, a string of rocky outcrops in the East China Sea. For years, China has sent boats into or near Japan's territorial waters around the disputed islands, known as the Diaoyu in China. Tensions flared in 2012, when activists landed on one of the islands, and frequent incursions have continued since.

American officials have voiced concern that Chinese and Japanese coast guard forces could be drawn into a shooting match as they patrol the island chain and are authorized by their governments to use deadly force to defend them. Last year, Chinese ships spent a total of 333 days in Japan's contiguous waters, the longest time on record, according to the Japanese Coast Guard.

A senior U.S. defense official also noted repeated incursions by Chinese military aircraft into Japan's "air defense identification zone" — an area that extends hundreds of miles from the Japanese mainland and includes the Senkakus — which are often met by Japanese fighter jets.

Tensions have also recently flared in the Taiwan Strait. In January, China flew four warplanes over the waterway, in what was widely interpreted as a show of force just after Mr. Biden took office.

Last week, the commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command warned of China's growing threat to Taiwan, a democratically governed island that has increasingly resisted Beijing's insistence that it is part of a "greater China."

The commander, Adm. Philip S. Davidson, said China's threat to Taiwan "is manifest in this decade — in fact, in the next six years." The next day, an American destroyer passed through the Taiwan Strait — the third such voyage since Mr. Biden came into office, signaling support of Taiwan.

U.S. officials have sought to cast the talks this week with China in Anchorage — which will come after Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin travel to Seoul for meetings with South Korean officials — as an informal session to outline issues on which the United States may be willing to work with Beijing. But they will also offer a chance to condemn China's territorial encroachments and its threats against human rights and democracy in the region.

The joint statement issued on Tuesday cited "serious concerns" regarding Beijing's human rights abuses against protesters in Hong Kong and against Uighurs and other minority groups in the western region of Xinjiang.

A day earlier, before Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin had landed in Tokyo, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry urged the United States to "stop interfering in China's internal affairs" and instead cooperate to manage differences and improve relations between the two superpowers.

"Certain countries have been so keen to exaggerate and hype up the so-called 'China threat' to sow discord among regional countries, especially to disrupt their relations with China," said the spokesman, Zhao Lijian. "However, their actions, running counter to the trend of the times of peace, development and cooperation and the common aspirations of the countries and peoples in the region, will not be welcomed or succeed."

During the Trump years, amid the aggressive rhetoric from the administration, Japan sought to balance its relationship with China, drawing closer to its neighbor as a hedge against growing unease about a smaller American presence in the region.

In 2018, the prime minister at the time, Shinzo Abe, traveled to Beijing, the first visit there by a Japanese leader in seven years. Before the pandemic, the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, was invited to Japan for a state visit. Even last year, as Chinese military aggression expanded and Beijing cracked down on Hong Kong, Japan pursued a lighter approach to China, its largest trading partner.

Now, with the Biden administration in place and with China growing increasingly assertive, Japan seems more willing to join with the United States in its unequivocal criticism of China's actions.

Mr. Kishi, the defense minister, said that Japan could "absolutely not accept" China's actions to increase tensions in the East and South China Seas, and indicated they were violating international laws.

Yet the Japanese foreign minister, Toshimitsu Motegi, was less overt in criticizing China.

While Mr. Blinken explicitly singled out China — and Myanmar, where the military staged a coup last month — for threatening "democracy, human rights and rule of law," Mr. Motegi avoided mentioning China directly. He said that he welcomed the alliance for its role in protecting "peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific."

Analysts said Japan may temper its language because it has more to lose from confrontation with China.

"One big difference is their economic relationships with China," said Narushige Michishita, vice president of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo. "While the U.S. can live without China, Japan cannot. They have to find a common ground there."

The high-level visit from Washington sought, in part, to remind Japan that it shares much common ground with the United States. That it was the first official trip overseas for both Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin since taking office was repeated several times on Tuesday to assure Japan of its value to the Biden administration.

The alliance with Japan never suffered as much damage under the Trump administration as U.S. partnerships in

Europe. Mr. Abe maintained a close relationship with Mr. Trump and hosted him for two visits to Japan. Last October, when then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, the two exchanged a fist bump that lasted 15 seconds.

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3. Japan, U.S. Officials Share Their Challenges With China In Tokyo Talks

(ASSOCIATED PRESS 16 MAR 21) ... Mari Yamaguchi

TOKYO — Japan and the United States joined forces Tuesday to criticize China’s “coercion and aggression” in Asia as senior ministers from both countries held their first in-person talks since President Joe Biden took office in January.

Aside from the sharp rhetoric aimed at Beijing, the meeting in Tokyo and a planned stop next in Seoul are as much an effort by the Biden administration to reassure worried allies in Asia after four years of occasionally confrontational dealings with the Trump administration.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, after holding the so-called “two plus two” security talks with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and their Japanese counterparts — Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi — said democracy and human rights in the region are being challenged and the United States will push with its partners for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Blinken said the Biden administration is committed to work with U.S. allies and those in the region as they face challenges from China and its ally North Korea, which is pursuing an illicit nuclear weapons program.

“We will push back if necessary, when China uses coercion or aggression to get its way,” he said.

In a joint statement released after the talks, the ministers shared strong worry over Beijing’s human rights violations in Xinjiang, “unlawful maritime claims and activities in the South China Sea” and “unilateral action that seeks to change the status quo” over the Japan-controlled East China Sea islands that China also claims. The statement also stressed the importance of “peace and stability” in the Taiwan Strait.

On the Biden administration’s first Cabinet-level trip abroad, Blinken and Austin also agreed with their Japanese counterparts to cooperate on the coronavirus pandemic and climate change, as well as the nuclear threat posed by North Korea and the situation in Myanmar after its military coup.

On Tuesday, a day after the two U.S. officials arrived, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s powerful sister warned the U.S. to “refrain from causing a stink” if it wants to “sleep in peace” for the next four years. She also criticized the U.S. and South Korea for holding military exercises.

Kim Yo Jong’s statement was North Korea’s first comments directed at the Biden administration.

Biden’s decision to send key ministers to Japan as their first overseas visit — rather than hosting Japanese officials in Washington — means a lot for Japan, which considers its alliance with the United States the cornerstone of its diplomatic and security policies.

Blinken, in his opening remarks at an earlier meeting with Motegi, said “it is no accident that we chose Japan for the first Cabinet-level overseas travel” of the Biden administration, and that he and Austin are “here to reaffirm our commitment to the alliance and to build on it.”

On Tuesday, when Mr. Suga met with Mr. Austin and Mr. Blinken at his official residence, they all bowed — as is the custom in Japan.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/16/world/asia/us-japan-china-talks.html>

He said the United States and its allies are working on together on climate change, cyber security and health security “in support of our shared values.”

Blinken also said that the United States and Japan reaffirmed the importance of their three-way partnership with South Korea, though the ministers did not publicly mention the strained relations between Tokyo and Seoul over wartime compensation issues.

South Korea and Japan have been struggling to repair relations that sank in 2019 following South Korean court rulings that ordered Japanese companies to pay reparations for forced labor during World War II. Those rulings led to trade curbs by both countries and Seoul threatened to scrap a bilateral military intelligence-sharing agreement that was a major symbol of the countries’ three-way security cooperation in the region.

Since then, Japan and U.S. have changed leaders, leaving hope for improved relations.

Austin referenced “China’s destabilizing actions” and said it was a “a pacing challenge” for his department. He said the allies need to develop operational capability to respond quickly to a security threat like China.

“We know that competing in today’s shifting global dynamics, can only be done through the spirit of teamwork and cooperation, which are the hallmarks of our alliance with Japan,” he said.

Kishi said Japan, which has increasingly worked side-by-side with the U.S. military, will bolster extended deterrence and readiness across domains including space and cybersecurity by deepening coordination and aligning security policies.

Japan’s constitution prohibits the use of force in settling international disputes, and any attempt to increase its military capability is a sensitive issue in Asia.

Japan is also in a delicate diplomatic situation because its economy, like those of other countries in the region, heavily depends on China.

But Tokyo considers China’s escalating maritime activity in the region a security threat. Beijing has built manmade islands in the South China Sea and equipped them with military equipment and is pressing its claim to virtually all of the sea’s key fisheries and waterways. Japan opposes China’s claim to the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands, called Diaoyu in China, in the East China Sea and its increased activity in the disputed area.

China has denied it is expansionist and has said it is only defending its territorial rights.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian on Tuesday said U.S.- Japan dialogue “should not target or harm the interests of third parties.”

“The U.S. and Japan should engage in exchanges and cooperation that will help enhance mutual understanding and

mutual trust among regional countries, contribute to solidarity and cooperation, as well as peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region,” Zhao said at a daily briefing.

Later Tuesday, the American officials met with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who is expected to visit Washington sometime in the first half of April to meet with Biden in person — becoming the first foreign leader to do so since Biden became president in January.

In a move meant to signal his intention for the U.S. to more strongly engage with the Asia-Pacific region, Biden on Friday held a first virtual summit of the leaders from Australia, Japan, India and the United States, a grouping

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4. SOUTHCOM’s Faller: China Used Pandemic to Expand ‘Corrosive, Insidious Influence’ in Central, South America, U.S. Influence ‘Eroding’

(USNI NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... John Grady

China has used the COVID-19 pandemic to rapidly expand its “corrosive, insidious influence” – from money laundering for transnational gangsters to using its own ships to illegally fish protected waters and benefit from illegal logging and mining – “in our neighborhood,” U.S. Southern Command’s top officer said Tuesday.

“I can’t stress enough the full-court press” China has put on the Western Hemisphere by promoting itself as an effective vaccine distributor to combat the pandemic, underwriting 40 port expansions or developments, offering questionable loans and pressuring the few remaining countries who recognize Taiwan as an entity to drop diplomatic recognition of the island, SOUTHCOM’s Adm. Craig Faller told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

China is also using its economic leverage in the region to push Huawei’s 5G telecommunications network to control that expanding market, Faller said. The United States has long raised concerns with NATO allies and partners in the Pacific about the danger to their own national security in allowing Huawei to control their telecommunications systems.

“Our influence is eroding” in Latin America as China and Russia have stepped up their propaganda and disinformation campaigns there. He added the United States’ efforts in combating the pandemic by providing \$230 million to 28 countries in South America are often lost in the steady stream of Chinese propaganda over what it is doing. Russia, on the other hand, questions what lies behind American efforts in the region.

Faller said that during a recent meeting he had with representatives from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which both have interests in the Caribbean and South America, they compared the region to a lifeboat.

But it’s a “lifeboat that is sinking [because of] violence and Chinese influence.” At a press briefing in the Pentagon, Faller added the United States is particularly questioning Beijing’s involvement in port construction and development in South America. “Why would they be looking at blue-water and deep-water ports” unless they saw them as possible future military bases, he questioned.

This rapid expansion of Chinese activities in the hemisphere and their connections to transnational criminal activities caused the committee to schedule a classified hearing immediately following the public session.

known as the “Quad,” and emphasized Washington’s commitment to the region.

Blinken and Austin on Wednesday will head to South Korea, with the focus of those talks being North Korea and its nuclear ambitions.

Blinken will meet senior Chinese officials in Anchorage, Alaska, on his way back to Washington. Austin will go from Seoul to New Delhi for meetings with Indian leaders.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2021/03/16/japan-us-officials-share-their-challenges-with-china-in-tokyo-talks/>

In his opening remarks, Faller described the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact as the “perfect storm” that sent South America’s economies plummeting by more than 7 percent, setting off new waves of violence as gangs battle for control of the narcotics trade. That, in turn, set off waves of immigration to the United States from Central America. Further south, Venezuela – “with an economy in a tailspin” from the pandemic and U.S. sanctions – has seen millions of its citizens seek refuge in Colombia and Brazil. In addition, the transnational criminal organizations have created black-market supplies to meet demands for vaccines and medical supplies and equipment that the region needs.

He compared the economic collapse to the Great Depression in a press briefing later.

All this combines “to allow bad actors like China” to operate freely. He added Russia also sees opportunities to expand its reach in the hemisphere beyond Cuba and Venezuela. Russia has tripled the number of hours of Spanish-language broadcasting it aims at South American audiences.

Citing intelligence from the Drug Enforcement Administration, he said the gangs traffick “in drugs, people, guns and illegal mining and [then] launder [their profits]” through Chinese enterprises.

Faller underscored the major shortfalls he has in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and Coast Guard and Navy ships, which are critical to the interdiction of illegal narcotics flowing northward.

Faller told the panel that last year the command took a 46 percent hit in its ISR budget, meaning he had fewer eyes and ears on “what are our competitors are up to.” By competitors, he was referring to transnational gangs, the Chinese and the Russians.

Lawmakers like Sens. Joni Ernst, (R-Iowa), Jeanne Shaheen, (D-N.H.) and Angus King, (I-Maine) expressed deep concern about how this cut, on top of an already small ISR budget, affected the mission.

He added during the Pentagon press briefing that some of the intelligence gap can be met by better and consistent use of artificial intelligence and machine learning. They “show great promise ... to build all-domain awareness.”

Last week, Robert Work, vice chairman of the national commission on artificial intelligence, testified that SOUTHCOM was a model for other combatant commands to

follow in using data effectively. Work is also the Chairman of the Board of the U.S. Naval Institute.

His prepared testimony said the combination of Navy and Coast Guard assets – from vessels to manned and unmanned aircraft, plus the better use of AI and machine learning – “increased the targeting of known air and maritime illicit trafficking by 65 percent.”

“Intelligence drives everything,” Faller said. He added later, “we can’t interdict our way out of narcotics” as long as demand for illegal narcotics remains high in the United States.

“We do not have enough Coast Guard and Navy ships to do our mission,” Faller said. Yet Coast Guard presence with

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5. Four-Stars Tell Senators More Resources Are Needed To Compete With China, Russia In Latin America, Arctic

(*STARS AND STRIPES* 16 MAR 21) ... Corey Dickstein

The U.S. military needs more resources in Central and South America and the Arctic region to counter increasing Chinese and Russian activities in those areas, the top U.S. military officers in charge of operations in the Western Hemisphere testified Tuesday.

The commanders of U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Southern Command told the Senate Armed Services Committee that China and Russia have increased efforts to assert influence in the Western Hemisphere and test American resolve amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Both of the primary power competitors for the U.S. have long sought to increase their global influence and have grown increasingly emboldened, Adm. Craig Faller, the SOUTHCOM commander, said Tuesday.

Faller said the Chinese are using coronavirus pandemic aid as leverage to persuade countries – including those in Latin America – to partner with them on infrastructure projects such as updated wireless network capabilities. The admiral labeled it “mask and vaccine diplomacy.”

“The conditions that the pandemic has caused in Latin America and the Caribbean rival those of the Great Depression here in the United States,” Faller told senators in a hearing alongside NORTHCOM’s commander, Air Force Gen. Glen VanHerck. “China has moved in particularly heavy handed ... and they’re using vaccines to leverage deals for their 5G, and their using it to drive a wedge between some nations in the region.”

Faller told senators that U.S. influence in his region was “eroding,” telling them a colleague from a country within the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility that he spoke to recently compared the region to lifeboat “sinking in violence and ... sinking in Chinese influence.”

“What I hear from our partner is: ‘We know that the United States military is the best, [and] we want to partner with you. But, we’re drowning, and we need a LifeRing, and we’re going to take the LifeRing from whoever throws it,’” including the Chinese, Faller said.

To remain the top power in the region, the United States must be able to provide partner nations critical military assistance and other aid, but he warned he needed more intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets and security forces.

Faller and SOUTHCOM commanders before him have warned for years that the command was underfunded and

its law enforcement component “are a top priority for our partners” in curbing narcotics flow and enforcing their fishing laws. In prepared testimony, he said the Coast Guard’s Offshore Patrol Cutters “will be critical to keeping drugs off our streets and countering” transnational criminal organizations.

King said, “we’re not interdicting the ones we know about” even now with the ISR cuts.

<https://news.usni.org/2021/03/16/southcoms-faller-china-used-pandemic-to-expand-corrosive-insidious-influence-in-central-south-america-u-s-influence-eroding>

especially lacking in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance resources. The admiral said his budget for those assets was cut 46% for fiscal year 2021, leaving him with critical gaps in tracking the drug trade run by transnational criminal organizations and other threats, including power rivals’ activities in the region.

“Our understanding of what our competitors are up to – Russia, China, Iran – a lot gets left on the table, and that is contributing to violence and driving instability,” Faller said. “We’ve got to be on the field to compete.”

Meanwhile, VanHerck issued a similar warning about the American military presence in the Arctic, where melting ice has provided new access to natural resources and potential future shipping lanes, at least in part sparking a competition for influence in the far north.

“We are lagging behind,” he said. “We’re in competition ... and to be competitive with Russia and China, specifically in the Arctic, you have to be on the field. And, so it’s crucial that we do that and we continue producing capabilities that will allow us to be in the Arctic.”

The U.S. military has increasingly looked to bolster its activities in the Arctic. In recent months, the Air Force and Navy have issued strategies for increasing their activities in the region, which call for new Coast Guard icebreaker ships and a potential new base for them in the Arctic.

The Army on Tuesday also issued its own Arctic strategy, which calls for increased training in the region, the establishment of a new two-star headquarters to oversee Arctic operations and to equip and train some combat brigades to fight in the region.

VanHerck endorsed a proposal to build a Navy base in Nome, Alaska. He said ships could fuel from there and ensure a more persistent presence to compete with growing Russian and Chinese naval presence in the region.

The general said the U.S. has two polar icebreakers and it is important to increase its inventory quickly to compete with Russia’s about 40. The Coast Guard plans to build six, with the first scheduled for completion in 2023. China, too, has said it plans to build several icebreakers.

The Coast Guard ships would ensure the U.S. can send cutters and “potentially destroyers or maybe cruisers” into the region, VanHerck said.

Though Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Pentagon leaders have assessed China poses the most serious threat now

to U.S. global influence, VanHerck warned Tuesday that Russia was the most viable military threat to the U.S. homeland in 2021.

He said NORTHCOM reported more Russian military flights – often formations with multiple bombers and fighter [Return to Index](#)

6. Taiwan Bolsters South China Sea Deployments, Gets U.S. Submarine Parts Approval

(REUTERS 16 MAR 21) ... Yimou Lee and Ben Blanchard

TAIPEI -- Taiwan's newly-appointed defence minister said on Wednesday it has strengthened deployments in the disputed South China Sea and that the United States has approved the export of sensitive technology to equip Taiwan's new submarine fleet.

China, which claims democratic Taiwan as its own territory, has increased its military activity near the island in recent months seeking to pressure Taipei to accept Beijing's sovereignty. Taiwan has vowed to defend itself.

Speaking in parliament, Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng, who took up his post last month, said Taiwan has increased personnel and armaments on Itu Aba, the main island Taiwan occupies in the South China Sea.

Itu Aba, also known as Taiping island, is the largest naturally occurring island in the Spratleys and is garrisoned by Taiwan's Coast Guard.

"They are capable of starting a war," Chiu told the parliament when asked by a lawmaker on whether China could attack Taiwan. "My goal is for us to be ready at all times."

Chiu said Taiwan was bolstering its position there due to China's "expansionism" in the region, though it was not currently considering a return to a permanent army garrison.

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7. Japan, U.S. Express "Serious Concerns" Over China Coast Guard Law

(KYODO NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... Junko Horiuchi

Japanese foreign and defense ministers and their U.S. counterparts expressed Tuesday "serious concerns" about a Chinese law that took effect recently enabling its coast guard ships to fire on vessels around the Beijing-claimed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

They agreed at their security meeting in Tokyo to enhance bilateral and multilateral exercises and training to maintain the alliance's operational readiness and deterrent posture to address China's "aggressive and coercive behavior," especially in the East and South China seas, the ministers said in a joint press conference after the meeting.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Japan for the so-called two-plus-two talks, the first Cabinet-level overseas trip under President Joe Biden's administration, which has described China as "the biggest geopolitical test of the 21st century."

Japan, for its part, has looked to assurances from the United States for its defense amid growing concerns posed by the Chinese coast guard law implemented on Feb. 1.

Chinese coast guard vessels have repeatedly intruded into Japanese waters around the Senkaku Islands in an apparent attempt to undermine Tokyo's control.

"The ministers...expressed serious concerns about recent disruptive developments in the region, such as the China Coast Guard Law," said the joint statement issued after their talks,

jets – near Alaska's coast in 2020 than "in any year since the end of the Cold War," some 30 years ago.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/us/four-stars-tell-senators-more-resources-are-needed-to-compete-with-china-russia-in-latin-america-arctic-1.666025>

China has built man-made islands in the South China Sea and air bases on some of them. Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei all have competing claims in the strategic waterway.

Separately, Chiu said that the United States had approved export permits for all of the sensitive equipment needed by Taiwan's indigenous submarine fleet, which it started building last year.

He added that Taiwan's arms purchases from the United States - the island's main source of weapons - had not been impacted by the new Biden administration taking office in Washington and were continuing.

Taiwan is modernising its armed forces, especially as it face almost daily challenges from China in the airspace and waters near the island, including frequent Chinese air force missions into Taiwan's air defence identification zone.

Chiu said these missions were part of China's war of attrition against Taiwan, whose forces are dwarfed by Beijing's, and defence forces were already adjusting on how to deal with such incursions, though did not give details.

"If we match them one for one, it costs a lot," he said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-security-idUSKBN2B90D7>

which also involved Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi.

"The United States and Japan remain opposed to any unilateral action that seeks to change the status quo or to undermine Japan's administration of these islands," the statement said in reference to the group of uninhabited islets.

It is rare for a joint statement by the two countries to single out China, a sign that Tokyo and Washington have raised their alert level over the threat Beijing poses militarily and economically and to its violations of human rights.

The statement also explicitly laid out that the Senkaku Islands fall within the scope of Article 5 of the bilateral security treaty, with the United States assuring its "unwavering commitment" to come to Japan's defense in the event of a conflict there.

"The Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. military have been conducting many exercises in (Japan's) southwest, including near the Senkakus. We want to continue building on these drills and show that Japan and the United States are acting together," Kishi told the joint press conference.

The Japanese Air Self-Defense Force said the same day four of its F-15 fighters and four U.S. F-35B stealth fighters together with a tanker aircraft conducted a joint aerial defense drill on Monday near the Senkakus in the East China Sea.

In the statement, Japan and the United States also reiterated their objections to "China's unlawful maritime claims and activities in the South China Sea."

Beijing has been promoting the militarization of outposts in the disputed areas of the South China Sea, parts of which are also claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

The Japanese and U.S. officials also agreed to convene another two-plus-two meeting later this year.

Following the latest two-plus-two meeting, the first of its kind since April 2019, the U.S. secretaries met with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga. The premier has been invited to the White House in the first half of April, when he is set to become the first foreign leader to hold talks with Biden in person.

In the two-plus-two talks, the ministers also shared "serious concerns" regarding the human rights situation in Hong Kong and China's far-western Xinjiang region, where the Muslim Uyghur minority lives.

The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the denuclearization of North Korea and urged Pyongyang to abide by its obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Blinken told the press conference that the Biden administration is currently conducting, in consultation with Japan and South Korea, a "thorough" review of U.S. policy toward the reclusive nation that is expected to be completed in "the coming weeks."

He also said the United States will cooperate in resolving the issue of past abductions of Japanese nationals by North Korea.

After visiting Japan, Blinken and Austin will travel to Seoul on Wednesday for talks with their South Korean counterparts.

Following the two-nation Asian tour, Blinken is scheduled to meet with Yang Jiechi, a member of the Communist Party of China's Political Bureau and the country's top foreign policy official, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Alaska on Thursday.

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8. Pentagon Pushes For Bigger Effort To Deter China's Growing Military Might

(NPR 16 MAR 21) ... Tom Bowman

The Chinese pilots push the throttles on their heavy bombers as the music in the video builds to dramatic, Hollywood-style swirling strings. Radios crackle while the planes rise and stream across the ocean. Suddenly, missiles unleash with a whoosh. Fireballs and bouncing debris rise from the targets: Hawaii and Guam.

That propaganda video was released last fall and appeared on the official social media accounts of the People's Liberation Army Air Force. Some at the Pentagon are dismissing the Top Gun-like video with smirks and eye rolls. After all, it includes footage lifted from the movies *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*, *The Hurt Locker* and *The Rock*.

YouTube

But Adm. Philip Davidson, the top U.S. officer in the Pacific region (or, as the U.S. now calls it, the Indo-Pacific), is

The Alaska meeting will be the first in-person contact between senior officials of the two countries since the Biden administration took office.

Gist of joint statement of Japan-U.S. high-level security talks

The following is the gist of a joint statement issued Tuesday by the foreign and defense chiefs of Japan and the United States after their so-called two-plus-two meeting in Tokyo.

The four chiefs:

- say their alliance remains cornerstone of peace, security and prosperity in Indo-Pacific region.
- oppose any unilateral action to change status quo or to undermine Japan's control of Senkaku Islands.
- voice "serious concerns" about China's new coast guard law.
- call for peace and stability in Taiwan Strait.
- reiterate objections to China's "unlawful" maritime claims and activities in South China Sea.
- reaffirm complete denuclearization of North Korea.
- agree issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea decades ago needs to be resolved immediately.
- share "serious concerns" over human rights situation in Hong Kong and China's far-western Xinjiang region.
- stick to current plan to relocate U.S. Futenma air base within Japan's island prefecture of Okinawa.
- highlight importance of cooperating also on new domains, including space and cyber.
- seek another two-plus-two meeting later this year.

The Japanese ministers:

- vow to boost national defense for stronger alliance with United States.

The U.S. secretaries:

- assure "unwavering commitment" to defense of Japan under bilateral security treaty, which includes China-claimed Senkaku Islands.

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/03/6669d017ec-d7-update3-japan-us-hold-security-talks-in-response-to-chinas-coercion.html>

taking it seriously. He recently referred to the video during a recent hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"Guam is a target today," Davidson told the senators, referring to the overseas U.S. territory, that also houses a major U.S. Navy and Air Force base. "It needs to be defended and it needs to be prepared for the threat that will come in the future."

Defending Guam is at the heart of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, a massive effort pushed by Congress to add more military hardware to the Indo-Pacific area and work more closely with partners and allies. It's all an effort to counter a more aggressive China, officials say.

But China is unlikely to target Guam today — or maybe ever, says Larry Korb, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, who worked in the Pentagon under the Reagan administration.

"Are the Chinese going to attack an American territory?" Korb asks incredulously.

"The thing is, in the military you maximize trying to get the most by saying, 'China is a big threat,'" he says. "Same thing happened with the Soviet Union."

Korb sees a lot of the China threat talk as a bit too alarmist and a way for the Navy to go after more of the federal budget. Still, he backs shifting more of America's military strength to the Pacific away from the Middle East, building more Navy ships and also working more closely with allies as a counter to China.

Meanwhile, Rep. Adam Smith, the Democratic chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, is wary of all the talk of a Chinese military threat.

"It runs the distinct risk of creating conflict where it doesn't need to be," he said during a recent discussion at the Brookings Institution, a Washington, D.C., think tank. "We need to be really careful about stumbling into a cold war with China."

Whether or not China is intent on targeting Guam the Chinese government is widely seen as a growing problem, the greatest strategic threat, according to the Pentagon, lawmakers and now the Biden administration, which sent Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken to Japan and South Korea this week to assure allies about a rising China.

China claims much of the South China Sea, in contravention to international rulings, building artificial islands there that include radar systems and runways, bullying its the fishing fleets of neighbors like Vietnam. It is quashing the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, and throwing around its economic weight with tariffs on Australian goods. There's also a fear that an emboldened China could one day threaten the key sea lanes through Asia.

The Chinese government raised its military budget by 6.8% this year to 1.35 trillion yuan (\$207.5 billion). It's building more ships and a fifth-generation aircraft akin to the American F-22. Hundreds of missiles bristle its coastline, with ever longer ranges, like the DF-26 missile.

"If you look at the range rings, it seems to have been designed with Guam in mind," says Aaron Friedberg, a professor of political science and international affairs at Princeton University. "Some people are calling it the 'Guam Killer,'" as distinct from the DF-21 'carrier killer.'"

Brad Bowman, senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracy, points out that Guam is the U.S.' No. 1 operating base in the western Pacific. China's aggressive moves have a purpose, Bowman says: to supplant the U.S. as the dominant power in the Pacific region.

"Beijing is trying to push the [U.S.] military farther and farther back," says Bowman, so it can expand its operations in the Pacific region and more easily threaten Taiwan. Beijing claims Taiwan is part of China and has vowed to bring back into the fold since the losing Nationalist government fled there in 1949 at the end of the Chinese civil war. Adm. Davidson testified that he believes China could make a move on Taiwan within the next six years.

So Davidson wants to push back. He's looking at more sophisticated air and missile defense for Guam, as well as a proposed advanced radar on the island of Palau, to the south.

That's just the beginning of an effort being pushed by Congress known as the Pacific Deterrence Initiative.

Davidson's Pacific Command already got \$2.2 billion, what he calls a "good first start" to move forward on deterrence. From the budget that comes out in the coming weeks, he hopes to get \$4.7 billion.

The initiative also calls for more ground-based missiles, new facilities around the Pacific region that would enable the U.S. to disperse its forces against a potential Chinese threat, as well as create more fueling and maintenance facilities. Building more facilities or bases in the region would also help alleviate what experts describe as a key element that limits U.S. ability to respond to a potential Chinese threat: the tyranny of distance. It currently takes as many as three weeks for a Navy ship to arrive in the Western Pacific from the U.S. West Coast, and around 17 days from Alaska.

The increased spending, the Pentagon says, would also allow for more realistic training with allies like Japan and South Korea, and provide more money for communications equipment — so the allies can more easily respond to one another in a crisis.

For David Finkelstein, a China expert and vice president of the Center for Naval Analyses, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative makes both tactical and strategic sense.

"Strategically, it should signal a message of resolve, commitment and assurance to those many countries in the region," he says, "who see it in their national interests to have a highly capable U.S. force presence in the region."

Finkelstein says the U.S. and China have two "competing visions." The U.S. wants to be able to move through the area and defend its national interests and its allies. China wants to ensure that no "potentially hostile foreign military — especially that of the United States — can operate in the vicinity of the People's Republic of China with impunity," he says, and that no military will be able to take on China without confronting "great risk."

Michael O'Hanlon, a defense analyst at the Brookings Institution, says he supports the Pacific initiative, but says "we shouldn't just look to Palau and Guam and places like that." He says the U.S. should focus more on India and the Indian Ocean region, "where geography works even more in our favor."

Korb of the Center for American Progress agrees. "India's a major power economically. Their military is good. Traditionally India and China have had a tense relationship," he says. Last year, India and China came to blows along their long, undemarcated border, killing at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese ones.

Working with India and selling it more expensive weapons would send a message to China: With U.S. as a strong ally, "there's no way [China] can win a war with India," Korb says.

Other defense experts, such as retired Adm. James Stavridis, have longed push for the U.S. to work more closely with India as a counterweight to China. Defense Secretary Austin is scheduled to visit India following his visits to Japan and South Korea.

"I do like the idea of working with regional powers," says O'Hanlon, and such a "web of relations" with allies that can help block aggressive Chinese moves.

Smith, the Democratic congressman, agrees and says that's why the U.S. should better prepare the militaries of partner nations in the region that can react quickly.

"If we had quick-strike deterrent capability, that would impose a cost upon China and not drag us into a larger war," he says. "That's about alliances and partnerships."

That's different from some of what the initiative envisions — it aims to set up bases around the Indo-Pacific.

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9. Ukraine Scraps Deal With China, In a Nod to U.S.

Washington had urged Kyiv to halt Chinese acquisition of Motor Sich; move risks backlash from Beijing

(WALL STREET JOURNAL 17 MAR 21) ... Brett Forrest and Alan Cullison

Ukraine plans to nationalize a prominent aerospace manufacturer and cancel its acquisition by China, after the U.S. opposed the deal to keep critical defense technology out of Beijing's hands.

The Ukrainian government's national security council last week announced the decision on Motor Sich, a maker of advanced engines. The decision angered China, which demanded Ukraine respect the rights of Chinese investors, and the plans still must pass the Ukrainian legislature and could face legal challenges from the spurned Chinese suitors.

If carried out, the state takeover would end more than three years of wrangling that had placed the company and Ukraine in an expanding confrontation between Washington and Beijing.

It could also salve relations between the Biden administration and Ukraine, after the government became embroiled in U.S. domestic politics during Donald Trump's presidency, weakening support for the country in Washington.

The nationalization of Motor Sich shows that Ukraine "stands with the U.S. even at considerable cost," said Anders Aslund, a Swedish economist and senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, a think tank in Washington. "This was an excellent step that the U.S. should greatly appreciate."

The White House and the State Department didn't respond to requests for comment. U.S. officials in both the Biden and Trump administrations have said that Ukraine must understand China's ambition to acquire and master vital defense technologies and stop the purchase. The Ukrainian government didn't respond to requests for comment.

In 2019, President Trump asked Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky to launch investigations into the business dealings of Hunter Biden, son of then-presumed presidential rival Joe Biden, while the younger Mr. Biden served on the board of a Ukrainian gas company, Burisma Holdings. The phone call between Messrs. Trump and Zelensky led to Mr. Trump's first impeachment by the House; he was acquitted by the Senate. President Biden and his son denied wrongdoing.

Nearly two months after Mr. Biden's inauguration as president, he has yet to speak over the phone with Mr. Zelensky. That, a Ukrainian official said, has caused anxiety in Kyiv, which sees the U.S. as a vital partner in standing up to Russia.

"They are trying to please the Americans and trying to get their attention," said Oleksandr Lemenov, a founder of nonprofit civil-society group StateWatch, which lobbies for

O'Hanlon worries about a price tag that could be "astronomical." The budget for the Pacific initiative this year could more than double from last year.

"What I don't want is 10 Okinawas fortified with long runways," he says, referring to the U.S. Marine base on the Japanese island, off China's coast. "When do you know when you're done? It invites more and more and more."

<https://www.npr.org/2021/03/16/977987292/pentagon-pushes-for-bigger-effort-to-deter-chinas-growing-military-might>

transparent economic practice in Ukraine and has received funding from the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine, among others.

Kyiv is also looking at setting up a body to review foreign investments into strategic enterprises—a U.S. goal.

Motor Sich, once a linchpin in the Soviet Union's defense industry, supplied engines to Russia's military-helicopter fleet for decades. That came to a halt in 2014, when Ukraine and Russia went to war over Russia's incursion into eastern Ukraine and its annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

Ukraine then banned exports of military gear to Russia, crippling Motor Sich's business and providing an opening to China, a Motor Sich customer since the 1990s. Beijing Skyrizon Aviation, a private firm, led a group of companies that in 2017 completed a \$3.6 billion purchase to control Motor Sich from shareholders led by company President Vyacheslav Boguslayev.

The U.S. pressed Kyiv to annul the deal, particularly driven by concerns that Chinese ownership would boost China's efforts to build a fifth-generation fighter plane and a fleet of heavy-lift helicopters, according to U.S. and Ukrainian officials.

A Ukrainian court froze the Chinese transaction in April 2018, and the government's antimonopoly committee opened an investigation into possible unfair competitive practices. Both actions effectively suspended the deal, with Washington and Beijing continuing to lobby Kyiv.

Then last week, Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of the Ukrainian government's National Security and Defense Council, said that Motor Sich would be "returned in the near future to the Ukrainian people, to the ownership of the Ukrainian state in a constitutional way."

Mr. Danilov said that enterprises regarded as strategically important would be legally returned to the state, and their investors would be compensated. He didn't provide a timetable or other details or use the word "nationalize" in his comments.

"This is being done for the national security of the country," Mr. Danilov said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Friday demanded the issue be properly resolved and that Ukraine "take into account the legal rights of Chinese enterprises and investors."

A Skyrizon official said the company is preparing to file lawsuits in Ukraine and in other countries. "We will vigorously defend and protect the legal rights of Chinese investors," he said.

The U.S. has attempted to find a buyer for Motor Sich, according to U.S. and Ukrainian officials, but the decision to nationalize could carry a big price tag, given the \$3.6 billion purchase price.

Concern about the Motor Sich transaction persisted in the transition between the Trump and Biden administrations. In January, Motor Sich, signed an \$800 million contract with Aviation Industry Corporation of China, a supplier to the Chinese People's Liberation Army, to build engines for its JL-10 trainer jet fighter.

Around that time, the Trump administration placed Skyrizon on a sanctions blacklist. Ukraine followed suit, freezing Skyrizon's assets in Ukraine.

U.S. officials have advised Ukraine to establish an entity similar to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., which reviews foreign investments in U.S. firms, to have a legal basis to deny transactions such as the Motor Sich deal, said a U.S. official who participated in talks with Ukraine on the matter.

Ukraine's parliament has taken up debate on legislation to establish such a body. Separately, Alexander Kornienko, the

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FLEET READINESS:

10. USS Monterey Conducts Joint Patrol Exercise With Israeli Ships

(UPI 16 MAR 21) ... Christen McCurdy

The guided missile cruiser USS Monterey conducted joint maritime security patrol with the Israeli Sa'ar 4.5 ships in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea this week.

"Regional security and stability are directly linked to enhanced cooperation, understanding and collaboration with our partners," U.S. Navy Capt. Joe Baggett, USS Monterey commanding officer, said in a Navy press release.

"Through operations and training such as this, U.S. and IDF enhance existing cooperative relationships and take great strides in safeguarding the region's vital link to the global economy," Baggett said.

According to the Navy, the patrols "enhanced interoperability between the maritime nations through communication and command and control scenarios between the two nations."

Commanding officers were also able to hold a cross deck meeting while observing COVID-19 safety protocols.

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deputy head of Mr. Zelensky's parliamentary faction, said in a recent briefing that he would introduce a bill in the coming weeks to deal with Motor Sich.

"It's not just the U.S. telling Ukraine what to do," a Ukrainian official said. "It's important for Ukrainian national security to keep such companies locally owned."

A backlash from China is likely to prove costly for Ukraine, which is financially troubled. In recent years, China has purchased tank engines, turbines for destroyers, aerial refueling tankers and landing craft from Ukraine and has also been a major purchaser of Ukrainian agricultural goods.

Last week, as Mr. Danilov was announcing the nationalization of Motor Sich, a delegation of Chinese businessmen met with officials in the Russian-backed government in Crimea, the Black Sea Ukrainian peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014 and an enduring sore point for Kyiv.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-to-nationalize-defense-firm-keeping-china-out-in-a-nod-to-u-s-11615908836>

Monterey, which is homeported in Norfolk, Va., departed for deployment on Feb. 18 with the rest of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group.

Earlier this month, the Navy announced that the strike group was conducting flight operations near the Canary Islands off the West African Coast.

Last week the Marine Corps led Israeli Defense Forces on a tour of simulation centers at North Carolina's Camp Lejeune.

According to the Marines, Camp Lejeune has several simulation centers to use prior to conducting live-fire training and scenario-based training.

The tour included the Infantry Immersion Trainer, Simulator Integration Center and Range Control Operations Complex, Gun Fighter Gym, a Marathon target system field test and a meeting with Advanced Infantry Training Battalion-East leadership.

<https://www.upi.com/Defense-News/2021/03/16/Israel-joint-maritime-patrol-Camp-Lejeune-tour/6801615916074/>

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT:

11. With Top U.S. Officials in Asia, North Korea Warns Against ‘Causing a Stink’

The country took a confrontational stance against the United States in its first official remark directed at President Biden’s administration.

(NEW YORK TIMES 17 MAR 21) ... Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL — North Korea issued its first warning shot against the Biden administration on Tuesday, denouncing Washington for going forward with joint military exercises with South Korea and raising “a stink” on the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea released its statement hours before Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III began meetings with officials in Japan before a trip to South Korea later this week. The visits were meant to strengthen alliances in the region, where the threat of North Korean nuclear weapons and China’s growing influence have been cast as major foreign policy challenges.

The statement was the first official comment on the Biden administration from North Korea.

“We take this opportunity to warn the new U.S. administration trying hard to give off a powder smell in our land,” Kim Yo-jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, said in a statement carried by state-run North Korean media on Tuesday. “If it wants to sleep in peace for the coming four years, it had better refrain from causing a stink at its first step.”

Ms. Kim’s statement was the first indication that North Korea has plans to influence the new administration’s policies by raising the prospect of renewed tension on the peninsula, analysts said.

“Kim Yo-jong’s statement was a message of pressure to the United States and South Korea,” said Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. “As the senior officials meet this week in Seoul to discuss their North Korea policy, the North is warning them to choose wisely between dialogue and confrontation.”

Ms. Kim, who serves as her brother’s spokeswoman in North Korea’s relations with Seoul and Washington, dedicated most of her statement to criticizing Seoul for pushing ahead with its annual military drills with the United States this month, despite warnings from her brother.

Keep up with the new Washington — get live updates on politics.

Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin were scheduled to fly to South Korea on Wednesday to meet with President Moon Jae-in and other senior South Korean leaders. How to deal with North Korea’s growing nuclear and missile threats are high on the agenda. During a meeting with officials in Tokyo, Mr. Blinken said that the United States would work with allies to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific region, and that “one element of this is the denuclearization of North Korea.”

The Biden administration has said it is conducting a comprehensive review of American policy on North Korea. Since talks with the former president Donald J. Trump collapsed in 2019, Mr. Kim has said there was no point in continuing negotiations unless Washington first offered terms that his country could accept. These include lifting sanctions and ending United States military drills around the Korean Peninsula in exchange for steps toward denuclearization.

The Biden administration has attempted to reach North Korea through multiple channels in recent weeks, but Pyongyang has been unresponsive, according to the White House. Analysts said the silence was part of the North’s pressure tactic.

“The allies have precious little time to coordinate their approaches on deterrence, sanctions and engagement,” said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul.

In her statement, Ms. Kim accused South Korea of opting for “war in March” and “crisis in March,” instead of “warmth in March,” by starting the joint military drills, which the North has described as rehearsals for invasion.

Under Mr. Trump, Washington and Seoul suspended or scaled down the joint military drills to support diplomacy with Mr. Kim. After three meetings, Mr. Trump’s talks with Mr. Kim collapsed without a deal on how to end North Korea’s growing nuclear and missile capabilities.

Still, the United States and South Korea greatly reduced the scale of this year’s annual springtime military exercise, conducting it as a computer simulation without any large movement of troops. South Korea said the drill was minimized this year because of the pandemic and a desire to keep diplomatic momentum with North Korea alive. It called on the North to become more “flexible,” and not to raise tensions, as it has often done in response to the annual drills.

On Tuesday, Ms. Kim called South Korea’s diplomatic wishes “ridiculous, impudent and stupid.” She warned that North-South Korean relations would further deteriorate because Seoul had crossed a “red line.”

“War drill and hostility can never go with dialogue and cooperation,” she said. “They are about to bring a biting wind, not warm wind expected by all, in the spring days of March.”

She did not elaborate on what the “biting wind” would constitute. But she indicated that North Korea may abolish its Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, saying the ruling Workers’ Party organization focused on dialogue with the South “has no reason for its existence.” She also warned that North Korea may consider terminating a joint North-South Korean military agreement that Mr. Kim and Mr. Moon signed in 2018 during a short-lived rapprochement.

North Korea blew up an inter-Korean liaison office last year, ending all official dialogue with Seoul. During a party congress speech in January, Mr. Kim warned that returning inter-Korean relations to a “point of peace and prosperity” depended on South Korea’s behavior. North Korea has faulted Seoul for failing to persuade the United States to make concessions for Pyongyang or improve inter-Korean economic ties, regardless of Washington’s wishes.

After his meetings with Mr. Trump failed to lift sanctions, Mr. Kim vowed to further advance his country’s nuclear capabilities. At the party congress, he declared that North Korea would build new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic

missiles and make its nuclear warheads lighter and more precise.

Analysts have watched North Korea closely in the past week to see if it would provoke Washington by conducting missile or other weapons tests before the arrival of Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin in Asia.

So far, that has not happened.

“Kim Jong-un’s main priority at the moment is at home, focusing on the economy and improving the people’s lives,” said Mr. Yang, the professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul.

The North Korean economy has been devastated by the pandemic. And Mr. Kim, who has admitted that his economic policies have failed, has said he was focused on building a “self-reliant” economy in the face of international sanctions.

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12. Austin, Blinken Travel To South Korea For Talks Expected To Cover North’s Nuclear Ambitions

(STARS AND STRIPES 17 MAR 21) ... Seth Robson

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — North Korea’s nuclear arsenal will likely be the focus of talks when the U.S. secretaries of Defense and State meet their South Korean counterparts Thursday in Seoul.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was greeted by the commander of U.S. Forces Korea, Army Gen. Robert Abrams, after landing at Osan Air Base, south of the capital, just after noon Wednesday. He will be joined by Secretary of State Antony Blinken for discussions with Minister of Defense Suh Wook and Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong.

The pair will also visit South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the Blue House, his official residence in Seoul, on Thursday afternoon, according to South Korea’s Yonhap Television News.

Blinken and Austin came to the peninsula from Tokyo, where they met with their Japanese counterparts Tuesday during the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, informally called 2+2.

“North Korea’s arsenal poses a threat to international peace and stability,” Austin and Blinken said in a joint statement following those talks.

Nuclear-armed Pyongyang, claiming it possesses the “world’s most powerful weapon,” showed off a new submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile during a parade in January. However, Abrams, in written testimony to the House Armed Services Committee this month, said North Korea’s claims about the missile’s capabilities aren’t evidence of a viable new nuclear weapon.

The ministers’ Tokyo statement called for complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

“Trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and [South Korea] is critical for our shared security, peace, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region,” the statement said.

North Korea, on Tuesday, warned the U.S. not to cause a “stink.”

“If [the U.S.] wants to sleep in peace for coming four years, it had better refrain from causing a stink at its first step,” North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s sister, Kim Yo Jong, said in a statement published Tuesday in Rodung

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But even if North Korea did not greet Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin with a missile test, Ms. Kim’s statement signaled that the country expects the Biden administration to tread lightly. North Korea will likely start raising tensions soon to gain leverage, said Shin Beom-chul, an analyst at the Korea Research Institute for National Strategy in Seoul.

“They will start by launching conventional short-range missiles, probably thinking of going all the way to launching an intercontinental ballistic missile,” Mr. Shin said. “They are putting pressure on the Biden administration to make concessions as it reviews the U.S. policy on North Korea.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/16/world/asia/north-korea-biden-drills.html>

Sinmun, the official newspaper of North Korea’s Central Committee.

Ongoing computer-simulated military drills between U.S. and South Korean forces drew Kim’s wrath.

“The South Korean government yet again chose the ‘March of War,’ the ‘March of Crisis,’” she said, according to the newspaper. “Whatever the South will do by following its master, it will be not easy that the warm spring days of three years that it strongly wants will return.”

U.S. officials are worried that North Korea could resume missile tests after a three-year break in response to the drills, Politico reported Wednesday, citing anonymous sources.

Before flying to South Korea on Wednesday morning, Austin met a group of service members and civilians at Yokota, the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

“It’s really great to lay eyes on you,” he told troops lined up on a ramp near his aircraft.

Austin praised them as representatives of America and for continuing their mission during the coronavirus pandemic.

“You are what it is all about and there are 3 million more of your comrades spread around the globe who are working hard just like you are,” he said. “We are all part of a big team.”

Col. Andrew Campbell, commander of the 374th Airlift Wing, introduced Austin to a pair of airmen and two Japanese civilian workers who were involved in Operation Tomodachi, the U.S. response to the earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan in March 2011.

“I appreciate your courage,” Austin told them. He handed challenge coins to each in the group, which included a pilot and crew chief who flew missions over the disaster zone, a firefighter who delivered a firetruck from Yokota to emergency personnel struggling to control meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant and a member of Yokota’s Mission Support Group who monitored radiation exposure during the crisis.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/austin-blinken-travel-to-south-korea-for-talks-expected-to-cover-north-s-nuclear-ambitions-1.666074>

13. Defense Minister Expresses Regret Over N. Korea's Criticism Of Military Exercises

(YONHAP NEWS AGENCY 16 MAR 21) ... Oh Seok-min

SEOUL – South Korean Defense Minister Suh Wook said Tuesday North Korea's criticism of Seoul's military exercise with the United States was "regrettable."

Suh made the remark at a parliamentary hearing hours after Kim Yo-jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, threatened to scrap an inter-Korean military agreement over the combined exercise by the allies.

"I find criticism of a defensive and annual exercise regrettable," Suh said.

Asked about the possibility that North Korea would resort to military provocation, Suh said, "We're prepared against any type of contingency."

Kim accused the South of hostility for pushing ahead with springtime military exercises with the United States that kicked off on March 8 and continue through Thursday.

Suh's words echoed the defense ministry's stance expressed during a press briefing earlier in the day.

"As we've repeated, the Korea-U.S. combined exercise is a command post exercise which has been conducted on a regular basis and is defensive in nature," ministry spokesperson Boo Seung-chan told a regular briefing.

"Our stance is that North Korea should take a flexible stance, such as responding to our dialogue offer, for the

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establishment of permanent and solid peace on the Korean Peninsula," he added.

Under the 2018 Comprehensive Military Agreement (CMA), the two Koreas agreed to halt all hostile acts against each other and set buffer zones along their air, land and sea borders to reduce tensions and prevent accidental clashes.

"The agreement has played a significant role in maintaining peace and stability on the peninsula, and military tensions have also been eased thanks to the agreement," Boo stressed.

The North Korean leader's sister also said the North would disband its organization handling cross-border affairs and dialogue, saying there is no reason for such an entity to exist anymore.

The statement came a day before U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visit South Korea for "two plus two" alliance talks with their South Korean counterparts, where North Korea is expected to be a key topic.

<https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20210316005851325?section=national/defense>

14. U.S. General Says North Korea Might Flight Test New ICBM Design 'In The Near Future'

(REUTERS 16 MAR 21) ... Phil Stewart, Idrees Ali

WASHINGTON - North Korea might begin flight testing an improved design for its inter-continental ballistic missiles "in the near future," the head of the U.S. military's Northern Command said on Tuesday, a move that would sharply increase tensions between Pyongyang and Washington.

The warning by Air Force General Glen VanHerck appeared based on North Korea's October unveiling at a parade of what would be its largest ICBM yet, and not specific intelligence about an imminent launch.

Still, VanHerck made his remarks a day ahead of a debut trip by President Joe Biden's top diplomat and defense secretary to South Korea and underscores U.S. concerns that Pyongyang may resume testing of missiles and nuclear weapons after a hiatus of more than three years.

Even during the testing lull, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called for continued production of nuclear weapons for his arsenal, launched a series of smaller missiles and unveiled the ICBM.

VanHerck told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Pyongyang's "considerably larger and presumably more capable" ICBM further increased the threat to the United States. Still, he expressed confidence in U.S. missile defenses.

The U.S. general also noted that Kim released himself from a moratorium on testing over a year ago.

"The North Korean regime has also indicated that it is no longer bound by the unilateral nuclear and ICBM testing moratorium announced in 2018, suggesting that Kim Jong Un may begin flight testing an improved ICBM design in the near future," VanHerck said in his written testimony.

Jenny Town, director of 38 North, a U.S.-based website that tracks North Korea, said that while an ICBM test was possible "I'm not sure how likely it is."

She speculated that instead North Korea would be more likely to restart test launches with shorter-range missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

"It seems more likely that if North Korea is going to start testing missiles again, it will start with ones where testing has been almost normalized," Town said.

A U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that while there have been indications in recent weeks that North Korea may be preparing for a missile launch, one did not appear imminent.

The White House on Monday confirmed a Reuters report that the Biden administration sought to reach out to North Korea but had received no response, extending a chill in relations that began at the end of Donald Trump's administration.

After the White House remarks, North Korean state news reported that the sister of the North Korean leader here, Kim Yo Jong, criticized the Biden Administration for ongoing military drills in South Korea.

"If it wants to sleep in peace for coming four years, it had better refrain from causing a stink at its first step," Kim said in a statement carried by state news agency KCNA.

The joint U.S.-South Korean springtime military drill begun last week was limited to computer simulations because of the coronavirus risk, as well as the efforts to engage with the North.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-northkorea-pentagon/u-s-general-says-north-korea-might-flight-test-new-icbm-design-in-the-near-future-idUSKBN2B82KM>

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15. Iran Enriching Uranium With New Advanced Machine Type At Underground Plant -IAEA

(REUTERS 16 MAR 21) ... Francois Murphy

VIENNA - Iran has started enriching uranium at its underground Natanz plant with a second type of advanced centrifuge, the IR-4, the U.N. nuclear watchdog said in a report reviewed by Reuters on Tuesday, in a further breach of Tehran's deal with major powers.

Iran has recently accelerated its breaches of the deal's restrictions on its nuclear activities in an apparent bid to pressure U.S. President Joe Biden as both sides are locked in a standoff over who should move first to save the deal.

Tehran's breaches began in 2019 in response to the U.S. withdrawal from the deal and the reimposition of U.S. economic sanctions against Iran under Biden's predecessor Donald Trump, who opposed the agreement and sought to wreck it.

Last year Iran started moving three cascades, or clusters, of different advanced models of centrifuge from an above-ground plant at Natanz to its below-ground Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP). It is already enriching underground with IR-2m centrifuges. The deal only lets it enrich there with first-generation IR-1 machines.

"On 15 March 2021, the Agency verified that Iran began feeding the cascade of 174 IR-4 centrifuges already installed

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at FEP with natural UF₆," the International Atomic Energy Agency said in the report to member states dated Monday, referring to uranium hexafluoride, the form in which uranium is fed into centrifuges for enrichment.

Iran has indicated that it now plans to install a second cascade of IR-4 centrifuges at the FEP but installation of that cascade has yet to begin, the report said. Iran has already increased the number of IR-2m machines, which are far more efficient than the IR-1, installed at the underground plant.

"In summary, as of 15 March 2021, Iran was using 5,060 IR-1 centrifuges installed in 30 cascades, 522 IR-2m centrifuges installed in three cascades and 174 IR-4 centrifuges installed in one cascade, to enrich natural UF₆ up to 5% U-235 at FEP," the IAEA report said, referring to the fissile purity of uranium.

Iran is enriching up to 20% purity at another plant, Fordow.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-iaea/iran-enriching-uranium-with-new-advanced-machine-type-at-underground-plant-iaea-idUSKBN2B82ZH>

MARINE CORPS:

16. USMC Commandant Visits FRCE

(WCTI-TV ABC NEW BERN 16 MAR 21) ... Annette Weston

Fleet Readiness Center East — The high-ranking United States Marine Corps officer paid a visit to Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point on Monday.

Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David H. Berger and Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Troy E. Black visited Fleet Readiness Center East to receive updates about the support FRCE provides to Marine Corps aviation and the facility's current status of operations.

Berger and Black toured the facility with FRCE Commanding Officer Capt. Mark E. Nieto and Executive Director Mark Meno. The itinerary focused on the V-22 Osprey, F-35 Lightning II and future plans for F-35 maintenance and capabilities at FRCE.

"I was proud to welcome General Berger and Sergeant Major Black to FRCE and familiarize them with the vital work we're doing to support Marine Corps aviation," Nieto said. "This visit gave us an excellent opportunity to provide him with a firsthand look at how FRCE operations contribute to Marine Corps readiness and explain what we need to be successful, now and in the future."

During a tour of FRCE's V-22 and F-35 aircraft lines, Berger had the opportunity to discuss the programs' successes and constraints, and explore how the command has managed to meet the needs of the nation's warfighters while prioritizing health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Berger also made a stop in FRCE's additive manufacturing shop to explore 3D printing capabilities and advanced technology initiatives at the facility.

It was Berger's first official visit to FRCE as Commandant of the Marine Corps.

FRCE provides depot-level maintenance, repair and overhaul, component support, or engineering services for several Marine Corps aircraft, including the V-22 Osprey, F-35B Lightning II, H-53E Super Stallion, AV-8B Harrier F-18 Hornet, UH-1Y Venom, C-130J Super Hercules and VH-92A Presidential Helicopter. Marine Corps aviation accounted for 78 percent of the FRCE depot workload in fiscal year 2020.

"FRCE is a vital strategic asset for the Navy-Marine Corps team and the nation," Nieto explained. "We stand ready to meet the global readiness and sustainment challenge as we continue to produce what we promise, on time and at the best cost, to our customers in the U.S. armed forces and allied organizations."

Following the tour of FRCE, Berger departed for Marine Corps Air Station New River and Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where he will focus on operations at Marine Corps Installations East facilities.

<https://wcti12.com/news/local/usmc-commandant-visits-frce>

17. Marine Veteran, Once Held In Iranian Jail, Fights Espionage Claims

(ASSOCIATED PRESS 16 MAR 21) ... Eric Tucker

After Amir Hekmati was released from Iranian custody in a 2016 deal trumpeted as a diplomatic breakthrough, he was declared eligible for \$20 million in compensation from a special U.S. government fund.

But payday never arrived, leaving Hekmati to wonder why.

The answer has finally arrived: Newly filed court documents reviewed by The Associated Press reveal FBI suspicions that he traveled to Iran to sell classified secrets — not, as he says, to visit his grandmother. Hekmati vigorously disputes the allegations, has never faced criminal charges and is challenging a special master's conclusion that he lied about his visit to Iran and is therefore not entitled to the money.

The FBI investigation helps explain the government's refusal for more than two years to pay Hekmati and muddies the narrative around a U.S. citizen, Marine and Iraq war veteran whose release was championed at the U.S. government's highest levels, including by Joe Biden, then the vice president, and John Kerry, then the secretary of state. The documents offer radically conflicting accounts of Hekmati's purpose in visiting Iran and detail the simmering, behind-the-scenes dispute over whether he is entitled to access a fund that compensates victims of international terrorism.

Hekmati said in a sworn statement that allegations he sought to sell out to Iran are ridiculous and offensive. His lawyers say the government's suspicions, detailed in FBI reports and letters from the fund's special master denying payments, are groundless and based on hearsay.

"In this case, the U.S. government should put up or shut up," said Scott Gilbert, a lawyer for Hekmati. "If the government believes they have a case, indict Amir. Try Amir. But you, the U.S. government, won't do that because you can't do that. You don't have sufficient factual evidence to do that."

Gilbert declined to make Hekmati available for an interview while Hekmati's lawsuit seeking compensation is pending.

The FBI and Justice Department declined to comment, but details from the investigation emerge in hundreds of pages of documents filed in the case.

The documents show the FBI opened an espionage investigation into Hekmati as far back as 2011, the same year he was detained in Iran on suspicion he was spying for the CIA.

Hekmati, who was raised in Michigan and served as an infantryman and interpreter in Iraq before being honorably discharged from the Marines in 2005, says he went to Iran to visit an ailing grandmother after a brief, unsatisfying stint as a Defense Department contractor conducting intelligence analysis in Afghanistan.

But the FBI concluded that he went there intent on selling Iran classified information, according to an unsigned five-page summary of their investigation.

The assessment is based partly on accounts from four independent but unnamed witnesses who say Hekmati approached Iranian officials offering classified information, as well as the fact he abruptly resigned his contracting position before his contract was up and left for Iran without telling friends and colleagues, the FBI says. An FBI computer

forensics search concluded that while in Afghanistan, he accessed hundreds of classified documents on Iran that agents believe were outside the scope of his job responsibilities, the documents say.

Hekmati, the son of Iranian immigrants, says he researched Iran openly to cultivate an expertise on Iranian influence in Afghanistan. "Everyone knew" about the work he was doing, he said at a hearing last year, and supervisors didn't place restrictions. He says he'd already quit his job when he left for Iran and therefore wasn't obligated to tell colleagues of his trip. At no point in Iran, he said, did he meet with any Iranian officials or tried to sell government secrets.

Hekmati's lawyers say the FBI's suspicions are impossible to square with the treatment he endured in prison, which they say included torture and being forced to record a coerced but bogus confession. Were he actually spying for Iran, Gilbert said, "You'd think the guy would have been a valuable asset, they actually would have wanted to do something with him" rather than abuse him.

He was initially sentenced to life, but the punishment was cut to 10 years.

Hekmati enjoyed support from senior-level officials, including Kerry, who demanded his release, and Biden, who met with his family in Michigan. In January 2016, after four-and-a-half years behind bars, he was freed with several other American citizens, including Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian, as the Obama administration entered its final year eager for signs of improving relations after the controversial nuclear deal with Iran.

Months later, Hekmati sued Iran over his torture. A federal judge in Washington entered a \$63.5 million default judgment after Iran failed to contest the claims. Hekmati subsequently applied to collect through a Justice Department-run fund for terror victims financed by assets seized from U.S. adversaries. He was awarded the statutory maximum of \$20 million, his lawyers say.

The fund's special master then was Kenneth Feinberg, renowned for overseeing payments to victims of the Sept. 11 attacks. In December 2018, he authorized an initial payment of more than \$839,000.

But for months, no money came. After Hekmati's lawyers warned they'd have to sue, the Justice Department cryptically indicated it was seeking a reconsideration of the award.

In January 2020, Feinberg formally revoked Hekmati's eligibility for the fund, saying his application contained errors and omissions and that information from the Justice Department supported the conclusion that Hekmati visited Iran with the intent of selling classified information.

A second letter last December didn't repeat that precise allegation, but said Hekmati had given "evasive, false and inconsistent statements" during three FBI interviews, failed to "credibly refute" that most of the classified information he accessed related to Iran and "traveled to Iran for primary purposes other than to visit his family."

Feinberg declined to comment, saying his decision "speaks for itself."

The correspondence had been secret until January when Hekmati's lawyers filed it in the Court of Federal Claims in Washington as part of its lawsuit. Hundreds of additional

pages of documents have since been filed outlining the investigation.

The documents include summaries of FBI interviews from 2016 in Germany, on Hekmati's way home from Iran, and in Michigan that show FBI agents grilling him with increasing suspicion.

One summary says Hekmati refused to answer when asked if he'd ever accessed classified information on Iran and replied the FBI could figure it out itself. In a follow-up interview, an agent confronted Hekmati with the FBI's assessment that he went to Afghanistan to obtain classified information that he could sell to Iran. After a back-and-forth, Hekmati told the FBI that he accessed the material to become a subject matter expert on the topic.

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18. Marine Corps Looks To Stabilize Shore At Sinking Hawaii Range

(*MARINE CORPS TIMES 16 MAR 21*) ... Philip Athey

Rising sea levels has put the Pu'uloa Range Training Facility on Marine Corps Base Hawaii at risk of going underwater — and has the Marine Corps weighing its options.

A 14-year study on potential shoreline erosion laid out three potential erosion rates based on three projected sea level rise scenarios. The lowest amount of sea level rise over the next 14-years was projected at 0.25 feet, which would result in the loss of between 1.4 feet and 2.1 feet of the shoreline, Marine spokesman Capt. Eric Abrams told Marine Corps Times.

The highest projected rise was projected at 2.03 feet, which would result in a potential loss of 11.8 feet to 19 feet of the shoreline.

“Given the significant coastal erosion along the shoreline, MCBH is exploring multiple stabilization options to ensure PRTF continues to operate as a vitally important piece to Marine Corps readiness in the Pacific,” a statement from the base about the change said.

The risks if the Corps does nothing include “erosion of the earthen berms along the seaward boundaries of the ranges, seawater intrusion into the ranges rendering them unusable, and increased potential for erosion and lead contamination of the beach and water,” an environmental report said.

To stop the erosion the Corps laid out a three-phase plan.

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Hekmati and his lawyers state the FBI interviews shouldn't be considered credible in part because he was suffering from the effects of post-traumatic stress at the time.

The status of any investigation is unclear, as are Hekmati's prospects of ever receiving payment. But Gilbert, Hekmati's lawyer, says he hopes the decision gets a fresh look by the new Justice Department.

“I am hopeful that we will see the appropriate outcome here and be able to put this saga to bed.”

<https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-military/2021/03/16/marine-veteran-once-held-in-iranian-jail-fights-espionage-claims/>

First it will attempt to revegetate the available land between the range and the highwater mark of the shore.

The second phase will see the Corps move the range up to 100 feet back from the shore. And the final phase would see the Corps construct a wall 1,500 feet long and up to 20 feet deep just above the high-water mark and below the range, the release said.

There is no timeline currently for when the shore stabilization project will kickoff, as no money has been budgeted yet for the change.

The Hawaii range is just one Marine property forced to consider construction projects in the wake of rising sea levels.

In 2018 then-Marine Corps Assistant Commandant Gen. Glenn Walters warned lawmakers in the Senate Armed Services Committee that a seawall would need to be constructed onboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina, to prevent inevitable flooding as the sea continues to rise.

In fewer than 30 years the historic recruit depot will partially be underwater for up to a quarter of the year, Marine Corps Times previously reported.

<https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2021/03/16/marine-corps-looks-to-stabilize-shore-at-sinking-hawaii-range/>

CORONAVIRUS:

19. About One-Third Of Troops And Residents At Guantánamo Bay Are Fully Vaccinated

(*NEW YORK TIMES 16 MAR 21*) ... Carol Rosenberg

More than two months into a campaign to give shots to troops and other essential residents at Guantánamo Bay, about one-third of the people who live at the remote naval station in Cuba have been fully vaccinated, according to Department of Defense figures.

The Pentagon has declined to say how many eligible troops and other residents at the outpost have declined the vaccine, or how many have received one dose but are not yet fully vaccinated. None of the wartime prisoners at the base have been vaccinated.

Guantánamo functions in some respects like a small town, with a K-12 school, church, community hospital and suburban-style neighborhoods for the families of Navy personnel and Pentagon contractors. There are about 5,100 adults residing at the base, including the 1,500 troops who serve at the prison on nine-month tours of duty, as well as about 400 children.

The military began vaccinating residents on Jan. 8 with the Moderna vaccine, starting with military medical personnel assigned to the prison and the hospital at the base. By Feb. 2, everyone who works at the prison, in or out of uniform, had been offered the vaccine, a prison spokesman said last month. Eligibility has been expanded to include hundreds of others, from commissary and airport workers to Navy officers and workers assigned to the war crimes court at the base, which has been closed through nearly the whole pandemic.

Lt. Col. Kenneth L. Hoffman of the Air Force, a Pentagon spokesman, said on Tuesday that as of March 12, a total of 3,200 people at the base were eligible, and 58 percent of them had been fully vaccinated — equivalent to about one-third of the base's total population.

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20. Naval Medical Center Portsmouth Ramps Up Efforts To Vaccinate Military Personnel

(*WAVY-TV 16 MAR 21*) ... Tamara Scott

PORTSMOUTH, Va. — Efforts to get members of the military vaccinated against COVID-19 are ramping up.

More than a thousand shots a day are happening at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth now.

Just like the community as a whole is facing misinformation and resistance by some, the United States Navy is working to answer questions and bust the myths.

“It’s been challenging just to scale up the numbers and get the flow just right, so we get people in, in a safe manner, and get them their vaccines.”

In three months of administering the vaccine, they have locked down a system. People sign up for the vaccine, and the medical professionals get them in and out.

“We grab the papers, their information sheets, and then we fill out their shot card,” said Thomas Clifton, a hospital corpsman.

Clifton says one of the biggest inconsistencies has been the supply shipments.

“Here lately, last weekend, we were on-average 100 patients per day. And then on some days, we can see ... I think ... it was 1,500 patients,” he said.

Spot testing, a 14-day quarantine for new arrivals and other measures have managed to prevent the virus from spreading at the isolated base. But the military cannot require troops to get a Covid vaccine, as it can with other immunizations, because the Covid shots are being given under an emergency use authorization.

Across the military, roughly one-third of active duty or National Guard troops have said no to the vaccines, particularly younger troops. The Pentagon has declined to describe the extent of refusals at Guantánamo.

The issue of vaccinating the 40 wartime prisoners held at Guantánamo has stirred some controversy. A Pentagon health official decided on Jan. 27 that the prisoners should be offered vaccination once all the troops at the base who wanted to be inoculated had a first dose. But the idea was put on hold after a public and political outcry, and there is currently no plan to vaccinate the prisoners, who range in age from the 30s to 73.

The coronavirus has been a major obstacle to resuming pretrial hearings in the prosecution related to the Sept. 11 terror attacks, in part because almost everyone involved other than the defendants travels to the court from across the United States.

Three prisoners charged with links to a terror cell in Southeast Asia were due for court appearances in February, their first in 17 years of detention, but an Army judge postponed the hearing until the summer, citing a lack of vaccinations and the risk of traveling during the pandemic.

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/16/world/covid-19-coronavirus>

Officials told 10 On Your Side that most of the time, they get two shipments per week, meaning at least 2,000 doses per shipment.

But Naval Medical Center Portsmouth Medical Director of Immunizations Carl Kronman said the supply chain still hasn't been reliable enough that the hospital can get quite to a rhythm, although they expect that may happen soon.

When they do get people in, they are working hard to debunk any myths or misinformation going around.

“How could there not be [skeptical]? It’s something new that is seemingly quick to come out, but nonetheless, was very specific in ways that the vaccine was created,” said Lt. Cmdr. Julie Cheringal.

Cheringal says easing those worries and answering the questions is a highlight for her

“It’s invigorating, this has been one of the darkest hours of my training in medicine and so this is sort of a light at the end of the tunnel with respect to receiving the vaccination,” she said.

Getting the vaccine is still on a voluntary basis. Cheringal says, to date, she has received her vaccine and encourages anyone else to also make that decision.

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<https://www.wavy.com/covid-19-vaccine/naval-medical-center-portsmouth-ramps-up-efforts-to-vaccinate-military-personnel/>

21. Naval Academy Sets Punishments to Stop Mids Violating Strict COVID Restrictions

(CAPITAL GAZETTE 16 MAR 21) ... Heather Mongilio

The first time a midshipman violated the Naval Academy's rules intended to slow the spread of COVID 19 they face getting demerits, enough to be considered a major discipline offense but something like a parking ticket.

The offense will also mean the loss of a weekend of liberty when it is restored and an additional seven days of restrictions when they are eased, according to a memo approved by the academy on March 11. Second offense adds another 50 demerits, another week of restrictions and another lost chance to get off the Yard for the weekend.

Leaders of the Brigade of Midshipmen advocated letting the mids themselves stop classmates from breaking the restrictions, according to a March 11 email from Brigade Executive Officer Ashley Boddiford to members of the brigade.

But those tactics didn't work, leading the academy to issue a new violations policy with punishments spelled out.

"Our blatant disregard for the orders given to us by the Commandant of Midshipmen will stop today," Boddiford wrote in the email.

The brigade is facing penalties for violating the restriction of movement they have been in since Feb. 28 due to an outbreak of COVID-19. The academy could not say how many midshipmen were sick due to operational security, but nearly 200, at least 98 of them recovering from COVID-19, were moved into local hotels to expand quarantine and isolation space at Bancroft Hall.

While the midshipmen continue under the restriction of movement orders, which has paused Navy sports as well, they have been able to start receiving vaccines.

The memo on disciplinary measures, along with the email to the brigade and the "One-Stop-Shop ROM Guidelines," was first reported at USNA At Large, a Facebook page run by David Tuma. The Virginia resident is a retired captain and academy graduate.

Cmdr. Alana Garas, an academy spokesperson, confirmed the legitimacy of the documents.

After the first violation, the punishments rise in the number of demerits, as well as the loss of liberty and restriction. A second violation earns 25 more demerits, takes away another weekend of liberty and adds another week of restrictions.

The first violation's demerits are almost equivalent to a parking violation. A midshipman could earn 25 demerits and a seven-day restriction period, according to the Commandant of Midshipmen Instruction from July 27, 2020.

Any additional violations of the restriction orders will each result in 50 more demerits plus a week of restriction and another weekend of lost liberty. Similarly, a second parking offense would be 50 demerits and a 14-day restriction.

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Demerits affect a midshipman's conduct standing. Demerits below 50 are considered minor, while those up to 90 are major and at 100 are considered the worst.

Each semester midshipmen receive conduct grades, which are affected by the number of demerits a person receives over the semester. For example, a midshipman 1st class can receive no more than 25 demerits in a semester in order to earn an A, while a plebe, or freshman, can earn up to 30 and receive an A.

If a midshipman were to violate restriction protocols twice, the highest conduct grade the mid could earn is a B.

In order to ensure compliance to the restriction of movement protocols, members of the brigade, regiment and battalion staff and the watch chain of command will do rounds, with one between 3-7 p.m., which is the most populated time of the day, according to the action/decision memo.

Boddiford's email contained examples of protocol violations observed in the past week, including two midshipmen who were not roommates running, midshipmen entering rooms of other midshipmen and improper mask use.

The violations go against the midshipmen's mission, she wrote. Each midshipman must follow orders if midshipmen want to have a return to normalcy.

"We must each take responsibility for the state we are in," Boddiford wrote. "This is not the desired method, but we have expended our chances to be remediated any other way."

The One-Stop-Shop ROM Guidelines, which Boddiford attached to her email, were updated March 11. They continue what each midshipman can do at certain buildings.

For example, midshipmen cannot use self-serve laundry, interact with midshipmen who are not roommates or wear civilian clothes on the weekend in Bancroft Hall. They can use brigade laundry.

Midshipmen can grab food from King Hall, but they cannot eat it anywhere but their rooms, according to the guidelines. Midshipmen cannot go to the mailroom or use Naval Academy Business Service Division services.

The midshipmen are also only allowed a maximum of two hours outside, mostly for physical training.

Commuters who are living off-campus with friends, family or sponsors are also participating in the restriction of movement period. They cannot come to the academy grounds for food or for twice-weekly antigen COVID-19 tests. They instead will use credits known as COMRATS for food.

They can use the yard for physical therapy if they live within a mile from the academy.

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/03/16/naval-academy-sets-punishments-stop-mids-violating-strict-covid-restrictions.html>

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE:

22. Top Pentagon Research Arm Combats ‘Aggressive’ Foreign Investors

(C4ISRNET 16 MAR 21) ... Andrew Eversden

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon’s lead innovation office expanded its business accelerator to compete against “aggressive” foreign investment possibly tied to unfriendly governments and instead is courting U.S. investors to push its desired products to market.

The goal for the accelerator, established by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, is to move 150 technologies out of the lab and into the marketplace over the next five years. The effort is part of an expansion of DARPA’s Embedded Entrepreneurship Initiative pilot program that helped raise more than \$100 million for 30 research teams.

Connecting DARPA-backed innovations with U.S. investors protects against the technology reaching adversarial nations. Kacy Gerst, DARPA’s chief of commercial strategy, told C4ISRNET that the program is an “effective counter against aggressive foreign investors that has been ramping up in the past five years in targeting early-stage research teams.”

“In some cases, foreign capital is inextricably bound to foreign governments and militaries that are working at cross purposes to the United States and its allies,” Gerst said. “Through this effort, DARPA seeks to retain the nation’s strategic and economic advantage against near-peer competitors, as well as to ensure supply chain security for critical products and supplies.”

The DARPA accelerator gives research teams an average of \$250,000 to hire an entrepreneurial expert to connect them with U.S. investors. The adviser stays with a team for one to two years. Though \$250,000 doesn’t sound like much in comparison to multimillion or multibillion defense programs, that funding is vital to connecting critical futuristic technologies with U.S. investors, Gerst said.

“We’ve found that foreign investors are often talking to our researchers when they’re still in the university or in the lab before they’ve even spun something out and offering really compelling terms very early on,” she said.

Through its initial pilot, DARPA worked with several companies on projects for a range of issues — from COVID-19 to blood sampling. One business, named Embody, develops medical devices and therapeutics for tendon and ligament injuries, common injuries for military members. It received FDA approval for a surgical graft to mend soft tissues that resulted from DARPA-backed research.

The money from DARPA was transformative for Embody, according to CEO Jeff Conroy. He told C4ISRNET that his company had partnered with DARPA for several years, but used the funding it received largely for product development. Receiving money dedicated to business development boosted the company to the market.

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“I was able to hire a commercial [-focused] person probably a year before I would have typically,” Conroy said. “That has really made a big difference, starting to think like a company that’s going to launch a product 18 months before the pilot is cleared, instead of six months before the product is cleared, really put us in position to get a fast start.”

Through the accelerator, research teams have access to commercialization mentors and DARPA’s Transition Working Group, which includes more than 100 U.S. investors and corporations seasoned in scaling and supply chain development. The DARPA initiative is bolstered by a new partnership with In-Q-Tel, the intelligence community’s venture capital firm, which will provide additional investor expertise.

One significant challenge DARPA faces is that its research funding goes to “really highly technical scientists and engineers” who have little experience connecting lab developments with interested companies, securing licensing agreements or forming startup companies, Gerst said. Additionally, U.S. investors scrutinize business plans far more closely than foreign investors, which offer more compelling terms to researchers quicker, Gerst said. Conroy noted that Embody “constantly” fielded inquiries from foreign investors.

“Our research teams that have difficulty raising funding from U.S. investors that are really scrutinizing whether they have a strong business and business team and whether they can make a return off of that investment,” Gerst said. “Our researchers weren’t having a difficult time raising funding from foreign investors who more so want to get access to the IP [intellectual property].”

Gerst noted that the effort is successful because the technologies are being developed “in parallel” with the entrepreneurial work, allowing the company to adjust products to fit the business case.

“What we’re learning through this entrepreneurial effort impacts the design of the technology, and makes it a lot more relevant to the end market,” Gerst said.

DARPA program managers nominate research teams that would benefit from the additional entrepreneurial support. For Embody, that decision gave the company a clear path to market for a product to help with military injuries.

“We were an early-stage company that would be challenged to attract investment at scale in the early stages,” Conroy said, adding that the company expects the first 50 surgeries using its device this quarter.

<https://www.c4isrnet.com/industry/2021/03/16/top-pentagon-research-arm-combats-aggressive-foreign-investors/>

23. Army Focuses On Defending And Fighting In Arctic Region With New Strategy

(STARS AND STRIPES 16 MAR 21) ... Caitlin M. Kenney

WASHINGTON — The Army needs to reinvigorate how it trains, equips and positions troops in the Arctic region as competition with Russia and China grows, according to the service's new strategy document released Tuesday.

"We're seeing that many of our competitors are focused on the Arctic, and also many of our allies and partners have concern about that competition," Gen. James McConville, the Army's chief of staff, said during the Association of the United States Army's Global Force Next virtual event.

Like in the Arctic strategies of the Defense Department, Navy and Air Force, the Army's document describes the competition that the United States faces with Russia and China for the region's economic resources and how the impacts of climate change is opening more navigable waterways.

"With increasing levels of adversary activities in the Arctic region, it is essential for the U.S. Army to employ a calibrated force posture with units that are manned, trained, and equipped to maintain a credible deterrence and the first line of defense of the homeland," the document states.

Most of the Army's personnel living in the Arctic or sub-Arctic regions are soldiers stationed at three installations in Alaska: Fort Wainwright, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, and Fort Greely, according to the document. The soldiers also fall under a unique command environment, supporting U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Northern Command, and U.S. Army Alaska. U.S. European Command is also involved in the Arctic.

The Army's intended "end state" for their Arctic strategy is to be able to deploy troops trained and equipped to operate in the region and fight in extreme conditions for extended periods, according to the document.

The new strategy incorporates the Army's new Multi-Domain Operations concept, which involves a joint force operating in contested environments against adversaries such as China or Russia. The Army has decided to place a Multi-Domain Task Force in Alaska to experiment with how the unit can function in the region with extreme conditions, according to the document. There is now a task force located at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., and it brings together intelligence, information, cyber, electronic warfare, and space capabilities. The Army also plans to have another task force in Europe.

Having this type of task force in Alaska will allow the Army to begin tackling some of the region's challenges,

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including the extreme environment, multiple combatant commands, and little infrastructure, according to the document.

"In Alaska, [the task force] will have the ability to take advantage of world-class training facilities and the presence of significant U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy forces to experiment and train multi-domain operations," the document states.

Training troops on how to live and operate in the Arctic is also a priority in the strategy. There is a training range and a few training centers that teach skills in cold weather and rugged terrain, including the Northern Warfare Training Center at Fort Wainwright. However, upgrading or creating new training areas are being considered to ensure that units can receive the Arctic-specific training that they need to be effective.

"Do we do the training up there rather than taking them to Fort Polk [in Louisiana] for [the] combat training center? Would they be better at a combat training center where they train in the harshest conditions that you could have? Would that be better for them? So, we're putting those together as we speak," McConville said.

The Army also wants to ensure troops with this specialized training and knowledge are prioritized for units in the Arctic. This could mean some soldiers are more likely to command Arctic units because of their qualifications, according to the document.

Having this qualification information available in personnel files would "allow the Army to rapidly build environmental expertise in a unit designed for deployment, providing the Army the ability to respond to crisis without maintaining an array of environmental-specialized units," the documents states.

Working with allies and partners in the Arctic is also key to the Army's strategy, especially working with indigenous populations who can provide their knowledge of the region for training. One of the ideas is to look into the development of an "Alaska Scouts" auxiliary force that was first proposed by Alaska's governor in 2015. The force would be comprised of volunteers of Alaska Natives that would be "a source of environmental expertise and situational awareness in support of the joint force," according to the document.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/us/army-focuses-on-defending-and-fighting-in-arctic-region-with-new-strategy-1.666063>

ALLIES & PARTNERS:

24. Britain Will Boost Nuclear Stockpile

After its departure from the European Union, the U.K. seeks more sway in the Indo-Pacific region

(WALL STREET JOURNAL 17 MAR 21) ... Max Colchester

LONDON—The British government laid out plans to increase its stockpile of nuclear weapons as part of a shift in defense policy that recognizes that the world order it helped forge in the wake of World War II is crumbling.

Following its exit from the European Union last year, Britain is looking to carve its place in a more volatile and fragmented international system while bolstering its economy through greater global trade.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that requires the U.K. to become a nimble power broker with a greater sway in the Indo-Pacific region backed by an increase in domestic investment in science and technology.

“The fortunes of the British people are almost uniquely interlinked with events on the far side of the world,” Mr. Johnson told Parliament as he presented a blueprint for Britain’s post-Brexit foreign-policy aspirations. “The U.K. could never turn inwards or be content with the cramped horizons of a regional foreign policy,” he said.

Brexit has long been touted by government officials as a way for Britain to quickly adapt to global challenges unencumbered by the EU. The government’s 114-page review paints a gloomy picture for the coming decade.

The report warns globalization’s retreat, which began after the financial crisis, will continue to exacerbate divisions between nations. The use of novel chemical and nuclear weapons will also proliferate, the review says, as challenges to U.S. supremacy mount. “A defence of the status quo is no longer sufficient,” it concluded.

Reflecting this outlook, Britain is bolstering its nuclear threat as a deterrent. Britain had been on track to reduce its nuclear warhead stockpile to not more than 180 warheads by the mid-2020s.

However, faced with growing threats, this ceiling will be lifted to not more than 260 warheads. The government will no longer provide figures on how many of the warheads are operational.

Currently, the U.K. has a stockpile of 190 warheads, according to the Federation of American Scientists. Its stockpile will remain the lowest among the declared nuclear powers, which include neighboring France.

Some analysts questioned the move. After spending years railing against nuclear proliferation, raising this cap “is a major diplomatic mistake,” said Nick Witney, former chief executive of the European Defence Agency. “It provides greater arguments for proliferators around the world.”

After Brexit, a series of trade-offs loom. To pay for a new-look military, the U.K. will have to dial back spending on more conventional armed forces. It will bid to secure deeper relations in the Indo-Pacific region, even as officials say it won’t turn its back on Europe.

Underscoring this complex balance: Britain will aim to expand economic relations with China while criticizing its

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human rights record and trying to contain Beijing’s threat to Britain’s national security.

“We have a balance to strike,” said Mr. Johnson, adding that now wasn’t the time for a Cold War with China. This year the British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth is due to conduct patrols in disputed waters in the South China Sea amid rising tension with Beijing.

Much of the review is shaped by Britain’s experience during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the country’s reliance on extended global supply chains left it vulnerable to borders shutting down.

Meanwhile, its successful vaccine development and rollout has turned into a soft-power victory.

Britain’s foreign policy will now be underpinned by a large-scale domestic spending program aimed at bolstering British research and development. The U.K. aims to direct at least £6.6 billion, equivalent to \$9.18 billion, of defense funding over the next four years to areas including space, directed-energy weapons, and advanced high-speed missiles

“It feels like the U.K. approach is becoming more French and less liberal,” said Malcolm Chalmers, the deputy director general of the Royal United Services Institute, a defense think tank. “It is putting more focus on our national technology base.” France has previously championed building up its domestic defense and technology capabilities.

How this overhaul is paid for will be detailed next week when the government outlines a series of cuts to the country’s military. Analysts expect the government to cut the number of soldiers, jet fighters and frigates to pay for the rejigger. But Britain’s finances are already stretched following the pandemic, raising questions over how or if the new strategy will be properly implemented, said Mr. Witney.

The review states that the U.S. will remain the U.K.’s most important ally both commercially and militarily. Britain will continue to view Russia as its number one adversary and Britain will try to build diplomatic ties in the Indo-Pacific region.

It has applied to become a partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and is seeking to join the trans-Pacific free-trade agreement. Mr. Johnson is due to visit India soon.

Last year, the U.K. government announced its biggest increase in military spending since the Cold War in a bid to secure its position as the U.S.’s main military ally in Europe after Brexit. The country will spend an additional £24.1 billion over the next four years compared with last year’s budget. This, the government says, reaffirms Britain’s attachment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-secretaries-of-state-defense-push-back-against-china-in-tokyo-trip-11615900076>

EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE:

25. Dual Letters From Congress Signal Hill Headed for Defense Spending Showdown

(USNI NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... Mallory Shelbourne

A debate between lawmakers over defense spending is brewing, as a group of progressive House members push for cuts to the defense budget while others argue for a boost to shipbuilding.

In a March 16 letter to President Joe Biden, 50 Democratic members of Congress argued for a decreased budget for the Defense Department.

“Recent reporting indicates that your first budget request to Congress will recommend the same level of Pentagon spending as the last fiscal year. While we are heartened that your Administration is not contemplating expanding the Pentagon’s already inflated budget, our new Democratic majorities in Congress along with your Administration should go further,” the letter reads.

The Biden administration in May is slated to unveil its budget proposal, which Bloomberg News and Politico recently reported would hover between \$704 and \$708 billion for the Defense Department.

“Rather than requesting a flat Pentagon budget, we urge you to seek a significantly reduced Pentagon topline,” it continues. “Thoughtful analysis from experts across the political spectrum shows that significant cuts can be achieved without reducing the support, pay or benefits provided to our men and women in uniform and their families. We could cut the Pentagon budget by more than ten percent and still spend more than the next ten largest militaries combined.”

A 10 percent cut from a \$704 to 708 billion budget would result in a total Pentagon topline of \$634 to 637 billion.

While the letter does not call for a specific percentage or dollar figure for the cuts, lawmakers write that “[h]undreds of billions of dollars now directed to the military would have greater return if invested in diplomacy, humanitarian aid, global public health, sustainability initiatives, and basic research.”

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) is the only member of the House Armed Services Committee to sign the letter. Other signatories to the letter include progressive voices like Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), Katie Porter (D-Calif.), Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.), Dan Kildee (D-Mich.) and Mark Pocan (D-Wis.). No members of the House Appropriations defense subcommittee signed the letter.

The letter from progressive Democrats comes one day after a group of bipartisan lawmakers from Mississippi and Maine sent a letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Deputy Defense Secretary Kath Hicks pushing for a bigger navy and a “robust” request for the shipbuilding account in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2022 budget submission.

“We are concerned that the DOD and the Navy are not keeping pace with China on shipbuilding. Due to the long lead times necessary to properly procure and resource a larger fleet, attention must be paid to this critical issue immediately,” the letter reads.

The states’ four senators – Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine), Angus King (I-Maine), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) – all signed the letter, in addition to Reps. Trent Kelly (R-Miss.), Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.), Jared Golden (D-Maine) and Chellie Pingree (D-Maine).

The letter also specifically asks the Navy to keep buying the Arleigh Burke-class destroyers and their ultimate successor, the DDG(X) platform. General Dynamics Bath Iron Works in Maine and Huntington Ingalls Industries’ Ingalls Shipbuilding in Mississippi both build the Navy’s Arleigh Burke-class destroyers.

“The appropriate composition of a growing fleet is also a significant consideration. The Navy’s Large Surface Combatants (LSC) are a vital component of the surface fleet and must be an important focus of future shipbuilding plans and efforts,” the letter reads. “DDG-51s are the true workhorses of the Navy, conducting freedom of navigation missions in the South China Sea, leading maritime security patrols in the North Atlantic, and deterring Iranian aggression in the Persian Gulf.”

The two letters come as the Biden administration performs a “budget relook” of the FY 2022 request the last administration put together, with shipbuilding topping the list of items under assessment. The Trump administration in December unveiled a plan that showed a boost to the shipbuilding account in FY 2022, but it’s unclear what the new administration will do with the proposal.

USNI News reported last week that the Pentagon is weighing a decrease to the Navy’s aircraft carrier force as part of the budget evaluation, a potential move that some lawmakers have already criticized.

Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Va.), a former Navy nuclear-qualified surface warfare officer who is also the vice chairwoman of the HASC, quickly criticized the possibility of reducing the number of aircraft carriers.

“As we look to expand the U.S. Navy’s presence in response to malign Chinese activity and illegal maritime claims, the last thing we should consider is cuts to our carrier fleet,” Luria said in a statement issued after USNI News’ report on potential cuts to the carrier force.

The Virginia Democrat has also called for an increase to the Pentagon’s budget.

“Now is not the time to cut defense spending. Our defense budget should grow at 3 to 5 percent above inflation to counter an increasingly threatening China,” Luria said in the statement. “One cannot place a value on the unparalleled power projection and deterrence provided by our fleet of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and their embarked air wings. I urge the Biden administration to immediately drop this from consideration.”

As part of slashing the carrier force, the Pentagon could opt to not refuel USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75), which is approaching its midlife overhaul, USNI News reported.

Senator Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, in a statement to USNI News on Tuesday dismissed the idea of retiring Truman early.

“I am aware of no new information that would merit reconsidering the law that requires the Truman to be refueled,” Inhofe said.

The Pentagon tried to retire Truman early in its FY 2020 budget submission under the Trump administration, a move that lawmakers criticized at the time. The administration reversed the decision when former Vice President Mike Pence

made a trip to the carrier and said the Navy would keep the ship in the fleet.

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<https://news.usni.org/2021/03/16/dual-letters-from-congress-signal-hill-headed-for-defense-spending-showdown>

26. Luria: Navy Should Not Decommission Ships Early In Favor Of New Construction

(USNI NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... John Grady

Decommissioning ships that have viable service life at a faster rate than industry can build new ones is not how the Navy should grow the fleet, the vice chairwoman of the House Armed Services Committee said Monday.

Speaking at a Hudson Institute online forum, Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Va.) said “the math doesn’t work” for the Navy to potentially decommission any ships early.

“I don’t see any other way,” to reach a higher ship total other than service life extension programs for large surface vessels, like Ticonderoga-class cruisers until then, Luria said. She asked rhetorically: “what do you do between now and then” when new frigates and large unmanned surface vessels become available to the fleet.

Luria said that while the Navy will ultimately replace the cruisers, the service could evaluate how to use the platform if it is properly maintained and its service life extended.

When asked about the possibility of carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75) not receiving a mid-life refueling as a way to save money in the upcoming budget request, she said that for now “it’s only speculation.” Luria added, “there’s not going to be a long-term savings” if the decision is made not to refuel and refit.

Congress rejected a Trump administration proposal in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget request to retire Truman early. Lawmakers at the time were unsatisfied with the Navy’s argument that it could use the money gleaned from retiring Truman to put toward new unmanned systems and were concerned the service was retiring an asset in the fleet early in favor of new technology. For years, Capitol Hill has said no to Navy plans to retire cruisers that are fit for service life extension programs.

Last week, USNI News reported that the Pentagon is considering a reduction in the carrier force in the FY 2022 budget request the administration is expected to unveil in May.

If the carrier is refueled and refitted, Truman would have 20 more years of service in the fleet.

At the same time, Luria, a Naval Academy graduate who served more than 20 years on active duty, said the cutting of Truman would further strain carrier strike groups that “are very stressed already.” Using Truman as an example, she said it “did double deploy” duty most recently because there were not enough carriers to meet requirements in the Middle East and Western Pacific.

Luria added that these carrier duties were not the “surge” in responding to a crisis, as described in the Optimized Fleet Response Plan, but rather filling a gap in coverage and further stressing crews and ships.

When asked about the Battle Force 2045 call for a Navy of more than 500 manned and unmanned vessels and later about the tri-service maritime strategy, she said “we have a lot of questions” and “these questions need to be answered.” Luria said Rep. Rob Wittman, (R-Va.), ranking member on the HASC seapower and projection forces subcommittee shares these concerns.

“In Congress, we’ve only been given the number of ships” in the future battle force plan and not the assumptions and rationale behind the numbers. “I’m still looking for a briefing from the Navy [on] how they got the numbers in the plan,” Luria said.

She said the history of problems when introducing new classes of ships – like the Littoral Combat Ship, the Zumwalt-class destroyer and the Ford-class carrier – before they were fully capable of carrying out all their missions underlines the importance of questioning assumptions.

“It’s not just numbers; it’s capabilities,” like minesweeping that were supposed to be in place in LCS variants but still isn’t there. Among the questions she has for expanding the number of large unmanned vessels in the fleet are how they would operate in a GPS-denied environment and how they would operate with manned vessels.

It is critical to “understand the CONOPS [concept of operations] and what you’re going to use them for” before buying, Luria said.

To reduce the number of problems that surface in new classes of warships such as the weapons elevators and catapults on USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) is to have the Navy present the builder with more detailed plans of the capabilities it wants in the design phase, Luria argued. Then testing ensures the “key component” weapons elevators perform as needed, she added.

Luria also wants more consistency in systems placed in different classes of ships and even in the same class to reduce building costs and accelerate maintenance afloat and in shipyards.

The Navy “hasn’t done very well with this,” she said.

Battle Force 2045 shouldn’t “be just a menu to buy,” but a document that recognizes being able “to build what we can build” in existing shipyards and understands the “need to maintain the ships” in the fleet in public and private yards. Luria also saw it as a document that justified cutting classes of existing ships as a means to provide money for construction.

Luria wants shipbuilding and ship repair to remain stable to hold skilled workers in both and also to address the long delays in public shipyards that are refitting and refueling nuclear vessels. “It’s not just the yards; it’s the supply side [because] sometimes the Navy is the only customer,” particularly for nuclear-related items.

“If they go out of business, where do we go [to build and repair],” she said.

Luria saw in a Biden administration plan to rebuild the nation’s infrastructure an opportunity to address major problems in public facilities. The example she used was the Norfolk Naval Shipyard’s struggle with rising sea levels that slow or halt production when major storms threaten Hampton Roads.

<https://news.usni.org/2021/03/16/luria-navy-should-not-decommission-ships-early-in-favor-of-new-construction>

27. House Democrats Want A Fast Repeal Of 2002 Iraq War Authorization

(*VIRGINIAN-PILOT 16 MAR 21*) ... Rachel Oswald

WASHINGTON — Leading House Democrats are making plans to begin repealing and replacing the anti-terrorism authorizations to use military force that have been on the books for nearly two decades.

Democrats told reporters on Friday that they were seizing on recent statements from the Biden White House that it wants Congress to replace the open-ended authorizations for use of military force with a legal framework that is “more narrow and specific.” The 2001 and 2002 war resolutions permit attacks against al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, respectively.

House Foreign Affairs Chairman Gregory W. Meeks said during a video press conference that in the coming weeks he would hold a markup to advance legislation from Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., to repeal the 2002 war authorization that led to Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. The repeal measure has 90 cosponsors, including seven Republicans.

“Given the 2002 AUMF is not needed for any ongoing military operations, there is no reason at all to leave it in place,” said Meeks, D-N.Y.

When Democrats took back the House in the 116th Congress, the chamber repeatedly passed Lee’s 2002 authorization repeal measure, though the legislation was never able to clear the Republican-controlled Senate. But with unified Democratic government this year, repeal backers are hopeful the political calculus has finally changed in their favor.

Sens. Tim Kaine, D-Va., and Todd Young, R-Ind., have a similar measure that would repeal both the 2002 AUMF as well as the 1991 military authorization for the Gulf War. Their resolution has eight other bipartisan cosponsors including Sen. Charles E. Grassley, R-Iowa

“We really just need the political will to move forward,” said Lee, noting that fewer than 25 percent of current lawmakers were serving in Congress when the 2001 and 2002 war authorizations were passed in those early fearful days after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Lee is well-known for being the only lawmaker to vote against the 2001 war authorization.

Next week will mark the 18th anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. As of January, there were some 2,500 deployed U.S. troops in the country.

Supporters of repealing the 2002 AUMF contend it is not needed as legal justification for the limited ongoing counterterrorism operations taking place in Iraq against the Islamic State terrorist group, and they worry that leaving the authorization on the books is an invitation for abuse by future presidents.

In 2014, the Obama administration said the 2002 authorization provided a supplementary legal justification for its redeployment of troops to Iraq but that it was primarily relying on the more expansive 2001 authorization as justification for its burgeoning anti-Islamic State campaign.

However, the Trump administration cited the 2002 authorization as giving it partial justification for its January 2020 targeted drone assassination of Iranian spymaster and top general, Qassem Soleimani, on the rationale he jeopardized

U.S. efforts to establish a peaceful and democratic government in Iraq.

As of February 2018, successive administrations have cited the 2001 AUMF to justify 41 military operations across 19 countries, according to the Congressional Research Service.

“These have been stretched far beyond anything Congress ever intended it to do,” Meeks said.

House Intelligence Chairman Adam B. Schiff said Congress’ constitutional authority to be the deciding voice on matters of when the country goes to war has been badly eroded over the decades. Former President Donald Trump accelerated that trend, Schiff said, by disregarding lawmakers’ explicit spending instructions so he could divert Pentagon money to build a border wall with Mexico.

Previously, lawmakers had comforted themselves with the notion that their “power of the purse” gave them the ultimate ability to curtail or end funding to military operations they opposed.

But Trump showed that even congressional authority over spending could be hollowed out if the president chooses to declare a national security emergency, as he did with respect to migrants illegally entering the country from Mexico.

By forcing Democrats to take him to court over the issue, Trump offered a playbook to future autocratic-minded presidents on how they might launch overseas military operations on flimsy legal grounds and then leave it up to the court system to make a ruling on its legality, a process that could take years.

“The place to start is repealing these old, outdated authorizations,” Schiff, D-Calif., said of clawing back Congress’ war powers. “I think we can do so with the prior Iraq authorization without any impact on the president’s ability to respond to dangers in that region.”

Meeks said he is fine with taking the lead on efforts to repeal the 2002 authorization and replace the 2001 version. On March 23, the House Foreign Affairs Committee will hold a hearing on “Reclaiming Congressional War Powers.”

“I’m not going to wait on the Senate,” the chairman said. “We’re going to move in a very expeditious manner.”

Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Menendez told CQ Roll Call on Thursday he doesn’t have a timeline for when the committee might markup legislation to repeal and replace the older military authorizations.

The New Jersey Democrat indicated that in the short term, he is focusing on getting a bipartisan China policy bill advanced through his committee. Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer has said he wants the chamber to vote on China legislation this spring.

Differences, including among members of the same party, over how narrowly to tailor a replacement for the 2001 war authorization stymied previous efforts during the Obama administration to pass an updated anti-terrorism resolution.

However, there appears to be considerable support for including in an updated authorization an expiration date for military operations in the Middle East and Africa, after which

the executive branch would have to persuade Congress to extend it.

"There is growing consensus" that a sunset clause should be included, said Rep. Anthony G. Brown, D-Md.

The former Army aviator and vice chairman of the House Armed Services Committee said there are also arguments in favor of "locking" authorizations in the replacement AUMF to just the seven countries where the United States has ongoing military campaigns.

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CAPABILITIES (ACQUISITION AND INNOVATION):

28. Why You Should Trust Drone Ships And Unmanned Tech, According To The Navy

(*MILITARY.COM 16 MAR 21*) ... Gina Harkins

Navy and Marine Corps leaders have produced a new 40-page "campaign plan" to better explain to Congress, the public and even members of their own forces why unmanned ships and aircraft are not to be feared.

The Navy Department's Unmanned Campaign Framework was published Tuesday, two days before top leaders are due to testify about the future of drone technology on Capitol Hill.

"This campaign plan reflects an integrated Navy and Marine Corps strategy to make unmanned systems trusted in integral parts of our force," Vice Adm. Jim Kilby, deputy chief of naval operations for warfighting requirements and capabilities, told reporters ahead of its release.

The sea services' push for funding to test and field unmanned technology -- particularly drone surface vessels -- has faced significant resistance. The Navy wanted \$2 billion to build 10 large unmanned surface vessels over the next five years, but later walked that back after lawmakers took steps to block the service from buying any of the ships in 2021 "until a certification regarding technology maturity has been submitted to Congress."

The new campaign plan doesn't include timelines or spending plans for specific platforms since it's unclassified, but explains that unmanned systems will be essential in future fights. Marine Lt. Gen. Eric Smith, deputy commandant for combat development and integration, said every program referenced in the report has a specific timeline with goals to meet their objectives.

The report lists seven unmanned air systems; seven unmanned surface vessels; eight unmanned undersea vessels; and three autonomous ground systems.

Smith said there's an underlying commitment to field the platforms as soon as possible "because the pacing threat is constantly moving and accelerating."

"We feel the proverbial hot breath on our neck to move as rapidly as possible and to be as agile as possible," he said.

Leaders say unmanned systems will be particularly important in competing with China and Russia, but the services aren't just facing resistance to unmanned technology on Capitol Hill. Smith and Kilby cited examples of resistance they see in the fleet, where some are comfortable doing things the way they've always done them.

Marine Commandant Gen. David Berger wrote in the plan that the idea of seeing half the Corps' aviation fleet being unmanned "in the near- to midterm" or most logistics needs being handled by drones should not frighten anyone.

Those countries are understood to be Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Niger, Somalia, Syria and Yemen.

"Any use of force beyond that would require coming to Congress," he said.

<https://www.pilotonline.com/nation-world/vp-nw-war-powers-act-20210316-bj6lu7emyjeg5lpq5wkldytux4-story.html>

Technology is driving the changes, Smith said, and Marines need to "play our part in it and to maximize it."

"What [the commandant] is saying is for everyone -- for young Marines, for commanders, for the retired community -- is 'Don't be frightened by the fact that you may have a larger percentage of your aviation community be unmanned or that you may have unmanned systems on the ground,'" Smith said. "And frankly, even to the public who we serve, these systems that we are procuring are remotely operated on their way to autonomy."

The goal is to create a hybrid force, Kilby and Smith stressed, in which unmanned platforms support sailors and Marines in the fleet. Pilots or ship drivers shouldn't be concerned they won't be as promotable as the Navy shifts to unmanned platforms, Kilby said. And Marines and sailors will still be making decisions to use lethal weapons on unmanned systems, Smith said.

The Navy and Marine Corps will hold fleet exercises during which troops will have a chance to get familiarized with some of the new systems. One of those exercises will be hosted next month by U.S. Pacific Fleet, Kilby said.

The document says the sea services want to take a "capabilities-based approach" to identify systems that work on a host of platforms rather than building plans around one piece of equipment.

At least one member of Congress already pushed back against the idea though, saying the Navy must address technical and operational problems on new vessels before they enter full production.

"[We] have been here before, rushing into the full development and production of a promising new platform too soon," Rep. Rob Wittman, a Virginia Republican and ranking member of the House Seapower and Projection Forces subcommittee, said Tuesday after the report was published. "It always proves a costly mistake, and we cannot afford to make that same mistake again."

Unmanned systems are "here to stay," Wittman added, calling it exciting to see the new processes underway.

"But we must focus on getting this right rather than doing this too quickly," he said. "... Simply put, the Navy must show they can meet the critical milestones and understand these platforms' roles before we invest taxpayer money into the vessels' full production."

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/03/16/why-you-should-trust-drone-ships-and-unmanned-tech-according-navy.html>

29. Navy, Marines Unveil How They Will Buy and Operate Future Pilotless Aircraft and Crewless Ships

(USNI NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... Megan Eckstein

The sea services see themselves moving toward a future where they are just as likely to perform a mission with an unmanned platform as a manned one, based on the specifics of the mission and what assets are available. A third of the Navy's fleet and half of Marine Corps aviation could be unmanned under this hybrid vision the two services are pursuing, which they argue in a new Department of the Navy Unmanned Campaign Framework is necessary to stay ahead of adversary capabilities without breaking the bank.

However, achieving this vision will require the services to buck the budgeting system in a way they haven't had to before: they can't just develop and buy new unmanned aircraft, surface vessels and underwater vehicles, but they'll also need to invest in enablers like artificial intelligence and machine learning, networks, data standards, command and control systems and more – which will require constant focus from top leadership to ensure that these less tangible spending items don't fall through the cracks in a platform-centric budget process.

The Unmanned Campaign Framework states that, "Autonomous systems provide additional warfighting capability and capacity to augment our traditional combatant force, allowing the option to take on greater operational risk while maintaining a tactical and strategic advantage. The Navy and Marine Corps are already operating unmanned systems, and going forward will seek to achieve a seamlessly integrated manned-unmanned force across all domains. The question is not 'if' the Naval force will prioritize and leverage unmanned platforms and systems, but how quickly and efficiently, in resource-constrained environments."

Vice Adm. Jim Kilby, the Navy's deputy chief of naval operations for warfighting requirements and capabilities (OPNAV N9), told reporters today that the vision for a hybrid fleet may be a big change for some, but the need for it has been well proven out by wargaming.

"The global security environment as characterized by great power competition necessitates this shift from traditional force structures to a hybrid force of manned and unmanned platforms working together to create a greater naval force for the joint force. So unmanned systems in themselves aren't a goal, they're an enabler for a capability based on a threat that is rapidly accelerating," he said.

He also stressed that adding unmanned systems to the fleet in greater volume and to conduct a broader range of missions doesn't fundamentally change how the Navy and Marine Corps will fight and it doesn't put anyone's jobs at risk: the services will still have to conduct surface warfare, or they'll have to clear the way for Marines to land on a beach or they'll hunt for submarines. Just as the services have already moved to tackle those mission areas from a multi-domain approach – having surface strike options from U.S. surface ships, submarines and aircraft – they'll now have both manned and unmanned options too, based on the specifics of the mission.

Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David Berger wrote in his introduction to the document, "The campaign plan serves as a starting point for the Marine Corps to understand

that unmanned systems must and will take on greater importance in our near future. Concepts such as half of our aviation fleet being unmanned in the near- to mid-term, or most of our expeditionary logistics being unmanned in the near- to mid-term should not frighten anyone. Rather, these ideas should ignite the creative and cunning nature of our Marines so that our forward-deployed forces are even more lethal and useful to the joint force."

During the media call, Lt. Gen. Eric Smith, deputy commandant for combat development and integration, addressed the issue of hesitancy to embrace this new hybrid fleet concept.

"There are folks who may not wish to change the way they currently do business because they're comfortable with it. What he's saying is, for everyone – for young Marines, for commanders, for the retired community: don't be frightened by the fact that you may have a larger percentage of your aviation community be unmanned, that you may have unmanned systems on the ground. And frankly even to the public, who we serve: these systems that we are procuring are remotely operated, on their way to autonomous," but will still have Marines in the loop and making all decisions about using lethal effects.

For example, Smith said, an artificial intelligence tool that can monitor real-time video footage from a large unmanned aerial system in the sky would be of great use to the Marine Corps without putting anyone out of a job: instead of a young intelligence analyst having to monitor that footage in real time, the lance corporal can wait until the AI tool finds the enemy ground formation or ship at sea and then use his or her training to help understand what the adversary might do next and what actions the Marines should take.

"These systems enable commanders" is the message he tried to drive home.

The Unmanned Campaign Framework lays out a vision of "Mak[ing] unmanned systems a trusted and sustainable part of the Naval force structure, integrated at speed to provide lethal, survivable, and scalable effects in support of the future maritime mission."

"It is imperative that we employ new and different strategies to win the future fight. Unmanned concepts allow us to rewrite the narrative on traditional warfare. Through a capabilities-based approach we can build a future where unmanned systems are at the front lines of our competitive advantage. The Naval force needs to move toward a capability-centric proactive environment able to incorporate unmanned systems at the speed of technology, to provide maximum agility to the future force," it continues.

In some ways, the Navy and Marine Corps are already moving in this direction. Smith noted that many of the early unmanned systems in all domains (UxVs) that were fielded were urgent operational needs from the warfighter, meaning the unmanned systems were built with speed-to-fleet in mind instead of how they might fit into a larger network of manned and unmanned vehicles and weapons. But now, as some of those oldest systems are aging out and being replaced by new systems, there are already opportunities to take a smarter

approach and focus on commonality across interfaces, networks, data formats and more.

For example, the Navy separately fielded a medium-sized unmanned underwater vehicle for the explosive ordnance disposal community and another for the submarine community. The two are now being combined into a common MUUV program that will meet both communities' operational needs while simplifying the inventory and picking a solution that can leverage work being done on developing a common controller system and autonomy software, and can tap into the Navy's overall common operating picture.

On the Marine Corps side, the service has been testing and operating the RQ-21A Blackjack small UAV for the better part of a decade, but the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit is experimenting with other options such as the Martin UAV V-BAT, which could also be used from a ship or ashore and provide the MEU commander an aerial surveillance capability.

"The Marines just want that capability; and when that capability arrives, is tested, experimented, wargamed and is validated and then we can do it to scale, then there's no need for a previous thing that was doing that but not doing it as well," Smith said, adding that whatever solution the Marines pursue could provide commanders with improved capability while also fitting into the vision of common networks and interfaces for the hybrid fleet.

The services aren't just upgrading their legacy UxVs to fit this new construct, they'll also be experimenting with and eventually investing in many more unmanned systems to conduct missions never before associated with unmanned craft. The Marine Corps has been particularly outspoken about its excitement to use unmanned craft on or under the water's surface to deliver supplies to Marines scattered across island chains, for example, or to use unmanned Joint Light Tactical Vehicles to haul around anti-ship missiles.

A key challenge to the services will be the nature of the budget process itself. In the Navy, for example, a program manager oversees the development, acquisition and fielding of the system, but a resource sponsor in a separate office on the chief of naval operations' staff – which resource sponsor it is depends on whether it is used on, under or above the sea – determines how much money it needs to stay on track. That dollar amount gets thrown into a Navy budget proposal overseen by yet another office on the CNO's staff, which then goes to the Secretary of Defense and eventually on to Congress, where it could be overhauled. In the future hybrid Navy, not only will each platform fall under separate program managers and resource sponsors, but so too will the autonomy packages, payloads and networks they all rely on, meaning that multiple program managers and resource sponsors will have to stay in sync. Otherwise, the Navy could have an unmanned ship without the right command and control tool to operate it, or a payload without a reliable unmanned airframe to carry it.

The Department of the Navy in June 2015 created a Director of Unmanned Systems (OPNAV N99) position on the CNO's staff and in October 2015 created an office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Unmanned Systems, both of which were meant to tackle the issue of common enablers for unmanned systems across domains. However, N99 was eliminated in February 2017 and DASN Unmanned in May 2018.

Since then, commonality efforts have taken place at the programmatic level, such as within the Program Executive Office for Unmanned and Small Combatants. Last fall the Navy tapped Rear Adm. Doug Small, commander of the Naval Information Warfare Systems Command, to lead a Project Overmatch that would "develop the networks, infrastructure, data architecture, tools, and analytics that support the operational and developmental environment that will enable our sustained maritime dominance," according to a memo signed by CNO Adm. Mike Gilday. But little has been done to formally ensure that unmanned technologies and their critical enablers would be developed and fielded in tandem.

Navy and Marine Corps leadership vowed to give the attention needed to ensure the whole package – the unmanned vehicles, as well as the spare parts, the operators and analysts working with the unmanned systems (UxS), autonomy technologies, resilient communications, payloads and common interfaces, power and endurance, reliable mechanical systems and more – is fully funded and delivered.

"The complexity of warfare is driving us to manage this at a different level. Navy Integrated Fire Control Counter Air (NIFC-CA) is one of those examples where I have to align all those programs at once," Kilby said during the call with Smith and acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition Jay Stefany.

"When Secretary Stefany has gate reviews now for platforms, we bring in the enablers, the managers of those links, to make sure they're pacing and going to deliver with that platform," Kilby continued. He said manned-unmanned teaming will require that not just one program from its program manager be fielded successfully, but rather that the Navy create a warfighting capability where "many programs are reliant on and contribute to that capability, and we've got to make sure that we're aligned to that."

Though Stefany, Kilby and Smith said during the call that they were confident they could manage this inter-connected acquisition and fielding effort through high-level leadership and focus, a prominent House Armed Services Committee member expressed both optimism and concern after the Navy released the unmanned plan today.

Rep. Rob Wittman, the top-ranking Republican on the HASC seapower and projection forces subcommittee, said in a statement that "unmanned systems are here to stay and will continue taking an increasingly prominent role, providing the flexibility our Navy needs to fight and win the wars of tomorrow. It is exciting to see this process underway, but we must focus on getting this right rather than doing this too quickly. To get this right, we must resolve the technical and operational issues with a few of these vessels before entering full production. If that sounds commonsense, it is."

"Yet, we have been here before, rushing into the full development and production of a promising new platform too soon. It always proves a costly mistake, and we cannot afford to make that same mistake again," he continued.

"We must work out these new platforms' required capabilities and operational concepts before they enter full development. Simply put, the Navy must show they can meet the critical milestones and understand these platforms' roles before we invest taxpayer money into the vessels' full production."

Kilby pointed to land-based test sites to demonstrate reliability and the iterative process for drafting and continually refining concepts of operations as reasons for lawmakers and other stakeholders to have confidence that the Navy can learn quickly so it can overhaul the fleet and reach its manned-unmanned teaming vision quickly.

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30. Navy, Marine Corps Release Unmanned Campaign Plan

(*SEAPOWERMAGAZINE 16 MAR 21*)

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps released on March 16 the Unmanned Campaign framework, which presents their strategy for making unmanned systems a trusted and integral part of warfighting.

Through a capabilities-based approach, the services seek to build a future where unmanned systems are at the front lines of U.S. competitive advantage.

The framework has five goals: Advance manned-unmanned teaming effects within the full range of naval and joint operations; build a digital infrastructure that integrates and adopts unmanned capabilities at speed and scale; incentivize rapid incremental development and testing cycles for unmanned systems; disaggregate common problems, solve once, and scale solutions across platforms and domains; create a capability-centric approach for unmanned contributions (platforms, systems, subsystems) to the force.

The framework provides a strategy for integrating these systems to provide lethal, survivable, and scalable effects supporting the future maritime mission. The Navy and Marine Corps are developing detailed technology maturation and acquisition roadmaps within a separate classified plan of action and milestones. The objective is to innovate quickly to provide solutions for complex problems of current and future conflicts.

The path forward requires a holistic approach to developing and deploying unmanned systems, ensuring individual technologies can operate within a broader architecture of networked warfighting systems, supported by the right people, policies, operational concepts, and other enablers.

The campaign framework focuses on how the Navy and Marine Corps will reduce risk and identify performance requirements. Using dedicated prototypes for each unmanned system and developing capability in this manner standardizes autonomy, command and control, payload interfaces, and networks.

“The Navy and Marine Corps unmanned campaign plan serves as a roadmap for how we will realize a future where unmanned systems serve as an integral part of the Navy’s warfighting team in support of distributed maritime operations,” said Vice Adm. Jim Kilby, deputy chief of naval operations for warfighting requirements and capabilities. “The plan lays out how we will scale tested and proven systems as well as develop the core technologies required to successfully integrate unmanned systems into the fleet.”

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“Working together, the three of us here today are committed to pursuing, developing and integrating unmanned systems into our future force structure,” Kilby said.

<https://news.usni.org/2021/03/16/navy-marines-unveil-how-they-will-buy-and-operate-future-pilotless-aircraft-and-crewless-ships>

The framework provides guidance for the services to pursue an agile and aggressive approach to develop the core technologies required to successfully integrate unmanned systems into the Navy’s future force structure. The services must invest in the networks, control systems, infrastructure, interfaces, artificial intelligence, and data required to support unmanned systems to succeed.

“The Navy and Marine Corps unmanned campaign plan will guide our naval research and development investments, and through the acquisition process, we will collaborate with our industry partners to design, build, field and sustain manned and unmanned teaming throughout the fleet,” said Frederick J. Stefany, acting assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition. “It also sets the framework to enable the Department of the Navy to accelerate, deliver and scale valuable manned and unmanned capabilities.”

Today’s global security environment has seen a return to great power competition. This shift has placed the Navy at an inflection point where a traditional force structure will not be enough in the face of new warfighting demands. Autonomous systems are not a replacement, but provide additional capacity and capability to the combatant force and allow commanders to accept risk where they couldn’t before.

“A family of unmanned systems is critical to the employment of our force during distributed maritime operations. The goal is for us to be able to persist inside the weapons engagement zone of any adversary, to create problems and challenges, to make that adversary change their behavior or course of action they intend to pursue. These systems will be prevalent in all mediums: surface, subsurface, ground and air. Manned/unmanned teaming increases our lethality while allowing us to accept less risk in certain situations. Coordinating our efforts as a naval force will expedite the concept development and material solutions for our Marines and Sailors,” said Lt. Gen. Eric Smith, commanding general of Marine Corps Combat Development Command and deputy commandant for combat development and integration.

The Unmanned Campaign Plan is comprised of the Unmanned Campaign Framework and a classified Unmanned Plan of Actions and Milestones.

The Unmanned Campaign framework can be found at: Department of the Navy Unmanned Campaign Framework.

<https://seapowermagazine.org/navy-marine-corps-release-unmanned-campaign-plan/>

31. US Navy Conducts First Aircraft Carrier F135 Module VERTREP At Sea

(NAVAL TECHNOLOGY 16 MAR 21)

The US Navy has successfully conducted the first aircraft carrier F135 engine power module proof-of-concept vertical replenishment (VERTREP) at sea.

The development marks an important step forward in the future of the F-35C Lightning II joint strike fighter.

During the VERTREP, a civilian Eurocopter AS332 Super Puma and a US Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466 transported a load simulator.

The load simulator was replicated to weigh equivalent to an F135 engine power module, which powers the F-35C.

The helicopters vertically transferred the load from the dry-cargo ammunition ship USNS Richard E. Byrd (T-AKE 4) to the Nimitz-class nuclear aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70).

The exercise was conducted to offer a proof-of-concept to the US Navy in the maintenance and tactical operations functions of the F-35 aircraft at sea in the future.

USS Carl Vinson is capable of supporting fifth-generation aircraft and can embark both the single-engine fixed-wing jet F-35C and the CMV-22B Osprey aircraft.

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Vinson commanding officer captain Scott Miller said: “This exercise confirms the navy’s ability to maintain maritime operations in a new generation of jet fighter aircraft.

“What we’ve accomplished here ensures that our fleet will be capable of utilizing the latest in cutting-edge, warfighting technology in future joint strike fighter deployments. With every success, we improve our readiness and maintain our capability to defend our nation and allies against any adversary.”

The vertical replenishment demonstration is the result of integrated operations between the carrier and air wing for over six months.

Last month, the new CMV-22B Osprey was used to transfer an F135 from shore to Vinson.

Vinson maintenance officer commander William Gray said: “Today’s success provides an additional option when replenishing parts to maintain the F-35C Lightning II while underway.”

<https://www.naval-technology.com/news/company-news/us-navy-conducts-first-aircraft-carrier-f135-module-vertrep-at-sea/>

PERSONNEL READINESS & VETERANS:

32. Sailor Dies From Apparent Self-Inflicted Gunshot Wound Aboard Submarine In Pearl Harbor

(STARS AND STRIPES 16 MAR 21) ... Wyatt Olson

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A sailor died Monday from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound while on duty aboard a submarine at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, the Navy said in a news release Tuesday.

“Out of respect for the family the name will not be released until 24 hours after next of kin have been notified,” Cmdr. Cindy Fields, a spokeswoman for Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, said in a statement to Stars and Stripes. “This is to provide adequate time to notify and care for the family prior to public announcement. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Sailors’ family, friends and shipmates.”

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service is investigating the death, the Navy said.

“While it would be inappropriate to comment on specific details of an ongoing investigation, the Sailor died from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound while on duty aboard a submarine at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, Fields said.

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The shipyard was the scene of a murder-suicide by a 22-year-old sailor in December 2019.

Machinist’s Mate (Auxiliary) Fireman Gabriel A. Romero shot three civilian workers, killing two, before turning his service-issued M-9 pistol on himself.

Romero had been assigned to the fast-attack submarine USS Columbia.

A Navy investigation released in September concluded that “no one could have reasonably predicted” Romero’s lethal actions and did not establish a motive for the shooting.

The Navy’s health system had also under-diagnosed Romero’s mental health issues, the report said.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/sailor-dies-from-apparent-self-inflicted-gunshot-wound-aboard-submarine-in-pearl-harbor-1.666067>

ENVIRONMENTAL/INSTALLATIONS:

33. Coast Guard, Navy Help Rescue Cold-Stunned Turtles, Return Them to Warmer Waters

(*SEAPOWERS MAGAZINE 16 MAR 21*) ... Edward Lundquist

Texas recently experienced record-breaking cold temperatures, causing the largest cold-stunning event for sea turtles in the state's history. As the water temperature dropped to the mid-30s Fahrenheit, thousands of turtles were found stranded on beaches or floating in the water.

In the shallow bays and inlets of the Laguna Madre next to Padre Island, water temperatures can change rapidly. As reptiles, turtles are cold-blooded and cannot regulate their body temperature. Cold-stunned turtles experience hypothermia when the sea water drops to about 50°F or below, and become lethargic and unable to swim.

According to Sea Turtle Inc., a non-profit organization on South Padre Island, "cold-stun events happen when the water gets too cold for sea turtles to maintain their body temperature. As a result, the turtles are awake but unable to move or swim. If not rescued, while they are awake and alive, the turtles will drown from being unable to lift their head to draw their breath."

Fortunately, the Coast Guard and Navy were ready, willing and able to join in the effort with a team of organizations to help the turtles.

A consortium of organizations including the Turtle Survival Alliance, Sea Turtles, Inc., the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, the Texas Sealife Center, Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife and the National Park Service make up the South Padre Island Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network, which works to rescue and care for cold-stunned turtles. While the area has experienced cold weather before, the February 2021 cold weather event was unprecedented. With 7,000 or more turtles knocked out by the frigid waters, ranging in size from a few pounds to more than 400 pounds. The rescuers were overwhelmed.

Active-duty Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen pitched in, including student pilots for Naval Air Station Corpus Christi. Volunteers also included Navy civilian employees, retirees, spouses and family members.

NAS Corpus Christi and Coast Guard Sector Corpus Christi, like many military installations, are used to encountering wildlife suffering from severe weather. But this 2021 event has resulted in thousands of turtles stupefied by the cold. It is remarkable that so few of them died, but without the intervention of the Navy, Coast Guard and others, the toll would have been much higher.

Capt. Christopher Jason, the commanding officer of Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, used his kayak to paddle out to the turtles and pull them out of the water. Turtles were kept in a hanger and later moved to a Defense Logistics Agency temperature-controlled warehouse to recover.

The rescues started with a base resident wanting to help a couple of injured birds. It turned into a large-scale operation involving dozens of volunteers rescuing more than 1,200 threatened sea turtles, at the same time as many of those volunteers did not have heat or water because of the unusually cold winter storm.

"The scale of the effort was unprecedented," said Biji Pandisseril, NASCC environmental director. "Usually, about 20 to 30 turtles are rescued here after a cold snap."

U.S. Coast Guard Rescue swimmers from Air Station Corpus Christi swam through rough and cold water to reach turtles far away from the shore. Petty Officer 3rd Class Will Groskritz and Petty Officer 2nd Class Russell Grizzard brought 60 turtles to safety in one day. The next day, Grizzard and Petty Officer 1st Class Rob Rendon saved another 40 to 50 turtles.

Responding to cold stun events is one of Sea Turtle Inc.'s ongoing rescue and rehabilitation efforts. For example, Sea Turtle Inc. has released over 55,000 sea turtle hatchlings into the Gulf of Mexico, and each year helps with any cold-stunned turtles that are found. But, with more rescued turtles coming in the Sea Turtle Inc.'s facility could handle. The rescued turtle filled the facility to capacity, with many turtles placed in children's play pools. A makeshift rescue center was established at the South Padre Island Convention Center and Visitors Bureau.

In addition to the turtles being affected by the cold, their rescuers also had to contend with power outages and water shortages of their own as the cold snap surprised Texans.

Aerospace Company SpaceX donated a large power generator from their Boca Chica launch facility in Brownsville to provide electricity to the Sea Turtles Inc. facility, which already had hatchlings and other turtles being cared for. The power helped to keep the water in facility's tanks warm enough for the turtles to survive.

"This event had the potential to be devastating to both the sea turtle population and our hospital and residents. We prepare for cold stun events, but to respond as efficiently as we have although the additional challenge of no power speaks volumes about the passion and commitment of the Sea Turtle Inc staff and the Rio Grande Valley community," said Wendy Knight, executive director of Sea Turtle Inc.

Unique ecosystem

Dr. Donna Shaver, chief of the division of sea turtle science and recovery with the National Park Service at Padre Island National Seashore, is the Texas coordinator of the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network.

Shaver and her team were not completely unprepared. Back in October, Shaver, along with Texas State Aquarium and U.S. Coast Guard representatives, held a tabletop exercise to discuss what the response to a mass cold-stunning event such as this would look like. Because of the planning and preparation of that exercise, rescue, rehabilitation, and release of these animals was swift and effective.

Shaver said the February cold snap was the coldest event since 1895, when a cold-stunning event was thought to have decimated the Green Sea Turtle population in Texas. She called it the "perfect storm" for cold study.

Shaver explained that the Laguna Madre, the salt water lagoon between mainland Texas and Padre Island, with lush sea grasses and algae, is a prime habitat for the juvenile green turtles, which represent the vast majority of the cold-stunned turtles.

Once-numerous, the green sea turtle is today a threatened species in Texas. Considered a delicacy, there was once a large commercial fishery harvesting turtles in the area. "This

used to be a thriving population in Texas until it was decimated in the late 1800s. It's rebuilding, but now needs our help with these rescues," Shaver said.

At about 125 miles long, Laguna Madre is one of the few hypersaline lagoon systems in the world, meaning it is saltier than most seawater. There isn't much inflow of fresh water or rainwater, and circulation with the Gulf of Mexico is limited. Laguna Madre is one of the most productive estuarine systems and a valuable habitat for wildlife. It is protected by Padre Island, the longest stretch of undeveloped barrier island in the world, and there are only a few channels that allow access to open water. The precipitous decline of the temperatures, how long it stayed cold, and the depth of the cold water spelled trouble for the trapped turtles.

The water temperature can change temperature rapidly, and sea turtles swimming in Laguna Madre may not have had enough time to swim out of to the deeper, warmer waters of the Gulf of Mexico before becoming cold stunned.

Rehabilitation is fairly straight forward, Shaver said. "The first step is to bring in them in out of the elements and gradually warm up — but not too quickly — and then

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determine which ones are still alive, because we can't tell for many of these turtles."

"When they start to move around, we can put them in the water, let them expel some gas, and give them a swim test. Then we wait until the Gulf of Mexico waters when the waters are warm enough so we can release them there," Shaver said. "We don't want to release them back into the Laguna Madre, because they could become cold-stunned again."

"Working with our partners in the Texas State Aquarium and Texas Game Wardens to release these animals back into the wild is a surreal experience," said Coast Guard Ensign Austin Sawicki. "Getting to play a small part in keeping the green sea turtle population safe is a very rewarding experience."

Coast Guard Sector Corpus Christi and Station Port Aransas crewmembers assisted partner organizations to release the rehabilitated sea turtles back into the Gulf of Mexico in areas where the water was at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit were selected.

<https://seapowermagazine.org/coast-guard-navy-help-rescue-cold-stunned-turtles-return-them-to-warmer-waters/>

NAVAL HISTORY:

34. What It Was Like For Marines Responding To One Of The Worst Nuclear Disasters In History

"This set the conditions on how we were going to take care of our friends."

(TASK & PURPOSE 16 MAR 21) ... David Roza

Lt. Col. Giuseppe Stavale was in a situation no parent wants to be in. It was early afternoon on March 11, 2011, and a massive earthquake, followed by a 140-foot tall tsunami, had just struck the coast of northeast Japan. The city of Tokyo, where Stavale was stationed, was shaking around him, and he could not find his teenage daughter.

"I was trying to get in touch with my daughter to ensure she was ok, but all the cellular phone networks stopped working, either due to outages or being overwhelmed by volume of calls," the Marine said in a recent press release. "We were watching the news footage, seeing collapses, and we realized that it reached much further than Tokyo, it was extensive."

Fortunately, Stavale managed to track down his daughter and pick her up in his car. His wife, meanwhile, survived with their twins while taking shelter in the family living room. They were the lucky ones. Nearly 16,000 people lost their lives in what became known as the Great East Japan earthquake, and the ensuing Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, which the earthquake and tsunami set off.

Now, on the ten-year anniversary of the triple-catastrophe, the Japanese government and the U.S. Marine Corps took time to remember both the massive losses of the event and the monumental efforts of Japanese first responders, civilians, and nearly 25,000 American service members who worked together to rebuild in the face of disaster.

"We had this big earthquake, followed by a massive tsunami, followed by a nuclear disaster, and we had the thought that if anyone ever tried to introduce all those factors into an exercise, they would be fired," said Stavale, who was a Major at the time and has since retired. "That would never be

allowed to be a scenario, never be allowed to happen, because it was so unlikely. But it happened."

In its wake, nearly a million buildings were damaged or destroyed; 6 million households were without power or water; many areas of the coastline were flooded, and a 30 km no-go zone was created due to radiation from the nuclear meltdown. For context, the earthquake was the most powerful ever recorded in Japan, and the fourth-most powerful worldwide since modern record-keeping began in 1900. Meanwhile, the only nuclear disaster worse than Fukushima was the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. So Japan was basically wrecked by three heavy-weight historic catastrophes all at once.

Over the ensuing months, Marines and local Japanese worked together to search for and rescue survivors, clear out debris, rebuild airfields, treat injuries, distribute food, water, and supplies, get electricity up and running, and perform the countless other tasks of getting an entire country back on its feet. The Marines immediately got to work restoring a major airfield far faster than anyone would have thought possible.

"When we first arrived at [Sendai] airport, local officials thought it would take months to get aircraft back in there," said Maj. Gen. Craig Timberlake, then a brigadier general, who had been in command of the Japan-based 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade for only four days when the triple-catastrophe struck.

Luckily, Col. Craig Kozeniesky was on the scene. The commanding officer of Camp Fuji, Kozeniesky didn't wait for permission from command before trucking in Marines and heavy equipment to Sendai airport to get it reopened as soon as possible. Instead of taking months, it took a mere three days for relief flights to start landing again to drop off supplies and recovery experts.

“How that happened was probably a miracle, because we were told that Sendai airport — the busiest in the northeast — was a total loss,” said Lt. Col. Stavale. “But here come the Marines from Fuji with their ‘can do’ attitude, and their willingness to help ... Once they cleared that runway, and the relief flights became regular, it gave everyone a lot of hope.”

Elsewhere, Marines, soldiers, sailors, and airmen soon found out how big an impact a small difference can make in a disaster zone. A shower unit near Camp Sendai was “essential for cleanliness and very therapeutic,” Stavale said; a load of sports energy gels kept people fueled; and a shoulder to cry on gave an elderly Japanese woman a chance to let out some of the pressure of the catastrophe. Stavale said he was proud to provide that shoulder, and he was proud of helping clean out schools in Ishinomaki and installing radiation monitoring devices in the meltdown area. However, none of it would have happened without two essential ingredients: communication and relationships.

“This is why we need people that learn Japanese, know who to talk to, know who your counterparts are,” said Stavale. “It’s not just a person on the other end of the phone, or a radio, but understanding who they are and how they think.”

As a Foreign Area Officer with an education in Japanese, Stavale was well-positioned to provide that understanding. He helped Marines and locals work together, which was especially important in Japan, where an emergency response infrastructure already exists.

“The 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force had done many humanitarian assistance/disaster relief missions in third-world countries ... However, we had never done this sort of mission in a first-world developed nation,” Maj. Gen. Timberlake said. “We had to complement Japanese military assistance and not compete with their robust efforts.”

One person in particular who enabled the joint effort was Dr. Robert Eldridge, the political advisor and Japanese government expert for the Americans in Sendai. Multiple Marines credited Eldridge for making the partnership between the two countries stick.

“Dr. Eldridge had prior existing relationships, intense knowledge of the culture, language, political processes, and understood how to work with people,” said Timberlake. “Every time we had an issue, he was one of the first people I talked with. Without him, we would not have been as successful as we were. It is now ten years later I don’t believe anybody has done as much to further the relationship between the U.S. and Japan than Dr. Eldridge.”

In a 2020 interview with Japan Times, Eldridge said that his proudest achievement was his work during Operation Tomodachi (literally Operation Friends), the name for the U.S. military relief effort for Japan. In 2015, Japan Times reported that Eldridge was dismissed from his position as a Marine Corps advisor after leaking surveillance footage of an anti-base protest to a Japanese neo-nationalist YouTube channel. Still, he made a big impact during Tomodachi, Marines said in the press release.

“He introduced [military leaders] to the right officials and explained how agencies plug into each other, and made it work,” said Stavale. “He was the right guy at the right time, and he deserves a lot of recognition.”

Though the Americans were there to help Japan, Stavale noted that the Japanese taught Americans many lessons along the way.

“The Japanese probably taught us more than we taught them about how to behave amidst disaster. Some people use the word ‘resilient’ or ‘stoic,’” the Marine recalled.

“Unfortunately, in U.S. disasters recently, we saw some disappointing stuff, to include looting, fraud, price gouging, and other things. There of course is a lot of goodness too, not to discount that, but the Japanese showed how although it may be very tough and there may be a lot of personal pain, they were resilient and moved forward.”

For example, U.S. helicopters would deliver supplies to isolated areas, only to be turned away by local Japanese who preferred to wait until everyone had enough to share, Stavale said.

“There is a lot about that which we Americans can learn from,” he added.

Of course, the Japanese were not the only ones to benefit from Operation Tomodachi. Maj. Gen. Timberlake noted that the Japan-U.S. relationship was and is “the cornerstone of security in the Indo Pacific,” and that it was important to demonstrate how the U.S. helped its allies “especially in the eyes of potential adversaries.”

That alliance has become increasingly important as China moves to rival the U.S. for control of the Pacific. However, not all Japanese appreciate America’s presence in their country. While a record 82 percent of Japanese reportedly had friendly feelings towards the U.S. following Operation Tomodachi, according to the New York Times, some critics said the operation was used to justify controversial Marine basing locations on the southern island of Okinawa, which many islanders still oppose to this day.

Related: 3 Marines got drunk in Japan over Halloween weekend and were treated to jail in three separate incidents

Thirty-one of the 85 U.S. military facilities in Japan are on Okinawa, despite it being among the poorest and smallest of Japan’s prefectures, the Council on Foreign Relations wrote in 2019. Despite the bases bringing economic benefits such as jobs, many Okinawans resent the American presence there due to the bloody World War II battle that took place on the island (which killed nearly a third of Okinawa’s inhabitants); notorious incidents of rape of local women and girls by U.S. service members; and hundreds of dangerous military aircraft mishaps that took place near local hospitals and schools.

Residents point to the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in particular for its poor placement in the middle of the city of Ginowan, which The Guardian once compared to having F-22s landing in Hyde Park, London (a bit like New York City’s Central Park). The U.S. has since agreed to move the base to a less populated area of the island, though the tension on Okinawa remains. Though the U.S. military’s presence on the island has been a source of controversy, the Marines and other service members stationed there definitely proved themselves useful after that day in March ten years ago.

“The very day the earthquake occurred, Yokota Air Base accepted emergency divert flights from Japanese commercial airports,” Stavale said. “Those Japanese civilian flights landed on our military base, where the service members took care of hundreds of stranded passengers, giving them food, information, shelter, and helping to coordinate onward

movement. This set the conditions on how we were going to take care of our friends.”

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<https://taskandpurpose.com/culture/marines-fukushima-diaster-japan/>

35. Repairs Underway To Save The Decommissioned Destroyer The Sullivans From Taking On Water

(ASSOCIATED PRESS 16 MAR 21) ... Carolyn Thompson

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Keeping the Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park from going under during the pandemic has been hard enough without also having to worry about keeping one of its star attractions afloat.

After losing 87 percent of its revenue because of COVID-19 closures and cancellations during the past year, the park recently discovered the destroyer USS The Sullivans taking on water and listing at its dock in Buffalo’s inner harbor.

The 78-year-old decommissioned vessel is named in honor of the five Sullivan brothers from Waterloo, Iowa, who were killed in action when the USS Juneau was sunk by the Japanese in the South Pacific during World War II.

Their mother, Alleta Sullivan, christened the ship, which saw action in World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War. It’s now a National Historic Landmark.

“She was built to last about 20 years. Destroyers by their very nature, are built with a very thin layer of steel because they’ve got to be fast and maneuverable,” said Paul Marzello Sr., president and chief executive of the park. “Seventy-eight years is a long time to keep these ships in condition to be floating, especially when we want to use them as a museum piece and use them as an educational tool.”

Crews from the military park couldn’t immediately board the leaning vessel because the gangways had been damaged by a winter storm. When they did, they found that 15,000-20,000 gallons of water had poured in through three holes in its hull.

“The holes can be anywhere from the size of a dime to a quarter, but it doesn’t take much when it’s below the water line,” Marzello said. “It’s just coming in full bore, so those are the scary ones.”

Emergency repairs are under way to pump out the water and plug the holes. Officials estimate it will cost \$1 million to permanently repair a hull weakened and damaged by the freeze and thaw of decades of winters.

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It would have been a costly undertaking for the nonprofit park and museum even before the pandemic all but wiped out its revenue stream.

“It killed the summer as far as admissions and tours, not to mention what it does to gift shop revenue, the restaurant revenue. It goes right down the line,” Marzello said.

The granddaughter of Albert Sullivan, the youngest of the brothers and the only one to have a child, is scheduled to kick off a St. Patrick’s Day fundraising effort Wednesday being led by Washington, D.C.-based developer Douglas Jemal.

Kelly Sullivan was 5 years old when she took her first plane ride to Buffalo to see the ship become a museum. Since then, she has been a regular at reunions held by sailors who served on it and their families.

“I didn’t grow up in the big Irish Catholic family that I would have had if even one of the boys had survived, but I have my Sullivan sailors family,” Sullivan said as she traveled to Buffalo from Waterloo, Iowa, where she teaches third grade.

“It’s an artifact that celebrates not just Sullivans, but it honors all of the men and women who have served our country,” she said.

The USS The Sullivans is one of four decommissioned Naval vessels at the park, along with the USS Little Rock, the last surviving vessel from the Cleveland-class of light cruisers; the USS Croaker, a Gato-class submarine on the National Register of Historic Places, and the PTF-17 that was used as a high-speed reconnaissance and patrol craft in Vietnam.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2021/03/16/repairs-underway-to-save-the-decommissioned-destroyer-the-sullivans-from-taking-on-water/>

COMMENTARY:

36. The Next World War Won't Be Like The Last

(WASHINGTON POST 17 MAR 21) ... James Stavridis and Elliot Ackerman

Imagine a crisis with China that escalates into a world war 10 years or so from now. Would the United States stand a chance in such a conflict?

If you believe that future wars will be conducted like those in the past, in which the sophistication and numbers of our ships, planes and tanks are the essential metric of dominance, then the United States remains in an enviable position.

But the world is evolving quickly and dangerously. And in war, what is past is rarely prologue.

Today, our fleet of aircraft carriers remains unmatched. But carrier warfare, particularly of the kind that began nearly a century ago, is becoming antiquated and challenged by undersea threats. Autonomous technologies, such as low-cost swarms of air- and sea-based drones coupled with hypersonic missiles, could shift the balance of power on the oceans. Imagine a sky filled with aircraft, or an ocean filled with ships, on a scale we have not witnessed since World War II. Now, imagine that those platforms are entirely unmanned.

This is what the future of warfare may look like; that is, if we can see it at all. Rapid developments in stealth technology may allow whole fleets to hide on the open seas.

Such a scenario does not consider the impact of cyberwarfare. The recent SolarWinds attack sponsored by Russia hacked our government and more than 400 of the United States' Fortune 500 companies. It's a penetration so vast that we're still struggling to comprehend its scope. Specialists have been sounding the vulnerability alarm on cyber for more a decade; too many policymakers assume that so long as their bank accounts and home Internet are password-protected, our national security infrastructure remains well guarded and uncompromised. Yet we are moving toward a cyberwar "Pearl Harbor" with insufficient military and civilian resources devoted to the problem.

Catching up means investing in offensive cyber capabilities, smaller platforms, drone and stealth technology and artificial intelligence.

Our personnel needs will change in multiple ways: We will need to select, train and employ people with a Special Forces-like mentality — finding far smaller numbers of elite

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men and women who can integrate with the advanced technology using biotechnological breakthroughs. And we must recognize that the major weapons systems of the future will largely be unmanned and often autonomous. We continue to buy and build weapons system designed for conflicts we are not likely to face again.

If we get it right, a new strategic triad of offensive cyber, elite forces and unmanned vehicles will span combat zones from well below the ocean's surface to satellite constellations high above the Earth. But while the Pentagon and other agencies are taking steps in the right direction, they do not go remotely far enough. This new triad is not yet central to the future that the military services are imagining today.

What we need most is an active imagination; we should enlist insights not only from security professionals, but also historians, writers, foreign policy experts and representatives from the arts. If any hesitation existed before, the pandemic should demonstrate to our leaders the importance of unconventional thinking when it comes to anticipating future threats to our country and taking steps to avert a crisis before it arrives on our doorstep.

Thinking imaginatively means suggesting ideas and possibilities that some people might find absurd. But no idea should be off the table. Questioning the status quo must be the norm. We have to imagine our way toward the next war and then try to reverse-engineer its causes to avoid it. And if we fail to do so, we must be prepared to fight and win.

Sun Tzu said, "The greatest victory is that which requires no battle." It follows that the greatest reason to do the hard, awkward work of imagining the future is so that you and your adversary — via a thousand virtual simulations, drills and field exercises — will have already played out the horrors and imagined the costs of the next war. And you will have thus immunized yourself against future catastrophe by, hopefully, reaching an enlightened mutual conclusion: In modern global war, no one wins.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/03/16/next-world-war-wont-be-anything-like-last-heres-how-us-must-prepare/>

37. The Military Could Soon Face a Flag Officer Talent Crisis

Senior leader pay is seriously out of sync with the risks and responsibilities that come with the positions.

(DEFENSE NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... Col. Charles Luke

Military service members received a heralded 3% pay increase under the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, but this increase camouflaged the continued stagnation in general and flag officer pay stemming from provisions in the 2015 NDAA six years prior. That law limits the pay of generals and admirals (officers in pay grades O7 and above) to the Executive Level II salary level for civilians.

This pay cap limits current and retirement pay of senior executives to \$199,300. While that may sound like an impressive amount of money, these are executive leaders responsible for organizations larger than any of the companies

whose chief executives earn, on average, \$21.3 million. As a result of the cap, officers stop receiving pay raises at the two star rank. It's a limit that discourages continued service and makes it harder to keep talent at the highest levels of the military.

As of February, chief operating officer annual salaries in the United States averaged \$447,971. That's more than twice as much as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff earns. If the U.S. Army were a corporation, with its over 1 million active duty and reserve soldiers and 300,000 civilian employees, it would rank just behind Walmart in the size of its

workforce. The compensation package for the chief operating officer of Walmart is almost \$10 million, whereas, the Army Chief of Staff earns \$199,300. For the three- and four-star officers who remain in the Army for 40 years, the cap creates a cumulative pay reduction of more than \$1 million in earnings when compared to pay without the limitation.

In the corporate world, that would be like promoting a middle manager to COO or CEO and then requiring them to serve for a decade without a pay increase for the privilege of taking on substantial new responsibilities.

The military develops its most senior officers from a limited pool of men and women who have typically served at least 26 years before making their first star as a general or admiral. By the time they are on their way to achieving a third star (and thus limited by the pay cap), they typically have at least 30 years of service. Most of them also have to pack up and move every one or two years for a new assignment.

At this point, most face a decision: to continue to wear the uniform at the same pay or leave the military and possibly earn a significantly higher salary in the corporate world.

Under the cap, these officers also are denied the standard 2.5% retirement increase for years served, so retirement benefits do not increase with continued service. While senior military leaders are largely driven by an ethos of service, at some point, the prospect of more time with their families and the decreasing potential earnings have to tip the scales towards retirement. For senior leaders in their 50's, there is a point of diminishing returns on earnings in the corporate talent market.

As in the business world, talent management is a top priority for the military. Two years ago, the Army reinvigorated a Talent Management Task Force and all the services have programs that focus on attracting and retaining

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38. Biden Hopes "Alliance Math" Adds Up To Security And Stability

(KYODO NEWS 16 MAR 21) ... James L. Schoff

U.S. President Joe Biden and his administration are breaking out onto Asia's diplomatic stage in a big way, beginning with the first-ever leaders' meeting of the "Quad" (the United States, Japan, Australia and India) last Friday and followed by back-to-back foreign and defense minister meetings ("two-plus-two") this week in Tokyo and Seoul featuring Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. Never have two-plus-twos been arranged so early in a new administration, and they were not held even once during the Trump administration with South Korea.

The purpose of these mathematical combinations is clear. As State Department spokesman Ned Price described, they are "to demonstrate in both word and deed" how the Biden administration believes that its alliances and partnerships are "a core source of strength" by which they can meet challenges collectively and create opportunities. Additionally, by making their first overseas trip to Asia, Blinken and Austin are signaling the importance they attach to the Indo-Pacific region because it offers the most opportunity for the United States and is home to its greatest challenge, China. Biden's approach can also benefit America's partners in Asia, but it will take effort by everyone, and even then a lack of complete unity will often mean that smaller bilateral and trilateral action is needed.

the best talent to defend the nation. But because of limitations imposed by Congress, the system is discouraging quality at the highest levels.

In the corporate world, that would be like promoting a middle manager to COO or CEO and then requiring them to serve for a decade without a pay increase for the privilege of taking on substantial new responsibilities.

Most people in uniform stay for service rather than money, but there comes a time in every career when the opportunity costs shift. While few would feel sorry for flag officers—they are, after all, the highest paid members of the military—the current system is not sustainable if we want the best officers to remain in uniform.

At a minimum, Congress should delink the pay cap for retirement pay. This would provide a retirement equivalent to the pay scale for all service members, while not paying them more than members of Congress. Additionally, military pay caps should be adjusted based on the annual increase in the Employment Cost Index.

Another possible solution with historical precedent would be to selectively remove the cap for certain positions based on the level of responsibility, such as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the service chiefs, and the combatant commanders. Finally, the military should adopt an innovative retirement system commensurate with the inherent risks, responsibilities and commitment of a senior military leader.

It's time for Congress and the Pentagon to begin serious consideration of how to address senior leader pay. Delinking military pay from the civilian Executive Schedule is an important start.

<https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2021/03/military-could-soon-face-flag-officer-talent-crisis/172677/>

The Biden administration emphasizes the important connection between foreign and domestic policy, that the United States cannot be an effective world leader unless it is strong at home, and that its foreign policy priorities should align with the needs of America's middle class. The just completed Quad summit is a good example of this thinking in practice, because nothing has impacted average Americans more negatively in recent years than the COVID-19 pandemic. The four nations' decision to jointly manufacture and distribute up to 1 billion doses of coronavirus vaccine throughout Asia will help the world overcome the pandemic more quickly, which in turn protects American lives and contributes to faster economic recovery.

Some suggest cynically that the Quad's generosity is designed to counter China's vaccine diplomacy, but while partially true there is more to it. The Quad's newly established working groups on vaccines, climate change, and critical technologies all connect to domestic priorities and are a way to act internationally in support of shared interests. While the four partners do share concerns about China's use of economic and military coercion and will at times take coordinated steps to balance against or contain China, they also have competing political and private-sector interests that prevent a consistent united front. The allies do not have to adopt the same China policies, but complementary tactics on everything from supply

chains to freedom of navigation will make a stronger impression on China and promote stability.

These different diplomatic combinations represent something like a hybrid engine in an automobile that can use gasoline power when the electric batteries are weak. While the United Nations or the Group of 20 can be effective multilateral institutions for their global reach and legitimacy, they are weak when paralyzed by conflicting interests. Strengthening the Quad can be a useful alternative for the partners to have a bigger impact in Asia than any one or two countries can do on their own. The vaccine project is one example, and another might be helping to expand the use of open architecture 5G telecommunication networks that offer an alternative to China's Huawei, among other possible regional initiatives.

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But even a small group of "like-minded" countries will disagree on issues like export controls, environmental policies, or data governance, and so the two-plus-two bilateral framework is the ultimate "gas engine" that can get an alliance moving on important (but possibly contentious) defense, trade, and foreign policy issues. What matters to Biden is making progress by whatever means necessary. Succeeding for the American people is the best way to discredit the previous approach of Donald Trump and help stabilize American politics. The Biden team believes that cooperation with Asian partners in support of shared interests is the best strategy.

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/03/f90260120d12-opinion-biden-hopes-alliance-math-adds-up-to-security-and-stability.html>