



**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION DIVISION
1155 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1155**

Ref: 22-F-0249
May 15, 2023

Mr. John Greenwald
The Black Vault, Inc
27305 W. Live Oak Road
Suite #1203
Castaic, CA 91384

Dear Mr. Greenwald:

This is a final response to your November 29, 2021 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, a copy of which is enclosed for your convenience. We received your request on November 30, 2021, and assigned it FOIA case number 22-F-0249. We ask that you use this number when referring to your request.

The Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, a component of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, conducted a search of their records systems and located 31 pages determined to be responsive to your request. Ms. Tanya R. Rose, Director Information Management, in her capacity as an Initial Denial Authority, has determined that portions of the 31 responsive pages are exempt from release pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(5), inter- and intra-agency memoranda which are deliberative in nature; this exemption is appropriate for internal documents which are part of the decision making process and contain subjective evaluations, opinions and recommendations; as well as (b)(6), information which, if disclosed, would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of individuals. Please note that we have considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing records and applying exemptions under the FOIA in the processing of this request.

In this instance, fees for processing your request were below the threshold for requiring payment. Please note that fees may be assessed on future requests.

If you have any questions or concerns about the foregoing or about the processing of your request, please do not hesitate to contact the Action Officer assigned to your request, Christine Dickinson, at 571-372-0435 or christine.m.dickinson.ctr@mail.mil. Additionally, if you have concerns about service received by our office, please contact a member of our Leadership Team at 571-372-0498 or Toll Free at 866-574-4970.

Should you wish to inquire about mediation services, you may contact the OSD/JS FOIA Public Liaison, Toni Fuentes, at 571-372-0462, or by email at OSD.FOIALiaison@mail.mil. You may also contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows:

Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS
College Park, MD 20740
E-mail: ogis@nara.gov
Telephone: 202-741-5770
Fax: 202-741-5769
Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448

You have the right to appeal to the appellate authority, Ms. Joo Chung, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Privacy, Civil Liberties, and Transparency (PCLT), Office of the Secretary of Defense, at the following address: 4800 Mark Center Drive, ATTN: PCLFD, FOIA Appeals, Mailbox #24, Alexandria, VA 22350-1700.

Your appeal must be postmarked within 90 calendar days of the date of this response. Alternatively, you may email your appeal to osd.foia-appeal@mail.mil. If you use email, please include the words "FOIA Appeal" in the subject of the email. Please also reference FOIA case number 22-F-0249 in any appeal correspondence.

We appreciate your patience in the processing of your request. As stated previously, please contact the Action Officer assigned to your request, Christine Dickinson, and reference FOIA case number 22-F-0249, if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Fisher

Stephanie L. Carr
For Chief

Enclosures:
As stated

This document is made available through the declassification efforts
and research of John Greenewald, Jr., creator of:

The Black Vault



The Black Vault is the largest online Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
document clearinghouse in the world. The research efforts here are
responsible for the declassification of hundreds of thousands of pages
released by the U.S. Government & Military.

Discover the Truth at: <http://www.theblackvault.com>



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

NOV 23 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Establishment of the Airborne Object Identification and Management
Synchronization Group

The presence of unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) in Special Use Airspace (SUA), designated in accordance with 14 CFR Part 73, represents a potential safety of flight risk to aircrews and raises potential national security concerns. Accordingly, I direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD(I&S)) to establish the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG) to synchronize efforts across the Department and with other Federal departments and agencies to detect, identify and attribute objects of interests in SUA, and to assess, and as appropriate, mitigate any associated threats to safety of flight and national security. To provide oversight and direction to the AOIMSG, I establish the Airborne Object Identification and Management Executive Council (AOIMEXEC). The USD(I&S) will be the lead DoD official responsible for management of this process, will co-chair the AOIMEXEC along with the Director of Operations, Joint Staff, and will invite Principal-level participation from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. Resourcing for this requirement will be addressed in the Program Budget Review process.

The Director, AOIMSG (hereafter referred to as "the Director") will synchronize the activities among the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and DoD Components, and with other U.S. Government departments and agencies, to minimize safety of flight and national security concerns associated with UAP or other airborne objects in SUA. The Director, with support from the OSD and DoD Components heads, will address this problem by standardizing UAP incident reporting across the Department; identifying and reducing gaps in operational and intelligence detection capabilities; collecting and analyzing operational, intelligence and counterintelligence data; recommending policy, regulatory or statutory changes, as appropriate; identifying approaches to prevent or mitigate any risks posed by airborne objects of interest; and other activities as deemed necessary by the Director. Additionally, the Director, in coordination with the OSD and DoD Component heads, will identify requirements and recommended changes in doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, workforce, facilities, and resources to be brought to the AOIMEXEC for review, consideration and implementation, as appropriate, by the applicable DoD Component head.

Effective immediately, the AOIMEXEC, in coordination with the OSD and DoD component heads will manage the transition of the current UAP Task Force to the AOIMSG. The AOIMEXEC will designate an acting Director of the AOIMSG, and will



submit implementation guidance for my approval. This guidance will specify organizational membership, roles, responsibilities and authorities for the AOIMSG, AOIMEXEC, and OSD and DoD Components.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. H. H.", with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive, stylized font.

cc:
Director of National Intelligence

(b)(6)

From:

(b)(6)

Sent:

Thursday, December 9, 2021 9:50 PM

Subject:

AOIMSG Question

Media colleagues,

In Wednesday's press briefing, Travis Tritten, Military.com, asked about the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG). If you haven't seen Deputy Secretary Hicks' memo, you can see it here: <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/23/2002898596/-1/-1/0/ESTABLISHMENT-OF-THE-AIRBORNE-OBJECT-IDENTIFICATION-AND-MANAGEMENT-SYNCHRONIZATION-GROUP.PDF>

You may attribute the below to Sue Gough, Department of Defense spokesperson:

"As directed by Deputy Secretary Hicks in her memo, we're currently transitioning the UAP Task Force and its ongoing efforts to the AOIMSG. We're also working on additional implementing guidance on the AOIMSG, as well as the Airborne Object Identification and Management Executive Council (AOIMEXEC), for Deputy Secretary Hicks' approval, per her memo. Once that guidance is approved and published, the transition from UAPTF to AOIMSG is complete, and the AOIMEXEC has had its first meeting, we'll be happy to answer your questions about the AOIMEXEC and AOIMSG more fully."

Regards,

Defense Press Operations

AOIMSG Establishment December 9, 2021

Executive Summary

Public and news media interest in unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) remains high. On Nov. 23, 2021, DSD signed a memo announcing the establishment of the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG) as the successor to the UAPTF; the memo also established the Airborne Object Identification and Management Executive Council (AOIMEXEC) to provide oversight of the AOIMSG. The *draft* FY22 NDAA approved by the House on Dec. 7 contains a section directing DoD and ODNI to establish an office, organizational structure, and authorities to address UAP.

Top Line Messages / Talking Points

- [*Prior to NDAA becoming law:*] We're not going to comment on pending legislation. We're not going to get ahead of the legislative process.
- We take reports of incursions into our airspace – by any aircraft, identified or unidentified – very seriously, and investigate each one.
- Safety (of our personnel) and security (of our operations) are of paramount concern.
- The Deputy Secretary's direction reflects her desire to ensure the Department is fully aware of objects in our airspace in order to protect safety of flight and national security.
- The AOIMSG will focus on proactively identifying objects in Special Use Airspace, rather than simply focusing on items that were observed but not identified. This will help to ensure that we are postured to collect adequate data during the event, instead of only gathering data forensically.
- The AOIMSG will ensure we leverage of the strength of the Department and the IC to normalize UAP reporting, analysis and mitigation into standing processes.
- This has been, and will continue to be, a collaborative effort, involving many organizations across DoD, as well as interagency partners.
- Implementing guidance with further details on the AOIMSG Director, organizational structure, authorities, resourcing, and roles and responsibilities is forthcoming.
- The Department is committed to transparency with the Congress and the American people while balancing its obligation to protect classified information.

Questions and Answers

Q. [If asked about the AOIMSG/AOIMEXEC prior to publishing of implementing guidance]

A. “As directed by Deputy Secretary Hicks in her memo, we’re currently transitioning the UAP Task Force and its ongoing efforts to the AOIMSG. We’re also working on additional implementing guidance on the AOIMSG, as well as the Airborne Object Identification and Management Executive Council (AOIMEXEC), for Deputy Secretary Hicks’ approval, per her memo. Once that guidance is approved and published, the transition from UAPTF to AOIMSG is complete, and the AOIMEXEC has had its first meeting, we’ll be happy to answer your questions about the AOIMEXEC and AOIMSG more fully.”

Q. Why is the Deputy Secretary replacing the UAPTF?

A. The DNI report to Congress highlighted the challenges associated with assessing airborne objects, including UAP, occurring on or near DOD training ranges and installations. It also confirmed that the scope of the UAP activity expands significantly beyond Navy’s purview. The report also identified the need to make improvements in processes, policies, technologies, and training to improve our ability to understand UAP.

Q. What are the national security threats that the Pentagon is concerned about?

A. The Department of Defense takes seriously any incursion into our airspace by any aircraft, identified or unidentified, very seriously.

Q. Is the U.S. not currently aware of items in its airspace?

A. Not all objects in U.S. airspace are tracked and identified, especially if they are small and don’t pose a threat. However, the increase in unmanned aerial systems and airspace debris has highlighted that there are a number of objects which do pose a concern. This effort lowers the threshold for items to be considered and evaluated to ensure that we are able to identify any items that may pose a threat to safety of flight or national security.

Q. Why is the data you have insufficient? What else do you need?

A. Encounters with UAP are often brief and fleeting, and frequently involve a single source, such as a verbal report or a single photograph. We need more data and a better reporting structure – standardized reporting, timely reporting, and further reducing the stigma about reporting on UAP so that we have more reports for pattern and trend analysis.

Q. Who is going to be the AOIMSG Director/what can you tell me about the AOIMSG budget/organization/size/members/personnel/operations/etc.?

A. As Deputy Secretary Hicks noted in her memo, implementing guidance is forthcoming.

Q. Can you explain the SUA term? Why are you using that now?

A. Special Use Airspace is designated in accordance with 14 CFR Part 73. It’s a more accurate term for airspace that the AOIMSG will be focusing on. SUA is airspace that is restricted for national security and other uses, and includes military operations areas, firing ranges, etc. For the AOIMSG, we are not interested in looking at *all* airspace in the world; the AOIMSG will be focused on the areas where there are security risks to our training, operations, and infrastructure. [This is no different than what the UAPTF was focused on – military training ranges and operations airspace.]

AOIMSG Establishment November 23, 2021

Executive Summary

Public and news media interest in unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) remains high. ODNI submitted a preliminary assessment report to Congress on June 25, 2021, as required by the SSCI report attached to the FY20 NDAA. That report noted the challenges associated with assessing UAP occurring on or near DOD training ranges and installations highlighted and also identified the need to make improvements in processes, policies, technologies, and training to improve our ability to understand UAP. On the same day, DSD directed OUSD(I&S) to develop a plan to formalize the mission currently performed by the UAPTF. On Nov. 23, 2021, DSD signed a memo announcing the establishment of the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG) as the successor to the UAPTF; the memo also established the Airborne Object Identification and Management Executive Council (AOIMEXEC) to provide oversight of the AOIMSG.

Top Line Messages / Talking Points

- We take reports of incursions into our airspace – by any aircraft, identified or unidentified – very seriously, and investigate each one.
- Safety (of our personnel) and security (of our operations) are of paramount concern.
- Our approach has been – and will continue to be – driven by science and data.
- The Deputy Secretary’s direction reflects her desire to ensure the Department is fully aware of objects in our airspace in order to protect safety of flight and national security.
- The AOIMSG construct focuses on proactively identifying objects in Special Use Airspace, rather than simply focusing on items that were observed but not identified. This will help to ensure that we are postured to collect adequate data during the event, instead of only gathering data forensically.
- This has been, and will continue to be, a collaborative effort, involving many organizations across DoD, as well as with interagency partners.
- We currently lack the data to indicate whether UAP are part of a foreign collection program or indicative of a major technology advancement by a potential adversary.
- There is not one single explanation for UAP.
- We need to improve our capacity and capability to further analyze UAP. We need more data, more sensors, more reporting, and more consistency and standardization in reporting.

- The selection of USD(I&S) and the Director of Operations, Joint Staff on the AOIMEXEC reflect the Department's characterization of this issue as both an operational and intelligence problem, and provides strengthened guidance to ensure appropriate efforts are undertaken in each area.
- Implementing guidance with further details on the AOIMSG Director, organizational structure, authorities, and resourcing, is forthcoming.

Questions and Answers

Q. Why is the Deputy Secretary replacing the UAPTF?

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Q. Why is the memo using the term “airborne object” (rather than UAP)?

A. The term “UAP” still refers to items that are unidentified. The ODNI report in June 2021 noted that most objects were unidentified due to incomplete data. Therefore, this effort seeks to proactively detect, identify and attribute objects to help minimize the overall number of items that are classified as UAP. Additionally, as we’ve said, we need more data, including more reporting. One way to do that is to destigmatize UAP reporting by standardizing and normalizing reporting of airborne objects in SUA – whether the object is a UAP or another object.

Q. Why is Navy no longer in charge of UAP examinations?

A. The Department recognizes the great work that Navy did on examining UAPs, both before the UAPTF existed and as the head of the UAPTF. The June 2021 report to Congress confirmed that the scope of UAP activity expands beyond Navy and identified the need for improvement in many areas to better understand UAP; this involves organizations across DoD and the USG interagency, and is better directed at the OSD level rather than by a military department.

Q: Is the AOIMSG being established under the USD(I&S) because there are intelligence concerns or concerns about foreign actors?

A: The USD(I&S) has broad responsibilities for intelligence and security, which includes security of U.S. facilities. The USD(I&S) also oversees defense intelligence production and analysis which are critical capabilities to ensure identification of objects. As there are significant operational equities, the Joint staff is also involved.

Q. What is the mission of the AOIMSG?

A. The AOIMSG will oversee the Department’s efforts to detect, identify and attribute objects of interest in Special Use Airspace and to assess and mitigate any associated threats to safety of flight or national security.

Q. Has the Department found any evidence of extraterrestrial technology?

A. The examinations into incursions by UAPs are still ongoing; we lack sufficient information in our dataset to attribute incidents to specific explanations. It is not the purpose of the AOIMSG to look for evidence of extraterrestrials. Other parts of the government do that; for example, NASA looks for evidence of life on other planets.



DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, November 24

OVERVIEW

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley spoke with General Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff, as an exercise of continued communication to reduce risk and operational conflict amid rising concerns of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, *Bloomberg News* reported. Additionally, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks announced the creation of the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group, which will investigate “unidentified aerial phenomena” found in restricted military airspace, according to the *New York Times*. Also of note, the Pentagon continues to search for logistical solutions to pandemic-related supply chain challenges that have upended the defense industry, *Defense News* wrote.

TOP STORIES

1. Top U.S., Russian Military Chiefs Talk Amid Ukraine Tensions

Bloomberg News, Nov. 23 (1351) | Tony Capaccio

The top military officers of the U.S. and Russia spoke Tuesday as tensions remain high over Moscow’s deployment of about 100,000 troops on the border with Ukraine. General Mark Milley, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff, talked by phone about “several security-related issues of concern,” according to a statement from the Joint Chiefs. Russia’s Defense Ministry confirmed the call, Interfax reported, without providing details.

2. Pentagon Forms a Group to Examine Unexplained Aerial Sightings

New York Times Online, Nov. 24 (0008) | Julian E. Barnes

The Pentagon on Tuesday night announced a new group to investigate reports of unidentified aerial phenomena in sensitive areas, work that will be overseen by both the military and the intelligence agencies. The group will lead an effort to “detect, identify and attribute objects” in restricted airspace, as well as mitigate any threats to military flights.

3. ‘No company is immune’: Supply chain woes weigh on defense firms

Defense News Online, Nov. 23 (1050) | Stephen Losey

More than a year and a half after the COVID-19 pandemic began to rock supply chains around the world, the defense industry is still wrestling with its fallout — and figuring out how to move forward amid the turmoil. From massive deliveries of steel and aluminum needed to build the military’s newest ships and aircraft to landing gear brakes to items as small as semiconductors, supply chain shortages or delays have upended the plans of defense firms of all sizes.

--With assistance from Henry Meyer

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2. Pentagon Forms a Group to Examine Unexplained Aerial Sightings

The announcement follows a report that failed to clarify strange phenomena observed by military pilots and others over the past two decades

New York Times Online, Nov. 24 (0008) | Julian E. Barnes

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon on Tuesday night announced a new group to investigate reports of unidentified aerial phenomena in sensitive areas, work that will be overseen by both the military and the intelligence agencies.

The group will lead an effort to “detect, identify and attribute objects” in restricted airspace, as well as mitigate any threats to military flights.

The announcement follows the release of a report in June that failed to provide explanations of 143 sightings of strange phenomena by military pilots and others over the past two decades.

The report frustrated some inside the intelligence community who believed more analysis and research should have been done to try to categorize and explain the phenomena. Releasing a report that said the sightings were unexplained further drove theories that the videos or pictures could be visitors from space, a theory that few in the U.S. government take seriously.

Kathleen H. Hicks, the deputy defense secretary, said the new group would be called the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group. It will be overseen by an executive council made up of the under secretary of defense for intelligence, the director of the Joint Staff and senior officials from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The group will focus on special-use airspace, which includes military operations areas, firing ranges and places restricted for national security and other uses. In a memo, Dr. Hicks said unidentified aerial phenomena in special-use areas represented a potential safety issue for military pilots and raised “potential national security concerns.”

In June, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence released a report that reviewed unidentified aerial phenomena seen since 2004, noting that 143 remained unexplained. Of those, 21 reports, involving 18 episodes, possibly demonstrated technological know-how unknown to the United States, such as objects moving without observable propulsion or with rapid acceleration that is believed to be beyond the capabilities of Russia, China or other terrestrial nations.

Government officials said privately that there was no evidence of Russian or Chinese advance technology in use, much less space-traveling aliens, in the information collected. But the officials acknowledged that the

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 9:23 PM
Subject: Establishment of the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG)
Attachments: 20211123 DSD ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AOIMSG.pdf

Media colleagues,

Today, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks, in close collaboration with the Director of National Intelligence, directed the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence & Security to establish within the Office of the USD(I&S) the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG) as the successor to the U.S. Navy's Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force. The AOIMSG will synchronize efforts across the Department and the broader U.S. government to detect, identify and attribute objects of interests in Special Use Airspace (SUA), and to assess and mitigate any associated threats to safety of flight and national security. To provide oversight of the AOIMSG, the Deputy Secretary also directed the USD(I&S) to lead an Airborne Object Identification and Management Executive Council (AOIMEXEC) to be comprised of DoD and Intelligence Community membership, and to offer a venue for U.S. government interagency representation.

Incursions by any airborne object into our SUA pose safety of flight and operations security concerns, and may pose national security challenges. DOD takes reports of incursions – by any airborne object, identified or unidentified – very seriously, and investigates each one. This decision is the result of planning efforts and collaboration conducted by OUSD(I&S) and other DoD elements at the direction of Deputy Secretary Hicks, to address the challenges associated with assessing UAP occurring on or near DOD training ranges and installations highlighted in the DNI preliminary assessment report submitted to Congress in June 2021. The report also identified the need to make improvements in processes, policies, technologies, and training to improve our ability to understand UAP.

In coming weeks, the Department will issue implementing guidance, which will contain further details on the AOIMSG Director, organizational structure, authorities, and resourcing.

The Deputy Secretary's memo on the establishment of the AOIMSG is attached. You can see her initial direction to OUSD(I&S) to begin the planning effort for formalizing the UAPTF's mission here: <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jun/25/2002749916/-1/-1/1/DEPUTY-SECRETARY-OF-DEFENSE-MEMORANDUM-ON-UNIDENTIFIED-AERIAL-PHENOMENA-ASSESSMENTS.PDF>

Please direct any questions on this to (b)(6)

Regards,
Defense Press Operations

(b)(6)

From:
Sent:
Subject:

(b)(6)

Wednesday, December 1, 2021 5:44 PM
OSD(PA) COB

DOD RELEASES

* SECDEF Call with Polish Counterpart. SECDEF spoke with Polish Minister of National Defense Mariusz Błaszczak to discuss the United States' commitment to NATO and exchanged views about the Belarus regime's hybrid tactics along Poland's border and Russia's military activities around Ukraine. Read the full readout here: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2857573/readout-of-secretary-of-defense-loyd-j-austin-iis-call-with-polish-minister-o/>

* Upcoming Guantanamo Periodic Review Board. Posted a media advisory on defense.gov announcing media will be allowed to observe and cover unclassified portions of the Guantanamo Periodic Review Board for Khalid Ahmed Qasim (ISN - 242) at the Pentagon satellite viewing location on December 7. Media are asked to RSVP by 1 p.m. December 3. You can read the advisory at <https://www.defense.gov/News/Advisories/Advisory/Article/2858619/guantanamo-periodic-review-board-media-invitation-announced-december-7-2021/>

THREE DAY FORECAST (all events subject to change)

(b)(5)

QUERIES OF NOTE

* Chief Information Officer. Jackson Barnett, FedScoop, heard that the DoD CIO's office recently re-organized some of its positions to elevate the staff involved in the Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (EMSO) effort. He asks what has changed in EMSO? Coordinating with the DoD CIO on a response.

* Federal Lawsuit Claiming Religious Exemptions are "Sham." Michael Chen, KGTV-San Diego, asked for comment regarding a Marine that is part of a federal lawsuit filed in Tampa alleging the vaccine mandate religious exemption process is a 'sham,' pointing to the numbers so far in which none have been approved. Responded that we cannot comment on on-going litigation but provided key messages from the PAG regarding the importance of the vaccine and readiness.

* Economic Security Initiatives. Mary Walsh, CBS News, requested information pertaining to the economic security memo and initiatives. Sent a summary of the actions that outlines how the DoD will provide immediate relief to economic insecurity and how we will work to train and educate the force on financial readiness.

* Mergers & Acquisitions. Jonathan Guilford, Reuters, requested information on DoD's role in Mergers & Acquisitions, as he is writing a column on how the DoD and antitrust authorities weigh general concerns about competition against the DoD's national defense mandate. Provided copies of DoD Directive 5000.62, which establishes policies and assigns responsibilities for M&A, as well as the Defense Science Board report that created the DoD M&A program.

* DoD in the Indo Pacific. Naveed Jamali, Newsweek, asked if OSD had a comment on DoD posture in the Indo-Pacific region in light of China-Taiwan tensions, and if the DoD is "prepared for the potential of PLAN increased aggression in the region?" Referred the reporter to Secretary's October 22 news conference at NATO headquarters where he addressed these issues.

* DASD for TRAC. Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg, asked to confirm that Mr. Kingston Reif had started as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Threat Reduction and Arms Control (TRAC). Coordinated with Acquisition and Sustainment; Mr. Reif started as the DASD for TRAC on Nov. 29.

* AOIMSG Establishment. Ed Browne, Newsweek, sent separate queries seeking comment from DSD Hicks and USD(I&S) Moultrie on their 'hopes and aspirations' for the AOIMSG, their personal thoughts on 'UFOs,' and national security implications. Referred reporter to DSD's memo on the establishment of the AOIMSG, and provided pre-approved lines, including: "The preliminary assessment report on Unidentified Aerial Phenomena that the Director of National Intelligence submitted to Congress in June 2021 highlighted the challenges associated with assessing airborne objects, including UAP, occurring on or near DoD training ranges and installations. The report also identified the need to make improvements in processes, policies, technologies, and training to improve our ability to understand UAP. The AOIMSG will focus on proactively detecting, identifying, and attributing airborne objects – including both known objects and UAP – in Special Use Airspace, rather than simply focusing on objects that were observed but not identified. One goal is to help minimize the overall number of airborne objects that are classified as UAP."

Defense Press Operations

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Friday, December 10, 2021 5:52 PM
Subject: OSD(PA) COB
Attachments: briefing cards for the week Dec 6-10.pdf
Signed By: (b)(6)

BRIEFINGS

* Press Engagement. Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby held an on-camera, on-the-record press brief. In his opening remarks, he discussed President Biden's plans to present the Medal of Honor to Army Master Sgt. Earl Plumlee, to Mrs. Tamara Cashe on behalf of Army Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn Cashe, and to Mrs. Katie Celiz on behalf of Army Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Celiz; Deputy Secretary Hicks' meeting with her U.K. counterpart, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Defence David Williams; Deputy Secretary Hicks' planned travel, beginning Dec. 13; and the 122nd Army-Navy football game, to be played Saturday in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Topics of questions included the National Defense Strategy and Nuclear Posture Review; a DoD-funded study of the ICBM program; whether the Department of Defense had an opinion of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's possible extradition; calls from Russia for the U.S. to rescind offers to join NATO; the Russian buildup along Ukraine's border; the DoD's confidence in Ukraine's ability to defend itself; military options if talks with Iran fail; whether the U.S. agreed to hold joint military exercises aimed at Iranian nuclear facilities; the death of India's Chief of Defense Staff General Bipin Rawat in a helicopter crash; whether Russia or China poses the greater threat to U.S. security in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea; PRC efforts to build a worldwide network of military facilities and any effects on Camp Lemmonier in Djibouti; al-Qaida in Afghanistan; vaccination rates among U.S. service members; the response to service members who do not get vaccinations and whether boosters will be required; whether Secretary Austin, on his next trip to the region, will discuss plans to expand the U.S. footprint in the Pacific; and whether draining the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility in Oahu is a possibility. Mr. Kirby took no questions for follow-up. A transcript will be posted at <https://www.defense.gov/> when available.

DOD RELEASES

* U.K. Meeting. Published readout of Deputy Secretary Hicks's virtual meeting with U.K. Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Defence David Williams, to deepen cooperation on a wide range of issues, including defense strategy, technology innovation, force development, and strategic competition. Among other topics, the two leaders discussed Russia's concerning military movements near Ukraine's borders and reaffirmed their unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The full readout is posted at <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2870021/readout-of-deputy-secretary-of-defense-dr-kathleen-hickss-virtual-meeting-with/>.

* DSD Travel. Published "Deputy Secretary of Defense Hicks Travels to Michigan, Colorado, Hawaii, California and Nebraska," describing Deputy Secretary Hicks' plans to visit Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan; U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Space Command, and the U.S. Space Force Space Training and Readiness Command in Colorado; U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii; Naval Amphibious Base Coronado in California; and U.S. Strategic Command in Nebraska starting Monday, Dec. 13. The full advisory is posted at

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Advisories/Advisory/Article/2870014/deputy-secretary-of-defense-hicks-travels-to-michigan-colorado-hawaii-californi/>

* U.S.-Sweden-Finland Meeting. PTDO DUSD(P) Dr. Karlin met with Sweden Defence Policy Director Johan Lagerlöf and Finland Deputy Director General for Defence Policy Janne Kuusela to discuss a range of global and regional security challenges facing Europe, and to underscore the importance of security and stability in the Nordic and Baltic region. The full readout is posted at

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2868722/readout-of-performing-the-duties-of-deputy-under-secretary-of-defense-for-polic/>.

THREE-DAY FORECAST (all events subject to change)

(b)(5)



QUERIES OF NOTE

* AOIMSG. Following up on a question by Travis Tritten, Military.com, from the Dec. 8 on-camera press briefing, provided the following statement to media via the broad DPO media distribution lists: “As directed by Deputy Secretary Hicks in her memo, we’re currently transitioning the UAP Task Force and its ongoing efforts to the AOIMSG. We’re also working on additional implementing guidance on the AOIMSG, as well as the Airborne Object Identification and Management Executive Council (AOIMEXEC), for Deputy Secretary Hicks’ approval, per her memo. Once that guidance is approved and published, the transition from UAPTF is

AOIMSG is complete, and the AOIMEXEC has had its first meeting, we'll be happy to answer your questions about the AOIMEXEC and AOIMSG more fully." Also provided the link to the DSD memo establishing the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG): <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/23/2002898596/-1/-1/0/ESTABLISHMENT-OF-THE-AIRBORNE-OBJECT-IDENTIFICATION-AND-MANAGEMENT-SYNCHRONIZATION-GROUP.PDF>.

* Detainees at Guantanamo Bay. Following up on previous questions, Jeff Schogol, Task & Purpose, asked how many detainees at Guantanamo Bay have been convicted by military commissions. Coordinated with Detainee Policy office and provided: David Hicks, convicted pursuant to pretrial agreement, transferred and served sentence in Australia, charge upon which convicted subsequently vacated by appellate court; Ali Hamza al Bahlul, convicted, serving a life sentence at GTMO; Salim Hamdan, convicted, served sentence, transferred, charge (providing material support to terrorism) upon which convicted vacated by court of appeals as inapplicable to overseas activities prior to the Military Commissions Act of 2006; Omar Khadr, convicted pursuant to pretrial agreement, sentenced, transferred to Canada to complete sentence, paroled by Canada, appealing his conviction in U.S. federal court; Ibrahim al Qosi, convicted pursuant to pretrial agreement, sentenced, transferred after completion of sentence to native Sudan; Noor Uthman Mohammad – convicted pursuant to pretrial agreement, sentenced, transferred after completion of sentence to native Sudan; Mohammad al Darbi, convicted pursuant to pretrial agreement, sentenced, provided testimony against alleged USS COLE bomber and Hadi al Iraqi, transferred to Saudi Arabia to complete sentence; Majid Khan, convicted pursuant to pretrial agreement, serving sentence at GTMO.

* Quarterly Suicide Report. Rachel Cohen, Air Force Times, requested the most current Air Force suicide data for 2021, beyond what is provided on the Defense Suicide Prevention Office website. Responded that the data provided on the website is the latest and that the next quarterly report should be published soon.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF INTEREST

* National Defense Strategy. PTDO DUSD(Policy) Dr. Karlin conducted a virtual "Mission Brief" on Dec. 9 with Becca Wasser of the Center for a New American Security, discussing the National Defense Strategy scheduled for publication in early 2022. Topics included China as a pacing threat, Russia's military modernization, integrated deterrence and the Global Force Posture Review. Dr. Karlin also took questions from the audience. A video of the event is posted at <https://www.cnas.org/events/mission-brief-the-next-national-defense-strategy-with-dr-mara-karlin>, and a DOD News article is posted at <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2869837/dod-official-outlines-2022-national-defense-strategy-in-cnas-forum/>.

* Cyber. DASD(Cyber Policy) Ms. Eoyang conducted a fireside chat with Jenna McLaughlin, NPR, for the annual meeting of #NatSecGirlsSquad. Ms. Eoyang highlighted whole-of-government efforts to combat ransomware activities as well as the cooperation of international law enforcement to hold malign cyber actors accountable for their actions. She emphasized the government's efforts to protect critical infrastructure against cyber threats and, addressing a question from the audience, described DoD's recent efforts on Cyber Maturity Model Certification.

Defense Press Operations

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, November 24, 2021 4:30 PM
Subject: OSD(PA) COB
Attachments: briefing cards for the week.pdf

ON TOP

* AOIMSG Establishment. Multiple reporters (including Spencer Ackerman, Forever Wars/The Daily Beast; Tom Rogan, Washington Examiner; Courtney Kube, NBC; Jeff Schogol, Task & Purpose; Greg Hadley, Air Force Magazine; Jazz Shaw, Salem Media Group/Townhall Magazine; Terrace Garnier, Newsy; Ramin Skibba, Wired) asked about last night's press release and DSD memo on the establishment of the Airborne Object Identification & Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG), the new activity replacing the UAPTF. Most focused on the 'new' term SUA, AOIMSG vs. the organization in the amendment proposed by Rep. Gillibrand, and interagency coordination. Provided clarification on SUA; noted that we weren't going to comment on or speculate about proposed legislation; noted that not only would the AOIMSG be collaborating across DoD agencies and with interagency partners (just as the UAPTF did), but ODNI would be invited to participate in the AOIMEXEC that's providing oversight and direction to the AOIMSG; and noted to several that, as the DSD memo indicated, implementing guidance on membership, roles, responsibilities, etc., would be forthcoming. Garnier and Skibba asked to interview someone via Zoom today (Garnier) or next week (Skibba); declined interviews for now.

DOD RELEASES

* SECDEF Thanksgiving Message. Posted SECDEF statement thanking DoD employees for their service and for the support and love they receive from their families. Read the full statement here: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2853852/statement-by-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii/>

* SECDEF Thanksgiving Calls. SECDEF spoke today over video-teleconference with service members from each branch of the armed forces to wish them a happy Thanksgiving. The Secretary expressed his appreciation for their service in defense of the nation and in supporting our allies and partners around the world. Read the full press release, including the list of units called, here: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2854007/defense-secretary-makes-thanksgiving-calls-to-deployed-service-members/>

* AOIMSG Establishment. Announced that DSD has directed USD(I&S) to establish the Airborne Object Identification & Management Synchronization Group (AOIMSG) to synchronize efforts across the department and with other federal departments and agencies to detect, identify and attribute objects of interest in Special Use Airspace (SUA), and to assess, and as appropriate, mitigate any associated threats to safety of flight and national security. You can read the press release here: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2853121/dod-announces-the-establishment-of-the-airborne-object-identification-and-manag/>
And you can read the DSD memo here: <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/23/2002898596/-1/-1/0/ESTABLISHMENT-OF-THE-AIRBORNE-OBJECT-IDENTIFICATION-AND-MANAGEMENT-SYNCHRONIZATION-GROUP.PDF>

* Hybrid Vehicle Kit. The Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) is adapting hybrid conversion kits for military tactical vehicles to reduce fuel consumption. In August, DIU and the Army's Project Manager Transportation Systems issued awards to two companies to integrate their respective commercial solutions into prototype idle-reduction Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles, the Army's standard two-and-a-half to 10-ton trucks. Read the DoD News article

here: <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2853649/prototype-aims-to-reduce-fuel-use-improve-tactical-vehicle-performance/>

* USD(P) Call with Spanish Counterpart. USD(P) Dr. Colin Kahl met virtually today with Spain's Secretary General for Defense Policy, Admiral Juan Martínez Núñez. The two leaders confirmed the robust bilateral defense relationship between the U.S. and Spain and, emphasizing Alliance unity, discussed a range of security challenges facing NATO. Read the full readout here: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2853789/readout-of-under-secretary-of-defense-for-policy-dr-colin-kahls-virtual-meeting/>.

THREE DAY FORECAST (all events subject to change)

Thursday, Nov. 25

-- Thanksgiving Day (federal offices closed)

Friday, Nov. 26

-- Nothing scheduled

(b)(5)



QUERIES OF NOTE

* PRC / China Cooperation. Caitlin McFall, Fox News, asked if the Pentagon is "concerned by this call for increased joint military exercises by China and Russia?" Referred her to the Oct. 25 press conference when Mr. Kirby answered the same question (<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2822235/pentagon-press-secretary-john-f-kirby-holds-a-press-briefing/>).

* VH-92 Report. Mosheh Gains, NBC, queried about the report on the VH-92 (presidential helicopter) as reported by Bloomberg. Coordinated responses with Director, Operational Test & Evaluation and NAVAIR. Part of the response included, "The presidential helicopter replacement program continues to execute to its acquisition strategy of integrating government defined mission systems into a commercial helicopter, while maintaining FAA airworthiness certification and adding no new critical technologies. A concerted effort between WHMO, DCA, PMA-274, and HMX-1 will ensure a safe and successful transition to the VH-92A. HMX-1 has some of the most professional and capable maintenance Marines from the fleet to ensure every aircraft remains fully operational and in support of presidential transport."

* Request for Medical Assistance Teams to Michigan. Robin Erb, Bridge Michigan, and Dustin Walsh, Crain's, asked for confirmation that DoD Governor Whitmer has requested medical assistance teams for hospitals in Michigan. Explained the process by which the state would request assistance via FEMA, and informed them that such a request hasn't reached DoD yet.

* DoD Civilian Vaccination Rate. Patricia Kime, Military.com, and Caitlin Doornbos, Stars & Stripes, requested the percentage of DoD civilians that are vaccinated. Informed reporters of the data on the [Defense.gov/coronavirus](https://www.defense.gov/coronavirus) and provided the approved statement: "The DoD federal employee compliance and vaccination data includes all civilian and active duty employees who have received vaccinations through DOD providers or self-reported that they had been vaccinated. As we continue to process the incoming data, DoD will provide further updates on DOD civilian vaccination rates. Being fully vaccinated is one of the surest ways to bolster our readiness and safely meet the readiness requirements that our national security depends on. We have and will continue to implement the vaccination requirement without disruptions to the critical work of the Department."

ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF INTEREST

* Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Strategic Studies. Mr. Randy "Church" Kee, Senior Advisor for Arctic Security Affairs, conducted an on-the-record interview with Melody Schreiber, Arctic Today, on the progress of standing up the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies, the Department of Defense's sixth and newest regional center. The interview focused on the mission of the center, how it supports the DoD and U.S. government, and the efforts to "build while doing" to quickly address national security needs. Publication will be the week of Nov. 29.

Defense Press Operations

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, December 9, 2021 9:23 PM
To: Kirby, John F SES (USA); Trudeau, Elizabeth K SES OSD PA (USA); Brasseale, J Todd SES OSD PA (USA)
Cc: (b)(6)
Subject: RE: AOIMSG Establishment Update

Copy; I can incorporate that and send to our distro.

From: Kirby, John F SES (USA) (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, December 9, 2021 7:00 PM
To: (b)(6) Trudeau, Elizabeth K SES OSD PA (USA)
(b)(6) Brasseale, J Todd SES OSD PA (USA) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6)
(b)(6)
(b)(6)
Subject: Re: AOIMSG Establishment Update

(b)(5)

From: (b)(6)
Date: Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 5:57:23 PM
To: "Kirby, John F SES (USA)" (b)(6) "Trudeau, Elizabeth K SES OSD PA (USA)" (b)(6) "Brasseale, J Todd SES OSD PA (USA)" (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6)
(b)(6)
(b)(6)
Subject: RE: AOIMSG Establishment Update

Sure. From you or from me? See proposed below.

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

Regards,

(b)(6)

From: Kirby, John F SES (USA) (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, December 9, 2021 5:33 PM
To: (b)(6) Trudeau,
Elizabeth K SES OSD PA (USA) (b)(6) Breasseale, J Todd SES
OSD PA (USA) (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6)
(b)(6)
Subject: RE: AOIMSG Establishment Update

Rgr.

Can we summarize this into a concise answer back to Travis?

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, December 9, 2021 3:27 PM
To: Kirby, John F SES (USA) (b)(6) Trudeau, Elizabeth K SES OSD
PA (USA) (b)(6); Breasseale, J Todd SES OSD PA (USA)
(b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6)
(b)(6)
Subject: AOIMSG Establishment Update

BLUF: The AOIMSG is not yet fully operational; further implementing guidance is forthcoming.

Providing this update due to Travis Tritten's recent queries and articles.

DISCUSSION

-- DSD Hick memo of 23 NOV directed several things:

+ designate an acting Director

+ immediately begin transitioning UAPTF to AOIMSG

+ submit implementing guidance to her for approval (organizational membership, roles, responsibilities, and authorities for the AOIMSG, AOIMEXEC, and OSD and DoD components)

-- First two are underway. Matt Cummings (SES in OUSD(I&S)) is acting director; we haven't announced this publicly.

-- UAPTF is continuing its work during the transition, so there is not a halt/pause in efforts to examine reports of UAP in military airspace.

-- Not expecting that implementing guidance will be published until the NDAA is signed, as Sec. 1683 of the House-approved version will directly impact the AOIMSG.

-- OSD(LA) Intel Team fully expects that Sec. 1683 will be in the final, signed NDAA.

-- OUSD(I&S) and other components are working on having implementing guidance ready for DSD approval as soon as the NDAA is signed into law.

-- There's a meeting on the implementing guidance this afternoon.

-- I've been in discussion with OUSD(I&S) for some time that once the implementing guidance is published, we need to hold a backgrounder for media.

-- So far, OUSD(I&S) has agreed to that (not that Matt is thrilled, as he'd be the key senior defense official), as they all recognize this is needed to further our efforts to normalize, standardize, and destigmatize reporting on UAP/airborne objects in military airspace, as well as get our messages out on the AOIMSG and what it'll be doing than constantly being in RTQ status.

Regards,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

From: Magsamen, Kelly E SES (USA)
Sent: Wednesday, November 24, 2021 9:19 AM
To: Plumb, Radha I SES (USA); Lauter, Louis I SES OSD OASD LA (USA); Williams, Matthew R SES OSD OASD LA (USA); Norman, Mela T (Mela Louise) SES (USA); Berlin, Jennifer SES SD; (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) Kirby, John F SES (USA)
Subject: RFI: Hospitals Seek Military Help in Michigan Amid Covid Overflow
Attachments: Defense Morning Clips 24 Nov 2021.pdf
Signed By: (b)(6)

Team: Saw this in the clips. Have we received a formal request from the Michigan Governor for DoD help on COVID? Obviously, she has authorities to use the Guard, but is she asking for broader help? I haven't seen a letter or anything.

7. Hospitals Seek Military Help in Michigan Amid Covid Overflow
Bloomberg News, Nov. 23 (1635) | Keith Naughton and Anna Edney
Henry Ford Health System has seen Covid-19 cases soar by 50% in three weeks, straining staff and care at the Detroit-based network of five major hospitals in southeast Michigan. On Tuesday, statewide Covid hospitalizations reached 4,085, approaching the record of 4,640 set in April 2020 at the onset of the pandemic. Michigan's hospitals, with the help of Governor Gretchen Whitmer, have asked the U.S. Department of Defense to provide emergency staff, said Brian Peters, chief executive officer of the Michigan Health & Hospital Association.

Thanks,
Kelly

Kelly E. Magsamen
Chief of Staff
to the Secretary of Defense

O: (b)(6)
C: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, November 24, 2021 5:04 AM
Subject: Defense Morning Clips 24 Nov 2021

Note: There will be no Defense Morning Clips on Thursday. It will resume Friday, November 26.

DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS
As of 0430 Hours, November 24

OVERVIEW

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley spoke with General Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff, as an exercise of continued communication to reduce risk and operational conflict amid rising concerns of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, Bloomberg News reported. Additionally, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks announced the creation of the Airborne Object Identification and Management Synchronization Group, which will investigate “unidentified aerial phenomena” found in restricted military airspace, according to the New York Times. Also of note, the Pentagon continues to search for logistical solutions to pandemic-related supply chain challenges that have upended the defense industry, Defense News wrote.

TOP STORIES

1. Top U.S., Russian Military Chiefs Talk Amid Ukraine Tensions

Bloomberg News, Nov. 23 (1351) | Tony Capaccio

The top military officers of the U.S. and Russia spoke Tuesday as tensions remain high over Moscow’s deployment of about 100,000 troops on the border with Ukraine. General Mark Milley, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff, talked by phone about “several security-related issues of concern,” according to a statement from the Joint Chiefs. Russia’s Defense Ministry confirmed the call, Interfax reported, without providing details.

2. Pentagon Forms a Group to Examine Unexplained Aerial Sightings

New York Times Online, Nov. 24 (0008) | Julian E. Barnes

The Pentagon on Tuesday night announced a new group to investigate reports of unidentified aerial phenomena in sensitive areas, work that will be overseen by both the military and the intelligence agencies. The group will lead an effort to “detect, identify and attribute objects” in restricted airspace, as well as mitigate any threats to military flights.

3. ‘No company is immune’: Supply chain woes weigh on defense firms

Defense News Online, Nov. 23 (1050) | Stephen Losey

More than a year and a half after the COVID-19 pandemic began to rock supply chains around the world, the defense industry is still wrestling with its fallout — and figuring out how to move forward amid the turmoil. From massive deliveries of steel and aluminum needed to build the military’s newest ships and aircraft to landing gear brakes to items as small as semiconductors, supply chain shortages or delays have upended the plans of defense firms of all sizes.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

4. Key Pentagon Posts Remain Vacant Amid Supply-Chain Crisis

DefenseOne.com, Nov. 23 (1650) | Marcus Weisgerber

In March 2020, as the coronavirus spread and millions of employees around the country were told to work from home, the Pentagon’s acquisition and sustainment office mobilized to figure out how they could safely keep open companies critical to national security. But the office has been leaderless since Jan. 19, when Ellen Lord, the Trump administration’s defense undersecretary for acquisition and sustainment, stepped down. And those government-industry conference calls have stopped.

5. ‘Forever Chemicals’ Exposure Data Emerging From Federal Studies

Bloomberg News, Nov. 23 (1704) | Pat Rizzuto

The findings of perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS) and six other per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the blood of 459 people living in Westfield, Mass., near Barnes Air National Guard Base were among the first study results recently posted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The study is one of eight Congress ordered the agency, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to conduct to better understand the extent of exposure to PFAS in drinking water resulting from military bases. It will discuss the findings with the community at a Dec. 9 public meeting.

6. Pentagon test office says new presidential helicopter not yet 'operationally suitable' for emergencies

The Hill Online, Nov. 23 (1551) | Jordan Williams

The Pentagon's test office says that the new presidential helicopter is not yet "operationally suitable" for emergencies, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday. According to an unpublished report from the Pentagon's director of operational test and evaluation, dated Sept. 28 and obtained by Bloomberg, the aircraft is "operationally effective" for routine missions such as a trip to Camp David or taking the president to Joint Base Andrews, but not yet for "contingency operational flights."

COVID-19

7. Hospitals Seek Military Help in Michigan Amid Covid Overflow

Bloomberg News, Nov. 23 (1635) | Keith Naughton and Anna Edney

Henry Ford Health System has seen Covid-19 cases soar by 50% in three weeks, straining staff and care at the Detroit-based network of five major hospitals in southeast Michigan. On Tuesday, statewide Covid hospitalizations reached 4,085, approaching the record of 4,640 set in April 2020 at the onset of the pandemic. Michigan's hospitals, with the help of Governor Gretchen Whitmer, have asked the U.S. Department of Defense to provide emergency staff, said Brian Peters, chief executive officer of the Michigan Health & Hospital Association.

8. Unvaccinated soldiers and Army units see updated rules in latest FRAGOs

Army Times Online, Nov. 23 (1319) | Rachel Nostrant and Davis Winkie

Unvaccinated troops will be limited to mission critical travel and will have to submit a negative COVID-19 test at least weekly before entering military facilities, according to two fragmentary orders issued Nov. 21 and reviewed by Army Times. The FRAGOs also outlined the appeals process for troops who are denied religious waivers and described how commanders must purchase COVID-19 test kits for their soldiers.

EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE

9. Expanded benefits for vets exposed to burn pits coming, but for some it's too late

ABCNews.com, Nov. 23 (1656) | Lauren Lantry and Isabella Meneses

There are multiple ways to expand veterans' benefits. The president can sign an executive order, Congress can pass legislation, which could then get signed into law, or the VA can choose to recognize more claims. Last week, the Biden administration said it was establishing a new policy to help more veterans exposed to burn pits during their service overseas receive more benefits.

10. Veterans groups urge Congress to stick by changes in the way sexual assault is handled within the military

Stars and Stripes Online, Nov. 23 (1724) | Rose Thayer

More than a dozen veteran service organizations came together Tuesday to call on Congress to keep long-sought changes to the way the military handles sexual assault cases in the final version of the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act. In letters sent to leadership of each chamber and of their armed services committees, the groups call for full passage of the legislation, titled the Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act. The bill has bipartisan support with 220 co-sponsors in the House and 66 in the Senate.

11. Women would be required to register with the Selective Service if this amendment becomes law

USA Today Online, Nov. 23 (0604) | Savannah Behrmann

For the first time in history, women may be on the cusp of being included in future U.S. military drafts. When Congress returns from Thanksgiving recess, they will be working overtime to approve the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, a must-pass national security package. It includes an amendment that would require women ages 18 to 25 to register for the Selective Service, alongside men.

AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

12. No Afghan family members of U.S. troops have been eligible to come to the U.S. Here's why

Military Times Online, Nov. 23 (1752) | Meghann Myers

The Defense Department has received about 60 requests from service members and department civilians to get their family members out of Afghanistan and legally into the United States, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters on Nov. 15, but none of them qualify for an immediate legal residency status. The requests came through an inbox set up in early November. Over the course of the 20-year war in Afghanistan, many Afghan-born immigrants joined the U.S. military or became DoD civilians and contractors, while members of their family have remained in the country.

MIDDLE EAST

13. Pentagon Says 'U.S. Forces Will Remain in Iraq' Despite Militia Warning for Dec. 31

Newsweek Online, Nov. 23 (1504) | Tom O'Connor

Defying a warning from local militias, a Pentagon official has told Newsweek that U.S. forces will remain in Iraq after the scheduled end of combat operations on December 31. With less than a month and a half left in the year, an ensemble of Iraqi paramilitary factions known as the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Commission shared with Newsweek a message Friday expressing disappointment with the lack of U.S. military drawdown.

14. US base in Syria targeted by rockets - report

Jerusalem Post Online (Israel), Nov. 23 (2253) | Not Attributed

The Kharab al-Jir military base used by US forces in the Hasaka Governorate in northeastern Syria was targeted by rockets, according to Syrian state news agency SANA. According to the report, five rockets were fired at the base. No casualties have been reported. An official from US Central Command (CENTCOM) told Al-Arabiya that no injuries or damage were caused by the rocket attack, saying that the rockets fell short and did not impact near the bases themselves.

15. U.S. weighs grim options if nuclear talks with Iran collapse

NBCNews.com, Nov. 23 (1001) | Dan De Luce and Abigail Williams

As Iran and world powers prepare to resume negotiations next week on reviving a nuclear deal, the U.S. and its allies are already debating a list of "Plan B" options if the negotiations collapse, Western diplomats, former U.S. officials and experts say. With chances for a breakthrough at the talks in Vienna looking remote and Iran at odds with U.N. nuclear inspectors, U.S. and European officials face a grim set of choices — from ramped-up sanctions to potential military action — as Iran's nuclear program advances into dangerous territory.

16. Israel flags Iranian UAV bases, offers counter-measures to Arab allies

Reuters, Nov. 23 (0446) | Not Attributed

Israel sharpened its rhetoric against Iranian combat drones on Tuesday, disclosing what it said were two bases used to carry out maritime attacks with the remote-controlled planes and offering to cooperate with Arab partners on counter-measures. "Today I reveal to you two central bases in the area of Chabahar and Qeshm island in south Iran, from which operations in the maritime arena were launched, and where today, too, advanced Shahed attack drones are deployed," Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz told a televised security conference.

INDO-PACIFIC

17. Biden Includes Taiwan Among 110 Invitees to Democracy Summit

Bloomberg News, Nov. 24 (0338) | Nick Wadhams

The Biden administration included Taiwan among the 110 invitees to its upcoming democracy summit, the State Department announced on Tuesday night, a move that's intended to show solidarity with a key regional partner but risks angering China. Taiwan was invited to join nations, including the U.K. and Japan, at the Dec. 9-10 virtual summit, the State Department said on its website Tuesday. The online gathering is an event Joe Biden vowed to host while a candidate for president last year, with the goal of rallying like-minded countries around efforts to fight corruption and authoritarianism and advance human rights.

18. Philippine Navy Brings Supplies to Troops in Second Thomas Shoal One Week After China Coast Guard Attack

U.S. Naval Institute News, Nov. 23 (1728) | Rene Acosta

The Philippine military undertook a resupply mission for its troops in the Second Thomas Shoal in the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) on Tuesday, exactly one week after the mission was aborted after two Chinese Coast Guard vessels used water cannons to attack the two civilian boats bringing supplies to the soldiers. The delivery of supplies for the small contingent of soldiers aboard the partly sunken BRP Sierra Madre, which Filipino troops are using as an outpost in securing the Second Thomas Shoal, apparently went along with a scheduled troops' rotation.

CHINA

19. 'Clock is ticking' as U.S. vulnerable to Chinese electromagnetic attack, experts warn

Washington Times Online, Nov. 23 (1823) | Ben Wolfgang

America's electric grid and other key infrastructure remain vulnerable to an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack from China, North Korea or other adversary, and the U.S. is at a pivotal moment if it wants to avoid a potential doomsday scenario, a panel of experts warned Tuesday. At a major virtual forum hosted by the Universal Peace Federation, specialists warned of the growing threat of an EMP attack that could knock out communications, water and sewer services, transportation systems, retail and other central components of American society.

EUROPE

20. Ukraine launches 'special operation' on Belarus border, holds Javelin drills

Reuters, Nov. 24 (0328) | Pavel Polityuk

Ukraine, which has accused Russia of massing troops nearby and says Belarus could send migrants over its borders, launched an operation on Wednesday to strengthen its frontier, including military drills for anti-tank and airborne units. The Ukrainian state border service said the "special operation" at the border with Belarus involved troops of the National Guard, police, Armed Forces and other reserves.

21. Fearing new Russian threat, Ukraine races to upgrade its navy

CNN.com, Nov. 23 (2136) | Sebastian Shukla and Frederik Pleitgen

The Ukrainian naval patrol boat "Kremenchuk" churns out into the gun-grey waters of the Sea of Azov, one mounted machine gun pointing aft, another pointing fore into the drizzle. Commander Ivan Ovchar explains his ship's mission: "To defend and maintain the sovereignty of Ukraine." The threat, the officer and many of Ukraine's allies believe, comes from Russia.

RUSSIA

22. Moscow says U.S. rehearsed nuclear strike against Russia this month

Reuters, Nov. 23 (1740) | Andrew Osborn and Phil Stewart

Russia's defence minister on Tuesday accused U.S. bombers of rehearsing a nuclear strike on Russia from two different directions earlier this month and complained that the planes had come within 20 km (12.4 miles) of the Russian border. But the Pentagon said its drills were announced publicly at the time and adhered to international protocols.

23. Russia, China Sign Roadmap for Closer Military Cooperation

Associated Press, Nov. 23 (1308) | Vladimir Isachenkov

Russia's defense chief on Tuesday signed a roadmap for closer military ties with China, pointing to increasingly frequent U.S. strategic bomber flights near both countries' borders. During a video call, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe "expressed a shared interest in stepping up strategic military exercises and joint patrols by Russia and China," according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

AFRICA

24. Military moves in Ethiopia risk undermining progress toward peace talks - U.S. envoy

Reuters, Nov. 23 (1441) | Not Attributed

The U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa said on Tuesday that “nascent progress” toward getting all parties to Ethiopia’s conflict into negotiations on a ceasefire risks being outpaced by an “alarming” increase in military operations. Envoy Jeffrey Feltman briefed reporters in Washington after returning on Monday from Ethiopia, where he met Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and discussed a potential diplomatic solution to the year-old conflict, which has killed thousands and displaced millions in Africa’s second most populous nation.

25. Sudan’s Hamdok says investigation launched into violations against protesters

Reuters, Nov. 24 (0226) | Not Attributed

An investigation has been launched into violations committed against protesters since the military power grab on Oct. 25, Sudan’s newly reinstated Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said, according to a statement from his office. Hamdok and the group called for political prisoners to be released as soon as possible and for the right to peacefully protest to be respected.

AMERICAS

26. U.S. plans to lift terror designation of Colombia’s FARC

Washington Post, Nov. 23 (0115), Pg. A13 | Karen DeYoung and Samantha Schmidt

The Biden administration has informed Congress that it plans to lift a nearly 25-year-old terrorist designation against the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, following a peace deal the group signed five years ago with the Colombian government. New designations will be issued for at least one of the splinter groups that have broken with the FARC, as it was known, and still consider themselves at war with the government. The administration also plans to keep in place existing U.S. indictments against individual members, including for drug trafficking, according to people familiar with the decision.

NAVY

27. The Navy is working to ease the supply-chain shortage in LA County

Military Times Online, Nov. 23 (1606) | Rachel Nostrant

The Navy is working with the Oxnard Harbor District in Port Hueneme in Los Angeles County to provide direct support in decreasing port congestion in hopes of reducing the national supply-chain shortage. The collaboration is part a Joint Use Agreement that was first signed in 2002, allowing the Navy, when activated, to support commercial supply chain logistics by authorizing commercial use of certain facilities and areas aboard Naval Base Ventura County, freeing up space to move and store cargo.

INSTALLATIONS

28. Timeline Extended for Resettling Afghan Refugees in Indiana

Associated Press, Nov. 23 (1719) | Casey Smith

Federal officials said Tuesday that they’ve pushed back their timeline to resettle roughly 4,100 Afghan refugees who are still at the Indiana National Guard’s Camp Atterbury training post more than two months after they arrived there. Limited resettlement agency resources and the coronavirus pandemic have delayed resettlement efforts, Aaron Batt, Department of Homeland Security coordinator for Operation Allies Welcome, said during a news conference. Officials previously said their goal was for refugees to be permanently resettled by early November.

29. On a South Jersey military base, help for Afghan evacuees starting new lives

Philadelphia Inquirer Online, Nov. 23 (1835) | Jeff Gammage

Lt. Col. Adam Howland became an attraction the moment he stepped through the door and onto the hardwood floor — an American soldier who speaks Dari, one of Afghanistan’s two national languages. He was formally trained as an expert on the culture and served in-country as a bridge between people and agencies. As the lead culture adviser, Howland, 41, spent the last three months as a central point of contact and problem-solving for 11,100 Afghans, all awaiting resettlement in communities across the United States.

ACQUISITION & INDUSTRY

30. U.S. needs ‘manufacturing renaissance’ to compete with China - Report
BreakingDefense.com, Nov. 23 (0944) | Brad D. Williams

A new report calls for a US “manufacturing renaissance” amid an intensifying economic and national security competition with China, which has openly stated it intends to displace the US as the world’s leading economy in coming decades. The new report from the Reagan Foundation, titled “A Manufacturing Renaissance: Bolstering U.S. Production for National Security and Economic Prosperity,” provides four recommendations to strengthen the US manufacturing base. These include modernizing the Defense Production Act, enlarging the US workforce for high-demand trades, creating new public-partnerships and financial incentives to strengthen economic sectors important to national security, and facilitating new forums with G7 and Quad (US, India, Japan, and Australia) countries to coordinate on economic issues.

MODERNIZATION & TECHNOLOGY

31. JADC2 Cross-Functional Team adds new Transport Working Group
Fedscoop.com, Nov. 23 (1325) | Jackson Barnett

The main organization working to implement one of the military’s top modernization priorities stood up a new group dedicated to developing modern networks and communications standards. The Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2) Cross-Functional Team (CFT) now has six working groups, with the Transport and Warfighter Communications Working Group activated Tuesday. The CFT is the central body of civilians and uniformed military members from across the department working to coordinate the development of a network-of-networks that can enable the integration of air, land, sea, space and cyberspace operations. Now the CFT has a group dedicated to cloud, communications and network tech oversight.

CYBER

32. ‘The game has changed’: VMware exec says defense industry faces destructive cyberattacks, belligerent foes
BreakingDefense.com, Nov. 23 (1440) | Brad Williams

Not content to just steal secrets, foreign threat actors targeting the defense industrial base are increasingly becoming more belligerent when encountered by incident response teams, actively engaging cyber defenders and sometimes turning to destructive attacks when pressed, according to VMware cybersecurity chief Tom Kellerman. “The game has changed,” Kellerman told Breaking Defense in a recent interview. “The adversary now doesn’t just want to break into defense contractor x and steal national secrets. The adversary wants to break into defense contractor x and then use their digital transformation to attack government agencies.”

NOTABLE COMMENTARY

33. America Repeated Vietnam’s Mistakes in Afghanistan
Wall Street Journal, Nov. 24 (0200), Pg. A15 | Arnold L. Punaro

Defense Department leaders have assured Congress and the American people that the military would study the war in Afghanistan to learn lessons from America’s 20-year involvement and painful exit. This will be an important exercise, but not a new one. Many lessons from Afghanistan mirror ones from Vietnam. This time, we owe it to our fighting sons and daughters not merely to identify the lessons of failure but also to integrate them into our military so they aren’t repeated.

34. Team Biden Is Talking Itself Into a Hole With China
Bloomberg Opinion, Nov. 23 (1800) | Hal Brands

The fundamental question isn’t whether the U.S. wants to preserve peace amid increasing tensions with China. The question is how best to do so while also defending American interests. Biden may have had it right the first time: “Extreme” competition now could be the best guarantee of “healthy” relations later.

35. Americans Want to Defend Taiwan. The Pentagon's Budget Should, Too

DefenseOne.com, Nov. 23 (1658) | Chet Lee

In recent polling, a greater share of the American public than ever supports using the U.S. military to defend Taiwan from China's aggression. More Americans than ever believe Taiwan should become a treaty ally of the United States. But more than ever, Americans also believe the U.S. military is incapable of matching up to China's People's Liberation Army. This rising tide of public support for Taiwan presents an opportunity for lawmakers to close the gap between the U.S. military budget and arsenal that we have to what is needed to balance and compete with that of China.