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ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JONATHAN RATH HOFFMAN: Thank you. Good morning, everybody. Thank you for being here.

This week, Secretary Esper traveled to the Naval Air Station Pensacola and SOUTHCOM headquarters in Miami, Florida.

While at Pensacola, he met with and thanked the heroic first responders, including Master-at-Arms 1st Class Donald Scott, Captain Robert Johnson, M.A. 3 David Link Jr., and Patrol Officer Daniel Dugger.

They discussed the new measures that DOD has implemented to safeguard our military installations and protect our service members, their families and our civilian employees.

Once the military departments implement these newly required security procedures, they are authorized to resume all training of international military students. New procedures will include new standards for detecting and reporting insider threats, restrictions on the possession and use of firearms, control measures limiting international students' access to U.S. government facilities and other military bases, and new vetting procedures and continuous monitoring of international students while enrolled in U.S. base training programs.

The secretary also visited SOUTHCOM, where he met with SOUTHCOM commander Admiral Faller to discuss implementation of the National Defense Strategy and their robust efforts to support partnerships, safeguard our nation and counter threats in the region.

Today, the secretary delivered a keynote address at the CSIS Global Security Forum on Emerging Technology Governance. Guided by the NDS, the Department of Defense has in part focused its efforts on great power competition, lethality and readiness through, in part, developing emerging technologies.

As we continue to invest in technologies tomorrow, we must also safeguard American innovation and encourage our allies and partners to take similar steps. We will continue to pursue a results-oriented

So finally, I wanted to give an update on our service members in Iraq.

This morning, the secretary directed the acting undersecretary for personnel and readiness, Matt Donovan, to begin working with the Joint Staff to review our processes for tracking and reporting injuries, wounded in action and casualties attributed to injuries.

The goal is to be as transparent, accurate and to provide the American people and our service members with the best information about the tremendous sacrifices our warfighters make. We will have an update on this review in the future.

With regard to the numbers of recent injuries, here's the latest update.

Thirty-four total members have been diagnosed with concussions and TBI.

Eight service members who were previously transported to Germany have been transported to the United States. They will continue to receive treatment in the United States, either at Walter Reed or at their home bases. They arrived this morning.

Nine service members transported to Germany are still undergoing evaluation and treatment there. One service member transported to Kuwait received treatment and has returned to duty in Iraq.

Sixteen service members who were diagnosed with concussion and TBI while in Iraq, and remained in Iraq, have already returned to duty.

The DOD is committed to delivering programs and services intended to lead to the best possible outcomes for our service members who suffer any injury. Over the last two weeks, we have seen a persistent and dedicated effort by our medical professionals on the ground in Iraq, Kuwait and Germany to diagnose and treat any and all members who needed assistance.

We wish all these members well and we are dedicated to ensuring that they have the support and

The -- so for the total number of confirmed cases of concussion, TBI, are you -- is that the same thing, basically? What number was that?

MR. HOFFMAN: I'm not a doctor, but the -- the terminology I've been given is the -- is the medical diagnosis of TBI. I was using the term "concussion" because I think that's what the -- the common description of the type of injuries that they received. So these are things that suffered with headaches, dizziness, sensitivity to light, restlessness, nausea; so similar symptoms that you'd see in TBI and concussion.

The total number is 34 that have been diagnosed by a medical professional over the course of the last couple weeks.

And as -- and as we talked about, you know, part of the timeline on this process is, a lot of these symptoms, they are late-developing, they manifest over a period of time.

People -- in some cases, their -- their condition will improve. And what we saw is a number of people who were initially screened for concussion-like symptoms that showed up at one of the medical providers in the -- in the base saw their conditions improve rapidly. And then others, we saw their conditions didn't improve. Some got worse, and some had severe enough symptoms that they were transported on for further treatment.

Q: And why were they brought to the U.S.? What was their -- why -- why was that necessary?

MR. HOFFMAN: I don't think it was -- I can't speak to the individuals' medical. But I think in this case, is -- if they're receiving treatment, they can either receive treatment in a -- in a hospital in Germany, or they can return back to their home base to be with their families and to be back with their units and receive treatment in that environment.

These are mainly outpatient treatments, so -- where they're gaining support. And -- and so that seems to be the better place. I can't speak to that -- I'm not their medical provider -- on why that decision was made.

Go ahead.

Q: I just wanted to clarify, the 34, how many have TBI, how many concussion? Is there a breakdown, or --

MR. HOFFMAN: Sorry, I'm using the term relatively interchangeably, just because I think the -- the common term for TBI that most people have been using has been concussions or concussion-like. So this is -- I'm using it the same way. There have been -- 34 have been diagnosed with TBI.

Q: Okay. And would they be eligible for Purple Hearts?

MR. HOFFMAN: So that's -- that is a process that is a decision for -- that the services will make in due time. I'm not going to get ahead of the service secretaries in that.

I think we talked about it, last time I was in here, what the -- what the standards are for that, so it's enemy action causing an injury, diagnosed and treated by a medical professional. The diagnosis of a TBI resulting from the enemy action, that removes them from duty for 48 hours. So that is -- that's my understanding of the -- the regulations for that.

And so that's a process that'll take place, and I'm sure we'll have updates for you in the future on that.

Yes, go ahead?

Q: Hi. Vivienne Machi with Defense Daily.

This morning, Secretary Esper talked about some Fourth Estate reform efforts. And can you provide any update on how much may have been saved on those Fourth Estate efforts? And how -- where cuts have taken place?

MR. HOFFMAN: So the number we've been using and -- has been \$5 billion, is that the secretary has

budget will become in the coming year.

Obviously, I'm not going to get ahead of the president's budget announcement, it's the president's. So much more information on that will be coming in the coming weeks.

Q: All right, thank you.

MR. HOFFMAN: All right? Good.

Sir?

Q: Do you have any schedule for the U.S. in South Korea, joint military exercises, or suspended?

MR. HOFFMAN: So I think when we were in South Korea last, that there was a previously scheduled exercise that we postponed. At this time, I don't have an update on a -- on a change of that. I think the secretary said at the time that it was -- it was an effort to -- to provide the -- the leader of North Korea some room to continue with negotiations, and that's still our hope.

And -- but at this time, I have no announcement on any change in our -- our exercise posture in South Korea.

Q: Hi, Jonathan. You announced this review that the secretary has announced. What's the tie-in? Is it a direct tie-in with the updated numbers of 34? Is he upset that there's been a lag time in how this information has come out, and whether there was adequate information-sharing at his level about this?

MR. HOFFMAN: I think that what he's seen is, as we've talked about with this type of -- particular type of injury that it comes over time. So I think the -- the treatment that the members -- the goal on the ground in Iraq -- and I actually spent some time this morning, talking to the medical providers at OIR and walking through kind of how they -- they handle these cases.

The direction on the ground that was given was, anybody who comes in with symptoms, we need to

different types of reporting systems we have, sometimes the administrative reporting of an injury is different than the medical reporting, in that if someone is -- we need to get that clarified, we need to get a little better handle on it.

He -- he wants to make sure that we are tracking it because the commanders on the ground need to know what's happening, the American people need to know. And we need to be as transparent as possible on this.

Q: But what was his personal take on -- what has his personal reaction been to this process as it's developed over the last --

MR. HOFFMAN: I mean, his personal reaction's been mostly his concern for the individuals that -- that were injured, and making sure that they were receiving the treatment that they need.

We're all thankful that -- that there were not more injuries, we're thankful that there were not any casualties -- or, sorry, anyone who was killed in action on this. But that we want to make sure that they're getting the treatment that they need.

And just to be clear, you know, as I've said, that this is a -- some of these -- these conditions manifest over time, conditions can -- the symptoms can get better, they can get worse. So we may see those numbers change a little bit, this is a snapshot in time.

And that's what it's been, going on for the last few days, and that we've given you numbers. It's been a snapshot in time of where we are right now. And so we want to continue to be able to provide that. And so we'll give you updates, but I think that right now, the numbers are where they are.

Barbara?

Q: I want to come back to Luis' question. Very specifically, can you explain to us, this has been going on for many days, the numbers have grown, as we understand why. But you knew very quickly that it was a

MR. HOFFMAN: So I think that, to the secretary's comment at SOUTHCOM, I think his point was, he had not received an update that day. And as I said, this is a snapshot in time. And he wanted to make sure that you are provided with the most accurate up-to-date numbers.

And at the time, he thought that there were -- they're coming to myself or to others in this forum to give those numbers was probably the more accurate way to do it because the numbers have been, as we've talked about, they've shifted as more people have been diagnosed and more people have been treated. So he just wanted to make sure you were getting the most accurate numbers.

But with regard to the reporting system, I've been on the phone with the medical providers today and in the recent days, and what you see is many of you have been in the deployed environments, and the way some of these injuries are treated, is symptoms pop up.

So do we report just when someone shows up with a symptom? Do we wait until they have a -- we suspect something? Do we wait until we have a full diagnosis? Do we wait until they're evacuated from the region and they're no longer available for duty?

And that's the case of what happened in this case, was that the reporting did not come up until they were actually evacuated from the area and taken to Germany for further treatment. And at that point, they were lost to the formation and therefore the secretary was made aware.

Q: Two things. Just clarify, is this review strictly on how TBI --

MR. HOFFMAN: No.

Q: This is on all of it?

MR. HOFFMAN: This is -- this is -- we're going to take a broader look at it.

Q: So how is it, what you just described, when do you report TBI-type symptoms, how are they reported, et cetera, et cetera, how is it that after 18 years and so much experience on all levels of the

somebody who's been evacuated because of a condition they have.

And so my point is, is that there are different types of things that can be reported. And so all of that was being reported. But I think the question you had -- and this was a fair question -- is, at what point does that information get conveyed to the secretary?

And so we're -- we're looking at that, we're looking at how different things are reported. TBI's an example but -- but this happens routinely and so we're going to take --

Q: Let me rephrase. How can it be, seriously, after 18 years, the reporting of TBI symptoms needs to -- how it's reported, that it needs to be reviewed that the secretary of defense has --

MR. HOFFMAN: Well, I just -- I just told you that this is not a review of just TBI reporting. This is reporting in general and so --

Q: But he concerned about this.

MR. HOFFMAN: He's -- he's -- he is interested in seeing that we take a look at our reporting to make sure that all of the reporting requirements on the ground are well nested and that the best information is -- is available to the public as quickly as possible.

And so that's -- that's his goal, that's the mandate that he's given the undersecretary, and that's what we'll come back to.

Look, these conditions of change, we've had different people in place in these processes over the years. It's not unusual every now and then to take a look at the process you have in place to see if -- if maybe we can improve upon it. And that's all we're trying to do, is we're trying to get the best process we can to provide the best information that we can.

So, yes?



MR. HOFFMAN: So, I'm not -- I'm not familiar with that -- that particular letter and -- and any specific programs that we've adopted. My lack of knowledge of it does not mean they don't exist but I can get you -- an answer for you on that.

So, go ahead.

Q: Thank you, sir. I have two questions.

It was reported that the United States might deploy a Patriot missile defense system to Iraq. Do you know where they might be deployed: Anbar, Erbil or all of the bases?

And my second question is: Yesterday, Kurdistan President Barzani said in a Davos forum that, quote, "The resurgence of ISIS is a serious problem in Iraq, making the case for why U.S. troops needed to stay in the country."

Is that the Pentagon's assessment? And does ISIS maintain a capability to make a comeback?

MR. HOFFMAN: So, I think when you look at the military presence in Iraq, we have long said that the U.S. goals in Iraq continue to be the defeat of ISIS and support for the -- the Iraqi people in building a safe, prosperous country.

And I think the -- the -- the president's -- the minister's comments there reflect the view of many Iraqis in that Iraq is a -- a safer and -- location with the United States military there and that the U.S. military in Iraq is a force for good.

And so that's -- that's the view we think we've seen from -- from many in Iraq, and we think that's the -- the -- the view that is the winning view among most Iraqis right now.

With regard to -- to basing, the commander on the ground has the authority and the resources he needs to handle force protection.

So the commander on the ground has to balance all of that and make a determination about where he puts his resources.

So -- and as we saw on the -- the attack on the -- on the 8th, there's different things you can do to address different types of attack, whether it's a -- a -- an anti -- anti-ballistic missile system or if it's a shelter -- hardened shelters or dispersal. There's different types of solutions they have.

So I'm not going to get ahead of the -- the commander and his determination on what he -- what force protection measures he chooses but he has a -- he has a range of them available and he'll be looking at that.

Jeff.

Q: Thank you.

The Taliban has said they expect a peace agreement with the United States this month. Is the United States willing to accept a, quote, "reduction in violence," end quote, in lieu of a cease-fire as part of an agreement?

MR. HOFFMAN: So, Jeff, I'm not going to get ahead of State Department; they've got the lead -- Ambassador Khalilzad has the lead on that negotiation. So we will continue on this topic to refer everybody for -- to -- to State Department for an update on where that negotiation is and -- and what conditions.

The role of the military is to help set the security environment so that -- the -- those diplomatic solutions can be successful.

Q: Second -- go ahead, let him go to a follow up.

Q: When are 4,000 American troops leaving Afghanistan?

So I -- I have no announcement on that for you.

Q: Jonathan, just to clarify, you said 34 total diagnosed with TBI, eight brought back to the U.S., nine are still in Germany. Have the rest been returned to duty as service members?

MR. HOFFMAN: So eight -- eight have returned to the United States, nine -- nine remain in Germany seeking evaluation, one who was evacuated to Kuwait has been returned to duty in Iraq, and then there were 16 that were treated and diagnosed in Iraq but have returned to duty since then.

Tony?

(CROSSTALK)

MR. HOFFMAN: Third time to Tony.

Q: (Off mic) being deferred to Fox twice is a lot.

Q: The breakdown for 34, that's where I'm confused -- so half of them have returned to duty then --

(CROSSTALK)

MR. HOFFMAN: 17 -- 17 of the 34, yes.

Q: Returned to duty?

MR. HOFFMAN: Yes.

Q: Okay.

Q: Dow Jones this morning broke a story saying that the Pentagon weighed in with a Commerce Department rule -- proposed rule that would limit or prohibit or -- I think limit U.S. company

have taken place. I here's a -- there's a public portion of the rule-making process.

With that particular rule, I'm not aware of where it is or -- in the process or that type of decision, but I would have to say that -- that we're just not going to comment on it.

Q: In his remarks, he -- he -- he laid out that Huawei is a threat to the U.S. and the allies, the 5G issues. And yet the story implied that the Pentagon was trying to stop a regulation that would prohibit U.S. companies from doing business with a company that you guys say is a threat. These seem inconsistent. Can you square the circle a little bit?

MR. HOFFMAN: Other than to say that I -- I -- I'm not going to comment on any type of interagency conversation on this topic.

I think our position with regard to the -- the danger of -- of Chinese technology getting into U.S. systems, and particularly the communications systems, is real. We've -- we've spoken about it openly, the secretary spoke about it this morning.

But I -- I don't have a comment for you on an interagency conversation that -- that -- that I'm not familiar with.

Q: One that you could answer. What steps is the Pentagon taking to reduce \$35 trillion in accounting adjustments made last year? It's trillion" with a capital T, which stands for trouble in the accounting world.

MR. HOFFMAN: I -- I think that's a -- you know, the -- the -- the number I -- I think most people realize that the Department of Defense is an incredibly large organization and we have -- there's a lot of -- of money that runs through the department.

But what we've seen is -- is over the last couple of years, taken -- talking about concrete steps, is the audits that we've had. So we've had the two audits over the last couple of years. These are large undertakings in an effort to make sure the money is well spent.

period of many years.

So you look back and you say, "All right, this money was -- a budget was drafted, was sent to Congress, was passed, was implemented, and then five years to spend, you're looking at a seven-plus-year cycle of a decision was made on how money initially should be spent to how it may -- may be best spent seven years later.

And so there's always going to be some movement of that. And so I think the number actually is a good indication that the department is flexible and that, as we are able to shift money around to meet new needs and new missions, we're able to do that.

Do we need to get better at it? Yeah. And that's part of the audits and that's part of what the CMO and the comptroller are looking at. And -- and we will continue to get better.

All right?

Q: Hi, I'd like to circle back to the Fourth Estate --

MR. HOFFMAN: Sure.

Q: -- and clarify the status of the \$5 billion. Is that money -- are those cuts that have already been done, or are those proposals that will be included in the budget request?

MR. HOFFMAN: So I'm not going to get ahead of announcements on -- on what that is going to take or where we are on that, just to say that the -- we've used this number before, that that's the -- that's the bulk of what we're looking at in finding programs.

The -- the Defense-wide review that the secretary has undertaken, that that's a part of, will be reflected in the budget. So you will see that when our budget comes out, of some of the changes that we've proposed.

U.S. troops to stay in Iraq. But today hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in Baghdad, demanding the departure of -- of U.S. troops.

So do you think the Pentagon should ignore them because they are pro-Iranian?

MR. HOFFMAN: So I think, if you look at Iraq, there is a number of different demonstrations that take place in Iraq on a regular basis. And if you look back past couple weeks and months, what you've actually seen are very substantial demonstrations in Iraq against the Iranians, in an effort to get the Iranians to stop influencing, manipulating, supplying weapons and interfering in the -- the lives of Iraqis.

You've seen demonstrations against corruption. You've seen demonstrations looking for a more responsive government. So it's -- it's a complex environment. But I stand by our comment that I believe, as we've seen from the -- the Kurdish representative, we've seen from Sunni representatives -- we've seen this repeatedly -- the -- the Iraqi people understand that the United States is a force of good in Iraq and that the D-ISIS mission, the building and strengthening of the Iraqi security forces and the support for the NATO mission is better off with the American forces there.

All right?

Q: Yeah, I have a question about 355 ships.

MR. HOFFMAN: Okay.

Q: How confident is the secretary that there will be money, not just in F.Y. '21 but in future years, to actually build and sustain and staff a fleet of that size?

MR. HOFFMAN: So we've -- part of our -- our Defense-wide review and part of our -- our force posture review is to look and see what type of forces we need for -- for shifting under the NDS. Everything we do is -- is focused on implementing the NDS and the focus on -- on China and -- and -- and the great power competition.

Q: Yes, sir, thank you.

Do you -- do you think it's appropriate for elected members of Congress to disparage the patriotism of an active duty military officer?

MR. HOFFMAN: Not familiar with where this is going so I'll -- I'll let you ask the follow up.

Q: Sure. The Republican senator tweeted that Lieutenant Colonel Alex Vindman disparaged -- questioned his patriotism and his participation in the hearings and how he's handled the call from this. So, I mean, just generally, he's still an active duty service member. Do you -- how do you feel about that standard being set?

MR. HOFFMAN: I -- I'm not going to wade into the -- the hearings and things that are taking place on Capitol Hill right now. Obviously it's become a -- it's a -- a highly charged environment so I'm going to not weigh in on that other than to say that Colonel Vindman is a -- still an active duty member of the military and -- and continuing to perform his -- his job on a daily basis.

Q: Is the Secretary thinking he served honorably?

MR. HOFFMAN: I haven't asked the Secretary.

Q: On Iraq, you've said that most Iraqis, particularly the Sunnis and Kurds, are in favor of the United States stay there. In -- in the past, we see that the United States will -- was training Sunni tribes in Al Asad Base and several other bases in -- in Iraq but now we see that the Sunni tribes and also mostly Kurds have been sidelined in the government affairs in Iraq.

What particular is the United States doing to bring them into the kind of Iraqi governmental affairs and action and what is -- is the training for the Sunni tribes continuing?

the -- the different factions, all of the different groups and allows some sort of -- of -- of cumulative governing arrangement.

And so we've always been an advocate for including each of those groups in -- in governing -- governing and decision making.

Q: And just a follow up? In Syria, Russian forces and U.S. troops are reported to come to -- closer to each other and even have some skirmishes in East -- east of Hasakah. Do you have anything on that? Have you -- do you have any --

MR. HOFFMAN: So the -- in Syria, our positions are clear. We -- we make it very well known to other -- other countries and forces in the area where our -- our people are. We work through de-confliction channels to ensure there's no miscommunication and there's no -- no accidental engagements.

We continue to do that and make sure that they know where we -- we're going to be and where we continue to be. So I don't have any update on any specific -- I think you've described as a skirmish -- I don't have any updates on that other than to say that we are where we are and they know where we are.

Q: Yeah, the Secretary and the Chairman credited the instincts of the commanders on the ground in Iraq after the Al-Asad attacks, for sending troops to a bunker and preventing injuries. Now that we've seen reported TBIs and concussions, is DOD considering any further measures to protect troops on the ground in light of potential Iranian strikes in the future?

MR. HOFFMAN: So I think it wasn't just the instincts, it was the planning of the commanders. So if you look back at the -- the plan that General McKenzie and General White and their teams put in place to bring troops into more secure locations, to disperse also the -- the -- the benefit of our early warning systems that allowed us to -- to give people an opportunity to get to those bunkers.

So we're looking with -- General McKenzie's taking a look at the force protection needs on the ground and seeing how -- how we -- if we need to make any adjustments and -- and how we're protecting our



to protect people is taken.

Q: Just on the nine service members, sorry, that are in Germany. Is there any possibility they'll be sent to the U.S. for further screening or if the severity of the cases increases, they could be sent home?

MR. HOFFMAN: I -- I -- I think that's a possibility. I would not -- I'm not going to get ahead of the doctors on that but given the -- the track record of -- of how this has progressed, I -- I think that's a distinct possibility.

David?

Q: Just one last time because it's not adding up.

MR. HOFFMAN: Okay.

Q: 34 total --

MR. HOFFMAN: So 34 total, so 18 of them were evacuated out of Iraq. Of the 18, 17 of those went to Germany. Of the 17, nine of them are still in Germany, eight of them have come to the U.S. Of the 18 out of Iraq, one of them went to Kuwait. That individual has returned to duty.

In addition to the 18 that were evacuated, there were 16 that were treated in Iraq and returned to duty. I'm a lawyer, so math is hard, but I think that's 34.

(CROSSTALK)

MR. HOFFMAN: All right -- all right, keep going.

Q: Andrew Clevenger, CQ Roll Call.

MR. HOFFMAN: All right.

team has been working on the budget and our Leg team. We've got a good team in place and that hasn't had any impact.

Yeah, Tara?

Q: All right, I have another math question -- billions with a "B," though. So how can the Department of Defense afford to shift \$7.2 billion for the border wall and can you describe in a larger picture how does the border wall fit into the NDS with its focus on China and great power competition?

MR. HOFFMAN: So what -- what \$7.2 billion are you talking about?

Q: The -- like, the reprogramming for building the --

(CROSSTALK)

MR. HOFFMAN: I'm not familiar with if there's been a reprogram of money to the border wall.

Q: It hasn't been reprogrammed yet but the request and the additional --

MR. HOFFMAN: I'm not familiar with a request and I think the -- there's been an RFA from DHS that has listed out a -- a number of miles that they would like to see assistance on.

The Secretary, I think we briefed last week on this -- the Secretary, the Comptroller's looking at that. The Chairman's Office is looking at it. Policy is looking at it and we're -- we're making a determination as to what we think that -- that hasn't happened, so I don't want to get ahead of any decision. There's been no request for a dollar figure, there's been no -- no decision on that.

So the secretary will look at that and make a determination but I -- it'll go back to -- we have priorities but you also have to look at what the president has declared and there is a national emergency on the southern border that involves illegal immigration and border crossing, and as part of that we -- we do have priorities and that -- that is a priority and it's an emergency that the president has -- has declared

And so our -- this goes to the fact of, you look at the NDS, our goal is to move forces to -- to the Indo-Pacific region, to counter China. But at the same time, we've still got to balance that with regional conflicts that flare up from time to time, as we've seen in the Middle East, and be able to prioritize.

We're a big department. We can do multiple things at once, and we're continuing to -- to balance those priorities and move them along.

Nobody's asked about it, but I'll mention, this kind of comes back to our discussion that's ongoing right now, about the -- the zero-based reviews that are taking place with the COCOMs.

The secretary's taking a hard look at everybody and saying, do you have the resources you need to do the mission you have? Let's go through and look at what your mission is. Has that mission -- how does it nest under the NDS? Has there been mission creep over time? Do we need additional forces here?

So that's taking place. I think the first two, AFRICOM and -- and SOUTHCOM are taking place. And then we're going to roll through and do that with everybody. But its part of your question, is we've got to prioritize everything and how do we fit it under the NDS.

We'll do a couple more.

Q: Thank you. Ambassador James Jeffrey said, yesterday, that there may be a potential shift at some point in the future between the number of U.S. forces in Iraq and coalition forces in Iraq, as compared to forces that are under the NATO mission rubric.

Senior NATO officials have met with Iraqi officials in the past few days. Has the U.S. -- has the DOD received any indication of the Iraqi position on this potential proposal in the future?

MR. HOFFMAN: So the mission in Iraq in part is in support of the NATO mission, so that there is -- there are forces there, we're helping them. We're all there at the invitation of the Iraqi government, and we've all expressed an interest in helping the Iraqi government better train their forces, we've all

It goes back to the NDS question about shifting our resources back to -- to China, and the focus on the Indo-Pacific. And so we're looking, whether it's in Africa, whether it's in the Middle East, whether it's in Asia, we're looking for our allies and partners to step up. And in this case, there's been a -- the president's made it clear that he's looking to NATO to do more.

Q: If I could just follow up on that --

MR. HOFFMAN: Yeah.

Q: -- U.S. officials are headed to Europe. I know Ambassador Jeffrey said he's going to Brussels, and possibly Copenhagen next week. Is there any intention to reach out to U.S., European allies about the potential to contribute more forces or somehow expand the NATO mission?

MR. HOFFMAN: I mean, I think in the -- in the wake of some of the activities in the last few weeks, I think the secretary and John Rood, the under secretary of Policy, did more than 60 phone calls with allies and partners. So that's at the head of state or minister of defense level. Having conversations on a wide range of issues, but that is one of those things we've talked about.

So those conversations have been ongoing for -- for months. As long as the secretary's been in office, he's been reaching out to our partners and allies to talk about how we can get together and do more as a group.

So we'll do one more.

Q: For the injured soldiers in Iraq, can you say if they were soldiers, airmen, Navy, Marines?

MR. HOFFMAN: No. At this time -- at this time, I can't give any more details out on it. That's going to be a service-specific decision as to when we're going to go out with that. But we've got some -- we want to be cognizant of some of the HIPAA concerns and some of the other information.

MR. HOFFMAN: To protect from --

Q: Coronavirus?

MR. HOFFMAN: So right now we are following the CDC and State Department guidance with regard to travel and -- and measures we take. The military commanders and the base commanders are -- are monitoring it, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, keeping tabs on -- on cases as they pop up.

They have the authority to take additional action if they need to, but right now we're adhering to the CDC guidance.

Q: So --

(CROSSTALK)

Q: -- mobilization?

Q: -- specific about monitoring?

MR. HOFFMAN: Excuse me?

Q: So nothing specific about monitoring?

MR. HOFFMAN: At this time we're monitoring it. Right now, we have no -- no indications of -- of outbreaks at -- that would affect our personnel in their current status. But we're monitoring and we'll -- we'll make changes if we need to.

All right, guys. Thank you.

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