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Ladies & Gentlemen, below please find this week's edition of *Executive Insight Brief*, compliments of The Roosevelt Group.

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EXECUTIVE INSIGHT BRIEF | JUNE 28, 2019

TOP STORIES

Iran Update

Cyber Attacks

The U.S. Military's Cyber Command carried out a [major cyberattack on Iranian-backed proxy](#) groups on Tuesday, according to sources. The attacks, in response to the shooting down of an American RQ-4A drone last week, came

after President Trump reportedly called off further military action against Iran. The cyberattacks targeted Kata'ib Hezbollah and specifically affected their communications network. The Department of Defense and USCENTCOM declined to comment on the subject. Tensions between the two countries are at the highest in recent memory, as high ranking officials from both the U.S. and Iran continue their bellicose rhetoric.

Sanctions

On Monday, President Donald Trump signed an executive order that [targets Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and associates with additional financial sanctions](#). These sanctions singled out the Ayatollah and his associates as the administration identified Khamenei as being "ultimately responsible for the hostile conduct of the regime." Furthermore, the new sanctions also extend to foreign minister and Iranian symbol of diplomacy Javad Zarif. Zarif responded by claiming Americans "despise diplomacy" and accusing President Trump of having a "thirst for war."

These new sanctions come in the midst of escalating tensions between Iran and the U.S. following Iran's downing of a U.S. drone and [a war of words](#) between President Trump and the Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani. The Iranian President condemned the new sanctions as "mentally retarded" to which President Trump responded, saying that if Iran attacked "anything American" Iran would face "great and overwhelming force. In some areas, overwhelming will mean obliteration." Although both Iran and the U.S. have said on numerous occasions that they do not want war, the new sanctions against the Ayatollah mark a symbolic move to increased hostility with Iran. On Tuesday, Iran said that the sanctions mark a ["permanent closure"](#) of their diplomatic relations, and it will halt all negotiations while these new sanctions are still in effect.

Russia Update

Russian Warship in the Caribbean

[An advanced Russian Warship reached Havana, Cuba on Monday.](#) The ship has been seen sailing around the Caribbean. The U.S. Navy has sent its own warship to the area to monitor the situation. The Russian warship is preparing to make port calls at several locations across the Caribbean. Over the past decade, Russia has occasionally sent ships to the Caribbean, citing them as routine trips. However, this trip to the Caribbean follows a recent trend of the Russian military coming into extremely close proximity with the U.S. military. Earlier this month, a Russian destroyer nearly collided with a U.S. cruiser in the Pacific, and just a few days earlier, a Russian fighter jet aggressively buzzed a Navy aircraft over the Mediterranean. Russia has given no reason for the trip to the Caribbean.

Russia Sides with Iran on Downed U.S. Drone

After investigation, the Russian Defense Ministry has come to the conclusion that the U.S. drone shot down by Iran was flying over Iranian airspace, contradicting the Trump administration who claims the drone was flying over international waters. Russia—an ally of Iran—claims to have [military intelligence](#) showing the drone flying over Iranian airspace.

Trump and Putin Meet at the G20 Summit

[President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a meeting at the G20 Summit in Osaka, Japan on Friday.](#) The meeting, as described by Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, was an “intensive” meeting between the two world leaders. Despite time limitations, the two were able to hold a robust discussion around the issue of economic relations between the U.S. and

Russia and how the level of bilateral trade between the two countries “does not match its potential.” Putin also extended an invitation for Trump to visit Moscow in May to further the conversation.

Supreme Court

Supreme Court Rulings

The Supreme Court ruled on Thursday, June 20th, that a 40-foot tall World War I memorial cross can stay on public land at a Maryland intersection. [The ruling](#) was 7-2 in favor of keeping the memorial standing. Justice Samuel Alito wrote the majority opinion stating that “[The Cross] has become a prominent community landmark, and its removal or radical alteration at this date would be seen by many, not as a neutral act but as the manifestation of a hostility toward religion that has no place in our establishment.”

The court ruled that it should be up to the states to address the issue of partisan gerrymandering, not the federal judicial system. The court was asked to consider if state politicians have too much power when redistricting in North Carolina and Maryland.

The court blocked the addition of a citizenship question on the census, for now.

This bars the Trump administration from adding the question [unless it can provide stronger support for the question.](#)

Revolving Door Continues at Pentagon

Esper's First Week

On Monday, new [Acting Secretary of Defense Mark Esper](#) began his tenure, replacing Patrick Shanahan in the role. Esper, formerly the Secretary of the

Army, becomes the third Secretary of Defense in the calendar year, after Jim Mattis' abrupt resignation from the post on January 1st. Though President Trump has indicated support for confirming Esper as permanent secretary, no date has been set for related proceedings.

Acting Secretary Esper's [first major trip abroad](#) came Thursday when he traveled to Brussels to meet with NATO member state officials. During this meeting, Esper denounced recent actions from Iran that resulted in an escalation in tensions with the U.S. He urged NATO allies to aid in the policing of the Strait of Hormuz and encourage a diplomatic resolution to the growing conflict. NATO member states have stated they would stand behind all diplomatic efforts between the U.S. and Iran.

McCarthy Replaces Esper

Ryan McCarthy, formerly Under Secretary of the Army, will be promoted to Acting Secretary [following Mark Esper's departure](#) from the post. The former Army Ranger assumes the position as tension with Iran builds towards possible military confrontation. Within the department, he will be tasked with maintaining stability in projects such as the efforts to modernize the Army. President Trump announced last Friday that he intended to nominate McCarthy for the permanent position, but gave no timetable on when he would do so.

Norquist to be Nominated

In addition to McCarthy's nomination, President Trump also stated he would [nominate Deputy Secretary of Defense](#) David Norquist to the permanent position. Norquist had been acting deputy for Patrick Shanahan, who left the role to assume the position of acting Secretary of Defense. While Shanahan has since left the Pentagon, Norquist will remain as deputy secretary for the foreseeable future. With Norquist and Esper's nominations, the Department of

Defense will have stability at the top.

The Navy's Futuristic Submarines

The U.S. Navy is currently planning the [next generation of attack submarines](#), and their capabilities are astonishing. As part of "Block VI development," the Navy is establishing the parameters and must-have assets of their future submarine force. The plan is to use a Virginia-class base and improve upon it with cutting edge, and yet to be tested, technologies. This is particularly effective because the Virginia-class was always intended to be modular and easily upgradeable.

Specifically, the new submarines will be purpose-built for clandestine operations of all kinds including special forces deployment, high-risk surveillance, and intelligence gathering. The [Block VI Virginia-class](#) will accomplish these tasks through a mix of next generation drone warfare, new classified weapons systems, and quieting technology that will make the vessels almost totally silent.

F-22 Readiness

The Air-Force's stealth F-22 Raptor will not meet the desired mission readiness goal set by former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. Before his departure, Mattis mandated that all [F-15, F-16, F/A-18, F-22, and F-35 squadrons](#) achieve a mission capable rate of 80 percent by the end of September 2019. Officials declined to provide precise reasons for this outcome and noted that precise readiness figures are classified.

In March 2019, Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson warned that the 186 strong F-22 force might not be able to make the readiness goal that was set by Mattis. Three months later, Air Force Brigadier General Heath Collins confirmed and

announced officially the F-22 force would not reach the 80-percent mark. However, the rates for mission capable raptors have always been low, typically floating around 50-percent. Nonetheless, the Air Force stated that the mission capable numbers are higher than they've ever been.

Update in the Far East

China

In an interview on Wednesday, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin [said a trade deal with China is about 90% complete](#). Mnuchin is looking forward to the G20 Summit where President Trump and President Xi will meet for discussion of a potential trade deal. President Trump has claimed that a trade deal could be reached as early as this weekend at the G20 summit.

Despite the Presidents optimism, there is still cause for concern as President Trump recently insisted that the U.S. is willing to impose tariffs on all remaining Chinese imports if disagreement continues.

Similarly, a Chinese Commerce Ministry spokesperson, Gao Feng, [spoke out against the U.S.'s "abuse of export controls" on Thursday](#). Feng demanded that the U.S. cancel sanctions on Chinese telecom equipment maker Huawei. The Trump administration previously indicated that Huawei could be a part of the trade deal.

Taiwan

It was recently reported that pro-Beijing Taiwanese politician, and current mayor of the city of Kaohsiung—Han Kuo-yu—had help during his rise from obscurity to a political household name. A campaign of social media manipulation orchestrated by a mysterious, seemingly professional cyber group

from China apparently played a key role in his success.

As he eyes a run for the Taiwanese presidency, this realization might concern many across the world, particularly in the U.S., which has militarily supported Taiwanese independence over many decades. [Click here for the full story.](#)

Taiwan is prosperous and democratic, which creates an uncomfortable contrast for the CCP and a potential object of emulation for its subjects on the mainland.

As in Hong Kong, the people of Taiwan have grown accustomed to their freedoms and are reluctant to give them up. As China expands its military capabilities, Taiwan's once technological advantage is [all but gone](#). Many believe it is vital to U.S. foreign policy to continue to [support](#) Taiwan, as forsaking them for unreliable concessions from China could pose pronounced threats to American alliances throughout the Pacific. At a time when some allies across the globe already question America's willingness to defend them, especially against China, the U.S. must maintain a hardline stance more than ever. [Read the full article here.](#)

2020 Election

Democratic Debate in Miami

Ten Democratic Presidential candidates squared off Wednesday night in the [first Democratic Primary Debate](#) of the 2020 election. Senator Elizabeth Warren was the top polling Democrat on stage going into the debate, and news analysts are commending her performance as well as that of Julian Castro. Texan politicians Beto O'Rourke and Julian Castro squared off in a heated argument over immigration. Left-Wing politics dominated the stage with very little push back from Moderates on Medicare-for-all, gun control, and immigration issues. However, one issue that Democrats did divide on was

[national security](#), giving several different answers (ranging from China to climate change to nuclear weapons) when asked to identify the top national security threat.

The current frontrunners of the primary took the stage on Thursday night, headlined by former Vice-President Joe Biden, Mayor of South Bend, Indiana Pete Buttigieg, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, and California Senator Kamala Harris. The second night of debates proved itself to be even more chaotic than the first. The debate was seen as the battle between the upper echelon of Democratic competitors (except for Elizabeth Warren and perhaps Julian Castro or Cory Booker). Joe Biden appeared to be the frontrunner coming into last night's debate, yet he struggled to cope with the fiery round of questions from Senator Harris about his positions on school busing in the '70s or about his recent comments concerning working with known segregationists in the past.

Quick Hits

USMC Revamping Urban Warfare Tactics

Hundreds of U.S. Marines will join their British counterparts for large scale training exercises at the massive Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in Indiana this summer. As part of [Project Metropolis](#), the Marines will spend weeks simulating urban warfare, practicing squad tactics, and testing new technologies. Project Metropolis is part of the military's turn toward modern urban warfare with near-peer adversaries and away from the counterinsurgency of the last two decades. The project is expected to last four years. Officials believe the exercises will provide the opportunity for Marines to innovate with new technologies and to experience a new style of combat. The Army is launching [similar exercises](#) at facilities around the country.

Turkey's S-400s

Moscow will deliver its first [S-400 missile system to Ankara in July](#), Russian news agencies reported from the head of Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport. He stated on Wednesday “we are making our first delivery in July as part of our plans.” Even after the U.S. threatened Turkey with sanctions and exclusions from the F-35 program if Ankara went through with the purchase, Turkey did not renege from the deal with Russia.

Mueller to Testify

Robert Mueller agreed on Wednesday to [appear in open sessions](#) on July 17th before the House Judiciary and House Intelligence Committees, pursuant with the subpoena issued by Congress. The Democrat-controlled House has made considerable efforts to coax the tight-lipped Mueller into testifying in Congress. Given the DoJ's inability to charge a sitting president with crimes, Mueller has maintained that he would not speak about matters outside of his report.

Saudi's Capture ISIS Leader in Yemen

On Tuesday, Saudi officials announced the [capture of the leader of ISIS in Yemen](#), Abu Osama al-Muhajer, along with other leaders including the chief financial officer during a 10 minute raid on June 3rd. The raid was conducted by a combined Saudi-Yemeni force with U.S. aid at an undisclosed location.

Officials noted there were no civilian casualties.

Last but Not Least

Popular Mechanics featured a fascinating and informative article on the evolution of America's military helmets over the past century. As we gear up for the 4th of July next week, it is rather fitting to learn more about such an integral part of a soldier's uniform—also inspiring to see how far we have come since

the days of the Doughboy. [Click here for the article.](#)

This Day in History

1519

[Charles I of Spain](#), who by birth already held sway over much of Europe and Spanish America, is elected the successor of his late grandfather, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I.

1675

Frederick William of Brandenburg crushes the Swedes at the [Battle of Fehrbellin](#).

1709

Russians defeat the Swedes and Cossacks at the [Battle of Poltava](#).

1776

American Patriots under Major General Charles Lee, [repulse](#) a British sea attack led by General Henry Clinton—on Charleston, South Carolina.

1778

Mary "[Molly Pitcher](#)" Hays McCauley, wife of an American artilleryman, carries water to the soldiers during the [Battle of Monmouth](#).

1862

Fighting continues between Union and Confederate forces during the [Seven Days' Campaign](#).

1863

General [George Meade](#) replaces General Joseph Hooker three days before the Battle of Gettysburg.

1914

Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand is [assassinated](#) at Sarajevo, Serbia by Serbian nationalist [Gavrilo Princip](#), who belonged to a radical group called the [Black Hand](#). This assassination sparked a powder keg that was Europe, the result of a decade of expanded nationalism, arms-races, and the romanticism of war. It would set off a chain of alliances being pulled into a massive conflict that would prove to be one of the most destructive and bloodiest in history. It would become known as the Great War and the “War to end all wars”, however, history would prove that notion to be unfitting.

1919

Germany signs the [Treaty of Versailles](#) under protest, officially ending World War I. The British and particularly the French, who after years of vicious conflict and devastation of their lands and population, yearned to make Germany pay for the damage instigated by the war. The Americans and [President Woodrow Wilson](#), on the other hand, sought for a less stringent deal. The steep financial repayment, combined with a global depression paralyzed the German economy, sending the nation into economic ruin. [Some argue](#) this, in addition to a large sentiment of resentment over the terms of the treaty and the burden imposed virtually solely on Germany following their defeat, directly contributed to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, along with the Second World War.

1942

German troops launch a multi-pronged offensive, codenamed [Case Blue](#), to seize Soviet oil fields in the Caucasus and the industrial city of [Stalingrad](#). The

Battle of Stalingrad would become one of the most brutal battles in history, as soldiers fought each other through the rubble that was formerly the city, as well as sub-freezing conditions—usually -22 degrees. It was common for Soviet soldiers to hold one floor of a building, while German soldiers held another—fighting was oftentimes hand to hand and bitter close combat. If soldiers somehow managed to survive the hostile cold, or close quarters combat, starvation usually finished the job. The average life expectancy for the conscripted Soviet soldier in [Stalingrad](#) was 24 hours (though take statistics with a grain of salt, many Soviet soldiers became experts in urban combat and went all the way to Berlin). When the encircled German 6th army surrendered in February, only 91,000 of the original 330,000 were left. Of those, only about 5,000 would survive captivity to return to Germany. The battle would go on to mark the turning point in the war on the eastern front.

1945

General Douglas MacArthur announces the end of Japanese resistance in the [Philippines](#).

1949

The last U.S. combat troops are called home from Korea, leaving only 500 advisers. Almost exactly a year later North Korean troops would pour across the partition, igniting the [Korean War](#).

1950

General Douglas MacArthur [arrives](#) in South Korea as Seoul falls to the North.

1953

Workers assemble the [first](#) Chevrolet [Corvette](#) in Flint, Michigan.

1965

U.S. forces launch [first offensive](#) in Vietnam, spearheaded by the 173rd Airborne Brigade. 3,000 U.S. troops and 800 Australian and Vietnamese assault Viet Cong Zone D, 20 miles northeast of Saigon.

1967

14 people are shot during race riots in Buffalo, New York.

1971

The [Supreme Court](#) overturns the draft evasion conviction of Muhammad Ali.

1972

Richard Nixon announces that no new draftees will be sent to Vietnam.

1976

The first women enter the U.S. Air Force Academy, among them is [Gen. Janet Wolfenbarger](#) (Ret.), who would eventually go on to serve as Commander, Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC).

See more at historynet.com and history.com

Look Ahead

Tuesday, July 2

8:30 AM EDT

Discussion: The Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies

Topic: Defense

Location: Capitol Hill Club, 300 First St. SE

Thursday, July 4

9:30 AM EDT

Event: George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens

Topic: Arts

Location: George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Highway,
Mount Vernon, VA

11:00 AM EDT

Event: The Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum

Topic: Social Issues

Location: National Air and Space Museum, Sixth St. and Independence Avenue
SW

With congress being out of session, there is not a whole lot occurring in D.C.

Have a great weekend!

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