

Community Comment May 26th 2014

By Jon Sapper

Memorial Day 2014

This is Jon Sapper for Community Comment.

Today is Memorial Day where we honor those brave men and women who gave their lives in preserving the freedoms we enjoy. It is not a day to be sugarcoated or taken lightly. We have our freedoms only because of the hard work and sacrifice from those who protect this country 24/7/365. Many of us, including me, go about our daily lives in a state of blissful ignorance, unaware of what it takes to keep this country safe from those who want to harm us and our way of life. I was given a real education on national security two weeks ago.

Three of us from our area were fortunate to be invited to attend a National Security Forum at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. Others from here have attended in the past. We were among 150 civilians from across the country who came together matched with the same number of senior officers from all branches of the military and many of our allies. It was eye opening to be briefed on security issues facing this country and engage in dialogue and debate on strategy. Obviously, we were not shared classified information, but the briefings we did receive on US/China military relations, the powder keg in Syria and domino scenarios in that region, a CIA intelligence analyst from the White House and the new security fronts that must be given attention, kept my head spinning for several days.

The traditional military.....air, land and sea is certainly still important and will continue to be, but hearing that a developing national defense strategy in outerspace and cyberspace, will require a whole new approach to national security and protecting this country.

I gained a heightened sense of appreciation of what it takes to protect us from non-stop attempts by those who don't like us and our way of life.....and yes, it costs a lot of money. It was made clear from high ranking officers and reports that there are serious concerns over our ability to be ready on all fronts while also modernizing our country's defense. But, when these same reports state that 25-30 percent of current Air Force facilities are not needed and are only kept open by

I don't understand it
members of Congress who don't want a closure in their district, ~~that's hard to~~
~~swallow~~. A high ranking officer believed many of the budget shortfalls needed to
maintain readiness and modernization could be made up by closing these
unnecessary facilities. I hope for common sense to eventually prevail.

What I do understand is
~~Even with these challenges, let us remember that~~ today is Memorial Day and we
all need to take a moment and give thanks to those who served and gave their
lives to protect this country.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.