



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON BENELUX  
UNIT 21419  
APO AE 09708-1419

August 12, 2020

USAG Benelux Commander  
COL James R. Yastrzemsky  
Unit 21419  
APO AE 09708

Dear Benelux Community:

To address a few questions about the current situation and to clear up any potential confusion with U.S. European Command's (EUCOM) recent designation of Belgium as a "Red" country, below are a few guidelines for us to follow.

a. Current U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) policy states that for all U.S. Army Soldiers seeking approval for leaves and passes (official and unofficial travel) to or from a "Red" country, an Exception To Policy (ETP) signed/approved by the first General Officer or Senior Executive Service leader in a Soldier's chain of command is required. Generally, normal/routine travel to/from a Red country is not authorized. Exceptions for travel to/from a "Red" country generally fall into the categories of personal hardship, humanitarian reasons, or mission essential purposes. All exceptions to travel are handled on an individual basis by the member's chain of command. Leave, pass, or other unofficial travel by Soldiers is authorized inside Belgium. Please continue to monitor Host Nation guidance for higher-risk areas within Belgium.

b. For other service members, follow the guidelines published by your chain of command. For everyone's understanding, not all services use the same guidelines for various reasons. Services and commanders retain the discretion to impose more restrictive leave and pass policies on top of Department of Defense and higher headquarters policy. However, subordinate headquarters will not reduce requirements established by their higher headquarters. Requirements are established by commanders to protect the force. All individuals (Service members, Department of Army Civilians, Family members, and other affiliated personnel) must comply with Host Nation travel guidance. Due to rapidly changing conditions, keep in mind that countries may impose quarantines, close borders, or otherwise restrict movement with little or no warning, during their travel or return.

c. Belgium recently initiated new procedures requiring people (16 years or older) who travel outside the country (by air, train, bus, or car) for over 48 hours to complete a traveler form (Public Health Passenger Locator Form) following a stay outside the

*We Deliver!*

Schengen area or in a “high-risk” area as defined by Belgian authorities and located inside the European Union. We know this has caused some confusion, and we are working closely with the Belgian government and the SHAPE Healthcare Facility to determine the exact testing process upon return from such a trip. We will share the details as soon as possible.

d. Understand that these measures are put in place by our higher headquarters so that we can protect ourselves and our surrounding communities across Europe. Please continue to take the necessary personal precautions to protect not only yourself, but also the local communities. We must continue to be good neighbors and representatives for the U.S. and do our part.

e. For those with a few questions about the Health Protection Condition (HPCON) status and opening schools within the Benelux community: The chain of command works closely with Host Nation public official guidance and our public health officials in our community to closely monitor emerging health-related trends on a daily basis and to determine appropriate HPCON levels for our garrison community. Currently, we are in “HPCON B,” which means that all schools are prepared to open as scheduled for either face-to-face or virtual instruction depending on parental preferences and registration. If you have last-minute requests for changes, work with your local school representatives to seek an exception as appropriate. Please continue to monitor DoDEA updates and Town Halls as they continue to actively inform the community. I will refer you to our last “Coffee with the Commander,” in which we hosted DoDEA-West leadership focused on getting back to school information. Leadership within the schools, garrison, and health community continue to conduct “COVID Assurance Team” school inspections to ensure the proper measures are in place to mitigate any risk as much as possible.

For more detailed information regarding coronavirus information, please refer to your specific unit’s chain of command. You can always refer to our USAG Benelux website where relevant information is routinely updated.

Thank you for your engagement and questions. We hope this clears up any confusion. These are certainly stressful times, but we will remain resilient by getting through this together. Please stay flexible and vigilant, and as my daughter says- continue to “Be Nice”!

Sincerely,

JAMES R. YASTRZEMSKY  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Commanding