

COVID Town Hall – 29 October 2020

As of: 1520, 28 October 2020

Participants: MG Rohling, COL Vogel

CG Opening Remarks:

Good Evening Team. I'm Major General Andrew Rohling, Commander of the Southern European Task Force and Senior Responsible Officer for all U.S. Army forces south of the Alps.

As many of you know, we are facing growing numbers of positive COVID cases in Italy and within the Vicenza/Darby Military Community.

We are testing more often and are able to determine earlier if someone has COVID. Most of the positive cases we've identified have been asymptomatic, meaning that they test positive for the virus but are not suffering any severe symptoms.

Asymptomatic carriers are still contagious. Therefore, it is important to detect the virus and isolate it from the rest of the community.

We are reinstating weekly virtual town halls to provide you all accurate and up-to-date information. We also want to provide the community a way to interact with senior leaders and subject matter experts. This way you can raise your concerns. Ask questions. And get answers.

Applying everything we know and have learned over the past eight months – this community is taking assertive measures to protect the force, stop the spread, and maintain readiness.

Positive COVID cases have, and will continue to cause short term disruptions to our daily routines, schools, and post services. I ask for your patience and understanding as we do our best to minimize impacts.

Team Trace and Team Clean are helping us shorten the duration of closures and disruptions by quickly identifying individuals and locations potentially exposed to the virus. And then working quickly to notify impacted individuals and sanitizing locations on the installation.

If you are required to self-isolate due to a family member testing positive or being identified as a 'close contact' through contact tracing – please adhere to the quarantine and restriction of movement procedures. This is about protecting you, your families, and this community.

Over the past couple months we have welcomed many new members to the Vicenza and Darby military communities. Including myself and my family.

I know this has been an extremely stressful time for everyone. We must continue to take care of ourselves and our loved ones physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If you're struggling or need help – please reach out to your chain of command. We are here to help.

2020 is not business as usual but guidance to the team is to keep as many post services open as possible. Of course, we will do so while following all recommended health and safety guidelines and staying aligned with host nation decrees.

I'm also committed to keeping our schools open unless ensuring the health and safety of our students, teachers, or staff requires us to close.

In order to maintain operational readiness in support of our Defense and Security missions, we will continue to operate our fitness facilities. In line with our priorities, the strict mitigation measures we have in place allow the force to safely conduct physical training.

However, to further mitigate the spread, we will limit the access of indoor physical fitness facilities to active duty military and our work force, which includes Department of Army Civilians, contractors, and host nation professionals.

While indoor fitness facilities remain available to this limited population, we strongly encourage **everyone** to conduct individual physical fitness training outside – to the greatest extent possible.

For the time being, our family members will have to utilize outdoor fitness areas. And the Garrison team is putting together a plan to bolster these areas – similar to what was done earlier this year.

Our military families have made so many sacrifices this year. I'm sorry that we have to continue to ask more of them. I can assure you that we would not be making this change if there was any other way to keep the facilities open.

Colonel Vogel is here today and he'll provide an update on the status of several installation services. And we can further discuss the gym and other concerns during the question and answer period.

Bottomline – our intent and commitment is to keep this community safe and informed.

We will provide information through command channels in the form of town halls, General Orders, Fragmentary Orders, command messages, and commanders forums.

Please use the U.S. Army Garrison-Italy website and Facebook page as your main sources for accurate and timely information. We will post all we know as quickly as we can.

We will get local decrees translated and summarized as quickly as possible. Ensuring you know the latest from our host nation and what is required by Italian law. We'll also let you know how the latest decrees impact our installations and how they might restrict activities such as official and personal travel.

I can't predict how long this fight will last, but by now we are all COVID veterans. We all know the recommended measures to stay safe. We must continue to wear our masks, practice social distancing, wash our hands frequently, and avoid unnecessary risks.

I have thoroughly reviewed our COVID priorities for the Vicenza and Darby Military Communities and they have not changed. They are:

1. Protect the Force;
2. Stop the spread of the virus; and
3. Maintain Readiness.

I'll now turn things over to Colonel Vogel for a community update.

Dan, over to you.

COL Vogel: *Provide community updates*

(Opportunity for CG to emphasis anything COL Vogel said)

CG Closing Remarks:

Team – listen – I know that this year has been a challenge and that we are all feeling some fatigue. But in addition to fighting the spread of COVID-19, we also need to fight complacency. There are things every single one of us can do to protect ourselves, our families, and this community.

That includes adhering to recommended social distancing guidelines, wearing our masks, and practicing good hand sanitation by regularly washing our hands and using hand sanitizer.

Additionally if you see Soldiers, Civilians, or Family Members in the community not adhering to guidelines please politely correct them.

It is going to take all of us knowing the standard, following the standard, and enforcing the standard – in order to stop the spread of the virus in our community.

Remember my three priorities are:

- Protect the force
- Stop the spread of the virus, and
- Maintain readiness.

Please continue to get updates from official sources, websites, and social media platforms. I know there are a lot of rumors out there. Don't listen to rumors. Go to official sites and get the answers.

I ask for the community's continued adherence to Italian decrees, your patience, and your resolve as we move forward in our battle against COVID.

Thank you everyone for your continued support and cooperation.

Colonel Vogel and I thank you for watching this message.

Thank you for staying informed and doing your part to protect yourselves and this community.