



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

3/27/2020

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DOD PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: Message to the Force – COVID-19 Response

The Department of Defense is engaged in one of the great global challenges of our time as we work together to combat the spread of the coronavirus. While the situation continues to evolve, I want to assure the force that we will take all necessary measures to protect our people and win this fight. As we aggressively respond to this pandemic, my priorities remain: protecting our troops, DoD civilians, and their families; safeguarding our national security capabilities; and supporting President Trump's whole-of-nation response.

We are committed to taking every precaution to ensure the health and wellbeing of our people. That is why we have imposed restrictions on all domestic and international travel. We understand the impact of delaying PCS moves, modifying training exercises, and temporarily closing some installation services. These decisions are necessary to mitigate risk to you and your families, while we work to ease the burden on the force as much as possible.

During these times, it is important that we minimize person-to-person interaction and practice social distancing, whenever possible. I know this can be challenging in certain situations, as every unit, installation, and mission is unique. There are, however, some common-sense rules that we should all follow: do not crowd large groups of people into confined spaces for meetings or briefings; conduct tasks such as physical training and maintenance in small groups; and use teleworking and other virtual tools to enable staff work, when possible. I trust our commanders around the world to make the best decisions for their troops as they balance mission requirements with force health protection.

As we do our part to mitigate the effects of this pandemic, we must remain prepared to carry out our core national security missions. Our adversaries may look to exploit this crisis, as much of the world's attention is directed toward the coronavirus. We will not hesitate to modify our security posture around the world, if necessary. Meanwhile, we will ensure all of our forward deployed troops receive the support and resources needed to accomplish their missions.

At the same time, we will continue to support the whole-of-nation response to the coronavirus. Thus far we have provided critical medical supplies to civilian hospitals, mobilized thousands of National Guard troops across the country, and are deploying the Navy's two hospital ships and multiple Army combat support hospitals. The Army Corps of Engineers is performing vital work to convert buildings into temporary hospitals. And, our world-class doctors and scientists remain on the leading edge of vaccine and treatment development.

Together, we are doing what the Department has done throughout its entire history – adapting, innovating, and demonstrating why the American people call on the United States military during the most trying times. I am proud of our Service members and DoD civilians who are answering the call all around our great country. We will get through this together, and we will emerge stronger and more resilient than ever before.

*Mark T. Esper*



OSD003399-20/CMD001151-20