

Peterson AFB: 21st Space Wing Town Hall Transcript
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21st Space Wing commander, Col. Thomas Falzarano
21st Medical Group commander, Col. Chris Vaughn

21st Space Wing commander, Col. Thomas Falzarano: Good afternoon Knights and happy Friday the end of another week in this new normal posture and as we talk about COVID-19 and in some of the amazing things that all of our Knights are doing around the world so welcome to all of you and one of the 14 time zones but I know currently our airmen are serving and doing amazing work. These Facebook things are becoming normal, now it's good that might be a thing we continue on as we move into the next phase or eventually hopefully move back to normal posture. If you haven't got a chance to see a General Raymond the Space Chief and Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force Chief Towberman they did a Facebook town hall live event yesterday and then you can go on and check that out as well make sure the link is up to that. They had some good information on the Space Force in the transition of our bases and by the way this impacts not only people that are going to have blue Space Force name tags but all the people that work on our base and because we know that this transition can't happen successfully without the folks all across the Support Group and the folks that take care of us in the Medical Group and all of the wing staff agencies. Their lawyers in our public affairs professionals and folks handle money and on and on and on it is entire team effort so there's some great information out there and encourage you all to go take a look at that well we are now Colonel Johnson reminding me a couple days ago that we were at day 40 of consecutively sending situation reports up to the headquarters. And so I assume now a couple days later we're at date 42 if my math is correct and so we've kind of been in this posture for a while now. We're significantly into the second month of this, obviously some folks who've been in this for a lot longer... I was talking to someone who had just PCS'd here from the Korean peninsula actually just a couple days ago, and was talking so I know we have folks in all of the world who have been engaged in this fight for quite awhile and it's a strain and stress on all of us and appreciate continued patience and everyone's continued leadership, teamwork. This week there's Colonel Vaughn on the line as well he's going to talk to a few of the numbers and give us some highlights from a medical perspective. I would tell you that I think is I look at it as I've talked to the to the mayor here in Colorado Springs, I've talked with leaders around the Air Force and there's a few glimmers of hope on the horizon. And I've said that a few times but I firmly believe that I think there's some optimism out there that maybe we're starting to turn the corner on some of this now. I want to be cautious and tell all of you that we can only turn the corner and start to loosen some of these restrictions and isolation measures is if we continue to be vigilant so I ask all of you to continue to do that. Practice safe practices, hygiene and all the things that matter. Medical personnel is reminding us of that.

I've been walking around the BX and commissary every day as I do I think I was in the commissary three or four times just today and I'm sure I could have yeah I bought something each time I probably done all at once but it's a great for me to go and talk to you, to talk to folks. Folks are saying see that the plexiglass in front the cashier's is working out well thanks to our CE Warriors and get a pulse on what's going on and what people said concerns are. It was

great to see the pharmacy team out there. I went out there yesterday afternoon, snow was coming in, blowing sideways. It was below 30 degrees out there and they are bundled up, running back and forth, catching ID cards as they blow away in the wind. I even caught one by the way. I don't know who that was but I saved an ID card and went out there and made a point of coining the whole team that was out there for their work and keeping all folks who get prescriptions safe. In the cold and volunteering through this and motivated to do this 'cause they know what a significant impact they're having on the mission and great progress has been made on the communication front. And I just want to thank all of our communication warriors and cyber warriors.

I think this morning the briefing I got said we were up over 150,000 simultaneous VPN connections that could be made. When we started this over a month ago I remember the number they told me was 32,000 across the Air Force and so not only here on Peterson but bases across the Air Force they have work to increase that too and now we have the capacity for folks to actually really be doing telework which I think is going to be a big benefit going forward as we move into this normal new normal posture and maybe have fewer people working from home or fewer people in the office and will be able to balance that workload so that's good news.

April is Month of Military Child so I remind you all that we've got an art project online we'll make sure that link is highlighted on our Facebook. So we're asking children and parents that put up their paintings on what it means to be a military child. I was over at the BX and I saw they had put up some. My kids, my 2 five year old's in the one year old Valentina and hers is a little big. But should be wearing it for about five years so it's purple shirt and said "hey isn't it awesome to be a military child" and so your kids are all locked in and it's important that we mind that most how important they are and for those of us who have children to go and put them on a pedestal for a little bit especially when they are locked in the house.

So take part in that if you can encourage you to do that we're going to have more exciting stuff coming out from the Force Support Squadron as well. I'll talk a little bit about that as we continue to go and before I sent it over to Colonel Vaughn I just want to say thanks to our medical team. I had Valentina over there today with a 103 degree fever, we were up all last night, but you guys took great care of her and luckily she's got one of those other viruses that kids catch enough to coronavirus so happy and we're really proud of our medical team and pediatricians over there so this is just a reminder that are pediatricians in our entire team or doing other care as well they're taking care of a whole lot of people that are sick for all sorts of reasons and not COVID needs to continue on to do that every day so Colonel Vaughn thanks to you and your team over there for continuing to be on the front lines. Let me turn it over to you real quick.

21st Medical Group commander, Col. Chris Vaughn: OK great thanks sir and glad to hear Valentina got taken care of and will be hoping that she starts to feel better really quickly with that. Good afternoon, Chris Vaughn, the 21st Med Group commander. So like Colonel Falzarano said the health and safety and wellness of our total installation community is absolutely our top priority and it's something that we take very, very seriously to help us support that and this interesting time that we're in. The Medical Group and all of our mission partners, we continue to take steps that helps all of us stay in this fight for as long as it's needed. But as the boss said

we're starting to see what we are hoping are positive signs and that these public health measures that we've all been taking are starting to have the desired effect. Something that we're doing out of the Medical Group we continue to monitor personal protective equipment, making sure that we have enough of this on hand both for our staff and other individuals who who might need that. Leveraging virtual appointments you may have had some health care needs taken care of virtually or by telephone and we're just trying to do smart business trying to take care of the easy things so that somebody doesn't have to come into the clinic at all but they can still have their health care needs met. There is still a lot of health care that's required in this coronavirus environment and that never stops just because we're dealing with COVID-19. Health care needs don't pause so we're just trying to find smart ways to take care of those needs the point of testing lane that we're running out of the car wash on Peterson continues to be just a hugely valuable resource. We're still operating that Monday Wednesday and Friday to take care of sample collection and we're running those through the lab out at Wright Patterson Air Force Base and that team at Wright Patt are just the heroes they are getting these sample results turned around within 48 to 72 hours which is just fantastic and just as a reminder if you think that you might need to have a sample taken please call our appointment line first and we'll get you prescreened and then if you need to have a sample take it will give you a specific time to show up and to have that taken care of and it doesn't take long you show up out there and we get the sample taken and then you're on your way really within minutes out there.

Another success is the drive through pharmacy pick up at the Peterson base exchange and we have delivered thousands, well over 3,000 prescriptions just since last Wednesday already so that's been a great success. We appreciate everyone's patience and cooperation as we've gotten that up and running and we're going to keep doing that for as long as we need to. Obviously it's a valuable service and it's meeting people's needs so we're not going to adjust that until the conditions tell us that we can start to pull that back. Additionally if someone does get a COVID-19 sample taken at a non-DOD location but you're a military beneficiary we'd ask that you let our public health section know just because we're working in this environment this kind of data tracking and public health tracking is really important during this COVID-19 battle so if you do get a sample taken off base please close the loop with our public health section so that we can help track that and close the loop based on the outcome of that result.

Last but not least just want to remind folks to please continue to monitor the installation Facebook page and also download the Air Force Connect App. Our public health team is doing phenomenal work with collecting information as it gets updated and then getting it pushed out through those mechanisms and it's a lot of work on their part but they are absolutely strategic communicators right now so monitor the Facebook page and download the Air Force Connect App. I appreciate it boss back to you.

21st Space Wing commander, Col. Thomas Falzarano: Once again and I mentioned it to myself going over to the pharmacy and thinking those folks but a fantastic initiative that was an initiative built by the pharmacy team in house and they figured out that this is need unfortunately some bases have the ability to buildings or structured facilities are structured they can go and have a drive up pharmacy and we just don't have facility that is structured like that and they took it upon themselves to do that initiative that's paying off and really it reduces foot traffic it's making people safe everyone is doing their part and I'd be remiss if I didn't

mention some of our Operations Group personnel and Wing Staff Agency personnel by the way are out there. You go out there you'll see them you'll see people with Space badges on getting your prescription and that's 'cause this is a total team effort across the entire wing. When the Medical Group but the Support Group has increased workload like to do right now the entire wing comes together. And by the way people want to be part of the effort they want to know that they're helping out so that's great there.

So you know unfortunately we've had some snow in the recent days. I would prefer that there was no snow ever again-- at least maybe October, November, but uh I don't want to put the snow ski resorts out of business but at least the next few months so we've had some snow and someone asks: *"is the wing no longer conducting snow calls for those of us still coming for work?"*. And so we have as everyone knows we are already maximizing these telework for almost every organization on base we are in a mission essential already posture and that's the way we're operating and so now for some organizations like Space Command in the Space Force that means something different right? It still means in the case of new road North, it still means thousands of people that they have to be here at work that are doing absolutely mission critical work every single day and had the leading edge not only protecting the nation but the leading edge of the coronavirus. And so in order to reduce confusion and complexity with all that we have I have decided not to go and close the base if we have snow and instead you may have seen for some organizations that were affected like let's say Space Command we sent out some targeted messages for those organizations and that directed them some meetings were canceled or they were going to do teleworking and we put the messages out specifically for that. And so fingers crossed it'll be great weather I'm looking at I was looking at the weather app today looks like get out in your backyard if you have one or walking trails safe so you have this weekend. Fingers crossed that the good weather is here to stay but if somehow we do get some snow that will be the continued posture I will not close the base and we will continue to bring in all the mission critical people. We'll have targeted messages to go out to the folks supervisors think should stay home and realize it has some implications on the civilian side but those are small number of cases and we'll continue to work with those organizations on that OK let me, Chris, give it over you.

21st Medical Group commander, Col. Chris Vaughn: OK alright sir so one of the questions that came to the Medical Group is: *"what is the change in testing that has gotten a turnaround time down to 48 to 72 hours from a week or two turn around time?"* So as I mentioned earlier the samples that were taking were sending these to a lab that's located at Wright Patterson Air Force Base and I've actually seen this lab and it is pretty phenomenal it's large, it's high capacity, there's a lot of automation in there and so with that capability we started getting these tests around within just a couple of days versus initially when we went into this COVID-19 environment we started having turnaround times that we're taking a week or longer just because local labs and other private labs we're getting inundated as more and more samples were getting sent us into them. So once we started sitting our tests over to Wright-Patt that really cut it down to 48 to 72 hours and we're going to continue to leverage that capability 'cause it's really a strategic resource that we're using out there appreciate the question.

21st Space Wing commander, Col. Thomas Falzarano: Yeah you know Chris, I was quarantined right at the beginning did you get into this big effort for over a week and a half and that was 'cause yeah there's a test that went it was taken downtown and they just took a long time so this is it's really a force multiplier 'cause otherwise your entire office is we would have to go days figure out. Fortunately for right now the vast majority of those cases we find out our carbon negative and a little precaution and everyone feels good that that they can have a little sense of security with their families and for those couple days and then they get the test results back more times than not it's been negative. So that's been great news and by the way talk about mental health and stress reduction right that is not only is it a COVID thing but it's all around health thing that it helps out with terms of people not having to worry.

So question here on some confusion for the commissaries: *55 and up hour is it from military retirees and veterans who are 55 or older or is it anyone with access to the commissary who is 55 or older and then specifically someone had a concern about their spouse being 55 or younger and whether or not they were able to accompany that person.* So you know we've recently implemented some high risk shopping hours at the commissary and we're taking a look at it as everything we may adjust maybe we'll need to expand that maybe there's a reason for that. We'll see how this goes we continue to evaluate that same with the BX by the way and the number of people were allowing in the BX all that continue to evaluate that with health professionals all the time. This is to have a time for high risk individuals so if you are going there feed the feedback up to me. If you see that someone is turning your way in your fitting for your with your high risk spouse give us that feedback that's not the intent. The intent is to have a time for high risk folks to be in there so like I said we can expand that anyone is that you have to be an active duty or dependent of an activity person or special character ID card says on it you have access to the commissary and you're in that high risk category that's the time when you can go into the commissary where you know they'll be fewer people.

And I know that's critically important 'cause there's a population of folks, and the medical professionals will tell us, that are at significant risk for it and this is a life and death situation and so they'll be a few people in there. By far give us some feedback on it if you need to expand that at all let us know. I ask that you try and keep close to the age restriction so if you need your grandchild or something to be with you 'cause maybe you have a physical limitation that's one thing, but you ask bring children and a bunch of other folks into the commissary at same time get away from that intent but fully understand that some folks may need a little assistance and we can work around that work with you. Alright Chris let me send it over you again.

21st Medical Group commander, Col. Chris Vaughn: Alright sir I've got another question: *here if your primary care manager is at USAFA can you be tested at Peterson's test site?* So our answer is yes but we do have a preference with the testing. It should really occur at the MTF (medical testing facility) that a patient is enrolled in and the reason for that is what I mentioned earlier then it's really important that this public health data gets tracked accurately because testing is really based on criteria whether somebody has symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19 or if they came in contact with an individual who tested positive already for coronavirus. So there's a lot of contact tracing and kind of public health forensics it goes into this and it really gets streamlined. If an individual is tested at their MTF of enrollment because

when it when a sample is taken and then a test is initiated it kind of creates a due out on their tracker or on some MTF tracker and it's just a lot simpler when the tracking is consistent with an MTF enrolled population now. If it is after hours or if it's on weekends there is a capability with Fort Carson that may offer some expanded testing service hours with that but ultimately it's going to require a handoff back to the parent MTF. So again our we really, really encourage and we're asking people to please keep the testing at your parent MTF.

21st Space Wing commander, Col. Thomas Falzarano: Thanks Chris. Yeah I get that question a lot too. When I'm out someone says "hey you know I'm not feeling great. Do I call a, thankfully I've got the base connect app button on my phone because I can't remember all the phone numbers I can push that and guide him in the right direction. But hey so first part is not a question, but this is a great comment I love this comment: thank you FSS for everything you're doing. So my kids love the movie, they're probably at the drive-in movie with my kids, and distance of course. And we're super excited about the Easter Bunny as well. I was out there and the bunny was throwing some sanitized candy out. A question though is "what's next?" and so I'm happy to really pump up the FSS and talk about the things to do. First off if any questions on what activities are still going on at base you can go to www.21ss.com and all the everything's laid out there. I can tell you that we're starting a new thing for kids on base: the Peterson adventure challenge every Friday starting 17th of April and we're going to have 10 to 20 challenges weekly and then we're going to give away pizza and prizes and a whole bunch of other stuff. So if you go out to the FSS website 21FSS.com and you click on there, there's a challenge. There's one on there right now that you have until midnight Sunday April 19th to complete the challenge and so just to get another creative way that our FSS team is trying to get people thinking get him away from the 24 hour news channels and looking at some some regular fun activity winner prize. Everyone loves prizes and free stuff so good opportunity to get out there and do something normal. The Month of the Military Child is ongoing so I encourage you go out there once again to our Facebook site or FSS, any of the Facebook sites, and post pictures, drawings, artwork of what it means to be a military child.

We are going to do another drive-in movie theater and we're looking now that the snow has subsided and the weather is looking great outside here we may move that by the way to the tennis center parking lot to create a bigger place. We used up all the parking spots last time and have a good family fun movie and then if we moderate some of the isolation whatever we might have an opportunity to maybe let folks sit outside the car bring some lawn chairs you know and have all the distance between families and do some fun things like that. Exploring some safe ways to do some scavenger hunts, virtual bingo had been going to club virtually so looking at all that stuff, and many, many more activities.

So the next asked team, who I've said this several times I've said we're looking at it we need to look at it, but I've asked the team to give me a briefing next week on the gym and how we can go and safely take a look at that and provide the outlet again as well as a couple other things and we'll see where we go from there. Chris, do you have a last question over there?

21st Medical Group commander, Col. Chris Vaughn: Yes sir, I've got one more and want to also foot stomp the FSS team. Their Wednesday pizza night and the Friday pizza and wing night to great service that they're doing kind of helps to break up the week. With that I've done the

pizza night twice which is awesome and you just show up in the back of the club and they bring it out. And if you're interested they do the growlers as well and I think it's fantastic that if someone's on Peterson and when they're leaving that afternoon they can just swing by and some food and be on their way so hats off to the other side. Yeah I've got my schedule for 4:30 today so set, although the gym not open you gotta be careful 'cause right? It's really good. You got a question here: *the CDC just released information that the COVID-19 virus can spread on shoes and is transferable up to 13 feet are we going to change any policies to help combat this COVID-19 it can persist on any surface not just shoes that is possible that's not just a COVID-19 same but other kinds of viruses as well?* So with that really the most important measure it doesn't remain unchanged and it's just continuing to wash your hands thoroughly after handling surfaces is particularly commonly used surface is whether it's a countertop or office equipment. Things at home or even your shoes because your shoes can get dirty and it's just always a good idea to wash your hands anyways even if you're not enough coronavirus environment. So the personal hand hygiene the personal hygiene still remains the number one defense here with the with coronavirus.

21st Space Wing commander, Col. Thomas Falzarano: So as an interesting question regarding the shoes thanks for sending it in appreciate it. Thanks Chris appreciate it and so we're coming to the end of our 30 minutes here and on our Friday get together with the main group talking about some of the concerns that you've raised and hopefully we've answered a few of your questions. If you have questions that didn't get answered please bring those forward either through the public affairs channels or through your leadership team. And by the way when I'm walking around or driving around or you see Chief Simmons, anything we should know about coronavirus as well people ask me things all the time as it is right there and appreciate that we can go and answer some of your concerns. And by the way sometimes some of you are smarter than I am you have great ideas so bring those forward as well this is you know over the next all of you been watching the national news and keep track of some of the criteria that's been laid out for getting back to let's use the word normal and so we're looking at the same thing over the next few weeks think you're going to see certainly as we arrive here in Colorado to the 26th of April. But every state is on a different isolation or lock down or stay at home posture date and so those would kind of be phased in every state that we operate in, every country that we operate in is a different posture so we're tracking all that but I think over the course of the next few weeks what you're going to see is we're kind of kind of being both worlds we're going to have we maintain our focus on cleaning and hygiene and asks washing hands officers and then in minimizing contact at the same time we're going to kind of be peeking around the corner. Right OK what can we safely and what do we need to open up what procedures do mean put in place and so that's why I mentioned Jim. I know folks that would love to get into the Chapel in a safe way and other facilities on base in around town as well and by the way I know even as the Wing Commander right, there's come to work is only a couple people here in the office and I feel the isolation. I know there's many the house and just be in the office with someone else or or be out working doing whatever it is you do on the installation next to somebody having an interaction and so I think the day is coming when we're going to start to see that little bit more of that. We're gonna try and do that safely. We want to keep an eye on and be mindful of those who are at high risk. So I'm going to ask your leadership and your supervisors to make sure that

they understand in which our area are high risk, have family members that are high risk like me and so that we don't put you in a position where you don't feel safe and you don't feel comfortable and I think that's going to be any normal for awhile too, right? We're just going to have to be some people didn't work from home we're going to work from home and some people would back in the office some different work schedules and we're going to work through that creatively as a team and as a family and I know that all of you have great thoughts about that and great ideas and so we're going to take all that in and do that. Like I said it's teamwork and that's exactly what we are. Hey guys I'm extremely proud to be your Wing Commander and to be a part of this team. Fight that COVID-19. Fighting as we transition into the Space Force here over the next 6 to 8 weeks there's a lot going on here in this organization. A lot that we support and you should be proud of what you do, what you contribute, and you should be telling that to your family, and your parents, your children, or siblings or just friends. Don't be bashful or bragging about what you contribute to national security 'cause it is a lot so I'm proud to serve alongside each and everyone of you. And as I was saying, sign off with the news, Colonel Vaughn feels the same way as Chief Simmons does: our goal every day is to make sure that each and every one of you is built to last for the long term.