

Peterson AFB: 21st Space Wing Town Hall Transcript

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21<sup>st</sup> Space Wing Commander, Col. Thomas Falzarano

21<sup>st</sup> MDG Commander, Col. Christopher Vaughn

SMSgt Davis

**21st Space Wing Commander, Col Thomas Falzarano:** Alright hey good morning team pete, knights or good afternoon wherever you're at in one of those many time zones that we operate in and we got door closing behind us we got wind we have the elements we have a beautiful view of Pike's Peak this morning and we are on location at our drive in pharmacy here on Peterson Air Force Base and I just wanted use this venue to highlight just one of the many incredible innovations that's occurring around Peterson Air Force Base. We have, at this drive through pharmacy here, in just since the beginning of April filled now over 75 hundred prescriptions and you can't see but behind the camera there's a line of cars, there's lines of cars all over the parking lot here of people that are getting their prescriptions filled and when I say 75 hundred prescription you know what to me what goes on in my head when I hear that is that's 75 hundreds time maybe someone had to travel with someone to get them there safely so maybe that's 10 thousand people that did not walk through the doors of the base exchange you know the pharmacy. They didn't have an interaction with someone else, a physical interaction they were in extreme distancing in a car, safe. So that brought down the risk maybe 10 thousand times of people interacting and having a chance to contract the corona virus and many of which fall into some high risk categories so that just an amazing effort in thinking on the fly and putting together things quickly and so before we get to some of your questions I just wanted to turn it over to Col Vaughn and have you talk a little bit about your team that put that together.

**21st MDG Commander, Col. Christopher Vaughn:** Yeah, thanks sir. Hey everybody. Team pete and friends and Schriever and Cheyenne Mountain and other locations. As the boss said, I'm Colonel Chris Vaughn, the 21<sup>st</sup> Medical Group Commander and I hope everyone is doing well today and having a good Friday. So as Colonel Falzarano said, since April 8<sup>th</sup> this drive up pharmacy has delivered over 75 hundred prescriptions and I just gotta tell ya it is a total team effort across all squadrons on this installation. This miniature Alaskan shelter have been installed by the civil engineers and their ingenuity. The inside is really awesome it's got this reflective lining that helps with temperature control. We've got power running to it. We've have climate control modules out here to apply heat or air conditioning because we're still in Colorado and the weather gets really crazy. This has really kind of become the home base of one our busiest service here and this really for pharmacy deliver which is one our critical services for our population. This is the command post for it and it is awesome. They've got snack in there and they're ready to go but really team effort, civil engineering, the defenders with traffic management, Comm, public affairs helping to get the word out. Everybody has pitched in to make this happen. So we're going to continue to operate this service for as long as it makes sense to because we know that people need it and we're happy to help and support it. We truly appreciate everyone's effort with this.

**21st Space Wing Commander, Col Thomas Falzarano:** The airplane fly by is going on. We are outdoors. As you've mentioned rightfully so, this is a team effort so I just want to go and highlight a couple of

individuals who really put this together. I came out here when the shelter was going up and some of the other fight positions. I love that, putting fight positions at the pharmacy and the wind and snow is blowing sideways and everything is flapping and they were out here making it happen. So we have some guest stars we're going to bring on this morning and let you see and they'll get on Facebook live. We'll make them famous maybe and so I want highlight some of our CE team.

So if you follow me, let me bring you over here. We'll do a virtual high-five. We have Senior Davis here and Senior Davis was uh, he led the team that kind of put all this stuff together and got all this place organized like I said and they're not just doing it here by the way. If you go into our commissary and our BX, you'll see plexiglass everywhere, all the customer service areas, that's the CE team that is around base, innovatively trying to figure out, how do we keep people safe? And they are accredited in everything we do and a critical part of, when I say 10 thousand people did not have interaction, that's credited to the CE team. They are a part of reducing the spread of corona virus. So you know let me turn it over to you and have to take us over here and let you brag on your team a little bit.

**SMSgt Davis:** Thank you sir. So this is part of the CE team that helped get this pharmacy area set up. What happened is our team (inaudible) the plan and layout for this area and so like I said they came out and set up all the traffic control measures. We set up lanes. We did a little bit of adjusting for the past couple of days. We tried to make it as smooth as possible for the hundreds of people that come through here every day. Next up our structures team (inaudible) we set up the jet, put up the DFPs. They got a little bit of the wind (inaudible) and that was a good relief for all of the (inaudible) minimal manning time out here helping everybody with prescriptions. We turned it over to our HVAC team they set up our crop controls (inaudible) providing heating and cooling for this (inaudible) They came out and set up the generators, they turn them on and off and that way we can continue to provide service for this tent. (inaudible) We definitely had help across the base and we appreciate everybody that participated in making this happen.

**21st Space Wing Commander, Col Thomas Falzarano:** Alright, great job CE team. Let's make sure to get the rest of the team on the camera here. Let's see if the CE team is awake this morning. I got a little exercise to test that out. Here we go. Alright. You can't spell space...

**Civil Engineer Team:** without CE!

**21st Space Wing Commander, Col Thomas Falzarano:** They're awake this morning. Hey, hi-five virtual hi-five team. I would love to do that if it was safe. Alright now we're going to go back and ask our viewers some question. You guys are gonna stay right here and we're gonna be back in a few minutes...Relax, you can go inside. Alright hey that was great and great way to highlight the entire team.

We're going to shift gears now and talk a little bit about some of the guidance that has come out on stay at home or restrictions and loosing those restrictions...and I know a lot of people were chomping at the bit to get you know back in the office and do something normal and what know. So let me just tell you the overall bumper sticker and the overall bumper sticker for what going to happen next is this, if some asks the question "So what going to happen on Monday?" my answer is not a lot, not a lot is going to change and there are some reasons for that. We're going to talk a little bit about that. First and foremost, at least in Colorado, and many of the states that we operate are the same way. So I'm gonna use Colorado for example, we're going from about 75 percent seeing social distancing to maybe 60 65 percent in there, some of the goals by the governor and we're going to follow along with that and that's

10 percent-ish more interactions or reduction in extreme social distancing and so when you do that its not a lot and so as we go forward the one thing that we need to keep in mind is that there is chance we can go and have relapse and have to back out of this and so for that reason just as we went into this posture we kind of deliberately went into it, we are going to deliberately come out of it and so we're going to take and make a risk based decision and look at everything on a case by case basis. Not a lot is going to change on Monday morning. There might be a reason for a couple more folks to come in and check something in the office. We are going to gradually and minimally open up our fitness center for those in uniform in very low number and extreme cleaning and distancing and because as we move forward, there are a significant number of personnel on this base and the surrounding bases, as I look at the risk and how to measure risk, I start to worry more about mental and physical health and is that a bigger concern for some portions of the population than corona virus and so for that reason we are going to start to open up some things like the gym and then we'll gradually, as we access, maybe open it up more and we'll take a look at that. The same thing is going go with various other activities around the base on a case by case basis. So let me uh, I know you've been following the situation very closely, Colonel Vaughn, let me get your kind of thoughts on where we're at.

**21st MDG Commander, Col. Christopher Vaughn:** Yeah, thanks sir. Exactly what the boss said you know, we are closely accessing what the Colorado states, safer at home protocols are going to involve and we're accessing and we're helping the instillation here and out at Schriever. What that's going to mean for the installation and what services can reopen and in what capacity just so that we can continue to start business. It is going to be in phases, we would expect that but as Colonel Falzarano said, come Monday, we don't anticipate a lot of change here locally but we're continuing to work with the county health department, the state health department and the other area installations as we're collectively accessing this because also people that work here live all over the place. We've folks who live down in Pueblo, people who live up in Woodland Park, folk who live all the way up in Denver and with COVID-19 the realities on te ground can be a little bit different based on where someone lives and so it's really kind of an A to Z comprehensive assessment as we continue to move forward but my bottom line is everyone's health and safety is the most important thing and we're going to work to manage risk and getting risk to absolute zero is probably not possible right now so it's just going to be a matter of determining what we can reasonably do that's also for people's overall wellness which could be the physical fitness and just overall mental wellbeing.

**21st Space Wing Commander, Col Thomas Falzarano:** Yeah. So I was traveling here in the car, I was listening to a press conference from Denver and they were talking about the that the Denver stay at home order is going to be in effect through the 9<sup>th</sup> of May. So we have people that are, that live in Denver right or that may want now that they think things are opening up may want to travel to Denver and so I just caution everyone that you know the entire area is under different postures everywhere and so for that reason that's precisely why we're going to go and take things very very slowly and by the way if we have a relapse then we have, then we know how to take things away very very slowly and my goal is to make sure that I don't cause or we don't cause a kind of a knee jerk reaction to everything...open the base, close the base, open the base because I know that's going to put more stress on people than anything else, the dramatic changes.

So I'm going to take a couple of questions at first here that are kind of related. Someone asked about the thrift store opening up and some other facilities and then they asked about the trusted traveler program and I put those all into the same category. We are...there are by the way the trusted traveler

program right now is not being used but you can still get someone on base. You through the VCC. We have low numbers, I tracked those numbers and so if you need to have access and there are a lot of valid reason for that you can still do that. The thrift store is one of the things we're looking at in addition to outdoor rec. there are a lot of outdoor rec activities like a single person on a bike renting a bike to ride around the base. That's perfectly safe. That's extreme distancing. SO we're looking at couple of those things. The aero club...things where people are doing things separate or there's not large groups of people and guidance will be coming out shortly on all those things as we gradually phase them in and as I said, to reiterate once again I don't want to be broken record but we are...we want to make sure that we put one toe in the water and test it out and my goal is to make sure too that one that all of you are healthy wherever you're at, if you're at Peterson or one of our other operating locations our mission partners are healthy. By the way we still have to make sure that we can support North Comm, Space Comm, Space Force and all of our mission partners, safely and then I want to make sure that the missions continue on right and so we don't want to jeopardize anything. You've all heard the stories of other pandemic and the second wave being worse and we're very cautious about that.

**21st MDG Commander, Col. Christopher Vaughn:** Alright, thanks sir. So I got a healthcare question here, which is "what is considered high risk? I keep hearing if we are high risk we are supposed to be staying at home. My husband got a letter in the mail from the Peterson clinic saying that he is high risk and he has no idea why he would be high risk as he doesn't have any long term medical issues." Now that's a great question. So this is what the CDC identifies as potential high risk individuals particularly in older adults, individuals who are 65 years or older and it could be someone that has asthma, or high blood pressure or chronic kidney disease, or severe obesity. Those kind of chronic conditions that in normal times would not necessarily be a higher risk category like it is right now and so if somebody received a letter like that from the medical facility it's probably because they have that kind of underlying chronic condition either currently or in the recent past, that should they contract COVID-19, it could create a higher level of complication with those factors all combined and that's the rationale behind that.

**21st Space Wing Commander, Col Thomas Falzarano:** and of course if you have any questions please call our clinic. That's what they're here for. They're focused on that and we're here to answer your questions. Absolutely our number one goal is to make that we do not put anyone else at risk. It's why we have our high risk hours at the commissary. We're here to make sure that you're safe. Let me...Im going to continue on take a couple questions at a time here. Someone said "hey I was over at the BX and saw someone without a mask on." If you see, and they point it out to the person and I think they didn't get the response they were looking for. You did the proper thing. I don't want to have any fights or fist fights break out in the commissary or the BX. If you know who the individual is and you want bring that up to the chain of command, that would be appropriate and we will take a look at that. My experience so far, I'm out every day, is that 99.9 percent of people have their mask on. It could be some people that have medical conditions where maybe that's not appropriate or maybe it fell off but I just ask you to be considerate and point that off and if you see chronic problem, the chain of command can help you deal with that because I'm happy to engage depending who it is if it's appropriate at my level.

A question from someone who lives off base, works off base, spouse works off base and now there's some different guidelines and maybe Chris, you can chime in too, there's some different guidelines. I just said Denver is still locked down until the 9<sup>th</sup> of May. Most of the state maybe is starting to lose a couple restrictions. The base sometime can have slightly different restrictions although I'll tell you, I talk to the mayor every Monday and all of the installation commanders of the five major installations inside

this city talk to the mayor every single Monday and we talk about what's going on to stay in sync. All of the installation commanders talk together multiple times a week to stay in sync but there are times with legitimate reasons why things are slightly different and so I just ask that when you're on Peterson that you follow those rules. We'll be understanding. We understand that sometimes the rules have changed and it takes a little while for people to catch up but continue to follow those rules. One of the areas though that this brings up too is when you're talking about work is child development centers and so we are trying to stay in sync on the child development centers. We are looking at that right now. Right now they're open for mission essential care but we know at some point there's going to be some loosening in those restrictions that will be appropriate as we start to bring people back into the work center that we're going to provide child care and the city is going to have to do that as well and so we are right now having that dialogue about how do we do that and how do we synchronize that so that all of you can go and have that service if it's appropriate to be at work and to be in a safe manner and so look for more guidance on that.

**21st MDG Commander, Col. Christopher Vaughn:** Absolutely and as Colonel Falzarano said you know the installation is absolutely understanding as protocols change and evolve, it's a process of mutual understanding and ongoing education when changes are made we work really hard to get the word out maybe before they come on the base and then they're unfortunately surprised where something has change. So this just going to be kind of how we handle this moving forward but absolutely I think just flexibility across the board is how all of this works and its absolutely appreciated.

**21st Space Wing Commander, Col Thomas Falzarano:** There's some question about the stay at home order and how that is going to impact some people. I've got some questions on people, you now, rightfully, and by the way I'm in the same boat with you're frustrated with telework and you don't interact with humans outside the home so when are going to loosen some of those restrictions? As I said we are loosening a couple of them next, in terms of the fitness center for a targeted population. Some of the activities at the aero club and few other activities on base but then for most people I would tell you that situations are going to look similar for a little longer. We're going to continue to emphasize telework. I'm going to encourage our commanders and mission partners to maximize telework. Doesn't mean a few more people can't come back in as appropriate but we're going to continue to do that and at the end of the day we are going to continue to support our mission and the missions of our mission partners right because that dictates largely what our posture has to be. We have.. I keep bringing up the Nurad North Comm mission, we have to support that. They're at the center of the fight and so what they say is mission is essential or they need is what we're going to support. The other thing I'll tell you why I'm not rushing to bring everyone back, besides the health concerns, is I fully understand that many of you have been locked in your house for a month and there could be things that you were prohibited from doing. Maybe you have leak in your roof. I hope you don't have a leak in your roof, but maybe you have a leak in your roof you need to fix or the irrigation system. There are things you have not been allowed to do because of the stay at home or and I want to make sure everyone has a sense of normalcy and return back to normal and get those things accomplished because until you get those things accomplished your mind is not going to be focused 100 percent on all the thing you got to do at work and so we need to make sure this is a balance and think we can it and balance that.

**21st MDG Commander, Col. Christopher Vaughn:** Absolutely and really again it gets the whole person concept evolves into the whole household right now with so many issues to continue to take care of and that s absolutely important. One of the other healthcare questions we got had to do with pediatrics and

immunizations and child well checks and so we are performing those but there are some age cutoffs right now and this is just one of those things that continues to be in a state of flux and evolution as we receive revised guidelines on pediatric well checks and immunizations for young children. So I just want to ask you to please just contact the medical group directly for the current status of pediatric well checks and immunizations because the age cutoffs are going to continue to keep changing as we receive the updated guidelines. So the best thing is to just continue to stay in touch with medical group and we'll let you know where we are with that.

**21st Space Wing Commander, Col Thomas Falzarano:** Back to my original comment about teleworking, still some questions about VPN capacity and communication. We have dramatically increased the number of VPN connections across the Air Force and the Department of Defense and we're continuing to improve those capabilities and I realize that for some the capabilities are still not great and so if you have problems I encourage you to call the Comm focal point at 554-2666 so that's 554-2666 and they'll be able to help you out and work on that with you. Do we have any more questions there? One more question on the medical center.

**21st MDG Commander, Col. Christopher Vaughn:** Yep. I've got one more here. It says "My PCS is still happening due to mission requirements. How do I in-process with the medical group when I arrive or how do I out-process if I'm PCSing?" So our Tricare office over at the medical group, it's in building 725. That's still open and it's still open Monday through Friday from 0730 to 1630 and again that building 725. You can just walk right in. We have a customer service desk that's open and we'll get you squared away whether you're in-processing or out-processing.

**21st Space Wing Commander, Col Thomas Falzarano:** Thanks Chris, appreciate that. So, just to you know let everyone know where we're at. I thought it was important that everyone you know, gets the message that come Monday morning there is no need for you to...and I know you're antsy and you want to get back and start doing the things you were doing before but there is no need for everyone to rush right back. We're going to do this in a deliberate fashion. We'll continue to provide guidance, activity by activity that gets opened up and as we dip our toes into the water and we see the water is fine then we'll dip the other toe in we'll continue to progress along. If we have a need to back out we can do that smartly. Every day on this base and I know all our bases are this way, 10 thousand people came through the gates of Peterson Air Force base and every base is like this right and every day at our gym 3 thousand people came through the gym to workout. That's fantastic how people are doing that. Those numbers are dramatically lower now. To give you an idea, the gym it was before we close it we were in the 2 to 3 hundred people range and now we're way...we're thousand below the 10 thousand range on base. So we have done the extreme physical distancing. I just ask that you continue to do that for a little bit longer and let us work through activity by activity. If you have suggestions or thoughts on something, if you think the safe (inaudible) or if you have an idea on how we can open up something or even if you have something you think we could had for services on base bring that forward. I was out the drive in Movie Theater on Wednesday and let me tell you it was absolutely packed, it was packed now in a safe manner. They were 10 feet apart. Cars were...but it was packed in terms of the car were as many cars as you can fit in the parking lot and so as I look at things, I tend to look at things in a glass half full manner and I was watching the drive in movie theater and I was thinking you know this is only something we would have done had we had the corona virus and it's a sad situation for a lot of families and I know it is but on the other side of it there's a lot of things that we're learning, a lot of things that we're going to take forward that are positive and that we're going to do and that's one of things we're going to

continue to do, incorporate that into how we connect to build a stronger culture together and that's, as we go forward, going to be at the forefront of our mind. So as always Colonel Vaughn and the rest of this team, I just want to let you know that I'm proud to continue to serve alongside each and every one of you and as we go forward with this and gradually come out of this posture we want to make sure and the entire teams wants to make sure that you, your entire family and the missions you support are built to last.