

Knights,

We've entered a new phase in the COVID-19 battle. A short time ago I notified your unit leadership of 2 positive COVID-19 test results from tests administered on Peterson AFB. Neither work in the 21 SW. Neither reside on base. Neither had children in one of our Child Development Centers. One is an active duty service member. Both individuals are quarantined and receiving support and medical care in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Force Health Protection and 21st Medical Group guidelines. Our Medical Warriors are conducting a thorough contact tracer to determine whether any other personnel may have been exposed. Those personnel will be contacted and given direction by their leadership. Depending on the results of that investigation, additional precautionary measures will be taken to minimize spread. There are no other confirmed cases on Peterson AFB or Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station. There are positive COVID-19 test results now at four of the five major Colorado Springs military installations. Cheyenne Mountain is the exception with zero cases. For our Knights at our GSUs, I know the COVID-19 situation varies widely across our 27 locations. I am tracking each location closely. Please continue to rely on your local commanders and unit leadership for the most up to date information.

I spent the today speaking with the Mayor, senior USSF and USAF leaders, the commanders of Schriever, USAFA and Fort Carson and your unit leadership to ensure we are properly safeguarding our mission, your health, and that of your family. Considering many factors, and in order to facilitate coordination with El Paso County in support of their proclamation of a local emergency, as well as civilian authorities, I am declaring a public health emergency in accordance with DoD Instruction (DoDI) 6200.03, "Public Health Emergency Management (PHEM) Within the DoD," and Air Force Instruction (AFI) 10-2519, "Public Health Emergencies and Incidents of Public Health Concern."

This declaration does not significantly change many of the protective measures already put in place. It does give me and public health personnel the ability to take further action to issue guidance that affects installation personnel and property, and other individuals working, residing, or visiting the installation (e.g., closing base facilities, restricting movement, or implementing quarantine or isolation for select individuals). I ask that everyone continue to adhere to public health direction and guidance.

Commanders have been given direction to limit in-office activities to those that are required for critical mission accomplishments. However, many of us have to be present on base. The Space Domain Awareness, Missile Warning, Missile Defense, and Electronic Warfare missions entrusted to the Knights must continue 24/7. We are critical to the successful operations of HQs USSF, USNORTHCOM, USSPACECOM, and countless other mission partners. Some like USNORTHCOM are at the center of the COVID-19 fight. In order to sustain this fight long term, I may ask some of our Airmen to augment mission essential personnel who are currently working round the clock. However, please don't get focused on the definition of mission essential. I'll explain why.

This is the direction I've given to commanders at all levels on what I consider mission essential. "...the mental health of our Airmen. I expect you to be engaged 24/7. Know the situation of your Airmen. Know who is under financial stress. Know who has young children. Know who is worried about high risk family members. Know who was previously on our high risk watch list and actively engage with them. Know who are the next Airmen you worry about. We have Airmen who will struggle over the next 2 weeks and beyond as they are further isolated. I ask you to get creative...any attempt at getting #ConnectedAF is going to be a positive step in the right direction."

Knights, when it comes to working through this crisis together and maintaining positive mental health, we are all mission essential. Please continue to look out for each other as we are tested in the days to come. As we do more testing in the days ahead I want you to understand that our positive test result numbers may increase. This is expected. We will address each case individually and promptly notify those we believe to be affected. These are tense times as many of us isolate ourselves and many are on the front lines battling COVID-19. I ask that if you have concerns or questions you please make your immediate supervisor and unit leadership aware. We will provide further guidance soon regarding additional restrictions of services and precautionary measures.

Prouder than ever to serve alongside you!

V/r,
Falz