



1. PURPOSE: To provide consistent messaging and define lanes of responsibility for media response.

2. PA POSTURE: Active with a caveat. You may actively communicate force health protection measures that are in-line with HHS, CDC and DHA guidance, but **must coordinate** any responses to query or public notifications beyond the answers to the information in this PA Guidance with command JA, MAJCOMs and/or SAF/PA **prior to use**.

SAF/PA will respond to AF-level queries on the policy.

MAJCOM and installation-level units will:

- a. Be active in response to health protection efforts that are in-line with HHS, CDC and DHA guidance.
- b. Respond to query related to specific numbers of affected personnel
- c. Use the talking points and questions and answers within this public affairs guidance to answer questions within their areas of responsibilities.
- d. **Coordinate positive test releases with command-level JA prior to sending to SAF/PA, in order to balance the individual's right to privacy with public health interest.**
- e. **Ensure any notification of a positive test mirrors local civic leader guidance for identifying residence locations, ie using county versus city.**
- f. Refer all media queries outside the scope of this public affairs guidance to SAF/PAO.

Push to MAJCOM/PA and SAF/PA for notification prior to release of information related to the following **(YOU ARE ALLOWED TO RELEASE, after notifications have been made):**

- a. Commanders declaring a public health emergency
- b. Elevating HPCON level

Push to MAJCOM/PA and SAF/PA for notification prior to release of information related to the following **(YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO RELEASE, until you have heard from SAF/PA):**

- a. **Cancellation of MAJCOM level exercises (i.e. Red Flag, Combat Archer, etc.)**
- b. Restricting travel of military and family members beyond DOD/Air Force guidance
- c. Notifications of base populace who may test positive for COVID-19
- d. **Deaths of any personnel related to COVID-19, to include: servicemembers, families, civilian employees and contractors. ***OSD and Department of the Air Force will be responsible for these releases*****

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION: On Jan. 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a public health emergency of international concern for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). On Jan. 31, 2020, the Secretary of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency in the United States and announced new measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The current epidemic, which originated in mainland China, has demonstrated the capacity of the COVID-19 to spread globally. While



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supporting other government agencies' response to the COVID-19 threat, the Department of the Air Force is responding appropriately to protect the health of the force and maintain operational readiness.

4. STATEMENT FOR RELEASE: Adjust as needed for local situation.

“There are (#) of confirmed cases of COVID-19 on (installation). (Installation) leadership is continually monitoring the situation and working closely with the (insert state) Department of Health to coordinate prevention and response efforts in the local area. We are providing installation personnel and their families with up-to-date information on appropriate measures to prevent potential spread of the virus, as well as any impact to local activities.”

5. TALKING POINTS:

- Force health protection is our top priority, and we will continue to ensure that Department of the Air Force personnel have the most up-to-date information on appropriate measures to prevent potential spread of the virus.
- The Air Force is committed to preserving the ability of our servicemen and women to provide for national defense and current worldwide military missions.
- Air Force commands outside the United States have unique geographic constraints and operational considerations for force health protection. Commanders of individually affected geographic commands will be issuing specific guidance to their forces.
- We follow risk-based measures consistent with guidance from the Department of Defense and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including applicable travel advisories and disease-mitigation actions.
- We are taking proactive steps to encourage all Department of Air Force personnel to follow Force Health Protection and CDC guidance to avoid contracting or spreading respiratory illnesses like the flu or COVID-19. We have contingency plans in place and are taking steps to educate and safeguard our military and civilian personnel, family members and base communities in preventing wide spread outbreak.
- We continue to work closely with our interagency partners to strengthen global detection and response to COVID-19. Air Force health care and research professionals are adequately equipped with first-rate training, equipment and technology. The Air Force has cutting edge researchers and highly educated scientists who continually train and prepare to deal with emergent health issues.

PCS guidance to or from Level 3 countries:

- **Airmen currently assigned to a CONUS base with a projected PCS to one of the Level 3 countries, and Airmen who have out-processed, but not departed the local area for one of the Level 3 countries, will remain in place until Stop Movement is terminated.**

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- Airmen currently assigned to an overseas base in a Level 3 country with a projected PCS and March 2020 Date Estimated Return from Overseas who have not departed will remain in place until Stop Movement is terminated.
- Airmen who are PCSing to or from an installation in a Level 3 country, have departed their last duty installation and are enroute to their gaining base, must contact their losing chain of command and MPF/FSS by whatever means available. Airmen will not proceed until Stop Movement is lifted. Airmen who do not desire to take leave enroute will receive further instructions. Airmen are authorized to be placed in a TDY hold status by their losing FSS/MPF, instructions to amend PCS orders will be provided after Stop Movement is terminated. Airmen placed on TDY hold are not entitled to a rental vehicle, but are authorized TDY per diem.

TDY or Leave to or from Level 3 countries:

- Airmen projected TDY to a Stop Movement location will not proceed on TDY. Airmen enroute, or currently at, a TDY location impacted by Stop Movement will remain in-place until further guidance or Stop Movement is terminated. Airmen currently on leave in an impacted Stop Movement country are encouraged to contact their chain of command and MPF/FSS; their chain of command must be in contact with these members to provide further guidance. Leave dates will be adjusted accordingly upon the member returning to home station.

Wing Commanders (Engagement with local & state political officials)

- We are doing everything we can to help minimize the spread of COVID-19. Department of Air Force personnel and their families, live, work and attend school in this community and we are committed to doing our part to limit the spread of this virus.
- We are following risk-based measures consistent with guidance from the Department of Defense and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, such as considering travel advisories, and encouraging base personnel to follow Force Health Protection guidelines.
- We are working closely with our state and regional/local health officials to ensure our detection and response efforts are coordinated.
- *Regarding the acceptance of Princess Cruise Passengers:* We are taking every precaution to ensure proper isolation occurs while maintaining community protection measures.

6. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

Q. How many people are being monitored Department of Air Force wide (or at XXX installation)?

A. The number of personnel being screened for COVID-19 is managed by medical personnel, and individual statuses change daily.

Q. What are we doing about personnel who are at risk?

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A. Personnel who are at elevated risk of getting COVID-19 due to possible contact with an individual confirmed to have COVID-19, and/or individuals with symptoms and possible travel history to an area of elevated risk, are being screened for the disease.

Q. What are Air Force medical facilities doing to educate, prevent, screen and manage efforts?

A. Air Force medical facilities are protecting the force in accordance with OSD Force Health Protection Guidance.

- Air Force medical facilities are mitigating the spread of the virus by ensuring accountability of all service members who have returned from mainland China and placing those service members under a 14-day restriction of movement.
- The Air Force is preparing by publishing screening and event-management guidance, training staff in CDC processes and ensuring medical personnel rehearse event-management processes.
- Air Force medical staff help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 by using personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as developing health-surveillance protocols, PPE requirements and tracing processes in coordination with state and local public health organizations.
- Air Force medical facilities will respond to the COVID-19 threat by identification, monitoring and management of possible cases and positive tests for the virus, protecting staff and beneficiaries within hospitals and the local community.
- Air Force medical facilities will educate and reassure beneficiaries by providing information directly and in concert with installation leadership and state and local public health organizations.

Q. What are Air Force medical facilities doing if someone tests positive for COVID-19?

A. The safety and health of our Airmen and Space professionals is paramount to mission readiness. In the event that an Air Force member or dependent tests positive for COVID-19, each medical facility has plans in place for treatment, and will take appropriate measures to mitigate the spread of the virus. The patient will be isolated appropriately in a private room with a door and its own bathroom, if available. The appropriate Personal Protection Equipment will be available to the patient and the staff consistent with CDC guidelines. Actions to protect patients and staff include education and future contact tracing if required. Air Force officials at all levels are working closely with the local/regional health departments and the CDC to validate our preparedness for public health emergencies.

Q. What about military members and units either deploying to regions affected by the virus or returning from regions where the virus is present?

A. Senior leaders in each region evaluate the potential safety for travel and military operations by Airmen and Space professionals. As a matter of precaution, members returning from overseas duties from affected regions are being monitored before they leave the region, during their travel back, and upon arrival at their destination. Airmen and Space professionals deployed to affected regions are complying with commanders' directives regarding travel and military duties associated with current operations.

Q. Is the Air Force going to cancel or delay any TDY missions, leaves or PCS moves?

A. **We are complying with any DOD travel restrictions and clearance processes. Currently, personnel are restricted from traveling to, from or through Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designated**

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Level 3 COVID-19 locations for the next 60 days. These restrictions apply to all forms of official travel such as PCS, TDY and government-funded leave for uniformed and civilian personnel and includes personal leave and other non-official travel for uniformed personnel. Level 3 locations *currently* include most of Europe, South Korea, China, and Iran. However these are subject to change as determined by the CDC.

Q. How is the Air Force screening people at Basic Military Training?

A. The safety and security of all of our recruits is of the utmost importance to us and we are taking steps to ensure their safety and well-being. All members entering basic military training are required to process military entrance processing stations on the day of or the day before departing for basic military training. Members at MEPS have virus protocol procedures to observe and take temperatures of all individuals entering MEPS facilities. Air Force recruiters also complete a medical pre-screen on all applicants that covers all medical concerns, to include COVID-19. We continue to encourage all members and their families to follow CDC guidance for COVID-19.

Q. Will there be any daycare, school or commissary facilities closed as the virus spreads?

A. Confirm any known closures. Commanders of individually affected geographic combatant commands are issuing specific guidance to their forces, to educate and safeguard military and civilian personnel, family members and bases communities in preventing wide-spread outbreak. The CDC has issued a Level 3 Travel Health Alert for Italy and South Korea, recommending travelers avoid all non-essential travel. The closing of CDCs in those areas are in-line with what local health officials are recommending, as well as the authorities given in Force Health Protection Guidance Supplement 2 dated 25 February 2019, and DODI 6200.03 “Public Health Emergency Management Within DoD” in order to prevent the spread of the COVID-19.

Q. What precautions should I be taking?

A. All Air Force personnel are encouraged to follow the guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The risk of contracting the new coronavirus virus is low, but CDC officials do recommend getting an influenza vaccine and taking everyday preventive actions to help preclude the spread of germs. We encourage all Air Force personnel and their families to continue to practice proper hygiene as the best way to prevent the spread of viruses. This includes washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Also, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands and avoid close contact with those who are sick. Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces should also be done.

Q. What should I do if I think I have coronavirus?

A. According to the CDC, anyone contracting a respiratory illness shouldn't assume it is novel coronavirus; it is far more likely to be a more common malady, such as seasonal influenza or the common cold. However, patients who traveled to China, or another area where COVID-19 has been identified as having community transmission, in the past 14 days and currently have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, should immediately seek medical care and notify their medical provider of their travel history. If possible, call the medical facility before arrival so the staff can take appropriate precautions. Military medical facilities have provided guidance on how to address such circumstances.



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People who think they may have been exposed to the virus should contact their healthcare provider immediately.

Q. Who is making the decision to initiate Force Health Protection (FHP) actions?

A. USNORTHCOM provides guidelines to the Military Departments and other DoD Agencies in the Continental United States. The Military Departments provide additional guidance to their installations. The local commanders make appropriate FHP decisions regarding their installations.

Q. What are Force Health Protection Conditions (HPCON)?

A. Much like the guidance that CDC provides to the public, the Department of Defense provides similar guidance to military commanders. The primary difference is that the DoD guidance is designed to ensure the Department of Defense can continue to perform its mission. Installation commanders use the HPCON framework to select an appropriate response to a public health emergency or incident of public health concern. The framework clarifies uncertainty associated with these situations and provides options based on the scope and severity of the situation.

Q. What are the different HPCONS?

A. The following is a brief description of each HPCON level.

- HPCON 0 – Normal Operations. No known health risks, other than diseases endemic to the area surrounding the installation.
- HPCON A – Limited Disease Threat. There is a limited threat to personnel based on the existence of a disease or unusual human health threat that has the potential to rapidly move into the local area (i.e., an area defined by each installation as consisting of a predetermined distance or a list/map depicting by-name counties surrounding the installation).
- HPCON B – Moderate Disease Threat. There is a moderate disease threat and/or a real risk of exposure to personnel due to a significant outbreak of disease in the local area or imminent spread of disease to the local area. HPCON B would be employed by the commander if notified by the PHEO that there has been an initial case identification of a contagious disease, such as a novel influenza, or a dramatic increase in the risk of acquiring a new significant disease from the environment within the local area.
- HPCON C – Substantial Disease Threat. There is a substantial threat of disease for personnel due to a local epidemic outbreak of a disease with a high morbidity rate, imminent spread of such a disease to the local area, and/or a wide area of contamination that requires special or costly avoidance procedures.
- HPCON D – Severe Disease Threat. A local epidemic with a high mortality rate or imminent spread of such a disease to the local area will drive enactment of HPCON D.

7. LINKS:

- Air Force - <https://www.af.mil/News/Coronavirus-Disease-2019/>
- DOD – <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Spotlight/Coronavirus/>
- DOS – <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/novel-coronavirus-hubei-province--china.html>
- CDC – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

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- DHS – <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2020/02/02/dhs-issues-supplemental-instructions-inbound-flights-individuals-who-have-been-china>
- MHS – <https://health.mil/News/In-the-Spotlight/Coronavirus>

8. POINTS OF CONTACT: Maj Lindy Singleton and Ms. Lynn Kirby, SAF/PAO, at 703-695-0640 (DSN 225).

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