



20 March 2020

Marines, Sailors, Civilians and families of I Marine Expeditionary Force,

The news this week has been unsettling and confusing for many as we all plan for, manage and minimize the threat of spreading Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The health and wellness of the I MEF team is my top priority. We are taking this threat very seriously and are working with the leadership of Marine Corps Installations West to implement necessary conditions to protect the I MEF family.

My intent is to maintain and continue to generate the combat power and deployability of I MEF in support of national security. To do so, we must keep the entire team healthy - those in uniform and out of uniform. We must isolate and mitigate potential impacts to our force and also to the local community. As all of you know better than most, a Marine/Sailor can't be distracted by situations on the homefront or be untrained when in responding to crisis or in combat. COVID-19 can't be a distraction, nor preclude training and readiness.

The first step to preserve and protect the entire team is by taking necessary precautionary measures to decrease exposure and proactively seek examination by medical authorities if flu-like symptoms exist. To isolate exposure requires a whole team effort beginning with individual accountability and reinforcing leadership at the lowest level. I need everyone to comply with the recommended CDC guidelines such as executing more effective hygiene practices and cleaning contact surfaces in workplaces and at home with appropriate disinfectants. We will comply with guidelines of reduced personal contact, social distancing, and limiting group sizes and activities to mission essential tasks.

In following the restrictions of travel for Department of Defense personnel, normal leave and liberty must be curtailed to the local area. We are also adhering to the restrictions enacted by the Governor of California regarding stay at home/shelter in place. Both of these measures are intended to reduce exposure to others who are infected and to ensure that particularly susceptible people, such as the elderly and immune deficient members of the community, are protected.

If you are exhibiting symptoms such as a fever, cough or shortness of breath, call your unit medical representative. They will give you instructions on how to get care without potentially exposing other people to the illness. In the event of positive COVID-19 test results, appropriate measures will be enacted to protect the public, treat the patient, and prevent the spread of the infection. If you are seeking medical advice, you can continue to use the Tricare Nurse Advice Line at (800) 874-2273.

To ensure the most up-to-date, accurate information is received in a timely manner, I strongly encourage everyone to stay connected with their leadership and continue to use the already approved and established sources of command information. For information pertinent to I MEF personnel, continue to use I MEF social media: <https://www.facebook.com/1stMEF/>. For information and updates about installation Health Protection Condition (HPCON) levels and gate closures go to: <https://www.pendleton.marines.mil/Unit-Home/COVID-19/>.

On behalf of SgtMaj Porterfield, CMDCM Roberts and I, we thank you for your support, hard work and dedication to ensuring we remain ready when called upon by our nation. Throughout history, I MEF has answered the call when our nation needed us -- now is no different. I require all personnel within I MEF to take ownership of our readiness to preserve and protect the force. We need to be the most ready, when our nation calls.

Semper Fidelis,



J. L. OSTERMAN

Lieutenant General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commanding General
I Marine Expeditionary Force