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Alaska National Guard responds to COVID-19 threat

Spc. Grace Nechanicky
Alaska National Guard

The Alaska National Guard Joint Task Force-Logistics team is supporting three missions for the State Emergency Operations Center during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The team is in charge of sourcing and disseminating equipment and people internally to support entities within the Alaska National Guard, and externally to support community organizations that have asked for help.

The logistics team includes 31 people who were put on state active duty orders to assist with COVID-19 response efforts.

“What I do is look at the personnel we have to work with and try to maximize the efficiency of those individuals,” said Lt. Col. Richard Mohammadi, commander of the JTF-Logistics team.

One team is supporting the Food Bank of Alaska by providing traffic control to ensure efficient food distribution at a site in East Anchorage. Another team is screening people at entry control points at the Alaska National Guard armory to ensure health mandates are followed. A third team will support harbor operations in Kodiak beginning May 1.

“The food bank piece is going very well,” said Mohammadi. “We’ve got 20 people in support of that operation, and when they’re not working out



Alaska National Guard Soldiers Spc. Fred Ulroan and Pfc. Duane Chavis unload pallets of COVID-19 supplies and personal protective equipment from the national stockpile at a warehouse in Anchorage in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services, Apr. 2, 2020. The Soldiers are on state active duty orders for the National's Guard's Quick Response Force assigned to the COVID-19 effort. (Photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount)

there, we have them working with other tasks to maximize their time.”

Sgt. Anthony Pillittier, senior enlisted leader for the JTF-Logistics team, said they are “tracking vehicles with the Army Guard and Air Guard that are all mission-capable and can be used in quick time if need be.”

JTF-Logistics also trans-

ferred people to the public affairs team to ensure effective internal and external communications.

The task force has fulfilled four requests for assistance from the State Emergency Operations Center, including taking inventory, organizing and distributing supplies for the Department of Health and Social Services warehouse

in Anchorage, providing cots to two communities for alternate homeless shelter sites, and helping ensure arriving airport passengers sign the governor’s declaration to self-quarantine.

“From the very beginning, we started looking into ‘what ifs’ and possibilities, and just making sure that we had our bases covered that way,” said

Pillittier.

“This is a historic occasion, and I’ve got a great staff that works well and is able to respond and be flexible with the needs of the day,” said Mohammadi. “Overall, I think we are well-prepared, and as things come up, we will continue to handle them as efficiently as we have been so far.”

AutoBears Assemble: Continuing the mission amid Covid-19 conditions

2nd Lt. Casey Walker, Delta Company, 70th Brigade Engineer Battalion

Since the introduction of the Covid-19 virus to the United States, Delta Company of the 70th Brigade Engineer Battalion has been preparing for its impact on operations in Fort Wainwright. A month into its effects, we are continuing to get after our missions, even if we have to do so differently than before.

In the interest of mitigating the risk of contracting the virus among Soldiers, leaders have been continuously enforcing safety standards.

In places where it’s possible, Soldiers maintain a six foot bubble of separation. When social distancing is not possible, they don facemasks or gaiters in order to continue operations even at close quarters. The company has provided hand sanitizer throughout its offices, and every level of

See BEARS on page 2

Pvt. Blevins demonstrating what six feet of distance looks like. (Courtesy photo)



A Marine’s final timeline

Lt. Col. Victoria Ragan
Medical Department
Activity – Alaska

Lt. Col. Victoria Ragan is the Deputy Chief of Nursing at Bassett Army Community Hospital, Fort Wainwright, Alaska. During her 19 years serving in the Army Nurse Corps she has deployed three times, and she wrote this during her last deployment to Afghanistan, shortly after the events described here occurred. In the interest of protecting the Marine’s privacy she did not include his name when she wrote this, and now his name is forgotten to her except for his rank and the first initial of his last name. This story refers to the Marine as Lance Cpl. D, and is a true telling of a typical day for (then) Maj. Victoria Ragan while she was in the 10th Combat Support Hospital and attached to the United Kingdom Bastion Hospital, at Camp

Bastion, Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Close to the Veterans Day holiday, Ragan shares this true life accounting and honors the debt of gratitude we owe those we lost, while not knowing their names.

Time is one of the few things that means anything when a Soldier is deployed. How much time until dinner, how much time until the next shift, and most importantly, how much time until you get to go home. So when someone gives you their time on deployment; it means something significant.

Lance Cpl. D was significant. He was significant enough that over 1,000 service members gave up their coveted Saturday night time for relaxation and sleep to salute his flag draped coffin onto a C-130.

The following is what I believe to be Lance Cpl. D’s extraordinary last timeline:

See MARINE on page 3

WEEKEND WEATHER

Friday



Mostly sunny. High: 68F.

Saturday



Partly sunny. High: 72F.

Sunday



Mostly sunny. High: 77F.

IN BRIEF

For most, going to college and getting through a heavy course load is enough to balance, but not for Army ROTC Cadet William Collins. Read more on page 6.

History Snapshot: May is Historic Preservation Month – The Quonset Hut, 1944



The U.S. Navy first commissioned the Quonset hut in 1941 when it needed an easily shippable, multi-use structure that could provide durable shelter in a variety of climates. Based on the British Nissan hut, the Quonset hut came in a variety of prefabricated sizes and could be assembled with no specialized training or tools on virtually any level surface, including the bare ground. Quonset huts were also easy to move once assembled and could be readily hoisted onto trucks, or even carried in one piece by a troop of strong Soldiers. At Ladd Field, hundreds of Quonset huts were hastily put up to accommodate the arrival of new Soldiers after the onset of World War II. Quonset huts were also used extensively in the Aleutian Islands. After World War II, unneeded huts were sold to the public and repurposed into schools, offices, businesses, garages and even private homes. (Photo courtesy of Harold Wright and the 46th 72nd)

Chaplain Corps embraces virtual world to provide services, support

Sean Kimmons
Army News Service

With chapels closed and a ban on large gatherings, the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps has responded in creative and proactive ways to still engage with followers, its chief said Tuesday.

Facing physical distance challenges, chaplains and religious affairs Soldiers have turned to social media platforms and online video conferencing sites, allowing many of them to reach more people than before the coronavirus hit.

“Our people are watching you as you bring ministry and care to them in large numbers,” Maj. Gen. Thomas Solhjem, the chief of chaplains, said during a virtual Chaplain Corps town hall from the Pentagon.

On top of lives-treamed worship services, chaplains have organized virtual potlucks and games among community members, with at least one chapel creating a “Bible Madness” bracket after college basketball canceled its March Madness tournament.

Further, Soldiers in the Chaplain Corps have conducted virtual religious education opportunities, drive-in services, as well as drive-thru confessions and communions.

“We are in a unique time,” said Sgt. Maj.

Ralph Martinez, the corps’ senior enlisted leader. “And as we deal with the challenges of this COVID-19 pandemic, I have witnessed unit ministry teams all across the world leveraging creative and innovative approaches.”

Through virtual settings, the diversity of faith found across the Army was also recently on show.

Last month, Army chaplains virtually celebrated the Buddha’s birthday, the Jewish Passover, and multiple events during Christian Holy Week, all in the same week. And currently, they are supporting the Muslim holiday of Ramadan, Solhjem said.

“Where else but in the Chaplain Corps can we celebrate such unique diversity as seen in that same virtual lens, in a way that probably we would not have seen in isolation of one another,” he said.

Groundhog Day

After weeks of isolation and physical distancing measures, the general said it’s now even more important for Soldiers to stay socially and spiritually connected.

During this time of uncertainty, the general said Soldiers should remain flexible as the Army, and the entire world, adapts to a new

normal.

“Please encourage and care for one another,” he said. “And seek encouragement and care for yourself, as we all work through these feelings of disruption and insecurity.”

He likened the present situation to the 1993 film, Groundhog Day, which has Bill Murray’s character reliving the same day over and over. And for many under stay-at-home orders, there seems to be a similar effect on each passing day.

Initially in the film, he said, the main character is depressed since he cannot control the situation. After realizing he can control the way he responds to it, his mood lightens up and he begins to help people.

“As we’re experiencing this together,” Solhjem said, “it’s very important to look around and take inventory of your environment and say to yourself, ‘how can I make things better, how can I improve?’”

Some good can always come out of a bad circumstance, he said, adding that Soldiers should take this time to show compassion to those who may be struggling or less fortunate.

“No matter how difficult I feel the struggle is for me, there are others who have it worse,” he said.

Organizational change

Even when the safety measures are lifted, the lessons learned during the pandemic may permanently change how the Chaplain Corps operates.

“It will not be going back to what it was before,” Solhjem said. “As we move forward, it’s not like throwing [on] a light switch.”

The effective communication methods being used virtually today will be a mainstay in the future, he said, likely forcing the corps to improve the quality of its services for both live and virtual gatherings.

“Having seen the Chaplain Corps’ response in this current environment, I’m confident as we move forward that same creative, innovative spirit is going to move us into our new normal,” he said.

The Army’s top chaplain said the corps is not rebuilding, but refining the skills it has previously used, such as virtual counseling sessions and other online services.

That refinement also includes a trans-

formation plan that was ongoing before the pandemic to enhance religious support capabilities.

In it, the corps is tightening up the staff at the Pentagon while empowering a new Religious Support Operations Center at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, the main training post for corps Soldiers.

The corps is also continuing its plans to establish a field operating agency.

“We must all continue to ask ourselves how we will improve and what we will do for the Army in the future,” he said to chaplains and religious support Soldiers.

Suicide prevention

The Army’s chief of staff has also recently established a new senior leader working group for suicide prevention, in which the Chaplain Corps will play a vital role, Solhjem said.

In support of those efforts, the corps received several submissions for the new name of its own suicide prevention campaign plan.

Those submissions will be cut down to about 10 and then voted on by senior leaders very soon, he said.

As they did before, chaplains and religious support Soldiers will be heavily involved in helping curb suicide, which the general said mainly stems from breakdowns in relationships.

“The Chaplain Corps leads the way in providing the means to build healthy and strong relationships and we’ll continue to do that and support our Army,” he said.

He also reminded his online audience of the National Day of Prayer this Thursday. With its roots dating back to 1775, the day is an observance for people to turn to God in prayer and meditation.

While public events are typically held on this day, Solhjem said it can still be celebrated alone.

“Wherever we are, we can pray,” he said. “That is something that doesn’t require an audience. It is something that is very intimate and special between us and our God.”

BEARS

Continued from page 1

leadership stresses the importance of proper hand washing technique.

Additionally, Delta Company is educating its soldiers on past epidemics to allow them to make more informed decisions during Covid-19 conditions and afterwards.

For example, leaders are using the Spanish Flu of 1918 as a case study to show how viruses can mutate, which results in multiple

“waves” of outbreaks. These waves can extend beyond the first quarantine period, and therefore, we are warning our Soldiers to maintain good hand-washing practices even after the virus subsides.

The safety of Soldiers is always paramount, and for this reason, Delta Company will continue to give its Soldiers the tools they need to stay healthy in these uncertain times.

ALASKA POST

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Online Relationship Success Series

Fort Wainwright Family Advocacy Program

Victim advocates of the Family Advocacy Program on Fort Wainwright will be presenting an online Relationship Success Series comprised of three topics; Healthy Relationships, Conflict and Anger and Healthy breakups.

Videos will be posted on the Army Community Service Facebook page every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday starting May 12 thru June 4. Each of the three topics will be broken out into four separate micro-sessions, each lasting five to 15 minutes.

The first in the series, Healthy Re-



lationships, begins at noon, on Tuesday, May 12, and for the next four Tuesdays.

Conflict and Anger series begins Wednesday, May 13, and Healthy Break-

ups will begin on Thursday, May 14. The series will be posted on the Fort

Wainwright Army Community Service – ACS Facebook page. “Social distanc-

ing does not have to mean social isolation,” said Andrea Del Fierro, victim advocate with the Family Advocacy Program. “Our goal is to utilize social media to continue to support, encourage and educate those within our community.”

ACS and the Family Advocacy Program are asking those who are interested in watching the series to leave comments and provide feedback as the series develops.

For more information on the series, its content and scheduled postings, message ACS Facebook or call (907) 799-9770.

MARINE: Final timeline

Continued from page 1

Zero hour: Lance Cpl. D stepped on a landmine. If my calculations are correct, it was sometime after lunch on a pretty sunny day in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, and forever his life, what very little remained of it, changed. Not only did his life change, but the life of his child, of whom he had their baby feet tattooed on his side, and the lives of his mother, father, wife and buddies were changed.

Two minutes after injury: Lance Cpl. D may have been conscious, and if his training held out, he was probably trying to figure out where his tourniquet was so he could apply “self-aid” to himself. I seriously doubt he managed to think about reaching for a tourniquet. His wounds were extraordinary, and he was rapidly losing blood. The Lance Cpl. who had been walking beside him when the landmine went off was also injured. His right eye was seriously wounded, and he had burn and shrapnel wounds to his face.

10 minutes after injury: The corps-

man (best described as a Navy combat medic) in his unit at this point had likely gotten at least one tourniquet on each of his three amputated extremities. He’d be working on putting two tourniquets on each amputation site, but since most corpsmen don’t carry six tourniquets, I suspect his squad buddies were helping to apply their own tourniquets as well. Mind you all of this was going on in a mine field and fellow unit members were moving around quickly to help out Lance Cpl. D while others were taking care of the U.S. Marine who had been beside him when the landmine exploded, and someone else was calling in for a Category A Medevac, the most urgent of medical evacuation requests.

20 to 30 minutes after point of injury: A Medical Emergency Response Team helicopter arrived with a crew of British surgeons, nurses and medics on board. They quickly loaded Lance Cpl. D and his buddy onto the CH-47 Chinook and away from the point of injury. Reports stated

that MERT started chest compressions before they left the ground indicating, for all intent and purposes, that Lance Cpl. D was dead. MERT however used 100 percent of their blood products and performed CPR on him for their entire flight to Bastion Hospital in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. MERT has a 100 percent survival rate because they do not pronounce a casualty dead on their helicopter. Instead they will pronounce death at the scene of injury, but once a Soldier or Marine makes it on the MERT, he or she gets a shot of at least getting to the hospital operating room, even if that means they arrive in full cardiac arrest, and are receiving chest compressions.

50 to 60 minutes after injury: Lance Cpl. D arrived by MERT to Bastion Hospital. A couple of my nurses from the British army were returning from lunch when they saw him being carried off of the MERT toward the waiting ambulance for transport to the hospital. Not knowing who it was, they

thought he might have been a child, because the body looked so short on the stretcher.

70 minutes after injury: Lance Cpl. D was rolled thru the trauma bay, and was immediately deemed so critical that he made a “left turn.” Skipping the trauma bay is called taking a left turn because they run past everything and take the first left into the operating theatre. I don’t know the exact time of death of Lance Cpl. D. I do know his buddy who was beside him when he was injured kept asking everyone how he was doing. His buddy had to keep asking what was going on because his entire face was covered with dressings, and he couldn’t see a thing. At some point, a medic told the buddy that Lance Cpl. D was okay, but then the medic was pulled aside and told to never tell a patient such a falsehood. The medic was advised to say “I don’t know, I’m just in charge of taking care of you” next time. I guess in instances such as these, certain “white lies” are understandable.

10 hours after the Injury: At some point, the word went out that the U.S. Marine Corps had lost one of their own. About 1,000 service members put down whatever they were doing and gathered at a dark runway at the end of Camp Leatherneck, Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Despite such a large number, not a single person made a sound other than an occasional snuffle. The ceremony was brief. Lance Cpl. D’s buddies got a chance to go onto the C-130 to say goodbye, and then we were all dismissed. All 1,000 of us walked in silence back to our vehicles to start our way back to our tents. My friend Jody didn’t attend the ceremony. She worked in the ER, and started crying as soon as she left work because she had seen Lance Cpl. D when he rolled in.

She described to me his injuries, I won’t repeat them here, and she took care of his blind buddy. She talked about how awful it was that his buddy couldn’t see anything and how little regard he had for his own devastating injuries.

What I saw out there amazes me. I saw hard core professional Soldiers vomit when they saw their buddies on life support. I saw Marines, coming out of anesthesia try to crawl out of bed because they left their buddies “out there”. I heard of blinded Marines more worried about their buddy than whether or not the doctors could save their eye sight.

I guess in the grand scheme of things, if I had to spend twelve months of my life there, I will not complain because at least I made it home.



Lt. Col. Victoria Ragan, then Maj. Ragan, is shown while she was in the 10th Combat Support Hospital and attached to the United Kingdom Bastion Hospital, at Camp Bastion, Helmand Province Afghanistan in 2012. Ragan recounts a typical day at the hospital by remembering a Marine, Lance. Cpl. D who lost his life in battle. (Courtesy photo)

Hearing loss? Contact an audiologist

Staff Report

May is National Better Hearing Month and the American Academy of Audiology is encouraging the public to contact an audiologist if they suspect hearing loss for themselves or any of their loved ones. Fort Wainwright Hearing Program/Audiology is seeing patients via phone consultations and will begin scheduling face-to-face appointments when possible. The Audiology Clinic is a referral clinic, so one would need a referral from a physician. It is important to make an appointment now and not procrastinate.

Hearing loss alone causes many to feel isolated, lonely and can lead to depression.

According to a 2016 study by the National Institutes of Health NIDCD, approximately 15 percent (37.5 million) of American adults aged 20 to 69, have some trouble with hearing and approximately 28.8 million could benefit from the use of hearing aids. As the baby boomer population ages, more Americans are forced to face hearing health challenges. Untreated hearing loss may lead to falls and/or dementia.

While age is still the greatest factor in hearing loss, many younger people also experience hearing problems due to exposure to loud music and noise—including occupational noise. Individuals, who work in construction, land-

scape, airport runway jobs, law enforcement and other occupations where there is noise exposure, often experience some degree of hearing loss.

Hearing aids are not always the recommended solution, which is why it is important to consult an audiologist who can further determine the appropriate treatment. Sometimes the cause is temporary or a symptom of another illness or disease.

Signs of hearing loss may include:

- Suddenly turning up the volume on the television, radio or computer and having others complain that the volume is too loud.
- Difficulty understanding people speaking to you

and asking them to repeat themselves.

- Sudden inability to hear the doorbell, the dog barking and other household sounds.
- People telling you that you speak too loudly.
- Ringing in the ears.

School-aged children with hearing loss will sometimes exhibit poor school performance because they cannot understand teacher assignments or classroom interactions. If hearing loss has been present from a young age, they often do not recognize the loss and cannot identify the problem. Having children home during the pandemic has been an opportunity for parents to observe their

children throughout the day to determine any hearing difficulties.

"Hearing loss is a problem in people of all ages," said Maj. Virginia Bailey, U.S. Army Alaska Hearing Program manager/audiologist at Bassett Army Community Hospital, Department of Public Health. "If you or your family members experience difficulty in hearing, you should contact an audiologist."

For more information on the Army Hearing Program, please email virginia.b.bailey3.mil@mail.mil. To make an Audiology appointment, call (907)361-5212. For more information on the American Academy of Audiology, visit www.audiology.org.

Army finalizing plan to resume collective training

Sean Kimmons
Army News Service

The Army aims to soon resume collective training and hold a ceremony for graduating West Point cadets, after the recent success of measures safeguarding new recruits at training centers.

In a Pentagon briefing Thursday, Army Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy said a proposed risk mitigation framework that outlines a safe return to exercises is being finalized, with the help of the defense secretary and other services.

"As we balance global operations and combating COVID-19 on the homefront, the Army continues to need a manned, ready force," he said. "We will continue to take the necessary precautions to protect the force and we will enable commanders [with] the flexibility to make conditions-based decisions."

Thousands of new recruits have moved through initial military training sites in the past few months, he said, while at the same time the Army has been protecting them against the virus.

Once recruits arrive, they are placed in groups, screened and tested for the virus, as controlled monitoring and tactical dispersion measures continue during their cycle.

"We are creating



A drill sergeant at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, takes the temperature of a Soldier before allowing them to board a bus for advanced individual training at Fort Lee, Virginia, March 31, 2020. The Army aims to soon resume collective training and hold a ceremony for graduating West Point cadets, after the recent success of measures safeguarding new recruits at training centers. (Photo by Thomas Byrd)

the safety bubbles that will protect the force while they conduct training," Army Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville said, adding over 800 recruits were shipped to training sites last week.

The Army looks to replicate similar measures for home-station training and rotations at combat training centers.

Gen. Michael Garrett, commander of U.S. Army Forces Command, said Tuesday that the newly-ac-

tivated 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade is slated to be the first unit to train again at the Joint Readiness Training Center in June.

On Wednesday, McConville visited the JRTC at Fort Polk, Louisiana, to see firsthand how it will safely receive units.

"Getting back to collective training is crucial," McConville said, "but we need to make sure we have the right measures in place first."

Training opportu-

nities, though, may vary depending on the threat of the virus at a specific location.

"It's not going to be a one-size-fits-all solution," he said. But "we're looking at the long game. We're not waiting for COVID-19 to go away."

As the Army – including its efforts with national laboratories and private industry – works to find a vaccine, the general said the service will need to operate under a COVID-19 environment for some time.

"We can't telecommunicate to combat," he said. "Our troops need to be ready to go. And what we need to do as leaders is put the appropriate risk measures in place."

Future Army officers will also need to be prepared for their first duty assignment. Graduating cadets at the U.S. Military Academy, for instance, are set to return to West Point, New York, to complete medical and administrative tasks needed for them to commission.

The cadets left the academy's grounds on March 6 for spring break and have conducted remote classes ever since.

"We have to bring the cadets back to start the process to get them to their initial duty assignment," McCarthy said. "There are tasks they have to perform at the academy."

The cadets are scheduled to arrive at nearby Camp Buckner, where they will be screened and tested for the virus. Afterward, they will return to their quarters for quarantine.

"While they're at West Point, they will be [separated] the entire time," said Lt. Gen. Darryl Williams, the academy's superintendent. "They will come back in five cohorts [and] no cohort will intermingle while they are there for those 14 days. They'll eat and live separately."

While at the academy, the cadets will be able to complete physicals necessary for their branches, clearance requirements and collect any of their personal items.

On June 13, President Donald Trump is also expected to speak at their graduation ceremony, which will be held using safety measures, such as physical distancing.

"We'll do it safely," Williams said. "We're going to take care of them."

Army researchers help design 3D-printed ventilators

Thomas Brading
Army News Service

To take on the shortage of ventilators caused by COVID-19, developers from the Army Research Laboratory are collaborating with civilian partners to manufacture low-cost, emergency ventilators suitable to be 3D printed.

The handheld gas ventilator, dubbed the Illinois RapidVent, is roughly the size of a water bottle. Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, due to its size and portability, the ventilator may also be ideal for Soldiers in battle, said Tonghun Lee, an Illinois-based researcher for the Combat Capabilities Development Command Army Research Laboratory.

In the past few years, ARL has invested its talent

into regional offices around the country to partner with civilian-sector researchers on various Army projects.

"We are at the right place, at the right time," Lee explained. "Our business model already enables us to situate with the leading researchers at regional hubs; we are in the midst of the action – so to speak – as needs arise for military and civilian needs."

The ventilator design was led by researchers from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Grainger College of Engineering and Carle Health, and the team was made up of more than 40 different engineers, doctors, medical professionals, and manufacturers.

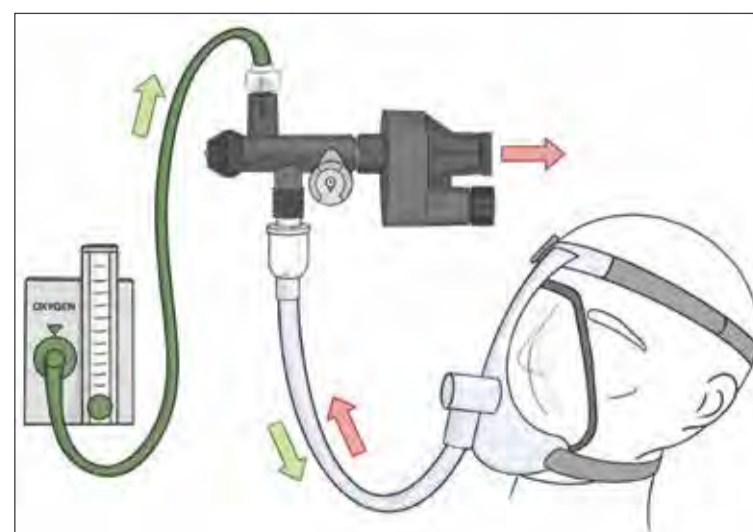
"We got together with the hospital staff here and

found one of the key issues people die from is the lack of ventilators," Lee said. "Ventilators essentially pump air into your lungs, and withdraw air out."

The device was created in less than a week and completed 2 million test breathing cycles, and is able to plug into an oxygen source found in most hospital rooms, or can attach to a tank of oxygen.

For example, if hospitals become overwhelmed and patients are forced to receive care in hallways, the RapidVent could be used on them until a standard ventilator becomes available, said Eric Wood, an ARL researcher.

"The really sick patients would stay on the full ventilators," Wood said. "Our [3D-printed ventilators] are intended for patients



The Illinois RapidVent, a gas-powered, handheld ventilator, is roughly the size of a water bottle. Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, due to its size and portability, the ventilator may also be ideal for Soldiers in battle. (Illustration by James Bell)

who need a ventilator but are not sick enough to displace those who are really sick, but still need a ventilator to survive.

"The hospital staff

[we're working with] made it clear with this design, the goal would be to transition patients onto a [standard ventilator] within a day or two," he explained.

From student-athlete, to Army ROTC, to potential NFL pro

Catrina Dubiansky

For most, going to college and getting through a heavy course load is enough to balance, but not for Army ROTC Cadet William Collins.

After completing three years of NCAA Division 1 football at the University of Louisiana Monroe, Collins decided to finish out his undergrad at University of Central Oklahoma. Coming from a family with a history of military service and the love of football, Collins wanted a way to complete his master's degree, play football, and join the Army, so that's exactly what he did.

After graduating with his bachelor's degree in 2019, Collins applied for his master's degree to continue his stay at UCO. Collins went on to not only study Secondary Education and play football as their starting quarterback, but also became a part of the Army ROTC program.

Just when you think balancing two very demanding activities outside of your typical day-to-day college classes is enough, Collins was asked by NFL scouts to throw at UCO's NFL Pro Day.

How did he do it you ask?

"It was very hard. I would do morning PT with ROTC and then lifted weights at night at a local



Cadet William Collins, University of Louisiana Monroe, looks to connect a pass during a football game. (Courtesy photo)

gym. Then after morning PT I would knock out all my online grad school homework, and before my night lift, hit some sprints to throw routes to whom ever would stand there and catch," says Collins.

While Collins often times sacrificed a social life, extra time to spend with his girlfriend and family, and any down time that many other college students value, he says it was absolutely worth it.

Collins found that juggling school, ROTC and

training for football while adding in extra workouts is very difficult. However, he believes ROTC helped him to be a better student, athlete, teammate, and truly pushed him harder than he would have pushed himself to train for the Pro Day.

"I was inspired to be a Cadet and train for this. I wanted to show that Cadet's across the country are elite and that our nation's future officers are capable of accomplishing anything... [ROTC] helped me realize just how important

it is to communicate well as a leader," Collins said. "As the quarterback, one of my jobs is to communicate the signal, or play call, to all the linemen and receivers ... Same is to be said for an infantry platoon leader. I will have to communicate fast and effectively."

Currently, Collins is waiting to hear back from a team, and has high hopes about his performance on Pro Day. Collins decided that if he does get chosen to go into the NFL, he will take that opportunity, and

join the Army Reserves. However, after his football career, he has reservations to immediately find his way back to the active duty component, being that, that is his ultimate dream.

In the meantime, Collins is set to graduate and commission from UCO in May of 2021. Collins hopes to branch infantry and go to Basic Officer Leadership Course and looks forward to possibly attending Ranger School to "hopefully train and be a part of the greatest force on Earth."

DOD to implement new laws for tobacco sales beginning in August

Douglas Holl

Although most Americans are rightfully focused on the current health threat posed by the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, tobacco use is still the number one cause of preventable disease, disability and death in the United States.

In recognition of the long-term harm caused by early onset tobacco use, President Donald Trump signed legislation in December 2019 amending the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, and raising the federal minimum age for sale of tobacco products from 18 to 21 years. This legislation, known as Tobacco 21 or T21, makes it unlawful for any retailer to sell tobacco products — including cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, hookah tobacco, cigars, pipe tobacco, electronic nicotine delivery systems including e-cigarettes and e-liquids to

any person younger than 21 years of age. Effective Aug. 1, the Department of Defense will no longer sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 21, including service members.

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense published policy making it unlawful for any retail outlet on DOD installations and facilities within the U.S. and its territories and possessions, and on U.S. naval vessels at a U.S. port, to sell tobacco products, including electronic nicotine delivery systems, to any person younger than 21 years of age. Retail outlets are required to post signs no later than July 1 informing patrons of this policy change.

"Research has shown that raising the legal age of sale to 21 would likely reduce youth tobacco initiation and use," said Corey Fitzgerald, Army Public

Health Center public health social worker. "Nearly all smokers start as children or young adults and these groups are heavily targeted by the tobacco industry. Early onset of tobacco use increases risks of smoking-related illnesses and death."

According to the APHC 2018 Health of the Force report, 23 percent of Soldiers reported tobacco use with prevalence ranging from 8.3 percent to 31 percent across Army installations. Smokers under the age of 25 are the largest group represented. Across the age groups, the prevalence of tobacco use among male Soldiers was more than double that of female Soldiers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate if the current rate of cigarette smoking among Americans under the age of 18 continues, 5.6 million of those youths

will die from a smoking-related disease. This would equate to one of every 13 Americans under the age of 18 alive today.

"APHC's challenge goal is to eliminate tobacco use from the Army by 2025," said Fitzgerald. "The Soldier of 2025 is in middle school today. We highlight the Tobacco Free Living program on our website to help Soldiers, Family members, Department of the Army Civilians, and military retirees, adopt lifestyles that prevent the initiation of tobacco use, help those who want to quit tobacco succeed, live free from the effects of second and third-hand smoke exposure, and create tobacco free zones where children live,

learn and play."

Fitzgerald says the APHC TFL website is a targeted priority in the Department of Defense Instruction 1010.10, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

"We continuously update the site to reflect the latest TFL evidence-based strategies and interventions," said Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald says it's important for leaders to support the T21 policy change.

"For this policy to be effective at increasing the readiness and health of our Army, leaders at all levels need to communicate support of Tobacco 21 laws," said Fitzgerald. "Tobacco 21 with no military exemption was passed

because the health of our young Soldiers is just as important as their civilian peers."

The APHC "Education for Individuals" Tobacco Free Living toolkit offers a number of resource links to assist Soldiers, Civilians and Family members with the goal of tobacco-free living.

The Army Public Health Center focuses on promoting healthy people, communities, animals and workplaces through the prevention of disease, injury and disability of Soldiers, military retirees, their families, veterans, Army civilian employees, and animals through population-based monitoring, investigations, and technical consultations.

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Army working to offset challenges as travel ban extends

Sean Kimmons
Army News Service

With the stop-movement order for official travel now extended to June 30, the Army is continuing to reduce challenges faced by Soldiers and families. About 48,000 Soldiers and family members were scheduled to move between March and the end of September, until the Defense Department initiated a travel ban in mid-March to help curb the spread of the coronavirus.

On Monday, Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper extended the order, which the Pentagon plans to review every 15 days to see if travel can resume earlier.

Since last month, the Army has launched several new polices to balance readiness while also taking care of its people.

"We know that this stop move will affect what are normally routine [permanent change-of-station] moves and we're taking steps to minimize the negative impact on our Soldiers and families," said Lt. Gen. Thomas Seamands, the Army's G-1.

Last week, a special leave accrual policy was announced allowing Soldiers to carry over up to 120 days of leave, doubling the normal limit of 60 days. Saved leave days will not have to be taken until the end of fiscal year 2023.

Some cardholders can also temporarily use a DOD identification card that has expired on or after Jan. 1 to access bases and benefits until Sept. 30, as long as they have a current affiliation with the DOD.

Other policies have been issued on training, retention and promotions, such as the use of virtual boards, to ensure the career paths of Soldiers are not adversely affected.

"These efforts seek to ease the burdens brought on by COVID-19 that the service members are facing through no fault of their own,"

Seamands said Tuesday during a press briefing.

Exceptions to the travel ban will remain on a case-by-case basis for compelling cases deemed mission essential, necessary for humanitarian reasons or warranted due to extreme hardship.

Already, about 500 requests have been sent to the Army vice chief of staff, who is still the approval authority on such cases.

"What we wanted to do is get those people who are kind of in limbo to be able to move on to their next location," Seamands said, adding he expects that number to increase in the coming weeks.

Seamands said the process has not been "one size that fits all" in considering which Soldiers are mission essential.

"We've left it up to the gaining command to say why this person is mission essential," he said. "It may be the [military occupational specialty] they have, it may be the strength at their location and why the incoming person needs to be there."

To lessen pressure on moving companies and perhaps provide a safer moving option once the travel ban is lifted, the Army will reimburse a Soldier for a personally procured move for 95 percent of how much it would cost the government to move the same weight.

"If your actual costs exceed that, service members can apply for the actual costs," said Lt. Gen. Duane Gamble, the Army's G-4.

Last fiscal year, about 7,000 Army personnel conducted a full PPM move. But the Army is currently working with DOD to increase the 95 percent amount and entice more people to take advantage of the program, Gamble said.

Since limited moves will be occurring for some time, Gamble said the Army will essentially have to move five months of people in three months in the

upcoming peak PCS season.

Also to help with this effort, the Army is asking Soldiers to stay up to a year at their current duty station.

To date, there have been about 100 requests from Soldiers to stabilize at their location, with more projected to roll in before the deadline on May 1.

"We expect that number to grow considerably here in the next 10 days or so," said Maj. Gen. Joseph Calloway, commander of U.S. Army Human Resources Command.

Soldiers about to retire or resign, if an officer, can also now withdraw their packets and remain on duty, he said, adding more than 250 have already expressed an interest in doing so.

As of today, nearly 40 noncommissioned officers and officers from a range of specialties have submitted requests to withdraw their packets. In addition, over 70 officers and almost 50 enlisted have submitted requests to extend their retirement dates beyond those originally approved, he said.

"It's voluntary and we've opened it up to everybody," Calloway said. "We're going to continue to do the right thing for Soldiers and families who may present a hardship."

Besides medical professions, the Army is hoping to keep Soldiers with recent drill sergeant experience, recruiters, aviators, and those in military intelligence and cyber career fields.

"Those are examples and there are others as well," Calloway said.

As these new policies are rolled out, Seamands also said input from units will be important to ensure that they keep people and readiness as their centerpiece.

"In order to do that, we need the feedback across the formations to make sure what we're doing is going to ease the burden and the stress on our Soldiers while maintaining readiness," he said.



Movers load the property of a service member into crates to be transferred to a temporary storage facility in O'Fallon, Illinois, July 1, 2019. The Army has recently launched several new polices to help ease the burden of the stop-movement order, which is now extended to June 30, 2020. (Photo by Stephanie Wade)