

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4321

February 18, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Azar, and Secretary Esper,

I write today to inquire about the processes in place that are being followed regarding the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). As a Member of Congress representing large portions of San Antonio, Texas, including Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, I am seeking additional information about the quarantine zone in use for repatriated Americans from both the Hubei province in China, and the Diamond Princess Cruise Ship.

It is my understanding that symptomatic individuals are being taken from JBASA-Lackland to an offsite hospital for further treatment, and that in some cases, individuals who have been tested overseas are being put on chartered cargo planes for travel to quarantine destinations within the United States. I understand certain military bases were chosen as quarantine zones, and that generally regional civilian hospitals are best suited for handling disease outbreaks, as well as treating sick patients.

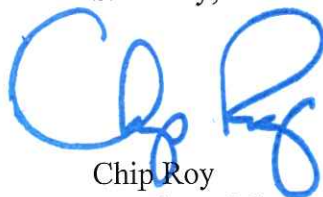
I am proud to represent the City of San Antonio, and I take pride in our medical facilities and in our ability to care for the sick. I look forward to continuing to work directly with local officials and stakeholders to ensure all of us are kept up to date with the information being provided.

Additionally, and to assist us in creating an understanding of the current situation, I politely request that you provide the below information by March 3, 2020.

1. Are there other airplanes that will bring repatriated Americans to be received by Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland? If so, what is the timeline for these arrivals?

2. How many total individuals are now tested positive for the Coronavirus at hospitals in the San Antonio region and which groups were they with?
3. Where are plans developed for these operations, and who makes the decisions for military-base destinations for repatriated individuals?
4. Were all Diamond Princess Cruise Ship passengers tested in Japan before traveling back to the U.S.?
 - a. How often will these repatriated individuals be tested?
 - b. Where is testing done?
 - c. Why were these individuals able to travel if they were carrying the virus?
5. Are repatriated travelers who have previously been positive but are now stable, and non-symptomatic discharged from the hospital and sent back to quarantine? If so, why?
6. Why are travelers who develop signs and symptoms at their quarantined residence and not in need of hospital-level care transported from their quarantined residence to a separate medical facility instead of staying in quarantine and cared for by the HHS Health and Medical Task Force physicians and nurses that are on-site 24/7?
7. Does the extra transportation and movement of sick patients put San Antonio and Bexar County residents at further risk?
8. Is Brooke Army Medical Center allowed to participate in the care of the federally quarantine patient as a federal facility? If not, why?
9. Why was JBSA-Lackland chosen as a quarantine site?
10. Understanding that force protection is important, does the transportation of symptomatic patients out of the quarantined area at Lackland put the community at greater risk of the spread of the Coronavirus, and given that civilian and active duty military personnel mostly live within the community, is this potentially a greater threat to our base personnel as compared to treating symptomatic patients entirely on base in a quarantined area?
11. Are patients that show symptoms of the virus tested at regional hospitals and then transported back to the base and kept on the base until results are received? If so, why?

Sincerely,



Chip Roy
Member of Congress

cc: Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director
Center for Disease Control and Prevention