

Frequently Asked Questions

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness, first detected in Wuhan, China. Because of the virus' capacity to spread globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. The next day, the Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency for the entire United States to aid the nation's healthcare community in responding to the virus. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), under statutory authority of the Secretary of HHS, has issued 14-day, federal quarantine orders to all 195 United States citizens who repatriated to the U.S. via a Department of State charter flight. Although HHS and the CDC are the federal government leads for the response to the virus, the Department of Defense was requested to provide housing support for the repatriated personnel during their 14-day quarantine period.

SECTION I: Coronavirus

Q. What is the 2019 Novel Coronavirus?

A. The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a virus identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China.

Q. How does the virus spread?

A. Much is unknown about how 2019-nCoV, a new coronavirus, spreads. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. It is likely that the virus originally emerged from an animal source and now can be spread from person-to-person. Most often, person-to-person spread of the virus happens among close contacts (about 6 feet). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. At this time, it's unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

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

A. While 2019-nCoV poses a serious public health threat, CDC believes the immediate risk to the U.S. public continues to be low at this time. If you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have traveled to China or were in close contact with someone with 2019-nCoV in the 14 days before you began to feel sick, seek medical care. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms. Military Treatment Facilities have provided guidance on how to address such circumstances.

Q. Is it safe to travel to China?

A. The Department of State recently adjusted the travel advisory for China to Level 4, meaning individuals should not travel there. The commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), in support of the U.S. Department of State's Level 4 Travel Advisory, has restricted all DOD travel to the People's Republic of China (PRC).

SECTION II: Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Response Roles

Q. Why is DOD involved with the coronavirus response?

A. The Defense Department is supporting our interagency partners by housing passengers during their 14-day quarantine period. Health Security is a pillar of national security, and DoD has an important role in supporting the implementation of the federal quarantine orders and ensuring the safety of those evacuating to the United States, as well as those on our base and in our communities.

Q. Who is being evacuated?

A. The individuals being evacuated from China are U.S. citizens and exempted persons (immediate family members of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents of the U.S.). These individuals are not currently known to be ill, and are being screened before leaving and upon arrival to the U.S. They will be quarantined for 14 days and carefully monitored to ensure they do not become ill with coronavirus before being released. Many of these individuals are leaving a challenging situation in China, and our focus will be to support and help deliver a safe and dignified transition into the United States. We stand ready to help these individuals while ensuring the safety of all Americans.

Q. Why was JBSA-Lackland chosen, despite its weekly influx of visitors and growing surrounding community of San Antonio?

A. JBSA-Lackland was chosen by the DOD because it met the necessary location and requirements set by the HHS/CDC – who can address those criteria separately. Many states and bases were considered, and ultimately the decision was made by the Secretary of Defense to select JBSA-Lackland as one of the DOD locations.

Q. How were people in the surrounding areas of the bases notified of the incoming flights?

A. On Feb. 1, at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, JBSA-Lackland was one of four installations selected to assist the Department of Health and Human Services for lodging individuals traveling from overseas due to the novel coronavirus. JBSA released a statement on the request to support HHS, as well as base leadership contacted civic leaders, via email, in the

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San Antonio and surrounding areas after the SECDEF announcement. The base is working closely with HHS and CDC officials, and information will be provided as soon as available.

Q. What role does HHS/CDC play in the evacuation process?

A. CDC's goal is to complete the health screening and quarantine activities in a manner that safeguards the health and safety of all passengers and the people of the United States. The Federal Quarantine Order will last for at least 14 days from when a person was last in an area where the virus was being spread. CDC medical professionals repeatedly check passengers for symptoms such as: fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. CDC will also ask a series of questions about each passenger's health and risk of exposures to others with the 2019 novel coronavirus. If a passenger begins to experience symptoms (fever, coughing, or difficulty breathing) while in quarantine, the individual will be evaluated regarding the need for further treatment or transportation to a local healthcare facility.

SECTION III: Town Hall Information

JBSA personnel and their families are invited to attend a town hall to address any questions and concerns to the Dept. of Health and Human Services on the evacuation of passengers from China. Officials from the DHHS and CDC will discuss efforts to protect the health and welfare of our JBSA community during this operation.

Wednesday, February 5, 2020 from 5 p.m. – 6 p.m. at the Gateway Club, JBSA-Lackland