

United States Senate

March 10, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

General Joseph L. Lengyel
Chief, National Guard Bureau
National Guard Bureau
111 S. George Mason Drive
Arlington, VA 22204

Lieutenant General Charles D. Luckey
Chief of Army Reserve
Army Reserve Headquarters-Fort Bragg
4710 Knox Street
Fort Bragg, NC 28310

Lieutenant General David G. Bellon,
Commander, Marine Forces Reserve
Marine Corps Forces Reserve
2000 Opelousas Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70114

Vice Admiral Luke M. McCollum
Chief of Navy Reserve
Navy Reserve Forces Command
1915 Forrestal Drive
Norfolk, VA 23551

Lieutenant General Richard W. Scobee
Chief, Air Force Reserve
Air Force Reserve Command
693 Lakeside Circle
Robins Air Force Base, GA 31098

Dear Gen. Lengyel, Lt. Gen. Luckey, Lt. Gen. Bellon, VAdm. McCollum and Lt. Gen. Scobee:

With the increasing community spread of the highly contagious severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (COVID-19), our Nation is transitioning its response from a primarily containment-based strategy to one focused on mitigating the effects and impact of the disease. However, I remain concerned about avenues that may increase the spread of COVID-19 or introduce it to broader populations, including by those whose work requires them to travel.

I am particularly concerned with our Reserve and Guard troops' ability to keep themselves and their communities safe. Reservists and Guardsmen travel from all over the country to their units for their monthly drills. This has real potential to spread the virus if someone feels they must report for duty but they are in a heavily hit city or should be under restricted travel.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned that in regard to COVID-19 spreading on U.S. soil, "It's not a question of if, but rather a question of when and how many people will have severe illness," and in some places we are already seeing that warning tragically validated.

Therefore I ask that each of you make public and communicate to all the affected individuals what the current policy is for Reserve and Guard troops' travel for drill weekends in light of COVID-19. If such a policy does not exist or requires updating, I request that you rapidly work to develop a starting policy, as well as a plan to re-evaluate and proactively communicate any updates or exceptions to that policy to the individuals who are required to report in the coming weeks. I would also ask for a brief update on how you plan to reassess and approach these decisions while incorporating the various emergency declarations that have been, and will be, issued at the State and local level.

Our Guardsmen and Reservists often rely on their drill pay to make ends meet beyond their civilian employment, and these weekends count toward critical retirement calculations as well. As the services are developing these policies, I also ask that you consider the possibility of allowing the affected individuals to drill from home, completing online courses or other tasks as assigned by their command. They should not miss critical pay and the ability to earn retirement points toward a good year due to COVID-19.

Thank you in advance for considering my request and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Tammy Duckworth", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator