

Civilian virtual Town Hall meeting, March 26, 2020

COL. PANANON

I'd like to welcome you to the next version of our town Hall This will be a civilian focused event to make sure we entertain and really focus in on The conversations and discussions and concerns we've been asked from our audience the intent here is to cover the civilian populace which includes GS, LNDH, MoD, NAF and contractors.

To my right is Col. William Marshall and I'd like to offer him the microphone at this time.

COL. MARSHALL

Excellent – thank you Col. Pananon.

I'd just like to say first and foremost thanks to Col Pananon and the team for hosting this. It is important that we address our civilian coworkers and as we have talked about our responsibilities we do have a combat mission to continue to make sure that we are continuing to sustain the combat ready Airmen To do what the nation needs us to do. that requires a whole group of folks that work on base And our message has been that every member of our wings whether you wear the uniform or come to work in civilian attire Is an important part of generating that combat mission. I understand there is a lot of angst right now About folks we've been asking to come to work and we hope to address some of those concerns today. I would just like to say that we do view that as an essential mission activity to include a lot of those services that you wouldn't think about directly contributing to the mission. The services that support our folks are also an important part of generating combat air power and a big part of that is the civilian workforce We appreciate everyone that is part of that And their continued efforts in order to help us achieve that.

Now, Based on the fact I'm not the expert on civilian personnel And I know you aren't I'm going to clear stage left Hello and allow Miss Gracy Harrison from the civilian personnel office to come forward as the expert from the CPO office come forward and address more of your concerns

COL. PANANON

Thank you (Col Marshall). Gracy, would you please join us? And so as she approaches the stage and the microphone some of the rules of engagement What we're going to go through is we received several questions throughout the week since our very first town Hall and we're going to go through those and I'll try to follow up with a few questions and Gracie I know you've had some time to look at and review these questions and provide your expert guidance and answers and so for the broader audience I think we'll try And make sure we address those questions in this stream and also understand too, that as we go through this town Hall it is recorded and it is live, that we develop a transcript and post it to our website. the thing that you would want to make sure is this is an extremely Dynamic environment and so we make decisions based on information that we have that is current and in front of us at that time. and then we get guidance which could maybe change it or environmental - The climate could change - So it's constantly evolving but the one thing that we will make sure that we continue to do Is continue this dialogue, continue this communication continue to review our policies and that we continue to utilize to make sure that we continue to deliver that combat power that Col Marshall was talking about.

And so with that, I'm going to go through a series of questions that we have received from our Facebook comments section.

The first question that I'm going to ask is:

If I'm home under quarantine, how do I categorize this time?

GRACY

For the purposes of COVID this time would be categorized as administrative leave or weather and safety - it's the same exact thing. If you are sent home from work that is also admin leave, so depending on the conditions of the quarantine whether it was directed by public health, local authorities or your unit, it would be administrative leave.

COL. PANANON

OK. I think you mentioned it but obviously the squadron commander involvement is a key part of that process.

GRACY

Absolutely. To the fullest extent possible individuals, commanders and employees alike should be exploring the options of teleworking if where possible were allowed, so having that discussion, even by phone during quarantine to establish what kind of working from home, with equipment or without equipment. Sometimes you can do analysis or do your training from home without CAC-enabled equipment so things like that if they can be accomplished at home, should be. If you cannot accomplish telework then it will be admin leave.

COL. PANANON

So this is the complication about this new, dynamic environment. We're making adjustments on the fly. What I'm going to try and do is I will move the microphone to the person that is speaking so that we can make sure we are heard on the stream. I apologize to those listeners and viewers on Facebook – we're going to speak as quickly and as loudly as possible to make sure that you hear what we're talking about, so our apologies upfront.

We're going refrain and restart as apparently the first questions weren't heard.

If I'm home under quarantine, how do I categorize this time?

GRACY

If you're home under quarantine, whether it's directed by public health, local authorities and/or your unit, it would be considered administrative leave. Or weather and safety leave, which is the same thing. If there is a possibility for you to telework, commanders, supervisors, first-line managers and employees should be exploring the possibilities to telework. If that is not a possibility, if all types of work have been exhausted, such as policy reviews, training, administrative duties that you can accomplish from home, then it would be administrative leave.

How do I know if I'm required to come into work as opposed to stay at home?

GRACY

This applies to any circumstance, whether COVID or not, individuals should be checking with their supervisors. If that first-line supervisor is not available, you should check in with your second line, moving up the chain of command. But that clarification should come either directly from your supervisor or someone in your chain of command.

What if I'm told to report to work because my job is essential, but I don't feel comfortable doing this?

GRACY

This takes us back to the first question. If you're not comfortable coming to work, you need to have a discussion with your supervisor or somebody in your chain of command to talk about flexibility, such as working from home, maybe alternating your shift, coming in at a different time when the rest of the population has left the facility. You should explore all options to be able to accomplish the duties that the mission requires. However, if, once you discuss with your supervisor you still feel that you can't reach an agreement as to what type of shift you can do due to childcare limitations or other personal circumstances you may have, personal leave would be the next option to explore with approval from your chain of command.

What if I'm high risk, but I can't complete my job via telework?

So again, all avenues of telework should be reviewed, explored. Sometimes we forget about duties that we can accomplish at home, such as training, or if there's old items that haven't been updated, standard operating procedures or internal operating procedures that you can develop from home, you should think outside the box. Think about what you can do from home. At the end of the day, if you can't accomplish that job from home because of the duties that you perform on a daily basis, but you are required to come to work, then you need to discuss with your supervisor the possibility of personal leave.

So if you're high risk, and through either CDC direction or local UK government standards, if you're high risk and there's no telework and it's admin leave.

If health and well-being is so important, why do some facilities still remain open and require us to work?

GRACY

So, I'll answer the civilian personnel portion of that question. As mission dictates and management dictates, some responsibilities and duties have to be accomplished in order to support the local Airmen, their families and those essential civilians performing the work. So support staff are sometimes required to come in to maintain those critical services that are required on base.

COL. PANANON

Yes, and I can't stress that enough. If you were able to hear Col. Marshall in his opening comments and statements, we do have a very critical mission here that enables combat power. Every individual that is a part of the base infrastructure and personnel are critical to that mission, and so on a day-to-day basis we need you, certainly during a time of crisis, we need you probably even more. And so some of the things we really try to enforce is the fact that every individual is extremely valuable to us. We value your health and well-being and we take every precaution necessary to ensure that you're safe. So it's really important when we determine that we need you we've thought through all that, and we need you to understand that we've thought through how important it is to have your services available to help support the mission.

I'm OK with coming into work, but I'm not busy the entire time. What can be done about this?

GRACY

This is again a discussion that you should have with your chain of command all work possibilities during this time should be exhausted. If you are running out of duties, you need to talk to your chain

of command. There are things again that we can get creative with as far as responsibilities, maybe filing, things like that, depending on your workcenter. You should definitely consult with your management before you make the determination as an employee that you have no work, as there are certain duties that can be found for you to help with while you're still here.

If for whatever reason that unit decides that for the day work has ended and they decide to send you home, then you would be on administrative leave. If you choose to leave early, per supervisory approval, then would use your personal leave.

COL. PANANON

I would also add that we are in a dynamic environment. We've adjusted a lot of things across the enterprise and that is all of the operations across the entire globe at military bases. And what we've found is that by providing the social distancing, creating shifts, creating teams, altering schedules, if sometimes the people that you normally would work with, converse with, interact with, aren't there because they're doing telework or they're doing other activities. And what we've found for uniform members is that sometimes we may ask them to do something that is not normally part of their normal day-to-day job or their normal environment.

For instance, we have sought out volunteers to stock shelves in the commissary and that's a voluntary option for them. And why is that? It's to help our community out because we cannot keep up with the current demand that is taxing some of our commissaries. There are going to be times that it may appear to you that you're not busy, but in the grand scheme of things, after things level out, I think you'll find that there's going to be a way to help manage that workload more effectively and more efficiently. We're in that initial stage of this crisis and we want to get further along, and as we do this there will be some lulls, but we hope to minimize those as much as possible. Your, communication and your feedback is very important, valued and extremely helpful.

What is my pay status if my supervisor sends me home when I'm done with my work?

GRACY

That question is a little tricky. When you're done with your work could mean you're done with responsibilities during your shift, or it could also mean I'm done with my shift. If you're done with your duties at the end of your shift then you just go home as normal. If you're done with your duties before the end of your shift or regular duty hours, and your supervisor asks you to leave the premises then it would be either taking some work home to telework, or you would be on administrative leave.

If the UK government is saying I should only report to work if absolutely necessary, why am I being told to come into work?

GRACY

So that would be mission dependent and unit dependent on whatever your unique support that unit is providing. As Col. Marshall mentioned earlier, some responsibilities and duties do need to be accomplished to provide support to the Airmen that remain performing those critical functions, so although we are minimizing the amount of individuals that have to come in, some duties and responsibilities are required that are essential to the mission, and that is why some individuals are being asked to still report to work.

COL. PANANON

We sometimes categorize these things as second- or third-order effect and if an individual that doesn't think that they position or the activities that they do are critical to that mission, they probably might be mistaken because oftentimes it might not be directly supporting, but it might be supporting somebody that is directly supporting the mission and so we find that it's really important to have that discussion with your leadership, and we will work with you to make sure we address your concerns.

Before I get to the next question, I think it's very important to mention this. We've got different categories of civilians out there and I want to make sure that we address all of them. I talked a little bit earlier and it might have not been heard, so I want to make sure that we are kind of responding to the GS employees, NAF employees, LNDH and MoD.

Important to that piece is the MoD element is vital to what we do so we are talking to the United Kingdom and with the Ministry of Defence staff. We need to make sure that we are available to answer your questions. Some of those we're not going to be able to answer today, so we did some we did some liaison with Group Capt. Sean Harris and unfortunately he couldn't attend here because of other military obligations, so he wanted to provide the audience that has direct questions with MoD with this following statement, so if you don't mind, I'm going to go ahead and read that first.

"For MoD colleagues, I apologize that I cannot be there today at the town hall meeting to answer MoD-specific questions that I know some of you have. We have been working hard to get the latest MoD information to you through your local business support teams, and I recognize there may have been some frustrating communications from us during this challenging period. In case you have not access to MoD information, or you have other more specific questions, I will be conducting three one-hour dial-in question and answer sessions tomorrow, specifically for MoD staff – one for those at Mildenhall, one for Lakenheath, and finally, one for other US Visiting Forces bases.

"Timings and details of how to dial into these communications can be had by emailing Mr. Mark Young at mark.young575@mod.gov.uk as soon as possible. We and our United States Air Force colleagues are committed to only having those people physically in work who are absolutely necessary, in the smallest numbers and nobody in large groups. We also have a shared commitment to ensuring that in accordance with the rigidly adhered to. However, we also need you to take personal responsibility to ensure that you and others stick to the rules.

"These are truly unprecedented times where, for example, cleaners who are not needed on snow days have become key workers and vital to keeping operations and staff safe. Do not underestimate the important role that you all play every day in the United Kingdom's defence through the NATO alliance. Keeping you, your family and your friends safe 24/7 is the primary job. The COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest challenge in modern times, and I know that you, whatever your specific job, as part of the Ministry of Defence team, can be relied upon to play your part."

And he looks forward to talking to you tomorrow through one of the MoD dial-in sessions. And that was from Group Capt. Sean Harris. And with that in mind, we're going to go with the next question.

If I'm told by my supervisor not to come into work, but I can't telework, what status does this put me in?

GRACY

So I can't stress this enough, telework should be explored to the fullest extent possible, both by employees and management. If there are duties that you can perform from home with or without equipment, then it is permissible and should be explored. However, if there is no work that you can perform from home and your supervisor asks you to leave the facility or work site and go home, that is administrative leave.

What if I'm not feeling well and need to stay home, completely unrelated to COVID-19?

GRACY

That is normal sick leave that you would use depending on your circumstances. If you don't have sick leave, there's the opportunity to request advance sick leave, annual leave or leave without pay.

Can I still take leave during this time?

GRACY

Yes, absolutely. With supervisory approval, we are all able to request whatever category leave is on your books. That includes advanced leave, advanced annual leave and leave without pay. However, we must remember that if you are requesting personal leave, you still have to adhere to the UK limitations as far as movement restrictions and adhere to the installation commander's movement restrictions.

COL. PANANON

So we had a few questions from our previous town hall and we're going to provide some of those answers right now.

I heard an employee at the Lakenheath BX tested positive and they refused to close, putting all other employees at risk – is this true?

COL. PANANON

I can tell you based on the information I have right now, public health interviews all the people with a positive COVID-19 test and then determines, through their activities, if there were any personal interactions to make sure they identify people that could be at risk as well. As of March 25, there have been no high-risk interactions from either employees or patrons at both RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath BX. So the answer to that one would be 'untrue'.

Another thing I wanted to make sure I addressed is we received some questions on contractors and how we are looking at contractors. So the contracting squadron that is at the 48th Fighter Wing, are in direct engagement and involvement with all the contractors that are currently left and they are directly talking to all their supervision to determine what can be done and what can continue. So what I recommend for those contractors is please, talk to your leadership within your contracting element. They are directly talking to our contracting squadron.

As of right now, the primary F-35 contracting operations are continuing and definitely key and essential.

I'm going to read what we have received via our chats on Facebook, so bear with me as I go through a number of questions we have received. So let's see here.

Can you define as what is essential to the mission?

I think we've touched on that from both yourself Gracy, and I know Col. Marshall had mentioned it, but let me reiterate to you – what we are working through right now is unprecedented in nature and unprecedented in time. We must continue to pursue our global mission projecting combat power and to that end, what we ask and what we've given our squadron commanders is that authority and review as what they deem as essential in making sure their mission continues, and to that, I would say that if a squadron commander has determined that they need a certain task to be performed, and an individual is involved with that task, then yes, it is essential to the mission. And so, I think we mentioned it before, there are second- and third-order effects and we're all interconnected in various ways, and so absences do affect the mission in varying ways. When it directly impacts the mission, then we have reason to be concerned and so you might not think that your current role and responsibility is essential, but I tell you that as the squadron commanders review the task that they need to accomplish, they're making that determination and they're making sure if they bring you in, that your safety is paramount. So when they ask, that is one of the things I would ask you to consider.

The UK government has been saying to people on the 'vulnerable' list to stay at home for 12 weeks. As a UK citizen and spouse, am I to ask my old doctor for a letter, or am I expected to get something from my from my base PCM?

COL. PANANON

So we may have to come back to that. We'll review that question and come up with an answer once we've talked to a subject matter expert. I believe that we're going to have to refer that to our medical team to determine who the UK side of the house and get a legal reading on that.

What happens if your leadership is classing you as mission critical and it's not in your PD and you have not had prior notification?

GRACY

So as Col. Pananon has mentioned, this is an unprecedented event and due to having no historical experience with an event of this type in present history, some positions that were previously not classified as mission essential, have been determined to be mission essential, or essential to the mission. I think it's important for both employees and supervisors to understand their roles and responsibilities at this time. Frank discussions and frequent discussions should be occurring between supervisors and managers so both have an agreement and understanding on what is essential about your position.

If that has not been clarified to you, you are entitled to understand why your position is essential. You should follow up with management if your first-level supervisor is unable to answer your questions, you need to elevate that. Employees are entitled to full understanding of why their position is essential.

If placed on admin pay, is it full pay or reduced?

GRACY

Just as if you were at work, it's regular pay.

I'm an LNDH who works at the post office. I'm well, feel fine but should I be home self-isolating, or continue to work? If I am to self-isolate, will I still be paid, is there any form of paperwork that needs to be completed, and when would I be returning to work?

GRACY

So an employee who chooses to self-isolate based on a precaution, not for any high-risk reason or because they've been exposed, that would be your own personal leave, with the approval of your management. The period of leave is dependent between your request and whatever management approves. If you are granted admin leave for reasons of exposure, because you've been asked to leave the work site, or because you're considered high risk, or have a family member who is ill with COVID, the period of admin leave is typically in line with the government and CDC recommendations of 14 days at this point. The 14 days starts from the day you were exposed, so we count that way. From the day you were exposed, if you were out of work two days, those two days count and you credit the remainder through admin leave. The end of the admin leave period would be either 14 days, or depending if you were teleworking, you wouldn't be on admin leave, or when you're asked to return to work some time after those 14 days. Supervisors should be assessing at the 14-day point

Are contractors considered essential to the mission, for example there is a contractor who says, 'I'm a cleaner working on base and the government says only key workers go into work. How does the base classify us as a key worker?'

GRACY

Again, that's a management decision and it's based on individual unit requirements on the unit's mission, whatever they need to accomplish. So as Col. Pananon mentioned, each squadron commander has been delegated the authority to make the decision as needed, so key designation, or essential designation, would come at the discretion of the individual commander based on whatever that organization is performing and supporting.

Is there anything in place for essential workers with high-risk dependants?

GRACY

Yes. Again, to the fullest extent possible, management and employees should be exploring the availability of telework so that you can stay at home with your high-risk dependants if they require care from you, for example, minor dependants, or even elderly dependants, at this time if your dependant is not sick, but high risk, telework to the maximum extent possible. However, if you choose to stay home, with an asymptomatic dependant that is personal leave.

If your dependant becomes ill with COVID, then administrative leave may be approved if your unit and public health officials direct you to stay home.

How is the CDC staff considered essential when there are no children to be supervised?

Again, that's an individual commander decision and my opinion from civilian personnel would be that type of position is key in order to support the Airmen performing these mission-essential duties.

COL. PANANON

I can't stress that enough – sometimes we fail to recognize how important our positions are, and what we've asked in our particular instance at Mildenhall is we did ask the CDC staff to come in and ensure that our CDC was clean and safe in preparation for when we needed it to restart an operation, whether it be limited, scaled or a whole operation. Because in these times, because we

have a mission, that many, many people depend on outside of this country and in this country, it is important that we support those members that require maybe some help to watch their children during these times. So squadron commanders have a lot of responsibility. They make that determination – if they need that particular Airman or civilian member to come in, and that member requires the CDC to help support them, then we need to have the CDC open if we're going to have staff members to come in.

Again, this is a dynamic and rapidly changing environment and right now we're currently focused in on COVID-19 and we don't know what other things could occur or what other things we might need to support. We've just got to keep that in mind.

Who determines if you are essential to the mission?

COL. PANANON

I think we've said it a whole lot of times, it's the commanders. They've been given a lot of responsibility; they know the mission well, they know their people well, they know what they need and so they make that determination.

Are you going to provide letters to stop LNDH getting fined by local police?

COL. PANANON

Yes, we have in development a letter that you can provide to the constabulary if you were to be stopped for any reason. We are definitely focusing in on our civilian populace that may get stopped during these times, now that restrictions have been put in place. I know that the 48th Fighter Wing have evolved their letter and are getting it out as quickly as possible, and we're following suit, so we're not far behind. So yes, we're reviewing that right now.

The other part of this is that we have a great relationship with the constabularies in the local area, and we've already informed them that there will be instances where we need individuals that are essential to the mission to come in. So they're aware that if an individual is coming to support our mission at either of the bases, or any of the U.S. Visiting Forces, that they have a current understanding that they should let those individuals come and proceed. But we are following up and taking good measure to have a letter in place that allows for those constabularies to let you proceed.

On your last town hall, you said LNDH should stay home.

I will tell you that this is an extremely dynamic environment. We continue to make decisions based on the information we have at that point in time. But the conditions always change and we get new information, we get new guidance, we get new policies and so that decision that we made yesterday could change, and it could absolutely opposite, or 180 degrees out, from the decision that we made two days ago. So I will tell you that we are going to continue to evaluate every decision we make, to keep up with the constant change. The only thing that I can tell you, to help reassure you, is that our communication is going to be constant and vigilant. We're going to make sure that we inform you of any of those changes, specifically changes in any decisions that we make.

There are shops in civil engineering that could be run by the military personnel. We're running on emergency workorders only until this passes. Why are the British – who are under instruction from their government to stay at home unless they are essential staff – required to still come in and possibly take this virus home to our families, some of which are key workers and working flat out in the health service.

COL. PANANON

So I will tell you that there is no definitive timeline on how long this pandemic could endure, so I would say that every individual that we have, and we task and we determine that we need to come in to support the mission, is required. We balance all that out, we make a risk assessment, then we determine who we need to come in. So if you're being asked by your commander to come in, then we encourage to do that just.

If you have an extenuating circumstance, have that conversation with your leadership and see how you can go forward, but really and truly, trust us when we say this, we're determining what we need and what we consider to be essential.

Does admin leave get paid?

COL. PANANON

I think we've covered that.

GRACY

Yes. Admin leave is simply a status that allows you to receive pay without charge to your personal leave categories or balances. This is a category is basically as if you were home but it reports that you were authorized to be away from the work site, with pay, without charge to your leave balances.

That concludes the end of that question, but I would like to back to one where an individual asked what type of paperwork is required, as I forgot to answer that.

At this time there is no documentation requirement. That may change as we get additional guidance as we get additional guidance from either DoD, Air Force and/or the local government, but at this time we are relying on and trusting the workforce to be honest with their chain of command and for the chain of command to make decisions based on whatever is essential to their mission.

COL. PANANON

And I think you were just addressing the fact that did they need to get any sort of documentation from their medical provider, is that right?

GRACY

Yes

Can our supervisors make the determination of who stays home and who doesn't, or do we have to wait for guidance from further up the chain? GS specifically

GRACY

At this time, those decisions are delegated to squadron commanders. First-line supervisors can make recommendations to squadron commanders, and with their approval and concurrence those decisions will come down. But front-line supervisors are not authorized to do that at this time.

COL. PANANON

I can concur with that, specific to the guidance, we really have placed a lot of responsibility on the squadron commanders. But they do take advice and they took take recommendations from the leadership levels at each echelon, so constant communication and discussions with your leadership is critical at this time.

Will there be a policy letter addressing different employees statuses?

COL. PANANON

I'll tell you right now, what we've been working through, and we may have mentioned earlier, we have approximately five different categories here that help support our missions in this area. And with that in mind, trying to craft a policy letter which addresses each category is a bit challenging, but we're working through it. We think we've made some progress in certain categories, and we're still working through some of the other ones. So please, your patience is really critical to this. We're working through this and trying to make sure we address the most widespread concerns and policy that captures all of the audience, but in certain conditions there are going to be individuals that may have to work on extenuating circumstances for individually, so it's important to stay in touch with your command, your leadership, and of course your human resources.

Why are lodging front desk non-appropriated funds employees mission critical? We meet the most individuals as we are open 24/7. What is being done to for us? The aircrew in from the US could still be carrying the virus and we are in the firing zone when checking them in. We can't do this work from home.

COL. PANANON

I think I can address that myself. Again, the thing that we have to ensure that everyone knows is that during this time and this situation, the operations that we are required to execute can be varied. And the aircrew members that are sometimes transiting our bases, are moving forward to do combat operations, support combat operations, support humanitarian operations or aeromedical evacuations. Their missions are very critical to ensuring the safety of not just those here, but those abroad.

And so I would tell you that sanitation of our facilities is a high priority. We must have clean work spaces, clean lodging, and clean environments for members that are transiting both in and out. The things that I will tell you that we can assure you of, is that as members transit this base, our transient alert personnel in conjunction with public health, do the tests to ensure that members who are transiting do not exhibit any signs of a virus, or carrying a virus or are ill. So they come here, both predeparture and as they arrive safe and free from instances where we might be concerned. Again, your safety is paramount, the safety of others is paramount and what we need from you is just understanding that we are trying to protect everybody in this situation, and we must have facilities that can support this mission.

Is housekeeping mission essential?

COL. PANANON

I think we've said this – it's definitely essential to every mission set that we see at this base, and that is conducted at Lakenheath and the surrounding U.S. Visiting Forces bases, and we absolutely have to have clean and sanitary lodging for our members and the people that are executing the mission. So we thank you for your understanding and we thank you for your support, and please know that you are absolutely essential.

Can LNDH telework?

GRACY

Yes, absolutely. For the period of COVID, USAFE issued a total policy that allows individuals to telework from alternate locations, such as their home, and it includes the ability to telework while you're taking care of a dependant, which is not something that is regular, and we really appreciate that. So long as you meet the requirements of your tour of duty, you can take full advantage of telework (xx 45:20)

How long can you be on admin leave for?

GRACY

Honestly, squadron commanders authorize it as needed , so it really is dependent case by case, but there is no limitation – there's no minimum and there's no maximum. It will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

What if you are considered high risk and essential to the mission?

GRACY

So high risk and essential to the mission, you maximize the utilization of telework but absolutely we are taking into consideration the fact that you are high risk, so if you aren't able to telework but you're essential, a session with your supervisor should occur and you may be entitled to administrative leave if you are high risk. Health is a priority.

What happens with people who could otherwise go to work but now have no childcare available?

COL. PANANON

I think that kind of goes back to the point where we discussed the value of the child development center. There is going to be a time – and again, we don't know when it will occur – that there will be a time where we need to depend on individuals to come in that are essential to the mission. They may be uniform-wearing or they may be a civilian status. Regardless, they may require childcare, and so in those instances, that child development center is going to be a critical part of helping us execute the mission. So when I go back to that, when we run into these situations where you are essential to the mission, whether you're in uniform or not, we will need you to talk to leadership so we can put in place some opportunities to address those concerns. It may be opening up the child development center, or it may be the community helping and pitching in to ensure that your children are taken care of. There's ways to go about this, but really, feedback and communication are important.

For the contractors that are out there watching this stream, I'm going to reiterate that the 48th Contracting Squadron at Lakenheath is reviewing, with leadership, each and every contract to determine if essential to the mission, some of which are to execute our mutually beneficial missions with our UK partners. So the contracting squadron is responsible for not only Lakenheath, but Mildenhall, and as they review these with the contractors, they're working together to ensure there's a clear understanding of the importance.

Is there a plan to reopen the CDCs?

COL. PANANON

If you were to ask me at this moment, at this juncture, today – no – but I'm not going to leave that off the table and hopefully Col. Marshall is not going to leave that off the table. Because again, it comes down to if we need a certain individual, or groups of individuals to come in, we may need that CDC to reopen to execute and perform our mission.

From the stream, Rachel Westra asked, 'How can I help volunteer?'

COL. PANANON

I'll tell you right now, the thing that we appreciate most, we just had an opportunity yesterday where the commissary was having – and if you've been shopping there, you've noted that some of the shelves have been bare – it's not that the supplies aren't here, it's that we don't have enough personnel to stock those shelves. And so we put a call out for volunteers, and sure enough we did have some volunteers to help stock one of the commissaries. What a great opportunity to volunteer and help the community, because when those items are available on those shelves that helps families get provided with the things they need, which could be food or other items.

So what I would say is, if you are considering volunteering and feel that you have an opportunity to share, you can share that on our comments section. We're trying to coordinate all of our volunteer efforts. We do have a number of teams that are working to kind of organize that and so please stand by. We'll make sure that we have something in-place that allows you to volunteer for those efforts.

Any questions that are related to medical, just understand that we will review all the questions that are in the stream, and if they are medical related we will table those for now, but you will get answered. I want to assure you of that.

We're running short on time now. We've got about 10 more minutes but please continue to feed those questions into the stream. We will answer those questions and if they need to be answered directly to you, we will direct message you. Or, if it benefits the entire audience, we will provide an answer in the transcripts or in the comments section. We've found that this is a very useful way to share with our audiences out there.

How does this affect new hires that are supposed to start within the next month? If our office is currently teleworking, how do we get the new hires started and trained, or will their start date be postponed?

GRACY

The answer will be a little bit different depending on the category of individuals that is recorded. So GS individuals, we are still affecting their start date so long as they are still available to start, if they are not essential they immediately go into the status of administrative leave until the supervisor can determine for the squadron, what type of work can be assigned to them. For LNDH is something similar. If you have a start date already established, we will go ahead and start but the individual will not actually report, They will be placed on an administrative leave until it can be determined whether teleworking can be somehow arranged, or until operations resume closer to normalcy.

COL. PANANON

Gracy, I think this is more of a generic question and statement, but with your responsibility, most of these questions have come from Mildenhall and Lakenheath, but you do have a greater responsibility, is that correct?

GRACY

That is correct – we service all USAFE assets across the UK and Norway.

COL. PANANON

Some of the questions that have been coming in, and some of the answers we provided, please I urge you to continue to work with your leadership. We do have a responsibility for those areas, whether it's here, around the UK or Norway, to work through your civilian personnel office to try and address those, and work in coordination with the local wing leadership to make sure we respond to your concerns.

Do mission-essentials get hazard pay?

GRACY

No Sir, not at this time. Mission essential is a category that addresses functions that are essential to the mission. Hazard pay addresses conditions you would be exposed to, for example, fire or things like that. But that could again change based on the fact that this is ever-evolving, and that would be determined at a later date.

Can you define situational teleworking? Can I use my personal computer to complete appropriate work – not FOUO and not PII?

Situational telework is a category in which telework is not regular and recurring and not 100 percent telework. It's based on situation and you can be on situational telework when you will not be performing telework 100 percent of the time throughout your employment.

As we minimize personnel at work to essential mission, can commanders use admin leave and alternate work schedules to reduce workforce while still preserving mission capability, ie work one week, then admin leave the next week?

GRACY

That would be squadron dependent, it just depends on whatever the unit is performing, so for example there are a lot of individuals working in a closed space then that could be a possibility. But there's a lot of shift work so it doesn't necessarily just have to be admin leave, so you could split your shifts up into different hours.

COL PANANON

Then again, every unit, at least for sure at Lakenheath and at Mildenhall, we all have unique mission sets, and we all have unique circumstances, and so I reiterate as your commanders are working through this and discussing options with the second and third, and every echelon of supervision,

they will determine what is the best way to employ their force and in doing so, they'll make sure they coordinate with the HR office to get advice, and from thereon out they will work through them.

So Larry Johnson, shout out to you! 'Is there an opportunity to for us to help monetarily or to send food, etc?

This is a team effort and I applaud you Sir. It's incumbent upon us to help find a way to kind of organize that activity and so we'll reach out directly but we'll also advertise how we can affect that and how we can help this community out.

One thing we're doing here at Mildenhall is we do have a food pantry where members can donate and light goods, to include cleaning supplies. All those donations are accessible via first sergeants and they are entirely free. That's an opportunity that is available at Mildenhall but we will seek to make sure that we have a way to share that effort across the bases and to the families that are affected.

If you are on admin leave, how do you put your time in ATAPS?

GRACY

That's a timekeeping questions and I don't remember the code, but there is a code in the register.

COL. PANANON

We'll follow back up with that code.

I'm on admin leave at the moment but return next week. How can I ensure social distancing is being followed?

COL. PANANON

I can assure you that every unit and every squadron across both bases is very well aware of social distancing, and we will ensure that those practices are followed. It is certainly personal responsibility, but in cases where you your work center does not make that possible, then we will try and ensure that we provide a way to ensure that we can follow that guidance.

We're running up to near the end and I'm going to close it off with this one last question.

Where can I review and see latest guidance on civilian personnel matters?

GRACY

It will depend on your category of LNDH, GS, MoD or NAF. MYPERS has a page for each category and MoD will go through BST.

COL. PANANON

I'll try to help the effort also by at least if we can, we have a link on our home page – www.mildenhall.af.mil – and I know that Lakenheath does as well, the COVID-19 link, and maybe we can find a way to put links that will point to some of those resources. So our team will look at that to make those updates.

We coming to the end of our scheduled town hall time, I just want to close with something real quick. I just want to reiterate to each one of you out there, all of our civilian populace – you are absolutely critical to the mission. Each of our civilian members, you on a day-to-day basis help us

execute a really vital mission, certainly at this time and in this kind of crises, we look to you to assist us and make sure we are able to do exactly what our nations' require of us.

I just wanted to say please be patient with us, stay safe and we will be continuing this communication.

26 March Civilian Town Hall Comment Section Q&A

User Question:

Don't think sorting stores and clearing contractor compound is essential to missions or carrying on with normal ppm duties, it should be at least reduced manning to cover any emergency call outs.

RAF Mildenhall Answer:

Good morning -- details regarding contracts are currently being reviewed by 48 CONS and leadership to determine a way forward as many of these contracts play an important role in enabling mission success for both the US and UK.

User Question:

Will there be a transcript after this- I am only getting a few words from each sentence? Thanks

RAF Mildenhall Answer:

yes, there will be

User Question:

On your last Town Hall meeting you did say LNDH should remain home

RAF Mildenhall Answer:

Due to the nature of this ever-evolving situation, it's always possible that guidance provided one day, could be different the next. That is why we do our best to host frequent town halls and consistently provide updates. Please make sure you're maintaining contact with your supervisor and listening to the most recently issued guidance.

User Question:

You have just addressed mission essential again, who is defining this for contractors?

RAF Mildenhall Answer:

The 48th contracting office is reviewing each contract with leadership to determine which are essential to the mission as many are important to executing our mutually beneficial missions with our UK allies.

User Question:

What measures is the commander taking to ensure that active duty comply with UK requirements regarding social distancing? Military neighbours having parties at their homes will not help stop the spread.

RAF Mildenhall Answer:

All RAF Mildenhall personnel are being instructed to adhere to UK policies and social distancing. If you have any specific concerns, you can DM them to the RAF Mildenhall or 100 ARW Command Team page directly.

User Question:

After watching this and learning about administrative leave, will contractors still be paid if placed on administrative leave or is this only for GS?

RAF Mildenhall Answer:

Currently, details for all contracts are being reviewed by leadership and 48 CONS to determine a way forward as many of these contracts support essential missions that are mutually beneficial to both the US and UK.

User Question:

Most of the questions they answered are about leave and pay, there are some really good questions that should have been answered.

RAF Mildenhall Answer:

All questions will be answered, but we could only answer so many while live in the time allotted. If you have a question that isn't answered by tomorrow morning, please DM the RAF Mildenhall or 100 ARW Command Team page directly.

User Question:

Are you going to research and ask/inform higher authority about improving email access via the Air Force portal for those of us doing telecommuting? Particularly, GS employees. Currently, I have not been able to access my work email over the last 4 days. I'm using my personal laptop, simply not enough government laptops to around. My staff has moved to using alternative communication.

RAF Mildenhall Answer:

We've been informed that these conversations are being had at the Department of Defense level.

User Question:

When do contractors get real guidance? Seems like we're not a priority for the local leadership or the companies we work for

RAF Mildenhall Answer:

The 48th Contracting office is working with leadership to review all contracts to determine which are essential to the mission as many of them are important to executing our mutually beneficial missions with our UK allies.