

December 7, 2020

Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy
U.S. Department of the Army
1600 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-1600

Secretary McCarthy,

As members of the New Mexico Congressional delegation, we write with increasing concern regarding ongoing COVID-19 response efforts at Fort Bliss. As of December 7, 2020, we understand that at least 70 members of Oregon's 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) have tested positive for COVID-19 upon their return to Fort Bliss from deployment in Kosovo. This represents a dramatic increase compared to the 10 Soldiers who tested positive on December 4, 2020.

We have also learned that dozens more are showing symptoms consistent with coronavirus and remain concerned about self-isolation and quarantine conditions the Army has put into place while monitoring and treating these servicemembers.

With these concerns in mind, we ask for your prompt response to the following questions to ensure the health and well-being of members of this unit and others returning from worldwide deployment:

- What is the Department of the Army doing to ensure members of the 41st IBCT who have tested positive for COVID-19, those who are showing symptoms of exposure, and those who have been in contact with positive cases are placed in appropriate self-isolation and quarantine facilities?
- Has contact tracing identified any individuals outside of the 41st IBCT who may have been exposed to COVID-positive individuals?
- For the 62 Soldiers who received a negative test within the last 72 hours, what plan is there to re-test those individuals? Will they have to display symptoms to be re-tested?
- Does William Beaumont Army Medical Center have the capacity it needs to provide medical care to COVID-positive and symptomatic individuals? If not, what plans are being implemented to ensure treatment?
- What is the Department of the Army's overall testing, isolation, and quarantine protocol for Soldiers upon returning stateside? What is the protocol and plan for living quarters during observation and quarantine?

- Under the current policy, does the Department of the Army have sufficient test kits, PPE, and personnel to test, trace, monitor and treat each Soldier currently mobilizing and demobilizing at Fort Bliss and other installations across the country? If not, what resources are needed? If the Army changed its policy to test all Soldiers, including those who are asymptomatic, would it have enough test kits?

Thank you for your prompt attention to our questions, we look forward to your expedient response.

Sincerely,



TOM UDALL
United States Senator



MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator



BEN RAY LUJÁN
Member of Congress



DEB HAALAND
Member of Congress



XOCHITL TORRES SMALL
Member of Congress