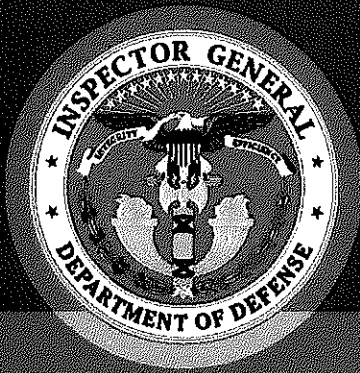


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Report No. DODIG-2021-058



INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

March 03, 2021

Evaluation of the U.S. Central Command's Response to the Coronavirus Disease—2019

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INTEGRITY ★ INDEPENDENCE ★ EXCELLENCE

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INSPECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22350-1500

March 03, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDER, U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

SUBJECT: Evaluation of the U.S. Central Command's Response to the
Coronavirus Disease-2019 (Project No. DODIG-2021-058)

(U) On May 11, 2020, the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General (DoD OIG) began the subject evaluation to assess the efforts undertaken by U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), U.S. European Command, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Southern Command, and the Joint Staff to maintain force and mission readiness while responding to the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the subsequent public health crisis. This evaluation was conducted as a joint evaluation by the Evaluations and Audit Components of the DoD OIG. This report focuses on the USCENTCOM response to the COVID-19 pandemic; we will address the other Combatant Commands' portions of this work separately.

(U) As discussed in the Recommendations, Management Comments, and Our Response section of this report, we will close the recommendations when you provide us documentation that we will review to determine whether all actions to implement the recommendations are completed. Therefore, please provide us your response concerning specific actions completed on the recommendations. Send your response to DoD OIG (b) (6) if unclassified or DoD OIG (b) (6) if classified SECRET.

(U//~~FOUO~~) If you have questions, or would like to discuss this evaluation, please contact DoD OIG: (b) (6) at DoD OIG: (b) (6). We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during our review.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael J. Roark".

Michael J. Roark
Deputy Inspector General for Evaluations

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(U) Objective

(U) The objectives of this evaluation were to determine whether U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) and its Component Commands executed a pandemic response plan (PRP); to identify the challenges encountered in implementing the PRP; and to identify the impact to operations resulting from COVID-19.¹

(U) Scope and Methodology

(U) We conducted this evaluation from May through October 2020 in accordance with the "Quality Standards for Inspections and Evaluations," published in January 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Those standards require that we plan and perform the evaluation to obtain sufficient appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our evaluation objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our evaluation objectives.

(U) To answer the evaluation objectives, we interviewed USCENTCOM personnel to gain an understanding of how USCENTCOM implemented its PRP and continuity of operations (COOP) plan; what actions were taken to respond to and mitigate the impact of the pandemic; and how the command communicated pandemic mitigation responsibilities to units in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR). In addition, we evaluated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on USCENTCOM Directorates and the challenges they faced while responding to the pandemic.

(U) The team also obtained, reviewed, and analyzed documentation to understand USCENTCOM's pandemic response; challenges faced during its response; and the impacts of the pandemic on its operations, exercises, and mission-essential functions. Specifically, we reviewed the following documentation.

- (U) USCENTCOM's PRP and COOP Plan
- (U) Command Guidance for Headquarters USCENTCOM Staff Regarding Force Health Protection and the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19)
- (U) USCENTCOM's orders directing its response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- (U) USCENTCOM COVID-19 Pandemic Playbook for Operational Environment

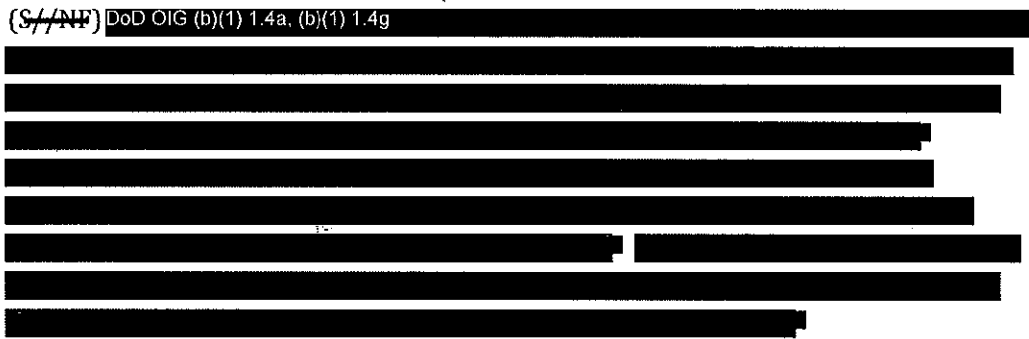
¹ (U) PRP refers to the Combatant Commands' Pandemic Influenza and Infectious Disease (PI&ID) plans, which provide a strategic framework to prepare for, detect, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the effects of a pandemic. In this report, we refer to USCENTCOM's PI&ID concept plan as its PRP.

- (U) Defense Readiness Reporting System data for USCENTCOM Theater Campaign Plan, dated July 23, 2020
- (U) Additional documents provided by USCENTCOM in response to our request for information

(U) Background

(U) DoD Preparedness Efforts

(S//NF) DoD OIG (b)(1) 1.4a, (b)(1) 1.4g



(U) DoD Response to COVID-19

(U//FOUO) Following the World Health Organization's declaration of a global healthcare emergency on January 30, 2020, the DoD took action to coordinate a global response to COVID-19. Specifically, on February 1, 2020, the Secretary of Defense approved a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Execute Order directing the DoD response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Execute Order directed U.S. Northern Command to execute its GCP and Geographic Combatant Commands to execute their supporting PRPs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 13, 2020 the President of the United States issued a Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak. By the end of March 2020, the Secretary of Defense issued DoD-wide travel restrictions, raised the health protection condition levels at all DoD installations in recognition of the significant threat posed by COVID-19, and outlined actions DoD employees should take to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

² (U) DoD GCP-PI&ID-355-13, "Global Campaign Plan for Pandemic and Influenza and Infectious Disease," October 15, 2013.

³ (U) Level III contingency planning results in a Concept Plan, which includes a Base Plan and annexes to add operational details on areas such as logistics, personnel, public affairs, and operational contract support.

⁴ (U) Guidance for the Employment of the Force 2015-2017; (U) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3110.01J, "Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan," September 25, 2015.

(U) U.S. Central Command

(U) Headquartered in Tampa, Florida, USCENTCOM is one of the DoD's six Geographic Combatant Commands. The Command has an AOR that covers 20 nations in the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and Egypt, as well as the strategic waterways that surround them. According to the USCENTCOM public web site, the USCENTCOM Commander's priorities are deterring Iran; negotiating a resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan; maintaining the defeat-ISIS campaign in Syria and Iraq; countering the unmanned aerial system threat; and countering the manipulation or co-opting of internally displaced persons and refugees by adversaries to gain political, military or economic advantage.⁵ USCENTCOM consists of a headquarters (HQ) element and the following Component Commands and Joint Task Forces (JTF).

- (U) U.S. Special Operations Command Central (USSOCCENT)
- (U) U.S. Army Central (USARCENT)
- (U) U.S. Naval Forces Central (USNAVCENT)
- (U) U.S. Air Forces Central (USAFCENT)
- (U) U.S. Marine Forces Central (USMARCENT)
- (U) Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR)
- (U) U.S. Forces–Afghanistan (USFOR-A)

⁵ (U) Posture Statement of Commander, USCENTCOM, March 10, 2020.

(U) USCENTCOM's Pandemic Response and Continuity of Operations Plans Did Not Include Some Elements Needed to Facilitate a Response to COVID-19

(U) Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, USCENTCOM prepared for a pandemic or other emergency situations by developing a PRP in 2015 and a COOP Plan in 2020, as required by DoD policy. The USCENTCOM PRP, Concept Plan (CONPLAN) 1251-15, delineates the policies, actions, and requirements for the employment of military resources within the USCENTCOM AOR for a pandemic.⁶ The USCENTCOM CONPLAN includes Level III planning details and is in the format required by the DoD GCP, including a base plan and annexes containing operational details on areas such as logistics, personnel, public affairs, and operational contract support.

(U) The USCENTCOM PRP also includes several planning assumptions and prescriptions for six phases of operations to prepare for and respond to a pandemic event. For example, the PRP assumed that a pandemic would have multiple waves worldwide for 12 months or more, and that host nation (HN) closures and restrictions on borders and other movement (to prevent the spread of the disease) would significantly impede the flow of forces and material.

(U) USCENTCOM did not accomplish all of the prescribed Phase 0 (pre-pandemic) activities in the PRP. For example, the PRP directs the staff to develop synchronized plans for a pandemic in Phase 0, but the headquarters staff was not prepared to institute telework options in large numbers as directed by the PRP at the initiation of Phase 1. In addition, the COOP Plan, USCENTCOM Regulation 525-40, did not include the information necessary to respond to a scenario that required social distancing and maximum teleworking, such as COVID-19, and USCENTCOM did not activate the COOP) Plan.⁷

⁶ (U) U.S. Central Command Concept Plan 1251-15, "Regional Concept Plan for Preparation and Response for Pandemic Influenza and Infectious Disease," March 13, 2015.

⁷ (U) U.S. Central Command Regulation 525-40, "Continuity of Operations," August 20, 2020.

(U) USCENTCOM's COOP Plan Did Not Include Required Information for a Pandemic

(U//~~FOUO~~) According to the USCENTCOM COOP Plan, the Commander's intent is to be prepared to execute an unscheduled deployment of critical command, control, communications, and computer systems capabilities to alternate locations to maintain command and control. The COOP Plan is based on the assumption that natural or man-made disasters, primarily hurricanes, will render the HQ facilities unusable and require relocation. During Phase 0 (pre-event phase), the COOP Plan directs HQ staff directors to annually and periodically approve assigned mission-essential personnel and maintain a COOP roster of personnel. According to USCENTCOM J3 personnel, the designation of mission-essential personnel is a dynamic assessment that depends on the length of time, mission requirements, and phase of an operation; therefore, a unique designation list may be required for a pandemic.⁸

(U) Phase 0 of the COOP Plan also directs the staff to develop procedures to relocate communications and network capabilities to designated locations. However, the COOP Plan only addresses dedicated access to secure communications capabilities by "COOP personnel," who are not clearly identified. The COOP Plan provides no guidance for telework, other than stating that the HQ will continue to expand the Secret Internet Protocol Router Network (SIPRNET) and Non-classified Internet Protocol Router Network (NIPRNET) teleworking in the event that the HQ infrastructure is not recoverable within a 30-day timeframe.

(U) Since the COOP Plan lacks specific guidance regarding use of telework at an alternate location, it is unclear if limited secure communications capabilities are to be provided to designated key leaders, all personnel on the COOP roster, or all designated mission essential personnel. The COOP Plan also does not address dedicated non-classified telework communications access for HQ staff. According to DoD Instruction 1035.01, telework is an effective strategy for enabling continuity of operations in a crisis or national emergency, such as a pandemic influenza.⁹ DoD Instruction 1035.01 states that telework should be actively promoted, implemented, and exercised periodically by DoD Components to prepare for COOP and an efficient transition to telework in an emergency.

(U) The USCENTCOM COOP Plan does not address other critical continuity requirements during a pandemic, such as alternate work schedules; social distancing and other force health protection (FHP) measures; knowledge management for staff collaboration tools; and classification of boards, bureaus, centers, and working groups. The events that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that continuity of operations for a pandemic requires a relocation of the majority of the

⁸ (U) USCENTCOM J3 is the Operations and Cyber Directorate.

⁹ (U) DoD Instruction 1035.01, "Telework Policy," (Incorporating Change 1) April 7, 2020.

(U) USCENTCOM staff from headquarters facilities to a teleworking environment with a heavy reliance on alternate work schedules and modified headquarters activities.

(U) USCENTCOM Issued Orders and Force Health Protection Guidance Instead of Including Certain Information Necessary to Respond to COVID-19 in Their PRP and COOP Plan

(U//~~FOUO~~) The USCENTCOM PRP and COOP Plan did not include the information, such as FHP requirements, necessary to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, USCENTCOM issued a series of orders and FHP guidance that addressed the pandemic as a military operation. According to USCENTCOM operations directorate staff, pandemic planning was not initially mature or exercised. As the scope and potential duration of the pandemic became more apparent, USCENTCOM leadership needed to implement ways to gain situational awareness and understanding, determine what appropriate HQ staff structures were needed, and what reporting requirements should be in place to enable the headquarters to respond to the pandemic. Therefore, USCENTCOM established a COVID-19 Crisis Action Team in March 2020 that primarily addressed issues in the USCENTCOM AOR, while the Chief of Staff addressed COVID-19 issues affecting the USCENTCOM HQ staff.

(S//~~REL TO USA, FRA, FIN~~) The USCENTCOM Commander issued an execution order (EXORD) on February 27, 2020, directing its components and JTFs to execute Phase 1 of the USCENTCOM PRP and supporting component plans in response to COVID-19.¹⁰ USCENTCOM activated Phase 2 of the PRP on March 14, 2020, which included actions to mitigate the effects of a pandemic to maintain mission-essential functions and capabilities. USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a

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(U) After activating CONPLAN 1251-15, USCENTCOM issued guidance for the HQ staff and, along with its components and JTFs, issued several orders in response to the pandemic. Specifically, the USCENTCOM Chief of Staff issued "Command Guidance for HQ USCENTCOM Staff Regarding Force Health Protection and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)," on March 13, 2020, with an attached "Health Protection Condition (HPCON) Checklist."¹² This guidance provided direction to the HQ staff on

¹⁰ (S//~~REL TO USA, FRA, FIN~~) USCENTCOM EXORD, "Novel Coronavirus Outbreak Response Operations," February 27, 2020.

¹¹ (S//~~REL TO USA, FRA, FIN~~) USCENTCOM EXORD, "Novel Coronavirus Outbreak Response Operations," Mod 1, March 14, 2020.

¹² (U) USCENTCOM Memorandum, "Command Guidance for HQ USCENTCOM Staff Regarding Force Health Protection and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)," March 13, 2020; with update 2, March 19, 2020; update 3, March 25, 2020; update 4, April 8, 2020; and update 7, July 16, 2020.

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(U) communications, individual and workplace preventative measures, HQ visits and travel, alternate work arrangements, and telework. The guidance documents were updated seven times through July 16, 2020, to provide additional details in concert with Secretary of Defense-directed DoD-wide updates to health protection conditions.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FRI, FVEY)~~ USCENTCOM, its components, and its JTFs separately issued guidance for personnel deployed to the AOR via EXORDs and fragmentary orders (FRAGOs). The USCENTCOM Commander issued EXORD, "Novel Coronavirus Outbreak Response Operations," on February 27, 2020, followed by several modifications to the orders, to direct tasks for HQ staff directorates, all components, and JTFs regarding movement of personnel, force management, healthcare guidance, and other issues to minimize the adverse effects of COVID-19 on USCENTCOM operations.¹³

(U) USCENTCOM Subordinate Joint Task Forces Response to COVID-19

(U//~~FOUO~~) CJTF-OIR declared a Public Health Emergency in a daily tasking order on March 29, 2020, that authorized subordinate commanders to issue guidance and take actions to comply with DoD Health Protection Conditions, including closing base facilities, restricting movements, and implementing quarantine or isolation of select individuals.¹⁴ Additionally, CJTF-OIR issued Operations Order (OPORD) 20-03-0001 directing Commanders to execute Phase 1 of the USCENTCOM PRP and develop and implement FHP measures, institute telework options, and provide a daily report to the CJTF-OIR Battle Desk on DoD personnel status.¹⁵

(U//~~FOUO~~) The USFOR-A Commander issued FRAGO 20-104 to provide FHP guidance to all USFOR-A units and personnel on USFOR-A installations. The FRAGO directed medical personnel to identify, confirm, and control the Public Health Emergency and follow the DoD HPCON framework to identify actions necessary for implementation.¹⁶ The USFOR-A Commander delegated to subordinate commanders the authority to issue

(U//~~FOUO~~) guidance and take actions that affect installation property and personnel, including Coalition forces, civilians, and contractors, such as closing base facilities, restricting movements, and implementing quarantine or isolation for select individuals.

¹³ (U//~~FOUO~~) USARCENT/CFLCC OPORD 20-032, "COVID Response Operations," March 5, 2020; (U//~~FOUO~~) USARCENT/CFLCC MOD 1 to OPORD 20-032, April 23, 2020; (U) COMUSNAVCENT/COMFIFTHFLT Notice 6210, "Novel Coronavirus Disease Contact Tracing Requirements in Commander, U.S. Naval Central Command Area of Responsibility," June 21, 2020.

¹⁴ (U) According to USCENTCOM EXORD Novel Coronavirus Outbreak Response Operations, February 28, 2020, a "quarantine" is the separation of an individual or group that has been exposed to a communicable disease, but is not yet ill, from others who have not been so exposed, in such a manner and place to prevent the possible spread of the communicable disease. An "isolation" is the separation of an individual or group infected or reasonably believed to be infected with a communicable disease from those who are healthy.

¹⁵ (U//~~FOUO, REL TO USA, FRI, FVEY~~) CJTF-OIR OPORD 20-03-0001, "CJTF-OIR Novel Coronavirus Outbreak Response Operations," March 10, 2020.

¹⁶ (U//~~FOUO~~) USFOR-A FRAGO 20-104, "Declaration of Public Health Emergency for the CJOA-A," March 28, 2020.

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(U//~~FOUO//NF~~) For Coalition forces, the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) Commander declared a Public Health Emergency on March 29, 2020. The RSM Commander directed the removal of non-essential personnel, the quarantine and isolation of individuals as necessary, base facilities closure, and implementation of rigorous social distancing and hygiene measures. The RSM Commander issued FRAGO 316 on July 31, 2020, which revised deployment entry procedures by requiring testing and medical screening for COVID-19 symptoms and placing personnel in quarantine facilities in Afghanistan, as necessary.¹⁷

¹⁷ (U//~~FOUO//NF~~) HQ RS FRAGO 316.02, Amendment 2, "COVID-19 Consolidated Order," July 31, 2020.

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(U) USCENTCOM's Primary Challenges, Mitigation Measures, and Operational Impacts During COVID-19

(U) Although USCENTCOM activated its PRP and issued orders regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, USCENTCOM encountered challenges related to the transition to alternate work schedules, inadequate telework program capabilities, an ineffective knowledge management program, movement restrictions, contractor absenteeism, logistics, and isolation and quarantine of personnel. However, USCENTCOM developed mitigation measures for each of these challenges to minimize operational disruptions.

(U) USCENTCOM Did Not Have an Adequate Telework Program and Telework Capabilities Conducive to Responding to COVID-19

(U//~~FOUO~~) USCENTCOM experienced difficulties implementing alternative work arrangements due to USCENTCOM administrative policies that restrict telework and computer network infrastructure shortfalls. Additionally, telework reduced staff access to classified computer systems where the preponderance of staff work occurred.

(U//~~FOUO~~) USCENTCOM pre-pandemic policy did not permit staff to telework; therefore, the command did not have Office of Personnel Management-required telework agreements and training in place to rapidly implement large scale staff telework. This resulted in staff capacity remaining at about 33 percent, because of the command social distancing policy, until USCENTCOM could implement staff telework more fully.

(U//~~FOUO~~) To enable the staff to continue working, on March 13, 2020, USCENTCOM leadership developed an exception to the command telework policy under a "safety and weather related emergency condition" and provided guidance for staff regarding telework. This guidance gave USCENTCOM staff directors and special staff the authority to direct the completion of telework agreements and training for staff members who could perform their duties while teleworking.

(U) USCENTCOM HQ Did Not Have Sufficient Telework Capacity

(U//~~FOUO~~) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.7e
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(U) USCENTCOM Used Alternate Work Schedules to Mitigate SIPRNET Access Challenges

(U//~~FOUO~~) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.7e
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¹⁸ (U) USCENTCOM J6 is the Command, Control Communications and Computer Systems Directorate.

(U) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.7e [Redacted]

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(U) Knowledge Management Policies and Procedures for Remote Work Were Unclear

(U//FOUO) According to USCENTCOM J7 officials and our review of USCENTCOM draft lessons learned, USCENTCOM did not have an effective knowledge management program prior to COVID-19.¹⁹ For example, there was no policy or Command-wide guidance on what collaboration tools were available for staff remote work or how or when the staff should use these tools.

(U//FOUO) For example, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (USNAVCENT) provided collaboration software as a pilot program for NIPRNET users who did not have Government-issued laptops during COVID-19. In addition, other DoD enterprise tools were used for teleworking, such as Defense Collaboration Services, Commercial Virtual Remote, and OWA. As a result, staff members used multiple methods to collaborate, with no clear policy or specified collaboration tools adopted by the command. In addition, according to USCENTCOM COVID-19 draft lessons learned, USCENTCOM officials stated that there was a lack of experience in using SharePoint. For example, basic knowledge gaps for effectively employing SharePoint at a user level included how to use version control and how to get links to documents for sharing by e-mail or referencing in reports.

¹⁹ (U) USCENTCOM J7 is the Exercise and Training Directorate.

(U) USCENTCOM Was Challenged by Movement Restrictions

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(S//REL to USA, FVEY) In addition to host nation restrictions, the DoD implemented a 60-day stop-move order for all personnel, effective March 13, 2020.²⁰ USCENTCOM issued its own order on March 14, 2020, directing all USCENTCOM and Coalition forces to stop movement of rotational forces. While the DoD made an exception to travel restrictions on April 20, 2020, for personnel deploying or redeploying in support of Global Force Management activities, the initial stop-move order delayed movement of a large number of personnel, causing backups in transportation.²¹ According to CJTF-OIR officials, the USCENTCOM stop-move order caused deployment tours to be extended 30 to 90 days.

(S//REL to USA, FVEY) On March 11, 2020, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued a requirement for a 14-day restriction of movement for all Service members moving to, through, or from at-risk countries.²² In response, on March 14, 2020, USCENTCOM issued guidance for a 14-day quarantine for personnel deploying into the theater. The USCENTCOM order initially required the quarantine for personnel traveling to the USCENTCOM AOR from locations designated by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as level 2 or 3 countries, or personnel traveling from the continental United States (CONUS) with an en route stop who could not remain on the aircraft or in a controlled environment.²³ On April 10, 2020, the USCENTCOM

²⁰ (U) SECDEF Memorandum, "Travel Restrictions for DoD Components in Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019," March 11, 2020.

²¹ (U) SECDEF Memorandum, "Modification and Reissuance of DoD Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019--Travel Restrictions," April 20, 2020; (S//REL to USA, FVEY) USCENTCOM EXORD, "COVID-19 Outbreak Response," Mod 8, April 23, 2020.

²² (U) Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, "Force Health Protection Guidance (Supplement 4)--Department of Defense Guidance for Personnel Traveling During the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak," March 11, 2020.

²³ (U) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention assigns foreign countries and U.S. territories by COVID-19 risk, from THN (very low risk), through level 1 (low risk), level 2 (moderate risk), and level 3 (high risk). The primary criteria Centers for Disease Control and Prevention uses for destinations with more than 300,000 people is the following: level 2 for countries with 251-500 new cases per day, an incidence rate of 1.5-3 per 100,000 people and decelerating, slowing, or stable new case trajectory; level 3 for countries with more than 500 new cases per day, an incidence rate of more than

(S//REL TO USA, FVEY) guidance was modified to require a 14-day quarantine in theater of all DoD uniformed, civilian, and contract personnel that could not produce evidence of completing a quarantine immediately prior to travel to the USCENTCOM AOR.

(S//REL TO USA, FVEY) USCENTCOM components were authorized to execute their own procedures for this 14-day quarantine.²⁴ If personnel were not able to quarantine prior to arrival and remain "clean" throughout their transportation journey to the AOR, they had to quarantine for 14-days at the AOR entry locations.²⁵ While a necessary FHP measure to prevent the spread of the pandemic, the 14-day quarantine further slowed the integration of replacement personnel into operations.

(S//REL TO USA, FVEY) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g

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(U) Movement Restrictions Led to Contractor Absenteeism Issues

(U) According to USCENTCOM J4 logistics personnel, the biggest challenge the USCENTCOM experienced in responding to COVID-19 was operational contract support (OCS).²⁶ USCENTCOM officials stated that USCENTCOM relies heavily on OCS. Specifically, USCENTCOM employs contractors from 101 countries, totaling about 39,500 people. USCENTCOM OCS integration cell personnel stated that once commercial air options were reduced or eliminated and visa processing was delayed or stopped, many contractor vendors could no longer move their personnel into or out of theater.

(S//NF) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g

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3 per 100,000 people, and an accelerating or growing new case trajectory; (S//REL TO USA, FVEY) USCENTCOM EXORD "COVID-19 Outbreak Response Operations," Mod 1, March 14, 2020.

²⁴ (U) USCENTCOM EXORD, "COVID-19 Outbreak Response," Mod 6, April 10, 2020.

²⁵ (U) A "clean" individual is neither infected by COVID-19 nor is a "person of interest" requiring isolation because they are suspected of having the infection due to exposure to an individual infected or displaying symptoms of the infection.

²⁶ (U) The USCENTCOM J4 is the Logistics Directorate.

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²⁷ (S//NF) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g [Redacted]
²⁸ (U) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.7e [Redacted]
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(U) Mitigation Measures to Address Contract Personnel Shortfalls

(U) USCENTCOM and its components used several means to mitigate contractor absenteeism in response to the travel restrictions.²⁹ Despite the closure of many commercial flight services, including all commercial flights to Kuwait and Iraq, USCENTCOM employed three flight options for transportation: (1) military airlift provided by USTRANSCOM, (2) NATO airlift contracts, and (3) the Diplomatic Flight Service for Afghanistan. USTRANSCOM had procedures to ensure military airlift stayed COVID-19-free, compensating for the loss of commercial options that were either shut down or that introduced excessive risk due to uncontrolled connections. Military airlift facilitated movement of U.S. contractors, and movement of OCN and Diplomatic Flight Service, a U.S. Government-contracted commercial flight service, facilitated movement of other contractors. Diplomatic Flight Service was able to continue moving personnel into and out of Afghanistan because the company established a quarantine facility in the United Arab Emirates to help prevent travelers from being infected with COVID-19 prior to arrival in Afghanistan.

(U) USCENTCOM also mitigated the reduction of its contractor workforce from absenteeism by having military personnel augment contractors who performed life support functions, such as staffing some positions at the dining facility. Commanders also appealed to Service members to clean common areas due to less frequent contract cleaning services and to make do with fewer choices at the dining facility, longer laundry turn-around times, and reductions in non-essential services.

(U) Movement Restrictions Led to Logistics Challenges

(U) In an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, countries in the USCENTCOM AOR closed borders, significantly restricted traffic through ports of entry, and imposed curfews and shelter-in-place measures. These closures and restrictions made transportation more complex and presented a challenge to logistics resupply.

(S//REL TO USA, FVEY) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g

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²⁹ (U) The term "absenteeism" is intended to describe absence from the workplace due to quarantine, infection, social distancing requirements, travel restrictions, fear, or other pandemic-related causes and is consistent with its use in other DoD documents related to pandemic influenza and infectious disease.

³⁰ (U//REL TO USA, FVEY) Annex D to OPOD CJTF-OIR 20-03-0001 (Operation Phantom Judgment) Logistics, March 15, 2020.

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(U) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.7e
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[Redacted]

(U) USCENTCOM Experienced Difficulties Engaging With Partners

~~(S//REL to USA, NATO)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a and 1.4g
[Redacted]

~~(S//NF)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a and 1.4g
[Redacted]

³¹ (S) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a and 1.4g [Redacted]

³² ~~(S//NF)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a and 1.4g
[Redacted]

~~(S//NF)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g [Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

~~(S//REL to USA, FVEY)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g [Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

~~(S//REL to USA, FVEY)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g [Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
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~~(S//REL to USA, FVEY)~~ USCENTCOM exercises with partner nations were also impacted by COVID-19. In total, USCENTCOM cancelled at least eight exercises, postponed one, and modified two others.³⁴ Travel and quarantine restrictions proved a significant factor in the decision-making process because it was not practical to add 28 days or more for quarantines to the scheduled events to conduct exercises. USARCENT officials stated that training readiness and mission currency of deployed forces can be expected to diminish as exercises and engagements continue to be cancelled or postponed.

³³ ~~(S//REL to USA, MESP)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g [Redacted]

³⁴ (U//FOUO) CJCS COVID-19 Daily Brief, "COVID-19 Exercises (J-7)," June 2, 2020.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ According to USFOR-A personnel, COVID-19 had minimal impact to partner development and TAA activities overall, but the reduced face-to-face interaction through training and exercises caused a gradual degradation of building relationships and partner capabilities.

(U) USCENTCOM Experienced Difficulties Implementing Isolation and Quarantine FHP Measures

(U//~~FOUO~~) In April 2020, early in the pandemic, USCENTCOM issued a directive for all forces deploying into the AOR, including DoD uniformed personnel, civilians, and contractors, to quarantine for 14 days in CONUS immediately prior to travel. Additionally, the April 2020 USCENTCOM EXORD directed all components and JTFs to coordinate with appropriate base operating support authorities to quarantine personnel, in theater, who could not provide evidence of completion of quarantine immediately prior to their arrival in the CENTCOM AOR.³⁵

(U) Lack of Standardized Quarantine Policy Led to Difficulties With Unit Movements

~~(S//NF)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g
[Redacted]

~~(S)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g
[Redacted]

³⁵ (U) USCENTCOM EXORD, "COVID-19 Outbreak Response," Mod 6, April 10, 2020.

³⁶ ~~(S//NF)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g

³⁷ ~~(S//REL TO USA, MBSF)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g

(S) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a and 1.4g
[Redacted]

(S) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a and 1.4g
[Redacted]

(S) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a and 1.4g
[Redacted]

(S//NF) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a and 1.4g
[Redacted]

³⁸(U) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.7e
[Redacted]

(U) Lack of Standardized Quarantine Policy Led to Ad Hoc Mitigation Measures

~~(S//NF)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4a

[REDACTED]

(U) USCENTCOM Experienced Difficulties With OCN Contractor Evacuations

~~(S//REL to USA, FVEY)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4g

[REDACTED]

~~(S//NF)~~ USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4d

[REDACTED]

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~

(S//NF) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4d and 1.4g
[Redacted]

(S//NF) USCENTCOM (b)(1) 1.4d and 1.4g
[Redacted]

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~

(U) Recommendation, Management Comments, and Our Response

(U) Recommendation 1

1. (U) We recommend that the Commander of U.S. Central Command:

- a. (U) Update the U.S. Central Command Regulation 525-40, "Continuity of Operations Plan," August 20, 2020, to include the policies, procedures, and responsibilities for executing mission essential functions in a pandemic environment. In addition, develop a plan to annually integrate the updated continuity of operations procedures into the U.S. Central Command Joint Exercise Program.**
- b. (U) Modify U.S. Central Command's telework policy to include guidance on the implementation of mass telework, distribution of telework resources, telework agreements, and telework training.**
- c. (U) Develop a knowledge management plan that establishes policy and identifies the tools and methods for staff collaboration in mass workforce telework situations.**
- d. (U) Develop and memorialize COVID-19 lessons learned and incorporate them into U.S. Central Command Pandemic Influenza and Infectious Disease Concept Plan, supporting component plans, and Central Command Regulation 525-40, "Continuity of Operations Plan," August 20, 2020. The Continuity of Operations Plan should include information on quarantine processes and contractor personnel.**
- e. (U) Conduct a review of support contracts and request modifications to contracts, as required, to make vendors more accountable for care such as health, food, lodging and transportation of contract employees in and out of theater.**

(U) U.S. Central Command's Comments

(U) The USCENTCOM Inspector General, responding on behalf of the USCENTCOM Commander, provided comments on the draft report and agreed with Recommendation 1.a, 1.b, and 1.d. The USCENTCOM Inspector General stated that USCENTCOM Regulation 525-40 would be updated to include a broader telework annex and an annex referencing pandemic influenza and infectious disease. Additionally, USCENTCOM will establish telework guidance that includes information regarding universal standards for hardware, software, and encryption configuration of personally owned devices to support OWA along with detailed instructions and training on collaboration tools

(U) available to users. The Inspector General also stated that since each disease is unique in its transmission and operational impact, the social distancing requirements will be wholly dependent on the recommendations coming from the Center for Disease Control and the force health protection orders issued from the DoD.

(U) The USCENTCOM Inspector General stated that USCENTCOM captured COVID-19 lessons learned throughout the pandemic by collecting the lessons through NIPRNET and SIPRNET collection portals and staff data calls. The Inspector General further stated that USCENTCOM's COVID-19 lessons learned will be used to update its Pandemic Influenza and Infectious Disease Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan and will be uploaded and maintained in the Joint Lessons Learned Information System for use by the Joint Community and Service Components.

(U) The USCENTCOM Inspector General disagreed with Recommendations 1.c and 1.e. For Recommendation 1.c, the Inspector General stated that USCENTCOM knowledge management and information management processes did not change because of the COVID-19 pandemic and that there was no need to develop or modify the USCENTCOM knowledge management plan. For Recommendation 1.e, the Inspector General stated that USCENTCOM did not have procurement or acquisition authority and that, although at times USCENTCOM issues orders, guidance, and directives to Service Component Commands to coordinate with their respective Service contracting activities to issue or modify contract awards in support of Combatant Command orders, guidance, and directives, the standard clauses in support contracts are not controlled at the USCENTCOM level. The Inspector General stated that changing contract standard language would need to be coordinated with the Director for the Defense Acquisition Regulations System, which resides within the office of the Principal Director, Defense Pricing and Contracting.

Our Response

(U) The USCENTCOM response addressed all of the specifics of Recommendation 1.a, 1.b, and 1.d; therefore, these parts of the recommendation are resolved but will remain open. We will close these parts of the recommendation once we receive documentation that the actions to implement these parts of the recommendation are complete.

(U) Regarding Recommendation 1.c, we determined that USCENTCOM primary staff processes continued to be conducted via SIPRNET, in accordance with USCENTCOM policies, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. USCENTCOM J6 personnel stated that USCENTCOM is procuring up to approximately 1,500 Secure View laptops that will increase staff access to SIPRNET. This action will require little change in USCENTCOM's steady state knowledge management or information management processes in a mass telework situation. Additionally, USCENTCOM issued USCENTCOM Command Policy Letter Number 112, "Teleworking Capabilities Policy" on June 22, 2020, and established

(U) a teleworking guide on USCENTCOM internet site accessibility without need to be logged to the USCENTCOM intranet.

(U) The intent of Recommendation 1.c was to ensure that USCENTCOM memorialized changes in its normal staff procedures and processes for future mass telework situations. Based on the additional information provided by USCENTCOM, we concur that there was very little change in USCENTCOM's knowledge management processes and those changes that did occur were effectively memorialized. Therefore, we consider Recommendation 1.c closed.

(U) Regarding Recommendation 1.e, the USCENTCOM Operational Contracting Cell provided us with additional information on actions taken by USCENTCOM to mitigate problems with contract companies unable to move or care for their employees. These actions included establishing a contractor repatriation Operational Planning Team (OPT), issuing orders, and coordinating with Defense Pricing and Contracting on DoD contractor policies.³⁹

(U) USCENTCOM established an OPT that focused on contractor repatriation issues for OCN contractors unable to repatriate home from Afghanistan. According to USCENTCOM Operational Contract Support Integration Cell personnel, the contractor repatriation OPT identified current and future problems and enabled coordination among OPT members to facilitate care and repatriation efforts of the OCN contractors. The OPT included representation from the USCENTCOM Staff, the Office of Secretary Defense Policy, the Office of Secretary of Defense Acquisition & Sustainment, Department of State, relevant Embassies, the U.S. Joint Staff, Headquarters Department of the Army, and Army Contract Command. According to USCENTCOM lessons learned, proactive and timely establishment of the contractor repatriation OPT was critical in enabling USCENTCOM to deal with emerging issues with contractor repatriation.

(U) Additionally, USCENTCOM included language in several orders to help address difficulties with contractor care and repatriation. For example, the USCENTCOM Execution Order issued on August 14, 2020, required contracting officers to ensure all contractor personnel maintained medical insurance that covered COVID-19 testing, inpatient care, and inter-theater medical evacuation. The USCENTCOM night orders issued on August 14, 2020, directed Components and Joint Task Forces to remove COVID-19-positive contractors through coordination with the contracting activities. If removal of COVID-19 positive contractors was not immediately possible, the order required contracting activities to direct contractors to develop plans to "unburden and relieve USCENTCOM components and Joint Task Forces of the responsibilities to provide basic life support, routine medical care, and, if necessary, security."

³⁹ Defense Pricing and Contracting is responsible for all pricing, contracting, and procurement policy matters, including e-Business, in the DoD. Defense Pricing and Contracting executes policy through the timely update of the Defense Federal Acquisitions Regulations Supplement and Procedures, Guidance, and Information.

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(U) Finally, USCENTCOM coordinated closely with Defense Pricing and Contracting to redeploy at-risk contractors from Afghanistan. According to USCENTCOM lessons learned, to facilitate the redeployment of at-risk contractors from Afghanistan, the USCENTCOM Operational Contract Support Integration Cell coordinated with Defense Pricing and Contracting to issue specific guidance to DoD Contracting Activities on contractor redeployment during an international pandemic. USCENTCOM lessons learned also highlighted that collaboration and coordination with Defense Pricing and Contracting was critical for establishing and issuing policy and guidance to contracting agencies within the USCENTCOM AOR and the DoD contracting community of interest.

(U) The intent of Recommendation 1.e was to recommend a way for USCENTCOM to mitigate issues it faced with contractors during the COVID-19 pandemic in future similar situations. We concur that the actions taken by USCENTCOM and captured in its lessons learned meet the intent of the recommendation. Therefore, we consider Recommendation 1.e closed.

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(U) List of Classified Sources

- (U) **Source 1:** (U) Guidance for the Employment of the Force 2015-2017
(SECRET//NOFORN)
Declassification Date: February 3, 2040
Date of Source: February 3, 2015
- (U) **Source 2:** (U) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3110.01J, "2015 Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan" (SECRET)
Declassification Date: September 25, 2040
Date of Source: September 25, 2015
- (U) **Source 3:** (U) HQ RS FRAGO 316.02, Amendment 2, "COVID-19 Consolidated Order," July 31, 2020. (NATO/RS RESTRICTED)
Declassification Date: July 31, 2045
Date of Source: July 31, 2020
- (U) **Source 4:** (U) USCENTCOM EXORD, "COVID-19 Outbreak Response," Mod 8, April 23, 2020. (S//REL to USA, MESF, NATO, RSMA)
Declassification Date: April 23, 2045
Date of Source April 23, 2020
- (U) **Source 5:** (U) USCENTCOM EXORD "COVID-19 Outbreak Response Operations," Mod 1, March 14, 2020. (S//REL to USA, MESF)
Declassification Date: March 14, 2045
Date of Source: March 14, 2020
- (U) **Source 6:** (U) USCENTCOM Defense Readiness Reporting System, July 23, 2020, TCP Plan, MET ST 2, Conduct Theater Intelligence; TCP Plan, MET ST 8.1, Conduct Security Cooperation; and MET ST 9, Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction in Theater. (S//NF)
Declassification Date: July 23, 2045
Date of Source: July 23, 2020
- (U) **Source 8:** (U) USCENTCOM Excel File, "COVID-19 GFM Tracker," June 1, 2020. (S)
Declassification Date: June 1, 2045
Date of Source: June 1, 2020
- (U) **Source 9:** (U) Annex C to OPORD CJTF-OIR 20-03-0001 (Operation Phantom Judgment) Operations, March 21, 2020. (S//REL to USA, MESF)
Declassification Date: March 21, 2045
Date of Source: March 21, 2020

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(U) **Source 10:** (U) CJCS COVID-19 Briefing, "Combatant Command Weekly Summary of COVID Impacts," May 18, 2020. (S//NF)
Declassification Date: May 18, 2045
Date of Source: May 18, 2020

(U) **Source 11:** (U) CJTF-OIR Mod 1 to Annex C to OPORD 20-03-0001 (Operation Phantom Judgment), April 6, 2020. (S//REL to USA, MESF)
Declassification Date: April 6, 2045
Date of Source: April 6, 2020

(U) **Source 12:** (U) Resolute Support Mission, "Impacts of COVID-19 on the Coalition," May 28, 2020. (S//REL TO USA, NATO, RSMA).
Declassification Date: May 26, 2045
Date of Source: May 26, 2020.

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