



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

JUN - 2 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DOD PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: Message to the Department – Support to Civil Authorities

The United States military has been the greatest force for good in our Nation's history. While we often see the impact of our efforts overseas, every President has at times deployed military forces for domestic missions as well. In the last few months, for example, America's men and women in uniform – Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard – have worked day and night across our communities to confront the COVID-19 crisis. This historic mission was just the most recent example of our longstanding support to civilian authorities – from pandemics to hurricanes, and from wildfires to providing security after 9/11.

Throughout these response efforts, I have been incredibly proud of our Service members and their hard work to assist our fellow Americans. This past week, our support to civil authority mission – that had been focused on COVID-19 – changed. Our National Guard are now also being called upon across the country to help protect our communities, businesses, monuments, and places of worship.

Department of Defense personnel have taken an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States. I myself have taken it many times in my military and civilian careers, and believe strongly in it. As part of that oath, we commit to protecting the American people's right to freedom of speech and to peaceful assembly. I, like you, am steadfast in my belief that Americans who are frustrated, angry, and seeking to be heard must be ensured that opportunity. And like you, I am committed to upholding the rule of law and protecting life and liberty, so that the violent actions of a few do not undermine the rights and freedoms of law-abiding citizens.

I appreciate your professionalism and dedication to defending the Constitution for all Americans. Moreover, I am amazed by the countless remarkable accomplishments of the Department of Defense in today's trying times – from repatriating and sheltering Americans who were evacuated from a foreign land, to delivering food and medical supplies to communities in need, and to protecting our cities and communities. In every challenge, and across every mission, the U.S. military has remained ready, capable, and willing to serve.

As I reminded you in February, I ask that you remember at all times our commitment as a Department and as public servants to stay apolitical in these turbulent days. For well over two centuries, the U.S. military has earned the respect of the American people by being there to protect and serve all Americans. Through your steadfast dedication to the mission and our core values, and your enduring support to your fellow Americans, we will safeguard the hard-earned trust and confidence of the public, as our Nation's most respected institution.

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Mark T. Esper

US Secretary of Defense