



**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE
SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR LEGISLATIVE
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ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC
AFFAIRS
DIRECTOR OF NET ASSESSMENT
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES
DIRECTORS OF THE DOD FIELD ACTIVITIES

Subject: Policy on Accessions and Accessions Training During the COVID-19 Outbreak

As the Department aggressively responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, we must remain prepared to carry out our core national security responsibilities. Maintaining a steady flow of new recruits is critical to the long-term readiness and capacity of the Armed Forces. However, in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, we all recognize the increased complexity of conducting accessions, basic training, and advanced individual training. Accordingly, the Military Departments must seek ways to maximize accessions in a responsible manner to minimize a reduction in military end strength and the potential deterioration of mid- and long-term readiness and capacity.

I have given, through written direction and verbal guidance, latitude to the Military Departments to make adjustments to this process without completely turning off their accessions, basic training, and advanced individual training pipelines. Looking ahead, anticipating the continued spread of COVID-19 and the infection of more Americans, additional guidance from me is warranted as we approach the summer months when we see a large number of Americans join the military.

As such, the Secretaries of the Military Departments are authorized to pause accessions training for two weeks effective Monday, April 6, 2020, if they determine that time is required to



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plan, adjust protocols, secure materials such as testing supplies. Our goal remains, however, to maximize accessions—with a particular emphasis on Service members with military occupational specialties associated with high-demand, low-density units and organizations—while being mindful of protecting recruits, the training cadre, and staff at the basic and advanced training commands and installations.

Going forward, the continued reception of persons into the military and into basic and advanced individual training must be conditions-based. Decisions should be guided by a framework with a set of objective, data-driven criteria that accounts for the pervasiveness of the virus, the ability to protect and treat personnel, the effectiveness of the training, the ability to generate substitutes for any training cadre that may become infected, and the risk (near- and long-term) to the force of either a continuation or a pause. The Secretaries of the Military Departments will report to me the details of their framework by April 16, 2020.

I expect the Secretaries of the Military Departments to notify me prior to significantly reducing or suspending accessions, basic training, or advanced individual training. In addition, even if their respective Military Departments reduce or halt accessions training, they should continue their recruiting and accessions activities, albeit with the appropriate force health protection measures (e.g. social distancing), to ensure the pipeline of recruits does not dwindle markedly. As we continue to monitor the rapidly evolving COVID-19 outbreak, this guidance will be updated as warranted.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark T. Esper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.