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May 22, 2020

The Honorable Ellen M. Lord
Under Secretary of Defense for
Acquisition and Sustainment
3010 Defense Pentagon, Room 3E1010
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Secretary Lord,

I hope this letter finds you well. Similar to the last time we corresponded and spoke on March 12, another potential crisis has arisen regarding the movement of Department of Defense contractors overseas.

Situation: The CONUS Replacement Center (CRC) at Ft. Bliss, Texas, shut down in early March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, contractors who do business in the CENTCOM AOR have not been able to validate any replacement personnel. There have been a limited number of contract flights out of Afghanistan that have allowed contractors to depart the theater. As a result, many Department of Defense contractors have had personnel depart with no ability to backfill them.

Issue: Below the starred line at the end of this letter is the link to the CRC web site. Alert 1 indicates that CRC resumed operations on May 9. Alert 2 indicates that CRC is not receiving any contractors for CENTCOM AOR due to the shut down in Kuwait. The channel flight that departs CRC each week flies through Kuwait then into Afghanistan. An issue pre-COVID arose in January when the Kuwaiti's stopped issuing entry/exit visas at Ali-al-Saleem (the Kuwaiti official stopped coming to work). This caused approximately 200 contractors to be stranded until the US military engaged the government of Kuwait and operations resumed. Currently, Kuwait is under curfew and no visas are being issued. While the curfew is currently scheduled to end 30 May, there is no guarantee that the government will resume operations or start issuing visas. Thus, the ability for all contractors to use CRC for CENTCOM replacements appears to be totally reliant on the Kuwait government.

Potential Solution: If the Kuwait shut down is the actual problem, then one solution would be to have TRANSCOM run a channel flight through another country. The weekly rotator out of BWI on Friday flies to Al Udeid, Qatar for example. However, since no one owns the entire CRC deployment process end-to-end, top down pressure does not exist to explore this or any other solution. When asked, CRC officials simply state that they are awaiting orders to resume operations but have no information on a timeline. Contracting Officers at Rock Island simply stated that flights through Kuwait cannot be made at present, so CRC will remain closed for CENTCOM validation.



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There are no apparent efforts to resolve this situation. I appeal to you and your leadership to rectify this impending crisis.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Howard R. Lind'.

President and Executive Director

<https://home.army.mil/bliss/index.php/units-tenants/crc>

ALERT 1: CRC resumed deployment operations 9 MAY 2020. All CRC deployers must have a confirmed reservation prior to arrival. You must arrive on your start date. Early arrival no earlier than 1400hrs on Friday. Latest arrival is 2359 hours on Saturday. Late arrivals or deployers without reservations will be returned to units.

ALERT 2: CRC processing is now a 14 day event that includes a quarantine period. Cycles will start on a 2 week schedule - 9 MAY, 23 MAY, 6 JUN, 20 JUN, 4 JUL, etc. Personnel should get with their Army Service Component Commands(ASCC) for reservation guidance. CRC is currently not receiving any contractors for the CENTCOM AOR due to the Kuwait government shutdown.