

Frustration. That is what adequately portrays this pandemic. Being a military wife is hard. Like really hard. My husband is frequently gone for days to weeks to months and neither of us have control of when or if he is coming home. To add to this regular chaos that is what happens to a military family there is a pandemic. While the official order is to have bases social distance, wear masks and frequently wash hands the reality of it is based off of units, companies and platoons where the orders often vary from official protocol. Since the stay-at-home order has been lifted according to my husband and my experience the military has acted as if the pandemic is no longer occurring. Sure, in the PX you have to wear a mask but on the company level no one is abiding by the precautionary measures recommended. My husband recently participated in a competition to win expert soldier badges. This badge recently came out and is earned by soldiers completing 15 specific tasks. Basically, it was a dog and pony show. They sent every NCO and officer available to a two-week training course in order to prepare for this competition. The soldiers were given a few days' notice that they would be work from 6am to 7pm for the next two weeks 7 days a week. While this type of training isn't unusual the competition was supposed to be volunteer only. In the military there is a term used called "Volun-told" where you are told you have to volunteer. So, my husband among many others did the training for the weeklong competition. He comes home and tells me the people running the training literally said, "There's no such thing as social distancing out here so do not even try it". Therefore, an estimated 3800 soldiers were sent to train in this area working in close proximity with no masks, infrequent hand washing (because they were in the field without running water or hand sanitizer), and shared equipment that was not cleaned in between uses. The competition was last week following the training together and 10 people from my husband's company, which is only a few hundred people, have already tested positive for the coronavirus. My husband comes home to numerous texts and calls and for an hour spends time on the phone with the other NCO's and soldiers he works with trying to figure out how to proceed. Now they have made wearing facemasks mandatory. Now they have decided they are going to keep social distancing a priority at the company. However, there is another two-week training event for this badge occurring this week with soldiers who did not go last time. There is field training for those not doing the competition. The training going on in the field involves hand-on teaching that cannot be done 6 feet apart. And this is not the only base or unit that such events are taking place. My husband who has been deployed and seen combat tells me he is worried. Knows no one cares or will care until someone in the company dies and by then it will be too little too late, and these soldiers have no choice but to follow the commands given to them or face being punished. The soldiers have no ability to take precautions and then come home to their families. No one has autonomy. Everyone is put at risk and no one is talking about it. Frustration is the feeling from this pandemic.