

UNCLASSIFIED

COMMANDER
UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND



4 June 2020

Message to the Personnel of U.S. European Command

Today, we cannot turn a blind eye to the events in our homeland, our units, and our communities. The history of our nation is filled with peaceful protests and demonstrations; it is an essential part of who we are. As members of DoD we are often expected to be comfortable being uncomfortable, but not complacent. Leadership, social awareness, and compassion matter. As our Secretary of Defense has said, those who are frustrated, angry, and seeking to be heard must be afforded that opportunity. The violent actions of individuals cannot be allowed to define us or undermine the rights and freedoms of all.

To fully understand the issues impacting our nation today, to honestly care for our teammates and family members who may be impacted by these on-going events, and to improve ourselves and strengthen our organizations, we must have frank, open dialogue and discussions. We must heal, and we must continue to learn. To that end, the First Amendment is one of our most-cherished Constitutional rights. We hold dear our rights for freedom of speech and peaceful assembly, but we must be cognizant that we are guests in 51 foreign host nations. For off-installation activities, leaders must ensure Service members know that they are prohibited from participating in peaceful protests / demonstrations in foreign countries. DoD civilians and family members, while not prohibited from attending, must follow applicable host nation laws, ordinances, and law enforcement directions regarding assemblies and demonstrations. To provide opportunities for on-installation gatherings to allow our community members to come together to heal and learn, we are currently working through options cognizant of limits imposed by COVID-19 restrictions.

Leaders, along with every Service member and civilian in this command, must learn from the events in the U.S., look internally at our own organizations, and stamp out divisiveness in race, ethnicity, and gender wherever it is found. We, regardless of race, color, or creed, are the forward representatives of our nation, and we carry our nation's values, and burdens, with us in all we do. I expect all of us to uphold these values and ensure all people, at all times, are treated with respect and dignity. Our high standards of conduct matter most during times of turmoil and uncertainty, and by facing these issues head-on, we will change our organization for the better.

Thank you for your commitment.

TOD D. WOLTERS
General, U.S. Air Force

UNCLASSIFIED