



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## U.S. Department of Defense and Department of Health and Human Services deploy medical personnel to Navajo Nation to help fight COVID-19

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – In response to an official request from FEMA with support from Navajo Nation leaders, the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are deploying federal medical personnel to health care facilities on the Navajo Nation this week, to provide much-needed relief and resources for health care workers to help fight the spread of COVID-19.

Through the Department of Defense, the U.S. Army North (ARNORTH), the Joint Force Land Component Command of U.S. Northern Command, will oversee the military operation that will bring 25

U.S. Navy medical personnel who are part of four Rapid Rural Response Teams (RRRT). The medical personnel will come from several locations and support the Northern Navajo Medical Center in Shiprock, N.M., and the Chinle Comprehensive Healthcare Facility in Chinle, Arizona.

HHS recently deployed 30 public health and medical personnel, which includes 25 nurses and safety officers from the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) to support the Crownpoint Health Care Facility and Gallup Indian Medical Center. Five public health nurses from the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corp are presently providing additional support for Gallup Indian Medical Center. NDMS medical personnel are normally deployed for up to 14 days, USPHS officers are deployed for up to 30 days. Additionally, HHS also deployed 10 USPHS officers to support clinical laboratory operations at the Crownpoint Health Care Facility and Northern Navajo Medical Center. If medical surge support is needed beyond these time frames, there can be a request for additional support.

“This is certainly great news for our health care workers. Recently, we had a very large surge in new COVID-19 cases that led to a crisis situation in many of our health care facilities. Many of our



**PHOTO:** Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez meeting with Major General John F. King and Navajo Area HIS Director Roselyne Tso at the Chinle Comprehensive Health Facility in Chinle, Ariz. on Dec. 15, 2020.

health care workers are exhausted and we are also concerned about their mental health at this time due to the overwhelming circumstances they are working under. The deployment of the medical personnel from the U.S. Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services is greatly appreciated. Relief is on its way,” said President Nez.

On Monday, Vice President Myron Lizer met with Major General John F. King, who is the Commander of Contingency Command Post 1 and Task Force 51 for U.S. Army North, to discuss the deployment of the medical personnel. President Nez also had the opportunity to meet and thank Major General King and Navajo Area IHS Director Roselyn Tso on Tuesday.

“It was an honor to meet with Major General King and his team. We are very grateful for the relief that is on its way and we look forward to welcoming the medical personnel. Our health care workers have done an amazing job to help our Navajo people and to save lives during this devastating pandemic. This is a great partnership and collaboration,” said Vice President Lizer.

Several team members arrived earlier this week to prepare for the arrival of the Navy RRRT medical and public health personnel. Major General King also stated that mental health officers will also provide mental health services for health care workers as needed.



**PHOTO: Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer meeting with Major General John F. King at the Office of the President and Vice President in Window Rock, Ariz. on Dec. 14, 2020.**

“Our commitment to support the whole-of-America response to the COVID-19 pandemic remains strong,” said Lt. Gen. Laura J. Richardson, ARNORTH and JFLCC commander. “We consider this obligation sacred, and will work tirelessly to alleviate the burden of the coronavirus on the Navajo Nation as we have elsewhere.”

Major General King is scheduled to join President Nez and Vice President Lizer during an online town hall on Thursday, Dec. 17 at 6:00 p.m. (MST) on the Nez-Lizer Facebook page to provide more updates.

The National Disaster Medical System is a part of HHS’ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. For more information about NDMS, visit [www.phe.gov](http://www.phe.gov). For additional information, contact ARNORTH Public Affairs office at [usarmy.jbsa.arnorth.mbx.pao-media-operations@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.jbsa.arnorth.mbx.pao-media-operations@mail.mil).

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