



**COMMANDER, NAVY REGION HAWAII/
NAVAL SURFACE GROUP
MIDDLE PACIFIC**

**COVID-19 AWARENESS
November 25, 2020**



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Region and MIDPAC Ohana,

Just as the first World War was coming to an end in 1918, a new adversary appeared on the world stage: the pandemic that became known as the Spanish Flu. In two years, about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population became infected with this virus. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide with about 675,000 occurring in the United States – and over 2,500 in Hawaii. In other words, more than four times as many people died as a result of this pandemic in two years than those who died on the battlefields of World War I in four years.

By November 1918, Americans were growing tired of hearing about the Spanish Flu. Many Americans, like today, lived under various phases of quarantines and were ordered to wear face coverings. And over a century ago, public health officials in many cities issued a warning that sounds all too familiar: Stay safe by staying home. For many, this was unwelcome news. Cities reeling from the economic impact of closed businesses organized the wide-spread disposal of masks in time for Thanksgiving. Unfortunately, history shows us that the celebration was premature, as a third wave of influenza cases surged after the Thanksgiving holidays, forcing the renewal of measures the citizens in 1918 had just eagerly abandoned.

This week we celebrate Thanksgiving in the midst of COVID-19. The number of new cases both on the mainland and around the world continues to grow, and even here in Hawaii, the new case numbers have jumped into triple digits on some days. Because of the dynamic nature of the virus, it is essential that we remain vigilant in mitigation measures to help keep our military Ohana and our communities safe and protected from a virus that knows no boundaries.

As much as we would like to be able to celebrate Thanksgiving in our traditional fashion with large gatherings, the call to action for our efforts remains the same as it has throughout this pandemic – exercise good judgement and continue to do the things that make a difference in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

As always, take care of yourselves and your families and Happy Thanksgiving.

V/r, Robb

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