

## **Armed and Security Forces (Mexico and Central America)**

### **Practical recommendations to attend COVID-19**

Within this crisis the Police and the Armed Forces become part of the States' response to prevent, control and manage COVID-19 pandemic. Their adequate preparation and professionalism will allow them to fulfill the mission, avoiding unnecessary risks and humanitarian consequences that such a situation can cause.

- 1. Your face-to-face field work is essential. Avoid the risk of contagion and avoid becoming a transmitter of the disease. Use personal protective equipment (PPE), according to the standard supply, and the instructions you receive on your unit.**
  - a. Apply preventive hygiene measures, use PPE and avoid contagion. The greatest amount of available force is needed, and furthermore, it is essential to prevent you from being a source of contagion.
  - b. Avoid military formations (parades-training) during your work and services. Prioritize the use of technology for meetings and for transmitting orders and instructions.
  - c. Use personal protective equipment: N95 or FFP2 masks, and disposable gloves and aprons to avoid the risk of contagion by respiratory droplets and by contact, considering your high exposure to the virus. After using the PPE, dispose of it correctly: the masks and aprons, maximum use of 12 hours, and gloves should be disposed of whenever you have contact with secretions from a suspected case.
  - d. Keep your work tools clean and disinfected: vehicle, motorcycle, bicycle, radio, equipment weapon, belt, etc. You can use 70% alcohol-based solution or 5% hypochlorite solution.
  - e. Wash your hands frequently, make sure you have enough soap (liquid soap recommended) or disinfectant gel with alcohol in your work units. If you do not have access to soap or water, preferably use disposable paper towels. Do not touch your face, nose, mouth and avoid physical contact with people and elements that are not necessary for the fulfillment of your mission.
  - f. When you arrive at your resting place and/or your home, take all the hygiene measures (hand washing), discard the PPE equipment and change your clothes (do not shake) to avoid the risk of contagion in family and colleagues.
  - g. If you or someone in your family suspects COVID19 infection and/or you have any of the following symptoms: fever higher than 38 ° C, dry coughing, sore throat, general discomfort or difficulty breathing, notify your supervisor so that appropriate measures can be taken (immediate isolation).
  
- 2. Effects of the pandemic on Police and for Armed Forces personnel.** The current phase of the epidemic increases the risk of transmissibility in the community, which is why exposure levels could affect the workforce, morale, and the physical and mental health of the members of these institutions. Therefore, it is essential that commanders and chiefs prepare contingency plans to prevent and control the effects of the pandemic, attending to their personnel, as well as a feasible progressive reduction of the foot force.
  
- 3. COVID-19 is a public health emergency and of international concern (March 11<sup>th</sup>, the WHO declared a pandemic). Their dissuasive and authoritative presence is essential for compliance with the measures adopted by the State to deal with this situation.**

- a. The Police and the Armed Forces have the responsibility to act always with respect to the human rights of all people. Life, dignity and integrity are rights that cannot be suspended even in States of Emergency.
  - b. Control of quarantines, curfews, protection of health institutions/structures and food supply places are part of their fundamental responsibility to overcome this pandemic.
  - c. COVID-19 is generating fear, stress and situations never experienced by the community they serve. Social panic or disorders can arise. Remember that the Police and the Armed Forces must act with responsibility and knowledge also in these eventualities.
  - d. In the event of non-compliance with the preventive measures adopted by the State, remember that the use of force must always respect international standards of legality, necessity and proportionality. Give preference to deterrents such as presence and verbal commands. Excesses in the use of force can trigger undesirable public order problems that would aggravate the complex moment already present.
- 4. Detention, including preventive detention, must be limited to causes established by the law.** Detention centers are a vulnerable space for the spread/contagion of the coronavirus. If it is not mandated by law, the unnecessary increase of the population deprived of liberty must be avoided.
- 5. Constant communication with the community and the authorities.** It is important to maintain constant communication with the community. All the decisions of the authority that represent action of the Police and Armed Forces must be communicated in a timely manner. It is important to attend the community's requirements and complaints. Communication between the authorities responsible for responding to this situation will allow effective and successful coordination.
- 6. Duration of the Pandemic.** It is difficult to predict the duration of the pandemic; therefore, it is advisable to make short and medium-term plans and adapt based on the established guidelines of the public health instructions, within operational realities, the number of personnel available and the contingencies to be faced. Likewise, it is essential to think in alternative means of communication and planning that allow and guarantee command and control.
- 7. Professionalism and responsibility in procedures and performance.** The important thing is to maintain order, avoid the proliferation of the pandemic and help the community. Remember to prioritize dialogue with the population, remembering the responsibility that we all must prevent the spread of contagion.
- 8. Both Police and the Armed Forces can and should contribute to the control of this public crisis.** Your mission today is to help the nation and its authorities to maintain public order, calm in the community and reduce anxiety generated by uncertainty about the future; with this, you will contribute so that the effects of COVID-19 do not generate public disorder and eventually social chaos. Avoid sharing unofficial information.
- 9. Relationship with National Red Cross Societies.** In this kind of situation, you will meet Red Cross personnel carrying out their humanitarian work, remember that we work for a common goal and that our fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence are essential to our work.

**10.**The best way to overcome this pandemic is with the society, attending to and applying preventive measures; basic services working, and keeping calm in the streets.

**Remember COVID -19 is a public health emergency, the responsible exercise of authority is needed to organize the community. Your presence dissuades and generates the necessary respect to comply with social distancing measures, quarantines, curfews, and protection of health structures and food collection, for all who need it.**

**"Professionalism, legality and responsibility are the best tools of the Police and Armed Forces in Protection of the Population against COVID-19"**