

Senate Committee on COVID-19

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Senate Committee on COVID-19 (In Camera) - 11 June 2020 - Q2 - Outbreak Modelling - Siewert

Question reference number: 2

Senator/Member: Rachel Siewert

Type of question: Spoken

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 24 June 2020

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Okay. Thank you. This is my last question, and then I'll hand over: did you do any modelling of how you would address an outbreak or a simulation process of what impact an outbreak would have if there, were an outbreak from the marines coming in?

Lt Gen. Frewen: My task force has not specifically done modelling on this, but our Joint Health Command, working in consultation with the Northern Territory health facilities, would have considered the various capacities that would be necessary to ensure that there were adequate arrangements in place for the rotational force.

Senator SIEWERT: They would have or they did?

Lt Gen. Frewen: I believe they have, but we can take that on notice.

Answer:

Defence undertook a detailed health planning process for the US Marine entry into the Northern Territory in close consultation with the Northern Territory Department of Health. This included drawing on contemporary epidemiology and modelling available to Defence through the Department of Health and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

Through this planning and consultation, Defence ensured all appropriate mitigations were established, including a quarantine plan, access to COVID-19 testing, a robust outbreak management plan and strong enforcement of physical distancing and personal hygiene. The arrival of the Marines occurred in a staged way to accommodate the capacity of the Northern Territory healthcare system if an outbreak was to occur. All ADF planning is based upon reducing any impact upon the Australian Health system and full transparency through consultation with the jurisdictional Chief Health Officers and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Parliamentary inquiry –

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Select Committee on COVID-19 (In-Camera) - 11 June 2020 - Q3 - Chloroquine Trial - Lambie

Question reference number: 3

Senator/Member: Jacqui Lambie

Type of question: Spoken

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 24 June 2020

Question:

Lt Gen. Frewen: We are undertaking a trial into chloroquine as a preventative measure. We were seeking to conduct the trial with a number of hundred volunteers. We had 43 volunteers in the program when - unfortunately in the name of science, but fortunately in the name of public health - there were no longer the rates of infection that meant that the trial was going to be particularly viable. So we are continuing with 42 of the original 43 volunteers. One of them has withdrawn, but at the moment we are not taking additional volunteers into the trial.

Senator LAMBIE: How much longer do you anticipate those volunteers will be on that trial?

Lt Gen. Frewen: I'll have to confirm that for you.

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Senator LAMBIE: Can you tell me whether or not any of those volunteers were diagnosed with PTSD or other mental illnesses befo.re they were put on that trial?

Lt Gen. Frewen: No. I can't tell you that.

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Senator LAMBIE: Would you be able to find that out. Can you tell me whether or not a compensation system has been set up in lieu of this in case there are any unintended consequences further on down the line?

Lt Gen. Frewen: I'll confirm that for you.

Answer:

1. The current volunteers will complete their participation in the trial on 9 July 2020. Due to the current low prevalence of COVID-19 in the community new recruitment into the trial has been suspended.
2. All participants enrolled in the trial were screened for previous medical history of mental illness or PTSD. No participants selected have a history of mental illness or PTSD.
3. If an Australian Defence Force participant experiences an adverse event during or after the trial, health care is provided through the Defence health care system. As with all episodes of health care in the Australian Defence Force any such consultations will be recorded in their medical record and available for future reference. If participants believe they may have suffered an illness or injury as a result of the trial they can submit a claim to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. There is no requirement for a separate compensation system for Australian Defence Force participants in this trial.