

I2: NE Soldier

- Tell me about your mission
 - Started in April
 - Called up, told to stay at an armory (1st couple nights) and didn't have beds (did have cots) or food (this is kind of typical)
 - She was put on test team #2
 - Sent to the middle of NE
 - Strong Hispanic population in this area and many meat packaging plants
 - See lots of numbers in this area
 - Started testing
 - Around Easter, it was snowing and cold "as shit"
 - A mix of Army and Air
 - Leader from each side
 - Air ran medical
 - Army ran logistics
 - 1st started was Decon NCOIC (decontamination noncommissioned officer in charge)
 - Ran decon zone until it switched to running registration
 - Registration
 - Checking IDs
 - Making sure that people showing up had appointments
 - Then switched over for free for alls - no appointments
 - Almost worked better
 - Many people hesitant to come to see them because they were in uniform and had state patrol with them
 - Fear of deportation
 - Others concerned with price and healthcare
 - Told them it was free and sent to Test Nebraska
 - Test Nebraska did all the patient contacting after soldiers collected information
 - Soldiers themselves never saw the information to know if they were positive or not unless they were watching the news
 - Spent about 5 weeks in central NE testing that Hispanic/meatpacking population area
 - Then became a mobile team and started bouncing around the state
 - Mostly central and some north
 - Once done with bouncing around came back to central NE and ran a "Task Force" mission
 - Run the main spot and then do a small outreach testing spots in the small towns around and come back to the main spot
 - Did until July-ish
- When the mission ended for you did it end for everyone or is there still an active team?
 - As of NOV. 6th
 - Still one team out that she knows of - doesn't know if still active

- Why do you think Kearney was so mad?
 - IDK - they (state) picked 5 colleges that the state picked for Corona holding/quarantine areas if people wanted to stay there or get monitored or whatever
 - Kearney didn't seem to have an issue with that
 - Not sure why they had such a big issue with them
 - Her team didn't go into other college towns
 - Another team she talked to didn't have issues in other college towns
- They weren't violent at all right?
 - "No, just verbally abusive. They almost made one of my little boys cry." (- referring to a younger soldier under her)
 - "The nicest kid on the whole fucking team and they were telling him what a piece of shit he was and he just automatically took it to heart. It was sad."
- While testing?
 - Yes
- Were they forced to test or was it optional?
 - Some of them were forced but it was mostly optional
 - Forced by employers
 - If they didn't test she wasn't sure what happened
- Types of tests?
 - Didn't know what they were called but long Q Tips that went up the nose for 10 s then down (probably nasopharyngeal)
 - Brain tickler
- The questionnaire mentioned trial and error test kits
 - Had them try a gargle test
 - Had to drink a solution, gargle it for 11-15s and then spit it back into a tube
 - Also had their brain tickled because wasn't sure if it would work - must not have because never saw it again after one day
- Who was coordinating the mission and who did the testing site determination?
 - System was Test Nebraska
 - Governor was pushing it
 - People could pick where they wanted to get tested at by location and date and then the system would give a time to show up around
- How long did they use level C?
 - About 2 months
 - Kept trying to downgrade and then they were saying no they couldn't
 - Seemed openly frustrated but not surprised by this
- Team size?
 - 12-14 for one testing site
 - Would test on average about 300 a day
 - Days were not long
 - Very easy gig
 - Did depend on the place when they would have them come

- Didn't do it on 'refit days' (days off)
- Then moved to once a day and then no times a day (not sure if she meant this during refit days or all days)
- How many days a week did you work?
 - Started out 7, casually dropped off to 5
- Ever do any COVID tests?
 - She didn't and they didn't test any of the soldiers unless they thought they had symptoms
 - One person on her team they thought did but he ended up testing negative
 - Some people got tested when they got off mission but not all
- Did you quarantine at the end?
 - She did but because of her civilian job - boss made her and the county paid for it
 - Said she still went to the gym and such
- Were you upset that the guard didn't pay for a quarantine period?
 - Sad but mostly because she was about 12 days away from hitting her 90 days on active duty (so quarantine would have put her there)
 - But sadder about the loss of benefits and not that they didn't have her quarantine
 - She did ask about it though
 - Benefits lost are the Post 9/11 GI bill and the loss of veteran status with VA and disability and retirement stuff
- What orders were you on?
 - Title 10 for some of it and 32 for the rest of it
 - Supposed to go 32 within a week but didn't until a couple of weeks after
 - Researcher information on what different orders mean (not part of interview):
 - <https://www.military.com/benefits/reserve-and-guard-benefits/whats-difference-between-title-10-and-title-32-mobilization-orders.html>
 - 3 types of orders - all can be used for COVID
 - Title 10 - Federal
 - Funds and orders under federal control
 - Automatically have tricare - free treatment at military facilities, no cost, also covered in ED
 - National defense
 - Deployments usually
 - Title 32 - state
 - Under state control - called up by governor
 - This can be directed to send guard members to any state of US territory
 - If +30 days - same benefits at Title 10
 - Usually for national emergencies
 - State Active Duty - SAD
 - Different
 - Healthcare coverage less clear
 - Duty related should be covered
 - Depends on length and mission
 - Benefits not the same
- Did you think your mission made an impact on public health control of COVID?

- “Yeah probably”
- Didn’t know
- Could tell they were doing good things
- But could tell that people didn’t give a crap about it (not the service members)
 - Most of the populations (rural/small towns) clearly didn’t believe in the ‘rona
- Did your team believe it was real or an actual threat?
 - Yeah at first - “the longer it went on, the less threat it seemed”
 - Then everyone they were testing was appearing to come up negative according to the health department
 - Started questioning if it was a waste of time and resources - “definitely a waste of resources”
- Didn’t know about federal funds (researcher mentioned how Ohio has been short on money due to their activations)
- Did normal units in NE (ones not activated) stop drilling in person, like OH?
 - Hers did but there was like no one left to
 - Virtual IDT did happen for April and May
- They had Tricare the entire time
- If you could change anything about the mission, what would you change to make it better or feel more purposeful?
 - Besides giving 90 days and beds to sleep in at the start
 - “It did feel purposeful until it didn’t”
 - They did cut the teams off at the right point with numbers of cases
 - Thinks they played it right
- Are you scared of getting called back in with rising rates?
 - No, thinks they’ll let healthcare workers do it because then they can charge for it and they don’t have to pay soldiers
- But what about the Hispanic populations that you were testing that are illegals?
 - That is a problem - she doesn’t know how they are getting tested anymore
- Did the Hispanics seem scared of COVID?
 - No just super scared of being deported
 - There was a local health department lady that was Hispanic that helped to dissipate fears by telling everyone that no one would be deported and she helped calm fears
 - This was in Grand Island (probably highest hispanic population)
 - She would tell them the soldiers were trying to help
- Language barrier?
 - Yes it was rough
 - They had to charade it out
 - And only one of her for 300/400 people
 - They couldn't seem to find any others
- Talked about “mexington”
 - Said there were a lot of Somalians
 - First time there weren’t any translators and struggled

- The next time they found a couple - but wasn't very good
- Said she would improve with translators for every team
 - They did pass us the chain that they needed them and they didn't give any
- Did you do an AAR (after action review) for the mission?
 - She thinks so, like came up once
 - Does think the translator issue was mentioned
- Were you concerned about getting medical care
 - No not really
 - One new kid in new unit (post mission) - said she can tell he's a weird dude and that he's crazy scared of the 'rona but said he's scared of everything
- No one knows anyone that's had it and died?
 - Anyone she's known that has had it at most lost their taste and it took awhile to come back
 - Doesn't really know anyone high risk though
 - She did know one girl with she thinks Crohn's Disease that got it and didn't have an issue with it
 - Part of the reason she doesn't see it serious
 - She does see it bad in the nursing homes on rescue calls (she's also a firefighter/EMT) and they often have cancer or worse and expects to see issues with it