Foggo: U.S. Military in All-New Territory in Fight Against Virus



Hospitalman Recruit Jacob Cortes monitors the level of oxygen in a tank aboard the hospital ship USNS Mercy on April 14, docked in Los Angeles in support of COVID-19 response efforts. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Luke Cunningham

ARLINGTON, Va. — The scope of the COVID-19 pandemic shows the new domain that the U.S. military must prepare to operate in, according to the top commander of U.S. naval forces in Europe and Africa.

"That seventh domain is just simply germs. It's the biosphere we operate in," Adm. James Foggo III said April 15 during a webcast for Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition. "And I think we're going to have to take that into account in our preparations for deterrence and defense in the future."

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click here.

Foggo, commander of Allied Joint Force Command, which is based in Naples, Italy, as well as U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Naval Forces Africa, said the challenges of a massive NATO exercise, Trident Juncture 2018, which involved 50,000 personnel, 70 ships, 10,000 ground vehicles and 165 different aircraft, taught him that logistics should be added to the five battlespace domains of land, sea, air, space and cyber. However, the coronavirus outbreak that has sickened 1.9 million people worldwide, killed more than 123,000 and devastated Italy shows that there's now a seventh domain.

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>
> *Adm. James Foggo III*

"It hit us earlier, here in Italy," where the Joint Force has facilities at Aviano Air Base in the north, Naval Air Station Sigonella in Sicily and Gaeta, near Naples, where the amphibious command ship USS Mount Whitney, the flagship of the 6th Fleet, is based.

Foggo credited Microsoft founder, billionaire and philanthropist Bill Gates for suggesting in a 2015 speech that, in addition to traditional wargames and tabletop exercises, pandemic planning take priority.

Foggo also cited a fast-spreading virus wargame, Urban Outbreak 2019, co-sponsored by the U.S. Naval War College, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Lab, as "a start in preparation for the future and incorporation into our planning processes."



Adm. James Foggo III, commander of Allied Joint Force Command, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Naval Forces Africa, spoke on April 15 during a Navy League Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webcast.

The admiral stressed the importance of testing for COVID-19 to determine if someone is infected and whether persons they've come in contact with be isolated.

"Testing works in our favor," Foggo said. "We can't afford to take anybody off the line in a day of Great Power Competition, where we have adversaries, competitors and, most importantly, we have violent extremists who take advantage of any chink in the armor."

In the future, "we're going to have to plan ahead on how we're going to protect the force against something like the coronavirus until we get a vaccine against COVID-19, and then beyond that there will be a next coronavirus, and I think we'll be much better prepared for that in the future."