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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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March 9, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin, III  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is investigating the federal government's response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Senator Peters previously notified this Department on November 18, 2020 to preserve all documents and communications, including regarding the government's COVID-19 response. In addition, Senator Peters sent this Department a request for documents and information on December 21, 2020 related to its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This letter reasserts that request.

The United States remains in the midst of a national and public health security crisis. More than a half million Americans have died from COVID-19 since the first cases were detected in the United States.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office found that “[a]s of December 2020, there were more than 10.7 million unemployed individuals, compared to nearly 5.8 million individuals at the beginning of the calendar year,” and further warned the “pandemic will likely remain a significant obstacle to more robust economic activity.”<sup>2</sup> The federal government's response has a decisive impact on efforts to save lives, restore the economy, and overcome the pandemic.

These deaths are unacceptable. The economic fallout must also be remedied. As such, we must examine and understand the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and any needed reforms to combat this and future pandemics. This includes understanding decisions regarding testing, distribution of medical supplies, and communications with the public, as well as answering questions surrounding public health, military, and intelligence warnings about the pandemic and potential political interference with scientific guidance. The Committee is authorized by Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate “the efficiency and economy of operations of all branches of the Government.” To that end, please provide the following documents and communications as soon as possible, but no later than March 29, 2021:

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *United States COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by State* ([https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases\\_casesper100klast7days](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days)).

<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office, *COVID-19: Critical Vaccine Distribution, Supply Chain, Program Integrity, and Other Challenges Require Focused Federal Attention* (GAO-21-265) (January 28, 2021).

*Executive Branch Actions and Guidance to the Public*

1. All organizational charts at the Department of Defense (DOD) referring or relating to the COVID-19 response.
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to the shifts in leadership and areas of responsibility between the White House Coronavirus Task Force, the White House COVID-19 Response Team, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) or other components of DOD.
3. All DOD intelligence community and National Center for Medical Intelligence reports referring or relating to the emergence of COVID-19.
4. Northern Command's 2013 Playbook titled, "Global Campaign Plan for Pandemic Influenza and Infectious Disease," and all previous and subsequent drafts.
5. All documents and communications referring or relating to DOD's COVID-19 response strategies, including White House guidance, January 2020 to present.
6. All documents and communications during the DOD transition referring or relating to the COVID-19 response, including requests by and information provided to transition teams.

*Strategic National Stockpile and Personal Protective Equipment*

7. All documents and communications referring or relating to the DLA's COVID-19 Task Force, including a list of specific offices, personnel, and chain of command, including the office(s) and individual(s) charged with program operation and oversight.
8. A list of the processes used for acquiring and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) and the Joint Acquisition Task Force's (JATF) respective roles and responsibilities.
9. All senior official communications with the Supply Chain Stabilization Task Force referring or relating to PPE demands and supply acquisition/distribution.

*COVID-19 Testing*

10. All documents and communications referring or relating to DOD's COVID-19 testing strategies for active duty members, including but not limited to deployed units, January 2020 through present.

*Vaccines*

11. All documents and communications referring or relating to Operation Warp Speed, including the organizational structure, those individuals involved, including independent contractors, and a delineation of responsibilities between Operation Warp Speed, HHS, DOD, and any other relevant agency.
12. All contracts and agreements awarded by DOD-JATF or DLA referring or relating to PPE and vaccine development, manufacture, or distribution.
13. All documents and communications referring or relating to DOD's COVID-19 vaccination plans, including but not limited to support for civilian authorities, January 2020 through present.

*Defense Support of Civilian Authorities (DSCA) Missions*

14. All execution order and general administration messages referring or relating to DOD COVID-19-related Defense Support of Civilian Authorities (DSCA) missions, including operational leadership, planning, and areas of responsibility by and for U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) and FEMA.
15. All documents referring or relating to the analysis performed by DOD under DOD Directive 3025.18 § 4(e) considering the cost, appropriateness, and readiness factors of sending DOD assets to perform COVID-19-related DSCA missions.
16. All FEMA mission requests to DOD for domestic medical assistance and any related state documents requesting assistance.
17. Any checklist or "playbook" the advance DOD and FEMA teams used in setting up DSCA COVID-19 related operations in response to FEMA mission requests.
18. All dates, participants, and objectives of any NORTHCOM-sponsored pandemic training involving the use of hospital ships.
19. All documents referring or relating to manning for DOD DSCA COVID-19-related missions to include civilian, active duty, and reserve personnel, including but not limited to command location information for all medical staff.
20. Documents sufficient to show all costs associated with DOD DSCA missions, including, but not limited to, equipment, staffing, logistical support, and travel expenses.
21. All documents and communications referring or relating to decisions whether to use DOD prepositioned stocks to support COVID-19 related relief efforts.

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin, III

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Additionally, we ask that you make any officials with relevant information available for interviews to provide information and testimony regarding the issues identified herein.

Please refer to the attached Schedule A for information on how to respond to this request and for the types of documents and communications to be provided. Unless otherwise indicated, all documents and communications responsive to these requests should be provided from January 2019 to present.

Thank you for your prompt attention and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary C. Peters", written over a horizontal line.

Gary C. Peters  
Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rob Portman", written over a horizontal line.

Rob Portman  
Ranking Member