Dear President Trump,

We are writing today to inquire as to how you are marshalling Department of Defense (DOD) resources to contribute to broader whole-of-government efforts to address the continued spread of COVID-19, and the strain that spread will place on our health care system. As you know, DOD has a range of assets that can be utilized to help contain, treat, and ultimately prevent spread of the virus. We hope that you will proactively prepare and use these resources in support of civilian authorities, as appropriate, rather than wait for an escalating crisis to force your hand.

Due to scant information on the utilization of various DOD authorities, resources and capabilities in response to COVID-19, we write to highlight areas we believe might be particularly relevant to supporting a national response based on current authorities and past precedent. Given the severity and scope of this crisis, we believe it is necessary to engage all elements of our national power in formulating an effective homeland defense.

Specifically, we would like to be informed within 82 hours whether and how your administration has readied or deployed the following assets:

1. Mobile Hospital Units and Supplemental Bed Capacity—During the Ebola crisis, USAFRICOM deployed Monrovian Mobile Unit hospitals to West Africa in support of Operation United Assistance. USNORTHCOM could deploy similar mobile units to localities where a critical bed shortage is identified by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). DOD could also review whether it has additional bed capacity at U.S. military installations around the country that could be used to supplement local civilian hospitals as appropriate.

2. Ventilators and Other Emergency Equipment—As a first step, DOD should review the national stockpile of ventilators and other appropriate medical equipment. We would also like to know how many are in military Medical Treatment Facilities and how many are in the national stockpile. The Administration should also consider implementing the Defense Production Act to ramp up current production of personal protective equipment, ventilators and other essential items in short supply.

3. Vaccine Development—The U.S. Walter Reed Army Institute of Research maintains a global network of laboratories that could help research, develop, and test a COVID-19
vaccine. In addition, the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command should be actively included in vaccine research, development and testing.

4. Emergency Funds—Military funds have recently been drawn on, despite Congressional opposition, to support construction projects justified by a presidential emergency declaration. During the 2014-2015 Ebola response, excess Overseas Contingency Funds were used to support Operation United Assistance. DOD should identify for Congress now possible funding transfers that may be necessary to support the national response.

5. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE)—ACE funds, planners, and material could help with construction of hospitals and other needed facilities and infrastructure in hard-hit and/or low-capacity areas.

Thank you for your attention to these important questions, please contact Mitchel Hochberg in Congresswoman Speier’s office at 202-225-3531 or Mitchel.hochberg@mail.house.gov with any questions. We look forward to your response by COB Friday, March 20.

Sincerely,

Jackie Speier
John Garamendi
Raúl M. Grijalva
Donald Norcross
Member of Congress
Member of Congress
Member of Congress
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Brian Higgins
Member of Congress
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress
Member of Congress
Sean Casten
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Andy Kim
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

David E. Price
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress
Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Susie Lee  
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

David Trone  
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress
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Lloyd Doggett
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Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

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Daniel T. Kildee
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Brendan F. Boyle
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Cindy Axne
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Suzan DelBene
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Xochitl Torres Small
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Nanette Diaz Barragán
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John Yarmuth
Member of Congress