

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1309

May 19, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

The Honorable Mark Esper
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1300
Dear Secretary Esper:

I write to request that you work with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to make sure the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) is proactively and continually updating the Defense Support of Civil Authorities doctrine to meet the requirements of the deadly coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that has already killed more than 80,000 Americans.

While DoD has made progress implementing its response strategy, including developing tiered testing priorities, the overall response has been reactive and uneven. To address this challenge, DoD should work with CJCS and FEMA to update plans and reaffirm lines of communication to make sure that Defense Support of Civil Authorities continue to serve as a force multiplier in bolstering disaster response capabilities and capacity, particularly as our Nation approaches the start of hurricane season on June 1, 2020.

FEMA has already published its "COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for 2020 Hurricane Season," and DoD should expedite development of concurrent, complementary guidance that considers the following:

1. How troops responding to a natural disaster fit into the priority tiers for testing;
2. How DoD would adjust its supply chain to accommodate changing and expanding demands for personal protective equipment (PPE) in a natural disaster zone;
3. How DoD would execute the evacuation of DoD installations, if necessary to protect people and property, while adhering to public health guidance aimed at lowering the risk of COVID-19 transmission; and
4. How will DoD coordinate with FEMA to close emergency response capability gaps identified in past major disasters?

Please provide my office with an update on development of this DoD guidance prior to June 1, 2020. Thank you in advance for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator