

January 7, 2015

United States Secretary of Defense  
The Honorable Chuck Hagel  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel,

When President Obama announced that the United States would send as many as 3,000 military personnel to West Africa to assist with Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak response efforts, the virus was like a forest fire raging out of control. The virus was ravaging Liberia, and the Liberian government and NGO partners were struggling to address high patient volume and keep pace with the accelerating infection rate. The President's decisive leadership and the intervention of the Department of Defense has saved countless lives and radically changed the trajectory of this crisis. The scale, speed, and scope with which the 101st Airborne intervened were pivotal and impressive, and for that, I commend Major General Volesky and his troops for their important contribution.

The 101st Airborne has provided communications, logistics, and transportation support in Liberia, primarily through the construction of ten temporary Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs), many of which are located in remote locations with little to no access to the transport of building materials, construction equipment, medical supplies, and staff. A 40-member team of Army and Air Force medical trainers has trained more than 1,400 ETU staff and health workers to safely and efficiently run the ETUs and treat patients infected with EVD. Finally, the DoD-built Monrovia Medical Unit (MMU), staffed by the U.S. Public Health Service for the exclusive treatment of EVD responders infected with Ebola, has been particularly important to the brave men and women assisting with the Ebola response effort. An array of health workers, missionaries, and community mobilizers has noted the sense of security that the establishment of the MMU brought in the midst of the dangerous work they were doing.

It is largely because of the United States' extraordinary effort that the number of reported new cases in Liberia has dropped from more than 100 per day to fewer than 10 per day in just three months. This remarkable progress should not mean the end of the U.S. mission in West Africa, but rather, the start of a new phase. As the DoD reassesses its deployment later this month, I recommend against the wholesale recall of all 2,400 of our deployed service members. Instead, I urge a substantial realignment whereby the majority of our military personnel are recalled so that a smaller force can stay until the outbreak is no longer a threat to the region and to the United States. Our strategy should adapt to the changing conditions on the ground and in the months ahead, I urge you to focus on the following issues:

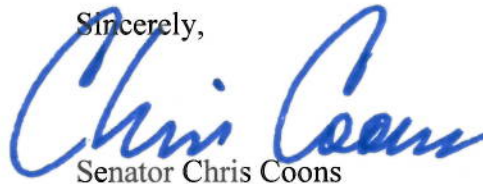
1. Converting our ETUs into sustainable local health clinics to be administered by trained Liberian personnel.

2. Transitioning the mobile laboratories that have proven critical in diagnosing EVD cases. If Ebola is going to be suppressed over the long-term, local EVD-testing capabilities must not only remain available, but be expanded to facilitate testing of malaria, cholera, Lassa fever, and other diseases endemic to the region.
3. Assisting with key infrastructure projects, including the construction of roads that ensure access to health facilities from remote areas.
4. Redirecting some support and training activities to Sierra Leone, where EVD has increasingly overwhelmed health systems.
5. Assisting with the training of Liberian National Police forces to promote increased security and stability throughout the country.
6. Transitioning logistics functions currently being performed by DoD personnel to implementation partners such as the World Food Programme.

The fight against Ebola is far from over. The United States went to West Africa with a strategy that has made a historic difference, but now that strategy should evolve. The best way to protect American lives continues to be the containment and eradication of the Ebola virus in West Africa, so a continued U.S. military presence in West Africa would have my strong support. As you evaluate the future of the DoD mission in Liberia, I hope that you will ensure that the United States' contribution is lasting and sustainable, and that a future intervention of this size and scope is unnecessary.

Americans can be proud of the extraordinary work the Department of Defense and the men and women of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne have done to control the EVD outbreak. I have every confidence in the ability of the brave men and women under your command to continue to help end this crisis, and to ensure Liberia is prepared to fight a future outbreak.

Sincerely,



Senator Chris Coons

cc: Honorable Rajiv Shah  
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