



LEGISLATIVE
AFFAIRS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1300

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

JUN 11 2020

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Secretary, I am responding to your letter dated June 10. The Department is continuing to operate in good faith based on multiple phone conversations between our senior leaders and the Committee, to include calls between you and the Secretary.

Your letter indicated "frustration" in not receiving a response by June 9th to your questions posed in your letter dated June 3rd, however it should be noted most of those questions were answered by the Secretary of the Army on June 8th during a briefing to the Members of the Committee. Further, we had communicated to the committee that a formal written response was forthcoming and was in fact delivered on June 10th.

Based on our ongoing communications regarding your request for a hearing I can confirm that the Secretary accepts your invitation to testify, but ask that in keeping with standard protocol and the bipartisan tradition of the committee, we have some flexibility in scheduling.

Due to pre-existing commitments, we propose a hearing the week of July 6, immediately following the Congressional recess. The Secretary is participating in the virtual NATO Defense Ministers conference the week of June 15, as well as pre-planned visits to initial entry training locations to review COVID mitigation measures. The week of June 22, the Secretary will be traveling to visit NATO partner countries and hold meetings at NATO headquarters.

It has generally been the practice of the congressional defense committees to conduct their oversight duties in a bipartisan manner. This approach has proven invaluable in advancing our Nation's security. In keeping with that bipartisan nature, we ask that this be an 'in-person' hearing as it will undoubtedly add to the candor and straightforwardness this subject demands. Finally, I ask that we work together to ensure the hearing remains focused on this important topic. Now, more than ever, is not the time to upset this time-proven formula.

In closing, communication between the Department of Defense and your committee is a vital component of Congressional oversight. As we coordinate with the White House, I look forward to working with you and your staff, and Ranking Member Thornberry and his staff, to finalize the Committee hearing request.

Robert R. Hood
Assistant Secretary of Defense
for Legislative Affairs

cc:
The Honorable William M. "Mac" Thornberry
Ranking Member