MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Biodefense Vision

Since taking office, President Biden has emphasized the importance of bold approaches to defeat the current coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as transform the Nation’s approach to biodefense. We must prepare to operate in a biological threat environment and support the National biodefense enterprise, both at home and abroad. To support that vision, the Department of Defense (DoD) will prioritize biodefense across the full spectrum of biological threats, from naturally occurring to accidental and deliberate biological incidents.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department’s preparation and response enabled it to protect DoD personnel, safeguard the DoD mission, and support a whole-of-nation response. However, after-action reviews have identified areas for improvement across the DoD biodefense enterprise that must be addressed. Therefore, I direct the Department to continue to fortify our immediate pandemic preparedness and to undertake a comprehensive Biodefense Posture Review (BPR). This review will assess the biological threat landscape and establish the Department’s approach to biodefense, to include clarifying biodefense priorities, roles, responsibilities, authorities, capabilities, and posture.

Three principles will guide the Department’s posture review: 1) Unify efforts through an empowered, collaborative, and integrated approach to biodefense across the Department; 2) Modernize DoD operations to optimize capabilities, capacity, resilience, and readiness; and 3) Synchronize biodefense planning with the Department’s new National Defense Strategy and with the efforts of other Federal departments and agencies and, as appropriate, allies and partners, to support national biodefense efforts in alignment with national goals and strategy.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense will oversee this work and provide implementation guidance for the BPR and pandemic preparedness efforts. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment will co-lead the BPR. Every component across DoD plays a role in biodefense; I expect that the entire Department will play a constructive role in this review.

Working together, the Department will act boldly to continue the fight against COVID-19 while we also prepare for future biological threats. Thank you for your continued service and dedication to meeting and overcoming our Nation’s challenges, both today and into the future.