

MIKE ROGERS, ALABAMA, CHAIRMAN
JOE WILSON, SOUTH CAROLINA
MICHAEL R. TURNER, OHIO
DOUG LAMBORN, COLORADO
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VIRGINIA
AUSTIN SCOTT, GEORGIA
SAM GRAVES, MISSOURI
ELISE M. STEFANIK, NEW YORK
SCOTT DEARLIS, TENNESSEE
TRENT KELLY, MISSISSIPPI
MIKE GALLAGHER, WISCONSIN
MATT GAETZ, FLORIDA
DON BACON, NEBRASKA
JIM BANKS, INDIANA
JACK BERGMAN, MICHIGAN
MICHAEL WALTZ, FLORIDA
MIKE JOHNSON, LOUISIANA
LISA C. MCCLAIN, MICHIGAN
RONNY JACKSON, TEXAS
PAT FALLON, TEXAS
CARLOS A. GIMENEZ, FLORIDA
NANCY MACE, SOUTH CAROLINA
BRAD FINSTAD, MINNESOTA
DALE W. STRONG, ALABAMA
MORGAN LUTTRELL, TEXAS
JENNIFER A. KIGGANS, VIRGINIA
NICK LALOTA, NEW YORK
JAMES C. MOYLAN, GUAM
MARK ALFORD, MISSOURI
CORY MILLS, FLORIDA
RICHARD MCCORMICK, GEORGIA

CHRIS VIESON, STAFF DIRECTOR

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

ADAM SMITH, WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER
JOE COURTNEY, CONNECTICUT
JOHN GARAMENDI, CALIFORNIA
DONALD NORCROSS, NEW JERSEY
RUBEN GALLEGOS, ARIZONA
SETH MOULTON, MASSACHUSETTS
SALUD O. CARBALLO, CALIFORNIA
HO KHANNA, CALIFORNIA
BILL KEATING, MASSACHUSETTS
ANDY KIM, NEW JERSEY
CHRISY HOULAHAN, PENNSYLVANIA
ELISSA SLOTKIN, MICHIGAN
MIKE SHERRILL, NEW JERSEY
VERONICA ESCOBAR, TEXAS
JARED F. GOLDEN, MAINE
SARA JACOBS, CALIFORNIA
MARILYN STRICKLAND, WASHINGTON
PATRICK RYAN, NEW YORK
JEFF JACKSON, NORTH CAROLINA
GABE VASQUEZ, NEW MEXICO
CHRISTOPHER R. DELUZIO, PENNSYLVANIA
JILL N. TOKUDA, HAWAII
DONALD G. DAVIS, NORTH CAROLINA
JENNIFER L. MCCLELLAN, VIRGINIA
TERRI A. SEWELL, ALABAMA
STEVEN HORSFORD, NEVADA
JIMMY PANETTA, CALIFORNIA
MARC A. VEASEY, TEXAS

BRIAN GARRETT, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

January 9, 2024

The Honorable Lloyd J Austin III
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1010 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

I was recently informed of your hospitalization following surgical complications. I wish you a speedy recovery.

My colleagues and I have grave concerns about the handling of your absence and hospitalization. It is unacceptable that neither the Department of Defense (“Department”), the White House, nor the Congress were accurately informed of your position or capacity. With wars in Ukraine and Israel, the idea that the White House and even your own Deputy did not understand the nature of your condition is patently unacceptable.

Everything from on-going counterterrorism operations to nuclear command and control relies on a clear understanding of the Secretary’s decision-making capacity. The Department is a robust institution, and it is designed to function under attack by our enemies, but it is not designed for a Secretary who conceals being incapacitated.

In order to understand how this outrageous situation and lack of disclosure transpired for so long, please promptly answer the following information and produce related documents regarding your hospitalization:

- 1) Occurrences of any medical sedation or general anesthesia that occurred between January 1, 2024, through the time you resumed your duties as Secretary of Defense;
- 2) Any orders or instructions issued by you or a member of your staff to inform or not inform any other person of your hospitalization or medical condition;
- 3) A detailed account of your actions and intent in transferring your duties to Deputy Secretary Hicks and the context conveyed to her about the reason for the transfer of

- duties;
- 4) An accounting of all official actions taken or approved by you during your hospitalization;
 - 5) A list of all military operations carried out in the United States Central Command area of responsibility from December 22, 2023 to January 8, 2024 while you were not acting in the role of Secretary of Defense;
 - 6) Whether Deputy Secretary Hicks took any action as Secretary during the time she performed your duties and the nature of such actions;
 - 7) A record of all other periods where any other person assumed the duties of Secretary of Defense that coincided with medical procedures or other medical activities rendering you unable to perform such duties;
 - 8) All written communications concerning your health, medical procedures, whereabouts, operational capability to lead the Department between you, your staff, or other Department of Defense staff from the time of your hospitalization on January 1, 2024 to today, January 9, 2024; and,
 - 9) All Department communications from January 1 through January 9, 2024, with the White House or Biden Administration officials regarding your health or operational control of the Department of Defense.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this request. The Committee on Armed Services, under Rule X, clause 1 of the Rules of the House of Representatives (“House Rules”), maintains oversight jurisdiction over the Department of Defense generally. Moreover, under the House Rules, the Committee on Armed Services derives its authority to conduct oversight from, among other things, clause 2(b)(1) of Rule X (relating to general oversight responsibilities), clause 3(b) of Rule X (relating to special oversight functions), and clause 1(b) of rule XI (relating to investigations and studies).

To arrange delivery of documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Ryan Breitenbach of the Committee on Armed Services Majority Staff.

Sincerely,



Mike Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services

cc: The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services