

# United States Senate

April 23, 2020

The Honorable Mark Esper  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Pentagon Defense  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Esper,

As our great Nation faces the challenges of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize the diligent and swift action taken by the Department of Defense to assist our states and their citizens as well as its sister federal agencies and offices, specifically, the Department of Health and Human Services and the State Department.


We recognize that while extending strategic and operational support including the deployment of medical task forces, National Guard units and hospital ships, it is imperative to remain steadfast in our essential duty to defend our Nation and continue executing the National Defense Strategy. To achieve that strategy we need an agile and ready force capable of defeating and deterring our adversaries which poses a unique challenge requiring the careful balance of continued training while mitigating risk of exposure to COVID-19.


While we support your Department's tireless and crucial work, we ask that you keep us informed of the time and resources required to recover from the disruption of routine training and any shortages of critical occupational specialties. We understand that recovery will not be instantaneous and may take months or require you to evaluate future training and operations.

We also believe that the current circumstances provide you a unique opportunity to evaluate what training is necessary and how it is conducted – a process that would normally be obstructed by institutional norms – to modernize our military's operational functionality to better use and allocate personnel and logistical resources.

Again, thank you for your commitment and steady leadership in a time of crisis and we look to working with you to find solutions and maintain the readiness of our force.

Sincerely,

  
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Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



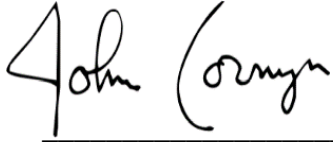
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Rick Scott  
United States Senator




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Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator



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John Cornyn  
United States Senator



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Kelly Loeffler  
United States Senator



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Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator