

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2021

Hon. Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Norris Cochran
Acting Secretary of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Austin and Acting Secretary Cochran,

We write to register our strong opposition to any plans by the Department of Defense (DOD) or Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to utilize military installations to house illegal immigrants as a result of the ongoing border crisis. Our military bases must be used as intended, to train and prepare our troops to defend the homeland, not house illegal aliens.

As the representatives for Fort Hood, one of the largest military installations in the United States, we ask you to reaffirm that our military installations exist to project power around the world and to serve our men and women in uniform and their families — not house illegal immigrants. Fort Hood has already suffered two shootings, including one terrorist attack. This military base is clearly a target and our country cannot afford to further burden it with the duties of running a safe house. Additionally, the presence of illegal immigrants at The Great Place as the COVID pandemic continues could endanger the health of servicemembers and their families as well as impair the ability to train and rapidly deploy our military to respond quickly to a crisis. Surrounding communities would also feel the detrimental effects of this shortsighted decision without any input.

Sadly, this is not the first time we have addressed this troubling issue. In 2016, we secured language in the National Defense Authorization Act to prohibit the Secretary of Defense from signing a memorandum of agreement with another Federal agency to provide a vacant facility for purposes of temporary housing support unless the Secretary first submits to the Committees on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and Senate a certification that the provision of the facility will not negatively affect military training, operations, readiness, or other military requirements, including National Guard and Reserve readiness. To date, no such certification has been made to the aforementioned committees of jurisdiction.

We respectfully request your immediate attention and quick response to this matter, and to suspend any actions currently underway to enact policies that would be in clear violation of current law. We recognize the ongoing crisis on the Southwestern border and would like to work with you to expeditiously resolve the issue. However, our military installations simply cannot be used in this manner, and our work will continue to ensure that no resources are directed away from the training and readiness of our armed forces.

In God We Trust,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

Roger Williams
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "J" at the beginning.

John Carter
Member of Congress