

January 23, 2023

Ms. Seileen Mullen  
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs  
1200 Defense, Pentagon  
Room 3E1070  
Washington, DC 20301

Major General Telita Crosland  
Director, Defense Health Agency  
7700 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 5101  
Falls Church, VA 22042-5101

Dear Assistant Secretary Mullen and Major General Crosland:

I write to you with concerns about the Defense Health Agency's (DHA) recent decision to cease providing care to Department of Defense (DoD) contractors and other civilians at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, around 4,000 individuals at Yokosuka are uncertain about their ability to access healthcare.<sup>2</sup> I am concerned that this is indicative of larger problems of access to healthcare for DoD-affiliated civilians on U.S. military bases in Japan, where non-TRICARE recipients were also cut off from access to medical services at Yokota Air Base. Beginning in August 2022, the 374<sup>th</sup> Medical Group at Yokota Air Base limited routine pediatric services and chronic medical condition management to those enrolled in TRICARE Prime only.<sup>3</sup>

DoD regulations make clear that military treatment facilities (MTFs) prioritize active-duty servicemembers and their family members enrolled in TRICARE Prime.<sup>4</sup> Other eligible persons, including civilians not enrolled in TRICARE, are able to access care as space is available.<sup>5</sup>

I understand that the decision to cut off civilian access to medical care at Yokosuka stems from concerns that this hospital is unable to meet the needs of servicemembers and other TRICARE recipients.<sup>6</sup> But it is unclear whether DHA has provided civilians the support and advice they

---

<sup>1</sup> Stars and Stripes, "Lack of medical care for civilians raises concerns at US Navy base in Japan," September 30, 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2022-09-30/naval-hospital-yokosuka-civilian-care-7521179.html>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Stars and Stripes, "US air base in Tokyo sends civilian children off base for health care," Seth Robson, June 24, 2022, [https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia\\_pacific/2022-06-24/pediatrics-yokota-tokyo-air-force-6442404.html](https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2022-06-24/pediatrics-yokota-tokyo-air-force-6442404.html).

<sup>4</sup> Congressional Research Service, "Military Medical Care: Frequently Asked Questions," Bryce H.P. Mendez, October, 25, 2021, p. 23, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45399.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Stars and Stripes, "Lack of medical care for civilians raises concerns at US Navy base in Japan," September 30, 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2022-09-30/naval-hospital-yokosuka-civilian-care-7521179.html>.

need to transition to receiving care through telehealth and at off-base locations. For example, at a September 2022 town hall meeting at the Yokosuka base, civilians expressed concerns about language barriers and whether local hospitals would deny them care.<sup>7</sup>

Press reports and a public petition indicate that at least some of these civilians did not feel like they had adequate notice about these changes in access to MTF care.<sup>8</sup> Civilians have expressed concerns they will lose access to prescriptions<sup>9</sup> and be unable to independently navigate Japan's healthcare system without DoD's assistance.<sup>10</sup> They also express concern that Japanese healthcare facilities and providers will be able to turn them away if they do not have sufficient resources, including language support, to treat these American civilians.<sup>11</sup> This decision also creates an unanticipated financial hardship for civilians since most host nation providers typically expect patients to cover the cost of their healthcare up front or upon discharge.<sup>12</sup> To make matters worse, DoD appears to be blaming civilians for having health needs in the first place, claiming that, "[b]ecause government employees and contractors are not pre-screened prior to assignment in Japan, they frequently arrive in country with health conditions of the type and severity for which the MTF cannot provide care safely or for which would require the MTF to shift resources from care for ADSMs [Active Duty Service Members] and ADFMs [Active Duty Family Members]."<sup>13</sup>

Under the Section 715 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the Secretary of Defense must notify Congress in advance if there is a modification to "the scope of medical care provided at a military medical treatment facility, or the beneficiary population served at the facility."<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the Secretary must also provide a "transition plan for the continuity of health care" if inpatient capabilities are reduced at MTFs abroad.<sup>15</sup> These provisions went into effect when President Biden signed the NDAA on December 23, 2022,<sup>16</sup> and given the changes put in place at the Yokosuka facility, I expect to receive this formal notice and this transition plan as rapidly as possible so that affected civilians receive the support they need after this loss of care. Providing the best possible services to support service

---

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Stars and Stripes, "Lack of medical care for civilians raises concerns at US Navy base in Japan," September 30, 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2022-09-30/naval-hospital-yokosuka-civilian-care-7521179.html>; Stars and Stripes, "'A problem unique to Japan': DOD civilians warn of looming loss of military health care," Kelly Agee, October 12, 2022, [https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia\\_pacific/2022-10-12/dod-civilian-military-health-care-japan-7660246.html](https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2022-10-12/dod-civilian-military-health-care-japan-7660246.html).

<sup>9</sup> Stars and Stripes, "Lack of medical care for civilians raises concerns at US Navy base in Japan," September 30, 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2022-09-30/naval-hospital-yokosuka-civilian-care-7521179.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Stars and Stripes, "'A problem unique to Japan': DOD civilians warn of looming loss of military health care," Kelly Agee, October 12, 2022, [https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia\\_pacific/2022-10-12/dod-civilian-military-health-care-japan-7660246.html](https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2022-10-12/dod-civilian-military-health-care-japan-7660246.html).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Information Paper (IP) on Access to Care at the 374th Medical Group (374 MDG) at Yokota Air Base for Civilian Employees and Contractors, p. 2, [On file with the Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren].

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Public Law 117-263, Sec. 715.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, H.R. 7776, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7776/all-actions?overview=closed#tabs>.

members and civilians deployed overseas enhances readiness, retention, and morale. To better understand the Defense Health Agency's decision and efforts to support these civilians, I ask you to answer the following questions no later than February 6, 2023:

1. What support services or coordination of care are available for civilians who are no longer able to receive MTF care? What is DoD's expectation for how these individuals will receive care without access to the Yokosuka facility?
2. How many requests for leave for medical care has DoD received since making this decision?
  - a. How many requests have been approved?
3. What information has DHA communicated to the Office of Personnel Management and/or Federal Employees Health Benefit Plans to help policyholders cover upfront costs for care or expedite reimbursement for care received?
4. Will DHA-employed or contracted translators be available to civilians to help coordinate care?
5. How did DHA assess that all or some civilians could no longer be seen at MTFs at Yokosuka and Yokota Air Base, respectively?<sup>17</sup> In responding, please include whether the assessment included a review of the following information:
  - a. A cost-benefit analysis and what this analysis found;
  - b. The impact of how access to healthcare concerns may affect civilian recruiting and retention for roles in Japan;
  - c. The roles of the impacted civilians—including the families of the children whose healthcare access was cut off at Yokota Air Base—in serving the military bases;
  - d. The impact of potential increases in civilian position vacancies if civilians leave after losing healthcare access, including its impact on military readiness and impact on military family support services such as child care and educators;
  - e. The impact of increased costs associated with mismanagement or delay of care for chronic health conditions civilians may have;
  - f. Any additional considerations from the assessment and how the assessment was conducted.
6. What will be the anticipated impact to third-party collections based on this DHA policy change and reduced MTF access for civilians?
7. Hospital executive officer Captain Jenny Burkett said she expected the hospital would be able to make more space for civilians in the future.<sup>18</sup> When does DHA estimate this will be the case?

---

<sup>17</sup> Stars and Stripes, "Lack of medical care for civilians raises concerns at US Navy base in Japan," September 30, 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2022-09-30/naval-hospital-yokosuka-civilian-care-7521179.html>; Stars and Stripes, "'US air base in Tokyo sends civilian children off base for health care,'" Seth Robson, June 24, 2022, [https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia\\_pacific/2022-06-24/pediatrics-yokota-tokyo-air-force-6442404.html](https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2022-06-24/pediatrics-yokota-tokyo-air-force-6442404.html).

<sup>18</sup> Stars and Stripes, "Lack of medical care for civilians raises concerns at US Navy base in Japan," September 30, 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2022-09-30/naval-hospital-yokosuka-civilian-care-7521179.html>.

8. Which U.S. bases in Japan have received a reduction in health care access for civilians over the past 5 years? Please explain the nature of these reductions.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



---

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator