

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 18, 2018

John Bolton
National Security Advisor of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Bolton:

We are writing regarding reports that last week, retired Rear Admiral Timothy Ziemer, "the head of global security on the White House's National Security Council, left the Trump Administration."¹ Mr. Ziemer's departure appears to represent "a downgrading of global health security," and means that "no senior administration official is now focused solely on global health security"² and that "it is unclear ... who at the White House would be in charge of a pandemic."³

This is a troubling report. Mr. Ziemer reportedly left the White House after your "reshuffling of the NSC ... which ... eliminates the office Ziemer led."⁴ It comes amid continuing concerns that the nation and the world are unprepared for pandemic outbreaks or other global public health threats,⁵ as the Trump Administration is proposing significant cuts to funding global public health and pandemic detection and prevention,⁶ and just days after the Democratic Republic of Congo declared a new outbreak of the

¹ Huffington Post, Sudden Departure of White House Global Health Security Has Experts Worried, Lauren Weber, May 9, 2018 (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tim-ziemer-global-health-security-leaves_us_5af37dfbe4b0859d11d02290?h9k).

² Washington Post, Top White House official in charge of pandemic response exits abruptly, Lena H. Sun, May 10, 2018 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2018/05/10/top-white-house-official-in-charge-of-pandemic-response-exits-abruptly/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.2218c50638a3).

³ Beth Cameron, quoted in Huffington Post, Sudden Departure of White House Global Health Security Has Experts Worried, Lauren Weber, May 9, 2018 (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tim-ziemer-global-health-security-leaves_us_5af37dfbe4b0859d11d02290?h9k).

⁴ Beth Cameron, quoted in Huffington Post, Sudden Departure of White House Global Health Security Has Experts Worried, Lauren Weber, May 9, 2018 (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tim-ziemer-global-health-security-leaves_us_5af37dfbe4b0859d11d02290?h9k).

⁵ See, e.g., Washington Post, Outgoing CDC chief talks about agency's successes - and his greatest fear, Jan. 16, 2017 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2017/01/16/outgoing-cdc-chief-talks-about-the-agencys-successes-and-his-greatest-fear/?utm_term=.531ad0d16809).

⁶ NPR, Trump Proposes Deep Cuts in Detecting Disease Outbreaks Worldwide, Michaeleen Doucleef, Feb. 12, 2018 (<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/02/12/585119417/trump-proposes-deep-cuts-in-detecting-disease-outbreaks-worldwide>).

deadly Ebola virus⁷ - an outbreak that quickly “spread to a ‘new phase’” after the discovery of an Ebola case in a major urban areas.⁸ The threat of a pandemic is serious, and it’s important families know we have a vigilant and experienced team in place and working to protect us against such public health threats.

We have, on numerous occasions in the past 16 months, written to Trump Administration officials to raise our ongoing concerns about global public health preparedness and response efforts and have yet to receive satisfying answers.⁹ The departure of Mr. Ziemer presents us with new concerns. To address these concerns, we ask that you provide us with a staff-level briefing on the Administration’s global public health work no later than June 1, 2018. We also ask that, prior to this briefing, you provide us with answers to the following questions:

1. Why did Mr. Ziemer depart the National Security Council (NSC)?
2. What current structure is in place at the NSC to address global health security?
3. With Mr. Ziemer’s departure, who is the top official in the White House responsible for global health security? What are this individual’s qualifications, and what specific public health experience does this individual have? Is this person expected to fill the role for the long term? If not, what steps are being taken to identify the person who will?
4. To what extent and how often does this individual meet with key leaders from the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, Food and Drug Administration, and other public health agencies? To what extent does this individual coordinate efforts between public health agencies and other federal agencies involved in global health security, including the Department of Defense and the U.S. Agency for International Development?
5. What mechanisms are in place to determine global health security funding and policy needs?
6. Reports indicate that Andrea Hall, who “leads the National Security Council’s weapons of mass destruction unit” and Dr. Luciana Borio are leading the NSC

⁷ CNN, Ebola Outbreak Declared in Democratic Republic of Congo, Susan Scutti and Debra Goldschmidt, Feb. 9, 2018 (<https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/08/health/ebola-outbreak-who-bn/index.html>),


⁸ Huffington Post, Ebola Case in Urban Area Leaves Experts Worried About the Outbreak’s ‘New Phase’, Lauren Weber, May 16, 2018 (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/democratic-republic-of-congo-ebola_us_5afca885e4b06a3fb50d5e87).

⁹ See, e.g., Letter from Sens. Warren and Murray and Reps. Pallone, Green, and DeGette to HHS Secretary Price and Acting CDC Director Schuchat, Mar. 13, 2017, https://www.warren.senate.gov/files/documents/2017_3_13_Letter_to_CDC.pdf; Letter from Sens. Warren and Murray and Reps. Pallone, Green, and DeGette to CDC Director Fitzgerald, Nov. 3, 2017, <https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/110317%20-%20CDC%20-%20Flu.pdf>.

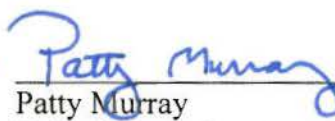
response to the Ebola outbreak.¹⁰ Is this accurate? If so, why was the NSC reorganized in this fashion? Which individuals are supporting their efforts, and which individuals are representing the United States at the World Health Organization Emergency Committee meeting on Ebola that is being held today?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Brian Cohen of Senator Warren's staff at 202-224-4543 or Elizabeth Letter of Senator Murray's staff at 202-224-0767 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator

¹⁰ Huffington Post, Ebola Case in Urban Area Leaves Experts Worried About the Outbreak's 'New Phase', Lauren Weber, May 16, 2018 (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/democratic-republic-of-congo-ebola_us_5afca885e4b06a3fb50d5e87).