

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 29, 2023

Brendan Owens
Assistant Secretary of Defense
Energy, Installations, and Environment
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Assistant Secretary Owens:

We write concerned about the recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report¹ to the Armed Services Committees detailing poor living conditions in military barracks. This report's findings describe several deficiencies of the Department of Defense's (DoD) management of military barracks including DoD does not reliably assess conditions, DoD does not have complete funding information to make informed decisions, and DoD conducts insufficient oversight.

We understand the U.S. government operates nearly 9,000 barracks across the world, many of which are aging and over 50 years old. However, the aforementioned GAO report detailing mold, inoperable air conditioning units, pests, and broken fire alarms is completely unacceptable. Our service members put their country and the mission ahead of themselves. We must ensure the U.S. government and DoD is taking care of our soldiers, particularly our new recruits.

Our military is already facing an unprecedented recruitment crisis and poor housing conditions will only exacerbate recruitment and retention issues. We are committed to working with DoD to rectify these problems while also maintaining rigorous oversight of the Pentagon. As members of the House Armed Services Committee, improving military housing is a top priority and will continue to be a critical part in shaping future National Defense Authorization Acts.

For these reasons we request your response to the following questions:

- 1) The GAO report mentioned DoD does not reliably assess conditions of barracks. What is DoD doing to correct these shortfalls?
- 2) Has DoD considered requiring the same condition of barracks assessment for all the services and the same frequency of assessment among all the services?

The GAO report mentions DoD does not have complete funding information to make informed decisions. The report states, "DOD did not know how much it spent on housing allowances for service members who would normally be required to live in barracks."

¹ Military Barracks, Poor Living Conditions Undermine Quality of Life and Readiness
<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-105797.pdf>

- 3) What is DoD doing to develop or clarify guidance in order for DoD to have complete funding information as it relates to funding for barracks?
- 4) The GAO report states that DoD conducts insufficient oversight of military barracks. What is DoD doing to increase oversight? Has the DoD guidance that allows services to waive barracks from complying with standards in the DoD Housing Manual contributed to the lack of oversight of military barracks?

We request a response to these questions by October 10, 2023. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Mark Alford
Member of Congress



Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



Don Davis
Member of Congress



James Moylan
Member of Congress



Jim Banks
Member of Congress



Mike Gallagher
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Mike Turner
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Rich McCormick, M.D., MBA
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CC:

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