

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 20, 2018

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1100 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Mattis:

We understand that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is considering using Department of Defense (DOD) sites to temporarily house unaccompanied migrant children. We write to request assurances that Members of Congress will have access to any DOD lands and facilities, including those on military bases, being used to house unaccompanied migrant children to facilitate appropriate and necessary Congressional oversight.

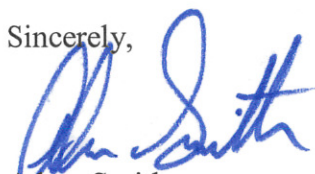
Pursuant to requests from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) at HHS, it is our understanding that DOD provides information about potential facility and land options for HHS to consider for housing unaccompanied migrant children. While we recognize that these children are in the custody of HHS, we expect DOD to work with HHS to ensure that Members of Congress will be able to exercise Congressional oversight over any housing of unaccompanied migrant children on DOD property. Given the expected continued increase in the number of children in the custody of ORR, and the importance of ensuring appropriate care and safety of these children, it is essential that Members of Congress have access to these facilities even in circumstances where short-notice is provided.

The Administration's "zero tolerance policy" is simply cruel and inhumane. It is unconscionable that children are being separated from their parents at the border, many of whom are legally seeking asylum or humanitarian aid from violence they face in their home country. This abhorrent policy does nothing to improve our national security or address the factors that led these families to flee their home country. It is detrimental to our standing in the world and directly counter to the values our country was founded on. We will continue to fight against the separation of children from their families.

Congress must be able to conduct direct oversight to ensure these children are receiving the care they need and deserve while they are in the custody of the federal government. Given the Administration's continued implementation of this objectionable policy, we request your confirmation that Members of Congress will have access to DOD sites selected by HHS for temporary housing of migrant children.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee



Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee