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June 27, 2006

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The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

Many scientists agree that the world could experience another influenza pandemic. Some scientists fear that the H5N1 influenza virus currently circulating in birds in Asia, Europe, and Africa may mutate into a human-to-human transmissible strain and spark the next influenza pandemic. The impact of an influenza pandemic would be pervasive and have significant implications not only for society and the economy, but for our nation's security as well.

In May 2006 the Administration released its *Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza*, which details actions that the U.S. government plans to take to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic. The Implementation Plan requires federal departments to develop their own pandemic influenza plans that detail how the department will fulfill its responsibilities identified in the Implementation Plan as well as how the department will ensure employee safety, continuity of operations, and communications in the event of a pandemic.

The Department of Defense (DOD) has almost 3 million active duty and reserve military personnel, civilian employees, and contractor personnel performing missions around the world, as well as many dependents and beneficiaries living around the world. Additionally, DOD will likely be needed to provide support as part of a government wide response to an influenza pandemic. Accordingly, we request that GAO conduct a study to address the following questions:

1. To what extent has DOD planned and prepared to protect its military and civilian personnel, including contractors, dependents, and beneficiaries in the United States and abroad in the event of an influenza pandemic?

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2. To what extent has DOD planned and prepared for its civil support role in the United States and humanitarian assistance role abroad in the event of an influenza pandemic?

Please contact Susie Schulte of Chairman Davis' staff at (202) 225-5074 or Sarah Despres of Mr. Waxman's staff at (202) 225-5051 to further discuss timeframes for reporting and interim briefings on the progress of your work.

Sincerely,



Tom Davis
Chairman



Henry Waxman
Ranking Member