

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3302

October 21, 2014

Dr. Tom Frieden
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Dear Dr. Frieden,

As Members of Congress, we write you today deeply concerned with the administration's unwillingness to restrict travel into the United States during the transmission of the Ebola epidemic. On September 20, 2014 – a person who was infected with Ebola entered the United States on a commercial airline flight. On October 6, 2014, you received a letter sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Customs and Border Protection agency (CBP) demanding stricter guidelines for international airlines with connecting flights from Africa into the United States. As of October 14th, 2014, the Ebola threat in our country continued to grow as two Texas nurses responsible for treating the first Ebola victim, were diagnosed with this deadly disease. The Ebola threat continues to escalate in our country and to date, the administration has only promised to attack this threat; however, they are failing to implement meaningful travel restrictions.

Ebola is a national security threat to our country - and this lack of restriction is unacceptable.

On October 16, 2014, the U.S. House of Representatives hosted a hearing on the Committee of Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, in order to gain the perspective of the federal government agencies involved in containing this deadly disease. During this hearing, Congress discovered that all agencies involved were unaware as to the number of flights being used to provide aid in infected African countries, and then flown back into the United States. This ambiguity is unacceptable particularly from federal agencies that are unwilling to consider travel restrictions.

North Carolina is home to two international commercial airports located in Raleigh and Charlotte. Raleigh permits three connecting international flights from Africa into the United States through: London, Toronto, and Cancun. Therefore, if the administration refuses to consider and issue emergency travel restrictions, we are introducing a risky situation that could have otherwise been avoided. These risks remain even with the newly announced efforts to have all passengers initially arrive in the United States at five designated airports, before departing to other American destinations.

On behalf of our constituents, we have several questions regarding the current procedure in place to protect our nation's citizens from this tragic epidemic. During our committee hearing, Congress learned that enforcing a ban on international travel was not an administrative option for containing Ebola. I respectfully ask that you answer the following questions:

1. Specifically, who from the CDC granted Mrs. Vinson permission to travel via a national commercial flight?

2. If the President has executive authority to grant a travel ban for flights leaving affected African countries, would the CDC comply with this ban?
3. Will all hospitals be allowed to obtain the hazmat style of protective equipment for the use of intensive care staff?

As representatives, we demand that the administration and the CDC work together in order to enforce travel restrictions to protect our American citizens. We are deeply concerned with the current national process in place for international travelers entering into the United States from Ebola-plagued countries. Therefore, we implore you to update existing guidelines and create an emergency action plan with CDC experts involved.

We look forward to reviewing your response.

Sincerely,



Renee Ellmers (NC-02)
Member of Congress



Robert Pittenger (NC-09)
Member of Congress

Cc:

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