

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0550

May 12, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

I am deeply concerned about the Department of Defense's recent decision to deny a permit request to AMVETS for the purpose of the annual Memorial Day ride in remembrance of POW/MIA veterans in Washington, DC.

As you know, the organization submitted a request for a permit to use the Pentagon parking lot as a staging area for participants to safely gather and begin the motorcycle procession to the nearby memorials that stand in honor of our nation's fallen warriors. The Pentagon approved the permit in March and then rescinded the decision without explanation days later. On April 30, the Pentagon formally denied the permit, leaving event organizers without an available alternative.

It is troubling that the Department would approve and then deny a long-standing request without conversation or explanation.¹ This rescindment suggests interference in the standard consideration process. The rejection letter issued on April 30, cited the high COVID transmission rate in the event area of Arlington, Virginia. The concern regarding COVID, however, is belied by the Administration's very actions.

First, Pentagon parking lots are currently used daily for parking by hundreds of DOD employees and contractors. Second, the President staged his own drive-in rally on April 30 in Duluth, Georgia, where the COVID positivity rate was significantly higher than Arlington. In fact, the cases per 100,000 people were 2,530 greater and total COVID cases were 71,312 greater. Third, CDC guidance on large gatherings recommends attending drive-in events as an alternative to indoor events.²

Integral to the checks and balances system of American governance, Congress has the authority to inquiry and investigate actions of the Executive Branch. Oversight by Congress is exercised to ensure the proper use of resources in accordance with the Constitution, federal law, and rules.

¹ [Organizers say Pentagon is jeopardizing Memorial Day motorcycle ride - Veterans - Stripes](#)

² [Large Gatherings | CDC](#)

For the above reasons, please promptly provide my office the following documents relating to the permit request by the AMVETS organization for the event on May 30:

- All emails, records, communications, and documents, between officials or agents of the Department of Defense regarding the AMVETS' permit request from January 20, 2021 through April 30, 2021;
- All emails, records, communications, and documents with White House officials and/or White House staff from January 2021 to the present date;
- Communications to other federal, state, local agencies, departments, and offices; and,
- Documents sufficient to account for meetings, phone calls, virtual meetings regarding the request to include names of participants, titles, dates, locations, and meeting or conversation notes.

Please respond no later than May 19, 2021. The documents requested above may be sent directly to Amy Surber on my staff, at Amy.Surber2@mail.house.gov. The office will accept electronic, rolling production as the response documents are gathered.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darrell Issa', written in a cursive style.

DARRELL ISSA
Member of Congress