THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1200 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

HEALTH AFFAIRS

MAR 28 2007

The Honorable Ben Nelson
Chairman, Subcommittee on Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to forward this report as requested in House Report 109-464 on the extent to which the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is integrated into the Military Health System's Office of Transformation (MHS-OT). The committee is concerned that the Office of Transformation should be working closely with VA on issues that affect active duty service members (ADSMs), specifically seamless transition and co-location of facilities.

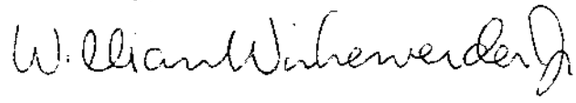
The MHS-OT Charter and Medical Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Roadmap do not specifically mention any tasks or authorities to work with the VA. When working on specific initiatives, such as Integration of Graduate Medical Education where the VA is a stakeholder, the MHS-OT has worked closely with the initiative leads to ensure VA representation. The charter and QDR did not contain tasks specific to seamless transition of ADSMs or co-location of DoD and VA facilities.

The VA-DoD joint strategic plan does however, specifically address seamless transition and co-location of VA and DoD facilities. Both of these activities are managed by the separate Health and Benefits Executive Council and regularly reported to the Joint Executive Council (JEC) which is co-chaired by the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) and the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The MHS-OT is scheduled to be disestablished in October 2007, consistent with its original charter. Accountability for all of the active QDR initiatives will be transferred to offices of primary responsibility within the MHS. The JEC will continue to provide oversight for seamless transition and co-location of VA and DoD facilities in an effort to provide the best care for our service members and their families.

Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,



William Winkenwerder, Jr., MD

cc:
The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member