THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1200 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

HEALTH AFFAIRS

FEB 2 2007

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0552

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter provides an interim report to Congress on the requirement in Section 737 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006. Section 737 requests the Secretary of Defense conduct a study of adverse health events that may be associated with the use of anti-malarial drugs, including Mefloquine, also known as Lariam.

To accomplish the study, we proceeded with four deliberate activities, three of which are complete. First, the Armed Forces Epidemiology Board recommended a design for the study. Second, the Deployment Health Research Center studied the health outcomes after Mefloquine use among US service members. Finally, we commissioned two studies by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. The first study is complete and addresses suicides in deployed and recently deployed service members. The second is a larger case-control epidemiological study to understand better the myriad of potential attributable risk factors associated with military suicides, including anti-malarials. Use of Mefloquine will be one of the factors assessed in this study. The projected completion date is November 2007 with a subsequent final report to Congress in March 2008.

I am committed to assuring that our service members continue to receive the care they need and deserve. Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,

William Winkenwerder, Jr., MD

Enclosures:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Ranking Member