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

HEALTH AFFAIRS

SEP 15 2009

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter reports to Congress on the requirement in the Senate Committee on Appropriations report (111-20) accompanying the original bill (S. 1054) making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2009.

As mentioned in the Senate report, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs provided interim guidance for baseline pre-deployment neurocognitive functional assessments on May 28, 2008, directing the Military Services to administer pre-deployment automated neurocognitive assessments for all Service members before they deploy. As an interim measure, the Department of Defense (DoD) selected the Automated Neuropsychological Assessment Metric (ANAM), a neuropsychological assessment tool developed by the U.S. Army, to satisfy the requirement. This selection was based on more than two decades of use of this tool to assess human performance and neurocognitive function within DoD and an analysis of alternatives assessment. The computerized ANAM, however, does require additional development to ensure its full operational capability for obtaining population-based assessments.

The ANAM tool currently operates on stand-alone notebooks or desktop computers, which are not connected to the DoD network. More than 300,000 multiservice baseline assessments collected to date will be migrated into the electronic medical record through the neurocognitive assessment tool (NCAT) initiative. These capabilities will improve access to baseline assessments and make both baseline and post-injury NCAT results part of the electronic medical record, thereby enhancing medical care to Service members. The NCAT system includes web capabilities and is currently under development with an anticipated delivery date of February 2010. The exact delivery date may vary depending on evaluation results.

At the same time, DoD continues studies that will inform the potential modification of the existing ANAM tool or the selection of an alternative computer-based

cognitive test. Because NCAT is modular, it can accommodate alternative test options if the computer-based tool changes as a result of evolving scientific research.

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

Sincerely,

Ellen P. Embrey
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Force Health Protection and Readiness)
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member

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

HEALTH AFFAIRS

SEP 15 2009

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
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Performing the Duties of the
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(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member

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

HEALTH AFFAIRS

SEP 15 2009

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Sincerely,

Ellen P. Embrey
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Force Health Protection and Readiness)
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Lindsey O. Graham
Ranking Member

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

SEP 15 2009

HEALTH AFFAIRS

The Honorable Susan Davis
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Military Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

This letter reports to Congress on the requirement in the Senate Committee on Appropriations report (111-20) accompanying the original bill (S. 1054) making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2009.

As mentioned in the Senate report, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs provided interim guidance for baseline pre-deployment neurocognitive functional assessments on May 28, 2008, directing the Military Services to administer pre-deployment automated neurocognitive assessments for all Service members before they deploy. As an interim measure, the Department of Defense (DoD) selected the Automated Neuropsychological Assessment Metric (ANAM), a neuropsychological assessment tool developed by the U.S. Army, to satisfy the requirement. This selection was based on more than two decades of use of this tool to assess human performance and neurocognitive function within DoD and an analysis of alternatives assessment. The computerized ANAM, however, does require additional development to ensure its full operational capability for obtaining population-based assessments.

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Sincerely,

Ellen P. Embrey
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Force Health Protection and Readiness)
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Joe Wilson
Ranking Member

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

SEP 15 2009

HEALTH AFFAIRS

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Sincerely,

Ellen P. Embrey
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Force Health Protection and Readiness)
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member

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

SEP 15 2009

HEALTH AFFAIRS

The Honorable John P. Murtha
Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Sincerely,

Ellen P. Embrey
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Force Health Protection and Readiness)
Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable C. W. Bill Young
Ranking Member

Senate Report 110-20
Fiscal Year 2009, Supplemental Appropriations

The Department of Defense requires pre-deployment Neurocognitive Assessment Tests [NCAT] for all Service members prior to their next deployment. NCATs measure cognitive performance areas most likely affected by mild traumatic brain injury, including attention, judgment, memory, and thinking ability. The Army system, Automated Neuropsychological Assessment Metrics (ANAM), was chosen as the specific type of NCAT, which is a 15-to-20 minute computerized test that records a Service member's cognitive performance. The Committee is aware of the need to adapt the ANAM to a web-based product because the current screening is performed on handheld devices or laptops, which are not easily accessible and cost prohibitive. The Committee recognizes that the Department is planning to develop a web-based tool in the coming year; however, critical issues remain unresolved on the exact format of the product. Therefore, the Committee directs the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) to report to the congressional defense committees no later than August 31, 2009, on the path forward for developing a web-based tool for ANAM.