

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0533

September 29, 2015

The Honorable Deborah Lee James
Secretary of the Air Force
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20318

Dear Secretary James:

As a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force Reserves, I have the utmost respect for your leadership of the Air Force. I am writing, however, because I am concerned by the Air Force's use of animals in its medical training courses.

As I understand it, on May 15, 2014, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs issued a memorandum instructing the Army, Navy, and Air Force to discontinue the use of live animals in six medical education training areas. The Assistant Secretary noted that these courses should be taught using simulation models instead. I have since learned that the Air Force requested and was granted a waiver for its Surgical Trauma Response Techniques course (FWH20120007). The Air Force reasoned that the course was incorrectly associated with Graduate Medical Education programs and that current technologies do not allow for the complete elimination of all animals in the course.

Repeated studies show that today's technologically advanced simulation models effectively prepare individuals participating in combat trauma training courses. While there are advantages and disadvantages to using live animals or simulation models, it often appears that animals are favored because they represent the status quo. Considering continued advances in technology, I believe it is unacceptable that we continue to engage in courses that are abusive to animals. Preparing Servicemembers for the battlefield and treating animals humanely are simply not mutually exclusive practices.

I hope to learn more about the Air Force's waiver for the Surgical Trauma Response Techniques course and its intentions regarding the use of live animals. Has the Air Force previously tested simulation models for this course and were animals proven to be significantly better training tools? What steps is the Air Force taking to transition to simulation models in all of its medical training courses? Does the Air Force have a predicted timeline of when this transition may be complete? How will the Air Force ensure that the exempted course fits in accordance with DoD 3216.01, "Use of Animals in DoD Programs?"

Again, thank you for your service to our country. I look forward to your response. If you have any questions, please contact my staffer, Elizabeth Arevalo, at elizabeth.arevalo@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ted W. Lieu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress