



One Hundred Fourteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We are writing to better understand the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) efforts to address the threat of pandemics and emerging infectious diseases, including Zika virus. In his statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee in February 2015, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper stated "infectious diseases are among the foremost health security threats. A more crowded and interconnected world is increasing the opportunities for human and animal diseases to emerge and spread globally."¹ Zika virus is the latest in a string of diseases that endanger the health security of our citizens, reminding us that the threat from pandemic influenza or emerging infectious diseases remains.

DHS has a critical role in mitigating this health security threat. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) screens approximately one million international travelers each day at U.S. ports of entry. In light of this volume, it is vital that protocols are in place to detect passengers with pandemic influenza or infectious diseases.

Last month the DHS Inspector General (IG) released a report on the Department's response to Ebola. The DHS IG found that coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) during the Ebola response was lacking, and recommended DHS coordinate with HHS to update and expand agreements related to infectious disease roles and responsibilities. The IG also recommended that DHS ensure that necessary guidance and resources are in place for CBP to conduct infectious disease screenings, as warranted.

The first locally-transmitted Zika case in the United States was confirmed as in Dallas County, Texas on February 2, 2016—the first documented case of presumed sexual transmission of Zika virus infection since 2008. To date, local transmission by mosquitoes has not been documented in the U.S., but additional U.S. cases have been reported in returning travelers. Furthermore Zika virus is being actively transmitted in Mexico, Puerto

¹ Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 114th Congress (2015) (statement of the Honorable James Clapper, Director of National Intelligence) at 10.

Rico, and a number of areas in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Given the porous nature of our southern border, it may be only a matter of time before we see an increase in Zika virus here at home.

Ebola wasn't the first disease that challenged our security, and Zika virus won't be the last. Therefore, we must use the tools at our disposal to stop the spread of these naturally occurring threats. We understand that at this time, DHS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are not conducting active border entry screening for Zika virus. In an effort to ensure the health security of our nation, we request a response to the following questions by February 19, 2016.

1. How is DHS coordinating with HHS and other interagency partners on pandemic influenza and emerging infectious disease prevention, preparedness, and response, including for Zika virus?
2. What are the criteria and decision-making processes that will be used to determine whether to change the border screening process for diseases, including Zika virus, at U.S. ports of entry?
3. What guidance or resources has DHS and CBP provided to employees at U.S. ports of entry on infectious disease screening?
4. Does guidance for employees at U.S. points of entry include recommendations on distancing and personal protective equipment usage for various infectious diseases?
5. Knowing the prevalence of mosquitos carrying the Zika virus in Mexico, what is DHS doing to protect personnel along the southwest border?

We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure we are doing everything we can to address these threats. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Kerry Kinirons of the Committee on Homeland Security Majority staff at 202-226-8417.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL T. MCCAUL
Chairman



MARTHA MCSALLY
Chairman
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness,
Response, and Communications