

JEFFERSON VAN DREW
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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Dear General Hokanson, Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer,

I have serious concerns over the National Guard's treatment while they are stationed in Washington D.C.. While I have concerns over the continued presence in Washington D.C., and the fencing keeping us in third world like conditions that keep our constituents away from the seat of Democracy; embarrassingly, there is an even more pressing and dangerous issue that keeps the men and women in uniform in danger: the poisoning of our National Guard with poorly prepared meals.

I have recently spoken with members of the New Jersey National Guard, who described numerous incidents involving poorly prepared food. This logistical failure disrespects the men and women who are protecting the Capitol, financially and psychologically burdens them, and diminishes their capabilities to act should the need arise.

There have been numerous recent reports that deployed National Guard troops in multiple states have experienced similar incidents of poor food quality.¹ In some cases, the food is in transit for hours as it makes its way to the plates of our servicemembers. They gather for dinner and find themselves cutting into cold, or raw chicken, amongst other concerns. These issues have been persistent since late January.

Some National Guard troops have instead taken to purchasing food from local restaurants to prevent from possible food-poisoning. They are not provided a per diem and must pay out-of-pocket for food costs at inflated D.C. prices. This failure of the government to take care of our own troops deflates morale and must be rectified immediately.

The most serious result of this malfeasance is the impact these failures have on the National Guard's ability to execute its objectives. The poorly prepared food has already resulted in multiple incidents of gastrointestinal distress and impacts the Guard's ability to perform their duties. Sometimes they must be isolated, because it cannot be determined whether their symptoms are from COVID-19 or from inedible food.

¹ <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/03/04/national-guard-wont-cut-ties-contractor-served-undercooked-food-sickening-troops.html>

I urge you to swiftly address the matter of poorly prepared food being served to the National Guard, particularly considering the recent two-month extension of their presence. It is not only disrespectful and burdensome but is a threat to the ability of the Guard to execute its mission of protecting the Capitol. We must defend those who put their lives on the line to defend us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Van Drew', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Congressman Jeff Van Drew