



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

August 18, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

I am writing to express my deep concern for the 5,000 brave men and women aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln. In recent weeks, reports – including many directly from the families of the servicemembers on board – have detailed shortages of food and basic supplies, broken plumbing, unsanitary and hazardous conditions, serious safety concerns, and deteriorating mental health amid the unprecedented, unwarranted, and grueling 200-day deployment without a port call since last December.

Of equal concern is the lack of transparency. Rather than answering basic questions, the administration has dismissed concerns from family members and dodged accountability. President Trump has even publicly suggested that nine months at sea is “not nearly long enough.”

Additionally, the administration has ignored questions from Congress to provide any information about servicemembers including from the State of Illinois – not even confirming how many Illinoisans are currently on board.

These reports and lack of transparency point to a profound and serious threat to the health and safety of these sailors, as well as a growing problem for our military readiness. I am greatly concerned about reports outlining deteriorating mental health, including multiple incidents in which sailors attempted or threatened to go overboard, alongside accounts from families describing exhaustion, acute distress, and difficulty accessing mental healthcare.

The USS Abraham Lincoln deployed from San Diego in November with an expected return in May. That mission has been repeatedly extended as the conflict continued without clear cause or justification. The shocking conditions raise questions as to whether this administration ever had a credible plan for sustaining the forces you have committed to combat.

The brave service members aboard the Lincoln continue to fulfill their duties under unthinkable circumstances — but that does not excuse this severe breach of responsibility and lack of accountability. The seriousness of these reports demands a thorough, transparent accounting of the conditions aboard the ship and immediate action to address any deficiencies identified.

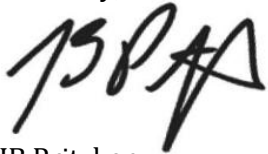
Our sailors deserve the basic conditions, medical support, rest, and supplies to sustain them safely and humanely. Their loved ones deserve the comfort of knowing that their Commander-in-Chief is concerned with – or even paying attention to – their health and safety.

Please respond in writing to the following questions:

1. How many Illinoisans are currently aboard the USS Lincoln?
2. What mental health services are being provided for service members aboard the ship? Will there be a full investigation of what went wrong during this deployment? Will that report be made public?
3. What were the original objectives of this mission and what has changed that justifies an indefinite deployment?

I look forward to your prompt response regarding an update on members from Illinois on board as well as details about how the administration intends to remedy this situation and ensure the safety and well-being of the Lincoln's crew.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JB Pritzker', with a stylized, cursive script.

JB Pritzker
Governor of Illinois