

Congresswoman Betty McCollum

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1714 Longworth HOB ♦ Washington, DC 20515

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Contact: Tyler Bond, (202) 226-3703 / (202) 407-0222 tyler.bond@mail.house.gov

McCollum: Health and Safety of MN Army National Guard Being Deployed to Liberia Are "My Highest Priorities"

Washington, DC – Today, Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) released the following statement in response to the announcement that members of the Minnesota National Guard Red Bull 34th Infantry Division Headquarters will be mobilized in the Spring of 2015 to provide command and control support for U.S. troops involved in *Operation United Assistance* supporting the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) response to the Ebola virus outbreak in Western Africa.

“The Ebola virus is a serious international threat to public health that must be contained and extinguished in West Africa. This requires a global response, including the on-going commitment by U.S. civilian and military personnel. For this crucial humanitarian relief mission, it is no surprise that the Pentagon is calling on Minnesota’s Red Bulls with their proven record of expertise, skill, and resourcefulness. While they will not be treating patients, their mission is vital to containing this virus in Africa and ultimately saving lives.

“As with any mission, the health and safety of our soldiers are my highest priorities. I have been working with the U.S. Department of Defense for months to ensure that U.S. troops are trained and ready to assist in this important work, and that extra steps are being taken to protect their health, including providing personal protective equipment and training about the disease. I will also work to ensure our soldiers receive the compensation and benefits they deserve during this deployment.

“The citizen-soldiers of the Red Bull 34th Infantry Division Headquarters are leaders of the highest caliber, having been called on combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and Bosnia. With this deployment to Liberia, our Minnesota Red Bulls will once again have the support and gratitude of the American people. I wish our troops much success in this important humanitarian mission and their families have my full support.”

*Congresswoman Betty McCollum serves on the House Appropriations Committee.
She is Democratic Co-Chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus.*

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