

ELIOT L. ENGEL, NEW YORK
CHAIRMAN

JASON STEINBAUM
STAFF DIRECTOR



MICHAEL T. MCCAUL, TEXAS
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER

BRENDAN P. SHIELDS
REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

The COVID-19 outbreak created unprecedented challenges for the State Department as international border closures and other travel restrictions around the world have made it very difficult for tens of thousands of Americans around the world to return home. We applaud the tireless efforts of the State Department workforce, including the many employees at our embassies and consulates around the world, who have been working to help bring these individuals back to the United States. We also thank the many Department employees who have volunteered to serve on the Department's Repatriation Task Force, and we welcomed the regular updates that it and other senior officials have provided to Congress about these efforts. The success of your team in repatriating more than 80,000 Americans to date during the COVID-19 crisis is commendable, and we hope you will pass along our gratitude to the men and women of the Department.

While large-scale repatriation efforts associated with COVID-19 are moving towards a conclusion, new challenges may emerge in the future either in connection with COVID-19 or other similar global crises. It is critical that the Department continue to prepare for such scenarios, using lessons it learned in the earliest days of this global repatriation effort—particularly from countries like Peru and Morocco where there were a significant number of American travelers—to ensure that future repatriations can be carried out swiftly and smoothly.

Throughout the unprecedented global repatriation effort in response to COVID-19, your team focused on mobilizing available capacity among commercial airlines in parallel with State

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
May 11, 2020
Page Two

Department-organized charter flights. As such, we recently encouraged major U.S. air carriers to work in close partnership with the Department on this challenge. But the Department's role in ensuring the safety—and safe return—of American citizens abroad is both critical and unique. To improve the Committee's understanding of recent repatriation efforts, and to ensure the Department has the authorities and resources it needs to continue to successfully carry out future missions, we welcome information from you and your team on the following items:

- A list of all COVID-19 related repatriation flights carried out to-date with information as to whether each flight was a State Department-funded charter or a “commercial rescue” flight (e.g. direct-sale commercial charter), and the carriers who provided the air service.
- A list of instances in which other USG agencies air assets or contracting capacity were utilized or requested to meet COVID-19 related repatriation needs.
- An estimate of potential new hotspots around the world where urgent repatriation needs could spike, and the projected government and commercial capacities needed to meet such additional repatriation challenges.
- Steps the Department, private carriers, and/or Congress can take to help minimize financial risks that pose challenges to standing up commercial rescue flights.
- Future conditions under which the Department would initiate a request to the Department of Defense to mobilize the Civil Reserve Air Fleet to support global repatriation efforts and impediments to doing so.
- A detailed description of how the State Department utilized any funds provided in the CARES Act and other COVID response legislation for repatriation efforts as well as any statutory or regulatory barriers the Department identifies as hindering its global response.

We thank you for your assistance in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact our staff at (202) 225-5021 with any questions or concerns, or to arrange a briefing to discuss these issues in more detail.

Sincerely,


ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman


MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member