

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Over the course of three years, House Foreign Affairs Committee Republicans, led by Chairman McCaul, have conducted a thorough investigation into the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, pursuant to the outlined methodology. The investigation has revealed five primary conclusions:

1. The Biden-Harris administration was determined to withdraw from Afghanistan, with or without the Doha Agreement and no matter the cost. Accordingly, they ignored the conditions in the Doha Agreement, pleas of the Afghan government, and the objections by our NATO allies, deciding to unilaterally withdraw from the country.
  2. The Biden-Harris administration prioritized the optics of the withdrawal over the security of U.S. personnel on the ground. For that reason, they failed to plan for all contingencies, including a noncombatant emergency evacuation (NEO) and refused to order a NEO until after the Taliban had already entered Kabul.
  3. The Biden-Harris administration's failure to prepare for a NEO and order a timely NEO created an unsafe environment at HKIA, exposing U.S. Defense Department and State Department personnel to lethal threats and emotional harm. As a result, 13 U.S. servicemembers were murdered by a terrorist attack on August 26, 2021. It was the deadliest day for the U.S. military in Afghanistan since 2012.
  4. In the aftermath of the withdrawal, U.S. national security was degraded as Afghanistan once again became a haven for terrorists, including al Qaeda and ISIS-K. America's credibility on the world stage was severely damaged after we abandoned Afghan allies to Taliban reprisal killings — the people of Afghanistan we had promised to protect. And the moral injury to America's veterans and those still serving remains a stain on this administration's legacy.
  5. The Biden-Harris administration misled and, in some instances, directly lied to the American people at every stage of the withdrawal, from before the go-to-zero order until today. This coverup included mid-level administration officials all the way up to the Oval Office. And as this investigation reveals, the National Security Council and NSA Jake Sullivan were of the source of the majority of that misinformation campaign.
-

## **THE DECISION TO WITHDRAW**

### ***The Doha Agreement***

On February 29, 2020, the U.S. and the Taliban signed “The Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan,” commonly known as the Doha Agreement. It was a conditions-based deal to withdraw U.S. troops in exchange for the Taliban meeting certain obligations, including:

- Cutting ties with al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations;
- Ceasing attacks on U.S. and coalition troops;
- Reducing violence against Afghan forces; and
- Starting negotiations with the Afghan government.

The agreement was negotiated by Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation (SRAR) Zalmay Khalilzad. Bowing to the demands of the Taliban, Ambassador Khalilzad excluded the Afghan government in these negotiations, undermining America’s ally and likely harming the Afghan government’s legitimacy. In addition, throughout the negotiations, Ambassador Khalilzad regularly excluded key military leaders from the decision-making process and turned a blind eye to concerns by American officials that the Taliban were not negotiating in good faith. It was unsurprising to many that, by late 2020, the Taliban were not meeting their obligations under the Doha Agreement. For that reason, President Trump decided to maintain 2,500 U.S. troops in the country until he left office on January 20, 2021.

### ***The Interagency Review***

When President Biden was sworn in, he selected National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan to lead an interagency review of the United States’ policy towards Afghanistan, which included an assessment of the Doha Agreement. He also kept Ambassador Khalilzad in place, signaling his support of the decision to withdraw troops. But NSA Sullivan’s interagency review would be severely flawed in many respects:

1. **Input from key officials was severely limited.** Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan John Bass — who would ultimately be sent to Afghanistan to lead the NEO after Kabul fell — was contacted only once by the NSC at the inception of the review and there were no “discussions about [the] way forward.” General Austin Scott Miller — the senior U.S. military official in Afghanistan at the time and longest serving U.S. commander in the country — was permitted to attend a single NSC deputies meeting. His assessments were otherwise never sought by NSA Sullivan. Both these officials would have had a tremendous amount of information and knowledge to share with the NSC for their review.
-

2. **The failure of the Taliban to uphold its commitments under the Doha Agreement were disregarded.** Warnings were issued from Ambassador Wilson, Embassy Kabul's regional security officer (RSO), Embassy diplomats, senior State Department officials in Washington, D.C., and senior U.S. military officials that the Taliban were actively violating the Doha Agreement. Yet, the decision to withdraw was made anyway. The Biden-Harris administration had clear and undisputable authority to pause the withdrawal pursuant to the Doha Agreement, but instead used it as pretext to justify their political aims. As State Department Spokesperson Ned Price admitted to the committee, the Taliban's adherence to the Doha Agreement was "immaterial" to the administration's decision to withdraw.
3. **Warnings and advice from both U.S. allies and a majority of President Biden's senior national security experts were ignored.** Despite President Biden's public assertions to the contrary, our investigation has revealed the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), the Secretary of State, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), and the Commander of NATO's Resolute Support Mission and United States Forces — Afghanistan all advised against withdrawing all U.S. troops from the country — both during and after the interagency review. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) John Sopko went so far as to warn in March 2021 a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops would mean the Afghan government "probably would face collapse." At the same time, NATO allies strongly opposed the complete withdrawal of troops, urging the Biden-Harris administration to keep a contingency force in Afghanistan to maintain NATO's footprint. They were concerned the situation on the ground would otherwise unravel, with the British Chief of the Defense Staff warning, "withdrawal under these circumstances would be perceived as a strategic victory for the Taliban." In the end, the president would ignore their warnings and withdraw all troops — while publicly and falsely claiming his senior advisors and NATO were in favor of that decision.

The evidence proves President Biden's decision to withdraw all U.S. troops was not based on the security situation, the Doha Agreement, or the advice of his senior national security advisors or our allies. Rather, it was premised on his longstanding and unyielding opinion that the United States should no longer be in Afghanistan. As Colonel Seth Krummrich, the chief of staff for Special Operations Command (SOCOM), put it: "The president decided we're gonna leave, and he's not listening to anybody."

---



His decision allowed the Taliban to conquer Afghanistan, left the U.S. in a perilous counterterrorism position for years to come, and set the stage for the chaotic evacuation from Kabul in August of 2021 that resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. servicemembers. To this day, the president has yet to acknowledge his role in this tragedy.

## **CREATING AN UNSAFE ENVIRONMENT**

### ***Expanded Embassy***

Once the president announced his decision to withdraw on April 14, 2021, the U.S. military urged a speedy retrograde because, as former CENTCOM Commander General McKenzie put it, “speed brought safety.” President Biden signed off on this speedy retrograde and, according to General McKenzie, the withdrawal was complete by July 12, 2021 — two months before President Biden’s arbitrary September 11th deadline.

During the Trump administration, the U.S. diplomatic footprint was reduced alongside the U.S. military footprint in accordance with recommendations from State Department and Defense Department officials. It was understood that, as U.S. troops left the country, the security situation would diminish and threaten the safety of the U.S. personnel and other American citizens who remained. Unfortunately, the committee’s investigation has revealed the same was not true during the Biden-Harris administration.

Instead, there was a dogmatic insistence to keep a large diplomatic footprint in Afghanistan across all levels of the Biden-Harris NSC and State Department. The committee’s investigation has uncovered that the size of the U.S. Embassy Kabul instead grew during the retrograde, even after the State Department implemented an ordered departure status. Testimony obtained by the committee points squarely at Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Ambassador Ross Wilson being behind this expansion. Ambassador Wilson vehemently opposed the military’s advice to scale back the embassy along with the troops, and fought against the ordered departure status, playing shell games with staff and forcing embassy personnel to return after R&R leave. Secretary Blinken advised the president that Embassy Kabul should remain open irrespective of a military withdrawal. In the summer of 2021, even under the ordered departure, U.S. Embassy Kabul was one of the largest U.S. embassies in the world. According to General McKenzie, the administration’s insistence at keeping the embassy open and fully operational was the “fatal flaw that created what happened in August.”

---

That obstinance continued throughout the retrograde, even with the deteriorating security situation. According to then-Deputy Assistant Secretary and Assistant Director for High Threat Programs Greg Sherman, State Department leaders created “pressure to get to yes” so the embassy remained open despite the Taliban’s rapid gains in 2021. The committee’s investigation uncovered State Department officials went so far as to water down or even completely rewrite reports from Diplomatic Security and the Defense Department that warned of threats. In one instance, a Diplomatic Security officer was told to change his report assessing “provincial capitals failing was imminent and that the ANDSF would fail.” When he refused, a different, “watered-down timeline was eventually pushed out.”

### ***Loss of Capabilities to Track and Fight the Taliban***

With the closure of U.S. bases, particularly Bagram Air Base, U.S. counterterrorism activities were greatly diminished. ISR capabilities were moved to our bases in the Gulf — an eight hour flight from Afghanistan. This made us all but blind to the situation on the ground. As General McKenzie put it, “it just doesn’t work.”

At the same time, U.S. and international contractors were forced to withdraw alongside U.S. troops — contractors that were pivotal to the Afghan military’s operations against the Taliban, particularly the Afghan Air Force. The Biden-Harris administration was warned of the damage this loss of contractors would cause, including a July CENTCOM 2021 report that concluded, without contractor support, the Afghan air forces would risk inoperability.

The severely diminished ISR capabilities coupled with the drawdown of U.S. troops and U.S. and international contractors in the middle of the Afghan fighting season, which ran annually from April through October and coincided with better weather, created fertile ground for Taliban conquests. From April 14, 2021, when the withdrawal was announced, until July 15, 2021, three days after CENTCOM announced 95% of the retrograde was complete, the Taliban tripled the number of districts under its control from 73 to 221. This was accomplished through both military gains as well as negotiated surrenders with local Afghan leaders, which were being overlooked by Biden-Harris administration officials.

This report proves senior Biden-Harris administration officials were willfully blind to warnings about the degrading security situation on the ground given to them by U.S. military personnel, U.S. intelligence assessments, American and international media reports, and State Department personnel in Kabul who sent a Dissent Channel cable in July 2021. Instead, they consistently prioritized the optics of maintaining a large U.S. embassy presence over the safety of embassy personnel.

---

## **THE FAILURE TO PLAN: “A SLOW-MOVING TRAIN WRECK”**

The investigation upends the Biden-Harris administration’s continued claim that they “planned for all contingencies.” Instead, the State Department and White House’s tunnel vision that U.S. Embassy Kabul remain open resulted in a failure to properly prepare for worst case scenarios, including conducting an evacuation under Taliban rule. When that precise scenario manifested, the Biden-Harris administration was caught flat-footed and chaos ensued.

### ***Little Effort to Assess the Potential Evacuation Population***

While American citizens are not required to report their travel to foreign countries, the investigation uncovered little to no effort was made to determine the number of American citizens in Afghanistan prior to the NEO. At the same time, the Biden-Harris administration took very few steps to increase the processing of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for those Afghans who assisted the U.S. government. Publicly, the administration vowed to get Americans and Afghan allies out of the country. Privately, however, they knew it was an all but impossible task with the U.S. withdrawing all their troops. As Russ Travers, the deputy homeland security advisor at the NSC, would later admit, “There was no way we were getting all those people out...From my perspective it was a slow-moving train wreck. We were going to fail; the question was how badly we were going to fail.” As a result, when the last U.S. military aircraft departed Kabul on August 30, 2021, approximately 1,000 Americans were left behind and over 90% of SIV-eligible Afghans were still in the country.

### ***NEO Planning Hindered by Optics***

The investigation has revealed senior State Department and NSC officials equated a NEO with failure. This explains, in part, the decision to keep Embassy Kabul open no matter the cost and their refusal to plan for a NEO. Indeed, testimony obtained by the committee reveals the administration failed to even contemplate a plan for a NEO with the Taliban in control of the country. This failure is inexcusable in light of warnings from Embassy Kabul personnel and the Defense Department that a Taliban takeover was imminent following the military withdrawal. Following President Biden’s go-to-zero order, only two interagency rehearsal of concept (ROC) drills were conducted, and the embassy did not fully engage in NEO planning until August 6th — a little more than a week prior to the fall of Kabul. As the Taliban surrounded Kabul on August 14th, notes from an NSC meeting that day reveal the U.S. government still had not determined who would be eligible for evacuation, nor had they identified third countries to serve as transit points for an evacuation.

---

In viewing a NEO as failure, Ambassador Wilson ignored triggers set by the Defense Department and refused to call the NEO until August 15th — as the Taliban were marching into Kabul and three days after the U.S. embassy began transferring staff to HKIA. According to General Milley, the “fundamental mistake” that resulted in the chaotic emergency evacuation was that the NEO “was too slow and too late.” Acting Under Secretary for Management Carol Perez, who was charged with ensuring the U.S. could maintain an embassy in Afghanistan after the military left, summed up the situation succinctly when she testified to the committee, “We were still in planning when [Kabul] fell.”

Again, evidence obtained by the committee points to Ambassador Wilson as a key figure in the unwillingness to properly plan for a NEO. In fact, one official claimed embassy personnel resorted to having “subversive NEO meetings” to avoid his retribution. Even with three years of hindsight, Ambassador Wilson testified to the committee he remains “comfortable” with his decision to have waited until August 15th to formally request a NEO. Indeed, he testified, “I regret that we don’t have any embassy now.” Further, as with the interagency review, the committee was pointed to the NSC and NSA Sullivan as taking the lead for the Biden-Harris administration’s withdrawal planning and strategy — and owning many of the failures. According to D-MR McKeon, the decision whether to keep the embassy open or to close it rested with the NSC. And White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki testified to the committee her press statements on the Afghanistan withdrawal and NEO — including those proven untrue by the committee — came directly from the NSC and NSA Sullivan.

## **CHAOS AND DEATH**

### ***The Failure to Plan Leads to Chaos***

The failure to plan for all contingencies and order a NEO only after the Taliban seized Kabul directly resulted in chaos reigning at Embassy Kabul and HKIA. Drove of classified documents and systems were left behind, and American and Afghan passports were unnecessarily burned as pandemonium enveloped the embassy compound. One Embassy employee concluded, “We know that some of [the classified documents] are being used by the Taliban. Another Embassy employee explained there was no embassy roster available when it came time to evacuate. As a result, the employee went room to room to clear the embassy compound. Indeed, on the day of the evacuation, some embassy personnel were not even aware the Taliban had marched into Kabul.

As consequence of the rapid military retrograde — rendering U.S. troop presence to less than 1,000 — and the failure to plan for a NEO, HKIA was overrun, and the airfield was forced to shut down for 48 hours.

---



Meanwhile the Taliban marched through the streets of Kabul exacerbating the panic amongst fleeing civilians. Rather than stationing troops in Afghanistan in advance of the NEO, President Biden ordered a troop surge to Afghanistan after Kabul was toppled.

Once the United States was able to surge enough troops into the country and retake the airport from panicked civilians, the airlift finally began on August 17th. Because the State Department and NSC never defined the parameters of eligible evacuation populations, Americans and Afghans on the ground seeking to escape received inconsistent messaging on who could leave and when. In fact, consular officers and servicemembers on the ground fell prey to the very same issue, unclear who would be allowed into the airport. In the end, the heartbreaking task of determining who could or could not get inside the gates of the airport were often left to rank-and-file servicemembers and foreign service officers. This situation was greatly exacerbated by the Taliban checkpoints around the airport, where Afghan allies and American citizens were often detained, refused entry, or in some cases physically assaulted.

At the height of the NEO, this investigation uncovered there were at most only 35 consular officers — many of whom were volunteers — at HKIA to process the thousands of people coming into the airport each day. And while these individuals acted in service of their country, they were neither trained nor prepared for the physical and emotional toll of the ill-prepared and chaotic NEO. Consular officers were consistently given changing guidance and had limited time to process people. According to Ambassador Bass' deputy during the NEO, Consul General DeHart, because of the changing guidance, consular officers may have turned away someone under previous guidance who would have been later admitted. The changing guidance also contributed to an environment where rushed, often flawed vetting took place. In one example, a consular officer at HKIA testified they “didn’t have access to systems or databases” crucial to determining the eligibility of evacuees.

Additional issues cropped up at every step of the way during the evacuation because of the Biden-Harris administration’s failure to plan for a NEO, including, but not limited to:

- There were insufficient military planes to conduct an airlift of this size, and the U.S. Department of Transportation waited until August 20th — five days after the country fell — to allow foreign civil aircrafts to conduct their own flights.
  - Throughout the NEO, logistics operations responsible for the provision of food, medical support, clean water, vehicles, and other critical supplies did not have more than a one-day supply on hand. U.S. government personnel were at great risk of running out of food and water.
-

- “Lily pads” for evacuees were not secured before the NEO began. It was not until August 19th that all three primary lily pads in Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait were operable. This delay resulted in multiple operational pauses of the evacuation, limiting the number of Americans and Afghan allies able to escape.

To compensate for the Biden-Harris administration’s failure to plan for the inevitable NEO, volunteer organizations across the country mobilized to assist Americans, green card holders, and Afghan allies escape the Taliban. These groups were made up of veterans, active duty servicemembers, journalists, former government officials, congressional staffers, and in some instances, average Americans with no ties to Afghanistan who wanted to do their part. They worked for free at great expense to themselves — emotionally and financially — to track down evacuees across the country, get them through the Taliban checkpoints in Kabul, and finally on a plane to safety.

### ***Abbey Gate Attack***

The failure to prepare for a NEO had ramifications not only for Americans and allies in Afghanistan, but U.S. personnel on the ground forced to evacuate desperate civilians in a hostile environment. Those concerns were sidelined by the Biden-Harris administration in favor of optics. Rather than concede their negligence, U.S. servicemembers and foreign service officers were directed to prioritize evacuating as many people as possible, no matter the threat posed to their lives.

Threat stream warnings regarding an attack at HKIA were consistent but vague. As a result, personnel on the ground were aware an attack was likely but could not identify a potential attacker with certainty given the breadth and ambiguity of those alerts. Abbey Gate, in particular, was exposed to multiple threats because it served as a main inroad into HKIA. On August 25th, Major General Chris Donahue selected Abbey Gate as being at highest risk of an attack in an assessment shared with General McKenzie. Despite that knowledge, little was done to reinforce protections around the gate. And ultimately, a decision was made by Brigadier General Farrell Sullivan to keep Abbey Gate open, primarily because British forces were still using the gate to evacuate individuals from Baron Hotel into HKIA. At that point, State Department officials on the ground pulled back its consular officers leaving only the U.S. Marines around when the bomb went off at 5:36:52 PM Kabul time on August 26th.

---

One hundred and eighty-five people were killed in the attack, including 13 U.S. servicemembers. Their names are:

**Marine Lance Corporal David L. Espinoza**  
**Marine Sergeant Nicole L. Gee**  
**Marine Staff Sergeant Darin Taylor Hoover**  
**Army Staff Sergeant Ryan Christian Knauss**  
**Marine Corporal Hunter Lopez**  
**Marine Lance Corporal Rylee J. McCollum**  
**Marine Lance Corporal Dylan R. Merola**  
**Marine Lance Corporal Kareem M. Nikoui**  
**Marine Corporal Daegan W. Page**  
**Marine Sergeant Johanny Rosario Pichardo**  
**Marine Corporal Humberto A. Sanchez**  
**Marine Lance Corporal Jared M. Schmitz**  
**Navy Corpsman Maxton W. Soviak**

Countless people were wounded including 45 U.S. servicemembers. It was the deadliest day in Afghanistan for the U.S. military since 2012.

As this report outlines, the attack was a result of a myriad of factors, including but not limited to:

- **The failure to close Abbey Gate in spite of consistent threat warnings about an imminent attack.** The intention behind this decision was magnanimous — getting innocent civilians to safety. But as a result, U.S. servicemembers were exposed to significant risk.
  - **The reliance on the Taliban for security.** Relying on a long-time, brutal enemy to provide security around the airport was fraught with problems from the very beginning. The Taliban long harbored violent intentions toward Americans and have expressed no regard for innocent human life. In addition, their security screening was inconsistent and haphazard. The Taliban also did not consistently assist the U.S. military with confronting known or suspected ISIS-K cells operating in the city, including the cell that would eventually carry out the attack.
  - **The refusal of the U.S. military to conduct any direct attacks against ISIS-K inside Afghanistan for fear of upsetting the Taliban.** Intelligence pointed to the ISIS-K cell behind the attack, but the U.S. military did not have the manpower and the Biden-Harris administration did not have the political will to conduct operations in and outside Kabul to neutralize it. Instead, the Biden-Harris administration relied on terrorists to capture other terrorists.
-

In the lead up to the attack, some Marines on the ground believed they spotted the suspected suicide bomber. Upon identification, they attempted to alert their commanders, who shared the identification up their chain of command. They did not hear back. For years, their stories of guilt and sacrifice went unheeded by the initial Defense Department investigations. It was not until April 2023 that the Defense Department reopened their investigation into the Abbey Gate attack. With pressure from Congress, CENTCOM released the name and photo of the Abbey Gate bomber: Abdul Rahman al-Logari, an ISIS-K fighter who was freed by the Taliban when they took over Bagram Air Base. Their report claims al-Logari was not the person the Marines identified, but many who were on the ground that day still believe they were one in the same. The full report remains classified.

Debate over whether the Abbey Gate attack was a lone suicide bomber or a complex attack, including gunfire after the bomb, has yet to be resolved. After initially representing it as a complex attack, CENTCOM then claimed its investigation revealed there was little to no gunfire after the bomb exploded, and any instances of gunfire were merely warning shots. This investigation, however, collected testimony from witnesses who recounted hearing gunfire following the bomb and spoke to doctors treating bullet wounds. An exclusive video released by CNN earlier this year shows 11 instances of gunfire taking place over four minutes raising further questions about the attack. There are two contributing factors as to why questions remain regarding this issue:

1. After consistent threat streams of an imminent attack and Abbey Gate as the likely target, there was no video footage of Abbey Gate leading up to and at the time of the attack.
2. In the aftermath of the Abbey Gate attack, the Defense Department demilitarized — a.k.a. destroyed — physical hard drives and servers. Some hard drives were brought to a shredder at HKIA. Other hard drives, servers, and information systems were punched through or even smashed.

Both are inexcusable errors by the Defense Department. Further investigation is necessary to determine why and how these failures transpired. As evidenced by this investigation, record collection and preservation are key to ensuring another such catastrophe does not occur again and preventing the loss of American life.

In response to the Abbey Gate attack, the Biden-Harris administration launched two retaliatory air strikes. The first killed two ISIS-K terrorists, including Kabir Aidi who CENTCOM identified as one of the planners behind the Abbey Gate attack. In a tragic turn of events, the second airstrike killed an innocent aid worker employed by a U.S. NGO, as well as nine members of his family.

---

After the Abbey Gate attack, President Biden and Vice President Harris showed disregard and disrespect toward the Gold Star families of the 13 U.S. servicemembers killed at Abbey Gate, and the servicemembers injured in the attack. Almost immediately after the dignified transfer at Dover Air Base for 11 of the 13 servicemembers, media outlets reported President Biden “checked his watch multiple times” during the event. The White House attempted to deny the allegation, until photos surfaced proving he did. Almost three years later, Ms. Psaki continued to perpetuate the lie that President Biden did not check his watch in her memoir. After media reports debunked her falsehood, she was forced to retract it.

After 20 years of American blood and treasure were poured into the country, the last U.S. military plane departed Afghanistan on August 30, 2021 at 11:59 pm Kabul time.

### **AFGHANISTAN OF TODAY**

The Taliban once again control Afghanistan, and they run the country with brutality and violence. Their regime is made up of terrorists who are sanctioned by the United Nations, as well as members of the Haqqani Network, a U.S. Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). There are consistent reports of revenge killings of America’s Afghan allies — the ones who were abandoned by the Biden-Harris administration. A 2023 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan report described of “hundreds of human rights violations,” including the murder of over 200 former government officials and ANDSF members.

Women in Afghanistan today live bleak, oppressive lives. They are not allowed to teach, work, study, travel, or even leave the house without a male escort. They are not allowed to receive education beyond sixth grade. Most recently, they have been banned from even showing their bare faces in public. There are also reports that child marriages are skyrocketing, with more than 200 girls in one province who have been sold into marriage or are awaiting buyers. The Taliban are also learning from America’s other adversaries, including Russia, that American hostages are currency. Currently, the Taliban holds at least seven American citizens. They recently released Mark Frerichs, who had been held by the Haqqani Network since January 2020. But the cost was high: The Taliban demanded the U.S. release a drug warlord who used his ill-gotten gains to fund the Taliban’s war against the United States.

### ***The Fallout***

The fallout from the ill-advised withdrawal and ill-prepared NEO created a tidal wave of problems in Afghanistan, the United States, and around the world.

---



Seven billion dollars of U.S. weapons and up to \$57 million in U.S. currency were left behind in Afghanistan for the Taliban to use and profit off of by selling to other terrorist regimes. Despite their claims of amnesty toward former Afghan government officials, the Taliban continue to carry out systematic and brutal reprisal killings. In fact, a NATO report written by the Defence Education Enhancement Programme found the Taliban were using U.S. military biometric devices and databases to hunt down America's Afghan allies.

The catastrophic withdrawal at the hands of the Biden-Harris administration has created a crisis within the U.S. military and among American veterans. Recruitment and retention within the military are down, with experts pointing to the withdrawal as a significant factor. Servicemembers and veterans are also facing devastating moral injury. Each day, they are forced to reckon with the reality that terrorists they fought against for two decades — who their brothers and sisters died to defeat — are once again in power. They are also forced to stand by while their Afghan allies are trapped in Afghanistan, at the mercy of the Taliban. Scott Mann, the founder of Task Force Pineapple and a Green Beret testified to the committee, "Relinquishing Afghanistan...has become a moral injury on our veterans and military families. A moral injury is an injury to the soul. A violation of what we know to be right by leaders whom we trusted."

Once again, Afghanistan has become a safe haven for terrorists, giving governing space to terrorist groups, including al Qaeda, ISIS-K, and the Taliban's own Haqqani Network. In a glaring example of the threat this poses to the United States, the leader of al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was living openly and freely in downtown Kabul in the summer of 2022. At the time, according to then-Defense Department Spokesperson Rear Admiral John Kirby, al-Zawahiri was "actively encouraging his followers to plot and plan attacks against American interest in the American homeland." He was finally killed in an airstrike in July 2022, but al Qaeda continues to grow in the country. Evidence reveals al Qaeda has set up eight new training camps Afghanistan, propped up madrasas throughout the country, and established a new base to stockpile weapons.

Fears by the military regarding the United States' limited over-the-horizon capabilities post-withdrawal have also come to fruition. The Biden-Harris administration has not conducted a single strike against ISIS-K since 2021. Meanwhile, according to a March 2024 Washington Institute study, "In the past year, [ISIS-K] has planned twenty-one external plots or attacks in nine countries, compared to eight plots or attacks in the previous year and just three between 2018 and March 2022."

The Biden-Harris administration's willful blindness has left the United States once again vulnerable to attacks emanating from Afghanistan.

---

Indeed, on June 11, 2024, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force arrested eight individuals with ties to ISIS-K who entered the U.S. illegally through the southern border. That same month, the Department of Homeland Security identified over 400 persons of interest from Central Asia who had illegally crossed the U.S. southern border with the help of an ISIS-related smuggling network. Our adversaries, like Russia, China, and Iran, saw weakness during the chaotic and deadly evacuation, emboldening them. Less than one year later, Russia launched a full invasion of Ukraine. Today, Iran's proxies are conducting a brutal war against our ally Israel, attacking our servicemembers in the region, and threatening global trade in the Red Sea. And China continues to ratchet up aggression in the Indo Pacific, including against Taiwan and the Philippines.

When Kabul fell, many drew comparisons to Saigon as, once again, U.S. helicopters were ferrying Americans off a U.S. embassy, abandoning longtime allies. But this investigation reveals what happened in Afghanistan was far worse — with long-term consequences that are far more dangerous to U.S. national security. It is crucial to fully expose truth so we can learn from the Biden-Harris administration's mistakes. That is the only way to ensure history does not repeat itself.

---