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

November 15, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

It has been over two months since the Biden Administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan that resulted in the deaths of 13 Americans, and there are still many unanswered questions about the planning – or lack thereof – that preceded the drawdown and evacuation. In an effort to bring accountability and transparency to a situation that, thus far, has involved neither, and in furtherance of the House Foreign Affairs Committee's oversight responsibilities, we are writing to follow up on our document requests submitted to the Department on August 20.¹ Pursuant to House Rule X, § 723, we request responsive materials at the earliest possible juncture.²

In addition, because recent briefings by State Department officials have been cursory exercises that mystify as much as they illuminate, with relevant actors often declining to answer questions directly, deferring to other colleagues or agencies, or claiming not to have relevant information at their immediate disposal and then offering to “follow up” with answers that never seem to arrive,

¹ See “McCaul Leads Letter to Secretary Blinken Condemning State Department's Dereliction of Duty Regarding Afghanistan,” Press Release, Aug. 20, 2021, available online at <https://gop-foreignaffairs.house.gov/press-release/mccaul-leads-letter-to-secretary-blinken-condemning-state-departments-dereliction-of-duty-regarding-afghanistan/>; see also, Oversight Letter from House Foreign Affairs Republicans to Secretary Blinken, Aug. 20, 2021, available online at <https://gop-foreignaffairs.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/8.20-GOP-HFAC-Letter-to-Blinken-Re-Afghanistan-Letter33.pdf>.

² The Committee on Foreign Affairs has jurisdiction over “intervention abroad, “diplomatic service,” “protection of American citizens abroad and expatriation,” “relations of the United States with foreign nations generally,” and other matters that pertain to the Biden Administration's lack of contingency planning and botched exit from Afghanistan. See House Rule X, § 723 (1), (9), (10), (14).

we request the individuals listed below appear for transcribed interviews conducted by committee staff.

The purpose of the transcribed interviews is to establish a more detailed record regarding topics such as: the number of American Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents who still reside in Afghanistan (in public media accounts, the Department’s own employees have recently called the magic number 100, which was repeated by senior Department officials for over a month, “absurd,”³ and now the number has been confirmed to be significantly larger but is still unclear⁴); the mechanism(s) for continued evacuations; any agreements reached with the Taliban and third countries; counterterrorism (CT) and over-the-horizon (OTH) capabilities and realities; processing Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applications and P1/P2 refugee referrals; the operations and decisions of various bureaus from April 2021 (when President Biden made his withdrawal announcement) through August 2021 (when Kabul fell); the internal deliberations of the Afghanistan Task Force, SIV Task Force, CARE Task Force, and other task forces and decision to wait to convene some of these until late July, August, and even October; the Administration’s foreign assistance policy in Afghanistan moving forward; the Department’s coordination and disconnects with the Department of Defense and USAID; Embassy Kabul’s Emergency Action Plan (EAP), decision to destroy sensitive documents like visa applications and passports, and calling on DoD to move arms stored at the embassy; the timing of the NEO decision; the Department’s approvals and blocking of private charter flights, and role in vetting of the same; the Department’s current Afghanistan-focused operations in Doha; operations at and future plans for DoD “lily pads;” potential reimbursements to private charter groups that have supplied food and safe houses to at-risk Afghans; the Department’s failure to answer congressional offices and assist with constituent emergencies in Afghanistan; and others.

The officials we request appear for transcribed interviews are the following:

1. Suzy George, Chief of Staff to U.S. Secretary of State
2. Brian McKeon, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources
3. Carol Perez, Acting Under Secretary of State for Management
4. Laura Dogu, CONUS Coordinator
5. John Bass, former Ambassador to Afghanistan and State Department lead of evacuation efforts at Hamid Karzai International Airport

³ See “So CA/OCS May Survive a Funding Crunch Only to Fall Apart at the Seams?”, *Diplo pundit*, Oct. 7, 2021 (“LEADERSHIP OBSESSES OVER NUMBERS AS EXHAUSTION BITES...Somebody noted to us that ‘The idea that ‘around 100 citizens’ remain in Afghanistan is absurd, as we never knew how many were there in the first place. And if it is such a low number who are posts from Mexico to Pakistan calling?’”).

⁴ Jennifer Hansler, “Close to 200 Americans are still seeking to leave Afghanistan, State Department tells congressional staff,” *CNN*, Oct. 22, 2021, available online at <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/22/politics/us-citizens-afghanistan-withdrawal-biden-admin/index.html> (stating number of U.S. citizens in Afghanistan to be 363); Rachel Bade, Eli Okun, and Garrett Ross, *Politico* Playbook, Oct. 26, 2021, available online at <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/playbook-pm/2021/10/26/threats-red-lines-and-roadblocks-stand-in-way-of-a-deal-494848?tab=most-read> (stating DoD Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl confirmed number to be about 450); Jack Detsch et al, “State Department: Thousands of U.S. Residents Still Stuck in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy*, November 3, 2021, available online at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/11/03/state-department-afghanistan-us-residents/>.

6. Scott Weinhold, Assistant Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy Kabul
7. Ross Wilson, Chargé d’Affaires, U.S. Embassy Kabul
8. James Morris, Department approver of flight manifests
9. Rena Bitter, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Consular Affairs
10. Ian Brownlee, former Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Consular Affairs
11. Ian Hillman, Senior Advisor, Visa Office, Consular Affairs
12. Nancy Izzo Jackson, Senior Bureau Official, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
13. Larry Bartlett, Director of Admissions, Population, Refugees and Migration
14. Dean Thompson, head of Department’s Afghanistan Task Force and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs
15. Mark Evans, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs
16. Todd Brown, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Diplomatic Security
17. Greg Sherman, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Assistant Director of High Threat Programs Directorate, Bureau of Diplomatic Security
18. Kevin O’Keefe, Director, Office of Security Assistance, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs
19. Tracey Jacobson, Operation Allies Welcome State Department Liaison
20. Beth Jones, Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts
21. Virginia Palmer, CARE Task Force Lead for Third Country Operations
22. Shannon Farrell, CARE Task Force Lead for CONUS Operations
23. Karen Decker, CARE Task Force Lead for American Inbound Flight Manifests
24. Evyenia Sidreas, Director, Arabian Peninsula, Bureau of Near East Asian Affairs
25. Brett Holmgren, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
26. Salman Ahmed, Director, Policy Planning Staff
27. Maureen Cormack, Dean of Foreign Service Institute
28. Dafna Rand, Director of the Office of Foreign Assistance
29. Richard Visek, Acting Legal Adviser
30. Karen Freeman, Acting USAID Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Asia
31. Mark Walther, USAID Director of Acquisition and Assistance
32. Sarah Charles, Assistant Administrator, Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
33. Karen Freeman, Acting USAID Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Asia
34. Tina Dooley-Jones, USAID Mission Director Afghanistan

Please direct the above officials to schedule their interviews as soon as possible. Your refusal to provide the requested documents and interviews would not only prevent the Committee from fully investigating the matters outlined above but also impede Congress’ ability to fulfill its Constitutional responsibilities to protect our national security.

If you have any questions, please contact staff for the Committee on Foreign Affairs at (202) 226-8467.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress



STEVE CHABOT
Member of Congress



JOE WILSON
Member of Congress



SCOTT PERRY
Member of Congress



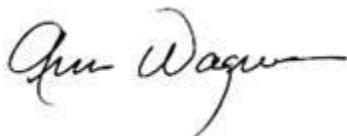
DARRELL ISSA
Member of Congress



ADAM KINZINGER
Member of Congress



LEE ZELDIN
Member of Congress



ANN WAGNER
Member of Congress



BRIAN MAST
Member of Congress



BRIAN FITZPATRICK
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



ANDY BARR
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Member of Congress



CLAUDIA TENNEY
Member of Congress



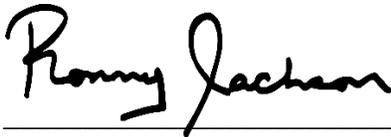
AUGUST PFLUGER
Member of Congress



NICOLE MALLIOTAKIS
Member of Congress



PETER MEIJER
Member of Congress



RONNY L. JACKSON
Member of Congress



YOUNG KIM
Member of Congress



MARIA E. SALAZAR
Member of Congress

CC: Chairman Gregory Meeks
USAID Administrator Samantha Power
Chairman Robert Menendez
Ranking Member James Risch