



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

June 27, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

I wrote to you on June 8 and 20, 2023, regarding the Department of State's (the Department) continued failure to produce requested documents and information regarding the Biden Administration's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. In those letters, I warned that I was prepared to issue a subpoena to compel the production of three specific priority items. While I thank the Department for producing two of those three items, it continues to fail to provide the Committee the Afghanistan After-Action Review (AAR) files, a longstanding request dating back to January 2023. Please produce the AAR files in complete and unredacted form no later than July 14, 2023, to avoid the need for compulsory process.

On January 12, 2023, I requested the production of "[a]ll documents resulting from State Department internal reviews related to the Afghanistan withdrawal [.]"¹ On January 30, Committee staff followed up by providing the Department a list of initial priorities for prompt production, including "Ambassador Dan Smith's After-Action Report and all documents and communications referring and relating to it[.]"² The Committee further identified the Department's AAR as one of three specific, easily identifiable priority items to be produced no later than February 7, 2023.³ The Department failed to comply with this deadline, prompting the Committee to warn that a subpoena would be forthcoming in the event of continued failure to produce these priority items.

In a March 3, 2023, letter, I requested that "a current draft of Ambassador Smith's After-Action Report (including any associated documents such as exhibits or appendices)" be produced

¹ Letter from Michael T. McCaul, Chairman, H. Comm. on Foreign Affs. (HFAC), to the Hon. Antony J. Blinken, Sec'y of State, U.S. Dep't of State (Jan. 12, 2023) [hereinafter Jan. 12 Letter].

² Email from HFAC Majority staff to U.S. Dep't of State staff (Jan. 30, 2023, 11:51 PM EDT) (on file with author) [hereinafter Priorities List].

³ *Id.*

immediately.⁴ The Department again failed to produce the AAR and other requested documents, prompting me to warn in a March 20, 2023, letter that I would proceed with a subpoena if the AAR and other items were not produced by March 22.⁵ On March 22, the Department agreed to share the AAR with Congress to avoid a subpoena, ultimately providing it on April 6, 2023.

The Department, however, did not meet the terms of the Committee's request, which called for a "current draft of the After-Action Report prepared under Ambassador Daniel Smith (including any associated documents such as exhibits or appendices)" in complete and unredacted form.⁶ The AAR references a set of documents titled the "Afghanistan AAR files," describing it as "an electronic and paper collection of all the materials the review team consulted and cited to prepare its report."⁷ To fully and properly comply with the Committee's request would have required the Department to produce not only the AAR, but the accompanying AAR files.

As such, on April 25, 2023, the Committee specifically requested that the Department produce the Afghanistan AAR files "in complete and unredacted form" no later than May 5, 2023.⁸ This deadline elapsed with no response from the Department. On May 23, 2023, Oversight & Accountability Subcommittee Chairman Brian Mast and Committee staff raised the need to produce this item in a meeting with Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Richard Verma.⁹ Despite repeated subsequent requests, including my recent June 8 and June 20 letters warning of a potential subpoena, the Department has yet to produce the AAR files.

As I have previously outlined, the AAR files are critical to the Committee's investigation of the Afghanistan withdrawal. Specifically, these documents will inform potential legislation and budgetary decisions to avert similar catastrophes in the future. As a collection of key materials used for the preparation of the Department's AAR, the AAR files will grant significant insight into the events of the withdrawal and the Department's plans and actions which led up to it.

The Committee therefore again reiterates the following request for documents and information in complete and unredacted form:

1. The Afghanistan AAR files, including all underlying and source documents.

During a June 22, 2023, discussion with Committee staff, the Department provided assurances that it would produce the AAR files but would need several additional weeks to do so.¹⁰ While the Committee believes this item could and should have already been produced months ago, as an accommodation, I am willing to extend the deadline for production of this item to July 14,

⁴ Letter from Michael T. McCaul, Chairman, HFAC, to the Hon. Antony J. Blinken, Sec'y of State, U.S. Dep't of State (Mar. 3, 2023) [hereinafter March 3 Letter].

⁵ Letter from Michael T. McCaul, Chairman, HFAC, to the Hon. Antony J. Blinken, Sec'y of State, U.S. Dep't of State (Mar. 20, 2023).

⁶ *Id.* at 9.

⁷ See March 3 Letter, *supra* note 4.

⁸ Letter from Michael T. McCaul, Chairman, HFAC, to the Hon. Antony J. Blinken, Sec'y of State, U.S. Dep't of State (Apr. 25, 2023).

⁹ Meeting between Brian Mast, Subcomm. Chairman, Oversight and Accountability, HFAC, & Richard Verma, D-MR, U.S. Dep't of State, in Washington, D.C. (May 23, 2023).

¹⁰ Call between HFAC Majority staff and Dep't of State staff (June 22, 2023).

2023. As Committee staff made clear to the Department, this request is a top priority for the Committee and should be treated as such.

Please provide **all** documents responsive to this request no later than 5:00 PM EST on July 14, 2023, **in complete and unredacted form**. All unclassified documents should be produced in unclassified format separately from classified materials, as applicable. **If the Department does not produce the AAR files by July 14, 2023, I am prepared to proceed with a subpoena.**

If you have any questions about this request, your staff may contact Committee staff at (202) 226-8467. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael T. McCaul". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee

CC:

Rep. Gregory W. Meeks, Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee