



Background

Ambassador Carol Z. Perez began her career at the State Department in 1987 and served 35 years until she retired in December 2022. She served as the U.S. Ambassador to Chile under the Obama Administration, and as Director General of the Foreign Service under the Trump Administration. During the Afghanistan withdrawal Perez served as the Acting Under Secretary of Management, spanning from January 21, 2021, to late December 2021. Ambassador Perez has since retired and, since March 2023, serves as reemployed annuitant (REA) in the Department. In this role Perez leads classes at the National Security Executive Leadership Seminar.

Role throughout the Afghanistan Withdrawal

1. Perez was responsible for maintaining a safe platform for the State Department’s ongoing diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, testifying, “My role was actually not about the withdrawal but to help maintain a safe platform for the ongoing presence, diplomatic presence.” (Page 15, Lines 23-24).
2. Perez traveled to Kabul in April of 2021 to assess the needs of Embassy Kabul, testifying, “[W]hen the President made an announcement, I had a conversation with Brian McKeon and said, you know, we should go out -- somebody should go out and just make sure that the embassy has what they need for the future. And I was the person, so I went out, traveled there.” (Page 14, Lines 22-25).
3. Perez testified that there wasn’t one person in the State Department responsible for overseeing planning for the Afghanistan withdrawal, asserting “So the way it works at the Department is not generally a senior leader. When we have -- as I said, when we start to plan for any kind of contingency, that is the responsibility of a bureau working with the post. We don't, sort of, take one senior leader and do that.” (Page 21, Lines 22-25).
4. Perez mainly engaged with Ambassador Ross Wilson, U.S Embassy Kabul’s Chief of Mission. (Page 18, Line 11).
5. Perez did not engage with Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad at all during the withdrawal period. (Page 18, Lines 19-20).

Carrying out the Afghanistan Withdrawal

1. According to Perez, the Department’s position and planning during the withdrawal focused on maintaining a diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, testifying “We were focused on an enduring diplomatic presence -- again, for both Presidents, withdrawal of troops, enduring diplomatic presence.” (Page 38, Lines 15-16).
2. When asked who gave her orders to maintain a continued US diplomatic presence in Kabul, Perez described taking her initiative from President Biden’s public comments:

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- a. It's the President's statement that, you know, we were going to withdraw but there would be, you know, a remaining diplomatic presence. That, to me, was signaled, right? And, again, I never talked to the President in my life. But, you know, that statement was, like, "Okay. So now what do we do?" Right?" (Page 84, Lines 17-22).
3. Perez did not begin talks with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security until April of 2021:
 - a. "So I don't remember anything before April with Diplomatic Security. ... So I don't recall any conversations with them prior to that, but after that we were obviously very engaged." (Pages 33, Lines 11-25).
4. During the withdrawal, Perez's assessment of the situation centered around Kabul and not Afghanistan as a whole:
 - a. "Again, Kabul itself was quiet, you know, relatively speaking. There were not attacks on Americans. ... If it stayed quiet, then perhaps, you know, work can continue." (Page 35, Lines 10-14).
5. Perez's understanding of the security situation in Afghanistan did not change until after Kabul fell, testifying that the Department hoped for the best.
 - a. "You know, I would say that I think we all were very much surprised by what happened. Because the -- I'm not an expert, right? I mean, I'm dumped into this job, you know, with all due respect -- which, you know, I did. And, you know, we're talking about the Afghan Security Forces, and everybody thought that they would be there and that Kabul itself would stay safe. So I, you know, relied upon the people who had more experience than I did and expertise to, you know, help me assess whether or not this was a good thing or not, right?" (Page 35, Lines 15-23).
 - b. "It didn't sink in until it fell. I mean, I've got to admit, I think we were all like, how did this happen?" (Page 93, Line 9-11).
 - c. "I mean, you hope for the best, right? So, you know, if Kabul could've held, I think it would've been okay[.]" (Page 39, Lines 9-12).
6. Perez testified that she does not understand Afghanistan's annual fighting season culture, nor remembers any consideration being given to the fact the military withdrawal coincided during the fighting season.
 - a. "I'm sorry, but you're talking about something I really don't have any -- I mean, not 'knowledge,' but I don't understand it. So I can't answer." (Page 39, Lines 15-25; Page 40, Lines 1-4).
7. Perez did not recall any discussions concerning potential Taliban takeover of Kabul, the embassy, or HKIA, testifying "I don't think we ever thought -- you know, nobody ever

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talked about, ‘Well, what's going to happen when the Taliban come over the wall?’”
(Page 85, Line 7-10).

NEO Planning

1. Perez’s focus did not shift away from maintaining a U.S. diplomatic presence to NEO until the evacuation began, testifying “My focus shifted when the evacuation started and all of a sudden it was like how do we get people out and move them to the United States quickly and safely and that kind of thing.” (Page 142, Lines 1-5).
2. Perez defined the evacuation as encompassing “U.S. direct hires, those we would normally evacuate in an emergency; American citizens, LPRs, and those that we might have an obligation to under MOAs.” (Page 48, Lines 20-21).
3. Perez testified that the Department has standard procedures for closing embassies, testifying “But we do have procedures for closing embassies. And it happens, unfortunately, more than you would think, right? And so part of it's the destruction of documents, it's destruction of classified equipment, those kinds of things. You have a checklist that you go through.” (Page 86, Lines 9-12).
4. Perez is unaware of anyone in the Department, or Biden administration, recommending a NEO be declared until August 15, 2021. (Page 145, Lines 14-16).
5. According to Perez, the neither U.S. Embassy Kabul nor the Department’s South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau anticipated a NEO:
 - a. “I the embassy for sure not. The embassy I think was very positive. And I don't even remember SCA saying, yeah, we think that's going to be the NEO.” I think it took -- I mean, again, I think it took everybody by surprise. Remember the airport was open, right. As long as the airport's open, there's no NEO. You don't need it. You can get out on commercial flights.” (Page 146, Lines 6-18).
6. Perz was unsure what changes on the ground would have triggered a NEO in Afghanistan prior to it being called. (Page 147, Lines 4-8).
7. Perez was unsure what entity was responsible for running Hamid Karzai International Airport, testifying, “I don't know for sure. Again, I was not focused on what was happening on the ground there, because the military came in, and once the military came -- you know, our military came in, then I assumed that they took over those operations. (Page 150, Lines 21-25; Page 151, Lines 1-3).
8. Perez learned the NEO had been requested simultaneously to learning that the evacuation from Afghanistan was already underway. (Page 151, Lines 24-25; Page 152, Line 1).
9. Perez concedes that the Department failed to identify a specific person in charge of NEO. (Page 152, Lines 3-11).

10. Based on her experience as an ambassador, Perez acknowledged that within an embassy, responsibility lies with the ambassador to plan “any kind of disaster,” testifying “So, as a former ambassador, I was responsible for whatever happened at my mission, right? And so that planning for any kind of disaster was on me. And I would work with my regional bureau to make sure that we had what we needed.” (Page 20, Lines 14-16).
11. On the discrepancy between a NEO and what transpired in Afghanistan, Perez testified “And then what happened was we had a humanitarian airlift, which is completely different. And I have no experience in that. I wasn't around the last time we did this, which was in Vietnam.” (Page 48, Lines 21-25).

On-the-Ground Situational Awareness

1. Perez had no knowledge of how many individuals qualified as an SIV, pursuant to the program run by the Department. (Page 158, Lines 4-8).
2. Perez contends it would be impossible to identify all SIV qualified personnel because it is on the individual to apply, and absent that application the data is not tracked. (Page 158, Lines 20-25; Page 159, Lines 1-10).
3. When asked if she had contemplated an Afghan government that included the Taliban, Perez responded, “I didn't contemplate a government in Afghanistan. I mean, honestly, that was not really what I was focused on, what that might look like. And there are unity governments that work in some countries, but, honestly, I was not contemplating anything.” (Page 160, Lines 14-19).
4. Perez never contemplated that Hamid Karzai International Airport would be breached or overrun. (Page 161, Lines 15-18).
5. The State Department did not have any standard operating procedures for the type of operation or scenario in Afghanistan. (Page 161, Lines 24-25; Page 162, Lines 1-8).
6. Perez only knew Afghan provincial capitals fell to Taliban forces in early August 2021. (Page 162, Lines 17-19).
7. Perez testified that despite the Taliban seizing provincial capitals throughout Afghanistan, remained unworried about Kabul's security, stating “So, in my discussions that I was having with, you know, these calls and everything, Kabul was still quiet. And so I'd say, ‘How's everything?’ And they'd say, ‘Kabul's quiet.’ ‘Are we continuing?’ ‘Yes.’ And we did.” (Page 162, Lines 20-24).
8. Despite the benefit of hindsight Perez does not believe that her understanding of the security situation was too Kabul centric. (Page 1632, Lines 3-12).
9. Perez is unsure that visiting Afghanistan sooner would have benefited her ability to prepare for what occurred.

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- a. "I'm not sure. I had been in the job a couple months. That's nothing, you know. Just trying to sort of get myself, you know, very much on top of what was going on. I think the timing was a good timing. As I said, again, we weren't starting from ground zero; we were starting at quite a good level. But it also -- the announcement gave impetus for people to work, right? If I had gone earlier and said, 'Hey, what about this?' and they're like, 'Well, why do we care?' right, 'There's no announcement,' people -- you know, 'Yeah, I'll worry about that tomorrow.' It's human nature, right? Unless you're not a procrastinator. But I am. So, you know, you just don't do it." (Page 164, Lines 4-14).

CCR Bureau

1. Under the Trump Administration, Secretary of State Pompeo stood up the Contingency and Crisis Response Bureau (CCR), which would have been staffed by members of the Medical Services Bureau, tasked with evacuation Americans overseas in high threat scenarios. CCR was permanently halted from implementation under the Biden Administration. (Page 99, Lines 22-25; Page 100, Line 1).
2. Perez while serving as President Trump's Director General of the Foreign Service opposed CCR, because she believed removing positions from the Medical Services Bureau put the health of State Department officials around the world at risk. (Page 100, Lines 17-25; Page 101, Lines 1-25; Page 102, Lines 1-2).
3. Perez recused herself from decision making pertaining to CCR under the Biden Administration given her prior opposition. She believes that Deputy Secretary of State McKeon recommended to Secretary Blinken that the Department dissolve CCR. (Page 102, Lines 24-25; Page 103, Lines 1-3).