



Background:

Suzy George spent the majority of her career working for former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, six years at the State Department and fourteen in the private sector. She then worked on the Obama National Security Council as the Chief of Staff and Executive Secretary before moving to work at the ONE Campaign, a nongovernmental aid organization predominantly focused on African poverty. Next, she worked on the Biden transition and, in January 2021, joined the State Department as the Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Antony Blinken in January 2021 – a role she continues to serve in.

Retention of Wilson and Khalilzad

1. The Biden Administration retained Ambassador Khalilzad as U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation after the State Department agency review team made the recommendation. George does not recall the specific reasons for his retention. (Page 18, Lines 13-19).
2. The Biden Administration retained Ambassador Wilson as Chief of Mission to U.S. Embassy Kabul after the State Department agency review team made the recommendation. George does not recall the specific reasons for his retention. (Page 19, Lines 2-4).

Roles and Responsibilities for Policy and Planning

1. George testified that Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Brian McKeon held the principal responsibility for leading the State Department’s equities in the Afghanistan withdrawal, and Counselor to the Department Derek Chollet led on the policy work.
 - a. “So Brian McKeon, as the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources, was responsible for the planning for the withdrawal.” (Page 15, Lines 21-22)
 - b. “Derek Chollet led on the policy work.” (Page 16, Line 1)
2. According to George, the White House and NSC led the policy review on the Afghanistan withdrawal.
 - a. “So the White House ran the Afghan policy review process, National Security Council process. That went started in January of ’21 and went on through the spring.” (Page 17, Lines 2-4)

Secretary Blinken’s Afghanistan Trip

1. George participated in the planning for the trip but would not explain in any greater detail what she specifically planned. (Page 40, Lines 17-19).

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2. George traveled to Afghanistan with Secretary Blinken in April 2021. They spent somewhere between five to ten hours in Afghanistan. (Page 40, Lines 20-23).
3. During their brief visit Secretary Blinken and George met with Afghan government officials, U.S. embassy personnel, and some of the civil society. (Page 40, Lines 24-25; Page 41, Line 1).
4. George said the purpose of the trip was to visit the U.S. embassy to get an assessment of the facts on the ground and for Secretary Blinken to conduct diplomatic engagement with the Afghan government. (Page 41, Lines 3-5).
5. George stated Secretary Blinken met with President Ghani and his cabinet. (Page 41, Lines 10-11).
6. George does not recall any key takeaways from their trip to Afghanistan, testifying “I don’t recall the specific key takeaways. I think the diplomatic engagement with the Afghan Government was as is often in diplomatic engagement, was an opportunity for the Secretary to share the U.S. Government's perspective and point of view, to learn about the Afghan Government's point of view.” (Page 41, Lines 23-25; Page 42, Line 1).

Withdrawal Planning and Execution

1. The Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources, Brian McKeon, oversaw planning for the withdrawal in the State Department. (Page 15, Lines 15-21).
2. Other officials involved in withdrawal planning were Carol Perez as Acting Secretary of Management, Derek Collet led on the policy work, and Ambassador Khalilzad. (Page 15, Lines 22-25; Page 16, Lines 1-2).
3. George is unaware of a formal assessment of whether the Taliban were reliable partners regarding keeping to their obligations under the Doha Agreement. (Page 37, Lines 4-9).
4. The State Department decided in the Spring of 2021 that U.S. embassy Kabul would remain open after the U.S. military withdrawal.
 - a. “In the spring of 2021, there was an ongoing process, parallel to the policy process, to plan for the withdrawal. Within that planning process, there were ongoing discussions about the ability to keep the embassy open post withdrawal. During the planning process, there was a series of -- my recollection is that there were a series of discussions about under what circumstances the embassy would be able to remain open.” (Page 38, Lines 6-13).
5. George does not know what impact President Biden’s go-to-zero order had on the stability of the Afghan government. (Page 43, Lines 2-10).

NEO Planning and Execution

1. George spent much of August focused on Afghanistan, testifying “So, throughout the month of August, I spent the majority of my time focused on Afghanistan.” (Page 69, Lines 19-20).
2. According to George, DMR McKeon led NEO Preparation at the State Department. (Page 70, Lines 18-25).
3. George stated that no one at the State Department had concerns about Embassy Kabul Chief of Mission, Ambassador Wilson’s ability to lead. (Page 82, Lines 14-17)
4. According to George, one of the primary issues post August 15th was access to proper paperwork for qualifying Afghans seeking to leave Afghanistan. (Page 78, Lines 15-20).
5. During the interagency discussions addressing security of the embassy, the Department’s position on Afghanistan were presented by Ambassador Khalilzad, Deputy Secretary Sherman, and Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources McKeon, and Counselor Chollet. (Page 81, Lines 5-15).
6. Deputy Secretary Sherman recommended Ambassador Bass travel to Afghanistan to assist Ambassador Wilson. (Page 82, Lines 20-21).
7. During the NEO approximately 100,000 people were evacuated and 6,000 to 8,000 were American citizens. George, however, was unaware of the breakdown of legal permanent residents, green card holders, third-country nationals, or SIVs. (Page 86, Lines 13- 25; Page 87, Lines 1-7).
8. When asked if the State Department was surprised about the scale and complexity of the evacuation, George testified, “We had done a lot of planning for the withdrawal, but I think as is publicly noted in many sources, the evacuation was unprecedented, yes.” (Page 82, Lines 4-5).

Situational and Policy Awareness

Transition and Interagency Review

1. George does not recall where the withdrawal planning process stood when she assumed her position as Chief of State in January 2021. (Page 20. Lines 2-4).
2. George does not recall when the Biden Administration made the decision to draw troops down to zero. (Page 20, Lines 8-10).
3. George does not recall the prudent planning process that formulated withdrawal options for Afghanistan. However, she does recall concerns that insufficient plans were being developed. (Page 20, Lines 14-17; Page 21, Lines 20-22).

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4. George does not know the specifics of the interagency review process assessing whether the Taliban was living up to the Doha agreement. (Page 22, Lines 23-25).
5. George does not remember when she learned of President Biden's go-to-zero plan, but assumed she learned of it a few days before the announcement. (Page 28, Lines 15-16).

Embassy Security

6. George does not recall how the Bureau of Diplomatic Security characterized the level of risk for the U.S. Embassy Kabul if the U.S. military was drawn to zero. (Page 39, Lines 4-7).
7. George does not know if there were disagreements within the State Department during security discussions. She remembers discussions occurring but cannot recall if any disagreements existed. (Page 39, Lines 15-18).
8. George does not remember if Secretary Blinken ever considered requesting a stay behind force for embassy security. (Page 39, Lines 19-21).
9. George remembered who the Secretary met with on their trip to Afghanistan but could not recall any specifics that came out of those meetings. (Page 41, Lines 2-25; Page 42, Lines 1-3).
10. George does not know what affect President Biden's go-to-zero announcement had on the Afghan government's stability. (Page 43, Lines 2-10).

Taliban

11. George is unsure of when she learned that the Taliban refused to attend the Istanbul conference, which was key to negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government. (Page 65, Lines 21-25; Page 66, Lines 1-5).
12. George does not recall what steps the State Department took in response to the Taliban's refusal to attend the Istanbul conference. (Page 66, Lines 6-8).
13. George does not recall when the Department first realized the Taliban was making significant gains in Afghanistan. (Page 66, Lines 12-15).

NEO Planning and Execution

14. George stated that Afghanistan was a priority for Secretary Blinken but does not know the specific amount of time the Secretary spent on it. (Page 69, Line 25; Page 70, Lines 1-3).
15. George is unsure when the State Department realized NEO was a potential outcome, but estimates it was the Spring of 2021. (Page 70, Lines 10-17),
16. George does not recall when NEO planning began. (Page 70, Lines 20-23).

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17. George does not recall a specific date when it became clear to the State Department that it could not sustain an embassy presence in Afghanistan. However, she estimates it was not until August 2021. (Page 72, Lines 14-21).
18. George is unsure if evacuation operations were impeded by the inability of officials to verify clearances. (Page 76, Lines 1-6).
19. George does not know the efforts made to track Americans in Afghanistan prior to August 2021. (Page 84, Lines 4-11).
20. George does not know the specific number of SIVs in Afghanistan and does not know if the State Department ever determined a specific number. (Page 86, Lines 2-11).