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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

April 22, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write to express my extreme concern regarding President Biden's decision to fully withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021. This decision seems to be politics over policy and President Biden is regretfully repeating the mistake President Obama made in Iraq. This withdrawal will hand the Taliban an undeserved victory, damage U.S. credibility as a counterterrorism partner, and gravely endanger the lives of Americans and Afghans alike.

The recent ODNI Annual Threat Assessment established that the Taliban will likely make territorial gains once the coalition has withdrawn forces, meaning that al-Qaeda could quickly gain strength again. President Biden's own CIA Director Burns also recently testified that there is "significant risk" associated with the withdrawal and that this decision will result in a decreased ability to collect intelligence and act to counter threats. And CENTCOM Commander General McKenzie testified this week that the withdrawal will make it harder to find, fix, and finish counterterrorism threats inside Afghanistan from outside locations.

Given the threat the withdrawal of U.S. troops poses to our homeland, it is vital that the Administration is clear-eyed about the implications of this withdrawal and rapidly secures the basing, overflight for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and strikes, and other necessary agreements that will allow us to have lethal counterterrorism capabilities from countries around Afghanistan and in the larger region. To this end, I would like to request your assessment of the effect the withdrawal will have on U.S. counterterrorism capabilities.

1. Has the Administration secured the necessary diplomatic agreements to grant us lethal counterterrorism strike capabilities in Afghanistan from surrounding countries and the

larger region once the U.S. has withdrawn forces? If so, from which countries has the U.S. secured these agreements?

2. Once our forces are withdrawn, what is the plan to ensure we have the necessary intelligence collection capabilities (e.g. ISR) to help prevent terrorism threats in Afghanistan from reaching the homeland?
3. How do you compare the intelligence collection capabilities we have today versus what we will have post-withdrawal?
4. Will the U.S. keep any type of counterterrorism capability in Afghanistan post-withdrawal? If so, what will be maintained?
5. What is your assessment of the amount of time post-withdrawal that it could take al-Qaeda and ISIS to regain enough capability to conduct an attack on the homelands of the U.S. or our allies?
6. What force protection assets will be utilized to secure Embassy Kabul post-withdrawal?

Please provide this information in an unclassified form, with a classified supplement as needed.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee