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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

September 23, 2021

The Hon. Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, Northwest
Washington D.C. 20520

The Hon. Lloyd Austin III
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Hon. Avril Haines
Director
Office of the Director of
National Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20511

Dear Secretary Blinken, Secretary Austin, and Director Haines,

On September 13, 2021, the House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing with Secretary Blinken to evaluate the Biden Administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan. During this hearing, several Members inquired about intelligence assessments predicting the Afghan government's ability to defend the country against the Taliban. When Secretary Blinken was asked how the Biden Administration is able to rectify the numerous conflicting statements from government officials on how quickly Afghanistan would fall to the Taliban, his response was:

“The Director of National Intelligence has said in the days leading up to the Taliban takeover, “Intelligence agencies did not say collapse was imminent. This unfolded more quickly than we anticipated, including in the Intelligence Community.”

I write to request that you submit to the House Foreign Affairs Committee the various intelligence products presented this year in the White House Principals meetings concerning: the strength and goals of the Taliban, the capabilities of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces to fight the Taliban without our continued support, reliability of senior political leadership

in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the evacuation related consequences for not maintaining Bagram Air Base, and the various time estimates over the course of this year on the likelihood of a Taliban takeover of the country. Of note, I am interested to see exactly how these products were reflected in the Biden Administration's contingency and worst-case scenario planning.

As you are aware, on June 23, the Wall Street Journal reported that intelligence assessments suggested the Afghan government may collapse six months after U.S. withdrawal, breaking from previous Biden Administration and military leadership suggestions that the Afghan government could hold for years. However, on August 8, CENTCOM Commander General McKenzie reportedly shared an estimate with Secretary Austin that the Taliban would control Afghanistan and isolate Kabul within 30 days. As such, it is imperative that Congress be given access to any and all reports and underlying intelligence products that led to the assessments so we may better understand how the situation deteriorated so quickly and why the Administration made the decisions they did regarding the disastrous evacuation.

I also request all relevant Department of State cables and intelligence community products regarding the threat of ISIS-K to Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA), specifically those leading up to the attack at HKIA on August 26, where we lost 13 brave service members. It is clear that U.S. forces were aware of an impending attack at the airport, as Secretary Austin reportedly told international leaders to prepare for a "mass casualty event" due to a "significant" intelligence report indicating a threat made by ISIS-K. I understand there may have been specific and credible threat information available the day before the attack. Please provide access to any and all relevant intelligence and related products from your organizations regarding any warning of this specific attack on U.S. forces.

The Administration owes the public transparency on the reports and assessments that informed the President's April 14 withdrawal decision and ultimately lead to abandoning hundreds of Americans, thousands of U.S. legal permanent residents, and tens of thousands of Special Immigrant Visa applicants and other Afghans at risk. Therefore, I also request you declassify and make public as much of this information regarding the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the August 26 HKIA attack as possible, while protecting sources and methods.

Please make all requested information available within 30 days. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee