

House Republican Foreign Affairs Committee Interim Report

"A Strategic Failure:"

Assessing the Administration's Afghanistan Withdrawal

House Foreign Affairs Committee Republicans have released an interim report on President Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan and the resulting chaotic and deadly evacuation. Here are some top takeaways:

The Doha agreement didn't force President Biden to withdraw from Afghanistan – he chose to do that in spite of advice from his top military advisors, the intelligence community, and America's allies.

- The Doha agreement was conditions-based, and those conditions were not being met according to Pres. Biden's own advisers. In addition, President Biden has admitted he "would've tried to figure out how to withdraw those troops" from the country even if the Doha agreement didn't exist.
- Generals Milley, McKenzie, and Miller all advised the president to leave a small force of about 2,500 military personnel in the country. They would have been joined by 6,000 mostly NATO troops.
- Gen. Milley made it clear that while a small number of additional troops might be necessary if the Taliban began to attack us, he testified the most that would be needed was likely 4,500 total. That is significantly less than the tens of thousands President Biden and Secretary Blinken repeatedly claimed would be – and that the NSC continues to claim.
 - Top NATO allies, including leaders from the United Kingdom and Germany, opposed the unconditional withdrawal from Afghanistan and urged the Biden administration not to do it.

The Biden administration absolutely did NOT "plan for all contingencies," as they repeatedly claimed.

- When the military evacuation began on August 15, 2021, there were only 15 consular officers at the airport processing people. At the height of the evacuation, only 36 consular officers were on site, or about one for every 3400 evacuees. U.S. military officers complained repeatedly about the absence of State Department personnel.
- Brigadier General John Sullivan, Joint Task Force-Crisis Response Commander in Kabul said, "NSC was not seriously planning for an evacuation...The embassy didn't fully participate in NEO planning until a week prior to the fall."
- The U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ross Wilson, took 2-week vacation the last week of June and first week of July 2021.
 - Around the same time, Gen. Miller warned, "the Taliban are on the move" and "what we are seeing is the rapid loss of district centers."

Before, during, and after the military evacuation, senior officials in the Biden administration – including the president himself – misled the American people. In some instances, they made these statements knowing they were not accurate.

- Throughout the evacuation, senior officials and spokespeople claimed the evacuation was progressing well, with one saying it was "moving quite efficiently," while gates were closed or flights were halted.
- Officials said the Taliban were cooperating and business-like during the evacuation when in fact they were beating, shooting and detaining would be evacuees – information that was both being reported in the news and was included in internal State Department memos.
- President Biden said it was "highly unlikely" the Taliban would take power, despite the U.S. military and U.S. intelligence community warning repeatedly this is exactly what would happen.

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The fallout from the withdrawal and evacuation has made America less safe, emboldening our adversaries and angering our allies.

- The Biden administration repeatedly claimed only “about a hundred” American citizens were abandoned in Afghanistan after the U.S. military evacuation ended on August 31, 2021. However, the report reveals the State Department has evacuated more than 800 AMCITS since that date. In addition, outside veterans groups have evacuated several hundred more – meaning more than 1,000 Americans were abandoned in a country controlled by a terrorist organization.
 - For perspective, the Iran hostage situation in 1979 saw 66 Americans left in the country.
- After the evacuation, desperate to find safety from the Taliban, a “significant” number of Afghan security forces, including high ranking officers and commandos, crossed the border into Iran. Some brought military equipment and vehicles with them. While some were returned to Afghanistan, according to the UN, others likely remained.
 - To date, the administration still has developed no plans for dealing with commandos – many of whom could be a serious national security threat to the United States if they are captured or turned by Iran, Russia or China. They were trained by U.S. special operators and know not only our tactics, but who these elite military officials are. Some of even trained in the United States.
- The Department of Defense, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the chief of MI-6 all agree the withdrawal is good for America’s adversaries, specifically Iran, China, and Russia.
 - “The victory of the Taliban would be a kind of rallying cry, a morale boost for extremists around the world, and indeed for those sitting in the capitals in Beijing, Tehran, and Moscow.” – Sir Richard Moore, Chief of MI6
- General McKenzie said it is “more likely than not” that al Qaeda and ISIS could reconstitute because of the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Gen. Milley said the unconditional withdrawal and chaotic evacuation that followed “damaged” U.S. credibility.

The Biden administration has refused to comply with any requests for documents. It’s imperative Congress fulfill its Article I duties and conduct proper oversight of the decision to withdraw and the fallout that caused.

- The administration has repeatedly ignored requests for documentation and information from the State Department.
 - At one point, the State Department replied with identical language in two different responses to requests for further information – making it clear they were sending form letters. Neither response answered the questions the initial letters asked.
- The Committee Minority believes the State Department needs to provide requested documentation, which includes memos, letters, and notes touching on the decision to withdraw, the preparations made for the fallout from the withdrawal, and the military evacuation.
- The State Department should provide the 33 officials for transcribed interviews that were requested in November 2021 after multiple other attempts to gather information were ignored or refused. In addition, they should provide the five additional officials that were requested, including the primary spokespeople for the administration during this time period.
- The House Foreign Affairs Committee should hold multiple, open hearings focused on the withdrawal from Afghanistan with top Biden administration officials including Secretary Blinken, NSA Sullivan, and others.