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One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

May 29, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

Thank you for providing access to the July 13, 2021 Dissent Channel cable and official response, which both Ranking Member Meeks and I read *in camera* on May 23 at the State Department. Providing this access was the right decision. Reading the original documents has significantly enhanced my understanding of the deteriorating conditions on the ground in Afghanistan and the direness of the dissenting officials' warnings to the Department's leadership. Review of the dissent cable makes clear the remarkable extent to which the dissenters accurately predicted the situation on the ground and the Department's course of action in Afghanistan, and that the Department's actions taken in response were grossly inadequate.

Without divulging any classified information, and based on my review of the cable and response, I can unequivocally state that the summary and briefing which the Department provided the Committee are not an adequate substitute for reading the documents themselves. I am therefore writing to reiterate the acute need to provide access to these documents to my fellow Committee members. I believe it is essential that every one of the Committee's Members – Democrat and Republican – have the same opportunity that Ranking Member Meeks and I did to review them. The original cable more clearly conveys the urgency of the warnings the Department received from embassy officials in a stark manner that the Department's one-page summary could not and did not satisfactorily convey. To operate off the basis of the summaries is to operate off an incomplete and inadequate understanding of these documents.

The terms of the Committee’s March 28, 2023 subpoena compel you to produce in unredacted form “[t]he Dissent Channel cable sent on or about July 13, 2021, reportedly signed by 23 State Department officials and the official response to it” to the Committee – not merely its Chairman and Ranking Member.¹ The accommodation necessary to satisfy the subpoena, is for the Department to provide all Committee Members access to the documents as soon as practicable.

Congressional oversight is a power vested under Article I of the Constitution.² Here, the consideration of potential future legislation to prevent similar catastrophes is an important part of the Committee’s oversight efforts. To allow two Committee Members out of 51 the opportunity to review these documents obstructs such legislative efforts. **Therefore, as soon as possible, but no later than June 9, 2023, please arrange with Committee staff to provide all Committee Members access to view the Dissent Channel cable and official response.**

I am, of course, sensitive to concerns regarding the protection of the identities of cable signatories. The dissenting officials provided an invaluable service for their country and merit appropriate recognition, whether in public or private in accordance with their individual wishes. For that reason, I do not object to continued redaction of signatories’ names. However, to the extent the Department is concerned that cooperating with congressional oversight could somehow chill candor in future dissent channels, I respectfully disagree. If brave and dedicated officials are disincentivized to provide their honest and candid assessments in future communications with Department leadership, it will be because the Administration failed to heed their warnings in July 2021 and not because Congress seeks a full accounting for the American people.

While I paused efforts to enforce the Committee’s subpoena pending my review of the documents, I did so with the express stipulations that the subpoena remains in full force and effect, and that acceptance of this accommodation did not waive any of the Committee’s rights. Should the Department continue to refuse to provide the entire Committee the same opportunity Ranking Member Meeks and I had to review these documents, I will need to revisit my current position.

The Department waited nearly two years after the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal to provide just two Members of Congress with access to documents showing the dire warnings by career officials that went unheeded, with tragic consequences. I strongly urge you to do the right thing and provide access to the documents to all Committee members and to the American people. On this Memorial Day, all Americans – particularly Afghanistan veterans and Gold Star families – deserve a full and complete accounting of the Administration’s actions. Based on my review of

¹ *Subpoena from the U.S. House of Rep. Comm. on Foreign Affs. to Antony Blinken, Sec’y of Dep’t of State*, 118th Cong. 4 (Mar. 28, 2023).

² *See generally* U.S. Const. art. I, § 8, cl. 8; *McGrain v. Daugherty*, 273 U.S. at 135, 174 (1927) (holding that “the power of inquiry—with process to enforce it—is an essential and appropriate auxiliary to the legislative function”); *Eastland v. U.S. Servicemen's Fund*, 421 U.S. at 491, 504 (1975) (holding that “the power to investigate is inherent in the power to make laws”).

the documents, I do not believe there is an adequate basis for them to be classified or that their release would have any negative impact on national security. To the contrary, their release would be first step in restoring Americans' trust with the Administration's foreign policy decisions.

We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael T. McCaul". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee

CC:

Rep. Gregory W. Meeks, Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee