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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

August 12, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

During the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on May 22, 2024 – *The State of American Diplomacy in 2024: Global Instability, Budget Challenges, and Great Power Competition* – I asked for your commitment to testify before the Committee as part of its investigation into the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.¹ As I noted during that hearing, the Committee will be releasing a report on the withdrawal in September 2024.²

In response to my request, you observed that you “grieve with [the Gold Star families] . . . [and] honor their sacrifice, and one of the ways [you] do that, of course, is by *taking part in oversight and answering questions*, giving the American people the answers they deserve.”³ You did not, however, commit to appearing before the Committee as part of the investigation, instead preferring to “have our teams talk about [your appearance].”⁴ Unlike other senior U.S. Department of Defense, Department of State, and National Security Council officials, you have not yet answered questions as part of the Committee’s investigation. The time is now ripe for you to appear, and as you describe, honor the sacrifice of the Gold Star families by providing answers to the American people.

To date, the Committee has interviewed 17 current and former Department of Defense and Department of State officials involved in the withdrawal from Afghanistan. On July 26, 2024, the Committee also interviewed former White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki regarding the Biden administration’s statements about that withdrawal. In addition, the Committee has held public hearings with senior government officials, including the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

¹ House Foreign Affairs Committee, *The State of American Diplomacy in 2024: Global Instability, Budget Challenges, and Great Power Competition*, May 22, 2024 (1:05:10 – 1:05:36).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.* at 1:05:38 – 1:06:03 (emphases added).

⁴ *Id.* at 1:06:28 – 1:06:32.

Staff, General Mark Milley, and the former Commander of U.S. Central Command, General Frank McKenzie. Further, the Committee has engaged in a rigorous discovery process and has analyzed more than 10,000 pages of agency documents, including interview notes from the State Department's After-Action Review.

The Department of State was central to the Afghanistan withdrawal, including serving as the senior authority during the August non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO). And as Secretary of State throughout the withdrawal and NEO, you were entrusted to lead these efforts and to secure the safe evacuation of Americans and allies. In testimony before the Committee, current and former State Department officials have confirmed that you served as the final decisionmaker for the Department on the withdrawal.

The Gold Star families, veterans, and American people deserve to hear directly from you on the Afghanistan withdrawal and NEO. Accordingly, I request that you please confirm your appearance for a public hearing on September 10, 2024, by August 19, 2024.

As a public servant, you have a duty to appear before Congress when requested. It thus is my expectation that you will appear voluntarily. Should you decide not to appear voluntarily, it will be my duty to ensure your appearance through compulsory process.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee

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