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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

September 3, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

The House Committee on Foreign Affairs (the “Committee”) is investigating the Biden-Harris Administration’s catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan. During the Committee’s 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 withdrawal.

In subsequent correspondence dated August 12, 2024, I requested that you confirm no later than August 19, 2024 your appearance at a public hearing on September 10, 2024.¹ This letter further indicated that should you choose “not to appear voluntarily,” I would be obligated to proceed with compulsory process to compel your appearance.²

The Committee is holding this hearing because the Department of State was central to the Afghanistan withdrawal and served as the senior authority during the August non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO).³ 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 Afghan 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 and evacuation. You are therefore in a position to inform the Committee’s consideration of potential legislation aimed at helping prevent the catastrophic mistakes of the withdrawal, including potential reforms to the Department’s legislative authorization.

¹ Letter from Michael T. McCaul, Chairman, H. Comm. on Foreign Affs. (HFAC) to the Hon. Antony J. Blinken, Sec’y of State, U.S. Dep’t of State (August 12, 2024).

² *Id.*

³ JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, U.S. DEP’T OF DEF., JOINT PUBL’N 3-68, NONCOMBATANT EVACUATION OPERATIONS, at I-1 (2015), https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp3_68.pdf.

Pursuant to your request for a telephone call and our subsequent discussion on August 19 – the response deadline – I informed you that the Committee’s report on the withdrawal will be released on September 9 and that you needed to appear at a hearing to address the findings set forth in the report.⁴ During this call, in the interest of the investigation, I agreed to provide you with additional time to finalize a scheduled date for your appearance, which you indicated would be “nail[ed] [] down in the next week.”⁵

Since this call, Committee staff reached out to the Department on August 26, seeking a proposed alternate date for the hearing; no date was provided.⁶ Committee staff followed up with the Department on each of the next three days, reiterating my initial request for your appearance and the Committee’s need to finalize a date for the hearing. Department staff again failed to provide a date. Specifically, Committee staff notified the Department on August 27 – as it had been over a week since our August 19 discussion – that dates had still not been provided and the Committee would be forced to issue a subpoena to compel your appearance to testify.

Despite repeated requests, and a warning of impending compulsory process, rather than provide proposed dates, the Department once again requested another telephone call be scheduled on August 30. Due to the State Department’s failure to confirm a date for your appearance, I am now forced to delay the date of the hearing to September 19.

The Committee has provided extraordinary accommodation in its multiple requests and communications seeking to finalize a date in line with your schedule. To date, the Department has yet to provide any potential dates for your appearance.

In view the Department’s continued delay and unresponsiveness to the Committee’s repeated requests for a specific hearing date, pursuant to the provisions of House Rule XI, clause 2(m), the Committee hereby transmits a subpoena compelling you to testify at a hearing before the Committee on September 19, 2024, at 10:00 am.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Enclosures

Cc:

⁴ Call between Michael T. McCaul, Chairman, HFAC, and the Hon. Antony J. Blinken, Sec’y of State, U.S. Dep’t of State (August 19, 2024).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Call between HFAC Majority staff and U.S. Dep’t of State staff (Aug. 26, 2024).

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