

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

January 28, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has been monitoring the deteriorating security situation in Yemen. In the wake of attacks against U.S. embassies and personnel worldwide—including the attacks that led to the murder of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans in Benghazi, Libya—the Committee is concerned about the safety of our embassy personnel in Yemen. Given the increasing turmoil and instability, we are writing to ask whether there is a planned evacuation of all embassy personnel in Yemen.

Despite an agreement reached by the Yemeni government and Shi'ite Houthi rebel fighters in September 2014, fighting erupted again this past week. On January 19, the Houthi rebels—which Iran has been supplying with weapons, money and training—clashed with soldiers near the presidential palace in Yemen's capital, Sanaa.¹ During these clashes, unknown assailants fired shots at a U.S. embassy vehicle, which carried U.S. diplomatic personnel.² On January 22, Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and his Cabinet resigned.³ His resignation has led to a “power vacuum in a country that is home to what Washington describes as al-Qaida's most dangerous offshoot.”⁴

Since the fighting began early last week, each day brings news of increasing unrest and violence with few signs of improvement. Shortly after President Hadi announced his resignation, 20,000 Yemenis protested against the Houthi in Sanaa.⁵ The Houthi rebels, who occupy Sanaa, had “scuffled with the demonstrators, firing automatic rifles into the air to disperse the crowd and breaking journalists' cameras.”⁶ On Sunday, U.N.-sponsored talks between Yemeni political parties and the Shi'ite rebels broke down.⁷ Meanwhile, a car bomb exploded in Sanaa, injuring 5 people.⁸

¹ *Yemen Crisis: Who Are the Houthis?* BBC NEWS, Jan. 19, 2015.

² Nick Paton Walsh, *Rebel Coup Ousts Yemen's Leader, Minister Says; U.S. Vehicle Fired on*, CNN, Jan. 20, 2015.

³ *Thousands Protest After President Resigns in Yemen*, ASSOC. PRESS, Jan. 24, 2015.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Ahmed Al-Haj, *Talks in Yemen Between Political Parties, Rebels Break Down*, MIAMI HERALD, Jan. 25, 2015.

⁶ *Talks in Yemen Between Political Parties, Rebels Break Down*, ASSOC. PRESS, Jan. 25, 2015.

⁷ Ahmed Al-Haj, *supra* note 5.

⁸ *Id.*

According to reports, the Administration has begun pulling out staff from the U.S. embassy in Yemen.⁹ There has been no indication whether the Administration plans to formally pull out all embassy personnel and/or leave the embassy open amidst the chaos in Yemen. Please make arrangements to brief Committee staff on the Administration's evacuation plans as soon as possible, but no later than January 30, 2015.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and may at "any time" investigate "any matter" as set forth in House Rule X.

Please contact Art Arthur or Jessica Donlon of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5074 with any questions about this request. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



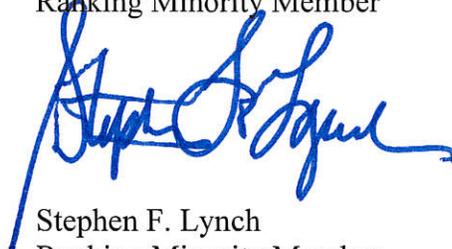
Jason Chaffetz
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Minority Member



Ron DeSantis
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security



Stephen F. Lynch
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on National Security

⁹ U.S. Pulls More Staff From Yemen Embassy Amid Deepening Crisis, REUTERS, Jan. 22, 2015.