

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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August 19, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretaries Blinken and Austin:

Yesterday, we requested the Chairwoman of the Committee on Oversight and Reform, Representative Carolyn Maloney, and the Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security, Representative Stephen Lynch, to convene an oversight hearing of the Biden Administration's execution of the Afghan withdrawal.¹ We request that you both commit to testify in front of this Committee.

The execution of the withdrawal of U.S. and U.S.-allied troops from Afghanistan has been reckless and haphazard, leading to deadly consequences. In a matter of days, the Taliban went on an offensive and took over Kabul for the first time in nearly two decades. This is unacceptable.

President Joseph Biden claimed he put plans "in place to respond to every...contingency, including the rapid collapse we're seeing now."² This is difficult to believe. The U.S. abandoned Bagram Air Force Base under the cover of night without telling the Afghan Security Forces, abandoned U.S. civilian personnel with little to no U.S. military protection, waited until the Taliban took Kabul to begin evacuating core diplomatic staff and securing the U.S. embassy, eventually repositioned and deployed thousands of troops to secure the evacuation of U.S. citizens and our allies, and, as a result of the other negligent decisions, made the Hamid Karzai International Airport the only way for Americans to egress Afghanistan. Was this the plan?

We have numerous questions about President Biden's decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan and the Biden Administration's plans, or lack thereof, to execute this withdraw. These questions include:

¹ Letter from Hon. James Comer, et. al., Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform, to Hon. Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform, and Hon. Stephen Lynch, Chairman, Subcomm. on Nat'l Sec., H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform (August 18, 2021).

² Remarks by President Biden on Afghanistan, The White House (Aug. 16, 2021).

1. Will U.S. financial or other assistance to Afghanistan continue considering it could be construed as providing material support to a foreign terror organization?
2. What is the location of U.S. assets and military equipment that was left to the Afghan government or abandoned during the withdrawal?
3. Will President Biden commit to ensuring the safe return of all U.S. citizens currently located in Afghanistan?
4. Did U.S. intelligence predict that Afghanistan would fall so rapidly?
5. Did President Biden and his Administration conceal any intelligence from Congress and relay different information to the American people than the intelligence suggested related to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan?
6. Was President Biden briefed on the likelihood that the Afghan Security Forces would succumb to the Taliban so easily or would be likely to take bribes to lay down arms?
7. Will more U.S. or U.S. allied servicemembers be deployed?
8. How long will the current number of servicemembers be deployed?
9. When did President Biden notify our allies of the plans to withdraw and did our allies express concerns?
10. Did President Biden attempt to negotiate any agreements between the Afghan government and the Taliban before the complete withdrawal?
11. Did President Biden attempt to negotiate a cease fire with the Taliban in lieu of a complete withdrawal?
12. How many Afghans to whom we promised to provide shelter and that assisted the U.S. efforts have been kidnapped or murdered?
13. For those Afghans that we successfully extricated from the country, how did the Administration decide who to extricate and where were they relocated?
14. How many Afghan civilians have been killed by the Taliban during the ensuing chaos?
15. Was President Biden briefed by either military or diplomatic leaders that the evacuation of U.S. and U.S. allied personnel posted at the Embassy should have begun sooner?
16. Why didn't the evacuation begin before the Taliban entered Kabul?

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17. Have any U.S. servicemembers been injured or killed thus far?
18. Was President Biden briefed on possible military actions against the Taliban as they made their way to Kabul?
19. Was President Biden briefed on possible military actions to destroy U.S. owned assets in Afghanistan?
20. Is the U.S. Embassy in Kabul secure?
21. Was all sensitive information within the embassy and any other U.S. buildings destroyed?

For the past 20 years, this Committee has conducted bipartisan oversight over the situation in Afghanistan; we see no reason to stop now. We reiterate our request that you commit to testify before this Committee as soon as possible.

To ask any follow-up or related questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Glenn Grothman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security