

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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August 19, 2021

The Honorable John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
2530 Crystal City Drive
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Inspector General Sopko:

Since the beginning of the conflict in Afghanistan, the U.S. has spent approximately \$837 billion on warfighting and \$145 billion on reconstruction efforts, including training and arming the Afghan Security Forces.¹ In addition to the monetary costs, nearly 70,000 Americans and allies lost their lives.² All of this work crumbled in a matter of weeks, culminating with the Taliban regaining control of Afghanistan for the first time in nearly two decades.³ It is vital to understand what happened in Afghanistan, how previous U.S. assistance was used, how much previously appropriated assistance remains unobligated, and, frankly, if ongoing assistance is legal and in the best interest of the U.S.

On April 14, 2021, President Joseph Biden announced he would unconditionally withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan.⁴ The execution of this withdrawal has been an unmitigated disaster, and the Taliban now rule Afghanistan. President Biden's withdrawal contained no conditions requiring the Taliban to sever ties with any individual or group posing a threat to the U.S, including al-Qaeda.⁵

On August 17, 2021, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan would not provide assurances that ongoing U.S. taxpayer assistance to Afghanistan would not go to the Taliban.⁶ Of the almost \$150 billion previously appropriated to Afghan reconstruction nearly \$7 billion

¹ WHAT WE NEED TO LEARN: LESSONS FROM TWENTY YEARS OF AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION, SPECIAL INSPECTOR GEN. FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION, VII (Aug. 2021).

² *Id.*

³ Scott Neuman, *Afghanistan Falls To The Taliban Again As The U.S.-Backed Government Collapses*, NPR (Aug. 15, 2021), <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/15/1027860324/the-taliban-win-control-of-afghanistan-as-the-u-s-backed-government-collapses>.

⁴ Missy Ryan & Karen DeYoung, *Biden will withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan by Sept. 11, 2021*, THE WASH. POST (Apr. 13, 2021), https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/biden-us-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan/2021/04/13/918c3cae-9beb-11eb-8a83-3bc1fa69c2e8_story.html.

⁶ Press Briefing, Jake Sullivan, Nat'l Sec. Advisor, The White House (Aug. 17, 2020).

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remains unspent.⁷ Further, President Biden requested an additional \$3.3 billion for the Afghan Security Forces for fiscal year 2022.⁸ Since President Biden did not condition his withdrawal on the Taliban severing ties with al-Qaeda and other terror groups, it is unclear if continued U.S. assistance would find its way into the hands of terrorists and be used to finance attacks on Americans. This is a question that must be answered.

To help us better understand this and other issues, we respectfully request a Member-level briefing to take place as soon as possible but not later than August 26, 2021. 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

⁷ QUARTERLY REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS, SPECIAL INSPECTOR GEN. FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION, 29 (July 30, 2021).

⁸ Jeff Seldin, *White House Proposes Slight Boost in Aid for Afghan Forces*, VOA NEWS (May 28, 2021), <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/white-house-proposes-slight-boost-aid-afghan-forces>.