

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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February 15, 2022

Mr. Jake Sullivan
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

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

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

General Mark Milley
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff
9999 Joint Staff Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20318

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Avril Haines
Director
Office of the Director of National
1500 Tysons McLean Drive
McLean, V.A. 22102

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Sullivan, Secretary Blinken, Secretary Austin, Chairman Milley, Secretary Mayorkas, Director Haines, and Acting Director Young:

Based upon a recently released internal White House document, the Biden Administration was tragically unprepared for the Afghanistan withdrawal.¹ This document—dated August 14, 2021, with the subject line: “Summary of Conclusions for DSG [Deputies Small Group] Meeting on Relocations out of Afghanistan” [hereinafter Meeting Summary]—further demonstrates the Biden Administration—contrary to warnings—did not expect Kabul to

¹ Memorandum, Summary of Conclusions for DSG Meeting on Relocations out of Afghanistan, Nat'l Sec. Council, The White House (Aug. 14, 2021).

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fall so quickly and it did not have an exit strategy for American citizens, allies, military, or equipment in Afghanistan. In light of this document, we request the production of all documents and communications related to the Administration's military and diplomatic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The Biden Administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan was an unmitigated national security and humanitarian disaster. At least 13 American servicemen and women and hundreds of Afghan civilians were killed.² Thousands of American citizens were abandoned.³ Billions of dollars in U.S. military equipment were lost.⁴ Meanwhile, for the first time in two decades, Afghanistan is again under Taliban control. Al-Qaeda is resurgent.⁵ Women and girls are being oppressed.⁶ U.S. allied-Afghans are being hunted down and publicly murdered.⁷ Despite efforts to shift blame, the Biden Administration's utter lack of preparation caused these outcomes.

According to the Meeting Summary, the Biden Administration appears to have started relocation plans for U.S. government employees, American citizens, and U.S. allied Afghans only hours before the Taliban took over Kabul.⁸ This directly contradicts President Biden's own public statements that he "[would] not conduct a hasty rush to exit," would withdraw "responsibly, deliberately, and safely," and that the Biden Administration "planned for every contingency."⁹ Instead, the Biden Administration waited until August 14 to prioritize Americans for evacuation, to start notifying those eligible for evacuation, and to start identifying third party countries to screen and vet Afghans.¹⁰ The Taliban had control of Kabul, including Hamid Karzai International Airport, on August 15—just less than 24 hours later.

The Biden Administration knew—or should have known—that the Taliban had been engaged in a months-long offensive:

² Transcript, General Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., Commander, U.S. Central Command, Press Briefing (Feb. 4, 2022).

³ Jack Detsch, et. al., *State Department: Thousands of U.S. Residents Still Stuck in Afghanistan*, FOREIGN POLICY (Nov. 3, 2021).

⁴ Adam Andrzejewski, *Staggering Costs – U.S. Military Equipment Left Behind in Afghanistan*, FORBES (Aug. 23, 2021).

⁵ Courtney Kube, *Potential Al Qaeda resurgence in Afghanistan worries U.S. officials*, NBC NEWS (Aug. 12, 2021).

⁶ Ayaz Gul, *UN Experts: Taliban Steadily Erasing Afghan Women from Public Life*, VOICE OF AMERICA (Jan. 17, 2022).

⁷ Jim Geraghty, *The Taliban Are Hunting Down Any Afghan Tied to Western Organizations*, NAT'L REVIEW (Sept. 17, 2021).

⁸ Memorandum, *supra* note 1.

⁹ Remarks by President Biden on the Way Forward in Afghanistan, THE WHITE HOUSE (Apr. 14, 2021); Remarks by President Biden on Afghanistan, THE WHITE HOUSE (Aug. 16, 2021).

¹⁰ Memorandum, *supra* note 1.

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- **May 4, 2021:** Less than one month after President Biden announced an unconditional military withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban began their offensive in southwest Afghanistan.¹¹
- **June 22, 2021:** The Taliban controlled 50 of Afghanistan’s 370 districts.¹²
- **July 21, 2021:** The Taliban controlled the majority of Afghanistan’s districts.¹³
- **August 6, 2021:** The Taliban took command of the Nimruz province.¹⁴

The Biden Administration had the warning signs that the Taliban were planning on seizing Kabul. Nevertheless, it appears the Biden Administration waited until August 14—one day before Kabul fell—to begin contingency planning. What ensued was a U.S. military withdrawal that has drawn apt comparison to the fall of Saigon.

The longer-term consequences continue to unravel. Americans are still stranded in Afghanistan and our allies’ lives remain in danger. The country is facing widespread starvation as it slides into economic collapse. As Afghanistan fails, it risks further destabilizing the region.

These ongoing consequences—especially in light of the August 14 Meeting Summary—necessitate Congressional oversight. Therefore, we request all documents, communications, and information referring or relating to the planning, implementation, and execution of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan as well as the evacuation of U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents of the U.S., and vulnerable Afghans be produced as soon as possible but no later than March 1, 2022, for the time period of January 20, 2021, through present.

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 in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

¹¹ Reuters, *Taliban launches major Afghan offensive after deadline for U.S. pullout*, REUTERS (May 4, 2021).

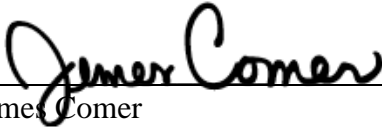
¹² Nic Robertson, et. al., *50 of Afghanistan’s 370 districts have fallen to Taliban since May: UN envoy*, CNN (June 22, 2021).

¹³ Reuters, *Half of all Afghan district centers under Taliban control – U.S. general*, REUTERS (July 21, 2021).

¹⁴ Chantal Da Silva, et. al., *Taliban overrun first Afghan provincial capital since U.S. began withdrawal*, NBC NEWS (Aug. 6, 2021).

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Sincerely,



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Glenn Grothman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security

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

The Honorable Stephen Lynch, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security