

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

February 17, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary
U.S. 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

Dear Secretary Austin and Chairman Milley:

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is continuing to investigate the Biden Administration's 2021 Afghanistan evacuation. After more than \$2 trillion spent on the war and reconstruction efforts,¹ Americans deserve answers and have received few from the Biden Administration. You were at the center of planning the withdrawal and evacuation and advised President Biden on decisions that amounted to tactical and strategic failures. The Committee requests documents regarding this series of costly and deadly failures in Afghanistan.

We are concerned that the Biden Administration continues to delay long overdue transparency to the American people about the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal and evacuation. The Afghan War Commission, established by the FY2022 National Defense Authorization Act, does not have to produce a report for three years after its first meeting.² The Commission has not met once. The Commission has the option to extend its investigation for a year,³ potentially releasing findings after the Biden Administration has departed. This timeline unacceptable to address questions that are already past due.

During the 117th Congress, Committee Republicans requested documents and information from the Department of Defense (DOD) on multiple occasions, but none of those requests received a substantive response. Committee Republicans requested all documents and

¹ SPECIAL INSPECTOR GEN. FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION, QUARTERLY REPORT TO CONG., 43 (Oct. 30, 2022).

² Nat'l Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Pub. L. No. 117-81, § 1094 (2021).

³ Nat'l Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Pub. L. No. 117-81, § 1094 (2)(A)(ii) (2021).

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communications be preserved following the collapse of the Afghan government,⁴ and then requested more information regarding the Taliban's access to U.S. funded military equipment.⁵ The Taliban now uses American equipment—worth approximately \$7.2 billion⁶—for its own military training.⁷ Committee Republicans subsequently asked in two additional letters last Congress for documents and communications from DOD,⁸ and both were met with inadequate responses.

DOD and the Joint Chiefs possess critical information regarding the events that unfolded in Afghanistan in 2021. To assist the Committee with its investigation of the Biden Administration's strategy in Afghanistan, please provide the following documents and information as soon as possible, but by no later than March 3, 2023:

1. All records, documents, and communications from January 20, 2021, to present related to contingency plans in the Afghanistan withdrawal and evacuation. Please include any rationale or discussion regarding the decision to remove air support prior to the evacuation of U.S. citizens;
2. All inter-agency records, documents, and communications implementing the plan to withdraw from Afghanistan;
3. All records, documents and communications discussing or requesting a surge or drawing down of troops in Afghanistan or in support of the mission in Afghanistan from January 20, 2021, to September 30, 2021;
4. All records, documents, and communications with North Atlantic Treaty Organization leaders regarding Afghanistan troop withdrawal and evacuation planning;
5. All records, documents, and communications referring or relating to al-Qaeda and other terrorists organizations' posture in Afghanistan from January 20, 2021, to present;

⁴ Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et. al., to President Joseph Biden, et. al. (Dec. 1, 2021).

⁵ Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et. al., to Lloyd Austin, Sec'y of Defense (Aug. 23, 2021).

⁶ News Release, DOD IG, Lead Inspector Gen. for Operation Enduring Sentinel and Operation Freedom's Sentinel Quarterly Report to the United States Congress (Aug. 16, 2022).

⁷ Mohammad Yunus Yawar, *Taliban test repaired helicopters, planes in flyover of capital*, REUTERS, (Aug. 17, 2022).

⁸ Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et. al., to Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor, et. al. (Feb 15, 2022); Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform to Sec'y Lloyd Austin & Chairman Mark Milley (Dec. 6, 2022).

6. All records, documents, and communications relating to the decision to use Taliban forces and the former Afghan government's National Directorate of Security to secure Hamid Karzai International Airport during the Afghanistan evacuation;
7. All records, documents, and communications between or among the former Afghan Air Force (AAF), ANDSF, the Afghan Ministry of Defense, Afghan Ministry of Interior, or the Afghan Government referring or relating to the closure of Bagram Airfield;
8. All records, documents, and communications detailing the amount of defense articles and equipment that remained in Afghanistan after the Taliban gained control;
9. All records, documents, and communications detailing any intelligence sharing with the Taliban from January 20, 2021, to present;
10. All records, documents, and communications referring or relating to the planning and implementation of Operation Allies Welcome and Operation Allies Refuge;
11. All records, documents, and communications regarding the ability to conduct over-the-horizon operations in Afghanistan following the withdrawal;
12. All draft or final after-action assessments of the Afghanistan withdrawal and evacuation completed by the Department of Defense, or an organization contracted by the Department of Defense, that specified any areas of improvement or weakness; and
13. All Congressional reports and forms required by sections 1069, 1213, 1216, and 1217 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2022.⁹

The Committee has provided instructions regarding how these materials should be produced and defined certain terms in the accompanying attachment.¹⁰ To coordinate the delivery of these documents or to ask any follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Accountability staff at (202) 225-5074.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability 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.

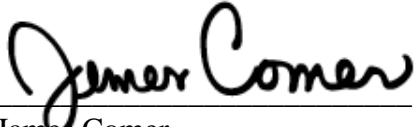
Thank you for your prompt attention to this important investigation.

⁹ Pub. L. No. 117-81, §§ 1069, 1213, 1216, 1217

¹⁰ See Attachment A.

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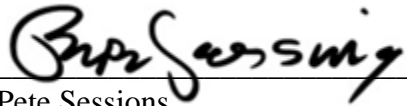
Sincerely,



James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability



Glenn Grothman
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security,
the Border, and Foreign Affairs



Pete Sessions
Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations
and the Federal Workforce



Nancy Mace
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity,
Information Technology, and
Government Innovation



Pat Fallon
Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic Growth,
Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs



Lisa McClain
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Health Care and
Financial Services

cc: The Honorable Jamie B. Raskin, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability