

**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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MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

February 17, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability continues to investigate the Biden Administration's 2021 Afghanistan evacuation. After more than \$2 trillion spent on the war and reconstruction efforts,<sup>1</sup> Americans deserve answers and have received few from the Biden Administration. You were at the center of planning the withdrawal and evacuation and you advised President Biden on decisions that amounted to tactical and strategic failures. Further, you contrived a narrative of success and orderliness as the Taliban retook Afghanistan as Afghans clung to and fell from planes departing Hamid Karzai International Airport and a suicide bomber murdered 13 U.S. service members and hundreds of innocent Afghans.<sup>2</sup> The Committee requests information from the Department of State (Department) 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.<sup>3</sup> The Commission has not met once. The Commission has the option to extend its investigation for a year,<sup>4</sup> 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 sent the Department three letters. The first—sent August 25, 2021—requested documents related to the screening and vetting of Afghan refugees.<sup>5</sup> Then, in December of 2021 and again in December 2022 we asked you to preserve all documents related to the withdrawal and evacuation from Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> None of

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

<sup>2</sup> Press Briefing, U.S. Dep't of State, Sec'y Blinken on Afghanistan (Aug. 25, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Nat'l Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Pub. L. No. 117-81, § 1094 (2021).

<sup>4</sup> Nat'l Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Pub. L. No. 117-81, § 1094 (2)(A)(ii) (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform to Antony Blinken, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of State (Aug. 25, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Letter from James Comer, et. al., Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform, to Antony Blinken, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of State, et. al. (Dec. 1, 2021); Letter from James Comer, et. al., Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform to Antony Blinken, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of State (Dec. 6, 2022).

these letters received a substantive response. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has notified the Committee of the Department's lack of cooperation in responding to its requests for information and refusal to participate in SIGAR's independent oversight work.<sup>7</sup> The Committee is concerned the Biden Administration is not prioritizing—or, indeed, intentionally deprioritizing—transparency regarding the Afghanistan withdrawal and evacuation.

Given your role advising President Biden regarding the evacuation of Afghanistan, you possess important information regarding what led to 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 referring or relating to contingency plans for the Afghanistan withdrawal and evacuation;
2. All inter-agency records, documents, and communications implementing the plan for withdrawal from Afghanistan;
3. All records, documents, and communications with North Atlantic Treaty Organization leaders regarding the Afghanistan troop withdrawal and evacuation planning;
4. All records, documents, and communications regarding al-Qaeda and other terrorists organizations' posture in Afghanistan from January 20, 2021 to present;
5. All records, documents, and communications with the former Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan regarding the planning and evacuation of U.S. troops, diplomats, and contractors;
6. All records, documents, and communications related or referring to the planning and implementation of Operation Allies Welcome and Operation Allies Refuge;
7. All draft or final after-action assessments of the Afghanistan withdrawal and evacuation completed by the Department of State, or an organization contracted by the Department of State, that specified any areas of improvement or weakness; and
8. The Congressional report required by section 1216 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Letter from John Sopko, Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction, to Sen. Patrick Leahy, et al., Chairman, S. Comm. on Appropriations (Jun. 22, 2022); Email from Robert Lawrence, Dir. Of Congressional Relations and Gov. Affairs, Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction to Mark Marin, Staff Director, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et al. (Oct. 11, 2022).

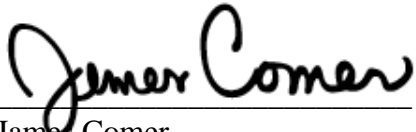
<sup>8</sup> Pub. L. No. 117-81, § 1216

The Committee has provided instructions regarding how these materials should be produced and defined certain terms in the accompanying attachment.<sup>9</sup> 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.

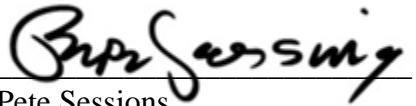
Sincerely,



James Comer  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Accountability



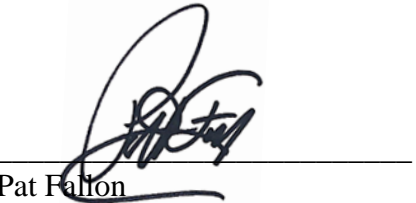
Glenn Grothman  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security,  
the Border, and Foreign Affairs



Pete Sessions  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Operations  
and the Federal Workforce



Nancy Mace  
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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

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<sup>9</sup> See Attachment A.