

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

August 30, 2022

Dear Secretary Austin and Secretary Blinken:

On the first anniversary of the disastrous withdrawal of American troops, equipment, and personnel from Afghanistan, we write with regard to the many unanswered questions that still surround this unnecessary loss of life, including 13 members of the military and Americans left behind. There must be more transparency and significant oversight to ensure that disasters on this scale will be prevented moving forward. We must also ensure that those in charge are held accountable for their actions that led to this catastrophe.

On August 15, 2021, Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, fell to the Taliban following the near-total withdrawal of American troops. Kabul was America's last stronghold in the country and the evacuation point for many seeking to leave. The United States concluded its military engagement in Afghanistan on August 30, 2021, although Members of Congress had been personally informed by Commander McKenzie's Chief of Staff that the withdrawal date would be August 31. Unfortunately, those in charge's failure to plan for this fateful day resulted in a rushed evacuation, leaving hundreds of American citizens behind, with their fate subject to the repressive whims of Taliban rule.

The fall of Kabul represents a complete and utter failure of leadership by those in charge. For weeks our government told American citizens in the country and our Afghani allies, including interpreters who served as a lifeline to our military, that they could come to the United States on Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs), or go to Kabul where they would be safe and evacuated, only to be abandoned by this administration. You also armed our enemies with \$7 billion worth of equipment that was left behind. The American exit did not have to be this way, and there must be accountability for this failure.

This tragic evacuation tarnished America's credibility with our partners and allies. We are committed to holding those in charge accountable for their failure of duty that allowed for a quick Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and a botched withdrawal that left hundreds of Americans and tens of thousands of Afghan partners behind.

With that said, we require the following questions answered in writing:

1. At the time of the withdrawal, Congress received conflicting answers regarding the number of Americans reported missing or remaining in Afghanistan after the withdrawal. Secretary Austin, in your appearance before Congress you claimed that no department in the Administration actually knew this number. Has every American reported missing or remaining in Afghanistan after the withdrawal been accounted for as of now?
2. We have received reports of Afghan interpreters who have applied for a SIV receiving no information or assistance in trying to exit Afghanistan since last year. What efforts have been made to facilitate SIV applicants' ability to leave Afghanistan?
3. Many Americans and SIVs have had to cross unfriendly borders to make it out of the country. Have efforts been made to partner with neighboring countries to assist in further evacuations or provide greater accuracy in accounting for the number of Americans left on the ground?
4. In early July 2021, internal State Department cables called on those in charge to begin collecting data on Afghan refugees and preparing to begin emergency evacuation flights no later than August 1. Why were these cables ignored?
5. Why did the documented increase in Taliban violence throughout 2020 and 2021 fail to prompt concern within the administration?
6. Was the failure by those in charge to conduct worst-case contingency planning in the months leading up to the U.S. military withdrawal the result of inaction or deliberate decisions taken by senior leadership under your command?
7. Why did you permit the covert handover of Bagram Air Base to Afghan security forces in July 2021, with reportedly no advanced notice to local partners?
8. Why was the withdrawal date moved forward by 24 hours after briefing Members of Congress that the withdrawal would take place on the 31st and that all equipment would be removed or destroyed?
9. Pentagon reports detail that more than \$7 billion of U.S. military equipment was left in the hands of Taliban forces following the last U.S. troop evacuation of Hamid Karzai International Airport on August 30, 2021. With that said, is the equipment left behind fully operational for Taliban forces?
10. Is there advanced equipment among what was left in Afghanistan featuring proprietary information that Taliban forces could access and share with other hostile states and affiliated entities?
11. Pentagon reports state, in August 2021, much of the equipment the U.S. left behind was destroyed or demilitarized. Are there any updates you can provide to verify these earlier

reports, and has there been any further monitoring of the equipment that was left since the withdrawal from Afghanistan?

12. Before the evacuation, were there any appropriate contingency plans to prepare for the possibility of preventing military equipment from being left in Afghanistan?

13. Have direct revisions in execution been implemented to prevent a similar loss of military equipment in the future?

Along with these questions, given the significant taxpayer investments in Afghanistan and its critical national security mission, Members of Congress should have the opportunity to directly question those in charge of the withdrawal to understand why there continue to be inadequate responses surrounding the Afghanistan withdrawal.

Your mismanagement on every level of the withdrawal of American troops and personnel from Afghanistan deserves serious and diligent oversight. We await your responses.

Sincerely,



Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress



Madison Cawthorn
Member of Congress



Steven M. Palazzo
Member of Congress



Victoria Spartz
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Diana Harshbarger
Member of Congress



Warren Davidson
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Mary E. Miller
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Kat Cammack
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Bob Gibbs
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Jefferson Van Drew
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Nancy Mace
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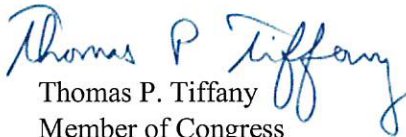
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Daniel Webster
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Carlos Gimenez
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Ted Budd
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Michael Guest
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Tracey Mann
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Michael Waltz
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Ralph Norman
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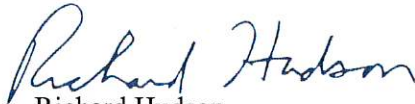
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Austin Scott
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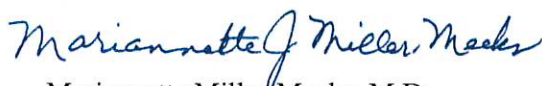
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