

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

December 6, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

House Oversight Committee Republicans are continuing to conduct oversight of the Biden Administration's botched withdrawal from Afghanistan. In July 2021, prior to the withdrawal, President Biden claimed "[t]here's going to be no circumstance where you see people being lifted off the roof of an embassy."¹ By August 2021, however, Americans watched in horror as the Taliban quickly gained control of Afghanistan, fleeing Afghans clung to and fell from planes departing Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA), and a suicide bomber murdered 13 U.S. servicemen and women and hundreds of innocent Afghans.² The Department of State (State) was the department in charge of the withdrawal. Considering State's role, the mass casualties, taxpayer dollars spent, and ongoing national security concerns, Committee Republicans are seeking information about the planning, logistics, and steps the Biden Administration took to plan for the rushed exit from Afghanistan. Looking forward to the 118th Congress, this investigation will continue to be a priority for the Committee. Therefore, we are reiterating our previous requests to State for documents and information.

Nearly a year ago, on December 1, 2021, we sent a letter to the Department of State and others asking that you preserve all documents related to the withdrawal and evacuation from Afghanistan.³ Additionally, on August 25, 2021, we requested documents related to the

¹ Press Briefing, The White House, Remarks by President Biden on the Drawdown of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan (July 8, 2021).

² Luke Harding & Ben Doherty, Kabul airport: *footage appears to show Afghans falling from plane after takeoff*, THE GUARDIAN (August 16, 2021).

³ Letter from Hon. James Comer, et. al., Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform, to President Joseph Biden, et. al. (Dec. 1, 2021).

screening and vetting of Afghan nationals.⁴ The response we received from the Department of State lacked answers and failed to provide a plan for document delivery.⁵

The Biden Administration's failure to be transparent with the American people is alarming. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has notified this committee on multiple occasions of State's obstruction to their congressionally requested investigations of the Afghanistan withdrawal and the continued risks to humanitarian and development assistance.⁶ This lack of cooperation raises serious questions. What does State have to hide?

As noted, next Congress the Committee will continue to investigate the Biden Administration's failure to conduct a safe withdrawal from Afghanistan and all national security concerns that reverberated from it. State possesses information critical to helping this committee understand the lead up to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. In addition to documents requested in previous correspondence, please prioritize the following requests for production, covering the time period from January 20, 2021 to present, as soon as possible but no later than December 20, 2022:

1. All documents and communications related to contingency plans for the Afghanistan withdrawal and evacuation;
2. All documents and communications between State, other departments or agencies, and the White House implementing the plan that unfolded in Kabul, Afghanistan in August 2021;
3. All documents, meeting records, and communications with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leaders regarding Afghanistan troop withdrawal and evacuation planning;
4. All intelligence assessments, reports, communications, and documents presented to the White House referring or relating to al-Qaeda's posture in Afghanistan;
5. All documents and communications with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan regarding the planning and evacuation of U.S. troops, diplomats, and contractors;

⁴ Letter from Hon. James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform, to Hon. Antony Blinken, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of State (Aug. 25, 2021).

⁵ Letter from Naz Durakoglu, Senior Bureau Official, Dept. of State, to Hon. James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform (Dec. 13, 2021).

⁶ Letter from John Sopko, Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction, to Hon. James Comer, et. al., Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform (June 22, 2022); E-mail from Staff, Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction, to Staff, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform (Oct. 11, 2022).

The Honorable Antony Blinken

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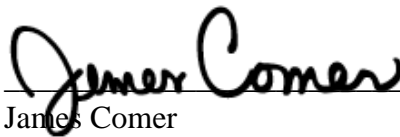
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6. All communications and documents related to the planning and implementation of Operations Allies Welcome (OAW) and Operation Allies (Refuge); and
7. All draft or final after-action assessments, completed by State, of the Afghanistan withdrawal and evacuation that specified any areas of improvement or weakness.

To schedule the delivery of these documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican 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 in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Comer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

James Comer

Ranking Member

Committee on Oversight and Reform

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