

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051  
MINORITY (202) 225-5074  
<https://oversight.house.gov>

December 6, 2022

The Honorable Samantha Power  
Administrator  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Ronald Regan Building  
Washington, D.C. 20523

Dear Administrator Power:

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."<sup>1</sup> And just days before the disastrous withdrawal, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) claimed it was "actively planning for a range of scenarios."<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Considering USAID's role in the withdrawal, 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 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, this investigation will continue to be a priority for the Committee. Therefore, we request documents and communications regarding USAID's preparedness leading up to the withdrawal.

USAID has played an active role in Afghanistan's development, investing \$22 billion in assistance since 2002.<sup>4</sup> This includes investments into agriculture, human rights, education, economic growth, and health.<sup>5</sup> Following the withdrawal, USAID acknowledged that "the hard-

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

<sup>2</sup> *The U.S.-Afghanistan Relationship Following the Military Withdrawal: Hearing Before The House Foreign Affairs Committee*, (May 18, 2021) (Statement for the Record for Karen Freeman, Acting Assistant Administrator for Asia, U.S. Agency for International Development).

<sup>3</sup> Luke Harding & Ben Doherty, *Kabul airport: footage appears to show Afghans falling from plane after takeoff*, THE GUARDIAN (August 16, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> *Our Work: Afghanistan*, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (last updated Nov. 8, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

won social and development gains made over the last two decades” were at risk.<sup>6</sup> The Biden Administration’s failed withdrawal jeopardizes USAID’s work and billions of American taxpayer dollars.

On September 20, 2021, the Committee sent a bipartisan letter requesting SIGAR investigate the rapid collapse of Afghanistan and “any potential loss or compromise of U.S. reconstruction assistance.”<sup>7</sup> SIGAR has provided Congress quarterly reports on the investigation’s progress. The Committee has been notified on multiple occasions that USAID is refusing to respond to SIGAR’s requests for information.<sup>8</sup> USAID’s refusal to participate in SIGAR’s independent and nonpartisan investigation is unprecedented and raises concerns about the agency’s involvement in the withdrawal. In fact, SIGAR told the Committee that USAID is “refusing to provide information and assistance” with its interagency review of the collapse.<sup>9</sup>

Upon taking office, President Biden stated that “the public deserves as much transparency as possible regarding the work of our national security institutions.”<sup>10</sup> USAID’s ongoing obstruction of SIGAR’s statutory work is contrary to President Biden’s stated position. USAID’s failure to cooperate with SIGAR raises new questions about the agency’s role in the Biden Administration’s failed Afghanistan withdrawal.

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. Your agency possesses critical information needed to inform Congress and the American people of the decisions and planning regarding the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Please provide the following documents and communications, no later than December 20, 2022:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to the agency’s preparation for the withdrawal;
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to any notices of program closures leading up to and after the withdrawal including the dates on which those programs would be terminated;
3. All documents and communications referring or relating to staff protocols for the withdrawal including any meeting records, and verification of attendance at evacuation planning meetings and drills;

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<sup>6</sup> *Country Profile: Afghanistan*, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (last updated Nov. 1, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Hon. James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform, et. al, to John Sopko, Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction (Sept. 10, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Harding *supra*, note 3.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from John Sopko, Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction, to Sen. Patrick Leahy, et al., Chairman, S. Comm. on Appropriations (June 22, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> *Memorandum on Revitalizing America’s Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships*, NATIONAL SECURITY MEMORANDUM/NSM-3 (Feb. 4, 2021).

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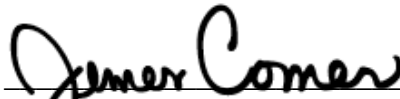
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4. All documents and communications between or among USAID and the U.S. Department of State—including the U.S. Embassy in Kabul—referring or relating to the withdrawal;
5. All documents and communications between or among USAID and its Afghan partners leading up to and after the withdrawal; and
6. All documents and communications referring or relating to USAID programs currently operating in Afghanistan including those in cooperation with any multilateral organization.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. To make arrangements, to deliver 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