# Congress of the United States
## Washington, DC 20515

August 16, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to express our indignation over your reckless withdrawal of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and mismanagement of the preventable disaster that is now unfolding there. The world is watching as one of the greatest foreign policy failures in American history plays out. Just weeks prior to the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban took back Afghanistan in a matter of days, again allowing Al Qa'ida a safe breeding ground within the country. Further, Americans and our allies are in grave danger in Kabul, a massive refugee crisis only continues to grow, and Afghan women and other vulnerable populations await their fate under the iron rod of Sharia law, enforced by the Taliban. The direness of the situation cannot be overstated, and there is no obfuscating press statement, briefing, or address that can hide where responsibility lies. It is appalling that during this ongoing crisis, you chose to defend your decision as "right" and place blame on the Afghans you abandoned instead of taking responsibility for the abhorrent consequences we are watching play out on our tv screens. Americans and Afghan partners alike need an evacuation plan – not platitudes. They have been abandoned behind enemy lines with their lives on the line.

As diplomats and others flee, the specter of a Taliban flag that could be raised in coming days at U.S. Embassy Kabul serves as a haunting reminder of how much has crumbled, and how fast, on account of your Administration's willful blindness. As recently as last month, you stated that Afghanistan would be no Saigon: "There's going to be no circumstance where you see people being lifted off the roof of the embassy of the United States from Afghanistan." Secretary Blinken parroted the same refrain, saying that the country would not fall "from a Friday to a Monday" and that a U.S. military departure would not correspond with immediate deterioration of the security situation.

For months, your Administration ignored assessments and dire warnings by your military and intelligence community, ignored repeated Congressional requests for details regarding contingency planning, ignored calls by Afghan partners and women for help, and ignored urgent calls by U.S. veterans to slow the withdrawal and get our interpreters out. We urge you to take a hard look at where we are today – is the absolute abandonment of our Afghan partners a sign of strong U.S. leadership? How far will our international standing fall as the world sees us in disarray? How jeopardized is the faith of today's and tomorrow's allies because of your April 14th abandonment announcement and subsequent betrayal of the Afghan people?

Questionable decisions by the White House, State Department, and others have compounded the problems we are dealing with now. Instead of urgently addressing the issues facing the Special Immigrant Visa program, the Administration delayed, waiting until the 11th hour to attempt to expedite processing for those who enabled our mission. Making matters worse, it was not until we evacuated to the Kabul airport that any third-nation hosting agreements materalized. Further, the Administration failed to secure any ISR basing, overflight, and counterterrorism strike agreements with surrounding countries, resulting in the United States almost fully "going dark" and having a greatly dimished cabability to eliminate terrorists plotting against Americans. And finally, despite numerous inquiries from Congress and the press last week about what contingency plans looked like for our embassy presence if Kabul was overrun, your team was not even able to talk straight to America and call it an evacuation, which is exactly what your actions resulted in.

Your arbitrary decision to require the removal of all U.S. troops by September 11th left Department of Defense leaders scrambling to ensure a safe and orderly withdrawal of U.S. troops, civilians, and allies. Specifically, your decisions to abandon Bagram Air Base early and leave only a few hundred troops at Hamid Karzai International Airport opened the door to the Taliban's rapid takeover and endangered the lives of Americans and our allies still in Afghanistan. Consequently, your decisions forced the late order to fly in 7,000 troops to hastily evacuate thousands of U.S. civilians and allies as the Taliban seized Kabul. Due to your failure to adequately plan, there are now more than twice the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan than when you took office.

In the intelligence realm, the Administration failed to account for the fragility of the national and provincial governments or to undertake any efforts to mollify the effect that an unorganized and chaotic withdrawal would have on President Ghani's regime. We are now concerned about the accuracy of public assessments from this Administration regarding the resurgence of terrorist groups in the region, including Al Qa'ida and ISIS-Khorasan.

Given the planning failures we have seen thus far and the dynamic situation on the ground, we expect your team to fully address the below and all related questions as Congressional Members and staff are briefed in the coming days.

1. What are the key topics and state of the current discussions in Doha with our partners and the Taliban? How long will Hamid Karzai International Airport remain under American control so we can continue to evacuate Americans, SIVs, and others? Will there be any diplomatic footprint or other capabilities left in Kabul to bring those who helped us over the past 20 years to safety? How will the administration approach repairing our diminished international standing after this tragedy and what is the plan to support the Afghan people that have been betrayed?

2. How does your Administration plan to use the U.S. military to prevent, disrupt, and dismantle the formation of terror groups in Afghanistan, and when will you present this plan to Congress?

3. Why did the administration fail to adjust its withdrawal plans when signs of the Afghan government's instability were first recognized and how will the swift degradation of access and personnel in Afghanistan limit the Intelligence Community's ability to quickly and accurately collect on national security threats in the region?

Sincerely,

Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs

Devin Nunes
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

Mike Rogers
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee on Armed Services