

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 24, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd Austin  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2210 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Austin and Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our grave concern and deep disappointment about the entirely avoidable crisis unfolding currently in Afghanistan. As the Article I branch of the United States government, Congress is willing, ready, and able to conduct its oversight responsibilities on behalf of the American people.


For two decades, the American people—particularly those in the U.S. Armed Forces—have been dedicated to the cause of fighting terrorism and providing a better future for the people of Afghanistan. However, as the Taliban rapidly consolidate control over Afghanistan at the expense of the freedom and rights of the Afghan people, particularly women, girls, and those in minority groups, the American people demand answers. To that end, we ask that you respond to the following questions immediately:

- (1) With President Biden—despite public statements suggesting otherwise—apparently unwilling to move back his deadline to withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan no later than August 31, 2021; what is the Administration’s plan to evacuate any remaining American citizens, including from the outlying provinces, who seek evacuation from Afghanistan after the deadline?
- (2) What is the current status of or result of talks between the United States and the Taliban as it pertains to operations to evacuate Americans and appropriate Afghan civilians?
- (3) With the United States freezing over \$9.5 billion in Taliban assets, what is the Biden Administration’s sanctions policy toward the Taliban? Will the Biden Administration commit to not provide any relief of U.S. sanctions and U.N. sanctions against the Taliban?
- (4) With reports that U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles in Afghanistan have fallen into Taliban hands, what will the Biden Administration do to counter the threat posed by this development?
- (5) Can you confirm that all classified documentation and data storage devices at the embassy have been either accounted for or destroyed?

We welcome an open dialogue, including ongoing regular principal-level classified and unclassified briefings to Senators, with Secretaries of the Department of Defense and the Department of State on these matters. In the near-term, we look forward to a detailed response that addresses each of the above questions.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

  
Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator

  
Bill Hagerty  
United States Senator