

United States Senate

August 25, 2021

The Honorable Joe Biden
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Over the past week, the world has watched as America was overwhelmed and humiliated in its failed mission to successfully withdraw U.S. forces and personnel from Afghanistan. This chaotic and disastrous attempt, which led to a rapid takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, has put a stain on America's national security reputation, empowered our enemies, and put the lives of our fellow Americans and our allies at risk.

During the past two decades, American and allied forces have driven terrorism in Afghanistan to the brink of extinction. But a 20-year war that took the lives of more than 2,300 American service members and wounded more than 20,000 others ended with the greatest country in the world scrambling. There was always going to be a time for American forces to leave – but on our terms.

Mr. President, the American people and our military deserve an unequivocal commitment that your administration will devote all military resources to ensure that every American is safely evacuated from Afghanistan as quickly as possible. It must be clear that we will not withdraw American forces from Afghanistan until that mission is complete. This commitment must also be made to our allies and all who stood and fought beside us in Afghanistan.

Rather, your administration hastily forced an unnecessary deadline, leaving the safety and security of American citizens and billions of dollars in military assets in the hands of a rogue militia. Now, the Taliban feels empowered to dictate the terms of our withdrawal, warning this week that there would be "consequences" if the U.S. withdrawal was not complete by the August 31 deadline set by your administration. For instance, we've heard reports this week that the Taliban is no longer allowing

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Afghans to travel to Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. These are unacceptable actions that must elicit a strong and unequivocal response.

With the Taliban in power, Al-Qaeda, ISIS-K and other terrorist organizations know we have no plan, and no one will resist them. Over the course of one weekend, a clear message was sent by your administration: the United States is willing to abandon our people, our allies and our interests. With your August 31 deadline quickly approaching, we must know your plan to get Americans home.

While I remain gravely concerned with your response and ability to handle this ongoing crisis, I request a prompt reply from your administration, in a classified setting if necessary, to the following questions:

- How many Americans are currently stranded in Afghanistan?
- How many Americans have communicated their desire to stay in Afghanistan?
- How are you holding the Taliban accountable for reports of American citizens being beaten near the airport? Do you have a plan to order a proportionate response should an American life be lost?
- Did you have a plan to safely evacuate all Americans and allies from Afghanistan before you announced your August 31 deadline? If so, what were the details of your original plan? How long has that plan existed? How has it changed since the rapid fall of Kabul?
- Did you have a plan to recover all U.S. military equipment out of Afghanistan? If so, what were the details of your original plan? How long has that plan existed? How has it changed since the rapid fall of Kabul?
- Was any advanced technology or computer systems left behind at Bagram Air Base or other abandoned installations? If so, do you believe that any of the United States' intelligence has been compromised due to computer systems or other technology being left behind?
- Do you have a plan to destroy equipment that cannot be removed, and to destroy abandoned American installations in Afghanistan?
- How will you hold senior members of your administration accountable for this failure?

The American people deserve to know your plan to safely evacuate our citizens and allies in Afghanistan. Your administration must take responsibility for this massive failure. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi should immediately launch a bipartisan and bicameral investigation to get answers and ensure total accountability.

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I look forward to your immediate response to these questions and continue to pray for the Americans and our allies stranded in Afghanistan due to this preventable and unacceptable failure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Rick Scott
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
The Honorable Lloyd Austin, Secretary, U.S. Department of Defense
The Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary, U.S. Department of State