



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress  
Committee on Homeland Security  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

The Committee on Homeland Security (Committee) is continuing to examine the Biden administration's catastrophic August 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> The chaotic withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan led to widespread Taliban control of the country in a matter of days and the tragic death of 13 U.S. service members, along with hundreds of Afghans in an ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) orchestrated terrorist attack.<sup>2</sup> The withdrawal also established a power vacuum that emboldened terrorist groups and threatened our national security interests. In fact, on March 16, 2023, General Michael Kurilla, Commander of U.S. Central Command, testified before the U.S. Senate that the Islamic State's Afghan affiliate, ISIS-K, "can do an external operation against U.S. or Western interests abroad in under six months with little to no warning," which raises serious concerns.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, months after the withdrawal, the U.S. government resettled approximately 88,500 Afghan nationals in the United States.<sup>4</sup> On September 6, 2022, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) published a report stating that DHS encountered obstacles to screen, vet, and inspect all evacuees during the crisis following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> The DHS OIG reported that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) lacked critical data to properly vet evacuees, but CBP still admitted or paroled evacuees who were not fully vetted into the United States. This shortfall in DHS's screening and

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<sup>1</sup> *The Homeland Security Cost of the Biden Administration's Catastrophic Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence of the H. Comm. on Homeland Sec.*, 118th Cong. (Apr. 18, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Cami Mondeaux, *Timeline of Terror: How Biden's Afghanistan Withdrawal Disaster Unfolded*, WASH. EXAM'R, Aug. 17, 2022, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/how-afghanistan-withdrawal-disaster-unfolded>.

<sup>3</sup> Caitlin Doornbos, *ISIS Could Hit US, West from Afghanistan in 'Under 6 Months': General*, N.Y. POST, Mar. 16, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/03/16/isis-could-hit-us-west-from-afghanistan-in-under-6-months-general>.

<sup>4</sup> Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec., Operation Allies Welcome Announces Departure of All Afghan Nationals from the National Conference Center Safe Haven in Leesburg, VA (Sept. 27, 2022) (on file with author), available at <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/09/27/operation-allies-welcome-announces-departure-all-afghan-nationals-national>.

<sup>5</sup> OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GEN., DEP'T OF HOMELAND SEC., OIG-22-64, DHS ENCOUNTERED OBSTACLES TO SCREEN, VET, AND INSPECT ALL EVACUEES DURING THE RECENT AFGHANISTAN CRISIS (REDACTED) (Sept. 6, 2022) [hereinafter DHS OIG Report].

vetting capabilities raises serious national security concerns for the state of U.S. homeland security.

This comes at a time when President Biden and his administration refuse to accept responsibility, while shamelessly shifting blame for imprudent decisions and indecisions that resulted in the deadly withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.<sup>6</sup> During an April 18, 2023 hearing before the Committee's Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence, multiple witnesses testified that no one from the Biden administration has been held accountable for the catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> The Biden administration's continuous denial and downplaying of what happened is an insult to Americans and our Afghan allies. On April 6, 2023, John Kirby, the Biden administration's coordinator for strategic communications at the National Security Council disgracefully said the administration is "proud" of its catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan and how "for all this talk of chaos, I [Kirby] just didn't see it, not from my perch," even though horrific images and footage of the evacuation depict the contrary.<sup>8</sup> President Biden and his administration must be held accountable, and we will ensure its compliance with the Committee's serious requests.

DHS must be forthcoming and transparent to the Committee and the American people about the Biden administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. To date, DHS has stonewalled requests from Committee members for information about the withdrawal. The Committee transmitted multiple requests for documents and information concerning the withdrawal, dating back to August 2021. These requests remain either wholly unsatisfied or insufficiently satisfied. On September 16, 2021, Committee members sent you a letter highlighting serious concerns regarding DHS's screening and vetting for Afghan evacuees.<sup>9</sup> On November 12, 2021, members of the Committee sent another letter to you reiterating the requests for information in the September 16, 2021, letter.<sup>10</sup>

This letter renews those outstanding requests with additional requests for documents and information. Accordingly, to assist the Committee's ongoing oversight of DHS's role and processes regarding the Biden administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, please

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<sup>6</sup> The White House, *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby* (Apr. 6, 2023, 1:30 PM EDT), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2023/04/06/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-and-national-security-council-coordinator-for-strategic-communications-john-kirby-9>.

<sup>7</sup> *The Homeland Security Cost of the Biden Administration's Catastrophic Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence of the H. Comm. on Homeland Sec.*, 118th Cong. (Apr. 18, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> The White House, *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby* (Apr. 6, 2023, 1:30 PM EDT), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2023/04/06/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-and-national-security-council-coordinator-for-strategic-communications-john-kirby-9>.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Rep. August Pfluger et al., Ranking Member, Subcomm. on Intelligence and Counterterrorism of the H. Comm. on Homeland Sec., to Hon. Alejandro Mayorkas, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec. (Sept. 16, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Rep. August Pfluger et al., Ranking Member, Subcomm. on Intelligence and Counterterrorism of the H. Comm on Homeland Sec., to Hon. Alejandro Mayorkas, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec. (Nov. 12, 2021).

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provide the following documents and information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 15, 2023:

1. All documents and communications between or among employees of DHS, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Department of Defense referring or relating to the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan from January 1, 2021, to the present;
2. All documents and communications between or among employees of DHS referring or relating to CBP's screening, vetting, or inspection of Afghan evacuees at U.S. Ports of Entry, including, but not limited to, "facilitation document[s],"<sup>11</sup> travel document data, or records in CBP's Treasury Enforcement Communications System considered to establish an evacuee's identity from January 1, 2021, to the present; and
3. Documents sufficient to justify why DHS has not concurred with the two recommendations from the DHS OIG's September 6, 2022, report OIG-22-64, which remains open over six months later.

To the extent a complete response to this inquiry requires the provision of classified information, please do so under separate cover.

An attachment contains instructions for responding to this request. Please contact the Committee on Homeland Security Majority staff at (202) 226-8417 with any questions about this request.

Per House Rule X, the Committee on Homeland Security is the principal committee of jurisdiction for overall homeland security policy, and has special oversight functions of "all Government activities relating to homeland security, including the interaction of all departments and agencies with the Department of Homeland Security."

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



MARK E. GREEN, MD  
Chairman



AUGUST PFLUGER  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism,  
Law Enforcement, and Intelligence

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<sup>11</sup> DHS OIG Report, *supra* note 4 at 10.

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CLAY HIGGINS

Chairman

Subcommittee on Border Security  
and Enforcement



DAN BISHOP

Chairman

Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations,  
and Accountability

Encl.

cc: The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Seth Magaziner, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence

The Honorable Lou Correa, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement

The Honorable Glenn Ivey, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability