

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0305

November 22, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

The withdrawal from Afghanistan was an unmitigated disaster. The American people watched with horror as the Taliban took over Afghanistan. Amazingly, you turned a victory into what feels like a colossal defeat.

On July 1, 2021, U.S. forces left Bagram Airfield without notifying the new Afghan commander. We left behind around 5,000 terrorists in prison and millions of dollars worth of equipment in the middle of the night.¹ We left thousands of terrorists behind at the base.

The terrorist who carried out the terrorist attack at the Kabul airport on August 26, 2021, was freed from Bagram prison on August 15, 2021 by the Taliban.² The individual in question had been held by the CIA for 4 years after he was arrested for his role in a plot to bomb New Delhi and other cities in the region.³ A mere 9 days after being freed, this terrorist attacked American soldiers protecting Kabul airport. This national security catastrophe could have been avoided if your administration had simply waited to leave Bagram until all Americans had left or had removed the terrorists before leaving Bagram.

Somehow your disaster in Afghanistan was not over. On August 29, 2021, the United States launched a drone strike in Afghanistan that killed 10 people, including 7 children.⁴ Your administration originally claimed that the target was an ISIS-K operative.⁵ Tragically, it was an aid worker and his family.

¹ Nick Paton Walsh & Sandi Sidhu, *Al Qaeda and Taliban members among thousands of prisoners left under Afghan control in jail next to deserted US air base*, CNN, July 6, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/06/world/al-qaeda-taliban-prisoners-us-air-base-intl/index.html>.

² Ryan Pickrell & John Haltiwanger, *ISIS suicide bomber who killed 13 US troops in Afghanistan was reportedly released from prison at Bagram Air Base days before the attack*, BUSINESS INSIDER, Oct. 6, 2021, <https://www.businessinsider.com/suicide-bomber-who-killed-us-troops-released-from-afghanistan-prison-2021-10#:~:text=The%20ISIS%20%20suicide%20bomber,forces%20in%20July%2C%20officials%20said.>

³ Praveen Swami, *Kabul Airport suicide attacker was freed by Taliban after four years in CIA custody for New Delhi terror plot*, FIRSTPOST, Sept. 19, 2021, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/kabul-airport-suicide-attacker-was-freed-by-taliban-after-four-years-in-cia-custody-for-new-delhi-terror-plot-9976961.html>.

⁴ Anna Coren, Julia Hollingsworth, Sandi Sidhu, & Zachary Cohen, *US military admits it killed 10 civilians and targeted wrong vehicle in Kabul airstrike*, CNN, Sept. 17, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/17/politics/kabul-drone-strike-us-military-intl-hnk/index.html>.

⁵ Matthew Aikins, *Times Investigation: In U.S. Drone Strike, Evidence Suggests No ISIS Bomb*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 10, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/world/asia/us-air-strike-drone-kabul-afghanistan-isis.html>.

This tragic and avoidable loss of life is made worse by the fact that at the time of the attack you did not know if it was an aid worker and his family or an ISIS-K operative who would be killed by the strike. Secretary Blinken admitted to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee that the U.S. did not investigate the target before the drone strike.⁶ This lack of judgment is astonishing. In your attempt to change the narrative around your failures in Afghanistan, you failed to take the steps necessary to ensure that you were targeting a terrorist and not a family of 10.

Amazingly, a Pentagon watchdog found that this disaster was not caused by misconduct or negligence.⁷ Air Force Lt. Gen. Sami Said conducted the review and stated during a press conference "It's a regrettable mistake. It's an honest mistake. I understand the consequences, but it's not criminal conduct, random conduct, negligence." It is not possible that a family of 10 is mistaken for a terrorist and the resulting deaths are not caused by misconduct or negligence. This loss of life was clearly caused by your failure to ensure the intelligence you received was accurate.

Several months after the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan there are still unanswered questions about events surrounding the withdrawal, the attack on the airport, the drone strike, and how many Americans are still trying to escape from Afghanistan.

Please provide your answers to the following questions by December 15, 2021.

1. Why did you decide to abandon Bagram Airforce Base before all Americans had evacuated from Afghanistan?
2. Did you coordinate with the Afghan Government regarding the prisoners before leaving Bagram Air Base?
3. Why did American forces leave terrorists at Bagram when they left?
4. Did you order the drone strike on August 29, 2021, that killed 10 civilians, including 7 children?
5. What evidence did you have that it was an ISIS-K operative?
6. How many Americans are still in Afghanistan?
7. What is your administration doing to get all Americans remaining in Afghanistan out of the country?
8. How is it possible that negligence is not involved when a family of 10 is mistaken for a single terrorist?

If these questions cannot be provided in written form due to national security concerns, I request a classified briefing in which the information can be shared.

Sincerely,

⁶ Missy Ryan, John Hudson, & Karoun Demirjian, *Blinken faces more heat from Congress over Afghanistan exit as lawmakers call for accountability*, WASH. POST, Sept. 14, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/blinken-afghanistan-senate-testimony/2021/09/14/7d5d70a4-1562-11ec-ae9a-9c36751cf799_story.html.

⁷ Lolita C. Baldor, *Watchdog finds no misconduct in mistaken Afghan airstrike*, ASSOCIATED PRESS, Nov. 3, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-kabul-bf24b4a670895ab1cc0b345ee9c90c74>.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andy Biggs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andy" and the last name "Biggs" clearly distinguishable.

Andy Biggs
Member of Congress