

established the nonpartisan Election Observer Program.

In the 2022 election cycle, observers were deployed to roughly 25 sites across the country. Dozens of offices have already signed up to participate in this year's program for the election that concludes in just 41 days.

With the help of our colleagues in the Senate, this election is now expanded to encompass a Senate program similar to the one we run in the House.

I am working to ensure election observers can be deployed across States as needed. At a recent committee hearing, six secretaries of State from both parties testified they would provide unimpeded access to our Election Observer Program in the upcoming election. I will continue to work to ensure every State and locality across the country will welcome our observers.

Strong election integrity increases confidence and participation in our elections, which is a good thing.

Providing a Federal statutory citation for these election observers to monitor election administration practices will achieve that goal. Elections are partisan, but the administration of our elections should never be partisan.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, first, let me thank my distinguished colleague and friend from Wisconsin, the chair of our committee, Mr. STEIL.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 6513. I am proud to say this measure is the byproduct of bipartisan and bicameral agreement.

As was noted, Article I, Section 5, Clause 1 of the Constitution grants Congress the authority to "be the judge of the elections, returns, and qualifications of its own Members."

The House of Representatives serves as the final arbiter over any contest to the seating of any Member-elect and is the ultimate authority over who may serve in the Chamber.

This measure, H.R. 6513, confirms Congress' constitutional authority to designate congressional staff to observe election administration procedures in congressional elections. This bill complements our longstanding Election Observer Program, as has been noted.

The program is conducted by the Committee on House Administration, as authorized by House rules and the Federal Contested Elections Act. The role of a congressional observer is to monitor the administration of the election, gather information, and report back to the committee.

Every 2 years, the committee's longstanding practice is to work collaboratively on a bipartisan basis to send observers. There is evidence of the committee sending observers dating back to at least the 99th Congress, 1985 to 1987.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, again, repeat that I am grateful to my colleague and chairman of the committee, Mr. STEIL, as well as another colleague who serves on our committee, Representative MIKE CAREY of Ohio, for sponsoring the bill. This addresses several concerns raised in committee with an earlier version of the text, and I thank them for working with us. I thank the staff on both sides for coming to this agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Senate amendment to H.R. 6513, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the ranking member of the Committee on House Administration, for his work on this important legislation, as well as the staffs of both the minority and the majority for coming together in a timely manner to get this across the line as well as our colleagues in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, having no further comments on the bill, I urge everyone to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

#### ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR KEY OFFICIALS IN THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBLE FOR DECISION-MAKING AND EXECUTION FAILURES THROUGHOUT THE WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1486, I call up the resolution (H. Res. 1469) ensuring accountability for key officials in the Biden-Harris administration responsible for decisionmaking and execution failures throughout the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOST). Pursuant to House Resolution 1486, the resolution is considered read.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1469

Whereas, throughout the Biden-Harris administration, key White House, National Security Council, Department of State, and Department of Defense officials prioritized the politics and optics of the withdrawal from Afghanistan over the security of United States personnel and civilians on the ground and failed to plan for foreseeable contin-

gencies, causing a chaotic, precipitous withdrawal that resulted in the death of 13 servicemembers and the wounding of 45 servicemembers in the Abbey Gate terrorist attack on August 26, 2021;

Whereas, in 2020, the Trump administration negotiated a conditional plan to withdraw from Afghanistan called "The Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan", commonly known as the Doha Agreement, which required the Taliban to cease terrorist activities, renounce linkages with al Qaeda, reduce violence, establish a ceasefire, and participate in Afghan-to-Afghan negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan;

Whereas the Biden-Harris administration was determined to withdraw from Afghanistan regardless of the Doha Agreement and the costs of withdrawal;

Whereas, in 2021, under the Biden-Harris administration, Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, baselessly asserted the Taliban would honor their commitments and respect basic human rights;

Whereas, in 2021, President Biden selected National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan to conduct an interagency review of the policy of the United States toward Afghanistan, including the Taliban's compliance with the Doha Agreement;

Whereas the review process led by National Security Advisor Sullivan, Deputy National Security Advisor Jonathan Finer, and Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall completely disregarded the failure of the Taliban to comply with the Doha Agreement, did not seek input from key government officials, and blatantly ignored warnings from senior national security experts and allies of the United States that a complete withdrawal of troops would cause a total unraveling and collapse of the Government of Afghanistan;

Whereas President Biden, supported by Vice President Harris, issued a "go-to-zero order" without any regard for the safety of Americans and without making appropriate plans for noncombatant evacuation operations;

Whereas the Department of State's leadership responsible for the safety of embassy personnel and civilian evacuation plans included Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State Brian McKeon, and Counselor for the Department of State Derek Chollet;

Whereas, during the military withdrawal from April to July 2021, Secretary of State Blinken, Ambassador Ross Wilson, other Department of State officials, and the National Security Council willfully disregarded warnings of the Taliban's imminent takeover in Afghanistan and instead increased the footprint of Embassy Kabul rather than plan for a noncombatant evacuation operation;

Whereas, in early August 2021, as the Taliban made gains across Afghanistan, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl, and other senior officials purportedly advised that positioning United States military forces to assist with a noncombatant evacuation operation was not immediately necessary, contrary to urgent warnings from United States military personnel on the ground;

Whereas Secretary of State Blinken and his State Department did not call for a noncombatant evacuation operation until the Taliban began marching into Kabul on August 15, 2021;

Whereas Secretary of State Blinken and his State Department had not made determinations about who would be eligible for

evacuation, and had not effectuated agreements with third countries to serve as transit points prior to the noncombatant evacuation operation;

Whereas the willful refusal to plan for a timely civilian evacuation caused chaos in Kabul and an untenable security situation at the Hamid Karzai International Airport;

Whereas, on August 26, 2021, the Biden-Harris administration's chaotic, precipitous withdrawal, willful refusal to properly plan for a noncombatant evacuation operation, and decision to rely on the Taliban to run checkpoints surrounding the airport resulted in a terrorist attack by ISIS-K at Abbey Gate that killed 185 people, including 13 United States servicemembers;

Whereas the suicide bomber at Abbey Gate was among thousands of militants released by the Taliban from Afghan prisons as they marched on Kabul;

Whereas, in August 2021, the Biden-Harris administration left behind approximately 1,000 Americans;

Whereas the Biden-Harris administration left behind \$7,000,000,000 worth of United States weapons and up to \$57,000,000 in United States currency that could be used by the Taliban and other terrorist regimes;

Whereas President Biden, Vice President Harris, National Security Advisor Sullivan, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, White House National Security Communications Advisor, and Defense Department Spokesperson John Kirby, and the Department of State Spokesperson Ned Price repeatedly and materially misrepresented to the people of the United States the state of affairs in Afghanistan and the withdrawal;

Whereas, since the Biden-Harris administration's withdrawal, the Taliban has carried out brutal reprisal killings of Afghan Government officials and individuals who assisted the United States and our allies, and created a safe haven for terrorist groups who seek to harm the United States;

Whereas the Biden administration had been warned the precipitous withdrawal would cause women's rights to "go back to the Stone Age", and since the withdrawal, women's rights have been rescinded and child marriages have skyrocketed;

Whereas the Biden-Harris administration's catastrophic withdrawal has emboldened our adversaries, and once again made the United States vulnerable to terrorist attacks;

Whereas the Biden-Harris administration refuses any accountability for the disastrous withdrawal; instead, Under Secretary of Defense Colin Kahl said "Americans should be immensely proud" and Press Secretary Psaki stated the withdrawal was "a success";

Whereas Vice President Harris said she was the last person in the room before President Biden made the final decision on the withdrawal and was described by an advisor as being "100 percent all in" on the decision; and

Whereas our Nation's most senior leaders, including the President and Vice President, failed in their responsibilities on behalf of the people of the United States and have not been held accountable for the death and destruction their failures caused: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives condemns each of the following individuals for their role in the Biden-Harris administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan and noncombatant evacuation operation, which led to the injury and death of United States servicemembers, injury and death of Afghan civilians, abandonment of American civilians and our Afghan allies, and harm to the national security and international stature of the United States:

(1) Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States.

(2) Kamala D. Harris, Vice President of the United States.

(3) Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor.

(4) Jonathan Finer, Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor.

(5) Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Deputy National Security Advisor.

(6) John Kirby, White House National Security Communications Advisor; former Spokesperson, the Department of Defense.

(7) Jen Psaki, Former Press Secretary, White House.

(8) Antony Blinken, Secretary, the Department of State.

(9) Brian McKeon, Former Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, the Department of State.

(10) Ross Wilson, Ambassador and former Chief of Mission to United States Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, the Department of State.

(11) Zalmay Khalilzad, Ambassador and former United States Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, the Department of State.

(12) Ned Price, Deputy to the United States Representative to the United Nations and former Spokesperson, the Department of State.

(13) Lloyd Austin, Secretary, the Department of Defense.

(14) Derek Chollet Chief of Staff to the Secretary, the Department of Defense; Former Counselor, the Department of State.

(15) Colin Kahl, Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the Department of Defense.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The resolution shall be debatable for 1 hour, equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, 3 years ago, the world witnessed one of the most devastating foreign policy disasters in American history. The Biden-Harris administration withdrew all U.S. forces from Afghanistan with no plan, no care, and no remorse.

As a result, 13 brave U.S. servicemembers and over 170 Afghan civilians were murdered, and 45 U.S. servicemembers and countless others were injured.

Just this month National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby was asked whether there had been any accountability for the administration's

deadly and chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

He responded: "We've all held ourselves accountable."

That answer, Mr. Speaker, is detached from all reality.

Today, the administration touts that deadly withdrawal as a success, and they have yet to hold a single person accountable for their role in this tragedy. In fact, many of those responsible for this catastrophe have actually been promoted.

If the administration refuses to hold itself accountable, then Congress must.

On April 14, 2021, the President announced the Biden-Harris administration would withdraw all troops from Afghanistan, no matter the cost or the consequence. They ignored the Taliban's violations of the Doha agreement. They ignored objections by our Nation's top military and intelligence experts, and they ignored objections by our NATO allies.

According to the administration's own admission, the Doha agreement was immaterial to that decision.

Following President Biden's go-to-zero order, the Taliban captured province after province in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's collapse was all but set in stone.

Astoundingly, this administration did nothing to plan for an evacuation. Instead, they denied threats to American interests, American citizens, and our decades-long Afghan partners.

On August 15, 2021, after months of Taliban advances, Kabul fell. The administration's utter failure to prepare became painfully clear.

President Biden claimed the very next day that his administration had planned for all contingencies. Nothing could be further from the truth.

At every step, the administration prioritized the optics and the politics of the withdrawal over the security of U.S. personnel and diplomats on the ground.

To protect their partisan aims, they ignored the well-known terrorist threats from ISIS-K and the Taliban to our servicemembers, diplomats, citizens, and allies.

The Biden-Harris administration instead chose to treat the Taliban—the very terrorists that we had been fighting for 20 years—as security partners, for God's sake, security partners during the evacuation.

This administration created the very environment that allowed an ISIS-K terrorist to pass through a Taliban checkpoint, because, Mr. Speaker, we put the Taliban in charge of the checkpoint.

Mr. Speaker, guess who let the suicide bomber through?

It was the Taliban.

The result of that was the deadliest day for American troops in Afghanistan since 2021.

On August 26, 2021, that terrorist detonated a suicide vest, murdering 13 U.S. servicemembers and over 170 Afghan civilians, and injuring 45 U.S.

servicemembers and countless civilians.

Rather than admit their failure, this administration continues to this day to celebrate their deadly evacuation. Never once have they said they are sorry to the Gold Star families.

It took the Speaker of the House at the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony to say: I am sorry for what your government did to you.

Just yesterday, President Biden proclaimed to the world that his withdrawal was “the right decision.”

I believe that is shameful.

When I became chairman, I launched an investigation so that we, the Congress, could work to ensure that what happened in Afghanistan never happens again.

As everyone here knows, you cannot begin to fix a problem without first admitting that there is a problem. That is what accountability is all about.

My 353-page report on this investigation works to provide that accountability. Today, we take the first step in fixing the problem by holding accountable those leaders who were derelict in their duty and are responsible for this disaster.

They are Joseph Biden, President of the United States; KAMALA HARRIS, Vice President of the United States; Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor; Jonathan Finer, Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor; Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Deputy National Security Advisor; John Kirby, National Security Council spokesperson and former Defense Department Spokesperson; Jen Psaki, former White House Press Secretary; Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of State; Brian McKeon, former Deputy Secretary of State; Ross Wilson, U.S. Ambassador and former Chief of Mission to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul; Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Ambassador and former Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation; Ned Price, Deputy to the U.S. Representative to the United Nations and former State Department Spokesperson; Lloyd Austin, U.S. Secretary of Defense; Derek Chollet, Chief of Staff to Secretary Austin and former Counselor to Secretary Blinken; and, finally, Colin Kahl, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

□ 1515

The American people, U.S. servicemembers, veterans, and, most importantly, the Gold Star families, deserve this. They deserve transparency, and they deserve, Mr. Speaker, accountability. This measure is the first step toward that, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, September 24, 2024.

Hon. MICHAEL T. McCaul,  
*House Committee on Foreign Affairs,*  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN McCaul: I write concerning H. Res. 1469, a resolution condemning the Biden-Harris Administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. As a result of your having consulted with us on provisions within H. Res. 1469 that fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on Armed Services, I agree to forego any further consideration of this resolution so that it may proceed expeditiously to the House floor for consideration.

The Committee on Armed Services takes this action with our mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration of H. Res. 1469 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over subject matter contained in this or similar legislation and that our committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as this resolution or similar legislation moves forward so that we may address any remaining issues in our jurisdiction.

Finally, I ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included by House Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Congressional Record during floor consideration, to memorialize our understanding. Thank you for the cooperative spirit in which you have worked regarding this matter and others between our respective committees.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL D. ROGERS,  
*Chairman, House Committee*  
*on Armed Services.*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
Washington, DC, September 24, 2024.

Hon. MIKE ROGERS,  
*Committee on Armed Services,*  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Thank you for consulting with the Foreign Affairs Committee and agreeing to be discharged from further consideration of H. Res. 1469, a resolution condemning the Biden-Harris Administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, so that the measure may proceed expeditiously to the House floor.

I agree that your forgoing further action on this measure does not in any way diminish or alter the jurisdiction of your committee, or prejudice its jurisdictional prerogatives on this measure or similar legislation in the future.

I will seek to place our letters on this bill into the *Congressional Record* during floor consideration. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation and look forward to continuing to work together as this measure moves through the legislative process.

MICHAEL T. McCaul,  
*Chairman.*

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this resolution, which is clearly just another attempt by Republicans to politicize their investigation. It was not a bipartisan investigation. It was their investigation into the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan. For what purpose? Solely to attack the Biden administration in an election year and deflect the scrutiny of their own partisan claims.

Mr. Speaker, we had a committee markup just yesterday. Why avoid regular order? Well, I will tell my col-

leagues why. If this resolution had gone through committee, we would have been able to go line by line and address either their misleading or outright falsehoods that were made throughout the text.

We could have made clear, for example, how Republicans cherry-picked testimony to reinforce their own predetermined, meaning they made a determination before it was concluded, narrative about the Biden administration while omitting any facts showing that former President Trump initiated the withdrawal; that President Trump's actions undercut U.S. leverage in negotiating with the Taliban; and that President Trump's order to withdraw more and more troops set it into an irreversible motion.

The majority's investigation and this resolution, of course, is not concerned about the facts. What it is really concerned about is the politics.

Why do I say that? That is evidenced by the fact that Republicans released their partisan, misleading report, a report into which, I might say again, Democrats had no input and didn't even see until just hours before Republicans made it public, so it was their secret.

It is evidenced by Republicans' rush yesterday to baselessly hold Secretary Blinken in contempt, even though the Secretary of State, who was with President Biden, engaging in high-level diplomacy with world leaders at the U.N. yesterday, has stated time and time again that he is willing to testify.

Why? What is the rush? What is the urgency? It is not to get answers. It is not to get the facts. The withdrawal was completed more than 3 years ago. Why? The majority wanted to make a spectacle before the November elections. It is clear.

Nothing underscores their partisan theater more than Republicans, get this, naming Vice President HARRIS over 200 times in their report, and we don't know when the majority added it or not, I believe it was at the last second, and 5 times in the resolution. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle put that in there, despite the fact she is mentioned only three times in over 3,000 pages of transcript interviews. She was mentioned three times.

Vice President HARRIS was only mentioned twice in the Republicans' interim report in 2022. I wonder what changed. I wonder why, all of a sudden, the majority wants to put her name in it more. Could it have something to do with the elections that are coming up in less than 45 days?

This did not need to be a partisan exercise. No one has claimed on our side of the aisle, or any party, that the withdrawal was perfect. There are clear lessons to be learned.

The State Department even admitted it. The State Department did its own investigation. However, facts are facts, and witnesses consistently made it clear that the Biden administration developed a plan after the Trump administration failed to do so.

I remind Members that the former President initiated this withdrawal when he went from 14,000 troops, upon his taking office, down to 2,500 troops by the end of his term. Multiple witnesses told us that the former President did not have a plan in place to evacuate our Afghan allies or our American citizens, but my colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't want to talk about that.

Witnesses also told us that the dynamic situation on the ground changed dramatically when Afghan President Ghani fled the country, leading to the collapse of the Afghan Government and the military.

I remind my colleagues that President Ghani was here in Washington, D.C., in a meeting with leaders. I was there, and the Republican leadership was there, where he had said that he and the Afghan Government would stay and that they would be there to monitor things. Just a week later, they fled.

Witnesses of the GOP investigation repeatedly told us that while the situation in Kabul was chaotic, the administration's response was not. Our military and diplomats adapted quickly to facilitate the largest airlift in U.S. history to relocate over 120,000 people, and that is why President Biden said it was a success and pulling out of Afghanistan was the right thing to do.

Despite what my Republican colleagues say, our withdrawal did not begin the moment that President Biden took office, though planning for it did.

It was the Trump administration's flawed deal with the Taliban that Republicans don't want to talk about. It is called the Doha deal. It is the deal that initiated our withdrawal and forced the Afghan Government to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners back into the battlefield, which the Republicans don't want to talk about either. This fundamentally changed the power dynamic in Afghanistan. That is not in their report. They don't want to talk about that.

Testimony reaffirmed that Trump's troop drawdowns were not conditions based, but that he even erratically ordered a full withdrawal in his last days of office, a decision that the military leaders essentially overruled. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't want to talk about that.

Trump had also frozen the SIV program, leaving the Biden administration with a backlog of more than 17,000 cases to start addressing, and they did. That is not in the majority's report. The majority doesn't want to talk about that either.

Republicans are trying desperately to clean up a candidate who clearly has a flawed record, Trump's record, on this withdrawal, but President Trump himself has bragged that the Biden administration couldn't stop the process if they wanted to. In this case, President Trump, a rarity, was accurate.

Witnesses said that if the withdrawal was reversed, then the only condition

in the Doha deal that the Taliban had honored, to stop firing on U.S. troops, would be broken. We would be back at war, and we would have had to send more troops back into Afghanistan.

The President had two options upon taking office: End America's 20-year war in Afghanistan, or massively surge troops for an undeterminable amount of time. As President Biden has said, yes, he made the right decision not to send another generation of Americans to spill blood in Afghanistan. That was the right decision.

Our country owes a deep debt of gratitude to the 2,461 Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan, including the 13 servicemembers tragically killed in the ISIS-K attack at Abbey Gate.

They deserve honest oversight of our longest war, which spanned four administrations. An honest oversight would look over all four, as we thought on our side of the aisle, was the appropriate thing to do if we really wanted to get the facts and make sure that we correct things that took place over that long 20-year time.

This resolution and the report it affirms are not oversight or accountability, they are really election season props to use for political gain.

Thankfully, the nonpartisan Afghanistan War Commission will provide that serious oversight that is necessary, and there is legislation that Congress can pass now to move forward with something impartial and something that will have real credibility. It is something that I believe could really console all of the families of those who lost their lives for our great country in Afghanistan.

We reported bipartisan legislation by Representative TITUS to authorize the coordinator for Afghan relocation efforts. I know negotiations continue on legislation by Representative CROW to improve how the State Department responds to crises. It is responsible legislation.

The Afghan Adjustment Act and the Afghan Allies Protection Act, which are longstanding, bipartisan proposals, would keep the faith with the Afghans who fought and worked alongside us. If we are going to do these kinds of reports, they should be bipartisan.

I deeply regret that this is one of the final bills we are likely to take up before election. I don't think it is by accident. We are getting out of here tomorrow. The last thing we are going to be doing is this. I know Republican leadership wanted to make sure of that—politics.

Even before we voted to keep our government open, this is what my colleagues want to do. This is an unfounded, partisan attack. We should be focused on and at least have the vote on the CR to keep this government open. The American people deserve better.

Let's reject this resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I will address some of the points. I can tell my good friend from New York (Mr. MEEKS) has some prosecutorial background, like myself, and I commend him for his skillful arguments.

I will address the argument that this is all political. The timing of our investigation and this report was not of my making. It was not my timeline. It was deliberately delayed by this administration, I think, in a plan to take it well beyond this election, well beyond this Congress.

□ 1530

Fortunately, we had it done in September, and we invited the Secretary to testify about the report. He declined to show up, saying he had no time for the Congress, not one day in September.

Secondly, they had nothing to do with this report. Every transcribed interview had full participation by Members in the minority. Members on the other side of the aisle. They were full participants.

I would have to say, with respect to the report itself, we have 1,812 citations with a very thorough, historic document. Their report is a 50-page memorandum that doesn't even cite to a single piece of the 20,000 pages the administration presented to us after a threat of holding the Secretary in contempt.

The Dissent Channel and the after-action report were the testimonies of the diplomats themselves on the ground. That is what is in our report. That is not political. It is not opinion based, other than what the generals were thinking on the ground and the diplomats were thinking on the ground at the time of the fall.

What is despicable is that Ambassador Wilson abandoned his own Afghan employees and left them to the mercy of the Taliban, and I am sure many of them were executed, along with many of the diplomats in the Embassy.

There is just so much more that I could talk about, and I am sure we will, but the fact is, I take pride in the work we did. I did it as a Federal prosecutor would, along with my team, who is also a former Federal prosecutor, methodically building our case.

We never threw advanced conclusions out. We never made judgment calls in advance. We didn't do much with press on this. We built our case, and all roads lead to the Secretary of State, Jake Sullivan, and the National Security Council. I believe those are the facts.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the resolution ensuring accountability in the Biden-Harris administration.

Sadly, as a student of history, the Biden-Harris administration's failures

in Afghanistan, I believe, have been the most catastrophic ever in American foreign policy and national security.

Thirteen Americans were murdered at Abbey Gate, and three Georgia Army reservists were murdered on January 28 of this year, with dozens of Georgia reservists also suffering permanent traumatic brain injury.

Americans were left behind. Afghan mothers gave up their babies over the wall so that their children could live in freedom. Patriotic Afghans fell from the planes as the Biden administration deserted the people of Afghanistan.

Surrender in Afghanistan, with Afghanistan becoming a safe haven for terrorists, has opened borders for every American family to be at risk of mass murder as we see dictators who have the ability to now come into our country and the potential of mass murder, as has been warned by the FBI.

War criminal Putin has been encouraged, as we see dictators, to conduct the mass murder in Ukraine. The Iranian puppets have slaughtered innocent people in Israel.

The agreements reached in Doha were conditions based, achieved by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. We had testimony before the Foreign Affairs Committee by General Milley and General McKenzie. They testified that the conditions were broken. They were broken from the beginning, and this certainly gave the opportunity for Biden-Harris to change course and not to be slaves of a particular time.

President Donald Trump has affirmed over and over—and I have been with him at different events in the past year—that he would have left a contingent of military allies at Bagram base to deter terrorism worldwide.

President Trump would have achieved peace through strength. He would have achieved maintaining the Bagram base so that we would not have it under the control of Taliban terrorists or the Chinese Communist Party.

Additionally, I especially appreciate the success of Afghan veterans keeping America safe for 20 years, with my youngest son, Lieutenant Hunter Wilson, serving in Afghanistan for a year as an Army engineer. I appreciate that so much.

I am also grateful that my former National Guard unit, the 218th Mechanized Infantry Brigade of the South Carolina Army National Guard, served for a year in Afghanistan. With the leadership of Adjutant General Bob Livingston, they established what they called a brotherhood with their Afghan brothers. They have been heartbroken to know, as Chairman MIKE McCAUL has so correctly stated, that by abandoning so many people in Afghanistan, they have been executed.

We know and hear women can no longer go to school, that they must stay in their homes. I saw with the USAID programs where young girls were being able to go to school, and it was just so inspiring to see this. Now, women are being totally subjugated

due to the Taliban, and this must stop. The way to do that is to never have this occur in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of the resolution.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, let me quickly rebut my dear friend before I yield to Mr. SHERMAN.

Number one, it sounds like nothing was done by the administration or anyone else for the last 2, 3 years. The administration has provided over 20,000 pages and made over 15 witnesses available over this entire Congress.

Secretary Blinken has said he did not want to testify. He said he is willing to testify. The first time he was subpoenaed to come was when he was in Egypt negotiating a cease-fire and return of hostages. I think everyone has known that this particular week is U.N. week, so that is not something that is secret. The record is clear on that.

The fact of the matter is, Secretary Blinken has testified over 14 times in Congress to Members of Congress, four of which were in our committee. Delay the investigation? I think not.

Then he is questioning whether or not our memo doesn't cite transcripts. In our memo, 43 of 59 total pages were cut and pasted directly from witnesses' testimony.

What we asked for was transparency for the people, and for some of those transcripts, I had to almost beg for them to be made public. It wasn't automatically made public.

Lastly, Jen Psaki had nothing to do with these decisions. That is just politics.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN).

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, a decade ago, we faced a tough situation in Afghanistan. We could have stayed indefinitely at a cost of \$50 billion a year and perhaps a dozen casualties a year, but then Donald Trump promised the American people that we would withdraw and that, at that point, it was no longer a possibility that America would remain indefinitely.

So what was accomplished during the Obama administration in Afghanistan? One important thing: We got bin Laden. What was accomplished during the Biden administration? A very difficult withdrawal, one of the most difficult military maneuvers carried out early in the Biden administration. Not only did we withdraw our troops, but we were able to get out perhaps 100,000 others. It was a difficult maneuver accomplished, but not without casualties.

What did we get under the Trump administration? Nothing, except he was able to sign a surrender agreement toward the end of his administration that he could have signed at the beginning of his administration.

This resolution is entirely appropriate if you change one thing: Condemn not that list of people to which they added HARRIS at the end; condemn one man, Donald J. Trump.

During his Presidency, 63 Americans died in Afghanistan, 57 of them returned to dignified return ceremonies that Donald Trump was too busy to attend. He was busy golfing instead.

During his Presidency, his golf handicap did not suffer, but 57 American widows and fathers and mothers and families suffered as they saw the coffins brought back to America and a President too busy to be there.

What did we accomplish for the \$200 billion that Donald Trump spent for the 63 who died? We signed a surrender document.

Now, I know they will say there are all kinds of wonderful things in the document. It is nothing but meaningless promises with no enforcement provisions, but don't take my word for it.

Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, Trump's National Security Advisor said, our Secretary of State, Mr. Pompeo, signed a surrender agreement with the Taliban.

Why surrender after you lose the 63 lives? Why not surrender in 2017? That is because withdrawals are difficult; surrender documents easier. Trump signed the surrender document and then left it to his successor to accomplish the withdrawal.

So we are told, oh, well, Donald Trump somehow would have enforced these meaningless conditions all without enforcement provisions. That is not what he would have done.

What does John Bolton, Donald Trump's other National Security Advisor, say. He said, had Donald Trump been reelected, he would have been doing the same thing on the question of withdrawal from Afghanistan.

But don't trust his staff. What did Donald Trump say? Donald Trump said in October of 2020, after the 5,000 Taliban fighters had been released because of Donald Trump's decision, he said, without any of the conditions having been met, that he would have all those troops home by Christmas 2020.

Those conditions were meaningless. They were meaningless to Donald Trump. They were meaningless to his National Security Advisor. They had no enforcement provisions in them.

Why did we stay in Afghanistan past 2017? So that Donald Trump didn't have to accomplish the withdrawal that was so difficult and for which he produced no plan.

We lost \$200 billion, we lost 63 lives, we sent over \$10 billion worth of our equipment that was spread all over Afghanistan with no prospect of recovering it, knowing that the Taliban would get it. We did all that during the Trump administration.

Now, we are having a partisan resolution as to who is at fault? The man who keeps our troops there, has 63 casualties, spends \$200 billion, signs a surrender agreement, announces he is not going to enforce the provisions, and now we have this.

The Speaker pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from California.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. We were in error. The gentleman from New York has 9 minutes remaining. The gentleman from Texas has 16 minutes remaining.

The gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 1 minute.

□ 1545

Mr. SHERMAN. At least Mr. Trump was able to golf and didn't have to go to the return ceremonies.

I would say that once you force the release of 5,000 Taliban fighters, it is very difficult to say things are condition-based because at that point, the Taliban has those 5,000 fighters and is able to inflict hundreds and hundreds of casualties on our forces unless they withdraw.

This was not a condition-based document. It was, in the words of General McMaster, a surrender, and the surrender was in the fourth year of the Trump administration.

Mr. Speaker, 63 of our finest died. Let us have a resolution condemning the one man who should be condemned: Donald J. Trump.

Mr. McCaul. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I love this argument. This is all Donald Trump's fault.

I would submit to you: Who made the decision to go to zero? You know what that means? Go to zero means withdraw all troops, withdraw all air cover, and withdraw all contractors.

That is precisely why Afghanistan imploded as fast as it did and why President Ghani, like a coward, left his people behind.

All of this talk about Doha is immaterial. Don't take my word for that. That is exactly what the White House said.

The Doha agreement was immaterial to the President's political decision, which, by the way, was going to happen on September 11. What an insult to the victims' families of 9/11.

The fact is, Donald Trump left troops in Afghanistan after his advisers told him that the Doha agreement was being violated by the Taliban.

They didn't cut their ties to al-Qaida. They did hit our troops. As a result, Donald Trump kept 2,500 American troops in Afghanistan and 6,500 NATO troops.

They will tell you that wasn't sufficient. Don't take my word again. Take the word of his top military generals: Milley, McKenzie, and Miller.

Ask for investigations. What did they do when they were in charge?

They had one hearing and no investigation. You talk about political, to cover up the tracks of this administration's disastrous withdrawal.

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close. I have no further speakers and reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. First,

let me just say this because I heard this at the hearing the other day.

When we were in charge, we held the first hearing after the withdrawal for a Cabinet Secretary on September 21. Who was that witness? Tony Blinken. The administration sent several Cabinet officials to Congress to discuss the withdrawal. We held hearings with Members because our position was trying to work in a bipartisan way and trying to make sure that we were going to get to the facts and understand so that we would never have this situation again after 20 years.

What did we do? We had hearings with people from the Bush administration, from the Obama administration, and from the Trump administration to look at the entire 20-year period of time, not playing politics, not looking at a month or two because they all were interconnected. It wasn't about politics for us.

As clearly stated here, there was no delay. The administration was cooperative. The fact of the matter is, this Congress, the 118th Congress, doesn't end until December 31.

If it is about the facts, if it is about learning the lessons, the Secretary has already said he is willing to testify.

He didn't want to turn his back on his responsibility as the Secretary of State, where he is now in a meeting, unfortunately.

I know maybe some of my Republican colleagues don't want him to talk to President Zelenskyy about what is going on in Ukraine and Russia's invasion into Ukraine. That is what he is doing. Maybe some of my Republican colleagues don't want him to have that discussion.

Well, I think my side of the aisle wants him to have that discussion because that is his job; to have a discussion to try to have a cease-fire and return of hostages, to talk to our allies in the Indo-Pacific and NATO that is now stronger than ever because of Joe Biden. That is his job. That is what he is doing. Maybe some don't want him to do that.

Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York has 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN).

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, some say that we should have left Americans there for this or that reason or the Taliban are doing this or the Taliban are doing that.

They are saying that Biden should have left those Americans there to die at the hands of the 5,000 Taliban fighters that Donald Trump had released.

How many hundreds would have died if they had stayed there? I don't know. Once you put 5,000 fighting Taliban into Kabul, I think at that point, it is hard to insist on conditions.

Mr. McCaul. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, the first question in closing is the decision that had to be made because of what the Trump administration had done, was whether to withdraw, as Mr. SHERMAN has indicated, or to escalate or to stay or to try to bring in more troops. As the generals have testified, if we were going to stay, we were going to need more than the 2,500 that were there.

How long would we stay there?

How many more lives would we lose?

Because the fighting, the generals did say, would resume after the deadline. Yes, Joe Biden decided no more American lives are we going to lose. He made the right decision.

This resolution, as I have said all along, is nothing more than political theater designed to score cheap points rather than address the real issues at hand, the real issues.

It is a distortion of the facts and a disservice to the American people, a disservice to our servicemembers, a disservice to our diplomats, all of whom put their lives on the line during our 20-year war effort there, and their sacrifices should not be used as a political football.

We should be working on real solutions, supporting our Afghan allies, ensuring that we learn the right lessons, and providing accountability that is based on truth, not partisan narratives. There is time for us to still do that.

I urge my colleagues to reject this resolution. Reject it, but let's commit to the American people. Let's commit to those servicemembers and the Gold Star families who have lost their loved ones.

Let's commit to them that today, we are going to work together in a meaningful way that honors their sacrifice, that honors those who serve and uphold the values that we all stand for.

Let us commit to come with a real report, not a partisan one. We can do that. We can do that today. We can stand together today on behalf of the people of the United States of America and those great soldiers.

How do I know that we can do that?

Because the United States of America is the greatest country that this planet has ever seen. It is that when we do things together.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a partial minority staff report.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
Washington, DC, September 9, 2024.

DEAR DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

I am transmitting the attached memorandum prepared by Committee minority staff summarizing the findings of the Committee on Foreign Affairs' investigation in the 118th Congress into the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

I have long voiced my concerns about Republican attempts to politicize the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. In keeping with the partisan tenor of this investigation, Committee Republicans have indicated they will soon release a partisan, majority report



on the Afghanistan withdrawal. The Majority did not involve the Minority in this report, nor have they even provided a draft copy to us. This comes on the heels of former President Trump using a ceremony to honor 13 American servicemembers killed in an ISIS-K terrorist attack as a campaign event to call the Biden-Harris Administration culpable, though Republicans knew for months that the attack was not preventable and that, even though a witness told our Committee he thought he had the ISIS-K bomber in his sights, he did not. And it follows the Chairman's subpoena to Secretary of State Blinken this week compelling testimony Secretary Blinken has already provided to us, including as the first cabinet official to publicly testify about the withdrawal in September 2021. The majority has also threatened to subpoena National Security Advisor Sullivan after baselessly accusing him of misconduct and, for months, has cherry-picked witness testimony to exclude anything unhelpful to a predetermined, partisan narrative about the Afghanistan withdrawal.

The Republican majority has taken particular pains to avoid facts involving former President Trump—including his committing the United States to a full, date-specific withdrawal in a deal he negotiated with the Taliban that excluded the Afghan government or any reference to the rights of Afghan women and girls; his unilateral announcements to withdraw troops, often a surprise to many of his own senior officials, which undercut U.S. leverage because those announcements were divorced from Taliban compliance with the deal; and his forcing the Afghan government to release 5,000 Taliban fighters back to the battlefield before a final Taliban offensive ultimately took Kabul. When former President Trump took office, there were approximately 14,000 American troops in Afghanistan. Days before leaving office, the former President ordered a further reduction to 2,500. President Trump initiated a withdrawal that was irreversible without sending significantly more American troops to Afghanistan to face renewed combat with the Taliban. All witnesses who testified on this issue agreed that the United States would have faced renewed combat with the Taliban had we not continued the withdrawal. Rather than send more Americans to fight a war in Afghanistan, President Biden decided to end it.

Republicans' partisan attempts to garner headlines rather than acknowledge the full facts and substance of their investigation have only increased with the heat of an election season, and after recent public criticisms about the investigation from former majority staff. With the ascendance of Vice President Kamala Harris to the top of the Democratic presidential ticket, the GOP performance has reached a crescendo—Republicans now claim she was the architect of the U.S. withdrawal though she is referenced only three times in 3,288 pages of the Committee's interview transcripts.

American taxpayers have funded this Committee's oversight, and American people deserve the truth. We owe it to them to highlight the facts elicited in this investigation without undue spin and with respect for the seriousness of the subject and the witnesses who have voluntarily testified to us about it. If information we receive is hidden, twisted, or used as a political cudgel it will undermine the Committee's ability to undertake credible oversight going forward. This is why I pressed the Chairman during a November 2023 hearing to release all closed-door interview transcripts from this investigation—five of which remain unreleased—and why I am now transmitting the attached memorandum to complete the picture on what this investigation has yielded.

In the September 2021 Committee hearing I referenced with Secretary Blinken following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, I called to mind some numbers to help us find perspective on the work we were undertaking then and now:

800,000—the number of Americans who served with the U.S. military in Afghanistan since 2001.

2,461—the number of American military personnel who died in Afghanistan, including the 13 brave Americans who were killed by ISIS-K as they facilitated the evacuation of more than 120,000 people from Afghanistan over the course of 17 days.

66,000—the number of Afghan National Security Forces killed in the conflict.

47,245—the number of Afghan civilians killed since 2001.

And finally, 20—the number of years we sent our brave men and women to fight a war in Afghanistan, from which disentangling ourselves was never going to be easy.

It strikes me now as it did during that hearing that many of those critical of withdrawal effort simply have a fundamental objection to President Biden fulfilling his pledge to be the last Commander-in-Chief to preside over the war in Afghanistan. They are masking their displeasure with criticisms but have failed to offer feasible alternatives. We must continue to wrestle with these matters not to rewrite the past or assign partisan blame, but to identify lessons that can help us better fight and end wars in the future.

Sincerely,

GREGORY W. MEEKS,  
*Ranking Member.*

[From the House Foreign Affairs Committee,  
Sept. 9, 2024]

MINORITY STAFF MEMORANDUM ON THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION IN THE 118TH CONGRESS INTO THE UNITED STATES' WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For two decades after the heinous attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States military fought valiantly in Afghanistan to degrade Al Qaeda, decimate its leadership, and deny the use of Afghan territory to conduct terrorist operations against the United States. Over that same time, United States diplomats and development professionals worked assiduously to help the Afghan government and people establish good governance; respect human rights, particularly of women and girls; and foster independent media, civil society, and economic development. The United States spent approximately 2 trillion dollars in Afghanistan from 2001–2021. That expenditure reinforced—but could not substitute for—the work of millions of Afghans to push back against corrupt and violent actors and define their own future.

After achieving our core security objectives, the United States increasingly risked continuing its war in Afghanistan as an untenable, and unnecessary, end in itself. This risk spurred both former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden to take actions during their respective administrations to fully withdraw the U.S. military from Afghanistan. President Biden completed that objective and ended the United States' so-called “forever war” in Afghanistan.

During the course of the Committee's investigation into this U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, witness testimony reinforced—with remarkable consistency—the following chronology of facts:

Amidst a steady, multi-year surge in Taliban territorial gains across Afghanistan, the Trump Administration initiated a deal with the Taliban—signed in Doha in February 2020—that committed the United States to a full withdrawal of military personnel and contractors by May 1, 2021 and laid out brief conditions to which both sides agreed in order to complete the withdrawal. The deal required the Taliban to cease threatening the security of the United States or its allies, but nothing in it required the Taliban to respect the rights of women and girls or the Afghan constitution. The agreement also compelled the Afghan government—itsself not a party to the deal—to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners, which fundamentally altered the power balance in the country.

President Trump ordered a drawdown to 8,600 U.S. troops within 135 days of the signing of the so-called “Doha Deal,” as the agreement stipulated. He then unilaterally ordered further drawdowns—to 4,500 troops by September 2020 and, after tweeting on October 7, 2020 his intent to have all U.S. troops home by Christmas, to 2,500 troops by January 2021—despite the Taliban's lack of full compliance with the Doha Deal. Trump's own lead negotiator and U.S. diplomatic and military personnel testified to their uncertainty and surprise around these unilateral troop drawdowns and a lack of any commensurate interagency withdrawal planning process.

Upon taking office on January 20, 2021 after a delayed presidential transition, President Biden ordered a comprehensive interagency review of Afghanistan policy to determine whether and how to complete the U.S. troop withdrawal set into motion by his predecessor. Top U.S. military officials recommended keeping a small force of at least 2,500 troops in country until an indefinite time when conditions on the ground might improve, but U.S. civilian and military officials agreed that the Taliban would resume attacks on U.S. forces—the one Doha Deal term the Taliban had largely respected—if the withdrawal stopped or reversed. On April 14, President Biden announced the United States would complete its troop withdrawal by September 11, 2021.

In doing so, President Biden directed his Administration to undertake deliberate withdrawal preparations, refine counterterrorism efforts to prevent the reemergence of threats, and determine the nature of a continued U.S. diplomatic presence in Afghanistan—all of which, according to witnesses, agencies subsequently did. Throughout 2021, the Biden Administration dramatically accelerated processing of Afghan Special Immigrant Visas (SIV), which had come to a virtual halt by the end of the Trump Administration. The Biden Administration also launched civilian evacuation flights in July 2021 under Operation Allies Refuge to facilitate departures of SIV applicants wanting to leave. State Department officials noted that, despite more than 19 specific warnings from March–August 2021 telling American citizens to leave Afghanistan and offers to help, including financial assistance for plane tickets, many Americans in Afghanistan were uncertain or unwilling to leave, and that there was no mechanism to track their whereabouts if they did not volunteer that information.

Throughout late spring and summer of 2021, the Taliban launched attacks on several provincial capitals in Afghanistan, which fell in what U.S. officials described as unexpectedly rapid succession as Afghan security forces surrendered or fled. On August 15, the U.S. Chargé d' Affaires in Kabul, in line with standard operating procedure and plans in place, asked the Department of Defense to

initiate a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) and moved U.S. embassy operations to the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. Senior military officials had pressed for closing the U.S. embassy and starting a NEO sooner, but State Department leadership emphasized the risk these actions could have on U.S. interests and an already precarious Afghan government. Proving State Department officials' point, on the same day the Department initiated the NEO, Afghan president Ashraf Ghani fled the country despite earlier pledges he would not. His departure triggered the collapse of the Afghan government and security services.

The acute shift in power in Kabul prompted a chaotic security situation and spike in demand from Afghan allies, SIV applicants, and Americans living in Afghanistan to leave. From August 15–31, 2021, U.S. military and diplomatic personnel worked shoulder-to-shoulder during the NEO to contact Americans and Afghan partners seeking to leave, negotiate with the Taliban on safe passage through territory it controlled, and facilitate the departure of more than 120,000 people. Consular processing by State Department officials occurred virtually nonstop throughout—unless the U.S. military closed the gates for security reasons—and resumed within minutes of the August 26 ISIS-K bombing at Abbey Gate that tragically killed 13 U.S. servicemembers and approximately 170 Afghans. By the early hours of August 31, the Biden Administration had facilitated the largest humanitarian airlift in U.S. history and ended the United States' longest war.

Key findings underpinning this chronological narrative, the number of witnesses who testified to these facts, and illustrative examples of their testimony are included in this memorandum, along with further background on the investigation itself. But it is important to underscore at the outset what this factual narrative yielded in this investigation is *not*. First, it is not new—it comports with what Administration officials, the State Department's own After-Action Review on Afghanistan (AAR), and extensive press reporting have already said repeatedly over years about the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. This narrative is also not without points of debate—such as over whether to retain a small force in Afghanistan, whether U.S. analysts should have better anticipated the fall of the Afghan government and rapid speed of the Taliban's takeover, or the precise timing of shifting from civilian-led evacuation flights to a NEO—but no thorough policy process would be, nor do any Commander-in-Chief's decisions satisfy everyone. Finally, since it places the start of the withdrawal in the Trump Administration, this narrative is not a neat political tool with which to assail the Biden Administration.

As such, Committee Republicans have regrettably—and repeatedly—attempted to downplay or twist the facts they have heard in their own investigation, seeking instead to perpetuate a narrative of “the Biden-Harris withdrawal” as an “unmitigated disaster of epic proportions” for which the current Administration is singularly responsible. These attempts lack intellectual rigor and do not comport with the facts gleaned from witness testimony. But the testimony speaks for itself—and helps form a critical body of knowledge, along with the findings and recommendations in the State Department's After-Action Review and the ongoing work of the Congressionally-mandated Afghanistan War Commission, to help ensure that the United States can effectively prosecute—and responsibly end—wars in support of our national interests.

#### INVESTIGATION BACKGROUND

In a January 12, 2023 letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul signaled his intent to investigate what he described as the Biden Administration's “catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan” in the 118th Congress and issued a request for extensive documents and information on the withdrawal, the bulk of which was keyed to a timeframe beginning in January 2021. On January 18, 2023, the State Department confirmed in writing its intent to cooperate with the Chairman's investigation and to produce responsive documents and information to the Committee.

The Department subsequently made 59 separate document productions to the Committee, totaling 19,778 pages of both unclassified and classified content. The productions include underlying files to the Department's own Afghanistan After Action Review (AAR). After Chairman McCaul threatened to hold Secretary Blinken in contempt, the Department also made available to Committee members, *in camera*, a July 2021 Afghanistan dissent channel cable in what it characterized as an extraordinary accommodation, given the internal and carefully regulated nature of the Department's dissent channel to protect dissent cable drafters.

In addition, the Chairman requested closed-door transcribed interviews (TIs) with multiple current and former State Department officials—these requests comprised both career officials and Biden Administration political appointees, but only one non-career political appointee from the Trump Administration (Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad) who President Biden retained in his role as Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation. The Department subsequently facilitated transcribed interviews with all of these individuals. Separately, one former State Department officer (Samuel Aronson) agreed directly to be interviewed in response to a request from the Chairman. Additionally, one former U.S. military official (General Austin “Scott” Miller) and one former White House official (Jen Psaki) sat for transcribed interviews requested by the Chairman without obstruction from the current Administration.

Since June 2023, bipartisan Committee staff conducted a total of 18 TIs in unclassified and classified settings. The TIs have often lasted as long as 10 hours, spanning multiple issue areas. Department staff and, in some instances, private counsels have participated in the TIs per the wishes of the interviewee, all of whom have appeared voluntarily. Interviewees by title relevant to the withdrawal and/or evacuation and date of interview are below:

Former Deputy to Ambassador John Bass in Kabul, James (“Jim”) DeHart, June 16, 2023.

Former Acting Chief of Staff to Ambassador Carol Perez, Jonathan Mennuti, July 20, 2023.

Former Consular Affairs Lead in Kabul, Jayne Howell, July 28, 2023.

Former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Afghanistan, Mark Evans, August 23, 2023.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, this is a link to the full report summarizing the findings of the Committee on Foreign Affairs' investigation in the 118th Congress into the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

[https://democrats-foreignaffairs.house.gov/cache/files/a/0/a05d09c4\\_4b27-4382\\_9818\\_0227a0156896/70CCFC2998DF868322F60057FF59079D.hfac-democratic-staff-memo-afghanistan-investigation-final-for-posting.pdf](https://democrats-foreignaffairs.house.gov/cache/files/a/0/a05d09c4_4b27-4382_9818_0227a0156896/70CCFC2998DF868322F60057FF59079D.hfac-democratic-staff-memo-afghanistan-investigation-final-for-posting.pdf).

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. McCaul. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time. Let me just say to my good friend for whom I have tremendous respect, we work together on many bipartisan things, and when we don't agree, we do so civilly. However, I cannot disagree with you more than I do today.

One of the byproducts of Bagram falling is 7,000 ISIS were released from Bagram prisons. Some of them have found their way into the United States.

What happened in Afghanistan is a tragedy, one of the worst foreign policy failures in our Nation's history.

Who could ever forget the harrowing images of Afghans falling off the planes and babies being flung over barbed wire in a desperate attempt by mothers to save their children and escape Afghanistan under Taliban rule?

The women that Mr. Wilson referred to, left behind along with American citizens, are now enslaved under Taliban Sharia law. We are the United States of America. You can't tell me we couldn't have safely evacuated U.S. personnel, Americans, and our brave Afghan allies.

My report shows the administration had the information and the opportunity to do so, but every step of the way, they chose political optics over the safety of Americans. Their deadly and chaotic withdrawal started a chain of events that have led to a world on fire.

We are witnessing the largest land invasion in Europe since World War II with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the CCP has become emboldened and more belligerent in their aggression toward Taiwan, and there is a war raging in the Middle East. Mr. Speaker, with the Ayatollah now rearing his ugly head.

That didn't happen by accident. It happened by design, and it started with the fall of Afghanistan. When you project weakness on the world stage, this is what you get: a world on fire inviting aggression from our adversaries.

Our U.S. national security is degraded, America's credibility on the world stage is damaged, and the moral injury to the American veterans and servicemembers is a stain, an ugly stain, on this administration's legacy.

□ 1600

I close, Mr. Speaker, with a reminder of the consequences of the actions of those named in this resolution, and it is the 13 heroic U.S. servicemembers who made the ultimate sacrifice. I have met with their loved ones, and they live with pain every single day. They wake up to it every single day.

These servicemembers paid with their lives because of this administration's failure on August 26, 2021, and I, for one, in this Chamber, in this House, say I am sorry for what your government did to you.

In their honor, I will read their names:

Marine Lance Corporal David Lee Espinoza



Marine Sergeant Nicole Gee  
Marine Staff Sergeant Taylor Hoover  
Army Staff Sergeant Ryan Christian  
Knauss

Marine Corporal Hunter Lopez  
Marine Lance Corporal Rylee McCol-  
lum

Marine Lance Corporal Dylan Merola  
Marine Lance Corporal Kareem  
Nikoui

Marine Sergeant Johanny Rosario  
Pichardo

Marine Corporal Humberto Sanchez  
Marine Lance Corporal Jared  
Schmitz

Navy Corpsman Maxton Soviak  
Marine Corporal Daegan William-  
Tyeler Page

Nothing will bring their lives back.  
Nothing will bring these children back  
to their parents, but we can hold those  
responsible accountable, and that is  
what this resolution does.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to  
support it, and I yield back the balance  
of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr.  
OBERNOLTE). All time for debate has ex-  
pired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1486,  
the previous question is ordered on the  
resolution and the preamble.

The question is on adoption of the  
resolution.

The question was taken; and the  
Speaker pro tempore announced that  
the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, on that I  
demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursu-  
ant to clause 8 of rule XX, further pro-  
ceedings on this question are post-  
poned.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pro-  
ceedings will now resume on motions  
to suspend the rules previously post-  
poned. Votes will be taken in the fol-  
lowing order:

Senate amendment to H.R. 6513; and  
H.R. 9747.

The first electronic vote will be con-  
ducted as a 15-minute vote. Pursuant  
to clause 9 of rule XX, the remaining  
electronic vote will be conducted as a  
5-minute vote.

#### CONFIRMATION OF CONGRES- SIONAL OBSERVER ACCESS ACT OF 2023

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The un-  
finished business is the vote on the mo-  
tion to suspend the rules and concur in  
the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R.  
6513) to amend the Help America Vote  
Act of 2002 to confirm the requirement  
that States allow access to designated  
congressional election observers to ob-  
serve the election administration proce-  
dures in congressional elections, on  
which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The  
question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr.  
STEL) that the House suspend the  
rules and concur in the Senate amend-  
ment.

The vote was taken by electronic de-  
vice, and there were—yeas 413, nays 1,  
not voting 18, as follows:

[Roll No. 449]

YEAS—413

Adams  
Aderholt  
Aguilar  
Alford  
Allen  
Allred  
Amo  
Amodei  
Armstrong  
Arrington  
Auchincloss  
Babin  
Baird  
Balderson  
Balint  
Banks  
Barr  
Barragán  
Bean (FL)  
Beatty  
Bentz  
Bera  
Bergman  
Beyer  
Bice  
Biggs  
Bilirakis  
Bishop (GA)  
Bishop (NC)  
Blumenauer  
Boebert  
Bonamici  
Bost  
Boyle (PA)  
Brecht  
Brown  
Brownley  
Buchanan  
Bucshon  
Budzinski  
Burchett  
Burgess  
Burlison  
Bush  
Calvert  
Cammack  
Caraveo  
Carbajal  
Cárdenas  
Carey  
Carl  
Carson  
Carter (GA)  
Carter (LA)  
Carter (TX)  
Cartwright  
Casar  
Case  
Casten  
Castro (FL)  
Castro (TX)  
Chavez-DeRemer  
Cherfilus-  
McCormick  
Chu  
Ciscomani  
Clark (MA)  
Clarke (NY)  
Cleaver  
Cline  
Cloud  
Clyburn  
Clyde  
Cohen  
Cole  
Collins  
Comer  
Connolly  
Correa  
Costa  
Courtney  
Craig  
Crane  
Crawford  
Crenshaw  
Crockett  
Crow

Cuellar  
Curtis  
D'Esposito  
Davids (KS)  
Davidson  
Davis (IL)  
Davis (NC)  
De La Cruz  
Dean (PA)  
DeGette  
DeLauro  
DeBene  
Deluzio  
DeSaulnier  
Diaz-Balart  
Dingell  
Doggett  
Donalds  
Duarte  
Duncan  
Dunn (FL)  
Edwards  
Ellzey  
Emmer  
Escobar  
Eshoo  
Españillat  
Estes  
Ezell  
Fallon  
Feenstra  
Finstad  
Fischbach  
Fitzgerald  
Fitzpatrick  
Fleischmann  
Fletcher  
Flood  
Fong  
Foster  
Foushee  
Foxy  
Frankel, Lois  
Franklin, Scott  
Frost  
Fry  
Fulcher  
Gaetz  
Gallego  
Garamendi  
Garbarino  
Garcia (IL)  
Garcia (TX)  
Garcia, Mike  
Garcia, Robert  
Gimenez  
Golden (ME)  
Goldman (NY)  
Gomez  
Gonzales, Tony  
Gonzalez, V.  
Good (VA)  
Gooden (TX)  
Gosar  
Gottheimer  
Graves (LA)  
Graves (MO)  
Green (TN)  
Green, Al (TX)  
Greene (GA)  
Griffith  
Grothman  
Guest  
Guthrie  
Hageman  
Harder (CA)  
Harris  
Harshbarger  
Hayes  
Hern  
Higgins (LA)  
Hill  
Himes  
Hinson  
Horsford  
Houchin  
Houlahan

Hoyer  
Hoyle (OR)  
Hudson  
Huizenga  
Hunt  
Issa  
Ivey  
Jackson (IL)  
Jackson (NC)  
Jackson (TX)  
Jacobs  
James  
Jeffries  
Johnson (GA)  
Johnson (LA)  
Johnson (SD)  
Jordan  
Joyce (OH)  
Joyce (PA)  
Kamlager-Dove  
Kaptur  
Kean (NJ)  
Keating  
Kelly (IL)  
Kelly (MS)  
Kelly (PA)  
Kennedy  
Khanna  
Kildee  
Kiley  
Kilmer  
Kim (CA)  
Kim (NJ)  
Krishnamoorthi  
Kuster  
Kustoff  
LaHood  
LaLota  
LaMalfa  
Lamborn  
Landsman  
Langworthy  
Larsen (WA)  
Larson (CT)  
Latta  
LaTurner  
Lawler  
Lee (CA)  
Lee (FL)  
Lee (NV)  
Lee (PA)  
Leger Fernandez  
Lesko  
Letlow  
Levin  
Lieu  
Lofgren  
Lopez  
Loudermilk  
Lucas  
Luetkemeyer  
Luna  
Luttrell  
Lynch  
Mace  
Magaziner  
Malliotakis  
Maloy  
Mann  
Manning  
Massie  
Mast  
Matsui  
McBath  
McCaul  
McClain  
McClellan  
McClintock  
McCollum  
McCormick  
McGarvey  
McGovern  
McHenry  
McIver  
Meeks  
Menendez  
Meng

Meuser  
Mfume  
Miller (IL)  
Miller (OH)  
Miller (WV)  
Miller-Meeks  
Mills  
Molinaro  
Moolenaar  
Mooney  
Moore (AL)  
Moore (UT)  
Moore (WI)  
Moran  
Morelle  
Moskowitz  
Moulton  
Mrvan  
Mullin  
Murphy  
Nadler  
Napolitano  
Neal  
Neguse  
Newhouse  
Nickel  
Norcross  
Norman  
Nunn (IA)  
Obermole  
Ocasio-Cortez  
Ogles  
Omar  
Owens  
Pallone  
Palmer  
Panetta  
Pappas  
Pelosi  
Peltola  
Pence  
Perez  
Perry  
Peters  
Pettersen  
Pfluger  
Phillips  
Pingree  
Pocan  
Porter  
Posey  
Pressley

Quigley  
Ramirez  
Raskin  
Reschenthaler  
Rodgers (WA)  
Rogers (KY)  
Rose  
Ross  
Rouzer  
Roy  
Ruiz  
Rulli  
Ruppersberger  
Rutherford  
Ryan  
Salazar  
Salinas  
Sánchez  
Sarbanes  
Scalise  
Scanlon  
Schakowsky  
Schiff  
Schneider  
Scholten  
Schrier  
Schweikert  
Scott (VA)  
Scott, Austin  
Scott, David  
Self  
Sessions  
Sewell  
Sherman  
Sherrill  
Simpson  
Slotkin  
Smith (MO)  
Smith (NE)  
Smith (NJ)  
Smith (WA)  
Sorensen  
Soto  
Spanberger  
Spartz  
Stansbury  
Stanton  
Staubert  
Steel  
Stefanik  
Stell  
Stevens

Strickland  
Strong  
Suozi  
Swalwell  
Sykes  
Takano  
Tenney  
Thanedar  
Thompson (CA)  
Thompson (MS)  
Thompson (PA)  
Tiffany  
Timmons  
Titus  
Tlaib  
Tokuda  
Tonko  
Torres (CA)  
Torres (NY)  
Trahan  
Trone  
Turner  
Underwood  
Valadao  
Van Drew  
Van Dyne  
Van Orden  
Vargas  
Vasquez  
Velázquez  
Wagner  
Walberg  
Waltz  
Wasserman  
Schultz  
Waters  
Watson Coleman  
Webster (FL)  
Wenstrup  
Westerman  
Wexton  
Wild  
Williams (GA)  
Williams (NY)  
Williams (TX)  
Wilson (FL)  
Wilson (SC)  
Womack  
Yakym  
Zinke

NAYS—1

Rosendale

NOT VOTING—18

Bacon	Granger	Rogers (AL)
Blunt Rochester	Grijalva	Smucker
Bowman	Huffman	Steube
DesJarlais	Jayapal	Veasey
Evans	Kiggans (VA)	Weber (TX)
Ferguson	Nehls	Wittman

□ 1624

So (two-thirds being in the affirma-  
tive) the rules were suspended and the  
Senate amendment was concurred in.

The result of the vote was announced  
as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on  
the table.

#### CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2025

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursu-  
ant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfin-  
ished business is the vote on the mo-  
tion to suspend the rules and pass the  
bill (H.R. 9747) making continuing ap-  
propriations and extensions for fiscal  
year 2025, and for other purposes, on  
which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The  
question is on the motion offered by  
the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr.  
COLE) that the House suspend the rules  
and pass the bill.

This is a 5-minute vote