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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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June 13, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

I have written to you separately in a classified letter (transmitted June 8, 2023) pointing out multiple discrepancies in the classified version of the After Action Review (“AAR”) concerning the botched and deadly withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> My classified letter also addresses your associated personal reflections (attached as a classified memorandum to the AAR). Sadly, your memorandum does not accept responsibility, and propounds outright untruths, related to the Biden Administration’s actions and inactions in failing to secure a safe and orderly withdrawal of troops and related Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (“NEO”).

While the fog of war is likely to result in mistakes and even tragedy, an honest appraisal of the Biden Administration’s involvement in implementing the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan has still not occurred. Towards this objective, it is incumbent on the Committee and its oversight responsibilities to determine what went wrong and how such a catastrophe can be avoided in the future.

To this end, I will await your response to my questions in the classified letter. Moreover, the Department’s AAR produced to the House omitted significant portions included in its Table of Contents, including all endnotes and other appendices to the report. Additionally, significant redaction of material in the classified report is not explained. The Committee relies upon transparency in conducting oversight for the American people, so I hope exclusion of associated

<sup>1</sup> Meghann Myers, *White House releases after-action reviews on Afghanistan withdrawal*, THE MILITARY TIMES, Apr. 6, 2023.

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documents with the AAR was unintentional and that the Committee can receive an appropriately un-redacted version. Please produce all documents, no later than July 7, 2023, associated with the AAR as listed in the report's Table of Contents.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. The Committee on Armed Services, under Rule X, clause 1 of the Rules of the House of Representatives (House Rules), maintains oversight jurisdiction over the Department of Defense generally. Moreover, under the House Rules, the Committee on Armed Services derives its authority to conduct oversight from, among other things, clause 2(b)(1) of Rule X (relating to general oversight responsibilities), clause 3(b) of Rule X (relating to special oversight functions), and clause 1(b) of rule XI (relating to investigations and studies).

To arrange delivery of documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Ryan Breitenbach of the Committee on Armed Services Majority Staff.

Sincerely,



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Mike Rogers  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services

cc: The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services