

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We respectfully write to urge you to uphold the May 1, 2021 deadline for withdrawal of all remaining U.S. troops from Afghanistan. We support your administration's pledge to advance a negotiated end to this war, and we believe that meeting the May 1 deadline is vital to this effort. We believe that continued diplomatic engagement with all parties to the Afghanistan conflict, including women and civil society groups, as well as carefully tailored assistance programs, are essential to the success of the peace process. But it is long past time for the United States to end its military role in a complex conflict that predates our initial invasion two decades ago.

We agree with the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance your White House released in early March, which states, “[t]he United States should not, and will not, engage in ‘forever wars’ that have cost thousands of lives and trillions of dollars.” This reflects a promise you made as a candidate, in response to a question on the war in Afghanistan, to “not put our women and men in harm’s way to try to solve every single problem in the world by use of force.”¹

Over a year has passed without a single U.S. combat death in Afghanistan, largely due to an agreement the Trump Administration signed with the Taliban on February 29, 2020. From 2018 to 2019, 30 Americans were killed in combat in Afghanistan and 306 were wounded in action.² This trend was on track to continue last year with four combat deaths and 14 service members wounded in action prior to the signing of the agreement.

As the Defense Intelligence Agency recently noted, “[the] Taliban is very likely prepared to resume its campaign of violence against U.S. and coalition targets if it perceives that coalition forces have stalled or reversed course on the agreed-upon withdrawal.”³ An attack on U.S. forces would most likely draw the United States back deeper into the conflict.

There are many ways that your administration can support progress toward a political settlement and transitional justice efforts without committing the U.S. military to continue to be a party to the conflict.

¹ "Face the Nation," [CBS News](#), February 23, 2020.

² U.S. Military Casualties - Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) Casualty Summary by Month and Service https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/report_ofs_month.xhtml

³ Lead Inspector General for Operation Freedom's Sentinel, "[Quarterly Report to the United States Congress](#)," Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2020.

Your team began this process in February, when you signed an executive order to address delays in the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program that offers refuge to Afghans who served alongside U.S. service members.⁴ In addition, the United States can and should continue proactive diplomacy. Convening a dialogue with Afghanistan's neighbors and facilitating inclusive peace talks between all Afghan stakeholders will contribute to a multilateral effort to promote a prosperous Afghanistan. Additionally, continued aid to Afghanistan's military and civilian institutions will give Afghans the best chance at securing their own future. These and other efforts can and should move forward without the continued deployment of U.S. troops.

We must also note United States forces are present in Afghanistan pursuant to an Authorization for the Use of Military Force enacted twenty years ago this year. At the time, Congress did not conceive that this authorization would sanction an endless military commitment. Finally bringing this war to an end will help restore the founders' vision of using military force only with the consent of their elected representatives.

The United States has agreed to leave Afghanistan militarily in less than 50 days. We believe that a decision to extend the military mission beyond the withdrawal deadline of May 1 will put U.S. troops at increased and unnecessary risk and fail to advance the goals of peace and justice in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Ken Buck
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Kamala Harris, Vice President
The Honorable Anthony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, U.S. Department of State
The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III, Secretary of Defense, U.S. Department of Defense

⁴ White House, [Executive Order on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration](#), February 4, 2021.