



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on September 9, 2024

“Willful Blindness”: GOP Releases Report on Biden’s Afghanistan Withdrawal

A new report on the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, released Monday, provides a critical assessment of the Biden administration’s decision making, highlighting significant flaws in both the planning and execution of the exit. The report paints a stark picture of how the situation was handled, raising concerns about leadership throughout the process.

[The 353-page report](#), titled “Willful Blindness: An Assessment of the Biden-Harris Administration’s Withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Chaos that Followed,” authored by Republicans on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, claims Biden’s determination to withdraw overrode critical advice from military and national security advisors, and led to a disorganized and deadly evacuation.



U.S. Department of Defense

According to the press release on the publication:

Our investigation reveals the Biden-Harris administration had the information and opportunity to take necessary steps to plan for the inevitable collapse of the Afghan government, so we could safely evacuate U.S. personnel, American citizens, green card holders, and our brave Afghan allies.

The report particularly focuses on the administration’s failure to anticipate the rapid collapse of Kabul and the resulting chaos, claiming that the administration delayed evacuation plans out of fear of how the optics might look to the international community.

Methodology

Over the course of its three-year investigation, the committee held eight congressional hearings and roundtables with witnesses from the White House, Department of State, and Department of Defense (DOD). Additionally, several relevant officials were interviewed behind closed doors. The report highlights that, despite being accountable to Congress, these government agencies were often reluctant and uncooperative in their compliance.

The committee also reviewed 20,000 pages of documents related to the withdrawal, which were produced by the State Department following two threats of subpoenas directed at Secretary Antony Blinken.



Key Findings

The report outlines several critical failures by the Biden-Harris administration during the Afghanistan withdrawal:

Determined Withdrawal. The Biden-Harris administration was unwavering in its decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, regardless of the conditions of the Doha Agreement (signed by the Trump administration and the Taliban in 2020) or objections from the Afghan government and NATO allies. The decision to withdraw unilaterally showed a clear disregard for the evolving situation on the ground.

Optics Over Security. The administration prioritized the appearance of the withdrawal over the safety of U.S. personnel. By delaying the noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) until after the Taliban entered Kabul, they failed to plan for all contingencies, creating a dangerous environment.

Failure to Protect Personnel. The administration's delay in ordering the NEO left U.S. personnel vulnerable. This resulted in the tragic loss of 13 service members during the August 26, 2021 terrorist attack — the deadliest day for U.S. forces in Afghanistan since 2012.

National Security Degradation. The withdrawal allowed Afghanistan to once again become “a haven for terrorists” from groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS-K. America's global credibility was damaged, as Afghan allies were abandoned to face Taliban reprisals. Veterans and those still serving were also harmed.

“Misinformation Campaign.” Administration officials — even in the Oval Office — misled and “[directly lied](#)” to the American people throughout the withdrawal. National Security Council officials and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan were identified as key sources of misinformation during the process.

Democrats' Response

The White House condemned the report, accusing House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Texas) of bias and misrepresentation.

“Chairman McCaul's latest partisan report shows that it is based on cherry-picked facts, inaccurate characterizations, and pre-existing biases,” said White House spokeswoman Sharon Yang, quoted by [The Hill](#). She defended Biden's decision to end the war, highlighting the difficult choice between ramping up a war with a strengthened Taliban or withdrawing after 20 years of fighting.

Yang emphasized that President Biden's decision followed the framework set up by the Trump administration in the Doha Agreement.

Similarly, the committee's ranking member, Gregory Meeks (D-N.Y.), criticized Republicans for “politicizing” the Afghanistan withdrawal and downplaying the role of former President Trump in negotiating the deal.

He also noted that the recent emphasis on Vice President Harris represents an escalation of these efforts. In a [minority report](#) issued alongside the GOP's findings, Meeks pointed out that with Vice President Kamala Harris now leading 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.”

While back in April 2021 Harris [claimed](#) she was “the last person in the room” before President Biden made the final decision to proceed with the withdrawal, various sources suggest that she played a



limited role in shaping the strategy or managing the withdrawal process itself.

Timeline of the Withdrawal

The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan began in April 2021, when President [Joe Biden announced](#) that all American forces would be withdrawn by September 11, 2021, extending the May 1 deadline set by the Doha accord under the Trump administration. The withdrawal officially commenced on May 1, with the pace initially progressing steadily. On July 2 U.S. forces quietly vacated Bagram Air Base, leaving Afghan forces to defend the country. The base had an unmatched significance, serving “not only as the nerve center for U.S. and NATO operations, but also as a vital counterterrorism base for the region,” per the report.

By early August, the Taliban had rapidly advanced, capturing key provincial capitals. On August 15, the Taliban [entered Kabul](#), the Afghan government collapsed, and President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. The U.S. hastily evacuated its embassy, leading to chaos at Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA). A formal noncombatant evacuation operation was ordered on the same day, but the situation quickly became dire as thousands of Afghan civilians and U.S. allies gathered at the airport, seeking to flee.

From August 16 to August 31, U.S. forces scrambled to evacuate American citizens, Afghan allies, and other vulnerable individuals. On August 26, a suicide bombing at Abbey Gate near HKIA, carried out by ISIS-K, killed 13 U.S. service members and at least 170 Afghans. On August 30, the final U.S. military flight departed from Kabul, officially ending America’s nearly 20-year involvement in Afghanistan. Despite the large-scale evacuation, many Afghan allies and others at risk were left behind. By September 1, 2021, Afghanistan was under full Taliban control.

Left Behind

Following the hectic withdrawal, the Biden administration left approximately \$7.1 billion worth of defense articles and equipment in Afghanistan. This included military vehicles, aircraft, weaponry, and other equipment that had been provided to Afghan security forces over the years.



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