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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

January 25, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write to request that the State Department immediately provide Congress with additional information on the safety and security of U.S. diplomatic personnel in Venezuela.

While I support the administration's decision to join more than 20 countries in the hemisphere and beyond in recognizing Venezuelan National Assembly President Juan Guaidó as the Interim President of Venezuela, I remain concerned about Nicolás Maduro's order to expel U.S. diplomats.

Although there are media reports suggesting that some U.S. personnel in Caracas have been ordered to depart, it is unacceptable that the U.S. Congress has not been notified. As it is my understanding that some personnel will remain at U.S. Embassy Caracas, I am deeply concerned about troubling statements made by members of Maduro's inner circle and the implications for our diplomats.

Mr. Padrino-Lopez, as Maduro's Minister of Defense and de facto head of Venezuela's military, said on local media that Mr. Guaidó's "criminal plan reached dangerous levels" and that [Mr. Guaidó's] administration is a "parallel de facto government." Prior to Mr. Padrino-Lopez' statement, eight Venezuelan generals who command strategic regions in the country affirmed their "absolute loyalty and subordination" to Maduro.

Additionally, Mr. Diosdado Cabello, president of Venezuela's illegitimate National Constituent Assembly and one of Maduro's closest allies, has publicly threatened to cut off basic services for American diplomats, including electricity and gas. The current situation thus presents potential risk for U.S. diplomats stationed in Venezuela.

The security of our diplomats abroad is of utmost importance. To that end, I ask that the State Department respond in writing to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the following questions:

1. How many U.S. personnel, including family members, are stationed at the U.S. Embassy in Caracas?

2. What is your plan to ensure the safety of U.S. diplomats in Venezuela?
3. In the event that there is public unrest and/or harassment of remaining U.S. diplomats, do you have contingency plans to ensure the safety of U.S. diplomats in Venezuela?
4. Do you have contingency plans, if necessary, to ensure a safe exit of American diplomats from Venezuela?
5. Is there a plan, if necessary, for the evacuation of U.S. citizens from Venezuela?
6. What is the current state of interagency coordination across the U.S. government on planning for Embassy security and evacuation scenarios?
7. How do you plan to provide basic necessities to U.S. diplomats in Venezuela, in the event that the Maduro regime attempts to deny them access?

Thank you for your attention to this letter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
Ranking Member