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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

October 13, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write regarding the ongoing anomalous health incidents (AHIs) affecting State Department and other U.S. personnel and their family members around the world. We are extremely alarmed that reports of these incidents continue to grow. It is clear that this threat continues to target U.S. diplomats and related personnel, and reflects a significant, unmitigated threat to our national security. We believe this threat deserves the highest level of attention from the State Department, and remain concerned that the State Department is not treating this crisis with the requisite senior-level attention that it requires. Further, while there has been progress, we continue to hear concerns that the Department is not sufficiently communicating with or responding to diplomats who have been injured from these attacks. We are also concerned that the Department is insufficiently engaged in interagency efforts to find the cause of these attacks, identify those responsible, and develop a plan to hold them accountable.

We urge you to immediately announce a successor to Ambassador Spratlen to lead the Department's Health Incident Response Task Force. Critically, this post must be a senior-level official that reports directly to you. It is incumbent that this individual has the experience to engage effectively with affected individuals and with the interagency. As you know, pending bipartisan legislation in the Senate would require the Secretary to designate an agency coordinator for AHIs who reports directly to you. We ask that you take this step now to demonstrate that the State Department does take this matter seriously, and is coordinating an appropriate agency-level response.

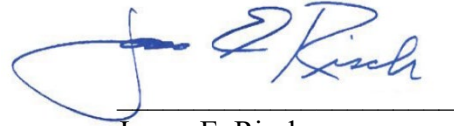
We also welcome President Biden's recent action to sign the HAVANA Act into law. This law reflects Congress' concern that affected individuals are facing too many hurdles to receiving treatment and benefits. We urge you to make swift implementation of the HAVANA Act a top priority. Many victims have waited for this legislation to pass in order to receive access to much needed financial and medical support. The President's signature and the bipartisan support behind the law sends the unambiguous message that all affected individuals must have access to benefits and financial support. We ask for your expeditious implementation of these provisions to ensure victims of these attacks are receiving equitable access to care and treatment. We owe it to our diplomats to exhaust every effort to try and guarantee a full recovery.

We wish to support the State Department and U.S. personnel through every means possible, and to support the Department in effectively addressing this national security threat. We look forward to receiving your response, and to your heightened engagement on this issue.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



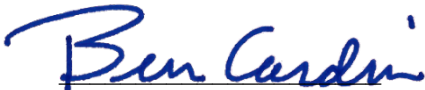
James E. Risch
Ranking Member



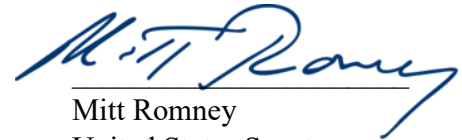
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