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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

March 19, 2019

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

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I am writing to request that Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad brief the Senate as soon as possible on the U.S. diplomatic strategy for Afghanistan reconciliation and the details of his negotiations with the Taliban. Ambassador Khalilzad was appointed on September 4, 2018, but has yet to make himself available to brief Congress on his efforts.

Ambassador Khalilzad's March 13 tweets from Doha on the framework of U.S.-Taliban talks confirm agreement has been reached on key elements of the negotiations, including counter-terrorism assurances, troop withdrawal, intra-Afghan dialogue, and a comprehensive ceasefire. Before this process goes further, members of Congress deserve to be briefed on the details of the draft agreement that has been reached and the Administration's desired end goals for Afghan reconciliation.

Despite high-level bipartisan interest in the future of U.S. engagement in Afghanistan, Congress has received little information on the negotiation process. I urge you to make Ambassador Khalilzad available to brief before April 15, 2019. In the meantime, I request a written response on the following questions:

1. What are the details of the draft agreement on troop withdrawals, including the proposed timeline for withdrawal? Is the draft agreement written down? Will you share a copy of the draft agreement with the Senate?
2. What are the guarantees that the Taliban will honor counter-terrorism assurances and ensure that it and other militant groups operating in Afghanistan will not use the country as a base to organize and launch terror attacks on the United States and its allies?
3. I am very concerned that the Afghan government's exclusion from the Doha talks will significantly diminish the possibility for a sustainable and durable peace agreement. The United States has recognized the government of Afghanistan as the legitimate

representative of the Afghan people, who have borne the greatest brunt of this war. How will the current peace process specifically bring the government into direct negotiation with the Taliban? If a schedule for U.S. troop withdrawal has been agreed to in draft form, what leverage does the Afghan government have to elicit concessions from the Taliban on intra-Afghan issues?

4. The Taliban have a regressive interpretation of women's rights. What are the levers to preserve the Afghan constitutional provisions protecting women's human rights if there is already a draft agreement on troop withdrawal without guarantees put in place for human rights and democratic governance?

I look forward to a briefing from Ambassador Khalilzad before April 15, 2019.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
Ranking Member