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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

March 18, 2020

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

Secretary Pompeo:

We write to express our urgent concern regarding the support being provided to American citizens overseas, including those seeking to return to the United States, as the spread of coronavirus continues to impose significant challenges for governments and communities worldwide.

We are particularly concerned about an increasing number of reports that Americans and their family members have been unable to leave areas affected by COVID-19 and return home. In particular, Americans in Honduras, Morocco, Peru, and Tunisia, among other countries, have reported to our offices that they are encountering difficulties in obtaining support from U.S. Embassies and Consulates, including to arrange commercial flights home. In some cases, they are reporting that they are unable to establish contact with, or receive even basic information from, U.S. Embassy personnel. While we are aware that Department personnel around the world are under immense strain to meet the many demands related to COVID-19, the safety and health of American citizens, including facilitating returns to the United States, must remain paramount.

To that end, we seek an immediate clarification regarding your current efforts to facilitate the return of Americans to the United States, whether by commercial airline flights, charter flights, or other means, as well as a detailed description of all efforts you are taking to provide support and guidance to Americans and their families who are either unable or choose not to return home during this crisis.

We also call on you to clarify the Department's public communication regarding its efforts on behalf of Americans abroad. Recent statements by Department officials and press reports that it will not, as a matter of course, provide chartered flights home, have led to confusion among many Americans overseas. In addition, existing travel advisories do not seem to account for the spread of coronavirus, which is only adding to confusion among many Americans overseas.

Providing support and assistance to Americans abroad and ensuring their safety and wellbeing are among the Department's most fundamental responsibilities. Americans overseas should have full confidence that the State Department will support them when abroad and facilitate their efforts to return to the United States if they are seeking to evacuate from areas affected by

COVID-19. While we understand this is a rapidly evolving crisis, as Secretary, it is critical that you ensure that the Department is moving quickly and taking every possible step to address and respond to the needs of Americans affected by COVID-19 overseas.

We recognize these are extraordinary times for the nation and the world. Yet this crisis calls for creative measures. We look forward to an immediate briefing on all steps the Department is taking, including working with foreign governments, commercial airlines, U.S. military, and other agencies to ensure that every American can be safely returned home. Every American should be confident that they have the full support of their government and of the Department, including those who are seeking support to return to the United States.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
Ranking Member



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



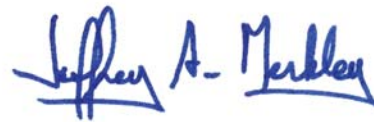
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Tim Kaine
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Edward J. Markey
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United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
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