

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2024

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

We write to you to express serious concern about the increasing threat of terrorism against the homeland. This concern comes at a time when bad actors, including ISIS-K, have recently demonstrated their ability to strike targets abroad amid escalating tensions in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

On July 8, 2021, before the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, President Biden stated that the U.S. was developing “a counterterrorism over-the-horizon capability that will allow us to keep our eyes firmly fixed on any direct threats to the United States in the region, and act quickly and decisively if needed.” However, we are still unsure of the effectiveness of this “over the horizon” capability or if it is being utilized currently, as it is clear to us that the threats to our nation have continued to grow since the complete withdrawal of our forces from Afghanistan in August 2021.

During a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing this past December, FBI Director Christopher Wray was asked if he assessed “that there's multiple blinking red lights out there?”, referring to the warning signs that were missed before the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Director Wray responded that he “see[s] blinking lights everywhere I turn.” Senior past and present DOD officials have also indicated that there are serious threats against our nation, including threats from ISIS-K. In a recent hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Michael Kurilla, Commander of U.S. Central Command, stated that “[f]ive years after the fall of the physical ISIS caliphate, the group’s extremist ideology endures” and that the group has “more than 5,000 fighters and operatives still at large throughout the Central Region and beyond.” This echoes comments made by retired General Frank McKenzie, when he stated on March 31, 2024, that the threat from ISIS-K against the U.S. was “growing” and that “as soon as we left Afghanistan, it took pressure off ISIS-K.” He also warned that ISIS-K has a “strong desire” to attack the U.S. and that “further attempts of this nature against the United States as well as our partners and other nations abroad” are “inevitable.” However, the most concerning comment from General McKenzie is his assessment that, “In Afghanistan, we have almost no ability to see into that country and almost no ability to strike into that country.”

As many experts have warned, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has created new threats and once again transformed the country into a safe haven and operational base for terrorist

groups. Our nation cannot afford to continue adhering to a policy of inaction towards these threats.

ISIS-K's recent attacks further highlight their ability to strike around the globe. Their operations include a suicide bombing in Iran in January of 2024 and a massacre at a concert hall in Moscow in March. Further, ISIS-K planned attacks against civilians in Germany and the Netherlands were also thwarted. It is evident the potential and desire for strikes by ISIS-K around the globe, including against the United States, remains significant. As former Director of Intelligence for CENTCOM, retired Army Major General Mark Quantock recently stated, "The U.S. remains target No. 1 for ISIS-K."

In light of this concern, we are requesting an all-member classified briefing on the rising threat of radical Islamic terror groups against the homeland and overseas targets, and an update on the Biden administration's over-the-horizon capabilities and strategy for Afghanistan no later than April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024. We request this brief be provided by senior leadership from the intelligence community as well as senior leadership from the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and State. We look forward to your reply to our critical request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lindsey O. Graham".

Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Boyd Britt".

Katie Boyd Britt  
United States Senator