

to learn the lessons of the Carter years. What have the Democrats learned in the last 18 months—anything? I don't think they have learned a thing, especially with regard to American energy. Joe Biden is continuing to restrict American energy, is continuing to give speeches against American energy, and then is going hat in hand to Venezuela, to Iran, and now, this week, to Saudi Arabia, saying: Please produce more energy.

This is the first time in 64 years that there will be no offshore energy lease sales this year—the first time in 64 years. Joe Biden is now considering blocking all offshore oil and gas leases for the next 5 years—no jobs for the people, no affordable energy for the folks and the families. No. He is just now lifting his blockade on onshore oil and gas leases that has been there since day 1 of his administration. Why is he doing it now? Well, he is doing it, kicking and screaming, because the Federal court forced his hand. After 17 months in office, when President Obama was there, they had held 40 lease sales. Joe Biden's energy strategy has now sunk us to a new low.

What is he doing now? What is the President's new approach? Because he wants to just belittle people in energy who make their livelihoods that way.

I mean, it is astonishing, the President of the United States tweeting about mom-and-pop gas stations in your neighborhood and mine. It is hard to believe, but it is true. Last week, the President of the United States tweeted a demand that gas stations bring down their prices. If only it were that easy.

You wonder, what does President Biden really understand about the way the world works and about the lives that people lead?

Prices aren't set by gas stations, and prices aren't set by Presidential tweets. They are set by supply and demand. It is economics 101. Gas stations aren't the problem. Gas stations would love to bring down prices overall. They can't do it. If demand is down because people can't afford to drive, that will lower the prices a bit. Today, the average is about \$4.65 a gallon. On the day Joe Biden came into office, it was \$2.38 a gallon. We are still at almost double the cost of a gallon of gas today, under Joe Biden and his policies, than we were the day he took office.

If you want to really lower prices at the pump and get to where we were on the day that Joe Biden came into office, we need more American energy. We have it. We have it here in the United States, and Joe Biden and the Democrats will not let us get it out of the ground.

So what are the Democrats in the Senate doing about these repeated failures by Joe Biden?

Well, right now, they are, once again, threatening another reckless tax-and-spending spree. They are planning a repeat of what got us into this inflation crisis in the first place. It is terrible

economics, and it is not even good politics. So just before the midterm elections, the Democrats are attempting to pass legislation that is going to make America's problems even worse.

They are proposing another reckless spending bill, and it is more reckless than the one last year because inflation is a lot higher now. Spending even more money is going to make today's prices go even higher.

According to media's report, the latest version of the Democrat bill includes more than \$100 billion in new taxes. Nobody knows exactly what is in it. We hear up to a trillion dollars in taxes. Many of these taxes are going to fall on American energy producers. If you have higher taxes on energy producers, who do you think is going to end up paying that? The people who have to use energy, who are the men and women going to work filling up their cars with gas, trying to take their kids to school, cutting back on vacations because they can't afford the gas.

The Secretary of the Treasury says, Well, you don't like the high price of gas? Buy an electric car.

Easy for him to say. Electric vehicle prices are up because of Joe Biden's inflation. They are 20 percent higher now than they were a year ago. How many Americans can go out and afford to buy one of these very expensive electric vehicles? Very few.

We are talking about a clueless administration, a clueless President, and a clueless Secretary of Transportation and Secretary of Energy who have promoted such policies.

Joe Biden should remember that in 2008, Senator Barack Obama said this:

[Y]ou don't raise taxes in a recession.

This is Senator Barack Obama in 2008, Presidential candidate Barack Obama in 2008:

[Y]ou don't raise taxes in a recession. The last thing you want to do is to raise taxes in a recession.

Yet that may be the party platform of the Democrats for this November.

The Democrats' attacks on American energy have been relentless. They are obsessed with stopping the use of fossil fuels, absolutely obsessed and worshipping at the altar of energy that is dependent on the weather. That is what they are proposing. The Democrats think that that is the winning sales pitch going into November.

Democrats I talk to privately admit that they expect to be stripped of power in November, NANCY PELOSI no longer Speaker of the House, her efforts to make sure that the Republicans are in the majority in the Senate. Democrats know the clock is running out on them, that they are not going to be able to do something like reconciliation to force down the throats of the American people, costly policies, tax increases, and regulations that the American people would never be in support of.

This is their last hope, their last Hail Mary pass to put into place policies of

the progressives that will help their group but hurt the country. It is absolutely wrong. It is one final try of the Democrats to increase spending, increase taxes, and, of course, increase the debt.

It doesn't seem the Democratic Party nationally or those on the Hill seem to care about that and the suffering of the American people who are living through the highest inflation in 40 years. The highest gas prices of all time until recently, massive debt, massive concerns, and incompetence—that is what the American people are looking at right now, and that is why, come November, what I believe, many, many Members, elected Democrats in the House and Senate, will be heading to the unemployment line.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the nominations of Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Dr. Agnes Schaefer to be Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, and Mr. Franklin Parker to hold the same position within the Navy.

The office Dr. Martinez-Lopez is nominated for is responsible for ensuring that we are medically ready to fight and win wars. This is a critical role for our national security at all times, but, of course, it is even more important during a pandemic.

Leaving this office without leadership jeopardizes our ability to respond to this health crisis and prepare for the next one. Having spent more than two decades as an Army surgeon and commander of medical centers at major U.S. military bases both stateside and overseas, and more than a decade as a leader of private medical research organizations, Dr. Martinez-Lopez clearly has the experience to fill this position.

The Assistant Secretaries for Manpower and Reserve Affairs across the branches ensure our military and civilian workforce have the education, the training, and the skills needed to meet current and future threats. Mr. Parker, who is nominated to head this office for the Navy, has demonstrated his ability to fill the role and will be able to hit the ground running, having held the position before.

Dr. Schaefer, nominated to head this office for the Army, will bring firsthand knowledge from her 15 years at the RAND Corporation, where she specialized in military personnel policy, reserve component issues, national security strategy, and emerging threats.

All three of these positions play important roles in our national security. All three nominees to fill them were voted out of committee—a committee on which the Senator from Missouri serves—without objection—without objection—4 months ago. But all three remain vacant.

The Senator from Missouri, as someone who serves on the Personnel Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, I know would know better than most the issues our military branches and the troops face. These include recruitment and retention challenges, ensuring safe workplaces, including implementing IRC reforms to prevent and respond to sexual assault and sexual harassment within the ranks, and addressing the high suicide rate among troops and veterans—all issues which impact military readiness. But there is a hold on all DOD nominees.

I am unaware of any substantive objections to these nominees based on their qualifications or their ability to serve, reasons which we have a constitutional duty to review based on our advice and consent role.

My understanding is that the Senator from Missouri is implementing a blanket hold based on general policy disagreements with the Biden administration. In addition to our advice and consent role, the Senate has oversight responsibilities, and that is a place where the Senator from Missouri, as a member of the Personnel Committee of the Armed Services Committee, has the responsibility of oversight of the three offices that we are discussing today. He has a way to ensure that once these three nominees are confirmed, he and his colleagues can evaluate their performance. With acting, nonconfirmed officials in these roles, that oversight authority is undermined.

As a Senator, we are afforded extraordinary powers to advance policies or even just to make a point, but these powers should be used in accordance with our constitutional responsibilities. The President of the United States has the responsibility to nominate qualified individuals to fill these roles, and he has. These individuals are qualified, and now we have the responsibility to confirm them so that they can get to work for our servicemembers and for the American people.

I will now yield to my friend and colleague Senator KAINE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise and thank my colleague from Hawaii for stating plainly the qualifications of these candidates.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I have had a chance to review their qualifications. And as the father of a U.S. marine, I agree wholeheartedly with the Senator's contention that these three positions would be very important to fill at a time when the United States has so many security challenges.

Anticipating a productive dialogue with my colleague from Missouri, I would like to ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 779, 780, 781; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the mo-

tions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. I would like to say a word, if I could, about the nature of my objection.

It has been now almost a year since the attack at Abbey Gate in Kabul in Afghanistan, almost a year since we lost 13 American servicemembers in that tragic attack, almost a year since hundreds of American civilians were left behind enemy lines, abandoned by this administration to fend for themselves against our enemies. And that attack claimed the lives, among the 13, of CPL Jared Schmitz, from Wentzville, MO.

I was thinking of Corporal Schmitz again just the other day when I was driving past the bridge in Wentzville that will soon be named for him. I am glad that Corporal Schmitz is getting some of the honor that he deserves, but let's be honest. As his father said to me just hours after we learned of his death: What would be far better—far better, indeed—would be for Corporal Schmitz, who is a very young man, to be with us. He was just at the beginning of his service, just at the beginning of his life. And while he was proud, I am sure, to give his life for his country—it is what he volunteered to do—we owe it to him, I owe it to him, to try and find out why—why—this attack at Abbey Gate happened. How was it that a civilian evacuation was not ordered in time? Why was it that this administration ignored repeated warnings from military commanders on the ground about the dangers that were mounting in Kabul in Afghanistan? Why was the withdrawal a debacle?

Now, I want to give central command some credit. They have commissioned an investigation on this point and issued a report, and I have some of it here with me. This is just the unclassified portion. It is 6,000 pages long. I will tell you, having been through all of it with my team, it is very exhaustive. It took them months to do. They interviewed commanders on the ground. They interviewed military members who were there at the time. They interviewed State Department officials and DOD officials.

Their conclusions that are set out here in this report are truly, truly stunning. What they found is that military commanders repeatedly warned the White House—repeatedly—that the situation in Afghanistan was deterior-

ating rapidly, that the danger to American troops were high, that the danger to American civilians was high and, indeed, potentially lethal. And what did the administration do? It ignored these warnings.

The CENTCOM investigation shows that Tony Blinken's State Department and Jake Sullivan's National Security Council dragged their feet for weeks and, indeed, months on end. It shows the State Department wouldn't even talk about an evacuation—wouldn't even speak of it—until it was too late. And the worst of it is, after this botched withdrawal, after this tragic loss of life, the administration took efforts to cover up what had happened. And we are still in the midst of this coverup.

Just last November, Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas testified—testified—that—and I am quoting him now:

Biometric and biographic information was collected from every individual evacuated from Afghanistan.

Every individual, that is his statement.

He testified that the administration—I am quoting him now:

(Took a whole-of-government approach, ensuring that Afghans arriving in the United States have been thoroughly screened and vetted.

That simply is not true, and we know it isn't true because the DOD inspector general just released a report debunking it, finding that U.S. Agencies did not use available data when vetting Afghan evacuees, finding that some evacuees with derogatory information could not be located, including individuals whose latent fingerprints have been found on improvised explosive devices and are known or suspected terrorists.

Here is my point: Almost a year after this tragedy, almost a year after this debacle, there has still been no accountability.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President.

Mr. HAWLEY. No accountability. There has been no one fired. There has been no one relieved of command. This administration has stonewalled. They have dragged their feet. They have refused to cooperate. Oh, we have had hearings, and they have had briefings almost entirely behind closed doors.

Here is my request. It is what I promised Corporal Schmitz's father I would do on the morning that I spoke to him, that I would seek accountability for what happened in Afghanistan, and that is exactly what I intend to do. It is what I have been doing, many a time have I been on the floor for the last 11 months seeking accountability. And I have been stonewalled at every single turn.

What I have asked for months on end is that the Armed Services Committee hold a public hearing on this investigation—a public hearing—not behind closed doors, not without the press, not cut off from the American people—a public hearing, and I have been denied every time.

So what I am going to do today is I am going to enter this report into the RECORD so that the American people can see what U.S. Central Command found. And until we have that accountability in public, I will continue to ask that the Senate observe regular order and actually vote on these nominees.

I yield the floor.

Mr. KAINÉ. Will the Senator yield for a question?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINÉ. Mr. President, if my colleague from Missouri would yield for a series of questions, I want to make sure that I understand the objection. I certainly understand the objection as indicated with respect to seeking accountability for Afghanistan. I understand that point.

Is it correct that in the committee, however, you supported each of the three nominations who are proffered on the floor today?

Mr. HAWLEY. A parliamentary question, Mr. President: Do I have the floor when I respond?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has yielded for a question. So he has the floor.

Mr. HAWLEY. But I am not asking the question. He is asking me the question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. But you were the one who yielded to the Senator from Virginia for a question. So you still maintain the floor.

Mr. HAWLEY. No, I have yielded the floor. My remarks were concluded. So the Senator has the floor. I am happy to respond.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator yield for a response?

Mr. KAINÉ. I will yield for a response, yes.

Mr. HAWLEY. Say it one more time, Senator. I can answer.

Mr. KAINÉ. My question was: I believe, in the Armed Services Committee, these three individuals, you supported their nominations for reporting to the floor. And I just want to make sure that I am accurate about that.

Mr. HAWLEY. That is incorrect, Senator. I reported as a no.

Mr. KAINÉ. On all three?

Mr. HAWLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. KAINÉ. Is it the Senator's position today that you do not object to them individually but there are other Members of your caucus who individually object to them?

Mr. HAWLEY. I do object to them, Senator. Are you asking me if I object to having a vote on them? Or are you asking me if I object to them?

Mr. KAINÉ. I will rephrase the question.

Do you object to having a vote on them? So, for example, I can modify the motion to suggest to seek unanimous consent that we schedule a vote on these three nominees instead of trying to move them en bloc.

Mr. HAWLEY. Yes.

Mr. KAINÉ. I would be very happy to amend my motion to that, if you would find that acceptable.

Mr. HAWLEY. Yes. A vote, I would like, Senator, but there are other Republican Members who have objections to all three nominees, and I am not authorized to consent for them.

Mr. KAINÉ. Then let me ask one final question. If we are able to clear the objections of others, would you agree—at a time that is convenient for the floor leaders of each party—to a recorded vote on the three nominees, if we were able to clear the objections with your other colleagues?

Mr. HAWLEY. I would like to have a recorded vote. Are you asking me if I would vitiate cloture, Senator?

Mr. KAINÉ. Yes, move to a final passage vote, on which you would be able to express your views on each of these nominees.

Mr. HAWLEY. I would like to have a cloture vote and a recorded vote. I would like to observe regular order on each of these, unless we can make some progress on having a public hearing on this report. That is my position at this time. Again, I am not authorized to negotiate for anybody else.

Mr. KAINÉ. I yield the floor.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the first part of an investigation directed by the U.S. Central Command concerning the Abbey Gate bombing in Afghanistan in August 2021.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND,
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDER,
15 September 2021.

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDER, UNITED STATES ARMY CENTRAL

From: Vice Admiral James J. Malloy, Deputy Commander, United States Central Command.

Subject: Memo Directing U.S. Army Central (USARCENT) to Conduct an Army Regulation (AR) 15-6 Investigation into the Facts and Circumstances Surrounding the Attack at Abbey Gate, Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) on 26 August 2021.

I am directing the Commander, USARCENT to appoint an AR 15-6 investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack upon U.S. forces located at the Abbey Gate at HKIA, Kabul, Afghanistan on 26 August 2021. This AR 15-6 investigation will be a holistic review of the facts and circumstances surrounding the attack. USARCENT is directed to conduct an in-depth examination of all relevant aspects which gave rise to the attack. The AR 15-6 should closely examine tactical-level actions of U.S. personnel, gate operations, force protection and posture, readiness, leadership, and all other actions before, during and after the attack.

BACKGROUND

Recently the Commander, USCENTCOM directed his staff, Component Commands, and relevant supporting commands to conduct an after-action review (AAR) of the Afghanistan non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO). This AR 15-6 is a separate requirement from that AAR.

DISCUSSION

This AR 15-6 will be conducted in accordance with Service regulations. USARCENT will provide the completed AR 15-6 to Head-

quarters, USCENTCOM no later than 1 October 2021. If additional time is required, this request must be approved by the Commander.

Finally, to thoroughly examine the facts and circumstances of this attack, Component Commands, subordinate commands and other supporting commands are directed to assist USARCENT investigators during the course of this AR 15-6 as applicable.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, 3RD EXPEDITIONARY SUSTAINMENT COMMAND,

ACTS-SCK-DO, 22 October 2021.

MEMORANDUM FOR LTG RONALD P. CLARK, COMMANDER, THIRD ARMY/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL, SHAW AIR FORCE BASE, SC

Subject: Findings and Recommendations—Attack Against U.S. Forces Conducting NEO at Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August 2021.

1. BLUF. See EXSUM at enclosure 7.

2. Background: On 26 August 2021, U.S. Marines were conducting a Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) at the Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) as part of a larger joint force operation to conclude U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan. Eleven Marines, one Navy Corpsman, and one Army PSYOP Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) were killed in an attack at the entry control point (ECP) known as Abbey Gate. As a result of the deaths of U.S. Service Members in combat, LTG Ronald P. Clark, Commander, Third Army/U.S. Army Central, at the direction of Gen McKenzie, Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), appointed me to investigate the surrounding facts and circumstances.

a. Scope. In accordance with (IAW) AR 15-6, I was appointed to investigate the facts and circumstances and address the following matters:

- (1) Actions before, during, and after the attack;
- (2) Force Protection, specifically including pertinent issues associated with:
 - (a) Force Posture, and
 - (b) Gate Operations.
- (3) Readiness;
- (4) Leadership;
- (5) Medical Considerations;
- (6) Chronology/Timeline of Events.

b. Time Extensions. My initial appointment order, dated 17 September 2021, required me to complete my investigation no later than 1 October 2021 (enclosure 1).

After careful analysis, I requested an extension to 22 October 2021 to ensure I could conduct sufficient interviews of widely dispersed forces and collect important products and documents to provide a complete investigation. You granted me the requested extension on 22 September 2021 (enclosure 2).

c. Methodology. The investigation follows the procedures in AR 15-6 and the appointment memorandum, with one exception. After consulting with my legal advisor, I determined the use of memorandums for record (MFRs) to capture interviews was a more appropriate method, given the subject matter and personnel involved. I spoke with my legal advisor and also resolved conflicts in the evidence, and discussed the use of any self-serving statement that I relied upon.

(1) The Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command (MARCENT), MajGen Paul Rock, assigned two Marine Corps Officers, (TEXT REDACTED) to perform duties as both subject matter experts and assistant investigating officers (enclosures 3 and 4).

(2) Additionally, I requested appointment of my Command Judge Advocate, (TEXT REDACTED) investigating officers (enclosures 4 and 5).

3. Findings of facts.

a. Task Organization. Before addressing the directed matters, it is of extreme importance to describe and clarify the task organization and command relationships (COMREL) between units executing operations at HKIA from 1–31 August 2021. The below descriptions are also enclosed in block and line charts (enclosure 8).

(1) 1–16 August 2021.

(a) RADM Pete Vasely, Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (Forward) (USFOR-A FWD), was the overall commander throughout the execution of operations in Afghanistan during the month of August. USFOR-A FWD was chartered as a Diplomatic Assurance Platform (DAP) and Joint Task Force (JTF) for operations in Afghanistan (exhibits 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 21). USFOR-A FWD was also Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan (SOJTF-A). Elements of the 3/10 Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) augmented USFOR-A FWD staff and security forces at the Embassy (exhibits 126, 247). The Commander of 3/10 IBCT, (TEXT REDACTED) also served as Chief of Staff for USFOR-A FWD, and commander of two ground forces, Task Force (TF) Polar Bear and TF Wild Boar, which supported the Embassy and HKIA (exhibits 21, 22, 126, 247).

(b) JTF-Crisis Response (CR), commanded by BGen Farrell Sullivan, arrived at HKIA on 20 July 2021, to prepare for a potential NEO. Beginning in May 2021, USFOR-A FWD had tactical control (TACON) of JTF-CR for planning, and then for NEO execution in August (exhibits 10, 11, 15, 18).

(c) The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), (TEXT REDACTED) sent its Command Element (CE) and Battalion Landing Team (BLT), 1/8 Marines to HKIA on 14 August 2021 to set conditions for NEO (exhibits 15, 100, 102, 104). JTF-CR had TACON of the 24th MEU, which had TACON of 1/8 Marines (exhibits 100, 102, 104).

(d) Elements of 1/82 IBCT arrived at HKIA throughout 15–16 August 2021. JTF-CR initially had TACON of the 1/82 elements, received them at the flight line, and put them into defensive positions (exhibits 15, 100, 102, 121, 125).

(e) 2/1 Marines, the ground combat element (GCE) for the CENTCOM Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF), began arriving at HKIA in the early morning of 16 August 2021 (exhibits 53, 54, 55, 76, 77). The 24th MEU had TACON of 2/1 Marines (exhibits 10, 11, 53, 54, 76, 77, 100, 102).

(2) 17–28 August 2021. The Tactical Command Post (TAC) for the 82nd Airborne Division, commanded by MG Christopher Donahue, arrived to HKIA in the early morning hours of 19 August 2021 (exhibits 13, 21, 125). With the TAC's arrival, Gen McKenzie altered the task organization, granted USFOR-A FWD TACON of the 82nd Airborne Division, and gave the 82nd TACON of JTF-CR (exhibits 10, 11, 238). JTF-CR retained TACON of Marine forces until departure, while 82nd Airborne Division retained TACON of 1/82, and additional Army combat formations. However, USFOR-A FWD retained TACON of JTF-CR for NEO. and JTF-CR coordinated with 82nd Airborne Division (exhibits 125, 40). Marine units also executed an alternate COMREL, as 2/1 Marines reported directly to JTF-CR, despite the fact the 24th MEU had TACON of 2/1 (exhibits 18, 53, 100). 1/82 IBCT assumed TACON of TF Polar Bear and TF Wild Boar (exhibits 10, 126, 247).

(3) 28–30 August 2021.

(a) USFOR-A FWD departed HKIA in the early morning hours of 28 August 2021. MG Donahue, 82nd Airborne Division Commander, assumed command of all operations at HKIA until his departure at 0002 on 31 August 2021 (exhibits 131 21, 125, 246).

(b) JTF-CR and all Marine forces departed by the morning of 30 August 2021 (exhibits 15, 18). No Marine forces subordinate to JTF-CR were task organized under the 82nd Airborne Division during the last two days of the NEO.

(4) Adjacent Forces.

(a) Taliban. On 16 August 2021, RADM Vasely began to coordinate with Taliban forces for additional crowd control and security of HKIA (exhibits 13, 20, 21, 23). USFOR-A FWD's primary point of contact for coordination was local Taliban Commander, (TEXT REDACTED) (exhibits 13, 20, 21, 23). U.S. commanders and leaders at all echelons coordinated with Taliban forces to clarify security tasks and responsibilities (exhibits 53, 76).

(b) Turkish Military Forces. Turkish Forces were present on HKIA prior to the NEO and responsible for security of northern HKIA and working through Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) to secure the remaining perimeter (exhibits 15, 18). JTF-CR, and later USFOR-A FWD, coordinated with the Turkish Military Forces for security tasks and evacuation efforts (exhibits 15, 18).

(c) United Kingdom Forces. The U.K. had a large force presence, led by (TEXT REDACTED) on HKIA and at the adjoining Barron Hotel (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21, 126). This force consisted of three companies from 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment (2 PARA) and two companies from 3 PARA, for a combined force of approximately 550 troops, (TEXT REDACTED) (exhibit 126). Commanders and leaders at all levels worked with the U.K. Forces at Abbey Gate, coordinating their security and evacuation efforts (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21, 53, 56, 65, 76, 77).

(d) Afghan National Strike Unit (NSU). This organization was affiliated with U.S. interagency activities and integrated into the security of HKIA on 16–17 August 2021 (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 21). USFOR-A FWD worked through U.S. Embassy Kabul (USEK) personnel to coordinate with NSU (exhibits 18, 21).

b. Actions before, during, and after the attack.

(1) Key Findings.

(a) By 25 August, Abbey Gate was the Main Effort for Gate Operations at HKIA.

(b) At approximately 1736 local time, 26 August 2021, a single explosion occurred at Abbey Gate.

(c) There was no complex attack; it was a single suicide bomber not accompanied by enemy small arms fire.

(d) How the bomber bypassed Taliban checkpoints to get to the canal is unknown. There were multiple avenues of approach to the canal continuously used by Afghans to bypass Taliban checkpoints. The bomber likely used one of these avenues. No Marines at Abbey Gate recall any civilian using U.S. identification to get closer to their position at the time of the attack.

(e) The attack at Abbey Gate killed between 160–170 civilians. There is no evidence the Marines' response to the attack caused further harm to civilians or fratricide. A potential civilian casualty was reported during interviews with 2/1 Marines. A Platoon Commander reported the casualty occurred during initial gate operations on 20 August and the injury, or possible death, was caused by a flash-bang grenade.

(2) USFOR-A FWD

(a) USFOR-A FWD was task organized to fill the command and staff billets of SOJTF-A specifically NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (NSOCC-A) (exhibits 20, 21). CENTCOM, after consulting with outgoing USFOR-A Commander, GEN Miller, established USFOR-A FWD as a DAP prior to its deployment to Af-

ghanistan (exhibits 20, 21). The DAP's mission was to provide indications and warnings (I&W) for USEK, coordinate military activities in Afghanistan (security cooperation, targeting), and be prepared to command and control NEO (exhibits 20, 21). USFOR-A FWD developed a trigger matrix for preparation and execution of NEO, and shared it with USEK staff (exhibits 20, 21, 22). USFOR-A FWD used the trigger matrix as a tool to measure the Taliban's advancement and convince USEK staff to prepare for NEO (exhibits 20, 21, 22). However, USEK staff showed little interest in planning for NEO (exhibits 15, 18, 20, 21, 22). Despite the Taliban's rapid advance towards Kabul, on 12 August USEK only planned to evacuate 250 personnel by 31 August (exhibit 21). On 14 August, the Ambassador committed to evacuating the Embassy, but his personnel were unprepared and had taken few steps to reduce their footprint or destroy sensitive equipment/information (exhibits 20, 21, 22, 146). USEK security forces and the USFOR-A FWD (TEXT REDACTED) evacuated the final personnel from the Embassy to HKIA at 0100 on 16 August. Most USEK personnel departed Afghanistan shortly thereafter (exhibits 15, 18, 20, 21, 22).

(b) At HKIA, USFOR-A FWD was responsible for up and out coordination. They communicated daily with various elements of the interagency, to include Department of State (DoS) and the White House. They also coordinated with partner nations seeking support with evacuation, and coordinated with the Turkish Military, the Taliban, and the NSU to establish and maintain security of the airfield (exhibits 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO KIM HOLDEN

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise today for two reasons: one happy, one not so happy.

First, I want to take a moment to recognize a much admired Louisiana journalist. I am referring to Ms. Kim Holden from the wonderful city of New Orleans in my State. Kim has just retired from WVUE, which we sometimes call FOX 8 News, in Louisiana, and Ms. Holden has been with FOX 8 News for 34 years.

Kim, if I may call her by her first name, is Louisiana through and through. She is what most of us would call a star-spangled professional. Ms. Holden graduated from St. Mary's Dominican High School. I know, to some of you, that doesn't mean much, but it is an extraordinarily good school in my State.

She started out at Tulane University. She wanted to study premed, but she realized pretty quickly that premed wasn't for her. She discovered her love for journalism, and she went to and graduated from Loyola University in New Orleans with a major in communications.

She took her first job in 1988 as an intern at WVUE FOX 8, and she never left. Kim's talent and intelligence was quickly recognized at FOX 8. She was hired almost immediately after being an intern as a part-time production assistant.

Throughout her 34 years at FOX 8, she has worked as a producer, as a reporter, as a weekend anchor, and as an assistant news director. In 2005, Ms. Holden started anchoring the morning