

.....
(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. _____

Commemorating the 13 United States servicemembers killed at Abbey Gate during and as a result of President Biden's disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. VAN EPPS submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Commemorating the 13 United States servicemembers killed at Abbey Gate during and as a result of President Biden's disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal.

Whereas 5 years ago the Biden administration's chaotic and disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan—

(1) undid 20 years of American sacrifice in a span of weeks;

(2) surrendered the country to the same Taliban regime the United States toppled after September 11th;

(3) handed terrorists a safe haven and \$7,000,000,000 in American-funded weapons and equipment;

(4) stranded Americans and allies behind enemy lines;

(5) emboldened adversaries of the United States around the globe; and

(6) cost the lives of 13 United States servicemembers killed at Abbey Gate on August 26, 2021;

Whereas the Biden administration was so determined to withdraw from Afghanistan regardless of conditions on the ground that it ignored the Taliban's violations of the Doha Agreement, the warnings of security officers and diplomats at the United States Embassy in Kabul, and the objections of the Afghan Government and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies;

Whereas State Department Spokesperson Ned Price admitted in a transcribed interview with the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives that Taliban compliance was "immaterial" to the decision;

Whereas the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Commander of United States Central Command, and the Commander of NATO's Resolute Support Mission each recommended retaining approximately 2,500 United States troops, the intelligence community warned of rapid collapse, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) warned Congress in March 2021 that, absent United States military and contractor support, the Afghan Government "would probably face collapse", and the British Chief of the Defence Staff warned that "withdrawal under these circumstances would be perceived as a strategic victory for the Taliban", yet President Biden ignored them all and fixed

a withdrawal date of September 11, 2021, for the sake of symbolic headlines;

Whereas the United States abandoned Bagram Air Base in the middle of the night without telling the base's Afghan commander, who learned of the departure only hours later, after looters had stormed the gates, thereby surrendering a fortified airfield with two runways, including one nearly 12,000 feet long, giving up a strategic position within reach of China's Lop Nur nuclear testing grounds, and forcing the entire evacuation through the insecure, single-runway Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA);

Whereas the abandonment of Bagram left the United States-built Parwan detention facility to the Taliban, who on August 15, 2021, freed thousands of prisoners, including Abdul Rahman al-Logari, the ISIS-K terrorist who carried out the Abbey Gate bombing 11 days later;

Whereas the forced withdrawal of United States and international contractors gutted the Afghan military, a 2021 CENTCOM assessment cited by SIGAR concluded the Afghan Air Force could not be sustained as combat effective without contractor support, and, according to SIGAR's July 2021 quarterly report, the Taliban tripled the districts under its control from 73 in April 2021 to 221 by July 2021, even as the withdrawal proceeded;

Whereas the investigation by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives found that Department of State officials, fearing bad optics, refused to plan for a noncombatant evacuation operation until August 6, 2021, days before Kabul fell, did not order one until the Taliban entered Kabul on August 15, and refused to close the United States Embassy in Kabul even as secu-

rity collapsed, resulting in the loss of sensitive materials to the Taliban;

Whereas the Biden administration drew United States forces down to a skeleton presence of roughly 650 troops before evacuating American personnel, leaving the civilian side of HKIA to be overrun amid the Taliban's seizure of Kabul and forcing a suspension of evacuation flights until thousands of United States reinforcements could be rushed back in, while the Taliban ringed the airport with checkpoints where Americans and Afghan allies were detained, refused entry, and assaulted;

Whereas the Biden administration issued no guidance on who could be evacuated, forcing young servicemembers and foreign service officers to decide who lived and who was left behind, and the investigation of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives found that alternative "lily pad" staging locations were not secured until August 19 and that the Department of Transportation waited 5 days after Kabul fell to permit foreign civil aircraft to fly evacuation missions;

Whereas an internal Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) audit found that "the need to immediately evacuate Afghans overtook the normal processes required to determine whether individuals attempting to enter the United States pose a threat to national security";

Whereas a September 2022 Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General report found that vetting data was "inaccurate, incomplete, or missing", including 11,110 records listing a birthday of January 1, and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) guidance was nevertheless to admit or parole evacuees even with improper identification documents;

Whereas Afghan men were admitted accompanied by young girls alleged to be victims of forced marriage, the sexual abuse of children by powerful men in Afghanistan is extensively documented and was rarely prosecuted, and the United States has no access to the former Afghan Government's criminal records, meaning tens of thousands of Afghan men entered the country without United States officials having any means of knowing whether they were predators;

Whereas Russ Travers, the National Security Council's Deputy Homeland Security Advisor during the withdrawal, admitted, "From my perspective, it was a slow-moving train wreck. We were going to fail; the question was how badly we were going to fail.";

Whereas Abbey Gate, a main inroad to HKIA that was assessed as the gate at highest risk of attack, was never properly reinforced, as the Biden administration relied on the Taliban's haphazard and insincere security efforts and withheld authority for United States forces to strike ISIS-K cells for fear of upsetting the Taliban;

Whereas, at 5:36 p.m. on August 26, 2021, an ISIS-K terrorist detonated a suicide bomb at Abbey Gate, killing 13 United States servicemembers and approximately 170 Afghan civilians and wounding scores more, in the deadliest day for the United States military in Afghanistan since August 2011;

Whereas President Biden never publicly spoke the names of the 13 fallen, with Gold Star families describing his conduct at Dover Air Force Base as scripted and hollow, recounting that he spoke of his own son rather than their children, and never contacted them afterward, and photographs confirm he checked his watch multiple times dur-

ing the dignified transfer as the flag-draped remains of the fallen were carried past him;

Whereas the withdrawal turned Afghanistan back into a safe haven for al-Qaida and ISIS–K;

Whereas former FBI Director Christopher Wray testified that the loss of a United States presence crippled the ability of the United States to collect intelligence and monitor threats to the homeland;

Whereas under President Biden’s open border, CBP data show 382 individuals on the terrorist watchlist were apprehended crossing between ports of entry from fiscal year 2021, through fiscal year 2024, alongside nearly 2,000,000 known gotaways;

Whereas the Taliban carried out reprisal killings of Afghans who served with the United States;

Whereas the United Nations has documented the Taliban’s institutionalized oppression of women, which the United Nations Special Rapporteur called “the most extreme and systematic assault on gender equality in the world today”;

Whereas the investigations conducted under President Biden were inadequate, no official was ever held accountable, and until the day he left office, President Biden defended the withdrawal and never admitted it was a mistake, a refusal Gold Star families have described as tantamount to betrayal;

Whereas the 13 servicemembers killed at Abbey Gate, 1 sailor, 1 soldier, and 11 Marines, deserve lasting recognition, accountability from those responsible, and a commitment that such failures will never be repeated, and their names are—

- (1) Petty Officer Third Class Maxton W. Soviak, United States Navy;
- (2) Staff Sergeant Ryan C. Knauss, United States Army;
- (3) Staff Sergeant Darin T. Hoover, United States Marine Corps;
- (4) Sergeant Johanny Rosario Pichardo, United States Marine Corps;
- (5) Sergeant Nicole L. Gee, United States Marine Corps;
- (6) Corporal Hunter Lopez, United States Marine Corps;
- (7) Corporal Daegan W. Page, United States Marine Corps;
- (8) Corporal Humberto A. Sanchez, United States Marine Corps;
- (9) Lance Corporal David L. Espinoza, United States Marine Corps;
- (10) Lance Corporal Jared M. Schmitz, United States Marine Corps;
- (11) Lance Corporal Rylee J. McCollum, United States Marine Corps;
- (12) Lance Corporal Dylan R. Merola, United States Marine Corps; and
- (13) Lance Corporal Kareem M. Nikoui, United States Marine Corps; and

Whereas President Biden and those in his administration who orchestrated the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal have yet to take accountability for ignoring reality and repeated warnings, a failure whose price was paid by the Gold Star families of those killed at Abbey Gate, by Americans harmed by unvetted Afghan evacuees, by the Afghan people suffering under Taliban rule, by the allies

and Americans left behind, and by the NATO partners they abandoned: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) solemnly commemorates the fifth anniver-
3 sary of the loss of 13 brave servicemembers at the
4 Abbey Gate bombing;

5 (2) condemns the Biden-Harris administration's
6 dereliction of duty to steward American lives and
7 property during the withdrawal from Afghanistan;
8 and

9 (3) denounces the historically damaging deci-
10 sion of the Biden-Harris administration to put at
11 risk Americans and noncombatant civilians through
12 the cavalier forfeiture of materiel and military prop-
13 erty to the Taliban.