

**TOM RICE**

7TH DISTRICT, SOUTH CAROLINA

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
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MEASURES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY



*Congress of the United States*  
*House of Representatives*  
*Washington, DC 20515*

WASHINGTON OFFICE:  
460 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
TEL: (202) 225-9895  
FAX: (202) 225-9690

GRAND STRAND REGIONAL OFFICE:  
2411 NORTH OAK STREET, SUITE 405  
MYRTLE BEACH, SC 29577  
TEL: (843) 445-6459  
FAX: (843) 445-6418

PEE DEE REGIONAL OFFICE:  
1831 WEST EVANS STREET, SUITE 300  
FLORENCE, SC 29501  
TEL: (843) 679-9781  
FAX: (843) 679-9783

September 2, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. State Department  
2201 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

General Mark A. Milley  
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
9999 Joint Staff Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20318-9999

Dear Secretary Blinken, Secretary Austin, and Chairman Milley:

I appreciate your several efforts to brief Congress in recent weeks, regarding the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Unfortunately, in each case, you have not had time to take my question. So, I am forced to inquire by letter.

You twist yourselves into knots trying to put lipstick on a pig. You describe your last-minute emergency evacuation as a success. You wrap yourselves in the heroic acts of our soldiers, who were placed in harm's way by you. In fact, it was an embarrassing debacle, and the injury and death suffered by our brave soldiers and thousands of Afghans was the direct result of your appalling lack of strategy and foresight.

The fact that the greatest military on Earth was forced to evacuate over 120,000 people in two weeks from a public airport under the supervision of terrorists, armed with weapons ceded by us, is simply beyond comprehension. The number of evacuees that you so proudly flaunt as a U.S. "success" in fact includes charter flights and efforts from our allies. I cite your failure to place conditions on our withdrawal to prevent the Taliban's instant takeover of the Afghan Government, the decision to abandon our most secure air base at Bagram, and the inexplicable

failure to evacuate our friends and allies well before the withdrawal of our troops as just a few of the monumental failures on your part.

The President repeatedly stated that we had a strategy that considered all contingencies. If we had any strategy prior to the final two-week scramble, it is not discernible to me. And it clearly considered no contingencies.

Your incompetence resulted in the deaths of 13 American soldiers, thousands of Afghans, and injuries to thousands more. You have embarrassed the United States on a global scale. Our allies are legitimately concerned about the United States' integrity, commitment, and capability. China and Russia are happy to fill the void. I am certain it will take decades for the United States to recover the international trust and stature this administration has squandered.

My constituents are appalled. One of the many problems the American people have with our government is that when there are massive failures such as this, especially ones that result in the death of Americans, there is no accountability. For example, the Veterans Administration debacle under President Obama's watch that killed at least 40 veterans in Phoenix, Arizona. Nobody got fired. The lack of accountability among our Nation's leaders should change now.

President Biden told the American people just a few weeks ago that the 'buck stops with him.' I agree, and he should resign. But we all know that will not happen. Therefore, the question I wanted to ask in each of your briefings (before your urgent departure) was: **When will you three resign?**

Each of you have acted in a fashion that killed and injured our soldiers and our friends and embarrassed our country on a global scale. Please do the honorable thing.

In that you were unable to accommodate my question during any of the briefings, and I've been forced to write to you, I would in turn appreciate a written response.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Rice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "T" and "R".

Tom Rice  
Member of Congress