

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Kerry and Secretary Hagel:

We are concerned about recent reports confirmed by Department of Defense officials that U.S. Marines protecting the U.S. Ambassador to Yemen and other embassy personnel during their evacuation this past week were ordered to destroy weapons and equipment prior to boarding a commercial aircraft. We are also concerned about reports that vehicles and weapons left in Yemen were then immediately seized by dangerous elements fighting for control of Yemen's capital city.

This is not the first evacuation of an embassy in a hostile region in the history of our nation. Most recently, on January 3, 2014, U.S. Marines used two C-130 aircraft to evacuate 20 Americans from the U.S. Embassy in South Sudan. Additionally, on July 26, 2014, the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, Libya, was evacuated by U.S. Marines conducting a non-combatant evacuation using two MV-22 Ospreys and three F-16 aircraft. The U.S. Marine Corps trains every day for this scenario and stands ready to protect the Ambassador, the embassy, and U.S. citizens seeking refuge around the world. We are concerned State Department and Department of Defense leadership failed to coordinate an orderly military evacuation of embassy personnel in Yemen and, in haste, ordered our Marines to engage in an "approved destruction plan" of weapons and equipment that is beyond comprehension.

We ask you provide us with the following information so we can understand the situation faced by those on the ground in Yemen during the evacuation:

1. What assets did the Department of Defense have available in the area to conduct a proper and orderly military evacuation of the U.S. Ambassador, embassy personnel, and U.S. citizens? What assets did the Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SP-MAGTF) Crisis Response from Central Command have available in Yemen and in the region to conduct a military evacuation instead of boarding commercial aircraft to depart Yemen?

2. If the State Department and Department of Defense considered Yemen a permissive environment to allow a commercial aircraft evacuation, why were military assets not used in the evacuation of the Ambassador and embassy personnel to avoid destruction of weapons and equipment?

3. Who gave final approval for the Marine Security Guards and SP-MAGTF personnel to destroy weapons and leave them in Yemen prior to evacuation aboard commercial aircraft? Did the State Department or the Department of Defense have operational control of the actions of the Marines during the evacuation?

4. As fighting in the capital of Yemen has evolved over the past weeks, what advance planning was conducted in preparation for protection and potential evacuation of the embassy? Did the Department of Defense approve an evacuation plan that included destruction of weapons and equipment prior to evacuation?

5. Is it standing policy for Department of Defense personnel to leave weapons and equipment behind during the evacuation of an embassy in a permissive environment?

Our U.S. Marines standing duty around the world do a tremendous job to protect U.S. citizens and interests abroad in very dangerous places. We believe you share the goal of understanding what happened on the ground in Yemen during the evacuation.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you to address this issue. Should you have any questions, your staff can contact Ryan Silverberg in Congressman Kline's office at (202) 225-2271 or ryan.silverberg@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



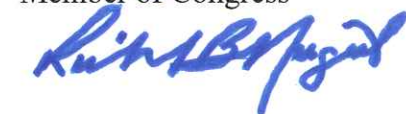
JOHN KLINE
Member of Congress



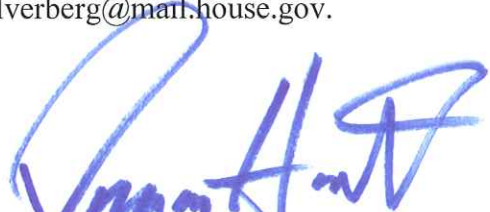
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