



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

August 25, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We are extremely concerned to read reports that you have shut down the Contingency and Crisis Response Bureau (CCR), which was a new State Department entity created during the Trump administration to coordinate emergency response services overseas. Last week, the State Department refused to answer questions regarding the shutting down of the CCR.¹

As you may be aware, your administration moved to dissolve the crisis response program, according to an internal State Department memo. According to a notification sent to Congress back in October 2020, as reported by the Washington Free Beacon, the CCR would provide "aviation, logistics, and medical support capabilities for the Department's operational bureaus, thereby enhancing the secretary's ability to protect American citizens overseas in connection with overseas evacuations of a natural or man-made disaster."² This bureau was set up to provide capabilities that did not exist at the Department during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Right now, we have an emergency where we are trying to evacuate U.S. citizens out of Afghanistan. Furthermore, we are hearing reports that hundreds of U.S. citizens are not able to evacuate due to several problems.³ The decision to shut down this program only months before a rushed withdrawal has led to dire consequences and is unacceptable. Not only did President Biden leave without providing a chance for Americans to evacuate, the State Department shut down one of our most vital tools to facilitate the evacuation of Americans in times like these. The decision to shut down the CCR may very well have cost human lives.

We request that you furnish copies of all documents, communications, memoranda and notes relating to why the CCR was resolved including the names of the officials at the Department of State who recommended shutting down the CCR. We also request that you provide Congress, including all appropriate committees, with an immediate explanation as to how shutting down the CCR has affected our efforts to evacuate Americans stranded in Afghanistan.

Finally, we request an answer to the following questions no later than Friday, September 3rd 2021, at 5:30pm as this is an urgent matter. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

BRYAN STEIL
Member of Congress

JIM BANKS
Member of Congress

¹ https://www.theepochtimes.com/state-department-mum-on-why-it-killed-pompeos-crisis-evacuation-unit_3956162.html

² <https://freebeacon.com/biden-administration/biden-state-dept-moved-to-abolish-crisis-response-bureau-months-before-taliban-takeover-of-afghanistan/>

³ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-struggles-to-count-its-citizens-in-afghanistan-as-biden-weighs-withdrawal-delay-11629744179>