

Afghan troops fled to Iran amid Taliban takeover, GOP report says

[Leo Shane III](#) Aug 14, 10:01 PM



[Thousands of Afghan security personnel](#), including special forces troops, likely fled to Iran with U.S. equipment and military knowledge as their country fell to [Taliban insurgents](#) last year, according to a new report released by House Republican leaders on Monday.

The [119-page document](#) accuses President Joe Biden's administration of failing to adequately prepare for the evacuation of Afghan allies in the months leading up to the full withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country in August 2021. This includes using just 36 consular officers to process more than

100,000 requests for evacuation.

“Despite multiple bipartisan appeals from members of Congress and outside veterans’ groups, the Biden administration demonstrated no urgency in evacuating America’s Afghan partners,” the report states.

The authors said their findings come from interviews with whistleblowers, previously unreleased State Department memos and interviews with individuals on the ground in Afghanistan in the days leading up to the withdrawal.

It does not include any direct testimony from senior administration officials, who have previously criticized Republicans’ work on the issue as politically motivated.

State Department officials have said they attempted to work with GOP lawmakers to clarify lingering questions about the evacuation, but Republican House leaders disputed that assertion, saying the department did not cooperate with their oversight work.

In an appearance on Face the Nation on Sunday, Rep. Mike McCaul, ranking member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the findings refute White House assertions that the chaotic withdrawal was inevitable, and that the administration did everything possible to mitigate the lives lost.

“There are many sins,” he said. “There was a complete lack of a plan, and a failure to plan. ... And it could have been avoided.”

Military officials have said about 124,000 American citizens and Afghan allies were evacuated in the months leading up to the end of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. More than 80,000 of those left in the final two weeks of the U.S. military presence there.

The Republican report focuses on thousands of others who were not helped, including more than 3,000 Afghan security forces believed to have fled into neighboring Iran.

An inspector general report from May said that those individuals could become valuable military assets for the Iranian leaders looking to learn about U.S. training and tactics.

"No special prioritization status has yet been granted to any former Afghan military personnel despite the security risks highlighted by the Biden administration's own State Department," the report states.

During an appearance on CNN Sunday, former Afghan president Ashraf Ghani blamed former President Donald Trump for the fall of his government last year, saying the deal Trump struck with Taliban leaders in February 2020 to remove all U.S. military forces undermined the long-term security situation there.

The Republican report partially acknowledges that deal but places most of the blame on Biden for the Taliban takeover, saying a better plan would have given government fighters enough support to continue on.

McCaul said in his Face the Nation appearance called the findings "a fairly objective report about the failures that were made."

The report's authors said more information on missteps leading up to the Afghanistan withdrawal are still needed to ensure that similar mistakes are not repeated in the future. They've also called for additional public hearings on the issue in coming months.

Democratic leaders in recent weeks have pushed back on that idea, pointing to several public hearings already held on the topic in late 2021 and early 2022.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jack Reed, D-R.I., earlier this

month said he wants lawmakers to follow through with plans for a nonpartisan commission established last year to conduct a thorough study into “all matters” relating to the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, from the 2001 invasion to the 2021 withdrawal.

The one-year anniversary of the full U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan is Aug. 30. The mid-term congressional elections are scheduled for Nov. 8.

Leo covers Congress, Veterans Affairs and the White House for Military Times. He has covered Washington, D.C. since 2004, focusing on military personnel and veterans policies. His work has earned numerous honors, including a 2009 Polk award, a 2010 National Headliner Award, the IAVA Leadership in Journalism award and the VFW News Media award.

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