



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAY 20 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Departmental Review of the U.S. Military Withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021

On August 26, 2021, President Biden's administration led a chaotic withdrawal of U.S. military and embassy officials from Afghanistan that led to the deaths of 13 U.S. Service members and 170 civilians in a suicide bombing at the Kabul International Airport's Abbey Gate. President Trump and I have formally pledged full transparency for what transpired during our military withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Department of Defense has an obligation, both to the American people and to the warfighters who sacrificed their youth in Afghanistan, to get to the facts. This remains an important step toward regaining faith and trust with the American people and all those who wear the uniform and is prudent based on the number of casualties and equipment lost during the execution of this withdrawal operation.

Over the last three months, the Department has been engaged in a review of this catastrophic event in our military's history. I have concluded that we need to conduct a comprehensive review to ensure that accountability for this event is met and that the complete picture is provided to the American people. To meet this imperative, I am directing the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ATSD-PA) and Senior Advisor, Sean Parnell to convene a Special Review Panel (SRP) for the Department who will thoroughly examine previous investigations, to include but not limited to, findings of fact, sources, witnesses, and analyze the decision making that led to one of America's darkest and deadliest international moments. This team will ensure ACCOUNTABILITY to the American people and the warfighters of our great Nation.

PBJ



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