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**BLUMENTHAL URGES PRESIDENT BIDEN
TO EXPAND EVACUATION OF AT-RISK AFGHAN
ALLIES & THEIR FAMILIES**

Afghan allies – including the family members of U.S. veterans, former military translators, civil servants, humanitarian workers, journalists, and others – remain at significant risk

[WASHINGTON, D.C.] – Today, U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) wrote President Joe Biden calling for a clear, effective strategy to expedite the evacuation of Americans and at-risk Afghan allies who face significant, imminent risk if they remain in Afghanistan.

Blumenthal urged President Biden to appoint an “**evacuation czar**” to coordinate expanded efforts to arrange the swift departure and resettlement of Afghan nationals who “**worked for the American government, served alongside our troops, or dedicated their lives to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan.**”

Blumenthal noted that measures to evacuate at-risk Afghan allies and conduct security screenings outside of Afghanistan are fully compatible with rigorous and thorough vetting processes already in place under current policies. “**To fulfil our moral obligations as well as protect our own security, we can establish a process allowing at-risk Afghan allies to complete vetting and screening in a third country before resettlement,**” Blumenthal wrote.

Blumenthal encouraged President Biden to direct his administration to work with independent non-profit organizations – many organized by veterans and servicemembers – that are coordinating additional evacuation efforts. Blumenthal also raised concern that current policies are restricting these efforts by preventing the departure of several humanitarian charter flights that have been denied permission to land at Al Udeid Air Base because their manifests do not meet certain narrow categories for entry into the lily pad system. The passengers on these flights include longtime U.S. government workers and the relatives of U.S. military combat veterans – all of whom are being directly targeted by the Taliban for their or their family’s work in support of the American mission in Afghanistan.

Blumenthal wrote: “**Keeping our nation’s word to these at-risk Afghan allies means swiftly establishing a clear, consistent, and compassionate strategy for evacuation, including for humanitarian charter flights seeking to land at Al Udeid and other lily pad locations.**”

The full text of Blumenthal’s letter is [available here](#) and copied below.

Dear Mr. President:

I write with serious concerns about ongoing obstacles to evacuate at-risk Afghan allies – military translators, civil servants, humanitarian workers, and others who supported the US mission in Afghanistan. I strongly support your admirable work to secure the safe departure of Americans who are still in Afghanistan. I urge the Administration to expand on these efforts and articulate a clear, effective strategy to expedite the evacuation of these remaining Americans and at-risk Afghan allies.

Numerous Afghans who worked for the American government, served alongside our troops, or dedicated their lives to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, remain in the country at significant imminent risk. They lack the luxury of waiting years to seek safety. Their family homes are commonly visited by the Taliban and their names are on “kill lists.” Some have already been detained, tortured, and murdered.

I have called repeatedly for an “evacuation czar” with clear Presidential direction and authority to implement such a strategy and coordinate the numerous federal agencies with responsibilities for evacuating and resettling our at-risk Afghan allies.

More creative and proactive measures can assure both our national security and the safety of these at-risk Afghan allies. Threshold security vetting and eligibility processing in Afghanistan can be conducted remotely to allow swift departure from Afghanistan to third countries, or “lily pads.” Our partners on the ground, such as Qatar, can play a role. After arrival in a third country, rigorous and thorough security screening and vetting can be completed before entry into the United States. Of course, anyone failing this security process would be denied entry to the United States. Screenings at these lily pad locations have the benefit of consular presence and a safe, secure environment. Conducted there, they can be effective and cost-efficient. To fulfil our moral obligations as well as protect our own security, we can establish a process allowing at-risk Afghan allies to complete vetting and screening in a third country before resettlement.

Humanitarian charter flights independently organized and funded by non-profit organizations can expedite the evacuation process parallel to U.S. government efforts. Several of these charter flights manifested with at-risk Afghan allies and their families have recently sought permission to land at Al Udeid Air Base in Doha, Qatar, currently the largest lily pad site. Unfortunately, I understand they have been denied permission to land because some on their manifests do not fit certain narrowly defined categories established by the State Department. Public reports indicate that only American citizens, LPRs, and SIV applicants who have received Chief of Mission approval will receive State Department approval to depart Afghanistan.

I fear that the result of an unnecessarily restrictive policy would be to strand many of our most at-risk allies until they complete a years-long visa application process from Afghanistan.

Keeping our nation’s word to these at-risk Afghan allies means swiftly establishing a clear, consistent, and compassionate strategy for evacuation, including for humanitarian charter flights seeking to land at Al Udeid and other lily pad locations. Such an effective strategy may also require investing more resources, waiving parole fees, providing funds to qualified non-government agencies, or other measures. Time is of the essence as the situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate.

Thank you for your consideration and continued leadership.
