



May 13, 2021

The Honorable Anthony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. State Department
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

The Honorable Samantha J. Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523

Dear Secretary Blinken, Secretary Austin, and Ambassador Power:

On behalf of the member companies of the Professional Services Council (PSC), International Stability Operations Association (ISOA), and National Defense Industrial Association, we are requesting your help in addressing the significant impacts of President Biden's decision to withdraw all U.S. military forces from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021, on contracting partners who support our nation's Afghanistan policy. We also offer recommendations for improving access to feedback from those partners, many of whom have operated side-by-side with U.S. defense, development, and diplomatic personnel in Afghanistan for almost 20 years. We want to help ensure that the U.S. drawdown in Afghanistan is carefully planned and successfully executed with due consideration given to contractor concerns and to support future, post-drawdown U.S. Government (USG) efforts in Afghanistan and the broader region. As you know, these issues and actions affect deployments and interests globally.

You know well that government contractors have long supported USG policies in Afghanistan and around the world. They have played, and continue to play, a critical role supporting a fully functional Afghan Government, strengthening women's voices throughout Afghanistan, and contributing to a more developed and sustainable Afghan economy. Services provided by government contractors range from training a broad spectrum of Afghan personnel—from high-ranking ministry officials responsible for strategies, policies, and budgets to air traffic controllers

that maintain air safety standards for civilian and military aircraft—to advancing women’s rights, participation, and education to implementing projects to support a more stable, robust economic base and workforce. Companies under contract with the U.S. Government also provide a wide range of support to deployed U.S. forces, other USG agencies, and Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and other Afghan entities. This work relies on and supports supply chains throughout the region (e.g., UAE, Bahrain, Qatar).

According to available data, unclassified Fiscal Year 2020 federal contract spending for Afghanistan was \$3.6 billion, of which \$3.1 billion (88 percent) was for services and \$431.7 million (12 percent) was for products. \$2.8 billion of that total was for Department of Defense (DoD) contracts, \$524.3 million for the Department of State, and \$174.4 million for the Agency for International Development (USAID).

All of this impact and support is at risk during the drawdown, and that risk is exacerbated by the current lack of USG-industry collaboration in both Kabul and Washington. The planned drawdown of DoD forces will significantly affect security, raise as-yet-unanswered questions about the future of USG policy toward Afghanistan, leave undetermined the work that industry partners will be allowed to perform, and create confusion regarding the ways in which contractors can best support the DoD drawdown and remaining U.S. Government missions. Questions include:

- What does the future of Afghanistan support look like? What will be the impact on other USG agencies operating in Afghanistan? What are the roles of those agencies? What role will contractors play both in-country and in the region? How are USG officials in-country and in Washington communicating on these questions with their contractor partners?
- What is the role for continued contractor support for Afghan government missions and capabilities, either in-country or over-the-horizon?
- Non-DOD USG agencies are currently soliciting proposals for planned firm-fixed-price, 5-year contracts. USAID officials are still actively planning at least 5 projects with 3-4 awards per fiscal quarter.
 - How should U.S. government contractors in Afghanistan think about force protection, legal liabilities, and life support in a post-drawdown environment?
 - How should contractors prepare for future support of our nation’s intelligence missions in Afghanistan?
- What are DoD plans to react quickly to security conditions in a post-drawdown Afghanistan? What consideration is being given to government contractor personnel?
- What impact will the drawdown have on USG contracts in regional support locations such as Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, and elsewhere?

To help ensure better planning for and successful execution of the drawdown and to support post-drawdown USG efforts in Afghanistan and the region, we recommend the **creation of two collaboration forums between USG officials and their government contracting partners.**

Secretary Austin, you will recognize these because they are similar to procedures in place when you were previously involved.

One collaborative forum should be in Kabul, where USG officials previously held regularly-scheduled meetings with implementing partners. In-country USG and contractor officials, meeting weekly, can share information, coordinate efforts, and help on-the-ground personnel address issues even in a fast-changing security environment.

A second collaborative forum should be in Washington. Current biweekly DoD meetings do not represent the majority of contractors operating in Afghanistan, nor do they include all non-DoD USG entities that will require a continued contractor presence in post-drawdown Afghanistan. Given the pace of the drawdown, such collaborative meetings involving USG planners and industry officials would provide a good mechanism to raise and address government contractors' concerns and to permit DoD and other USG planners to learn of and incorporate industry insights into drawdown planning and execution.

Contractors need up-to-date information from USG officials on the constantly changing drawdown impact on USG missions in Afghanistan and on the security environment for contractor operations. Better communications and prudent planning that includes contractors can help protect our people while executing the drawdown and achieving defense, development, and diplomatic goals.

We look forward to expanded engagement on these issues, and we thank you for your consideration of the concerns and recommendations outlined in this letter. You may always contact PSC at berteaud@pscouncil.org or (703) 875-8154, ISOA at howielind@stability-operations.org or (703) 336-3940, and NDIA at hcarlisle@ndia.org and (703) 247-2550.

We look forward to your reply.

Respectfully yours,



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