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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 31, 2021

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Dear Veterans of Afghanistan and Families,

Over the last two weeks, our country has watched the collapse of the government of Afghanistan and the deterioration of security for its people. We know that for most of you, watching these events unfold has been difficult and frustrating. Over the past two decades, you, your fellow servicemembers, and your families have sacrificed greatly while fulfilling your mission in Afghanistan. As our hearts ache for the future of the Afghan people and for our Afghan allies, we will work to see that this war is ended responsibly. As Chair and Ranking member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, we want each of you to know that you not only have our support, but also our admiration and confidence for what you have achieved and what you will go on to achieve for our country.

The current situation in Afghanistan is not the fault of men and women in uniform. You executed the War on Terror with world-class expertise, and our military will continue these critical counter-terrorism missions as long as necessary to keep our nation and its allies safe. The American public has trust in you, and for good reason. Your courage and compassion have been a bright and encouraging spot over these past two weeks. That is who the U.S. military is, and that will not change.

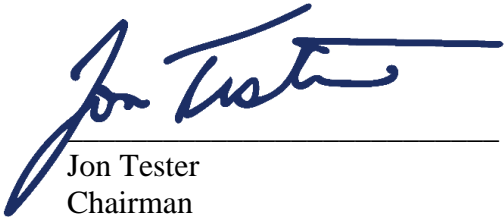
In the last 20 years, the U.S. military ousted the Taliban from power, eliminated the threat from al-Qaeda, and brought Osama bin Laden to justice. For ordinary Afghans, especially women and girls, your service and sacrifice delivered new opportunities to live free and to thrive in ways that were previously unimaginable. You also formed bonds of friendship with our interpreters, Afghan defense forces, and other Afghan allies. And for years now, you have engaged with Congress and Presidential administrations to ensure that our Afghan partners who worked and fought alongside U.S. forces are not left behind. Throughout this year and since the collapse of the Afghan government, these efforts have intensified, saving countless lives through your sheer determination and refusal to leave American allies on the battlefield.

Make no mistake, your service has left a lasting and unparalleled impact on this world.

Whatever you are feeling in response to events in Afghanistan, we encourage you to share your thoughts with friends and family. You are not alone in feeling upset, frustrated, or angry, and you should talk to a trusted mental health counselor or other veteran-serving community organization if those feelings persist or become overwhelming. *If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255 or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).* Additionally, if you are a veteran of Afghanistan or the Global War on Terror, please reach out to your fellow veterans, talk about what is happening, and help them connect to these resources if needed.

We are dedicated to ensuring you, and all veterans, have the right tools and resources to be successful after your service, and we will continue to push the Department of Veterans Affairs to match its services to the emerging needs of those of you who served in Afghanistan. We ask each of you to keep serving in any way you can. Our country is better off because of who you are, what you have done, and what you will do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jon Tester
Chairman
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jerry Moran". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs