

September 20, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

I write to seek more clarity regarding the admission and vetting of refugees and other individuals from Afghanistan. While admitting those who served alongside U.S. forces and those who would face religious persecution is laudable, there is a great deal of public confusion as to the full scope of those who are entering the U.S. following the fall of Afghanistan's government to the Taliban and the subsequent U.S. withdrawal. Additionally, there is significant concern about the thoroughness of the security screening process, and how reallocating resources to deal with this crisis is impacting the Department of Homeland Security's other critical missions.

As you know, there is significant concern with admitting large numbers of immigrants from a war-torn country like Afghanistan, which has a lack of comprehensive records from which to screen most people. Further, this administration's calamitous and rushed withdrawal has significantly eroded public trust given reports that more than 120,000 people were evacuated, yet most Special Immigrant Visa applicants and a number of U.S. citizens were left behind. Equally as concerning, there are numerous media reports of potential child trafficking cases involving "child brides" and of women and children being subjected to sexual abuse prior to their departure from Afghanistan.

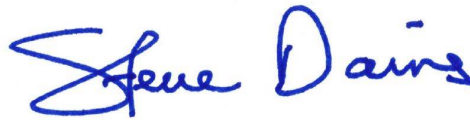
This avoidable disaster, coupled with the historic crisis on the southern border leads to a number of questions regarding this process:

1. How many evacuees are currently in the U.S. and how many total individuals does the administration plan to resettle in the U.S.?
2. How many employees has DHS reassigned or coordinated to work on vetting evacuees from Afghanistan?
 - a. How many of those were reassigned from securing land borders in the U.S.?
 - b. How is DHS ensuring that its existing responsibilities, such as securing the southern border, are being maintained?
3. How long does it take to provide a full and thorough security screening to evacuees?

- a. Is this process fully completed overseas or are some sent to the U.S. who have only been partially screened?
 - b. Once evacuees arrive in the U.S. are they subject to continual screening?
 - c. With current resources, how many evacuees can be fully screened per week?
4. What steps, if any, are taken to screen for potential child trafficking or other sexual misconduct cases?
- a. Do these screenings take place overseas, in the U.S., or both?
 - b. If an evacuee is identified at an overseas screening location of suspected trafficking or sexual misconduct, does this prohibit them from being admitted to the U.S.?
 - c. If an evacuee is identified at a U.S. screening location of suspected trafficking or sexual misconduct, are they subject to removal from the U.S.?

I look forward to a timely response to these questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Daines". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

STEVE DAINES
United States Senator