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One Hundred Nineteenth Congress
U.S. House of
Representatives
Committee on Foreign
Affairs

2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
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March 17, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write to you with grave concern regarding the State Department's seeming lack of preparedness for the war it initiated with Iran and its foreseeable risks to American citizens and U.S. government personnel. Despite President Trump publicly threatening over at least the past three months to strike Iran, the Department's lack of preparation under your leadership for such an event has put the lives of thousands of Americans across the Middle East and broader region in needless danger since U.S. military operations against Iran began on February 28.¹

On February 24, you reportedly acknowledged that if Iran was attacked it would conduct retaliatory strikes against U.S. bases and embassies.² Indeed, during the United States' attack on

¹ Adam Taylor et al., "State Dept. Scrambles to Aid Stranded Americans amid Attacks, Airport Closures," *Washington Post*, March 4, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/03/03/iran-embassy-closures-stranded-americans/>.

² Mark Mazzetti, Julian E. Barnes, Tyler Pager, Edward Wong, Eric Schmitt, and Ronen Bergman, "How Trump Decided to Go to War," *New York Times*, March 2, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/02/us/politics/trump-war-iran-israel.html>.

Iran last summer, Iran's leaders had retaliated with strikes against U.S. military bases in Qatar and Iraq.³ Suspected Iranian strikes since February 28 have targeted U.S. personnel in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Iraq, with parts of the embassy in Riyadh called "unrecoverable."⁴ Additionally, U.S. Marines in Karachi, Pakistan are reported to have fired on attackers who had breached the grounds of the consulate on March 1 following the death of Ayatollah Khamenei.⁵

Despite these anticipated retaliatory attacks, the Department did not begin to order or authorize the departure of U.S. diplomats and their families until March 2—two days after the war had begun—from Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. U.S. personnel in Karachi and Lahore were evacuated a day later, after the attack in Karachi had already occurred. Additionally, you indicated that more than 1,600 Americans were stranded and seeking means to leave the region after the war began.⁶

There is no higher responsibility than the safety and security of Americans overseas. Yet the Department under your direction did not prioritize getting Americans out of the conflict area or sufficiently preparing U.S. embassies and personnel for the consequences of President Trump's decision to begin the war on February 28. It was not until March 2 that Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Mora Namdar posted on X for Americans to, "DEPART NOW ... using available commercial transportation" from 14 countries.⁷ But by that time, commercial flights had largely stopped across the region, leaving Americans stranded. The conflicting messaging telling Americans to leave without means of evacuation sowed mass confusion. It took another day for President Trump to state that the United States would start providing government-chartered flights.⁸

Despite State Department officials telling Americans to leave 14 countries and now assisting Americans to leave the region, the Department still has not changed its public-facing travel advisories to the highest level of "Do Not Travel" for countries in the conflict zone—except for Iraq and Lebanon, which were already at Level 4 prior to the start of current U.S. military operations. It strains common sense that in the middle of an escalating war with no clear end, you would not tell Americans to avoid travel to countries most impacted by the violence.

³ NPR Staff, "Hours after Attack on US. Base, Trump Says Iran and Israel Will Begin a Ceasefire," NPR, June 23, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/06/23/g-sl-74059/iran-attack-us-bases-iraq-qat-ar>.

⁴ Dan Lamothe & Missy Ryan, "Drone hits US. diplomatic facility in Iraq as Mideast violence deepens," WASH. POST, Mar. 10, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/03/10/baghdad-diplomatic-drone-strike/>.

⁵ Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart, "Exclusive: US. Marines Fired on Protesters Storming Consulate in Karachi, Officials Say," Reuters, March 3, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-marines-fired-protesters-storming-consulate-karachi-officials-say-2026-03-03/>.

⁶ State Dept. scrambles to aid stranded Americans amid attacks, airport closures, Adam Taylor, Dan Lamothe, Sammy Westfall, WASH. POST, Mar. 3, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/03/03/iran-embassy-closures-stranded-americans/>.

⁷ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Dep't of State (@AsstSecStateCA), Post on X (Mar. 10, 2026), <https://x.com/asstsecstateca/status/2028588420403241021>

⁸ Isabella Kwai, Ceylan Yeginsu, Omnia Al Desoukie, and Alexandra E. Petri, "Some Evacuation Flights Begin for Travelers Stranded in Middle East," New York Times, March 3, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/03/world/middleeast/iran-war-middle-east-traveler-evacuations.html>.

President Trump launched Operation Epic Fury at a time of his choosing. If safeguarding Americans was the Administration's highest priority, then the Department should have raised the travel advisories to Level 4 weeks before the campaign began-and started authorized and ordered departures of diplomats and their family members, as well as assisting American citizens to leave in accordance with a longstanding, no-double standard policy. A task force also should have been stood up to coordinate the safety of Americans across the Department and U.S. government before the war began-not after. This would have decreased the danger facing Americans and avoided the chaos that they have faced since February 28 due to the decisions of you and your senior leadership.

As the U.S. House of Representatives committee with primary jurisdiction over the Department of State, including its consular and management operations, we need to better understand the factors and decision-making around these matters. We thus request that the Department provide detailed, written responses to the following questions, with a classified annex if necessary, by March 30:

1. Prior to February 28, why did the Department not raise the travel advisories for all 14 Middle East countries it later ordered Americans to depart from on March 2, or begin moving diplomats and their families out of the region?
2. When did the Department begin contingency planning for potential consular or embassy operations challenges in the event of a war with Iran? What did any such contingency planning entail?
3. Did you or your senior leadership, including Under Secretary for Management Jason Evans, provide guidance to U.S. embassies and consulates to review their travel advisories and emergency planning related to a possible war with Iran? If so, when did that occur?
4. When did the State Department Travel Advisory Review Committee, per 7 FAM 013, last review the need for a change in the advice level for countries in the region?
5. On what dates in 2026 have Emergency Action Committees been convened at any U.S. posts located in the 14 Middle East countries from which the Department on March 2 ordered Americans to depart?
6. What coordination occurred with the National Security Council, Department of Defense, or other relevant federal agencies to provide additional security at embassies, charter aircraft to safely evacuate American citizens, or, if necessary, a non-combatant evacuation operation of Americans prior to February 28?
7. What communication was there with host governments prior to February 28 to increase local security at our embassies and consulates in the possibility of attacks from unmanned aerial systems, violent protests, or other means of attacks?

8. When and in what ways was threat reporting and/or intelligence shared with senior Department leadership prior to February 28 regarding the likely consequences of a war with Iran on U.S. Embassies and chief of mission personnel in the region?
9. What steps, if any, were taken prior to February 28 to improve or increase the security posture at U.S. embassies in the region, including but not limited to Diplomatic Security presence, hardening or reinforcement of physical facilities, deployment of additional defensive equipment or other countermeasures?
10. Why did the Department suspend all operations, including all American citizen services and core diplomatic activities, at Embassy Kuwait abruptly on March 5 when other regional posts, including those already on authorized or ordered departure facing similar threats, have continued operations?
11. What is the current status of the physical facilities at Embassy Riyadh and what efforts, if any, are underway to assess the extent and type of repairs needed to enable U.S. diplomatic operations and American citizen services to resume? What is the timeline for doing so?
12. What steps has the Department taken at the consulate in Karachi following the March 1 violent protests and attack on the compound to ensure the security of all mission personnel as well as the physical compound?
13. Do you plan to convene Security Review Committees for the posts that were attacked and inform congressional committees within 60 days as required by law?

We are grateful to the public servants at the Department who have been working tirelessly to get Americans safely out of harm's way and advance America's diplomatic interests in the face of violent attacks. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Gregory W. Meeks
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign
Affairs



Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



George Latimer
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
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Sydney Kamlager-Dove
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Joaquin Castro
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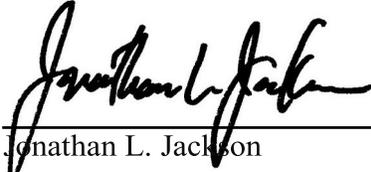
Sara Jacobs
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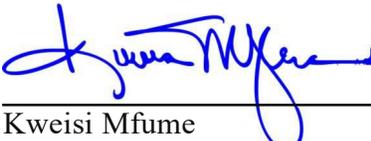
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Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



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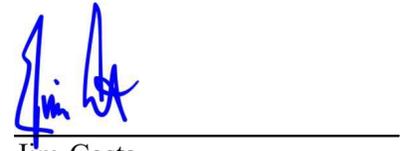
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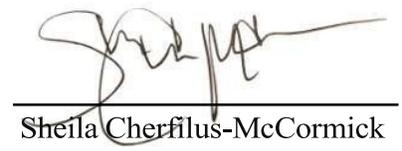
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