

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3313

January 25, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

The situation on the border between Russia and Ukraine is dangerous and evolving. Russia has amassed more than 100,000 troops on the border, and reports suggest President Vladimir Putin's aim is to install a pro-Kremlin puppet regime in Ukraine, potentially by force of arms.<sup>1</sup>

In recent days, the Biden administration has made several announcements with mixed signals. On January 23, 2022, the State Department issued a “do not travel” warning to Americans and urged those Americans in Ukraine to depart immediately.<sup>2</sup> Also on January 23, the State Department ordered the U.S. Embassy staff to evacuate the country.<sup>3</sup>

That same day, however, the State Department reportedly told the press that, “Given that the President has said military action by Russia could come at any time. The U.S. government will not be in a position to evacuate U.S. citizens. So U.S. citizens, currently present in Ukraine should plan accordingly.”<sup>4</sup>

It is troubling that State Department officials and the White House recently admitted that the United States does not have a “solid number” of Americans in Ukraine. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki remarked on January 21 that, “it’s an open question” and “we don’t put a chip in Americans when they go to countries around the world and track their movements.” She

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<sup>1</sup> Grayson Quay, *Russia Plans to Install Puppet Regime in Ukraine, Says U.K. Intelligence Report*, THE WEEK (Jan. 23, 2022), <https://theweek.com/ukraine/1009293/russia-plans-to-install-puppet-regime-in-ukraine-says-uk-intelligence-report>.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Sabes, *State Department Issues 'do not travel' Warning for Ukraine as Embassy Staff is Told to Leave*, FOX NEWS (Jan. 23, 2022), <https://www.foxnews.com/world/state-department-orders-evacuation-of-diplomats-families-from-ukraine-embassy>.

<sup>3</sup> Eleanor Watson, *U.S. Orders Embassy Staffers' Families to Leave Ukraine Amid Russian Military Buildup*, CBS NEWS (Jan. 24, 2022), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-ukraine-us-embassy-families-leave-kyiv/>.

<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Griffin (@JenGriffinFNC), TWITTER (Jan. 23, 2022, 7:55 PM), <https://twitter.com/jengriffinfnc/status/1485415912706613249?s=21>.

later stated, however, that, “the State Department would certainly have the number, in terms of Americans who have registered with the State Department.”<sup>5</sup> When President Biden’s remarks about accepting a “minor incursion” from Russia are taken into account, the American people are rightly concerned about the fate of citizens caught in the middle of this volatile situation.

Given the fact that the Biden administration stranded an unknown number of Americans in Afghanistan during last year’s withdrawal, I write to you with extreme concern for the fate of American citizens again in harm's way in Ukraine.

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Given Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland’s broad estimate that “a range of 10 to 15,000”<sup>6</sup> Americans are in Ukraine right now, does the Biden administration know the exact number of Americans who may be in need of evacuation from Ukraine?
2. If Russia invades Ukraine, does the Biden administration have a plan to evacuate every American in Ukraine who wants to leave?
3. What steps is the Biden administration willing to take to keep U.S. citizens in Ukraine safe if Russia does invade?

When American citizens are abroad, they deserve the full protection of the United States government. Yet, the Biden administration’s handling of the withdrawal from Afghanistan, leaving Americans behind, was nothing short of disgraceful. I am concerned a similar situation could repeat itself in Ukraine. A policy of “you’re on your own” is not an acceptable policy for the United States of America.

Sincerely,



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Ted Budd  
Member of Congress

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<sup>5</sup> Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki (Jan. 21, 2022), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2022/01/21/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-jen-psaki-january-21-2022/>

<sup>6</sup> Natasha Bertrand et al., *Biden Administration Considering Options for Possibly Evacuating US Citizens from Ukraine if Russia Invades*, CNN (Dec. 7, 2021), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/12/07/politics/us-citizens-evacuation-ukraine/index.html>.