

United States Senate

September 13, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

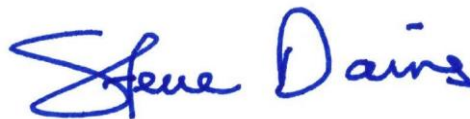
Dear President Biden,

Following the 20th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the world remains in shock over the failed withdrawal of the U.S. from Afghanistan. Hasty planning and empty promises left hundreds of U.S. citizens stranded and thousands of vulnerable Afghans abandoned. Our closest allies feel vulnerable, and some are re-evaluating their ties with the U.S. The strongest world power for nearly a century is seen as weak and reluctant, embattled with internal strife. As we pivot from Afghanistan, the U.S. must not validate those perceptions with partisan infighting, and we must instead act decisively to regain our footing abroad.

Over the past three days, Super-typhoon Chantu brought devastating winds and torrential rainfall upon our closest allies in the south Pacific, including the Philippines and Taiwan. Scenes of catastrophic flooding, landslides, and human suffering are likely hours away, ripe for Chinese propaganda to chip away at the confidence of its 23 million citizens. U.S. ships should be first on scene to provide assistance as necessary to those in need. Concurrently, the Philippine National Defense Secretary has asked your Administration for support in defending its sovereignty against China's new maritime law which took effect on September 1st, requiring vessels inside the nine-dash line to report to Chinese authorities. Those assurances should be implicitly understood, and any ambiguity resolved before the Secretary's return to the Philippines. The U.S. should also protect and support the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea for trade and our allies in the region. Additionally, China is reportedly considering troop deployments to Bagram Air Base in consultation with Taliban authorities, giving credence and legitimacy to its government. We must not cede any more leverage in our diplomatic efforts—or what little remains from our outpost in Doha.

Mr. President, now is the time to reassure U.S. allies and partners of our resolve, and demonstrate strength on the world stage. I urge you to refocus your Administration on that task, and take swift action to regain the initiative on these unfolding events.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator