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October 19, 2017

The Honorable Ed Royce
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Royce,

I write in regards to the recent attack in Niger that resulted in the deaths of four members of U.S. Special Operations Forces. As Congress and the American people struggle to get clear answers from the Administration about what happened in Niger, the attack leaves us with many questions about what we are doing there in the first place. Given the thousands of U.S. military personnel deployed across the continent and the years-long counter-terrorism mission that appear to lack a regional strategy, I request that you call Administration officials to testify before our committee on the attack in Niger and broader U.S. objectives.

I am deeply concerned that over two weeks later, basic facts about the attack against U.S. and Nigerien forces still remain unclear. Sen. John McCain indicated the Administration has not been upfront about the circumstances surrounding the operation or the attack, and has reported at times conflicting information. One of the ways to honor the sacrifice of our four fallen soldiers in Niger is to ensure that they did not die in vain, and that more service members do not fall because we failed to conduct basic oversight of U.S. strategy.

The U.S. has approximately 800 soldiers deployed to Niger. Yet despite this significant presence of U.S. service members, our committee has not held a single full committee hearing focused on U.S. objectives in Niger specifically or the Sahel region more broadly since 2013.

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration has not articulated its strategy for the U.S. counter-terrorism mission across Africa, nor has it devoted the necessary resources to empower democratic governments to make progress sustainable, combat radicalization and protect human rights. Four years after the U.S. significantly scaled up our military presence in the Sahel region, it is clear that we're fighting the wars but we're not finding the peace.

As a Veteran, I firmly believe one of Congress' most fundamental duties is to conduct oversight over war powers and operations, especially when Americans have died. In light of recent events in Niger, I request that our committee will take action.

Sincerely,



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Eliot Engel, Ranking Member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs