

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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February 5, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington D.C., 20520

Dear Secretary Esper and Secretary Pompeo:

One month ago, on January 5, 2020, al-Shabaab terrorists launched an attack on U.S. personnel and facilities in Manda Bay, Kenya, which killed U.S. Army Spc. Henry J. Mayfield Jr. and Department of Defense contractors Bruce Triplett and Dustin Harrison. In addition to the tragic loss of three American citizens, press reports indicate that multiple aircraft were damaged, potentially costing the Pentagon millions of dollars.¹

We write today to request a briefing on the January 5, 2020, attack as significant questions about the events of that day and the security posture of the Manda Bay airfield remain unanswered.

Last week, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) Commander General Stephen Townsend acknowledged, “We were not as prepared there at Manda Bay as we needed to be.”² Multiple press reports described security at the base as “surprisingly sparse,” with a “woefully undefended perimeter” and “obvious vulnerabilities.”³ According to one military official, the base “wasn’t

¹ *Chaos as Militants Overran Airfield, Killing 3 Americans in Kenya*, New York Times (Jan. 22, 2020) (online at www.nytimes.com/2020/01/22/world/africa/shabab-kenya-terrorism.html).

² *U.S. Africa and Southern Command Operations*, Hearing Before the Senate Armed Services Committee (Jan. 30, 2020) (online at www.c-span.org/video/?c4850771/general-townsend-admits-us-fully-prepared-january-5-kenya-base-attack).

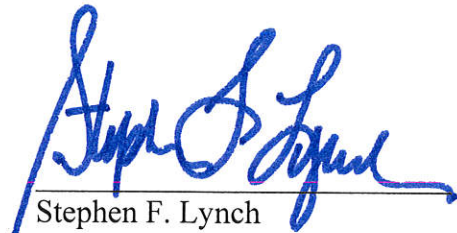
³ *Kenya Base ‘Surprisingly’ Undefended During Attack, US Officials Say*, Defense One (Jan. 29, 2020) (online at www.defenseone.com/news/2020/01/kenya-base-surprisingly-undefended-us-officials-say/162747/?oref=d-topstory).

properly manned or equipped.”⁴ Conflicting narratives have surfaced about the Kenyan military’s response to the attack, with some claiming that Kenyan forces “hid in the grass while other American troops and support staff were corralled into tents, with little protection, to wait out the battle.”⁵

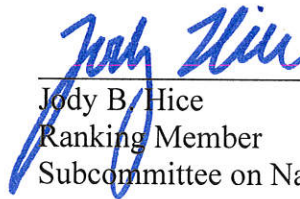
We understand that AFRICOM is conducting an internal investigation. Due to the tragic loss of American life in this attack, it is vital for Congress to receive a briefing as soon as possible on the Department’s investigation and its interim findings. In addition, we respectfully request that you provide a complete report of the investigation’s conclusions upon its completion, including any attachments or appendices.

Please contact the Subcommittee by Friday, February 7, 2020, to schedule the requested briefing. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Stephen F. Lynch
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security



Jody B. Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Jim Jordan, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Chaos as Militants Overran Airfield, Killing 3 Americans in Kenya*, New York Times (Jan. 22, 2020) (online at www.nytimes.com/2020/01/22/world/africa/shabab-kenya-terrorism.html).