

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 25, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretaries Blinken and Austin:

We write with concern regarding recent reporting by *The New York Times* that Saudi Royal Guard unit officials who participated in the abhorrent assassination of U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi previously received State Department-authorized paramilitary training from a U.S. private security contractor.<sup>1</sup> While we understand this training happened before either of your tenures, we believe accountability is paramount.

Congress has long authorized a variety of United States foreign military training, exchanges, and capacity building for the purpose of bolstering norms and values including: civilian control of the military; respect for the rule of law, human rights, and the laws of armed conflict; and partnership and alliance-building. While we continue to believe these programs are integral to U.S. national security objectives, rigorous oversight is paramount for their success and for the integrity of the United States. We have long been concerned about private U.S. individuals and corporations providing military and intelligence-related training and services to foreign governments, and the limited extent of congressional visibility into these contracts. In this case, although public reporting indicates the security contractor that trained the Saudi officials may not have included the specific tactics that were used to carry out Mr. Khashoggi's gruesome murder, these revelations raise serious questions about such training, including whether similar training and services have enabled other human rights abuses by the Saudi regime, including against Saudi nationals at home or abroad.

As you know, along with many of our colleagues, we have been increasingly focused on ensuring additional oversight and accountability of U.S.-facilitated training, military cooperation and arms sales, particularly with regard to Saudi Arabia. To that end, we request you provide the following:

1. A comprehensive accounting of all training provided to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by, or authorized by, the Department of State or the Department of Defense, since 2014 to

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Mazzetti et al., Saudi Operatives Who Killed Khashoggi Received Paramilitary Training in U.S., *The New York Times*, June 22, 2021.

the present, including training that has been approved but has yet to be initiated (not including training or services directly and solely related to the operation of military aircraft, missile systems or armored vehicles). This should include any such training planned to support the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Defense Transformation program, clearly identify the U.S. contractors in question, and the amount of financial compensation for each contract.

2. In the case of a license granted by the State Department for a private contractor, a clear articulation of the criteria and vetting procedures for approving such licenses, any process for re-evaluating licenses (for example, after a certain number of years or a change in political leadership), and any circumstances under which licenses may be revoked.

Given both the sensitivity and quality of U.S. military expertise and the grave risk for placing these skills and knowledge in the wrong hands, the lack of restrictions or requirements in U.S. law regarding U.S. provision of military, security, and intelligence-related services to foreign governments and entities is alarming. There have been numerous allegations that such services have been misused by foreign governments to commit actions that undermine U.S. national interests.

More immediately, we must thoroughly assess and reevaluate the full extent of such services that the U.S. Government and U.S. private contractors are providing to Saudi Arabia. The United States and Saudi Arabia have a history of partnership to confront common threats, and we should continue to support our partners with the understanding that the United States will uphold fundamental values. We look forward to the prompt provision of this information, in an unclassified format to the maximum extent possible.

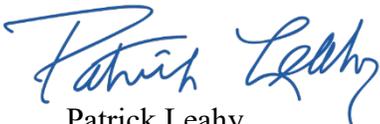
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator