

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 20, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Mr. Christopher C. Miller
Acting Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1300

Dear Acting Secretary Miller:

We write today to urge your attention to the status of American citizen and Illinoisan Mark Frerichs. Mr. Frerichs has been missing from Afghanistan since January 31, 2020 and is believed to have been kidnapped by members of the Taliban, Haqqani Network or their affiliates.

As the duration of his captivity stretches into months, his family is understandably distressed about his well-being and questioning what efforts are underway to secure his return. As plans continue to develop for a drawdown of American forces in Afghanistan, we are increasingly concerned that we may be losing our largest point of leverage to make sure that all American hostages in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including Mark Frerichs, are returned safely home to their families.

With your background in counterterrorism and your previous roles in this administration overseeing personnel recovery and hostage issues, we know you understand the gravity of Mark's situation.

While diplomatic channels might be the best avenue for Mark's return, you could be an important advocate for the safe return of remaining American hostages held in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including Mark. We urge you, as the lead for the announced drawdown of troops from Afghanistan, to devote attention to this case in your interagency discussions and conversations with the President.

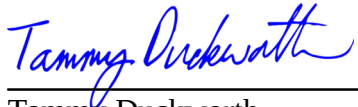
As you plan for an accelerated withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, please do not forget Mark and others like him or ignore the potential consequences of withdrawal without concessions from the Taliban. These hostages' safe return should be a condition

for any reduction in troops and a primary consideration in this Administration's future plans in the region.

As a Veteran, you know that we do not leave Americans behind. We request that you ensure your interagency partners—and the entire Trump Administration—understand this, as well.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator