

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

March 22, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

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

Dear Secretaries Pompeo and Esper,

I write today requesting direct assistance from your agencies in expediently facilitating the transport of Americans who have found themselves stranded in other countries due to border closures and flight cancellations related to the Coronavirus outbreak. My office has been in contact with dozens of Wisconsinites who feel the State Department and its U.S. Embassies have been unresponsive to their pleas for assistance. Further, the airlines that transported them to countries abroad have left them abandoned. It is past time to utilize all available resources within the U.S. Government, including the Department of State and Department of Defense.

The situation for U.S. citizens in Peru and Honduras, in particular, is unacceptable. Dozens of Americans in Peru have reached out to my office frustrated and afraid. I am hearing similar stories from just as many individuals in Honduras and elsewhere.

Last week, my office was in contact with constituents stranded in Morocco, who for days reported that they were seeing travelers from other countries being evacuated while they were left behind with minimal response or information provided by the Embassy in Casablanca. It was not until Friday that the Department of State and the U.S. Mission to Morocco arranged special chartered flights for U.S. citizens and U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents to depart Marrakech International Airport at a cost of \$1485 one-way.

While the State Department and its Embassies have been providing information on possible commercial flight options available to assist U.S. citizens, my constituents have reported the resources to be ultimately ineffective and they remain frustrated with no clear path home. It is time for the State Department to stop deferring to unresponsive commercial carriers who are only offering limited and excessively priced tickets. Therefore, I am requesting that you immediately begin chartering U.S. government flights or order United States Air Mobility Command to transport citizens back to the United States.

Finally, I am requesting an immediate response to feedback my office passed along to the State Department's Repatriation Task Force that was provided to me after my office shared Department of State resource information with my constituents stranded in Peru. Specifically:

- The Latam and Avianca sign-up pages are just interest surveys
- "We got up at 5:30am to try all companies listed by the U.S. Embassy. We called AND tried online reservations on each one of these companies. NO FLIGHTS OFFERED!!"
- A plane of Americans went home to DC yesterday but it was US Embassy workers
- There are nothing but errors when you search for flights on the websites. They say cannot complete your request
- The Peru LIM airport is closed and is only open to scheduled flights arranged by governments

These are trying times for everyone and I understand that federal agencies are responding on multiple fronts to the impact that COVID-19 has had on the world. However, we have a solemn duty to protect Americans at home and abroad and we should be using every capability within the U.S. government, including the Department of Defense, to bring everyone home.

It is imperative that the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense take immediate action to ensure that all Americans currently in other countries may quickly return home during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator