

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE
HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, FULL COMMITTEE HEARING
DURING AND AFTER THE FALL OF KABUL: EXAMINING THE ADMINISTRATION'S
EMERGENCY EVACUATION FROM AFGHANISTAN
MARCH 8, 2023

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Ranking Member Meeks, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here to testify today as one of thousands who volunteered to help those left behind in Afghanistan.

[\[Slide 1\]](#) My name is France Hoang. In August 2008, I was an Associate Counsel to the President, working as a lawyer in the White House. [\[Slide 2\]](#) Just one year later, I was serving as a Captain with a U.S. Army Special Forces Company deployed to Afghanistan.

Every day that I served in Afghanistan, Afghan Allies [\[Slide 3\]](#) like Jabar, an Afghan security guard, stood resolute beside me. He, and tens of thousands of other Afghans who supported our mission in Afghanistan, were branded as traitors by the Taliban and targeted for reprisals. The Americans who served in Afghanistan, and our nation as a

whole, made a solemn promise to Afghans like Jabar to stand by them as they risked themselves and their families on our behalf.

For over 160,000 Afghans, our nation has failed to live up to this promise. To be sure, a number of Afghan Allies and their families have been able to come to the United States. But, over 80% of the Afghans who stood by us at great risk to themselves remain left behind.

[\[Slide 4\]](#) I am here today because, in August 2021 during our nation's rushed and chaotic withdrawal, thousands of Americans including me began receiving frantic pleas for help from Afghan allies whose lives were at risk because they worked with us. Unwilling to turn our back on these allies, we did what we could to save their lives. Working from our homes and using every digital tool at our disposal, thousands of us helped [\[Slide 5\]](#) guide Afghans on the ground through crowds, with frightened, tired, and hungry kids in tow, desperately trying to find a way out.

9 times out of 10, these efforts failed. But every success was a family saved, a promise kept. [\[Slide 6\]](#) Volunteer groups, such as Allied Airlift 21, were responsible for getting thousands of people into the airport and to safety.

But the work wasn't done.

[\[Slide 7\]](#) On August 27th, when the gates of Kabul Airport closed to our allies, Allied Airlift 21, other volunteers, and several private companies organized a desperate and treacherous 200 mile journey for 6 buses filled with Afghan Allies and Americans through Taliban-controlled territory to Mazar-e-Sharif. The harrowing journey included an attempted bus-jacking and the birth of a child on board one of the buses. Our group eventually got nearly 400 Afghan Allies and Americans to Mazar, where we hoped to privately charter a flight to safety.

We spent the next 3 weeks hiding these nearly 400 people from the Taliban, keeping them alive and fed using funds from private American donors. [\[Slide 8\]](#) On September 17th, 2021, a privately chartered plane lifted into the skies above Afghanistan with 380 souls on board, including 128 Americans, 152 children, and 1 newborn baby. All 380 passengers are now in America, alive and free – [\[Slide 9\]](#) including Jabar, his wife, and their 8 children.

My passion for helping our Afghan Allies comes from a deeply personal place. [\[Slide 10\]](#) You see, nearly 50 years ago, I was one of those rescued children.

In 1975, my family was evacuated by American forces from Saigon. In a speech to the American people weeks earlier, President Ford stated that America had a “profound moral obligation” to its Vietnamese allies. He and Congress then followed those words with action, putting aside political differences to evacuate and resettle 130,000 Vietnamese allies. Because of their political will and courage, I’m alive and free today.

I have been blessed with the opportunities that only America provides and grew up inspired by the sure knowledge that America stood by me and many like me. That led me to decide to apply to West Point and [\[Slide 11\]](#) serve as an officer in the U.S. Army, in order to repay the debt I felt I owed to America. And because America stood by its allies nearly 50 years ago, I was able to live a life that allowed me to eventually help organize a flight to save 380 allies, including 152 children, who are now blessed with the same opportunities I had and who will know that America stood by them and their families.

We often talk about America as a shining city on a hill, a beacon of freedom and opportunity to the world. I, along with 1 million other Vietnamese immigrants, are living proof that America can live up to that ideal, keeping our promises and meeting our moral obligations. And now we must summon the courage to fulfill our commitment to the Afghan Allies still left behind, just as your forebearers in office fulfilled their obligation to me, my family, and other Vietnamese Allies. That includes asking hard questions about the Afghanistan exit, and critically, what remains to be done to fulfill our promises to those whose lives remain in our hands. Future generations will rightly judge each one of us, and collectively our nation, for what we do—or don't do—in this moment.

We cannot let thousands remain abandoned by our nation. We cannot betray our veteran service members who reopened painful wounds of war to rescue those who our nation left behind. Promises were made and have yet to be kept. You can change that.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank a few groups before I close. First, our veterans and other volunteers who endure immense pain and burden trying to save our Allies, the organizations they stood up overnight to make it happen, and the private donors who made it possible: thank you for your past and continuing efforts, which history will long honor. Second, to the members of Congress and their staffs, including several who serve on this committee, who worked and continue to work tirelessly to help our Afghan Allies: thank you for your support and courage. Third, thank you to the many American troops, intelligence professionals, and career foreign service officers, here and in Afghanistan, who chose the harder right and saved tens of thousands of Allied lives. Fourth, to my wife and children, and the families of all of us who work this effort, who bear the brunt of our work: thank you for your unwavering support. And finally, thank you to our Afghan Allies, especially those still in Afghanistan. We have not forgotten you and we will not rest until we have fulfilled the promises our nation and our troops made to you.

I look forward to your questions.