

United States Senate

September 30, 2015

Honorable Ashton B. Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Carter,

I write to you seeking information on the Department of Defense's plan to address the brutal sexual abuse of children in Afghanistan. Although the United States has engaged in a campaign to improve governance and respect for human rights in Afghanistan for more than a decade, recent reports about potentially widespread sexual abuse of young boys, a practice known as "Bacha Bazi," suggest that we are failing in that endeavor. The reports also raise questions about the extent to which our troops are permitted to intervene to protect children who are believed to be sexually abused. I am sure you will agree that "Bacha Bazi" is morally reprehensible and contrary to the principles of the men and women who serve in the United States Armed Forces. Members of our military should never be placed in a position of choosing between their careers or the life and safety of an innocent child.

In a recent statement, General Campbell assured the public that no "theater policy has ever existed" requiring our troops to "ignore suspicions of sexual abuse committed by Afghans against children." He went on to direct that "any suspicions of sexual abuse will be immediately reported to the chain of command, regardless of who the alleged perpetrators or victims are," and "[i]f the abuse involves Afghans, a report shall be forwarded to me through operations channels, copied to the Staff Judge Advocate, so that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan can be advised and requested to take action."¹

General Campbell's statement is an excellent beginning, but it is only that, a beginning. Merely requesting that the government of Afghanistan "take action" to end the practice of "Bacha Bazi" does not suffice. Our Service Members must observe a demonstrable effort by the Afghan government to eradicate this abuse, or they will continue to perceive a lack of action and feel obligated to intervene personally to prevent the deplorable sexual abuse of children. So long as Americans are expected to fight for the security of the Afghan government, the United States has every right to demand that immediate action be taken, and if the Afghan government proves

¹<https://www.facebook.com/GENJohnCampbell/photos/a.162268200596849.1073741828.162243273932675/513810892109243/?type=1&theater>

unwilling to take the necessary action, then the United States should do so itself or be willing to withdraw our Service Members from this appalling situation.

In order that Congress is better informed on the nature and scope of the problem, I request that you provide the following information from October 1, 2012 to the present:

1. Each allegation of sexual abuse of a minor (18 years old or younger) by an Afghan national that was reported to Commander, Operation Resolute Support; Commander, United States Forces Afghanistan; or any level of their chains of command.
2. Of the allegations identified in #1, the number that were allegedly perpetrated by a member of the Afghan military or police forces.
3. Of the allegations identified in #1, the number that were allegedly perpetrated by a national or local government official.
4. Of the allegations identified in #1, the number that allegedly occurred on a U.S.-controlled installation, base, or post.
5. Describe what action the chain of command took to address each allegation of sexual abuse identified in #1.
6. Of the allegations identified in #1, the number that were reported to the government of Afghanistan for action.
7. For each allegation that was reported to the government of Afghanistan, describe what action the government of Afghanistan took.
8. Describe what actions the United States undertook to follow up on allegations that it referred to the government of Afghanistan.
9. Of the allegations identified in #1, the number of prosecutions that were pursued and the number of convictions obtained.
10. Describe each instance where a United States Service Member was disciplined for his or her actions in attempting to protect a child from sexual abuse by an Afghan national.
11. Describe what actions have been taken by the United States and the Commander, Operation Resolute Support, to address the practice of "Bacha Bazi."

Please provide the requested information as soon as possible, but **no later than 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, October 20, 2015.**

The United States of America cannot sit on the sidelines in Afghanistan and allow the deplorable practice of “Bacha Bazi” to continue. To do so would make America complicit in human rights violations of the worst sort and would dishonor the incredible sacrifice our men and women in arms have made on behalf of the Afghan people. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ted Cruz", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ted Cruz