

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4606

March 17, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write today regarding efforts by the Department of State to address serious concerns that Congress and the Department's Inspector General, among others, have raised about the Explosive Detection Canine Program (EDCP).

In September 2019, the Office of the Inspector General for the U.S. Department of State (OIG) released a report, *Evaluation of the Antiterrorism Assistance Explosive Detection Canine Program – Health and Welfare*¹. As you know, the evaluation of this program resulted from allegations that the U.S. was providing insufficient oversight, resulting in the inadequate health care, mistreatment, and premature deaths of a number of dogs. Months later, in December 2019, OIG issued a subsequent report, in response to another complaint alleging that “additional canines beyond those described in the [September] evaluation had died” from preventable causes.²

As part of its evaluations, OIG made a series of recommendations to the Department to address the serious concerns over the health and welfare of the dogs trained and deployed as a part of this program.

I was glad to see that the recent Consolidated Appropriations Act, which was signed into law on March 15, included language requiring the State Department to report to Congress on the status of dogs currently in, and retired from the program, as well as an update on the policies and procedures that the Department has implemented in response to the Inspector General's recommendations.

As you know, the Department spends millions of taxpayer dollars in order to initially train these canines, provide appropriate veterinary care, and embed mentors in partner nations, among other efforts and expenses meant to ensure the success of the program. Once abroad, these loyal

¹ OIG, *Evaluation of the Antiterrorism Assistance Explosive Detection Canine Program—Health and Welfare* (ESP19-06, September 2019) <https://www.stateoig.gov/system/files/esp-19-06.pdf>

² OIG, *Management Assistance Report: Continued Health and Welfare Concerns for Antiterrorism Assistance Explosive Detection Canines* (ESP20-02, December 2019) <https://www.stateoig.gov/system/files/esp-20-02.pdf>

canines play an invaluable role, often risking their lives in support of their security mission, working to keep important assets, their teams, and broader populations safe.

For these reasons and more, it is morally wrong and unacceptable for any deployed dog to be subjected to mistreatment, malnutrition, improper care, or unsafe shelter. Congress and the American people deserve to know the steps that the Department has taken and is planning, to ensure that taxpayer dollars are not placing dogs in these conditions.

I'm glad that the Department under your leadership will be examining this issue, and I look forward to seeing the results from the report within the required 90-day period. To coincide with that report, I would ask that the Department also brief my staff on the current status of the program.

This issue remains very important to me, and I look forward to working with you as needed to continue addressing reforms to this program.

Sincerely,



MARK R. WARNER
United States Senator