

EXCLUSIVE - Biden has IGNORED us: Gold Star families of 13 Americans killed in Kabul suicide blast demand President meet them and admit 'flaws' in catastrophic withdrawal that led to their 'needless' murder' two years ago

By Kelly Laco, Executive Editor Of Politics For Dailymail.Com Updated 17:06 EDT 26 Aug 2023



- **13 American service members were killed two years ago on August 26, 2021**
- **Families are seeking accountability from the Biden admin two years later**
- **READ MORE: [Afghanistan Gold Star mom says President Biden asked her for a photo op as she wept in the Oval Office after the heartbreaking loss of her son](#)**

Two years ago, a suicide blast ripped through the streets outside Kabul's

international airport and killed 13 American service members.

The attack marked a catastrophic end to 20 years of the United States' involvement in [Afghanistan](#) and became one of the darkest days of President [Joe Biden](#)'s administration.

No Americans had been killed in 18 months before the fateful events of August 26, 2021. Now 13 families would welcome their sons and daughters home in flag-draped coffins.

Speaking two years on, loved ones of the fallen service members have said their deaths were needless and have accused Biden of ignoring multiple requests to meet them.

They also demand the president come forward and finally admit flaws in the bungled withdrawal that tore their lives apart.

Christy Shamblin, the mother-in-law of Marine Sgt. Nicole Gee who died in the bombing, told DailyMail.com that the past two years have been 'very painful.'

'One of the hardest parts has really been being ignored largely by the administration and official elected officials,' she explained.

She says she is working to get a 'glimpse of hope' to actually 'have some truth about the circumstances of their deaths.'



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The service for fallen marine Sgt. Nicole Gee in July 2023. Families of the U.S. service members killed during the deadly Afghanistan withdrawal are seeking accountability from the Biden administration almost two years later - demanding that the president 'admit flaws' in the catastrophic evacuation



Hunter Lopez, 22, was a Marine among the thirteen U.S. service members who were killed in a deadly airport suicide bombing in Kabul, Afghanistan

The 13 American service members killed in Kabul

blast

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. David Espinoza, 20, of Rio Bravo, Tex.

Marine Corps Sgt. Nicole Gee, 23, of Roseville, Calif.

Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Darin Taylor Hoover, 31, of Utah

Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Knauss, 23, of Corryton, Tenn.

Marine Corps Cpl. Hunter Lopez, 22, of Indio, Calif.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Rylee McCollum, 20, Jackson, Wyo.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Dylan R. Merola, 20, of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Kareem Nikoui, 20, of Norco, Calif.

Marine Corps Cpl. Daegan William-Tyeler Page, 23, of Omaha

Marine Corps Sgt. Johanny Rosario, 25, Lawrence, Mass.

Marine Corps Cpl. Humberto Sanchez, 22, Logansport, Ind.

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jared Schmitz, 20, of Wentzville, Mo.

Navy Hospital Corpsman Max Soviak, 22, of Berlin Heights, Ohio

'That's what is important to us to make sure it doesn't happen again,' continued Shamblin.

'I don't want to watch another family or service member have to go through the same thing.'

She told DailyMail.com that the only time the Biden administration reached out to her was at the Dover Air Force Base dignified transfer.

The president made the unannounced trip to [Delaware](#) as the caskets of the 13 service members killed in the attack were brought back to the United States in the days after the bombing.

But he was criticized for appearing to look at his watch just seconds after the salute honoring the return of their remains.

Alicia and Herman Lopez, the parents of Cpl. Hunter Lopez, told DailyMail.com that they were never personally reached out to by any administration officials other than seeing them in Dover.

'We did receive a certificate or a letter or something from Biden saying that they were sorry for our loss but that was it,' they said.

Shamblin said she and other Gold Star families have 'recently' reached out to ask President Biden to meet with them.

'We haven't heard anything. We just haven't heard anything back,' she said.

Shamblin said she would like the administration to acknowledge that the withdrawal 'wasn't a success, that there were flaws.'

'I would love to sit down with President Biden and have him outline the successes.'

Shamblin sees 'moments of success' in the rescue of women and children, but that was on the part of the armed forces, she said.

'Those successes belong to them. I don't see where the administration had successes, and I would love to see his perspective.'

Nicole was 'amazing' and was 'widely known for being a very enthusiastic encouraging partner,' said Shamblin.

She had a very uplifting spirit for everybody around her, and her 'absence

is missed every single day by a lot of people.'

The Gold Star families hope that meeting with Biden and other military leadership can ensure the tragedy is never repeated.



Marine Sgt. Nicole Gee died in the bombing in August 2021



Christy Shamblin said she and other Gold Star families have 'recently' reached out to ask President Biden to meet with them, but he hasn't responded

Although being in the military is dangerous, it 'doesn't need to be reckless or needless loss,' said Herman Lopez.

'This is not over because these are things that potentially could affect decision makers that are tasked with keeping our military in our country safe,' he continued.

'And so if these people are not in a position or capable of making the right decisions or their hands, or their hands are tied or they're not capable, then you know, that needs to be addressed so that our country is safe and that other members of our military are not needlessly in danger.'

Shamblin added that she hopes she can 'rest easy' knowing that troops in the future won't unnecessarily be put in harms way.

'I hope that I can rest easy knowing that the next time we send our armed forces to a humanitarian crisis and an evacuation, that there won't be needless murders of our armed forces by our own mistakes,' Shamblin

said.

The Lopez family says they are 'definitely are still seeking answers' two years later.

They are still waiting on getting their son's cell phone back from the Pentagon and his other personal items.

Their other son is still in the military, and the Lopez family respects their processes and thorough procedures, but the information they have received so far is very 'limited.'

Hunter loved to play chess and was an extremely 'committed' and good kid, his parents say.

He was a fun-loving, easygoing guy who loved Star Wars and deeply enjoyed being a Marine and reading about history and military tactics.

Hunter planned to join the sheriff's department like his parents when he left the military.



The Americans killed in the blast were: (left to right, starting with top row) Cpl. Daegan W. Page - Sgt. Johanny Rosario Pichardo - Staff Sgt. Darin T. Hoover - Lance Cpl. David L. Espinoza - Lance Cpl. Rylee J. McCollum - Lance Cpl. Kareem M. Nikoui - Cpl. Hunter Lopez - Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz - Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Knauss - Cpl. Humberto A. Sanchez - Navy Corpsman Maxton W. Soviak - Lance Cpl. Dylan R. Merola - Sgt. Nicole L. Gee

Families of those killed in withdrawal say no responsibility taken



Last month, during a congressional hearing into what went wrong during the withdrawal, the family members were asked whether the Biden administration had taken ownership of the botched exit.

They shook their heads in unison during a powerful moment.

A handful of the Gold Star families will be back on Capitol Hill next week.

They are participating in a roundtable hosted by House Foreign Affairs Chairman Michael McCaul, R-Texas.

Christy Shamblin will be in attendance next week to keep the memory of her daughter alive and get more answers that she is seeking from the administration.

On Saturday, Biden released a statement on the families of the 13 casualties of the attack.

'We will forever honor the memory of the 13 service members who were stolen far too soon from their families, loved ones, and brothers- and sisters-in-arms, while performing a noble mission on behalf of our nation, he said.

'We can never repay the incredible sacrifice of any of the 2,461 U.S.

service members who lost their lives over two decades of war in Afghanistan or the 20,744 who were wounded.

'But we will never fail to honor our sacred obligation to our service members and veterans, as well as their families, caregivers, and survivors. Today, Jill and I remember and mourn these 13 brave American service members and the more than 100 innocent Afghan civilians who were killed in the horrific terrorist attack at Abbey Gate.

'Many more were injured and will carry the impacts of their wounds and the horrors of that day for the rest of their lives. We pray for the families of our fallen warriors. We grieve with them, we honor them, and we will always continue to support them.'