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US evacuation from Afghanistan nears its end

In the last two days of their occupation of the Kabul Airport, US military forces have been reduced largely to evacuating themselves, Pentagon officials have acknowledged. Some 2,000 of the nearly 6,000 US troops deployed there have now left, and no more Afghan civilians are being allowed into the airport to board flights.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told Fox News Sunday that there were about 300 more American civilians still awaiting evacuation, and he said there would be no problem bringing them out in the huge C-17 transport jets that are conducting the lion's share of the evacuations.

A single C-17 could easily accommodate all the remaining Americans, and still have room for military equipment that is now being taken out. One well-publicized flight last week crammed in 640 Afghan adults and 183 children, for a total of 823 people.



At Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, President Joe Biden watches as a Navy carry team moves a transfer case containing the remains of a Navy Corpsman who was killed during an attack on the Kabul Airport. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

The evacuation is in its final stages, with France and Britain announcing that all their citizens and soldiers have left Afghanistan. The US military command told both American and Afghan citizens to stay away from the gates to the airport because of the likelihood of a terrorist attack in the next 24 to 36 hours.

Thursday's attack, which killed 13 American soldiers and at least 160 Afghan civilians, has had at least one effect. Despite the bluster by the White House and Pentagon about continuing their mission "undeterred," evacuations have dwindled to a crawl since the bombing. While 13,400 flew out on Thursday, before and after the bombing, that number fell to 6,800 on Friday and only 2,900 on Saturday. About 1,400 civilians of all nationalities remain at the airport for screening and evacuation.

There were unconfirmed reports Sunday, appearing on the social media site Kabul Lovers, that many of the Afghans killed in Thursday's terror attack were actually shot when American troops fired into the crowded square outside the gate in order to clear it after the bombing.

The television networks and daily newspapers in the imperialist countries have attributed all the Afghan deaths in the atrocity to the bomber and to confederates who opened fire on the crowd. All were acting at the behest of ISIS-K (Islamic State-Khorasan), according to

a statement issued by someone claiming to speak for group, whose origins and very existence are quite murky.

Taliban officials have not suggested that US troops were responsible for any of the deaths Thursday, confining themselves to a pledge to investigate the circumstance of the attack thoroughly.

The likelihood that American troops fired on the crowd of Afghans they were supposedly in Kabul to rescue is reinforced by the events of Sunday. US forces carried out a drone missile strike on an alleged ISIS-K vehicle in Kabul “eliminating an imminent ISIS-K threat to Hamad Karzai International airport,” according a spokesman for the US Central Command.

Reporters on the ground in Kabul said that an entire family of nine people, including six children, was wiped out in this drone attack, only the latest example of indiscriminate warfare by American imperialism against the people of Afghanistan.

The drone missile strike in Kabul was the second attack inside Afghanistan acknowledged by US commanders since the Thursday bombing at the airport. On Friday, a drone missile struck a vehicle in Jalalabad, the eastern city that is the gateway between Afghanistan and Pakistan. US officials said two ISIS-K leaders were killed, described as a “planner” and a “facilitator,” although they conceded that neither had anything directly to do with the Kabul bombing.

Meanwhile intensive diplomatic activity continues between the US government, its major allies, and the Taliban. A statement issued Sunday by 98 countries, including the US, Britain and France, announced an agreement with the Taliban to continue permitting Afghan citizens to leave the country without hindrance after August 31, when last US troops are set to leave and the Kabul airport is to revert to Afghan control.

“We have received assurances from the Taliban that all foreign nationals and any Afghan citizen with travel authorization from our countries will be allowed to proceed in a safe and orderly manner to points of departure and travel outside the country,” the statement said.

“We will continue issuing travel documentation to designated Afghans, and we have the clear expectation of and commitment from the Taliban that they can travel to our respective countries. We note the public statements of the Taliban confirming this understanding.”

The statement only underscores the extent of the defeat suffered by the major imperialist powers in Afghanistan. The Islamist militia which they ousted from power 20 years ago, and which reputedly held only the periphery of the country six months ago, has now consolidated its grip on every major city, including Kabul, with its population of five million.

Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, a Taliban leader and deputy to Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, issued a video message Saturday urging Afghans to let the US complete its withdrawal and promising that the new regime will not prevent Afghan citizens from leaving the country after August 31 if they wish to do so, including by using the Kabul airport.

The United Nations Security Council is to meet on Monday, and will reportedly take up a joint French-British resolution seeking the establishment of UN-supervised zone in Kabul where Afghan citizens opposed to the new regime can find shelter and make arrangements to leave the country. It is nearly certain that the Taliban would oppose such an effort as a violation of the national sovereignty of Afghanistan.

While the Taliban has offered to allow the United States to maintain a diplomatic mission in the Afghan capital, the Biden administration appears to have rejected that, although a State Department spokesman said Friday that the administration was “actively discussing” the request. All US diplomats in Kabul are at the airport and are expected to leave by Tuesday along with the remaining US troops.

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