

## § 53.04 Tabular Synopsis of America’s Longest War

Table 53-2  
Key Events in the U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan: September 2001-September 2021<sup>131</sup>

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
2001		
11 September	The worst terrorist attack on American soil, plotted by <i>Al Qaeda</i> , which is led by Osama Bin Laden, occurs. Nineteen hijackers commit murder-suicide flying two commercial airliners into both World Trade Center towers in New York City, which collapse, and one plane into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., which sustains serious damage. As a result, in 2,997 persons killed (2,606 at the World Trade Center, and 125 at the Pentagon) and over 6,000 injured. A fourth hijacked plane crashes into a field in Pennsylvania.	U.S. commences involvement in Afghanistan in response. Fifteen of the 19 hijackers are from Saudi Arabia. Osama Bin Laden is in Afghanistan, under the protection of the <i>Taliban</i> , which refuses to hand him over to the U.S.

131. In addition to the citations below, this Table draws on a variety of sources, including: *Key Dates in U.S. War in Afghanistan Since Sept. 11, 2001*, CBC NEWS, 30 August 2021, [www.cbc.ca/news/world/timeline-us-war-afghanistan-1.6157838](http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/timeline-us-war-afghanistan-1.6157838) [hereinafter, *Key Dates in U.S. War*]; Dave Philipps, *U.S. Veterans View Afghan Collapse with Anguish, Rage, and Relief*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 16 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/16/us/afghanistan-us-troops-veterans.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/16/us/afghanistan-us-troops-veterans.html?referringSource=articleShare) [hereinafter, *U.S. Veterans View Afghan Collapse*]; Matthew Rosenberg & Adam Nossiter, *After 7 Years of Failing to Fix Afghanistan, Ghani Makes a Hasty Escape*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 16 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/16/world/asia/afghanistan-president-ashraf-ghani.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/16/world/asia/afghanistan-president-ashraf-ghani.html?referringSource=articleShare); *Kabul Evacuations Stall Amid Airport Chaos, Criticism of U.S. Pullout*, REUTERS, 16 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/talibans-rapid-advance-across-afghanistan-2021-08-10/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/talibans-rapid-advance-across-afghanistan-2021-08-10/); *Afghan Conflict: Taliban Control All Key Cities Except Kabul*, BBC NEWS, 15 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58219169](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58219169); Eltaf Najafizada & Jennifer Jacobs, *Taliban Set to Retake Afghanistan After 20 Years in Shadows*, BLOOMBERG, 15 August 2021, [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-15/taliban-fighters-enter-outskirts-of-kabul-gunfire-in-capital?sref=7sxxw9Sxl](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-15/taliban-fighters-enter-outskirts-of-kabul-gunfire-in-capital?sref=7sxxw9Sxl) [hereinafter, *Taliban Set to Retake*

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Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
7 October	<p>The Afghan War begins.</p> <p>U.S. commences air campaigns, striking <i>Al Qaeda</i> and <i>Taliban</i> targets in Kabul, Kandahar, Jalalabad, and other locations. <i>Taliban</i> air defenses and small air forces are destroyed.</p> <p>Across the next 20 years of U.S. military involvement in the country, “more than 775,000 American troops [will be] deployed there, to city-like air bases and sandbag outposts on lonely mountaintops.”<sup>132</sup></p>	<p>U.S. Special Operations Forces and Central Intelligence Agency agents enter Afghanistan to help guide the bombing, and to organize the Northern Alliance to oppose <i>Al Qaeda</i> and the <i>Taliban</i>. The <i>Taliban</i> refuses to surrender Osama Bin Laden.</p> <p>“More than with other wars in the nation’s history, Americans . . . [will be] mostly insulated from the fighting in Afghanistan,” because there is “no draft or mass mobilization,” and “[l]ess than 1 percent of the nation [will] serve[] [in Afghanistan], and a disproportionate number of troops . . . [will come] from rural counties in the South and West, far from the seats of power.”<sup>133</sup></p>
13 November	<p>U.S.-backed Northern Alliance forces enter Kabul, and the <i>Taliban</i> withdraws to Southern Afghanistan. Other cities fall to the Alliance. In other words, the <i>Taliban</i> will “swiftly be toppled, however, with no major U.S. combat deployment on the ground.”<sup>134</sup></p>	<p>Within one month, <i>Taliban</i> leaders flee from Southern Afghanistan to Pakistan. U.S. and its allies fail to catch them at the Tora Bora cave complex, and they live to fight another day.</p>
December	<p>U.S. bombs the Tora Bora cave complex in Eastern Afghanistan.</p>	<p>Osama Bin Laden, reportedly in the Tora Bora cave complex, slips over the Afghan-Pakistani border into Pakistan, where he disappears for nearly 10 years, during which he continues to direct and inspire <i>Al Qaeda</i> operations around the world.</p>

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132. *U.S. Veterans View Afghan Collapse*.

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134. *Key Dates in U.S. War*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
<b>2003</b>		
20 March-1May	The U.S., along with Australia, Poland, and U.K., invade Iraq with the intent to topple Iraqi leader President Saddam Hussein, who America alleges has weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and ties to <i>Al Qaeda</i> .	The U.S. fails to win United Nations Security Council approval for this second Iraq War (in contrast to the first one, in January 1991).
2 May	U.S. officials declare major combat operations in Afghanistan are finished, and under President George W. Bush, U.S. focuses on its invasion of Iraq (which occurred in March 2003).	U.S. divert troops, equipment, and intelligence collection from Afghanistan to Iraq, thus allowing the <i>Taliban</i> to regroup, starting in Southern and Eastern Afghanistan.
<b>2004</b>		
26 January	Afghanistan's <i>Loya Jirga</i> (Grand Assembly) agrees to a new Constitution, which envisages Presidential elections in October 2004.	Negotiations over the Constitution were protracted.
7 December	Hamad Karzai, the leader of the Popalzai Durrani tribe, is elected the first President of Afghanistan under the new Constitution.	Mr. Karzai serves two five-year terms as President.
<b>2005</b>	The <i>Taliban</i> launches its "official website of Islamic Emirates of <i>Taliban</i> , 'Al-Emarah.'" By September 2021 it "publishes content in five languages—English, Arabic, Pashto, Dari, and Urdu. The audio, video, and written content is overseen by the cultural commission of Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan (IEA), headed by their Spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid." <sup>135</sup>	This launch is a dramatic reversal of <i>Taliban</i> policy toward "When the <i>Taliban</i> first came to power in Afghanistan in 1996, they banned the internet and confiscated or destroyed television sets, cameras, and video tapes." <sup>136</sup> This official website marks a pragmatic adaption by the <i>Taliban</i> .
<b>2006–2008</b>	"With U.S. forces mainly fighting a surge campaign in Iraq, only a much smaller contingent is deployed in Afghanistan. The <i>Taliban</i> launch major advances threatening to recapture swaths of territory, especially in the south. In response, an enlarged NATO mission brings thousands more troops, notably British forces, hundreds of whom are killed in intense battles against the <i>Taliban</i> in Helmand Province." <sup>137</sup>	Perhaps under-appreciated by many Americans, Canada's contribution of forces "eventually grow[s] to about 2,300, stationed mainly in and around Kandahar." <sup>138</sup>

<b>2006</b>		
May	British troops deploy to Helmand Province in Southern Afghanistan, which is a <i>Taliban</i> stronghold.	The original mission of the British troops was to assist with infrastructure projects, but quickly they are drawn into combat. Ultimately, over 450 of them are killed.
<b>2009</b>		
January	A few days before being sworn in as Vice President, Joe Biden travels to Afghanistan (one of his four trips to the country). The Vice President Elect “disgustingly walked out of a dinner with Hamid Karzai, the then Afghan President.” <sup>139</sup>	“If Karzai had shown some gratitude for American help, and indulged in some self-criticism, it might have gone differently,” says [Jonah] Blank [Biden’s South Asia Policy Advisor when, as Senator, Mr. Biden was Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee]. “Biden’s mind was pretty much fixed from then on.” <sup>140</sup>
17 February	In his first significant military decision as Commander in Chief, President Barack Obama orders a surge of 17,000 troop deployment to Afghanistan to fight the <i>Taliban’s</i> intensifying insurgency.	The 17,000 additional troops reinforce 38,000 American soldiers, plus 32,000 soldiers from 40 NATO allies. The surge is modelled after similar American efforts in Iraq, where the U.S. bolstered its forces to kill militants and protect civilians.

135. Sarah Atiq, *The Taliban Embrace Social Media: “We Too Want To Change Perceptions,”* BBC NEWS, 6 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58466939](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58466939). [Hereinafter, *The Taliban Embrace.*]

136. *The Taliban Embrace.*

137. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

138. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

139. Edward Luce, *Biden’s Afghanistan Fiasco: “We Look Like a Deer Caught in Headlights,”* THE FINANCIAL TIMES, 20 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/c6e012d4-fe69-4579-a1b0-997c1a1e1bc9?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/c6e012d4-fe69-4579-a1b0-997c1a1e1bc9?shareType=nongift). [Hereinafter, *Biden’s Afghanistan Fiasco.*]

140. *Quoted in Biden’s Afghanistan Fiasco.*

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
Late 2009	U.S. Generals recommend to President Obama another “surge” campaign similar to the one waged in Iraq in 2006-07,” and “Obama would order an even larger build-up.” <sup>141</sup>	“The U.S. contingent would exceed 100,000 by the middle of 2010, carrying out extensive counter-insurgency operations across the country.” <sup>142</sup>
2011		
1-2 May	U.S. Special Operations Forces, specifically, U.S. Navy Seals, kill Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, which is located in the Hazara region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the Northwest Frontier Province) in Eastern Pakistan, about 125 kilometers (75 miles) north of Pakistan’s capital city, Islamabad. Bin Laden is buried at sea.	No prior notice is given to Pakistani authorities, for fear the plan to raid on Bin Laden’s compound will be leaked. Because Bin Laden is killed on Pakistani soil, the U.S. accuses Pakistan of being an unreliable ally in the War on Terror. Owing to another surge of troops, the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan peaks at about 140,000. The CIA intensifies drone strikes on <i>Taliban</i> and <i>Al Qaeda</i> targets.
December	U.S. reveals that its diplomats have been holding secret meetings, in Germany and Qatar, with the Afghan <i>Taliban</i> . “Canada’s combat mission to Afghanistan ends, though soldiers stay in a training role until March 2014.” <sup>143</sup>	The meetings have been occurring over the previous 10 months, implying the U.S. realizes there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict, and therefore seeks to identify moderates within Islamist violent extremist organizations (VEOs) who may be amenable to a diplomatic solution to end the war.  Additionally, perhaps under-appreciated by many Americans, “[i]n the end, more than 40,000 Canadian personnel serve[] in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014, with 158 losing their lives.” <sup>144</sup>

15 December	<p>U.S. formally declares an end to the Second Iraq War and prepares to withdraw its combat troops. That is, having invaded Iraq in March 2003 on what proved to be false pretences, America pulls out its troops in 2011.</p> <p>However, the U.S. returns three years later “as part of a multinational coalition, when IS [Islamic State] militants over[run] large parts of the country.”<sup>145</sup> The U.S.-led coalition do not end this mission and depart until year-end 2021, but the “2,500 troops currently [as of December 2021] in the country . . . remain to ‘advise, assist and enable’ Iraqi security forces, at the government’s invitation.”<sup>146</sup></p>	<p>U.S. Special Operations Forces eventually capture Saddam Hussein (in “Operation Red Dawn” on 13 December 2003, in Ad Dawr, near Tikrit, his hometown), and he is executed by hanging (at a joint U.S.-Iraqi military base) on 30 December 2006, following his conviction by an Iraqi Special Tribunal for crimes against humanity. The U.S. never uncovers evidence of Iraqi WMDs, nor of Iraqi ties to <i>Al Qaeda</i>.</p>
<b>2013</b>		
23 April	<p><i>Mullah</i> Mohammad Omar, founder and leader of the <i>Taliban</i>, dies.</p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> conceal his death for over two years. Afghan intelligence officials report he died of health problems in a Karachi, Pakistan hospital, but the Pakistani government denies he was in Pakistan.</p>
<b>2014</b>		
27 May	<p>President Barak H. Obama announces a plan to withdraw all U.S. troops, save for 9,800, by the end of 2014, and pull out the rest of them by the end of 2016.</p>	<p>The plan reflects the war-weariness of the American public, which will soon vote in both the 2014 mid-term Congressional elections, and the 2016 Presidential elections.</p>

141. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

142. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

143. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

144. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

145. *U.S.-Led Coalition Against IS Ends Combat Mission in Iraq*, BBC News, 10 December 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-59593007](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-59593007). [Hereinafter, *U.S.-Led Coalition Against IS*.]

146. *U.S.-Led Coalition Against IS.*

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
28 December	At a ceremony in Kabul, the U.S. and NATO announce the official conclusion of their combat mission in Afghanistan, and they withdraw most of their troops.	The U.S. transitions toward an Afghan-led war, and it leaves 10,000 troops in Afghanistan focused on training Afghan forces in counterterrorism.
Year-end 2014	<p>ISIS-K begins appearing in Eastern Afghanistan,<sup>147</sup> specifically the Eastern Province of Nangarhar, “close to drug and people-smuggling routes in and out of Pakistan.”<sup>148</sup></p> <p>France ends all military operations in Afghanistan and evacuates 800 Afghans, and their relatives, who had worked with French armed forces.<sup>149</sup></p>	<p>ISIS, specifically “Islamic State Khorasan,” or “Islamic State Khorasan Province,” (named for the historic Afghanistan-Pakistan region), abbreviated “ISIS-K” or “IS-K,” “originally [is] an offshoot of Al Qaeda that grew into a rival.”<sup>150</sup></p> <p>The group establishes “a reputation for extreme brutality.”<sup>151</sup></p>
<b>2015</b>		
January-December	Throughout the year, the <i>Taliban</i> launch car bombings, suicide attacks, and other assaults across Afghanistan, including on the Parliament building in Kabul.	Along with the resurgence of the <i>Taliban</i> , Islamic State begins operations in Afghanistan.
January	<p>ISIS-K formally organizes in Afghanistan.<sup>152</sup></p> <p>The group will go on to “target[] Afghan Security Forces, Afghan politicians and Ministries, the <i>Taliban</i>, religious minorities, including <i>Shī’a</i> Muslims and Sikhs, U.S. and NATO forces, and international agencies, including aid organizations.”<sup>153</sup></p> <p>At its peak, ISIS-K will have 3,000 fighters, but will “suffer[] significant casualties in clashes with both the U.S. and Afghan Security Forces, and also with the <i>Taliban</i>.”<sup>154</sup></p> <p>Though most of its operations are “in Nangahar and Kabul, it . . . claim[s] attacks in the Provinces of Kunar, Jowzjan, Paktia, Kunduz, and Herat.”<sup>155</sup></p>	<p>The establishment of ISIS-K corresponds with the height of the power of Islamic State “in Iraq and Syria, before its self-declared caliphate was defeated and dismantled by a U.S.-led coalition,” (as discussed in a separate Chapter).<sup>156</sup></p> <p>The group “recruits both Afghan and Pakistani <i>jihādists</i>, especially defecting members of the Afghan <i>Taliban</i> who don’t see their own organisation as extreme enough.”</p> <p>ISIS-K established itself as “the most extreme and violent of all the <i>jihādist</i> militant groups in Afghanistan.”<sup>157</sup> It will be “blamed for some of the worst atrocities . . . , targeting girls’ schools, hospitals and even a maternity ward, where they reportedly shot dead pregnant women and nurses.”<sup>158</sup></p>

2016		
May	Hibatullah Akhundzada becomes “the Supreme Commander of the <i>Taliban</i> .” <sup>159</sup> He takes “charge of political, military, and religious affairs.” <sup>160</sup>	Hibatullah Akhundzada “is believed to be in his 60s [as of September 2021], and has lived most of his life in Afghanistan.  However, . . . he maintains close ties with the so-called “Quetta <i>Shura</i> ” — the Afghan <i>Taliban</i> leaders said to be based in the Pakistani city of Quetta.” <sup>161</sup>

147. See *Attack on Kabul Airport Kills At Least 13; Airlift Thrust Into Chaos*, REUTERS, 24 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghanistan-faces-humanitarian-crisis-airlift-deadline-looms-2021-08-25/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghanistan-faces-humanitarian-crisis-airlift-deadline-looms-2021-08-25/). [Hereinafter, *Attack on Kabul Airport Kills*.]

148. Frank Gardner: *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who Are IS-K?*, BBC NEWS, 27 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58333533](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58333533). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who*]

149. Andrew England, Helen Warrell & Amy Kazmin, *ISIS-K: the Jihādis Seizing on Chaos of Taliban’s Return*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 27 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/f110e72c-9410-462e-afcd-3600326b4dea?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/f110e72c-9410-462e-afcd-3600326b4dea?shareType=nongift).

150. See Victor Mallet, *Why France Was More Clear-Eyed About Afghanistan Than the U.S.*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 30 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/fcf46b6d-f650-482b-8a7a-f862cb4f3626?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/fcf46b6d-f650-482b-8a7a-f862cb4f3626?shareType=nongift). [Hereinafter, *Why France Was More Clear-Eyed*.]

151. *Attack on Kabul Airport Kills*.

152. See *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who*.

153. *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who*.

154. *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who*.

155. *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who*.

156. *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who*.

157. *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who*.

158. *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who*.

159. *Afghanistan: Resistance Leader Says Open to Peace Talks with Taliban*, BBC NEWS, 6 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58458584](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58458584). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Resistance Leader Says*.]

160. *Afghanistan: Resistance Leader Says*.

161. *Afghanistan: Resistance Leader Says*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
<b>2017</b>		
21 August	President Donald J. Trump announces a strategy of open-ended deployment of U.S. forces to pressure the <i>Taliban</i> to negotiate with the American-backed government in Kabul.	The strategy is redolent of President Richard Nixon's Christmas 1972 bombing of Hanoi with the aim of bombing the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong to the peace table.
<b>2018</b>		
4 September	The U.S. appoints Zalmay Khalilzad, an Afghan-born U.S. diplomat, to negotiate with the <i>Taliban</i> .	Direct negotiations between the U.S. and <i>Taliban</i> follow.
<b>2019</b>		
25 January	Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announces that over 45,000 Afghan Security Forces have been killed since he became President in 2014.	The 45,000 estimate is much higher than previously understood.  President Ghani, a former World Bank official, holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Columbia, and he is one of Afghanistan's leading academics. Ironically, he is the author of a book entitled <i>Fixing Failed States</i> (2008). The <i>Taliban</i> reject any power sharing arrangement if he is included in the government, but he resists pressure (including from Pakistan) to resign.
May	ISIS-K establishes a separate section in Pakistan. <sup>162</sup>	Until this point, one section covered both Afghanistan and Pakistan.
<b>2020</b>		
29 February	In Doha, the U.S. signs with the <i>Taliban</i> an agreement, called the <i>Agreement for Bringing Peace</i> ; America and its NATO allies agree to withdraw their troops within 14 months (by May 2021), but only if the <i>Taliban</i> keeps to the deal.	Under the <i>Agreement</i> , the <i>Taliban</i> agree to halt attacks on U.S. forces, not to let their territory be used for terrorism and to hold talks with the Afghan government. <sup>163</sup> But, "those talks would subsequently prove fruitless." <sup>164</sup>

		Thus, in effect, the <i>Agreement</i> is an unconditional withdrawal of foreign forces which calls for peace talks between the <i>Taliban</i> and the American-backed government in Kabul.
12 September	In Doha, the <i>Taliban</i> and American-backed government in Kabul begin to negotiate the peace talks.	These negotiations had been delayed for several months.
2 December	The <i>Taliban</i> and American-backed government in Kabul reach a preliminary <i>Agreement</i> during the negotiations.	The <i>Agreement</i> covers only the procedures for future peace talks, though it is the first written deal between the two sides after 19 years of conflict.
<b>2021</b>		
14 April	President Joseph R. Biden announces U.S. forces will stay in Afghanistan beyond the May deadline set forth in the <i>U.S.-Taliban Peace Agreement</i> , but they will also withdraw unconditionally by 11 September 2021. Later, this deadline will be advanced to 31 August 2021.	The <i>Taliban</i> do not agree to any delay beyond May in the U.S. troop withdrawal, and they threaten combat against foreign forces remaining in Afghanistan. They also note they never agreed to cease combat against the American-backed Afghan government.
May	The <i>Taliban</i> begins an offensive in earnest to retake Afghanistan.	The offensive proves successful. Within weeks, the <i>Taliban</i> overruns more than half of Afghanistan's 400 Districts, often without any fighting, and it threatens most of Afghanistan's 34 Provincial capitals, and Kabul.

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162. *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who.*

163. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

164. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>France begins evacuating Afghans working for its Embassy in Kabul, and for other French organizations in Afghanistan, with their families.<sup>165</sup> Before the Afghan military collapses, France will evacuate 623 persons to France.</p> <p>France also repeatedly warns its citizens to leave Afghanistan.</p>	<p>“At the time, the French decision [to evacuate] prompted remonstrations from NGOs and from some of France’s European allies. They were concerned about this apparent abandonment of Afghanistan and accused the French of being unduly pessimistic about the security impact of President Joe Biden’s announcement of a full U.S. military withdrawal by September.”<sup>166</sup> However, “France’s foresight about the imminent collapse of Kabul . . . contrast[s] with the lack of U.S. preparedness and trigger[s] speculation that French spies knew something the Americans did not.”<sup>167</sup> In truth, “senior officials in Paris and independent analysts . . . shared the same intelligence and the difference was in its assessment. When the French were able to take a more dispassionate view and draw the obvious conclusions about the consequences of the U.S. withdrawal, the Americans were blinded by their long association with the Afghan armed forces, their \$1tn [trillion]-plus investment in the country, and by the cumbersome nature of their own intelligence systems.”<sup>168</sup></p>
Early May	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> launches a “comprehensive social media campaign” to complement its “history of conflict” in Afghanistan.<sup>169</sup> “A network of social media accounts highlight[] the alleged failures of the [American-backed] Kabul government, while lauding the <i>Taliban</i>’s achievements.</p> <p>Tweets boasted about the group’s recent victories . . . [and] pushed several hashtags, including #kabulregimecrimes (attached to tweets accusing the Afghan government of war crimes); #westandwithTaliban (an attempt to drive grassroots support) and [an Arabic Twitter handle] that translates to “help from God and victory is near.”<sup>170</sup></p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> realizes the power of online social media to win hearts and minds to its ideology. By early May 2021, <i>Taliban</i> Spokesman “Zabihullah Mujahid’s . . . new [Twitter] account — active since 2017 — has more than 371,000 followers.” Afghanistan’s condition as a least developed nation limits that power: “[t]here are just 8.6 million internet users [out of a population of approximately 40 million people] in Afghanistan, and absence of network coverage and affordable data remains a key challenge.”<sup>171</sup> Moreover, as an unnamed <i>Taliban</i></p>

		social media team member states: “Most Afghans don’t understand English, but the leaders of the [American-backed] Kabul regime actively communicated in English on Twitter — because their audience is not Afghans but the international community. The <i>Taliban</i> wanted to counter their propaganda and that’s why we too focused ourselves on Twitter.” <sup>172</sup>
26 June	President Biden meets at the White House with Ashraf Ghani, the President of the American-backed government in Kabul.	President Biden pledges continued security assistance to the government in Kabul, however, he declares Afghans must decide their future.

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165. *See Why France Was More Clear-Eyed. Victor Mallet.*

166. *Why France Was More Clear-Eyed. Victor Mallet.*

167. *Why France Was More Clear-Eyed. Victor Mallet.*

168. *Why France Was More Clear-Eyed. Victor Mallet* (also reporting: “The biggest intelligence failing, according to Myriam Benraad, International Relations Professor at Schiller International University, was not underestimating the *Taliban*, but the ‘wishful thinking’ in overestimating the strength, coherence and loyalty of the Afghan army on which Biden relied to hold Afghan cities while U.S. forces withdrew. ‘I’m not buying into the ‘spectacular final assault’ of the *Taliban* in Afghanistan,’ she said. ‘We had this completely distorted view of the Afghan Army maintaining control over territory . . . when they had been deserting to the *Taliban*.’ The Afghan Army . . . ‘was not giving out the right information about the Afghan forces,’ and the Americans ‘wanted to believe them after investing so much. . . . We have seen this elsewhere.’)

169. *The Taliban Embrace.*

170. *The Taliban Embrace.*

171. *The Taliban Embrace.*

172. *The Taliban Embrace.*

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
Early July	<i>Taliban</i> brutally torture and massacre at least nine Hazara <i>Shi'a</i> men in Mundarakht, which is in the Malistan District in the Eastern Province of Ghazni. <sup>173</sup>	<p>The incident is a harbinger of <i>Taliban</i> intolerance:            “Villagers said they had escaped to the mountains when fighting intensified between government forces and <i>Taliban</i> fighters.</p> <p>When some of them returned to the village of Mundarakht to collect food, they said the <i>Taliban</i> had looted their homes and were waiting for them. Separately, some men who passed through Mundarakht on their way home to their hamlet were also ambushed.</p> <p>In total six men were allegedly shot, some in the head, and three were tortured to death. According to witness accounts, one man was strangled with his own scarf and had his arm muscles sliced off. Another’s body was shot to pieces. An eyewitness said they asked the [<i>Taliban</i>] fighters why they inflicted such brutality on their people. A fighter allegedly responded: “When it is the time of conflict, everyone dies, it doesn’t matter if you have guns or not. It is the time of war.”<sup>174</sup></p>
2 July	U.S. forces withdraw from Bagram Airbase, 60 kilometers north of Kabul, which had been the center of combat operations since the start of the war.	Violence around Afghanistan reaches historic highs, and the <i>Taliban</i> gains control of more territory than at any time since the U.S. drove them from power in November 2001.
8 July	President Biden defends his decision to withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan, saying: “Just one more year of fighting in Afghanistan is not a solution, but a recipe for fighting there indefinitely,” <i>i.e.</i> , maintaining the <i>status quo</i> was not an option. <sup>175</sup>	The heart of his defense were three points: (1) “I will not send another generation of Americans to war in Afghanistan with no reasonable expectation of achieving a different outcome,” (2) it was “highly unlikely” the Afghan

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173. See *Afghanistan: Taliban “Tortured and Massacred” Men from Hazara Minority*, BBC NEWS, 20 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58277463](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58277463). [Hereinafter, *Taliban “Tortured and Massacred” Men*.]

174. *Taliban “Tortured and Massacred” Men*.

175. *Quoted in Biden Defends Decision*. Though polls consistently showed Americans overwhelmingly supported a withdrawal, the President’s decision was met with criticism from conservative quarters. For example:

A disastrous *Taliban* takeover wasn’t inevitable. President Biden said his hands were tied to a withdrawal given the awful peace deal negotiated between the Trump Administration and the *Taliban*. But there was still a way to pull out American troops while giving our Afghan partners a better chance to hold the gains we made with them over the last two decades.

Mr. Biden chose otherwise. The way he announced the drawdown and eventual departure of American troops — at the start of the fighting season, on a rapid timeline and sans adequate coordination with the Afghan government — has in part gotten us into the current situation.

Reasonable people can disagree about the wisdom of keeping American military forces in Afghanistan indefinitely, even at very low numbers. I and others have argued that the investment, including the risk to American personnel, is worth it to prevent militant groups from once again overrunning the country.

...

A responsible withdrawal needed more time and better preparation. History will record Mr. Biden, a supposed master of foreign policy for decades, as having failed in this most critical assignment.

As U.S. military planners well know, the Afghan war has a seasonal pattern. The *Taliban* leadership retreats to bases, largely in Pakistan, every winter and then launches the group’s fighting season campaign in the spring, moving into high gear in the summer after the poppy harvest. At the very least, the United States should have continued to support the Afghans through this period to help them blunt the *Taliban*’s latest offensive and buy time to plan for a future devoid of American military assistance.

American diplomats could have used this time to negotiate access to regional bases from which to continue counterterrorism operations. Simultaneously, the American military should have prepared contingencies in case those negotiations failed. And even that plan would have meant contending with an increasingly brazen *Taliban*. (A report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction said the *Taliban* launched its latest offensive after U.S. and coalition forces officially began drawing down in May. [See SIGAR — Special Inspector General For Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, 30 July 2021, [www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2021-07-30qr.pdf](http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2021-07-30qr.pdf)].)

Adopting a more judicious approach would have required Mr. Biden to accept two things in addition to a longer timeline: the temporary deployment of additional U.S. forces and the slightly increased risk of American casualties.

...

Obviously, Mr. Biden did not proceed in this manner. Instead, he ordered a hasty withdrawal of the military just as the *Taliban* offensive was moving into its major phase.

Several weeks after the President’s announcement, there was no clear plan for responding to terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan post-withdrawal. It was still unclear if the United States would continue to provide air support to Afghan forces, whether it would have bases in neighboring countries, or how Kabul’s international airport would be secured — an element essential to the maintenance of a U.S. diplomatic presence in the country.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
		government would be able to control the entire country [presumably even with continued U.S. presence], <sup>176</sup> but a <i>Taliban</i> takeover is not “inevitable” because 75,000 <i>Taliban</i> fighters were no match for 300,000 U.S.-trained Afghan Security Forces, <sup>177</sup> and (3) “We did not go to Afghanistan to nation build.” <sup>178</sup>
12 July	America’s longest-serving commander in Afghanistan, four-star General Austin Miller, relinquishes command and leaves Afghanistan.	U.S. Marine General Kenneth McKenzie, head of Central Command, says <i>Taliban</i> seeks a “military solution” and opines: “If this government is overthrown, if the <i>Taliban</i> prevail, I think we’re going to expect a return to medieval standards here in Afghanistan, particularly in the domain of women’s rights, human rights, education and so many other things.” <sup>179</sup>
14 July	<i>Taliban</i> capture the Wesh-Chaman border crossing in the Spin Boldak District in Kandahar Province, south of Kandahar City. This border crossing is a major transit point between Afghanistan and Pakistan.	Wesh-Shaman is land-locked Afghanistan’s “second busiest entry point and a main commercial artery between its sprawling southwest region and Pakistani sea ports” ( <i>i.e.</i> , it links that region to Pakistan’s ports, and thus is vital for trade), with roughly 900 trucks crossing daily. <sup>180</sup>
		This <i>Taliban</i> victory follows ones in previous weeks in which the <i>Taliban</i> captured border crossings with Iran, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.
21-22 July	U.S. military aircraft based in the Persian Gulf and/or the aircraft carrier U.S.S. <i>Ronald Reagan</i> strike <i>Taliban</i> targets across Afghanistan, including in Kandahar.	The air strikes are a response to the stunning gains the <i>Taliban</i> made since launching its offensive in May, “reflect both the level of American worry and the Afghan military’s continued need for U.S. air support,” and are condemned by the <i>Taliban</i> as “disobedience” with respect to the <i>Peace Agreement</i> , and may be met with “consequences.” <sup>181</sup>

23 July	President Joe Biden and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani hold their final direct communication before the <i>Taliban</i> overruns Afghanistan, a 14-minute telephone conversation.	Mr. Biden offers aid to Mr. Ghani, if he “could publicly project he had a plan to control the spiraling situation in Afghanistan,” saying: ‘We will continue to provide close air support, if we know what the plan is.’ <sup>182</sup>
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Frederick W. Kagan, *Biden Could Have Chosen To Stop the Taliban. He Chose Not To.*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 12 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/12/opinion/biden-afghanistan-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/12/opinion/biden-afghanistan-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare). See also Katrina Manson, Lauren Fedor & Benjamin Parkin, *Critics Round on Joe Biden as U.S. Pulls out of Afghanistan*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 14 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/f163b68f-c93c-4e5c-ac26-0bde2060d97e?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/f163b68f-c93c-4e5c-ac26-0bde2060d97e?shareType=nongift) (recounting a litany of criticisms). The reality, however, was that many of the attacks on President Biden’s decision were partisan in nature, from Republicans who likely would have attacked him for spilling more American blood and treasure had he not ordered a withdrawal. Their criticism, and their professed concerns for the Afghan people, also was ironic, given the Islamophobia they had whipped up and/or acquiesced to ever since 9/11.

176. Quoted in *Taliban Capture Key*.

177. Quoted in *Biden Defends Decision*. However, for evidence the 300,000 figure was inflated, see *Afghanistan’s Ghost Soldiers Undermined Fight Against Taliban — Ex-official*, BBC NEWS, 9 November 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59230564](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59230564) (reporting: “Afghanistan’s ex-Finance Minister has blamed the government’s fall on corrupt officials who invented ‘ghost soldiers’ and took payments from the *Taliban*. Khalid Payenda . . . [said] most of the 300,000 troops and police on the government’s books did not exist. He said phantom personnel were added to official lists so that generals could pocket their wages. . . . Mr. Payenda, who resigned and left Afghanistan as the Islamist group advanced, said records showing that security forces greatly outnumbered the *Taliban* were incorrect. ‘The way the accountability was done, you would ask the chief in that Province how many people you have and based on that you could calculate salaries and ration expenses and they would always be inflated,’ . . . The former Minister said the numbers may have been inflated by more than six times, and included ‘desertions [and] martyrs who were never accounted for because some of the commanders would keep their bank cards’ and withdraw their salaries, he alleged. A 2016 report by the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) claimed that ‘neither the United States nor its Afghan allies know how many Afghan soldiers and police actually exist, how many are in fact available for duty, or, by extension, the true nature of their operational capabilities.’ In a more recent report, SIGAR expressed ‘serious concerns about the corrosive effects of corruption . . . and the questionable accuracy of data on the actual strength of the force.’ Mr. Payenda said that troops who did exist were often not paid on time, while there were leaders of government-backed militias who were ‘double-dipping’ — taking their government wage, and then also accepting payments from the *Taliban* to give up without a fight. ‘The whole feeling was, we cannot change this. This is how the Parliament works, this is how the Governors work. Everybody would say the stream is murky from the very top, meaning the very top is involved in this,’ he said.”).

178. Quoted in *Biden Defends Decision*.

179. Quoted in *In Symbolic End*.

180. *Afghan Taliban Seize Border Crossing*.

181. *U.S. Strikes Taliban Targets*.

182. *Exclusive: Before Afghan*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>The two “leaders discuss[] military aid, political strategy, and messaging tactics, but neither Biden nor Ashraf Ghani appear[] [to be] aware of or prepared for the immediate danger of the entire country falling to insurgents.”<sup>183</sup></p>	<p>Notably, “[i]n much of the call, Biden focused on what he called the Afghan government’s ‘perception’ problem. ‘I need not tell you the perception around the world and in parts of Afghanistan, I believe, is that things are not going well in terms of the fight against the <i>Taliban</i>,’ Biden said. ‘And there is a need, whether it is true or not, there is a need to project a different picture.’”<sup>184</sup></p>
<p>24 July</p>	<p>Afghan government imposes one-month long nationwide curfew from 22:00 to 04:00 daily, so as (per the Ministry of the Interior) “to curb violence and limit the <i>Taliban</i> movements.”<sup>185</sup></p>	<p>Under the curfew, all movement is banned, other than in Kabul and two Provinces, Panjshir and Nangarhar.</p>
<p>26 July</p>	<p>America signs an agreement with Iraq to end formally the U.S. combat mission in Iraq by year-end 2021.</p>	<p>The accord, signed by U.S. President Biden and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi in the Oval Office, heralds the end of America’s second longest war — over 18 years since the March 2003 invasion. President Biden states: “Our role in Iraq will be . . . be available, to continue to train, to assist, to help and to deal with ISIS as it arises, but we’re not going to be, by the end of the year, in a combat mission.”<sup>186</sup> At the time the deal is signed, 2,500 U.S. forces remain in Iraq to counter ISIS, but per the deal and the President’s remarks, America’s role “will shift entirely to training and advising the Iraqi military to defend itself.”<sup>187</sup></p>
<p>August</p>	<p>In the weeks leading up to the 31 August deadline for the end of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, the CIA arranges for clandestine evacuations from its secret, secure compound, which is “[s]ituated between Kabul’s industrial outskirts and a mountain range, . . . less than three miles from Hamid Karzai International Airport,” and “spans about two square miles.”<sup>188</sup></p> <p>Starting in April-May 2021, the CIA destroys one key part of the facility, the “Salt Pit,” where in 2002–2004 the Agency had used “enhanced interrogation techniques” (<i>i.e.</i>, torture) against detainees, and after the covert evacuations (around 27 August), it destroys another key portion, “Eagle Base,” a former brick factory, where the Agency trained Afghan counter-terrorism units.<sup>189</sup></p>	<p>The CIA uses Russian Mi-17 helicopters for the covert evacuations, as they are flown by the Afghan military and draw less attention than U.S. choppers. The evacuees, numbering hundreds, are flown via the Russian helicopters and thereby avoid <i>Taliban</i> check points.</p> <p>Ironically, “the C.I.A. . . . previously acknowledged that it has flown Mi-17s — and even used one to enter into Afghanistan back in September 2001 to kick-start the war.”<sup>190</sup></p>

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183. Aram Roston & Nandita Bose, *Exclusive: Before Afghan Collapse, Biden Pressed Ghani To “Change Perception,”* REUTERS, 31 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/exclusive-call-before-afghan-collapse-biden-pressed-ghani-change-perception-2021-08-31/](http://www.reuters.com/world/exclusive-call-before-afghan-collapse-biden-pressed-ghani-change-perception-2021-08-31/). [Hereinafter: *Exclusive: Before Afghan.*]

184. *Exclusive: Before Afghan.*

185. *Quoted in Afghanistan Curfew Imposed.*

186. *Quoted in Biden, Kadhimi Seal Agreement.*

187. *Biden, Kadhimi Seal Agreement.*

188. Christiaan Triebert & Haley Willis, *Covert Evacuations and Planned Demolitions: How the C.I.A. Left Its Last Base in Afghanistan*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 1 September 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/09/01/world/asia/cia-afghanistan-evacuations-demolitions.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/01/world/asia/cia-afghanistan-evacuations-demolitions.html?referringSource=articleShare). [Hereinafter, *Covert Evacuations.*]

189. *Covert Evacuations.* Regarding the enhanced interrogation that had occurred, see Mark Mazetti, *Panel Faults C.I.A. Over Brutality and Deceit in Terrorism Interrogations*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 9 December 2014, [www.nytimes.com/2014/12/10/world/senate-intelligence-committee-cia-torture-report.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/10/world/senate-intelligence-committee-cia-torture-report.html) (reporting: “The Senate Intelligence Committee . . . issued a sweeping indictment of the Central Intelligence Agency’s program to detain and interrogate terrorism suspects in the years after the Sept. 11 attacks, drawing on millions of internal C.I.A. documents to illuminate practices that it said were more brutal—and far less effective—than the Agency acknowledged either to [George W.] Bush Administration officials or to the public. . . . In exhaustive detail, the Report gives a macabre accounting of some of the grisliest techniques that the C.I.A. used to torture and imprison terrorism suspects. Detainees were deprived of sleep for as long as a week, and were sometimes told that they would be killed while in American custody. With the approval of the C.I.A.’s medical staff, some prisoners were subjected to medically unnecessary ‘rectal feeding’ or ‘rectal hydration’—a technique that the C.I.A.’s Chief of Interrogations described as a way to exert ‘total control over the detainee.’ C.I.A. medical staff members described the waterboarding of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the chief planner of the Sept. 11 attacks, as a ‘series of near drownings.’ . . . [President] Obama welcomed the release of the Report, but in a written statement made sure to praise the C.I.A. employees as ‘patriots’ to whom ‘we owe a profound debt of gratitude’ for trying to protect the country. But in a later television interview, he reiterated that the techniques ‘constituted torture in my mind’ and were a betrayal of American values. . . . Mr. Bush, former Vice President Dick Cheney, and a number of former C.I.A. officials have said more recently that the program was essential for ultimately finding Osama bin Laden, who was killed by members of the Navy SEALs in May 2011 in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The Intelligence Committee’s Report tries to refute each of these claims, using the C.I.A.’s internal records to present 20 case studies that bolster its conclusion that the most extreme interrogation methods played no role in disrupting terrorism plots, capturing terrorist leaders, or even finding Bin Laden. The Report said that senior officials—including former C.I.A. Directors George J. Tenet, Porter J. Goss, and Michael V. Hayden—repeatedly inflated the value of the program in secret briefings both at the White House and on Capitol Hill, and in public speeches. . . . The Report is more than 6,000 pages long, but the committee voted in April [2014] to declassify only its 524-page executive summary and a rebuttal by Republican members of the Committee. The investigation was conducted by the Committee’s Democratic majority and their staffs. Many of the C.I.A.’s most extreme interrogation methods, including waterboarding, were authorized by Justice Department lawyers during the Bush Administration. But the Report also found evidence that a number of detainees had been subjected to other, unapproved methods while in C.I.A. custody. The torture of prisoners at times was so extreme that some C.I.A. personnel tried to put a halt to the techniques, but were told by senior Agency officials to continue the interrogation sessions.”). The unclassified, redacted Senate Intelligence Committee Report as published is 693 pages. See REPORT OF THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE, COMMITTEE STUDY OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY’S DETENTION AND INTERROGATION PROGRAM, TOGETHER WITH FOREWORD BY CHAIRMAN FEINSTEIN AND ADDITIONAL AND MINORITY VIEWS, 113th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Report 113-288 (9 December 2014), [www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CRPT-113srpt288.pdf](http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CRPT-113srpt288.pdf). Then Deputy Assistant Attorney General, and University of California—Berkeley, Boalt Hall School of Law Professor, John Yoo, is listed 11 times in this Report for his role in advising (as the Report at page 34 puts it), “that the criminal prohibition on torture would not prohibit the methods proposed by the interrogation team, because of the absence of any specific intent to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering.”

190. *Covert Evacuations.*

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>By 28 August, the demolitions are finished, and all documents, hard drives, and sensitive information are destroyed.</p> <p>On 30 August, the <i>Taliban</i> enter the erstwhile CIA compound, and realize, “This was a very important place.”<sup>191</sup></p>	
6 August	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> captures Zaranj, in Southwestern Nimroz Province, the first Provincial capital it takes since the February 2020 <i>Peace Agreement</i>.</p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> assassinates Afghan Head of the Government Media Dawa Khan Menapal in Kabul.</p>	<p>The last Provincial capital conquest by the <i>Taliban</i> was in 2016. Zaranj is strategic because it lies on Afghan-Iranian border with and is a major trading hub between the two countries.</p>
7 August	<p>U.S. Embassy in Kabul suggests all American citizens leave Afghanistan “immediately” and U.K. and Germany do likewise.<sup>192</sup></p> <p>India suggests its citizens leave Afghanistan and sends aircraft to Northern Afghanistan to bring home its officials at its Consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif.<sup>193</sup></p>	<p>“‘The order for American citizens to leave is an indication of the deteriorating security situation,’ a U.S. [Department of] Defense official [said].”<sup>194</sup></p> <p>India called upon Pakistan to play a “constructive role” to end the violence in Afghanistan.<sup>195</sup></p>
9-10 August	<p>EU confirms <i>Taliban</i> is in control of 65% of Afghanistan, and over half of the country’s approximately 400 Districts, having captured nine Provincial capitals in approximately one week, including Aybak (Samangan), Kunduz (Kunduz), Pul-e-Khumri (Baghlan), Farah (Farah), Lakshar Gah (Helmand), Sheberghan (Jowzjan), Sar-e-Pol (Sar-e-Pol), Taloqan (Takhar), and Zaranj (Nimroz).</p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> threaten another 11 Provincial capitals; fighting raged on in 25 of Afghanistan’s 34 Provinces. Government forces withdraw from hard-to-hold rural areas to protect urban centers and Kabul.</p> <p>“The <i>Taliban</i>’s gains are the most significant since U.S. President Biden announced in April [2021] that American troops would pull out of Afghanistan by the end of August.”<sup>196</sup></p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> victories are nation-wide. Already the <i>Taliban</i> had captured or was threatening Provincial capitals in the South (e.g., Nimroz, Zaranj, and Lakshar Gah, which it captured, and Kandahar which it threatened).</p> <p>In the West, the <i>Taliban</i> take one Provincial capital: Farah</p> <p>Notably, the <i>Taliban</i> victories also are in five Northern Provincial capitals, which for several years had been the most peaceful part of Afghanistan, with minimal <i>Taliban</i> presence, and a source of strength for the Afghan government: Aybak (Samangan); Pul-eKhurmi (Baghlan); Kunduz (Kunduz); Sar-e-Pol (Sar-e-Pol); Sheberghan (Jowzian); and Taloqan (Takhar).</p>

	<p>The Afghan government “appealed for pressure on neighboring Pakistan to stop <i>Taliban</i> reinforcements and supplies flowing over the porous border,” but “Pakistan denies backing the <i>Taliban</i>.”<sup>197</sup></p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> strategy is to capture the strategically important, revenue-generating, population and trading centers, border crossings, and transportation hubs in the South, North, and West, and then to converge on Kabul.<sup>198</sup></p>
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191. *Covert Evacuations* (quoting an unnamed *Taliban* fighter).

192. Quoted in *Taliban Seizes Ground Across Afghanistan*; *Afghanistan War: Sheberghan Falls*.

193. See *Biden Says Afghan Leaders*. See also *Taliban Seizes Three More* (reporting: “Other countries, including the U.K. and India, have also scaled back their presence in the country. New Delhi on . . . [10 August] withdrew its personnel from its consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif and told its citizens to leave the country. . . . [T]he decisions were a sign of their limited confidence in the Ghani government’s ability to withstand the *Taliban* assault.”).

194. Quoted in *Taliban Seizes Ground Across Afghanistan*.

195. For example:

Regional power India is watching with concern as well. Arindam Bagchi, spokesperson of India’s Ministry of External Affairs, told a media briefing . . . [on 12 August 2021] India hopes for an immediate and comprehensive cease-fire.

“We are supporting all peace initiatives in Afghanistan,” he said. “Our primary concern is peace and stability in that country and offering a prosperous future — independent, sovereign and democratic.”

Asked whether India was holding discussions with the *Taliban*, Bagchi said: “We are in touch with various stakeholders.”

New Delhi earlier this week advised Indian nationals in Afghanistan to return home on commercial flights. Separately, it has withdrawn all Indian nationals from its consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif as “a temporary measure” in view of the security situation there. Bagchi added there is no plan to shut the Indian embassy in Kabul.

Meanwhile, he issued a veiled call on Pakistan to play a constructive role in Afghanistan.

“For peace in Afghanistan, we need to ensure that the external malign influences there do not happen,” Bagchi said in an indirect reference to India’s nuclear-armed neighbor.

“We would certainly hope that all parties, including regional countries there, understand this and work toward a situation where Afghans can have a process that is owned by them, controlled by them, led by them,” he said, adding: “We certainly don’t think that currently that’s the situation.”

Quoted in *Taliban Push Toward Afghan Capital*.

196. *Taliban Sweeps Across*.

197. *Taliban Control 65%*. See also *Taliban Could Take Afghan Capital* (reporting: “Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said *Taliban* leaders told him earlier this year that they will not negotiate with the Afghan government as long as Ghani remains President.”).

198. For example, Kunduz, was a “city of 270,000” and “regarded as a strategic prize as it lies at the gateway to mineral-rich Northern Provinces and Central Asia.” *Taliban Overrun Northern Afghan Cities*. In the North, *Taliban* gains were on the “border of Afghanistan’s Central Asian neighbors and trading partners Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.” *Taliban Push Toward Afghan Capital*. Moreover, the:

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>Afghan President Ashraf Ghani calls on regional warlords, with whom he had quarrelled, to fight the <i>Taliban</i>, and to civilians to defend Afghanistan’s “democratic fabric.”<sup>199</sup></p> <p>U.S. President Biden intones: “Look, we spent over \$1tn [trillion] over 20 years, we trained and equipped with modern equipment over 300,000 Afghan forces. Afghan leaders have to come together . . . They’ve got to fight for themselves, fight for their nation.”<sup>200</sup></p>	<p>These urban centers were supposed to have been safe under the <i>Peace Agreement</i>; hopes for a negotiated political settlement with the government fade as the <i>Taliban</i> continues its offensive.</p>
11 August	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> seize another Provincial capital: Faizabad (capital of Badakhshan Province). The Afghan Acting Finance Minister, Khalid Payenda, resigns and leaves the country.</p> <p>U.S. intelligence predicts “<i>Taliban</i> fighters could isolate Afghanistan’s capital in 30 days and possibly take it over in 90.”<sup>201</sup> This “new assessment of how long Kabul could stand was a result of the <i>Taliban</i>’s rapid gains as U.S.-led foreign forces leave,” though is not presented as a “foregone conclusion,” if the Afghan Security Forces reverse <i>Taliban</i> momentum by fighting harder and more effectively.<sup>202</sup></p> <p>Multiple sources say <i>Al Qaeda</i>, ISIS, and other violent extremist organizations (VEOs) are collaborating directly with the <i>Taliban</i> on the battlefield and, indeed, the <i>Taliban</i> never had distanced itself from these VEOs, contrary to the expectation of the <i>Peace Agreement</i>.<sup>203</sup></p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> controls 11 Provincial capitals, one-third of the 34 capitals. Its capture of Faizabad, a mountainous city in the Badakhshan, is significant because the city is “well-fortified” and “had remained out of the group’s reach when it ruled the country in the 1990s.”<sup>204</sup> As a result, the <i>Taliban</i> controls the entire Northeast region. Badakhshan borders China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan.</p>

location [of Kunduz] makes it strategically important, as there are highways connecting Kunduz to other major cities, including Kabul, and the Province shares a border with Tajikistan.

That border is used for the smuggling of Afghan opium and heroin to Central Asia, which then finds its way to Europe. Controlling Kunduz means controlling one of the most important drug smuggling routes in the region.

It also holds symbolic significance for the *Taliban* because it was a key northern stronghold before 2001. The militants captured the city in 2015 and again in 2016 but have never been able to hold it for long.

*Afghanistan War: Taliban Capture Three*. Likewise, Pul-e Khumri (sometimes transliterated as “Puli Khumri”), is “a strategically important city on the route to

Kabul from the traditionally anti-*Taliban* north.” *Taliban Seizes Three More*.

199. *Taliban Control 65%*. However, “[f]or years, Mr Ghani tried to side-line the warlords in an attempt to boost the Afghan National Army, and now he is turning to them in his hour of need, . . . [and not until the week of 9 August did] the President also agreed to arm pro-government militia.” *Afghanistan Taliban Take 11th Provincial*.

200. *Quoted in Taliban Seizes Three More*. See also *Biden Says Afghan Leaders* (quoting the President: “Afghan leaders have to come together. They’ve got to fight for themselves, fight for their nation.”).

201. *Taliban Could Take Afghan Capital*.

202. *Taliban Could Take Afghan Capital*.

203. The question of a relationship between ISIS-K and the *Taliban*, *i.e.*, is there a link, is a yes-and-no matter:

Peripherally yes [there is a link], via a third party, the Haqqani network.

. . . [T]here are strong links between IS-K and the Haqqani network, which in turn is closely linked to the *Taliban*.

...

Dr. Sajjan Gohel, from the Asia Pacific Foundation, has been monitoring the militant networks in Afghanistan for years.

He says, “several major attacks between 2019 and 2021 involved collaboration between IS-K, the *Taliban’s* Haqqani network and other terror groups based in Pakistan.”

When the *Taliban* took over in Kabul on 15 August [2021], the group released large numbers of prisoners from Pul-e-Charki jail, reportedly including IS and *Al Qaeda* militants. These people are now at large.

...

But IS-K have major differences with the *Taliban*, accusing them of abandoning *Jihād* and the battlefield in favor of a negotiated peace settlement hammered out in “posh hotels” in Doha, Qatar.

IS-K considers *Taliban* militants “apostates,” making their killing lawful under their interpretation of Islamic law.

IS militants now represent a major security challenge for the incoming *Taliban* government, something the *Taliban* leadership shares in common with Western intelligence agencies.

*Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who?*. One of the specific links between the *Taliban* and ISIS-K could be through social media platforms involving the Haqqani network:

Although the U.S. State Department has designated the Haqqani Network as an international terrorist group, their leader Anas Haqqani and many members of the group have Twitter accounts with thousands of followers.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, one member of the *Taliban’s* social media team told the BBC that the team decided to use Twitter in earnest to promote a *New York Times* opinion article written by Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Deputy Leader of the *Taliban*, in February 2020. Most of the active *Taliban* accounts on Twitter were created after that.

*The Taliban Embrace*. In other words, it is clear the *Taliban* and Haqqani network communicate, and the next link concerns that network to ISIS-K.

204. *Taliban Seizes Three More*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
12 August	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> capture two more Provincial capitals: Ghazni (capital of Ghazni Province) and Herat (Herat).</p> <p>Afghan Security Forces withdraw from Kandahar, the second largest city in Afghanistan, suggesting the <i>Taliban</i> are about to capture it.</p> <p>The Afghan government replaces Army Chief General Wali Mohammad Ahmadzai, who it appointed in June 2021, with General Hibatullah Alizai on Wednesday.</p> <p>The U.S. announces it will send 3,000 troops (two Marine infantry and one Army battalion), and the U.K. says it will send 600 troops, within 48 hours to evacuate their Embassy Staff, as well as their local civilian translators.</p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> are in control of nearly all Northern Afghanistan, save for Mazar-i-Sharif, near the border with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.</p> <p>Herat is economically significant as Afghanistan’s third largest city. Along its ancient trade routes, it is a gateway to Iran.</p> <p>Ghazni is militarily strategic because it connects Western Afghanistan to Kabul via the Kandahar-to-Kabul highway.<sup>205</sup> With Ghazni, the <i>Taliban</i> are just 150 kilometers (93 miles) from Kabul,<sup>206</sup> and they are encircling the capital to force the surrender of President Ashraf Ghani’s government.</p> <p>In most of their conquests, the <i>Taliban</i> open the local jails, thereby freeing fellow <i>Taliban</i> members incarcerated by the government. It is also, reportedly, “executing Afghan troops who were surrendering.”<sup>207</sup></p> <p>Analysts are “sceptical that leadership changes in the armed forces would bolster Afghan troops, a number of whom appear to have faded away in the face of the insurgents’ onslaught.”<sup>208</sup></p> <p>Having complained the previous week that President Biden had not bothered to telephone him, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan accuses the U.S. of “consider[ing] his country ‘useful only’ in the context of somehow settling this mess which has been left behind after 20 years of trying to find a military solution when there was not one.”<sup>209</sup></p>

<p>13 August</p>	<p>Kandahar, capital of Kandahar Province, falls to the <i>Taliban</i>. Additionally, Qala-e-Naw, capital of the Northwestern Badghis Province, Firuz Koh, capital of Central Gohr province, and Pul-e-Alam, capital of Southeastern Lowgar Province, also fall.</p> <p>The U.S. and Germany ask the <i>Taliban</i> to spare their Embassies, should it capture Kabul, and warn that if the <i>Taliban</i> attacks them, then the <i>Taliban</i> will not receive any post-war foreign assistance.<sup>210</sup></p> <p>Afghan refugees continue to flee to Kabul to escape the <i>Taliban</i> onslaught.</p> <p>U.K. Defense Minister Ben Wallace “warn[s] that Afghanistan could again become a haven for international terrorists such as <i>Al Qaeda</i>, whose presence prompted the US-led invasion to oust the <i>Taliban</i> from power almost 20 years ago” saying: “I’m absolutely worried that failed states are breeding grounds for those types of people.”<sup>211</sup> He also criticizes America’s withdrawal: “I felt this was not the right time or decision to make because of course <i>Al Qaeda</i> will probably come back.”<sup>212</sup></p>	<p>Since August 6, the <i>Taliban</i> captured 17 Provincial capitals. Kandahar’s fall is significant, because it is the second largest city in Afghanistan, and the economic hub of the South.</p> <p>Other than Kabul, the only major cities not yet under <i>Taliban</i> control are “Mazar-i-Sharif, a northern stronghold of local anti-<i>Taliban</i> warlords, and Jalalabad, to the south of Kabul.”<sup>213</sup></p> <p>As for the capital, the <i>Taliban</i> are encircling and isolating Kabul, and the U.S. expects an assault by the <i>Taliban</i> within days. Pul-e-Alam lies just 80 kilometers (50 miles) from Kabul.</p>
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205. *Afghanistan Taliban Take 11th Provincial.*

206. *Afghanistan Taliban Take 11th Provincial.*

207. *Afghanistan Taliban Take 11th Provincial.*

208. *Afghanistan Taliban Take 11th Provincial.*

209. *Quoted in Taliban Extends Rout of Provincial Capitals* (also reporting: “Pakistan has long played an ambiguous role in Afghanistan. Washington and the Afghan government believe Islamabad has covertly supported the *Taliban*, even while publicly claiming its support for a U.S.-backed peace process,” and observing: “Fawad Chaudhry, Pakistan’s Information Minister, . . . [said]: ‘The people of Afghanistan and the United States must ask their governments exactly what use came from over \$1tn [trillion] that the U.S spent on the Afghan war. Why is the Afghan army coming apart like leaves?’”). The same might be asked of post-Partition American aid to Pakistan, and the answer lie in the quality of Pakistani governance.

210. *See U.S. Asks Taliban to Spare.*

211. *Quoted in Taliban Encircles Kabul.*

212. *Quoted in Taliban Encircles Kabul.*

213. *Taliban Encircles Kabul.*

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
		<p>Though U.S. Embassy evacuations begin, the U.S. insists the facility remain open, in part to encourage other countries not to shut theirs, and to avoid comparisons with the 1975 collapse of Saigon.<sup>214</sup></p> <p>Nevertheless, in addition to the 3,000 soldiers the U.S. sent to orchestrate these evacuations, it deploys an additional “back-up detachment of 3,500 soldiers . . . to Kuwait in case the security situation deteriorates further.”<sup>215</sup> Ironically, “[i]f those troops end up in Afghanistan, that would bring the number of American forces there to around 7,000, more than double the number in the country when Mr. Biden announced in April that he would withdraw American troops and end America’s longest war.”<sup>216</sup></p> <p>As evidence of the diplomatic efforts America made in the Near East since 9-11, “about one-quarter of the current U.S. diplomatic corps have been posted to either Afghanistan or Iraq over the last 20 years and remain emotionally invested in the war zones in which they worked.”<sup>217</sup></p>
14 August	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> captures three more Provincial capitals: Mazar-e-Sharif (capital of Balkh Province); Sharana (Paktika); and Asadabad (Kunar).</p> <p>President Biden authorizes the deployment of an additional 1,000 military personnel (from the 82nd Airborne Division headquartered in Fort Bragg, North Carolina<sup>218</sup>) for evacuations from Afghanistan, bringing the total U.S. troop number to 5,000 (including the 1,000 that already at the Embassy and Hamid Karzai International Airport).</p> <p>Multiple U.S. Chinook and Black Hawk helicopters fly over Kabul, monitoring <i>Taliban</i> movements and evacuating U.S. officials from the Embassy.</p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> controls at least 20 Provincial capitals, that is, more than half of the capitals.</p> <p>The Southeastern and Northeastern Provinces of Paktika and Kunar, respectively, border Pakistan. Aside from Nangarhar Province, whose capital is Jalalabad, the <i>Taliban</i> control the entire Afghanistan-Pakistan border.</p> <p>Mazar-e-Sharif, the fourth largest city in Afghanistan, which is close to the country’s borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, was the last bastion of resistance against the <i>Taliban</i> in the North. The <i>Taliban</i> overruns it without much of a fight. They had not captured Mazar-e-Sharif since the 1990s.</p>

		<p>The only major cities left under Afghan government control are Jalalabad and Kabul.</p> <p>Over 250,000 Afghans are internally displaced, many streaming to Kabul to flee the violence.</p>
15 August	<p>In the morning (Kabul Time), the <i>Taliban</i> takes control of Jalalabad. Jalalabad is just 150 kilometers (90 miles) east of Kabul.</p> <p>President Ghani flees the country, reportedly to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, or Oman, and ultimately lands in the UAE.<sup>219</sup> He is accused of cowardice, but he argues he left to avoid bloodshed.<sup>220</sup></p>	<p>About 17,000 Afghans have worked for the U.S., which vows to help evacuate them from the country and denies that it is abandoning Afghanistan. America also rejects parallels to the 1975 fall of Saigon, with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinkin saying: “This is not Saigon. We went to Afghanistan 20 years ago, with one mission, and that mission was to deal with the folks who attacked us on 9/11, and we’ve succeeded.”<sup>221</sup></p>

214. For a short analysis of the similarities and differences between the fall of Kabul and Saigon, and the ramifications of each, see Jonathan Marcus, *Afghanistan: What’s the Impact of Taliban’s Return on International Order?*, BBC NEWS, 17 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58248864](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58248864).

215. *Taliban Encircles Kabul*.

216. *U.S. Is Sending 3,000 Troops*.

217. *U.S. Asks Taliban to Spare*. See also *U.S. Is Sending 3,000* (reporting: “Five current and former officials described the mood inside the [U.S.] Embassy [in Kabul] as increasingly tense and worried, and diplomats at the State Department’s headquarters in Washington noted a sense of tangible depression at the specter of closing it, nearly 20 years after Marines reclaimed the burned-out building in December 2001. Several people gloomily revived a comparison that all wanted to avoid: the fall of Saigon in 1975, when Americans stationed at the U.S. Embassy were evacuated from a rooftop by helicopter.”).

218. See also *Biden Adds Forces for Afghan*.

219. See *Ashraf Ghani: Afghanistan’s Exiled President Lands in UAE*, BBC NEWS, 18 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58260902](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58260902).

220. For Mr. Ghani’s *post hoc* rendition of his departure, see *Ashraf Ghani: Ex-Afghan President Describes Moment He Fled the Taliban*, BBC NEWS, 30 December 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59807737](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59807737).

221. Quoted in *Taliban Set to Retake Afghanistan*. Secretary Blinkin’s point was defensible, as Lionel Barber, former Editor of the *Financial Times*, explained: . . . [L]oose talk about President Biden’s “Saigon moment” — a reference to the iconic image of evacuees being loaded onto a CIA helicopter from a rooftop during the U.S. withdrawal from Saigon on April 29, 1975 — is premature. Despite all too familiar mistakes in U.S. foreign policy, often grounded in a failure to appreciate culture and history, there are important differences between the U.S. occupation of Vietnam and the American misadventure in Afghanistan.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>Former President Hamid Karzi (in office from 2004–2014) chooses to stay in Kabul, broadcasting on Facebook a photo with his three young (unveiled) daughters. He and his former political adversary, Abdullah Abdullah, Head of the High Council for National Reconciliation, declare they are forming a Coordinating Council to manage a peaceful transition of power.</p> <p>By mid-day, the <i>Taliban</i> control all entry points to Kabul, as well as Bagram Air Base. <i>Taliban</i> commanders order their soldiers not to enter Kabul, as efforts are underway to arrange a peaceful transition of power. However, <i>Taliban</i> forces enter Kabul, ostensibly to prevent looting, through all four entry points.</p> <p><i>Al Jazeera</i> broadcasts stunning exclusive live video of a Presidential Palace official handing control of the Palace to the <i>Taliban</i>, who hold a Press Conference from the President’s desk, and replace the Afghan flag.</p>	<p>President Biden again defends the U.S. withdrawal, saying: “I was the fourth President to preside over an American troop presence in Afghanistan — two Republicans, two Democrats. I would not, and will not, pass this war onto a fifth.”<sup>222</sup></p> <p>But the swift, comprehensive victory of the <i>Taliban</i> evinces the failure of 20 years of American policy in Afghanistan, and the unmitigable blow to its prestige and influence is obvious.<sup>223</sup></p> <p>Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova intones: “The world is watching in horror the results of Washington’s latest historical experiment.”<sup>224</sup></p> <p>Also, Russian diplomats described the new men in town [<i>i.e.</i>, the <i>Taliban</i> in Kabul] as ‘normal guys,’ and argued that the capital was safer now than before.<sup>225</sup></p>

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First, the domestic context. At the peak of the war, the U.S. deployed 500,000 troops in Vietnam, five times the peak presence in Afghanistan. Some 58,000 U.S. soldiers died, compared to around 2,300 in Afghanistan and more than 20,000 wounded. University campuses — full of middle-class students fearing the draft — were ablaze. Today, the U.S. operates an enlisted army and there is no significant anti-Afghan war movement. Most important, however divided the U.S. may appear today, it bears no comparison to the early 1970s. America then was suffering a pervasive crisis of authority epitomized by the Watergate scandal which forced the resignation of President Richard Nixon. Today, Americans are suffering more from

battle fatigue from the “forever wars.” the twin engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan launched in retaliation for the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. While the cost of the Afghan intervention was high — \$2 trillion over 20 years — the burden was shared by NATO allies, led by the U.K. (a notable absentee in the Vietnam conflict). The duration of the war made it America’s longest, but reconstruction helped to educate a generation of Afghan women and build a nascent middle class in a remote, ethnically diverse and historically xenophobic country. All these gains risk being crushed by the *Taliban*, merciless and medieval in their methods.

...

Back in 1975, in Vietnam, the Communist forces of the North swept south and reunited a homogenous country. By contrast, Afghanistan is an ethnic patchwork inimical to nation-building. The *Pashtuns* form around 40% of the population, with *Tajiks*, *Hazaras*, *Uzbeks*, *Turkmens*, and other tribes outside the tent. No central government has ever exercised control over the whole country.

Afghanistan will forever be vulnerable to meddling by outside powers: neighboring Pakistan, India, Russia and in another era, imperial Britain. Latterly, China has increasingly taken an interest, warmly welcoming the *Taliban* leader *Mullah* Abdul Ghani in Beijing. Hard-nosed realists in Washington may welcome someone else managing the Afghan problem, but there will likely be geopolitical costs, with China a possible winner.

...

Still, all predictions should be accompanied with a degree of humility. After the Communist takeover of Vietnam, the much-vaunted “domino theory” never happened. Apart from Cambodia and Laos, Southeast Asia was not subsumed in a red tide. In fact, Vietnam fought a border war with China in 1979 and later restored diplomatic relations with the U.S.

No such benign outcome is likely with the *Taliban*. They harbored *Al-Qaeda* terrorists responsible for the deadliest attack on U.S. territory.

Lionel Barber, *America’s Afghan Misadventure is Not Biden’s “Saigon Moment,”* NIKKEI ASIA, 16 August 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/America-s-Afghan-misadventure-is-not-Biden-s-Saigon-moment>.

222. Quoted in *Taliban Set to Retake Afghanistan*. See also *Biden Adds Forces for Afghan* (reporting: “Biden said that his Administration had told *Taliban* officials in Qatar that an action that put U.S. personnel at risk, ‘will be met with a swift and strong U.S. military response.’ But he also said an indefinite U.S. military presence was not an option. ‘One more year, or five more years, of U.S. military presence would not have made a difference if the Afghan military cannot or will not hold its own country. And an endless American presence in the middle of another country’s civil conflict was not acceptable to me,’ Biden added.)

223. See, e.g., David E. Sanger, *For Biden, Images of Defeat He Wanted To Avoid*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 15 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/15/us/politics/afghanistan-biden.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/15/us/politics/afghanistan-biden.html?referringSource=articleShare) (opining: “Rarely in modern presidential history have words come back to bite an American commander in chief as swiftly as these from President Biden a little more than five weeks ago: ‘There’s going to be no circumstance where you see people being lifted off the roof of an Embassy of the United States in Afghanistan.’ Then, digging the hole deeper, he added, ‘The likelihood there’s going to be the *Taliban* overrunning everything and owning the whole country is highly unlikely.’ . . . Mr. Biden will go down in history, fairly or unfairly, as the president who presided over a long-brewing, humiliating final act in the American experiment in Afghanistan.”)

224. Quoted in *Taliban Set to Retake Afghanistan*.

225. Quoted in Petr Kozlov & Anna Rynda, *Afghan Crisis: Russia Plans for New Era with Taliban Rule*, BBC NEWS, 21 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58265934](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58265934).

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>By 23:00 Kabul Time, the <i>Taliban</i> take control of Kabul “without a fight.”<sup>226</sup> Kabul thus falls.<sup>227</sup></p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> also take control of the last border post, Torkham, at the Khyber Pass, Afghanistan’s major border crossing with Pakistan.</p> <p>Throughout the day, the U.S. and several other countries evacuate their Embassy personnel (including the Acting U.S. Ambassador) from Kabul’s Green Zone to Hamid Karzi International Airport. The Airport is under attack, forcing suspension of all commercial flights, leaving only military aircraft flights for evacuation.</p>	<p>The <i>Financial Times</i> opines: “The fall of Kabul to the <i>Taliban</i> — 20 years after it was driven out — will end American influence in Afghanistan, probably for decades. In that sense, it is comparable to the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979, the fall of Saigon in 1975 or the Cuban Revolution of 1959.”<sup>228</sup></p> <p>The United Nations does not evacuate its personnel from Afghanistan, and the Security Council schedules a meeting to discuss the <i>Taliban</i> takeover. United Nations Members will have to decide whether to recognize the new <i>Taliban</i> government.</p> <p>“The Afghanistan Central Bank held \$9.4 billion in reserve assets as of April, according to the International Monetary Fund. That amounts to roughly one-third of the country’s annual economic output. The vast majority of those reserves are not currently held in Afghanistan. . . . Among those, billions of dollars are kept in the United States [specifically, the Federal Reserve Bank of</p>

226. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

227. For a chilling, step-by-step account of the fall of Kabul by an eyewitness journalist, see Matthieu Aikins, *Inside the Fall of Kabul*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 10 December 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/12/10/magazine/fall-of-kabul-afghanistan.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/10/magazine/fall-of-kabul-afghanistan.html?referringSource=articleShare).

228. Gideon Rachman, *Afghanistan Is Now Part of the Post-American World*, THE FINANCIAL TIMES, 16 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/516b75b4-0c1c-4a7b-91d9-dd4844blecab?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/516b75b4-0c1c-4a7b-91d9-dd4844blecab?shareType=nongift). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan Is Now Part.*] See also *Biden’s Afghanistan Fiasco* (opining: “Not since Major General William Elphinstone’s retreating British army was picked off in 1842, has a foreign occupier left Afghanistan under such a cloud. It took three years after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 for its Kabul ally to submit to *mujahideen* forces. It was two years after the U.S. military’s exit from Vietnam before Saigon fell to the Communists in 1975. . . . Kabul folded to the *Taliban* almost three weeks before the official day of America’s departure. ‘We look like a deer caught in the headlights,’ says

Mathew Burrows, a former senior CIA officer now at the Atlantic Council. 'It is one more chink gone in the American empire.' The scenes of chaos at the Hamid Karzai International Airport will supply anti-American propagandists with years of footage. America's failure after two decades of fruitless nation-building has many authors, starting with George W. Bush and including Barack Obama, and Donald Trump. But as the President on whose watch the concluding fiasco took place, Joe Biden's name will be indelibly linked to it. The question is whether he can extract any foreign policy gains in what one analyst described as Biden's 'Ideas of August.' . . . History may yet distinguish between the unseemly manner of America's pull-out and the strategic logic behind it. Biden's thinking is that there is no elegant way to quit a war you have lost. Moreover, the sooner the U.S. could leave Afghanistan, the more it could focus on America's biggest strategic challenge of dealing with a rising China. Biden's foreign policy priorities are the three Cs — China, Covid, and Climate. . . . 'The joke was that in 1989 the [Pakistani] ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence] defeated the Soviets with American help,' says Sarah Chayes, an Afghan expert who was a senior Pentagon adviser. 'Now the ISI has defeated the United States with American help.'"); The Editorial Board, *History Repeats Itself in the Tragedy of Afghanistan*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 15 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/2daba011-2eee-4374-8e6c-967d9afd10?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/2daba011-2eee-4374-8e6c-967d9afd10?shareType=nongift) (opining: Pictures of helicopters lifting off from the U.S. Embassy [in Kabul] recalled the humiliating fall of Saigon in 1975 — something President Joe Biden dismissed just last month as implausible. This is a tragedy for the people of the country and a betrayal of the thousands of U.S. and allied troops — and more than 120,000 Afghans — who died in 20 years of war. It is a grave setback, too, for the credibility of the U.S. and of the community of democracies Biden hoped to cement. It was former president Donald Trump who announced U.S. troops would leave by 2021 provided the *Taliban* met the terms of a peace accord signed last year. But going ahead with the pull out was Biden's choice. The domestic political cost is still likely to be low. Polls show Americans are as weary today of the 'forever wars' as they were under Trump. Preserving the messy military stalemate into which Afghanistan had settled was a hard political sell. In terms of America's global standing, however, the miscalculation will haunt the rest of the Biden Presidency. . . . [T]he Afghan collapse reflects not just a [U.S.] military and intelligence failure but the failure in 20 years to have built a more functional state. . . . Successive Afghan governments bear responsibility too. Corruption and dysfunctional management badly hampered efforts at state-building. A desire in the White House to wrap up nagging foreign policy problems so it can focus on China is understandable. But the abandonment of Afghanistan raises doubts over the depth of U.S. commitment to supposed allies, and its determination to see military entanglements through to the bitter end. As one of the north Atlantic alliance's biggest and most costly foreign policy priorities of this century implodes, those lessons will not be lost on Beijing.") Arguably, however, the U.S. indeed did see its engagement to the bitter end, and the proper inference, for China and the world, is to take note of American endurance.

Perhaps the best analysis of the crisis, including a balanced criticism of the Biden Administration, came from *The New York Times*:

Interviews with key participants in the last days of the war show a series of mis-judgments and the failure of Mr. Biden's calculation that pulling out American troops — prioritizing their safety before evacuating American citizens and Afghan allies — would result in an orderly withdrawal.

Biden Administration officials consistently believed they had the luxury of time. Military commanders overestimated the will of the Afghan forces to fight for their own country and underestimated how much the American withdrawal would destroy their confidence. The Administration put too much faith in President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan, who fled Kabul as it fell.

And although Biden White House officials say that they held more than 50 meetings on embassy security and evacuations, and that so far, no Americans have died in the operation, all the planning failed to prevent the mayhem when the *Taliban* took over Kabul in a matter of days.

Michael D. Shear, David E. Sanger, Helene Cooper, Eric Schmitt, Julian E. Barnes & Lara Jakes, *Miscue After Miscue, U.S. Exit Plan Unravels*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 21 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/21/us/politics/biden-taliban-afghanistan-kabul.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/21/us/politics/biden-taliban-afghanistan-kabul.html?referringSource=articleShare).

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>The U.S. Treasury Department (Office of Foreign Assets Control) freezes all Afghan government assets (including those of the Central Bank) within its jurisdiction, blocking access by the <i>Taliban</i> to billions of dollars held in American financial institutions.<sup>229</sup></p>	<p>New York] . . .”<sup>230</sup> Of the \$9.4 billion, \$7 billion is at the New York Fed, \$1.3 is in other international accounts, and \$700,000 is held at the Bank for International Settlements in Basle, Switzerland.<sup>231</sup></p>
<p>16 August</p>	<p>Panic-stricken Afghans crowd Hamid Karzi International Airport, impeding airlift operations and forcing a brief suspension of flights.</p> <p>Several western countries in addition to the U.S. and Britain, including France, Germany, and New Zealand, work to evacuate their citizens plus their Afghan employees. India evacuates its Embassy. Only three Embassies remain operating in Kabul— China, Pakistan, and Russia.</p> <p>The Governor of the Central Bank of Afghanistan leaves the country, saying he did his best to stabilize the country’s currency.</p> <p>President Biden delivers an address on the crisis.</p>	<p>Poignant pictures of Afghans clinging to U.S. military cargo planes, and the deaths of several seeking to exit, underscore the fear of a return to the dark days of 1996–2001 <i>Taliban</i> rule, notwithstanding statements from <i>Taliban</i> officials such as “<i>Taliban</i> Spokesman Suhail Shaheen [, who] said on Twitter that the group’s fighters were under strict orders not to harm anyone” and “[l]ife, property and honor of no one shall be harmed, but must be protected by the <i>Mujahideen</i>.”<sup>232</sup></p> <p>President Biden’s speech is a resolute defense of his decision to withdraw, includes an admission that the swiftness of the <i>Taliban</i> victory caught the U.S. by surprise and singles out the failures of the Afghan government and its troops for blame for the collapse.<sup>233</sup> Admitting the logistics of the withdrawal were “hard and messy,” and the chaotic scenes were “gut wrenching,” he points out that when the U.S. sought to begin withdrawals months earlier, the Afghan government asked the U.S. not to do so to avoid a collapse of morale, thereby making the <i>Taliban</i>’s victory a self-fulfilling prophecy. The speech is both praised and criticized.<sup>234</sup></p> <p>India’s Ministry of External Affairs articulates its policy for Afghan refugees: India “would help Afghanistan’s minority Hindu and Sikh community members to come to India, and stand by a number of other Afghans ‘who have been our partners in the promotion of our mutual</p>

		developmental, educational and people-to-people endeavors.” <sup>235</sup> But, “[o]n the issue of India prioritizing repatriation into India of Hindus and Sikhs from Afghanistan, Pankaj Jha, a Professor of Strategic Affairs at the O.P. Jindal Global University, . . . [observes] there are some ‘inherent problems’ when it comes to New Delhi accepting Afghan refugees. ‘Most of them are using India just to try and seek asylum in the U.S. or other countries in the West,’” he said, adding that refugees themselves are not keen to stay in the country for long.” <sup>236</sup>
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229. See Jeff Stein, *Biden Administration Freezes Billions of Dollars in Afghan Reserves, Depriving Taliban of Cash*, THE WASHINGTON POST, 17 August 2021, [www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2021/08/17/treasury-taliban-money-afghanistan/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2021/08/17/treasury-taliban-money-afghanistan/) (also observing: “Cutting off access to U.S.-based reserves represents among the first in what are expected to be several crucial decisions facing the Biden administration about the economic fate of that nation following the *Taliban* takeover. Afghanistan is already one of the poorest countries in the world and is highly dependent on American aid that is now in jeopardy. The Biden Administration is also likely to face hard choices over how to manage existing sanctions on the *Taliban*, which may make it difficult to deliver international humanitarian assistance to a population facing ruin. . . . . The United States did not need any new authority to freeze the reserves, because the *Taliban* was already facing sanctions under an executive order approved after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. . . .). [Hereinafter, *Biden Administration Freezes Billions*.]

230. *Biden Administration Freezes Billions*.

231. Andrea Shalala, *Explainer: What Leverage Do U.S., Allies Have Over Taliban in Afghanistan?*, Reuters, 2 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/what-leverage-do-us-allies-have-over-taliban-afghanistan-2021-09-02/](https://www.reuters.com/world/what-leverage-do-us-allies-have-over-taliban-afghanistan-2021-09-02/). [Hereinafter, *Explainer: What Leverage*.]

232. Quoted in *Taliban Enter Afghan Capital*.

233. See Michael D. Shear & David E. Sanger, *Biden Stands Behind Afghan Withdrawal, Despite “Hard and Messy” Final Days*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 16 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/16/us/politics/biden-afghanistan.html?referringSource=articleShare](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/16/us/politics/biden-afghanistan.html?referringSource=articleShare)

234. See, e.g., Catie Edmondson, *Lawmakers Unite in Bipartisan Fury Over Afghanistan Withdrawal*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 16 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/16/us/politics/afghanistan-withdrawal-congress.html?referringSource=articleShare](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/16/us/politics/afghanistan-withdrawal-congress.html?referringSource=articleShare).

235. *Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan* (quoting the Ministry statement).

236. *Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>Turkey announces it is building a 295 kilometer wall, fortified by trenches and barbed wire, along its border with Iran to keep out Afghan refugees.<sup>237</sup> That was true even though Turkey is “separated from Afghanistan by Iran and a long, perilous 2,000-kilometer journey.”<sup>238</sup> Turkey’s motive is that it “already hosts more than four million refugees — 3.6 million from the war in its neighbor Syria — and doesn’t want to receive any more,”<sup>239</sup> nor does it wish to be a warehouse for refugees for the European Union (which likewise is chary of taking in more refugees).</p> <p>Greece follows suit, building a 40-kilometer fence in its Evros region, on its border with Turkey.<sup>240</sup></p> <p>And, “[a]ccording to a Tehran media report that couldn’t be officially confirmed, Iran . . . made a deal for closing its border with <i>Sunni</i>-majority Afghanistan in exchange for a <i>Taliban</i> promise not to kill any of the country’s <i>Shi’as</i>, a minority who follow the same branch of Islam as nearly all of Iran’s population.”<sup>241</sup></p>	
17 August	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> holds its first international Press Conference since the fall of Kabul.<sup>242</sup> The <i>Taliban</i> reaffirms it has the same ideology as it always had, and seeks to form a strong Islamic government based on the <i>Shari’a</i>. The <i>Taliban</i> also states it does not want continued fighting. They claim the new government will be inclusive, with general amnesty for all individuals, and Afghanistan will not become a base for attacking other countries.</p>	<p>Doubts remain about the sincerity of <i>Taliban</i> reassurances, and even whether there is one unified <i>Taliban</i>, rather than several factions. For example, the <i>Taliban</i> says women can work, and girls can go to school, within the bounds of the <i>Shari’a</i>, and it does not unambiguously disavow links to <i>Al Qaeda</i> or other foreign fighters in the country. <i>Taliban</i> officials cleverly present a moderate tone to obtain international aid, which Afghanistan desperately needs, as over 50% of the population is poor.<sup>243</sup></p> <p>Subsequent reports of violent reprisals against persons who worked with the Afghan government, and against women, cast further doubt on the sincerity of the <i>Taliban</i> pledge to forgive.<sup>244</sup></p>

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237. See Carlotta Gall, *Afghan Refugees Find A Harsh And Unfriendly Border in Turkey*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 23 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/world/europe/afghanistan-refugees-turkey-iran-taliban-airport.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/world/europe/afghanistan-refugees-turkey-iran-taliban-airport.html?referringSource=articleShare). More specifically:

Ankara is fortifying a three-meter-high wall along part of its 560-km border with Iran that it started building in 2017. The plan is to extend the barrier from around 155 kms to 242 kms, and supplement it with deep ditches, razor wires, thermal cameras and additional troops — the Turks have wall-building experience, having completed 837 km of a 911 km one on its Syria border.

Kiran Sharma, Sinan Tavsan & Talan Taslimi, *Turkey, Iran and Pakistan Raise Entry Bars for Afghan Refugees*, NIKKEI ASIA, 7 September 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Asia-Insight/Turkey-Iran-and-Pakistan-raise-entry-bars-for-Afghan-refugees>. [Hereinafter, *Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan*.]

238. *Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan*.

239. *Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan*.

240. *Greece Erects Fence at Turkey Border Amid Warnings of Afghan Migrant Surge*, BBC NEWS, 21 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58289893](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58289893).

241. *Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan*.

242. *See Taliban, Striking Dovish Tone, Pledge Peace and Women's Rights Under Islam*, REUTERS, 17 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/evacuation-flights-resume-kabul-airport-biden-defends-us-withdrawal-2021-08-17/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/evacuation-flights-resume-kabul-airport-biden-defends-us-withdrawal-2021-08-17/).

243. See George Wright, *Afghanistan: Mystery Taliban Spokesman Finally Shows His Face*, BBC NEWS, 17 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58250607](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58250607) (observing: “Mr. [Zabihullah] Mujahid fielded a wide-range of questions from reporters in the historic press conference, in which he claimed that the rights of women would be respected ‘within the framework of Islamic law.’ . . . The BBC’s Yalda Hakim says she was ‘shocked’ to see the face of a man she had been speaking to for more than a decade. . . . The Spokesman sought to strike a tone of conciliation, telling another reporter: ‘We don’t want any internal or external enemies.’ But Ms. Hakim says this is a far cry from some of the messages she used to receive from him. ‘Some of these texts were hardcore Islamist texts. Some of those you think: ‘This guy is bloodthirsty for the Americans, he’s bloodthirsty for anyone in the Afghan government.’ Then today [17 August 2021] he sits there and says there will be no reprisals,’ she says. ‘For years he has sent out these bloodthirsty statements and now he’s suddenly peace loving? It’s hard to reconcile.’ In fact, Mr Mujahid was sitting in the seat which until recently belonged to Dawa Khan Menapal, the Director of Afghanistan’s Media and Information Center, who was assassinated by *Taliban* militants earlier this month. . . . Ms. Hakim says she was wary of his words . . . despite his efforts to appear measured. ‘The caveat was really the *Shari’a* law [*sic*] — that sent chills down my spine,’ she says. ‘They still haven’t laid out what that looks like.’ ‘That’s the thing with the *Taliban* — they’re deceptive, they’re charming, they know how to use the right language, but you’re never quite sure whether you should believe them or not,’ she says. ‘There is a lot of mystery . . . but do we really know who they are?’”).

244. See Yogita Limaye, *Amid Violent Reprisals, Afghans Fear the Taliban’s “Amnesty” Was Empty*, BBC NEWS, 31 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58395954](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58395954). See also *Life in Kabul Under Taliban: Where Is Your Male Escort?*, BBC NEWS, 3 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58437713](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58437713) (reporting: “‘Why are you travelling without a *mahram*?’ the *Taliban* guard asks a young Afghan woman about her missing male escort. She sits on her own in the back of a beat-up Kabul yellow taxi as it pulls up to the checkpoint marked, like all the others, by the white *Taliban* flag with black script. What is allowed now in Kabul, and what is not? The turbaned Talib, rifle slung over shoulder, tells her to call her husband. When she explains she doesn’t have a phone, he instructs another taxi driver to take her home to get her husband and bring them back. Once completed, all is resolved.’; Andrew England, *Qatar Urges Taliban to Accept Foreign Presence as Security at Kabul Airport*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 30 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/2b165031-1a24-4cae-8e6e-4b807bc92ebf?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/2b165031-1a24-4cae-8e6e-4b807bc92ebf?shareType=nongift) (reporting: “The *Taliban* has said it wants to open the [Hamid Karzai International] Airport [in Kabul] to commercial flights and will allow Afghans to leave if they have the requisite travel documents. But on . . . [30 August 2021] it told Afghans they would be blocked from going to the Airport, *even if they had visas and the correct papers.*”) (emphasis added).

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
		<p>These doubts prove well-founded, that is, the <i>Taliban</i> promises prove meaningless. In December 2021, 22 governments issued a <i>Joint Statement</i><sup>245</sup> demanding “the Islamist regime respect its pledge not to harm former government or security personnel,” saying: “We are deeply concerned by reports of summary killings and enforced disappearances.”<sup>246</sup> Their <i>Statement</i> follows a November Human Rights Watch <i>Report</i> documenting “more than 100 executions and abductions of former Afghan government officials since the <i>Taliban</i> took control of the country almost four months ago [in August 2021],” and “the murder of 47 members of the Afghan Security Forces who surrendered to, or were captured by, the <i>Taliban</i> between 15 August and 31 October.”<sup>247</sup></p>
<p>18 August</p>	<p>Criticism of the Biden Administration mounts for not anticipating the swift <i>Taliban</i> takeover of Afghanistan and not adequately planning to evacuate U.S. personnel and the Afghans who helped America.<sup>248</sup></p> <p>President Biden defends his actions, saying chaos was inevitable: “The idea that somehow, there’s a way to have gotten out without chaos ensuing, I don’t know how that happens.”<sup>249</sup> He vows the U.S. military will not withdraw until every American has been evacuated, even if that means staying beyond 31 August.<sup>250</sup></p> <p>Anti-<i>Taliban</i> protests occur in Jalalabad, which the <i>Taliban</i> suppress by killing at least three persons.<sup>251</sup> “The <i>Taliban</i> call[s] upon Afghanistan’s <i>imams</i> to urge unity when they hold their first Friday prayers since the <i>Taliban</i> seized control as protests spread to more cities . . . , including the capital, Kabul.”<sup>252</sup></p> <p>The IMF denies Afghanistan access to nearly \$500 million worth of liquidity facilities.<sup>253</sup></p>	<p>The U.S. is aware that many Afghans seek to leave the country, and that the <i>Taliban</i> is preventing them from getting to the Hamid Karzai International Airport. The U.S. says it does not have the military personnel in Kabul to safeguard their passage to the Airport — the 4,500 troops there are focused on securing the Airport. So, the U.S. is communicating with the <i>Taliban</i> to allow freedom of entry into the Airport.<sup>254</sup> This mismatch fuels criticism of the Biden Administration.</p> <p>Repression of anti-<i>Taliban</i> protests by the <i>Taliban</i> is an early sign the group is unlikely to govern in an inclusive manner.</p> <p>The IMF cites a “lack of clarity” with respect to the recognition by the international community of the <i>Taliban</i>.<sup>255</sup></p>

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245. See U.S. Department of State, *Joint Statement on Reports of Summary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan* (4 December 2021), [www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-reports-of-summary-killings-and-enforced-disappearances-in-afghanistan/](http://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-reports-of-summary-killings-and-enforced-disappearances-in-afghanistan/). The 22 signatories were those of Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, EU, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, U.K, Ukraine, and U.S.

246. *Quoted in Afghanistan: Taliban Warned Against Targeting Former Security Forces*, BBC NEWS, 5 December 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59536522](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59536522). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Taliban Warned Against Targeting*.]

247. *Afghanistan: Taliban Warned Against Targeting*. The Report is Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan: Taliban Kill, “Disappear” Ex-Officials — Raids Target Former Police, Intelligence Officers* (30 November 2021), [www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/30/afghanistan-taliban-kill-disappear-ex-officials](http://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/30/afghanistan-taliban-kill-disappear-ex-officials).

248. See Mark Gollom, *Why Experts Say the U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan Didn’t Have to Lead to Chaos*, CBC NEWS, 18 August 2021, [www.cbc.ca/news/world/afghanistan-biden-troops-withdrawal-1.6143848](http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/afghanistan-biden-troops-withdrawal-1.6143848).

249. *Quoted in Taliban Keep Some Evacuees from Reaching Kabul Airport, as U.S. Vows to Finish Airlift*, REUTERS, 18 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/evacuations-afghanistan-gather-momentum-taliban-promise-peace-2021-08-18/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/evacuations-afghanistan-gather-momentum-taliban-promise-peace-2021-08-18/). [Hereinafter, *Taliban Keep Some Evacuees*.]

250. See *Biden Says Aug. 31 Deadline in Afghanistan Might Have to be Extended*, REUTERS, 18 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/kabul-airport-operations-restarted-evacuation-flights-pentagon-2021-08-16/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/kabul-airport-operations-restarted-evacuation-flights-pentagon-2021-08-16/).

251. *Taliban Keep Some Evacuees* (reporting: “Taliban fighters opened fire when residents tried to install Afghanistan’s national flag at a square in the city, killing three and injuring more than a dozen.”).

252. *Taliban Urge Afghan Unity as Protests Spread to Kabul*, REUTERS, 19 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghanistan-edge-after-anti-taliban-protest-east-kabul-calm-airlift-goes-2021-08-19/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghanistan-edge-after-anti-taliban-protest-east-kabul-calm-airlift-goes-2021-08-19/).

253. See Wajahat Khan, *IMF Cuts Off Afghanistan Funds as Taliban Take Control*, NIKKEI ASIA, 19 August 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Afghanistan-turmoil/IMF-cuts-off-Afghanistan-funds-as-Taliban-take-control> (also reporting: “The potential of the SDR [Special Drawing Right, explained below] allocation to provide nearly half a billion dollars in unconditional liquidity to a regime with a history of supporting terrorist actions against the United States and her allies is extremely concerning,” a group of 18 U.S. lawmakers wrote to the U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. . . . ‘Since 2020, we have raised concerns over the potential for vast sums to flow to evil regimes through an SDR allocation’ . . . ‘The Taliban has been added to the list of rogue regimes. These events call for the United States to cut off hard currency to the Taliban, including through its access to Afghanistan’s SDRs.”). [Hereinafter, *IMF Cuts Off Afghanistan*.]

254. *Taliban Keep Some Evacuees* (reporting: “U.S. officials have told the Taliban ‘that we expect them to allow all American citizens, all third-country nationals, and all Afghans who wish to leave to do so safely and without harassment,’ U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman . . . [said].”).

255. *IMF Cuts Off Afghanistan*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
20 August	<p>President Biden delivers a Press Conference concerning the status of evacuations from Afghanistan. He claims “significant progress” has been made in recent days,<sup>256</sup> noting that the U.S. had evacuated about 13,000 persons since 14 August.<sup>257</sup></p> <p>He says any American who wants to leave the country will be evacuated, and pledges to do what is necessary to bring out Afghans who had helped the U.S.<sup>258</sup></p> <p>He reiterates America has no long-term interest in Afghanistan, other than counterterrorism, and says that the U.S. never would have invaded the country if Osama Bin Laden had plotted the 9-11 attacks from Yemen.</p>	<p>It appeared that “about 11,000 US citizens have preregistered their presence in Afghanistan, while tens of thousands of Afghans who helped the US mission are also eligible for evacuation.”<sup>259</sup> The Department of Defense says the military has the “capacity to fly out 5,000-9,000 people a day from Kabul International Airport, but have managed only 2,000 a day.”<sup>260</sup> This “slow processing of names by the State Department as well as <i>Taliban</i> checkpoints throughout the city that are preventing evacuees from getting to the Airport.”<sup>261</sup></p> <p>The President says there is an agreement with the <i>Taliban</i> to permit Americans through its checkpoints around the Hamid Karzai International Airport to be evacuated, but does not want to extend the perimeter of U.S. control outside that Airport, into Kabul, because of “unintended consequences.”<sup>262</sup> Yet, he says an American military convoy helped evacuate officials from the French Embassy, casting doubt on why the U.S. is selective in conducting rescue missions beyond the Airport.</p> <p>In saying the Afghan evacuation is “one of the largest, most difficult airlifts in history,”<sup>263</sup> the President exaggerates, given two other major logistical operations: the (1) the 27 May-4 June 1940 evacuation of Dunkirk, in which 338,226 escaped surrounding Nazi forces, and (2) 24 June 1948-12 May 1949 Berlin Airlift to break the Soviet blockade of the access of the western allies to the western sectors of Berlin, in which the U.S. and British Air Forces flew over Berlin more than 250,000 times to drop necessities to the people of Berlin.</p>

<p>22 August</p>	<p>The U.S. reports it has evacuated 17,000 persons from the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, including approximately 2,500 American citizens.<sup>264</sup></p> <p>U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin activates the “Civilian Reserve Air Fleet “to provide commercial aircraft to support evacuation efforts from temporary havens,” and thereby “allow military planes to focus on flying in and out of Kabul’s International Airport.”<sup>265</sup></p> <p>President Biden suggests the 31 August deadline for ending all military operations in Afghanistan may need to be extended to allow for evacuations. He reports that ISIS is active in Kabul and may attack the</p>	<p>Participating airlines include American, Delta, Hawaiian, United, as well as Omani Air. They do not fly in or out of Kabul, but rather to and from third country transit points, to which the evacuees are taken from Kabul for onward passage to countries that have accepted them.</p> <p>Baradar had been a negotiator in Doha for the <i>Taliban</i> on the February 2020 <i>Peace Agreement</i> in Doha, and returned from Qatar to Kandahar, the so-called spiritual home of the <i>Taliban</i>, before arriving in Kabul. He states the new government: “will not be a democracy like in the West but it will ‘protect everyone’s rights.’”<sup>266</sup></p>
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256. Katrina Manson, *Biden Says “Significant Progress” Made on Evacuation of Afghanistan*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 20 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/0795a0a7-2b1f-4ce1-bf31-cef4159abbd4?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/0795a0a7-2b1f-4ce1-bf31-cef4159abbd4?shareType=nongift). [Hereinafter, *Biden Says “Significant Progress” Made*.]

257. See Justin Sink, *Biden Says U.S. Is Committed to Evacuating Afghan Refugees*, BLOOMBERG, 20 August 2021, [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-20/biden-says-u-s-is-committed-to-evacuating-afghan-refugees?sref=7sxw9Sxl](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-20/biden-says-u-s-is-committed-to-evacuating-afghan-refugees?sref=7sxw9Sxl).

258. See *Biden Again defends U.S. Pullout as World Powers Struggle with Afghanistan Evacuations*, REUTERS, 20 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nato-pledges-speed-evacuations-afghanistan-criticism-mounts-2021-08-20/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nato-pledges-speed-evacuations-afghanistan-criticism-mounts-2021-08-20/).

259. *Biden Says “Significant Progress” Made*.

260. *Biden Says “Significant Progress” Made*.

261. *Biden Says “Significant Progress” Made*.

262. Quoted in Katrina Manson, *Biden Pledges to Evacuate Every American Trying to Flee Afghanistan*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 21 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/0795a0a7-2b1f-4ce1-bf31-cef4159abbd4?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/0795a0a7-2b1f-4ce1-bf31-cef4159abbd4?shareType=nongift).

263. Quoted in *Joe Biden to Americans in Afghanistan: “We Will Get You Home,”* BBC NEWS, 20 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58285923](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58285923).

264. See *Afghanistan: U.S. Fears Risk of Islamic State Attack at Kabul Airport*, BBC NEWS, 22 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58293832](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58293832). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: U.S. Fears Risk of Islamic State*.]

265. Aime Williams & Stephanie Findlay, *Biden Says U.S. Could Extend Deadline for Afghanistan Pullout*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 22 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/0bcb4a2b-6447-47d0-8fed-1703338e63ee?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/0bcb4a2b-6447-47d0-8fed-1703338e63ee?shareType=nongift).

266. *Afghanistan: U.S. Fears Risk of Islamic State*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>Airport. He also concedes “that for many other Afghans desperate to leave the country, ‘I cannot promise what the final outcome will be.’”<sup>267</sup></p> <p><i>Taliban</i> co-founder <i>Mullah</i> Abdul Ghani Baradar arrives in Kabul to form a government. Secretly, he meets in Kabul with CIA Director William Burns.<sup>268</sup></p> <p>Between 21-22 August, the U.S. evacuates another 10,400 Americans, third-country nationals, and Afghans.<sup>269</sup></p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i>-CIA meeting was “the highest level official encounter since the militant group took over the Afghan capital,” and “Burns and Baradar . . . discussed the Aug. 31 deadline for a U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan.”<sup>270</sup></p>
23 August	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> warns it will not extend the 31 August end-date for the U.S. to end its military operations in Afghanistan.<sup>271</sup></p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> launches an assault in the Panjshir Valley, North of Kabul, where anti-<i>Taliban</i> resistance continues.<sup>272</sup> This rugged, stunningly beautiful, territory, a “maze of valleys, crevices, and caves,” is one of Afghanistan’s smallest Provinces, and home to 150,000-200,000 people.<sup>273</sup></p>	<p>In response to the <i>Taliban</i> offensive, China, Pakistan, and other neighbors of Afghanistan state that an inclusive government is a pre-condition for recognizing a <i>Taliban</i> regime.<sup>274</sup></p>
24 August	<p>President Biden decides to maintain the 31 August deadline for evacuations and military operations.<sup>275</sup></p>	<p>The President’s decision follows a Group of Seven (G-7) meeting in which allies, especially the U.K., urged the U.S. to extend the deadline, attracting bipartisan criticism. However, the decision comports with recommendations from the Pentagon, which stress the security of U.S. troops (<i>i.e.</i>, their heightened vulnerability to attack if they stay beyond 31 August).</p>
25 August	<p>To date, since the fall of Kabul on 15 August, over 82,000 Americans, third-country nationals, and Afghans have been evacuated from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul.<sup>276</sup></p> <p>With 13,400 evacuees this day, the total number of evacuees is 95,700, thus reportedly at this point making it “one of the biggest air evacuations in history.”<sup>277</sup> Moreover, “[s]everal thousand Afghans . . . crossed into Pakistan not long after the <i>Taliban</i> took control of Kabul, while some 1,500 Afghans . . . entered Uzbekistan and are living in tents near the border.”<sup>278</sup></p>	<p>The Secretary Blinkin, insists America is on track to complete its evacuations by the 31 August deadline, and reiterates that “[o]nly the United States could organise and execute a mission of this scale and this complexity.”<sup>279</sup></p> <p>The pace of evacuations accelerates, with 19,000 persons in the previous 24 hours, and a flight departing roughly every 45 minutes around the clock.<sup>280</sup></p>

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267. Quoted in *Afghanistan: U.S. May Seek Airlines' Help in Evacuation Effort—The U.S. Cites “Potential Security Threats” Near Kabul's Airport, Including from ISIS*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 21 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/live/2021/08/21/world/biden-taliban-afghanistan?referringSource=articleShare#the-us-cites-potential-security-threats-near-kabuls-airport-including-from-isis](http://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/08/21/world/biden-taliban-afghanistan?referringSource=articleShare#the-us-cites-potential-security-threats-near-kabuls-airport-including-from-isis).

268. See *CIA Director Met Taliban Leader in Afghanistan on Monday—Sources*, REUTERS, 24 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/cia-director-met-taliban-leader-kabul-monday-washington-post-reports-2021-08-24/](http://www.reuters.com/world/cia-director-met-taliban-leader-kabul-monday-washington-post-reports-2021-08-24/). [Hereinafter, *CIA Director Met Taliban Leader*.]

269. See Mark Landler & Megan Stack, *Taliban Reject Extended Deadline as U.S. Races to Finish Evacuation*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 23 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/world/asia/afghanistan-evacuation-americans-biden.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/world/asia/afghanistan-evacuation-americans-biden.html?referringSource=articleShare). [Hereinafter, *Taliban Reject Extended Deadline*.]

270. *CIA Director Met Taliban Leader*.

271. See *Taliban Reject Extended Deadline*.

272. See Stephanie Findlay, Benjamin Parkin & Mercedes Ruehl, *Taliban Attacks Resistance Fighters in Last Holdout Region of Afghanistan*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 23 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/80e98f12-8e3b-4bbf-903b-60ff5aa35373?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/80e98f12-8e3b-4bbf-903b-60ff5aa35373?shareType=nongift) (also noting: “Ahmad Massoud, the son of a renowned *mujahideen* who fought the Soviet Union invasion in 1979, and leader of the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan, has called for international support to fight off the *Taliban* if a peaceful settlement cannot be reached.”). [Hereinafter, *Taliban Attacks Resistance*.] On the Panjshiri resistance, see Paul Kerley & Lucia Blasco, *Afghanistan: The “Undefeated” Valley An Hour From Kabul*, BBC NEWS, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58329527](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58329527).

273. *Afghanistan: Taliban Claim to Have Taken Panjshir Valley*, BBC NEWS, 6 September 2021 [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58466647](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58466647) (analysis by Lyse Doucet). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Taliban Claim to Have*.]

274. See *Taliban Attacks Resistance*.

275. See Kitty Donaldson & Jennifer Jacobs, *Biden Rebuffs G-7 Call for More Time to Finish Afghan Airlift*, BLOOMBERG, 24 August 2021, [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-24/u-s-rebuffs-g-7-demands-for-more-time-to-finish-afghan-airlifts?sref=7sxxw9Sxl](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-24/u-s-rebuffs-g-7-demands-for-more-time-to-finish-afghan-airlifts?sref=7sxxw9Sxl).

276. *Afghanistan: Taliban Committed to Post-Deadline Safe Passage, U.S. Says*, BBC NEWS, 25 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58337380](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58337380). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Taliban Committed to Post-Deadline*.]

277. *At Least Four U.S. Marines Killed*.

278. *Afghanistan: Where Will Refugees Go After Taliban Takeover?*, BBC NEWS, 25 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58283177](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58283177) (also charting the countries in 2020 that took the largest numbers of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers, and identifying the countries (1) vowing to repatriate any further Afghans once conditions permitted, notably, Iran, (2) allowing intakes (at least temporarily) of more Afghans, namely, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, U.K., U.S., Canada, Australia, North Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, and Uganda, and (3) shutting their doors, disappointingly, Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, and Turkey). Impressively: “Uganda has agreed to take in 2,000 Afghan refugees. The East African nation has the largest number of refugees in any country in Africa — and the third largest in the world.” *Id.*

279. Quoted in *Afghanistan: Taliban Committed to Post-Deadline*.

280. See Lara Jakes, *How Many People in Afghanistan Need to be Rescued? The Number Remains Elusive.*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 24 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/24/us/politics/afghanistan-evacuations-kabul-airport.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/24/us/politics/afghanistan-evacuations-kabul-airport.html?referringSource=articleShare) (also reporting: “refugee and resettlement experts [including from the International Rescue Committee] estimate that at least 300,000 Afghans are in imminent danger of being targeted by the *Taliban* for associating with Americans and U.S. efforts to stabilize Afghanistan.”).

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>The Airport “is currently being defended by 5,800 U.S. and 1,000 British troops.” However, “Turkey . . . announce[s] that it had started pulling its troops out of Afghanistan.”<sup>281</sup></p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> agrees to allow departures to continue even after the 31 August withdrawal of U.S. military forces. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinkin states: “The <i>Taliban</i> have made public and private commitments to provide and permit safe passage for Americans, for third-country nationals and Afghans at risk past August 31st,” and he adds America will assist those who want to leave Afghanistan “not just during the duration of our evacuation and relocation mission, but every day thereafter.”<sup>282</sup></p> <p>The World Bank announces it is halting all aid to Afghanistan, and that it has evacuated its Kabul-based team to Pakistan<sup>283</sup></p>	<p>Significantly, up to 1,5000 Americans are still in Afghanistan. “The CIA and the U.S. military have been carrying out clandestine operations to extract Americans using helicopters and ground troops. . . . The perilous operations have been both inside and outside of Kabul. . . .”<sup>284</sup></p> <p>Since 2002, the World Bank committed over \$5.3 billion for reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan. Its decision to suspend funding is based on “concerns over how the <i>Taliban</i>’s takeover will affect ‘the country’s development prospects, especially for women.”<sup>285</sup></p>
26 August	<p>As predicted by intelligence reports, a “complex attack” occurs at 18:00 local time at the Abbey Gates to Hamid Karzai International Airport, and the nearby Baron Hotel, in Kabul.<sup>286</sup> Initial reports indicate at least 13 persons (including women and children) are killed, including 4 Marines (plus three others wounded). <i>Taliban</i> guards at the Airport are among the wounded.</p> <p>Evacuations are suspended.</p> <p>Soon, a grimmer reality emerges: at least 95 persons are killed, including 13 U.S. military personnel (including the Marines, a Navy medic, and others) and over 70 Afghan civilians.<sup>287</sup> “Two suicide bombers, assessed to have been ISIS fighters, detonated near the Abbey Gate at Hamid Karzai International Airport and near the Baron Hotel, which is adjacent to the airport.”<sup>288</sup> The attack at the Abbey Gate is followed by a number of Islamic State gunmen who opened fire at civilians and military forces. . . . The explosion occurred during the screening process to let people inside the Airport.”<sup>289</sup> The twin-attacks amount to “the deadliest incident for U.S. forces in Afghanistan in more than a decade.”<sup>290</sup></p>	<p>Both the <i>Taliban</i> and U.S. are opponents of ISIS-K. The <i>Taliban</i> describes the attackers, without identifying them, “as ‘evil circles’ who would be suppressed once the foreign troops leave,” and speaking anonymously, a <i>Taliban</i> official says: “Our guards are also risking their lives at Kabul Airport, they face a threat, too, from the Islamic State group.”<sup>291</sup></p> <p>“Pledging to go after the culprits, [President] Biden said: “To those who carried out this attack, as well as anyone who wishes America harm, know this: We will not forgive. We will not forget. We will hunt you down and make you pay.”<sup>292</sup></p> <p>He also affirms the evacuations will continue: “We will not be deterred by terrorists, we will not let them stop our mission. We will continue the evacuation.”<sup>293</sup></p>

	<p>In February 2022, the Pentagon states a single ISIS-K suicide bomber, using 20 pounds of military-grade explosives, carried out the attack, which could not have been prevented with the resources available.<sup>294</sup></p>	<p>Before the attack, Canada, Germany, and Netherlands ended their evacuation operations, and Turkey announced the withdrawal of its troops, who had been guarding the Kabul Airport for the previous six years.<sup>295</sup></p>
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281. *Afghanistan: Taliban Committed to Post-Deadline.*

282. *Quoted in Afghanistan: Taliban Committed to Post-Deadline.*

283. *Afghanistan: World Bank Halts Aid After Taliban Takeover*, BBC NEWS, 25 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/business-58325545](http://www.bbc.com/news/business-58325545). [*Afghanistan: World Bank Halts.*]

284. *Quoted in Afghanistan: Taliban Committed to Post-Deadline.*

285. *Quoted in Afghanistan: World Bank Halts.*

286. *At Least Four U.S. Marines Killed.*

287. *See Kabul Airport Attack: What Do We Know?*, BBC NEWS, 27 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58349010](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58349010) [hereinafter, *Kabul Airport Attack: What Do?*]; *Afghanistan Airport Attack: Who.*

288. Later the details of the attacks are corrected to say there was one suicide bomb explosion: “U.K. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said a suicide bomber walked into the middle of families waiting outside the gate before carrying out the attack. ‘We think it was a suicide vest and a smaller device. The individual got to the perimeter we had pushed out the day before in response to that threat. [The bomber] walked straight into the middle of those families waiting.’ . . . [S]ome victims were blown into a sewage canal where Afghans were waiting to be processed.” *Kabul Airport Attack: What Do.*

289. “*We Will Not Forgive*,” *Biden Says After 13 U.S. Deaths in Kabul*, NIKKEI ASIA, 26 August 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Afghanistan-turmoil/We-will-not-forgive-Biden-says-after-13-US-deaths-in-Kabul>. [Hereinafter, “*We Will Not Forgive.*”] *See also* Helene Cooper, Eric Schmitt & Thomas Gibbons-Neff, *As U.S. Troops Searched Afghans, a Bomber in the Crowd Moved In*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 27 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/27/us/politics/marines-kabul-airport-attack.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/27/us/politics/marines-kabul-airport-attack.html?referringSource=articleShare) (noting: “‘This is close-up war — the breath of the person you are searching is upon you,’ Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., the head of United States Central Command, said . . . after the attack, describing the face-to-face contact between Marines at the [Kabul] Airport gate and Afghans they must search before allowing them to enter.”).

290. *Key Dates in U.S. War.*

291. *Quoted in Attack on Kabul Airport Kills.*

292. *Quoted in “We Will Not Forgive.”*

293. *Quoted in Biden to Press On.*

294. *See* Phil Stewart & Rami Ayyub, *Single Bomber Carried Out Kabul Airport Attack, U.S. Military Says*, REUTERS, 4 February 2022, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/single-bomber-carried-out-kabul-airport-attack-us-military-says-2022-02-04/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/single-bomber-carried-out-kabul-airport-attack-us-military-says-2022-02-04/) (reporting the Pentagon’s revised assessment is based on “testimony from more than a hundred witnesses, analysis from medical examiners and explosives experts, drone footage and other evidence”).

295. *Kabul Airport Attack: What Do.*

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
27 August	<p>The death toll from the 25 August ISIS-K attacks rises to 170,<sup>296</sup> and then to 182.<sup>297</sup></p> <p>Notwithstanding the terrorist attacks of the previous day, “[t]he White House said . . . [today] that roughly 12,500 people had been evacuated from Kabul in the past 24 hours by U.S. forces and coalition partners, taking the total number of evacuees since the end of July to approximately 110,600,<sup>298</sup> or by other reports, over 111,000.<sup>299</sup></p> <p>As “more than 5,000 people remain inside the Airport, waiting to be flown out,” the U.S. and British force are “wrapping up” their mission and “the Taliban will take over in ‘a matter of hours.’”<sup>300</sup></p> <p>In retaliation for the ISIS-K attacks in Kabul, the U.S. launches a drone strike (specifically, a Hellfire missile fired from a Reaper drone<sup>301</sup>), reportedly killing two high-profile ISIS-K members (a planner and a facilitator) travelling in a vehicle in the Eastern Province of Nangarhar (where several thousand other members are believed to be in hiding).<sup>302</sup> Relatives (presumably of the victims) say the strike also kills 10 members of one family, including six children.<sup>303</sup></p> <p>Following a U.S. Central Command investigation, the U.S. (on 17 September) confirms 10 innocent civilians were killed in the drone strike, “an aid worker and nine members of his family, including seven children, died in the 29 August strike,” with “[t]he youngest child, Sumaya, . . . being just two years old.”<sup>304</sup></p>	<p>President Biden says the Americans who died in the terrorist attacks are “heroes who have been engaged in a dangerous selfless mission to save the lives of others,” and “order[s] military commanders to ‘develop operational plans to strike ISIS-K assets, leadership and facilities,’ vowing America will ‘respond with force and precision’ at a moment and location of Washington’s choosing.”<sup>305</sup></p> <p>The Taliban criticize the U.S. for launching drone and anti-missile attacks on Afghan soil, saying America should have consulted it first,<sup>306</sup> even though ISIS-K is an “enem[y] of both the West and Afghanistan’s new Taliban rulers.”<sup>307</sup></p> <p>Separately, “<i>The New York Times</i> and <i>Washington Post</i> say the strike the U.S. said targeted an Islamic State operative actually killed an aid worker on daily duties in Kabul. They say their evidence undermines U.S. military reports that explosives in the targeted car caused a secondary blast.</p> <p>The Pentagon said it still believed it prevented an ‘imminent threat.’<sup>308</sup> However, U.S. Central Command General Kenneth McKenzie calls the strike a “tragic mistake.”<sup>309</sup></p>

296. *Afghanistan: U.S. to Continue Kabul Evacuations “Until Last Moment,”* BBC NEWS, 27 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58364172](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58364172). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: U.S. to Continue.*]

297. *See Afghanistan: Biden Was Advised to Keep 2,500 Troops, Say Generals,* BBC NEWS, 28 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58719834](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58719834). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Biden Was Advised.*]

298. *Biden to Press On.*

299. *See Afghanistan: U.S. to Continue.*

300. *Afghanistan: U.S. to Continue.*

301. *Afghanistan: U.S. Media Cast Doubt on Kabul Drone Strike*, BBC NEWS, 11 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58527989](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58527989). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: U.S. Media Cast Doubt.*]

302. See *Afghanistan: U.S. Drone Strike “Eliminates Airport Bomb Threat,”* BBC NEWS, 31 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58372458](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58372458) [hereinafter, *Afghanistan: U.S. Drone Strike*]; *Afghanistan: Biden Says Another Kabul Airport Attack Likely*, BBC NEWS, 30 August 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58369922](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58369922) [hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Biden Says Another*].

303. *Afghanistan: U.S. Media Cast Doubt.*

304. *Afghanistan: U.S. Admits Kabul Drone Strike Killed Civilians*, BBC NEWS, 17 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58604655](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58604655) (also noting that the retaliatory strike “was one of the US military’s final acts in Afghanistan, before ending its 20-year operation in the country. U.S. intelligence had tracked the aid worker’s car for eight hours, believing it was linked to IS-K militants. . . . The investigation found the man’s car had been seen at a compound associated with IS-K, and its movements aligned with other intelligence about the terror group’s plans for an attack on Kabul airport. At one point, a surveillance drone saw men loading what appeared to be explosives into the boot of the car, but it turned out to be containers of water. . . . The strike happened as the aid worker — named as Zamairi Akmadhi — pulled into the driveway of his home, 3 k[ilometers] (1.8 miles) from the Airport. The explosion set off a secondary blast, which U.S. officials initially said was proof that the car was indeed carrying explosives. However, the investigation has found it was most likely caused by a propane tank in the driveway. Relatives of the victims . . . [said] the day after the strike that they had applied to be evacuated to the U.S., and had been waiting for a phone call telling them to go to the Airport. One of those killed, Ahmad Naser, had been a translator with U.S. forces. Other victims had previously worked for international organizations and held visas allowing them entry to the U.S.”). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: U.S. Admits Kabul Drone.*] For yet more on the tragic drone strike, see Eric Schmitt, *A Botched Drone Strike in Kabul Started With the Wrong Car*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 21 September 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/09/21/us/politics/drone-strike-kabul.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/21/us/politics/drone-strike-kabul.html?referringSource=articleShare) (observing: “U.S. military officials have insisted since the last American troops withdrew from Afghanistan last month that they would be able to detect and attack Islamic State or *Al Qaeda* threats in the country from afar. But an errant drone strike that killed 10 civilians, including seven children, in Kabul on Aug. 29 calls into question the reliability of the intelligence that will be used to conduct the operations. U.S. commanders concede that the missions will be more difficult without a military presence in the country. But new details about the drone strike, which the Pentagon initially said was necessary to prevent an attack on American troops, show the limitations of such counterterrorism missions even when U.S. forces are on the ground. . . . ‘Clearly our intelligence was wrong on this particular white Toyota Corolla,’ General [Kenneth F.] McKenzie [Commander of U.S. Central Command] told reporters. . . . ‘We thought this was a good lead. We were wrong.’”)

305. *Quoted in Biden to Press On* (also reporting: “Biden was asked . . . if he accepted any ‘responsibility’ for the attack on U.S. troops, prompting him to criticize Donald Trump . . . for the original withdrawal agreement with the *Taliban*. ‘I bear responsibility for fundamentally all that’s happened of late,’ he said. ‘But here’s the deal . . . you know, as well as I do that, the former President made a deal with the *Taliban*.”).

306. *Afghanistan: U.S. Media Cast Doubt on Kabul Drone Strike*, BBC NEWS, 11 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58527989](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58527989). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: U.S. Media Cast Doubt.*]

307. *U.S. in Final Phase of Kabul Evacuations, Taliban Says Ready to Take Over Airport*, REUTERS, 29 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-final-phase-evacuations-kabul-western-official-2021-08-29/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-final-phase-evacuations-kabul-western-official-2021-08-29/).

308. *Afghanistan: U.S. Media Cast Doubt.*

309. Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: U.S. Admits Kabul Drone.*

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
28 August	<p>The U.S. begins its withdrawal of troops from Hamid Karzai International Airport. “[F]ewer than 4,000 troops left at the Airport, down from 5,800 at the peak of the evacuation mission.”<sup>310</sup></p>	<p>The remaining days of the mission are the most dangerous, as U.S. troops are engaged in evacuations, but there are fewer of them to focus on security.</p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> announce it has “appointed governors and police chiefs in all but one of Afghanistan’s 34 Provinces and would act to solve the country’s economic problems.”<sup>311</sup></p>
30 August	<p>U.S. anti-missile defenses intercept as many as five rockets fired at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul and the U.S. troops their engaged in evacuation operations.</p> <p>“U.S. General Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, announces completion of the U.S. troop withdrawal.”<sup>312</sup></p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> again criticize the U.S. for launching attacks on Afghan soil.</p>
31 August	<p>The formal end-date for all U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan, and full withdrawal from the country occurs.<sup>313</sup> The U.S. is the last to complete its mission, as all other countries have evacuated.<sup>314</sup></p> <p>The U.S. launches a drone strike in Kabul to prevent another imminent suicide bombing attack at Hamid Karzai International Airport.<sup>315</sup> The successful strike hits a vehicle containing at least one member of ISIS-K. Secondary explosions from the vehicle prove it contained a significant number of explosives. However, there are civilian casualties from the strike.</p> <p>President Biden, for the third time, delivers a defense — his strongest yet — of his withdrawal decision, and the logistics of the evacuations.<sup>316</sup></p>	<p>Though the U.S. does not confirm whether airstrikes would continue beyond 31 August, it appears it intended for the Afghan Security Forces to be “on their own” after this date.</p> <p>President Biden also states: “We completed one of the biggest airlifts in history, with more than 120,000 people evacuated to safety. That number is more than double what most experts thought were possible. No nation — no nation has ever done anything like it in all of history. Only the United States had the capacity and the will and the ability to do it, and we did it today.”<sup>317</sup> The President points out</p>

		that the evacuees numbered 5,500 Americans and 100,000 Afghans, and thus intones: “No country in history has done more to airlift out the residents of another country than we have done.” <sup>318</sup>
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310. *Biden Warns Another Militant Attack in Afghanistan is Highly Likely*, REUTERS, 28 August 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-launches-drone-strike-islamic-state-after-afghan-airport-blast-2021-08-28/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-launches-drone-strike-islamic-state-after-afghan-airport-blast-2021-08-28/). [Hereinafter, *Biden Warns Another Militant Attack*.]

311. *Biden Warns Another Militant Attack*.

312. *Key Dates in U.S. War*.

313. See Aime Williams & Benjamin Parkin, *U.S. Withdraws from Afghanistan Bringing an End to 20-Year War*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 30 August 2021, [www.ft.com/content/b2ba76a1-694b-47f9-b077-d48ad88a8cb5?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/b2ba76a1-694b-47f9-b077-d48ad88a8cb5?shareType=nongift); Adam Nossiter & Eric Schmitt, *U.S. War in Afghanistan Ends as Final Evacuation Flights Depart*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 30 August 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/08/30/world/asia/afghanistan-us-occupation-ends.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/30/world/asia/afghanistan-us-occupation-ends.html?referringSource=articleShare).

314. See *Afghanistan: U.S. Drone Strike*.

315. See *Afghanistan: U.S. Drone Strike*.

316. For the full transcript of his speech, see *Transcript: President Biden’s Remarks on Afghanistan*, NIKKEI ASIA, 31 August 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Afghanistan-turmoil/Transcript-President-Biden-s-remarks-on-Afghanistan>. [Hereinafter, *Transcript: President Biden’s Remarks*.] See also *Afghanistan: Joe Biden Defends U.S. Pull-out as Taliban Claim Victory* (Anthony Zurcher, Analysis), BBC NEWS, 1 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58403735](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58403735) (stating: “Joe Biden tried to ‘turn the page’ from a month of chaos and death in Afghanistan and, more broadly, from 20 years of ultimately futile U.S. attempts at occupation and nation-building. At times he seemed defensive, noting that Americans were warned 19 times to exit Afghanistan before the [31] August [2021] U.S. military withdrawal. He accused Afghan leaders, allies on whom the U.S. had depended, of ‘corruption and malfeasance.’ And he blamed the Trump Administration for negotiating what he characterized as an inadequate withdrawal agreement with the *Taliban*.”).

317. *Transcript: President Biden’s Remarks*.

318. *Transcript: President Biden’s Remarks*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>The President states that, in addition to avoiding a “forever war” and thereby freeing the U.S. to meet the “challenges in the competition for the 21st century,” <i>i.e.</i>, with China, he rejected a “forever exit.”<sup>319</sup></p> <p>President Biden reminds America and the world: “In April, I made the decision to end this war. As part of that decision, we set the date of Aug. 31 for American troops to withdraw. The assumption was that more than 300,000 Afghan National Security Forces that we had trained over the past two decades and equipped would be a strong adversary in their civil wars with the <i>Taliban</i>.” He concedes: “That assumption — that the Afghan government would be able to hold on for a period of time beyond military drawdown — turned out not to be accurate.”<sup>320</sup></p> <p>In his defense, the President takes aim at President Trump’s flawed February 2020 <i>Peace Agreement</i>: “My predecessor . . . signed an <i>Agreement</i> with the <i>Taliban</i> to remove U.S. troops by May the 1st, just months after I was inaugurated. It included no requirement that the <i>Taliban</i> work out a cooperative governing arrangement with the Afghan government . . . The previous Administration’s <i>Agreement</i> said that if we stuck to the May 1st deadline that they had signed on to leave by, the <i>Taliban</i> wouldn’t attack any American forces, but if we stayed, all bets were off. So, we were left with a simple decision: Either follow through on the commitment made by the last administration and leave Afghanistan, or say we weren’t leaving and commit another tens of thousands more troops going back to war. That was the choice — the real choice — between leaving or escalating. . . . I take responsibility for the decision. Now, some say we should have started mass evacuations sooner and ‘Couldn’t this have be done — have been done in a more orderly manner?’ I respectfully disagree. Imagine if we had begun evacuations in June or July [2021], bringing in thousands of American troops and evacuating more than 120,000 people in the middle of a civil war. There still would have been a rush to the airport, a breakdown in confidence and control of the government, and it still would have been a</p>	<p>“Now we believe that about 100 to 200 Americans remain in Afghanistan with some intention to leave. Most of those who remain are dual citizens, long-time residents who had earlier decided to stay because of their family roots in Afghanistan.</p> <p>The bottom line: . . . 98% of Americans in Afghanistan who wanted to leave were able to leave. And for those remaining Americans, there is no deadline. We remain committed to get them out if they want to come out.”<sup>321</sup></p> <p>Finally, President Biden challenges critics on the withdrawal decision itself: “To those asking for a third decade of war in Afghanistan, I ask: What is the vital national interest? In my view, we only have one: to make sure Afghanistan can never be used again to launch an attack on our homeland. Remember why we went to Afghanistan in the first place? Because we were attacked by Osama Bin Laden and <i>Al Qaida</i> on Sept. 11th, 2001, and they were based in Afghanistan. We delivered justice to bin Laden on May 2nd, 2011 — over a decade ago. <i>Al Qaida</i> was decimated. I respectfully suggest you ask yourself this question: If we had been attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, from Yemen instead of Afghanistan, would we have ever gone to war in Afghanistan — even though the <i>Taliban</i> controlled Afghanistan in 2001? I believe the honest answer is ‘no.’ That’s because we had no vital national interest in Afghanistan other than to prevent an attack on America’s homeland and . . . our friends. And that’s true today. We succeeded in what we set out to do in Afghanistan over a decade ago. Then we stayed for another decade. It was time to end this war.”<sup>322</sup></p>

	very difficult and dangerous mission. The bottom line is: There is no . . . from the end of a war that you can run without the kinds of complexities, challenges and threats we faced. None.” <sup>323</sup>	
Early September	“With a humanitarian crisis looming [in Afghanistan], the Biden Administration is reviewing how to tailor [a] web of sanctions so that aid can continue to reach the Afghan people. The challenge is how to let donor money continue to flow without further enriching the <i>Taliban</i> , which the United States considers a terrorist organization.” <sup>324</sup>	“[S]uch a situation, in which a group deemed to be terrorists takes over an entire country, is without precedent and poses a complex test for the United States’ sanctions program.” <sup>325</sup>
2 September	Eighteen days after it takes control of Kabul, the <i>Taliban</i> has yet to form a government. It also has failed to win control over Panjshir, which is the last Province to resist its rule. <sup>326</sup>	“ <i>Taliban</i> forces and fighters loyal to local leader Ahmad Massoud battled in Afghanistan’s Panjshir Valley,” with each side asserting it had inflicted heavy casualties on the other, and the “National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRFA, or NRF) rebel grouping said it had full control of all passes and entrances and had driven back efforts to take Shotul District [ <i>i.e.</i> , <i>Taliban</i> assaults launched on that District from Jabul-Saraj, in the neighboring Parwan Province].” <sup>327</sup>

319. *Transcript: President Biden’s Remarks.*

320. *Transcript: President Biden’s Remarks.*

321. *Transcript: President Biden’s Remarks.*

322. *Transcript: President Biden’s Remarks.*

323. *Transcript: President Biden’s Remarks.*

324. Alan Rappoport, *U.S. Wrestles with Taliban Sanctions as Afghan Crisis Looms*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 3 September 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/09/03/us/politics/treasury-taliban-sanctions-afghanistan.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/03/us/politics/treasury-taliban-sanctions-afghanistan.html?referringSource=articleShare). [Hereinafter, *U.S. Wrestles with Taliban*.]

325. *U.S. Wrestles With Taliban.*

326. *Rebels Hold Out in Afghan Valley as Taliban Set Up Government in Kabul*, REUTERS, 2 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/india/rockets-fired-kabul-airport-us-troops-race-complete-evacuation-2021-08-30/](http://www.reuters.com/world/india/rockets-fired-kabul-airport-us-troops-race-complete-evacuation-2021-08-30/). [Hereinafter, *Rebels Hold Out*.]

327. *Rebels Hold Out.*

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
4 September	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> breaks “up a demonstration by dozens of women in Kabul demanding the continuation of rights built up since the end of the <i>Taliban</i>’s previous spell in power. The group say the <i>Taliban</i> targeted them with tear gas and pepper spray as they tried to walk from a bridge to the Presidential Palace.”<sup>328</sup></p>	<p>When it ruled Afghanistan from 1996–2001, the <i>Taliban</i> banned the education of women. Thereafter, many foreign government- and NGO-sponsored programs focused on women’s empowerment, including through their education.</p>
5 September	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> provide “more details of how segregation of the sexes will be enacted in universities. In an extensive document, the new authorities said men and women must be separated, if necessary by a curtain. Ideally, women will be taught by women but if none are available then ‘old men’ of good character can step in. . . . Female students must wear an <i>abaya</i>, or robe, and <i>niqāb</i>, or face veil.”<sup>329</sup></p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> is accused of killing an eight-month pregnant female police officer, Banu Negar, at her “family home in front of relatives in Firozkoh, the capital of central Ghor Province.”<sup>330</sup></p>	<p>These details cast yet more doubt on the extent to which the <i>Taliban</i> has moderated its stance on the education and labor force participation of women.</p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> deny killing the police officer. But, “three sources have told the BBC that the <i>Taliban</i> beat and shot Negar dead in front of her husband and children. . . . Relatives supplied graphic images showing blood spattered on a wall in the corner of a room and a body, the face heavily disfigured. . . . Three gunmen arrived at the house on Saturday and searched it before tying members of the family up, relatives say. The intruders were heard speaking Arabic, a witness said.”<sup>331</sup></p>
6 September	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> capture Panjshir,<sup>332</sup> and kills “at least 20 civilians” in the Panjshir Valley.”<sup>333</sup></p> <p>NRFA Leader Ahmad Massoud calls for continued struggle against the <i>Taliban</i>: “Wherever you are, inside or outside, I call on you to begin a national uprising for the dignity, freedom and prosperity of our country.”<sup>334</sup></p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> says its Supreme Commander, Hibatullah Akhundzada, “will come into public view soon.”<sup>335</sup></p>	<p>With the fall of Panjshir, the <i>Taliban</i> control all of Afghanistan.</p> <p>Anti-Pakistan protests, which the <i>Taliban</i> puts down with force, occur in Afghanistan.<sup>336</sup> Protestors oppose Pakistani interference in Afghanistan, and allege the Pakistan Air Force bombed the Panjshir Valley.</p>

<p>7 September</p>	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> announces its interim government and declare Afghanistan an “Islamic Emirate.”<sup>337</sup></p> <p>The Prime Minister is Mohammad Hassan Akhund, a close adviser to the late <i>Taliban</i> founder <i>Mullah</i> Mohammed Omar. He served as Deputy Foreign Minister in the first <i>Taliban</i> government (1996–2001), and “is influential on the religious side of the movement, rather than the military side.”<sup>338</sup></p> <p>The Deputy Prime Minister is <i>Mullah</i> Abdul Ghani Baradar, the <i>Taliban</i>’s Political Chief, and its Chief Negotiator with the U.S. (including with respect to the February 2020 <i>Peace Agreement</i>), based in the <i>Taliban</i> Political Office in Doha.</p>	<p>All of the officials in the <i>Taliban</i> government come from the core leadership of the group: male, strict Islamist ideologues. Few of them are from non-<i>Pashtun</i> ethnic communities.</p> <p>For example, Prime Minister Hassan Akhund “is a hardliner who filled a similar role within the insurgency’s Leadership Council in recent years, and was a Deputy Prime minister of the first [1996–2001] <i>Taliban</i> government.”<sup>339</sup></p>
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328. *Afghanistan: Taliban Accused of Killing Pregnant Police Officer*, BBC NEWS, 6 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58455826](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58455826). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Taliban Accused of Killing*.]

329. *Afghanistan: Resistance Leader Says*.

330. *Afghanistan: Taliban Accused of Killing*.

331. *Afghanistan: Taliban Accused of Killing*.

332. See *Afghanistan: Taliban Claim to Have; Taliban Claim Control of Panjshir, Opposition Says Resistance Will Continue*, REUTERS, 6 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/india/taliban-claim-control-panjshir-evacuation-flights-await-clearance-2021-09-06/](http://www.reuters.com/world/india/taliban-claim-control-panjshir-evacuation-flights-await-clearance-2021-09-06/).

333. *Afghanistan Crisis: Taliban Kill Civilians in Resistance Stronghold*, BBC NEWS, 13 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58545892](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58545892).

334. *Afghanistan: Taliban Claim to Have*.

335. *Afghanistan: Resistance Leader Says*.

336. *Afghanistan: Taliban Claim to Have*.

337. See *Hardliners Get Key Posts in New Taliban Government*, BBC NEWS, 7 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58479750](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58479750) [hereinafter, *Hardliners Get Key Posts*]; Stephanie Findlay, *Taliban Announces Government as It Faces Growing Crises And Isolation*, FINANCIAL TIMES, 7 September 2021, [www.ft.com/content/9cc0e2ca-19ab-4614-a168-76f1e4c1875b?shareType=nongift](http://www.ft.com/content/9cc0e2ca-19ab-4614-a168-76f1e4c1875b?shareType=nongift) [hereinafter, *Taliban Announces Government*.].

338. *Hardliners Get Key Posts*.

339. *Afghanistan — Live Updates*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>The Defense Minister is 31- or 32-year-old <i>Mullah</i> Mohammad Yaqoob, the eldest son of <i>Mullah</i> Omar, who “first came to prominence in 2015 when, in an audio message released after his father’s death, he called for unity within the militant group.”<sup>340</sup></p> <p>The Interior Minister is 48-year-old Sirajuddin Haqqani, “a senior leader of the Haqqani network,” which is linked to <i>Al Qaeda</i>.<sup>341</sup> His Uncle is named Minister for Refugees and Repatriation.</p> <p>The Foreign Minister is Amir Khan Muttaqi, and his Deputy is Sher Abbas Stanikzai. Like the Defense and Interior Ministers, they are relatively young and represent new generation of <i>Taliban</i> leadership.</p> <p>Four younger officials are among the “so-called ‘Guantánamo Five.’ They were held at the American detainment camp at Guantánamo Bay for 13 years before being exchanged in 2014 for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, an American soldier captured by the <i>Taliban</i>.”<sup>342</sup> Notably, “<i>Mullah</i> Mohammed Fazl, who spent 12 years at Guantánamo, . . . resume[s] his role as Deputy Defense Minister. In 2001, he was behind a fake surrender at Qala Jangi that led to the death of a CIA officer, Mike Spann, America’s first casualty after the Sept. 11 attacks. <i>Mullah</i> Fazl, who came of age during the <i>mujahedeen jihād</i> against the Soviets in the 1980s, commanded 10,000 <i>Taliban</i> and a substantial number of <i>Al Qaeda</i> troops in 2001. His nickname, Mazloom, which means ‘meek’ or ‘oppressed,’ is grimly ironic.”<sup>343</sup></p> <p>Similarly, “<i>Mullah</i> Fazl and <i>Mullah</i> Norullah Noori, the new Ministers of Borders and Tribal Affairs, are believed to have orchestrated the massacre of thousands of minority <i>Shi’ite</i> when the <i>Taliban</i> were last in power [1996–2001]. Abdul Haq Wasiq, the new Intelligence Chief, has been accused of being closely connected to <i>Al Qaeda</i>. <i>Mullah</i> Khairullah Khairkhwā, now Minister of Information and Culture, was described in a leaked U.S. military document as ‘one of the major opium drug lords in western Afghanistan’ and as a <i>Taliban</i> envoy to Iranian-backed terrorist groups. Mohammad Nabi Omari, the new Governor of Khost, is suspected to be a leader of the Haqqani network.”<sup>344</sup></p>	<p>One rare exception is “<i>Mawlawi</i> Abdul Salam Hanafi, a prominent Uzbek member of the [<i>Taliban</i>’s] negotiating team” with the U.S., who (along with Mr. Baradar) is appointed a Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>345</sup></p> <p>“Several members . . . have been the targets of sanctions by the U.N. for terrorism.”<sup>346</sup></p> <p>For instance, the Prime Minister is on a U.N. blacklist.<sup>347</sup> And, the “Interior Minister [is] on the FBI’s most wanted list,”<sup>348</sup> that is, he is “wanted by the FBI for ‘cross-border attacks against the United States’ and has a \$5 m[illion] bounty on his head.”<sup>349</sup> He also “presided over the insurgency’s campaign of urban bombings that terrorized Kabul for years.”<sup>350</sup> As Interior Minister, he has “extensive authority over policing and legal matters.”<sup>351</sup> His Uncle, the Refugees and Repatriation Minister, has a bounty of \$5 million on his head.</p> <p>Notably, neither former Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai nor veteran politician Abdullah Abdullah “secure roles in the new government, despite holding extensive talks with the <i>Taliban</i> leadership.”<sup>352</sup></p> <p>Though the government is a caretaker one, it is expected most, if not all, of the officials will be permanent, dashing hopes for a moderate, inclusive “<i>Taliban</i> 2.0.”<sup>353</sup> Notwithstanding the youth of several senior officials, the leadership resembles <i>Taliban</i> 1.0.</p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> insists that as a sovereign government, it has the right to appoint a Cabinet of its choosing, without approval from foreign powers, and refuses to include any former government officials tainted by corruption.<sup>354</sup> Yet, several such powers are chary of dealing with <i>Taliban</i> officials, much less lifting sanctions and/or disbursing non-humanitarian funds.</p>

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340. *Hardliners Get Key Posts.*

341. *Taliban Announces Government.*

342. *Afghanistan — Live Updates*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 7 September 2021. [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan — Live Updates*.] On the Guantánamo Five, see Mujib Mashal, *Once Jailed in Guantánamo, 5 Taliban Now Face U.S. at Peace Talks*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 26 March 2019, [www.nytimes.com/2019/03/26/world/asia/taliban-guantanamo-afghanistan-peace-talks.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/26/world/asia/taliban-guantanamo-afghanistan-peace-talks.html). On the Berghdal prisoner swap, see Eric Schmitt & Charlie Savage, *Bowe Bergdahl, American Soldier, Freed by Taliban in Prisoner Trade*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 31 May 2014, [www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/us/bowe-bergdahl-american-soldier-is-freed-by-taliban.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/us/bowe-bergdahl-american-soldier-is-freed-by-taliban.html).

343. Toby Harnden, *The Taliban Are Telling Us They Haven't Changed at All*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, 10 September 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/opinion/taliban-new-government.html?referringSource=articleShare](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/opinion/taliban-new-government.html?referringSource=articleShare). [Hereinafter, *The Taliban Are Telling*.]

344. *Afghanistan — Live Updates.*

345. *Taliban Announces Government.*

346. *See Hardliners Get Key Posts.*

347. *Taliban Announces Government.*

348. *Taliban Announces Government.*

349. *Afghanistan — Live Updates*. See also *Hardliners Get Key Posts* (reporting: “Sirajuddin Haqqani, the new acting Interior Minister, is head of the militant group known as the Haqqani network who are affiliated with the *Taliban* and have been behind some of the deadliest attacks in the country’s two-decade-long war — including a truck bomb explosion in Kabul in 2017 that killed more than 150 people. Unlike the wider *Taliban*, the Haqqani network has been designated a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. It also maintains close ties to *Al Qaeda*. According to the FBI’s profile on Haqqani, he is ‘wanted for questioning in connection with the January 2008 attack on a hotel in Kabul . . . that killed six people, including an American citizen.’ It adds: ‘He is believed to have coordinated and participated in cross-border attacks against United States and coalition forces in Afghanistan. Haqqani also allegedly was involved in the planning of the assassination attempt on [former] Afghan President Hamid Karzai in 2008.’ The Haqqani network has also been blamed for an attack on the U.S. embassy and nearby NATO bases in Kabul on 12 September 2011. Eight people — four police officers and four civilians — were killed in that attack.”).

350. *Afghanistan — Live Updates.*

351. *Taliban Announces Government.*

352. *See Taliban Announces Government* (noting: “In our region of the world, every time someone says caretaker or interim it never necessarily means a temporary set-up,” said Obaidullah Baheer, a Lecturer at the American University in Kabul. “They wouldn’t bring top-brass leadership in a temporary role.’ He added: “The *Taliban* on the face of this will use this as an excuse to explain why the government isn’t inclusive. I don’t think the international community is going to buy it.’ The *Taliban*’s ‘indifference to international recognition is alarming,’ Baheer said.”).

353. *The Taliban Are Telling.*

354. *See Hardliners Get Key Posts.* (reporting: “‘Why should we let others pick our Cabinet when other countries pick their own?’ was one retort.”).

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p>In a written statement distributed in English at a press conference in Kabul, his first since the <i>Taliban</i> took control of Afghanistan, 60-year old Sheikh Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada, Supreme Leader of the <i>Taliban</i>, declares: “I assure all our countrymen that these officials will work hard to uphold Islamic rules and <i>Shari’a</i> law [sic]. The Islamic Emirate needs the continued support of its people to rebuild the ruined country together.”<sup>355</sup> He also says: “The <i>Taliban</i> want ‘strong and healthy relations with our neighbours and all other countries based on mutual respect and interaction,’ but with the caveat that they would respect international laws and treaties ‘that are not in conflict with Islamic law and the country’s national values.’”<sup>356</sup></p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> abolish the Ministry of Women’s Affairs.<sup>357</sup> In its place (according to the new sign the <i>Taliban</i> posts on 17 September) at the same Kabul compound), the <i>Taliban</i> re-establishes the Ministry for Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.<sup>358</sup> The <i>Taliban</i> defends the Ministry, saying “the institution is important: ‘The main purpose is to serve Islam. Therefore, it is compulsory to have [a] Ministry of Vice and Virtue,’ [says] a <i>Taliban</i> member, Mohammad Yousuf. . . .”<sup>359</sup></p> <p>However, “[h]undreds of women took to the streets of Kabul . . . and they were soon joined by hundreds of men. It appeared to be the largest protest since the <i>Taliban</i> entered Kabul on Aug. 15, [2021] and Afghan’s new rulers made clear that they were not in a tolerant mood. <i>Taliban</i> members set on the crowd brutally, beating protesters with rifle butts and sticks, and firing shots into the air. Their tactics succeeded in driving them away, but in a sign of the challenges that may lie ahead for the government, the protesters did not stay away. They re-grouped, and went on protesting.”<sup>360</sup></p>	<p>Days after the new government is announced, a major row breaks out in the Presidential Palace in Kabul between two rival <i>Taliban</i> factions. The clash, which involved a brawl, and which the <i>Taliban</i> denies, “center[s] on who did the most to secure victory over the U.S., and how power was divided up in the new cabinet. . . . The group seized control of Afghanistan last month, and have since declared the country an ‘Islamic Emirate.’ Their new interim cabinet is entirely male and made up of senior <i>Taliban</i> figures, some of whom are notorious for attacks on U.S. forces over the past two decades. The row also reportedly stems from divisions over who in the <i>Taliban</i> should take credit for their victory in Afghanistan.”<sup>361</sup></p> <p>One faction, led by Abdul Ghani Baradar (a signatory to the February 2020 <i>Peace Agreement</i>), “believes that the emphasis should be placed on diplomacy carried out by people like him, while members of the Haqqani group — which is run by one of the most senior <i>Taliban</i> figures — and their backers say it was achieved through fighting.”<sup>362</sup></p> <p>Competing visions of whether there is to be a <i>Taliban</i> 2.0 appear to underlie the factionalism.</p> <p>The Ministry of Vice and Virtue is “responsible for deploying so-called morality police into the streets to enforce the <i>Taliban</i>’s strict interpretation of Islamic religious law, . . . <i>Shari’a</i>.” During 1996–2001, the Ministry “became known for beating women who did not dress</p>

		modestly or for being outside without a male guardian,” and “[g]irls were not allowed to be educated past primary school — a measure the group has now reportedly reintroduced.” <sup>363</sup>
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355. *Afghanistan — Live Updates*.

356. *Hardliners Get Key Posts*. See also Taliban Name New Afghan Government, Interior Minister on U.S. Sanctions List, Reuters, 7 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/india/taliban-fire-air-scatter-kabul-protesters-no-reports-injuries-2021-09-07/](http://www.reuters.com/world/india/taliban-fire-air-scatter-kabul-protesters-no-reports-injuries-2021-09-07/) (reporting: “Taliban Supreme Leader Haibatullah Akhundzada, in his first public statement since the Aug. 15 [2021] seizure of the capital Kabul by the insurgents, said the Taliban were committed to all international laws, treaties and commitments not in conflict with Islamic law. ‘In the future, all matters of governance and life in Afghanistan will be regulated by the laws of the Holy *Sharī’a*,’ he said in a statement, in which he also congratulated Afghans on what he called the country’s liberation from foreign rule.”).

357. *Hardliners Get Key Posts*.

358. *Afghanistan: Taliban Morality Police Replace Women’s Ministry*, BBC News, 17 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58600231](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58600231). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Taliban Morality Police*.]

359. *Afghanistan: Taliban Morality Police*.

360. *Afghanistan — Live Updates*.

361. Khudai Noor Nasar, *Afghanistan: Taliban Leaders in Bust-up at Presidential Palace, Sources Say*, BBC News, 15 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58560923](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58560923). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Taliban Leaders in Bust-up*.]

362. *Afghanistan: Taliban Leaders in Bust-up*.

363. *Afghanistan: Taliban Morality Police* (also reporting: “Entertainment like music and dancing was banned, and activities such as playing chess or flying a kite were prohibited. Prayer times were strictly enforced, men were made to grow beards, and Western-style haircuts were frowned upon. Anyone found to have violated the rules was harshly punished — flogging, beatings, amputation, and public execution were not uncommon. . . . The Ministry was disbanded after the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, although then-President Hamid Karzai re-established a similar but less powerful department in 2006 following pressure from conservatives. At the time, the Human Rights Watch called the Ministry a ‘notorious symbol of arbitrary abuses.’”).

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
8 September	<p>Former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani apologizes via Twitter for fleeing the country, saying: “Leaving Kabul was the most difficult decision of my life,” . . . adding that he was sorry he ‘could not make it end differently.’<sup>364</sup></p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> beats women protestors in Kabul: “We want equal rights, we want women in government,’ dozens of female protestors chanted as they marched down a street in Kabul. . . . . ‘We cannot accept this, and that’s why we came out,’ Sara (name changed) told the BBC. . . . ‘We were marching peacefully. Then I saw 4-5 vehicles with about 10 <i>Taliban</i> fighters in each of them, following us,’ said Jia (name changed), another protester. The women say they were stopped, lashed with whips, and beaten with batons that emit electric shocks. ‘They struck my shoulder twice. I could feel pain all over my body. It still hurts and I can’t move my arm,’ Jia said. ‘They also used a lot of bad words and abused us. It’s too shameful for me to repeat the names they called us.’ ‘We were all beaten. I was also hit. They told us to go home saying that’s where a woman’s place is,’ said Sara. Her phone was knocked out of her hand by a <i>Taliban</i> fighter when she tried to film them stopping the protest.’<sup>365</sup></p>	<p>The 72-year-old Mr. Ghani reiterates, “I left at the urging of the palace security, who advised me that to stay risked setting off the same street-to-street fighting the city had suffered during the civil war of the 1990s,’ . . . adding that he did so to ‘save Kabul and her six million citizens.’<sup>366</sup></p> <p>The <i>Taliban</i> assault on women protestors is yet more evidence it is little different from when it ruled in 1996–2001.</p> <p>President Biden declares America is “a long way off” from recognizing the <i>Taliban</i>. China steps in with an offer of \$31 million of emergency aid.<sup>367</sup></p>
9 September	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> allows 113 foreigners, including 13 Britishers, 43 Canadians, 13 Dutch, and 21 Americans, to leave Afghanistan from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul on a chartered Qatar Airways flight to Doha.<sup>368</sup> Specifically, out of the 39 American citizens and permanent residents the State Department invited for the flight, 21 of them (10 citizens and 11 permanent residents) were on board.<sup>369</sup> The U.S. observes “the <i>Taliban</i> had been ‘business-like and professional’ in helping the US citizens fly out.”<sup>370</sup> Before the flight, roughly 100 Americans were thought to remain in Afghanistan.</p>	<p>This evacuation is the first since U.S. military personnel withdrew from Afghanistan, and it underscores the significant role Qatar has played throughout not only the change in power, but also in hosting the <i>Peace Agreement</i> negotiations. Simply put, Qatar is the one intermediary trusted by both America and the <i>Taliban</i>, and in this high-profile, constructive role of diplomatic engagement, it upstages its Gulf rivals, most notably Saudi Arabia.<sup>371</sup></p>
11 September	<p>This was the initial final scheduled date for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, but it was pushed forward by agreement between the U.S. and the <i>Taliban</i> to 31 August.<sup>372</sup></p>	<p>This date is the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and marks the end of America’s longest war, and — along with the 1965–1973 Vietnam War — America’s second significant defeat.</p>

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364. Quoted in Ashraf Ghani: “I Apologize That I Could Not Make It End Differently,” BBC NEWS, 8 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58496410](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58496410). [Hereinafter, Ashraf Ghani: “I Apologize.”]

365. Yogita Limaye & Aakriti Thapar, *Afghanistan: Women Beaten for Demanding Their Rights*, BBC NEWS, 8 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58491747](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58491747).

366. Ashraf Ghani: *I Apologize* (also reporting Mr. Ghani “said that when the *Taliban* entered the Presidential Palace in Kabul, ‘they started looking for me from room to room.’ Denying claims that he had taken a large amount of money with him when he left the country, Mr. Ghani said he was ‘not even allowed to take my sandals off and put my shoes on.’”).

367. *China Offers \$31m in Emergency Aid to Afghanistan*, BBC NEWS, 9 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-58496867](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-58496867).

368. *Afghanistan: First Foreigners Fly Out of Kabul Since U.S. Pull-out*, BBC NEWS, 9 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58497904](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58497904). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: First Foreigners Fly*.]

369. See *Afghanistan Commercial Flights Resume as U.N. Accuses Taliban of Harassment*, REUTERS, 9 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-interim-government-agrees-let-foreigners-leave-afghanistan-2021-09-09/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-interim-government-agrees-let-foreigners-leave-afghanistan-2021-09-09/).

370. *Afghanistan: First Foreigners Fly*.

371. Indeed:

Analysts describe Qatar’s emergence as a broker in Afghanistan as a part of a carefully nurtured strategy by the tiny but rich state to bolster its own security, by becoming indispensable as a venue for international mediation.

The world’s biggest liquefied natural gas producer, the small desert peninsula country is one of the wealthiest nations *per capita*. It is home to barely 3 million people, 85 percent of them foreigners with guest worker visas. Yet it has long held outsized ambitions, hosting both the Middle East’s biggest U.S. Air Base [*Al Udeid*] and its most influential TV channel [*Al Jazeera*].

It squandered much of its regional clout over the past decade by overreaching in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring revolts, when it backed pro-democracy movements and rebels across the region. Furious neighbours led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with their ally Egypt, punished it with trade sanctions and diplomatic isolation.

Now, Qatar is back. Its dispute with the Arab powers was finally resolved this year, and next year it will host the soccer world cup. But few moves appear to have paid quite as large a diplomatic dividend as its role over Afghanistan, cultivated since it let the *Taliban* open the group’s main international office in 2013 and provided the venue for peace talks that led to last year’s [February 2020] U.S. agreement to withdraw.

That “patient diplomatic facilitation” was a classic means for a small state to elevate its international relevance, said Kristin Diwan, Senior Resident Scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

“Given its population size, substantial military projection is a tough proposition. But Qatar can bring real value through the relationships it maintains, especially across both Western and Islamic parties — and especially those the U.S. is loath to approach directly.”

Alexander Cornwell, *Analysis: The West Owes Qatar a Favor over Afghanistan. That Was The Point*, REUTERS, 8 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/west-owes-qatar-favour-over-afghanistan-that-was-point-2021-09-08/](http://www.reuters.com/world/west-owes-qatar-favour-over-afghanistan-that-was-point-2021-09-08/).

372. See *Afghanistan: U.S. Drone Strike*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	The U.S. publishes the first of what are expected to be multiple, declassified, redacted documents concerning alleged links between the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the 9/11 terrorists, 15 of the 19 of whom were Saudi nationals. <sup>373</sup>	The first, 16-paged, document into alleged links between the Saudi government and 9/11 terrorists chronicle contacts between Saudi nationals and the attackers, but “provides no evidence that the Saudi government was linked to the 9/11 plot,” and thus does not implicate the government. <sup>374</sup>
12 September	The <i>Taliban</i> Minister for Higher Education, Abdul Baqi Haqqani, announces women can be educated at universities, but only in gender-segregated facilities, while adhering to a strict “Islamic” dress code, and in every instance possible, by female instructors. <sup>375</sup>	Twenty years after the 9/11 attacks, and after 20 years of conflict, Afghanistan seemed to have gone full circle with respect to women’s education: the patriarchal <i>Taliban</i> again determines whether and how it could take place, as well as its substantive content. <sup>376</sup>  Moreover, the new rules seem likely to exclude women from tertiary education, because Afghan universities do not have the resources to offer gender-segregated classes.
13 September	The entire Afghan national women’s youth soccer team, 32 players plus their families, totalling 81 persons, escapes the country, crossing the border to Pakistan. <sup>377</sup> They had written directly to Pakistani PM Imran Khan for urgent help, as “the girls were at risk of ‘grave threats’ from the <i>Taliban</i> .”  The team’s departure is yet further evidence of the loss of human capital in — a brain drain from — Afghanistan. <sup>378</sup>	The team’s escape follows an announcement the previous week from the Deputy Head of the <i>Taliban</i> Cultural Commission, Ahmadullah Wasiq, which “cast doubt over the future of women’s sport in the country when he said it was considered neither appropriate nor necessary in response to a question about the fate of the women’s cricket

373. See *FBI Begins Declassifying Documents into Saudi 9/11 Links*, BBC NEWS, 11 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58533538](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58533538). [Hereinafter, *FBI Begins Declassifying*.] The document (dated 14 April 2016) is Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI Records: The Vault, 9/11 Material Released in Response to Executive Order 14040 (3 September 2021), 11 September 2021, <https://vault.fbi.gov/9-11-attacks-investigation-and-related-materials/9-11-material-released-in-response-to-executive-order-14040>.

374. *FBI Begins Declassifying* (also providing analysis, per Gordon Corera: “Most of the 19 hijackers on 9/11 were Saudi nationals. *Al Qaeda*’s leader, Osama bin

Laden, was from an influential Saudi family and his organization alleged to have received money from wealthy Saudis in the 1990s. All of that has led to questions about whether there was any official involvement in the attacks — and whether successive U.S. Administrations had covered this up to protect an ally. This latest document does not prove that. But nor will it dispel all the questions, making clear that the FBI in 2016 was still investigating an apparently well-connected Saudi who was alleged to have provided logistical support to two of the hijackers. This is only the first release and even if, as the Saudi Embassy [to the U.S.] maintains, none of it will show any complicity in the attacks, it may still raise awkward questions for both Washington and Riyadh, including why it has taken so long to be more open.”).

375. *Taliban Say Women Can Study at University But Classes Must Be Segregated*, REUTERS, 12 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/taliban-say-woman-can-study-university-classes-must-be-segregated-2021-09-12/](http://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/taliban-say-woman-can-study-university-classes-must-be-segregated-2021-09-12/) (also reporting: “When there is really a need, men can also teach (women) but in accordance with sharia, they should observe the veil,’ he [the Minister] said. Classrooms would be curtained off to divide male and female students where necessary and teaching could also be done through streaming or closed-circuit TV.”). [Hereinafter, *Taliban Say Women Can Study*.] See also *Afghanistan: Taliban Announce New Rules for Female Students*, BBC NEWS, 13 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58537081](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58537081) (reporting the *Taliban* Higher Education Minister “also announced a review of the subjects students would be taught.”).

376. *Taliban Say Women Can Study* (noting the *Taliban* Higher Education Minister contended “the new *Taliban* government . . . would ‘start building the country on what exists today’ and did not want to turn the clock back 20 years to when the movement was last in power.”).

377. *Afghanistan Women’s Youth Soccer Team Escapes to Pakistan*, BBC NEWS, 15 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58571183](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58571183). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan Women’s Soccer*.]

378. See *Afghanistan Women’s Soccer* (reporting: “Women were barred from participating in sports during the *Taliban’s* last spell in power from 1996-2001. Their departure is part of a wider exodus of Afghan sports and cultural stars amid fears of a crackdown on women’s rights following the takeover of the country by the *Taliban* after foreign forces withdrew. As well as the departure of the women’s football teams, the country’s biggest pop singer Aryana Sayeed and the famed film director Sahraa Karimi both left during the evacuation last month.”).

What happened to female athletes — persecution or a well-founded fear thereof based on the *Taliban’s* inauthentic interpretation of Islamic legal precepts — happened to all musicians:

Afghan singers who escaped to Pakistan say they had no choice but to flee when the *Taliban* took power in Afghanistan.

The BBC spoke with six singers who crossed the border to Pakistan illegally and are now living in hiding. One said he feared he would be executed if he stayed in Afghanistan.

The *Taliban* have banned music and are accused of executing a folk singer in northern Baghlan Province in August.

The militant group has not responded to the allegation.

Singer Fawad Andarabi’s son Jawad . . . [said] his father was shot in the head at the family’s farm in the Andarab Valley.

Khan (not his real name) was based in Kabul for the past 20 years and sang and played music at weddings across the country. Folk singers are popular at *Pashtun* weddings.

Music had been banned under the previous *Taliban* regime, but business had been good since they were overthrown in 2001, he said.

As the *Taliban* advanced across the country this year Khan and others were unconcerned; they believed that the militant group had changed and would allow them to continue their music-making.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
		team.” <sup>379</sup> He stated: “‘In cricket, they [the women’s team] might face a situation where their face and body will not be covered. Islam does not allow women to be seen like this. It is the media era, and there will be photos and videos, and then people watch it. Islam and the Islamic Emirate [Afghanistan] do not allow women to play cricket or play the kind of sports where they get exposed.’” <sup>380</sup>
18 September	The <i>Taliban</i> exclude girls from Afghan secondary schools, allowing back into the classroom only boys and male teachers. <sup>381</sup>	Secondary schools encompass ages 13-18. <sup>382</sup> Although the <i>Taliban</i> previously announced on 12 September women would be allowed to study at universities (albeit not alongside men, and subject to a strict dress code), excluding women from secondary schools would mean they could not matriculate into tertiary education. “Since the <i>Taliban</i> were removed from power in 2001, enormous progress has been made in improving Afghanistan’s education enrolments and literacy rates — especially for girls and women. The number of girls in primary schools increased from almost zero to 2.5 million, while the female literacy rate nearly doubled in a decade to 30%. However, many of the gains have been focused in cities.” <sup>383</sup>
19 September	The new <i>Taliban</i> Mayor of Kabul, Hamdullah Nomany, instructs all “female municipal employees to stay home unless their jobs cannot be filled by a man,” because “the <i>Taliban</i> ‘found it necessary to stop women from working for a while.’” <sup>384</sup> However, he also says “some would carry on working. ‘For example, women work in the women’s toilets in the city where men cannot go.’” <sup>385</sup>	About one-third of the 3,000 Kabul municipality employees are women. <sup>386</sup>
21 September	Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan declares banning girls from schools is un-Islamic: “The idea that women should not be educated is just not Islamic. It has nothing to do with religion.” <sup>387</sup>	PM Khan also says Pakistan will not recognize the <i>Taliban</i> regime unless it is inclusive, respects human rights, and is not a home for terrorists that would threaten Pakistani

	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> appoint “two veteran battlefield commanders from the movement’s southern heartlands as Deputies in important Ministries,” namely, <i>Mullah</i> Abdul Qayyum Zakir as Deputy Defense Minister and Sadr Ibrahim as Deputy Interior Minister.”<sup>388</sup></p>	<p>security: “If they do not include all the factions, sooner or later they will have a civil war. That would mean an unstable, chaotic, Afghanistan and an ideal place for terrorists. That is a worry.”<sup>389</sup></p>
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But after the *Taliban* took control of the capital last month [15 August 2021], armed men — who Khan believes were *Taliban* fighters — came looking for him and smashed up his instruments.

“At midnight my office guard called me and said some people came with guns and broke all the instruments, they are still here and asking about you,” he said.

...

Even before the fall of Kabul, when the *Taliban* took control of a city, they would ban music on local FM radio stations and turn state-run broadcasting into the Voice of *Shari’a*, referring to Islam’s legal system, with programming consisting of religious chanting.

The *Taliban* disapprove of music due to their strict interpretation of Islam, a view not shared by most Muslims.

Khudai Noor Nasar, *Afghan Singers Flee Taliban Violence*, BBC News, 16 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58583217](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58583217).

379. See *Afghanistan Women’s Soccer*.

380. Quoted in *Afghanistan Women’s Soccer*.

381. *Afghanistan: Girls Excluded as Afghan Secondary Schools Reopen*, BBC NEWS, 18 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58607816](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58607816). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Girls Excluded*.]

382. *Afghanistan: Girls Excluded*.

383. *Afghanistan: Girls Excluded* (also reporting: “‘This is a setback in the education of Afghan women and girls,’ said Nororya Nizhat, a former Education Ministry spokesperson. ‘This reminds everyone of what the *Taliban* did in the 90s. We ended up with a generation of illiterate and non-educated women.’”).

384. *Afghanistan: Stay Home, Female Kabul Government Workers Told*, BBC NEWS, 19 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58614113](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58614113). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Stay Home*.]

385. Quoted in *Afghanistan: Stay Home* (also reporting: “‘But for the positions that others [men] can fill, we have told them [women] to stay at home until the situation is normalized. Their salaries will be paid,’” said the Mayor).

386. See *Afghanistan: Stay Home*.

387. *Afghan Girls School Ban Would be Un-Islamic, Pakistan PM Says*, BBC NEWS, 21 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58639538](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58639538). [Hereinafter, *Afghan Girls School*.]

388. *Taliban Appoint Hardline Battlefield Commanders to Key Afghan Posts*, REUTERS, 17 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-appoint-hardline-battlefield-commanders-key-afghan-posts-2021-09-21/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-appoint-hardline-battlefield-commanders-key-afghan-posts-2021-09-21/). [Hereinafter, *Taliban Appoint Hardline*.]

389. *Afghan Girls School*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
	<p><i>Taliban</i> Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi asks United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to speak to the General Assembly to address world leaders at the annual General Assembly meetings in New York, and the <i>Taliban</i> “nominate[s] their Doha-based spokesman, Suhail Shaheen, as Afghanistan’s U.N. Ambassador.”<sup>390</sup> This “sets up a showdown with Ghulam Isaczai, the U.N. Ambassador in New York representing Afghanistan’s government ousted last month [August] by the <i>Taliban</i>.”<sup>391</sup> The <i>Taliban</i>’s letter says “Isaczai’s mission ‘is considered over and that he no longer represents Afghanistan.”<sup>392</sup></p> <p>The United Nations sends “the rival requests for Afghanistan’s U.N. seat . . . to a nine-member Credentials Committee, whose members include the United States, China, and Russia.”<sup>393</sup> On credentials questions, the Committee and General Assembly operate by consensus.</p>	<p>The Deputy Defense and Interior Ministers are “loyal to the former <i>Taliban</i> leader <i>Mullah</i> Akhtar Mansour” and “press[ed] the leadership to step up the war against the Western-backed [Afghan] government,” and “add to the roster of hardliners in the main group of Ministers.”<sup>394</sup></p> <p>On the one hand, “[e]ventual U.N. acceptance of the Ambassador of the <i>Taliban</i> would be an important step in the hard-line Islamist group’s bid for international recognition, which could help unlock badly needed funds for the cash-strapped Afghan economy.” On the other hand, the U.N. Secretary General observes “that the <i>Taliban</i>’s desire for international recognition is the only leverage other countries have to press for inclusive government and respect for rights, particularly for women, in Afghanistan.”<sup>395</sup></p>
24 September	<p><i>Mullah</i> Nooruddin Turabi, the Head of Afghanistan’s Prisons, announces the <i>Taliban</i> will resume extreme punishments, including executions and amputations,” arguing they are “necessary for security,” intoning “[n]o-one will tell us what our laws should be.”<sup>396</sup></p> <p>His announcement reflects the assertion (made days before the <i>Taliban</i> took control of Kabul on 15 August) by a <i>Taliban</i> judge in Balkh, Haji Badruddin: “In our <i>Shari’a</i> it’s clear, for those who have sex and are unmarried, whether it’s a girl or a boy, the punishment is 100 lashes in public. But for anyone who’s married, they have to be stoned to death. . . . For those who steal: if it’s proved, then his hand should be cut off.”<sup>397</sup></p>	<p>In the first <i>Taliban</i> government (1996–2001), Mr. Turabi was Minister of Justice and Head of the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (<i>i.e.</i>, the Religious Police). He “notorious for his harsh punishments for people caught listening to non-religious music or trimming their beards in the 1990s,” and is “on a U.N. sanctions list for his past actions.”<sup>398</sup> During his previous tenure, “executions were held in public in Kabul’s sports stadium, or on the vast grounds of the Eid Gah Mosque.”<sup>399</sup></p>
26 September	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> “ban[] hairdressers in . . . [southern] Helmand Province from shaving or trimming beards, saying it breaches their interpretation of Islamic law. Anyone violating the rule will be punished, the <i>Taliban</i> religious police say.”<sup>400</sup></p>	<p>“Some barbers in . . . Kabul have said they also received similar orders. ‘The [<i>Taliban</i>] fighters keep coming and ordering us to stop trimming beards,’ one barber in Kabul said. ‘One of them told me they can send undercover</p>

	<p>The <i>Taliban</i> Ministry of Foreign Affairs appeals to airlines to resume flights to Afghanistan.<sup>401</sup> Although “[a] limited number of aid and passenger flights have been operating from Kabul’s Airport[,] normal commercial services have yet to resume since it was closed in the wake of the chaotic evacuation of tens of thousands of foreigners and vulnerable Afghans that followed the <i>Taliban</i>’s seizure of the capital.”<sup>402</sup></p>	<p>inspectors to catch us.’ Another hairdresser, who runs one of the city’s biggest salons, said he received a call from someone claiming to be a government official. They instructed him to ‘stop following American styles’ and not to shave or trim anyone’s beard.”<sup>403</sup></p>
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390. Michelle Nichols, *Exclusive — Taliban Names Afghan U.N. Envoy, Asks to Speak to World Leaders*, REUTERS, 21 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-conflict-un-taliban-exclu/exclusive-taliban-names-afghan-u-n-envoy-asks-to-speak-to-world-leaders-idUSKBN2GH22D](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-conflict-un-taliban-exclu/exclusive-taliban-names-afghan-u-n-envoy-asks-to-speak-to-world-leaders-idUSKBN2GH22D). [Hereinafter *Exclusive — Taliban Names Afghan*.]

391. *Exclusive — Taliban Names Afghan*.

392. *Quoted in Exclusive — Taliban Names Afghan*.

393. *Exclusive — Taliban Names Afghan*.

394. *Taliban Appoint Hardline*.

395. *Exclusive — Taliban Names Afghan*.

396. *Quoted in Afghanistan: Executions Will Return, Says Senior Taliban Official*, BBC NEWS, 24 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58675153](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58675153). [Hereinafter, *Afghanistan: Executions Will Return*.]

397. *Quoted in Afghanistan: Executions Will Return*. See also *Afghanistan: Taliban Hang Bodies as Warning in City of Herat*, BBC NEWS, 25 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58691824](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58691824) (reporting: “The *Taliban* say they have shot dead four alleged kidnappers and hung their bodies in public squares in the Afghan city of Herat. . . . The men were killed in a gun battle after allegedly seizing a businessman and his son, a local official said. Local residents said a body was hung from a crane in the city center.”).

398. *Afghanistan: Executions Will Return*.

399. *Afghanistan: Executions Will Return*.

400. *Afghanistan: Taliban Ban Helmand Barbers from Trimming Beards*, BBC NEWS, 26 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58700159](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58700159). [*Afghanistan: Taliban Ban Helmand*.]

401. *Taliban Ask Airlines to Resume International Flights to Afghanistan*, REUTERS, 26 September 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-ask-airlines-resume-international-flights-afghanistan-2021-09-26/](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-ask-airlines-resume-international-flights-afghanistan-2021-09-26/). [Hereinafter, *Taliban Ask Airlines*.]

402. Hereinafter, *Taliban Ask Airlines*.

403. *Quoted in Afghanistan: Taliban Ban Helmand*.

Year/ Date/ Month	Key Event(s)	Additional Development(s) and Comment
28 September	<p>In testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, U.S. General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, states <i>Al Qaeda</i> has not been eradicated from Afghanistan, and it and ISIS could re-constitute under <i>Taliban</i> rule in Afghanistan: “The <i>Taliban</i> was and remains a terrorist organisation and still has not broken ties with <i>Al Qaeda</i>. . . . A reconstituted <i>Al Qaeda</i> or ISIS . . . with aspirations to attack the U.S. is a very real possibility, and those conditions to include activity in ungoverned spaces could present themselves in the next 12-36 months.”<sup>404</sup> The General asserts this threat can be contained.</p> <p>Syed Moosa Kaleem Al-Falahi, the Chief Executive of the Islamic Bank of Afghanistan, one of the country’s largest lenders, says the “financial industry is in the grip of an ‘existential crisis’ as customers panic. . . . ‘Only withdrawals are happening, most of the banks are not functioning, and not providing full services.’ . . . Inflation is soaring, the <i>Afghani</i>, the country’s currency, is plummeting and people are desperate as many have lost their jobs and are short of cash.”<sup>405</sup></p> <p>The banking system suffers a liquidity crisis, with insufficient currency (particularly U.S. dollars) to meet withdrawal demands. Thus, “accessing international funds and foreign assistance is key to Afghanistan’s survival. But countries like the U.S. have said that while they are willing to consider working with the <i>Taliban</i> — it will depend on some pre-conditions — including the regime’s treatment of women and minorities.”<sup>406</sup></p>	<p>In the same hearing, General Frank McKenzie, Commander of U.S. Central Command, states that before the full American withdrawal in August 2021, he recommended President Biden keep a force of 2,500 in Afghanistan.<sup>407</sup> The President says he does not recall such advice. General Milley also says the speed of the <i>Taliban</i>’s advance and the Afghan government’s collapse surprised the U.S..</p> <p>Also at the hearing, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin indicates the U.S. failed to take aggressive action against corruption in that government: “We helped build a state, but we could not forge a nation.”<sup>408</sup></p> <p>The United Nations World Food Program warns “only 5% of households in Afghanistan have enough to eat every day,” and “[h]alf of those surveyed said they have run out of food altogether at least once in the last two weeks.”<sup>409</sup></p>
29 September	<p>In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, “[t]op U.S. defense officials . . . said the <i>Taliban</i>’s takeover of Afghanistan can be traced back to a deal between the group and the Trump Administration,” that is, the February 2020 <i>Peace Agreement</i> signed in Doha that set a date for America to withdraw its troops. “General Frank McKenzie said the deal had a ‘really pernicious effect’ on the Afghan government and military. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin agreed, saying the <i>Agreement</i> had helped the <i>Taliban</i> get ‘stronger.’”<sup>410</sup></p>	<p>“In addition to setting a withdrawal date, the Doha <i>Agreement</i> included obligations on the <i>Taliban</i> to take steps to prevent groups such as <i>Al Qaeda</i> from threatening the security of the U.S. and its allies.”<sup>411</sup> But, per the testimony the previous day by the same officials, whether the <i>Taliban</i> would or even could fulfil those obligations was dubious.</p>

	<p>“General McKenzie told the Committee the Doha <i>Agreement</i> had a strong psychological effect on the Afghan government because it set a date for ‘when they could expect all assistance to end.’”</p> <p>“Mr. Austin said that by committing the U.S. to ending air strikes against the <i>Taliban</i>, the Doha <i>Agreement</i> meant the Islamist group ‘got stronger, they increased their offensive operations against Afghan Security Forces, and the Afghans were losing a lot of people on a weekly basis.’”<sup>412</sup></p>	
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404. Quoted in *Afghanistan: Biden Was Advised*.

405. Quoted in Karishma Vaswani, *Taliban: Afghanistan Bank Boss Warns Sector Near Collapse*, BBC NEWS, 28 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/business-58660579](http://www.bbc.com/news/business-58660579). [Hereinafter, *Taliban: Afghanistan Bank Boss*.]

406. *Taliban: Afghanistan Bank Boss* (also observing Afghanistan “is hugely dependent on foreign aid — about 40% of its gross domestic product (GDP) comes from international aid, according to the World Bank.”).

407. See in *Afghanistan: Biden Was Advised*.

408. Quoted in *Afghanistan: Biden Was Advised*.

409. *Taliban: Afghanistan Bank Boss*.

410. *Afghanistan: U.S.-Taliban Deal Hastened Afghan Collapse, Defense Officials Say*, BBC NEWS, 30 September 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58738953](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58738953). [Hereinafter, *U.S.-Taliban Deal Hastened*.]

411. *U.S.-Taliban Deal Hastened*.

412. *U.S.-Taliban Deal Hastened*.