

DAILY TRACKER

1st September 2021

Afghanistan

- The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan will not end as evacuation flights wind down, the United Nations warned country. Afghanistan's tragedy will be less visible once the airlifts end, but the crisis "will still be a daily reality for millions of Afghans," UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said in a statement. The Pentagon on Monday said the U.S. finished its withdrawal efforts from the Kabul airport, ending America's longest war. President Joe Biden said more than 120,000 people, including U.S. citizens and Afghan allies, were evacuated over 17 days.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/31/afghanistan-faces-great-humanitarian-crisis-as-foreign-troops-leave-un.html>

- President Biden and his aides promise that the U.S. can keep terror threats from Afghanistan at bay from afar with "over the horizon" surveillance and strikes now that U.S. troops have departed. Counterterrorism and intelligence officials say it will be much harder and less effective than the White House suggests.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-s-pledge-to-fight-terrorists-in-afghanistan-will-be-harder-without-boots-on-the-ground-11630402200>

- The UN Security Council has adopted a resolution requiring the Taliban to honour their commitment to let people freely leave Afghanistan, but the measure did not include a "safe zone" mentioned by French President Emmanuel Macron. The resolution – drafted by the United States, United Kingdom and France – was passed on Monday with 13 votes in favour and no objections. China and Russia abstained. The resolution said that the council expects the Taliban to allow a "safe, secure, and orderly departure from Afghanistan of Afghans and all foreign nationals".

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/30/un-afghanistan-resolution-safe-zone-taliban>

- Taliban fighters and their supporters rallied across Afghanistan to celebrate the end of 20 years of foreign military presence on Tuesday, pledging to implement strict Islamic rule as ordinary Afghans, many of them bewildered and scared, grappled with the uncertain future ahead.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/taliban-celebrate-u-s-exit-vow-to-enforce-islamic-rule-11630411843>

- Maulvi Mohammad Sardar Zadran, the former head of the National Council of Religious Scholars of Afghanistan, was photographed looking forlorn as he sat on the ground with his hands clasped together and a strip of brown material covering his eyes. The clip was released by the Taliban as proof that it had arrested the outspoken

cleric, according to the Pajhwok Afghan News agency. Zadran had been religious adviser to runaway President Ashraf Ghani and had called on Afghans to resist the Taliban as they rose to take back the country, The Times of London said.

<https://afghanistan.kivazen.com/taliban-arrests-top-afghan-cleric-who-spoke-out-against-insurgents/>

- Countries neighbouring Afghanistan have been offered millions in aid if they are prepared to temporarily harbour tens of thousands of refugees, prior to security checks clearing them for transit to Europe and the US, but Pakistan and other bordering states have warned they will not take more refugees permanently. Iran could see a large influx of refugees – mainly Hazara Shias – reaching the country overland. Qatar has long played a pivotal role in mediating with the Taliban, and also in acting as a first stopover for more than 100,000 people involved in the recent evacuation.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/31/afghanistans-neighbours-offered-millions-in-aid-to-harbour-refugees>

- After Afghanistan's U.S.-backed government collapsed on Aug. 15, Beijing couldn't contain its glee at what it described as the humiliation of its main global rival—even though Washington said a big reason for withdrawal was its decision to focus more resources on China. In Russia, too, state media overflowed with schadenfreude, albeit tempered by concern about the Afghan debacle's spillover into its fragile Central Asian allies. "The moral of the story is: don't help the Stars and Stripes," tweeted Margarita Simonyan, editor in chief of Russia's RT broadcaster. "They'll just hump you and dump you."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghanistan-u-s-withdrawal-china-russia-power-relations-11630421715>

- The US-led operation to evacuate people by air has now ended, with the last flight taking off from Kabul airport. More than 123,000 civilians were evacuated by US forces and its coalition partners after the Taliban took control of the capital on 14 August - but it's unclear exactly how many of those were Afghan nationals. The US has said that it flew nearly 80,000 civilians out of Kabul and of those, about 5,500 were Americans and more than 73,500 were either Afghans or other foreign nationals. The UK Ministry of Defence, said it had flown out more than 15,000 people and some 8,000 of them were Afghans. The UN has urged Afghanistan's neighbours to keep their borders open to refugees and called on the international community to support those countries.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58283177>

- Taliban supporters paraded coffins draped with American and NATO flags in the eastern city of Khost on Tuesday, part of celebrations across the country following the withdrawal of the last US troops. The mock funeral, in which coffins covered in French and British flags were also carried along the street through a large crowd, marked the end of a 20-year war and a hasty and humiliating exit for Washington and its NATO allies. Banned terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda has congratulated Taliban for its 'victory', while mentioning 'azadi' (freedom) of Kashmir. "America has been

defeated and its global image has been tarnished. It was humiliated and thrown out from Afghanistan,” the terrorist organization wrote in a letter. “O’ Allah! Liberate the Levant, Somalia, Yemen, Kashmir and the rest of the Islamic lands from the clutches of the enemies of Islam. O’ Allah! Grant freedom to Muslim prisoners across the world,” read the message titled “Congratulations to the Islamic Ummah on the victory granted by Allah in Afghanistan!”.

<https://www.news18.com/news/world/afghanistan-taliban-news-live-updates-kashmir-al-qaeda-india-pak-unsco-joe-biden-kabul-4150958.html>

- Former President Donald Trump, nearly four years ago, warned against the exact consequences of a hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan. At Fort Myer in Virginia, Trump delivered a speech outlining his strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia, where he said the nation must seek an “honorable and enduring outcome worthy of the tremendous sacrifices” made, and warned that a “hasty” withdrawal could create a vacuum for terrorists in the country.

<https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2021/08/31/trump-warned-against-hasty-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-four-years-ago/>

PAKISTAN

- There is still no confirmation on base US drones are operating from. Pakistan says it ‘will not allow CIA to use bases on its soil for cross-border counterterrorism missions after US withdrawal’.

<https://theprint.in/world/why-us-drone-strikes-against-iskp-in-afghanistan-smack-of-secret-arrangement-with-pakistan/725036/>

- The Foreign Office, in a statement issued, condemned a terror bid by Houthi militants targeting Abha International Airport of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). A drone attack on Saudi Arabia’s Abha airport wounded eight people, said the Saudi-led coalition battling Houthi rebels in neighbouring Yemen.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/886020-pakistan-condemns-houthi-attempt-to-target-abha-international-airport-in-saudi-arabia-fo>

- Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad has ruled out a long-term presence in Pakistan of those US troops who are coming from Afghanistan, saying that the foreigners who will stay in the country had been issued transit visas ranging from 21 to 30 days.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1643615>

- There is growing concern among Pakistani officials about security in neighbouring Afghanistan, as the Taliban tries to form a government and stabilise the country following the departure of U.S. and other foreign forces. Islamabad is particularly worried about militant fighters from a separate, Pakistani Taliban group crossing from

Afghanistan and launching lethal attacks on its territory. Thousands of Pakistanis have been killed in jihadist violence in the last two decades.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-frets-over-security-threats-neighbouring-afghanistan-2021-09-01/>