



[The August 31st Deadline for the United States' Troop Withdrawal from Afghanistan Passes](#)

This past Tuesday, August 31st marked the deadline for the United States to complete its troop withdrawal from Afghanistan – officially ending the nearly two-decade long direct military presence in the country. The last plane left after the U.S. military and State Departments' Operation Allies Refuge evacuated more than 122,000 people. President Biden addressed the nation, adamantly standing by the execution of the operation and a conclusion to the “forever war.” Moving forward, the future of Afghanistan and the U.S mission remains uncertain. Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed that the United States' efforts would consist of a diplomatic operation focused on human rights in Afghanistan, although some observers remain skeptical about the ability to work with the Taliban to ensure these values are respected. While acknowledging the ruthlessness of the Taliban, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark A. Milley stated that the U.S. could work with them to combat the threat of ISIS-K.

Over the preceding days, the Taliban held a victory parade through the streets of Kabul. As the Taliban's seemingly new leader, Sheikh Haibatullah Akhundzada, takes control, the struggle to form a stable government remains a difficult process as the nation grapples with a humanitarian and economic crisis. At the forefront of Afghanistan's future is the issue of human rights. The Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres expressed grave concern, as many of Afghanistan's most at-risk demographics such as women and children face discrimination and malnutrition. While the Taliban makes claims that their government will be more inclusive, doubt emanates regarding the prospects of a positive future climate in the country for human and civil rights.

The past few weeks of the evacuation operation have been seemingly chaotic. Operation Allies Refuge has been deemed a success by the White House and Pentagon officials, removing around 98% of Americans who wished to leave the country and helping to airlift thousands of Afghan refugees. However, while not the sole fault of the Biden administration, many analysts were dismayed that the two decades of attempting to build up the Afghan government and security forces was a failure – as the Taliban were able to swiftly regain control of the nation. The Taliban does have a difficult road ahead regarding consolidating power over the full state, as they are economically hampered from international sanctions. Internally within Afghanistan, many small opposition forces are still trying to minimize the Taliban's military control.

For the United States' mission as well as that of its NATO allies, the focus has shifted in a post-war era from a military occupation to a humanitarian approach. It appears that the United States will begin to work diplomatically and negotiate with the Taliban, despite its designation. In the aftermath of the Kabul airport bombing, the United States will continue its counterterrorism operations with a spotlight on ISIS-K, the terrorist organization's Afghanistan chapter that claimed responsibility for the attack which killed 13 American military personnel. As some American citizens and allies remain in Afghanistan, the Biden administration has reiterated their dedication to ensure that all who wish to get out will in fact be able to. The exact process of how the United States plans to carry this out is not definitive however it appears that the State Department will continue to engage with the Taliban's leadership to have Kabul airport operate as a normal international transit center. The United Nations has called on member states to donate money and resources to aid the people of Afghanistan, as well as assist in the relocation of Afghan refugees to various countries including the United States.