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## Taliban holding on to \$7 billion of U.S. military equipment left behind after withdrawal



By [Imtiaz Tyab](#)

Updated on: February 4, 2025 / 8:15 PM EST / CBS News

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Inside Kabul over 3 years after U.S. withdrawal



[Inside Afghanistan more than 3 years after U.S. withdrawal 04:21](#)

More than three years after the [U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan](#), the country's new leaders insist they have improved people's lives, but for years the Taliban has ruled with an iron fist — aided by abandoned U.S. military hardware.

Last year, the Taliban put on a parade showing off its massive haul, including assault rifles and Humvees.

According to a 2022 Department of Defense report, 78 aircraft, 40,000 military vehicles and more than 300,000 weapons were among some of what was left behind.

On the eve of his inauguration, President Trump accused the Biden administration of handing over U.S. military assets to the Taliban following the 2021 withdrawal — a withdrawal that [Mr. Trump negotiated](#). Now, he's demanding the Taliban give back the hardware valued at \$7 billion.

The Taliban has refused.

"These are the assets of the state of Afghanistan. They will continue to be in the possession of the state of Afghanistan," Abdul Qahar Balkhi, the Taliban's spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told CBS News.

"People don't make deals on the assets of their states," he said. "They make agreements through dialog and engagement to find spaces and areas of common interest."

The 2021 takeover triggered desperate scenes of [Afghans trying to escape](#) as Taliban fighters celebrated their return to power.

Years later, the city of Kabul is noticeably different.

Gone is the claustrophobia of two decades of war — with most concrete blast walls and checkpoints being removed — and market traders told CBS News they feel safer now than ever before.

The Taliban's leaders say they want a reset with Mr. Trump following his reelection.

"We would like to close the chapter of warfare and open a new chapter," Balkhi said.

That new chapter may be written in Afghanistan's mines, where the country has an estimated \$1 trillion in untapped mineral reserves.

Mr. Trump has had his eye on those reserves for years, and recent studies have found the country has the potential to be what a 2010 Pentagon memo described as the "Saudi Arabia of [lithium](#)," a critical metal used to power cellphone and electric car batteries.

But competition will be fierce, with China and Russia having already made huge investments in Afghanistan.

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Imtiaz Tyab is a CBS News correspondent based in London and reports for all platforms, including the "CBS Evening News," "CBS Mornings," "CBS Sunday Morning" and CBS News 24/7. He has extensive experience reporting from major global flashpoints, including the Middle East and the war on terror.

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