

Biden faces a tragedy he worked to avoid.



By Michael D. Shear

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President Biden's decision to end America's longest war was driven, he had said repeatedly, by his determination not to sacrifice even one more member of the military on behalf of an effort that he had long believed was no longer in the interests of the United States.

But on Thursday, the withdrawal from Afghanistan claimed the lives of 13 U.S. troops, along with scores of Afghan civilians — the first American casualties there in 18 months and the deadliest day there for the U.S. military since 2011.

In searing remarks from the East Room of the White House, Mr. Biden pledged to “hunt down” the terrorists who claimed credit for the bombing.

“To those who carried out this attack, as well as anyone who wishes America harm, know this: We will not forgive,” Mr. Biden said, using language that had grim echoes of warnings President George W. Bush made after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

America's tumultuous exit from Afghanistan has dragged down Mr. Biden's approval ratings, and the bombing on Thursday will surely open him up to political criticism. But it is unclear what the damage will be to his presidency in the long term, as he exits a war that most Americans want out of as well.

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