

Covid-19: Biden Pledges \$2.7 Billion to Help Create 'Arsenal of Vaccines for the World' >

The last U.S. diplomat to leave Kabul has tested positive for the virus.



By Zach Montague

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Ross Wilson, the chargé d'affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul who helped manage the evacuation from the Kabul airport, has tested positive for the coronavirus, according to a person familiar with his condition who was not authorized to speak on the record.

Politico broke the story on Wednesday, and quoted Mr. Wilson as saying he had been vaccinated.

Mr. Wilson was one of a number of officials who continued operating in the country as Taliban fighters swept into the capital, prompting the evacuation of around 123,000 people. The last American diplomat to depart Kabul, he continued working at the airport to process the paperwork of Afghans who wanted to leave for two weeks after the embassy shut down on Aug. 15.

Mr. Wilson's condition on Friday was not immediately clear.

In the rush to complete the evacuation, military and diplomatic officials have scrambled to put in place a system for screening those airlifted out of the country for the virus. Many have arrived in the United States.

Pentagon officials have said that they established temperature checks and other Covid protocols at the airfield in Kabul. Last week, the White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, said that all evacuees would also be tested and offered vaccines upon arrival.

"With regards to Covid, the Afghans coming from the Middle East into our locations that we have stood up are all being tested, actually, multiple times," Gen. Glen D. VanHerck, the commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, said last week.

Of those who arrived last week, roughly one out of 1,200 had tested positive, he said.

Addressing the evacuation efforts on Monday, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken thanked Mr. Wilson, whom he credited for "exceptional, courageous work during a highly challenging time."

Mr. Blinken also acknowledged the heavy toll that the pandemic had taken on Afghanistan, where vaccines have been scarce and a summer surge just months ago badly strained the country's hospitals.

Lara Jakes contributed reporting.

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