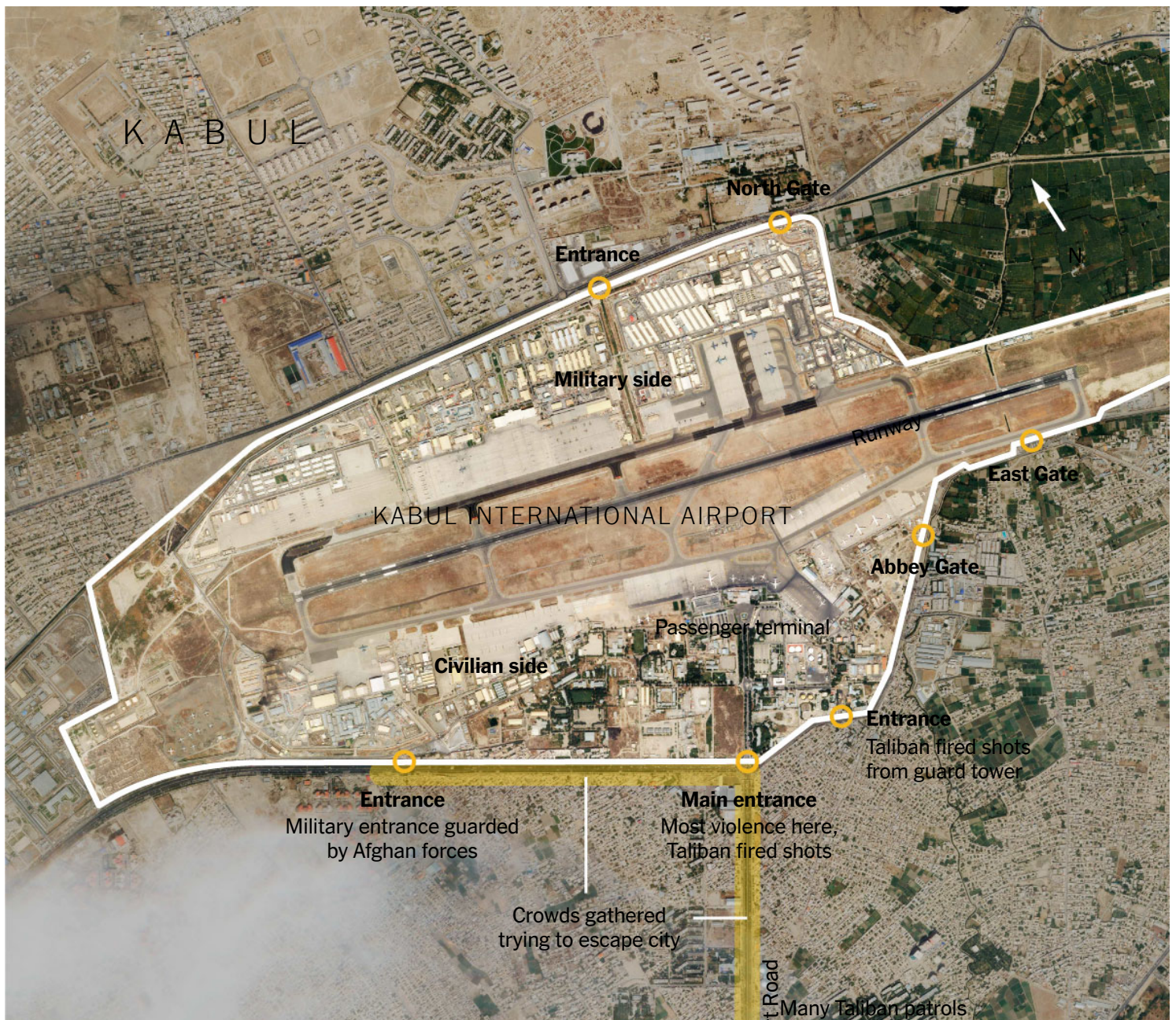
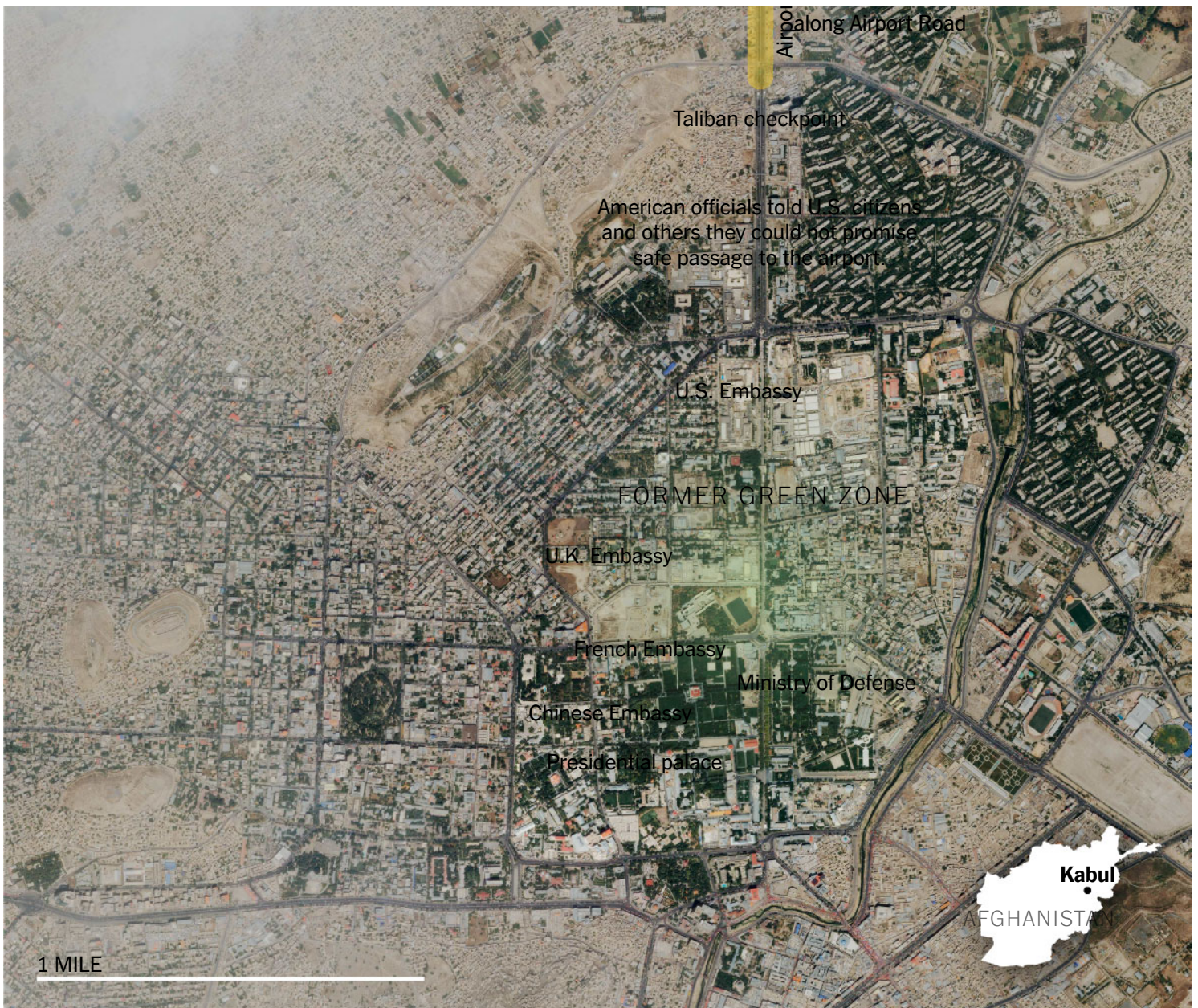


The Dangerous Road to the Kabul Airport

By Lauren Leatherby, Jim Huylebroek, Scott Reinhard and Sarah Kerr Aug. 18, 2021

While American forces have taken control of Kabul's airport, chaos dominates just outside. As thousands desperately try to flee Afghanistan, Taliban fighters have blocked entrances, fired rifles and beaten some people in the crowds.





Satellite imagery: Planet Labs

Taliban control the main entrance

Most of the violence has been just outside the airport's main entrance, where crowds trying to get into the airport met Taliban forces beating them back. There were volleys of rifle fire, along with pushing, pulling and beating with wooden sticks, Kalashnikovs and hoses.



Jim Huylebrook for The New York Times

Large crowds, including people camped out and families gathered with children, gathered outside the main gate as Taliban fighters shot rifles into the air. Very few got in.



Jim Huylebrook for The New York Times

Camped out on the roads nearby

On the roads surrounding the airport, people camped out, waiting to try to get access to a flight out of the country. Some sat under pine trees on the airport's perimeter.



Jim Huylebroek for The New York Times

Taliban fighters patrolled Airport Road, the main way into the airport. The sound of heavy gunfire echoed through the streets, and some fighters hit people to try to keep them back.



Jim Huylebroek for The New York Times

‘This gate is closed,’ a commander says

At an entrance east of the main gates, Taliban fighters positioned themselves on concrete road dividers.



Jim Huylebroek for The New York Times

Their commander, a Kalashnikov slung around his shoulder, told the crowds: “This gate is closed. Only foreigners and people with documents are allowed.”



