

U.S. officials warn Americans again to leave the Kabul airport after Biden says a new attack is ‘highly likely.’

By Michael Levenson

Aug. 28, 2021

U.S. officials again warned Americans to leave the Kabul airport area immediately because of a security threat, hours after President Biden said that another terrorist attack there was “highly likely” in the coming days.

Early Sunday morning in Afghanistan, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul warned Americans of a “specific, credible threat.” State Department officials have issued several similar warnings in recent days.

On Saturday, President Biden promised that Friday’s U.S. retaliatory strike for Thursday’s suicide attack would not be the last.

The warnings were yet another sign of the chaotic and dangerous situation as the U.S. tried to pull the last remaining Americans and Afghans out of a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan before the Tuesday deadline.

A suicide attack claimed by Islamic State militants that killed scores of people outside the Kabul airport this week has brought further anguish to the country and hindered evacuation efforts.

In a statement, Mr. Biden said another attack was “highly likely” in the next 24 to 36 hours. He added that he had directed the U.S. military to “protect our men and women on the ground.”

He also said that Friday’s retaliatory strike, which killed two ISIS militants, “was not the last.”

“We will continue to hunt down any person involved in that heinous attack and make them pay,” he said in a statement. “Whenever anyone seeks to harm the United States or attack our troops, we will respond. That will never be in doubt.”

Updates on Afghanistan Sign up for a daily email with the latest news on the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. [Get it sent to your inbox.](#)

Many countries were pulling their troops out of Afghanistan. France ended its efforts on Friday, and Britain’s evacuation of its citizens was ending on Saturday, Nick Carter, the chief of the defense staff, told the BBC’s Radio 4.

“We haven’t been able to bring everybody out, and that has been heartbreaking,” Gen. Carter told the BBC. “There have been some very challenging judgments that have had to be made on the ground.”

The U.S. State Department said Saturday that about 350 Americans were still awaiting evacuation from Afghanistan. Another 280 people who “self-identified” as Americans do not intend to leave or “have not informed us of their plans,” a statement said. The United States has repeatedly warned Americans to stay away from the airport because of the threat of attack.

Understand the Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan

Who are the Taliban? The Taliban arose in 1994 amid the turmoil that came after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989. They used brutal public punishments, including floggings, amputations and mass executions, to enforce their rules. Here’s more on their origin story and their record as rulers.

With three days remaining before President Biden’s Aug. 31 deadline for withdrawing U.S. troops, the mission is shifting from airlifting people in Afghanistan to bringing home American military personnel.

A Pentagon official said about 2,000 people had been evacuated from the Kabul airport during a 12-hour period on Saturday, bringing the total to 113,500 since the operation began on Aug. 14. Evacuations had slowed since early Thursday, before the suicide attack, when White House officials said 13,400 people had been airlifted in the previous 24 hours.

Hundreds of thousands of Afghans are still thought to be seeking to flee the country, yet Mr. Biden and other global leaders have acknowledged that many will not get out before the deadline.

There were signs on Saturday that the evacuation effort at the airport was slowing.

Roads leading to the airport were closed, and the large crowds that had strained in recent days to push inside had dissipated in the aftermath of the bombing, which struck as U.S. troops were screening people trying to enter.

Most gates were closed Saturday, and few people were getting through. At the airport's South Gate, which remained open Saturday, buses carrying hundreds of people lined up, their processing slowed by the close screening for explosives.

Thursday's attack was one of the deadliest in the nearly two decades since the U.S.-led invasion, killing 13 American service members and as many as 170 civilians.