

Read excerpts from Biden's prepared remarks on Afghanistan, to be delivered at the White House this afternoon.

Immediately after the speech at the White House, Mr. Biden is scheduled to travel to Arlington National Cemetery, where he will visit Section 60, where service members who died in Iraq and Afghanistan are buried.



By Karen Zraick and Thomas Gibbons-Neff

April 14, 2021

President Biden will deliver a speech Wednesday afternoon in which he will lay out his plans for withdrawing all troops from Afghanistan, ending American involvement in a war that began 20 years ago.

The speech is scheduled for 2:15 p.m. in the White House's Treaty Room. Immediately afterward, Mr. Biden is scheduled to travel to Arlington National Cemetery to visit Section 60, where service members who died in Iraq and Afghanistan are buried.

In excerpts from his prepared remarks released to the news media hours before the speech, Mr. Biden argued that the United States cannot “continue the cycle of extending or expanding our military presence in Afghanistan hoping to create the ideal conditions for our withdrawal, expecting a different result.”

He cautioned that diplomatic and humanitarian work would continue, along with American support for the Afghan government as it continues negotiations with the Taliban.

“We went to Afghanistan because of a horrific attack that happened 20 years ago,” the statement said. “That cannot explain why we should remain there in 2021.”

In Afghanistan, there is talk of civil war after the U.S. withdrawal. The Taliban, which once controlled most of the country, continue to fight the government. And they appear closer than ever to achieving the goal of their insurgency: to return to power and establish a government based on their extremist view of Islam.

Many Afghans had watched with cautious optimism when Mr. Biden assumed office in January, hoping he would reverse the Trump administration's rushed pledge to withdraw all U.S. troops by May, after brokering a shaky peace deal with the Taliban last year.

While Mr. Biden extended the deadline to September, the pullout of the United States and its NATO allies will be a massive blow to the Afghan security forces. In addition to the Taliban, militias controlled by powerful local warlords are once more rising to prominence and attacking government forces.

“It is not the right time to withdraw their troops,” said Major Saifuddin Azizi, a commando commander in the southeastern province of Ghazni, where fighting has been especially brutal in recent days. “It is unreasonable, hasty and a betrayal to us. It pushes Afghanistan into another civil war. Afghanistan's destiny will look like it did two decades ago.”