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Inside C2

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group Daily

Wednesday, August 25 2021

Biden keeps Aug. 31 deadline to withdraw troops from Afghanistan

U.S. President Joe Biden decided to stick with the Aug. 31 deadline for troops withdrawal from Afghanistan, U.S. media reported on Tuesday.

Citing a U.S. official, multiple news outlets said that Biden also asked for contingency plans in case he determines at a later date that the U.S. military needs to remain in the country longer.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid made it clear on Tuesday at a press conference that the United States should withdraw all troops and contractors before the Aug. 31 deadline.

Biden in July ordered that the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan conclude by the end of August.

The United States has been scrambling to evacuate Americans and its Afghan partners from the country since the Taliban entered the capital Kabul on Aug. 15.

The White House said on Tuesday that around 21,600 people had been evacuated during a 24 hour-period ending early Tuesday morning.



IMF's largest SDR allocation in history takes effect

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced on Monday that its new allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) equivalent to 650 billion U.S. dollars, the largest in the IMF's history, comes into effect, in an effort to help countries recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The allocation is a significant shot in the arm for the world and, if used wisely, a unique opportunity to combat this unprecedented crisis," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in a statement.

"The SDR allocation will provide additional liquidity to the global economic system -- supplementing countries' foreign exchange reserves," Georgie-



va said, adding countries can use the space provided by the SDR allocation to support their economies and step up their fight against the crisis.

SDRs are being distributed to countries in proportion to their quota shares in

the IMF. About 275 billion dollars of the new allocation will go to emerging and developing countries, of which low-income countries will receive about 21 billion dollars, according to the IMF.

The announcement came weeks after the board of governors of the IMF on Aug. 2 finally approved the SDR allocation proposal, which was delayed for more than a year.

The United States, the IMF's biggest shareholder with a unique veto power, blocked the proposal

last year under the Donald Trump administration. The Joe Biden administration quickly reversed the position and voiced its support for the plan earlier this year.

The SDR allocation proposal gained wide support during the virtual spring meetings of the IMF and the World Bank held in April, as G20 finance ministers and central bank governors, as well as officials from other IMF members, backed the plan.

The SDR, an international reserve asset created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves, can be exchanged among governments for freely usable currencies in times of need.

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

08/24/2021



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G7 leaders are pressuring President Biden to extend the deadline for U.S. troops to withdraw from Afghanistan which has caused anger and anxiety in many countries.

Biden himself has not publicly committed to such a move. Many American allies worry that they don't have enough time to get their citizens and the Afghans who assisted in the war out of the country. An official said that on Monday

approximately 10,400 people had been evacuated from Kabul on 28 separate U.S. military flights.

Biden indicated that the White House is in discussions to remain in Kabul longer, but his goal still is to have troops out of Kabul by August 31. The Taliban signaled that they wanted U.S. troops out of the country by the end of this month.

According to a reliable source, the president of France Macron told

Biden that we have a moral responsibility with regard to Afghans who need protection and have shared their values.

President Biden has also nominated Nicholas Burns as Ambassador to China. Mr. Burns will face a very big challenge as the China and U.S.

relationship has deteriorated. In a statement, Burns said that he welcomes this opportunity to work on the behalf of the president and the American people on the strategic competition between the U.S. and the P.R. C., as well as other difficult and complex challenges we face

together at this critical juncture in our relationship.

We are so worried about the chaos in Afghanistan and the growing tensions in the Taiwan Strait. We all hope the world leaders will use their wisdom to avoid going to war.



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



A firefighter works as the Caldor Fire burns in Grizzly Flats, California. REUTERS/Fred Greaves



A family walks towards a U.S. Air Force Boeing C-17 Globemaster III during an evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Afghanistan. U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. Samuel Ruiz



A girl looks out the front window of a bus as she and other people arrive at a processing center for refugees evacuated from Afghanistan at the Dulles Expo Center near Dulles International Airport in Chantilly, Virginia. REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst



People tie themselves to a vehicle during a protest of Extinction Rebellion climate activists, in central London, Britain. REUTERS/Peter Nicholls



2nd grader Sheilyne has her temperature checked at Benbrook Elementary School on the first day of school amid the coronavirus pandemic in Houston, Texas. REUTERS/Go Nakamura



A baby is handed over to the American army over the perimeter wall of the airport for it to be evacuated, in Kabul, Afghanistan. OMAR HAIDARI/via REUTERS

Biden Admin. Recommends COVID-19 Booster Shots -- Distribution To Begin Sept. 20



Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, gives an opening statement during a Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing to discuss the on-going federal response to COVID-19, at the U.S. Capitol on May 11, 2021. (Greg Nash/Pool via Reuters)

Booster Shots Will Only Be Offered To Americans Fully Vaccinated With Moderna, Pfizer Shots

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

A joint statement from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle Walensky, National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, and Acting Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Janet Woodcock stated that people will need booster shots, starting eight months after they received their second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine.

Those who received the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine will likely need booster shots as well, they said, although more data are needed before making a formal recommendation. The J&J vaccine uses a more traditional adenovirus mechanism, whereas the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use mRNA technology.

"The available data make very clear that protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection begins to decrease over time following the initial doses of vaccination, and in association with the dominance of the Delta variant, we are start-

ing to see evidence of reduced protection against mild and moderate disease," the statement reads, referring to the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus that causes COVID-19.

As a result, federal agencies are now preparing to offer the booster doses starting on Sept. 20. Individuals who were fully vaccinated will likely be eligible for the third dose, according to the statement. That includes some health care workers, nursing home residents, and other senior citizens. The United States will begin widely distributing COVID-19 booster shots next month and will recommend them for most Americans who have received one of the vaccines, according to several top federal health officials.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky is seen during a hearing.

ing at the U.S. Capitol on May 11, 2021. (Greg Nash/Pool/Getty Images)

"Based on our latest assessment, the current protection against severe disease, hospitalization, and death could diminish in the months ahead, especially among those who are at higher risk or were vaccinated during the earlier phases of the vaccination rollout," the statement reads. "For that reason, we conclude that booster shot will be needed to maximize vaccine-induced protection and prolong its durability."

The announcement comes after the White House COVID-19 press briefing on Aug. 18, during which health officials provided more information about the booster shots. In the briefing, Walensky said the CDC analyzed data that suggested booster shots provided more protection against "severe disease, hospitalization, and death." She noted that a study found that Pfizer's vaccine effectiveness against infection dropped over several months, with effectiveness dropping to about 53 percent in July. She also said vaccines can protect against severe illness, but acknowledged that there's "increased risk" for death and severe illness "among those who were vaccinated early."

FAQs

Murthy and COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients said during the briefing that the plan to distribute booster shots is contingent upon whether the FDA and CDC approve them for most Americans before Sept. 20. The CDC recommended booster doses for immunocompromised individuals last week, a day after the FDA authorized the boosters.

The move to recommend booster shots more widely is sure to spark criticism from the World Health Organization (WHO), which recently called on wealthy nations such as the United States to hold off on recommending third doses in lieu of providing vaccines to poorer nations with lower vaccination rates.

In July, WHO Director Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus rebuked Pfizer and Moderna for focusing on developing and selling booster shots, arguing in a statement: "We're making conscious choices right now not to protect those in most need."

There has also been criticism that Pfizer and Moderna are pushing U.S. officials to quickly recommend boosters to make a profit. Both firms are predicted to reap billions of dollars in revenue from their COVID-19 vaccines in the coming years.

The federal officials appeared to preempt WHO criticism on Aug. 18, with Murthy suggesting it's a false dichotomy to suggest

that the United States can't produce booster shots and distribute vaccine doses to poorer nations.

We clearly see our responsibility to both, he said.

Earlier this year, more than a dozen influential scientists told Reuters that recommending booster shots so soon may imperil the public's confidence in the vaccine. Some scientists, including a former CDC director, also expressed concern about statements made by Pfizer executives that COVID-19 booster shots will be needed every 12 months.

"It's completely inappropriate to say that we're likely to need an annual booster, because we have no idea what the likelihood of that is," Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, who now leads the global public health initiative Resolve to Save Lives, told the news agency, referring to the Pfizer claim. (Courtesy <https://www.theepochtimes.com/>)

Related

People who received the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines will be eligible before Johnson & Johnson recipients

People 18 years and older who received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines will be eligible for a booster dose eight months after their second dose, officials said. The booster plan would go into effect starting the week of Sept. 20.

People who got the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine would also likely need an additional shot to prolong its effectiveness against coronavirus infection and to reduce the severity of COVID-19 symptoms, health officials said. However, they are still conducting research and not yet releasing plans for booster shots for people who received that type of vaccine.

The data shows vaccines become less effective over time

The announcement comes as health officials across the country are battling a new wave of COVID-19 cases linked to the highly transmissible delta variant. The latest infections have once again pushed intensive care unit occupancy rates to the breaking point in multiple states, especially those with low rates of vaccination.

The surgeon general said that health officials were concerned about "waning immunity and the strength of the delta variant" — a "pattern of decline" that could "continue in the coming months."

In a statement released shortly before Wednesday's briefing, the U.S. Department

of Health and Human Services cautioned that "the current protection against severe disease, hospitalization, and death could diminish in the months ahead, especially among those who are at higher risk or were vaccinated during the earlier phases of the vaccination rollout."

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cited three new studies

in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report that show reduction in protection from infection over time, including in nursing homes and against the delta variant. Effectiveness against severe disease, hospitalization and death remains relatively high, she said.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the chief medical adviser to President Biden, said the plan for a booster is happening now because "if you wait for something bad to happen, you're considerably behind in your response." When it comes to the virus, he said, it's better to stay ahead of it than chase after it.

The White House says it's trying to make it easy for people to get the shots

Jeffrey Zients, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, said the aim was to make the administration of booster shots as easy as possible — and that they would be given at the same locations where people received their first and second vaccine doses. He said 90% of Americans live within 5 miles of one of the more than 80,000 vaccination sites across the country.

He also defended the plan to give Americans an additional dose while much of the rest of the world remained unvaccinated. The U.S. goal is to administer 100 million booster shots in the coming months. Over the same time period, 200 million doses would be donated to other countries, Zients said.

Biden addressed this issue himself, when he delivered remarks later Wednesday.

"We can take care of America and help the world at the same time," he said.

Biden also outlined plans to require nursing homes to vaccinate staff or risk losing Medicare and Medicaid funding.

"With this announcement," he said, "I'm using the power of the federal government, as a payer of health care costs, to ensure we reduce those risks to our most vulnerable seniors." (Courtesy <https://www.npr.org/sec/>)

least, at 58 percent.

The overall number on Wednesday had increased roughly 2 percent over the previous week, when Austin first announced he intended to make the vaccines mandatory. That jump doesn't represent a significant spike, as vaccine rates have been growing 1 to 2 percent week over week for much of the summer.

DoD does have a process for requesting medical or religious exemptions.

Approval requires legal and spiritual counseling, as well as discussion of all alternatives.

Additionally, DoD is creating guidance to get into compliance with the rest of the federal government, as President Joe Biden in August announced that unvaccinated federal employees will be subject to regular COVID-19 testing.

The Pentagon's announcement follows the military's deadliest stretch of the pandemic yet.

In the past month, eight service members died of COVID-19, twice as many as the November, previously the worst month. Four of those deaths came between Aug. 13 and Aug. 15, bringing the military mortality rate to 0.01 percent — well below the nearly 2-percent rate across the U.S., but also 25 times higher than it was for troops in 2020.

For most of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Defense Department has reported one or two service member deaths monthly, with a peak of four in November 2020. That was, until late July, when two sailors died, and were quickly followed by a field-grade Army officer and then five more troops in one week.

Five service member deaths of COVID-19 were reported between Aug. 11 and Aug. 18, according to DoD's latest numbers,

the pandemic's highest weekly death toll. Eight total deaths in the past three weeks adds up to twice the previous monthly high, after a period that began in May with no deaths at all. (Courtesy armytimes.com/)

BUSINESS

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky is seen during a hearing.

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COMMUNITY

Major Medical Groups Calling For All Health Workers To Be Vaccinated



A health care worker administers a shot of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to a woman at a pop-up vaccination site operated by SOMOS Community Care during the COVID-19 pandemic in Manhattan in New York City, on Jan. 29, 2021. (Mike Segar/Reuters)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Dozens of major medical groups, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, are calling for employers to mandate COVID-19 vaccines for all health care workers.

"Our health care organizations and societies advocate that all health