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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Rockets target US troops as core diplomats fly out of Kabul

Aug 30 (Reuters) - U.S. anti-missile defences intercepted rockets fired at Kabul's airport early on Monday, as the United States flew its core diplomats out of Afghanistan in the final hours of its chaotic withdrawal.

The last U.S. troops are due to pull out of Kabul by Tuesday, after they and their allies mounted the biggest air evacuation in history, bringing out 114,000 of their own citizens and Afghans who helped them over 20 years of war.

Two U.S. officials said the "core" diplomatic staff had withdrawn by Monday morning. They did not say whether this included top envoy Ross Wilson, expected to be among the last to leave before the final troops themselves.

A U.S. official said initial reports did not indicate any U.S. casualties from as many as five missiles fired on the airport. Islamic State - enemies of both the West and the Taliban - claimed responsibility for the rocket attacks. The rockets followed a massive Islamic State suicide bombing outside the teeming airport gates on Thursday, which killed scores of Afghans and 13 U.S. troops.

In recent days Washington has warned of more attacks, while carrying out two air strikes against Islamic State targets, including one on Sunday it said thwarted an attempted suicide bombing by blowing up a car packed with explosives.

Tuesday's deadline for all troops to leave was ordered by President Joe Biden, fulfilling an agreement reached with the Taliban by his predecessor Donald Trump to end Washington's longest war.

But having failed to anticipate that the Taliban would so quickly conquer the country, Washington and its NATO allies were forced into a hasty evacuation. They will leave behind thousands of Afghans who helped Western countries and might have qualified for evacuation but did not make it out in time.

The Taliban, who carried out public executions and banned girls and women from school or work when last in power 20 years ago, have said they will safeguard rights and not pursue vendettas. They say once the Americans leave, the country will at last be at peace for the first time in more than 40 years.

But countless Afghans, especially in the cities, fear for their futures. And the United Nations said the entire country now faces a dire humanitarian crisis, cut off from foreign aid amid a drought, mass displacement and COVID-19.

"The evacuation effort has undoubtedly saved tens of thousands of lives, and these efforts are praiseworthy," said UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi.

"But when the airlift and the media frenzy are over, the overwhelming majority of Afghans, some 39 million, will remain inside Afghanistan. They need us - govern-



ments, humanitarians, ordinary citizens - to stay with them and stay the course."

A Pakistani plane flew 12.5 tonnes of World Health Organization medical supplies on Monday to the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, the global health body's first shipment to reach Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover. The emergency and trauma kits would be distributed to hospitals across the country, said the WHO, which had warned on Friday that Afghanistan's medical supplies would run out within days. [read more](#)

Outside the airport in Kabul, people described themselves as forsaken by the departing foreign troops.

Afghan men take pictures of a vehicle from which "We are in danger," said one woman. "They must show us a way to be saved. We must leave Afghanistan or they must provide a safe place for us."

TERRIFIED

Afghan media said Monday's rocket attack was launched from the back of a vehicle. The Pajhwok news agency said several rockets struck different parts of the Afghan capital.

"People are terrified and worried about the future, worried that the rocket launching might continue," said Farogh Danish, a Kabul resident near the wreckage of the car from which the rockets were launched.

On Sunday, Pentagon officials said a U.S. drone strike killed an Islamic State suicide car bomber

preparing to attack the airport. The Taliban said seven people died in the blast. U.S. Central Command said it was investigating reports that civilians were killed.

"We know there were substantial and powerful subsequent explosions resulting from the destruction of the vehicle, indicating a large amount of explosive material inside that may have caused additional casualties," it said.

Two U.S. officials told Reuters evacuations would continue on Monday, prioritising people deemed at extreme risk. Other countries have also put in last-minute requests to bring out people in that category, the officials said.

The Taliban will take full control of Kabul airport after the American withdrawal on Tuesday, Qatar's Al Jazeera television network cited an unidentified Taliban source as saying.

PRESIDENT MOURNS U.S. DEAD

Biden attended a ceremony on Sunday at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware to honour members of the U.S. military killed in Thursday's suicide bombing, the deadliest incident for U.S. troops in Afghanistan in more than a decade.

As the flag-draped transfer caskets carrying the remains emerged from a military plane, the president, who has vowed to avenge the Islamic State attack, shut his eyes and tilted his head back. [read more](#)

Five of the fallen service members were just 20, as old as the war itself. [read more](#)

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY 08/30/2021

Ida Made Landfall On The 16th Anniversary Of Hurricane Katrina



to the governors of the states in the Gulf of Mexico region and he said at a briefing with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that, "We're providing food, water, generators and other supplies to the area. FEMA already has deployed 500 emergency response personnel to both Texas and Louisiana."

the unfolding of Afghanistan and the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Hurricane Ida could be another big domestic problem for President Biden.

We still remember sixteen years ago when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Hundreds of thousands of people came to Houston to seek shelter.

This is a very critical time for the Biden Administration with

We all hope this will not happen again.

Hurricane Ida made landfall on the Gulf Coast Sunday at 12:55 p.m. as an "extremely dangerous" Category 4 hurricane with top winds of 150 miles per hour. This is the date of the 16th anniversary of the historically devastating Hurricane Katrina.

customers were without power as Ida continued to pound the coastal state.

After Ida hit the New Orleans area Sunday causing massive disruption to U.S. oil production, more than 95% of the oil production facilities have been shut down. It will have a significant impact on the nation's energy supply. It could also impact fuel from the Gulf Coast to the East Coast market.



Ida was downgraded to a Category 3 storm on Sunday at 7:00 p.m. It was close, but the storm missed New Orleans by about 25 miles west by southwest of the area. More than 700,000

President Biden has spoken



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Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



Christina Bourg snuggles her son Jean-Luc, 8, as her daughter Olivia, 10, places the finishing touches on a sign they painted after boarding up their property in preparation for Hurricane Ida in Moreau City, Louisiana. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



U.S. President Joe Biden salutes during the dignified transfer of the remains of U.S. Military service members who were killed by a suicide bombing at the Hamid Karzai International Airport, at Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Delaware. REUTERS/Tom Brenner



Anti-government protesters escape from a police water cannon with purple dye and tear gas during a protest against the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic in Din Daeng district of Bangkok, Thailand. REUTERS/Cory Wright



Members of a hand crew walk across a ridgeline ahead of the Caldor Fire in Twin Bridges, California. REUTERS/Fred Greaves



U.S. Marines with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) process evacuees as they go through the Evacuation Control Center (ECC) during an evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan. U.S. Marine Corps/Staff Sgt. Victor Mancilla



Ntando Mahlangu of South Africa in action during the men's long jump final at the Tokyo Paralympics. REUTERS/Athit Perawongmetha

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

The Next Big COVID Disaster Could Be Here



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

With India's dramatic surge in COVID-19 cases continuing to devastate the country, wary epidemiologists are trying to forecast where the novel coronavirus will strike next.

Some experts are casting a wary glance toward another vast, developing country that—like India—suffers huge health disparities and uneven access to vaccines: Nigeria.

With 200 million people, it's the most populous country in West Africa and the seventh most populous country in the world.

"Nigeria is actually quite vulnerable," Ngozi Erondui, a senior research fellow at the Chatham House Center for Global Health Security in the United Kingdom, told The Daily Beast. "It has a lot of similarities to India."

The world isn't powerless to stop COVID from devastating Nigeria the way it's doing India. More equitable distribution of vaccines across borders could build a firewall against a surge in cases in Nigeria, as well as in other less developed countries.

But that would require the world's richer countries to share lifesaving resources with

their poorer neighbors. And if India's tragic example proved anything, it's that the world's vaccine "haves" are in no hurry to help out the "have-nots" on distant continents.

That said, "African" is not synonymous with "poor." The continent is huge and diverse. Its 54 countries with their 1.2 billion people run the gamut from big to small, rich to poor, powerful to weak, democratic to authoritarian.



Likewise, the African countries' pandemic experiences have varied. South Africa—one of the richer countries on the continent—got hit hard last summer, and then again in January. Officials there

have logged more than 54,000 deaths. That's 93 fatalities per 100,000 people, a rate that's much lower than the 175 deaths per 100,000 population the U.S. has registered, but much higher than the global average of 38 fatalities per 100,000 people.

Many of the less industrialized African countries have, so far, managed to avoid the catastrophic surges in infections that have driven up death tolls in richer countries. A total of 580,000 Americans have died of COVID; only 1,600 Nigerians have died.

But that doesn't mean COVID isn't coming for Nigeria and other African countries—it might just mean it hasn't gotten there yet. "I see raging COVID-19 fires breaking out across the world in the coming weeks and months," Lawrence Gostin, a Georgetown University global health expert, told The Daily Beast. "And I am most concerned about Africa."



"I see the crisis in India as a leading indicator of what is to come in other low and middle-income countries," Gostin added. Bear in mind, India—despite its teeming cities, limited public health measures and patchwork health care—was relatively lucky until recently. The country of 1.37 billion counted just 160,000 fatal cases through March, for a rate of 11 per 100,000.

Then in April, a new and more transmissible variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, known to geneticists as "B.1.617," spread across the country, driving cases and deaths through the roof. In a span of just a couple of weeks, India added nearly 50,000 deaths. The fatality rate jumped to 15 per 100,000.

The Frustrating Reason We're Flying Blind on New COVID Variants

India's COVID surge is ongoing as of this writing, but the trends are encouraging. The daily rates of new cases and deaths are flattening. While every indication is that tens of thousands more Indians will die before the surge ends, at least the pandemic isn't still getting worse there.



But the novel coronavirus is an opportunist. It looks for densely packed, unprotected populations. Spreading via aerosols from one person to the next, it sets up a proverbial laboratory in each body it infects. Every individual SARS-CoV-2 infection mutates every two weeks for as long as it's active, looking for evolutionary pathways that might produce a new increasingly transmissible variant.

New variants help the virus spread even faster in a self-reinforcing cycle that ends

only when strong social-distancing mandates, vaccinations, the antibodies of survivors—or, more likely, a combination of all three—cut off its transmission pathways. The harder it is to socially-distance, and the lower the vaccine uptake, the longer the pathogen has to run amok.

It's no accident SARS-CoV-2 thrived in India this month. Popular religious festivals drew huge, maskless crowds. Meanwhile, India's vaccination effort has been abysmal. The country has fully vaccinated just 3 percent of its population, compared to more than 30 percent in the United States. The global average for full vaccination is slightly more than 3 percent.

Nigeria, with its teeming cities, deep poverty and ramshackle health system is, from an epidemiological standpoint, a lot like India—except worse, in some aspects. Where India at least has some domestic vaccine-manufacturers, Nigeria has none. It must import all of its doses.

That helps to explain why the country has partially vaccinated just 1 percent of its population—and fully vaccinated almost no one. The government in Lagos expects to receive 84 million vaccine doses from AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson in coming weeks.

(Article Continues Below)



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

(Article Continues From Above)

The Next Big COVID Disaster Could Be Here

plus—they're useless. Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

But that's enough to fully vaccinate just one out of five Nigerians. Vaccinating three-quarters of the population—the proportion experts say could result in "herd immunity" that blocks most transmission pathways—could take until 2022.

To help Nigeria and other unprotected countries, the world's rich countries should stop hoarding excess doses. More jabs isn't a panacea, of course—even a country with plenty of vaccines can have trouble administering it.



But while logistics, as well as hesitancy among wary citizens, could slow inoculations, a shortage of doses definitely will slow it.

"The only way to know for sure how well Nigeria will administer vaccines is to ship it. Once they have a larger supply of doses, then we can see how things like distribution and hesitancy are impacting their vaccination campaign," Shaun Truelove, an epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, told The Daily Beast.

Global supply isn't the biggest problem. The U.S. alone, a country with multiple competing vaccine-producers, is sitting on a stockpile of more than 60 million unused doses even as more vials arrive from factories and the vaccine-uptake rate ticks downward, especially among Republicans. It wasn't until weeks into India's ongoing COVID surge that the administration of President Joe Biden promised to ship some of its extra vaccines to the country. The spare jabs, from AstraZeneca, aren't even authorized for use in the United States. To Americans, those doses aren't just sur-



What's particularly egregious about the delay in releasing surplus vaccines is that health officials anticipated this problem a year ago. Last spring, the U.N.'s World Health Organization, along with several international public-private partnerships, worked together to set up the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access initiative, or COVAX.

The idea was for rich countries to pay for vaccines for poor countries. COVAX's goal was to deliver 100 million doses by March. It actually delivered fewer than 40 million. "This has set Nigeria and many countries up to fail," Erondu said.

The United States is part of the problem. The Trump administration refused to sign on to COVAX, a move that reflected its narrow "America-first" philosophy. The Trump White House either didn't understand—or didn't care—that vaccinating poor countries helps protect rich countries, too. Viruses don't respect borders, after all.

The Biden White House reversed the decision back in February. The administration pledged \$4 billion in cash, making the U.S. COVAX's biggest financial donor, albeit belatedly. In a parallel move, Biden signalled support for a controversial proposal for the World Trade Organization to suspend patent protections for COVID vaccines, in theory allowing any manufacturer in any country to produce doses.



But experts are divided on whether suspending patents would result in more doses reaching the countries that need it. Meanwhile, many richer countries have been late to fulfill their COVAX pledges, piling delay on delay as the novel coronavirus targets one unprotected population after another.

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To Americans, those doses aren't just surplus—they're useless.

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Nigeria is ripe for infection. But the West African country doesn't have to suffer the same fate as India. Vaccines are available. Mechanisms exist to get it to countries that need it most. What's lacking is a sense of urgency in the countries that have more than enough, and don't seem to appreciate the importance of sharing it. (Courtesy <https://news.yahoo.com>)

