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4 Killed, 2 Wounded in Separate Targeted Attacks in Kabul

At least four people were killed and two more were wounded in two separate incidents on Tuesday morning in Kabul city.

In the first incident, two people were wounded in a magnetic IED blast in Kabul city.

The blast happened at around 09:21am in the Macroryan area of PD16 of the capital.

A Land Cruiser type vehicle belonging to the government was hit by the IED blast. Police told the media that one person was wounded and no further information about the identity of the individuals inside the vehicle were given

In the meantime, media reported another incident in the Company area of PD5 in Kabul, where a Corolla type vehicle comes under armed attack by unknown gunmen.

The armed men have reportedly targeted employees for Maidan Wardak Rural Development Department.

At least 4 people were reported killed in the incident.

No group has claimed responsibility for the incidents so far.



ATRA's Inability to Provide Facilities Created Problems for Private Telecommunication Companies

The private Mobile Network Operators "MNOs" (AWCC, Etisalat Afghanistan, MTN Afghanistan and Roshan) in a statement said that they face a number of issues that are not only impacting their future plans, but also the current operations. "The highly competitive nature of the market has made even recouping our initial investment in rolling out 3G/4G technology a difficult challenge. This has been compounded by ATRA's inability to provide us with the clean frequencies, free from all forms of interference, which we need to run our networks," the statement said. MNOs stated that contrary to recent statements made by ATRA Chairman Ansari, it is the arbitrary and ...

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Taliban Halts Intra-Afghan Talks: Dr. Abdullah



The chairman of High Council for National Reconciliation announced that the Taliban had halted the intra-Afghan talks in Doha. Speaking at a meeting on the occasion of the inauguration of the Media and Public Awareness Commission of the HCNR on Tuesday, Mr. Abdullah said: "There are no negotiations going on now." Abdullah expressed hope that the

Taliban would end the current situation and come back to the negotiating table. He also called on Qatar, the United States and other influential countries in the Afghan peace process to encourage the Taliban to continue negotiations. According to him, no decision can be made behind the scenes, and the Taliban can put whatever they want

on the table. The chairman of HCNR has denied allegations by some members of the Taliban's negotiating team that the government's negotiating team does not have full authority to negotiate. He stressed that the negotiating team has been given full authority to consult with the Taliban on the agenda.

Abdullah Abdullah also pointed out to the issue of an interim government.

He stated that despite the interest of a number of politicians in the country in formation of an interim government, he personally does not find the issue useful.

According to him, no experience in the world has shown that with the advent of an interim government, peace will be achieved.

According to Abdullah, peace must be decided by the people, and this goal is possible only through negotiations.

The chairman of HCNR also spoke about the escalation of violence in Afghanistan.

He said the message that if one side is not willing to let people live comfortably for a month, two or three months in the absence of war and fire, it means that there is no belief in peace.

Dr. Abdullah's remarks come as no official meeting has been held between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban in Doha for several weeks. Since the start of the second round of talks, only three formal meetings have been held between the two sides.

Afghan Taekwondo Team Heads to Uzbekistan in Lead up to Olympics

A group of six taekwondo athletes left Kabul on Tuesday for Uzbekistan in preparation for the Tokyo Olympics. The group will take part in a training camp in Uzbekistan before competing in the Asian Games, which will be hosted by Jordan in three months. This contest will be part of the qualifying rounds for teams that will go through to the Olympics. The Afghan team comprises four men and two women - who have less than six months for final preparations for the Olympics if they are selected. The 2020+1 Tokyo Olympics were postponed last year due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic.



India, Afghanistan signed a pact on 'Shahtoot Dam'

Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and President Ashraf Ghani agreed on the construction of a dam project in a virtual summit talk. The Shahtoot dam project establishment was signed by Mohammad Hanif Atmar, Afghan Foreign minister, and Subrahmanyam Jasishankar, Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs. President Ghani on his part thanked the Indian government for 500,000 doses of the vaccine he added, "At this critical time, there could not be a greater gift". India being a true partnership in Afghanistan's development plans and assistance is marked on our landscape, President Ghani added. Meanwhile, PM Modi expressed his Nation's concern over the increasing level of violence and targeted killings of journalists, and innocent people and call for an "immediate stop" to such actions, he also said that India



supports Afghan-owned and led peace negotiations. Prime Minister, Narendra Modi indicated that both "India and Afghanistan want to see the region free of terrorism". Shahtoot dam will help provide 2 million people in Kabul with clean water and it will be the second dam constructed by India in Afghanistan, reports indicated, that the cost of this project is estimated to be \$236

million. The project is expected to be completed within three years and will facilitate the irrigation of 4,000 hectares of land in the Charasiab and Khairabad districts. The dam will hold 146 million cubic meters of portable water. Previously India in Afghanistan constructed the Salma dam also known as the India-Afghanistan friendship dam.

By Wang Yu, Chinese Ambassador to Afghanistan

President Xi Jinping's holistic view of national security Guides China-Afghanistan Security Cooperation to a New High

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Chinese President Xi Jinping has, on the basis of a deep understanding of the trend of history, put forward a series of new strategic, forward-looking and science-based ideas and concepts to unite and lead the Chinese people of all ethnic groups towards building a moderately prosperous society and ending absolute poverty in their new journey, to build China into a modern socialist country in an all-round way. In 2014, Xi put forward the creative holistic view of national security, laying out plans for China to improve its security work system, enhance its capacity and capabilities for national security and strengthen regional security cooperation, which will guide China-Afghanistan security cooperation to a new high.

The holistic view of national security embodies the national security values, approaches, institutions and mechanisms with Chinese characteristics. It represents the pursuit of an integrated national security system covering the political, homeland, military, economic, cultural, societal, science and technology, information, ecological, resource and nuclear aspects in response to today's complex security challenges. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, China's has been guided by the holistic view of national security in its fight against the pandemic. With President Xi's forward-looking views on non-traditional security such as those on biological security, the Chinese government has stuck to the people-centered approach, strengthened the awareness of potential dangers with a sense of fighting spirit, and worked resolutely to successfully control the pandemic, thus safeguarding the safety and health of the Chinese people and contributing to the protection of people in other parts of the world.

According to the holistic view of national security, China consistently pursues common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in its exchanges with the neighboring

countries. To be more specific, common means that security should be universal and equal, with the security interests of each and every country respected and protected; it should be comprehensive, covering both traditional and non-traditional fields protected in a coordinated way; security in all countries and regions should be achieved and promoted in a cooperative way through dialogues and consultation; and it should be made sustainable and durable by putting equal emphasis on development and security.

A wise man adapts himself as circumstances change. Unlike the old security concept of building military alliances and strengthening armaments, the concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security is aimed at achieving lasting peace and common development in the region through cooperation and openness rather than confrontation or alliance. It involves multiple dimensions and takes into account differences in security situations among countries, complex contradictions in non-traditional fields and imbalances in economic and social development. Its approaches and connotations are more in line with the historical background and complex current situation of national security problems in the region, such as that in Afghanistan. Such a concept provides methods to address the most prominent security problems and offer an approach to deal with various potential threats in a coordinated way. Bearing it in mind, China has contributed its wisdom and solution to tackle the Afghan question and other regional hotspots. Not long ago, the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) held an international seminar on joint response to terrorism under the new circumstances. Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui attended and addressed the meeting. It is pointed out that non-traditional security threats require transnational responses, which should be based on a coherent and sustainable approach, with a long-term view instead of knee-

jerk reaction. Opting for unilateralist and bullying practices, certain countries have politicized counter-terrorism and turned it into a convenient tool. This has caused serious disruption to international counter-terrorism cooperation, and we all need to be on high alert. In international counter-terrorism cooperation, it is important to uphold international consensus, adopt effective measures, follow a unified standard and deny terrorism its breeding ground.

Participants agreed that the pandemic has complicated and aggravated the international counter-terrorism situation, but the international community should uphold multilateralism, strengthen solidarity and jointly deal with non-conventional security threats including terrorism. We should apply a unified standard and reject double standards unequivocally. We should firmly defend international consensus and oppose the selfish politicization and instrumentalization of counter terrorism. We should adopt comprehensive measures to address both the symptoms and root causes of terrorism, pay attention to preventive counter terrorism and deradicalization, and strive to eradicate the breeding ground for terrorism. We should be open-minded and inclusive and avoid linking terrorism with any particular countries, ethnicity or religion.

Afghanistan has been in protracted war for 40 years. China has always respected the sovereignty, independence and national dignity of Afghanistan and has never bullied it. In the security community of China and Afghanistan, the security and stability of Afghanistan serve China's interests. In November 2020, at the 20th meeting of the Council of Heads of States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), President Xi Jinping once again stressed the importance of Afghanistan to regional security and stability and reaffirmed the Chinese commitment to help Afghanistan to achieve peace and reconstruction. Over the years, China has strengthened its counter-terrorism and security

cooperation with Afghanistan through bilateral channels, reaffirmed at the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogues its determination to combat terrorism. China supports Afghanistan in its counter-terrorism efforts through the SCO and the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism in counter-terrorism by the armed forces of China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan, actively participates in the international multilateral mechanisms on the Afghan question, supports the various decisions made by Afghanistan, oppose any intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan by any external force under any pretext, call for an orderly and responsible withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, and support the realization of lasting peace in Afghanistan.

In addition, China supports Afghanistan's efforts to resolve security issues through development. Since the start of Peace and Reconstruction in Afghanistan, China has attached great importance to cooperation with Afghanistan in such areas as economy and trade, infrastructure construction and energy development, opened up transport corridors and provided market access for specialty products such as pine seeds, saffron and carpets. Efforts have been made to promote connectivity between Afghanistan and the surrounding region within the BRI framework and help the country to make full use of its geographical advantages, build its own capacity and achieve self-sufficiency at an early date. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Afghanistan last year, China has given full support to its fight against the epidemic. Six batches of over 20 tons of pandemic response supplies have been delivered to Afghanistan. We purchased and distributed essential foods for residents in Kabul when the prices skyrocketed. Recently, the Chinese side has started to provide winter supplies for the cold northern provinces. A large amount of Chinese food aid has also arrived. We hope to help the Afghan people to have a warm winter. ...

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By Rafi Khetab

Why U.S. Troops Should Remain in Afghanistan

There are five national security reasons why the U.S. should keep a strong residual force in Afghanistan. There is also an important moral argument why America should not abandon the Afghan people and leave them in the clutches of the world's most savage terrorists. In a highly controversial withdrawal deal signed in February 2020 between the Trump administration and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, U.S. troops are to be fully withdrawn from Afghanistan by May 2021. Such a premature withdrawal will trigger a chain of events that will ultimately expose the U.S. homeland to major terrorist attacks.

As of December 2020, there was a bare minimum of 4,500 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. They had specific, limited missions: to fight global terror, prevent safe havens for Al-Qaida, stop terror attacks on the U.S. homeland, and train, assist and mentor Afghan Security Forces partners. In his final days as President, Mr. Trump ordered the withdrawal of 2,500 of those troops and left in place a plan to fully withdraw the remaining troops despite Congress passing a new U.S. law prohibiting such a drawdown. The withdrawal decision was made

in a slapdash manner without any strategic thought, foresight or deliberation. President Biden should reverse that order for the following reasons:

1. Withdrawal emboldens Global Terror: If the story of the birth and rapid expansion of ISIS in the aftermath of U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in late 2011 is any lesson, there is the danger that a similar withdrawal from Afghanistan could result in a similar catastrophe that would revive global terrorism and embolden dangerous jihadists all around the world on an unimaginable scale. Taliban and other terrorists will exploit U.S. withdrawal as a propaganda machine to attract more finances, bolster recruitment, and expand the reach of their cause. Flushed with cash and donations, terror networks will have the financial wherewithal as well as the charm of a presumed victory to attract flocks of dissatisfied, jobless youth from the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, and even Europe to join their ranks. A similar situation happened in Iraq after President Obama ordered the full withdrawal of the U.S. military prematurely from the country in late 2011. As analyzed by NPR, that

withdrawal, among other factors, resulted in a security vacuum, which led to the emergence and spread of ISIS – a ruthlessly vicious terrorist caliphate that wreaked havoc across the region threatened Europe and sent terror shockwaves across the globe. To this day, ISIS and its affiliates remain relatively active in many parts of the world, including Afghanistan, albeit significantly subdued by U.S.-led coalition forces that were re-deployed to stop ISIS. As the January 6, 2021, breach of the U.S. Capitol inspired violent domestic extremists in America, according to DHS, a premature departure from Afghanistan will inspire global terrorism all over the world.

2. Withdrawal Portrays U.S. Military A Defeated Force: The U.S. has an unrivaled military might that no other country's military can match its overwhelming power. The American military is respected and feared by both foes and friends alike. Imagine now, however, that U.S. troops withdraw from Afghanistan as dictated by the Trump-Taliban deal, just to appease a terrorist group – the result would be catastrophic for national security. Critics and tabloids would flush the internet with

big headlines and juicy literature, labeling the U.S. military with defeat at the hands of a terrorist group. This would harm America's credibility, taint America's military, affect the soldiers' morale, torment U.S. military strategists for generations, and inflict damage to America's reputation. In an interview with BBC last week, Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh succinctly warned that "the fate, reputation, and standing of the Western Civilization" hangs in the balance in Afghanistan. He added a sobering reminder that the Taliban would falsely label U.S. withdrawal with "defeat, surrender, and escape." Saleh emphasized that no one wants a jihadist state to come to power "anywhere in the world, especially if it comes, God forbid, by kicking the Western Civilization and the whole world out."

3. Withdrawal Destabilizes a Nuclear Armed Region: The Af-Pak (Afghanistan-Pakistan) region is packed with some of the world's most dangerous terrorist groups determined to harm America and the West. It's been reported that there are around 24 major terrorist groups operating in and out of Pakistan. With the U.S. military stationed in Afghanistan, those terrorists have been kept at bay and largely contained for the past 20 years. If the U.S. military withdraws from Afghanistan, those militant groups

will be unleashed, mobilized, and on the march once again – destabilizing the region, including the two nuclear-armed arch-rivals, India and Pakistan, which would spell further chaos to the global order. It is in America's interest to help keep the Af-Pak region stable.

4. Withdrawal Exposes U.S. Homeland and Europe to Attacks: Once unleashed and left uncontested, the Taliban and Al-Qaida, along with other terror groups, will start planning to target U.S. interests, including U.S. embassies, consulates, and citizens around the world. Their growth will inspire terror cells in Europe and America to target the U.S. homeland as well as European capitals. Without a forward-deployed military presence in Afghanistan, Al-Qaida will regain territory, strength, and base of operation from which it could once again mastermind attacks on the U.S. homeland and the European allies. In the war on terror, Afghanistan is the global frontline. You lose that frontline; you lose to terrorists everywhere.

5. Taliban Violating Peace Deal: The withdrawal of U.S. troops is tied to the Doha withdrawal deal. The deal was negotiated by Trump envoy Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad. Afghans, although thankful for U.S. assistance, are critical of the deal. They also distrust Khalilzad. The Afghan government sees ...

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Forex Markets Remain Closed Amid Money Exchangers Strike

The country's main forex markets have remained closed for the past four days amid a strike by money exchangers who are protesting the Central Bank's move to issue company-based licenses instead of individual permits. The ongoing strike by money exchangers has created problems for Kabul residents—who need to exchange and transfer funds—as the city has only one main forex market. Money changers who are asking for a renewal of an individual rather than corporate license say that they won't stop their protest until the government responds to their demands. According to money exchangers, the renewal of new individual licenses has been suspended by the Central Bank. Therefore, the money exchangers have

closed forex markets in Kabul and few other provinces over the last four days. "It is good to have renewed our old licenses, but we should be allowed to have our branches in provinces and continue our activities normally," a money exchanger Mohammad Sarwar Ansari said. "We will continue our strike until the removal of the limitations applied to our individual licenses affecting our activities," said Fazel Karim Ebrahimkhail, a money exchanger. The Central Bank and money exchangers should put an end to this problem as soon as possible, said an MP. Several money markets are closed in Kabul as well as in some provinces over the past three days.

Considering the current situation in the country, some MPs and people said they are in need of monetary services and there is no alternative available. "As people are facing troubles, responsibility goes to those who brought us into such a circumstance," said Abdul Ahad, head of the Kunduz money exchangers' union. On Monday, Feb 8, Afghan parliament called for the reopening of money exchanging markets in Kabul and the provinces. "The legislation that the Central Bank is trying to enforce is not applicable even in Europe and the United States. How can we implement it in Afghanistan, a country that has been in war for 40 years?" asked Gul Ahmad Noorzad, an MP from Nimroz.

The Central Bank says its decision is a move against money laundering and the support of terrorists and said the money exchangers' opposition to the decision is not in favor of the country's national interests. "We don't know why the respected money exchangers fear obtaining corporate licenses as obtaining the licenses requires the same procedures as individual licenses," said Esmatullah Kohsar, head of the media office of the Central Bank. "Even corporate licenses have more facilities and benefits than individual licenses." Money exchangers said the Central Bank has started the process of issuing corporate licenses for the last few years, but a few money exchangers have obtained the new licenses so far.

ATRA's Inability...

onerous nature of ATRA's policies and procedures on matters ranging from IMEI to SIM Distribution, and Customs Clearances to the Real-Time Data Management System, which have the biggest impact on their ability day-to-day to provide their customers with the latest products and services.

"Despite these challenges, we remain ready to work with ATRA and solve these issues together for the benefit of our customers and the country," the statement added.

Afghanistan Telecom Regulatory Authority has recently announced that telecommunication companies have been fined for selling unregistered SIM cards, and 70% of these SIM cards were blocked.

In an interview with the BBC Persian, Noor Saeed Shinwari, a spokesman for the ATRA office said that all telecommunications companies in the country were warned, that all the active and existing SIM cards must be registered by the end of 1400 (Solar Hijri Calendar).

According to Shinwari, the government took this step to ensure security, because many terrorist activities, blasts, and various other crimes are being carried out using unregistered mobile SIM cards.

However, telecommunications companies say SIM registration issues cannot be resolved fundamentally unless there is a digital central database registry system which they could link their systems to verify government issued IDs or Tazkiras, something which is not available. They also say that despite severe restrictions on SIMs by ATRA, which has raised the cost of a SIM, making it unaffordable for many people to access telecom services, crime rates have not gone down.

In addition to the above, out of 34 million SIM cards sold in the market, 22 million of them are reported active.

President Xi Jinping's...

China has never wavered in its determination to go hand in hand with Afghanistan. China will continue making use of its advantages and international status to assist the Afghanistan peace and reconciliation process to move forward in an orderly manner, work with Afghanistan to actively implement the Memorandum of Understanding on Jointly Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative and try its best to help Afghanistan in economic and social development and security capacity building. We stand ready to work with Afghanistan for a happy and bright future.

Why U.S. Troops...

Khalilzad as the architect of a deal that essentially surrenders Afghanistan to a terrorist group. In his BBC interview last week, Vice President Saleh argued that the Doha deal was a "fatal mistake" because it gave "massive concession to a terrorist group" and elevated the group's status by giving them undue international legitimacy. In exchange for full U.S. withdrawal, the deal required the Taliban to cut ties with Al-Qaida, renounce violence, and negotiate a political settlement with the Afghan government. The Taliban complied with none of those terms, but Mr. Trump ordered pulling out regardless. Many months after the deal, the United Nations reported that the Taliban had not cut ties with Al-Qaida. Instead, they enjoyed a close working relationship with promises to "honor their historic ties." Last week, U.S. Treasury also issued a report stating that "Al-Qaida was gaining strength in Afghanistan under the Taliban's protection." Furthermore, Taliban violence has increased ten-fold in lethality, complexity, and scope across Afghanistan. In addition to attacks on the government, the Taliban is now assassinating and targeting journalists, civil society and women's rights advocates, TV personalities, female judges, American translators, doctors, and other civilians, as well as destroying public infrastructure. Lastly, Taliban talks with the government are dishonest. They're only engaged in talks to encourage U.S. departure. Afghan intelligence services say the Taliban are preparing for a massive "Tet Offensive-like" terror campaign this summer. Their aim: to overthrow the government and establish a jihadist Emirate and a global terror launching ground.

6. The collapse of the Gains of The Past 20 Years: Lastly, it is morally imperative that America does not abandon its allies – the Afghan people. America and the world made significant investments in Afghanistan's blood and treasure over the last 20 years. Close to a trillion dollars spent, thousands of U.S. and NATO soldiers sacrificed, and over 50,000 Afghan soldiers died fighting

to establish democracy, allow girls to enroll in schools, and empower women to participate in society. While the gains are remarkable, they are fragile, nonetheless. A premature withdrawal will certainly result in the return of a Taliban jihadist clerical regime, waste all of these sacrifices and hard-fought gains, and usher in the collapse of the current regional order that will greatly harm America's national interest.

7. Action for Next Steps: President Biden should revise the Doha deal. A new agreement should follow a five-year plan and must require the Taliban to agree to and abide by a full ceasefire for a period of 10 months. The deal must have a robust verification mechanism for compliance. During the first year of ceasefire -- the U.S., in coordination with the Afghan government and NATO allies -- should help move the peace talks inside Afghanistan. This is important because negotiators must be attached to the realities on the ground to engage in honest talks. An expensive tropical vacation spot like Doha doesn't cut it. The parties should discuss the formation of a future participatory government based on fair and free elections as per the timetable in the Afghan Constitution. That future government should include Taliban members in it, in due time, as part of a national reintegration effort. In the second year, the Taliban must go through disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process. In the third year, they should be able to participate in local parliamentary elections. By the fourth year, a fully disarmed, demobilized Taliban could participate in national elections with a formula to form a participatory government at the end of the current government term. Taliban must agree to respect women's rights, international human rights, sever ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorists, and pose no threat to other nations. Throughout this process, the U.S. should remain in Afghanistan with a strong residual force to see through this five-year plan. There is already bipartisan support

behind troops remaining in Afghanistan. Biden is also not tied to any campaign promise of troop withdrawal. The cost of the war is already significantly lower compared to what it used to be a few years ago. And Afghans are doing the fighting themselves. It is far cheaper to remain and contain threats in Afghanistan than to leave, render America vulnerable to attacks, and then be forced to re-deploy the military.

During a rally for justice in Memphis, in his final and emotionally moving speech "I have been to the mountaintop," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. narrated an inspirational biblical story – the Parable of the Good Samaritan. While traveling on a dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho, the Good Samaritan stumbles upon a man in need – beaten up and injured by robbers. While other passersby ignore the injured man due to self-concern, the Good Samaritan decides to stop and help -- out of concern for the suffering of the man in need. Drawing on this parable, Dr. King called on Americans to march for social justice and the rights of sanitation workers in Memphis, not because of self-interest, but out of concern for those deprived workers. Dr. King implored, "the question is not if I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me. The question is: If I do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them." As such, the moral question is not if America stays to help the Afghan people, what will happen to America. As described above, America has national security reasons to stay. The moral question is – if America does not stay in Afghanistan, what will happen to Afghan women and girls? America is the Afghan people's Good Samaritan. As Dr. King said, "nothing would be more tragic than to stop at this point in Memphis." Afghanistan, in its current situation of dire need, is America's second Memphis. If Dr. King were alive today, he would say, "we have got to see it through," and call on President Biden to keep a minimum deterrent footprint of hard and soft power in Afghanistan until the mission is complete.

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Biden to Ask Resignation of Trump-era U.S. Attorneys

US President Joe Biden's administration will ask resignation of nearly all attorneys appointed by former President Donald Trump as soon as Tuesday, according to a report.

Citing a Justice Department official, CNN reported that the process will be done with two exceptions.

David Weiss from Delaware will remain in place as he oversees the tax probe of Biden's son Hunter. John Durham also will continue as an attorney to investigate the origins of the Russia probe, but will not continue as Connecticut attorney, according to the official.

When Trump assumed power in 2017, he ordered the resignation of 46 attorneys appointed by former President Barack Obama "as was the case in prior transitions."

The official did not say when the resignations would take effect.



A look at the world

China, Central and Eastern European countries to boost common development with closer ties: FM spokesman

CCTVPlus-Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern Europe countries (CEEC) will further create opportunities and promote the common development for both sides, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told the press on Tuesday.

Speaking about China's expectation for China-CEEC Summit held on Tuesday via video link, Wang said the summit will instill new vitality with enhanced cooperation between the two sides. "The cooperation between China and CEEC is a trans-regional platform for cooperation based on common aspiration while focusing on common need and common development, and has created opportunities for common development of both sides," said the spokesman.



In 2012, China initiated trade and cooperation agreements with the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, and started a relationship referred to as China-Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) Cooperation.

"Over the past nine years, the cooperation mechanism between China and CEEC has been steadily improved and achieved fruitful results. Chaired by Chinese President Xi Jinping, this year's leaders' summit is at its highest level since the cooperation mechanism was set up," Wang said.

"Both sides will review and summarize the path and experience during the past nine years, and then jointly explore new ideas and initiatives, to enhance cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic revival and development for post-pandemic era. China and CEEC member states are going to chart and steer the course for future cooperation as well as blueprint of development, while injecting new vitality to the China-CEEC cooperation and also the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership," he added.

With Greece joined the initiative last year, the cross-regional cooperation platform is now a "17+1" mechanism, with 17 CEEC countries plus China, aiming to safeguard multilateralism, promote free trade, and jointly build an open global economy.

MPs Call on UK Gov't to Pressure Israel to Stop Evictions



A group of UK lawmakers on Tuesday appealed to the British government to increase pressure on Israel to stop its forced evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem.

Over 80 MPs from different parties, from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, asked the UK's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab in a letter to "make clear to its Israeli counterpart that relations cannot continue as normal in the event of such transgressions".

"As you are well aware, the forcible transfer of an occupied population is a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as is the transfer of an occupier's population into occupied territory, which includes East Jerusalem," the letter read.

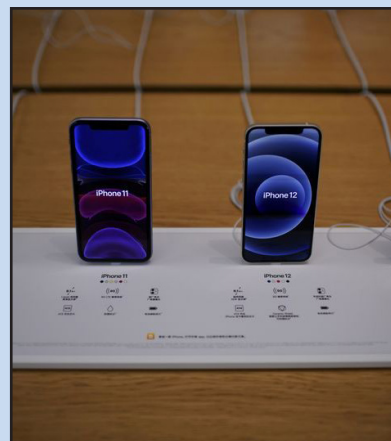
"All measures should be considered including reducing diplomatic engagement and banning trade in settlement products in full conformity with international law obligations in order to challenge the settler economy that profits from the occupation," it added. Adding that Israel's settlements are illegal, MPs said: "Such a step is not a sanction but a measure designed to ensure that the UK does everything in its power to ensure it does not assist in such serious breaches of international law."

Palestinian territories, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem, have been under Israeli occupation since 1967. The occupation is considered illegal under international law.

Apple iPhone 12 mini Sales Slow as Smaller Smartphones Lose Appeal

Apple Inc's iPhone 12 mini U.S. sales were just 5% of overall sales of its new phones during the first half of January, industry data provider Counterpoint said on Tuesday, adding to signs of muted demand for the new smaller version of its flagship device.

Smartphone users have switched to larger devices in recent years as they devour more video content on-the-go and binge on visually rich social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and Snapchat.



J.P. Morgan analyst William Yang said in a note last week that weak demand for the smaller iPhone 12 and 12 mini might lead Apple to stop production of the mini in the second quarter.

"The product mix adjustment is well expected by investors and should not be a negative surprise," Yang added. Apple was not immediately available for comment.

The company launched a smaller variant of the iPhone 12 model last year, but demand for the smaller smartphones seems to be weaker, compared to the high-end iPhone 12 Pros and the older iPhone 11s.

"This is in line with what we're seeing in the broader global market, where screens under 6.0" now account for around 10% share of all smartphones sold," Kang added. Apple shipped its iPhone 12 lineup several weeks later than usual last year, but an expanded number of models and new look tapped pent-up demand for upgrades, especially in China.

Last month, the Cupertino, California-based company reported \$65.60 billion in quarterly revenue from its iPhones business, beating a record it had set three years ago.



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