



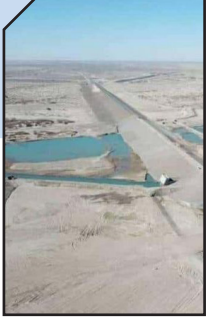
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3 Security Force Members Killed in Attack on Herat Dam

Three security force members, who were assigned to protect the Pashdan dam in Herat, were killed in an attack by armed men early Tuesday morning, an official said.

Nizamuddin Khpulwak, spokesman for National Water Affairs Regulation Authority, said the attack happened at around 3 am on Tuesday in which four more security force members were wounded.

Head of the Pashdan dam, Mohammad Arif Achakzai, told TOLONews that the Taliban attacked an outpost far from the dam.

He said the outpost has a lot of distance from the surrounding wall of the dam. Taliban so far has not commented on the incident.

The dam is located in Karokh, 25 kilometers northwest of Herat city. ... **P2**



MoFA Stresses Importance of Regional Countries Efforts for Peace in Afghanistan

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) announced appreciation for the efforts and support of neighboring countries and the region in achieving peace in Afghanistan, and emphasizes the importance of continuing these efforts and cooperation.

The MoFA in a press release acknowledged that the holding of peace talks in Afghanistan in the Russia and Turkey is a continuation of the Qatar process and is not an "alternative".

MoFA cited that the delegation of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is negotiating with the delegation of the Taliban in Qatar and these negotiations will continue in the future.

"Afghanistan appreciates the sincere efforts of the Qatari government to ensure peace in Afghanistan, especially the hosting of peace talks between the delegations of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban, and hopes that these joint efforts will yield the desired results," the press release added.

Abdullah Will Lead Delegation to Moscow Summit



A 16-member delegation of the Afghan government led by Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, will attend the Moscow meeting that will be held on Thursday, the reconciliation council confirmed.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a

statement said it appreciates efforts made by Afghanistan's neighboring countries and regional and international partners for peace and emphasizes the importance of continuing these efforts and cooperation.

"Appreciating the importance of

the Troika meeting on Afghanistan peace in Moscow and the proposed peace conference in Turkey, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers them complementary to the Afghanistan Peace Negotiations in Doha and not as a substitute to it," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry said the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is currently engaged in negotiation with the Taliban delegation in Doha and these negotiations will continue in the future.

The United States Department of State has confirmed that the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, will participate in the upcoming Moscow conference that is scheduled for the end of this week.

"Well, to answer your question on the peace process in Afghanistan as well as Special Representative Khalilzad, as of last week the Secretary said we are engaging in the region and (with) international partners to try to accelerate progress towards a political settlement, and as a part of our ongoing efforts to encourage this important peace process, Ambassador Khalilzad does plan to attend the meeting in Moscow," US State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

"This meeting will complement all other international efforts to support the Afghanistan peace process and also reflects the international ... **P3**

2 Killed in a Targeted Attack on University Bus in Baghlan

Two people were killed and four more were wounded in a targeted attack by gunmen on a bus carrying lecturers from Baghlan University on Tuesday morning, sources said.

According to the source a student and the driver were killed.

The source added that four lecturers were also wounded in the attack.

Abdul Qadir Mahan, head of Baghlan University confirmed the attack and said the lecturers had been taken to hospital.

Ahmad Javid Basharat, spokesman for Baghlan police said they ... **P2**



Amnesty International Slams Govt for Not Protecting Human Rights Defenders

Amnesty International (AI) on Tuesday blasted the Afghan government for not having delivered on their pledge to establish a functional body dedicated to protecting human rights defenders in Afghanistan.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the global rights watchdog said more than three months ago a Presidential Decree was issued on the establishment of a Joint Commission for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

However, "no practical steps have been taken to make it an effective protection mechanism, with a lack of information forthcoming on any plan or strategy to address the escalating threat faced by members of Afghan civil society", the statement read.

Citing UNAMA figures, AI pointed



out that an already "dire situation for Afghanistan's human rights community has significantly worsened over recent months", with no fewer than 11 human rights defenders and media workers killed in targeted attacks between the start of peace negotiations on 12 September 2020 and 31 January 2021.

The delay in having established

a functioning mechanism "has already cost lives and there is no sign of the violence abating," their statement read.

Meanwhile, Yamini Mishra, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Director, said: "The announcement of the Joint Commission was a vital step towards providing human rights defenders across the country ... **P3**

2 Killed in a...

have started an investigation into the attack. No group has claimed responsibility so far. This comes after a government staff bus came under attack in Kabul on Monday in an IED explosion that killed at least three women.

3 Security...

Herat governor's spokesman Jailani Farhad said the security forces killed the attackers by chasing them to a village in Pashtun Zarghon district in the province. He said five Taliban were killed in response by security forces to the attack. The dam has the capacity of 45 million cubic meters of water, generates two megawatts of power, and has the capacity to irrigate 13,000 hectares of land, officials said. The project is worth \$117 million, according to officials. This comes as at least 11 workers of the Pashdan Dam were abducted by the Taliban last month, according to Wakil Ahmad Karokhi, a provincial council member.

UN Seeks \$1.7B...

and protection needs, especially for women and children. Noudehou stated that thousands of humanitarian workers -- most of them South Sudanese -- are working tirelessly to save lives and provide humanitarian assistance to people in the areas of greatest need.

By Kirill Krivosheev

Why Russia Is Hedging Its Bets in Afghanistan

It's been a year since the United States and the Taliban reached their historic agreement on bringing peace to Afghanistan, but as expected, it has not led to any rapid results. Talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government have been taking place in the Qatari capital Doha since last September, but the two sides have still not even managed to agree on the agenda.

The more time passes, the clearer it becomes that the main point of the agreement—the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan within fourteen months of its signing—won't be achieved. The United States has reduced its contingent from 8,600 troops to 2,500, but has made it clear that it does not intend to withdraw the rest before May unless some miraculous solution is found to all the problems. The German government, which has the second largest contingent in Afghanistan, has already approved extending its mission there until 2022.

Everyone understands that the breakdown of the agreement on withdrawing troops will infuriate the Taliban and prompt a new outbreak of violence: Taliban fighters have said so openly. But the final word lies with the new U.S. president, Joe Biden, who intends to revise the deal, though to what extent is not yet known. The new administration's policy on Afghanistan should become clearer on March 27 at a conference in Istanbul that Washington has called on both the Afghan government and Taliban to attend.

According to the Associated Press, under the terms of the new U.S. peace agreement due to be signed in Turkey, the Taliban must agree to uphold civil rights and break its ties with Pakistan (believed to be the Taliban's main sponsor), while the Afghan government must accept the Taliban into its ranks as equal partners, and write a new constitution together. In other words, they must do in a couple of months what they have not been able to do over decades.

The Biden administration's motives are clear: it is not pleased to have inherited this problem and isn't sure what to do about it. Against this backdrop, the Afghan sides are starting to look around for other allies, including Russia.

Russia's relationship with Afghanistan is a complex one, burdened with fears for the situation in Central Asia, the standoff with the United States, and the trauma of the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s. Moscow doesn't see the current Afghan government as autonomous, and is trying to strike a balance between all the different forces at play in Afghanistan in order to retain its influence if one of those forces collapses.

The first side to come to Moscow for support ahead of the Istanbul summit was the Taliban at the end of January. Zamir Kabulov, the Foreign Ministry official responsible for Russia's Afghanistan policy, was already unpopular in Kabul, where he has a reputation for appearing to side with the Taliban on the international



stage.

Following the Taliban's January visit to Moscow, Kabulov gave an interview in which he said several things that outraged the Afghan government, including that the Taliban were sticking to the peace agreement while the Americans were not, and agreeing with the Taliban's complaints that Afghan government delegates were sabotaging the talks in Doha.

Relations were smoothed over during an emergency summit in Moscow between the two countries' foreign ministers. Afghanistan's foreign minister, Mohammad Haneef Atmar, made it clear that it is not acceptable for Moscow to treat Kabul and the Taliban as equal partners.

There is a blueprint for successful cooperation between Russia and the Afghan government. Kabul gladly purchased Russian coronavirus vaccines, and has invited Moscow to participate in a joint Afghan-Uzbek project to build a railway through

those two countries and Pakistan.

There may be little enthusiasm among politicians in Kabul for their U.S. ally right now—First Vice President Amrullah Saleh, for example, has said that Kabul thanks the United States for twenty years of financial and military assistance, but will not take orders from Washington. Still, for the United States, Afghanistan remains a partner and an important image project, and accordingly, Washington has an interest in its success. The same cannot be said of Russia, for which a deterioration in the situation in Afghanistan would mean a setback for its biggest geopolitical foe, and give it more ammunition to argue that the United States is failing in its role as global leader.

Despite Kabul's attempts to adhere to a foreign policy that is independent of the United States on issues such as Crimea (former president Hamid Karzai expressed support for Russia's annexation of it) and Iran (U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan ... **P3**)

By ALBERT HUNT

Afghanistan 20 years on

At a course I teach at the University of Pennsylvania on press and politics, students are assigned to write an op-ed or column. The exemplar is Harry Truman's economist: the former president — frustrated by advice of “on the one hand but then on the other” — wanted a one-handed economist. Should America finally get out of our longest war, with little end in sight — or would it just create a new terrorist safe harbor and a tragic setback for progress that has been made for women and others? There is a pretty persuasive case ... on both sides.

The Trump administration, negotiating with the Taliban, agreed to withdraw the 2,500 American soldiers still there by this May 1. It's widely agreed that the promise they got in return from the Taliban — no violence — have been abrogated from the get-go. President Biden, a dove on Afghanistan during the Obama

administration, is deciding in the next month or so whether to keep that commitment.

Secretary of State Tony Blinken is trying to get the United Nations and major countries in the region to revise Doha. This is the fourth American president to grapple with the Afghan dilemma.

The case for getting out is clear: Americans went into Afghanistan in 2001 after Osama Bin Laden used it as a launching pad for the 9-11 attack. Since then, 2,400 Americans have died; over 20,000 have been wounded, at a cost to the treasury in the trillions. For the first several years, there was progress: then as the Bush administration shifted its focus to Iraq, progress stopped. The Taliban now again controls most of the country outside of a few cities.

Corruption in Afghanistan today remains pervasive, leadership splintered. The dreams of nation building are a cruel hoax.

Moreover, as the Washington Post revealed a little more than a year ago in the government's private papers, American leaders — civilian and military — have lied to the public about the prospects of a war that they knew was unwinnable.

Shades of Vietnam.

Yet there are dire warnings from serious people against a precipitous withdrawal. To leave entirely on May 1 would be “destabilizing,” said Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Jack Reed (D-R.I.). Afghanistan can't be “the source of planning, plotting to project terrorist attacks,” warned one of the leading congressional authorities on national security. “I'm not sure we can do that without some presence there.”

That view was echoed by a congressionally appointed, bipartisan Afghanistan Study Group. They noted the Taliban violence against Afghans has actually

increased since they signed the Doha pact, killing thousands.

The human price of a Taliban takeover, probable if America leaves, would be painfully cruel. There has been progress on basic rights, especially for women. Some 3.5 million girls are in schools now, a 70-fold increase from 2001. If the fundamentalist Islamists, who ran the country before, regain power that progress will be wiped out.

The 2,500 current U.S. forces, down from 100,000 a decade ago, and supplemented by another 7,000 from allies, serve mainly in about a dozen enclaves. They protect some Afghan security forces and mount counterterrorism efforts.

When last week's New Yorker arrived, I thought maybe I'd found the equivalent of the one-handed economist: a long piece by Dexter Filkins, the great war correspondent. He paints a bleak picture of Afghan governing and the ability to secure the nation against the Taliban; the piece also captures the bravery of places like Afghan Women's Skills Development Center, which provides shelter for

battered women and job training. The heart says don't leave those struggling women. If just a few more months or a year would do the trick, it's a no-brainer. But if America stays, the Taliban will attack our forces, pressure will mount to send in reinforcements. On May 1, 2022, we'll hear the same arguments: just a little more time. Shades of Vietnam.

Nineteen years ago, I embraced the decision to go into the country that sheltered Bin Laden. My friend, Roger Altman, asked me simply: “Do you know the history of Afghanistan?”

For centuries this country, with its rugged terrain and dozens of often warring ethnic tribes, has repulsed invading forces: The British, the Russians, and now most likely the Americans.

Remember Rudyard Kipling a century and a quarter ago: “When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains, and the women come out to cut up what remains, jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains and go to your Gawd like a soldier.”

Govt to Inaugurate Nimroz's Kamal Khan Dam in 'Days'

The much-anticipated Kamal Khan Dam in the western province of Nimroz is prepared for its inauguration within the next few days, officials said on Monday.

The dam is located 95 kilometers from the city of Zaranj in the Chaharborjak district in Nimroz.

The dam built along the Helmand River in the Chaharbarak district will irrigate 174,000 hectares of land in three districts and will also supply water to the provincial center.

The dam is expected to provide nine megawatts of power, and, in the first stage, it will store 52 million cubic meters of water, according to the National Water Affairs Regulation Authority.

The dam is 16 meters high and is intended to irrigate agricultural lands while also preventing flooding in the province.



"The construction work and other activities on the dam will be completed by the end of the current year (1399) (March 21), and we will witness its inauguration on the second day of Hamal (March 22)," said the head of the water resource department of the National Water Affairs Regulation Authority, Fayiz

Rahman Azizi. The Kamal Khan Dam, with its capacity to store 52 million cubic meters of water, will have a positive impact on the economy of Nimroz and the west zone, said Abdul Zaher Shakib, acting director of the Afghanistan Science Academy. "The Kamal Khan Dam is in one

of the dry areas in the west of the country and is a big achievement for improving Afghanistan's economic growth and environmental protection," he added. MP Kamal Safi said that the dam has been faced with threats; therefore it will require the people's cooperation to protect it.

Abdullah Will Lead...

community's concerns about the progress to date," he added.

The High Council for National Reconciliation confirmed that Abdullah Abdullah, head of the council, along with a high-ranking delegation, will travel to Moscow on Wednesday to attend the conference.

The meeting comes amid new developments in the peace efforts in Afghanistan, which include the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's letter to President Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, and the US-proposed draft for Afghan peace shared with Afghan leaders.

According to the reconciliation council, the delegation includes:

Parliament Speaker Mr Rahman Rahmani, former president Hamid Karzai, ex-vice president Marshal Abdul Rashid Dostum, former vice president Mohammad Karim Khalili, Hizb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Deputy Head of Reconciliation Council Babur Farahmand, State Minister for Peace Affairs Sayed Sadat Mansoor Naderi, Chief Negotiator Masoom Stanekzai, republic negotiator Matin Bek, republic negotiator Nader, republic negotiator Habiba Sarabi, Senate Deputy Speaker Alam Izedyar, State Deputy Minister for Peace Affairs Abdullah Khinjani and Hizb-e-Islami members Abdul Sattar Khawasi and Ghairat Bahir.

Lavrov Meets...

Raad's visit came several days after Lavrov's return from a tour to Arab countries, in which he met with former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

Lebanon has been in a political crisis since a massive explosion rocked the port of Beirut in 2020. After the incident, the government resigned, and since then, the country has not been able to form a new government.

Amnesty...

with the support and security they so desperately need.

"But it's a body that currently exists in name only. In more than three months, during which we have witnessed a frenzied escalation of killings, attacks and threats against activists, the Commission has made no tangible progress or taken any meaningful action," said Mishra.

"This delay has already cost lives and there is no sign of the violence abating. The Joint Commission must urgently expedite its work and prioritize the immediate security needs of human rights defenders, investigate all cases of threats,

attacks and other forms of intimidation, and hold those responsible to account."

Amnesty International also called on the Joint Commission to ensure that, where necessary, human rights defenders are provided with adequate protection measures including relocation, relief and psychosocial support.

According to UNAMA figures, 14 human rights defenders were killed in Afghanistan in 2020. This includes Mohammad Yousuf Rasheed, CEO of Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan, who was shot dead on 23 December 2020 in morning rush-hour

traffic in Kabul along with his driver, days after the Joint Commission was established. According to its mandate, the Joint Commission has been established 'for the purpose of strengthening human rights advocacy and addressing the national and international concerns of human rights-related issues in Afghanistan'. "To achieve its goals and become worthy of its name, the Joint Commission must be provided with the necessary human and financial resources, and be fully supported by both the Afghan government and the international community," said Mishra.

Why Russia Is...

are prohibited from attacking Iranian territory), Moscow views the Afghan government as a U.S. puppet that could at any moment fall to an attack by the Taliban.

For this reason, Moscow does not intend to put all its eggs in one basket, and believes it is essential to maintain relations first and foremost not with Kabul but with unofficial local leaders, especially in the northern provinces that border with the former Soviet republics. This is why Atta Muhammad Nur, the leader of Afghanistan's Tajik community, has been an important guest at all the Moscow talks on Afghanistan. On some aspects, the goals of Russia and the United States in Afghanistan align: both countries would like to see the formation of an interim government and an end to the war, after which they can breathe a sigh of relief and move on. This is particularly true of Washington, which is

weary of the long and futile campaign it has been waging there since 2001.

In addition, both the United States and Russia have found themselves having to maneuver between the interests of Kabul and the Taliban. That could provide grounds for cooperation: it's no accident that the Americans, who were previously extremely dismissive of Russian efforts in Afghanistan, are now preparing to meet in a new format: with Russia, China, and Pakistan. It's also telling that the March 18 meeting will take place in Moscow, not Doha.

Still, Moscow and Washington's subtexts are very different. The United States may be firm with the Afghan government, but it is still its advocate. Kabul does not trust the Americans entirely, but hopes that they are only holding talks with the Taliban in order to gain influence over them and weaken them.

Russia, meanwhile, is a player whose goals are ultimately unclear, and in any case change with the situation. Moscow is prepared to undermine the authority of the central government by treating regional figures like full-fledged political authorities. Its alliance with unofficial northern leaders—ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks—is more important than with southern leaders (the Taliban), but will still come in useful. This approach should enable Russia to retain its levers of influence in Afghanistan if the country falls into chaos and the central government collapses. It does, of course, seriously complicate relations with Kabul, which is open to a constructive dialogue with Moscow, despite its dependence on Washington. But being located much closer to Afghanistan's borders than the United States, Russia cannot afford to take the risk of adopting a more one-sided strategy.

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77.4	\$	77.5
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Lavrov Meets with Delegation from Lebanon's Hezbollah

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met Monday with Mohammad Raad, the head of the Hezbollah bloc in the Lebanese parliament. Lavrov and Raad discussed the situation in Lebanon and the Middle East in general, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement following the meeting.

"Sergey Lavrov confirmed Russia's consistent line in support of the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon. He stressed the need to address pressing issues on the national agenda through a broad dialogue involving representatives of all the leading religious groups in Lebanese society exclusively in the legal field and without foreign interference," the ministry said.

The minister also stressed the urgent need to form a new government headed by Saad Hariri

that is capable of ensuring Lebanon's exit from the current crisis.

Speaking about Syria, Lavrov stressed the importance of the repatriation of Syrian refugees, including those from Lebanon, "in the interests of reliable stabilization in the region."

"Lavrov stressed Russia's unwavering commitment to achieving a comprehensive peace in the Middle East in accordance with the existing international legal framework," the ministry said.

Lavrov and Raad also spoke about Russian-Lebanese bilateral cooperation, including in fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

Apart from Lavrov, Raad also met with his deputy responsible for the Middle East and North Africa, Mikhail Bogdanov. ... **P3**



A look at the world

UN Seeks \$1.7B to Help 6.6M People in South Sudan



The UN on Tuesday officially launched the South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan for 2021, seeking 1.7 billion U.S. dollars to address the humanitarian needs of 6.6 million people in 2021. Alain Noudhou, humanitarian coordinator in South Sudan said the funds will enable the humanitarian community to reach more than 6 million people with urgent life-saving assistance and protection by the end of 2021.

"Our immediate priorities include sustaining our response in the most

food insecure areas and preparing for the upcoming rainy season, which is forecasted to lead once again to major floods," Noudhou said in a statement issued in Juba. The UN said South Sudan is expected to experience devastating flooding again in 2021 which affected almost one million people in both 2019 and 2020. The ongoing sub-national violence and localized conflicts in many parts of the country, combined with the disruptive impacts of the COVID-19 on markets, services and movements, have led to a substantial

increase in vulnerabilities. "As a result, South Sudan is facing its highest levels of food insecurity and malnutrition since independence 10 years ago. The upcoming lean season from May to July is expected to be the most severe on record," said the UN.

Noudhou said throughout these various shocks, the affected communities have continued to demonstrate a great sense of solidarity. "I call on the Government, development partners, donors and aid organizations to match their solidarity with unwavering support," he added.

The UN official said conflict, displacement, loss of livelihoods, inability to reach health care and lack of access to schools have created urgent humanitarian ... **P2**

N Korea Warns U.S. to 'Avoid Causing a Stink' if it Wants Peace

Kim Jo Yong, the powerful sister of the North Korean leader, has threatened to scrap inter-Korean co-operation as she condemned ongoing military drills between South Korea and the United States, and cautioned the US against "causing a stink" if it wants peace, state media reported on Tuesday. The statement comes a day before America's top diplomat and defence chief, who are currently in Japan, are scheduled to arrive in Seoul.

"We take this opportunity to warn the new US administration trying hard to give off powder smell in our land," Kim said in a statement carried by state news agency KCNA. "If it wants to sleep in peace for coming four years, it had better refrain from causing a stink at its first step."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin are expected to focus on foreign



and security policy during their time in northeast Asia. The timing of Kim's comments – the first direct address to the new US administration since Biden took office in January – seems designed to ensure that North Korea will be at the top of Blinken and Austin's agenda when they land in Seoul, said Ramon Pacheco Pardo, a Korea expert at King's College London.

"Until now, the discussion was focusing on The Quad, dealing with China and the North Korea policy review," he said. "Now Kim's statement will be central to discussions."

North Korea has so far rebuffed US calls for dialogue, the White House said on Monday, as the chill in relations that began under previous President Donald Trump extended into Joe Biden's presidency. Leader Kim Jong Un had three high-profile summit meetings with Trump and exchanged a series of letters but relations broke down over the North's insistence that sanctions be dropped as a prerequisite for denuclearisation.

In Washington, DC, State Department spokesman Ned Price said the Biden administration was conducting a "thorough" review of US policy towards North Korea, and that it was continuing to solicit input from Japan and South Korea.

"We've listened carefully to their ideas, including through trilateral consultation," Price said. The review is expected to conclude in a few weeks.

Volunteer announcement

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2	Middle Sila	5.925 ton	the middle	Indian		
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4	White & small sugar	3.555 ton	small	Indonesian		
5	Bean	3.555 ton	red	Turkmen		
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Email: iirokabul4u@hotmail.com **postbox:** (P-B - 3181 Ministry of Communications - Kabul Afghanistan)