

Ynet-News, Aug 31, 2021 – Tuesday

08.30.21 – Mo- - - News Placed in Aug 30 spot – Monday

Biden faced intense criticism over Tuesday deadline to leave Afghanistan

08.30.21 – Mo- - - News Placed in Aug 29 spot – Sunday

Category 4 Hurricane Ida hit New Orleans Sunday, all eight electricity lines failed

08.27.21 – Fr- - - News Placed in Aug 27 spot – Friday

U.S. braces for more ISIS attacks after 169 killed in Kabul airport carnage

08.30.21

Biden faced intense criticism over Tuesday deadline to leave Afghanistan

08.30.21

Last U.S. forces leave Afghanistan after nearly 20 years

Central Command chief confirms the last troops sent to evacuate Americans and Afghans at risk following takeover of Taliban - two decades after being removed from power by U.S. - flew out of Kabul

Reuters| Published: 08.30.21, 23:51

The United States has completed the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan, the U.S. military said on Monday, nearly twenty years after it invaded the country following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on America.

Marine General Frank McKenzie, the head of the U.S. Central Command, made the announcement at a Pentagon news briefing after the last troops sent to evacuate Americans and Afghans at risk following the Taliban's return to power flew out of the capital Kabul.

More than 122,000 people have been airlifted out of Kabul since Aug. 14, the day before the Taliban regained control of the country two decades after being removed from power by the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

The United States and its Western allies scrambled to save citizens of their own countries as well as translators, local embassy staff, civil rights activists, journalists and other Afghans vulnerable to reprisals.

The evacuations became even more perilous when a suicide bomb attack claimed by Islamic State - enemy of both the West and the Taliban - killed 13 U.S. service members and scores of Afghans waiting by the airport gates on Thursday.

The operation **came to an end** before the **Tuesday deadline set by President Joe Biden**, who inherited a troop withdrawal deal made with the Taliban by his predecessor Donald Trump and decided earlier this year to complete the pull-out.

Biden, who **faced intense criticism at home and abroad over his decisions**, promised after the bloody Kabul airport attack to hunt down the people responsible.

08.30.21

Category 4 Hurricane Ida hit New Orleans Sunday, all eight electricity lines failed

08.30.21

Hurricane Ida lashes Louisiana, knocks out New Orleans power

President Biden declares **emergency**, orders immediate **federal aid to the area**; 60-year-old man killed after tree falls on him near Baton Rouge; **150-mph winds** make storm 5th strongest hurricane to ever hit U.S. mainland

Reuters| Published: **08.30.21**, 08:21

Hurricane Ida plowed into **Louisiana** from the Gulf of Mexico as a fierce **Category 4** storm on **Sunday**, lashing the coast with **150 mile-per-hour winds, torrential downpours** and pounding surf that submerged much of the shoreline under several feet of water.

Power was knocked **out** Sunday night **to the entire New Orleans metropolitan area** with the **failure of all eight transmission lines that deliver electricity** to Louisiana's largest city, the utility company Entergy Louisiana reported.

One **transmission tower collapsed into the Mississippi River**, according to the Jefferson Parish Emergency Management Department.

U.S. President Joe Biden declared a major disaster in Louisiana, ordering federal assistance to bolster recovery efforts in more than **two-dozen** storm-stricken **parishes**.

Ida slammed ashore **around noon near Port Fourchon, Louisiana**, a **hub of the Gulf's offshore energy industry**, blasting the coast with hurricane-force winds extending 50 miles (80 km) out from the eye of the storm. Landfall came **16 years to the day after Hurricane Katrina**, one of the most catastrophic on record, struck the Gulf Coast. Sunday night, the sheriff's office in Ascension Parish reported the first known U.S. fatality from the storm - a 60-year-old man killed by a tree falling on his home near Baton Rouge, the state capital.

Flash flooding was reported by the National Hurricane Center across southeastern Louisiana. Nearly all offshore Gulf oil production was suspended, and major ports along the Louisiana and Mississippi coasts were closed to shipping.

Residents of the most vulnerable coastal areas were ordered to evacuate days in advance of Ida. Those riding out the storm in their homes in New Orleans, less than 100 miles inland to the north, braced for the toughest test yet of major upgrades to a levee system constructed following devastating floods in 2005 from Katrina.

"I almost found myself in a panic attack when news announced this was the anniversary of Katrina," Janet Rucker, a lifelong New Orleans resident and recently retired sales manager who took shelter in a downtown hotel with her dog, Deuce. "This is just not good for our nerves and our psyche."

The storm's approach forced the suspension of emergency medical services in New Orleans and elsewhere across a state already reeling from a fourth wave of COVID-19 infections that has strained Louisiana's healthcare system.

For an estimated 2,450 COVID-19 patients hospitalized statewide, many in intensive care units, evacuation was not an option.

A loss of generator power at the Thibodaux Regional Health System hospital in Lafourche Parish, southwest of New Orleans, forced medical workers to manually assist respirator patients with breathing while they were moved to another floor, the state Health Department confirmed to Reuters.

Farren Clark, a Nicholls State University professor who studied Katrina's impact and was riding out the storm at his mother's home in Thibodaux, called the arrival of Ida "nerve-racking."

"I can hear the howl of the storm getting stronger," he told Reuters by phone. "Having done research on Katrina, it is a little bit triggering."

Michael Lewis, 45, restaurant owner in nearby Houma, said he could see shingles blown off his roof and a downed fence through a window of his home but was unable to check the full extent of damage as the storm raged.

"It's way too dangerous to go outside right now," he said in a phone interview.

Officials of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said they expected the city's newly reinforced levees to hold, though they said they said the flood walls could be overtopped in some places.

"This is **one of the strongest storms** to make landfall here **in modern times**," Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards said at a news briefing.

Hundreds of miles of new levees were built around New Orleans after flooding from Katrina inundated much of the low-lying city, especially historically Black neighborhoods. That monster storm claimed more than 1,800 lives.

Edwards voiced confidence in the **\$14.5 billion in levee improvements since then**, saying they were "built for this moment."

Widespread outages

Power outages were widespread in the first hours of the storm, with more than 1 million Louisiana homes and businesses losing electricity by late Sunday night, according to the tracking site Poweroutage.US.

Just three days after emerging as a tropical storm in the Caribbean Sea, **Ida** had **intensified into a Category 4 hurricane** and swept ashore with top sustained winds of **150 miles per hour** (240 km per hour), the National Hurricane Center (NHC) reported.

As **Ida** pushed inland past to New Orleans over the next **10 hours**, its maximum sustained winds **diminished to 105 mph**, ranking it as a Category 1 storm on the five-step Saffir-Simpson hurricane wind scale, according to the NHC.

Palm trees trembled as rain blasted in sideways through New Orleans on Sunday, where retiree Robert Ruffin, 68, had evacuated with his family to a downtown hotel. "I thought it was safer," he said. "It's double-trouble this time because of COVID."

Inundation from Ida's storm surge - high surf driven by the hurricane's winds - was reported to be exceeding predicted levels of 6 feet (1.8 m) along parts of the coast. Videos posted on social media showed storm surge flooding had transformed sections of Highway 90 along the Louisiana and Mississippi coast into a choppy river. The NHC also warned of potentially catastrophic wind damage and up to 2 feet (61 cm) of rainfall in some areas.

"We're as prepared as we can be, but we're **worried about those levees**," said Kirk Lepine, president of Plaquemines Parish, and one of the most vulnerable areas along Gulf Coast. The parish later issued an alert on Facebook urging residents of one area to seek higher ground after reports of an overtopped levee.

Offshore energy operations in the region were at a virtual standstill. The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) said **nearly 300 offshore oil and gas platforms were evacuated**, cutting Gulf-based petroleum and natural gas production by 96% and 94%, respectively.

08.27.21

U.S. braces for more ISIS attacks after 169 killed in Kabul airport carnage

08.27.21

U.S. braces for more ISIS attacks after 169 killed in Kabul airport carnage

Central Command chief says U.S. commanders were on alert for more attacks after two blasts killed dozens, including 13 American service members; Biden tells ISIS that U.S. will 'hunt you down and make you pay'

Reuters| Published: **08.27.21**, 09:46

U.S. forces helping to evacuate Afghans desperate to flee Taliban rule braced for more attacks on Friday after an Islamic State suicide bomber killed 169 people, including 13 U.S. soldiers outside the gates of Kabul airport.

Two blasts and gunfire rocked the area outside the airport on Thursday evening, witnesses said. Video shot by Afghan journalists showed dozens of bodies strewn around a canal on the edge of the airport.

A health official and a Taliban official said the toll of Afghans killed had risen to 169, including 28 Taliban members, although a Taliban spokesman later denied that any of their fighters guarding the airport perimeter had been killed.

The U.S. military said 13 of its service members were killed.

Islamic State (ISIS), an enemy of the Taliban as well as the West, said one of its suicide bombers targeted "translators and collaborators with the American army". U.S. officials vowed retribution.

General Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, said U.S. commanders were on alert for more attacks by Islamic State, including possibly rockets or car-bombs targeting the airport.

"We're doing everything we can to be prepared," he said, adding that some intelligence was being shared with the Taliban and that he believed "some attacks have been thwarted by them."

U.S. forces are racing to complete their withdrawal from Afghanistan by an Aug. 31 deadline set by President Joe Biden, who says the United States had long ago achieved its original rationale for invading the country in 2001: to root out al Qaeda militants and prevent a repeat of the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

Biden said he had ordered the Pentagon to plan how to strike ISIS-K, the Islamic State affiliate that claimed responsibility.

"We will not forgive. We will not forget. We will hunt you down and make you pay," Biden said during televised comments from the White House.

Video taken after the attack showed corpses in a waste water canal by the airport fence, some being fished out and laid in heaps while wailing civilians searched for loved ones.

"Men, women and children were screaming. I saw many injured people - men, women and children - being loaded into private vehicles and taken toward the hospitals," he said.

CHAOTIC EVACUATION

A U.S. Central Command spokesperson said 18 soldiers wounded in the attack were "in the process of being aeromedically evacuated from Afghanistan on specially equipped C-17s with embarked surgical units".

A Taliban official lamented the number of his members killed, saying they had lost more men than the Americans, but Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid later said no Taliban were killed in the twin blasts.

"That part of the airport is under the direct control of U.S. forces so we weren't there," he said.

A NATO country diplomat in Kabul said all foreign forces were aiming to evacuate their citizens and embassy employees by Aug. 30.

The Taliban would tighten security around the airport, said the diplomat who declined to be identified.

"Security is their responsibility," the diplomat said, adding that the Taliban should investigate the Islamic State network.

Western countries fear that the Taliban, who once sheltered Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda, will allow Afghanistan to turn again into a haven for militants. The Taliban say they will not let the country be used by terrorists.

ISIS-K was initially confined to areas on the border with Pakistan but has established a second front in the north of the country. The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point says ISIS-K includes Pakistanis from other militant groups and Uzbek extremists in addition to Afghans.

100,000 TAKEN OUT IN AIRLIFT

The United States would press on with evacuations despite the threat of further attacks, McKenzie said, noting that there were still about about 1,000 U.S. citizens in Afghanistan.

The pace of evacuation flights had accelerated on Friday and American passport holders had been allowed to enter the airport compound, said a Western security official stationed inside the airport.

In the past 12 days, Western countries have evacuated nearly 100,000 people. But they acknowledge that thousands will be left behind when the last U.S. troops leave at the end of the month.

Several Western countries said the mass airlift of civilians was coming to an end and announced their last troops had left.

The American casualties in Thursday's attack were believed to be the most U.S. troops killed in Afghanistan in a single incident since 30 personnel died when a helicopter was shot down in 2011.

The U.S. deaths were the first in action in Afghanistan in 18 months, a fact likely to be cited by critics who accuse Biden of recklessly abandoning a stable and hard-won status quo by ordering an abrupt pullout.