

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Fall of Afghanistan: Chaos and Death at Kabul Airport Amid Desperate Rush of Thousands to Leave Country

US / **Published On August 16, 2021 08:14 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **August 16, 2021**



Afghanistan collapsed on Sunday after the Taliban entered Kabul, seizing control of the entire country. By. REUTERS VIA WSJ

With Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan now under the control of the Taliban, throngs of people on Monday converged on Kabul's international airport in hopes of getting a flight out of the country. In the chaos, three people were shot dead, with witnesses reporting seeing the bodies lying on the ground immediately outside the terminal building, according to multiple U.S. media reports, including the Wall Street Journal.

The shootings and mad dash to leave the country come as the Taliban's swift and stunning takeover of Afghanistan, which occurred in weeks, has left the world in shock and leaders concerned about the outcome.

And it has resulted in sharp criticism of President Joe Biden's foreign policy, as Mr. Biden moved ahead with a planned pullout from the country — against the advice of his generals and other top advisors — aiming for the symbolic date of 9/11/21.

The situation in Kabul has shocking similarities to Vietnam on April 30, 1975, when Saigon fell to the communist North Vietnamese Army. During that time, TV and the next day's newspapers showed large groups of American soldiers and civilians on the roof of the U.S. embassy waiting to be rescued by their country's military helicopters.

At the airport in Kabul, the similarities are inescapable. In the lead-up to the fall of Kabul, the U.S. scrambled to get Americans and Afghans who supported the country during the 20-year war — America's longest — out, but time ran out. The backup is what is currently unfolding: Mr. Biden has sent 6,000 more troops to the Kabul airport to manage the evacuation and bolster the U.S.'s presence, including at the civilian terminals where thousands of desperate Afghans continued to flock as the Taliban searched Kabul for those who collaborated with America.

According to WSJ, citing a Western military official, U.S. Marines fired warning shots late on Sunday when hundreds of Afghans who breached the perimeter rushed to board an idling C-17 transport aircraft.

People trapped at the airport also said U.S. troops repeatedly shot in the air to disperse the crowds during the nighttime. WSJ reported that hundreds of Afghan civilians were seen close to the runway and around parked planes on Monday morning, with some hanging from boarding ramps as they scrambled to get into the aircraft.

After having conquered the rest of Afghanistan, the Taliban entered Kabul Sunday and their arrival signaled the fall of country. Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country and security forces abandoned their posts.

As of Monday morning, the only location in Afghanistan still flying the country's flag was the airport, according to WSJ, though Taliban forces were deployed a short distance away.

With all civilian flights canceled and throngs of people at the airport — many of whom had no passports or even bookings — their only hope is to catch a flight out of the country on a foreign-chartered plane or those organized by private organizations and companies.

Correction: August 16, 2021 at 9:27 a.m.

A previous version of this story, because of a text error, included the wrong name for the Afghan president. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.

© Viconsortium 2026