

Headlines:

- **Exclusive: Before Afghan Collapse, Biden Pressed Ghani to Change Perception**
- **Taliban Parade Captured US Military Equipment in Kandahar**
- **Afghanistan: Dominic Raab Visits Pakistan in Push to Help Fleeing Afghans**

Details:

Exclusive: Before Afghan Collapse, Biden Pressed Ghani to Change Perception

In the last call between U.S. President Joe Biden and his Afghanistan counterpart before the Taliban seized control of the country, the leaders discussed military aid, political strategy and messaging tactics, but neither Biden nor Ashraf Ghani appeared aware of or prepared for the immediate danger of the entire country falling to insurgents, a transcript reviewed by Reuters shows. The men spoke for roughly 14 minutes on July 23. On August 15, Ghani fled the presidential palace, and the Taliban entered Kabul. Since then, tens of thousands of desperate Afghans have fled and 13 U.S. troops and scores of Afghan civilians were killed in a suicide bombing at the Kabul airport during the frenetic U.S. military evacuation. Reuters reviewed a transcript of the presidential phone call and has listened to the audio to authenticate the conversation. The materials were provided on condition of anonymity by a source who was not authorized to distribute it. In the call, Biden offered aid if Ghani could publicly project he had a plan to control the spiraling situation in Afghanistan. "We will continue to provide close air support, if we know what the plan is," Biden said. Days before the call, the U.S. carried out air strikes to support Afghan security forces, a move the Taliban said was in violation of the Doha peace agreement. The U.S. president also advised Ghani to get buy-in from powerful Afghans for a military strategy going forward, and then to put a "warrior" in charge of the effort, a reference to Defense Minister General Bismillah Khan Mohammadi. Biden lauded the Afghan armed forces, which were trained and funded by the U.S. government. "You clearly have the best military," he told Ghani. "You have 300,000 well-armed forces versus 70-80,000 and they're clearly capable of fighting well." Days later, the Afghan military started folding across provincial capitals in the country with little fight against the Taliban. In much of the call, Biden focused on what he called the Afghan government's "perception" problem. "I need not tell you the perception around the world and in parts of Afghanistan, I believe, is that things are not going well in terms of the fight against the Taliban," Biden said. "And there is a need, whether it is true or not, there is a need to project a different picture." Biden told Ghani that if Afghanistan's prominent political figures were to give a press conference together, backing a new military strategy, "that will change perception, and that will change an awful lot I think." The American leader's words indicated he didn't anticipate the massive insurrection and collapse to come 23 days later. "We are going to continue to fight hard, diplomatically, politically, economically, to make sure your government not only survives, but is sustained and grows," said Biden. [Source: Reuters]

The need to present an alternative picture was overwhelmed by America's swift withdrawal and the rapid collapse of the Afghan army. For the past several years, successive US administration were concealing to true extent of America's failure in Afghanistan, and the withdrawal last month of the crusader forces revealed to the world America's failure.

Taliban Parade Captured US Military Equipment in Kandahar

Taliban fighters have stood aboard captured Humvees as they prepared for a parade of plundered US military hardware in their southern Afghan heartland. A long line of green vehicles sat in single file on Wednesday on a highway outside Afghanistan's second-biggest city,

Kandahar, many with white-and-black Taliban flags attached to aerals, according to an AFP journalist. Fighters manned the controls of the multi-purpose trucks – used by US, Nato and Afghan forces during Afghanistan’s 20 years of war – while others clambered over the vehicles at Ayno Maina, a town on the outskirts of the city. Pick-up trucks laden with supporters rolled past the convoy of military vehicles, some armed with heavy weapons and machine guns. At least one Black Hawk helicopter has been seen flying over Kandahar in recent days, suggesting someone from the former Afghan army was at the controls as the Taliban lack qualified pilots. Kandahar is the ethnic Pashtun heartland of the Taliban where the hardline group was founded and from where it rose to power in 1996. By 2001, when US-led forces invaded, the Taliban had seized control of most of the country. At Kandahar cricket ground, white-bearded Taliban leaders waited in the shade in the players’ dugout, reclining on armchairs behind wooden coffee tables as they waited for the parade to start. [Source: The Guardian].

After America’s humiliating exit from Afghanistan, the Taliban captured so much American military equipment that some observers remarked that the group is now better equipped than several governments. Prior to America’s withdrawal the Taliban did not have an air force. Today they have 48 aircraft including US-supplied Black Hawks and A-29 attack planes. This is more aircraft than a third of NATO member states, including: Albania, Bosnia, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Slovenia.

Afghanistan: Dominic Raab Visits Pakistan in Push to Help Fleeing Afghans

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will visit Pakistan later as part of efforts to secure safe passage for Britons and others trying to leave Afghanistan. Mr Raab will meet his Pakistani counterpart and other senior leaders on the latest leg of his regional tour. It comes as the UK announced £30m in aid to Afghanistan's neighbours. The funding will help provide shelter and sanitation for the tens of thousands of refugees expected to flee the Taliban regime. In his first visit to Pakistan as foreign secretary, which is due to last two days, Mr Raab will meet the country's foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, as well as other senior civilian and military figures. They are expected to discuss how to encourage the Taliban to allow safe passage for refugees and prevent Afghanistan becoming a hub for terrorist groups. But Mr Raab has been criticised by MPs for not focusing more on the country. This week, he has been visiting the region to build a coalition with neighbouring countries to "exert the maximum moderating influence" on the Taliban. After talks with leaders in Qatar on Thursday, the foreign secretary said evacuations may be able to resume from Kabul airport "in the near future". The Afghan capital's airport is out of action following the withdrawal of US troops last week. And on Thursday evening he said he had spoken to Tajikistan foreign minister Sirojiddin Muhridin about "how our countries can help maintain stability in the region, and tackle the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan". Of the £30m in aid offered to neighbouring countries, Mr Raab said £10m would be made available immediately to humanitarian organisations in order to despatch supplies to Afghanistan's borders. Countries predicted to experience a significant increase in refugees will also receive £20m to help with processing new arrivals and to provide essential services and supplies. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has estimated a worst-case scenario of more than 500,000 refugees fleeing Afghanistan to Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in the coming months. Mr Raab said: "It is vital that we help those fleeing Afghanistan and do not allow the crisis there to undermine regional stability." [Source: The BBC]

It is clear that the UK is relying on Afghanistan neighbours to help contain the Taliban and avoid another devastating blow. However, if Afghanistan neighbours were to join forces with the Taliban they could easily end once and for all Western interference in Muslims lands.