

MSNBC's *The ReidOut*

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7:13:03 p.m. [TEASE]

8 seconds

JOY REID: Plus, the U.S. military ramps up evacuation from Afghanistan with the deadline exactly one week away. Are we on track to get everyone out?

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7:27:13 p.m. [TEASE]

18 seconds

REID: And still ahead: more than 22,000 evacuations in the last 24 hours, as the U.S. races to get U.S. citizens and African allies out of Afghanistan ahead of the August 31 deadline, which President Biden now says he will be sticking to, no matter what. We will bring you the latest next. Stay with us.

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7:31:46 p.m.

10 minutes and 19 seconds

[BIDEN CLIP]

REID: Late this afternoon, President Biden announced he will not be extending the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan beyond the August 31 deadline. That leaves one week to complete the evacuation of U.S. citizens and allies. After a rough start, the U.S. military has ramped up its efforts, with about 71,000 people evacuated in the last 10 days. Almost 22,000 were flown out of Afghanistan just yesterday, including more than 4,000 Americans and their family members. It also includes three babies who were delivered aboard those flights. And given that we were told that the target number of people to be evacuated was about 80,000, that sure sounds like they are on target. Joining me now from Kabul is Jane Ferguson, special correspondent for the *PBS NewsHour*. And, Jane, thank you very much. Really appreciate you being here. So, let's talk about this. It seems — the number we were given at the outset was that there were about 80,000 people that needed to come out. They're — they're on track, it seems, to make it by the one-week deadline. So, where is the pressure coming from to keep troops in longer? Is this — is this more — I don't know. Where is the pressure coming from to keep troops there beyond August 31?

JANE FERGUSON: Well, what we know, Joy, is that there are still Americans in Afghanistan, that the Biden administration haven't said how many are still to come out. Don't forget they're not necessarily in Kabul. They could be anywhere across the country. The Taliban takeover of the capital was so rapid, very few people predicted it. But, beyond that, you have to remember that a lot of those numbers were put together before the Biden administration announced an unconditional withdrawal from Afghanistan. So, if you're looking at, you know, the Special

Immigrant Visa applicants, so those interpreters and their families that worked alongside the U.S. military, they're going to be many who either hadn't applied yet or who were stuck in the system and who were not able to get through. It is famously difficult to get a Special Immigrant Visa. It can take years and years and many attempts actually of rejections. And so the — the numbers that were initially put forward didn't necessarily reflect the number of people who would wish to apply for the visas that they, in essence — that they were entitled to. And, also, we have also heard from the President since then that they were expanding eligibility for the refugee program, to include people like who had worked with the United States, like with the USAID or with — with the U.S. media. And so there were more people who were entitled to at least attempt to get to the United States. How they were going to do that, in what kind of time frame, is what has been so chaotic. People are now being told they have one week to make it and if you don't have the visa in your hand, you're very unlikely to get in the gate. But that doesn't mean you're not going to go and try and that's why we have seen chaotic scenes here.

REID: Well, the — is — the United States did not do this invasion and occupation of Afghanistan alone. This was an entire NATO operation. So it's presumed that it is all on the United States to do all the evacuations. Are any other countries, any of our NATO allies attempting to also get people out? Or is this an all-U.S.-military all-by-itself operation?

FERGUSON: The operations here very much so represent the way this war was fought. There are militaries from all over the world here. It's surreal when you're walking out on the street outside the airport here. You've got British soldiers who are heavily involved in — in pulling people out of the crowds, in sorting through, in getting them over to the air base. I've seen Canadian troops, Polish troops, Italian troops. I mean, you name it, if someone fought in Afghanistan, there is a presence here, and they are trying to get people out. It's actually America's allies here there, the other militaries, that have largely been pushing President Biden to try to extend that deadline, to at least extend it a little bit, so they can get their people and their own nationals, as well as their own interpreters and allies on the battlefield, so it's — it's very much so a joint project. But, of course, those who are here from allied forces rely on the U.S. military. This would not be possible without the U.S. Air Force and the ability to basically airlift this amount of people. No one else has that kind of capability, so it's ultimately up to the White House as to how long everything's — everyone stays here. The other nations will have to leave before the United States because they are so dependent on the U.S. Air Force.

REID: Hmm. Jane Ferguson, thank you very much. Really appreciate it. With me now, Malcolm Nance, MSNBC counterterrorism and intelligence analyst. I don't know if you were able to hear what Jane said, because it sounds to me as if the burden-sharing isn't exactly equal. There are all of these NATO countries that are essentially saying, "it's all up to you, the United States." And it sounds to me like the military are doing quite a thorough job. I mean, they've gotten a lot of people out. You wouldn't know it from sometimes listening to the coverage, but they have gotten a lot of people out. What do you make of the fact that this isn't a shared responsibility, so much as it's being made only America's responsibility?

MALCOLM NANCE: Well, it's American responsibility because we maintain the air bridge, we maintain the links from Doha, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and we control the airport with

our combat controllers. That's the Air Force teams that actually run the airport properly. So, we have more lift capacity than just about everyone. When we brought that air bridge to descend down into the Karzai Airport, it became our responsibility. And it's better that it's under our control, because our NATO allies know how to integrate with us. Charter jets can fly in there. We have aircraft from everywhere in the world flying in there, particularly, you know, from the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Saudi Arabia. It's not just U.S. forces. And NATO forces are evacuating their own citizens. But we maintain the perimeter and we run this entire air bridge and let me say one other thing here, Joy. This is going to be, if it stays on track — and ISIS Khorasan could screw this up at any minute — one of the — the second largest noncombatant evacuation in American history. This is not Dunkirk. They are not under attack and being surrounded. This is a semi-permissive noncombatant evacuation operation and we are taking out just about anybody who is there who can prove that they are U.S.-aligned or U.S. citizen. But we have to maintain something. There are 38 million Afghans. We cannot take every one of them.

REID: Yeah.

NANCE: And there's going to have to be a tiered system to get them out.

REID: Let me — let's get into this a little bit more, because so you — right. You had Boris Johnson, you know, talking about the number one condition we're setting for the G-7 is they've got to guarantee safe passage for those who want to come out. So, everyone agrees that people need to come out. There was this great video, this clip of these young girls, these Afghan girls who were on, like, a computer, a tech team, right? And they were all — they were sort of all together, and they all got on a plane, they all got to Qatar, they all got out. It was actually really heartwarming to see them go. It seems that the Taliban are belatedly realizing that their fourth century politics may not work for their future as a country, because they're now saying, whoa, hold on a second, the United States. They don't want you — they don't want us encouraging their doctors and lawyers and their engineers and those who are educated that we need them. They put out — this is their Taliban spokesperson, saying: "This country needs our doctors, engineers, and those who are educated. We need those talents." Really? Cause some of them are women. So, I'm wondering what kind of leverage there might be available to NATO countries, to the United States after the 31st. The World Bank still has to deal with the Taliban and whatever government is there financially. Their money is not necessarily available to them right now. They're still wanting to talk, because they don't want to have a complete brain drain of that country. So, in your view, is the 31st the end of any conversation that international forces could have with the Taliban to make sure that they — that people who want out can leave?

NANCE: Well, certainly, it's not going to be a cutoff date where everything just ends. The Taliban put that hard-line position up because that's how you negotiate over there and by sending our CIA director, who is, I understand, 30 years a diplomat, was the right person to go there. So by bringing the Taliban to the table, letting them know that there are alternatives that — and, you know, there's leverage that we have, an enormous quantity of money —

REID: Yep.

NANCE: — that actually belongs to the government of Afghanistan, whoever that is.

REID: Right.

NANCE: So, you know, they have to decide one of two things very quickly. I think it's already forming up because the leadership of the Taliban are my age, right? They are nearing late 50s, early 60 years old and they've been fighting since they were children. Are they going to lead a nation state or just a guerrilla base camp? And I think that that last time when — when we had this — when — you know, when the warlords took over in the 1980s and they thought them and beat them, they just became a guerrilla base camp that was — had the, you know, Islamic emirate of Afghanistan flag and that was about it. They had no recognition from anyone other than a couple of Gulf States. This time, they have to run a nation state and they want to be players in that region and they're going to have to make those concessions. If they think they're going to cut us off on the 31st and we're going to happily fly off and abandon American citizens or even some of those allies, they've got another thing coming to them. We have capacity to — to get everyone out that we want. I think we will. I think we'll beat 100,000 by the end of next week, and I — I look forward to hearing those naysayers tell us that this was the worst military disaster in history.

REID: Yeah, well, I think the — the narrative will be, “well, you only got 100,000 out. That's a failure.” I mean, I don't know that there's anything that Biden could do other than promise to leave troops in there for another 20 years in order to satisfy some folks. I don't know. We'll see what happens. Malcolm Nance, thank you very much. Appreciate you.