

U.S. TO WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

A file photo of U.S. marines as they clear improvised explosive devices from a main route in Trikh Nawar .AFPPATRICK BAZ

The U.S. will begin its drawdown of troops in Afghanistan before May 1 and complete the process before September 11, according to a senior U.S. administration official. There are between 2,500 and 3,500 U.S. troops in Afghanistan at present.

“We will begin an orderly draw-down of the remaining forces before May 1st and plan to have all U.S. troops out of the country before the 20th anniversary of 9/11,” the official told reporters on a briefing call on Tuesday. The process could be completed “well in advance” of the September deadline, the official said.

U.S. President Joe Biden, who had earlier said the May 1 deadline set by the Trump administration was unrealistic, will formally announce the withdrawal on Wednesday.

The U.S. and its NATO allies had signed a deal with the Taliban in February last year to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan if the Taliban met certain preconditions, including a cessation of violence (the Taliban has repeatedly attacked civilians and Afghan security forces since) and not turning the country into a haven for terrorist groups, particularly al-Qaeda.

On Tuesday, the administration official warned that there would be consequences for the Taliban if it attacked U.S. or allied forces during the drawdown.

“We have communicated to the Taliban in no uncertain terms that if they do conduct attacks against U.S. or allied forces as we carry out this draw-down... that we will hit back hard and that we will hold them accountable for that,” the official said.

The U.S. considers the re-emergence of al-Qaeda in the region after the draw-down of troops a “genuine threat” according to the official, who said the threat will be dealt with “directly” and by holding the Taliban accountable.

U.S. to focus on talks

Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts to arrive at an intra-Afghan settlement are under way. Istanbul will host talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government between April 24 and May 4, joined by Qatar and the United Nations. The U.S. , via Secretary of State Antony Blinken, had proposed a peace plan that included an interim government — a plan that Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has resisted, backing elections instead.

India has said it would back a negotiated peace settlement via a regional process convened by the UN.

The U.S. would continue its push for a diplomatic solution, the official confirmed on Tuesday, saying the administration had “long known” that there was no “military solution” to Afghanistan’s problems.

“... We will focus our efforts on supporting the ongoing peace process. And that means putting

the full weight of our government behind diplomatic efforts to reach a peace agreement between the Taliban and the Afghan government,” the official said.

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com