



Kabul
14 / 0



Herat
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Nangarhar
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Balkh
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Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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10 afs



Dr. Abdullah Calls for Acceleration of Peace Process, Establishing Ceasefire

Dr. Abdullah Abdulla, the Chairman of High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR) says contacts between the Taliban and Islamic Republic Peace Negotiations Teams have increased in recent days.

Speaking at a welcoming ceremony for Marshal Abdul Rashid Dostum in Kabul on Saturday, Mr Abdullah said: "The negotiating parties have been in contacts in recent days; but the expectations of the Afghan people have not yet been met."

According to Abdullah, the targeted assassinations, violence and war are still going on and are taking victims from the Afghan people.

Mr. Abdullah stressed the need to establish a ceasefire as soon as possible and the acceleration of peace talks.

The second round of peace talks began in Qatar more than a month and ... **P3**



Pakistan Urges US to 'Quickly' Complete Review of Peace Accord with Taliban

A senior Pakistan diplomat on Friday stressed the need for the United States to demonstrate urgency in concluding its reassessment of a February 2020 peace pact with Afghanistan's Taliban to enable the ensuing reconciliation talks between Afghans to move forward.

Pakistan Ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan advised U.S. President Joe Biden's administration not to alter mutually agreed upon troop withdrawal timelines without consulting the Afghan insurgent group.

"We know the institutional review processes take time in the United States, but we hope that in the interest of taking this process toward its logical conclusion the review will be completed soon," Khan said while delivering a public talk at the Islamabad Policy Research Institute think tank.

"The U.S.-Taliban agreement has mutual obligations for the parties and ... whatever U.S. conclusions come out of this review they have to be ... **P3**

Afghans Want Permanent, Dignified Peace: Ghani



President Ashraf Ghani on Saturday said the international community has kept Afghans away from their fundamental right of peace over the last four decades, reiterating that the people of Afghanistan want permanent and dignified peace. Addressing a ceremony on Armed Forces Day, Ghani said Afghan security forces have played a prominent role in fighting

international terrorism and that they can protect the values the country has achieved over the last 20 years.

Referring to his recent address to the UN Security Council, President Ghani said: "My main sentence was that for the last 40 years, the international community has kept a massive nation away from their fundamental right which is peace

and this is unacceptable."

"We want peace and we want dignified peace and a peace that is ensured by the power of our security and defense forces and with the will of the people. This peace will come," he said.

Ghani said the violence must end and that there should be no more bloodshed and no one should remain deprived of education

anymore.

He added that Afghans will decide on the next president and the next government.

"The people of Afghanistan have elected their government and president and they will elect the next president of Afghanistan," Ghani reiterated. "It is the right of the nation and the security and defense forces will prove that change will be legal and based on the nation's will; otherwise, the tenure of the Republic is clear."

He said that the Afghan security and defense forces are conducting over 90% of counterterrorism operations. "Today's (yesterday) Afghanistan is not the one it was in the past, the one that was protected by others. Today, you are safeguarding it. We are very close to self-reliance," he said.

The Armed Forces Day was celebrated in various ceremonies countrywide.

Addressing the same event, Deputy Defense Minister Shah Mahmoud Miakhil said the Afghan government and the Afghan forces made a big sacrifice by agreeing to release the Taliban prisoners.

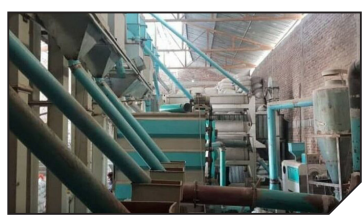
Two New Factories Open in Laghman & Nangarhar

An iodized salt factory and a plastic manufacturing factory have started operations in Nangarhar and Laghman provinces, respectively.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the salt factory in Laghman province is built at a cost of USD 60,000. The factory has the capacity to produce one ton of salt in a day.

The statement adds that a plastic goods factory in Nangarhar province started operating this week at a cost of USD 50,000.

The factory produces all kinds of plastic objects from raw materials obtained from inside the country.



Russia FM Calls on Taliban to Reduce Violence

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in a press conference with the Afghan Foreign Minister Haneef Atmar in Moscow on Friday said the Taliban should enter meaningful talks and should reduce violence. "Our main message to the Taliban is to resume meaningful dialogue as soon as possible, avoid further escalation of violence to reach to a conclusion and respect the decisions of the UN Security Council," Lavrov said.

He stated that the situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating and the violence needs to be stopped. Lavrov noted that Moscow was in contact with other countries involved in Afghanistan.

Russian Foreign Minister cited that Moscow is ready to cooperate with the Islamic Republic of Iran, China and Pakistan for restoration of



peace in Afghanistan.

He said Moscow has expressed concern over escalating tensions in Afghanistan over the rise of IS-K terrorist group.

"We are ready for talks to support achieving a solution in Afghanistan in cooperation with Pakistan, China and Iran," he added.

In the meantime, Afghan Foreign

Minister said that his Russian counterpart has agreed that the return of the Taliban's regime is unacceptable.

"We welcome Russia's position. The Taliban shouldn't be removed from the sanctions list unless they abide by their commitments toward peace," Atmar said at the event.

Kidnappers...

kidnapped nearly 350 boys, who were subsequently rescued by security forces.

Violence and insecurity have compounded the economic challenges faced by citizens in Africa's most populous country and top oil exporter, which is struggling to cope with a fall in revenues due to a slump in crude prices in addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most high profile school kidnapping was that of more than 270 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram from the town of Chibok in 2014. Around 100 of them remain missing.

China Grants...

Chen hopes that the new vaccine will help not only China, but the world in its efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19.

"I want to thank every volunteer and relevant departments who worked with us around the clock to develop the COVID-19 vaccine. The battle against the virus is a test for our team. We hope that China's scientific and technological innovations will make a strong contribution to world pandemic control efforts," said Chen.

China has granted conditional market approval to four self-developed COVID-19 vaccines, Minister of Science and Technology Wang Zhigang said Friday.

China has adopted five technological approaches in developing COVID-19 vaccines. China now has 17 self-developed COVID-19 vaccines undergoing clinical trials, with seven undergoing phase-3 clinical trials, Wang told a press conference held in Beijing.

China has also included 11 drugs and treatment methods in its diagnosis and treatment plan for COVID-19, Wang added. (CCTVPlus)

By **STEPHEN M. WALT**

How Not to Leave Afghanistan

Joe Biden is the fourth U.S. president to face the question of what to do about a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. After sending more troops there in 2017, the Trump administration eventually agreed to remove all U.S. forces by May 1, as part of a broader process intended to end the civil war there. Biden has to decide if he's going to honor that commitment, back away from it entirely, or kick the can down the road a little further.

To guide his thinking, he could rely on a recent report from the congressionally mandated Afghanistan Study Group, co-directed by former Sen. Kelly Ayotte, former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Joseph Dunford, and Nancy Lindborg, the former president of the U.S. Institute of Peace. The bipartisan group's 15 members are all familiar figures from the foreign-policy elite, including Michèle Flournoy, James Dobbins, Stephen Hadley, and former British Foreign Minister David Miliband. (Full disclosure: Dunford and Meghan O'Sullivan, another member of the study group, are colleagues of mine at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.) The study group also relied on insights from 26 senior advisors and the work of a staff of professional assistants.

Having now read the report, I hope Biden studies it carefully and then declines to follow its advice.

What do they recommend? They advise Biden to extend the May 1 deadline (ideally with the Taliban's concurrence but even if that is not forthcoming) and maintain a U.S. military presence and economic support package until U.S. objectives are met. All told, this mission currently costs more than \$50 billion per year. To achieve its goals, they say, the United States must clarify its commitment to Kabul, get the Afghan government to shape up, and develop a broad diplomatic strategy that encourages "stakeholders to play a neutral or constructive role" and lays the foundation for the "long-term integration of Afghanistan into the region." The report briefly considers three alternative pathways—a "recommittal to the state," a "calculated military withdrawal," or a "washing of hands"—and concludes that none "would allow the United States to meet its interests as defined by the Group."

These recommendations are unsurprising, insofar as the study group's members did not include anyone who was likely to argue for a more rapid U.S. withdrawal. To its credit, the report itself is soberly worded, avoids hyperbole, and contains



useful information about conditions inside the country. It describes the many challenges facing Afghanistan after decades of conflict with admirable candor. It acknowledges (some) past errors in the U.S. approach, recognizes that a lasting solution can only be achieved through negotiation, and correctly emphasizes the need for a diplomatic effort to get buy-in from India, Pakistan, Iran, and other regional players.

Despite these strengths, the report does not explain how its recommendations—and especially the decision to extend the current withdrawal date past May 1—will lead to a substantially better outcome in one, two, or even four years' time. Nor does it provide an adequate justification for a continued U.S. effort or consider the always vital issue of opportunity costs. If Biden accepts its recommendations, what was once George W. Bush's war, then Barack Obama's, and then Donald Trump's will become his. He will be dealing with Afghanistan for the rest of his presidency, and his successor will face the same awkward questions and unappealing choices when he or she takes office. One problem is that the report defines America's interests in Afghanistan much too broadly. It describes the desired end state as an "independent, democratic, and sovereign Afghan state" that can: 1) prevent al Qaeda or other terrorist groups from attacking the United States; 2) prevent illicit narcotics and mass migration from threatening the United States, its allies, or its neighbors; 3) support and protect minorities, women's rights, and manage domestic conflicts peacefully through "accountable civilian institutions"; and 4) become less reliant on

international assistance over time. Success is also defined as Afghanistan no longer being a source of regional instability or a locus of proxy regional competition.

These are worthy goals, but they are not remotely in sight given where Afghanistan is today. Only the first objective—preventing terrorist attacks on the United States—is a vital interest that might justify a substantial investment of blood or treasure. The rest of these objectives are essentially a log roll: #2 is what the Europeans care about; #3 appeals to liberal idealists and humanitarians; and #4 is designed to appease members of Congress who might worry about the bottom line. The result is a revealing paradox: In order to win support for a mission that is not working, one has to combine a set of interests and objectives that are even less achievable than the (relatively) limited goal of discouraging attacks on the United States itself. If achieving this full end state is the precondition for ending the current U.S. role in Afghanistan, the United States is going to be there for a very long time indeed.

The study group ties its recommendations to the continued threat from al Qaeda, just as Obama and Trump did when they sent additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan in 2009 and 2017, respectively. The report declares that "the foremost [U.S.] interest is containing the activities of terrorist groups that remain active in Afghanistan and could threaten the U.S. homeland," warning further that "withdrawing U.S. troops irresponsibly would likely lead to a new civil war in Afghanistan, inviting the reconstitution of anti-U.S. terrorist groups that could ... **P3**

By **XiMeng**

China Is Willing to Share the Experience of Poverty Alleviation with Afghanistan!

February 25th, Chinese President Xi Jinping solemnly declared in Beijing: China has achieved a complete victory in the battle of eliminating extreme poverty and created another miracle of China. Not long ago, Afghan ambassador to China Mr. Javed Qaem said: after eight years of continuous struggle, China has successfully lifted nearly 100 million people out of poverty and achieved the goal of comprehensive poverty alleviation as scheduled. This is a great achievement. Afghanistan and China are traditional friendly neighbors. In view of their similarities in history, China's poverty reduction experience deserves more attention and reference. Poverty eradication is a systematic project and cannot be achieved overnight. President Xi Jinping summed up China's key experience in poverty eradication by using

"seven insistences" at the commendation conference held on 25th Feb, such as sticking to the leadership of Communist Party of China, adhering to the people centered development thought and persisting in giving full play to the advantages of the socialist system in concentrating on doing great things. From the founding of People's Republic of China to the reform and opening up, and then to the new era of development, the party and government of China have always regarded striving for the happiness of the people as their original aspiration and put it in a prominent position. In particular, in the past eight years, the Chinese government has put forward a series of policies and measures for targeted poverty alleviation and made remarkable achievements by rolling up our sleeves and going full speed ahead with our work.

As the leader of a great power and the commander in charge of the campaign against poverty, in the past 8 years, Xi Jinping held 7 central meetings, conducted 50 surveys on poverty alleviation and traveled to 14 poverty-stricken areas. In this struggle against poverty, there are also countless extraordinary Chinese people, such as the Secretary of the village party branch who led the villagers to dig out the road to the outside world on the precipice for seven years, the female principal who brightened mountain girls' hope, the college students who returned to their hometown after graduation to participate in poverty alleviation and agricultural science and technology experts who are committed to poverty alleviation by industrial means. In recent years, a total of 2.8 million assisting cadres have been struggling in the front line of poverty alleviation ... **P3**

Two People Killed in Kabul, Nangarhar Blasts



Two people were killed and three more were wounded in two blasts in Kabul and Nangarhar provinces on Saturday, local officials and police confirmed. One person was killed and two more were wounded in an explosion that targeted a vehicle in Bagrami district in Kabul at around 9 am on Saturday morning, police said. Meanwhile, Abdul Qahar Qadir, a

member of the provincial council in Nangarhar, was wounded in an explosion that targeted his vehicle in the city of Jalalabad on Saturday afternoon, health officials said. According to local officials, one civilian was wounded in the explosion. The blasts come amidst a sharp increase in targeted attacks in the country, especially Kabul.

200 Trucks Go to Afghanistan Per Day via Iran's Dogharoun Customs

Iran's Director General of Dogharoun Border Customs Office Mahmood Koohgerd said over 200 trucks export Iranian products every day to Afghanistan as the border crossing has resumed activity after the huge fire in Herat province.

As per Fars news agency, Koohgerd said the export of goods, especially fruits and vegetables, to Afghanistan from the important border crossing is going after the trade stopped at the border gate due to a big fire in

Afghanistan earlier in February. The Iranian official added that the Iranian side has made every preparation to resume full operation at the border gate.

"Dogharoun customs was not damaged during the incident at the border facility of the neighboring country, but due to the critical situation in the area, its activities were stopped for a short period this month to prevent any damages," he added.



China Is Willing...

and more than 1800 of them have given their lives to the cause of poverty alleviation. It can be said that every achievement China has made is the outcome of the hardworking of Chinese people step by step, not the gift of any other country. We would never allow others to discredit it.

As a traditional friendly neighbor of China, Afghanistan has been devastated by war for many years, and the Chinese people have always had the same sense with Afghan people. Now Afghanistan is at a critical moment of ending the war and striding for peace. China firmly supports the efforts of Afghan government and people to seek peace and development and is willing to actively share the experience of poverty alleviation and the dividend of development. Under the joint construction of "Belt and Road", China and Afghanistan will build a community with shared future. Relying on its geographical and resource advantages, Afghanistan has made initial achievements. After the realization of peace in Afghanistan, there is still a huge space for economic and trade exchanges between China and Afghanistan to be explored. Chinese consumers are also looking forward to tasting more characteristic agricultural and animal husbandry products from Afghanistan, such as big pine nuts, red pomegranate and saffron.

Dr. Abdullah...

a half ago; but since then, no formal meeting has taken place between the two sides. During the time, the Taliban delegation has traveled to Iran, Russia and Turkmenistan. However, on last Monday, the contact teams of the two sides' delegations met after several weeks and talked about the agenda of the peace process.

Pakistan Urges...

addressed through interaction with Taliban," the envoy stressed. The Biden administration is studying the February 29 agreement his predecessor sealed with the Taliban one year ago. The document binds Washington to withdraw the remaining 2,500 American soldiers in Afghanistan by May 1, along with nearly 10,000 NATO-led allied troops, to close the longest war in U.S. history.

How Not to...

threaten our homeland and providing them with a narrative of victory against the world's most powerful country."

What is missing, however, is a careful assessment of how large that threat is today or is likely to become in the future. The study group acknowledges that the Taliban are "distinct from al-Qaeda and its affiliates and do not support its global jihadi agenda," noting further that "there is no evidence that they have any intention to attack the United States." Even so, the report cautions that a U.S. withdrawal might allow al-Qaeda to "reemerge" and that Afghanistan could once again become a "safe haven" for the group. This justification was never very compelling, however, because it is not clear that today's Taliban would give al-Qaeda a free hand to attack the United States and because Afghanistan is not the only place from which al-Qaeda or its offshoots can operate. After all, there are plenty of other governments that cannot fully control the potential terrorists inside their borders, including, we know now, the United States itself. If we could somehow transform Afghanistan into a replica of Denmark overnight, it would not eliminate the dangers that might arise from other places. Fortunately, that danger is much smaller than is usually believed.

Even if the United States left Afghanistan, al-Qaeda members were still present there, and the Afghan government couldn't fully control them, how serious a danger would that pose? Given the billions of dollars the United States has devoted to improving homeland security since 9/11, a resurgent al-Qaeda is unlikely to pose the level of threat that we once feared it might be. And in the unlikely event that a future Afghan government gave al-Qaeda the carte blanche it enjoyed before 9/11, this time United States would not hesitate to attack its training camps with bombers or cruise missiles. Contemplating the more serious dangers that Americans face from white supremacists, out-of-control militias, and other homegrown extremists, not to mention the half a million deaths the country has had due to COVID-19, should help us keep the threat of a resurgent al-Qaeda in perspective. The report also suffers from

an unavoidable internal contradiction. On the one hand, it recommends that the United States issue a "clear statement that it will provide sufficient levels of assistance to maintain Afghanistan's core state institutions, support civil society, and ensure key services are provided to the Afghan people" and "continue to provide, alongside allies, essential support to sustain Afghanistan's core state institutions." But on the other hand, it also says U.S. support should be conditioned "in terms that hold both recipients and donors accountable."

Here, in a nutshell, is a problem that has bedeviled the U.S. effort in Afghanistan from the very beginning. The more Washington declares Afghanistan to be a vital interest and affirms it will back the Afghan government no matter what, the less incentive Afghan officials have to get their act together and enact meaningful reforms. Unless the United States is genuinely willing to walk, its partners can always call its bluff and continue with business as usual. They have before, and they will again.

As a result, there is little reason to believe that the study group's recommendations will produce the desired outcome. To be clear: Its prescriptions are sensible and would almost certainly improve matters if they worked. But the study group is vague on this point: It expresses a certain amount of hope but neither promises success nor says how likely the group thinks it is. And there is this telling admission: Even "when it deployed higher levels of aid and troops, the United States was generally unable to shape political developments as much as it would have liked. This is due partly to Washington's competing global priorities, but also to the sheer complexity of this political ecosystem." Got that? The United States could not determine Afghanistan's political future when it had more than 50,000 troops there, but the study group now hopes that a token force and continued economic assistance will allow Washington to decisively shape its evolution and orchestrate a complex program of regional diplomacy, one in which the other stakeholders have more skin in the game than the United States does. I'd love to believe it could be pulled off, but both

logic and the experience of the past 20 years say otherwise. In the meantime, the trends are against us. The report concedes that "the Taliban remain the most coherent and disciplined political-military group" in the country, and two decades of U.S. training and material assistance have yet to create Afghan security forces that can hold their own. The report also contains worrisome data showing that poverty levels were increasing even before the pandemic—in part due to diminished external assistance—and perceptions of personal security were declining. The study group's desired end state cannot possibly be achieved until these trends are reversed, yet it offers no basis for believing that they will.

I have no desire to sound defeatist, but what incentive would the Taliban now have to accept an outcome that is compatible with the study group's goals? They have the luxury of controlling the pace of the conflict and retain the option of simply waiting it out. They know the United States and its allies are going to leave eventually—just as the British did in the 19th century and the Soviets did in 1989—and that they will be in a position to claim a larger share of political power. As Barnett Rubin points out, the Taliban's desire for international legitimacy may give Washington a modest amount of leverage in the near term, but it won't allow the United States to determine Afghanistan's political future over the long haul. Given these realities, does it make sense for the United States to devote significant resources to this effort? The study group points out that from "the perspective of great power competition, China may consider the U.S. presence in Afghanistan beneficial, given the complicated, costly, and distracting effects on U.S. foreign policy of that presence." Precisely. If the Biden administration is serious about balancing a rising China, cutting the United States' losses in Afghanistan and focusing finite resources—which include the president's time and the administration's foreign-policy bandwidth—on that challenge would be a wiser course than continuing a commitment that is unlikely to lead to a significantly better outcome.

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China Grants Market Approval for Recombinant COVID-19 Vaccine

China's drug regulator the National Medical Products Administration approved on Thursday the registration application of a domestically produced recombinant COVID-19 vaccine with conditions.

The vaccine was developed by a research team under the Academy of Military Sciences and CanSino Biologics Inc., a Chinese high-tech biopharmaceutical company.

Led by Chen Wei, a researcher at the academy's Institute of Military Medicine, the team developed the recombinant COVID-19 vaccine with the modified defective adenovirus as the vector.

The National Medical Products Administration requires Chen's team to continue its relevant research work, fulfill the requirements for conditional marketing approval, and submit follow-up research results in a timely manner.

"Among the COVID-19 vaccines granted market approval by China, our vaccine is the only such

product to require a single dose instead of two. With a single dose inoculation, both the cellular and humoral immunity of the human body will be activated. It will achieve good protection results after only 14 days. Besides, the vaccine can be transported and stored at two to eight degrees Celsius," said Hou Lihua, Chen's colleague.

On March 16, 2020, the vaccine started Phase I clinical trials in Wuhan City, central China's Hubei Province. At that time, it was the world's first COVID-19 vaccine candidate to enter clinical trials. On February 8, 2021, an interim analysis of Phase III trial data was completed for the vaccine. In Phase III trials conducted in Pakistan, the vaccine showed a 100 percent efficacy rate in preventing severe COVID-19 cases 28 days after a single dose inoculation, and the overall efficacy rate stood at 74.8 percent.

The vaccine has already obtained emergency use approval from Pakistan and Mexico. ... **P2**



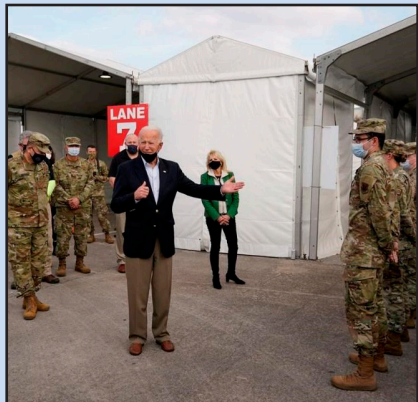
A look at the world

U.S. Airstrike in Syria Kills Iranian-linked Militiaman

A militiaman was killed in this week's US airstrike in eastern Syria, the Iranian-backed militant group he was loyal to said Friday.

Rahi Salam al- Sharaifi, a member of the Iranian-backed, Iraq-based Kata'ib Hezbollah, was killed in a US attack, the group said in a statement on Thursday's US attack.

The US military carried out airstrikes late Thursday against infrastructure used by Iranian-backed militant groups in Al-Qaim, eastern Syria, near the Syrian-Iraqi border.



Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby had said the strikes were directed by US President Joe Biden in response to recent attacks on American and coalition personnel in Iraq.

"Specifically, the strikes destroyed multiple facilities located at a border control point used by a number of Iranian-backed militant groups, including Kata'ib Hezbollah [KH] and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada [KSS]," said the statement.

Thursday's strike is Biden's first known military action since taking office in January.

The strike came after multiple rocket attacks on American forces in Iraq.

On Monday, in the latest incident, a rocket attack targeted Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, an area that hosts most of the capital's foreign diplomatic missions, including the US Embassy.

The Green Zone has regularly come under rocket attack since the assassination in January 2020 of Iranian Gen. Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike.

Washington blames Iran-backed Shia militias for such rocket attacks on foreign diplomatic missions and on US and foreign troops in Iraq. **P2**

Kidnappers Release Nigerian Schoolboys as Search for 300 Abducted Girls Continue



Gunmen in Nigeria on Saturday released 27 teenage boys who were kidnapped from their school last week in the northern state of Niger, while security forces continued to search for more than 300 schoolgirls abducted in a nearby state.

Schools have become targets for mass kidnappings for ransom in northern Nigeria by armed groups, many of whom carry guns and ride motorcycles.

On Feb. 17, 27 students, three staff and 12 members of their families were abducted by an armed gang who stormed the Government Science secondary school in the Kagara district of Niger state, overwhelming the school's security detail. One boy was killed during the raid.

After their release, boys were seen by a Reuters witness walking with armed security through a dusty village, some struggling to stand and asking for water. A government official said the boys were aged between 15 and 18.

"The Abducted Students, Staff and Relatives of Government Science Collage Kagara have regained their freedom and have been received by the Niger State Government," Governor Abubakar Sani Bello said in a tweet. The release of the schoolboys comes just a day after the raid on a school in Zamfara state where gunmen seized 317 girls.

The recent attacks have raised concern about rising violence by armed gangs and Islamist insurgents. Jihadist group Boko Haram carries out abductions in Nigeria's turbulent northeast, as does a branch of Islamic State. The unrest has become a political problem for President Muhammadu Buhari, a retired general and former military ruler who has faced mounting criticism in recent months over high profile attacks by the gangs known locally as "bandits".

Buhari replaced his long-standing military chiefs this month amid worsening violence in Nigeria.

In December, gunmen raided a school in northwestern Katsina state and ... **P2**

Saudi-led Coalition Destroys Rebel Drone from Yemen

The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen said Saturday it had intercepted an explosive-laden drone fired by Houthi rebels towards Saudi Arabia.

"Coalition forces managed to intercept and destroy an unmanned explosive-laden drone launched by the Houthi militia towards Khamis Mushait city" in southern Saudi Arabia, coalition spokesman Col. Turki al-Maliki, said in a statement cited by the Saudi SPA News Agency.



Al-Maliki said the Houthis targeting of civilian areas amounted to "war crimes".

There was no comment from the Houthi group on the report.

Yemeni rebels regularly announce rocket and drone attacks on Saudi territories, saying they are a reaction to the Saudi-led coalition's assault on Yemen.

On Friday, the coalition said it had intercepted two drone and missile attacks by the Houthis on Saudi Arabia.

Yemen has been wracked by violence and instability since 2014, when Houthi rebels captured much of the country, including the capital Sanaa.

A Saudi-led coalition aimed at reinstating the Yemeni government has worsened the situation, causing one of the world's worst man-made humanitarian crises with nearly 80% or about 30 million of its people needing humanitarian assistance and protection and more than 13 million in danger of starving to death.



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