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Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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10 afs



US to Build a Base in Qatar to Support Afghan Military Forces

The US Department of Defense intends to construct an airbase in Qatar in order to support Afghanistan military forces. The US's Pentagon has announced that it will establish a Command Center in Qatar under a new agreement to support security forces, particularly Afghan Air Force. US Department of Defense Spokesman John F. Kirby said the Center will be set up in Qatar to provide financial support to the country's security and defense forces, especially the Afghan Air Force. The spokesman reiterated that a new unit called "US-Afghanistan Progressive Forces" has been set up to provide a diplomatic...



Afghan Religious Scholars Call Ongoing War Illegitimate

In a resolution, the National Ulema Council of Afghanistan described the ongoing war as illegitimate and called for an immediate end to fighting. The resolution stated that the war is fratricide, murder of Muslims, and destruction of public and private infrastructure. Addressing a press conference, Acting Council Chairman Mawlawi Sardar Zadran read the resolution and added that the current war is detrimental to Islam and Muslims, and has caused the killing of youth, destruction of public facilities and farms, and increased hatred and enmity among the people. Zadran added that ulema in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and most recently Afghan and Pakistani ulema in Mecca conference have already issued fatwa on the illegitimacy of this war in Afghanistan. In other news, Member of Parliament (MP) for Parwan province...

US to leave Afghanistan by End of August: White House



Almost 20 years after the United States first went to Afghanistan, and just months after President Joe Biden announced his intent to pull all combat troops from the country, the U.S. withdrawal is nearly complete, with America's military presence limited largely to the capital of Kabul and the nearby international airport. Multiple U.S. officials said Friday that the vast

majority of troops and equipment have been pulled from Afghanistan, with the rest expected to leave by the end of August, slightly ahead of the early September deadline set by Biden in April. "We're on track exactly as to where we expected to be," Biden said, when questioned repeatedly about the developments while trying to talk up the latest U.S. jobs report. "We were in that war for

20 years, 20 years," he added, calling the drawdown "rational," before trying to change topics by telling reporters, "I want to talk about happy things." Other U.S. officials also conceded the somber nature of the U.S. pullout, acknowledging that the situation on the ground has deteriorated as the American footprint has shrunk. "The president has long felt, as many

Americans have, as many leaders have, that the war in Afghanistan was not one that could be won militarily," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Friday, arguing that a pre-withdrawal assessment "did not sugarcoat what the likely outcomes would be." Violence across Afghanistan has surged since the U.S. began its withdrawal, with the Taliban insurgency overrunning dozens of districts across the country, practically doubling the amount of territory it controls, according to an analysis by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies' Long War Journal. Casualties have also risen, with the Afghan government and Taliban officials claiming ever higher death tolls on the battlefield. Friday, however, seemed to mark a milestone for the decadeslong conflict, with U.S. officials confirming to VOA that American and coalition forces had left Bagram Airfield for the last time, turning it over to Afghan security forces. For nearly the entire span of the U.S. war in Afghanistan, the base, 60 kilometers north of Kabul, served as the center of the U.S. fight to remove Taliban forces from power and take...

Afghanistan Reports 1st Cases of 'Black Fungus'

Afghan health authorities on Saturday warned of surging cases of mucormycosis, also known as "black fungus," among coronavirus patients as the war-ravaged country grapples with a shortage of vaccines and medical oxygen. Health Minister Waheed Majorh said that health professionals had identified at least three confirmed cases of the fungal infection caused by exposure to mucor mould, commonly found in soil, plants, manure, and decaying fruits and vegetables. The condition mainly affects people who have a weak immune system causing loss of eyesight, removal of the...



US Defense Chief Approves Plan to Transfer Authority

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has approved a plan to transfer authority from Army General Scott Miller to Marine Corps General Frank McKenzie, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said late Friday. Miller is the commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and the Resolute Support Mission. McKenzie is the commander of U.S. Central Command. According to Kirby, this is all part of the safe and orderly retrograde that will have all U.S. troops out of Afghanistan by the end of August — well within President Joe Biden's order. "We expect that transfer to be effective later this month," Kirby said. "General Miller will remain in theater (Afghanistan) in coming weeks to prepare for and to complete the turnover of these duties and responsibilities



to General McKenzie." Kirby emphasized that McKenzie will retain all existing authorities that Miller currently possesses and commander of U.S. Forces, Afghanistan. "He will continue to exercise authority over the conduct of any and all counterterrorism

operations needed to protect the homeland from threats emanating out of Afghanistan, and he will lead U.S. efforts to develop options for the logistical, financial and technical support to Afghan forces once our drawdown is complete." This process will allow the...

US to Build...

presence of this country in Afghanistan and support the security forces. These forces will be deployed in Kabul and will be commanded by Peter Wasley, Commander of the US Navy. Providing security for US diplomats, assisting in securing Kabul airport, continuing to advise and assist the Afghan security and defense forces if necessary, and conducting counter-terrorism operations will be the responsibilities of this Command, he added. On the other hand, the US Department of Defense says that the responsibility of commanding US forces in Afghanistan will be transferred from Scott Miller to Kenneth McKenzie, the commander of the US Central Command called "CENTCOM".

US Defense...

United States to maintain a diplomatic presence within Afghanistan, as U.S. and Afghan leaders decide on the new bilateral relationship between the nations. Austin also approved establishing U.S. Forces Afghanistan to be led by Navy Rear Admiral Peter Vasely in Kabul. Army Brigadier General Curtis Buzzard will lead the Defense Security Cooperation Management Office, Afghanistan that will support Vasely. Buzzard's office is based in Qatar. That office will provide funding for the Afghan National Defense and Security forces to include over the horizon aircraft maintenance support. Kirby confirmed U.S. forces have left Bagram Airfield and said this was a key milestone in the drawdown process.

By: CGTN Insight

China's Response to the 'Clash of Civilizations'

Editor's note: "Roots of China's Growth" is a 10-episode series marking the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which has presided over the country's meteoric rise as a global power. The series focuses on 10 fundamental elements of the strategy that has led to China's transformation from an impoverished nation over the past 100 years. "China's inclusive culture" is the ninth in the series. The article is part of a special series from CGTN and its international media partners. After the Cold War, Samuel Huntington, Professor of Political Science at Harvard University, put forward the "Clash of Civilizations" theory, arguing that the fault lines between cultures would replace the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the main flashpoints for crises and bloodshed. Huntington forecast that the paramount axis of world politics would be conflicts between "the West and the Rest," requiring the West to contain the expansion of military strength among non-Western civilizations. Decades on, does Huntington's thesis reflect how the world works? The answer from China is no. You can get a glimpse of how diversified cultures peacefully coexist in China through this simple question: What is authentic "Chinese food"? Sichuan hotpot, Cantonese Wonton soup, Peking duck, Hunan's stinky tofu? All of these and more. Diverse cuisine from different regions of China can be found in one city, and sometimes even in the same block. The nation's inclusiveness has made this happen. This is also reflected in dozens of dialects, the traces of diverse philosophies that can be found in a single style of Chinese architecture, the



popularity of traditional ethnic clothing across ethnicities, to name just a few cultural expressions. China's stability is a result of its open attitude to diversity and not stifling minorities for a land of sameness. The risk of identity-based conflicts does exist but can be avoided by smart policymaking. Religious and ethnic differences can sometimes lead to chaos and even violence, but China, a multi-ethnic country, has endeavored to build a diversified and cohesive community, respecting differences while promoting underlying unity. There is no ethnic or cultural discrimination in China. People's ethnic identities are recognized by law. While some ethnic groups in certain countries, out of fear of discrimination, choose not to reveal their racial identity in public life, all ethnic minorities in China have actively participated in the country's political and social life. Chinese President Xi Jinping has stressed on several occasions that cultural inclusiveness, economic independence, and emotional closeness are the bonds that unify China's ethnic groups. Every

achievement by the country is a product of the collective wisdom and sweat of the Chinese people. Indeed, their common identity as a unified national community has become a powerful driving force for the country's growth. The balance between "differences" and "unity" is vital to China's stability and development. The relevance of an open and inclusive culture is evident not only in China's ethnic relations, but also in the exchanges between China and the rest of the world. Globalization may have intensified identity conflicts in some cases, but China has embraced foreign cultures with an open mind. Some advanced foreign cultural and technological products, after being introduced to China, have developed by leaps and bounds in the Chinese market, further enhancing and enriching Chinese culture. For many years, China was an importer and imitator of foreign technologies. According to the Xinhua News Agency, up to the year 2000, China's patent applications accounted for only 3.77 percent of the world total, well below the U.S. and Japan. Yet over the past

decade, China has turned from an imitator, follower and traditional manufacturer into an innovator, leader, and smart manufacturer. Its annual patent filings have surpassed Japan's and were double those of the U.S. in 2016. The country is now a global innovation powerhouse and the engine for an increase in the world's intellectual property assets. China's openness towards foreign cultures and technologies has been a catalyst for the transformation. Undeniably though, the emergence of "historical nihilism" and "cultural nihilism" in recent years has posed a major challenge to Chinese culture. Therefore, boosting cultural confidence is also an integral part of enhancing cultural identity. Burying one's head in the sand is not the right way forward. In response to the "clash of civilizations" scenario, China's open and inclusive culture is a solution. Gao Lei is an associate professor at the School of Marxism, University of International Business and Economics, and a research fellow at the Research Institute of Globalization and China's Modernization.

By: Mohammad Mazhari

U.S. Irresponsible Exit from Afghanistan Will Lead to Civil War

A Pakistani researcher is confident U.S. "irresponsible withdrawal" from Afghanistan will pave the way for a civil war in the country which will adversely affect the region in its entirety. Arhama Siddiqi tells the Tehran Times an extension of U.S. presence in Afghanistan would "lend some legitimacy to the Taliban" to continue fighting but "if irresponsible troop withdrawal takes place as is currently the case, without a doubt, there will be a civil war which will have domino effects on the entire region and gradually global implications as well." On Wednesday, Taliban fighters were battling government troops inside the northern city of Kunduz after occupying the main border crossing with Tajikistan the previous day and reaching the outskirts of northern Afghanistan's main hub, Mazar-e-Sharif. Overall, the Taliban's lightning offensive in northern Afghanistan

resulted in the fall of dozens of districts over the past week, putting much of the countryside under insurgent control. "The failure started when the Bush administration not only avoided talks with the Taliban but also outright rejected agreements that the Afghan government had itself belted with the Taliban in 2001 and 2004 which might have brought the war to rest 15 years ago. Similarly, the Obama administration made the same mistake," Siddiqi argues. Following is the text of the interview: Q: How do you assess U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan? A: When President Biden announced that the U.S. would start downgrading troop presence from July 2021, the responsibility of ensuring peace in Afghanistan shifted in the Afghan populace, particularly on both the Taliban and the Afghan government to come to a workable and sustainable compromise.

However, contrary to the previously optimistic estimates, there are fears now in the backdrop of the recent violence in northern Afghanistan and what can be termed as a completely irresponsible withdrawal on part of the U.S. administration that Kabul could collapse within six to twelve months of complete withdrawal of U.S. troops. Another major concern is that the ungoverned spaces left by U.S. troops supplemented by the focus of Afghan factions towards infighting could be filled by militants such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Q: Imran Khan has said Islamabad won't allow the U.S. to use Pakistan as a base for its Afghan operations. How do you read his statement? A: I would like to make three points here. First, if you analyze Prime Minister Imran Khan's statement in the years leading up to his election, you will notice that he has continuously criticized previous Pakistan governments to allow U.S.

boots in Pakistani soil. His vehement opposition has left little room for Mr. Khan's government to roll out a red carpet and submit to any U.S. requests. Second, hypothetically if Pakistan was to aid the U.S., it would most likely damage Islamabad's ties with the Taliban which the former can ill afford to do so. Third, if Pakistan accepts U.S. request, it would be a cause of concern for two of Pakistan's neighbors - China and Iran. The ongoing U.S.-China rivalry is no secret as is the U.S. aversion to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Hence, China would not want the U.S. keeping tabs on CPEC's development especially in close proximity to Gwadar. Similarly, Prime Minister Khan has been trying to reset ties with Iran and if he submits to U.S. proposals it would put a damper on that and also his statements regarding mediation/facilitation between Iran, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. will be contested. Moreover, it would disturb the neutral balancing act Pakistan maintains in the Middle East (West Asia) and would result in grave security consequences.

Q: How can Iran and Pakistan cooperate to establish the peace in Afghanistan? A: Both Iran and Pakistan share not only borders with Afghanistan but also a unique cultural connection and henceforth, have direct stakes in the Afghan peace process. Both Tehran and Islamabad also maintain a certain amount of influence over various Afghan factions. Both countries can also cooperate in countering threats such as those posed by Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Moreover, in order for the development of their economic and strategic interests, a stable Afghanistan is equally important for both sides. It should also not be forgotten that Iran is now formally part of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and any instability in Afghanistan will affect the implementation of the deal adversely. Here I must mention that the China-Iran deal holds immense benefits for Pakistan as well henceforth it too has a stake in maintaining its sanctity. The China-Iran deal gives further... **P3**

World Bank Appoints New Country Director for Afghanistan

The newly appointed World Bank Country Director for Afghanistan Melinda Good joined the Kabul office on July 1, succeeding Henry Kerali, who completed his term. Melinda Good, a United States national, joined the World Bank in 2005 and has worked in several leadership positions across the World Bank, including in South Asia. "I am honored to take on my new position as the World Bank Country Director for Afghanistan and serve the people of Afghanistan," said Melinda Good. "The country is facing unprecedented hardship due to COVID-19 and high levels of uncertainty. Continued international support to maintain Afghanistan's public services is critical to maintain development gains. The World Bank Group has been a key partner of the Afghan people in the last 20 years and has helped achieve significant development progress. Together with our international partners, we will continue to stand

alongside the government and people of Afghanistan in their journey toward recovery, self-reliance, and a more prosperous future." The World Bank Group's (WBG) program in Afghanistan is currently governed by its Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for fiscal years 2017-2021. The Bank also administers the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), the World Bank Group's largest single-country multi-donor trust fund. The World Bank has announced that it will award \$18 million to the Afghan government to strengthen the higher education sector and effectively fight the coronavirus. The assistance is part of the World Bank's program to strengthen the higher education system of South Asian countries. The World Bank in Afghanistan tweeted that the project will strengthen the higher education sector during the COVID-19 crisis by creating online education facilities. To date, the

World Bank has provided more than \$5.3 billion for development and emergency reconstruction projects and eight budget support operations in Afghanistan. This support includes more than \$4.8 billion in grants and \$436.4 million in no-interest loans. The Bank has 12 active projects funded by the International Development Association (IDA) for the total amount of \$940 million, and 15 projects jointly funded with ARTF, with a net commitment value of over \$1.2 billion from IDA. In other news, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) announced the extradition of 10 Iranian prisoners to Iran from Pul-e Charkhi and Bagram prisons, by a flight from the Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) on Thursday. The AGO stated that the prisoners were handed over to Iranian Embassy representative in Kabul, after the consent from the Ministry of Justice and in line with a bilateral Memorandum of



Understanding (MoU). Mohammad Hashim Stanikzai, who oversees the enforcements of verdicts within the AGO, said that efforts are ongoing to accelerate the extradition of Afghan prisoners from Iran, on the basis of the MoU.

US to leave...

down the al-Qaida terrorists responsible for killing thousands of Americans on September 11, 2001. "Bagram was a key hub for air support for everything that we were doing over there for the last 20 years," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby told reporters Friday. "I wouldn't describe it as the end of a chapter," he said. "But we don't need that kind of capability right now." Instead, Kirby said, the Pentagon will focus most of its attention on Kabul and the surrounding areas, including Kabul airport, where U.S. forces will join with Turkey, at least for the near term, to provide security. U.S. forces will also concentrate on protecting the ongoing U.S. diplomatic presence in Kabul, advising and assisting Afghan government forces, and providing support for Washington's counterterrorism efforts against groups such as al-Qaida and Islamic State-Khorasan. Kirby also said the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, General Austin "Scott" Miller, would remain in the region and retain the authority to launch airstrikes in support of Afghan forces for the time being. Other changes, though, are coming. The Pentagon announced Friday that U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin approved a plan to transfer combat authorities from Miller to General Kenneth "Frank" McKenzie, the U.S.-based commander of U.S. Central Command, later this month. It is also establishing a Kabul-based military office, U.S. Forces Afghanistan-Forward, to lead security efforts for the U.S. diplomatic presence, and adding a military office in Qatar to coordinate financial support to the Afghan security forces and help facilitate maintenance needs for the Afghan air force. However, not all details have been worked out. U.S. officials say they are engaging in ongoing talks with Afghanistan's neighbors about securing basing agreements and other rights, which might allow military planners to position assets such as drones and aircraft nearby to make it easier to conduct counterterrorism strikes if needed. "It's more important for us to do this right and to make sure that the solutions are sustainable over time than it is to just slap a solution on it," Kirby said. "We're confident that in working in concert with our colleagues at the State Department, we're confident that we're going to get there."

Afghan...

Abdul Zahir Salangi announced that he will reward anyone that provides information about those who destroy electricity pylons. Salangi pledged to pay his two-month salary, around 500,000 Afghanis as a reward, as the scheme is the only solution he thought of. Salangi rejected rumors that local thugs were responsible for the destruction of the pylons, and blamed terrorist groups, in particular the Taliban, for the act. Salangi added that he had identified such culprits and handed over to the ANDSF, 2 years ago, by proposing a reward of 300,000 Afghanis. Meanwhile, local officials in Herat province reported that two kidnapping groups were disbanded during an NDS operation. The groups had 11 members and were

involved in several kidnapping cases. Provincial Governor Abdul Saboor Qane told a news conference that one of the groups had kidnapped a religious scholar from Guzara district, who has been released during the operation. A kidnapper claimed that he was intending to build a madrasa from the religious scholar's ransom, who would also get some reward in the afterlife. The kidnapped scholar said that he was in kidnappers' custody for 23 days, who had asked for \$500,000 USD as ransom. Local officials gave assurances that efforts are ongoing to free 3 individuals, who are still in kidnappers' custody. Also, the Office of Prisons Administration reported that former commander of the Afghan National Civil Order Police,

Zmarai Paikan, has been transferred to the National Directorate of Security (NDS) for investigation. There has been a rumor that Paikan has been released from prison. Head of the Office's media department, Saifullah Jalalzai, told Hashte Subh daily that Paikan is still in government custody, and has been officially handed over to the NDS, for further judicial investigation. Jalalzai said that the Office is responsible to keep prisoners, and if the judiciary seeks further legal procedures into the cases, the prisoners will be handed over to them. Police arrested Paikan in August 2020, after 3 years of chasing. Three years ago, Paikan was sentenced to 8.5 years in prison on allegations of misusing his authority and cooperating with his son in a murder case.

Afghanistan...

nose and jaw bone. Underlining that official were using all available means to procure and purchase vaccines, Majorh said that low output of jabs and little competition among producers has made it difficult for Afghanistan to procure vaccines in the open market. "We are faced with the third wave of the pandemic, and as neighboring Iran is facing the fifth wave and Pakistan is faced with the

fourth wave, we are going to face another catastrophic wave soon," he warned. "The raging war is on one side and the pandemic on the other side. For God's sake, avoid gatherings and obey safety measures," he urged Afghans. According to the Ministry of Public Health, over 500 people died due to the pandemic in the past week alone. According to official figures, more than 1 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines

have already been administered in the country. Half of these, an estimated 500,000 doses, were gifted to Afghanistan by India, while another 486,000 doses came through COVAX, a global vaccine-sharing facility. In February, Afghanistan began the rollout of the Indian-made COVID-19 vaccine as it calls for more international support to vaccinate at least 20% of the estimated population of 38 million this year and 60% by the end of 2022.

U.S. Irresponsible...

impetus for the CPEC to be extended into Afghanistan as well. Hence, both Iran and Pakistan can help to cooperate peace in Afghanistan through counter-terrorism measures, maintain their development trajectories and continuing to facilitate the Afghan peace process by bringing all sides to the negotiating table. Q: Do you predict a civil war in Afghanistan? A: There are two aspects to this. The first is that it goes without saying that elongation of U.S. presence in Afghanistan would lend some legitimacy to the Taliban to continue fighting

and would continue to prolong the status quo. Secondly, if irresponsible troop withdrawal takes place as is currently the case, without a doubt there will be a civil war which will have domino effects on the entire region and gradually global implications as well. Q: Why did America fail to contain the Taliban in Afghanistan? A: Given that it has been 20 years since the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and what President Biden has termed as 'a forever war' seems to have been more driven based on emotions and irrational behavior as opposed to careful strategic planning.

I believe the failure started when the Bush administration not only avoided talks with the Taliban but also outright rejected agreements that the Afghan government had itself belted with the Taliban in 2001 and 2004 which might have brought the war to rest 15 years ago. Similarly, the Obama administration made the same mistake. The Taliban cannot be excluded from the peace process. They are very much a part of the landscape of Afghanistan if sustainable peace and development is to prevail. In Afghanistan, they will have to be part of the government. This is what the U.S. has failed to recognize for years.

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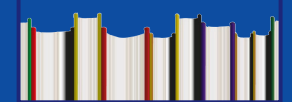
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Libya Talks on National Elections End Without Reaching Agreement

The latest session of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) aiming at paving the way for the scheduled national elections concluded in Switzerland Friday without reaching an agreement. Raised on Zenenga, Assistant UN Secretary-General and Coordinator of UN Support Mission in Libya, said in his closing remarks that it is regrettable the meeting has not succeeded in reaching an agreement. "Despite all the opportunities, there is still no common ground. The people of Libya will certainly feel let down as they still aspire to the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights in presidential and parliamentary elections on Dec. 24," he

said. "As we conclude this session, I encourage you to continue to consult among yourselves to pursue a workable compromise and cement what unites you," he added. Members of the LPDF met Monday in an undisclosed place in Switzerland for a week-long session in a move to clear the way for national elections on Dec. 24 this year.



A look at the world

Putin Endorses Russia's National Security Strategy

Russian President Vladimir Putin has approved the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation. An executive order to this effect was posted on the official legal information website on Saturday. "To approve the attached National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation," the document said. The executive order comes into effect from the date of its signing. "The implementation of this strategy will contribute to protecting Russia's



people, developing human potential, improving the quality of citizens' life and their prosperity, strengthening the country's defense capacity, the unity of cohesion of Russian society, achieving national development goals, increasing the competitiveness and international prestige of the Russian Federation," the document reads. The new version of the strategy was discussed on May 28 at the Russian president's meeting with the permanent members of Russia's Security Council. Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolai Patrushev later said in an interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta that the decision to prepare a new edition of the national security strategy had not been made all of a sudden: such documents must be amended every six years, and the previous version was approved in late 2015. According to Patrushev, work on the current document lasted about a year.

France Resumes Joint Military Operations in Mali



France has announced it will resume joint military operations in Mali after suspending them early last month following the West African country's second coup in less than a year. Following consultations with the Malian transitional authorities and the countries of the region, France "decided to resume joint military operations as well as national advisory missions, which had been suspended since June 3", the armed forces minister said in a statement on Friday. The decision to suspend the joint operations came after Mali's military strongman Assimi Goita, who led last year's coup, overthrew the country's civilian transitional president and prime minister. That move sparked diplomatic uproar, prompting the United States to suspend security assistance for Malian security forces and for the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to suspend Mali. Mali and France play key roles in the fight against a bloody insurgency plaguing the Sahel region. France has about 5,100 troops in the Sahel under its Barkhane operation across five countries - Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. On June 10, French President Emmanuel Macron announced a major drawdown of France's military presence in the Sahel where forces have been battling rebel groups for nearly a decade. Macron said the existing Barkhane operation would end, with France's presence becoming part of the so-called Takuba international task force in which "hundreds" of French soldiers would form the backbone. That Takuba force currently numbers about 600 troops, half of whom are French.

Over 3.13B Coronavirus Vaccine Shots Administered Worldwide

Nearly 3.13 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines have so far been administered worldwide, said figures on Friday compiled by Our World in Data, a tracking website affiliated with Oxford University. China leads the global count with more than 1.26 billion jabs, followed by India with 340.08 million. The list continued with mostly Western countries, with the US having administered 328.15 million shots, Brazil 102.78 million, UK 77.91 million, Germany 74.87 million, France 54.48 million, and



Italy 52.11 million. Turkey came ninth on the list with over 51.34 million doses given, followed by Japan, Mexico and Indonesia. The country with the most doses administered by population is the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with 155.33 doses per 100 people. Following the UAE, countries with the most doses administered per 100 people are the island nations of Malta with 151.91 doses and Seychelles with 140.92, followed by the microstate of San Marino with 131.17, Bahrain with 125.8, Israel with 124.64, Iceland with 123.91, Chile with 118.95, Mongolia with 115.56, Uruguay with 114.83, the UK with 114.76, Qatar with 110.3, and Hungary with 101.86. In 13 countries, including the UAE, the number of doses administered exceeded their population. Most COVID-19 vaccines are administered in two doses, so the number of shots given is not the same as the number of individuals fully vaccinated. Since December 2019, the pandemic has claimed over 3.95 million lives in 192 countries and regions, with more than 182.68 million cases reported worldwide, according to the US' Johns Hopkins University. The US, India, and Brazil remain the worst-hit countries.



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