

TIME-LINE LEADING UP TO THE COLLAPSE OF AFGHANISTAN

By Pete Blaber, Former Special Mission Unit Commander and Author of
“The Common Sense Way”

Possibly there has been a greater shambles in the history of warfare than our withdrawal from Kabul probably there has not. Even now, after a lifetime of consideration, I am at a loss for words to describe the superhuman stupidity, the truly monumental incompetence, and the bland blindness to reason of the leader and his advisors. If you had taken the greatest military geniuses of the ages, placed them in command of our army, and asked them to ruin it utterly as speedily as possible, they could not—I mean it seriously—have done it as surely and swiftly as they did.

*Lieutenant Harry Flashman*¹



The purpose of this timeline is to learn from what happened in the final days before Afghanistan fell. Those who fail to heed the lessons of history are damned to repeat them. If we can't learn from our past experiences then we can't adapt to future contingencies. If we can't adapt we will go the way of 99.999 % of species that have inhabited the planet--extinction. Learning from our experiences isn't about politics it's about our most inherently human right: Freedom of choice to survive, thrive, and evolve.

¹ A British incursion into Afghanistan ended in disaster in 1842 when more than 16,000 British soldiers and their families were massacred after setting out on an ill-advised retreat from Kabul. Only a single survivor made it back to British-held territory. It was assumed the Afghans let him live to tell the story of what had happened. Lieutenant Harry Flashman is a fictional character developed by George MacDonald Fraser (1925–2008) as he describes the tragedy in a series of 12 books, collectively known as ‘The Flashman Papers.’

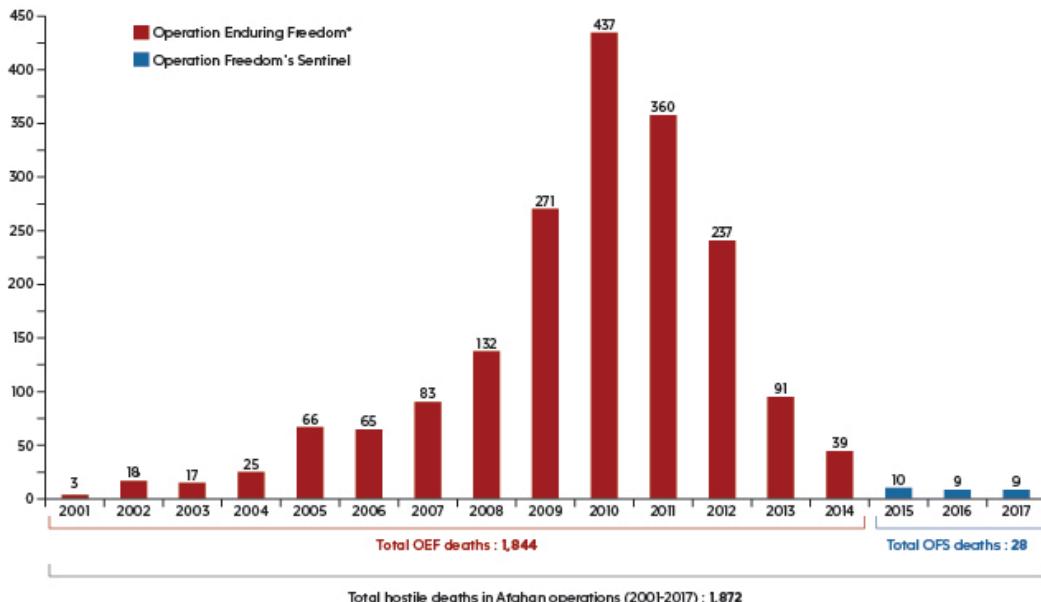
- **Fall-Winter 2001-2002:** Less than 500 special mission unit personnel and their Afghan allies from the Northern Alliance drive the Taliban government and all of their foreign fighter allies out of Afghanistan



The author with our Afghan allies, March, 2002

- **From 2001-2011:** American forces occupy Afghanistan. Their purpose: To Deny terrorist sanctuary in Afghanistan and prevent the enemy from conducting terrorist attacks on freedom loving people across the globe. We were fighting the terrorists overseas so we wouldn't have to fight them at home. This "foundational logic of why" was quickly forgotten by politicians and by proxy, most people across the globe.
- **22 June 2011:** One month after Osama bin Laden is killed by US Navy Seals, US President Barack Obama announces that troops will start to withdraw from Afghanistan.
- **Fall 2012:** During the Vice-Presidential debate between Joe Biden and Paul Ryan, Biden says the following: "We're out of there by the year—in the year 2014. My friend here (pointing to Ryan) and the governor (Romney) say it's based on conditions, which means it depends. **It does not depend for us [on the conditions].** It is the responsibility of the Afghans to take care of their own security." Biden said. He then added angrily: "**We are leaving. We are leaving in 2014, period.**"
- **A Note on Decision Making & Problem Solving:** Although the human brain is the most complex system yet found in the universe, the way it makes sense is the essence of simplicity: It takes what we know (the knowledge physically present in our brains) and combines it with the adaptive stimulus of what's going on around us. From this neural process the "logic of why" we do what we do and choose what we choose emerges. $1 + 2 = 3$. To make sense it has to add up. When you employ a decision-making process that ignores the adaptive stimulus of what's going on around you, your decisions will never add up. You are flying in the blind and heading for a crash landing. Remember the quote as we go forward.

HOSTILE DEATHS OF U.S. SERVICE MEMBERS IN AFGHANISTAN BY YEAR (2001-2017)



- **2009-2014:** The period between 2009 to 2014 was the highest casualty producing years of the war, 1,435 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines were killed during this period as the US along with our NATO and Afghan allies cleared the Taliban out of the cities and rural hamlets. The Afghan government controlled 90% of the country, and combat casualties (10) were at the lowest point since the beginning of hostilities in 2001/2002. Commanders on the ground recommended we begin a gradual draw-down of forces. The Obama-Biden administration didn't agree, instead they announced a change in strategy. All US forces were ordered to immediately "come out of the cities and hamlets and operate out of their bases instead."
- **May 2014:** The Obama administration released a statement saying that "our combat mission in Afghanistan is ending," and that the military would only remain in a training and advisory role with 10,000 troops. **Note:** the abrupt pull-out of all US combat forces from the cities and hamlets created a void that was immediately filled by the Taliban. All the effort and all the lives lost over the previous 5 years was lost.
- **4 November 2016:** Donald J Trump is elected President
- **21 August 2017:** President Trump meets with military advisors from Afghanistan and concludes that a "hasty withdraw from the country would create a vacuum that terrorists... would instantly fill".
- **2018:** General Scott Miller takes over as Commander of all forces in Afghanistan. One of the most competent, experienced, and knowledgeable commanders of US Forces in Afghanistan in 20 years. General Miller was there when US Special Operations forces routed the Taliban in 2001. He had lots of work to do during his first six months. One of his first orders of business was to quell the effects of the US Media fake news which was telling the world that President Trump planned to abandon the Afghans and Afghanistan.

After speaking with President Trump, General Scott Miller reassured his Afghan partners and his own staff that President Trump had issued no such withdrawal orders.



General Scott Miller on the ground in Afghanistan

- **August 2018:** Peace talks between the US and our NATO allies and the Taliban begin.
- **7 September 2019:** Trump cancels US-Taliban peace talks after the group claimed responsibility for a car bomb that killed an American soldier. President Trump then calls the head of the Taliban and warns him that if he continues to kill American troops, he will meet the same fate as Iranian General Qasem Soleimani.
- **29 February 2020:** Trump announces a signed peace deal between the US and NATO allies, and the Taliban.
- **17 November 2020:** In the final days of the Trump administration, the Pentagon announces plans to **reduce troop numbers in Afghanistan from 4,500 to 2,500**, which was to be completed by January 2021.
- **Note:** What's the logic of why they chose 2,500? It's the minimum number of troops required to execute the key tasks that the military on the ground in Afghanistan determined would prevent the vacuum-effect that President Trump was warned about in 2017. What were those tasks? First and foremost: to operate and secure Bagram Air Base, (see picture below). Bagram air base is as big as many Air Force bases in the United States. Bagram would become the sole remaining “base of operations” for US Forces, from which they would provide air and operational support during and after the transition. Bagram was the nerve center for all US combat operations in Afghanistan. In addition to operating and securing Bagram as an airbase, it would also provide support to small agile special operations liaison teams so they could deploy throughout the country to support and advise Afghan Special Forces at their bases and outposts around the country. Why did the Afghans still need US military liaison teams? Courage is contagious and so is common sense. Although the Afghan Special Forces had already proven themselves to their American Special Mission Unit advisors in battle, the Afghan

military was a new army that hadn't operated by itself (meaning without US units or other govt agency advisors). A key lesson learned from Viet Nam was that we should have conducted a slower more adaptive draw-down. The Afghans did not have any experience or frame of reference for how to command and control themselves as an independent entity. These liaison teams were an integral part of the drawdown because they would allow for a gradual transition that would enable the Afghan military and its Political leaders to withstand what everyone predicted would be a full-scale attack by the Taliban as soon as the American main-body pulled out. If the Afghan military could hold the Taliban off during this period they would learn that they are strong enough to defeat the Taliban in battle, while also gaining confidence and experience to operate on their own.



Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan

- **Jan 20, 2021:** Joe Biden is sworn in as President, he quickly appoints a new Secretary of Defense (former 4 star general Lloyd Austin), as well as a new National Security Advisor (Jake Sullivan). During the transition, the members of the new administration defer to the advice and counsel of the sitting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley. **Note:** War-time commanders recognize the potential for chaos that arises whenever political administrations change during on-going combat operations. The Commander in Afghanistan General Scott Miller asked the new Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and General Milley if they wanted him to fly back and brief the President on the situation in Afghanistan. Austin and Milley told him "no-no that's our job, we'll handle all that on this end, you stay in Afghanistan with your team." This should never be allowed to happen to any US President again.



L-R: Joe Biden, Lloyd Austin, Mark Milley

- **Jan. 3, 2021:** Instead of making sure that Biden knew as much key information about the current situation in Afghanistan as possible, General Milley and Sec-Def Austin had other priorities. According to excerpts from the book, "I Alone Can Fix It", in the first days of Jan., General Milley was warned by 'a retired military friend' that President Trump and his supporters were trying to "overturn the government" after losing the election. "They may try, but they're not going to f***ing succeed," Milley told his aides, according to the book. "You can't do this without the military," he added. "You can't do this without the CIA and the FBI. We're the guys with guns. This is a Reichstag moment," he said. "These guys are Nazis, they're boogaloo boys, they're Proud Boys. These are the same people we fought in World War II," he is quoted as saying.
- **Note:** Apparently General Milley's understanding of the Constitution he swore to protect did not include the First Amendment. The First Amendment guarantees freedoms concerning religion, expression, assembly, and the right to petition. It also expressly prohibits Congress from restricting the rights of individual citizens to speak freely, to assemble peaceably, and to petition their government.
- **Jan. 8, 2021:** House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called General Milley to discuss President Donald Trump and the nuclear codes. "This morning, I spoke to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley to discuss available precautions for preventing **an unstable president** from initiating military hostilities or accessing the launch codes and ordering a nuclear strike. The situation of **this unhinged President** could not be more dangerous, and we must do everything that we can to protect the American people from **his unbalanced assault** on our country and our democracy.
- **Jan. 8, 2021:** After talking on the phone with Nancy Pelosi, General Milley called his Chinese counterpart, Gen. Li Zuocheng of the People's Liberation Army. According to Bob Woodward, who interviewed General Milley for his book "Peril", this was the second time Milley contacted Li to reassure him that the U.S. would not make any type of advances or attack China in any form. "We are 100% steady. Everything's fine. But democracy can be sloppy sometimes." **Note:** Milley would later confirm both the call

from Pelosi and the follow-on call to his Chinese counterpart General Li. He would later claim he made the call based on “concerning intelligence regarding China.” The former U.S. Director of National Intelligence (DNI) John Ratcliffe, who at the time controlled all the intelligence General Milley had access to stated: “There was no concerning intelligence that merited a call to his Chinese counterpart. The idea that he’d have better or different intelligence, or have concerns about it that he wouldn’t share with me as the president’s principal intelligence adviser, or with the President himself, is absurd,” he said.

- **Feb 3d 2021:** As for the Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, in his first week as Secretary of Defense he orders a “DOD-wide stand down to discuss the problem of extremism in the ranks”. Austin and General Milley met with service civilian leaders and service military leaders to discuss the problem of extremism. During this meeting they directed the “stand down” to occur for all military units over the next 60 days, This is so “each service, each command, and each unit can take the time out to have these needed discussions with the men and women of the force,” Milley said. The ‘extremism’ stand-down ended on the 3d of April.
- **14 April 2021:** Joe Biden announces to the world press that all troops and civilian contractors will be withdrawn from Afghanistan by 11 September, the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. This edict was delivered to the Military and CIA without any explanation for the “logic of why” it made sense. The U.S. had 2,500 to 3,500 troops in Afghanistan when Biden announced the decision. “Speed is safety” Biden said as he announced his decision to override his military commanders on the ground. **Note:** Joe Biden did not consult General Scott Miller before he made the decision. Why would you reduce your military foot-print to less than 700 when the US embassy in Kabul still had ~4,000 defenseless state department personnel on the ground? It didn’t make any sense then and it doesn’t make sense now.
- Former Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff both had gone on record in support of not reducing the American presence in Afghanistan below 2,500 unless the security situation improved which it hadn’t.
- **15 April 2021:** US military on the ground in Afghanistan are stunned as their Afghan military and political allies look to them for answers. The foundational logic upon which the entire withdrawal plan had been built and based was that Bagram would be the base of operations for the remaining US Forces and their Afghan Special Forces counterparts. Bagram has everything the Kabul Airport doesn’t: secure stand-off range around the entire perimeter, multiple 10,000 foot run-ways, Advanced Air Traffic Control radar, and hundreds of buildings and hangers to include medical facilities that could be used to house and process the 86,000 Afghans who had already been Biometric vetted and registered. The 2d order effect of Bidens decision to renege on the US commitment to leaving 2,500 military forces behind was painfully obvious to all military and CIA personnel on the ground at the time: without the 2,500 troops the military would no longer have enough manpower to operate and protect Bagram airfield. Prior to this date, there was never any thought or plan to close Bagram.

- **4 May 2021:** As expected by on-the-ground military, the Taliban were emboldened by the announcement and launched their first major offensive on the Afghan military in the Helmand province. They also attack several nearby provinces. Requests to interdict the Taliban convoys and use US ISR assets (Intel-Surveillance-Reconnaissance) were denied.
- **14 May 2021:** The massed Taliban forces continue maneuvering to other provinces in Afghanistan without so much as a single pick-up truck being obliterated. With each passing day the lack of US response emboldens the Taliban to consolidate their gains and continue moving northward toward Kabul.
- **Mid-June 2021:** After landing in DC for meetings at the Pentagon, A high-ranking member of the US military staff in Afghanistan contacted me to say hello and as always, the topic immediately turned to “how things were going in Afghanistan”. Here’s what he said: “Afghanistan is a shit show, we are dealing with a bad decision, but that part would be okay if the administration didn’t try to mitigate the bad decisions political fallout on the backs of its military forces. We are in for a rough ride.” “What was the bad decision?” I asked, “the pulling of the 2,500 troops and contractors which means we can’t operate or defend Bagram. The administration told us that we must use the final 600 + troops to guard the US embassy and its diplomats as well as Kabul International Airport”, which would now by default become the primary exfil airfield.
- **Last week of June 2021:** The US military in Afghanistan continues to send ‘alternative courses of action” to the Pentagon where General Milley had taken operational control over the Afghanistan withdrawal. The Pentagon response was that “the decision was final” and that they were “super busy” with other late-breaking events. What could possibly be more important to the Pentagon then the collapse of Afghanistan?
- **24 June 2021:** General Milley testifies alongside Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin at a House Armed Services Committee meeting, here’s what he said: ‘I want to understand white rage, and I’m white... What is it that caused thousands of people to assault this building and try to overturn the Constitution of the United States of America? ... I want to find that out,’ he screams while pounding his fist on the table. **Note 1:** While Milley chose to focus all his energies on understanding and obsessing over his made-up concept of white rage, he also chose to ignore the real crisis unfolding in Afghanistan and thus did nothing to address it. The House Armed Service Committee meeting is exactly where he should have been pounding his fist on the table and screaming that we need to re-consider the decision to pull the final 2,500 forces out of Afghanistan. **Note 2:** I always write down or say out loud my first reaction whenever I read or experience a traumatic or serious situation. When I re-read the above paragraph on General Milley in the context of the fall of Afghanistan and the deaths of 13 Americans in Kabul less then two months later, the first words that came to mind were ‘Dereliction of Duty’. What we have here is a leader who has his priorities upside down. He made a conscious decision to water his front lawn while his house (with family inside) was burning to the ground.



General Milley testifies to the House Armed Service Committee about the need to teach soldiers about Critical Race Theory and White Rage

- General Scott Miller and his staff continue to send updates as the situation continues to deteriorate in Afghanistan. **Note:** By this date the Biden administration knew that U.S. military commanders wanted to maintain a force presence and continue supporting the Afghan government during the transition. By not just slashing the in-country troop presence but surrendering Bagram, the Biden administration realized that there would be no turning back from the decision to pull out. No matter how bad things got, U.S. commanders would have no military options to assist our allies.
- **2 July 2021:** The US quietly withdraws all personnel from Bagram Air Base. On the ground the Afghan military was confused and life or death concerned. ‘How can we operate without Bagram?’ one of the Afghan Special Forces leaders asked his trusted US advisor. The advisor couldn’t answer so he just shook his head in embarrassment and said nothing.
- **July 12, 2021:** General Scott Miller is unexpectedly told to relinquish command and return to the United States to prepare for retirement. General Miller had overseen U.S. and NATO forces since 2018, he was with me as one of the first-in back in 2001-2002 and had been in Afghanistan on and off every year since. He knew the people, he knew the culture, he knew the terrain, he knew the enemy, critically, he also knew the history. General Millers departure is even more difficult to comprehend amid the surge in violence from Taliban militants who had launched coordinated offensives across the country. At the time the administration tried to spin it as ‘prudent’ due to the imminent threat, but this is contradicted by the fact they left the US Ambassador and his massive and defenseless staff on the ground in Kabul.
- **July 12, 2021:** Marine Corps General Frank McKenzie, the commander of U.S. Central Command in Tampa Florida, formally took over responsibility for U.S. Forces Afghanistan. McKenzie told Afghan leaders, “You can count on our support in the dangerous and difficult days ahead.” For the past 20 years the U.S. military had backed up the Afghan military’s fight against the Taliban with airstrikes. McKenzie acknowledged that support will be very different in the future. “From now until the end of August as we finish our drawdown we will be ready to conduct [counterterror] strikes

as necessary against al Qaeda and ISIS targets (but not Taliban), should they emerge and pose a threat to the United States". On the plane ride back to his Headquarters in Tampa Florida, McKenzie told reporters "The decision about when and where to carry out airstrikes still rests with me, as it did when General Scott Miller was in charge. "there's no particular change there," McKenzie added (except the fact that General Miller was on the ground in Afghanistan and McKenzie would be 7,000 miles away in Tampa, Florida).

- **Note:** Just as Bidens decision to renege on the 2,500 stay-behind troops was responsible for the inability of US forces to run or operate Bagram, the Pentagons decision to recall General Miller was responsible for sending the Afghan President and the Afghan Army Generals into full panic mode. All mammals have what are called mirror neurons, these neurons evolved to enable mammals to react quickly and avoid falling victim to predators. When one deer lifts its head and goes stock-still rigid, the other deer around it take notice. When that deer takes off running the entire herd follows suit, that's their flight or fight instincts. The human nervous system works the same way as the deer. When one human panics, everyone around them panics too. Panic like calm is contagious. General Miller was the most trusted American in Afghanistan. He had built and earned that trust over the previous 3 years. Now, he was gone. Afghan leaders were in panic mode. The fall of Afghanistan was now imminent.
- **July 13, 2021:** Afghan President Ashraf Ghani begins preparations to exfil Afghanistan by gathering family, financial assets, and personal belongings. His aides mirrored his actions and every other high-ranking government and military official mirrored them all the way down to the Special Operations units that provided the last bullwork against Taliban victory. The Afghan Special Operations Forces never fully trusted their political leaders to "have their backs." What they were witnessing now simply confirmed that mistrust.
- **July 23, 2021:** Joe Biden speaks by phone with President Ghani for roughly 14 minutes in what would be their final call before the Taliban overran the government and Afghanistan descended into bloody chaos. According to a transcript and audio obtained by Reuters, much of the call was focused on what Biden referred to as the Afghan government's "perception" issue. "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 also told Ghani that 'Afghanistan's prominent political figures — including former Afghan President Hamid Karzai — should give a joint press conference that backed a new military strategy on how to defeat the Taliban', saying: **"That will change perception, and that will change an awful lot, I think."**
- **Note:** Imagine what was going through President Ghani's head during this phone-call. He was already packing his bags and now he had to listen to this crazy suggestion that he create a phony "military strategy" to change people's perception outside Afghanistan. Perception is not reality, reality is what's going on around you. This phone call is empirical proof that Biden knew Afghanistan was collapsing and instead of asking Ghani what he could do to prevent it, he tried to convince him to lie about it so the US could get out before it happened.

- **13 August 2021:** Kandahar, Afghanistan's second-largest city falls to the Taliban. **Note:** This was one of the trip wires that the previous plan (prior to Apr 14) had accounted for. If Kandahar falls a full military response should follow. The Taliban were now massed and out in the open. The main artery between Kandahar and Kabul is Hwy 101 which runs through the unpopulated flat-lands in the middle of the country. Military leaders on the ground saw one last opportunity to stave off an all-out Taliban victory. As the Taliban convoys began making their way north, we could have used Drones, AC-130's, and Air Force Attack Aircraft to destroy more Taliban in a day than we had in the last 10 years of skirmishes and hit and run attacks. The Pentagons response was 'stick with the plan.' Not a single bomb was dropped.
- **14 August 2021:** US President Joe Biden puts out a statement confirming the deployment of approximately 5,000 US troops to help with the evacuation from Afghanistan. He also reaffirms his desire to leave the region by Aug 31 (instead of the original date he gave the military of Sept 11). **Note:** why not have the 5,000 troops re-occupy Bagram? The all-out Taliban attack is no longer hypothetical. The Taliban were on the door-step of Kabul. Bagram was still empty, and we still had 86k biometrically vetted Afghans we had to get out. One reason they didn't take Bagram is because there was no one on the ground to suggest it. After recalling General Miller and his staff there was no institutional knowledge that could credibly suggest the concept much less how to go about executing it.
- **15 August 2021:** Afghan President Ashraf Ghani leaves the country along with the US acting Ambassador. The US embassy is evacuated, Kabul is seized by the Taliban. Afghanistan is now leaderless.
- **15 August:** CENTCOM Commander General Frank McKenzie meets with Taliban leader Abdul Ghani Baradar. According to McKenzie, "I met with Mullah Baradar on 15 August to pass a message to him that we were withdrawing, and if they attempted to disrupt that withdrawal we would punish them severely for that. As part of that conversation, Baradar said, 'well, why don't you just take security of all of Kabul?'" McKenzie turned the offer down. "That was not why I was there, that was not my instruction, and we did not have the resources to undertake that mission," McKenzie would later explain during testimony to congress.
- **Note:** According to McKenzie, he declined the Taliban leaders offer because he was locked into the orders he was given by the Biden Administration: that he was only there to conduct an evacuation. However, In the context of General McKenzie's stated purpose—to safely evacuate all US citizens and all 86k vetted Afghans--his decision to decline the offer to "control Kabul" during the evacuation doesn't make sense. By declining the offer to take operational control of the city of Kabul, McKenzie accepted that the U.S. forces inside Kabul International Airport and all Americans outside the airport were now at the mercy of the Taliban. Within a few hours the Taliban had surrounded the airport, set-up check-points outside the gates, began apprehending and beating people who were trying to get into the airport, prevented who knows how many thousands of people from getting to safety, and thereby undermined the very mission that McKenzie was supposedly tasked to carry

out. The Taliban ringing the airport were members of the Badri unit, who specialize in suicide attacks.



Kabul International Airport

- **15-30 August:** Chaos in Kabul as American forces find themselves surrounded by Taliban and thousands of civilians trying to escape the imminent blood-shed. As anyone who has flown in and out of Kabul International Airport knows, it is indefensible. It has no stand-off capacity, slums butt up against one side, while the other side is overwatched by high-ground from which a few enemy with small arms could--with impunity--take down a large transport plane or a soldier in the open.



- **26 Aug. 26, 2021:** A suicide bomber kills 13 members of the American military who were guarding the airfield and providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. Over 100 Afghans were also killed. Over one thousand were wounded.

- **27 August 2021:** The central issue quickly becomes: how did this happen and why in the world did we close Bagram? During a briefing, General Milley said that “securing Bagram requires a significant level of military effort of forces, and it would also require external support from the Afghan Security Forces which disintegrated along with the U.S.-backed Afghan government this month as Taliban fighters swept across the country. Our task given to us at that time, our task was to protect the embassy in order for the embassy personnel to continue to function with their consular service and all that,” he said. “If we were to keep both Bagram and the embassy going, that would be a significant number of military forces that would have exceeded what we had or stayed the same or exceeded what we had,” Milley added. “So, we had to collapse one or the other, and a decision was made.” **Note:** With regards to Milley’s testimony on the ‘disintegration’ of the Afghan Special Operations Forces, they did not “disintegrate”. Once they realized they were leaderless they simply fell back in order to fight again another day. Which they will.
- **27 August 2021:** During his press conference following the terrorist attack in Afghanistan that killed 13 U.S. servicemembers, President Biden blamed his generals for the decision to abandon Bagram Air Base and did not deny reports that his administration gave the Taliban a list of Americans stranded in the region. On the issue of Bagram Air Base, President Biden said that he made the decision to essentially abandon the location upon his generals’ advice: “On the tactical questions of how to conduct an evacuation or a war, I gather up all the major military personnel that are in Afghanistan, the commanders, as well as the Pentagon, and I ask for their best military judgment. They concluded, the military, that Bagram Air Base was not much value-added, that it was much wiser to focus on Kabul. So I followed that recommendation.”
- **Note:** Biden never gathered the commanders on the ground and asked them “what's your recommendation?” before making his fateful decision to renege on our commitment and common-sense plan to leave 2,500 forces behind and prevent the “vacuum effect” that every commander warned of going back to 2017. Additionally, he never once spoke with General Miller during the months leading up to the Taliban takeover. Perhaps he didn’t have time, the white house log shows that he works less than 4 hours per day. Instead, Biden solely depended on the advice of General Milley and Secretary of Defense Austin who were also advising him on the administration’s top priorities: learning about the made-up concept of white rage, teaching our troops about CRT and extremism in the military, and of course mandatory vaccines.

Lesson Learned:

With the exception of the individual choices we make to shape our own destinies, the choices made by the leaders we interact with throughout our life journeys have the most profound impact on every aspect of our existence. On the battlefield, the survival of our soldiers, and, by proxy, our citizens and our society; in business, our job satisfaction, our productivity, and our company’s, countries, and kinfolk’s potential to thrive; and over time, the success or failure of our species in our on-going quest to evolve. “The way” we

choose to lead and organize ourselves irrevocably influences our potential to survive, thrive, and evolve. **Leadership Matters.**

The time-line of the decisions leading up to the collapse of Afghanistan reveals that the key leaders involved lack some of the most important qualities needed by those who lead and govern: a common sense of shared purpose, the ability to make sense of what's going on around them, the ability to listen to their people and anticipate unfolding events, the capacity to make sensible choices based on incomplete information, and the flexibility and willingness to change their mind based on "the adaptive stimulus of what's going on around them." Their collective incompetence not only changed world history, it also changed our species evolutionary history by causing the deaths of at least 13 American freedom fighters along with thousands of freedom-loving Afghans, while enabling hundreds of the world's most despicable terrorists to survive, thrive, and evolve into the future.

Note on Time-Line: This timeline is a living document, as key information continues to come out we will continuously update the time-line as appropriate.