



**SECRET//FVEY**

Exhibit 074

# Operation Allies Refuge After Action Review 24 SEP 21

## USFOR-A FWD Submission



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# Defense of Hamid Karzai International Airport

## Defense of Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA):

(U) Issue: Force not set to establish security of HKIA and commence ECC operations at start of the NEO.

(U) Discussion: At the start of NEO CENTCOM and USFOR-A (FWD) were still setting the force. On 15 AUG, we were out of position relative to airfield security and a large majority of the security force was still flowing in to theater. At the time CENTCOM directed 1/82 ABN to move into theater, ARG/MEU and SPMAGTAF forces were still flowing into HKIA. In-theater C-17s and C-130s were at a readiness rate of 50% with 3 of 6 in theater C-17s and 2 of 3 in theater C-130s having maintenance issues. This impacted our ability to move in-theater forces rapidly. Within 72 hours we had the appropriate forces to secure the airfield perimeter and rapidly respond to any breaches in perimeter security. Prepositioning security forces earlier in the sequence could have prevented the initial breaches in airfield security. The flow into theater was initially slow due to maintenance issues and activation of TRANSCOM assets.

(U) Recommendation: Align flow of forces to NEO conditions matrix triggers and consider using forces in theater as an initial in-extremis measure should timeline accelerate.



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## DoS Integration

### DoS Integration:

(U) Issue: Consular affairs personnel rotated during NEO.

(U) Discussion: On 21 August, DoS brought in new consular personnel and replaced the consular team that initiated the evacuation. This mid-evacuation rotation caused confusion as the new consular team established operations. The new team shifted to initially AMCIT and legal permanent residents only, but then shifted back, allowing P1/P2 refugees, and establish a level of SIV processing paperwork that was acceptable. This caused confusion for security personnel and evacuees which led to delays in evacuee processing. Consular staff did not have sufficient manning to supervise all processing at the gates which often led to Department of Defense (DoD) personnel at the gates making on the spot calls concerning paperwork. The Consular provided examples and training to the DoD gate guards for processing paperwork, though with the limited time and exposure, there was confusion as to what paperwork was acceptable.

(U) Recommendation: As recommended in JP 3-68, Department of State needs to identify in NEO planning the expected NEO numbers by category. The DoS needs to provide the adequate number of consular officers that were part of the NEO planning to facilitate the evacuee categories. The criteria for prioritization needs to be presented up front and designed with DoD lead ECC planners.

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(Abbey Gate Investigation)

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(b)(1)1.4d, (b)(1)1.7e



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# Crisis Action Planning: Abbey Gate Attack

## Crisis Action Planning: Abbey Gate Attack:

- (U) Issue: Casualty identification and tracking practices were insufficient for a mass casualty event.
- (U) Discussion: There was a severe failure in patient administration/tracking during the 26 August MASCAL event. This failure caused the misidentification of one set of remains and at least one casualty that was in critical condition. The names were misreported through official channels, but the discrepancy was discovered prior to notification. A full accounting and re-identification of all casualties was conducted prior to any further casualty processing.
- (U) Recommendation: Establish and rehearse casualty marking and accountability practices. Designate an individual/team with the sole duty of maintaining positive identification of casualties as they are identified and tracking location and status.



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# Afghanistan Special Interest Groups

## Afghanistan Special Interest Groups:

(U) Issue: Special interest groups contacted the Multinational Coordination Cell directly, and did not prioritize American citizens.

(U) Discussion: The Multinational Coordination Cell was created to facilitate extraction of personnel through requests received via phone and emails. Additionally, requests to evacuate at-risk Afghans came from executive branch officials, lawmakers, their staff offices, retired and active duty GOFs, and special interest over pursuing AMCITs prioritized by the US Ambassador and DoS. These requestors used both implied and actual authority to coerce members to extract their special interest groups, resulting in devotion of limited manpower solely to this task and creating undue pressure on an already complex process.

(U) Recommendation: Follow planning and preparation guidance in JP 3-68. Ensure all requests flow through designated channels and not directly to the force executing the NEO. Develop an IA TF to serve as the focal point for requests that has the resources and ability to prioritize evacuation requests, and consider forming on-site NEO coordination cell. Sustain the MNCC concept and resource this in future NEOs to facilitate US and coalition requirements.



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# Drawdown and Evacuation

## Drawdown and Evacuation:

(U) Issue: Delay in embassy staff drawdown, NEO declaration, and lack of agreed upon IA NEO I&W conditions increased risk to mission upon NEO execution.

(U) Discussion: Despite five EACs and persistent collaboration with the Embassy RSO and key leaders on the deteriorating security situation, USEK was slow to order needed reductions in its 2400 US person manpower. On 21 Jul, the Embassy directed a 17% cut by 10 Aug bringing to the total civilians to 2000 over a three week period. The Inter Agency NEO TTX on 10 Aug identified the deteriorating situation which predicted the full isolation of Kabul within the next 30 days, but concluded with a lack of consensus on conditions that would trigger a decision to execute a NEO. Attached USFOR-A (FWD) I&W conditions matrix highlighted 6 of 7 indicators in the RED on 9 Aug. On 11 Aug, the Embassy informally request DoD support in the evacuation over a 17 day period which would have completed the withdrawal to HKIA by 31 Aug. This slow draw down over weeks (verses days) forced USFOR-A (FWD) to place most of its focus on evacuating the embassy over a 12 hour period on the 15th of August as the capital fell to the Taliban while simultaneously working with JTF-CR on building and setting the force to secure HKIA. As the Taliban entered the city on 15 Aug, several thousand Afghan civilians breached the southern entrance to HKIA before security could be set, delaying the ability to secure the airfield for close to 48 hours and set conditions for JTF-CR Evacuation Control Centers (ECCs). Had there been a more holistic understanding of the I&W conditions being set for a decision to initiate a NEO by O/A 9 AUG, the evacuation of the USEK could have been executed more efficiently and enabled USFOR-A (FWD) and JTF-CR to manage security conditions at HKIA to allow for a more orderly NEO process.

(U) Recommendation: Future crisis planning should include a discussion on building consensus between DoS and DoD on NEO I&W conditions with triggers for actions that should be taken to avoid strategic surprise. One of these actions should be to establish agreed to minimal manning posture well in advance of a NEO being executed to ensure conditions are set for evacuation process.

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# ISB and TSH

## ISB and TSH Site:

(U) Issue: Insufficient processing capacity at temporary safe havens paused evacuations.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Discussion: USFOR-A (FWD) developed two branch plans in cooperation with multiple DoD organizations and DoS using a key assumption that embassy evacuations and Afghan SIV evacuations would not occur simultaneously. Additionally, an interagency rehearsal of concept (ROC) drill identified that the total evacuation population was unknown, and temporary safe havens would reach capacity in only 48 hours. During the NEO, White House direction to increase the flow of evacuees coupled with several hundred special interest group request for support outside the prioritization scheme rapidly increased the throughput of evacuees. As a result, simultaneous processing and evacuation of all groups resulted in temporary safe havens quickly reaching and exceeding capacity. [redacted] (b)(1)1.4a

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4a

(U) Recommendation: Planning for large scale NEO operations requires a mechanism to synchronize the flow of evacuees between departure and reception facilities and organizations. [redacted] (b)(1)1.4a

[redacted] (b)(1)1.4a



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# Taliban Coordination

## Taliban Coordination:

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Issue: Direct coordination with, and sharing intelligence with the Taliban enabled layered security, facilitated evacuation of AMCITS, and likely mitigated further ISIS-K attacks.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Discussion: POTUS directed and CDR USCENTCOM approved the sharing of intelligence for force protection threats with the Taliban (en extremis). (b)(1)1,4c intelligence obtained through

(b)(1)1,4c reports enabled USFOR-A (FWD) to pass hard copies of

(b)(1)1,4c This intelligence sharing built trust and opened critical lines of communication with the Taliban Commander assigned as our direct coordination POC. This coordination provided a critical conduit to coordinate crowd control, external security of HKIA, and ensured the evacuation of prioritized civilian personnel. The 26 Aug ISIS-K attack reflects the risk of reliance on Tb as they failed to ensure checkpoints were in place to screen personnel approaching the gates, however, following this attack the Taliban increased force protection measures (stopping traffic, searching vehicles, reducing crowds at gates, etc). This cooperation likely averted the imminent ISIS-K attack planned for 29 Aug and follow on attacks planned against the JTE on 30/31 AUG. This direct coordination set conditions for a coordination mechanism led by DOS to further evacuate AMCITs and SIVs post-31 August.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Recommendation: Be prepared to cooperate with traditionally hostile parties when strategic objectives dictate. Intelligence sharing served as the foundation of building trust with the enemy in an extreme situation and enabled further cooperation on security and evacuations after the JTE.

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## Command Relationships

### Command Relationships:

(U) Issue: C2 deviation from what was planned for NEO execution

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Discussion: NEO planning resulted in several options for HKIA security augmentation if required. This problem set was exercised during the interagency TTX and CENTCOM ROC Drills. In execution an alternative option was chosen, the 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV security element was called forward with the addition of the division headquarters to fulfill a C2 function of airfield security. This led to three general officers and corresponding staffs operating under an initially unclear COMREL based on the conditions on the ground. It wasn't until mid-NEO that COMREL was published by CENTCOM, even then it was unclear to many subordinate elements. The decision to incorporate the 82 ABN DIV TAC enabled effective division of tasks and relationships amongst the GO/FOs and key staff ultimately provided the foundation for a successful working COMREL. However, the absence of a clear and published COMREL prior to the execution of NEO had the potential to increase risk.

(U) Recommendation: Higher headquarters must publish COMREL prior to the start of an operations for all echelons especially when outside forces are included in the force presentation. Commanders at all levels must ensure this is clear to subordinate elements in execution.



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## International Support

### International Support:

(U) Issue: Multi-lateral diplomatic forum essential to unifying coalition support to operations

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(U) Recommendation: For all operational theaters, identifying, understanding and harnessing the framework by which senior diplomatic and military representatives can come together is essential to mitigating risk, providing time and space to make decisions.