

U.S. Plays Down Afghan Threat to Central Asia

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ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan — A senior U.S. diplomat has played down concerns among Central Asian governments that the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan could foment regional instability.

Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake said Tuesday during a visit to Turkmenistan that the United States will conduct a responsible pullback that ensures security gains made in recent years.

Blake commended governments in the region for their role in helping rebuild the Afghan economy. He singled out Turkmenistan for praise for supplying electricity to Afghanistan, with which it shares a 750-kilometer frontier.

He was circumspect over Turkmenistan's much-criticized lack of democratic rights, noting only that he urged authorities in talks Tuesday to promote fundamental freedoms.

(AP)

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