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Russia Says U.S. Mission in Afghanistan Has Failed

By AFP

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Bagram Airfield base in Afghanistan after all U.S. and NATO left. July 8, 2021 **TASS**

Russia on Friday said that the United States had failed in its mission in Afghanistan and blamed the withdrawal of foreign forces for the war-torn country's rapidly deteriorating stability.

Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan have capitalised on the last stages of the withdrawal of foreign troops to launch offensives, capturing a swath of districts and border crossings, and encircling provincial capitals.

The White House had tried to paint the drawdown of foreign troops in "the most positive colors," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday.

"But everyone understands that the mission failed," he told reporters at a conference in Uzbekistan attended by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

Lavrov earlier blamed the "hasty withdrawal" of U.S. and NATO troops worsening security in Afghanistan and warned of instability spreading to neighboring countries.

"In recent days we have unfortunately seen a rapid deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan," he said in comments carried by Russian news agencies.

"In light of the hasty withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO troops, there is huge uncertainty around the future of the political and military situation in this country," he told reporters.

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Russia hosted Taliban representatives in Moscow last week, where the insurgent group claimed to have control over about 85% of Afghanistan.

Moscow is closely watching the Taliban's advance and concerned about the potential for instability reaching neighbouring ex-Soviet Central Asian countries where Russia maintains military bases.

Lavrov said the crisis had increased the threat of terrorism and worsened problems surrounding drug trafficking, which he said had reached "an unprecedented level."

"It's clear that, in this situation, there is a real risk of instability spreading to neighbouring countries," he said in Tashkent, according to Russian news agency TASS.

Earlier this week, ex-Soviet Tajikistan said nearly 350 Afghan refugees had crossed its border fleeing Taliban advances.

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rakhmon conducted inspections at border guard posts on Friday, having earlier called up 20,000 reservists to bolster defences along the country's shared border with Afghanistan.

Russia's Defense Ministry said this week it was staging military drills in Tajikistan where it has a base aimed at buttressing border security with Afghanistan.

The Taliban is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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