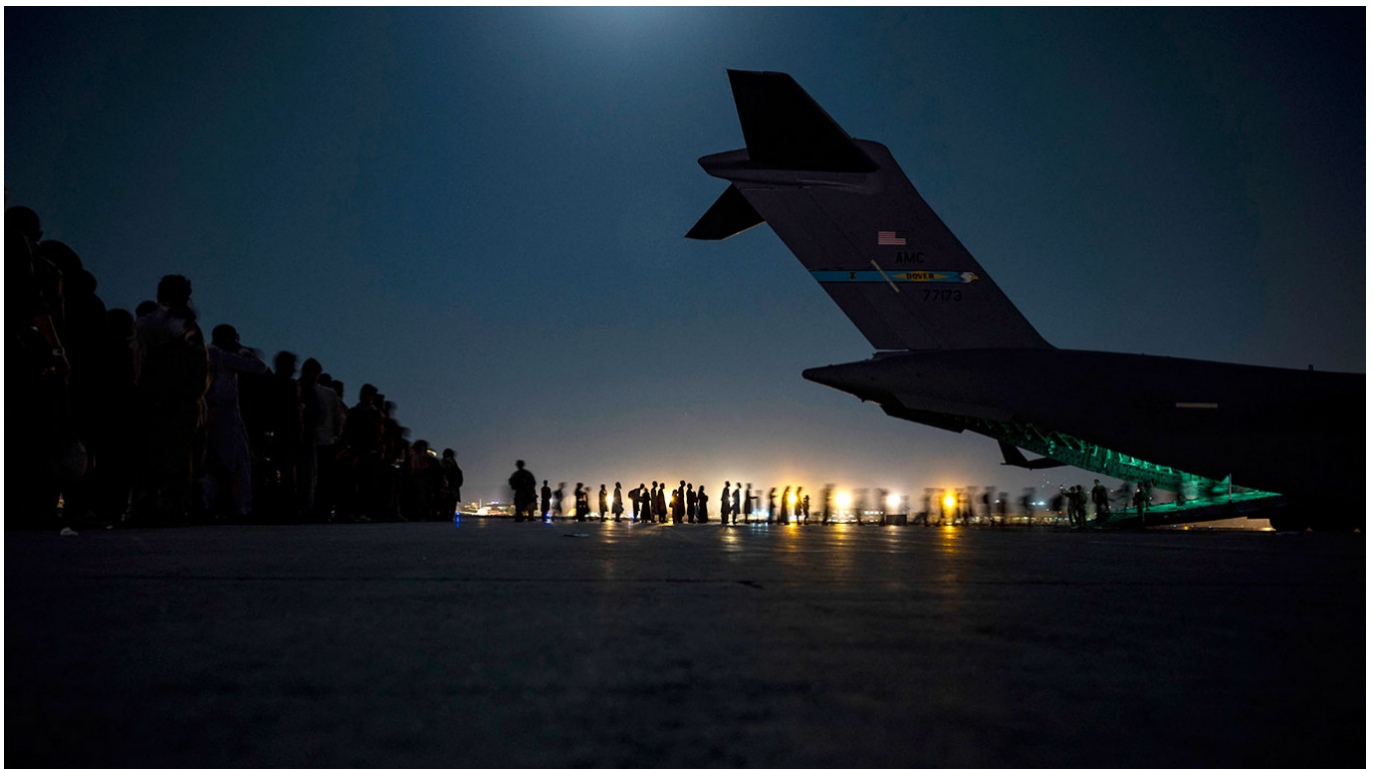# Ukraine FM Denies Its Evacuation Plane Was 'Hijacked' in Kabul

August 24, 2021

Ukraine is one of a number of countries that the United States says is assisting efforts to evacuate foreigners and Afghans from Kabul airport. **Taylor Crul / U.S. Air Force / AFP**

Ukraine's foreign ministry has refuted an earlier statement that a Ukrainian aircraft was hijacked at Kabul airport during a desperate evacuation of Afghans and other nationals seeking to flee the Taliban militant group.

On Monday, Ukraine's deputy foreign minister Yevhen Yenin spoke of two incidents involving its evacuation aircraft over the past week in comments to the Hromadske Radio media organization.

"Last Sunday, our plane was hijacked by third-party individuals who were armed, including with firearms," Yenin said.

"On Tuesday, a plane was in fact stolen from us. It took off for Iran with an unknown group of passengers on board instead of evacuating Ukrainians," Yenin said, adding that "our next three attempts to evacuate civilians were also not successful because our passengers could not

get to the airport."

But Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman Oleh Nikolenko on Tuesday [denied](#) that a Ukrainian aircraft had been hijacked in Kabul, telling Interfax Ukraine that Yenin "was explaining in general the unprecedented level of difficulties that diplomats have had to face in order to evacuate Ukrainians."

Nikolenko said Ukraine has carried out three evacuation flights that have transported a total of 256 people from Kabul to Ukraine.

The first evacuation aircraft carried 79 Afghans, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Tajiks, as well as Croatians and Dutch nationals on Aug. 16, according to Hromadske.

On Sunday morning, it said an Ilyushin Il-76MD military aircraft airlifted 83 people, including 31 Ukrainians.

Hromadske Radio reported that a third plane landed landed at Kiev's Boryspil Airport late Monday, carrying 98 people including 41 Ukrainian nationals.

The outlet said at least 50 Ukrainians remained in Afghanistan after around 200 of them contacted diplomats asking for help in returning home.

Ukraine is one of a number of countries that the United States says is assisting the airlift, which in addition to close allies Britain, France, Germany, Denmark and Italy includes Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

About 50,000 foreigners and Afghans have fled the country from Kabul's airport since the Taliban swept into power 10 days ago.

Crowds continued to mass outside the airport Tuesday as U.S. troops led an increasingly desperate effort to airlift thousands of people after the Taliban warned of an Aug. 31 deadline to pull out.

U.S. President Joe Biden and his top aides have repeatedly insisted they are aiming to stick to their Aug. 31 deadline, while European and British leaders are calling for more time.

Russia has said it would [provide](#) civil aircraft to evacuate anyone who wishes to leave "to any foreign countries that show interest in receiving and accommodating them."

Russian officials [said](#) last week that "one or two hundred" Russian passport holders remaining in Afghanistan had been evacuated earlier due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Taliban is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

AFP contributed reporting.

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