

Taliban fighters enter outskirts of Kabul as Western diplomats flee



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Kabul, August 15 (RHC)-- Taliban fighters began entering the Afghan capital of Kabul on Sunday, the last city to have been thus far spared takeover by the militants amid their breakneck blitz across the country.

A Taliban spokesperson said the fighters intended to negotiate a “peaceful surrender” of the city. The U.S. forces returning to Afghanistan are tasked with a “very narrowly focused mission” of evacuating

embassy staff in Kabul.

“Until a peace agreement is agreed, the security of the city and its residents is the responsibility of the government and they should guarantee it,” Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement.

A tweet from the Afghan Presidential Palace said there were “sporadic shootings in Kabul” but that the situation is “under control” with the help of security forces. The extent to which Taliban fighters have penetrated Kabul is not yet clear.

The Taliban were in the districts of Kalakan, Qarabagh and Paghman, according to the Associated Press citing three Afghan officials. NBC News could not independently verify this.

Since President Joe Biden’s April decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan before Sept. 11, the Taliban have made stunning battlefield advances with now nearly the entirety of the nation under their control.

The group previously captured the strategic city of Ghazni, which had brought their front line within 95 miles of Kabul, a staggering development that spurred the deployment of 5,000 American troops back into the country to help with evacuations.

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The State Department has issued repeated calls for U.S. citizens to leave Afghanistan immediately, warning that its ability to assist citizens is “extremely limited” due to deteriorating security conditions and reduced staffing.

Despite being vastly outnumbered by the Afghan military, which has long been assisted by U.S. and coalition forces, the Taliban seized Kandahar and Herat, Afghanistan’s second- and third-largest cities last week. The group also took the strategic town of Pul-e-Alam, a city that has one of the four main roads to Kabul.

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