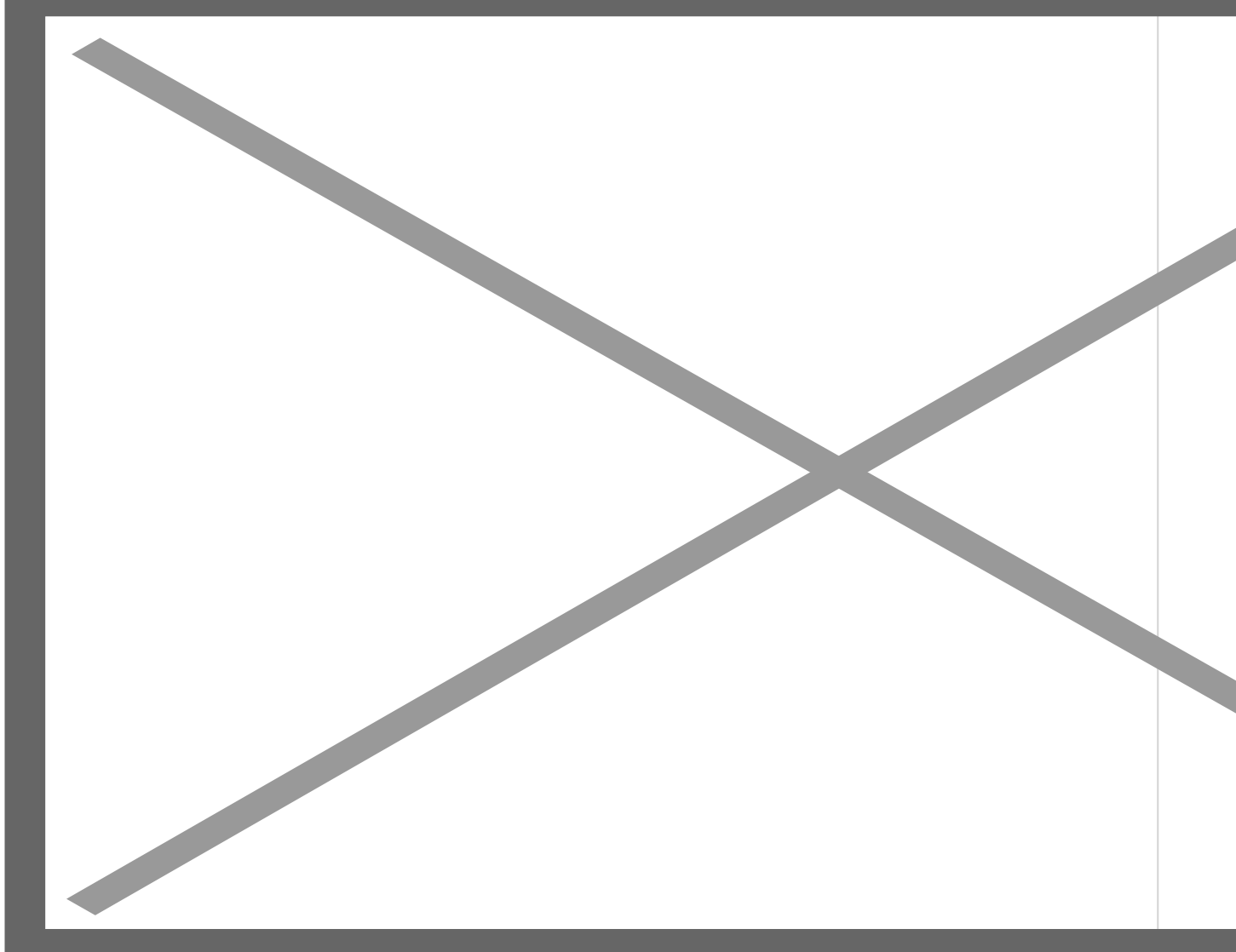


Taliban takes over Kabul as Afghanistan's president flees the country

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Taliban forces take control? of Kabul on Sunday

Kabul, August 15 (RHC)-- In a swift and stunning rout, Taliban fighters seized control of Afghanistan's capital Sunday, completing their sweep of the besieged nation as the Afghan government collapsed after two decades of U.S. efforts to reshape the region as part of its "war on terror."

Embattled President Ashraf Ghani fled the country as the Taliban entered the capital city of Kabul, and American troops scrambled to evacuate thousands of U.S. diplomats and Afghans from the U.S. Embassy.

The Taliban, which had been on the outskirts of Kabul for hours, announced soon after it would move farther into a city gripped by panic throughout the day as helicopters raced overhead to evacuate personnel from the U.S. Embassy. Smoke rose near the compound as staff destroyed important documents. Several other Western missions prepared to pull their people out.

The Pentagon authorized an additional 1,000 U.S. troops to be deployed to Afghanistan to help with the evacuation efforts, said a defense official who was not authorized to speak publicly. That is on top of the 5,000 troops that President Joe Biden announced Saturday would be sent to ensure "an orderly and safe" drawdown and evacuate U.S. personnel, as well as Afghans who helped American forces.

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