

Russian president says U.S. achieved zero in Afghanistan

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Captain Melvin Cabebe with the US Army's 1-320 Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division stands near a burning M-ATV armoured vehicle after it struck an improvised explosive device (IED) near combat outpost Nolen in the Arghandab Valley north of Kandahar, Afghanistan. [File: Bob Strong/Reuters]

Moscow, September 1 (RHC)-- Washington's 20-year campaign in Afghanistan ended in tragedies and Washington achieved nothing, Russian President Vladimir Putin has said, adding that the U.S. army's attempt to ingrain their norms in Afghanistan was futile.

Speaking on Wednesday at a meeting with teenagers in the Russian far eastern city of Vladivostok to mark the start of the school year, Putin said: "American troops were present on that territory (of Afghanistan) for 20 years, and over those 20 years they were trying – this can be said without offending anyone – to civilise the local people, but in fact, to impose their norms and standards of life in the broadest sense of this word, including the political organisation of society.

"The only result is tragedies and losses for those who were doing that – for the United States – and especially for the people who live on the territory of Afghanistan. This is a zero result, if not negative." It is "impossible to impose anything from outside."

"The result is sheer tragedies, sheer losses, both for those who were doing that – the US – and more so for the people who live in Afghanistan. A zero result, if not negative," Putin said.

Last week, Putin said Russia would not interfere in Afghanistan and that Moscow had learned from the Soviet occupation of the country. Moscow fought a 10-year war in Afghanistan that ended with the Soviet troops' withdrawal in 1989.

Putin has also complained about Western countries trying to place Afghan refugees in Moscow-allied Central Asian states, fearing that "radical Islam" would spill over into nations he is friendly with.

At the same time, Moscow has been cautiously optimistic about the new leadership in Kabul, saying it would not meddle in domestic affairs. But at home, the Taliban is still registered as a "terrorist" organisation.

Russia has evacuated hundreds of people from Afghanistan and plans to lay on further flights, while Putin's special representative on Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, said last week that Moscow's embassy was working to establish relations with Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers.

Russia was ready to help rebuild Afghanistan's economy, Kabulov said, urging Western nations not to freeze the Afghan government's financial assets. "We are establishing ties (with Taliban officials), our embassy in Kabul is working quite actively on this," he told Russian state television. "We have had such contacts for a long time and we will work further on them."

Recently, a Russian official dismissed any resistance efforts to the Taliban, saying there is no real alternative to the group.

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