

RECOGNIZING THE HEROIC EFFORTS OF LIFE-SAVERS

Salute To Patriots, Partners, & Participants In The Afghanistan Evacuations And Other Global Rescue Missions



Gen Chris Donahue

Charlotte Belis of Aljazeera

Respective of colour, race, religion, gender, skill or status every human life is sacred and should be accorded the necessary protection, preservation and prolongation to partake in earthly endowments and enjoyments. The hallowed duty to safeguard lives was again brought to global fore during the recent Afghanistan evacuation efforts. With the sudden collapse of the elected Afghan Government and the surprised 'Takeover' by the Taliban, who are now rapidly consolidating on power, it became crucially expedient for the western and allied forces with nearly two decades of occupation in the country to quickly relocate their various Embassy Staff, citizens and cronies to places of safety. Known for its past despotic and dictatorial regime, gross abuses of human rights, especially on women and girls, and unpredictable nature, even though the new rulers are assuring of reformations as they seek global recognition and acceptance, the western powers (who have fully withdrawn from Afghanistan based on the August 31st deadline agreement by the U.S.) could not take any risks of leaving their beloved behind enemies lines as this could bring dire consequences and forever regrets. So the only available option was to begin evacuations of affected people to different global destinations within deadline period.

The purpose of this article is to further:

- Recognize the efforts of numerous life-savers that executed these dangerous evacuations and many others executing high-risk and important missions as they constantly beckon globally.
- Reward selflessness, sacrifices, sympathy, strives and salutary strides of those who put their lives on the lines while prioritizing other peoples' well-being: men and women of pursuits and passions working profusely to keep things together and demonstrating rare show of solidarity in moments that mattered.
- Remember to always say **'THANK YOU'** to all frontliners and first responders racing to help us in the time of crises. This is necessary so we don't take for granted those who truly and wholly gives their all for us .
- Remind us that power is transient, friends and foes can work together on common interests and interdependence is crucial for living and survival.

For over two weeks, the world witnessed one of the highest human airlifts in history and with these corresponding courage, capability, compassion and commendation even in the face of criticism, dread and terror. Airlifting more than 123,000 evacuees in less than 20 days was not a folktale but a harsh reality that involved integrated efforts from nations, leaders of governments, academics, influencers, elected representatives, stakeholders, public officials, teachers & trainers, medical/healthcare professional, military serving members, veterans, airlines, flight crew members, media organizations & journalists, philanthropists, diplomats, negotiators & facilitators, and several others across the world whose prayers and best wishes still continues. Obviously, relocating people from a place of almost 20 years of residency is not always not an easy task, especially when the movement was unprepared and the displaced had close attachments to kindred, livelihoods, locality and interests. It is often painful separations, sad departures, traumatic experiences and unpleasant memories.

The fact is a lot of things were intricately involved and so many happenings went on behind the scene in rescuing the throng of thousands willing and ready to leave Afghanistan at the short period of notice, hurriedness and uncertainty. People came together and solved problems after problems, working day and night and around the clock, coordinating the operation, networking with partners in and out of Afghanistan to ensure the evacuations operation achieved the extraordinary result currently celebrated. From identifying, contacting, physically carrying out numerical counting, processing travel documents and clearance for boarding of evacuees, attaining effective security amid great threats, and providing needed press-coverages to ensuring that assigned on-site and connecting planes flew people to various places of desired safety where evacuees can begin new lives and promising futures. These heroic actions and actors will always be remembered in respected annals, tabloids, screens and human hearts.

Special Salute To:

i. Heads of Governments, multilateral institutions, Groups of Nations, leading organizations and Agencies, hosts and helpers in transit nations, mediators, logistics providers, facilitators in settlement and refugee camps, providers of urgently needed assistance and officials presently involved in intense diplomatic efforts to airlift more evacuees out of Afghanistan. These key stakeholders include: President Joe Biden and the U.S. Government, Prime Ministers, Chancellor, Presidents, Kings, Secretary- General, CEOs and leaders in **UNITED KINGDOM, CANADA, FRANCE, BELGIUM, ITALY, SWEDEN, IRELAND, CZECH-REPUBLIC, POLAND, HUNGARY, DENMARK, UKRAINE, AUSTRIA, SWITZERLAND, THE NETHERLANDS, SPAIN, GREECE, QATAR, TURKEY, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, INDIA, JAPAN, KOSOVO, NEW ZEALAND, AUSTRALIA, RUSSIA, PAKISTAN, UNITED NATIONS, UNSC, UNICEF, RED CROSS, WHO, EUROPEAN UNION, etc.**

ii. All late, former/retired, serving military and related security men and women across participating nations: uniformed personnel who showed exceptional bravery, professionalism, resilience and patriotism in the 20 years Afghanistan expedition. These troops on the frontlines faced grave dangers with some of them paying the supreme sacrifice as they carried out orders that safeguard lives and assets of compatriots and partners. As the last military representative, Gen Chris Donahue left Afghanistan, marking the end of a very long war, these participating nations can proudly raise their heads high-up and keep their flags flying of their various accomplishments. Tributes to the 13 fallen U.S. soldiers at the evacuations site at Kabul airport, comprising: *Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Darin T. Hoover, 31, of Salt Lake City, Utah, Marine Corps Sgt. Johnny Rosariopichardo, 25, of Lawrence, Massachusetts, Marine Corps Sgt. Nicole L. Gee, 23, of Sacramento, California, Marine Corps Cpl. Hunter Lopez, 22, of Indio, California, Marine Corps Cpl. Daegan W. Page, 23, of Omaha, Nebraska, Marine Corps Cpl. Humberto A. Sanchez, 22, of Logansport, Indiana, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. David L. Espinoza, 20, of Rio Bravo, Texas, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz, 20, of St. Charles, Missouri, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Rylee J. McColkum, 20, of Jackson, Wyoming, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Dylan R. Merola, 20, of Rancho Cucamonga, California, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Kareem M. Nikoui, 20, of Norco, California, Navy Hospitalman Maxton W. Sowiak, 22, of Berlin Heights, Ohio, Army Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Knauss, 23, of Coryton, Tennessee.* Your gallant and heroic sacrifices remain eternal in our memories.

iii. To distinguished diplomats (within and outside Afghanistan) who amid the chaotic and airport crisis tirelessly toiled to ensure evacuees' identification, made strategic and relentless contacts (making tens of thousands of calls and emails: for U.S. alone about 55,000 phone calls and 33,000 e-mails were sent since August 14th), provided vast consular services and ensured onward relocation of evacuees to homeland and new homes. The efforts of Envoys (from the Department of States, home Foreign Ministries, Embassies and Consulate General in Afghanistan and beyond including transiting countries like Qatar), some of which were called out from retirement laboriously worked to save lives that would have been trapped, targeted or even terminated will never be forgotten. Kudos to the last diplomat standing in the extract mission, US charge d' affaires, **Ambassador Ross Wilson**, a man of commitment and compassion.

iv. To varied external participants who spent their precious time and utilized scarce resources to improve the lives of the Afghans including women, youths and young girls: helping them with the required education and development opportunities, needed training and work, humanitarian needs, socio-economic empowerment, and the political, cultural and religious liberties to successfully pursue their careers and futures in the twenty years occupation. And countless contributors comprising individuals, associations, multi-partners and groups who are racing and risking it all through networking, financial and critical travels/flights arrangements to evacuate as much compatriots and vulnerable Afghans as possible. Even animal pets were not left out in their considerations, a host of these human companions also made it to safe havens.

v. To other Afghans within the country who provided life-saving interventions during the Kabul airport bombing that claimed over 170 fellow citizens' lives. Those who offered first aid services, rushed the wounded from the attack sites to vehicles and ambulances that conveyed them to the hospitals, doctors and nurses who attended to the survivors, and several other unsung and un-noticed helpers in the crises.

As the Afghans evacuees charts a fresh course in their new homes across nations of their various dispatch, it is hoped they will always find ways to contribute and support nation-building efforts in their host countries, become relevant to ongoing development process, and use these emigration opportunities to build a critical mass of elitist 'diasporian-army' that will return back in the years ahead to build a better and greater Afghanistan of their dreams. Only with their positive attitude and growth-inclined contributions can they reciprocate the gestures that saved their lives and will inspire more life-saving inputs. And, as the push for more evacuations continue the new Taliban leadership is expected to do what is right, live up to their various promises, rule well, respect the rights of women and improve citizenry welfare.

Importantly too, the exploits of life-savers in risky endeavors and environments around the world cannot be over-emphasized. The prompt responses from people of diverse specializations who rallied to save and provided succor to victims of the devastating earthquake in Haiti, the ravaging forest fires and floods in Europe, Japan, Turkey, North-Africa (Algeria) and California and the catastrophic tornadoes and Hurricane Ida that left millions in darkness, without homes, without basic supplies and in great discomfort in the U.S. Eastern Gulf Coast are inspiring and laudable. Profound appreciation to the helpers that kept attending to global humanitarian crises and needs, providers of life-giving medical aid and food items, pursuers of educational improvements, peace builders, advocates of trade and socio-economic growth, supporters of Girl-Child, women and youth advancement, rescuers of stranded migrants from dangerous voyages, promoters of cultural and tourism growth, fighters against rape, violence, illicit drug and human trafficking, champions of famine & hunger eradications and promoters of global sustainability. Moreover, the invaluable roles of those currently at frontlines of the Covid-19 crisis are also recognized: medical and non-medical professionals and volunteers who stood their grounds to say enough of deaths and disasters from the devious virus threatening to wipe humanity from the planet; scientists who promptly developed quick test-kits and miracle vaccines, health carers providing confrontational and curative efforts at hospitals, enforcers of lockdown measures toward curtailing the pandemic spread and severity, network of experts assisting in contact-tracing and tech companies providing and updating vital information on Covid-19. We love you all.

With worsening climate issues, frequent natural disasters and accidents prevalence, disease burdens, wars, terrorism and violence escalations... and as hearts fuse together, hands join-in-hands and legs sprinting to attend to these global challenges... **we will continue to celebrate our treasured Life-Savers ...Even YOU! ANN.**