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Pentagon slams leak showing US deaths in Kabul bombing could have been avoided

By [Steven Nelson](#)

August 30, 2021 2:15pm Updated

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The US government had advance notice and could have avoided last week's airport bombing that killed 13 US service members, according to a new report — as some relatives of the victims are furious at President Biden for his Afghanistan exit strategy and his conduct at a ceremony honoring the fallen.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby on Monday slammed an “unlawful” **leak to Politico** revealing that the **deaths of US troops** in last week's Kabul airport bombing could have been averted, as the Pentagon was aware hours in advance of an imminent “mass casualty” attack.

Kirby was asked at a press briefing about the report, which says the US knew the approximate time and location of the bombing that on Thursday struck the airport's Abbey Gate — but that a plan to close the gate to protect US troops was abandoned.

“I am absolutely not going to speak to a press story that was informed by the unlawful disclosure of classified information and sensitive deliberations here at the Pentagon — just not going to do it,” Kirby said.

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The Kabul airport shortly after a suicide bomb was detonated in the large crowd trying to flee Afghanistan.

AP Photo/Wali Sabawoon

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Sources: Planet Labs Inc.; Wikimapia; Associated Press reports

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A satellite image shows Kabul International Airport showing of the explosion that killed 13 US service members and several Afghans.

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Volunteers and medical staff bring an injured man for treatment after an explosion killed people outside the airport in Kabul on August 26, 2021.

WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP via Getty Images

Politico reported that the US military knew that Abbey Gate was the likely target and in the early morning hours of Thursday developed a plan to close the gate Thursday afternoon. But the gate was instead left open to allow a British operation to evacuate people from the nearby Baron Hotel. The bomb exploded around 6 p.m., killing nearly 200 people in total.

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Kathy McCollum, the mother of 20-year-old US Marine Rylee McCollum, who died in the bombing, said Friday [in a SiriusXM interview](#) that people who voted for Biden “just killed my

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Pentagon spokesman John Kirby slams Politico for leaking documents that hinted the US had intel that there would be an attack on Kabul's airport on August 26, 2021.

AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

McCollum's wife, Jiannah McCollum, who is pregnant with their child, reportedly was upset by a meeting with Biden on Sunday as the president watched the remains of the US service members return to the US at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware.

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Biden was widely faulted for checking his watch during the casket arrival ceremony. And later on Sunday, the president refused to take a reporter's question on whether there remained a

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The faces of the 13 US service members who were killed on August 26, 2021, by an explosion in Kabul.

The US government had publicly warned US citizens to avoid the airport in the hours ahead

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“[McCollum’s sister] said, ‘You can’t f— up as bad as he did and say you’re sorry. This did not need to happen and every life is on his hands.’... Can you talk a little bit about how the president thought the meeting with the families went — and also, what responsibility, if any, for these deaths does he think he bears?”

Psaki said that “it is certainly the right of any individual who met with the president yesterday to speak publicly about their experience. But I’m not going to speak about the president’s experience beyond what I’ve said already.”

She said that “the president made clear, as the Secretary of State and our national security adviser have made clear that we’re all responsible. And they feel responsibility and the buck stops with the president. And I think you heard him say that on Thursday when he spoke to the loss of life of these servicemen and women.”

Psaki said that Biden “absolutely” intended to stay in touch with the families of the victims, but that it’s unclear if he will attend any of the funerals.

“He’s only going to do things that are of comfort to the family, are supportive of remembering the lives that have been lost,” she said.

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A Taliban fighter stands guard at the site of a powerful explosion that killed scores of people including 13 US troops. WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP via Getty Images

Biden has sought to deflect blame for the desperate evacuation efforts by emphasizing that the US withdrawal was set in motion by his Republican predecessor, Donald Trump, though Trump and even some Democrats in Congress have harshly criticized Biden’s planning for the final drawdown.

On Monday, Peak was pressed by MSNBC reporter Peter Alexander on reporting that the

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worth of American-made weaponry?” Alexander asked.

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“We have an enormous amount of leverage, including access to the global marketplace, which is not a small piece of leverage to the Taliban,” she said.

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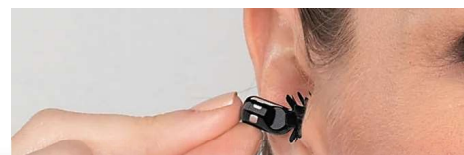
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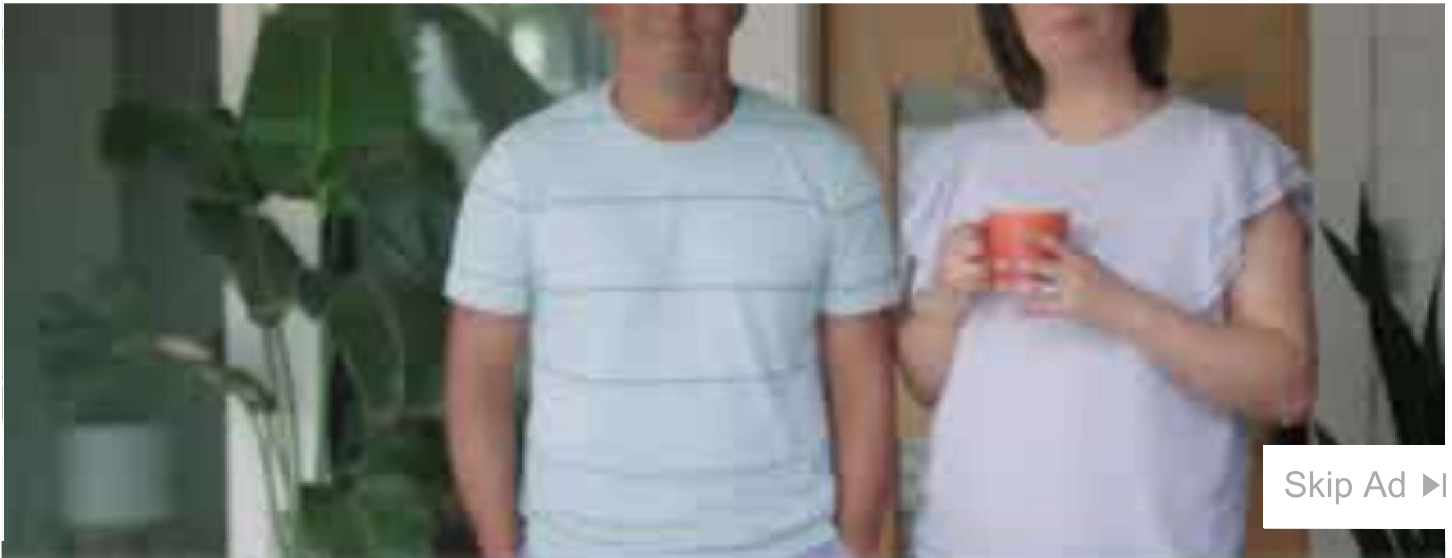
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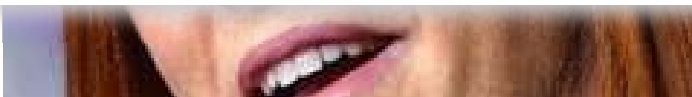


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