

# What's Behind Trump's Threat to Retake Bagram Air Base?

(Translated)

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In recent weeks, Donald Trump has repeatedly talked about the possibility of retaking Bagram Air Base and issued a series of warnings. In September, he wrote on his Truth Social platform, "If Afghanistan doesn't give Bagram Airbase back to those that built it, the United States of America, BAD THINGS ARE GOING TO HAPPEN!"

Current US policy toward Afghanistan lacks a final, written strategy and has so far relied on a policy of carrots and sticks, with threats and incentives. With the Trump administration's rise to power, pressure has prevailed, but evidence suggests that Washington is currently focusing on three central objectives:

- 1- The Taliban's commitment to the commitments stipulated in the Doha Agreement and its refusal to threaten the United States and its allies.
- 2- The release of Americans detained or held hostage.
- 3- The Taliban's intelligence and security cooperation with the United States in combating terrorism.

The reasons for the absence of a final strategy are also clear. During the UN Security Council session on Afghanistan, the US representative announced that "Washington's policy toward Afghanistan is under review." Elizabeth Stickney, spokesperson for the US State Department, also confirmed in an interview with Voice of America that Washington's priorities in Afghanistan are protecting Americans and safeguarding US national security.

Trump had previously commented on Bagram, but what distinguishes his latest threat from previous statements is its severity and timing. This escalation appears to be linked primarily to the Taliban leadership's resistance to some US demands, most notably the release of hostages. Following a new executive order issued by Trump granting the US State Department the authority to identify and sanction countries that unjustly detain Americans, a US delegation headed to Kabul, including Zalmay Khalilzad and Adam Bohler, the special envoy for hostage affairs. The delegation hoped to secure the release of some hostages, but negotiations failed. Following this failure, Trump threatened the Taliban with retaking Bagram. Khalilzad wrote on his Twitter account on September 20 that, "Assuming success in dealing with the prisoners/hostages issue between #USA and the Taliban, there will likely be more phases and additional issues to be agreed on and addressed. In time, I would not rule out enhanced security cooperation, including the use of facilities such as Bagram, for joint counter-terrorism operations. But it will take persistence."

However, America will not reoccupy this base. Its current strategy is based on strategic competition with China. Therefore, in recent years, the focus of its foreign policy has shifted from prioritizing the fight against terrorism, to competing with China,

which has led to the withdrawal of its forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, the possibility of a full return and widespread occupation of sites, like Bagram, seems unlikely, as such a move would effectively constitute a new attack and occupation.

Trump's recent threats regarding Bagram can be understood as part of a pressure policy, carrying indirect messages to China and Russia. This time, Beijing and Moscow have shown serious responses, including Beijing's invitation to Mullah Yaqoob Mujahid, Afghanistan's Minister of Defense. By raising the issue of reclaiming or pressuring specific sites, Trump has invited the Taliban to negotiate some of America's demands. If the leadership fails to respond, it may launch military strikes on sites inside Afghanistan, not necessarily with the intent of a permanent occupation, but rather to exert pressure.

These strikes could target one of two possible objectives: either destroying Bagram facilities and equipment, a major concern is that American weapons and equipment should not have fallen into the hands of the Taliban, or targeting key figures and specific Taliban leaders, particularly those Washington views as hardline or principled, and whose presence or influence it considers a hindrance to its interests and dealings.

This is the fate of an emerging state seeking to implement Islam within the framework of a nation-state. If it does not submit to Western demands, it will either be threatened with death or transformed into an arena for major power struggles. Trump's demand stems from blatant arrogance and represents a clear threat of reoccupation, while the Taliban government adheres to nation-state diplomacy and responds cautiously. The response to this arrogance is Jihad, within the framework of an organized army. In other words, breaking the yoke of arrogance can only be achieved by establishing the Khilafah (Caliphate), since only Islam has the power to decide in Muslim lands, and their lands are harnessed to the elevation of Islam alone. This can only be achieved by establishing the Second Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly Guided Caliphate) on the Method of Prophethood.

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