

# A hollow victory

**By Brian Lockhart**

It was 1975, and the rooftop of the American embassy in Saigon became a makeshift heliport as Huey choppers landed and loaded up embassy workers and panicked civilians as the North Vietnamese army surrounded the city and put a final end to 20 years of war.

The iconic images of the final moments of the siege show the faces of people desperate to get out of their own country rather than face the wrath of the army from the north.

Those images are now being compared to the situation in Afghanistan as thousands of people descended on the airport in Kabul last week in an attempt to fly out of the country after the Taliban effectively seized control of a good part of the country as the final American troops began to leave.

Many of them have good reason to be scared. If any of them had worked with the American or foreign governments in any capacity, or even the Afghan government, there would be no charges, no explanations, no excuses, just a bullet in the head to end their existence.

U.S. President Joe Biden made the proper move to remove American troops. You can't keep them there forever.

What was surprising was how fast the Taliban fighters crawled out of their rats' nests to take control of different areas. They were never defeated, they just blended into the regular population and waited for their chance to re-emerge and once again terrorize the population.

The regular Afghan troops, though well armed and well trained by the Americans, either do not have the will or ability to fight and protect their country, although it has been reported there are pockets of resistance in some areas.

There was a photo this week of the Taliban leadership at the Kabul airport declaring complete victory.

Being back in charge, at gunpoint, is not a victory. Terrorizing your own people is not a victory.

Afghanistan is already a struggling country with a third of its citizens already impoverished and experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity. Some sources say the country could be out of food within a month.

On top of that many state employees have stopped showing up for work placing basic services like electricity under threat.

Not only will Afghans be starving, they'll be doing it in the dark.

You can't blame state employees for leaving. Who wants to show up for your job only to have the muzzle of an AK-47 levelled at your head and be told to fix it or else?

The Taliban have a long list of people they want for working with foreigners. If caught, no doubt their accusers won't wait for anything like a trial or evidence, or even proof that a crime had been committed.

This new generation of Taliban leadership have declared themselves to be more moderate than their predecessors. Give the Taliban's past of torture, abuse of women and girls, mass executions, amputations, public floggings and beatings, does this mean a woman accused of adultery in public will only be shot once in the head in the town square based solely on an accusation by an angry husband or other family member?

There are already reports of Taliban members kicking down the doors of homes and demanding access to any girls inside.

The Taliban has taken over a country with no money. Assets have been frozen and are not available.

There will be some foreign aid of course. There is always one country willing to step up and help oppressors.

The real tragedy here is there are people Afghanistan who are there by birth, who want to live their lives, have a career, raise their families, and enjoy life.

When you are governed and oppressed by people who write your life story for you based on their rigid set of rules, those hopes of a life filled with self-direction, self-determination, and personal freedoms, are over.

The only recourse is to escape.

The Taliban claims to have a 'victory?', however, history will repeat itself and the oppressors will one day become the oppressed ? most likely a the hands of those they now stand side by side with.