



Truth Matters, We Verify

INCIDENT REPORT 2025

**False News about US Air Force
Plane Landing at Bagram
Airbase Debunked (Complete
Analysis)**

Published on:
Saturday, April 12, 2025

Fake News Watchdog

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org | **Web:** www.fakenewswatchdog.org



Truth Matters, We Verify

About Us

Fake News Watchdog (FNW) is a global initiative dedicated to identifying, analyzing, and countering the spread of misinformation and disinformation in today's digital world. We stand at the forefront of the fight for truth, empowering individuals, media professionals, academic institutions, and civil society to navigate the increasingly complex information landscape with confidence and clarity.

Our Mission

Our mission is to detect and debunk false narratives, monitor disinformation trends, and strengthen public resilience through media literacy. Leveraging artificial intelligence, advanced fact-checking tools, and rigorous research methodologies, we work to uphold the principles of transparency, credibility, and informed public discourse.

Our Vision

We envision a world where access to accurate, verified information is a fundamental right, and where communities are equipped to question, verify, and challenge misleading content. A well-informed society is the cornerstone of democracy, and we are committed to fostering a culture where truth triumphs over manipulation.

What We Do

- **Fact-Checking Services:** Verifying claims circulating in media, politics, and public discourse.
- **Reputation Management:** Monitoring digital platforms for false or misleading content about our clients and delivering timely, evidence-based rebuttals to protect their public image and credibility.
- **Research & Trends Analysis:** Studying patterns in disinformation to inform public policy and education.
- **Educational Outreach:** Promoting media literacy through training, resources, and awareness campaigns.
- **Global Collaboration:** Partnering with international organizations, journalists, researchers, and digital rights advocates to build a united front against fake news.

Fake News Watchdog

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org | Web: www.fakenewswatchdog.org



Truth Matters, We Verify

A Message from Our Team

At Fake News Watchdog, our mission is rooted in the belief that truth is not just a principle but a cornerstone of a thriving society. In an age where disinformation spreads faster than ever, the responsibility to uphold integrity in information is one we share collectively.

This report serves as both a reflection of the challenges we face and a call to action. It dives deep into the anatomy of disinformation, examining its sources, impact, and the societal vulnerabilities it exploits. By bringing these incidents to light, we aim to empower individuals, institutions, and policymakers with the insights necessary to recognize, combat, and prevent the spread of falsehoods.

Our work is not possible without the contributions of vigilant fact-checkers, dedicated researchers, and the trust of those who believe in a better-informed world. Together, we can build an ecosystem where truth has the power to outpace lies, fostering trust and accountability in every corner of society.

We hope this report inspires meaningful dialogue and decisive action. Thank you for standing with us in this crucial fight against misinformation.

– The Fake News Watchdog Team

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org

Fake News Watchdog

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org | **Web:** www.fakenewswatchdog.org



Truth Matters, We Verify

Our Team

Prof. Rehan Hasan (Patron-in-Chief)

Rehan Hasan is an accomplished Director with extensive experience in the broadcast media industry, showcasing a proven track record of excellence. Renowned for his expertise in Immersive Reality, Journalism, Media Relations, Radio, and Film Production, he brings a dynamic and innovative approach to every project. With a strong professional background and a passion for storytelling, Rehan continues to make significant contributions to the ever-evolving media landscape.

Dr. Asad Ali Shah (Co-Founder)

Dr. Asad Ali Shah is a professor, researcher, and entrepreneur. He has earned his Ph.D. in media and sociology from Canada. He has been teaching at different universities in Pakistan and Canada. He is the author of a number of publications, including a book, journal articles, and reports. After completing his doctoral degree in Canada, Dr. Shah returned to Pakistan to serve his country.

Muhammad Nasir Butt (Co-Founder)

Muhammad Nasir Butt is a seasoned journalist and academic, currently serving at Public TV. With extensive experience in media, he has previously worked with Capital TV and GNN. In addition to his journalistic endeavors, Nasir is also teaching media & communication courses at prestigious institutions including IIU and RWU. He holds an MPhil in Media & Communication and is pursuing a PhD in Media.

Sophia Siddiqui (Media Strategist & Researcher)

Sophia Siddiqui is a seasoned journalist, academic, and media strategist with extensive experience in both national and international platforms. With a decade-long career at Radio Pakistan, currently, she serves as the Manager of International Media at NDMA and She leads various media initiatives such as Taware Pakistan and Glory Media, focusing on youth, women, engagement, and environmental journalism.

Rubab Jaffery (Senior Researcher)

Rubab Jaffery holds a Master's degree in Media & Communication from the UK and brings a wealth of experience in journalism, working with several prominent media organizations, including Daily Jang.

Rashid Khan (AI Expert)

A leading expert in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Deepfake Technology, specializing in the development, analysis, and ethical implications of AI-driven content creation.

Fake News Watchdog

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org | Web: www.fakenewswatchdog.org



Truth Matters, We Verify

Copyright Statement

This white paper is intended for informational, academic, educational, media, and policy-making purposes. It explores the evolution and strategic redirection of India's space program from a development-focused initiative to one increasingly shaped by defense priorities.

All names, images, logos, and third-party content used in this publication remain the property of their respective owners.

This white paper may be reproduced, shared, or distributed without prior permission from the authors or the Fake News Watchdog organization, provided appropriate credit and citation are given.

Publisher: Fake News Watchdog, Islamabad, Pakistan

Publication Date: Saturday, April 12, 2025

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org

Website: www.fakenewswatchdog.org

Fake News Watchdog

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org | **Web:** www.fakenewswatchdog.org



Truth Matters, We Verify

INCIDENT REPORT 2025

False News about US Air Force
Plane Landing at **Bagram**
Airbase Debunked (Complete
Analysis)

Published on:
Saturday, April 12, 2025

Fake News Watchdog

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org | Web: www.fakenewswatchdog.org

About Bagram Airbase

Following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, Bagram Airbase has gained renewed significance, particularly for the Taliban-led Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA). Historically, Bagram was a vital hub for U.S. and NATO forces, supporting military operations and serving as a symbol of foreign presence. After the Taliban's rapid takeover, the IEA inherited the base, marking a symbolic and strategic shift in the country's power dynamics.

For the IEA, Bagram offers strategic military advantages, including a well-developed airstrip, secure perimeter, and ample facilities. Its location provides logistical support for military operations, surveillance, and airstrikes, bolstering the IEA's capability to control vast areas of Afghanistan. With the U.S. forces gone, Bagram has become a crucial point for maintaining internal security and managing potential insurgencies, particularly from groups like ISIS-Khorasan.

Furthermore, Bagram represents both a historical and symbolic shift in power. It stands as a reminder of the U.S. presence and their lengthy involvement in Afghanistan, and its capture by the Taliban highlights the successful assertion of control by the IEA. However, the base's use is also marred by the controversial detention facility previously operated there, which could potentially be repurposed for the IEA's own political or military interests.

As the IEA consolidates its authority, Bagram Airbase remains a strategic asset, offering both practical military importance and political symbolism in the post-withdrawal era. Its significance continues to evolve as the IEA navigates governance and security challenges in Afghanistan.

Bagram Airbase, located about 40 miles north of Kabul, played a pivotal role in the United States' military operations in Afghanistan for nearly two decades. It was established in the 1950s by the Soviet Union and later became a key base for the U.S. and NATO forces following the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. The airbase served as the primary hub for operations during the War on Terror, facilitating airlift missions, intelligence gathering, and logistical support.

Bagram's strategic location made it essential for military operations, offering a central point for deploying troops, equipment, and supplies throughout Afghanistan and the broader region. It enabled rapid response to emerging threats, such as insurgent attacks and Taliban forces, particularly in the country's remote areas. The base was also critical for

conducting airstrikes, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions, essential in countering insurgency movements.

Beyond its military significance, Bagram served as a symbol of U.S. and NATO presence in Afghanistan. It was a headquarters for both Afghan forces and international coalitions, influencing the political landscape of the country. The base also housed a detention facility, which became a point of controversy due to allegations of human rights abuses and torture of detainees.

After the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, Bagram Airbase was abandoned, marking the end of a significant chapter in the country's military history. Its closure underscores the shifting dynamics of Afghanistan's future and the complex legacy of foreign intervention.

1. Origin of the News

Claim

According to a report from Afghanistan's Khaama Press, the United States has recently retaken control of Bagram Airfield, a large military base located north of Kabul, at the request of the Taliban government. The report, published on April 7, 2025, details a significant development in the ongoing geopolitical dynamics of the region. The report claims that several U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III aircraft landed at the base in the past week, marking a notable shift in the control of one of Afghanistan's most important military sites.

The C-17 aircraft, which had taken off from Al Udeid Air Base in Doha, Qatar, crossed into Afghanistan via Pakistan on Sunday, carrying a substantial load of military vehicles and equipment. The report further reveals that the aircraft also transported key senior intelligence officials, including CIA Deputy Director Michael Ellis, indicating the high-level nature of the operation.

The decision to allow U.S. forces back into Bagram, previously abandoned after the U.S. withdrawal in August 2021, is a significant move, reflecting the evolving relationship between the Taliban-led government and the United States. While the details of the agreement between the two parties remain unclear, the retaking of Bagram Airfield marks a major shift in Afghanistan's security and political landscape, with the potential to influence future operations and intelligence gathering in the region. The development underscores the continuing complexity of Afghanistan's post-withdrawal dynamics.

Alleged Passengers: Members of the US Armed Forces, Deputy Director of the CIA Michael Ellis.

Initial Source: Khaama Press Afghanistan

Date of Circulation: April 7, 2025

2. Dissemination

Channels Used:

- Pakistani, Indian newspapers,
- Pakistani, Indian Television channels,
- Social media (Twitter, Facebook, Telegram, Instagram etc.)
- Regional news portals, podcast and talk shows
- Blogs or social media influencers

Language/Tone Used

The language and tone employed in the news items, television reports, and anchor deliberations were marked by sensationalism and a sense of urgency, often lacking verification or factual grounding. This approach heightened emotional responses, contributed to public anxiety, and compromised journalistic integrity by prioritizing impact over accuracy and responsible reporting.

Geographical Spread

The geographical spread of the news was global, however, given its direct relevance to Afghanistan, it received more concentrated coverage within the region. Notably, media outlets and platforms in India and Pakistan paid significant attention to the development, along with Iranian and Afghan regional and global interest blogs, as well as strategic communication and policy-focused websites.

3. Public and Political Reactions

Social Media Response

Digital media coverage has largely been speculative and driven by a sense of fear and uncertainty, often amplifying concerns without concrete evidence. However, amidst the apprehension, some narratives have also offered a ray of hope to the Afghan people.

Local Media

Everyone carries the story without verification

Taliban Response

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid has dismissed recent reports of a U.S. C-17 Globemaster aircraft landing at Bagram Airbase as "baseless propaganda." In a statement, Mujahid firmly asserted that no foreign military presence is required or allowed in Afghanistan under the current Taliban government. He emphasized that the country's sovereignty would be maintained, and the return of foreign forces, including the United States, would not be tolerated.

However, this statement from the IEA's spokesperson was not widely covered by most major media organizations, leading to some confusion and a lack of clarity regarding the nature of the situation at Bagram. While reports from sources like Afghanistan's Khaama Press had detailed the landing of U.S. aircraft and the involvement of senior intelligence officials, Mujahid's assertion contradicts those claims. This discrepancy between local reports and official Taliban statements raises questions about the level of cooperation or tension between the Taliban and the United States.

Given the historical significance of Bagram Airbase, both as a symbol of U.S. military dominance and as a key logistical site, the potential re-entry of U.S. forces could have substantial implications for Afghanistan's security and international relations. The lack of consensus in reporting highlights the challenges of obtaining reliable information in a rapidly changing and politically charged environment. The situation remains fluid, and further clarification from both sides is likely needed to fully understand the dynamics at play.

US Defense department Response

No immediate response from the Pentagon or US spokesman on the issue.

Other Fact checking organizations

Reports that Taliban ceded Bagram Air Base to US are unfounded (AFP Fact Check)

4. Fact-Checking and Debunking

Verified by

One of the senior most credible journalists with extensive experience in Pakistan affairs and deep connections within Afghanistan, Mr. Tahir Khan, has dismissed the recent report of a U.S. C-17 Globemaster aircraft landing at Bagram Airbase. Based on eyewitness accounts and direct communication with Afghan authorities, Mr. Khan has firmly rejected the claim as inaccurate. His long-standing involvement in covering regional affairs has provided him with a unique insight into the political and military developments in Afghanistan, making his assessment highly credible.

Mr. Khan's sources, both in Afghanistan and Pakistan, have not corroborated the claims made by the initial reports, which suggested that U.S. forces had retaken control of Bagram Airfield. According to his sources, no such foreign military presence is allowed in Afghanistan, aligning with the statements made by Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid, who previously dismissed the reports as "baseless propaganda."

The fact that Mr. Khan, with his extensive network and firsthand knowledge, has refuted these claims adds further complexity to the ongoing situation. His dismissal of the report highlights the challenges in obtaining accurate information from a region that has seen conflicting narratives and sources since the Taliban's return to power. Given his credibility and network, this rejection of the report suggests that the situation at Bagram Airbase might not be as the initial reports indicated, and further investigation will be needed to clarify the facts.

Journalists with close ties to the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan have also denied the widespread claim of any U.S. armed forces presence in Afghanistan, including the reported landing of a U.S. C-17 Globemaster aircraft at Bagram Airbase. These journalists, who have established credibility through their proximity to U.S. diplomatic sources, assert that there has been no confirmation or acknowledgment from the U.S. Embassy regarding any "boots on the ground" in Afghanistan. According to these sources, the U.S. government has not made any public statements or official claims about a return of military personnel to Afghanistan, which further contradicts reports suggesting otherwise. The absence of such a claim from the U.S. Embassy strengthens the position that no American military presence has been re-established in Afghanistan, despite circulating reports from various outlets.

The lack of clarity and the conflicting narratives surrounding the situation have led to confusion in the media. While some local Afghan reports and international sources initially

suggested the return of U.S. forces to Bagram, these claims have been challenged by those with direct connections to the U.S. diplomatic channels. This discrepancy highlights the challenges of verifying information in a region with complex political and security dynamics, particularly when official sources remain silent or dismiss the reports outright.

In light of these denials from both seasoned journalists and U.S. embassy contacts, it appears that the claim of a U.S. military presence at Bagram may have been based on misinformation, requiring further clarification from both Afghan and U.S. officials.

Other Tools Used for Verification

Satellite imagery



Reports claiming that the United States has been handed control of Bagram Airbase by the Taliban, and that C-17 aircraft have begun landing there along with significant equipment movements, have been deemed unsubstantiated. A thorough analysis of Sentinel-2 satellite imagery taken from March 31 and April 5, 2025, reveals no aircraft present at the base and no visible signs of any equipment movement. These satellite images, which offer a detailed and real-time overview of the situation on the ground, provide strong evidence against the claims of U.S. military activity at Bagram Airbase.

The absence of any aircraft or large-scale logistical activity, as shown in the satellite imagery, raises further questions about the authenticity of the reports circulating in the media. Given the sensitivity of Bagram's location and its historical importance as a key

military hub, any significant movements of military assets or personnel would likely be detectable via satellite surveillance.

These findings cast doubt on the accuracy of the initial reports, which had suggested that Boeing made U.S. C-17 Globemaster aircraft were landing at the airbase and that equipment was being moved in preparation for re-establishing a U.S. presence in Afghanistan. The lack of supporting visual evidence further undermines the credibility of such claims and highlights the importance of relying on verifiable sources when reporting on sensitive military matters.

This situation underscores the need for caution in interpreting unconfirmed reports and emphasizes the role of satellite technology in providing objective, factual information in conflict zones.

Flight tracking platforms

Flight trackers have reported that a C-17 Globemaster aircraft recently took off from Al Udeid Air Base in Doha, Qatar, and crossed over Pakistan and Afghanistan before entering Tajikistan. According to these tracking platforms, the aircraft's flight path was closely monitored as it traversed the region, raising questions about its purpose and destination.

While these flight tracking reports indicate the movement of a U.S. military aircraft, there is no confirmation of its involvement in operations related to Bagram Airbase or any U.S. military presence being re-established in Afghanistan. The aircraft's route through Pakistan and Afghanistan, and its eventual arrival in Tajikistan, does not align with the earlier claims of significant equipment movements or U.S. military activity at Bagram.

Given the sensitive nature of such flights and the region's geopolitical complexities, it is important to consider that aircraft in this part of the world often conduct logistics, reconnaissance, or personnel transport missions unrelated to any immediate military action in Afghanistan itself. The information provided by flight tracking platforms offer valuable insights into the movement of military assets but does not necessarily confirm specific ground operations or objectives.

Thus, while the C-17's flight pattern may raise speculation, it does not substantiate the broader claims of U.S. forces returning to Bagram Airbase or engaging in military operations in Afghanistan at this time. More concrete, verified reports would be required to fully understand the context and purpose of this particular flight.

Ground sources

Local journalists and officials have strongly denied any reports of a U.S. aircraft landing at Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan, carrying military equipment and personnel. These sources, with direct access to the region, have stated that no such landing occurred, further calling into question the authenticity of the earlier claims. Bagram Airbase, which is surrounded by dense housing areas, sees regular daily movement, with many individuals entering and exiting the base. This regular activity, combined with local oversight, makes it unlikely that such a significant operation could have occurred without being noticed by the local population or officials.

As of 2025, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has been working on efforts to restore the Afghan Air Force (AAF), utilizing the aircraft left behind after the withdrawal of U.S. and coalition forces in 2021. The restoration process is ongoing, with the IEA focusing on making the most of the military assets left behind, although the exact number of operational aircraft remains uncertain due to the fluid and evolving nature of the restoration efforts.

According to the World Directory of Modern Military Aircraft (WDMMA), the current active inventory of the Afghan Air Force under Taliban control includes approximately nine fixed-wing aircraft and six helicopters. Most of these aircraft were stationed at Kabul and Kandahar airports, where they are being refurbished and maintained. However, reports about the full operational capacity of these assets are inconsistent, and it remains unclear how many are fully functional and capable of active military operations. The restoration process has been complicated by limited resources and technical challenges, but the IEA's efforts to regain control over the country's airspace continue.

Result:

The reports claiming that a U.S. C-17 aircraft landed at Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan, carrying military equipment and personnel, have been proven false. Ground sources, local journalists, and officials have all strongly denied any such landing at the base. These reliable sources, with direct access to the region, have confirmed that no foreign military presence, including U.S. aircraft, has entered Afghanistan in this manner.

The airbase, which is surrounded by dense housing areas, sees daily movement of people entering and exiting, making it highly unlikely that a large-scale military operation could have gone unnoticed. This adds further credibility to the assertion that the initial claims were inaccurate.

Satellite imagery from Sentinel-2 taken on March 31 and April 5, 2025, shows no visible signs of aircraft at Bagram, nor any evidence of equipment movement, further debunking

the reports. These technological tools provide an objective and detailed look at the situation, confirming that the claims of U.S. aircraft activity at the base were unfounded.

In light of these denials from credible sources and the lack of supporting evidence, it is clear that the news of a U.S. landing at Bagram Airbase is false. This situation highlights the importance of verifying information through multiple reliable sources, particularly in conflict zones where misinformation can easily spread.

5. Intent Behind the Fake News

The recent wave of misinformation falsely claimed that a U.S. Air Force plane landed at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, allegedly carrying members of the American armed forces and a deputy director of the CIA. This report, although circulated widely through main stream Television channels, leading newspapers, social media and some digital platforms, has since been proven entirely false through our research and verification channels.

This incident report also seeks to explore the potential *intent and strategic motivations* behind the creation and dissemination of such disinformation. While the surface-level impact may appear limited, the implications of such false narratives are significant and warrant deeper analysis.

Possible Reasons

One of the most likely motivations behind this false claim is its function as a psychological operation (PsyOp). By suggesting a renewed American military presence at Bagram—an iconic site from the U.S. led mission in Afghanistan—the rumor may have been intended to generate fear, confusion, or hope depending on the audience, particularly in Iran, China, and Afghanistan.

Psychological operations are often used to shape public perception, sow uncertainty, and test political or social responses. In regions where trust in information ecosystems is already fragile, such tactics can be especially disruptive and effective.

At the time, American and Iranian officials were engaged in sensitive back channel negotiations. The emergence of such a rumor could have been designed to unsettle Iranian policymakers, shifting their strategic focus from U.S. activity in the Gulf to their eastern flank—Afghanistan. This shift in perception may have weakened Iran's bargaining position by introducing new variables into an already delicate diplomatic environment.

For China, which maintains strong diplomatic and economic ties with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), the claim was unexpected. However, given China's on-ground presence and access to reliable intelligence, it was able to quickly assess the veracity of the report. As a result, Chinese officials neither responded publicly nor appeared influenced by the disinformation, instead choosing to ignore the narrative altogether.

From the perspective of the IEA, this false report posed a different kind of challenge. Coming just days after their release of American nationals—a move that had placed them positively in the international media spotlight—the rumor raised questions about their sovereignty and control. It also threatened to undermine their recent diplomatic efforts and cast uncertainty on their future role in regional stability. As a psychological operation, it tested the reactions of key regional players, disrupted ongoing diplomatic processes, and introduced ambiguity in an already complex geopolitical landscape.

Over the past several months, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has experienced increasing strain, marked by a series of cross border incidents and the wave of terrorism related activities in Pakistan. Bagram Air base news have drawn significant attention from various segments of society, including religious communities and the broader public, who have traditionally played a role in fostering people-to-people connections. Emergence of news reports and narratives has raised concerns among stakeholders and have been perceived as efforts to deepen existing misunderstandings and divisions between the populations of the two countries. Within Pakistan, sympathizers of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) have expressed apprehension that such news could be part of a broader attempt to undermine mutual trust and disrupt the social and cultural ties that bind the two nations.

The news related to Bagram Air Base got a lot of space in the Indian media. Almost all the TV channels and newspapers and major social media platforms commented on it. Many well-known anchors expressed their views in their podcasts. It was part of India's propaganda war that almost all the media outlets including India Today, Hindustan Times, Times of India openly tried to prove it as Pakistan's military and diplomatic failure and took great enthusiasm in reporting this news as an opportunity to humiliate Pakistan.

Implications

The credibility and influence of mainstream media—including television, newspapers, and digital platforms is declining at an alarming fast pace. The erosion of journalistic integrity, increasing politicization of content, and the prioritization of sensationalism over substance have significantly impacted public trust. Traditional media, once regarded as the

cornerstone of information dissemination, is now frequently viewed with skepticism due to perceived biases, selective reporting, and lack of accountability.

This growing distrust has led to public disengagement, with audiences becoming more selective—or even indifferent—about the sources they rely on. The rise of click-driven content strategies have further fueled disillusionment, making it difficult for individuals to differentiate between credible journalism and manipulated narratives.

The spread of false and misleading information contributes to misinformed decision making, in a time when regional sensitivities are heightened, the deliberate and unchecked dissemination of the content, amplified through global networks intensifies confusion and fosters societal polarization. It also deepens divisions and hampers constructive dialogue. The resulting environment not only undermines public trust but also poses a significant challenge to peace building and stability efforts in the region.

It is essential to promote responsible communication and media literacy to counter the growing impact of misinformation on both local and international fronts. Media organizations must recommit to the principles of transparency, fact-based reporting, and ethical journalism and support our consistent fact-checking program.

