

Headlines:

- **US Warning: African Nations to be Punished if they Trade in US-sanctioned Commodities**
- **A Year After US Withdrawal from Afghanistan, Some Frustrated at Lack of Lessons Learned**
- **PTI Hires Firm to Improve Image in US**

Details:

US Warning: African Nations to be Punished if they Trade in US-sanctioned Commodities

African nations are free to buy grain from Russia but could face consequences if they trade in US-sanctioned commodities such as Russian oil, the US ambassador to the United Nations warned. "Countries can buy Russian agricultural products, including fertilizer and wheat," Linda Thomas-Greenfield said during her visit to Uganda's capital city Kampala, after a meeting with the country's President Yoweri Museveni. Museveni is a US ally who has, however, not criticized Russia's invasion of Ukraine and has expressed sympathy with Moscow. She added that if a country decides to engage with Russia where there are sanctions, then they "stand the chance of having actions taken against them." Her trip comes a week after the Africa visit of the Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov who dismissed charges that his country's invasion of Ukraine is solely responsible for a dangerous food crisis in countries ranging from South Sudan to Somalia. He blamed food shortages in the market on "the absolutely inadequate reaction of the West, which announced sanctions" following the conflict with Ukraine. Ukraine and Russia are key global suppliers of wheat, barley, corn and sunflower oil, with fighting in the Black Sea region, known as the "breadbasket of the world," pushing up food prices, threatening political stability in developing nations and leading countries to ban some food exports. Many African countries — including some with areas that are on the threshold of famine — depend heavily on grain imports from Russia and Ukraine. [Source: North African Post]

America's new strategy for Africa is punish African countries from buying food from Russia. The new scramble for Africa by the US is clearly intended to restrict Russia and China from exploiting Africa's resources. Instead, the US wants to neo-colonise the continent for itself under the pretext of keeping Russian and China out.

A Year After US Withdrawal from Afghanistan, Some Frustrated at Lack of Lessons Learned

On July 21st, several dozen consular and diplomatic security officers of the U.S. State Department were given the agency's prestigious Award for Heroism for assisting in the relocation of 124,000 people from Kabul in August 2021, including American citizens, legal permanent residents and tens of thousands of Afghan allies. "They worked closely with the Department of Defense, and other key agencies, and provided the leadership structure that underpinned and facilitated the department's operations at Hamid Karzai International Airport between August 15-30," a State Department spokesperson told VOA. One of the recipients, who spoke to VOA on condition of anonymity, likened the award ceremony to "group therapy" that helped put in context his feeling of helplessness during the grueling and dangerous two weeks of airlifting Americans and Afghans as Kabul swiftly fell to the Taliban. "We really beat ourselves up," he said. "You disproportionately look at what you couldn't do, the lives you couldn't save." After the operation ended, he said he worked through post-traumatic stress disorder therapy and spent much of the past year processing the sequence of events that capped the 20-year war with a chaotic withdrawal — bloodied by a suicide attack that killed 180 people, including 13 American troops — and left tens of thousands of Afghan allies behind. He and others involved in the massive airlift expressed frustration at what they see as the administration's lack of transparency on the lessons learned from the U.S. military pullout after the country fell so swiftly into the hands of the Taliban. "I'm really angry that we did that. We put so many people in harm's way," he said. "How did that happen? There are so many things that failed leading up to it." Ahead of the upcoming

November midterm elections, the Biden administration appears reluctant to delve into details of what went wrong in the last phase of America's longest war. The administration has largely stonewalled calls for more transparency, including from congressional Republicans who are demanding a full committee, unclassified hearing open to the public. More broadly, there is a general disappointment from the rank-and-file members of the military that "there hasn't been a more dedicated and resourced effort" to learn from the Afghan war, said Jonathan Schroden, director of the Countering Threats and Challenges Program at the Center for Naval Analyses, a nonprofit military research group. "It's more important for long-term systemic learning and organizational learning. Revisiting in detail how did we end up in a situation where we had to do that withdrawal, to do an evacuation, is critically important," he told VOA. "Right now, beyond what SIGAR is doing, there is no effort inside the U.S. government to do that systematically." The war in Afghanistan killed more than 2,400 U.S. troops and cost taxpayers \$300 million every day for 20 years. A holistic, interagency study that identifies best practices and challenges at various U.S. government entities as well as across the entire operation is crucial, said Mark Jacobson, who helped organize evacuees during the withdrawal and served as a deputy NATO representative in Afghanistan. [Source: Voice of America (VoA)]

It is obvious that America's longest war, which ended in humiliation continues to haunt the US. After spending all that wealth and blood, the US has only defeat to show for in Afghanistan. This also raises interesting questions about why the Taliban rushed to conclude a deal with the US, when the group clearly had the upper hand. The rush to take power obscured the Taliban from the challenges that they are struggling to overcome today like the economy and isolation from many countries.

PTI Hires Firm to Improve Image in US

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) US chapter has hired a public relations firm to improve its image in the United States, where it has been portrayed as anti-America since April, when party chairman and former premier Imran Khan accused Washington of backing efforts to overthrow his government through a no-confidence motion. Following his ouster in April, Mr Khan and his party have been running a systematic campaign on the narrative that the US backed "local abettors" to topple his government through a conspiracy, and install an administration of its choice. However, this latest move suggests that the party is looking to carry out damage control following its leader's campaign, vilifying the US to win over popular support in Pakistan. "This is an agreement between a PR firm, not a lobbyist, and a group of US citizens," Sajjad Burki, the PTI chairman's focal person for the US, told Dawn. "We are not lobbying for PTI Pakistan, and certainly not within the US administration." The agreement, signed on Aug 1 between David Fenton of Fenton/Arlook and attorney for PTI USA Salman Ravala became effective on Aug 9. It points out that PTI USA "is not supervised, owned, or controlled by any foreign political party, but will in certain instances be directed by a foreign political party in Pakistan". The PTI USA will pay the firm \$25,000 per month, "collected from PTI supporters who are legal US residents", Atif Khan, another PTI official, in Dallas, Texas, told Dawn. The documents filed on Aug 9 showed the party had engaged Fenton/Arlock LLC to support the PTI's "goals for good relations with the United States and the Pakistani diaspora in the US". The documents appear to lend credence to reports that the party was trying to mend its ties with the Biden administration after relentlessly accusing it of backing efforts to overthrow the PTI government through a "conspiracy", which includes backing the Pakistan Democratic Movement that is in power in Islamabad. Under the agreement, the New York-based PTI USA is the principal client of the PR firm, which has been hired for six months to manage the party's public and media relations. The same firm has previously represented the Pakistan embassy in the US for a brief period while the PTI was in power. Former prime minister Imran Khan also had dinner at Fenton's in 2019 when he visited New York to attend the UN General Assembly session. [Source: Dawn]

After persistently blaming America for ousting him from power, Khan now wants to mend ties with the Biden administration. The reversal of IK's position just underscores that the PTI along with all the other political parties are totally dependent upon America to secure their political fortunes. Khan has long lamented about intellectual slavery to the West and now his reversal confirms that he is also a slave of America.