

Germany's Merkel holds phone calls with US, Uzbek presidents

Developments in Afghanistan were main concern of both calls, say diplomatic sources.

BERLIN/TASHKENT, Uzbekistan

German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke by phone Wednesday with US President Joe Biden and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, according to diplomatic sources.

In her call with Biden, Merkel stressed the importance of evacuating Afghan citizens who worked for Germany, said government spokesperson Steffen Siebert.

Merkel and Biden also agreed to strengthen cooperation between their two countries, including between German and American troops at Hamid Karzai International Airport in the Afghan capital Kabul, Siebert added.

In a separate call held between Merkel and Mirziyoyev, the latest developments in Afghanistan and the evacuation of German citizens from there were addressed, the Uzbek Presidency's Press Office said in a statement.

Agreeing on the need to prevent a further escalation in Afghanistan, the two leaders reiterated that Germany and Uzbekistan hold similar stances on the importance of a political solution to the problems in Afghanistan, the statement noted.

Moreover, Merkel and Mirziyoyev decided to maintain close coordination for the evacuation of German citizens via Uzbekistan, the statement added.

As part of a peace deal reached in February 2020 between the US and the Taliban, this year, international forces began their withdrawal from Afghanistan.

*Writing by Ahmet Gencturk in Ankara

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