



Anyone who thinks the United States is really going to withdraw from Afghanistan in July 2011 needs to come to this giant air base an hour away from Kabul. There's construction everywhere. It's exactly what you wouldn't expect from a transient presence.

Step off a C-17 cargo plane, as I did very early Friday morning, and you see a flight line packed with planes. When I was last here two years ago, helicopters crowded the runways and fixed-wing aircraft were — well, if not rare, still a notable sight. Today you've got C-17s, Predators, F-16s, F-15s, MC-12 passenger planes ... I didn't see any of the C-130 cargo craft, but they're here somewhere.

More notable than the overstuffed runways is the over-driven road. Disney Drive, the main thoroughfare that rings the eight-square-mile base, used to feature pedestrians with reflective sashes over their PT uniforms carrying Styrofoam boxes of leftovers out of the mess halls. And those guys are still there.

But now the western part of Disney is a two-lane parking lot of Humvees, flamboyant cargo big-rigs from Pakistan known as jingle trucks, yellow DHL shipping vans, contractor vehicles and mud-caked flatbeds. If the Navy could figure out a way to bring a littoral-combat ship to a landlocked country, it would idle on Disney.

Expect to wait an eternity if you want to pull out onto the road. Cross the street at your own risk. Then there are all the new facilities. West Disney has a fresh coat of cement — something that's easy to come by, now that the Turkish firm Yukcel manufactures cement right inside Bagram's walls.

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