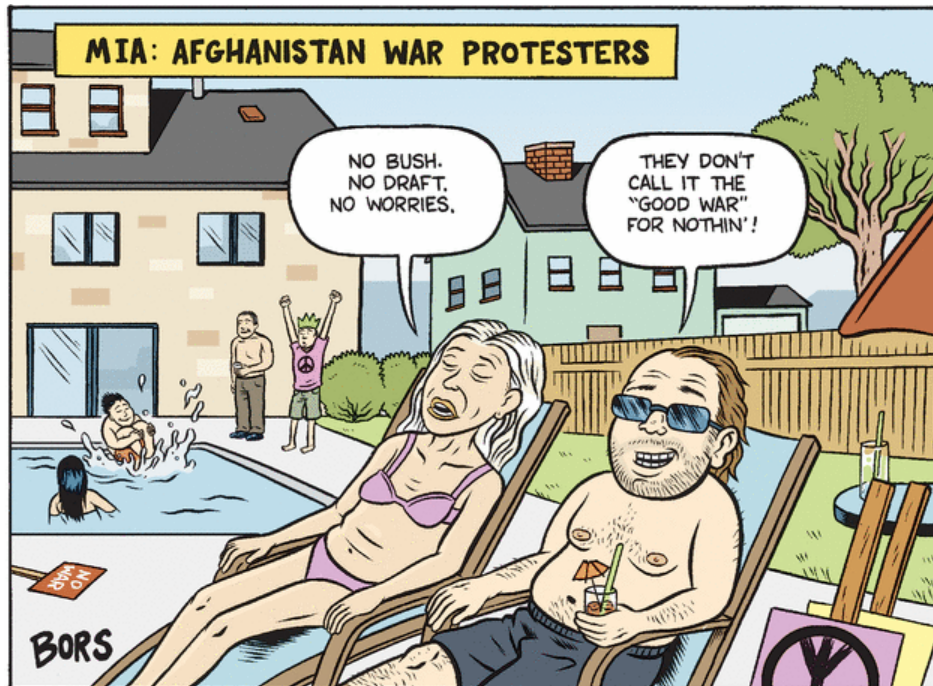


Military Resistance: 7/13:
[GI Special]



**Interviews With 6 Afghan
Resistance Fighters:
“A Rare Chance To Understand
How The Insurgents See This War,
From The Collapse Of The Taliban,
Through Their Revival And, Now,
Their Budding Ascendancy”
“Oral History, Told Through The
Words Of The Taliban Themselves”**



Sep 26, 2009 By Sami Yousafzai and Ron Moreau, NEWSWEEK [Excerpts]

During wars and after them, the real voice of the enemy is rarely heard.

Propaganda is plentiful, as are prideful boasts — and the Taliban have certainly been quick studies at the modern art of information warfare.

But the fears and ambitions of ordinary fighters are too often buried under statistics and theories propounded from thousands of miles away.

To put together this remarkable oral history, told through the words of the Taliban themselves, NEWSWEEK turned to contributing correspondent Sami Yousafzai, who has been covering the conflict for the magazine since 2001.

Over that time he has developed and maintained contact with dozens of Afghan insurgents, including the six whose stories are told here.

Working with NEWSWEEK's Ron Moreau, Yousafzai spent more than a month crisscrossing Afghanistan and Pakistan to meet these sources.

He has known them all for some time, and in the past their information has generally proved reliable.

While it's impossible to confirm the credibility of everything they say, their stories offer a rare chance to understand how the insurgents see this war, from the collapse of the Taliban, through their revival and, now, their budding ascendancy.

Chapter One: The Fall

'The bombs cut down our men like a reaper harvesting wheat. It felt like judgment day.'
Maulvi Abdul Rehman Akhundzada

HAQQANI: Two days before the September 11 attacks on America, we were all celebrating the death of (Northern Alliance commander Ahmed Shah) Masood. His forces were already on the verge of defeat, so his death all but assured us of total victory in Afghanistan.

But the September 11 attacks turned our cheer into deep concern. We gave those camels (a derogatory Afghan term for Arabs) free run of our country, and they brought us face to face with disaster.

We knew the Americans would attack us in revenge.

Realizing the danger, I immediately sent my wife and children to Pakistan. The entire government started to fall apart. I never thought the Taliban would collapse so quickly and cruelly under U.S. bombs.

Everyone began trying to save themselves and their families. When the bombing began, I changed out of my usual white mullah's garb, put on an old brown shalwar kameez, and headed for Pakistan. I crossed the mountains on foot, and at the top I turned around and said: "God bless you, Afghanistan. I'll never come back to you under our Islamic regime."

AKHUNDZADA: When the bombing started, I was commanding some 400 fighters on the front lines near Mazar-e Sharif. The bombs cut down our men like a reaper harvesting wheat. Bodies were dismembered. Dazed fighters were bleeding from the ears and nose from the bombs' concussions. We couldn't bury the dead. Our reinforcements died in their trenches.

I couldn't bring myself to surrender, so I retreated with a few of my men in the confusion. Everything was against us. The highway south to Kabul through the Salang Tunnel was blocked. We walked four days in the deep snow without food or water. Kids started shooting at us from the hilltops, hunting us like wild animals.

By the fifth day I could barely walk.

I hid my weapon and walked to a village, saying I was a lost traveler and asking for food. The villagers fed me, but I had lost touch with my comrades. I walked on until a minibus came along; I aimed my gun at the driver and forced him to stop. The van was full of Taliban. They said they had no room for me, but I threatened to shoot out their tires unless they took me. I had to lie on the floor with their feet on my body. It was uncomfortable, but I was warm for the first time in days.

A group of local militiamen captured us the next morning at a checkpoint on the Kabul-Kandahar highway. We were nearly dead. Our mouths were dry and cracked, our lips bleeding. It felt like Judgment Day.

I lay in their filthy jail for a month before they let me go free, just after the Eid holidays. With the strength I had left, I made it to Peshawar. Our Islamic Emirate had collapsed with less than 40 days of resistance — I couldn't accept that. Allah would let us rise again, I thought, because of all the blood we had spilled for Islam.

KHAN: After the mujahedin began retreating, Arabs, Chechens, and Taliban raced by our house and mosque in Ghazni in convoys of cars, pickups, and trucks, headed to Pakistan.

Almost immediately they started getting bombed. So they abandoned their vehicles and started walking, even the wounded. Some injured Taliban, and Arabs with their families,

came to seek shelter at my father's mosque. Other villagers wouldn't help them. Only my father and I brought them food.

YOUNAS: When I was a child, my father was a mujahedin commander in the jihad against the Russians, and he sent our family for safety to an Afghan refugee camp in Wana, South Waziristan. After the Taliban's victory (in 1996), he became an official in a ministry in Kabul. I used to visit him on holidays from Wana. The Islamic Emirate's collapse was like a nightmare.

I watched as wounded, disabled, and defeated Taliban fighters straggled into Wana and the surrounding villages, along with Arabs, Chechens, and Uzbeks. Every morning as I went to school I could see them wandering around town, almost like homeless beggars. Little by little, the tribal people started helping them, giving them food. Some people even took them into their houses; at first these once proud jihadis survived, thanks to the people's charity.

The Arabs were disappointed the Taliban hadn't stood and fought. They told me they had wanted to fight to the death. They were clearly not as distressed as the Afghans. That was understandable.

The Arabs felt they had lost a battle.

But the Afghans were much more devastated — they had lost their country.

MASIHUDDIN: When the Taliban fell, I was a madrassa student in Nuristan. Since all the Taliban officials and militiamen had fled, I decided to continue my studies in Pakistan.

(Then-Pakistani president Pervez) Musharraf imposed new rules on the Pakistani madrassas (in 2002), including a ban on foreign students. So I went to a mosque in an outlying village (near Peshawar) to study and wait for the situation to improve. We were 10 students studying and sleeping in one small room. The people couldn't afford to bring us food, so we often went without dinner. We rarely had electricity. Without a fan it was hard to study, even to sleep.

To make matters worse, the Peshawar police were harassing and arresting us. They didn't hold us for long, though — I think they just wanted to frighten us. We began praying for the survival of the Taliban who had fled. There was no reason to pray for victory, since such a return seemed inconceivable.

HAQQANI: My father, brother, and family were at Mansehra (a town in northwestern Pakistan that is home to several Afghan refugee camps). But I realized it wouldn't be wise to move in with them. Too many people knew who I was, and some had no love for the Taliban.

Instead I found a place to stay at a mosque nearby. I had to sneak over at midnight just to see my kids, like a thief. When I was visiting my daughter one night, she asked me about our Kabul home, why we didn't have a car anymore. She complained that it was too hot in the refugee camp, and that she wanted to move back to the cool climate of Kabul. I couldn't answer her.

But she could tell from my eyes how sad I was. I was a wreck — nervous, worried, and almost panic-stricken.

AKHUNDZADA: Once proud Taliban mullahs and fighters changed the way they dressed so they wouldn't be recognized. No one wanted to be identified as a Talib.

Friends and relatives who had respected me while I was a commander now turned away. I had no money or job. I moved my family to a village in Punjab, far from Afghanistan, to become a day laborer, but I was a failure at it. I couldn't speak the local language, and no one would hire me.

So I returned to Peshawar and started selling vegetables from a basket in the market. I began making money.

But I couldn't get over the Taliban's collapse, the death of my men.

My wife said I was crying in my sleep. I went to a doctor, who gave me some medicine. I was so distracted that when a customer would ask me for potatoes, I'd give him tomatoes.

Chapter Two: The Rebirth

'The end of the Taliban was the start of my Jihadi career.'
Mullah Aga Mohammad

KHAN: Mullahs like my father became depressed. Under the Taliban they had been very influential, but after the collapse people paid less attention to them.

My father was so upset, he had a stroke that left him partially paralyzed.

At the end of 2002 the Afghan police raided our mosque. They grabbed my father and hauled him in front of the villagers, accusing him of being with the Taliban. They demanded to know where the Taliban's weapons were stored. They personally insulted him and then threw him in jail. He was 70.

The faithful at our mosque went to the police and complained.

People who a few months before seemed to have turned against my father now supported him.

They said it was a disgrace for the police to have entered the mosque wearing their shoes, and to have arrested an old, crippled imam.

In early 2003 he died.

I was a just a kid, but the police arrested me too, twice — once from my house, once from the mosque.

They interrogated me, asking stupid questions like: "Where are the Taliban?" "Where are the weapons hidden?"

My family sold our motorbike to raise the money to free me. The police also arrested my brother, who was a schoolteacher. The police even arrested, insulted, and manhandled a 90-year-old mullah in our district.

People's attitudes were changing; they were becoming angry at the police and the local officials for the disrespect they were showing toward mosques and mullahs.

YOUNAS: At first I didn't hear the Afghans talking about going back to fight. But the Arabs did, and they encouraged the Afghans and the local tribal people not to give up. Nothing much happened for the first year or so, but then the Arabs started organizing some training camps. The first one I heard about was at Shin Warsak village, near Wana. When I had some time off from school, I decided to visit. I was really impressed. There was more than one camp. One was run by Arabs, and another by Chechens and Uzbeks.

Thanks to my madrassa studies I could speak Arabic; I made friends with Egyptians, Saudis, Libyans, and Yemenis. Nek Mohammad Wazir (a pro-Taliban Pakistani tribal leader who was killed by a June 2004 Predator strike) gave the Arabs places to train and access to weapons and other supplies. They moved openly on the main roads and in the towns and villages, showing no concern about security. I decided to leave my studies and join their resistance.

MOHAMMAD: The end of the Taliban was the start of my jihadi career. My father died in 1994, leaving me to take care of my mother, brothers, and sisters. So I'd had no time to join Mullah Omar's movement. For years I had a very heavy conscience for having missed the jihad. After the collapse of the Taliban in late 2001, many injured and traumatized mujahedin began coming to the mosque in Peshawar where I was the imam. Some of the worshipers asked me outright why I hadn't fought in the jihad like these men.

I needed to make up for not joining the fight. I started asking around if the mujahedin were still active, but no one could give me a real answer. Then one day I heard about a young Afghan named Azizullah who had been in the resistance — he's in jail now in Afghanistan.

I went to his house, and told him I wanted to help the resistance against the Americans if it was forming. He lied, saying he was only a poor man and had nothing to do with jihad. Then one day I saw him walking to the mosque. I joined him. He was still hesitant, but finally he said he could help. He gave me directions to a militant camp in Waziristan and a letter of introduction.

HAQQANI: In early 2003 my family and I moved to a rented house near Peshawar. It was the first time I was living in my own house since 2001. I put my white clerical outfit back on. And suddenly the Taliban's defense minister, Mullah Obaidullah, came to see me — the first senior Taliban leader I had seen since our collapse. He was traveling around Pakistan to rally our dispersed forces.

Half the Taliban leadership was back in touch with each other, he said, and they were determined to start a resistance movement to expel the Americans.

I didn't think it was possible, but he assured me I could help.

He said to meet him again in two weeks, and gave me an address. I was surprised at the number and rank of the people I found at the meeting. There were former senior ministers and military commanders, all sitting together, all eager to resist the Americans.

Obaidullah told me: "We don't need you as a deputy minister or bureaucrat. We want you to bring as many fighters as you can into the field."

AKHUNDZADA: One day a man came to buy vegetables — a mullah who had worked with our jihad in northern Afghanistan for years. We recognized each other.

He asked me what I wanted to do: keep selling potatoes or go back to the jihad.

I was making about 2,000 rupees (\$33) a day, which was good, but I wanted to rejoin the struggle.

We went to a meeting at night near Peshawar, and I couldn't believe what I saw: my top commander (from the northern front), Mullah Dadullah! He was my ideal; his name meant victory for us.

My interest in the vegetable business disappeared. After six or seven months I was called to Miran Shah (in North Waziristan). Dadullah (who would be killed in May 2007) was there; so were Akhtar Mohammad Osmani (who would be killed in December 2006) and our defense minister, Mullah Obaidullah (who would be captured by Pakistani forces in March 2007).

It was decided that each commander should go find his former soldiers and prepare to return to Afghanistan to fight.

I was sent to Quetta, where survivors from my unit had settled. There had been 400 fighters under my command. In Quetta I found 15 of them.

They embraced me and the idea of returning to free our land of the American invaders.

In North Waziristan we trained, re-equipped, recruited more men, and got ready to return to Afghanistan.

Chapter Three: The Taliban Surge

'After these first few attacks, God seems to have opened channels of money for us.'
Qari Younas

YOUNAS: One night in April (2003), we crossed the border in five pickups and one larger truck.

Once we were safely across, we sent the vehicles back to wait for us on the Pakistan side.

Our target was a U.S. base just across the border at Machda in Paktika province. We attacked at dawn. I think we really surprised them. We shelled them with 122mm rockets and mortars for about 30 minutes. But we didn't get close enough to fire our Kalashnikovs; before we could move in, American helicopters came, raining rockets and bullets on us. Terrified, I crawled and ran to escape death. Amid the noise and explosions, dust and smoke, I remember seeing six of us cut down and killed: two Arabs, three tribals, and an Afghan.

Still, I was strangely exhilarated.

We showed our resolve by fighting, by taking a stand.

We knew we'd be back.

We carried the stiff and bloodied bodies of our martyrs back to Wana. Thousands of locals attended their funerals, saying it was an honor to witness the burial of these martyrs. People brought flowers, ribbons, colored cloth, and flags to decorate their graves.

As the news traveled, a lot of former Taliban began returning to Wana to join us.

KHAN: By the middle of 2004, we were hearing rumors that the Taliban were operating once again in Ghazni. Friends and relatives in other rural districts were saying that armed men were beginning to show up in villages at night on motorbikes.

Within a few months, signs of them began appearing everywhere.

At first we saw shabnama ("night letters") that the Taliban were leaving in shops, mosques, and other public places warning people not to cooperate with Karzai and the Americans. By the beginning of 2005 the Taliban began targeted killings of police officers, government officials, spies, and elders who were working with the Americans.

One night around midnight someone knocked on the door of our house. We were terrified, fearing that the police had come back to arrest me or my brother once again.

But when we opened the door, it was one of my father's former students. He had a Kalashnikov on his shoulder and was a Taliban subcommander already.

The two other Taliban he was with also carried AKs and had several hand grenades attached to their belts.

This was my first encounter with the Taliban since the defeat. We invited them to spend the night. Early the next morning I accompanied them to the mosque. My father's former student read out the names of those he accused of having betrayed Islam by following Karzai and the infidels. He warned them to cease all contact and to quit any job they may have had with the government or the Americans. He ended by saying he would return in one week.

MOHAMMAD: Those first groups crossing the border were almost totally sponsored, organized, and led by Arab mujahedin. The Afghan Taliban were weak and disorganized.

But slowly the situation began to change.

American operations that harassed villagers, bombings that killed civilians, and Karzai's corrupt police and officials were alienating villagers and turning them in our favor.

Soon we didn't have to hide so much on our raids. We came openly.

When they saw us, villagers started preparing green tea and food for us.

The tables were turning. Karzai's police and officials mostly hid in their district compounds like prisoners.

YOUNAS: Our real jihad was beginning by the start of 2005.

Jalaluddin Haqqani's tribal fighters came actively back to our side because the Americans and the Pakistanis had arrested his brother and other relatives. He appointed his son Sirajuddin to lead the resistance.

That was a real turning point.

Until then villagers in Paktia, Paktika, and Khost thought the Taliban was defeated and finished. They had started joining the militias formed by the Americans and local warlords, and were informing on us and working against us. But with the support of Haqqani's men we began capturing, judging, and beheading some of those Afghans who worked with the Americans and Karzai. Terrorized, their families and relatives left the villages and moved to the towns, even to Kabul. Our control was slowly being restored.

KHAN: My father's former student returned as promised a week later. I decided to join him. I helped assassinate those people who had continued their contacts with the government and the Americans. I didn't want to kill, but I was determined to bring back our Islamic regime and get rid of the Americans and the traitors allied with them.

By the end of 2005 the Taliban's ranks in Ghazni were increasing.

There were new recruits like me and more former Taliban returning home from Pakistan.

At the same time, we started receiving shipments of RPGs, rockets, mines, and bombs, most of which were old and rusty. My group only had three RPG launchers and only one mortar tube, and a few rounds for each. We had a few rusty Russian mines that only worked about 30 percent of the time. So we could only carry out very quick and limited attacks on convoys, construction crews, and district compounds.

At first we didn't have much success. But we were learning.

Just firing a mortar, even if it didn't hit the target, was a big deal: it proved to everyone we were there and were a force to be respected.

The Americans and their Afghan allies made mistakes after mistake, killing and arresting innocent people.

There was one village in Dayak district near Ghazni City where the people had communist backgrounds, from the days of the Russians, and had never supported us.

But the police raided the village, beat the elders at a mosque and arrested them, accusing them of being Taliban.

They were freed after heavy bribes were paid.

After that incident the whole village sent us a message asking forgiveness for the abuses of the communist era.

AKHUNDZADA: There are famous Taliban poems about how mujahedin come to free villages from occupiers at the point of a bayonet.

I began living that poem.

My body and mind got stronger and my mental problems disappeared.

As word of our success traveled, I was able to organize another group of new, young recruits.

They were smarter, more spirited, and better motivated than my former Taliban fighters.

Still, we lacked weapons and money. So I visited Mullah Dadullah. He had gone into Helmand province in early 2006 with 30 people. When he returned months later, he had organized 300 sub-commanders who each had dozens of troops. His return was like the arrival of rain after five years of drought.

I gave him a list of our needs. Even before he read the list, he smiled and said: "Whether I am alive or dead, remember this: the resistance will become greater than your greatest expectations. We will return to control Afghanistan." The next day he called me, took a page out of a notebook, wrote something on it, and gave it to me. The note said to go and see this guy and he will help you. Back in Pakistan, I found the man. He kissed Dadullah's letter.

After two weeks this man had provided me with all the guns, weapons, and supplies I had requested. Dadullah gave such letters to many people.

MOHAMMAD: Once we sent a shipment for the making of IEDs to our forces in Zabul province. For some reason we forgot to include the remote-control devices. I got an urgent call from the commander asking me to quickly send the missing items. So I hid the remotes among some books and clothes in several travel bags. At Torkham (the Khyber Pass crossing), the police asked me to open the bags. At first I thought I should flee. But where could I run? I started searching for the key to open the bags. There was a long customs queue. The impatient policeman finally said: "You're taking too long. Get out of here."

Another night I was in a hotel in Kabul on a mission to smuggle remote devices and explosives. Afghan police and intelligence were checking all the travelers staying in the hotel. My fellow mujahedin and I hid the bags containing the remotes in the bathroom. The police checked our luggage and pockets. But God blinded their eyes to the bathroom. If they had found the devices I would have ended up in jail for life. All these close calls strengthened my faith and my commitment to the jihad.

HAQQANI: In 2007 I returned to Afghanistan for the first time. I visited the south and spoke to Taliban units, to elders and villagers, and raised new recruits. Mullah Omar has entrusted me with the job of touring towns and villages on both sides of the border to encourage people to support, contribute to, and join the jihad.

Between 2006 and 2009 I have personally raised hundreds of new recruits to join the resistance. (In August) I traveled to eight Afghan provinces in 20 days.

The unpopularity of the Karzai regime helps us immensely. In 2005 some Afghans thought Karzai would bring positive change. But now most Afghans believe the Taliban are the future.

The resistance is getting stronger day by day.

Chapter Four: We Get Stronger Every Day

'We were born here. We will die here. We aren't going anywhere.'
Mullah Aga Mohammad

MASIHUDDIN: That base on top of the mountain (in Barge Matal) had to go. The Americans there were monitoring our phone calls and walkie-talkies, and they ran intelligence operations with Afghan spies from there.

So (last June) we began carefully planning an attack. One of our men said that the mission would be hard even if the Americans only threw stones at us, as we'd be attacking up a steep mountain. Everyone laughed at him, but we knew there was some truth in what he said.

I asked for volunteers, and everyone signed up.

As usual we prepared a medical team, including donkeys and stretchers to evacuate our wounded.

But as I divided up weapons, ammunition, explosives, and communications gear, it started to rain heavily. The Americans have heavy boots and other mountain equipment that allows them to move up and down the steep rocks. But our men mostly wear leather sandals that don't give us any grip. So we postponed the attack for two weeks.

KHAN: Fighting the Americans is not easy. One night in the summer of 2007, my commander, Mullah Nurla, was killed in an American raid on his house. Other

Americans killed 12 of our commanders. All the raids came between midnight and dawn.

We found out that the Americans were finding us by tracing our cell-phone calls, and by calls from spies giving away our locations. So we forced the cell companies to stop all transmissions from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m.

We still worry about helicopters and bombers, but we are suffering fewer American night raids. I think they just don't have the intelligence they used to have.

Fewer people are willing to cooperate with them and betray us.

Our men, on the other hand, are watching American bases 24 hours a day.

They inform us of American movements.

We used to hit the Americans with roadside bombs and then disappear. Now when we explode an IED, we follow that with AK and RPG fire.

We now have more destructive IEDs, mostly ammonium-nitrate bombs that we mix with aluminum shards.

We get regular deliveries of these fertilizers, explosives, fuses, detonators, and remote controls. One heavy shipment is on its way right now. I think we are better at making IEDs now than the Arabs who first taught us.

HAQQANI: I admit Taliban commanders are being captured and killed, but that hasn't stopped us, and it won't.

Our jihad is more solid and deep than individual commanders and fighters — and we are not dependent on foreigners, on the ISI (Pakistan's intelligence agency), or Al Qaeda.

Personally I think all this talk about Al Qaeda being strong is U.S. propaganda.

As far as I know, Al Qaeda is weak, and they are few in numbers.

Now that we control large amounts of territory, we should have a strict code of conduct for any foreigners working with us. We can no longer allow these camels to roam freely without bridles and control.

MASIHUDDIN: Late Friday afternoon, after prayers, we began to move.

We slowly sent our people up the mountain as the shadows lengthened. The mujahedin climbed slowly, steadily. We waited quietly on the ridgeline overnight without fires for warmth or to cook food. We've learned that the Americans are always listening for the smallest sound.

I gave the signal to attack just before sunrise. We started with our mortar and rocket teams shelling the base from the surrounding hilltops.

By dawn our mujahedin were almost hugging the base's outer walls. We killed a number of Afghan Army soldiers, and one U.S. soldier who may have been hit in a guard tower.

As we fought, our video team filmed our advance. Our mortars, rockets, and RPGs destroyed most of one outer defensive wall.

We yelled to those inside to come out and surrender. No one came out. So we set fire to one side of the post and moved around to wait on the opposite side. The smoke forced some, if not all, of the soldiers to abandon the post. During the attack we didn't lose any fighters.

Then American helicopters arrived, firing rockets and machine guns. We fought until sunset. We lost 12 Taliban to martyrdom, largely to the helicopter fire that comes down like heavy rain.

We cannot compare our military strength to that of the Americans.

But we have learned how to stay protected behind rocks and mountains.

Even with all their advanced technology, we forced them to withdraw and captured that base. (Coalition forces retook the post three days later and later abandoned it; a U.S. chronology of the battle differs in some details.)

YOUNAS: Not long ago, when one of my younger brothers got married, my mother asked me: "Boy, when will you marry?" I told her that the day I help to bring the Taliban back to Kabul and restore the Islamic Emirate is the day I will marry. That day may be far away, but I know it will come.

KHAN: The Americans talk about getting Taliban to leave the jihad for their dollars. That's ridiculous. I was engaged to be married a year ago, but I don't have the \$1,500 bride price to give to the girl's father or the \$500 for the wedding. If I had money, I would not delay my marriage. Who would marry me? You'd be surprised.

The people here are not worried about giving their daughter or sister to Taliban, who can get killed within one week of the wedding. They are happy to be part of the jihad.

It's not easy being in the Taliban.

It's like wearing a jacket of fire.

You have to leave your family and live with the knowledge that you can be killed at any time.

The Americans can capture you and put you in dog cages in Bagram and Guantánamo. You can't expect any quick medical treatment if you're wounded. You don't have any money.

Yet when I tell new recruits what they are facing they still freely put on this jacket of fire.

All this builds my confidence that we will never lose this war.

MOHAMMAD: We never worry about time. We will fight until victory no matter how long it takes. The U.S. has the weapons, but we are prepared for a long and tireless jihad.

We were born here. We will die here. We aren't going anywhere.

MASIHUDDIN: In the south the mujahedin have adjusted to Obama's new crusade by making some small strategic withdrawals and fighting back mostly with IEDs.

But we mujahedin in Kunar and Nuristan are lucky. These mountains and forests are our protectors. Trees and rocks shelter us everywhere.

The Americans can't match us here.

Two or three years ago, U.S. soldiers in the region acted as if they were on holiday.

They were taking videos and photos of themselves and walking in the mountains for fun. They were playing games in the open.

Those days are over.

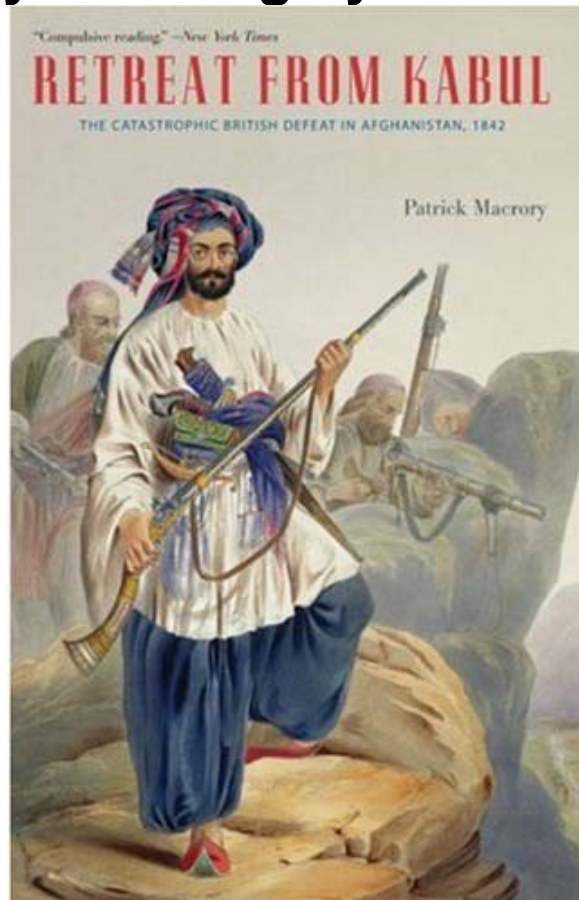
Now they are forced to keep their fingers on their triggers 24 hours a day.

AKHUNDZADA: Sometimes I think what's happened is like a dream.

I thought my beard would be white by the time I saw what I am seeing now, but my beard is still black, and we get stronger every day.

**Afghanistan 1842:
16,500 Occupiers: 16,499 Killed
“How The World’s Greatest Military
Power Learned A Bloody And
Previously Unimagined Lesson By
Underestimating The Afghan’s Iron
Resistance To Foreign Invasion And
Intrigue”**

“We Have Once For All Abandoned The Country, Leaving To The Afghans The Unmolested Possession Of The Liberty They Had Acquired, And Not Attempting To Place Upon Their Necks The Yoke They So Roughly Shook Off”



“They resolved to get rid of our King and our troops and to resume their barbarous independence; they massacred all our people civil and military, and they afterwards put to death the King.

Retreat from Kabul: The Catastrophic British Defeat in Afghanistan, 1842; by Patrick Macrory; The Lyons Press (Nov 1 2007)

“Retreat From Kabul is the compelling and gruesome story of how the world’s greatest military power learned a bloody and previously unimagined lesson by underestimating the Afghan’s iron resistance to foreign invasion and intrigue.”

Déjà Vu Department: [Excerpts]

“There Shone One Passion Above All Others, A Love Of Independence And A Violent Hatred Of Outside Interference”

The feudal chieftains were kind and considerate to their dependants who, in consequence, followed them with a loyal devotion in the interminable vendettas and warlike forays that racked the land.

And through all their turbulence and feuds there shone one passion above all others, a love of independence and a violent hatred of outside interference.

It was a characteristic that the British were presently to underrate with consequences disastrous to themselves

“He Was A Marksman, He Knew By Instinct How To Make The Best Use Of Cover, He Could Flit From Rock To Rock Of His Mountain Country As Nimbly As A Goat”

[T]he Afghan was a natural soldier.

He was a marksman, he knew by instinct how to make the best use of cover, he could flit from rock to rock of his mountain country as nimbly as a goat.

Nott thought them “very fine-looking fellows indeed. . . . I like them very much.”

He talked to one of them, who had come into camp with a load of fruit to sell. He was “the finest-looking fellow I have ever seen, quite the gentleman”.

The Afghan asked Nott why the British were invading his country.

“I told him merely for the purpose of putting his rightful King upon his throne. He said ‘We prefer Dost Mahomed.’

“I said, ‘He has no right to the throne.’

“I shall not forget the expression of his large black eyes: stepping up to me and placing his hand on my shoulder, he said, in a bold yet respectful tone, ‘What right have you to Benares and Delhi? Why, the same right that our Dost Mahomed has to Caubul, and he will keep it.’”

Nott added thoughtfully, “I really believe that the people of Afghanistan will not give up their country without fighting for it, and I know I would not were I in their situation.”

“If One Garrison Were Attacked By A Concentration Of The Enemy, No Other Could Come To Its Aid Without Having To Fight Its Way Through Some Of The Worst County In The World”

Roberts also freely criticised the general dispositions of the army throughout Afghanistan.

The plan adopted was, in modern idiom, one of “penny packets”. [2009: Petraeus calls it “oil spot” counterinsurgency.]]

Garrisons, a battalion or two of infantry and a handful of cavalry, were stationed at Kabul, Jalalabad, Ghuznee and Kandahar, with even smaller detachments of Soojah’s unreliable levies at other outlying spots.

The lines of communication between the different posts were vulnerable in the extreme and were wholly dependent on the goodwill of the local tribes, a goodwill only to be purchased by generous cash subsidies.

The road from Kabul down through Ghuznee to Kandahar was passable only by permission of the Western Ghilzyes, while the Eastern Ghilzyes held the route from the capital to Jalalabad in the hollow of their hand.

So long as the Danegeld [bribes] performed its service all might be well, but if once the lines of communication were cut and one garrison were attacked by a concentration of the enemy, no other could come to its aid without having to fight its way through some of the worst county in the world.

“We May Thresh The Douranees Over And Over Again, But This Rather Aggravates Than Obviates The Difficulty Of Overcoming The National Feeling Against Us”

Rawlinson, clear-sighted and pessimistic, agreed in effect with Burnes, who had written that “we shall never settle Afghanistan at the point of the bayonet”.

He reported to Macnaghten that “the state of the country causes me many an anxious thought — we may thresh the Douranees over and over again, but this rather aggravates than obviates the difficulty of overcoming the national feeling against us”.

Macnaghten took him severely to task for “taking an unwarrantably gloomy view of our position, and entertaining and disseminating rumours favourable to that view. We have enough of difficulties and enough of croakers without adding to the number needlessly.”

He added sharply that “these idle statements may cause much mischief. . . I know them to be utterly false as regards Caubul and I have no reason to believe them true as regards the country about Candahar”.

Perhaps the cheering circus audiences were left feeling that the Afghan war must have been a very successful and splendid affair.

But one clear-sighted observer found it hard to see what had been achieved at the end of it all by the blood, the tears and the expense.

“Everything is reverting to the old state of things, as it was before we entered the country,” Major Rawlinson had written.

In London, Charles Greville summed it up in his journal with cynical realism.

“In the midst of all our successes the simple truth is that Akbar Khan and the Afghans have gained their object completely. We had placed a puppet King on the throne, and we kept him there and held military possession of the country by a body of our troops.

“They resolved to get rid of our King and our troops and to resume their barbarous independence; they massacred all our people civil and military, and they afterwards put to death the King.

“We lost all hold over the country except the fortress we continued to occupy.

“Our recent expedition was in fact undertaken merely to get back the Prisoners, and having got them we have once for all abandoned the country, leaving to the Afghans the unmolested possession of the liberty they had acquired, and not attempting to place upon their necks the yoke they so roughly shook off.

“There is, after all, no great cause for rejoicing and triumph in all this.”

No great cause for rejoicing or triumph, indeed.

And if, in England and in India, there were still families who in their loneliness wept for those whose bones lay whitening in the passes from Khoord-Kabul to Jugdulluck, well, they must just become aware, like General Nott, “that war cannot be made without loss”.



Dr Brydon arrives at Jellalabad, the last survivor of an army of 16,500 soldiers and civilians: Britishbattles.com

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Two U.S. Troops Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan

Sep 27 AFP

An American soldier died of wounds sustained when an improvised-explosive device (IED) detonated in southern Afghanistan, the force said.

A second US trooper died Saturday, also in the south, as a result of wounds suffered during an insurgent attack, the statement said.

Soldier From 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh Killed

27 Sep 09 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that a soldier from 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh was killed in Afghanistan, today, Sunday 27 September 2009.

The soldier died as a result of an explosion that happened during a vehicle patrol in Musa Qaleh District, northern Helmand Province, this morning.

Family, Friends Remember Matthew Martinek

September 17, 2009 By CARRIE FRILLMAN, Daily Chronicle

Matthew Martinek had a light in his eyes.

But ask the friends and family of the 20-year-old – who died last week from battle wounds suffered earlier this month in Afghanistan – to put into words what that glint looked like and all you'll get is "it's indescribable."

"He was just always happy," said his stepmother, Sycamore resident Char DeGand. "... A really happy kid."

Martinek grew up in Genoa and moved to Bartlett after his freshman year of high school. Following graduation in 2007, he returned to DeKalb and briefly attended Northern Illinois University. He joined the U.S. Army in March 2008 as a paratrooper supporting Operation Enduring Freedom and was deployed from an Army base in Alaska in March. He was scheduled to come home for a visit Sunday.

But Martinek's vehicle was ambushed Sept. 4 with an improvised explosive device, followed by a rocket-propelled grenade and small-arms fire, the U.S. Department of Defense said in a written statement. He was among six soldiers who were injured in the attack.

Martinek, who was shot in the chest and head, died last week at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

Also killed in that attack was 2nd Lt. Darryn Andrews, of Dallas, Texas. "These kids ... they die for what they believe in and for us here at home," DeGand said. "Matt, he wanted to be in the service. That's what he wanted to do."

DeGand couldn't describe how she felt Wednesday. And she couldn't describe how it felt when she and Martinek's father, Mike, got a phone call from Afghanistan with word their son had been injured. He was induced into a coma in Afghanistan before being transported to Germany, she said.

"It's hard to believe," she said. "You just stand there, actually, for a second, hoping it absorbs. You don't feel anything, but you do. I don't know if it's shock. I don't know what it is."

DeGand was, at first, reluctant to fly to Germany to see her stepson because she didn't want to skew her memory of the outgoing, smiling young man who was constantly running around outside.

Martinek had a passion for outdoor activities, like snowboarding, riding all-terrain vehicles and camping, she said.

She recalled Wednesday the last time she saw him – at Christmas – before he was deployed overseas.

"We went out to dinner and he was so tan," DeGand said. "And I just was thinking, 'You were in Alaska. How are you so tan?' But that's how I will always remember him."

So that's how she is choosing to remember her stepson: As the kid who suntanned in Alaska, cheerful, and wearing the white ski vest he did on Christmas Day. His friends, like 23-year-old Ryne Jones, will remember joking with him about his rosy cheeks and "jolly" demeanor.

"He was a friend to everybody. Everybody liked him," said Jones, who worked with Martinek for about a year at Tires Plus in DeKalb. "If you were in a bad mood, he always did something to cheer you up — y'know, one of those clowns."

Martinek constantly tried to better his own life and the lives of those around him, Jones said.

A registered organ donor, he continued to do so, even after death. Several of Martinek's organs, including his heart, were used last week to save fellow soldiers, said DeGand, who flew with her husband to the hospital in Germany.

That trip is when a piece of reality began to set in, she said.

"You see on TV and you hear, '50 soldiers died,'" she said. "And you think, 'Oh that's terrible.' But then you see it in real life at that hospital. You see these families and the looks on their faces. That really turns your stomach. It really does. ... So if Matt was able to help any of those families by donating his organs, it's one more thing he did for people."

Martinek took pride in his own family and its military roots, his stepmother said. His paternal grandfather was a World War II veteran and his maternal grandfather served during the Korean War.

An uncle fought in Operation Desert Storm, and Martinek's two older brothers, Travis Wright and Frank Martinek, both served tours in Iraq. "I really figured he was going to do service time and come home just like his brothers did," DeGand said. " ... He died for something he really believed in. There is honor in that. He's a hero, that's for sure."

A wake for Matthew Martinek has been scheduled for Sept. 25 at Ahlgrim & Sons Funeral & Cremation Services, 330 W. Golf Rd., Schaumburg. A funeral is scheduled for Sept. 26, with a procession starting at the funeral home.

Survivors include his father, Michael; mother, Cheryl Brandes Ferguson; and three brothers, Travis Wright, Frank Martinek and Michael Martinek Jr.

Airman From Melrose Killed In Afghanistan

Sep. 15, 2009 By Timothy J. Gibbons, The Florida Times-Union

A Melrose native was one of three U.S. troops killed Saturday during an ambush in western Afghanistan when their unit was attacked with bombs, guns and grenades.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Bryan Berky, a graduate of Bradford High School in Starke, was an explosives ordnance disposal technician, tasked with disarming improvised explosive devices.

It was a job he enjoyed, according to a story written by a public affairs officer at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, where Berky was stationed as part the 28th Civil Engineer Squadron.

"I love deploying," he said in December. "I get back and feel like I contributed because I can immediately see the end result of my work; not everyone can say that about their job."

At that point, Berky had deployed twice.

The airman had married his wife, Erin, in 2003, a year after graduating high school. The couple had an infant son, according to the Rapid City (S.D.) Journal.

The family gathered Saturday in Delaware to receive Berky's body, according to a posting on the MySpace page of his brother, Jeremy, who paid tribute to "my hero and brother."

The area where the 25-year-old airman was killed has been the site of major battles in the past, in a section of the country where the Taliban is resurgent. About 50 militants and seven Afghan troops also were killed in Saturday's battle, an Afghan army spokesman told The Associated Press. The battle raged for six to eight hours after the ambush, a military spokeswoman told The Associated Press.

At least 749 U.S. service members have been killed in Afghanistan and nearby countries since the American invasion in 2001, according to the Department of Defense.

Military Confirms Deaths Of Fort Lewis Soldier



September 2, 2009 Seattle Times

Spc. Tyler R. Walshe leaves a wife and young daughter who will have her first birthday this Veteran's Day. He also leaves his parents and three younger brothers behind.

He was known to his friends at Tyler Vietti, or Tyler Walshe-Vietti, as he chose to identify with his stepfather's name. He was a 2006 graduate of Central Valley High School in Shasta, California, where he was a star athlete. He was an all-league pitcher, played defensive end, and was backup quarterback for the Central Valley Falcons' team that went on to win the Northern Section's Division II title.

Tyler's coaches remember him as an easy going guy, who rolled with whatever came his way, even when they had differences. Central Valley football coach Matt Hunsacker remembers: "He was very honest and open, and just a great kid. He was a throwing type of quarterback and we were a running team, but he said, "Coach, just put me where ever you want me to play." He was a big, tall lanky guy and fearless. He wasn't afraid to do whatever we asked him to do.

Tyler enlisted in the Army right out of high school, and met his wife at Ft. Lewis, where she and his daughter currently live. His wife, Kirsten, was at Dover Air Force Base, Del., on Wednesday to watch the transfer of remains. Ty's stepfather Paul Vietti said that the only thing he wanted was to be a hero to his family.

His wife said: "He was the most amazing person I ever could have asked for...I just can't believe he's gone. I'm trying really, really hard to keep it together and to stay strong for my daughter. She doesn't understand that daddy's gone."

UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; ALL HOME NOW



U.S. Marines return fire from behind a primary school wall as Taliban fighters attack them as they leave the school in the village of Aliabad in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan's Kunar province May 16, 2009. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)



U.S. soldiers of 10th Mountain Division walk around a water tunnel with discovered improvised explosive devices (IED) placed in jerrycans (blue and yellow) on the road near Combat Operation Outpost (COP) Conlon in the mountains of Wardak Province, Afghanistan, July 2, 2009. REUTERS/Shamil Zhumatov



U.S. Marines from 2nd MEF on the rooftop of a house looking for Taliban snipers on a mountainside Aug. 12, 2009, inside the village of Dahaneh in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Julie Jacobson)



U.S. soldiers help a comrade wounded in the leg during a gun-battle with Taliban fighters in the village of Bargematal, Nuristan province, August 23, 2009.
REUTERS/Oleg Popov

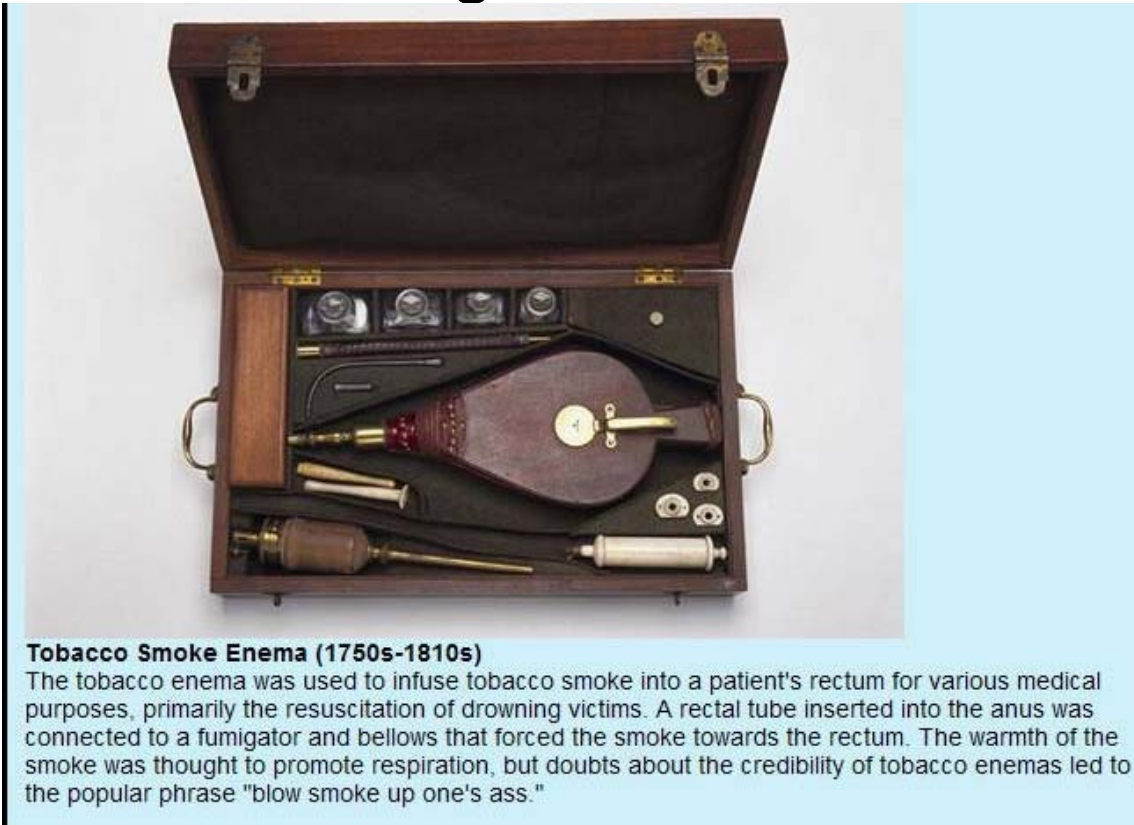
**THIS IS HOW OBAMA BRINGS THE TROOPS
HOME:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



Aug. 19, 2009: Soldiers of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division based out of Fort Drum, N.Y., evacuate a wounded soldier after their armored vehicle hit an improvised explosive device in the Tangi Valley of Afghanistan's Wardak Province. (AP Photo/David Goldman)

TROOP NEWS

DoD Announces New Weapons System Will Bring Success In Afghanistan



**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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CLASS WAR REPORTS

Ohio Prison Staff Try for Two Hours to Execute Convict and Fail



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ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!**

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http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi_special/

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