

**Document Title: "The Airport 1990"**

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Date: Describes events that took place in 1989 and 1990

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**Synopsis:**

Mustafa Hamid details the Battle of Torghar, and analyzes the importance of Torghar for the fight to take Khost as well as the military development of the mujahidin during the campaign. He also analyzes the failed March 1990 coup. This document is a prequel to **AFGP-2002-600092**.

**Key Themes:**

*Narrative of the Battle of Torghar*

Mustafa Hamid narrates in great detail the process by which the mujahidin took over Torghar mountain in February 1990, and acquired a strategic advantage over Communist forces in the siege of Khost.

As a journalist, at the end of 1989, Hamid decides to work with Jalaladin Haqani to produce a jihadi magazine, *Manba'a al-Jihad*. Some parts of the document are essays from the magazine, and as such adopt a journalistic tone. While touring the region with Abu al-Hareth (with Hajji Farid serving as his interpreter, and Hajji Ibrahim as his assistant), Mustafa Hamid first gets the idea to close the Khost airport, which he does successfully later in the year. During this tour he also experiences heaving bombing from the Communists.

Before his trip to Torghar, Hamid sends his wife and children to Islamabad, after they are subject to harassment in Peshawar. He also meets with Jalaladin Haqani in January 1990. Haqani is the mujahidin leader in charge of attacking Mount Torghar, but up until that time, repeated waves of Mujahidin attacks have been unsuccessful in taking it, including a recent attack by Ismail Kheil that is coordinated very poorly. Hamid estimates that, with Torghar conquered, 70% of the work for taking over Khost will be accomplished.

After the failed attacks, Haqani formulates a new plan. During the campaign, missiles narrowly miss Haqani several times, leading Hamid to be suspicious of how the enemy knows where he is. He guesses that the USSR is still involved via air attacks. An attack by Hakam Khan and Hanif Shah fails again due to poor coordination and disagreement about the use of tanks. Hamid gets an idea to poison the water supply of Khost to sicken enough people to overwhelm the city's hospitals, and he requests help from Abu-Hafs, but it does not seem to go anywhere.

At one point, a British journalist named Tim, embeds himself with Haqani, and Hamid serves as his host. He notes Tim's complete neutrality and lack of emotion, but also detests him. Several months after the battles, Hamid tells Tim that the mujahidin have not yet taken Khost because of Pakistani and US interference.

The mujahidin finally attack Torghar successfully on 16 February 1990. The attack from the south side is the most logical from the enemy's point of view, and although the southern thrust is not the mujahidin's main attack, the enemy shifts most of their forces to confront them there. This leaves the way open for a renewed attack on the western slope, as well as on the eastern slope, where the mujahidin have painstakingly worked their way through a mine field, taking the enemy by surprise. Hamid notes that the mujahidin suffer only one dead in the final attack, leading him to proclaim that they have God's support. In the aftermath, children come up to greet the victorious mujahidin, the mujahidin assault and take Little Torghar to clear the mountain completely of enemy forces, and Haqani builds a paved road to the summit to cement the mujahidin's control of Torghar. After interrogating some captives, the mujahidin confirm that the enemy forces are fractious, and morale is low, but the Communists are determined to fight to the end.

### *The US and Pakistan versus the mujahidin and al-Qa`ida*

Hamid is suspicious of Pakistan's intentions for the mujahidin, and blames the Pakistani intelligence service for the catastrophic loss at Jalalabad. He describes how General Imam of the Pakistani intelligence service is present at the Battle of Torghar, up to no good, and how he interferes with Haqani's plans. Hamid also assesses that the goal of the US is ultimately to encourage a negotiated settlement between Islamists and Communists, so it works to prevent a complete victory by the mujahidin, and to keep Najibullah in power. Any mujahidin attacks that fail give encouragement to the US and the USSR, especially as the Afghans are (in Hamid's view) responsible for the fall of the USSR. Hamid also blames his anti-US views for being the reason his articles in *al-Ijtihad* were not published.

The parties in Peshawar are often at odds with Haqani, and accused him of issuing a magazine as a step to forming a political party, played other 'dirty games,' and were probably happy that Abdallah Azzam was assassinated. At one point, Hamid describes meeting Abu-Hafs, who is under pressure from the Pakistani government, and suggests getting a British or European attorney to represent him, since Pakistan respects the UK.

### *Analysis of the importance of the Battle of Torghar*

Hamid describes these two articles as the first writing on the battles for Khost. One of the reasons for success is the appearance of Jalaladin Haqani, who is a rare combination of religiosity and competence. The Battle of Torghar was a special siege within the more general siege of Khost. Attacks against Torghar failed for years, and the enemy was well dug in. The mujahidin adopted an indirect approach, where they worked their way closer to the mountain, and gradually cut it off. They then attacked on the seemingly impossible east side, and convinced the enemy that the southern thrust was the main attack. In Hamid's opinion, the battle of Torghar also showed that tanks, which provided mobile artillery, could be used to great effect in mountainous terrain. In the final analysis, the mujahidin enjoyed better morale and command ability than the enemy, but the enemy enjoyed a higher quality and quantity of equipment. Following the capture of Torghar, the mujahidin were able to cut off the airport and all smuggling routes, thus starving Khost. After Torghar fell, the enemy knew Khost was lost.

### *The military development of the Mujahidin action in Khost*

Hamid goes over six features of the changes the mujahidin adopted in the battle for Khost that ultimately resulted in their victory. First, while the Paktia tribes in particular were enthusiastic and skillful fighters, the mujahidin needed to transform themselves into a conventional fighting force to beat the Communists. They accomplished this by instituting a shura (advisory) council that amassed authority and served as a forum for the various tribes to discuss strategy and tactics. The shura council was successful in stopping smuggling by the tribes themselves, but was less useful for coordinating direct military action, where it was vulnerable to delays. Second, the government broadcast constant propaganda, but mujahidin morale was still good. The mujahidin were able to boost morale by avoiding human losses in battles. In addition, the long siege lowered the government's morale, as did the mujahidin's own loudspeaker propagandists. Government defectors received good treatment, which increased defections. Finally, the mujahidin immediately used any weapons or ammunition they captured, decreasing the black market value of the spoils. Third, Khost's location was good for the mujahidin – supply lines from Pakistan were short, and the mountains gave the fighters natural defenses against air attacks. The mujahidin were also able to use local fighters who knew the terrain, remembered effective tactics against the British, and, because they were more effective in small numbers, were able to concentrate their forces and overwhelm the enemy in specific locations. Fourth, the mujahidin greatly increased their mobility was the adoption of motorized vehicles that moved along paved roads. Fifth, the mujahidin were able to concentrate their tanks for attacks against single targets, and as a result, tanks were decisive in the battles of Nadir-Shah-Cout, Dwamindo, Daraji, and Torghar. Sixth, the mujahidin used wireless communications systems to coordinate well.

*Analysis of failed coup of March 1990*

In the last section, Hamid analyzes the failed coup against Afghan leader Najibullah on 6 March 1990, which he sees as emblematic of larger problems. The USSR wanted to continue Communism in Afghanistan, but failed, and both the US and Saudi Arabia encouraged the mujahidin, then killed them. For instance, Saudi Arabia sent provocateurs to stir up conflicts within the mujahidin. Finally, the Afghans themselves killed Arabs who were drawn into their tribal battles. The secularists of the Middle East (including Egypt and Turkey's governments) are traitors, as are some mujahidin who are working in concert with the US and Russia. Hamid sees the war as one between Islam and infidels – politics has no place in it.

In the face of the coup attempt, Najibullah came down hard, although it is apparent that the USSR sold him out long ago. On the positive side, the Communist army was cleansed due to the coup, which is good for the mujahidin. On the negative side, the coup revealed the disunity of the Peshawar parties, and weakened jihad, especially when some Afghans claimed to be Muslim. The ongoing stagnation of the mujahidin is resulting in lost opportunities.

## **The City of Khost; Friday 15 May 1998**

### **The Airport 1990**

1990 came carrying all omens of danger whether at the personal level or the Afghani case level, in which we have been so deeply involved.

The bloody year 1989 ended turning us into the next year where our end was foreseen: The Arab Mujahidin (Arab holy fighters) and the end of Islamic Afghani case in Afghanistan. The United States practically entered into the direct action against Afghani people – and Mujahidin in particular – and against Arab Jihad presence over Afghani and Pakistani territories.

It was a painful strike in the back ... It became evident that after the assassination of Dr. Abd-Allah Azzam the Pakistani authorities had acted in collusion. Saudi intelligence were clearly involved. The beginning of a new element on the Afghani ground was the Egyptian intelligence, progressively grew to become the most important striking force against Arab presence especially at the final stage of ending forcefully that presence.

Arab masses lost their (legitimate) leadership represented in Dr. Azzam who was assassinated in Peshawar, as well as in Osama Bin Laden who was detained by the Saudi authorities and prevented from departure. Perhaps this protected him-in my belief- from facing the destiny of Dr. Azzam.

The "legitimate" leaders of Arabs at Peshawar were much less than the required standard. Quite the opposite in my opinion they were harmful in many situations especially in the tragedy of Jalal Abad. However, losing them made things worse as it was impossible for a new leadership to appear. At least there was no one who possessed the enormous financial decisions of those two men (Azzam and Bin Laden). Had not to mention the accumulated media lights that made both of them over the years, two stars in the blue of the Arab experience in Afghanistan.

By turning jihad towards Israeli, Dr. Azzam revolted against "the rules of the game" so he had to pay the price for it: his life. As for Osama Bin Laden, the goal was to destroy the communist regime in the south of Yemen – the homeland of his family, that is why he was kept alive because he did not stand against the international "American" will that began to move towards normalizing communist – Islamic relations in the Arab and Islamic area in general, after the collapse of the communist bloc. Therefore, Bin Laden began to face troubles from the Saudi government.

I was able to see the dangers increasing against Arab Mujahidin when they were engaged in futile kinds of activities of jihad, and confused thinking and ideas even

sometimes dangerous in the field of jurisprudence, movement or politics. The great increase in numbers had reached its limits in Peshawar, in which the national tint rose up to the highest levels notwithstanding all talk about one Islamic nation.

Communication channels between Arab community and me at Peshawar became relatively better at some levels of that community. However, they were still weak and difficult in general. I thought that it was my duty to transfer many messages to that community. Those were specifically two messages: the first was in relation to the community itself; its fate and issues; the second was in relation to Afghanistan and the awkward position Islamic issue reached in it under an international unanimity to thwarting Islamic Jihad and enforce secularism in the country.

(My choice to work with Haqani in issuing a magazine of his own was some kind of keeping in touch in maintaining a close connection to the battle fronts in general and with Haqani in particular, whom I believed was most likely to be the one who can get out of the military action crisis in Afghanistan and achieve a victory that could turn the basic course of Jihad towards optimum success, moreover, put a militarily and final end to the war specially in an area like Khost which I spoke of in details earlier and explained its military and political advantages. Events that came later proved this was right.

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My second goal with regard to working for the magazine was to provide Arab Mujahidin community with useful information. That is to say, presenting another type of dealing with military matters and events on Afghani ground as much professional as possible away from the hollow and sometimes deadly enthusiasms as was the case with Arab media at Peshawar regarding the massacre of Jalal Abad as we have seen earlier.

The events later proved my grave mistake in that respect. The little administration we could feel regarding our military analysis published in "The Spring of Jihad" (Manba'a al-Jihad) the name of our magazine, can not be compared at all with the enormous criticism and sarcasm coming from Arab community. The worst trace was left on the Arab and the American intelligence, especially that what my colleague (retired colonel Mohammad EL Makawi – Abu aL Munther) wrote of very deep analysis based on his military field of specialty, where he dealt with the significant Afghani battles at Jalal Abad, Kabul and other areas – in addition to the political approach that characterized those military essays (from the part of both my colleague and myself) was clearly against American policies. Therefore, it was not surprising that both of us had receive a "security shock" when Pakistani's intelligence moved to deport us both from Pakistan making us the first victims of the international security campaign against Arab Mujahidin in Afghanistan.

Generally, I was somewhat successful in managing to work in the Afghani field. My journalistic work at Manba'a Al-Jihad developed from just following closely to the events at the deadly front at Khost to an intimate participation in the most dangerous parts of that battle, namely to cut off the air communication between Khost and the rest of the world specially Kabul. This is where Airport 1990 operation came from. It worked extraordinarily. Six months later the "New Airport" operation followed which was successful too-though relatively less successful from our first operation. However, the later operation was done in unusual circumstances in terms of difficulty and danger. If we had this into consideration, we would have come up with the conclusion that it was not less effective than the other in terms of achievement. The operation had an important role in bringing the final victory at Khost and conquering the city on 31/3/1990. Anyway, we will talk later about those operations with some details.

As for the Arab front, I considered it as a growing failure despite the limited success, which had no real impact on those whom I dealt with. The most important failure in the Arab field in 1990 was those lectures which I presented with the participation of (Abu Musa'b AL Souri) at Jihad Wal Camp in Khost. The audience was among the most influential cadres of AL Qaida organization headed by Osama Bin Laden.

That "political course", as they called it, resulted in a minor split among the organization as some audience turned to become a stream of expiation. Everybody had discovered how hideous political work surrounding the Afghani issue was. Consequently, they judged everybody infidel both Arabs and Afghanis – though I doubt that they put me

under such category. Anyhow, the "militarily" interfered to frustrate the last combat mission that was assigned to me in Afghanistan I will be mentioning later.

I returned to explore Khost area again. "Too much water ran under the bridge!" how much change was there at the river's bank? As early as the fall of 1989, I have had many detailed trips around the area. I met old leadership friends and discussed the last battle with them, the current situation, and their prospective.

Morals were high because victories were successive. Victories are the best that can raise morale of the people. Mujahidin were able to take over more land and more spoils. They even got closer from the side of the west more than ever.

Some of those early trips were in the company of "Abu AL Hareth the Jordanian" who was the Emir (Commander) of the main Arab group at Khost, which I described before as being the best group of Arabs ever worked in Afghanistan, I still believe so up till now, whenever Arab activities at the fronts come to my mind.

Abu AL Hareth was a young man in his thirties. Descending from Bedouin tribe in Jordan, He was rough in his dealings and never less ruthless, helped him gain more enemies due to his genuine sense of humor. However, those who knew him closely like me discovered a good natured and compassionate man. Despite his intelligence, he hated politics and every thing related to it. He had strong belief in arms to deal with any problem. Though I disagreed with him over that opening, I was keen to be good friend with that firm and brave young man. We both shared the same view regarding Afghanistan issue in general and the importance of Khost area in particular.

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The leadership of Haqani, which was of critical importance. I think that he was the only Arab – after the death of Abdul Rahman – who agreed to a great extent with me in that respect.

At the beginning of my new newspaper work, I made several trips around the newly conquered areas of Khost as well as the old areas at Bary. Toda Shana and Dirwazji at the southern mountains facing the airport and the Torgar mountain that was still standing stubbornly in the faces of Mujahidin.

I recorded many information and instructions which I observed and I wrote some of them down in the form of press topics.

Once again, I had that fresh feeling of re-discovering the places I loved. Let us see how I observed that crossing point border at "Ghualam Khan", which lead to the south front in Bary and the surrounding areas. I will never remember how many times I passed thorough that crossing point, yet I always felt that it was the first time I see it. The following lines are the image of Ghualam Khan as dwelt in my memory in the early

months of 1990, which was published in Afghan magazine (issue 19-20) January-February 1990.

### **Ghualam Khan a village at the margin of the war**

A guard at the border – a militiaman – looks inside the car then indicates to his colleague sitting at the side of the road holding the end of a rope to loosen his grip to allow the car to pass through. He did so and the tires touched the Afghani soil.

The last thing you can see while you are leaving the borders is a word of farewell engraved on an old sign and above it are words summoning a funereal lmark. The words read: "Kuda Hafiz", words that had other meanings while you are to the Afghani land, hearing the echo of explosions, and clouds of smoke moving heavily over the mountains summits.

"Ghualam Khan" is the name of the last checkpoint at the borders and the name of the first Afghani village at the other side received by the village with a cemetery in which graves are adorned by tens of flags of different colors that characterize the graves of martyrs. The road descended down to a wide valley in which ran a narrow stream of water. The water was fresh and clear like a mirror. Ghualam Khan those days began to regain its breath after long suffocation for almost three years.

Buildings were destroyed; some houses balconies hung over falling wooden supports, the walls of the houses and the shops and the wooden roofs were scattered here and there. Those were the symptoms of a heart failure, the village had taken by the dreadful surprise of the Soviet aircrafts while the village was completely engaged in a fully economic prosperity. Trade was prosperous especially foodstuff. Other villages depended on it because they were remote. Mujahidin centers depended also on the village and many other centers at the area of Khost. At the acme of prosperity, the village forgot that the war was very close and that the enemy would not accept to have any Afghani village got away from paying the price of war. Therefore, before the noon of a summer day tons of bombs exploded over the people's heads of the village warning them all of a sudden that they were also in the midst of the war. Over fifty were killed under village debris.

The bombardment served as reactivation for the memory of those who almost forgot that the Soviets were still in Afghanistan. The aircraft carried the reminder message not only to Ghualam Khan Village but also to the immigrant camps beyond it and even to the humble market that was few kilometers away behind the borders which had its share of heavy caliber bombs, and resulted in killing more than one hundred immigrants including men, women and children. The bombardment destroyed simple goods that were displayed, many families in fact were eagerly waiting to sell them to stay barley alive. In the horse market, which was active on that day, the immigrants were offering to sell their beasts which transport them through the mountains in a hard trip that lasted for weeks.

The beasts had to be sold along with other simple belongings so that the first slow months would pass until the aid from Immigrants Commission came.

On that bleeding day the blood of horses mingled with that of the immigrants' bags of flour and brown sugar, knead with human roasted flesh.

However Man's well for life is stronger than memories of death. Thus, Ghulam Khan resurrected again, breathing with life and stepping forward to find a spot at the margin of the war.

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The war at Khost got tougher and life returned gradually to normal at the village allays. Baskets of fruit started to have a place in front of the few shops that had recovered. The butcher of the village hung red meat of an old buffalo. The Mujahidin welcomed the presence of a nearby market that saved them a long distance and time.

However, what really became active was the trade in "scrap metal" which was the remainder of the bombs thrown down by the aircrafts. Six "trading centers" soon appeared to receive heaps of the scrap metal. This sort of trade became the source of livelihood for many who had found it as a mean to earn their living. They preferred to stay alive rather to be between the jaws of death.

In the morning scrap metal collectors gathered in the immigrants camp each holding old bags of fabric. They hired a car that took them to their homeland just near Mujahidin' centers. They stay for a day or two wandering between the centers looking in the mountains for the remaining of a shell or a rocket. They worked individually and sometimes accompanied by a son, brother or a friend to collect the scrap metal and put them in their bags.

The tougher the battles were the abundance of livelihood was, no one listened or talked about risk or danger, they became permanent family members.

In every battle field, the bold got the utmost share, as was the case with those young men who were behind the first line of Mujahidin and sometimes in front of it, where they found more metal fragments of better quality of copper and more of "diamonds", which was the name given to the heavy iron masses fixed at some bombs thrown by aircrafts.

Those young men are really courageous; rockets fall around them and they laugh whenever a rocket leaves a momentary thrill but caused no harm to anyone. They fetch heavy gloves to protect their hands from the hot red iron pieces of shells that have just exploded. They also had a great deal of physical fitness, you could see it clearly when they descend down the hills or climb to their summits like deer or goats. They had enough will and strength to carry their gains to safer locations near the vehicle road or over camelbacks, whether hired or owned.

Ghualam Khan, the village that has just recovered from the memories of death, arranged its new source of wealth from scarp metal trading under the traditional tribal way of handling things. All merchants specialized in this unique field belong not only to the same village but to the same tribe as well. The competition between them is settled firmly under rules; prices are fixed and agreed on. Beyond this rule, the seller has the choice to sell to anyone he likes under no pressure or incitation.

That trading activity was connected with the intellectual state of affairs in the area and gave a good indication of the course of events because the village is the first place on the Afghani territories the visitor sees and the "specialized shops" in the war scrap metal give him an initial new bulletin of the situation. For example, the kind of used

ammunition available at the shop one can come up with somehow good information. Therefore, too many pieces of Scud missiles means that the enemy is in a crisis; empty rounds containers for artillery means that the Mujahidin are bombing heavily and the quantities of aircraft round or bomb fragments indicate to the enemy's air activity. In such days, you would find tons of such pieces because hostile aircrafts attack as long as 12 hours daily and so on.

While "military iron" trade is the most profitable activity and the largest among other trading activities of Ghualam Khan, food products trading came next in importance as it served other villages and some Mujahidin centers. The third trade in importance is "fuel" trading of which the most important is petroleum. There is only one gas station to provide fuel for cars and households. There are also other "centers" to buy and sell local wood that can only be useful for cooking and heating.

Few domestic beasts cross the streets of the village almost abandoned. Very few people are driven by curiosity to come to the village and witness the commercial world in Ghualam Khan. The village itself never abandons the memories of death from its subconscious. That is why it moved very carefully at the margin of the war.

My "military tour" with Abu AL Hareth was particularly useful because, he with his group, participated in many important battles that took place there in addition to his contacts which grew more intimate with the chiefs of Haqani and also in addition to being

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– Talking of Abu AL Hareth – strong-memory person. He almost forgot nothing which is an uncommon feature between the two of us. One of the closest events of that military tour to my memory is that trip to "Dirwazji" area where there was a center for missile or rocket launchers operating against the airport. The center was operated by martyr "Abdal Mannan" group, who took over his brother in leading the group. They were old friends of ours since our first days at Khost.

Let us see that trip as I drew its picture up of Afghanistan Magazine (Nov. 1989). That trip was of great use for me when I began planning to work to attack the airport in "Airport 90" operation. The title of the essay was: "Khost, a city born besieged"

### **"Khost, a city born besieged"**

The car moved carrying us on a very rough road. The back of the car was full of food boxes and some ammunition in addition to 7 Mujahidin carrying their guns. That "freight" was twice as the designed capacity of the car in normal circumstances.

No doubt that moving in that road the backs of mules was much easier, but mules also were too few and the car could not get to the destination in less time despite the bruises those riding in the back seat. Even those taking first class ride in the front seat by the driver are not safe from less embitterment in the form of bruises caused by the arms hits that are around their waists or between the legs. Those who are not familiar with or used to this experience could be subject to danger wounds. Aircrafts are the least thing they think of. Drivers do not think of stopping at the appearance of aircrafts unless they are in an uncovered area.

Through mountains passages, the car took us to the eastern side of the Khost valley. At that time, we were driving close to the city airport at less than five km distance approximately. Mountain chains lie between the airport and us. These mountains were not of the same elevation but they gradually get lower until they reach the plain of Khost itself where airport defense system begins.

No indication of life can be detected in Khost itself other than few cars moving a bit here and there in scattered places leaving behind a long line of dust.

Fuel crisis made cars movement carefully calculated. The shells thrown by Mujahidin at the city made it very dangerous to move without caution.

This was all connected with the long siege by Mujahidin of the city. So long that one thinks that it was "born besieged". The crisis became even graver when the arms of Mujahidin became sophisticated, they were able to fire at the sandy runway of the city airport resulting in mixing the dust of bombs with that of aircraft that tried hard to find a safe place for landing and take off.

Safety chances decreased gradually to the point that the most risky mission ever in the Afghanistan war- at least for the pilots- was to try to land or take off from the expected death runway of Khost airport. Our car moved slowly in our uncomfortable

trip. At every "hump" on the road, a cheerful group exclaimed "God is Great" then they started laughing loudly at seeing the turban of a colleague falling off his head, the shoe of another getting off his feet or even getting a painful bruise somewhere.

The whistling of rounds in the air did not bother any one either, except for newcomers among guests who come as tourists from another world that watches astonishingly the world of Afghani warriors (Mujahidin). The bomb whistles and explodes before or behind no one but stops nor cares. At the side of car road – if that thing can be called a road at all – there are deep holes that appear at far intervals. These were made by heavy shells (minimum weight is 500 pounds) dropped by aircrafts on the tracks of Mujahidin's cars to destroy their transport ways.

The attempt was very naive and useless; those large holes were soon filled by torrents as some Mujahidin came and filled them with their shovels and brought the road back to the rough position as before after removing air bombard effects.

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It was a dry season. Winter rain did not fall till later. The green grass that used to cover the mountain turned to yellow that burned easily under the explosions of bombs leaving the mountain in fire and heavy smoke.

The scene was magnificent especially at night. Unboundedly, the scene of fires and smoke brought comfort and false hope to the souls of the government army officers; smoke pillars and dust gave them happiness.

This was what the "commandant" with the thick beard mixed with grey had said laughing gladly showing snow-white teeth. He was the commander of the site to which we headed opposite the eastern part of the airport runway.

He gave us a ride in his very old "Toyota" car from Bary area, which faces the western part of the airport towards "Dirwazji" area by the eastern side where his group is watching attentively the enemy's attempt to use the airport. Any such attempt would bring prompt fire on the aircrafts.

Two days ago an aircraft was burnt at the airport and exploded with its load of ammunition. The pilot, his assistant and the flight engineer were killed. The commander said, "We received a wireless message transmitted by the enemy at Khost addressed to its command at Kabul:

The commander added fluently, confidently and enthusiastically; "You will see by yourself five aircrafts on the airport runway hit by Mujahidin rockets... There are other aircrafts among the trees surrounding the airport, especially at the northern side. You will see all that when we get to our site. You can see several piles of burnt aircraft structures at the runway sides and between the trees".

The car stopped to exchange greetings with a group of Mujahidin walking on their feet. They were coming from "Dirwazji", the area to which our caravan was heading. Personal greetings and tens of questions about Mujahidin positions and news were exchanged quickly and collectively. All repeated "Allah Shukur" thanking God, all brothers at centers are safe. Each caravan then continued its respective way.

Finally, the car stopped and the driver shouted asking everyone to step down the car thanking God for safety.

I looked to see where the center was, I saw a cover of thick fabric at the side of the road. It was clear that the canvas cover was a mosque for the group. Beside the mosque there were a number of stones where fire was set in between under a large teapot that became black of soot...

The tea was about to be ready. I felt happy just like everybody else, nothing in the world was better after a hard trip than a cup of green tea.

Five young men all under twenty came hurriedly to welcome the "commandant" and guests. Three older raised their voices mixing words of welcome with questions.

The first group was exchanging hugs with the comers as the procession was gradually increasing by persons appearing from here and there. The areas was suitable for hiding due to the tall and interlaced grass in addition to trees, as palm trees the height of which was no more than half of a meter. To the north and to the west, there was a mountain extending as a waving chain, at its western side was an observation point to monitor the city and the airport. To its east side, there was "firing area" where a rocket launcher BM12 was positioned at the edge of a steep slope, it was difficult to it while in position, it was sunset. Visibility was becoming difficult as the sun was moving to the western side of the valley where the mountains formed a site shield to the BM12 launcher.

"Would you like to climb up now and see the airport and the city?" the good commandant asked. His callosity and strength proved his good intentions but our bad shape was enough to answer the question negatively. To save us the embarrassment, we offered as an excuse that the time was late and was close to darkness, we asked to postpone the trip until tomorrow morning. I took a glance at the monitoring point, the mountain was not only high, but its upper third was literally vertical with a black summit looking up in defiance.

I sighed of pain I expected to encounter and a man next to me murmured let us turn to God for help.... Few minutes before the tea is ready, the commandant moved forward followed by the procession of Mujahidin towards the rockets launcher and we started to examine it while it was standing proudly at the edge of the slope with its twelve muzzles

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pointing towards the Airport runway, the gunner's chamber was two meters away to the right in a pit to the side of the slope, which made it impossible for hostile fires coming from the valley to hit it.

The commandant put his hands on his chest and nodded his head with sadness and pain: "Marma Nashtah" The news was bad indeed, no shells for the launchers.

The commander made it clear that this happened quite frequently. Obtaining shells for such launchers became very difficult. Gone were the days when such shells were available more than the bullets of a Kalashnikov.

- Since when has this crisis begun?
- Several months ago.
- Why?
- We do not know; aid became meager.

The cook called everybody for tea. He was the cook of the center and one of the youngsters working at the camp.

We sat in a semicircle around teacups, which lost its beautiful shape due to their broken edges and removed white paint from several spots.

The man next to me smiled and said: "cups from the era of David!"

One of the attendants heard it and laughed loudly and told the rest in a sarcastic comment, they all laughed. The commander felt ashamed and made apologies and quickly cast his blames on the aid people who bought inexpensive items.

Actually, nothing was worth apology. The tea was needed badly after our exhausting trip. With the sugar grains though mixed with dirt, the delicious taste of the tea was beyond description. Hunger and thirst were enough to make anybody feel the worst taste of the as the best.

Everyone soon felt merry without bounds and exchanged talks. The fresh breeze of the night was coming from the valley, the eastern part appeared from the crevice in the mountains where we were sitting. Few fresh things elsewhere became a source of happiness. Taking off the shoes for example after a wearing trip, then dipped the foot in the cold running water in the stream or exposing them to the fresh air, all that arose in the tired self an enormous happiness.

However, everybody there learned that nothing lasts forever even a piece of happiness with a cup of tea and a cold breeze in the evening, everything may stop all of a sudden either by a little annoyance or by a great tragedy.

Old cups in our hands jolted. Hot tea spilled out on the fingers because of a heavy shelling on the foot of the mountain opposite to us. The sound of the explosion was horrible not only for being so loud, which made one shivers, but also because it was not expected in a moment of clear mind such as the one we had after a tiresome trip.

Nevertheless, everyone laughed and no one complained; after that everything was so familiar.

It was a routine bombardment. .. They knew that we were here because they had this place until very recently before we kicked them out a short while ago... The mountain behind us, which we used for surveillance and monitoring the city, was a hub for them and landmines were still there.

The commandant explained the situation and the cheer got back to the gathering until... we heard the call for evening prayers from the direction of the rocket launcher, where the man calling for prayers stood beside it calling in a chanting voice that added a spiritual touch to the poetic atmosphere of the place.

Supper followed right after evening prayers had been performed. In the middle of those who were sitting two trays of rice were placed. For the guests' sake, sugar was added to the top of the rice. Camp members ate with strong appetite but the guests ate enough so as not to feel hungry at night. The fresh night breeze gave us hope of a nice evening together around cups of green tea... But the situation changed completely all of a sudden contrary to the state of clarity and amiability, which the guests imagined...several bombs fell just close to the camp.

The commandant called them to enter the main cave, situated few meters away, but it was a hard trip to get into there, especially after bombardment intensified and a number of rockets type BM41 fell near the place in which we were sitting. Some men fell between stones, others threw themselves under the edge of the steep slope and all ran towards the mouth of the cave with their ears directed to the sky to hear the whistle of the coming projectiles.

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The commandant received a wireless message through his small receiver hanging over his shoulder. The reconnaissance team, on the mountain, reported that a transport aircraft was trying to land at the city airport. The situation became clear to us. It seemed that the camp Mujahidin needed no wireless message to discover the mystery of the sudden bombardment. It was only a cover up for the aircraft to land safely since the area was dangerous to the airport runaway. We gathered in the cave amidst laughter and comments of the youngsters as such adventures help boost their energy and instill vividness and excitement in that calm life amid the silent mountains.

A rocket was launched from a nearby place and a guest asked the commander:

- What is this?
- Mujahidin rockets are directed towards the Airport
- From where? Have not you said that you have no rockets?
- At this center, yes. In the nearby center of course, we have a good number of them.

Shells fell over the cave roof and near the entrances. Everyone moved towards the far end of the cave, which was extending to about 4 meters inside the mountain. Some burning fragments pushed its way into the cave and broke the lantern turning the cave into darkness. The guests had a good excuse for loosing their mood of joy and cheerfulness, which they had a little while ago. One of them was about to inquire when the bombardment would stop ... had another call been received through the wireless receiver making the youngster shouting, "Allah is Great"... The aircraft was hit at the airport runaway and fire was seen burning it, many cars rushed towards the aircraft, perhaps to extinguish the fire or to extend aid.

- "Zandabad Allahu Akbar ..."

Successive shouting spreading warmth and confidence in the crowded gathering crowded at the closed end of the cave ... while rockets were exploding fiercely around the cave which was almost about to fall. However, no one cared even the guests; none of them asked about the time when bombardment would come to an end.

What I did not say about the adventure is that the bombardment continued until after midnight. Our cave could hardly stand it. Many fragments reached almost the end of the cave forcing us to stick to a small hole at the side and close the end of the cave. Those people have forgotten the lessons derived from Ore battle, including that it was necessary to have open caves connected from the inside that can provide emergency exits- but the presence of rocket launcher, relatively close to the cave, inspired me with an idea that I used later during the Airport 90 operation, but I made the launcher almost very close to the cave edge and fortifying the launcher and the cave entrance with sand bags. Such action was so important and valuable under the circumstances of this operation of ours as we shall see later on.

In the morning, I had a guide who took me, along with Abu Al Hareth, my companion in that trip, to the summit through the landmines around us. There, we could see the damaged aircraft completely burnt and the airport sank in utter silence and movement around it came to a standstill.

I spent sometime examining every spot in the airport and the area surrounding it in addition to the heaps of debris at the northern and southern edge, I then stared for a while at Mount Torgar and at the fortifications built on it and the trenches circling its upper rims.

Lastly, Abu Al Hareth drew my attention that the sun was about to burn us and that the guide left us and went back to the camp. We had to go down by ourselves and cope with "a simple problem", namely our ignorance of the location of the landmines. We thought that it was proper to yell from above calling on "Al Kothi" folks to send a guide to take us down. Doing so will definitely expose us to their endless mockery. Therefore, we opted to depend on ourselves and on God to get out of that predicament even if it would cost us our lives. Thus, we started to jump over from one rock to another like two

nimble goats avoiding stepping on dirt, which might contain death in the form of a landmine.

Of course, we made it because our age had not ended yet. This became a sold fact as we experienced several times when aircrafts almost killed us all three times in one trip during which we were exploring the areas to the west valley at "Nader Shah Cote", "Domando" and Draji".

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Despite the risk we were subject to, I benefited much in knowing the capabilities of the air force in open areas in the Khost Valley and the tactics that were new to me in the use of cluster bombs by such aircrafts.

It was the first time I've ever seen such a bombardment along a distance of more than ten km concurrently in a straight line. This happened on a road, which Mujahidin vehicles used to follow in the valley. Our car almost got into that hell, but God saved us. I realized then that a large number of aircrafts were dropping bombs continuously at a straight line (or that the enemy was using rockets launchers with unusual load i.e. strategic bombers which meant that the Soviets are still bombing us). The scene was dreadful but it gave the opportunity to the driver of our car to drive for a long distance in the valley under a screen of heavy smoke and dust without fearing any new air strike or interference of the enemy's heavy artillery or tanks.

During the same tour, which took several days, we visited Daraji area then a large concentration of the Mujahidin at Lagore to the west of the mountains, which was on an even distance between Darraji and Nader Shah Cote... It was used as a "jump" area during the last operations.

We were fortunate to find there Mawlawi Hanif Shah and Mawlawi Batiktar Jan, both played a vital role in conquering Nader Shah Cote. Each had lead one hundred Mujahidin to cut off communication lines between Nader Shah Cote and Khost or Darraji. They had succeeded in their mission. We heard from them what had happened in details. It was a nice and interested conversation, air bombardment on us almost got us injured several times.

The center was crowded with personnel, tanks, vehicles and piles of ammunition, all were plunders of the last war in that area.

We decided to move towards the Nader Shah Cote in order to escape the heavy air raids because the few hills around us provided little protection. Our driver who was also our interpreter (Hajji Farid) was more eager to leave because the raids did not stop and the place was so crowded. Unfortunately, our tough car stalled and we had to push it..., Abu Al Hareth and I, as the rest of the Mujahidin were quickly spreading out under the pressure of successive and concentrated air raids. We were pushing up the road in a slight slope over rough and protruding stones. Soon we almost lost our breath and stopped pushing. We thought of taking a small rest on the nearby rocks but a huge bomb exploded few meters away. This was sufficient to convince us to forget our exhaustion and race the wind on our feet. Abu Al Hareth, who had thought that I was torn into pieces by the explosion, began to call on me with his hoarse pitched voice, "Abu Walid... Abu Walid". I called back with all my voice, which eased him and then we proceeded to the car and started pushing it while "Hajji Farid" was trying to start it without lifting his hand off the ignition switch.

The engine started to produce a large mass of black smoke from the exhaust as if the heat of the situation ran into the pipes of the old engine. This gave us much joy and energy, we jumped into the car, while Hajji Farid was driving up away from Lagor Center, at a time the smoke and dirt were coming out from the aircrafts bombs ...and the exhaust pipe of our old car.

We passed by a number of destroyed and deserted villages in a beautiful area of hills which were lying between the western mountain chains and the green valley of Khost. We were among some scattered houses on a green hill. We stopped our car there to view the city of Khost from the western side which we did not see from a closer angle before.

Hajji Farid stood beside us, with his huge and good looking body, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath looking like a statue of glory facing the city. When he realized that I was watching him, he smiled innocently and said justifying what he did: "The air of Khost...the air of Khost" fresh and nice breeze was blowing lightly on us from the side of the valley. Hajji Farid, who was standing on the ground of his village, was a reflection of the moment of man's weakness of being homesick. That made me feel sad. My homeland – as I see it in my mind – is in a much graver situation than that of Khost which is covered by the clouds of war.

I've never forgotten the sight of that giant Hajji Farid-while he was standing with his eyes closed, inhaling deeply the breeze of the beautiful green valley.

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I was very glad to meet him again in 1995 in the city of Khost market where he opened a small shop. Hajji Farid conquered his city by force and now he lives there in dignity and pride.

Hajji's car moved forward to Nader Shah Cote Fort. Certain roads were marked for driving while others road implied danger underneath.

After the killing of Muteullah, who broke into the fortress, everyone was frightened and they all fixed certain paths for cars and pedestrians to move ont. However, the fortress itself was built according to medieval ages, style though was constructed in the beginning of the century. I only saw a huge store for soldiers and war materials. Sitting inside the rooms was almost impossible, specially the soldiers rooms which were built of clay. They were extremely narrow and compact in long rows facing the fences. They were rotten, the sun ray does not get through. Officers' offices were not an exception, they can surely cause depression, paraplegia and tuberculosis.

As for the equipment and war materials, they were still piled although most of them were taken outside the fortress to avoid air bombardment or Scud missiles.

Something drew my attention in particular, a green tank written on its side in white "Karawan Sulh" (Conciliation Caravan). I laughed at the word "conciliation" brought by tanks armored with weapons and heavy machineguns.

The government was still playing the tunes of national interest in its radio stations and diplomatic missions. I recalled their old slogans which were full of arrogance at the start of the communist revolution. During my first visit to Afghanistan, Kabul radio station used to repeat the slogan "The eternal government of the people's party" (Khalq) .

Such slogan tumbled and even the Soviet Union started to stagger.

To the farfar west at 20 km away from Nader Shah Cote we arrived at the horrible Dwamindo narrow passage where the end of the world was hanging by the northern chains of mountains, the summits of which were guarded by tanks and guns. Down in the valley was River Shamai flowing with its clear water over round gravels.

The site itself was geographically invulnerable. Army posts on the highway were suffering of the same misery with their clay rooms just like mice holes. The trenches were roofed and camouflaged with rocks and sand, they were used as emplacements for machineguns and landmines.

We asked about the tanks and guns on the mountains and I felt sad to know that they were brought down and distributed among other spoils. I wished that they were kept in place as to stop any attacks from the government forces, in case these forces managed to come back again. However, the time when the government forces were able to go anywhere they wish had gone too.

### **Torgar... the last time**

Late in December 1989, I intended to stay in Abu Dhabi to publish the first issue of Manba'a El-Jihad magazine. I finished writing most of the articles including the most important one about the death of Tamim AL Adnani, and the assassination of Dr. Abdullah Azzam , other topic was about the last battles of Khost and the conquests of Nader Shah Cote Fort, Domindo, Darraj and other fortresses spreading around the west of the Khost Valley.

A friend of mine named "Basel" helped me in writing some topics for the magazine. He was a journalist working in the United Arab Emirates and had deep Islamic senses along with an alert intelligent mind. All these attributes were good but he had a simple flaw; he constantly used to blame me for almost everything I did. I called him "Basel the blaming soul". This did not prevent him from inviting me to his house on several occasions and at least once to dine with him at a restaurant in Abu Dhabi.

I was planning to stay until the first issue had been completed, but I left quickly when I learned that there was an imminent attack against Mount Torgar. I was told by Ghazi Morjan- may his soul rest in peace- who was Haqani's representative in Abu Dhabi. I knew also that the Mujahidin were conducting an encirclement operation around the mountain to cut off the supply lines.

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It was an exciting development. The new areas that Mujahidin had taken over during this year – and the recent months in particular – gave them a good opportunity for military maneuver. I did not know in details the developments around Torgar. I always felt that I was morally responsible for participating in the campaign against the mountain.

As Torgar is linked with the martyrdom of my friend Abdul Rahman, it was also liked with what we used to think together that it was necessary to depend on Torgar to jump against the airport and the city. My family had moved from Peshawar to Islamabad as Peshawar was still strained since Dr. Abdullah Azzam is assassinated. Pakistani intelligence was still inquiring about (Arab lords) who all disappeared.

Even my wife was subjected to interrogation, questioning and delay when she came back from Abu Dhabi to Peshawar airport, that never happened before. I did what any ideal husband would do, I gave her all money I had before she traveled to Abu Dhabi. I was rich back then – something unusual for me – after I managed nearly 3 years struggling to receive the rest of my entitlements from Al Itihad newspaper, which had frozen them since the closure of its offices in Islamabad. The newspaper received a report from UAE embassy to liquidate the offices officially, all assets have been forwarded without embezzlement.

We returned to "Peshawar Mour" the busy and crowded quarter near the weekly Sunday market behind the main street, which was crowded with restaurants, vegetable shops and groceries. We lived in the same district when we first came to Pakistan because we loved the area and got used to it. Our kids did their best in acting with the naughtiness of childhood, which resulted in a number of little problems that always ended in making new friends and more popularity to our kids especially "Khalid" who was then more famous to shop owners than President Dia'ul haq. Therefore, when we came back to the area, many of them asked my son Walid about his brother Khalid , when he told them that he was martyred in Afghanistan , all were shocked and some cried.

I was glad we were back again to Islamabad. I loved that city, which was built in a jungle at the rims of the mountains. On the other hand, I hated the city of Peshawar since the first time I saw it and I will not like even until the last day in my life. I do not think I was mistaken. My guess was that this city hid evil underneath it and proved to be right. However, I soon realized that the political conditions had changed making Islamabad no less badly than Peshawar.

It was a bad omen that my wife had to call the police to evacuate some women who were relatives of the landlord to stay at my house for sometime claiming that the rental house of which we had paid in advance for a whole year is larger than our actual need.

However, I dismissed the devil's whispering when I knew that the man left a telephone set in the house after he had settled all its bills to enable us use it during our stay. Several months later, evil whispering visited me again when we discovered that he somehow was using the same line leaving settlement of the bills to us. It was a shock

because we almost failed to settle the large amount of bills in which many long distance calls were to numbers we never heard of.

Telephone bills were nothing compared to electricity and water bills. Their amounts were enormous and unbelievable. Apparently it was "bills war" as I called it. However, I was not the only victim of the bills war. I discovered that many Arabs in Peshawar and Islamabad suffered the same situation. It was a deliberate act to "sack" us out of the country.

I stayed several days with my family in Islamabad to make sure their situation was alright especially those relating to admittance of my children to Arab schools. We had no school available except Saudi schools which like all other Saudi educational missionary and medical centers were tools for the Saudi intelligence octopus.

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For the sake of truth, this is the case with all Arab countries. Their primary concern was to follow the movements of their citizens and recruit others to serve the local regimes and the international masters. Therefore, education for our children was more difficulty than the military operations in Afghanistan. We could not get them in any school and we still suffer to the very moment of writing these lines.

On the tenth day of January a "Scud" missile coming from Afghanistan fell on a village called "Wah" near the city of Rawalpindi close to the capital Islamabad. That was the deepest range rocket to reach Afghani territory inside Pakistan.

That act indicated a dangerous crises in the military field in which the regime in Kabul is passing through. At that time only Khost witnessed activities of Mujahidin which reached an alarming degree. Statements from the regime and other international parties came to indicate that Khost was the only focus of danger to the regime, while all other strategic and vital areas went into deep and suspicious silence and calmness. Some of these areas made a secret agreement with the communist government and the local leadership which began acting according to their own interest.

I moved towards Khost on Thursday Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> 1990 accompanied by my son Walid to commence studying computer in one of the private institutions in Peshawar after all ways for Arabic education were blocked in his face. We arrived at Peshawar at 8:00 pm and went directly to Jalalul Din Haqani's office, which was opposite to railway at the end of Abdara Road Street. The office was almost empty, the clashes were fervent at the front and Haqani had to be there to oversee action between Miranshah and combat lines at Khost.

The telephone operator told me that the Mujahidin attacked Ismail Khail area to the west of Khost and took over some positions. They also attacked mount Torgar and the outcome was unknown, the operations resumed since 6:00 am. I was surprised to hear the news from Torgar as I expected the attack would be several weeks later, I guessed that the results of the attacks against Torgar used to be known before sunset. I felt ashamed of the relief towards that probability, which meant I could participate in the next attack against the mountain.

Friday 12/1/1990 corresponding to 14 Jumada 2<sup>nd</sup> 1410, I was in the back of an ambulance heading to Miranshan hospital with some Afghani doctors from the interim government, the hospital remained inactive after Kuwaiti Red Crescent left it due to severe disputes with Mujahidin. The Red Crescent's doctors were extremist and superior in dealing with Afghanis. In that trip I was accompanied by Aala Dad, a young officer working with Haqani both belonging to the same tribe. When we arrived at the outskirts of the tribal area at the other end of the city of Banoun, we found a pick up full of guards sent by Haqani to accompany the doctors to the city of Miran Shah, which was one hour far from Banoun. The rain fell down heavily and the guards came like a sardine fish can armored with spikes of Kalashnikov guns.

The car stopped at the hospital entrance. Cold and rain imposed a curfew in the opposite yard and the surrounding roads, which made me unable to disclose – as usual – the severity of the battle and the huge crowds of people and cars at the gate of the hospital.

I went quickly to the House of Arabs, which was a guest house of two stories and many rooms. I anxiously asked about the news of the front, they confirmed the failure of the attack against Torgar and the situation of other battles was still uncertain and confusing.

Then I went to the "Cultural Office", which was not far from the House of Arabs. A relatively wide yard separated between them, which many houses were built in the ugliest architectural design you can imagine. The roads were completely muddy with pools of rain. Water was everywhere, I was forced to take narrow roads. The only advantage of those roads and pools was that they concealed the long rows of excrement of the neighborhood children with armies of flies, so fat and lazy they would not move gently at all.

It is strange to have a cultural office amidst all this filthiness, but that is the way it was. Our new magazine was supposed to have a special room at the ground floor of that wide house, a broadcasting "station" shared it with us in addition to a large guest room at the upper level that contained a "museum" of the leftovers of the battle of Jawar. It included pieces of equipment and official papers and clothes of killed Afghani and Soviet soldiers.

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A large map showing the south sector of the front in which mount Torgar appeared. No one of the magazine staff was present in the building. Most people were out on the fronts. I slept alone in one of the cold rooms that was full of blankets, I covered myself with a pile of them, as soon as I felt warm I went in a deep sleep.

Very early in the morning, I began gathering information of the fronts. I learned that the attack against Ismail Khail resulted in injuring 65 Mujahidin. Among the leaders Hanif Shah – an old friend of mine – was wounded and his colleague Hakam Khan was killed.

News was very bad and the faces were sullen and gloomy. Details of what happened were still unknown. I began to put my things together in my suitcase to go to the front when my assistant in the magazine "Hajji Ibrahim" arrives. He was a student of religious sciences and a previous commander from Zoormat area from the village of "Shahi Cote". Officially he was a translator in the magazine. He was intelligent, brave and good mannered young man, whom all Afghanis admired. He was a good helper in the magazine affairs as well as in the operations we participated together, as we will see later.

Hajji Ibrahim came in the morning. Both of us were glad to see each other again after being away for sometime. I did not find with him any thing new regarding the front, like everybody else his face was sullen. We went out to the market to buy our needs for our forthcoming voyage to the front. We bought some color films. I always had a small camera in my pocket of a latest model. I had another bigger camera with a zoom lens, which was a trust for my friend AL Minyawawi.

When we came back to the office, we learned that Sheikh Haqani was coming to attend the ceremony of burying a martyr in the cemetery opposite to the hospital. So, we postponed our travel until we had met him. It was crowded at the cemetery which was adorned by colorful flags indicating that those in graves were martyrs. Some of them were among my best friends including martyr Abdul Rahman AL Masri, Mawlawi Ahmad Jul, Nawlawi Fathullah, Mawlawi Shakerin and many others. My son Khalid was buried in another cemetery at Matchis area where my friend Hajji Ibrahim lived. Mawlawi Haqani came and gave a long speech to the great crowd in the ceremony. He dealt with religious topics such as Islam, Jihad and martyrdom and urged people to their holy war (Jihad) and its hardships. Such opportunities were quit suitable to charge people psychologically and lift their morals after losing t dear men of Mujahidin.

Most of the crowds were skinny tough armed men with bearded frowning faces. Every one of them was hiding a greater pain and suffering mountains could not tolerate. Few would cry in such occasions but many will find tears filling their eyes. As for me, I deliberately avoided such occasions. I'd rather watch alone so as to let my feelings go out without giving consideration to the presence of anyone else because I found it shameful for a man to be seen crying.

Ibrahim accompanied me to Haqani's guest house which was adjacent to his house. It was a large hall for guests. At one end of the hall a thick screen could be put thus having an isolated small room. Chairs were arranged around it and a small table was sitting in the middle with a television and video recorder. It was a showroom for films taken by a number of photographers working for Haqani during the battles. At the far end of the large hall was a door leading to a small room with two beds and some seats and a private toilet for VIPs.

The guest house had a middle size garden, which was well taken care of and surrounded by a wire fence to keep the kids of the family from sneaking in. Sometimes they receive scolding from the guards and relatives. However, flowers in the garden always paid the price of the presence of those kids.

We met the Sheik in the large hall designated for guests. He was accompanied by his two brothers: Ismail and Khalil Al Rahman, who was injured in his palm lately. I could not speak with Haqani who was preparing to move to "Bary", he asked me to meet him there.

Haqani left the guest house and so did most of the attendants. I stayed with Ibrahim to conclude the picture of the events with those who witnessed the last battles. Among those was Mustafa the Yemeni who was with his Yemeni group at the side of Ismail Kheil

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including Abu Mohammad the Syrian who was a leader among the group of Abu Al – Hareth’s Center at the western side of mount Torgar. The said center was a number of narrow entrance caves and some of these were connected with openings from the inside. Cave openings were facing the west. Abu Mohammad said that a rocket from BM12 launcher hit their position and killed the mortar's gunner and his assistant.

Mustafa, the Yemeni, who was the leader of a group supported by the Yemeni Sheikhs, including Sheikh Abdel Majid Al Zindani, said that his group and self took part in the attack which began at six o'clock in the morning on the village of Ismail Kheil without artillery support to surprise the enemy.

He said that with the sun rising up in the sky, Mujahidin were being surrounded by militiamen. At the beginning men ran away from the village and the women kept fighting and defending fiercely. Some of them even used the mortars behind their house walls. Choppers attacked Mujahidin bravely. He also said that the artillery of Mujahidin interfered and bombed the back positions of the enemy's canons.

He also stated that the number of martyrs was (5) only and seventy five were wounded. He had no more details. "Al Muslim" Pakistani newspaper stated in its issue today that the outcome of Mujahidin attack was 156 two times the original number. In fact, Pakistani media support for Mujahidin decreased and some newspapers presented a hostile attitude. Pakistani Prime Minister Panazer Boto sharpened her very white teeth that were hidden behind her lips and reddened by the blood, may be that of Abdullah Azzam.

Among the martyrs of yesterday was a tank driver who worked with Khalil on mount Torgar. He bombed from the rear (the side of the valley) and while he was going out of the tank a mortar shell fell on the tower killing the driver at once and "Khali Al Rahman" was injured in his palm as we saw today.

Muhiballah arrived today too. He was the chief editor of Manba'a El Jihad Magazine which was issued in the Pashto language. He came from Peshawar to cover the events of the front.

Muhiballah was an ex-judge in his fifties and spoke English fluently but no Arabic. He received some education in India for some years. He was well educated and was not a member of any party, we had much understanding and discussion. For me being with him was always pleasant and useful. Afghanistan was our favorite subject. I saw Afghanistan as a great mystery that cannot be solved, it was his opinion too. Therefore, our talk centered about its history, its geography, its political events, its wars and most important its people the core of all that.

**Sunday 14 January 1990 corresponding to 14 Jumada 2<sup>nd</sup> 1410 AH.**

In our trip to Bary a friend of mine, Othman AL Saidi, accompanied me. He was a bold tall young man who spent years fighting in Afghanistan. He was the sincerest among other Arabs who escorted me to the fronts and elsewhere. Some Arabs called him sarcastically "the outstanding pupil of Abu Walid", but that was not the case. Othman liked what I used to repeat of ideas and views about Afghanistan and other matters. He wondered that such ideas found no one to listen to. So, he tried to defend my ideas in the Arab community, the outcome was always against his wishes. He would not succeed in what I had failed. Anyhow I felt grateful to him.

As the headquarters were crowded, we headed for "the mount of surveillance", which was a high mountain lying at the south-western side of Khost valley and used by Haqani as a headquarter. He established a communication center where he could tap the enemy wireless communications in the city. He tapped communication calls between pilots which were very much useful. We used it in two operations against the airport several months later. We also benefited from it in our press task. That center was a unique source of information with accurate details between the conversations of decision makers.

There were two men in charge of wireless communications in the site. One was "Abdal Aziz", who was an ex-officer in the army. Abdal Aziz was strong, quiet and bright. The other one was "Fadhel", one of Mujahidin who was like his comrade except for his physical strength, he was sharp wit and shrewd instead. Both men provided valuable services to Mujahidin and to us during airport operation.

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In fact, my visits to the front and my close contact by working there during the first seven months of this year benefited me very much in understanding the way Mujahidin worked and their leaders thinking especially Haqani – and their capabilities and possibilities, and to understand more accurately the style, the capabilities and the possibilities of the enemy which enable me to write a number of military studies of those issues. (I will later state them).

It also benefited me in preparing for leading our first operation against the airport and leading our second operation during conquering the city in the next year 1991. Abdul Aziz narrated to us good things happened the night before (after the setbacks at Torgar and Ismail Kheil). He said that Mujahidin canons bombed the airport runway and hit an aircraft that had just landed and burnt. There were in the sky two cargo aircrafts trying to land too. The ground command in the city asked them to land and move the crew of the burning aircraft to Kabul. One of the two pilots replied that he had no orders to land and that he could not land without sufficient protection. The other pilot responded and landed with his aircraft but as soon as his aircraft touched the runway, a shell hit it. The ground commander in the city requested the third pilot to land but he replied: "Sorry I will not land!"

The last words Abdul Aziz could receive were the ground commander saying: "we will try to fix the aircraft. At four o'clock in the afternoon, Hajji Ibrahim came running to me and said:" Come at once, there is an aircraft trying to land at the airport. I was setting with Othman watching the city through binoculars, and talking in different topics. We ran towards Abdul Aziz who was listening to the communication calls between the pilot and the city. While Ibrahim was translating for us: a pilot of a malfunction military aircraft requested permissions to land with his parachute, but the headquarters in the city ordered him to land in the airport. It seemed that his hesitation was the fear of Mujahidin shelling. Finally he landed using a back umbrella to reduce the aircraft speed over the runway.

Abdul Aziz started asking for help from the gunner "Mohammad Bustan AL Kotchi", who had hit the two aircrafts yesterday. It was very exciting when several wireless devices participated and everybody was shouting asking the gunner Bustan to shell the cargo aircraft, which Mujahidin used to hit in the airport. The aircraft was a Fighter Jet Sokui – 7 which was an old model.

After a moment of excitement and waiting, Bustan had to close his device. Some Mujahidin went to him drawing his attention to what had happened at the airport. Bustan started working while Abdul Aziz was correcting the shootings. Several rounds fell not very far from the aircraft but the pilot moved quickly to the farthest eastern end of the runway then tilted a bit to the north until he was safe of Bustan's shells.

Afterwards, a rumor spread saying that the damage to the aircraft caused by two Stinger rockets which exploded at the same time and directly hit the plane. Others denied

that and attributed it to a technical malfunction. A year later, after conquering the city, I examined the plane myself. I sat in the pilot's seat, the body of the aircraft was hit with very small fragments possibly by Bustan's shells.

After conquering the city, the same aircraft caused death to one of the Kutchi – Mujahidin (a Bedouin Mujahidin) as the two men entered into the cockpit and fiddled with the instruments, suddenly the driver's seat went off high in the sky. When they hit the ground one was killed instantly and the other was badly injured.

As per our friend Kutchi the hero, Bustan, I made an interview with him for our magazine "Manba'a El Jihad". I discovered that he belonged to the group of my old comrade martyr Abdul Mannan.. Mohammad Bustan was extremely shy and humble young man despite his thick moustaches and the toughness of his features.

He died as a martyr several months later due to enemy's artillery fire near the entrance of "Bouri Kheil".

I still feel surprised at the great skill of the Afghani enemy in mastering fire of artillery and Stinger rockets despite receiving no training at all. At night the guards woke us up to bring a good news that a transport aircraft for the enemy tried to land in the airport and hit by shelling and burnt and everyone was killed on board. Four aircrafts were hit within 24 hours one of them was a military. In those moonlit and clear nights, the enemy was clearly revealing their attempts to land the cargo plains at the airport. Actually, they did not encounter the same violent resistance they always had. Therefore, they had the probability of winning with

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risk . In many cases they really won quite often when they chose the right time, the Mujahidin were taken by surprise, which often occurred between ten o'clock at night until early morning. These observations were very useful for me later.

### **Monday 15 January 1990 corresponding to 17 Jumada 2<sup>nd</sup> 1410 AH**

A number of fled soldiers arrived at the general command base at Bary –“Khalil Center” – one of them was on mount Torgar, he stated that the result of Mujahidin bombardment to the mountain the other day, 9 were killed among them 5 militiamen, 3 officers and another 9 were injured.

He also said that there were 6 corps from the government soldiers scattered on the foot of the mountain, among them one in white clothes (!! ) and the government was unable to draw them back.

(White clothes worn by militiamen indicated that they were citizens of Khost and the surrounding tribes who had families in this city. White clothes also indicated glory, courage and settlement in the area contrary to the case of the stranger soldiers who look dirty and frightened).

Among yesterday's news received today is the martyrdom of four Mujahidin at Bary as a result of a bomb dropped on their cave causing it to collapse over their heads. Later I passed by that cave and discovered that it was a big hole in the sand cliff which was apt to collapse for any other reason. I was interested in the caves dug by Mujahidin from the engineering and military point of view. The caves played a major role in our operations against the airport as we will see later.

As caves provided a very good shelter against air raids and rocket, the road network made by Mujahidin in the mountains provided a flexible route to move supply and aid to their warriors.

In the morning, we were able to sit with Sheikh Haqani. He said that the battles began a month and a half ago (that was since December) but they became shrewder in the last week. He said it was better for me to stay until battles were over. As for the magazine, it could be printed in Lahore. He told me also that today's battles will start with the aim of cutting off the road between Khost and Jaji Maidan at two points to prevent smuggling from Pakistan.

We came back to the observation post and saw a fire breaking in the mountains at the northern side opposite to us. Abdal Aziz told us that Mujahidin had taken over several military positions (posts) at "Mashgore" and the air force received orders to shell them but they apologized as it was raining and vision was not clear. The air force had received orders then to bombard the road between Logar and Jardiz to prepare for the military force to pass through to Jardiz.

At about 2:30 o'clock pm two Scud rockets fell down; one behind mount Torgar (where the government expected Mujahidin's trooping there), the other on Nader Shah Cote. Dust and smoke rising after exploding of such missiles were magnificent. They went high as far as one hundred meters and took the shape of a raven's nest like a nuclear bomb. The sound of their explosions was the hugest among all bombs and rockets.

Other news from "Mashgore": the fighting that broke at seven o'clock in the morning ended at noon by taking over three positions in a directorate. They put their hands on many spoils including two tanks and captured all the soldiers except four who managed to run away.

The government said that it lost all its weapons at the post and tried to recover those positions later except the directorate. Mujahidin however, said that they were still in all those positions that were taken over.

Mashgore summits were the highest at the northern parts as was mount Torgar in the south. The distance between them ranged from 15–20 km over a line crossing the city center. Taking these mountains over as well as Torgar meant that the city would be in between the two sides of a huge pincers from the north and from the south. That never happened anyway until the city had fallen in our hands. I wrote then in my notebook that with the fall of Mashgore and the success achieved in the operation that day was to cut off smuggling route from any field. If Torgar fell in our hands, 70% of the work to conquer the city would be achieved.

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I did not know that there was an upcoming operation against Torgar with the aim of taking it over. We heard heavy shooting on Torgar and I explained it as being the result of the fear and tension on the part of the soldiers. However, it was more likely that they had seen suspicious movements nearby. Mujahidin used to remove secretly the land mines buried by the government and to open the way for their upcoming attacks.

Today also, Abdal Aziz picked over a call from Torgar to the General Command of the city threatening that they should surrender if supplies were not received. Nerves then were on the edge, supplies were little and the administration was confused; is it time for falling?

At 5:30 pm (at sunset), there were clashes at a close distance above Torgar where light machineguns were used as well as heavy machineguns and RPG rockets. Was it a real attack or just a test by Mujahidin? Was it a quick movement from their part followed by a message from Torgar to the city threatening it to surrender? Before I got any answer a Skod rocket fell down on the area between mount Torgar and mount Zirmanki to the west of the Torgar. It was the real place as a concentration camp for Mujahidin where caves were abundant.

Our friend Abu AL Hareth's center was there. The government's use of Skod rocket was an indication that they had been facing a real crisis. Sometimes, fear and tension made things look dangerous. That is why their use of such rockets was sort of stupidity and ridiculous. However, sometimes their excellent aiming was admirable. For example, they hit Khalil Center at the entrance of the narrow mountain three times with a difference of few meters from the target each time. What was unusual is that every time the center was hit Haqani had already entered the camp.

I found hard difficult to accept that as a coincidence and also difficult to suspect their accurate fire by such rockets. I had doubt that they did not use – at least once – guided rockets such as the American Cruise Rockets, the satellite had a role in monitoring and guidance.

## **Tuesday 16 January 1990**

Waking up for dawn (Fajr) prayers in that cold winter over that high mountain was a very hard experience but still beautiful particularly when it was cloudy and the clouds are too low that the whole mountain was covered by a very charming and gentle screen which formed wet and cold vapors. Ecstasy extended by the possibility of moving freely on the mountain where the enemy could not see us therefore, no shelling and such

We were in a small narrow room full of mattresses, people and a very old wood heater. The room was plunging in the mountain horizontally. The wood chunks for the burner occupied a substantial space of the room. Between the chunks and the roof a

group of merry mice ran around, they spend most of their time running back and forth among the sleeping men in the room.

Roommates scattered early. Hajji Ibrahim, Othman AL Saidi and I stayed for breakfast which consisted of green tea and dry bread. We were lucky to find some sugar with Abdal Aziz, which allowed us to enjoy the hot tea in that freezing morning.

I went up with Othman to have a look at the airport. The silver Sokhoi aircraft was sitting by the trees at the eastern side, we counted seven destroyed aircrafts all AN-32 with two propellers and military colors. Later, I wrote in my notebook: "a miserable swan lake; that was Khost airport with its destroyed aircrafts".

Sometimes the weather was clear and sunny and the gun fire was intermittent. Until eleven in the morning the enemy's aircrafts had not shown up. While we were watching the positions of the enemy, General Imam, a Pakistani intelligence officer came to the site and left it quickly. He was responsible for Mujahidin in Miran Shah and from time to time he used to visit Khost area.

Those spies avoided dealing with Arab Mujahidin. There was no lost love between both parties. In Jalal Abad, however, the situation had changed. As we knew previously, Pakistani intelligence began dealing with the Arabs in Jalal Abad as one of the Afghan parties, I had no doubt that was an additional reason –among others – for the painful setback of the Arabs in that sector which witnessed the biggest massacre for the Arab fighters in Afghanistan.

Kabul radio station announced today that the broken down aircraft at Khost airport is being repaired and that it was hit by 23 shrapnels one of which hit the fuel tank.

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Abdal Aziz passed the news to the Mujahidin "Mohammad Butan" the Kotchi who restarted at once bombing the Sokhoi aircraft in try to hit it.

At the same time a black column of smoke appeared rising up to the sky at the eastside which may was the operations to close Al Maidan road. Once again there was exchange of fire above Torgar at 2:30 pm. Abdal Aziz then sent us the following news: "at 3:00 am today some of Mujahidin attacked the northern area of mount Shargore and took over eight military positions and administrative locations and a military headquarter in (Batcha Fardah) and captured a great number of soldiers and fire militiamen. The details of spoils are too many".

Mujahidin had 6 martyrs and 12 injuries. We received a Pakistani newspaper, which reported according to a government source in Kabul saying that the head of political department at the Ministry of Interior Major General Asadallah Bayman was visiting the Khost city, which was the hottest point in the country. The city was experiencing the second attack. The attack which began last Thursday had been resumed on Monday and the Mujahidin had lost 585 killed or wounded (!!). The communist officer did not mention the Sokhoi aircraft accident.

### **Wednesday 17 January 1990**

The weather was cloudy and rainy all night. That is how we received the morning. In addition to another surprise; the car that carries food and supplies to the center would not come because it was out of order. Thus, we will not have breakfast and we may not have lunch as well. This, however, did not prevent us from enjoying that refreshing morning and wandering around the mountain without being afraid to be seen by the enemy. Neither they nor we could see more than a few meters ahead because heavy clouds covered the area.

It looked as if the mountains were moving among masses of watery clouds while we were warming up around the burner, Hajji Ibrahim came with very strange news but it was good and from an unknown source. The news was that mourning was declared in Khost for 3 days upon the death of Major General Ajab Khan Mazari the commander of "Sarhadi" brigade, who kept fighting in the area for six years. The news also said that 15 others were killed with him and details were unknown. I was surprised not to learn that Ajab Mazari was killed, but to know that he was still alive and worked in Khost too. He was the commander of a government garrison above Torgar at the time of struggle in Bary in- the old days- until the death of Abdal Rahman.

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## **Torgar: The Second Attempt**

**Thursday 18 January 1990**

The morning started cold and cloudy. Clouds became thicker and heavier that seemed as if they were draying themselves over the mountains making it hard to see. The rain was light but refreshing; it stopped forming mud which handicapped the movement in the sandy area. However, our clothes got wet. The cold weather and the blowing wind made us shiver easily, that was the worst thing.

That was not the case of us who were sitting by the burner inside the room looking at the burnt wood that became red of utter anger for something. But the case for those men who were outside moving in that early morning to take over the most important military post in the battle over Khost namely, mount Torgar.

Abdul Aziz whispered to us saying that this day shall be the attack day. I felt good about the news and considered that the weather was perfectly suitable for action because we shall not see or hear the ugly sound of the enemies' aircrafts, our fighters could come few meters close to the enemies' lines up the mountain before being discovered.

At eight oclock in the morning the Mujahidin began their artillery bombard against Torgar, while the enemy artillery was shelling aimlessly the positions of Mujahidin. At eight thirty, Sheikh Haqani came to us at the observation point and took his position beside Abdul Aziz and his assistant Fadhel and set some number of big wireless communication devices, they covered them with plastic covers and covered themselves as well, rain spray was falling continuously.

Haqani and some of his assistants were using little wireless devices to communicate with different units. It was the first time I saw Haqani leading one of the largest operations. The situation had changed since 1981 which was the last year, I saw Haqani leading attacks against a governmental fort at the entrance of the Lijah Valley. Their personal arm then was only a Kalashnikov – which was a weapon carried only by the Russians and recovered from battle spoils. He always carried RPG to resist the helicopters.

I still remember him that day when terror and fear spread like a plague in our camp between the defiles of Lijah as a result of the helicopters continuous attack on the camp. In that day he climbed the mountain with his personal guard "Ali Jan" to shoot the choppers. Advance under the attacks of choppers was not possible because it aroused fear in everybody. People then were not used to deal with them and never succeeded in resisting them although the Mujahidin possessed a few number of "SAM" rockets. That is why Haqani was most concerned in putting courage and solidity in his men and destroy the fearing of helicopters in their hearts. He stood for the choppers by rockets to break the barrier of fear, he succeeded to a great extent

At Lija, then, there was not any small or large wireless device. At Ore battle one of the shortcomings was the lack for telecommunications between different groups. There was only one large device in the base for distance communications but not among the operating groups.

The emergence of small wireless devices was one of the positive effects for the Arab presence in Afghanistan. I think that most of such devices were either provided by Arabs directly to Mujahidin or that Arabs financed their purchase.

What I saw was a fantastic communication network capable of linking all units together and so with the general command, in addition they had the capability to tap enemy's air and ground communications.

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It was crowded up there in the observation post and headquarters, in addition to the personal guards of Sheik Haqani, there was another group with a car designated to carry out some missions that might be assigned in short notice, such as following up an urgent matter or deliver some orders directly without transmitting them via communication sets.

It even became more crowded by the presence of our "press" group that consisted of Othman AL Saidi, Hajji Ibrahim and me. We recorded most of the wireless communications, so we did in other battles. I still have those recordings, which may have become "historical". In a period of relative quietness the Sheik said to me: "the vision is not good in connection with heavy weapons and tanks but rainy weather and fog might be good for the attackers up in the mountain".

The remark was absolutely right. Such weather had prevented Mujahidin on the mountain from dealing with the heavy weapons; so they had to deal lonely against very strong entrenched and fully armed enemy that outnumbered Mujahidin, that was the tragedy of that day, which I wished it had been the day of conquer.

9:30 am: the fog was increasing and the rain was continuous. The shelling stopped and I found a chance to speak with Haqani. I asked him about the effect of taking Torgar over in the course of Khost battles. He said: "To them, this mountain is like the eye that watches our movements, it directs guns, aircrafts and hit our positions. If we take it over, all this will be null and we can bring our guns forward. We identify their positions around the airport and hit them. More often, fear will cripple them if we take Torgar over. The great propaganda around this mountain and their continuous boosting of their ability to hold Mujahidin back made all the people in the army and all the civilians feel that their very lives and existence are connected with this mountain".

Then I asked why Ismail Kheil's operation last week failed. He stated three reasons:

- 1- Parties participating in the operation did not act as was assigned to them.
- 2- The leaders of the four attacking groups were martyred or wounded.
- 3- Tanks (Numbering eight) pulled out without receiving orders as well as killing the leaders of the attack.

Haqani also said that the aircrafts had used recently very heavy bombs. One of these bombs fell near a tank and burned it. Regarding the fate of Ajab Mazari, he said that the news was not certain but our sources in Khost assured us that he was killed but that was kept as a secret. As for Mahgore positions they were still in the hands of Mujahidin.

Haqani said that Mujahidin are advancing now at the western side of mount Torgar while Khalil's tank in the valley is shelling the entrenchments and fortifications of the enemy. However, the enemy also benefited from the weather conditions and pushed new reinforcement towards the mountain despite our ambushes that surrounded the

mountain from the west bank. But those ambushes could not uncover the reinforcements of the enemy or confront them.

At 10:50 a Scud rocket fell, ten minutes later it was followed by another one near mount Torgar without any casualties; the air got tense and everybody was nervous when communications with Khalil (Haqani's brother) tank was cut off at the bottom of the valley. The tank was used to bomb the fortification of Torgar from the back, thus his tank was under intensive fire.

At 12:45 in Abdul Aziz's narrow dark room; we sat with Haqani to have lunch. He was very worried and concerned about his brother; he stopped eating in a try to communicate with the tank. At 12:45 a machineguns battle broke up on the mountain. Fire became very heavy and intense that one could hear it clearly. Our position was 4 km to the west of Torgar and a bit to the south.

Mujahidin had another tank shelling the western edge fortifications at Torgar using a position in mount Zormanki, which is to the west of Torgar at its lower hills. While Mujahidin climbed up toward the top of the mountain, part of the road became exposed to the enemy's artillery. The enemy concentrated its firing on that part. By that time Mujahidin had passed it the enemy was not able to see them due to the clouds and fog that covered the mountain and its surroundings.

Those who crawled towards the summit complained from the fire of a heavy machinegun (called Zikoyak) which had stopped their advance and demanded that "Fairouz" would interfere and silent it. Khalil himself replied: "I did my best shelling it. Now you have to come along and silence it".

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The person who spoke from up the mountain was Dr. Nasratallah the commander of Salman AL Farisy battalion who was moving on one leg after he had lost the other in a battle.

Nasratallah had reached the summit and what is left was one last step and he would be with his men in the trenches of the enemy's first line surrounding the mountain. At the top of that mountain was that fortified horrible top which deadly muzzled of heavy machineguns came out with launchers of hand grenades of the famous type called (Narin AK), which was a very effective weapon in such situations. The assailants were missing such terrific weapon.

Dialogue continued for a while between Nasratallah and "Nairouz" until machinegun fire eased up. They felt sad because attackers arrived to a dead end in the mountain. Therefore, they could not carry on with the last step of their mission, which was approximately 10 meters away. Though the distance was short, it stood between success and failure; victory or defeat; conquering Khost stayed in a vicious circle that may lead to the end of the struggle march which took more than 12 years to accomplish.

Some kind of a funeral silence prevailed up the mountain and around it. Even all other sites were dead silent and quite. Haqani had to deal with that critical situation. He took the speaker of the communication line and talked to all fighting units and in particular to the attacking group on top of the mountain.

The Sheik talked calmly with strong tone. He reminded them of God and the necessity of depending on Him alone and not reckoning to material causes and effects because victory is in the hands of God not in what appeared to be a good cause to it. He demanded peace of the mind and comfort of the heart as the promise of God shall prevail.

He said that what they had begun today had to be finished today, which we shall never find a better day than it because clouds and fog prevent aircrafts and artillery activity against us. Then asked all units to pray two prostrations for God and ask Him to bestow victory upon Mujahidin. Haqani finished his message and went on prayer so did everyone in the site. Everybody was deeply engaged in calling upon God and sometimes crying.

At 3:12 Mujahidin up the mountain started shooting and firing machineguns and anti armored tanks rocket. The enemy's famous machinegun Zikoyak suddenly silenced. Communication through wireless sets broke up with attackers. I imagined that the penetration had already been completed and that it was a very critical moment up the mountain where there would be no time for anyone to talk with one another in any language except for that of machineguns and bullets. At Sheik Amir site, Mujahidin were bombing the enemy's positions to prevent them from attacking Khalil's tank from the back the thing that Haqani was afraid of. This lead him to spread ambushes at advanced defense positions. A great explosion was heard at enemy's positions at Sheik Amir while Haqani was roaring with encouragement cries promising victory to Mujahidin.

Wireless communication with the attackers up the mountain was back. They said that ten enemy soldiers deserted and joined Mujahidin. Haqani ordered to bring them back to us. All of a sudden, enemy's choppers appeared and fired volley of rockets on the western side of Mount Torgar where they expected to have Mujahidin. Visibility was still difficult due to the clouds and fog. Another chopper came at a low altitude from above enemy's positions at Sheik Amir to the direction of Khaled's tank. It seemed that it was an attempt to destroy the tank but Mujahidin ambushes confronted it with RPJ forcing the chopper to flee quickly at extremely low altitude. The helicopters did that to avoid anti armored vehicle's missiles from hitting them. alert personnel who are.

Hostile rocket launchers BN-41 shelled Mujahidin's position around Torgar.

At 3:56 light and heavy hostile machineguns up the mountain fired without stopping which raise many suspicions that the attack failed and the penetration did not occur. The position was not clear for me so, I asked Sheik Haqani about the situation up the mountain and he told me that enemy's resistance was intensively strong.

A Scud missile fell down followed by another in just few seconds interval. The chopper was back bombing savagely the near rim to Torgar.

At 4:45 another Scud missile followed by vicious raid by the helicopter. It occurred to me that it did so to make use of the state of confusion to carry on their mission safely.

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Heavy machineguns up the mountain were still firing continuously so was the Kalashnikovs.

At 5:00 the helicopter continued to raid and it might land behind the mountain from the side of the city to clear the dead and the wounded. It became dark and the news came that the attack had stopped and there were an unidentified number of martyrs.

At 5: 25 up in Torgar there was a continuous firing using all kinds of weapons demonstrating cheer over the failure of the attack against them. Surly their success instead fasting against Mujahidin attacks will raise the morals of the enemy at Khost and Kabul and insure to them the ability of the regime to hold the strategic cities, which supports the international proposal to establish a communist/Islamic government in Kabul and serve the interest of the Americans and the Soviets together.

I wrote in my notes these words:

"It seems that this operation needs one more day with some modifications such as re-distribution of tank positions to shell the enemy's fortified centers up the mountain. The weather is an important factor. If it continued one more day; it would be a miracle working for Mujahidin"

I asked Haqani about resuming the attack tomorrow but he replied; "I know; should we attack tomorrow or some days later. We have to change our way and attack from different directions after we have removed the landmines. We need also to employ 120 mm mortars to destroy the launchers of heavy machineguns. We will reconsider all programs".

After sunset, Haqani joined us in Abdal Aziz room for sometime and asked to go all down to Khalil's center because it was very cold here. We gathered there in a cave of guests, which was warm. After supper, individuals and commanders who participated in the attack arrived to meet Haqani and submit their reports to him. Among our old friends there was "Mawla Alif Jool", chief of "Shireen Jamal" who seemed exhausted. He was covered with dirt that I hardly recognized him. He brought with him the bodies of 3 martyrs and brought 4 wounded including one Arab.

Shireen Jamal said that some enemy soldiers kept shooting on Mujahidin with their machineguns guns and hand grenades and RPJ rockets which made it impossible for Mujahidin to break through.

### **Friday 9 January 1990**

We spent the night in a room down the mountain. In the morning we performed Dawn prayer behind Sheik Nizamaddin. The burner in the mosque did not help warm it up; the freezing wind was getting through the wide tears in the windows which were closed with fabric, plastic pieces or even stones to give some kind of luxury to the mosque, the floor was made of concrete. In a winter like this, however, it becomes as

cold as ice. Therefore, most of us had to put off his robe (called Elbito) and put it on the floor under his feet to avoid his fingers from freezing. Mustafa of Yemen and his group met Haqani this morning.

The outlines of the new program were given to me by Haqani when I had met with him:

- 1- We will open a new road to advance to Torgar and clean it up of mines.
- 2- We intend to continue putting pressure on the enemy and give them no chance for taking breath.
- 3- We will start the assault operations in two or three days.

Before noon, an aircraft passed over the centre and fired a rocket fell a little to the back. Then Khalilal Rahman arrived with four government captives and I took some information from them about the city, which I will elaborate on soon. Abu AL Hareth came with some of the guys of his group. We sat together until noon prayer talking about yesterday's battle and the future programs.

Then I went up the mountain over the caves and walked by myself looking at the old world of our golden era in the Khalil's center area, which is now the beating heart of the area. That area was just some hidden and unknown mountain pass neglected by all. It will be used for few days then left without feeling sorry for it.

One kilometer to the south, there was Mannan Center, which was in the past the center of vital activity and power in south of Khost and its mountains. Several meters to the north there used to park a tank destroyed by Mannan and his men in

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the 1985 attack in which the government forces could get into Mannan center for the first time and last time during the whole period of war. The white holes that were seen in the foot of the mountain opposite to us to the north were made by bombs which I still remember when and why enemy's war aircrafts shelled us in 1987.

I looked at the direction of Mannan center to watch the road passing through it from Ghualam Khan. I remembered the past scenery that was submitted to a current of beautiful memories which drove me deeper and deeper into it. I was not aware of anything around me at that moment. Suddenly a huge ball of red and yellow fire appeared before me followed by a black smoke encircling the ball of flames and rising up to the sky while splitting wide from the middle. All that happened while I was still not aware of what was going on before me. All of a sudden a horrible sound of an explosion reached my ears and I heard its great echo between the mountains and the valleys. I moved instinctively and unconsciously and hid myself behind a near rock.

I woke up from my imaginations and wonders and all my senses were back to work. I realized that what I saw was a Skod rocket at the moment of hitting the ground. It was dropped on the road used by Mujahidin or near to it. I remembered hearing "Ali Jan" talking on the communication line while he was standing to the side of Haqani's car. Haqani was about to take off, he was telling the fighters on the other end of the road that they are about to move, a person came running and spoke for a few minutes with Haqani who was sitting inside his car. Then the car moved towards "Miranshah". A feeling passed quickly within me telling me that these minutes were the break between life and death and that Haqani was the target. It was an incident identical to the one occurred on Sunday 1/10/1989 which I mentioned in my notes and referred to it now, found it was completely and astonishingly identical; " both incidents were of the same kind made in the same way; there was a third incident when a Scud rocket exploded too at the moment Haqani got into the camp when a ball of fire, stones, smoke and dirt went in behind him. A rocket exploded at the entrance with an interval of few seconds after the man entered the cave. These were three incidents which all considered a deliberate attempt to assassinate Haqani. It was hard to believe that these incidents coincide three times with the same method.

I asked myself several puzzling questions that have confounding answers. For example: How is Haqani watched? Is it done through his wireless device? Or is there a spying center in the area pursuing his car movement? Or may be there is some one in his close group sending information promptly and directly about his movement? ... etc. in addition to other questions regarding the accuracy of the Scud hitting which is known to be inaccurate and used only against large targets but a number of firings were unusually accurate which was done frequently, negates that the coincidence theory.

Did the Russians implement in that stage long range guided missiles? Considering that in the past few years they use long range guided projectiles launched by fighter aircrafts. We even saw an air bombard on a center for Mujahidin near "Sheik Amir", one

of the pilot said he used guided missiles, (Abdal Aziz had intercepted that communication).

It is evident that after their withdrawal the Soviets maintained some kind of a quality participation in the war by using several thousands of their experienced personnel in Afghanistan and developed very sophisticated aircrafts, which were under test. They declared that when they displayed therein modern aircrafts during an air show exhibitions in Dubai in the nineties. I think that some cluster bombs raids made – which I saw them myself – at Khost valley between 1990-1991 when the city was conquered were executed by Russian strategic bombers in view of the unusual cargo dropped by that war aircrafts; where one raid had covered as wide as 15 km of cluster bombs.

I came back to Miranshah with Othman, Ibrahim, Abu AL Hareth and Zaki (who was a Mujahid from Pakistan specialized in war photography, at the end of the war he suffered a lot from a fragment that hit his head). In Haqani's guest house there was a top senior commander of combat. All were listening to Khost Radio Station, which made a big festival to what it called the greatest victory in Torgar.

It was strange that Khost radio mentioned my friend Abdal Rahman and boasted of killing him two years ago on Torgar and described him as an Egyptian expert in weapons. The radio then talked about the widow camp at "Naser Bag" near Peshawar and tried to provoke the jealousy of Afghan men on their women with unending and winking of the Arabs behaviors. Then he referred to the sectarian gap and defamed Arabs in that they are Wahabis and accused other organizations' leaders, including Sayaf, of the same accusation.

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But what did the four soldiers say when joined Mujahidin at the time of Torgar battle? Information given by them was useful especially as they were in high morale due to their success in running away. The common thing was when we had met those soldiers was the high morale and the enthusiasm for Jihad. Their zeal was even transmitted to Mujahidin themselves as they assured the near collapse of the army.

The captives were working in a training camp attached to the second border bridge. They were: Imam Mali, Mohammad Deen (from Budekhshan), Ghulam Sakhi (from Mazar Sharif) and Mohammad Hashem from the city of Maymanal (the capital of Farab). They all arrived to Khost two months ago within a regiment that came from Kabul for training. They were 105 persons of which 65 ran away. The aircraft landed them in the midst of Mujahidin attack and they quickly jumped out of the aircraft which took off once.

Regarding "Ajab Khan Mazari", they said they did not know him but they heard that they sent him to Kabul and they did not know if he had been wounded or killed. Mohammad Deen said he had been in the hospital when 16 corpses arrived. They were killed at Torgar battle and areas around. The wounded were too many and the food supply was very little. As regarding to Mashgore battle, the soldiers said that 15 government top seniors were killed including Intelligence Administrator (Khad), security Administrator and Tribal Affairs Administrator. As far as they know, the positions were still in the hands of Mujahidin and the government was still bombing them.

With regard to Ismail Kheil battle, they said that during the battle, all residents at the area escaped including the soldiers and militiamen and no one remained except the artillery. They also said that if Mujahidin continued fighting for two more hours, the city would have fallen into their hands. They said that the dead belonging to the government were too many and that three aircrafts were filled with dead bodies and took them to Kabul after two days from the battle.

As far as Torgar was concerned, they said that the Mujahidin succeeded before the last two battles against Torgar to cut off the back road for supplies especially after mines had exploded in under an armored vehicle and a water tanker last December. Since then, most supplies were sent to the mountain on feet in the dark.

It had been the first time I met my friend Mawlawi Hanif Shah, after Ismail Shah battle in which he was injured (January). The interview was conducted in the "Cultural Office" in Miratshan on Monday 29 of January. Hanif Shah (37 years) was angry that other parties let him down in the battle. The program of the attack was full and wide covering areas in the southern side of the valley in addition to the attack against Ismail Khail which was to the east from the famous village of Darraji. The last mission was assigned to Hanif Shah who headed a force of 650 Mujahid supported by two tanks. Attack from the south was supposed to meet another attack from the north east at a deep point in the enemy's territory which would result in splitting or cutting off large areas of the countryside at the west of the valley.

Hanif Shah said that they were able to make a penetration at one thousand meters deep inside the villages until the arrival at a desert flat area called (Tora Gorai) and took over seven military positions and that he intended to go on the village of (Sagi), which was one km far from the city and made preparations for the last jump. He trooped his men in the Dandar riverbed (which means a shallow and dry riverbed that sometimes gets furred) and Hanif Shah started from the beginning to say that the night was moony and that he had moved with his men and started to remove the land mines to open the way to Mujahidin after sunset. Attack was to start early before the enemy discovers the tanks. Therefore, Mujahidin started the battle.

"At five thirty in the morning when we they could see well Hanif Shah said "We defined targets for Mujahidin who had to strike them using RPJ rockets at the rate of 5 rockets per target then the tanks moved followed by Mujahidin".

Commander Hakam Khan was in-charge of two hundred Mujahidin and I began to fire the rockets. Upon firing the fourth rocket, he moved a few meters and stepped on a landmine. The mine exploded under his foot injuring him. The cleared him with the others back to Mranshah. Hakam Khan was a brave leader and he was loved by his men. His injury caused a shock and confusion among Mujahidin. At that difficult time, Harif Shah and the rest of leaders provided encouragement and support for the Mujahidin and said to them: "Hakam Khan is not the important thing, we have to continue with the attack before sunrise otherwise we will all be held captives".

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In half an hour all positions which were being defended by the army and militia were ceased. We went further into enemy's territory. Hanif Shah called Haqani who said: "we are in trouble here; the south tanks are out of order, infantry can not move forward because of the mines, you have to hold to your positions you got."

It seems that the attack from the south should meet with Hanif Shah some way close to (Torgar). As the south attack had stopped, the enemy then was to the south side of Hanif Shah, it was to the north of these troops as was the case in the confrontation. All that took place in an open area that was either desert or agricultural. That is why he replied to Haqani: "we can not do that we are too close to the city and the enemy has positions at the two sides."

What Hanif Shah was afraid of had happened, at eleven o'clock the enemy counter attack began, helicopter tanks and great numbers of infantry participated in the attack. A great number of Mujahidin withdrew without receiving orders from their commanders. It occurred to Hanif Shah not turn away from his position to retreat completely to the back without achieving any result. It occurred to him to turn and attack the enemy at his south wing at the same time the south Mujahidin whose tanks got defected and stopped by the land mines resumed the attack on the same target thus the ...enemy at the south wing would be subject to dual attack and Mujahidin would consequently win more territories and Hanif Shah would secure his right (south) wing. The decision was taken by the following leaders: Mirshadi khan Nizamuldim and Hanif Shah and they were standing beside him while he was calling Haqani to inform him of the new plan.

During his talk his leg hit a wire mine which exploded causing injuries to Hanif shah and the other two leaders thus the four leaders of the attack were injured which resulted in the failure of the attack. Hanif Shah's evaluation of the enemy was that the later was very weak; the main reason for the attack's failure is due to failure in executing the south attack and the disagreement from the part of Haqani to move the tanks on that axis. Hanif Shah was externally resentful for Haqani's attitude. However, he always remained loyal to his old teacher in the Haqani religious school in which he received his education before Jihad broke at the end of my interview with him. He told me that the government forces recovered all positions they lost at Mashgory which improved its position very much in the north.

### **Who was Hanif Shah?**

He was a skinny young man in his thirty seven years of ago. He was of medium height with a strong body and sharp features, he was one of Tangy tribe at the west of Khost in the province of Pakistan, he was born in Lagori village. Education: 3 years at the mosque of the village..., then Lakin religious school..., then Ismail Khalil school (which was attacked by the government forces), then he spent 3 years studying in the school of Fakhri region in Zadran, his teacher was Mawlawi Nizamaldin (Haqani's deputy currently and the brother of martyr Fathallah). Then he studied at the Nizamiyah School in Miranshah Pakistan, then Anjumin Al Qurarn School in the city of Tat, Pakistan, then 3 more years in Al Haqani School in Khatak in Pakistan, where Haqani was his teacher for

a year. Then Harif moved to receive his religious studies at (Akbar Dar Al Uloom) school in Pakistan too then he left school and went to Afghanistan when the communist coup took place on 27/4/1978.

Then he returned to Naryab School in Pakistan as a teacher. He remained there teaching for six months, then he went to Saudi Arabia to work and spent two years then left to Join the Mujahdin under the command of his uncle "Shakirin Jahdiyar" who worked in the fronts under leadership of Haqani. Following the martyrdom of Shakirin, the leadership of the group was assigned to Hanif Shah, who followed the orders from Haqani in 1982. The first front he started in was the Lijah front where he set up a famous ambush against the government forces deep inside the valley of Khost which was to the back of "Gond Malanj" which we previously talked about in this book.

Hanif Shah participated in many significant battles such as: Bari fortress conquer battle, Dibji border site conquer, Shaharnor battle, Maidan border area battle, Sati Kando conquering battle, Tanai area conquer battle, the battles over Nader Shah Cote and Dawamindo Lakan conquering battles, Orogon conquer, Ani Khalil area battles, Diraji conquering battle 1989). Hanif was injured twice in the head and arm. At the time of writing these lines (1998) Hanif Shah was working in Taliban movement forces in Kabul and Khost.

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Late in January, I learned from some friends in Abu Dhabi that Al Itihad newspaper had not approved publishing a series of stories which I left over there before my travel last December. The series comprised six articles entitled "Between the Soviet Hummer and the American Anvil" (What Is Going On In Afghanistan?).

From the beginning I doubted that they would publish the series because of the facts – the ground facts – these stories included. Such ground facts were undoubtedly the strongest attack against the American policy in Afghanistan in a time USA made a portrait of it self as the most sincere friend for Afghan people and the only victorious party in that war.

There were in Al Itihad newspaper a number of leftist journalists of different dimensions. Some of those caused me trouble. They were engaged in backbiting, slandering and criticism against the rule of those who worked for the Afghani case with the cooperation of USA (agents of course). All leftists back then were in one trench with the Soviets against Islam and USA. However, after the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan, most of them stood together in one trench with USA against Islam.

Among those respectable Journalists in Al Itihad newspaper whom I dealt with and I paid great respect to them despite the difference in the ideology was the Egyptian journalist "Abd Al Aal Al Baqouri". He held the ethics and the principles of a real gentleman. He was as brave as a knight. It was strange at all because Abul Al Aal AL Baqouri came from Egyptian highland called "Al Said". I believe he was the one who stood firmly behind publishing these articles after a long hesitation that took five months.

In the last day of January, I returned to Miratshah after a round in Peshawar and Islamabad where I gave the first issue of "Manba'a Al Jihad" to a press in the capital.

Abu Al Hareth and I – sat at Haqani's guest house. Abu AL Hareth told me that many Arab young men are protesting against Haqani's project to issue a magazine in Arabic, and they said that is the last step preceding Haqani's declaration to form a political party. What Abu Al Hareth felt embarrassed to say was that campaign defamed me claiming that I was behind every deviation from the part of Haqani's whom I lead to ally with an infidel western power which everyone of them had his opinion as to identify it.

Abu Al Hareth was shaken by the strength of the attack as he himself was subject to be offended due to his relationship with Haqani and his fighting with his group in Khost under Haqani's command.

My supposition was right. When I finished my defense that Haqani does intend to and can not establish a party because Pakistan holds all the cards regarding this issue and because Haqani is a man of combat and battle fields and can not leave the fronts and sits in Pakistan to carry on the "shift" others do. Abu Al Hareth said that his eldest brother came from Jordan to advise him to leave Haqani!!

Abu Al Hareth's family is an old Muslim brotherhood supporter. The stubborn young man, however, refused the patriarchal orders, which he was sure they were orders of the international organization or the international order – tell me about the difference. Then I asked him about that campaign launched by "The House of Services" in Peshawar against Haqani. I told him about a young Saudi man who came to me asking for a device regarding what he had heard from officials at that house who asked him not to go to the battle field by Haqani and never send any donations to him – except under the supervision of Sayaf – because Haqani is seeking to establish a new party for himself.

Abu Al Hareth said that young men who come now to fight are incontrollable; during their short leaves they run from this front to that looking for a battle. One day, you find them in Khost and another in Jalal Abad and a third in Qandahar.

He said that he was present at sessions for Islamic movement conference which was held in Lahore before the assassination of Dr. Azzam and that the later attacked strangely and fiercely the Islamic movements for their passiveness towards Jihad in Afghanistan, and so did Sheik Zanadani. Magazines of Muslim brotherhood however mentioned nothing of this. Actually, the weigh of Abdallah Azzam alone was far more important than all Islamic movements in the world.

I have no illusions, no suspicions as to the fact that they were very much relieved when he had been assassinated and that the tears shed by many hypocrite eyes were tears of joy because the arena was missing it gun hero and dirty game heroes could now play in it as they wish.

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In February the third, I had been waiting and looking for Hajji Ibrahim who disappeared without notice hindering my work and trip to the front. I found out, however, that it was Friday. So, I went to the mosque for prayer. It was "Al Muhajirin Mosque" which was near Haqani's guest house.

In the afternoon, I finished the American president Richard Nixon's book entitled (1999 ... A Victory without a War). I wrote in my notebook commenting on the book: it is the most important book I've read in years. Then I wrote several comments on the book. The guest house was quiet and the number of visitors was few as usual in Fridays. Therefore, I had time after finishing the book to examine a map to the area of Khost. The map was written by an officer working with Haqani aiming at illustrating tribal territories and administrative centers.

I remembered the events of the last battles; two consecutive attacks against Torgar Failed in addition to a third against Ismail Kheil to the west of the valley. It is a tumbling start for the military action this year. As for the airport, it is still operating despite the great casualties of the enemy in aircrafts. The aircrafts still succeed in landing and taking off. The airport remains long days without being given attention from the part of Mujahidin. Every body remembers the airport, which then only gets into trouble and the enemy starts losing aircrafts. This case can be called "Aircrafts Malaria" that is waves of high degrees of temperature to the point of burning followed by very low degrees to the point of freezing. Enemy's casualties, however, still high and substantial.

The siege status made quantities of food and ammunition very little. The city hospital suffers a lot from military cases , causing it to be heavily crowded to the extent that to stay in bed you need one partisan officer to mediate for you. Partisan officers alone have the right to stay in beds till the end of remedy period. Non partisans or soldiers receive little care and soldiers are taken off their beds and thrown to the street and accused of pretending to be sick even their limbs are torn and bleeding. As for the natives and local militia, they have no hope of receiving good medical care. All they get is few colored pills at the gateway of the hospital without medical examination.

What if Khost becomes a target for a comprehensive attack to include Torgar and the airport and other territories? What if this attack comes at the same time when there is a public medical crisis in the city forcing hundreds or thousands rush to the hospital in addition to war injuries already exceeding the limits of the hospital capability, while the airport is closed where neither medicine nor aircrafts come to carry the injured or the bodies of dead senior officers?

The solution is to pollute water sources in the city in un-deadly manner but sufficient to create a severe medical crisis. There is a main water reservoir for the government water transported via water pipes to the modern part of the city, governmental bodies , authorities and the market. There is also "River Shamal" which is basically used for agriculture, but the authorities might resort to it to provide the city with water if they discover that their main reservoir was polluted.

As for the population in the villages most of whom are workers in the government militia they do not depend on any external water source; in every house there is a well of its own within its spacious backyard. The main water reservoir in the city can be accessed by "collaborators" who work in favor of Mujahidin either for emolument, reward or volunteering.

The shallow river which has very little water – except for spring – this river can be polluted by good quantity of insecticides that would prevent utilizing the river by making it a source of intestinal troubles.

At nine in the evening, Sheik Haqani came. The dinner was not delivered yet, so he performed the evening prayers with four of his assistants. When he finished, we sat together privately and I proposed my plan immediately. He agreed provided I should start tomorrow morning executing the plan. We will buy the required insecticide and bring a number of Arabs from Peshawar and undertake polluting the water of the river which should coincide with a comprehensive attack against the city and we will look for a suitable material for the main water reservoir.

I arrived at Peshawar at 4 pm in the fourth day of February. I had backed some of my old zeal that was strong at those beautiful days at Bary and the airport. I was thinking deeply in method of execution. I formed an initial idea how we will carry out that part assigned to us, namely spoiling the river water for a limited time to extend the period before the general attack and little bit after its completion. Such period does not normally take more than a day or two at the most.

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I could finally find Abu-Hafs. He was still working undercover accompanied with Abu-'Obaida and others.

They expected to be arrested by the Pakistani authorities in their campaign which started by killing Dr. Azzam then accusing "Muhtaseb" of the attempt to blow up an airliner.

He asked me to help him, so I explained to him the new plan in Khost. I advised him also to attack instead of stand on the defense only. They should initiate a legal action against the government of Pakistan and to appoint a British or European attorney to represent "Muhtaseb". The reason for this is that the Pakistanis' respect for Britain is so great.

Their fear of the European public opinion is greater than fearing God, may his name be exalted". I also suggested that they should approach the press and non-governmental organizations and ask them to stir the domestic public opinion against them. That's because their case is so weak and it has many contradicting points between its facts. It is funny and clear through the official statements made by the police and intelligence. Fabricating the case needs no proof. I also advised him to close their offices in Peshawar and to move to Khost within one week as a maximum. This way we avoid another assassination plotted by Saudis or the police and intelligence against the group which is lead by Ousama Bin Laden. The Saudi government does not feel good dealing with him. He was still detained there and is forbidden from departing Saudi Arabia since he had left Jalal-Abad.

Abu-Hafs took me to a place they called the religious institute.

He said that groups of young people receive religious teaching in it in the form of courses. A group of students are graduating. After the delivery of the certificate, I was called to give a speech about the military status at Khost and the political aspect of the Afghani issue.

When I got to the point where I had to talk about the control exerted by the economic and military aids presented by the Americans and Saudis on the Afghani political decision, innocent questions regarding the political decision of Al-Qa'ida Organization began. They wanted to know in whose hands the decision was. At that point I stopped, because the answer is out of my jurisdiction.

I explained to Abu-Hafs later that I was in need for six persons to work with me as a group in the "Chemical War" project. He told me to wait till tomorrow for an answer because he wants to think it over.

During the next two days, I was under severe criticism with slandering and defaming and irony from group of some members who belong to Al-Jihad Egyptian organization. I had issued "Manba'-al-Jihad" magazine. They thought that it was a funny war and that Jihad almost ceased. For this reason we issued a magazine "to raise money!!" They suggested we should call it "the last drop".

Next day, they accompanied me until Islamabad. They repeated the same words over and over again that I almost lost my nerves. One of them was charged with working

in the chemical project. His name was Abu-Talha. He was strong, energetic and practical. Actually, those young people and despite their disadvantages that make you feel hopeless, still had really rare and unique advantages especially in our times.

On Saturday February 10, we were on our way from Islamabad to Peshawar in the early morning. Abu-Hafs was driving an old white car and I was alone riding with him. He was driving quietly so that we can finish the important subjects we were discussing together. Abu-Hafs was saying was that the best days we had in Afghanistan had been those in which we used to read a lot and work a lot in the fronts and that our military and political readings benefited our group a lot, which prepared them to assume leading positions in the groups they joined. Then he suggested that I undertake a work like that for the new youth.

I told him that my work in the new magazine was to present a small piece of knowledge about Afghani and international arenas so that they can play their role expected of them which may be decisive and benefit Muslims not their enemy.

As for a program for reading and operations in the front, it can not be done well except for a limited group. I can make the centre of the project in Bari so that a special operation program for that group may begin.

We had stopped to drink tea at a restaurant on the way near the bank of River Indos. We were in the area where River Indos meets River Kabul. The place was charming. Our conversation was sentimental and spontaneous. Abu-Hafs replied: "If we execute your suggestion, then some people would think that we are helping you to form an organization of your own (!!). He also added, "Abu-Abd-Allah (Osama Bin Laden) had changed his mind about you; especially after the course you gave in Miran-Shah and after the papers you had published in Peshawar on Jalal-Abad battle."

It was the first time that I hear that they are afraid of me forming or having an "organization of my own." That was an idea that never occurred to me, but I heard several times after that. As for the anger of Abu-Abd-Allah, that was very strange. I thought these things ended along time ago.

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## **Sunday 11 February 1990**

I arrived at Miran-Shah with a few copies of the first issue of our magazine "Manba'a-al-Jihad". I sat with Abu-Al-Hareth in the cultural office. He told me that Haqani is arriving any minute from "Khaldan" border area – inside Afghanistan – where some leaders from different organizations are pre holding a meeting, he described as urgent, to deal with the problem of the province of Loojer. The interim government and parties in Peshawar did not take a step. It was Haqani who did in order to find a solution from the leaders inside Afghanistan. News was that the leaders who attended the meeting decided to send 200 Mujahid to support Loojer Mujahidin. Haqani was concerned that the government would resume its movement from Jardiz to Khost through "Manjal" thus dispersing my military effort against Khost.

That would turn great part of his forces to defend that long road, which needs allocation of large part of human and material capabilities. His current effort in Khost might be weak. Khost's situation was already swaying. As a result, the future of the regime is swaying too in Kabul, and even the future of the international (American) scheme in Afghanistan. Haqani was the main source of that risk.

Therefore, his personal security was at risk too. Haqani had received threats from some of the merchants of tribal areas. Their smuggling operations of goods of Khost were damaged heavily.

Few months ago, there was an attempt to explode his car by a time magnetic bomb during its stop between Banoon and Miran-Shah before a checkpoint.

While we were talking about that, we did not know that at the same time Haqani was exposed to a new assassination attempt where his car was shot with a number of bullets. Haqani would have definitely been shot if he had not changed his usual position, the rear seat, and sat beside the driver instead. He had changed his position after performing noon prayer in a mosque that was by the road.

No one told us the annoying news the same day, because Haqani and his men stayed silent about it. After their arrival, they parked the cars immediately in the garage. We knew all about it on the next day in the afternoon. Abu-al-Hareth and I saw the holes caused by the bullets on the right side of the car. When I asked Haqani after that about what happened and whether it was a deliberate accident or not, he said that it was a coincidence. The front car in his convoy stopped by chance, and then the hood was opened suddenly. The driver got out of the car to shut it down. After that, it rained with bullets. They were two rival tribes in the area and one of them thought that we are their rivals. My men chased them but they ran away to the mountains.

My suspicions did not calm by his attempt to comfort us. I had a feeling that the driver of the front car must have been a conspirator. It was easy for him to open the engine cover while the car is moving. The location that he chose was not common. It was on a bridge where it would be difficult for the car behind his own (in this case it was

Haqani's car behind) to maneuver and hide. At that moment I remembered the aircrafts that had bombed Haqani above and under the General Command Center; He got bombarded by Scud at Khalil Center and the road leading to it. I remember when the mountain around us was burned with cluster bombs and the dry grass and trees were burned to the extent that we began to cough from the smoke. He cried: "There is a spy watching our movements". What happened is probability similar now.

### **Tuesday 13 February 1990**

Haqani told us that all arrangements were made to start operations in the front. He said that today we would leave to Bari. The guest house was crowded with dozens of chiefs and commanders while Haqani sat in a small internal room and called those waiting either individually or in small groups. He finished with them the forthcoming issues. Haqani used to start such meeting after he has performed his dawn prayer at seven o'clock in the morning.

That activity went on until afternoon prayer. Everybody had his lunch before that. At three thirty, we started preparing for moving. Haqani's car and two guard cars with a big caravan got ready to pick up the vehicle carrying the Mujahidin. Thus, the commanders and the ammunition were ready to move.

The view was magnificent. Haqani and his two brothers Khalil and Ibrahim went out with a number of his younger children to say goodbye. At the door of the house, his old mother stood crying holding a big rosary in her hand. She was muttering prayers. The kids gathered and began to play around the cars.

She ordered them to come by her side and pushed them inside the house scolding them. Some of them tried to hangover to the cars and go with their fathers to the front. So, the old grandmother had to bring a long stick and chase the kids.

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Some guards helped her to move them away from the car wheels. When the cars began to move the grandmother raised her hand to the heaven and went into deep prayer with her eyes full of tears.

Militia checkpoints on the road do not stop the procession more than a few seconds; the front car explains the position, gives some documents and some money naturally. After passing through the last border center at Ghulam-Khan, we stopped by a water stream for ritual ablution and prayer. Then we continued driving in the zigzag valley between the mountains. We were stopped twice by air raids; once by jet aircrafts; another by heavy launcher helicopter.

It took us more time on the road than necessary, but, thank God, we arrived safely and entered into the mosque of Khalil Camp to join those who had started to perform sunset prayer behind Malawi Nizam-al-Deen, Haqani's deputy.

After the prayer, we assembled in the upper cave. Nizam-al-Deen presented his report regarding the condition and situation on the front during that sunny day. He said that there were continuous air strikes since the morning, but without any deaths reported. Then, Haqani told him about Khaldan meeting and the Mujahidin movement to Loojar.

We prayed the evening prayer at the camp's mosque and I spent the cold night on the concrete floor. In such crowded days, it is difficult to have a blanket and if you did, it would be a sign that God is pleased with you. I won a cover and I thanked God so much.

### **Wednesday 14 February 1990**

We woke up responding to the call of dawn prayer outside the mosque. The ground was frozen like glass, that it was so difficult for us to balance ourselves while walking. We performed the preparation for prayers with the ice cold stream water. Our faces and our limbs turned to red and we felt energetic due to the progressive trembles passing through our bodies.

After praying, we went up to meet Haqani in the upper cave. I carried my luggage and climbed the zigzag road leading to the cave. The ice was still extended on the narrow rocky road. Suddenly, what I call the "perfect fall" occurred. It is when a man's foot slides and his body goes up suddenly causing the head to fall. That leads him to a position where he is laying in a complete flat position on the ground accompanied by the sound of hitting the ground and – may be – the laughs from those who see the exciting view. I stood up and went on marching after I had made sure that none of my bones were broken.

The day was shiny which is considered in the fronts a bad omen and a sign of evil air raids. We had our breakfast – tea and milk, our national drink – with Sheik Haqani. We ate also bee honey from the blessed Zadran Mountain. News from Abd-al-Aziz in the observation and Command Center arrived. Two Scud rockets fell on Dir Malk area and no one from the Mujahidin was hurt. The war aircrafts targeted the same area with

several raids which also caused no casualties – it was a very hot start for a day which is still in its first hours.

There was a yard facing the room Haqani sleeps in which was a small cave to which a small store was attached to it with a steel door that looked like a cell door. That cell was used to keep very important things and it was connected with the guest room by a small door.

In the yard, which was covered by the sun beams, I found my dear friend Mawlawi Abd-al-Halim sitting with his head leaning to the rocky wall behind him. There was a smile shining on his pleasant face. His smile rarely left his lips in all circumstances. That good Sheik reminds me of Torghar and the tragedies there. He lost his right leg there while he was trying to lift an Arab young man who was killed between landmines after an unsuccessful attempt to assault the stubborn mountain. The Sheik tried to stand up to embrace me, but I stopped him and embraced him while he was seated and kissed his head. In a short time, a great number of the leaders of the front assembled in the narrow yard. Sheik Haqani was sitting in the middle with Mawlawi Nizam-al-Deen at his side and Sheik Abd-al-Halim as well. The discussion was general and it was about the battles with a recommendation to steadfast and continue jihad.

No one talked about details about the coming battles. They all left and dual meetings began between Haqani and a number of senior commanders.

A surveillance helicopter arrived at a very high altitude above our area. Air raids followed with severe bombing covering the area from Khalil center to Torghar. That continued until sunset.

We had our supper in the mosque. Two new guests arrived. They were Arabs. One was Abu-Mohammad of Syria, a fellow of Abu-al-Hareth group; the other was a Saudi young man whom I saw for the first time.

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## Thursday 15 February 1990

I felt extremely glad to hear the dawn call of prayer, which meant for me the end of a long night of suffering and waiting for the sun, because the place was as cold as a cave in the North Pole.

Abu-al-Hareth suggested we should go and greet the Sheik in the core and have a cup of tea with milk to raise our morale. We were five in that trip: Abu-al-Hareth, Abu-Mohammad of Syria, a scholar from Sohat, his Saudi guest and I. We learned from Sheik Haqani that the battle was about to start – it seemed the enemy knew of that and bombed the place with aircrafts two days ago with bombs and rockets and air raids – it was decided that Abu-al-Hareth and Abu-Mohammad of Syria and his Saudi guest should leave to Dr. Nasrat-Allah center at Bouri-Khail (The entrance of Bari Valley from the side of Khost).

As for Sheik Haqani and the Sohat scholar and the humble servant of God, we will be headed to "the observation mount". i.e. Haqani's center at the time of operations. Before we moved, Haqani suddenly said to me feeling that he was suffering from an internal distress, "During the last two days, radio stations said many things. One of these was that the government force had arrived at Jardiz. Radio Kabul and the BBC however, they said that Russia and USA agreed to stop aids to Najib and the Mujahidin, while Russia is still sending two hundred and fifty million dollars monthly to Najib's government.

He added saying that "The West's target is to force the Mujahidin to accept Najib as the president of the country. Haqani continued, "Parties' leaders called by wireless asking me to meet them at Peshawar today, what is the use of such meetings? ... Should we stop the battle for the sake of useless meetings? The amounts they spent on their headquarters at Peshawar was enough to sustain jihad for two years; the weapons in their stores suffice for years, why do not they use them now, if not now, when we will use them? Why do they keep stored for? Say of for example Sayaf possesses 45 thousand rifles still in lubrication. I think those leaders are going to use these weapons to bribe the tribes in the elections they call for. Why do not they come to Khost? They expect us to agree an elevating the battles all over Afghanistan." What encouraged USA and Russia to keep Najib in presidency is the stop of Jihad in many areas in Afghanistan along with a weak Mujahidin government in Pakistan.

Jilani's wife said to the BBC: "We are tired of fighting and blood. We want our people to rest. Look now at the communists, who served the communists for twenty years; look at the officers who got their ranks not because they learned or got trained, but for killing Muslims and breaching of all kind of codes and laws. They call all these now good Muslims to enable them participate in the future government in the country.

The new Saudi young man asked him: "What do you say of Hikmatyar's suggestion that a coup should happen in the army to support Hikmatyar as the next president for the country?" The Sheik said sharply: "In the name of God, I will fight him

as I fight a communist as long as he is a president with all these officers who killed Muslims for twenty years around him. This is just a way to access to power by any means even if it was a hand from the communities. It is just like what happened with Daoud who was surrounded and supported by communists, and then they killed him.

I said to Sheik Haqani: "There is no other solution but to continue the battle at any cost. We shall conquer Khost, if God wills, and many things will change then". He replied quietly: this is right, circumstances now are back to the point Jihad started with in the beginning and it is the same as it was at the beginning of Islam. Everyone is distinctive now. Only the sincere ones remained in Jihad."

Haqani then informed us of the increasing number of soldiers deserting the army in the last ten days. The most remarkable was the escape of 15 soldiers to Hanif-Shah Center. Actually, those soldiers did not escape. They fought fiercely to leave their location, so they killed their officers and the militia present there. Four were killed among those soldiers and another four were wounded. The extraordinary thing was happened there was that they pulled the dead bodies and buried them in "Muslim Cemeteries" considering them martyrs. Their enthusiasm and rushing into Jihad are not less than that of the Mujahidin at the fronts.

We climbed the observation mount leaving Haqani at Khalil center to resume his meetings with the shifts and supervise the supply of food and ammunition for the front centers.

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At three thirty in the afternoon, the Mujahidin hit with their artillery bombs the main oil reservoir at the city. They burned it. A black column of thick smoke emanated from it and lasted for one hour.

Air raids are too many, but they are not accurate because no one reported any causality. Most of them were focused on mount Torghar and Bari area then Leejah Bari. It is in a supportive area for the attackers in Torghar; Leejah supports the Mujahidin of the west in Ismail Khail and Dir Malk).

In the afternoon, a military transport aircraft landed at the airport. No one among our gunmen was waiting. Abd-al-Aziz yelled "Batcha Dina" to the one in charge of artillery among the Kotchi group. He did not respond. After some yelling and agitation, a round was shot at the airport runaway.

The aircraft moved immediately after taking 15 minutes to complete its task. This had bothered me a lot, because I was so interested in the airport more than any thing else. It was a historic concern as I said earlier. This accident and others similar to it, added emphasis to the need for allocating artillery pieces for the airport; thus, making them ready and available for action at any minute. They would not "engage" with any other target so as to leave no "time lag" that can be utilized by the aircrafts to be in the airport, which we did several months later.

At night while I was preparing my bed to sleep, a car came from Khalil Center. The driver called me saying Haqani was asking for me. I went down with. A British journalist was there who was just about to make an interview with Haqani. No one could interpret for them except me. The journalist was a skinny young fellow wearing an Afghani dress. He had a rigid face as if it was a figure carved in limestone, bearing no specific feelings.

The journalist's name was Tim who was working for the BBC and for an American magazine. The important thing about the interview was that the questions reflected mostly the new outlook of the West towards Afghanistan. His main concern was to know exactly what happened in Khost and Jardiz. These are the only places witnessing a real war while the rest of the country was in peace.

He then concentrated on Haqani's potentials and possibilities; whether they were enough to conquer Khost; whether Haqani was prepared to stop fighting if a settlement would take place between the interim government and Najib's government. Finally, he concentrated too much on the subject of drug farming and trafficking in Afghanistan, which was a door widely opened by the West to defame the Mujahidin. Then, I asked him about what Mawlawi "Nasim Akhonzadah", the powerful leader in Halmond. Nasim said that would plant drugs in his territory so as to be able to resume Jihad because foreign aid has been stopped.

These were the statements that lead to the assassination of Akhonzadah's brother in law by orders from the USA, in agreement with Pakistan and also from the organization of which Akhonzadah was a member".

In the West, they knew that the battle of Khost (if it succeeds) would absolutely change the destiny of the country politically. They knew also that Haqani is a source of danger to determine destiny on the ground by the power of the guns. That is why attempts to kill him in Pakistan became numerous. I think that Pakistan's security needs to keep Haqani alive, because they needed stability and security in the regions close to Pakistani border. That need was greater than the American need to get rid of Haqani. That is why Pakistan cooperated hesitantly in the few attempts of assassinating Haqani, including the one that happened a few days ago before the last Torghar battle.

We spent the night having in mind that we were going to move in the morning to the observation and command mount accompanied by Haqani and Tim.

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## **Torghar ... the last battle**

**Friday 16 February 1990**

The car was ready to move. The sun had been rising up in the sky. We, the British journalist, Tim and I, took off in the car to the observation mount. Haqani was going to be late a little bit. He had to follow up on some of today's attack details. He told me they were ready for today's operation on Torghar. The group that, however, will attack the eastern side is not large. As for the south, which is the longest front of the mountain from the Mujahidin's side, the Mujahidin were not able to open a pass between the landmines and consequently work stopped.

The car moved carrying us towards the mountain. What I heard from Haqani was discouraging. This shiny weather and clear skies made me feel depressed, because there will be violent air raids. The enemy's fires will be far more accurate, and it is certain that there will be casualties for this day. The only difference today is that the Mujahidin will attack from the eastern side with a small group. Would this be more useful?

It was so obsessed thinking about it by the time we reached the top of the mountain. We put our luggage in the small room. The journalist began to ask. I explained to him the general situation. Then we came back to the room again to wait until Haqani arrives. I knew that no operation will take place until he has arrived, so he can follow it up from this summit.

We started talking about the political situation in Afghanistan. I told him frankly about the role of USA and the West in causing harm to the Afghans. They kept the fact that the Afghans were the ones who should be credited to liberate Eastern Europe, after defeating the Soviet Empire in Afghanistan, a secret from the world. Even the people of Russia and Western Europe see that Afghans' victory was an auxiliary factor in the downfall of the Soviet Union. I replied saying: "It was even the decisive factor; had the soviet regime been able to subrogate the Afghans; it would have gone on for another century at least, which is not considered a long time if we talk about the lifetime of countries."

Since eight o'clock in the morning, aircrafts had started action actively in a splendid weather. The day had sunny skies and a perfectly clear vision. The heavy bombing helicopters shelled tons of bombs on the locations that were expected to support an attack or where an attack might be launched from. They focused on Leejah and Bari and continued bombing regularly till eleven o'clock. Then, jet war aircrafts took over and the Antinov took a rest.

At last, Sheik Haqani arrived followed by two guarding vehicles. He was accompanied by two guests. I thought they are Saudis. One of them was a journalist; the other had a huge body and looked like a wrestler. His speech indicated that he was a

preacher in a mosque. His appearance showed that he is more fundamental than his friend.

Two Haqani's guards saw me coming out of my favorite trench and hanging a binocular from my shoulder. They borrowed the binoculars from me and sat in my place in the trench. I tried hard to take it back from them, but couldn't, until an hour later...

At 11:38 noon smoke appeared for the first time above Torghar summit as a result of the Mujahidin's bombardments. The clouds began to increase slowly, but it did not get as thick as it was in the last operations. It would anyway hinder relatively war aircrafts' action.

The Sheik said that he wants the battle to start on Friday prayer, so that the Mujahidin may benefit from the prayers of Muslims around the world. Then he prayed leading us to noon prayer in a small rocky yard prepared by the Mujahidin to serve as a site mosque. They put rocks around and made a curve to indicate the place of Mihrab.

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I looked to the sky before we started to pray. Clouds were very few, light and scattered. It seemed that it would be dispersed and rainy at anytime. Above us there was a small spot of white clouds. What was left of the clouds was few; meaningless masses.

I asked myself: "What a hard day?! How many men will fall martyrs in their positions today? How many of those I personally know? Will I be able to see alive again? What if a jet war aircraft took us with surprise during our prayer and bombed us all including Haqani, the leader of today's operation who is considered the greatest danger to the regime in Kabul? Have these aircrafts not bombed us in the same location before?"

After performing the ritual group prayer, Haqani started calling upon God in a long prayer while we were behind him and say "Amen" and ask of God for help and victory. He asked God for more things in his prayer and most of the people praying wept. Then he went to the wireless set and addressed everybody. He demanded everybody to trust in God and rely only on Him, and then he taught them the following prayer and demanded of them to repeat as many as they can: "And we have put a bar in front of them and a bar behind them and further we have covered them up so that they cannot see"

I remembered that he taught me this prayer ten years ago. I still remember that he taught me a lesson about courage and steadfastness under war aircrafts bombardments and how to shoot at them by a rifle instead of hiding in a hole, because I am an Arab and it is too low for Arabs to hide!! I was ashamed of myself that day. He could not, however, convince me of the use of shooting by a rifle at a jet war aircraft. Now, I know he is right; there is no use of hiding from an aircraft, because no one can protect you from the evil deeds and misfortune except for God alone, may his name be exalted.

What got my attention during the group prayer and after the ritual, the sky was quickly being covered with clouds. Almost everybody was nodding his head and looking at his hands raised before his faces. I was the only one or perhaps two of Haqani's guards were looking at the sky. I watched the clouds that were gathering so quickly, then I looked at Haqani who was fully absorbed in praying and he became grey and covered with shadows; in fact everybody became grey and covered with shadows. As soon as Haqani went to his wireless device, we all looked as if we were in sunset time.

I was delighted to this "miracle" and hoped it would be good news of victory and the beginning of the divine support to all the Mujahidin and those fighting up on the mountain in particular.

At 1:59 following prayer, the Sheik "Marshal" was ordered to start bombing. I thought the name was some code for an artillery group, but Hajji Ibrahim told me that it was a nickname for one of the Mujahidin.

Khalil's tank started bombing and hit the positions of the enemy on the summit. It hit the first target and a column of black smoke ascended from the fortress on the western rim. The enemy responded by a tough bombing on the western side of the mountain, where the Mujahidin sneaked in their previous attempts. It seemed that the enemy did not

expect any marching from the eastern side of the mountain, which the Mujahidin had never done before. Five minutes later the sounds of the enemy's heavy machineguns above the mountain could be heard easily. At 2:35 the Mujahidin's artillery was shooting at the enemy from the back. Both "Bustan" and "Batcha Dina" were working on the guns in a new and accurate manner.

Khalil's tank received many bombs from the enemy's artillery – attacking groups on top of the mountain are alright but still have not moved forward yet.

3 o'clock – the sun rose for a little while, and then the clouds closed up again. Wireless sets are crowded with cries, a call upon the Mujahidin for action along with encouraging them.

Wireless intervention is severe, and a psychological war is going on as tough as it can be on air between the Mujahidin and the enemy; not to mention threats and sometimes curses. The Sheik cries encouraging the Mujahidin and passes over them the news of injuries and casualties among the enemy caused by the bombardment, then he cried: "God is great...Zandah pad" and the Mujahidin repeated after him.

At 3:30: A Scud missile fell down on the east side of Torghar. Five minutes later another rocket fell in the same area. At 4:10: the enemy forces above Torghar one of their leaders, Abd-al-Aziz picked up the news. The attacking Mujahidin from the eastern side (those were Jalal-al-Kotchi's group, the brother of the martyr Mannan) reported that they were still removing the mines from the remaining distance, which was two meters according to their estimation. They said that the enemy had not fired at them so far.

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Helicopters fired from a far distance at the mountain rims, but without any focus. They then landed behind the mountain from the side of the city, maybe to carry dead bodies or the wounded or perhaps to bring some ammunition to the defenders though they had enough.

The Antinov bomber aircrafts were flying above the black clouds without any hope of participation, because they were blinded by the darkness of the clouds. They, however, remained flying all the time and that was – maybe – to convey some comfort to the defenders and lifting their morale knowing that the war aircrafts are close to them.

At 4:42 the attackers from the eastern side passed through the mines' barrier and exchanged fire by hand grenades with the first trench lines of the enemy. While Jalal was transmitting to Haqani the message, one of the Mujahidin cried happily (Torghar Khatam ... Torghar Khatam). Haqani scolded him strongly saying: "This is not true". He believed that announcing the news of the downfall of mount Torghar, while the battle is still in its critical stage, would confuse the course of action: many might shoot in the air to express their joy while the enemy was still holding steady fast in their trenches. The tanks might cease bombing the enemy's defensive and administrative locations up on the mountain thinking that the Mujahidin had reached their targets.

I will get back to the story of the eastern side and how is narrated by the attackers. I will talk later about what happened at that critical moment; the moment of attacking the first defense line of enemy's trenches conducted by the Bedouin (al-Kotchi) under the command of Jalal, the defense rock and the assaults' sword.

At 5:50 the pressure the pressure of the attack was concentrated at Joulab's side, while the western side where Dr. Nasrat-Allah was totally inactive.

Nasrat-Allah was assisted by a group of religious students from Qandahar lead by the brave leader (Mulla Shahzad), known as Mulla Qandahari. It is clear that after previous attacks, which were all over the years were conducted from the western side, the enemy concentrated most of its forces on this side.

Therefore, the difference now can be described as follows: The attackers from the western side engaged most of the enemy's forces. This allowed the smaller group of Jolab to penetrate defenses of the enemy and move forward. They moved towards the mountain as a knife would cut a bar of butter, which was done by the famous Kutchi group, Martyr Mannan's group. Thus, adding to his record of un-preceded numbers of victories a new glorious victory.

Al-Kutchi men, who attacked and penetrated from the eastern side of Torghar, reported that their attack was about to fail. The reason is that when they approached the landmine line, which was directly next to the enemy's trenches and which most of its mines they had removed in the dark – but not all mines – and when they moved forward for their final penetration, the enemy detected them while they were on the rim of landmine field.

The enemy fired as fiercely as they could, using their light machineguns and automatic rifles, and then threw a great number of hand grenades. It seemed that they were running out of ammunition for the light weapons. The Kutchi men noticed that the hand grenades were falling at their side, but bouncing back as rubber balls to the trenches of the enemy and exploding in there.

The Mujahidin, however, stayed motionless behind the rocks. Suddenly, an old man with grey hair and a beard, known to the Mujahidin as being naive and few words appeared. He ran towards the trenches of the enemy, firing from his machinegun, and then he crossed the landmine barrier safely and jumped into the trenches of the enemy. The young men were burned with enthusiasm to see this and followed him as fast as a meteor in a dark night. They jumped into the trenches and killed the soldiers inside them. They chased the running soldiers and continued advancing towards the location until the whole mountain has been conquered.

At the end of the battle, they asked the old man why he had rushed suddenly and so strangely like that. He answered simply: "When I saw the hand grenades falling on us like rain and bounding back to the enemy and exploding on their side, I realized that God had sent angels to support us, so, I rushed towards the enemy and I was confident then that they were defeated and nothing would harm us".

At 5:11 o'clock the right side of the mountain was completely under the control of the Mujahidin. The attackers were shooting with machine guns on the rest of the hostile locations on the mountain. They kept moving towards the west.

At 5:15 Haqani received a report from the attacking groups above the mountain. They reported that the resistance of the enemy up the mountain became very weak...it was a cleansing operation of the place and those who stayed in position. Many soldiers ran away to the other mountain and to the north. The north mountain was connected with Torghar and is called Wara Torghar, Back Torghar.

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At 5:50 o'clock, the attackers coming from the east met with those coming from the west on top of the mountain. At last, Torghar came under the control of the Mujahidin after long bitter years. That was since they had lost him the last time. They conquered Torghar and the city itself was supposed sooner or later to be conquered. That however, did not happen as fast as I had expected.

The British journalist Tim asked me what happened. I told him that the Mujahidin had taken Torghar. I looked in his face for a trace of any feeling. I felt angry, but controlled myself. There was nothing showing on that icy face that coming from Great Britain, who has tasted the bitterness of defeat at the beginning of this century. Just like the Soviets and the communists did at the end of this war by the hands of this wonderful people.

He then asked me coldly: "You said that Torghar is the key to Khost, when do you expect the Mujahidin to take the city?" I answered, "supposedly no more than a month". Did I make a mistake in specifying such a date considering the city was actually conquered 13 and half months later?

Tim met me in Peshawar several months later. He remembered exactly what I had told him that the city would be conquered within one month. He asked me bravely: "You said the city will be conquered in one month, what took it so long, the city is still unconquered till now."

I replied: "USA and Pakistan's interference is the reason. I stated to him some of their efforts to spoil Khost's conquer. The first report of the casualties among the Mujahidin stated that there was one martyr and no wounded men. An hour later, another report came contradicting the first stating that there were 3 wounded and no martyrs (next day the final report stated that there was one martyr and three wounded, the reason for contradiction was- if any- the first report came from the group who lost a martyr but no wounded, the second report was from second group who had 3 wounded men and no one killed).

These very few casualties were very surprising and astonishing. It is remarkable to accomplish such great achievement with this minimum amount of casualties. It is worth mentioning here that the accuracy of figures, furnishing the required means for work and acquisition of sufficient experience in its performance, are critical factors for victory.

The most important thing that comes ahead of all other factors is the support from God that can not be described by pen or tongue. The weather condition is one example. There were clouds hindering the vision before the enemy's aircrafts and artillery, and then clouds went apart a little allowing the Mujahidin to detect the mines and wires set around. Even the failure that the Mujahidin encountered in the past years on one side, which is

the western slope, lead the enemy ascertain that the attack would be carried out from the same direction as usual. Therefore, they concentrated their entire defense or most of it to that direction. Thus, Jolab was able to open the way easily from the eastern side. No one expected that among the enemy. They all expected that the east was a secondary axis for any attack possible. The opposite occurred.

At 6:07: An Antinov aircraft flew and bombed far away. The sky became clear as well as the lights of stars. That was of great benefit for the Mujahidin above the mountain. It enabled them to know their way there; the location of trenches around, in the fortification and armed places, especially from the western side. It also helped them know the administrative stores in the northern side. There was a room there full of food and ammunition. What was most important was to watch the enemy who was trying to counter-attack the same night before the Mujahidin strengthen their positions on the mountain.

At 7:00: Three Scud missiles fell sequentially around Torghar mountain. Another two fell in Touda Shana (South Torghar). Five Scud missiles fell in one night. It was a party made to celebrate conquering Torghar. Traditional shooting in such events were carried out by the Government not the Mujahidin. No casualties were reported following that bombardment.

NB: The value of each Scud missile at that time was one million (United States) Dollars. The enemy used in that battle 7 Scud missiles. They also fired only two missiles in the unsuccessful attempt made last January.

Finally, Haqani left us turning to Khalil's Centre, because there the men returning from the battle will come with the captures and spoils. I asked Haqani about the next move. According to Haqani, it was to take over mount Wara Torghar. Haqani said to me: "Torghar will not be useful if we do not hold Wara Torghar". I did not realize the significance of that move before, though it was completely logical. The two mountains are in fact one connected body. Any forces coming from the city to counter attack must take Wara Torghar as a support. The battle, then, is not over yet!

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I didn't leave with Haqani because I expected a battle on the mountain on this night. At night, Haqani called us saying that he is waiting for the captives' arrival for investigation and looking for the communists among them. He added that he will be here tomorrow..... I understood that the battle will resume tomorrow. I couldn't sleep till a late hour; happy with what had happened; soaring with the expectations.

### **Saturday 17 Feb. 90:**

I barely got any sleep, and then I woke up scared on the sound of shooting fire and missiles. I was sure that they came from (Torghar), because I was expecting a night assault by the government forces. Their movement towards the mountain during the day will be like committing a suicide. Nighttime is there only chance and this night in particular, before Mujahidin strengthen their positions in the mountain trenches and dig new locations opposite to the city. It was 4:00 a.m.

Suddenly the shooting stopped. I calmed myself saying that there's nothing important, Abd-al-Aziz is sleeping now and no one knows what is going on, so, I fell asleep again.

In the morning, I asked Abd-al-Aziz about what happened at night. He said (goodness gracious).I emphasized the question about Mujahidin affairs on the mountain. He repeated the same sentence.

At 7:00, we heard two RPJ shots above Torghar Mountain, then an intense artillery bombardment from the valley against the mountain and the surrounding area. Then we heard showers of heavy machineguns in the background. Helicopters shot missiles heavily against (Torghar). That calmed me, because it means that the Mujahidin are holding on to the mountain firmly.

The weather was cloudy. The Mujahidin's comments on the wireless were filled with joy and happiness.

At 8:30 a.m. Haqani called us saying that the enemy tried this morning to attack Torghar and re-occupy it, but the Mujahidin were on the alert. He said that the ammunitions, food and water were available and that the enemy received strong fires from both sides. This resulted in many casualties (hundreds according to him); many of them fled to the city. He added that some sought refuge behind Mount Torghar, and that the Mujahidin are proceeding to occupy it.

At 8:35, in spite of the thick clouds, an Antinov aircraft dropped its bombs from a high altitude around Mount Torghar- but without causing any harm. Clouds increased; the rain was light and the wind was very cold. The number of those present with us on top of the mountain decreased. It was clear that there will be no new assault today against (Little Torghar).

At 10:10, a military transport aircraft landed suddenly- It was an astonishing surprise at an unexpected time and conditions. The Mujahidin's artillery assigned for the airport (Batchadina) engaged in mutual firing with a big missile launcher BM-41.

The aircraft landed from the western end and remained for less than a minute at the eastern end then it turned around and took off.

I remember writing in my diary at the time: I don't understand what kind of mission could be accomplished in such a short period.

At 10:36, the surprise was stronger what that happened the next time. An aircraft landed, as usual from the west side and as soon as it arrived at the eastern end, it turned around and took off. Nobody could tell me, or tell the artillery personnel. I asked myself, "What is going on?"

Here, I have to praise the Afghani pilot's heroism and sacrifice. That went on, with us, throughout the war and I don't think that there are any other people careless about death more than them.

This is a common trait in most of the Afghani people.

Later, Haqani said that those aircrafts might have brought important persons from Kabul. He may be right, because after a while, General Ajab Mazari, the wicked former commander of Torghar Mountain appeared in Khost.

The landing of the two aircrafts in this way was like two slaps on the back on this cold dark morn, but a refreshing breeze blew on us where we saw a number of children climbing the mountain towards us. They had light torn or high clothes

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sometimes. I stood with Hajji Ibrahim looking at them and wondering how they came here, because the Mujahidin's vehicles did not move this morning, especially near us.

The children arrived and shook hands with us. They said that they study at Manba'-al-'Oloum in Miran-Shah school. They heard yesterday that the Mujahidin have conquered Torghar Mountain, so they came on foot (around 30 km) to make sure of the news and to see the places which have been conquered by the Mujahidin.

We were affected by what these children had done. I welcomed them and so did Ibrahim, Abd-al-Aziz and several others of the men present. They allowed the children to use the binoculars and explained to them about the places they are looking and about yesterday's events on Torghar Mountain. After that, they offered them tea and bread.

Tim the journalist came also to inquire those children's news. So, I explained to him their story. I asked him about the implications for these children walking such a long mountainous distance on a rainy cold weather, only to make sure of Mujahidin's news and to be happy of their victories.

Tim didn't utter any word of admiration or even a smile for the children; he is, no doubt, very neutral - so neutral that makes me hope that a cluster bomb that gets rid of every journalist from Britain which was -and will never be again- great.

It was 11:30 when Sheikh Haqani reached our post on the mountain. He called his brother Khalil, the famous tank commander - and who has the prominent role in destroying Torgar's resistance.... Khalil stated that their positions are excellent and asked us to take care of providing aid especially for the Mujahidin on the mountain.

I talked with Haqani about the aid problem, so I told him that the enemy will not easily admit Torgar's loss, because that would mean their loss of the city sooner or later. I also told him that the decisive factor in this battle is the ability of supplying the army with fighters, ammunitions, food and water. The enemy is more able to do so, because, during the previous years, they had prepared a road for providing aid behind the mountain. On the other hand, we don't have except a narrow dangerous lane going through a lot of landmines. One step outside the lane means death or at least amputation of the foot. I told him that the most important thing to do now is to open a road for a vehicle up to Torghar summit, starting from the western end descending to the eastern end. This would enable us to supply the mountain from two strong bases for the Mujahidin. These two bases are Buri- Khail- to the west and Touda Shani to the east.

Haqani needs nobody to remind him of the road importance to the battlefield, especially for a core target such as Torghar. Indeed, he started, after several days, pushing all his forces to build a road leading to Torghar summit, and even under the most severe conditions of air raids that hardly stop. Several true sacrificial bulldozer drivers helped him in digging, dealing with explosions and loosing a number of vehicles and casualties. Finally, he succeeded in building an excellent road. He could not take the road down towards the east, because the mountain terrains do not allow that without exposing the road to the enemy fire, which is coming from the mountains and not from the western cliff, hidden to the enemy.

In general, this was a great engineering and military success that confirmed the Mujahidin's control over Torghar and the surrounding area.

At 2:17, after we performed our noon prayers near the mountain summit, news came from Miran-Shah stating that the parties participated with Haqani in opening the mountain. He had paid them three million Rupees in order to leave the mountain for him,

so that he would be the only one who has the victory on the media. The lie was clear for those who were inside the fronts in the area, but outside, nobody can confirm what has happened. It was a sly strike coming from Peshawar's parties which did their best to cast tons of black paint on Haqani and all his deeds. Even on his splendid victories which were worthy of praise and glorification.

The coordination inside Bactia fronts in general and Khost in particular was as good as possible under such circumstances-with the least amount of friction; not even one single armed clash occurred during the Jihad based on party differences. But, coordination in battles used to take place outside the factions' scope and through direct understanding among the Mujahidin to be called thereafter by Joint Operations. The parties and their leaders in Peshawar didn't allow this coordination to exist before- if it happened, failure would inevitably come. They would try pressures, briberies and conspiracies to involve others, such as us, the prominent field commanders i.e. Haqani and his colleagues.

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I asked Haqani about the reason the other parties did not participate in "Torghar" battle. He replied by saying that nobody can forbear such a long battle. The siege lasted for three successive months. "According to me, I can add other reasons including: All the assault attempts on Torghar since 1984 failed and resulted only in casualties and injuries; wasting money and ammunitions; and mutual accusations and disputes among the groups participating in the operation.

The second reason: Torghar has accordingly gained a dignity in the souls: and that was enough to cause goose bumps in the Mujahidin's bodies.

The third reason: The Pakistani intelligence finds that the gate is wide open to interfere in the common operations, which are normally large operations. This was the reason for aborting several assaults on Torghar, because the Mujahidin's capture of Torghar means putting their hand on the city's neck. This contradicts the policy of Pakistan masters i.e. USA.

The following step for capturing Khost was closing its airport completely, and taking advantage of Torghar's location and what it provides for the operation ...but we'll see how the Pakistani intelligence did their best to prevent that.

Pakistan wanted to bite the fingers of Kabul system in Khost so as to reach better a bargain with it. On the other hand, the Mujahidin's benefit requires- capturing Khost...then Kabul's system will collapse and the Mujahidin will impose their own system.

Later we'll see how the Pakistani intelligence did its best to prevent the airport closure and exerted tremendous efforts to prevent the city from being captured.

...Haqani told me that he was very careful showing delight and happiness for capturing Torghar. He said when he declared the news, "We have captured the great Torghar and the battle is continuous on the little Torghar." I admired his behavior; it

indicates modesty, on the one hand and realism, on the other. No matter how much he knew about the enemy's weaknesses in Khost, the severity of what happened makes it a risk to assume that the enemy will give up to the real situation easily. At least, we can expect what happened at Darragi several months ago to occur again i.e. the positions of the government army and the Mujahidin will be exchanged until the situation is settled pro Mujahidin in the end.

Haqani said, "We are ready for the assault soon." The Mujahidin repeatedly attacked little Torghar and destroyed some of its defensive posts. The defenders asked to be provided with a tank to support them. We in turn, will send a tank to Tudahshni to support Joulab group to attack little Torghar – also we requested 200 Mujahid from Salman-al-Farsi regiment and Al-'Amri regiment. We will not use our forces on Torghar for attacks to keep our defenses on the mountain strong just in case of emergency. Haqani was moving very carefully. Great victory was not concealed from him.

In the late afternoon, Abd-al-Aziz warned us that the jet aircrafts are coming, but he doesn't know where... he was tracking a Khost conversation with Kabul. In minutes, the jet aircraft sound was heard and Abd-al-Aziz heard a pilot conversation with the target "Throw your load," the voice said. The pilot replied innocently...the government hasn't announced its loss of Torghar...but I am above Torghar Mountain!!

The Headquarters replied there is no more Torghar.. bomb it! The pilot inquired nervously: "What do you mean by that? (Torghar stamp)Torghar is finished. Then he had a fit of fury and started hallucinating saying: "you have sold it to them....you have sold Torghar .....Khost is lost... everything is lost." Then he made a wide turn with his aircraft and headed towards Torghar emptying a vast load of cluster bombs, but away from any target. Then, he disappeared with his aircraft amidst the dark clouds.

This event raised delight and pleasure among the Mujahidin; the enemy is living a violent crisis affecting its remaining morale.

But after a short time we were shocked ...sadness and silence overwhelmed us when we knew that Bustan-al-Kushi was martyred ....Bustan was working on his gun in an artillery contest with the enemy when a missile landed on a nearby plateau ,a bomb fragment hit him on the head and he died immediately.

Sadness overwhelmed all the posts so that Mujahidin forgot the victory of Torghar, at least for a while. Then, the name of the only Torghar martyr on the day of conquer reached us....He is Al-Kushi Joulab's student" .Does anybody on earth care about this name? Allah knows him and what he has done better....and that is enough.

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The aircraft dropped some aid by parachutes. The most important aid were the petrol barrels ...the winds drove away some of those parachutes to the Mujahidin locations... Mujahidin took them as plunder added to the Torghar ones, which we received their numbers as follows:

Number	Description
2	Anti- air craft guns 23 mm.
3	Hand- grenades launchers
3	Tanks (one only is serviceable)
13	RPJ launchers
3	Heavy machineguns (mountainous) 14.5 mm.
14	Mortar- various calibration
16	Rifle, Kalashnikov
1	Gun (mountainous), 76mm.
1	Heavy Grinov 7.62mm.
1	Rockets launcher, wireless, anti- armors.
2	Light machinegun.
1	Medium machinegun.

### **Sunday 18 Feb. 90**

A shiny day in which aircraft raids started early... the aircrafts were severely violent ...they didn't stop bombing Torghar; it was continuous.

At Khalil site, Haqani held a meeting with the field commanders to discuss Torghar battles and the plans required for the (Wara Torghar) coming up battle.

Then, groups of captives arrived. It was a big group of soldiers and some officers who have been captured on the mountain. Among them was an officer around twenty two years old, determined like an Australian mule. He had stupid and rough features. He was disdained and hated by soldiers and the few officers who were captives with him. He belonged to the area of "I.E" and the tribes of Minjal and it seems that he was the only one who belonged to a party among the group

The soldiers complained that he used to drink too much wine and treat them with harshness.

He admitted that he was trained in the Soviet Union. The session was not for trial. Thus, that officer was not killed in spite of the hatred that surrounded him.

A foolish soldier made everyone laugh, so he reduced the danger on that hated officer. The soldier was famous for being simple minded among his colleagues. For this reason they laughed every time he said something... He used to stand in front of Haqani with his body tighter than usual so that he was tilted backwards in a way that arouses sarcasm. His hands were as rough as an old tree bark.

In his funny military posture, he used to answer Haqani's questions. Haqani asked him nicely: "Which is better, Mujahidin or Kabul government?" That eloquent peasant said the opposite of what was expected. The answer that the soldiers used to respond to

normally when they fall captives: "Mujahidin are better, of course." Instead of that, the humped soldier answered: "Both of them are good, knowledgeable sir.

Haqani answered in astonishment: "How are they both good?" then the soldier replied: "Because they are Muslims and Afghans, sir!"

Everybody laughed including Haqani who taught the soldier a long lesson starting with: "How do you say that fool? Don't you know that Kabul government is communist?"...etc.

The soldier was perplexed while everybody around him was laughing even his colleagues. Finally, the soldier apologized for his mistake and laid the blame on his unit officers who taught him things contradicting to that.

These soldiers didn't stay long as captives.....everyone was given 200 Pakistani Rupees to help him go back to his village. As for the officers I didn't ask about them after ..

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There were soldiers who were fugitives in (Wara Torghar). They were around 40....they carried with them 3 Kalashnikovs, 2 RPJ and 2 Grinov.

Long talks were held with the escapees and the captives. The best one who was able to help me was the officer Diya' Muhammad-25 years old- from Hirat. He fled from (Wara Torghar) during Mujahidin assault on (Big Torghar).

Diya' studied till 12<sup>th</sup> grade- got trained in Kabul for 6 months and graduated as an officer. He said that he knew about the arrival of aid to Khost. This officer belonged to regiment 33 of division 17 in Hirat; a part of Jard brigade from Kabul (he belonged to the Safwa Forces whose members were factious), a part of division 18 in Mazar Sherif. In addition to that, division 25 located basically in Khost and (Daw Talab) forces i.e. the volunteers and about the artillery pieces, which he could count through his position during his service. He said that he had counted 4 rocket launchers (BM-41), 4 artillery guns DC, 122 mm and 4 mountainous artillery guns 76mm.

He said: there are 2(M-24) Helicopters, one exploded and one only remained.

He confirmed that the commando situation in the city was low and so was the medial service which the soldiers received none and the intelligence chief in the city (Rahmat-Shah) was in- charge of the smuggling operations from Pakistan. He concentrates mostly on petrol and food.

That officer said that the military commanders in the city are divided among themselves between "Khalq" and "Barsham" and every party tries to defend itself against the other, but he confirmed that both parties are determined to fight until the end, despite their many talks about compromise and peace.

### **Monday 19/ Feb/1990**

At late dawn, Khalil post was very active... a group of the fugitives were actively cleaning the Kateushya rockets and removing dirt and grease before distributing them near the front lines; small trucks (pick- ups) come to load the ammunitions from the surrounding caves and leave hurriedly. Several meters away from the post, a tank arrived yesterday covered with a thick military cloth cover; whereas another tank was being repaired by workmen group who were covered by the black oil and soil. They look like scary ghosts; nobody tries to shake hands. The camp bakery became more active and the number of workers was increased. The entire front obtains its bread from here three times a day.... So, that bakery stops working for one hour or two by day only. Several posts depend on Khalil post kitchen for all meals like the observation post.

Despite of rain, mud and cold weather in winter, management operations were doing well... at least complaints were rare ...thanks to the success in the operations. It made people forget their hunger and tiredness and even the lack of covers in the severe cold nights of Khost.

The day was shining and all indications suggest that an operation is imminent. Nothing was more important than the remaining mountain. i.e. (Wara Torghar) which makes last Friday's victory suspended between heaven and earth.

A pick-up truck was on its way to transport food and ammunitions to the famous location of Khalil tank. I found it suitable to visit the splendid tank and its marvelous location. "Tim", the British journalist, thought that it is a good opportunity, for him to visit the front lines before leaving to Miran-Shah today.

The vehicle moved; stacked with Mujahidin, boxes, bread and food containers. After about an hour, we were at "Buri- Khail" where the post of Dr. Nasr-Allah, Salman-al-Farsi regiment commander post was located. This was a huge post full of caves. In front of it there's a large field among the mountains separated from the neighboring Khost valley by a number of low hills. There were several artillery posts and rockets launchers for Mujahidin not too far from it. For every one of them there was a cave; more used for accommodation, spoiling tasks or for protection from air raids. Indeed, the artillery groups who were lazy to dig caves and replaced them with mud houses (like one of the groups did)...or the group that built an unsuitable cave, suffered losses in souls let alone the injured.

After several minutes, we were at a plain valley without any geographical barriers from the city. There was the famous fortress on "Mutoon" plateau which became for us the symbol of Khost city such as Eiffel Tower for Paris. The driver turned

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To the east and drove as fast as possible. He said that his vehicle was destroyed here several days ago by a tank bomb ...of course, this was not calming. The cloud of dust, behind us extended for more than a kilometer long and several meters high.

It was natural for the enemy to send us welcoming missiles, and that's what happened; but he sent them to the post we were going to. I was carrying a complete fighting kit. Tim asked me about the reason behind that, so I told him:

"If I was taken as a captive, they would kill me immediately, but you will be set free within week because you are a European."

I went to Khalil tank location. It was under a cliff that hides it from the eyes of the enemy in the valley. But it was completely visible to the enemy in (Torghar) and the area behind Torghar. No considerable fortifications were protecting it. It was simply parked under the cliff.

I thought that a lot could be done to a tank aimed by the enemy from the air and from the mortar guns more than any other target in the front. If we had protected it, we could have saved a number of people who died around it .We could have saved food or assistants. However, in a tank on such a location, regular human beings cannot hold their ground .Let alone the tens of the air raids which attacked that tank and the ground assault attempts by the tribal militias.

The location itself was on a highland; more than splendid in its engineering preparation. I was a complete network of long connected caves with a large network of ditches around the plateau, enough for people to walk without bending. Since the plateau was not high, the slope of the caves was downwards to leave sufficient height over the caves ...I remembered the water streams. If one of them had flowed into these caves, it would have turned it into a deep river, but they were very careful about this matter, so, they had not been exposed to such a dilemma.

I walked around with Tim to the external ditches network. I had never seen Torghar from its back side and from such a short distance. We took numerous pictures until, suddenly, a stream of artillery missiles showered on us and made us run into the caves inside. Some of it fell next to us on the edge of the trench.

The return trip was more exciting. The reason for that was (Ali Joul) the mythical person. Abu-al Hareth had told me a lot about him, but it was the first time I meet him.

Unfortunately, he sat with us on the passenger's seat; between me and the English Tim. The fourth person was the driver. I was smashed by (Ali Joul)'s huge body and he glued me to the door. As for poor Tim, he didn't find a room to sit except between the shoulders of Ali Joul and the driver.

The rest of Tim's slim body was stuck to the car's roof, but "Ali Joul" is brave kind-hearted more anything on earth and was scared of mines....and that was the reason of this fame among the Arabs...he told me how he learned ...or invented...his dialect when he worked in Saudi Arabia for several years. He told me about his late adventures: approaching the enemy first line and talking to the soldiers through the loudspeakers...in fact he doesn't need that device, because his ultra loud voice was about to make me deaf, especially in my right ear which was already sensitive and from which Ali Joul was only few millimeters.

Ali said that he had gained the amicability and friendship of the soldiers who used to listen to him respectfully and effectively, but the "cursed" officers damn him with the worst curses which make the forehead sweat. They used to ask the soldiers to shoot at him and even hit him with mortars but his efforts made him famous. He helped a considerable number of soldiers flee; those who listened to him by day a, fled at night. Everything he told them was true, except one simple part. He said that he removes mines "very carefully" to approach the enemy lines. When he saw me looking at his face, which I never did since he started bombarding me with his speech inside my right eardrum, his sharp intelligence told him that some of the rumors about him had reached me – I mean the intended rumors that stated he fears (greatly) the mines... He added saying: sometimes, I take some of my Arab brothers to assist me in removing mines.

In fact, the Arabs liked him at Abu-al-Hareth post and admired his bravery, strength, his kind heartedness and generosity. He used to invite them to his house to slay a lamb for them ... (he used to pronounce it Haroof not Kharoof (lamb in Arabic), but nobody told me that he once invited me to eat some of that lamb meat. The Arabs used to joke a lot with him about the subject of mines. He himself used to laugh a lot at that and knows, at last, in a sportsmanship, that he fears mines a lot.

Ali Joul used to like everyone who was around him to an abnormal degree ....for this reason, when he was martyred after some months, everybody mourned him

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Even Khalil, Jalal Haqani's brother, who seems careless by nature... Khalil wept as a child who lost his parents... so that Abu-al-Hareth was amazed by that. Abu-al-Hareth was there when that "huge hero" was buried and told us that Khalil threw himself on the grave and wept earnestly. He had never seen him cry like that before. I wouldn't have believed that Khalil did that if Abu-al-Hareth had not been the witness and the narrator of what had happened.

...Ali Joul noticed that I was carrying two cameras, one was big with a concave lens, and the other one small so that I can put it in the pocket. He asked me to give him the small camera ...I apologized saying that I use it for taking photos for Haqani's magazine. I thought that I had blocked his request...it was my own camera...but he surprised me saying "Haqani is my relative and he is from the same tribe and I'll take photos at the front and give them you to have them published in the magazine. This way, I will be one of those who work with you. Again, I apologized, but he insisted and clung as a little child, holding on to another child's toy; we reached the post in disagreement.

I presented the matter to Haqani making him the judge between us. Haqani laughed and asked me give him the camera and to have Ali Joul with us as a field photographer.

I had to yield and Ali Joul wanted to fly with joy...

After two weeks approximately, I met him in the same post. Abu-al-Hareth had told me that Ali Joul was looking for me for days, because he had photos for me. That made me glad and I promised myself with rare photos of the first line. Ali Joul came with three photos.....all of them are photos for individuals inside a room with an open window above them. I asked him: "Where are the photos?" He said that it is his first experiment in taking photos and I want to present them to you to give me your point of view, it was a disappointment for me and I asked him about the rest of the film photos, he responded that they didn't develop- and these only were developed I explained to him that they weren't good pictures, because intense light comes through the window and consequently the individuals' faces below it were very dark so that it was difficult to identify them.

Ali Joul said," So you didn't recognize me? Here I am sitting in the middle...here is my paternal cousin on my right and my maternal cousin on my left."

I asked him in astonishment, "Then how did you take the photos?"

He replied correcting my mistake (in a Saudi accent): "No ...I had not taken these photos one of my friends took them." I asked him, "but you said that you had taken them!!"

He replied that the photos he had taken did not appear in the development of the film and he did not know the reason. He wants also a new film to try his luck one more time.

Calmly and without arguing, I stretched my hand into my military pocket and gave him a film ...he took it thanking me with a joyful face.

I didn't share him his happiness; my ideas took me away seeking the real reason which made the enemy officers order their soldiers to hit "Ali Joul" with mortars.

Haqani asked me to accompany the guest journalist in the post car to Miran-shah, because he may need me to be the mediator there between him and the Arab doctors so they would allow him to ride in their ambulance. Haqani and his group relations were descending with the Arab doctors who worked not only with the Kuwaiti Red Crescent but with the Kuwaiti commission itself. This time, there was no time for honoring protocols. The car was crowded and the aircrafts were bombing the area...I jumped with the guest into the ambulance trunk in which two injured people were.

The driver was trying to drive very fast to save himself and with those who were with him away from the falling bombs. The driver had to stop once or twice when bombing surrounded him from the front and the rear. I sighed comfortably when we passed the border point at Ghulam-Khan. The aircrafts' pursuit ended as well as the rocky roads.

At Haqani's main office, were three ambulances ready to move towards Peshawar ...they easily agreed to take Tim ...but he thought that I had helped him a lot and that I was kind with him when I came and accompanied him to Miran-Shah. I entrusted the Afghani people in the caravan by telling them that this journalist is Haqani's guest. So, they hurried to provide any assistance possible for him.

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This tradition of respecting the guest as well as other guests is one of the Afghani's noblest and most ancient manners.

I went back quickly to Khalil post in the first car I saw and then I moved the mountain of observation and headquarters in Khalil post vehicle which used to transport water and bread there. I arrived at the summit at about 4.00 .....Haqani was there. Immediately, Mujahidin artillery began to operate against (little Torghar).

Abd-al-Aziz told me that the air bombardment on Torghar had not stopped since 12:00 noon. No one reported any injuries. The Mujahidin's artillery hit food and ammunitions stores on little Torghar. There several soldiers were killed...Abd-al-Aziz informed me that after he had listened to the enemy wireless calls. Smoking clouds were soaring high above little Torghar.

- 5:20: A raid on Mujahidin front line in Torghar Mountain.
- 5:24: Another raid on the same target, but it hit the enemy lines itself on "Little Torghar" and caused losses. The Mujahidin were happy for that.
- 5:37: Al Kutchi group contact Haqani saying that the soldiers are escaping from the mountain and they will pursue them. Haqani laughs and shouts encouraging them... they were proceeding from the eastern side of the mountain.
- 6:00: The attackers phoned Haqani saying "We are trying to approach quickly the first line defenses to take advantage of the daylight and avoid mines".
- 6:06: A group of the Kutchi, led by "Orange" reaches the enemy first line on the mountain.
- Haqani issues the most important decisions of the day ... he ordered the defenders of the Big Torghar, to descend to Little Torghar and assist their colleagues in clearing and defending it against any counter attack.

"Torghar the great" became a mere back line to support the first defense line, which moved to its younger brother "Wara Torghar".

It was brilliant this day...and so was the attacker division especially the Kutchi group that belonged to the Martyr Abd-al-Mannan. It was led by his brother Joul. Today the martyr commander "Orange" joined them...He belongs to the same team.

The bravery of that team aroused enthusiasm, joy, smiles and laughter as well. One of their most famous jokes was their using one wireless wave since receiving those devices and till the end of the war end...

The number was 444.The government used to track them and know their plans and the Mujahidin's.

Kutchi people never lie; therefore, they are a trustworthy source for the government. When they want to become secretive -and this doesn't happen except after the penetration success and the start of collecting captives and plunder-then, they would use a very complicated code as they did tonight for example. So, if they capture a soldier they would say, "We have caught a cow." But when they capture an officer, they say, "We have caught a pig."

- 6:09: Jet aircraft arrived and bombed Big Torghar and its surroundings. After the raid, Mujahidin said that none of them was injured.
- 6:12: The enemy commander, on the small mountain asks his headquarters in the city to send him an armored tank to lift him up. After that call, Haqani contacted the attackers asking them to look for that officer and catch him alive.
- 6:18: Rocket launchers of the enemy shoot their missiles against Torghar. Abd-al-Aziz and his group distort the wireless wave of the enemy's artillery
- 6:20 Abd-al-Aziz tells Haqani that jet aircrafts are coming to strike. Haqani orders the Mujahidin to stop firing until the air raid ends. It was night and it was easy for the pilot to locate the artillery firing locations and then hit the guns.

Aircrafts came and emptied big loads of cluster bombs on Torghar. A message from the Mujahidin arrived; they had hit their own fellow soldiers at that raid. It also seems that some captives were injured by the cluster bombs.

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- 6:27: An air raid on Torghar where cluster bombs were used followed by heavy weight bombs and an air raid on Mujahidin base at (Buri-Khalil) where Salman-al-Farsi regiment is stationed.
- 6:29: The government vehicles arrived to lift the escapees from the mountain to the city.
- 6:36: Three of the Kutchi Mujahidin found six soldiers and took them as captives. Haqani laughs and shouts at them encouraging them on the wireless radio (Zanda Bad).
- 6:40: Victory laughter and kidding with the Kutchi from Haqani and the other Mujahidin...they were the stars of that day. Darkness fell on the area except the remains of week twilight. Launching Antinov aircrafts raided several successive times but without causing injuries.
- 9:25: We were inside the room seeking some warmth when we heard the sound of Scud missile explosion followed by another missile after few seconds as a congratulation message for Mujahidin coming from Kabul.
- 11:30: I was fast asleep inside a room crowded with Mujahidin...everybody was randomly sleeping. Haqani's guard woke me up....he told me that the Sheikh is leaving for Khalil camp. He asked me whether I want to go back with him or stay where I was. I replied that I will stay here. I heard the sound of cars leaving the post. From time to time, I wake up hearing the sound of big explosions and the sounds of various aircrafts going and coming, but I was not worried or anxious...nobody around me moved from his sleep ...everyone knows that the aircrafts ....all aircrafts will not take back (the Torghar family) to the government forces as long as those forces had escaped and no intention to be back once more.

## **Tuesday 20 February 90.**

It was a beautiful shining day, but for the Mujahidin it was a warning for a hard day with the air force and this is what occurred. The government sent all its air force and I think that the Russians participated....air force was infected with rabies, outrageous striking everywhere and doesn't have a target. Air force hardly stopped all day long.

- 8:33: The first raid on Khalil post took place today, where Haqani is present. They dropped three bombs 1000 pounds each, then two bombs on Touda Shani and two below Big Torghar.
- 8:43: An interval of madness, a lot of aircrafts bombard in separate places and everywhere and at any target!! Smoke soared high in a most places, behind Torghar, the big and in the region of Drwazji (East Torghar) and the region of Lijah.
- 8:50: The steam train ran behind our site; the aircrafts dropped a lot of Napalm projectiles behind us producing clouds of black sticky smoke along kilometers, then heavy bombs in front of our site and followed by a bombardment on the artillery locations and administrate areas at Buri- Khalil.

- Besides Napalm and cluster bombs, phosphorous bombs appeared with their white pretty smoke which soars high in nimble columns abnormally....phosphorous fires caught the old poplar trees adjacent to Buri-Khalil ...these trees started burning. I felt sad, near it there was a rocket launcher and an artillery location for Mujahidin, but the site was provided with good caves and holes to be used as ditches.
- 8:55: There is a thick cloud of smoke to the south of Torghar, the big ...there was full of shrubs ....with napalm, the region there must be a piece of flame.
- 10:20: An air against Khalil tank under the cliff and direct raids against Torghar, the big and the little.
- 10:30 to 10:50: Continuous raids, without a stop on various places from 11:20 to 11:30 to 11:35... cluster bombs explode, without a stop on the ground or in the air and lines of smoke that draws their path descending from air towards the ground...after their first explosion in space which was followed by a lot of other explosions in space. The clusters of red flame fell to the ground where they exploded and split in countless explosions of small bombs on the surface of the ground.

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The cluster bombs had uninterrupted explosions in the air, then a stream of red fires dragging white smoke behind falling towards the earth, then countless explosions above the earth surface. They were a stream descending from heavens that hardly stopped.

- 12:00: The Antinov appeared for the first time and started dropping its heavy projectiles in a long regular line...as usual. The weather was a quite clear and we were warm. I didn't know whether that feeling was the result of being emotional or caused by the burning fires all around us in every or because the sun was really hot on that February day .
- Abd-al-Aziz news: Mujahidin captured an undamaged tank yesterday at Torghar, the small and they are clearing a way from mines for that tank so as to move it to their location.
- Finally, we had a two hour break. After that, the aircrafts resumed their work as usual. At noon time, Sheik Haqani arrived with several operation commanders such as Mawlawi Hanif-Shah and Mawlawi Alef-Joul and others. They remained at a meeting until it was dark and left. So, I couldn't talk with Haqani.
- I found out later that they had brought my bag with cameras inside. It was quite late. So, I lost the opportunity of capturing photos of today's air madness.

However, air force continued all night even though it was less severe than it was at the end.

In the evening, the government tried to prepare to land one of its military aircrafts in the airport. The government raided Torghar "mountains" to cover the aircrafts' landing, but Big Torghar used its heavy anti-air artillery (23mm) against the aircraft while it was in the air. It didn't hit the aircraft. That method didn't succeed in preventing the landing attempts on the airport. So, I sent them a suggestion. I told them to point that artillery on the runway when the aircraft lands, because it will be still and thus easier as a target. My proposal arrived late, because the enemy tanks broke down one of the artillery and hit the other with fragments. They had them disassembled the damaged one and take it down the mountain so it wouldn't be destroyed by the hostile projectiles.

At the same night before Haqani and his guests leave the place, we all watched a fire show in Khost's sky. Over the valley from the west, a big explosion sound was heard from the west and a huge ball of fire was seen in the sky. Another explosion occurred. The ball would split into three parts or more and fall down burning. I couldn't understand the significance of what I see. It was the first time I see something like that. Abd-al-Aziz is an amazing man. He brought us the news of what's going on; the Mujahidin at the northern mountain, the mountain facing us, contacted him. They told him that the Mujahidin at (Al-Khail) prepared an ambush in the mountains. They had a Stinger rocket. They hit a government transportation aircraft from Kabul, but it was in vain as usual.

They hit the Bari region by a Scud rocket:

The traditional report reached us: nobody was injured. It was interesting to watch a Scud missile taking off from Kabul. It had a long red thread behind it for a few seconds, and then the missile disappeared for a while till it fell down on Bari. There was a sufficient time for Abd-al-Aziz to brief all locations that a "Scud" is coming. He gave them his traditional order "protection and concealment". Today, it was certain that Mujahidin didn't have any human losses or even injuries during the operation against Small Torghar.

### **Wednesday 21 February 90**

Hajji Ibrahim, who returned from Miran-Shah, told us that the head of the officers of the Pakistani Intelligence in Miran-Shah had called. This general is called (General Imam). The general called all Ghost leaders for a meeting tomorrow...may be at Haqani's house. Some expect that he will ask all to cooperate with Haqani. The news indicates to pessimism, whenever such snakes appear and start nose at work, crises follow.

That was a bad omen. As soon as those serpents show up and start to interfere in our job, we start loosing. At Torghar battle, that general (Imam) was in the spy corps. He was over the observation summit accompanied with three small snakes- assistant officers. They were watching from behind the binoculars what is happening in the valley and on Big and Small Torghar. He was talking to them in the English language, which no one present understands. I was at an overhearing location, by accident. I sit on a rock a little bit higher than their location; there was a pile of rocks. Their comments were as absurd as our Saudi guests on the day of capturing Torghar. That is strange to hear from such dangerous military people

The big spy was explaining to his small scorpions that it's a genius idea to locate Khalil's tank in this position. He also explained Khalil's courage and his critical mission.

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God protected those people in a miracle no doubt. Otherwise, half of the bombs that were dropped in the morning period were enough to kill all the Mujahidin several times.

Today I took photos of the air shelling, the thing that compensated me for not taking photos yesterday.

News came from (Abu-Khail), Mujahidin saying that they have inspected the aircraft wreck. The aircraft which was shot down yesterday and found 20 bodies of officers. They got some of the identity papers which were intact. The aircraft also carried munitions .We also got a list of the spoils which Mujahidin obtained from (Wara Torghar) operation. They where as follows:

18 captives, 19 Kalashnikovs, 1 sound tank, 2 military truck, 1 mortar, 2 the Koyak (heavy machinegun 14.5mm), 1 Shilca (23mm), 12 light Greenov, 2 electricity generator, 5 (??) . Quite lot of munitions of various weapons, recorders and TVs (from depots were there)

Shelling stopped today for 2 hours. I seized the opportunity and went down with Hajji Ibrahim to meet Haqani at the headquarter post (Khalil post). We have made an agreement with him to go, Hajji Ibrahim and me, to visit Torghar. At the post, we met our old friend, the former fighter and the TV photographer (Thaki). Currently, he had visited Torghar and just came back from there. He had gone there and so did a Jordanian young fighter, a journalist in Al Jihad magazine in Peshawar. We knew that he had visited the mountain shortly after its capture but during his trip he went a little bit outside the mines gap ... a mine exploded with him and took off his feet and struck his face ...he was moved to Peshawar for treatment

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I got acquainted to him last year; he was Jordanian, and a friend to Abu-al-Hareth. Friendship and understanding grew between us. That was rare in these Arab locations.

A car directed to the post of Dr. Nasr-Allah- Khalil took us. We had to cover the trip on the auto stop way. There was no private car available. We arrived at Dr. Nasr-Allah post. The region was shelled wildly during the last two days. There where some men on Torghar belong to the Mujahidin of that Ghond. We found a car carrying logistics to them i.e. a chick peas sack and three petrol barrels. I rode with Ibrahim in the car truck. At the front there was the driver and two men. Everyone was in an abnormal hurry before the aircrafts overwhelm us. As soon as the driver started to move, 6 silver aircrafts appeared in the sky. They seemed like they are heading towards us. Ibrahim, assisted by other the passengers shouted asking the driver to halt beside the road because jet aircrafts are coming towards us. The driver didn't listen to them at first. They continued screaming and violent strikes. The driver stopped the car. He pulled out his hand shouting angrily: "What do you want?" Before he heard the answer he saw the air crafts so he had put his head into the car and pressed the accelerator as fast as he could. The passengers had contradicting ideas: some wanted the driver to stop and others shouted asking him to depart as fast as he could.

But the driver made up his mind - consciously or unconsciously - to press as hard as he could on the accelerator. His arms were stiffened on the drive wheel. He crossed the terrible roads. He passed over a little- stream and turned it to a big fountain surrounding our car, and then he passed out that fountain to big round stones and rocks of various sizes. He used to cross them without any discrimination.

Then we heard the cluster bombs cracking above our heads. We lay down (the rear group) on the car trunk (!! We thought that our death was sure. We laughed for the hopeless wise of saving ourselves. We questioned our selves," What is the meaning of man's lying down in an open car while tons of small cluster bombs falling on us from the sky!!

We uttered Al-Shahada. As a result of the explosion, we contracted our body and we closed our eyes and we pressed on our teeth which luckily didn't tremble ...The cluster bombs explosion roared around us. It was a great surprise for us to find the bombs exploding on the high hills, right and left but none of them fell on narrow winding valley.

But that didn't satisfy one of the wicked pilots. He swooped down on us with his aircraft. The thing that plucked up our hearts and car when the aircraft was passing over us drops a huge shell on a plateau facing us. We had not died yet but we were half-conscious when we heard all types of explosions around us and in the posts surrounding us.

When we realized that they (the aircrafts) had left, our voices started to be heard. This laughs hysterically; that shouts admiring the driver's skill, who was a hero unwillingly .... We reached the opposite artillery post. There was a rocket launcher and missiles. We asked the people there how things are going on. They said that there were no injuries. We praised Allah and resumed our trip. We were laughing at our helpless foolish behavior during the raid i.e. after shaking hands with death closely. We turned to the eastward and passed by the destroyed Buri-Khalil castle. That was the one that the Mujahidin had destroyed after capture in about 1980.

On the way, Mujahidin had built a post for making bread to provide Mujahidin on Torghar and around it.... The post was located on the narrow lane of Romaki Mountain near Torghar. There was a large yard with wild shrubs ...That yard was planted with mines especially under the shrubs, where it may be used as a shelter from the sun heat. They were mines planted by the government to prevent Mujahidin from moving in the area opposing Torghar. Most of them were difficult to control from above the mountain due to the abundant shrubs and sight angles that don't allow the good control from the mountain top. To the right of the lane, in a small steep slope, there lay the Saudi Martyr Abu Al Darda' grave who was martyred in a failure attempts for Mujahidin to capture Torghar. He is the Martyr who Mawlawi Abd-al-Hakim tried to drag out of the mines and he was hit by a mine and had his foot cut. We got off the car...Our mission came to an end at that location.

I resumed my trip with Hajji Ibrahim. Two young lads were with us on their way to Mujahidin post west of Torghar. It was about sunset, we had better hurry to reach Mujahidin post so as not to lose the way at night and to be hit by mines or fall a prey to sudden air raids.

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We arrived at the Mujahidin post. It was in the same line with Abu-al-Hareth post 200 meters away. It was North West near the big valley entrance.

It was cold and the cave was crowded. So, we sat at the end of the cave. We have to spend this night here. Nobody can ascend to the mountain at night.

One of the Mujahidin knew that I am an Arab. He got very angry and said: "Why didn't he go to the Arab post? Don't introduce anything to him even with one Ruble value.

Hajji Ibrahim didn't translate to me what that generous man said. And I didn't tell him that I had understood what that the man meant.

Both of us stayed silent in discomfort. But the rest of the Mujahidin were more generous. They provided us with food and shelter till the morning. This was not the first time I find people hating Arabs intensively, even the Mujahidin. I felt this phenomenon since 1986. The ones who were responsible for that, were the Arabs especially those young classic (Salafi) Wahhabi Muslims coming from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other countries. There was a religious in conflict between them. The Afghanis were merely people of "Al-Kubouriyin-al-Ahnaf" the polytheists in the eyes of those young lads. They don't see the correct image of the Islam and the "sound belief" except in themselves and in the classic and the Wahhabi way. We slept at 8:30 and woke up at 5:30 for the dawn prayer.

At sunrise, aircrafts started striking violently. We were inside the cave. We didn't know where they were bombing. The raids were above the mountain, for sure. We knew that because we were in the same mountain, from the west side and faced by the Zamankany Mountain, which was, until last year the west side that support Torghar. It was penetrated by the Mujahidin.

Our colleagues in the cave said that five soldiers arrived at dawn. They had RPJ and armed. They killed their officer and escaped to the Mujahidin.

They said that Mujahidin asked them to wait until mules come to load provisions to Torghar and go with them. We were afraid of the mule's subject that we were not sure about it. They haven't arrived yet from a distant place to perform their new work for the first time. Therefore, we preferred to move with a group of young people the top of the mountain. A group of ten strong young people took us quickly towards the mountain. I was with Ibrahim in the front of the group with Ibrahim. After some minutes we became at the middle; 5 minutes later, we became at the rear. After the third 5 minutes we found ourselves alone and the active group vanished...Ibrahim discovered that he has a severe cold. I found out that all my body was sore. The shoe pressed on my toe as if it was a nail inserted into my head. So, I was limping when I walk.

We were carefully walking in the lane that we can see, that led us to a large arena that has thick trees. Beneath the highest summit of the mountain, that was formerly the strongest point for the enemy. There to the east, where the famous tank lay. My friend Abd-al Rahman was martyred. Here we lost the road track. We were able to see some vast holes caused by Scud rockets. A lot of holes were caused by the aircraft's bombs. The traces of fires in the trees covered the mountain cliffs and the wild valley facing it. It resembles the poor Savanna in Africa. It lacks nothing except some lions, tigers and wild

cattle. Mines prevented all sorts of life in the region; you can see the skeletons of animals hit by explosions here and there. It is a dreadful yard for death lying under the earth. Very few know their safe paths which were, anyhow, very few.

If I could predict the future, I would have known that after about a year. I with Abu-al-Hareth and a number of young people of his camp will cut a road amidst those trees to connect Buri-Khail area with Touda Shani area to make car travel possible for the first time in that region. The effect of that will be reflected on the final battles course to capture Khost in a way we could not imagine. We and other people who had admired the accomplishment of that mined risk. We'll narrate their details on time. Ibrahim and I were in a dilemma, and our return is the solution. Even that is not the optimum solution. The aircrafts are shelling everywhere including the post we had come from a short time ago. If the aircrafts noticed our movement on the lane, they would shell us and bomb it as they always do with Mujahidin moving on the mountain cliff and ascending to the summit. I suggested that he would call them to guide us to the right

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Are we using the entrance, to the lane ascending to the mountain? Or we could wait till another group passes by us. Allah knows the best when that will happen. How can we sit in a region within the reach of the enemy aircrafts and rockets tasks?

We saw the location of mortars, recoilless weapons (guns) and Kateushya rockets. Some of the projectiles were even ready to be used. And they were left there. It seems that we are near a location that has been used lately to strike the enemy on the mountain; we proceeded towards that location and examined it. We were trying to find the type and number of weapons that were available and the target handled.

We went through risk with as much precaution as possible until we found the required path. We went on walking slowly and very carefully. We could hardly ascend a little bit in the mountain, and then we saw that the entire road was solid rocks suitable for putting wire mines for stumbling. That relatively made us relieved. The sight was good. And Hajji Ibrahim was sharp-sighted. I wasn't so, but I have confidence in him. It made me follow his footprints, after the possible investigation.

In a more than one area, ascending a semi-vertical mountain, one must use his hands and feet in climbing. We got out of breath several times. We sat down to rest. We faced several raids shelling the mountain up and down. Bombs fell near us and we wanted to lie, all we did was to tilt several degrees and stick to the ground which is a rocky wall in the mountain.

We reached the top of the black projected part on the mountain with difficulty sir. Finally this is Torghar which we used to dream of for long years ago, We used to stay up for long nights planing dreaming about it. Abd-al-Rahman was martyred will he was seeking to achieve his dream.

But it was captured without us. Haqani and his men only captured it, with some Arabs as ordinary people in the assault. They had no certain role or specified missions assigned to them. I felt sorry for that. I didn't do my duty because I didn't share personally in that limited level, neither I nor Abd-al-Rahman's close friends. No doubt, we are in lack of a lot of responsibility feeling.

We ascended to the location of the man in charge, Al-Karan (Major) Fahim. He was a former soldier. He had strong body and upright. It seemed that he belonged to the type of people who firmly execute the orders that he receives from his higher headquarters.

After a short talk with him, about the situation in the mountain and the aircrafts shelling results, he said that they were in strong situation and none of his men where injured. I think that no one who hasn't experienced the Afghani war believes this speech, he who sees those raids closely can confirm confidentially that nobody was left alive on that mountain. Here is an interesting episode. During the operations near the airport, Hajj Ibrahim and were exposed to that same situation. After that, on a neighboring mountain,

our brothers, Arabs and Afghani confirm that the aviation had killed us. They were surprised to see us alive. That is the same as we heard from major Fahim saying that there were no casualties in his troops, not even one single wounded man!

I took some photos to the commander. And I was holding a small wireless set and a lot of photos of Khost and Mujahidin areas as they seen on Torghar. I was surprised and puzzled. I could hardly believe that I am really on the horrible Torghar or it became a friendly mountain not a nightmare. We sat with Fahim till the air raids on the mountain stooped. I didn't want to be along with my colleagues and Hajji Ibrahim first martyrs of the air shelling on Torghar. The man gave us a permission to wander on the mountain as we like. He asked us to be careful on crossing obligatory regions. Not to reveal our selves to the enemy in the valley. He directed some of the artillery nozzles towards them. He advised us to crawl or run quickly or both.

We met groups of the Mujahidin scattering here and there. Nearby there was Abu-al- Hareth group located at the summit top. Others were located in the small Torghar. From now on till the capture day, these groups had close relation with that mountain. They played an undeniable role in protecting it and used some weapons from there that caused tangible losses in the enemy.

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Abu-al-Hareth, didn't love a place on earth as his this mountain, I have never seen such a case! A man loves a mountain as if they were twins. When I was writing this part, I could see Torghar from my house in Khost under Mutoon's glorious plateau. I didn't claim that I love that mountain one day, but certainly I respect it.

The image of Abd-al-Rahman, plotted with blood doesn't leave my mind when he was near the summit. The role of Abu-al-Hareth and his group on the mountain were much less than I imagine. Details will follow later.

Ibrahim and I entered the big castle which the enemy had built on the high edge to the west side.

The castle was a primitive blockade but it was very strong. The roof was made of huge tree logs, rocks and earth were laid on it. That would withstand any heavy projectiles of Mujahidin. Those fortifications may not stay permanently without Khalil and his wonderful tank.

I and Abu-al-Hareth used to say about him: "He is the strongest man". As for his cooperation in the front affairs, we believed that Khalil didn't meet any of our requests intentionally. We did not ask anything from his post (Khalil center) unless his elder brother (Sheikh Haqani) was there. We did not want to hear him saying "Nashta (no)" So we used to call the post itself "Nashta". That was between me and Abu-al-Hareth himself.

Despite of the strong fortifications, they were not comfortable at all. Any normal man can't forbear sitting there for more than some minutes. It seemed that the enemy used the fortifications themselves as toilets for the soldiers. The two sides of the fortifications (open from both ends). They were a copy of Miran-Shah narrow squares where un-separated stacks of nasty stool were heaped; the urine covered the entire place. We could not stay long there. We left the place quickly. In general all the communists' sites, military or civilian has a nasty smell and an ugly scene that will tighten the chest. They were not suitable for living or usage. It was more severe in the mountainous locations. No insect can stay there for minutes in these ditches and fortifications. Mujahidin did not use any of the enemy fortifications or ditches. They made new shelters for themselves at different locations. We walked into the linking ditches facing Mujahidin in the south. We watched them carefully in the last years. We arrived at the famous tank location where Abd-al-Rahman was martyred several meters, below it. Mujahidin were able to destroy it before the assault operation. But they are trying to repair it now.

At the linking ditches, we were confined, several times by the aircrafts strong raids. But all the bombs fell in front of us and behind us. Of course, with the great vertically shape of the mountain, those bombs had no effect. But we had to sit down inside the narrow linking ditch. I noticed, on its wall that was opposite me, very small pieces of burnt clothes. The entire wall was as dark as coal. The clothes were colored, not military. I asked what they were. They said: "they are the remains of a Mujahid. A direct bomb fell on him in the ditch from tanks projectiles. Nothing of him remains except what you see".

It is certain that where we were sitting on that narrow ditch was the remains of a martyr. He was evaporated by the direct action of a missile. I could not understand that it was a tank missile, as they said. It wasn't possible for the tank to shoot angle. The most common possibility that it was a mortar bomb, as it is the only weapon that can cast a projectile at such acute angle. No doubt, the heavy mortar was available abundantly with the enemy. Hajji Ibrahim was in a hurry to go back. Aircrafts hardly stopped shelling. I took more than 100 photos on the mountain. On our way back the aircrafts bid us goodbye as they welcomed us with dignity and hospitality.

On our way back, we encountered some human bones and a skull with a bullet penetrating at the back. I thought that it was an execution operation committed on the mountain for one of the soldiers when he tried to escape. Then they threw the body from over the cliff. Beasts, by turn, tore the body scattering it here and there. What a miserable man! Who was led under the weapon's threat to fight against his beliefs, against his nation, and religion!

A direct aircraft projectile hit one of the places that we were sitting on to rest at the lane during descending. Timing is an important thing in war, no doubt.

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On the way, there was a team of the Mujahidin and soldiers working vigorously in repairing the road, and paving it to facilitate Mujahidin vehicles movement.

I had admired the engineering sense of Haqani. I had no doubt that he will not waste any time to extend the road to Torghar and to make the "round way" becomes a real fact. I had imagined this road to ascend from the West of Torghar and descend East wards. Thus, connecting Touda Shani with Buri-Khail, and connecting them both with Torghar. The three will form a defensive ring, that can't be penetrated by the government army. It will form a thrusting base for a big offensive action that takes Mujahidin to Mutoon's Plateau.

I did my best to study the new development in of the operation in the field of Khost. The turnover method happened there, since Nadir- Shah -Cout battle, and then Darraji and so on. It is true that there were vast areas occupied by Mujahidin, in the early 1989 and late 1988. Most of them is due to the government plans to reduce their defensive lines. They wanted to concentrate their forces to provide better protection at a lower cost. In Khost, the government forces were attacked during these withdrawal operations. They were forced to withdraw more than necessary. This happened at the eastern sector of Khost valley.

I tried to come up with definite results in that detailed study. I did my best in that; I hoped to reach a good understanding for the Arab youth in Afghanistan. They wanted to develop their military action and put it on the right path. However nothing of that had happened.

In the second volume of Manb'a-al-Jihad magazine, two studies were published: The first was about Torghar and the second was about the latest development in the Mujahidin's military performance in the last period. The development led to the occupation of the city in March 1991 i.e. after about a year, as far as I know, none of the Arabs had written such studies before. The Europeans might have written and analyzed too much in their writings which didn't reach us. Anyhow, they were remotely written, not with a close experience, of the real situation of Al-Jihad in Afghanistan. Therefore, I don't believe that they had come to some important aspects, as the war relation with the human element. That is more important and more dangerous than its connection with the material elements, such as armament, geography and the political circumstances.

Khost war was, 100%, an Afghani form of guerrilla warfare, taken as for style, tactics, general philosophy and strategies from the situation of that region of Afghanistan land and its geographic, population, psychological and intellection conditions and even the temper (mood) situation and special traditions of the men of the mountains, shepherds (Kutchi) and semi-urban communities (Khost, Jardeez and others).

That is very special and rare case: the appearance of a practically competent leadership and a high religious habilitation – Jalal-al-Din Haqani the learned man of religion and one of the strong and the most intact- tribe. Zadran whose lands spread on

the most important lands strategically, may be in all Afghani south. This provided Haqani a type of immunity against the Pakistani conspiracy. Against Al Jihad and against the Afghani people pro USA with petty aspirations of disloyal politicians for home or religion.

Now, we'll introduce these two reports for their historical and military importance. To be careful, I say that I don't assume perfection, but it is one of the amateur's attempts conducted by one of the learned men (at home). He was never once at a military or political college.

Those reports didn't raise any significant interest amidst the Arab Mujahidin in Afghanistan. Nobody cares to discuss what they contain, but most of them didn't read then assuming that there were sometimes no dots on the printing letters. What induces sorrow is that even those specialty is supposed to be the military action among (Arab chief), had the same attitude too.

As for the intelligent, they considered the whole magazine a mere propaganda or, as more intelligent people say, are mere "sip". Let's read that military "sip". That was the mutual interaction between Khost battles and Torghar battles.

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Torghar battle gained the same general nature as Khost battles. The most important traits include:

- Depending on siege to disintegrate the enemy substantial power and exhaust him.
- Mixing the methods of guerilla warfare with the method of systematic ones "traditional" according to Mujahidin armament, social and political conditions.
- Adopting the indirect approach strategy. When Khost was under siege for months and years, the siege circles intensely the last year (1989), the months of the current year passed (1990). Torghar was exposed to a special siege within the general siege. Starting from December till its fall in the hands of Mujahidin on 16/2/90. It was known that high locations allow Mujahidin to have tactical defensive advantage better than those allowed to the attackers, who finds difficulty in reaching the first defending line to capture it.

Torghar was rugged place, especially in the south facing the Mujahidin. Deep and condensed mine fields made it more difficult to cross. Those mines were planted by the communist forces for more than 5 years of their being present on the mountain. The anti campaigns of the government set out from the mountain to attack the surrounding regions. They planted a large quantity of mines in the two valleys and roads leading to the mountain, till the mere approach of the region. That was an extremely dangerous action. The advantages of the mountain regions allow a more comprehensive vision for the military guns operations. That was a fundamental advantage for that mountain which reveals vast areas of the surrounding mountains and parts Mujahidin road.

The communist forces on the mountain were able to incur heavy losses, through years at Mujahidin post in the surrounding mountains. They used heavy weapons such as: tanks, mountain guns, heavy mortars and heavy machineguns etc... They directed field gun fires of the city and valley and aircrafts dropping missiles and bombs. That advantage revealed the theater of operations better .It was the best advantage of the mountain throughout the last years. The second defensive advantage was represented by protecting "Albaten-al-Rakho in the south" where the vital targets of the city were accumulated. In Torghar thresholds, the city airport extends approximately with the same extension of the mountain, 6 kilometers away. The city administrative and population center were less than 9 kilometers away from the mountain. The two parties: the communists' government and the Mujahidin, view was that the mountain was the real key of the city. The one who controls the mountain will own the city.

The Mujahidin made several strong assaults (campaigns) through out the 5 years to recapture the whole mountain, but they were all in vain. The difficulty in reaching the first defensive line was the direct reason of the campaign failure. Mines played a main role in that failure. Most of deaths and injuries of the Mujahidin were resulted from that. The communist forces didn't hesitate to support mine fields around the mountain. At the southern front, in particular and in the shape of a round belt, they were fortifying the defensive fortifications on the mountains and connecting them with the linking ditches. They were providing the artillery force with more heavy weapons and tanks.

On the mountain, the numbers of tanks was no less than one. There were three tanks on the mountain cliff when the mountain was captured: two of them were armored. On the northern side of the mountain that is facing the city, they built shelters for food and munitions. They were sufficient for several days of violent battles or several weeks of regular consumption.

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Moreover, the paved city road going to the mountain summit helped in moving the supplies of heavy weapons and tanks to the mountain faster. It facilitated the evacuation of the battle fields from wounded and killed persons. So, the mountain became an organic part of the city connected to it by defense and destiny affairs. Mujahidin made several failure attempts to capture that mountains fortress. The "self-restriction" of the Mujahidin made them falsely believes that it is impossible to achieve that dream.

On the other side, the communists' forces morale was flourishing. Torghar became "the legend of heroism and sacrifice" as the Khost broadcasting did night and day. The constant and obvious victory which the communist authorities in Khost could boast of and the military leadership takes as a justification to assume the "military honor" and an extraordinary accomplishment, was maintaining Torghar under their control and expel (force out) Mujahidin attempts to capture it. So, Torghar gained a high morale value for both parties in the field of "psychological war" and preserving the fighters' morals in addition to its indisputable value. The indirect approach of the Mujahidin to capture Torghar started at (1989) by these steps:

- To occupy the series of the extended castles more than 15 kilometers east of Torghar, some of them were strong and some were centers of observation and protection. All of them aim to strengthen the eastern side of the mountain and strengthen the security belt of the city and the dismissal Mujahidin fires to the city's airport. And to keep the airport away from the effective range of those weapons.
- To repeat the same action on the castles and the defensive points on west "Torghar" to control the mountainous ridges. It is noticed that the western and eastern ridges were less high from Torghar itself. And they have less effect on the city safety. But they revealed two sides of the mountain and threatened the city airport exposing the air navigation there to severe risks.
- By cleaning of the western ridges, it became possible to sneak towards Khost Valley across Bari region. This path comes from the mountain and ends in the valley. That sneaking was faced by defensive points located on the verge of the valley, especially the two posts (Nidad) and (Malang). After several attempts, the two parties took turns in capturing the two posts. Then the situation was settled by Mujahidin who grasped the two centers firmly. Thus, they opened the way to sneak from "Bari" path to some parts of Valley Khost by passing Torghar revealing a part of the northern cliff and its complete western end.
- From the mountainous "Leejah" part, Mujahidin attacked "Ispeen-Kai" post in Khost valley. It ended by facing them and them capturing it. The two paths "Bari" and "Leejah" were the assault most dangerous axles from the mountain to the valley. They captured it after capturing the communist defensive points facing them in "Nidad", "Malang" and "Ispeen Kai". Mujahidin captured a strip in the valley, 20 km long and about 3 to 5 kilometers deep. That was the first big flow of Mujahidin from their fortified mountains to Khost valley. That was enough to

- refresh their hopes of hitting deep in Darraji. The most important thing was encircling "Torghar" the legendary mountain.
- From the narrow strip they had captured. Mujahidin thought of setting out from "Bari" path, to attack the rear road which connects Torghar with the city and represents the artery of life for the mountain and its defenders. Gradually, their posts allowed them to advance at night and to plant mines and some advanced weapons on that road. Thus, it became the vital road in its effective range. So, the road was closed in the face of the mountain castle logistics. That was the first big step towards the mountain siege. The communist forces substituted the main closed road with another secondary road crossing the middle of the mountain. Logistics were carried by soldiers and on the mules back across it. That became exhausting, slow and not enough for smuggling food and fuel to besiege Khost by the gangs through the narrow boarders.

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These were the conditions and extent of the incomplete siege. It caused psychological troubles and confusion for the defenders. The Mujahidin tried to make an almost perfect technical assault, (penetration) but their attempts didn't succeed in 15/1/1990. It happened in the former attempts. The Mujahidin were unable to reach the enemy first in the first defensive line.

So, the Mujahidin decided to make a sneaky action and to turn around the eastern part of the mountain. That was extremely difficult because the enemy had backed up locations on small hill that made the operation almost not possible. So, they adopted a daring trick. They dug a covered ditch. They deliberately worked in long nights on the verges of east Torghar and then they turned northward.

Finally, they were able, with little risk, to remain in the ditch all day, and among the enemy fortifications and within its fires range and attacking Torghar logistic routes at night. It was by planting mines there or firing at them. That caused horror for the defensive forces and lowered their morale. They were sure that their sides and rear were in danger and the attack is not restricted on the southern direction only but became circular. Their logistic lines and withdrawal were not safe any more. This was clearly reflected in their fight at the final assault. The Mujahidin captured the mountain which was much less than its former level. The obstinacy and determination which distinguished their fight, defending the mountain, for several years didn't appear.

### **The Tactics Modification:**

At Khost battles, Mujahidin were famous in modifying their tactics quickly and taking lessons from every clash results that serves the other clashes. Trying to capture Torghar on 15/1 was a real introduction to their final successful attempt. The most outstanding mistakes in the Mujahidin's attacks were their concentration from one axle only that was the west edge of the mountain. They were able to open a gap in the mines band and sneak at night to a region near the enemy defensive line. They waited in their locations till the noon of the day. It was cloudy and rainy, that deprived the enemy from the air force support. Then they started the attack after the Mujahidin had finished their artillery prelude, where one tank from the sneaking area in the valley participated and shelled violently the enemy blockades located on the mountain west edge.

However, the enemy discovered the attacking group, and focused its fires on it and on the narrow gap in the mines field, which it had to cross from an open area for heavy firing intersecting with the enemy machineguns. Mujahidin noticed that their attempts were in vain and went back. Whereas another group advanced from the eastern edge of the mountain, and found it sufficient to fire only and didn't try to advance because the gap in the mines field wasn't complete. The final plan modification was as follows:

Attacking the mountain from three sides, the mountain eastern end, and the western end of the mountain and the western cliff, requires removing mines before the

time of the assault. Removing mines succeeded at both ends, but it failed on the southern cliff because it had more mines and a large number of explosive booby traps. That made removing mines a dangerous risk. On the southern cliff, one Mujahid was martyred. The leg of another was cut off during mines removing process. It was more probable that the enemy discovered the attempts and concluded that the attack will occur from the southern cliffs. So, the enemy focused its attention there. This benefited a lot at the final battle. Most defendants stayed on the alert and focused on the wide flat southern cliff lest the main attack direction should be from that side.

Accordingly, they didn't offer a significant assistance to the two edges: the eastern and western where the actual assault took place. Whereas Mujahidin didn't attack from the southern cliff because removing mines stopped after that sad event. The enemy has wasted its energy in waiting the attack that didn't happen. The enemy lost his precious opportunity when left the edges to be destroyed by Mujahidin. The defensive line was collapsed completely in several minutes, when Mujahidin succeeded in setting their feet on the enemy defense line. That was evaporated as a dream without any resistance. This proved the fragility of the enemy soldiers' structure and their quick collapse. The hero defending Torghar and the city and valley were the intensive mines, not the soldiers.

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To boost assault on the three axes, Mujahidin decided to use three tanks: one to promote fires at every assault axis, even when they decided to cancel the assault line in the middle "the southern cliff" they didn't withdraw the support tank of that sector but they left it there because the facing firing area was large and it was able to support the two side tanks. It became clear to them that they were right in making that decision more than they expected.

The terminal fortification of Torghar found themselves under the tanks intersecting fires. The shelling was extremely effective, so that the stands of the heavy machineguns were destroyed at the ends and killed who were inside. Any firing from the connecting trenches extending more than 1500 meters on the summit of the southern cliff was faced with restricting shots from the southern tanks. Nobody dared to show the standby tank artillery fires. The enemy was getting weaker compared to the last month.

### **Local Distinction**

Mujahidin excel the enemy in quality in two aspects: command and the individual fighting; whether that was in morale fields, the basis of combat action, or in the war professional (technical) field. As for number and equipment, the enemy excels in quantity of numbers and in quantity and quality of equipment. However, the Mujahidin command skill is approved in its being careful, and able to maintain a local extinction in number and equipment in every clash with the communist forces. That was obvious in Torghar battle and in Khost battles as well. Let's see how that applies at Torghar battle.

The communist force defending the mountain consisted of 300 to 350 fighters. The most important heavy weapons were: 1 serviceable tank, 2 anti- craft heavy machineguns, 23mm (used against the Mujahidin posts in the mountain and valley), 13 rocket missiles anti-tanks (RPJ 7), 3 machineguns 14.5mm, 14 mortar, 1 mountain gun, 76 mm, 1 recoilless gun, 3 grenade launchers. In addition to a large number of light machineguns, hand grenades and personal armament: Kalashnikov (AK) guns, short machineguns, and other. It is worthy to mention that all the heavy weapons and most of light and personal weapons fell in the hands of the Mujahidin.

Now, let's see the human and firing concentration of Mujahidin; Two days before the start of the end, the Mujahidin destroyed an enemy tank on the mountain. That was one of the most successful steps as it was the only firing force capable of confronting the Mujahidin tank from an excellent firing location. The two tanks in the east and west were fortified in locations where it is difficult for the enemy tanks in the valley to hit. But the southern (the third) can't be seen from the valley.

The Mujahidin used 150 attackers for every side, with a total of 300 fighters. On a distant near the mines gaps, a similar number of fighters for support when necessary within a short time. So, The Mujahidin have about 600 attackers against 250-300 guns i.e. at the ratio of about 2:1.

We will not mention the total fire force showered by the Mujahidin on the communists' defendants on the mountain. The Mujahidin didn't have weapons similar to those available on the mountain in kind such as: machineguns 23mm, enemy mortars, 14 mortars 8mm, 120mm. the attackers didn't have a support with such density of mortars, but we'll talk about the two edges points which Mujahidin penetrated: Every point was about a castle with a machinegun, 23mm, 120mm, another machinegun 14.5mm, number of light and medium machineguns, a grenade launcher and a number of RPJ launchers. All this big firing force was concentrated inside a fortress engraved in the mountain .It was roofed by thick trees branches covered with big rocky blocks. The Mujahidin didn't own any weapons of artillery that may have an effect in those fortified blockades. They used a number of mortar guns and mountainous guns 76mm and field guns 122mm.

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Because of the little caliber and improper firing angle, they didn't have an effect on the fortified blockades, such as the two end blockades. Although it had an effect on linking ditches and the light machineguns that stand on the mountain, the firing tanks were the main factor in destroying the fortified blocks and turning it to common tombs to the enemy.

The advance of the tanks of the edges enabled them to fire at an excellent angle that reveals the side end and the rear end. The tank on the south was able to destroy the blockades heads east and west and prevent any firing from the linking ditches and smaller blockades at the southern end.

Through tanks only, the overwhelming firing distinction, put an end to the battle pro Mujahidin. Perhaps that battle was one of the few battles that proved that: although the tank is a decisive weapon of land battles of open areas, it may be a decisive weapon in the mountain battles against the defensive fortified locations.

We can indicate that the Mujahidin mortars (mostly 82mm) were effective in pursuing the escapees outside the fortifications which became as death traps. Mujahidin mortars caused serious losses in the enemy side and the Mujahidin machineguns undertook the mission of ending the remaining rest.

We can't overlook the morale side which glittered among the Mujahidin, because of the change in the weather condition. It was sunny at first, and then it became cloudy. All Mujahidin became happy because the enemy aircrafts can't work against them. Moreover, the less sight range will enable them to move freely in the theater of operations. They achieved steps towards victory by the sudden change in the weather conditions. They considered that a support by Allah and a prediction for victory.

### **The effect of Torghar**

As capturing Torghar was affected by mental and tactical situation prevailed Mujahidin action in Khost, Torghar, after capture affected the operations and their final flow determination. Torghar might have been specified with its geographic location, where the final battle will be confined to determine Khost destiny. The effects of that conquer include:

- It deprived the communist forces from all the strategic and tactical advantages that the unique location in the mountain allowed.
- Mujahidin firmly controlled the city airport (6kms away from the mountain) under the effect of heavy machineguns (23mm) fires. Mujahidin gained those machineguns over the mountain and used them directly against the airport and the surrounding defensive sites.
- The distance between Torghar and the airport is considered as the lands of the city itself. And the airport is one of its establishments. Two thirds of the distance to reach the city centre.

By using the tactical advantages of the mountain, it became easy for the Mujahidin from the military point of view, to control that sector after conquering the communist forces defensive posts. This was much less difficult than capturing the mountain which represented the defying problem facing the Mujahidin. We may expect that the government forces will defend, till the last soldier, the mentioned sector. That is because losing it represents losing one third of the city area. Moreover, deterring the Mujahidin behind that line will be impossible because that is related to a lot of regions with trees and houses.

If the sector, south of the airport fell, the operation of the besieged communist forces' logistic operation would be more of a logistic operation for the Mujahidin. The reason behind that is less area which the government holds and dropping supplies by parachutes will be (a great part of them) on the Mujahidin's behalf. Currently, the Mujahidin will get a small amount of these supplies.

The route which the smuggling gangs follow will be completely closed and Khost (the city) will lose its way that leads to the war field, the boundary city and smuggling main source.

Thus, it can be said that capturing Torghar has exactly specified the area of the main battle that will decide the Khost destiny. It is the area confined between Torghar and the eastern edge of the airport runway.

However, there are great capabilities allowed by the theater of operations to reveal a lot of unexpected surprises.

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## **The military development of the Mujahidin action in Khost**

**From July 1989 till March 1990 AD**

**Corresponding Thou-al-Hijja 1410 to Sha'ban 1410 AH**

From the battle of (Nadir-Shah-Cout and Dwamindo) till the capture of the castle (Torghar), along with the capture of Darraji and its surrounding area, the Mujahidin's military action developed dramatically. This formed a distinctive mark in the military action history of the Afghani Mujahidin.

This study tries to observe some of the features of this change including:

- The six main elements of this development and the role of each in achieving victories in the region.
- Command and organizational structures and how they were built in tribal regions that reject submission to any authority.
- How the Mujahidin administered their special psychological war facing the great countries' alliance against them.
- The "bite by bite" policy and why it was the only allowed exit from the current crisis.
- The way in which the Mujahidin achieved their movement flexibility and controlled their forces while avoiding the abortive air strikes.
- The tanks war in which the Mujahidin were engaged and its features.
- The way in which the Mujahidin transformed the tank into a decisive weapon in mountain warfare.
- The way in which the Mujahidin were able to obtain early warning capability.
- The wireless communication network which was unintentionally built by the Mujahidin but turned out to be one of the decisive weapons.

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It is necessary that Muslims in general, and Mujahidin in particular, pay a deeper attention to studying the battles running in the Khost region since the summer of last year (July 1989); since the splendid battle of (Nadir-Shah-Cout and Dwamindo) that was an outstanding turning point in the course of events in this strategic valley, to the battle of "Darraji" after more than a month, which completely overturned the balance of powers to the Mujahidin's favor and confirmed their procession towards comprehensive control on the strategic Khost valley and its politically and geographically uniquely important city.

These two outstanding victories were followed by a big sweep operation. Consequently, the Mujahidin cleared large areas in the eastern and western edges of the Khost valley, thus dangerously approaching the city boundaries lying in the center of the valley. The city's width is a bit less than 20km in an almost circular distance. The valley extends to the east and the west in a shape of two wings for the city circle: 30kms long from the east and a little more than 25km to the west. After the mentioned victorious operations and the following captures, these wings shrunk until they became narrow appendices in width and they lost a lot of their extensions, which made them vulnerable to cutting and severance operations.

There was still an advantage for the communist forces defending Khost. That was their ability to penetrate the eastern wing by a concentrated force and a great air support to reach the boundaries at the Afghani "Al-Midan" town. There, they would find stacks of supplies and fuels smuggled across the other side of the borders, carry them, and return to the besieged city in the same way.

Sometimes, they do without these dangers and depend on the smugglers themselves to take the risk across a winding dangerous road until they reach Khost. There they sell their goods for extremely high prices, gaining great financial profit in a betraying trade according to all religious and mental logic.

The Mujahidin waged a special war against smuggling; there is no room here to tell its details though. Consequently, the siege on the city became more enforced, and the military garrison became in severe lack of food and fuels. The smuggling rate decreased to 20% of the previous rate.

Finally, Torghar conquer came (Torghar which the Mujahidin were able to recover and secure as will be mentioned later) to put the city garrison in the most awkward position it had faced since the start of the attack more than a decade ago.

Kabul government still conceals the news of the mountain castle fall declaring that it is still controlling it and resisting the Mujahidin attempts. Till now, Khost radio

hasn't declared the news yet. There is nothing indicating the vitality of this mountain for the city destiny more than that wireless call which the Mujahidin have intercepted between the enemy aircrafts on the following day of conquering Torghar (the aircrafts that came to shell Mujahidin posts in Khost), and their headquarters in Kabul. The dialogue went as follows:

- You are now over the target ...strike!
- No I am over Torghar Mountain.
- I said strike: there is no Torghar!

The pilot had gone beyond the target and started having a wide circle while he was completing the nervous dialogue with his headquarters:

- What do you mean by saying "there is no Torghar?"
- It is not with us now. You must strike it.
- You have delivered Khost to them!! Khost is lost!

On his following round, he cast his entire load at once on a place more than 2000 meters away from the mountain, maybe cause he still did not believe what happened.

The officers who escaped with their soldiers after the battle said that the army defending the city knows that the city will inevitably fall. The headquarters made them understand, as well as Khost radio repeated for years, that Torghar is the key of the city and repeated enthusiastic mottos as: "all of us sacrifice our souls for Torghar" and "the people of Afghanistan greet the hero commandos defending Torghar fortress". Now, after Torghar fell, these mottos bounced back in a destructive effect on the army morale in the city. Collective escape rates increased, and entire divisions' refusal to execute military orders was repeated.

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We conclude that there is a dramatic development in the military performance of the Mujahidin in that area. This forms an outstanding mark in the combat action development in that extremely important border province in particular, and the military performance of Mujahidin all over Afghanistan in general. We explain below the most important features of such development.

### **First: Command**

It is the most critical factor in any battle. The destiny of the battle depends to a large extent upon its efficiency and capability.

At Pakita in particular, the tribes are extremely eager for freedom, which makes their military enrollment or even the political one an extremely hard issue. This is confirmed in their long history that is independent of any external authority outside the tribe range. Their extraordinary bravery is the center of proverbs. Their skill in mountain wars is beyond doubt, and with that they are among the best fighters in guerrilla warfare. Therefore, most of their regions attained freedom since an early time of Al Jihad (fighting) outburst. The remaining cities or castles after that maintained their existence with extreme difficulty.

That outburst spirit of the Pakita fighters was in itself an obstacle in the face of their transformation from guerilla warfare to the systematic or semi- systematic wars model. That transformation was necessary for the military operations development of the Mujahidin from mere small operations of “attack and retreat”, capturing the locations in the mountainous edges and defending them, into a wider and more complicated attacking model from the tactical point of view. This consequently needs a higher level of controlling the forces and military discipline to a degree which the region fighters (Mujahidin) were not familiar to before. Several attempts were made in the previous years to bypass this obstacle. Then came the Al-Adha Celebration battle (1410A.H.), which resulted in capturing the main “Nadir-Shah-Cout” and "Dwamindo" fortified castles in a big battle where more than 600 Mujahid (fighter) assisted by tanks and a large number of artillery pieces. In this battle they executed (under the leadership of the martyr Mutee'-Allah) several skillful and successful maneuvers including: sneaking in large numbers behind the enemy lines with heavy weapons, attacking Nadir-Shah-Cout in a complete surprise of place and time, capturing the castle in a standard record time (less than one hour), then advancing towards "Dwamindo" castles from the rear side and capturing them within half an hour without fighting after the garrison yielded as a result of the surprise horror and for being disappointed as it was attacked from the sole road that connected it with the city where the supplies come from.

The military maneuvers took a more complicated shape in the battle of capturing "Daraji", which forms the main headquarters of the enemy forces outside the city and to the western end in particular. More numbers of Mujahidin participated in the battle with a larger number of tanks (six tanks at one time) and a larger number of heavy artillery. There were various targets including all the support centers of the main location in "Daraji". Jalal-al-Din Haqani himself was the leader of this battle.

This battle achieved a complete victory. After that battle, the Mujahidin were able to develop the assault and wipe the enemy out of a large number of secondary posts spread in the shape of an arch centered in Daraji, whose aim is to close the mountainous passages reaching the valley by a net of strong fortifications supported by several nets in the depth of the valley to present the fire support and the humans and materials supply.

For the first time in the history of this war, the Mujahidin maintained their locations which they occupied and defended "as any other regular army", confronting several counter-attacks by the enemy supported with sweeping air protection and heavy firing force much greater than that of the Mujahidin, all that on a completely open area.

The operation proved not only the great morale force of the Mujahidin, but also the ability of the command to control its forces under extremely difficult conditions. Moreover, it proved the quality transfer of the Mujahidin forces towards acting and fighting with a high degree of discipline and getting much closer towards acting as a regular army.

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But what are the remaining steps for the Mujahidin to be transformed into the regular forces model? As for training, there is no doubt that the Mujahidin in general are much better than the soldiers or militias of the government of Kabul in terms of combat experience. This experience, without exaggeration, is not available in the officers and soldiers of a lot of countries recognized for their military fame. Moreover, it is not a problem of armament, because armament density is not the only factor. The Mujahidin were able to defeat better forces with more armament and larger troop density than themselves under the complete airspace control of their enemy that was using strong and effective air force. Even if the lack of ammunition clearly affects the density of the operations and their continuity, it does not at all affect the performance quality and planning accuracy that the Mujahidin have lately proved since more than a year.

Undoubtedly, command unity is the decisive work for the Mujahidin to achieve a level of force efficiency that can settle the situation militarily, at least in Khost. This action can be possibly developed later to start the decisive settlement on Jardiz, the state capital, if the general situation development allows to. It can not be said that the Mujahidin have reached that level completely, but they have covered a tangible distance towards it and they were able to form an intact leadership framework consisting of:

- 1- **Four local revolutionary councils** for Khost's four sides, aimed at considering the local problems related to each region in representation of the high Shura (consulting) council.
- 2- The public **High Shura** (consulting) **Council** aimed at considering the affairs related to the entire Khost region from the military and the administrative aspects.
- 3- The **Shura Council Command** represented by Malawi Jalal-al-Din Haqani,

The mentioned Shura councils deeply confirm with the region's nature and history. They meet the acceptable conditions from the individuals of this society, which has a special nature as for:

- a- The precedence of scientists in those councils: These are the group of scientists engaged in Jihad since its early days, which gave them a deep experience in managing the affairs related to Jihad action and dealing with the tribes in the area from which they themselves come from. Those councils, including the secondary councils, the public council and even the general headquarters represented in "Mawlawi Jalal-al-Din" give the same emphasis to the meaning itself: The precedence of the Mujahidin scientists to state the dangerous issues such as war and the issues related to it.
- b- The tribes' representation: All the councils include a satisfactory and agreed upon representation among the tribes of the area. Thus, the collective decisions find a way for execution, collective care and respect.
- c- Party representation: This occurs automatically within the tribal representation as the men of every tribe are distributed among the various factional organizations. If it was agreed to avoid factional competition, the final result would be for the tribe's interest as it receives independent aid

from seven parties. This is better quantity wise compared to the complete tribe joining one factional organization.

We notice here that the tribal society of Paktia can not make decisions that endanger the combat process without returning to the Shura councils of this type.

Whatever power and capacity the single leader has, he can not dictate his orders without observing the social approval which is compelling from the tribes' side. This approval can only be obtained from the Shura councils approved by the tribes. For example: Although the Khost siege seems to be a pure military action, it is in fact a dangerous location and touches the tribes interests, especially those in the area. For some tribes this is an issue of internal sovereignty, for others it affects the living necessities.

Although the Khost siege existed for many years, it only reached the actual dangerous stage few months ago. That was not only connected with the cause's general conditions (such as the Soviet withdrawal and the Kabul system being left alone in the military field, at least in theory), but also the obstinacy of the siege increased with the increase of the Shura councils' authority, their attaining the unanimity of the population (the tribes) and their gaining a great morale trust not only due to their structural correctness, but also due to the military achievements.

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The victories achieved within the several recent months surpassed what the region witnessed during all the years of Jihad, all of this positively added in favor of the Shura councils and Haqani's command.

As we said, this leading formation which undertakes the military and administrative command in the region did not reach the extent of forces consolidation of the systematic model in the classical armies. It is however considered a higher degree of command norms development in the mountainous region of highly determined tribes. It also forms a great leap in their organizational capabilities development which can undoubtedly reach a higher degree of progress if the experiment is given more time and proper conditions.

This organizational framework is considered the optimum solution for the issues related to the tribes. One of these most outstanding issues is facing the smuggling operations conducted by individuals from the tribes themselves. Thus, the prevention or punishment becomes from the specialties of the tribe itself. The tribe will be morally responsible before Shura council, and consequently before the other tribes, for respecting the collective decisions. In this way, the Shura council has an efficient, although not direct, effect on the military action because the siege operation itself has the most effect on destroying the enemy military force, followed by the effect of direct attacking operations.

Concerning the direct effect of the organizational framework, it is less effective on the direct operations (attack). Although coordination is effective in the indirect action (siege), it is less effective in direct military action because that type of activity requires complete integrity in leadership and the working forces.

That does not mean that this organizational framework is useless. All the successful great assaults – except capturing Torghar – happened through a common "coordinating" action. But such operations remain vulnerable to successive delays. Moreover, it is very difficult to control mobilization and timing. Therefore, it is necessary to resort to the "independent" operations to control all the factors firmly under one leadership. This was what had happened in capturing the fortified mountainous castle in "Torghar", where the Mawlawi Jalal-al-Din group performed it and achieved a complete success after it avoided the downsides resulting from the "coordinating" action operation wise.

The competent leadership is what led to the success of the current organizational work. The great victories were an unmistakable measure of a high leading ability in planning and execution. Without that, all the work would have collapsed and the accurate representation ratios among the tribes would have not done it any good. Competency was not limited to the general leadership alone but it even reached the groups' leadership. The region is abundant of a great number of young commanders who have practiced for long years and under the most difficult missions and combat conditions. This gave the action as a whole the quality of seriousness, not the quality of the tribal or party reputation.

It is worth noting that even the “independent” operations done by a single combat group do not eliminate the element of Shura consultation. On one hand, Shura is a deep process in the tribal consciousness that rejects tyranny of all kinds, even within the military framework. On the other hand, the fighting group - meaning the group of Jalal-al-Din Mulawi in particular - combines the nature of a regular group and the volunteer groups. The regular group works on a professional basis in terms of training and organization similar to the classical armies, and it receives orders in the same manner, although it consists of former Mujahidin who converted into being professionals. Concerning the other groups, which are greater in number, it is in the form of collections closer to the "guerrilla warfare" nature in terms of formation. All are volunteers. Their commitment to the leadership is moral not organizational. For this reason, the leading work includes a tangible amount of consulting work, especially in the difficult tactical issues.

For example, the operation of capturing Torghar was faced by complicated technical problems in facing the enemy blockades and mine fields and the difficulty of advancing under the enemy fires coming from the mountain, the supporting artillery in the city,

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or the thick air support from the air force; also the accurate long range Scud missiles coming from Kabul to the Mujahidin locations, besides other tactical problems. All of these problems were discussed deeply and comprehensively in a detailed manner before finding solutions and starting their execution. The operation of Torghar capture went through several failing attempts, the last of which was last January, where in each time tactical problems that require new solutions emerged. The leaders of the small groups consisting of attackers, defenders or reconnaissance and others contributed valuable contributions in presenting solutions and applying them with a skill that led to this great victory in Torghar, with losses that did not exceed one martyr and two wounded, which is a very slight ratio compared to the task's difficulty and the complicated challenges that faced the attackers.

From that, we come up with an important conclusion, which is that the command organization methods are as successful and effective as they meet the individuals' requirements and match their social, intellectual and historical formation. Therefore, it is not possible to import those methods and means in a haphazard way from another society merely because they succeeded there, because this does not mean that they can automatically succeed under different social conditions.

## **Second: the Morale and the psychological war**

The Mujahidin command in Khost benefited to a great extent from the morale factor, which it skillfully transformed into an effective weapon in the hands of the Mujahidin, despite the tough psychological campaign which all the Afghani people were exposed to by the great forces and their powerful media. This media cooperated with Najib's regime to spoil the people's resistance, destroy the effort of (Jihad) and make the people admit the communist authority on Afghanistan.

This campaign which was directed on the Afghani people's morale and on the Mujahidin's moral in particular was so big and concentrated to the extent that it was difficult to imagine the possibility of its failure. Even the simple Mujahid in the front line ditches receives the effects of this campaign through the radio device on which the Mujahidin ensure they follow the news broadcast wherever they are.

We thus find that almost all the broadcasting stations concentrate on the same topic: "the common rule between all the sects in an extended government". This concentration gives an impression of having a balance of powers between the Mujahidin and the Kabul government on the battle field. Luckily, this fake impression failed to achieve the campaign objective in attenuating the fighting morale of the Mujahidin. This is for a simple reason: the actual work situation which the fighter sees and practices falsifies this impression. The government is besieged behind the mine fields and ditches, and it can barely even practice mobile defense for its region which contracts day after day. Balance and equality are thus nonexistent, and the psychological campaign is unjust and aims at achieving false results.

In this way, the Mujahid (fighter) started having doubts and even animosity towards these propaganda sources, some of which used to enjoy traditional respect. So, the campaign lost its creditability, which is enough to fail any psychological war propaganda campaign no matter how huge it was and no matter how much ability it had for incessant persistence. In Khost in particular, the propaganda campaign against the Mujahidin had twice as much failure as a result of the Mujahidin's military activity and the government forces' weakness and defeat.

Both Kabul and then Khost broadcasting stations participated to a great extent in multiplying this failure and confirming the reverse output on the Mujahidin by concealing the news of the Mujahidin's victories and announcing government forces progress. Also the daily calls of the Khost radio asking for halting combat and agreeing upon a "common solution" for the crisis, and the broadcasting stations' (which were known for their neutrality and trust) repetition of the assumptions and statements of both Kabul and Khost stations put them on the Mujahidin's list of accusation and doubt to a increasing extent.

#### **A. Positive steps in the psychological war**

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In contrast, the Mujahidin leadership waged its own morale war with its own methods. It gave priority to the religious mobilization that continued since the beginning of Jihad. The present situations of the Afghani issue, which is considered unsuitable in terms of circumstances, required finding new means to promote the assault spirit of the Mujahidin and revive hope in victory. Achieving victory in the battlefield became a morale necessity under those circumstances, including avoiding large human losses. That was reflected on the tactical methods in battles, so that it became a distinguished trait for the Khost battles.

We may ascribe that to the benefits gained from the Jalal-Abad drawback. Besides wasting ammunitions, wide improvised battles incur high human losses and lead to morale drawbacks for the Mujahidin along with the political focus that affects the entire Jihad work.

From this outset, intense care in planning and utmost accuracy in execution came to avoid the morale disasters resulting from high human losses without achieving victory. This would be discussed later when presenting some of the details of combat tactics followed recently by the Khost Mujahidin.

### **B. Utilizing the psychological effects of the siege:**

The siege left a destructive effect on the government soldiers' morale in Khost. On one hand, food quantity became less and its quality became worse. On the other hand, the available range of military maneuvers became narrower as a result of the close approach of the Mujahidin to the city boundary and the loss of vast areas that used to allow the freedom to maneuver for the communist forces in the valley. In the end, these forces became trapped in holes and shelters all day long and most of the night fearing the fires of the Mujahidin.

When the Mujahidin were able to capture some of these places, they were impossible to enter because of the nasty scents coming out from inside. The combat ditches were themselves the sleeping places and the toilets, all in one narrow place crowded with individuals and surrounded by mines from all sides, except for one narrow path connecting it to the other locations. This psychological situation which the siege left inside rotten ditches threatened by death around the clock is unbearable for a long time.

Whereas the soldier is supposed to endure that psychological pressure for an unlimited period, there is no means for having a leave and visiting the family or even moving to another combat front as a result of the roads closure and the scarcity of air travels from and to the city. A lot of the wounded officers carried for treatment in Kabul got burnt with the aircrafts on the runway. Also tens of soldiers who came by air to support the defense force got burnt inside the aircrafts.

This atmosphere turned the soldiers into timed bombs ready to explode in the face of their officers. Khost witnessed the largest escape operations among the Afghani cities'

garrisons. These operations were accompanied by officers' assassination and the clash with the militias that are more loyal to the regime and that do suffer from the same pressure, as it is easy for them to go out of the siege circle and attend their tribes when necessary.

### **C. Short distance broadcast station**

This is an old weapon for the Mujahidin, even though its results have a wider range currently in those battles. The reason behind this is the approach of contact lines to no more than one mine field deep in some cases, and less than 20 meters by day if the mine fields disappeared in close fight situations.

The near broadcast station is the microphone used by a Mujahid with a strong voice and an eloquent tongue. He addresses the soldiers as a Muslim to a Muslim and a brother to his brother, explaining to them the necessity to leave the Infidel camp and join the Mujahidin.

Ali Joul, a Mujahid of the penetration group and an eloquent effective announcer despite his little education, says that on the following day of Torghar capture, he drew nearer to less than 50 meters from the enemy crowd and talked to them for about one hour. In the meantime, the soldiers were listening and refusing their commander's orders to fire at the daring announcer. It did not take long before the operation gave result: The officer was assassinated at night, some of the soldiers joined the Mujahidin and the remaining part turned into pieces due to the mine fields entrapping them to prevent their escape from service.

### **D. Welcoming Escapers**

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The Mujahidin adopt the policy of good treatment towards the escaping soldiers and helping them financially to return to their distant homelands. Most of soldiers in Khost and Pakita in general are from the Persian taking areas in accordance with the policy implemented by the Soviets to deepen hatred among the Afghani people sects on the basis of language, tribe, etc... The escaping soldiers are treated extremely well. They are given available care such as medication and clothing, and some are used as broadcasters in the “short distance broadcasting station”.

Concerning the militia soldiers, which are more dangerous and larger in number in Khost, they normally receive encouraging rewards for their cooperation within the enemy lines, or for individuals and their assistants to migrate with their families from the city and encourage the remaining to do so too. This left an atmosphere of mistrust between the soldiers and the militias, and between the officers and the soldiers, and between the higher ranks and the lower ranks of non-factionists. The phenomenon of arranging collective escape with their soldiers has recently spread among them.

#### **E. Continuous exhaustion**

Intermittent fire clashes and provoking movements by the Mujahidin are continuous during periods separating big operations, especially at night. This keeps the enemy forces alert, which makes the soldiers lose the opportunity to rest or sleep. Thus they reach a stage in which they prefer death in the mine fields, while escaping, than remaining on that situation.

#### **F. Employing the spoils of war in deepening the participation in the battle**

The Mujahidin occupied large areas of land and captured a lot of fortified and important fortresses, whether in the mountains or plain area. This of course resulted in reviving the morale and acquiring the offensive nature in action. During those operations, the Mujahidin captured large amounts of ammunition and heavy arms which they were in a desperate need for to continue the operations, especially under the circumstances of cutting the aids coming to them from foreign sources.

It is worth noting here the spoils' immediate employment in the battle field. The Mujahidin participated with their shares in spoils for almost symbolic prices paid by the leadership to have these equipment and ammunition used in the same field without being taken out and offered for sale in the markets.

This attitude created a new kind of financial contribution from the fighters themselves in financing the battle. This resulted in practicing more care concerning the ammunitions' consumption or the weapons' use and a larger moral relation to the work flow and the care to develop it pushing its wage to the maximum. The relations of the Mujahid participating in the battle and the leadership became that of moral and financial participation as well. With that the collective work ties strengthened and a collective creative talent burst on the battle field.

### **Third: The compatibility between the objective and the means**

#### **A-Objectives**

The Mujahidin leadership in Khost has no doubt that the strategic objective of their campaign is capturing the city. As Haqani said, the aim of the siege imposed on the city since years was at the beginning to put the communist and Russian forces in a defensive position the keeps them occupied from attacking the Mujahidin bases in the mountains surrounding the valley, but now the objective has developed to be the capture of the city itself.

The reason that made the Mujahidin do that may be the main axis upon which the political settlement of the Afghani issue is based upon (according to the requirements of the balanced interest relationship between the Soviets and America). That consists of freezing the military situation between the Mujahidin and the government, and the two parties engaging in agreement negotiations to divide authority among them along with other elements that were not engaged in the fighting during any former stage, such as the Royalists and the Western elements which migrated and settled there.

Freezing the situation requires pumping power elements such as weapons, food and money to Kabul's disintegrated system and preventing the Mujahidin from sweeping the cities which the Kabul system hardly clings to. This policy requires exerting the harshest pressure on the Mujahidin to prevent them from complete military victory by holding back various types of aid, except what is enough for the continuity of indecisive battles that form no danger on changing the existing military balance;

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also by using political pressure means and internal sabotage against the Mujahidin from the inside and the outside.

The only available way for the Mujahidin to penetrate this satanic cordon enforced on them is to snatch military victory under the current difficult circumstances, using the few material means available to them. The real challenge is not attacking an enemy stronger in terms of personnel and arms and snatching victory from him, but it is more facing the efforts of friendly forces that have changed their opinion and allied with the enemy camp, without announcing that, while being ready to interfere, by all means, to prevent such a victory.

## **B- Available Means**

There are the geographical advantages offered by the site and the nature of topography surrounding it. Then there is the human fighter factor, and finally there are “geo-political” advantages offered by the site.

### **1 - Geographical Advantages**

It is a vital element of the battle in that Afghani sector, which is one of Gods' gifts that functions completely in favor of the Mujahidin in a surprising manner. The city of Khost and the valley named after it, which lies to its east and west, are located only around 20km from the Pakistani borders. This has provided the Mujahidin with ideal supply lines in terms of short distance and the natural protection provided by the mountainous topography of the area.

Such advantage multiplied to a large extent following the gain of large areas which the Mujahidin cut from the valley last summer (1989), thus shortening their supply lines that reach the northern mountain chain to less than a quarter of the former time and effort. This formed the northern siege of a stronger circle exerting increased pressure on the city.

The above-mentioned mountainous topography provided natural protection not only for the supply lines, but also for the Mujahidin positions and their administrative districts, in addition to places of mobilization and campaign launching. Such protection doubled as the Mujahidin expanded remarkably in excavating caves, grottos and trenches in the mountain to the extent that the enemy air force, despite its power and use of advanced technology, is no longer impeding the Mujahidin plans and movement even in the plain areas of the valley. The Mujahidin losses from the air raids and Scud missiles became almost insignificant while they were grave losses in an operation theater such as the one in Jalal-Abad which did not have the same characteristics.

It can be thus said that the operations' commanders in Khost, even rather all detachments' operation commanders, became proficient in the art of protecting the troops

and ensuring their security, benefiting in that from the natural characteristics of the battle field. Even the Mujahidin's heavy gear, such as tanks, bulldozers and vehicles were mostly put in caves for protection against artillery and air bombardment.

### **1- The "Fighting Human" Factor**

Most of the Mujahidin personnel around Khost are from the tribes of Khost itself or from the Pakista province mainly, with a limited number of other provinces' inhabitants. Everybody shares the advantage of spending years of fighting in the area. This has given them a vast knowledge of the nature of the land, the enemy's defenses (particularly mine fields) and the enemy's fighting tactics. This is along with the presence of a close and intimate relation between the Mujahidin groups.

It is noticed that the quality of the fighter among the Mujahidin is excellent from the morale and technical aspects in a way that he can not be compared to the government soldier. Government forces consist mainly of soldiers who were "arrested" to perform military service and only spent a short period of training. Most of them were trained in Khost itself in a camp set up for this purpose. Also officers received only short six months rehabilitation courses that were called "urgent courses for officers' graduation". The percentage of "political party affiliates" among these officers is also in a continuous decline.

The Mujahidin leadership's use of the human factor was characterized by great care, and we have mentioned earlier the secret behind that.

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Despite the sensitivity of the battle, the leadership did not request any human aid from outside its area. This is so it does not get involved in administrative and supply responsibilities beyond its ability in a way that makes it lose its tight control over the forces. Perhaps this was among the lessons benefited from the Jalal-Abad catastrophe, where thousands of undisciplined armed men rushed on the city and formed one of the defeat factors and were an easy target for enemy fires.

## **2- The Geopolitical Factor**

We have to add that the geographical location of the region gave the Mujahidin a chance to establish strong coalition relationships with the tribal areas on the other side of the borders. The Mujahidin leadership in the area benefited from such relationships in getting important support. Volunteer tribesmen having old Jihad heritage against British invasions continuously take part in the military efforts of the Khost Mujahidin. They contribute in distracting the forces hostile to the Mujahidin on the border areas and assist in combating smuggling operations to the communist forces and the besieged city. Such smuggling operations are dangerous as they affect the battle course.

The mentioned firm relations also helped facilitating the Mujahidin's acquisition of heavy ammunitions from arm dealers in these areas. The relations also sustained the good fame of the Mujahidin leaders and their allies from the tribes' Mujahidin. This action is of paramount importance under the strategic-sanctions conditions imposed on the Afghani resistance by the super powers and their regional allies.

## **4- Compatibility:**

Given the sought strategic target on one hand (Khost conquest), and the available means on the other hand, it is necessary to conduct a compatibility process to reach the target given the available material tools and the political circumstances and complications surrounding the place and people.

The tactic of capturing the important locations one after the other in violent and crushing strikes separated by periods of time acted as stockpiles. Through this, the Mujahidin resorted to "digesting" the new location and taking hold of it and then re-compensating the weapons consumed abundantly under current circumstances, although this implies a slow fighting pace and constitutes a driving necessity to adopt the (bite by bite) style, i.e. dividing the land and occupying the positions one after the other in the previously mentioned mode.

While the enemy uses about ten thousand fighters to defend Khost (4 thousand soldiers and 6 thousand militia members), several reasons which might include extreme concern about the human force - and consequently the morale- have made the Mujahidin use about one third of the defending force as an active and efficient force in the operations.

This is despite the fact that the military rule requires the opposite, which means that the attacker employs three times the defending force in the case of armament evenness. There is however no evenness in armament, which is definitely in favor of the communist powers. Nevertheless, in all attacking operations, the Mujahidin are privileged with a numerical superiority at the attack location that can reach five times the defending forces in certain cases, which is what was suggested by Moad Tsei Tong in his military theory and he called it the local superiority theory.

#### **Fourth: Movement Flexibility**

The Mujahidin control now large areas in Khost. All the mountains on the side are almost under their control, especially after conquering Torghar Mountain in the north. The only thing remaining now is the important summit "Mashghor", which is in the hands of the government. This in addition to the latest gains in the broad valley which the Mujahidin are defending and work persistently to expand by pushing government forces slowly towards the center of the city.

Controlling these areas requires the Mujahidin to spread their forces to cover strategic points. On the other hand, when they desire to launch a big attack on a certain target with the aim of capturing it, they should concentrate their forces at the base point in preparation for the assault. That mobilization process requires flexibility in troops' movement so that it happens at a sufficient speed and a short time that does not give the enemy the chance to prepare its defense in the targeted area. In order to obtain the required movement flexibility, the command gave special attention to preparing roads between mountainous positions according to the available financial and technical possibilities.

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It is worth mentioning that since summer 1989, and until the beginning of this year the paved roads were doubled between the mountains. So that it can be used by the Mujahidin vehicles. This made it easier to supply the positions with food and ammunitions and to take out the injuries and martyrs. It helped in the movement of troops and expansion of positions in order to avoid concentration of air and missile bombardment against large administrative bases that the enemy knew for previous years.

However this had resulted in another important outcome in that the highest percentage of the Mujahidin movement has become mechanized by using vehicles etc... Thus, they increased the flexibility and speed of their movement, remarkably.

Mechanized transport services covered the Mujahidin positions, in the flat valley of Khost, except for contact lines and places exposed to the enemy. There the Mujahidin vehicles moved under the screen of darkness. The same thing the enemy used to do in his open area. The few bulldozers of the Mujahidin can hardly give them the feeling of pride and gratification acquired by the tanks in which they fight in Khost valleys.

#### **Fifth: Tanks Tactics:**

The use of tanks in Pakita battles by the Mujahidin is not new, as stated by Haqani, but the new thing indeed is the tactics which Mujahidin followed in using effective weapon. We can say that their tactics in tanks war were close to guerilla warfare tactics, like having severe bravery in maneuver, and creating new tactics and ...trickery.

In addition, the quantity of tanks that Mujahidin had gained and are currently in service is no less than half of the number serviceable tanks within the besieged government forces (about 20 tanks only are capable of movement). Most government tanks operate as fixed cannons, in defensive abodes; thereby they lost their fighting advantages in movement and armor strength.

The Mujahidin have the advantage of combining the force of all their tanks in one large operation. Attacking by tanks against one target and using more than one axis for the offensive, as happened in "Daraji" battle and the huge cleansing operations of the smaller government positions, later on.

Government forces possess such advantage. Otherwise, their defensive positions will be exposed in many sensitive areas, which are fatal for them. The strange thing in such case is that Mujahidin will be in an even positions and perhaps predominant, in terms of number of tanks in the battle. The difference was obvious in the courage and the freedom of initiative enjoyed by the Mujahidin tanks crews.

Enemy tanks were suffering fuel shortage caused by sanctions circumstances. In addition to the fact that it is impossible to compensate the losses which tanks suffer during fighting? If we compare between what had happened in Jalal-Abad, we will notice that at the outset of the battle, the communist there had around 150 operating tanks. (That's according to certain reliable estimates). The Mujahidin gained around 10 to 15 of

them with the exception of large numbers that were destroyed. However, those gained tanks did not take part in a war but some of them were used as stationary guns.

In contrast, and as a result of failure to tighten the siege around the city before and after the operations, the enemy compensated quickly and easily its lost armors and its defense force in the city was not affected. Which depend mainly on that weapon in a plain area like Jalal-Abad "The most difficult dilemma facing Mujahidin is the use of their modern weapons, tanks, which is the enemy entire superiority over the battle field? This thing did not prevent the Mujahidin from using their tanks in the plain area during the shining day light under sky highly dense with fighter aircrafts throwing their bombs over tanks.

We recognize that such situation is hard to explain unless, we admit that there was a divine miracle helping operations of those tanks, in addition to tactics which Mujahidin tried to minimize as for as possible the range of risk by taking measure like: launching and decide attacks in a short period of time and in critical times for the air force, that is early morning or shortly prior to sunrise and at sunset or shorting before that.

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and approaching the target closely in the darkness with full camouflage of the tank and preparing camouflaged havens in the plain area and caves in the mountainous areas for protection.

In spite of this, the most important battles took place during daylight with the presence of the tanks in the plain valley; benefiting as much as possible from the concealed places like bushes, remains of destroyed clay houses scattered over the valley, or the sharp cracks in the ground that provided good curtain; in addition to other disguising factors.

With all their bravery and risk, the Mujahidin lost one tank only since they started “The Battle of Tanks” against the enemy last summer 1989.

This was due to air bombardment.

The evidence of how effective the tanks are in the Mujahidin’s hands can be proven in reviewing the three major operations that took place in the area during last summer. These are

1. Conquering Nadir-Shah-Cout’s castle and then Dwamindo fortress in July 1989.
2. Capturing the command post of “Daraji” and the surrounding posts on the western at southern mountains and what is behind it in the valley in September 1989.
3. Conquering the mountainous Torghar castle on 15/2/1990

In the first operation, the Mujahidin infiltrated with two tanks further than the fearful Dwamindo fortress in order to attack Nadir-Shah-Cout castle. This establishes control of the entrance of the western valley. Nadir-Shah-Cout is larger and stronger than the Dwamindo fortress. That is considered as one of its defensive tributaries.

All of a sudden, the fire of the two tanks advancing towards the historic fearful fortress Nadir-Shah-Cout, made the hearts of the defending soldiers throb; even though they had three tanks within the armament of the fortress, plus a large number of artillery. This took more than a half an hour; after which their defense surrendered.

The Mujahidin to tanks advanced towards Dwamindo to attack it from behind and it surrendered without resistance.

Thus, the steel beasts under the Mujahidin’s command lead to great achievements and miracles in less than half a day.

It’s good to notice the features of guerrilla warfare. They are courage, initiation and elusion; and these still impress the Mujahidin’s area even with the heaviest arms like tanks. That operation was commanded by the martyr Muti’-Allah, who came with his tank from Orghon, about 100km far from battle field. He started his victorious battle at the crack of dawn and ended it before noon.

The second battle was wider in spot and longer in time. In order to capture "Daraji" base, that controls the western sector, each of the valley and the mountainous fortress circling it. It was necessary to attack two more fortress which endangering the

attackers, namely "Musa-Khan" and "Sayed Ji" in that attack Mujahidin used of three tanks, which moved forward towards the infantry from the west side.

However another group moved towards launching the main attack on Darraji, accompanied by two tanks. The attack started at 5:30 am and the positions were conquered at 7:30. The Mujahidin gained three tanks with large quantities of arms and heavy weapons. The most difficult mission was to grasp the positions opened to the attacks of soldiers and militia, supported by tanks and heavy artillery as well as a hysteric air force. Mujahidin remained steadfast for ten days under difficult circumstances in a plane area lacking any with natural protection. Finally, the enemy surrendered the states quo and stopped is attempts.

It is worth mentioning that Mujahidin tanks also stood fast in defense and succeeded in conforming enemy tanks although one tank was burnt in the battle due to aircraft missile. However in that battle the Mujahidin recorded precedence the first of kind in the Afghan war and under such difficult situations in areas not suitable geographically. It is noted in this battle, as was the case in the previous one that it started at the first daylight and ended at noon before the air force was able to maneuver freely.

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The third battle was taking the mountainous Torghar castle. The strange thing is that tanks alone were the decisive weapons in the battle; although they were used as fixed emplacements for the artillery. The battle took place on top of a high mountain (1575AMSL).

To summarize the battle, we can say that mount Torghar extends from the east to the west; with its back to the city and long front to the south where the Mujahdin posts in Bari area are located. Enemy entrenchments extended along the mountain to counter any attack coming from Bari. The defense plan was based on this. Mine fields were densely placed to the south then around the circumference of the entire mountain; except for narrow roads coming from the north... to the side of the city.

Any attack from the south would have to face the mine fields and heavy firing from the top of the mountain that was piled with machineguns emplacements and fortified guarding towers.

Instead, the Mujahidin attacked in their latest successful operation from the eastern and western sides; where the enemy fires force is at minimum. Enemy precautions lied in strong entrenchments for heavy machineguns on both sides backed by emplacements of light machineguns and hand grenade launchers.

The tanks role was to destroy the two defense posts of the enemy on the eastern and western sides.

The two tanks of the Mujahidin sneaked to the valley. The first was adjacent to its eastern edge and the second west further deep in the valley around 5km away behind Torghar from the north western side. Each of the two tanks completed its mission in destroying the defensive strongholds at the edges.

In addition to that, a third tank belonging to the Mujahidin ascended to a mountain facing Torghar from the south and contributed in destroying the terminal strongholds, hitting communication trenches and machineguns emplacements along the southern edge, which try to hinder the Mujahidin rows advancing at the mountain cliff.

On a cloudy day, tanks started to operate after the Friday prayer. As soon as the afternoon prayer finished, they had destroyed the enemy force on the mountain. There was no air force interference due to the bad weather. For the attacking Mujahidin, the main obstacle was to avoid mines and wipe out some weak firing coming from between the rocks. It took them less than one hour, from the moment they moved from their attacking locations (from above the mountain itself in areas lower than the government positions) until they took hold of the fortified mountain summit. After that, the legendary mountain fell under their control. That was after six difficult years during which the government give the Mujahidin unlimited hard times.

“The Mujahidin took advantage of the terror that was in the government troops from the tanks. They launched small attacks on certain positions at dawn by using recorded sounds of moving tanks on loudspeakers. The trick succeeded and accomplished in target.

### **Sixth: Wireless System**

The Mujahidin have an efficient communication system that enabled them to have an effective communication with the units themselves, the general headquarters and commanders of the attacking and supporting groups. It also links the parts of the province; the mayor and other nearby provinces. This good connection capability gave very positive turnout during operations. It made the command control over the working forces an effective reality.

The Mujahidin's capabilities in this domain developed to an extent that enables them currently to wiretap create static distortion and overlap with other wireless systems, especially overlapping with wireless waves of enemy air force and obtaining valuable information. In addition to that, the Mujahidin were capable of having an early warning against air raids.

During the operations, the ones we are talking about currently, (from July 1989 until today) the wireless equipment, which the Mujahidin had captured, were of great help in the distinctive advancement which the Mujahidin achieved in the wireless telecommunication field. The availability of staff previously trained during their service in the Afghani army helped a lot as well.

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During the latest battles of Torghar, the Mujahidin were able to follow up and lead the offensive operations against Torghar. They were also able to receive wireless reports coming from Lojar and Jardiz regarding the government force which is moving on that road.

The development of the wireless telecommunications system of the Mujahidin and its growth was a secondary consequence of their battles in Khost. That turned, almost unintentionally, to take one of their important weapons. No battle made it without a critical moment in which liaison between the units and the command became a decisive and critical factor. The telecommunication system was the bridge on which the Mujahidin's victory passed during critical moments.

### **The Expected Coup**

On Tuesday 6 March 1990 the expected coup occurred and failed in Kabul.

I have not known anything about coups. Everyone was talking about and the anticipated repercussions for the resulting event. As if in fact it was a way out of the crisis.

It was a crisis that international settlement had to find a solution for. They suggested forming a government with dual allegiance for both sides. Najib-Allah in Kabul welcomed the idea that would guarantee him survival and continuation. In Peshawar, the "Jihad" party welcomed the idea because it will fulfill a dream that they waited for so long. They hoped to play the role of political representatives on their ruling seats in the capital of their country. They didn't want a mere political treason under humiliation by a ten degree government which is itself under the American humiliation.

The problem was that Najib-Allah had difficulty being accepted by the public whether migrants or Mujahidin. The man, like anyone else from a third world country, was the head of an espionage system. Then he became converted into ahead of a state and transformed the whole state into a nightmare of espionage.

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Whoever does not work as a spy shall be spied on. The majority prefers to be oppressing others rather than being oppressed. Military massacres also increased and not police repression.

It seems that continuous meetings between Gorbachove, president of the Soviet Union and Reagan, the US president, gave Gorbachove little compensation in return instead of the horrible retraction of his country from the international community. After the withdrawal from Afghanistan, one of the most important compensations was keeping the Soviet Union's regime structure in Afghanistan itself and to keep communist symbols there under any future settlement

Gorbachove received a similar compensation in Yemen where an illegitimate unification took place between the northern (tribal) Yemen and (communist) Yemen. It lasted for several years until it was failed by Muslim youth in 1984. They wiped out communism there and removed it away from political power in the country. However, Afghans continued their struggle and the Mujahidin defeated the idea of sharing power with communists.

One of the functions of the anticipated coup, and as a reason to divide powers, was to diffuse the ideological basis of the struggle in Afghanistan for being a conflict between Islam and infidelity,. Thus, it was clear and without the least of doubt, that this was happening since the early days of carrying arms against the communist government of (Khalq party). This persisted and intensified with the Soviet military intervention. The United States of America, as is it is usual in the west, clearly fears to put the west and the Muslims in a conflict. This is for the advantage of the Islamic quest alone, because it calls upon them optimal self defense powers.

The United States wishes to place the conflict in the form of civilized or economic but not religious struggle. In order to melt the religious nation of Muslims in general, which was affected by the ideological presentation of the conflict in Afghanistan, it was necessary to get rid of the Arab Mujahidin, who represent the real deal in the religious confrontation between the Islamic nation and the infidel nations.

Therefore, a very cruel, barbarian and cunning American program was initiated with the aim to get rid of those Arab volunteers. That was apparent in 1989. The most prominent one was arranging Jalal-Abad massacre followed by the assassination of Dr. Abd-Allah-'Azzam, the symbol of such Islamic presence and religious position. We stated that Jalal-Abad massacre began in 1989 and continued to burn the Arab youth until the 1992 war was over. Saudi Arabia used to encourage youth secretly to go to that holocaust and to facilitate their arrival to it. Saudi agents and spies were in the guest houses spread in Peshawar (arranging death trips from Peshawar to Jalal-Abad). They used to finance Al-Jazzara (slaughter camps).The Arabian militias, funded by Saudi agents, lead the inexperienced youth to the shortest road towards death. They call it martyrdom although it is just a perfectly premeditated murder.

A number of opportunist youth in Jalal-Abad had turned into Emirs, having cars, weapons, ammunitions, financial resources and ambassadors touring Saudi Arabia and the Gulf (states) to raise donations from fans and patrons. They were also visiting holy

Sharia'a to perform major and minor pilgrimages like the respected VIPs and agents, received by agents of the authority and the state and its high ranking officials, so that those ridiculous people had an entity by which they felt dizzy with joy. Jalal-Abad was the worst habitat for (Jihad trading) which was participated by number of Arabs, who lauded skillfully over Arab blood pools.

Since 1990 events started...Although they were few, but they were repeated... like assassinating Arabs inside Afghanistan. Some of these events were combined crimes, which mean that the real crimes perpetrators arrest someone influential then they ask their Arab colleagues to impose punishment for their murdered ones... which of course makes Arabs happy but they also don't realize the visors of the operation as by executing the punishment they shall be wanted as revenge by the tribes.

The tribe does not look to the operation as punishment but it sees that an Arab has killed one of its members... There the circle of killing Arabs has broadened, and even the bus for denying them publicly and vehemently by the injured tribes. It forced some notable Arabs to leave the Afghani arena. They discovered that they were willingly involved in a tribal vengeance that cannot be settled, while it was thought that it was being executed legally against a killer or convert communist... etc ... from conspiracies run by some wicked engaged in expelling or killing Arabs shortly before the coup, five Arabs were assassinated in Jalal-Abad... and their colleagues were asked to inflict punishment on for their assassinated ones, which they did and hence the evil circle for demanding revenge began.

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Therefore, hitting the ideological base of Jihad in Afghanistan was... in my view basic aim of that anticipated coup, but who dares from the Mujahidin side, to cross that terrifying gap that separates what is ideological and fundamental and what is contrary to religious doctrine and interest of the people who sacrificed and fought in order to get rid of communist and for Islamic role of the country?

This role, the true description of it is treason, played normally by leaders made by foreign forces who bestowed on them false celebrity and aura of loss and intelligence to attract people. If this happens, they jump the terrifying gap and transfer from (false) heroism to (real) treason. Nevertheless, this appears as an achievement and new heroism on the part of the mob... but concerning the one who is exposed to the charm of false heroism; he shall remain isolated so that it shall be easy to seduce him to make that dangerous acrobatic jump.

That's what Atatork did in Turkey... the false hero in the fields war shows against the British

Turkish people bowed to him as an impossible war hero. Thus, Atatork jumped and performed his political role by hitting Islam in the cradle of Ottoman Caliphate and declared secularism that is more infidel than the European crusade. This is what Sadat, October war hero, did. In actual fact, he was that war's first traitor. After making glory of false heroism, he also jumped with his dangerous and latest move. He took Egypt and Arabs from the square of enmity to Israel and the Jews to the square of humiliating surrender under the shoes of Israel and America.

However, as for Afghanistan, Atatork and Sadat together were that extremist Rudimental youth heroes...to the end of the list of false glories, which the west was keen to attribute to the youth stars and selling it to the Afghani people and Muslims of the world as the unmatched hard and serious hero of Afghanistan

The Afghani acrobat made his basic move, but it was in the vacuum...and the coup failed. The stubborn player and the fundamental Muslim repeated his game several times after that. For his misfortune, he kept failing each time until he was repulsed from Kabul, along with his identical failed players like Rabani and Sayyaf, leaders of Afghan Jihad whom the brotherly Islamic media promoted- America's representative in the Islamic action movement- and in the end all of them allied together, after they were expelled by the Islamic Sharia's students (Taliban movement) in Afghanistan. Taliban movement expelled them from Kabul and all those Mujahidin leads allied with...Russia!!!

They didn't find anything wrong with working with Abd-al- Rashid Dostum, the ugliest communist militia leader in the history of the country

So, what is the true story about these leaders? How they became leaders? And what is the connection of Muslim Brotherhood movement with this political pus? Days are still concealing secrets and catastrophes. We return once more to that important point, i.e. divesting the struggle in Afghanistan from its ideological trait and creating "pre-

Islamic" backward pitfall which under its cover that struggle continues, since 1989 calls for ethnic discrimination and clashes on ethnic basis.

The days are still full of secrets and disasters.

Let's go back again to that important point. They want to remove the struggle in Afghanistan from its religious forms and find "ignorant" ways to cover the struggle with. Since 1989, we've had ethnic lawsuits and clashes that were racial. The Farkar incident was the first famous of such kind ...although Mas'oud, in the northern part of the country had exerted all his efforts...in collaboration with the Soviets and the Kabul regime...i.e. to conduct ethnic cleansing to the north. His first step was to eliminate the Pashtoon power there. He started by senior powerful leaders.

I admitted saying that "I only realized that truth very late. After conquering Kabul, when Mas'oud occupied it with his ally Dostum, the fighting began between him and Hikmatiar in two distinct camps, one for the Tajik allying with the Uzbek (Mas'oud and Dostum) and the other for the Pashtoon (Hikmatiar). Western media kindled these fires a lot until they exploded and burned. The media was not the only factor on the field; the western intelligence apparatuses were pushing the Afghan in the same directions.

At the end of 1989, this question was addressed to Haqani by a western radio station, "after tightening your siege on Khost would you resort to solving this issue peacefully on the strength that they are Pashtoon like you?" Haqani replied at length explaining that this is not nationalist war but a war between Islam and infidelity.

The west opened other paths for fighting in Afghanistan and for obliterating its basic ideological feature. One of those paths was the sectarian war... which Hikmatiar started too (representing Pakistan policy) against Jamil-al-Rahman, leader of the Salafi

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... (Ancestral) cement (representing Saudi policy). This was clear in 1990. Then all parties joined in the war behind Hikmatiar forming a Caliphian alliance against the Wahhabi of Jamil-al-Rahman. Massacres took place in Konar. The aims of which were supposed to include Arabs in Afghanistan on the basis that they are the entire Wahhabiyya sect... but the response outside Konar was weak. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia failed to make it a comprehensive war involving Arab volunteers. Saudi Arabia did its utmost to expand the battle scope and drive Arabs into it. So, it sent a number of its spies in Afghanistan, who fabricated sectarian clashes with the Mujahidin. They declared it a war against the (unbeliever) Afghans and the tribal Mujahidin. They tampered with some graves and removed amulets from the chest of the Mujahidin and the Afghan children rudely. They are known for that. Even one of them pulled out a knife and put it on a child's neck to cut the amulet tied around his neck. Fortunately, one of his colleagues prevented him from doing so in order to avoid a fight with the Afghan. They saw an (Arab) putting a knife on a child's neck to remove verses of the Koran from around his neck.

In the sectarian war in Konar, when such war failed to extend to other states and thus include the Arab Mujahidin, it was necessary to let the Arabs in and get them directly involved in Konar war. This took place when Hikmatiar group and agents of Saudi intelligence convinced an enthusiast Arab youth to murder Jamil-al-Rahman. They convinced him that Jamil is as an invincible obstacle against unifying the Mujahidin and stop the war between them.

That young man killed Jamil-al-Rahman and he was shot immediately by Al-Rahman's guards. The person who pushed him to commit the crime disappeared, but the Pakistani and Saudi intelligence took upon them to finalize the mission. They warned all famous field leaders in Afghanistan, in whose fronts Arab volunteers are active, that there is a terrorist network Afghan leader. Such slander was so effective and some sort of caution and apprehension prevailed, but it did not amount to combat or fright, contrary to what Pakistan and Saudi Arabia wished.

We return once more to the expected coup, and this is what I wrote about it at the time in an article titled "Shah-Nawwaz...did he break the psychological barrier", which was published in Afghanistan Magazine issue (19-20).

Shah-Nawwaz: Did he break the psychological barrier? In the absence of military development of Afghani Mujahidin since the Jalal-Abad setback last year, the most trifling events at the domestic scene has become a simplification of an exciting change that preoccupy an interest far larger than its real size. Thus, was the failed coup, led by the Afghani Defense Minister, "Shah-Nawwaz-al-Tani" in March 1990? Despite the unsuccessful coup attempt, yet it is full of indications that draw a clear picture to the balance of powers of the parties in the conflict; Mujahidin on the one hand and Najib government in Kabul on the other.

### **The Expected Coup**

The coup was devoid of the most important elements of revolutionary actions; sudden attack, as since more than one year there is more than one Mujahidin leaders heralding a coup coming from within the army; implying beginnings of a solution for the Afghani problem...A scenario was drawn for such solution which provided that a transitioned government should be formed with participations of the revolutionists with the Mujahidin leaders "around Kabul". Such government oversees elections in which the people would elect its representatives, who in turn will decide the form of the coming regime in Afghanistan. The proposed solution-despite of the ambiguity and risk it implies-is not as odd as the oddness of public gesticulation of an action supposed to be carried out covertly, that is the pursued military coup.

Some announced...that there was more confirmation of strong arrangement with army officers planning for an upcoming coup in Kabul. Whereas Najib -Allah was not an exception from the men in power...he should not have viewed such statements with leniency.

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A man of such experience like this in managing secret espionage apparatuses was not expected to view such statements with sportsmanship. He did what a man in his position should have done. "Screening" and "combing" operations were made to the armed forces, especially the leading levels. He paid special attention to his Defense Minister "Shah-Nawwaz" and the rest of the "Khalq" crew, who still enjoys a great influence inside the army in a "Barashmi" state.

The Defense Minister was arrested and removed, tens of senior officers were also arrested and according to some sources a Soviet mediation was behind the return of the Defense Minister to his post in a bid to protect unity, "combine effort" and "brothers' gathering"...etc.

This occurred in December of last year and is itself sufficient to cast doubts that the Soviets were sympathizing with Nawwaz and his folks, but they might have wanted to give a chance to them to oust Najib who became ...personally.... an obstacle in applying the settlement especially due to the fact that the issue of participating in an "expanded" rule embodying not only those in the Afghani scene or regional parties in the dispute area, but the international parties who are interested in getting involved in the region.

For the Soviet, Najib now, as it is apparent, enjoys exceptional positions like the one which Chawshisko had in Romania; where the Soviets closed their eyes when he was standing before the death squad, so that his death would open the door for Romania to catch the new reign which Gorbachove inaugurated for the Russian empire and its subsidiaries. Najib remaining in power in Kabul would prevent Afghanistan from catching up with the Russian "Proystrica" under the umbrella of an expanded government accepted by all parties and makes every party have one piece of the Afghani cake...which according to that solution...shall remain on top the Russian dining table.

This is contrary to what the revolutionist Defense Minister "Nawwaz" alleges in that the Soviets are the obstacle he had faced and that there aircraft, taking off from inside the Soviet territories, are the ones that destroyed his headquarters and fighter aircraft at "Baghram Airport" near Kabul, the allegation's authenticity is hard to prove.

However, the events, which Kabul witnessed at that time, prove that the revolutionary operations were not secure and that failing it by Najib and his supporters was relatively easy despite the great losses that accompanied the attempts.

The coup was expected since around one year. It was announced and the communicated between the Mujahidin leaders and army officers. All this made Najib and his supporters' preparations at its climax. It awakes in them all their spying senses. The capabilities of their own state security apparatus "Wad" and "Nawwaz" himself as Defense Minister were under observation all the time. We can also say that all those who contacted him were also under observation. Nothing is easier than failing the attempts of a coup expected by a suspected Defense Minister; in addition to the he is a political opponent to the president of the state.

### **The Positive points of the Coup**

The failed coup attempt gave some advantage in favor of the Mujahidin, like manifesting the incoherence occurring in the fragile communist coalition front in Kabul and highlighting the "Khalqi- Barashami" conflict as a destructive factor. The latter has been working for long years, even before the Russian intervention in Afghanistan. Moreover, the said attempt weakened the political position of Najib, who was trying to contain all parties of the Afghani community society under his wing and proved his incapability even to contain his communist colleagues let alone other parties.

The attempt showed also that it was necessary to change Najib under all circumstances and whatever the expected solution might be. We can say that the coup, although it failed to oust Najib, yet it ended his political career. As for the military institution...which is the main support for Najib's regime...it was negatively affected by the coup attempt. It was preceded by "cleansing" operations inside the army leading positions...and was followed by "more severe cleansing operations" after the failure of the attempts. All that would weaken the organizational strength of the army, as well as the decrease of morale in the lines if junior leaderships between the officers...not to mention the soldiers ...whose morale exceeded the declare limit.

### **The Negative point of the Coup**

The negative outcomes of the coup attempt have several aspects:

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First: It quickly and directly revealed the disintegration of the political front of the parties in Peshawar. As usual, there were not united...or coordinated, stanchd with the coup attempt and its organizers. While one party vehemently backed the attempt to a degree close to political alliance with Shah-Nawwaz and their rear crew within the framework of a joint plan to topple the regime in Kabul and form features of an alternative regime to be reached with joint efforts.

Nawwaz defended that alliance with the group, which is embraced by the Mujahidin as a tactical alliance. The mentioned group denied the existence of any alliance, which in itself is an old tactic regarding the names of established facts. Nature of tactical alliance will not change. We can call it more tactful names like "temporary cooperation" or "benefiting from the circumstances" ...etc.

Alliance...whether temporary or permanent...has no shortcomings purse for being a political indispensable necessity, but the norm in adopting or rejecting is the benefit sought there from. Morale might precede the materials in this case, particularly in an ideological conflict like the one taking place on Afghanistan territories. Thus, the alliance between Jihad party in Afghanistan and a communist group dissident from Kabul regime undoubtedly weakens the Jihad action and automatically convert it from an ideology-based conflict to a mere political conflict whose only aim is power and obtaining it in any means .

The difference is big between the two cases. Islamic issues in this century passed through such a dangerous pitfall. The result of the political "tactical" alliance was a strategic change in the basics of the conflict itself; convert it from its ideological aspect to aspect of temporary political advantages.

Based on this, some analysts think that one of the substantial outcomes of the failed coup attempt carried our by "Shah-Nawwaz" is a sign of dramatic change in the ideological basis of the killing taking place in Afghanistan. It transforms it from the ideological aspect-in whose orbit it kept circling for more than are decade – and enters it in the scope of political conflict based on benefit basis. Equal steps were taken in this respect, one by "Shah- Nawwaz" and other by his brave host.

It starts:

In a dramatic change like that, the public opinion should be avoided, which is still –in general-following the ideological Islamic basis in the struggle against communism inside Afghanistan.

Change starts with a more courageous circumstance to beak the "psychological barrier", while the colleagues resort to gentle violent opposition. Once the psychological barrier has been broken completely with the Afghani people, a "national conciliation" march shall be completed and the ideological base that was suitable during the fighting stage shall be abandoned.

The form of moral mobilization for the warriors must be aborted at one point of the political settlements; based on a regional and international cold decision ; governed by the interests of a super power that stirs up fighting over years under an ideological cover, with its eyes on an eventual political settlement that take into consideration interests not ideologies.

### **Ideological Renunciation**

Shah-Nawwaz offered deeper and faster ideological renunciations, although he did not depart much from the framework, which was drawn by his bitter enemy in Kabul "Najib-Allah"; both of them declared that they have abandoned communism and each asserts that he is "a genuine Muslim"; both of them confirmed that his party needs "restoration" to be more acceptable to the Afghan people. Najib reiterates such words for long months and under the rifle's spears in Kabul. "Shah-Nawwaz" found that it was appropriate to repeat the same words from the Mujahidin trenches while carrying the nimbus of "national heroism" in fighting a regime which people rejects.

The Lojar caves lent credibility to "Nawwaz's claims more than Najib's words in which military campaigns against the Afghan people dub as a lie; that is a media deception-intentionally or unintentionally ...offered by more courageous Mujadidins to break the psychological barrier built by the previous ideological claims. It is an undoubted pretext for Afghani people to accept the idea of "repentance" of communist Afghans and to give them indulgences that wash away the bloods with which their hands were stained for more than a decade.

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The picture to which the Shah-Nawwaz contributed to instill in the Afghan and international public opinion is that war in Afghanistan was a civil war between an Afghan Muslim and another Afghan Muslim, even if the degree of quality differs here or there.

### **What is next?**

After the abortive coup attempt, how things will be going inside Afghanistan? We shall be content by examining some phenomena without indulging in the risk of predicting the invisible. There is no doubt that a new stage in the path of the Afghan question is causing the current events.

As phenomena indicate, the super powers hold most of the threads in the game. This does not mean that inevitably things will be as these powers wish. Any party and whatever its size might be, can make surprises in the situation, leading in turn to some sort of amendments.

The fear that military "stagnation", which the Afghan resistance is witnessing, might lead to slip many papers from its hands to fly to the hands of one of the big players, is no secret. Important papers have slipped away from the hands of the Afghan parties to the hands of the American player, which is no doubt a waste of the rights of the Afghan people, who suffered and scarified hundred of thousands of Afghan youth.

Failure to determine any internal military stance around the besieged cities is not a real failure, but an artificial one for which Afghan leaders before any one else will be questioned.

Also, the split in the preliminary ideological stance, which involved all organizations, is required to be reassumed through an action plans; not only by statements drafted in eloquent and fluent "Arabic Language, using it as the commodity that was marketable in the past years marked with a gradual stagnation. The Afghan people are the ones who need such assurance before any other overseas Arab party, because the Afghan bloods were the ones that were shed; the Afghan territories are the ones that were destroyed; the Afghan people are the ones who are in a dire and need to know where it is heading. They need to know more clearly and practically the attitude of Islam with respect to every thing that had happened in the past....what is happening now....and what will happen in future on the Afghan territory!

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