

# Learning from the First Victory of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Mazar-e Sharif

The victory at Mazar-e Sharif is legendary. In October 2001, Special Operations Forces (SOF) linked with the Northern Alliance, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century indigenous force on horseback, and directed precision weapons from the air to defeat the Taliban – a seemingly undefeatable foe. The battle, hailed as “transformational” by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, was key to the coalition force victory in the north and ultimately Afghanistan. While many recall the image of American SOF fighting from the backs of Afghan horses, the project enhances our understanding of the various aspects of this novel campaign and provides important lessons as we transform to a future force. Two examples include: the interdependencies among the indigenous forces, SOF, air operations and other government agencies; and the power of small, adaptable units integrating joint/coalition capabilities. “Learning from the First Victory of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Mazar-e Sharif” provides those insights.



SOF & Northern Alliance Horse Soldiers

At the request of the General Franks, Combatant Commander, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) an Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA)/Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) team reconstructed selected events from the Campaign for Mazar-e Sharif to support historical analysis, leadership development and research and development. The result of that work provided a comparison of simulation technologies from '73 Easting to those available for Mazar, an overview of the campaign and a methodology for experimentation.



3D Entity Level Viewpoint

campaign and an archive of the reference materials. Its purpose: To serve as an educational resource for leader development as well as to support historical analysis and further research and development.

General Schoomaker, Chief of Staff of the Army, asked that the material be consolidated into a DVD set to be used as an educational resource for leadership development. He felt that the lessons from Mazar were applicable to the NCO as well as the four star level.

The unclassified DVD was approved by the Army and includes multi-perspective reconstruction of the

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