

## **FIELD REPORT – Afghanistan**

A Centurion instructor assisted a media client in Kabul from September 19-21, 2002. This is his field report.

### **ACCOMMODATION:**

Mustafa Hotel (tel: 070 27 6021, email mustafa@inmarsat.francetelecom.fr) is used extensively by international media and NGOs. Centrally located one block from shopping area at Chicken and Flower streets, approximately 15-20 minutes drive from airport. Owner Weiz speaks very good English. Shower and washing facilities are adequate. Towels are available but you have to ask. The hotel has a laundry.

### **COMMUNICATIONS:**

A new GSM system is available from the airport, central post office and Intercontinental Hotel. Handset and SIM card cost about \$300.

### **CURRENCY:**

US dollars preferred (50,000 Afghanis = \$1). This was being replaced by a system that would have banknotes of 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 Afghanis as the main denomination rather than 10,000, 20,000, etc.

### **DANGERS:**

Beggars appear when a Westerner is identified. A couple of thousand Afghanis usually gets rid of them. Driving conditions are fair to very difficult. Roads in and around Kabul are poorly surfaced, driving is manic. Seat belts are not used extensively and do not exist in most vehicles. Rule of the road is basically "Go for it, but with caution". Mines still exist in and around Kabul and surrounding areas. Mine maps are available. HALO De-mining Trust is present and Handicap International Belgium runs mine awareness courses. Details can be found in the Survival Guide to Kabul which is distributed by children at traffic calming areas, markets, street corners, etc for 40,000-50,000 Afghanis (up to \$1). Best not to travel alone. Curfew in force from midnight until 0400.

### **FOOD & WATER:**

A lot of restaurants are starting to open and the food is generally good. Water is available in bottles. Avoid tap water and do not let shower water enter the mouth.

### **HEALTH & HYGIENE:**

Take first aid kit including water sterilisation tablets, painkillers, anti-diarrhoea tablets, re-hydration drinks. During times of high wind and sand storms dust gets everywhere so take gaffer tape to seal windows. Mosquito coils and/or net advisable. Nasal spray would be useful to clear blockages caused by dust.

### **LOCAL CUSTOMS:**

Normal Muslim customs apply.

### **SAFETY & SECURITY:**

Armed guards not present everywhere but do exist at most embassies and some road intersections. Take padlocks for security at hotel and a travel plug (local power is 110-220v AC).

### **TRAVEL:**

Flights to Kabul from Islamabad by UN World Food Program flight.

### **VISA:**

Required (£30 at Afghan Embassy, London). Take small passport-size photographs for local use.