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## FROM AFGHANISTAN

### Report from Afghanistan

By LTC Brian Pruiett

My home is on Decatur Island. I am in month 10 of my voluntary year in Afghanistan and hope to return to beautiful Lopez Sound by June. I wanted to share a few thoughts about what is going on here with all my friends and neighbors in the San Juans. I hear from so many people who are unable to get the real story of what's going on in this long war.



#### New Year In Kabul

I am having a high old time here- luncheons with governors and generals, racing around town with my pistol strapped on and my rifle at hand. Masses of humanity freezing in 17-20 degrees fahrenheit with snow and ice. Suicide bomb threats every day. Every day somewhere in the country an IED goes off, usually suicide.

Women treated worse than animals everywhere. Two good governors assassinated- one by suicide bomber. Filth in the streets. Fresh fruit stands everywhere. Dust and diesel pollution clogging lungs. Meat hanging on hooks by the side of the roads, for sale. Young women in burqas, with ancient wrinkled hands.

Cars decorated as if for weddings with signs reading "Hadj Mubarrak"- "Congratulations on completing your trip to Mecca." [AnySoldier.com](#). [Womenofhopeproject.org](#). Me in the "Pool of Blood" in Jalalabad where all that is left are the bullet holes and memories.

Men and small boys going thru garbage looking for sticks of wood and scraps of paper to burn in open fires in their mud brick homes to stay warm and cook. Boys banging on car windows at traffic jams asking for money and food. Women in burqas begging. One legged men by one's and two's adding up into the dozens, on crutches and begging- land mines respect no one.

Ministry workers in nice clothes with heads held high stay downtown. Police report drugs seized. Three thousand-five hundred kilos of opium on one truck. Attempted assassination of the police chief. Police searching vehicles everywhere. Soob Buckeye-Good morning. Chitoor asti-how's your health?

Border Management Initiative- not.

Police living in huts and hovels with no heat or electricity, getting paid \$65 per month. US and ISAF Headquarters issuing orders and demanding progress. Soldiers with 30 kilos of body armor and weaponry on their upper body slipping on ice and falling in the streets.

Lines of people at the Pakistan Embassy waiting for Visas- a few females wrapped into obscurity on one side of the street, the much longer line of men on the other side of the street wrapped in men's wool shawls and wearing their ethnic hats: turbans(longee), kolor (round, flat-topped, white), pakool (massoud hats).

Bicyclists on dark green Chinese-made bikes pedalling on sheer icy streets and thru snow five miles to work. Single-axle horse carts pulled by burros, donkeys, and horses at a trot and a gallop thru vehicle traffic and masses of humanity.

La Vie en Rose Bakery is Fresh Bread Heaven. General Order Number One prohibits military from frequenting businesses. One or two men to a horse cart pulling huge loads through the streets. Tiny burros carry 100 kilo loads. Military locations with dirt-filled walls 12 feet high and topped by wire, with noisy, dirty diesel generators running without ceasing to provide power for work and play- reports and internet.

Jomaa (Friday- holy day) bazaar on post- clothes, furs, antique guns by the hundreds, swords, cheap watches, beautiful stoneware, US Embassy folk crowding the post.

The rare rocket. The occasional RPG. The frequent IED. BIG VOICE: "ATTENTION IN THE COMPOUND, all personnel report to the bunkers immediately."

FYROM (Macedonia) soldiers in the streets on patrol. ISAF has alcohol for meals. 2,700 soldiers in German armored battalions banned from fighting the Taliban. Where is the Wehrmacht when we need them? Canadians battling bravely in Helmand Province. Dutch taking strong action in Oruzgan Province. New Zealand's team in Bamyan province looking daily at the destroyed Buddhas. Turks building Wardak Province. Big trucks getting searched with dogs and guards with mirrors outside the gate.

The Border Police commander assassinated in Herat after interdicting the enemy for six months- I knew and liked him. I got the news at Christmas. Hoping for new leadership direction.

Trucks and more trucks: water trucks, food trucks, laundry trucks, diesel tankers, sewer trucks, all coming in thru the wire with escorts and back out.

Work is long hours and short rest with short daylight and long bitter dark.

Rambo at the gate of Camp Phoenix has no family: the Taliban killed them and hurt him so bad he always has his face covered. Rambo at the gate. A suicide bomber drives up to detonate. Rambo saves us and captures the bomber.

New children swarm the capitol by the thousand. Families in lines for NGO handouts, military presence to prevent riots. A tomato can with wires shuts down all travel by US forces across the capitol city.

Ghazi high school is three stories high with no walls. Winds blow across students in coats. Three million people now, no- four, no- five. Suicide and IEDs. ID check. Pat down. More snow. Huge masses of men looking for work.

Suspicious hope amidst desperation. Not only the cold wind brings watery eyes and choking throats. Poor Kabul.....

If you are interested in more current information and pictures, you can see my blog at [AnySoldier.com](http://AnySoldier.com). Just look up Contacts and find my name.

With Love from Afghanistan,

**LTC Brian Pruiett**  
Camp Eggers, Kabul, Afghanistan

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*Editor's note: To find the blog on [AnySoldier.com](#), click on **Where to send**. A list of names will come up. Sort them by **name**, click on **P**, and scroll down to **Pruiett**.*

## How to contact San Juan Islander

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