



## (U) Assisting in the Hunt for al-Qa'ida Leadership

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Run Date: 01/11/2005

Intern [REDACTED] describes her 3-month TDY to Afghanistan (C)

 **SERIES:**  
(U//FOUO) Intern TDYs

(U//FOUO) As the plane quickly descended into Bagram Air Field (BAF) in late June, I was finally beginning to realize the gravity of the decision I had made to deploy on a 90-day [NIST](#). What was I getting myself into? Was I prepared for the work? The 12-hour or more days? The 7-day workweeks? Who would I be living with? Who would I be working with? All of these questions and hundreds more were running through my head as the plane touched down.

(TS//SI) The Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) at Bagram is comprised of teams from several different agencies to include NSA, CIA, DIA, CENTCOM, and NGA\*, and works to support Special Forces targeting and operations directed against al-Qa'ida Senior Leadership (AQSL) targets. My job was to serve as a geospatial metadata analyst (GMA) in support of this mission. As part of this duty, we were also charged with explaining SIGINT analysis to the tactical forces so that they could conduct effective time-sensitive operations. Never before was I able to immediately see the results of my analytic efforts, and it is a very rewarding feeling to see your work being used to fight anti-coalition militia or al-Qa'ida fighters.



(U//FOUO) NSA team in Bagram (the author is wearing the yellow helmet)

(U//FOUO) One of the highlights of the TDY was when DIRNSA came out to visit in mid-August. While he was scheduled to be there for meetings with the Commanding General and others in the CENTCOM chain of command, he made it a point to stop by our workspace to personally thank us for our efforts and to present us with a coin.

(U//FOUO) Although we were not allowed off BAF unless it was to go to Kabul, there were some interesting happenings. Every Friday we looked forward to the bazaar, at which local vendors would come in and set up shop to sell us anything from DVDs of the latest American flicks, money, jewelry, carpets, or any other trinket you can imagine. You could even get your picture taken on a camel for \$3 if you so desired. We also had "Surf n' Turf" on Fridays, when the DFAC (dining facility) served your choice of lobster, shrimp or crab legs and steak. It was a nice distraction from the fact that you were in Afghanistan and while it wasn't 4-star restaurant quality, it was always a welcomed meal.

(U//FOUO) There were also the camel races, an "invitation only" event hosted by our Coalition friends. When I first heard of them I

1. [Doing SIGINT in Pakistan](#)
2. [The Only Game in Town \(part 1\)](#)
3. [The Only Game in Town \(part 2\)](#)
4. [Eye-Opening Experience in Haiti \(part 1\)](#)
5. [Eye-Opening Experience in Haiti \(part 2\)](#)
6. Assisting in the Hunt for al-Qa'ida Leadership

thought they would be racing actual camels and wondered where on BAF they could actually do that! They were, unfortunately, not real camels. They were plastic camels that were auctioned off to the highest bidder before each race, and then betting was open to any and all, much like a horse race, and they moved by the roll of dice that had the color of the camel and a number of spaces to move. They were a welcome break from the 12-hour workdays and the fighting going on throughout the country.

(U//FOUO) It wasn't until 90 days later, when I was trying to fall asleep on a C-17 leaving Bagram for Germany that I could answer all of the questions I had back on that day in June when I arrived at BAF. I felt confident that I had provided the best support I could to the GWOT (Global War on Terror). It was definitely the experience of a lifetime, personally and professionally. I recommend that anyone considering deployment take advantage of the opportunity and experience if you can. I am looking forward to the day that I can go back and do it all over again!

[REDACTED]

*(U) one of many "mini-mart" type gas stations that are popping up along the road from Bagram to Kabul.*

[REDACTED]

*(U) The author at Bagram Air Field near a marker warning of mines.*

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\* (U) Notes:

DIA = Defense Intelligence Agency

CENTCOM = U.S. Central Command

NGA = National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (formerly known as the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA)).

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