

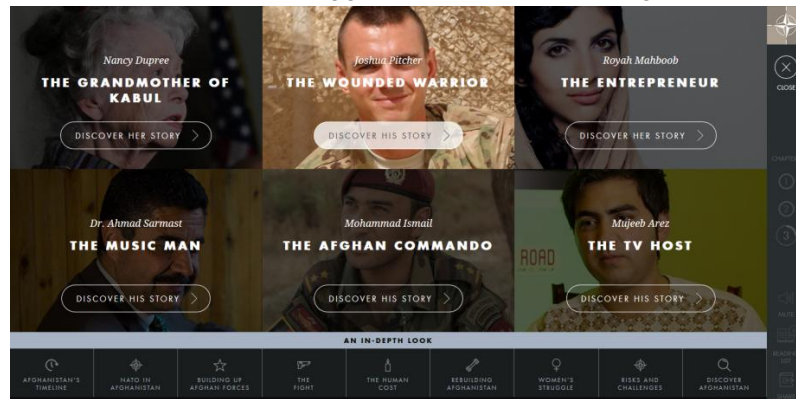
“Return to Hope”

NATO’s upcoming website on Afghanistan

Excerpt

“Sometimes I wake up and put my right sock on, and then I’ll try to put a left sock on. And then I’ll look down and my brain will be, like, “Oh.” And I’ll sit there, really depressed, for about ten seconds. But then I’ll be, like, ‘Charlie Mike.’” [Continue Mission]

In the early morning hours of 16 June 2013, a one-legged man stepped through the door of an airplane 800 feet above Fort Bragg, North Carolina. It was exactly 14 months since his left foot had been blown off by a roadside bomb near Kandahar – an event that would have ended the combat careers of most soldiers. But Lt Joshua Pitcher is not ‘most soldiers.’



Description

Entitled *Return to Hope*, this website weaves together the story of Afghanistan as told by some of the extraordinary people who returned there, determined to help create a better country:

- an 86-year-old American historian and archivist who has documented Afghanistan’s history since the 1960s, despite being thrown out for a decade by the Soviets and kept out by the Taliban;
- a young entrepreneur, the first female CEO of an Afghan technology company who dedicates her life to educating women, despite death threats;
- a musician and scholar who left a life of ease in the West to found Afghanistan’s first orchestra after the Taliban regime, which had banned music in the country;
- a commando who stares death in the face to defend his nation;
- a TV presenter who began his career as a child radio broadcaster during the Taliban era and whose TV shows now attract millions of Afghan viewers each week; and
- an ISAF paratrooper who lost a leg to an improvised explosive device but returned to combat duty a year-and-a-half later.

Return to Hope stands as a virtual testimony to the NATO mission in Afghanistan. The website is rich in strikingly beautiful images, immersive soundscapes and high-definition video. It features personal interviews with key actors of varying perspectives, explores the history, charts the challenges and achievements and recognises the sacrifice of thousands of men and women from Afghanistan and around the world.

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Approach

The website was created for casual public audiences in ISAF troop-contributing nations, and thus represents a significant departure from standard NATO publications, both in terms of content and style.

Return to Hope is built around compelling human stories, told by the individuals themselves, and presents their perspectives. It has elements at deeper layers that are of interest to well-informed and even expert visitors to the site, but it is not aimed primarily at those groups.

Content for the deeper layers has been developed in selected subject areas: NATO in Afghanistan; The Fight; The Human Cost; Building up Afghan Forces; Rebuilding Afghanistan; Discover Afghanistan; Afghanistan’s Timeline; Looking Forward; and Women’s Struggle. All the topic areas have been developed with a narrative approach that is appropriate for the widest audiences.

The images shown here give a first impression of the look and feel of the website, which was created by NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division and an award-winning web-company, in consultation with subject-matter experts from Brussels to Kabul and beyond.

Timing

The website will be launched on 2 September 2014, just ahead of the Wales Summit.

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