

# CAVES IN AFGHANISTAN

Pamir Knot, Afghanistan – After weeks of relentless bombing that has taken a devastating toll, the mountains of Afghanistan unconditionally surrendered to the United States today. U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, credited with targeting the attacks, announced the topographic capitulation in a press conference this morning, and insisted the mountains themselves have always been a prime objective in the fight against the al-Qaeda network and the ruling Taliban.

“We said from the outset that those harbouring terrorists were just as culpable as the terrorists themselves, and the mountains of Afghanistan were harbouring terrorists,” said Rumsfeld. “Also, if we include the mountains, more than 90 percent of our bombs have hit their targets.” Responding to complaints from Afghans that many bombs had hit people and weapons, Rumsfeld conceded there was “some collateral damage”, but insisted many mountains were parked in residential areas.

According to eyewitnesses, day and night raids by U. S. and British forces have shattered and demoralized the Hindu Kush, the westernmost extension of the Karakorum Mountains, and the Himalayas, which push from the Pamir Knot into central Afghanistan. Those who have travelled along many of the high passes and ridges in the country say the scene is one of utter devastation.

“It is difficult to talk about, but there are literally pieces of mountain all over the place”, said one Saudi journalist. “From all indications, these were

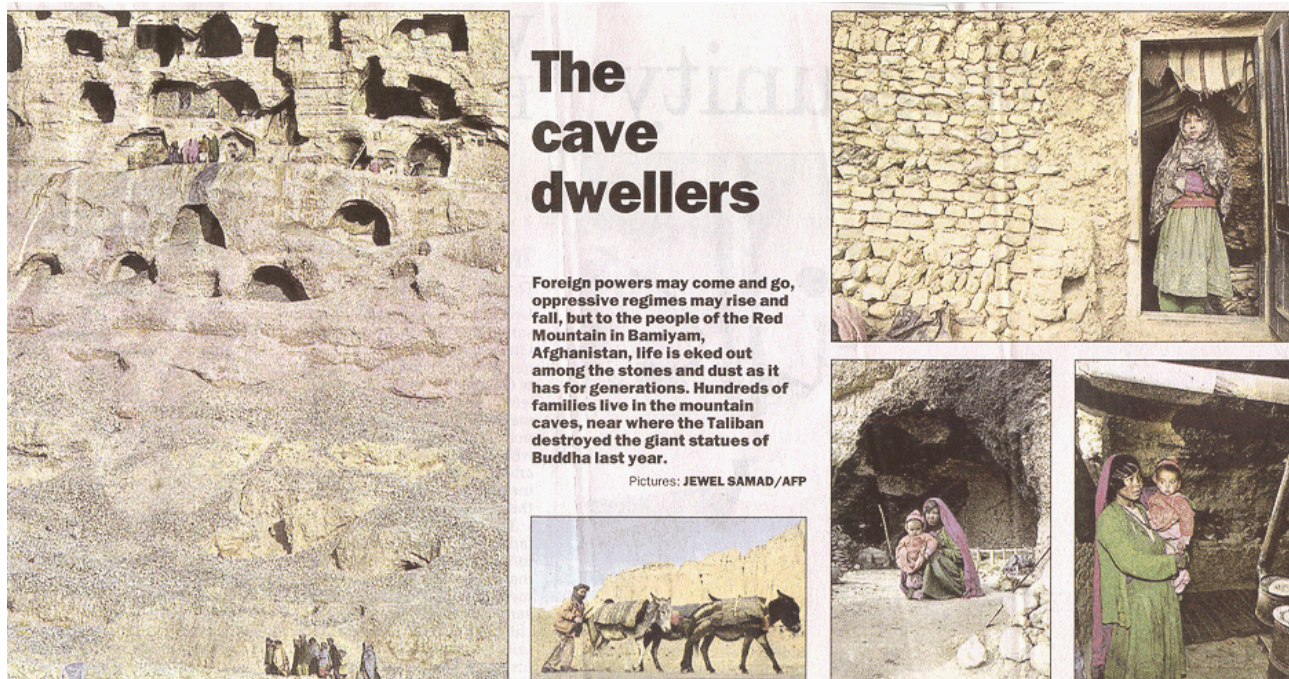
direct hits. They never had a chance”. “Yes, it is horrible”, added one Peshawar shopkeeper. “Everything looks just as it did before the bombing”.

For Afghanistan’s neighbours, the surrender staves off an unprecedented mountainarian crisis, as hundreds of peaks, fleeing the war, were arranged in makeshift refugee ranges along the borders with Pakistan and Tajikistan.

“We feel for these mountains, but many of them are 7,000 meters (23,000 feet), and we lack an adequate ski resort industry to absorb them”, said a Tajik government spokesman. U.S. allies were also relieved, and said they hoped America would be satisfied with this victory, and would not seek to expand the conflict by declaring war on other mountain ranges in nearby Iran or Turkmenistan.

With the mountains defeated, President George Bush said the United States will now turn to the diplomatically difficult task of mountain-building in an effort to one day bring the Afghan mountains into the international family of mountains. While no plan is yet in place for the restructuring, it is believed any such effort will have to include forces from the U.S. Geological Survey.

Bush also warned that the overall campaign is far from complete. “People said we could not win in Afghanistan. They said we would be wasting our bombs on mountains”, said Bush. “We proved them wrong, but we still face a very tough, very determined adversary, and we urge patience”.



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