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## JOURNAL

## Three Cups of Tea and an IED

By *SWJ Editors*

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### Three Cups of Tea and an IED:

*The Death of Haji Abdul Jabar and the Future of the Alikozai Tribe*

by Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Gaydon and Captain Jonathan Pan

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Haji Abdul Jabar pulled out his pistol and with tears in his eyes, he pointed to his head shouting, "If you go, I will pull the trigger!" Jabar was the District Governor of Arghandab District, Kandahar Province, who served as the logistics chief for Mullah Naqib, the legendary mujahedeen commander who checked multiple Soviet advances into Arghandab in the 1980s.

Jabar's emotional outburst occurred when he discovered that the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment was being relocated out of Arghandab in December 2009. Jabar had developed a close bond with many soldiers and officers of 1-17 Infantry but above all, he treated Captain Jon Burton, the battalion's civil-military officer, as his own flesh and blood. As a hardened mujahedeen, his tears resounded deeply with Burton, who admired the old warrior for his tenacity, honor, and above all his passion for the people of Arghandab. Burton refused to answer any phone calls after Jabar's death but recently he had the following to say,

"Like everyone who has met Haji Abdul Jabar, I am deeply saddened by his loss. For a man of such exceptional character to lose his life by a cowardly and dishonorable act is difficult to stomach. The people of Arghandab nominated Haji Abdul Jabar as the Governor with full confidence he possessed their best interests at heart; they will suffer the most from his loss. We can only hope the people of Arghandab rise to honor Haji Abdul Jabar by defeating a shameless enemy and bringing peace to his district."

Like Greg Mortenson's best seller, *Three Cups of Tea*, our relationship with Jabar was forged over *chai* during the late summer and fall of 2009. When we first met Jabar, he was courteous but reserved. He had seen coalition forces come and go from Arghandab and many promises remain unfulfilled. But this time, it was different. The Stryker Brigade had teamed up with the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to permanently station a combined civil-military team at the Arghandab District Center. The team was devoted, often fanatical in their efforts in building positive momentum with Jabar in the lead. Such dedication has led to legendary Burton-Jabar lore.

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### **SWJ Editors**

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