What follows is a brief summary of the critical events that shaped the planning and conduct of Operation Anaconda, the final and largest battle in the initial invasion of Afghanistan after the attacks of September 11, 2001. It was a complex operation set in a place and against an enemy that Americans have struggled — to this day — to comprehend. This is a story of individual courage amid chaos, decisiveness amid uncertainties, revealing both the fantastic abilities of American military power and its technological limits. The tale climaxes with the smallest of small-unit infantry actions, a 50-meter firefight supported by the most sophisticated forms of air and space power that prove to be barely enough to defeat a dug-in and determined foe.

Above all, the story is a cautionary tale about the famous “fog of war.” Carl von Clausewitz, the great Enlightenment philosopher of war, better called it the “friction in war.” “Everything in war is very simple,” he wrote,

But the simplest thing is difficult. The difficulties accumulate and end by producing a kind of friction that is inconceivable unless one has experienced war….Countless minor incidents — the kind you can never really foresee — combine to lower the general level of performance, so that one always falls far short of the intended goal. Iron will-power can overcome this friction; it pulverizes every obstacle, but of course it wears down the machine as well.¹

The purpose of this summary backgrounder is to introduce the participants in our “military simulation” to the particulars of Operation Anaconda; it’s a lot to keep in mind, both

for participants and role-players. And at every turn, we will see the workings of “friction”: in intelligence gathering and analysis, in operational planning, in chains of command, in tactical practice, in technological mishap, and in simple chance events. Most influential and confounding of all are the human sources of friction. The enemy always gets a vote, and commanders at every level, lacking either perfect insight or foresight, must make decisions that may alter the course of battle.

**BACKGROUND: OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM**

The first military acts of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan began October 7, 2001, less than one month after the attacks on the U.S. World Trade Centers and the Pentagon and the jet crash at Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The Islamist organization al Qaeda (“the base,” in Arabic), led by Osama bin Laden, had launched these attacks from a safe haven in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, governed by the Taliban. The U.S. government, led by President George W. Bush, called upon the Taliban to relinquish support for al Qaeda and turn over key terrorists, including bin Laden himself. The Taliban’s refusal meant war. The American response began with a handful of U.S. intelligence agents, quickly followed by Special Forces detachments. This small but highly expert U.S. contingent, along with special operators from the United Kingdom, Australia and other close allies, would meld the might of U.S. air power to Afghan militias opposed to the Taliban rule and al Qaeda influence.

But this was meant as just a first step. U.S military planners originally had expected the war in Afghanistan would be difficult and long, demanding a substantial force. Thus, the successes achieved by special operations forces, air power and Afghan militias came as a surprise. Al Qaeda and Taliban forces collapsed precipitously, yielding major cities across the country. On November 10, the pivotal city of Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan fell; three days later, the capital of Kabul was taken. On November 23, the Taliban gave up another critical northern city, Kunduz, and on December 6 two small bands of Afghan militias, one under future President Hamid Karzai, entered the southern city of Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban and its spiritual capital.

After the Taliban were driven from Kandahar, bin Laden, his senior lieutenants, and several hundred al Qaeda fighters rallied in eastern Afghanistan, falling back to a rugged redoubt in the mountains close to the border with Pakistan, an area known as Tora Bora. The mountains contained a complex of caves that had been well fortified and stocked with ammunition. And while the combination of U.S. air power and Afghan militias advised by U.S. Special Forces had worked well in the past, it failed at Tora Bora. Facing daunting terrain, and with an Afghan component with much less fighting experience than in earlier stages in the campaign, the effort faltered. Although the cave complex was eventually captured, delays allowed high-value targets to slip through the coalition’s grasp. Absent U.S. conventional troops, al Qaeda and Taliban elements were able to retreat along escape routes into Pakistan. Tora Bora showed the limitations of the template of U.S. air power, Special Forces and local Afghans — particularly in the eastern part of the country where there were fewer sympathetic and reliable anti-Taliban forces. U.S. conventional infantry would need to be added to the equation to ensure that, if cornered again, al Qaeda would be unable to escape.

**ASSAULTING THE ‘PLACE OF KINGS’**
Despite the frustration over Tora Bora, there was a sense within the Pentagon that the war in Afghanistan was wrapping up. Still, there was one last bastion of al Qaeda presence that had not been accounted for. By mid-December 2001, intercepts of electronic communication among enemy forces and local sources indicated a strong presence of Taliban and al Qaeda fighters in the Shah-i-kot valley in eastern Afghanistan — “Shah-i-kot” meant “place of kings” in Pashto. The valley was famous in mujahideen legend for never having been conquered during the 1979-1988 Soviet-Afghan war. Anywhere between 100 and 1,000 fighters were believed to be wintering there, and possibly preparing for a spring offensive in the valley. Communication intercepts also raised the possibility that “high-value” targets – if not bin Laden himself, then other senior al Qaeda leaders – were present. The stage was set for the contest to destroy the last stronghold of the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan. (For regional location of the Shah-i-kot valley, see attached map, “Afghanistan”)

**COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS**

Responsibility for U.S. forces operating in Afghanistan (as well as in the greater Middle East) fell under United States Central Command (CENTCOM). Major General Franklin “Buster” Hagenbeck, the commander of the 10th Mountain Division, led Task Force Mountain, the forward headquarters for CENTCOM’s coalition of land forces in Afghanistan. Hagenbeck answered to Lieutenant General Paul Mikolashek, head of all land forces in the theater; Mikolashek had his headquarters at Camp Doha, Kuwait. And finally, at the top of the chain of command sat Army General Tommy Franks, commander of CENTCOM and based in Tampa, Florida. Despite the experience at Tora Bora, Mikolashek and Franks were committed to the template of U.S. Special Forces, Afghan militias and American air power leading the way in the Shah-i-kot. U.S. conventional troops would be added, but only to block the escape routes from the valley.

Air operations in Afghanistan were directed by an “air component commander” for CENTCOM, the equivalent of Mikolashek. But there was no “forward” air command element equivalent to Hagenbeck in Afghanistan. When the war began, the senior air commander in the theater had been Lieutenant General Chuck Wald. U.S. Air Force personnel policy was to rotate commanders every 90 days; thus Wald was replaced by Lieutenant General Michael “Buzz” Moseley in early November 2001. Air operations were centrally managed at a giant, “Star Wars”-like complex at Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia. To make matters worse, Mikolashek and Moseley did not like each other.

In addition, there was a third chain of command for special operations forces operating in Afghanistan. This included the “Task Force Dagger” Special Forces who worked with the Afghan militias. These were led by Colonel John Mulholland, but because of the dispersed nature of unconventional warfare, the Special Forces operational detachments, or “A Teams,” operated with great independence. Each team had to shape its tactics based upon the nature of the militias they worked with. For example, what worked with General Dostum’s well-armed and seasoned Uzbek troops of the Northern Alliance, hardened by years of fighting the Taliban, would not work with the rag-tag, mostly Pashtun bands at Tora Bora – or in the Shah-i-kot. Mulholland’s Task Force Dagger would answer to General Hagenbeck and his Task Force Mountain headquarters.
Even within the realm of special operations forces, there was a second chain of command for elite or “black” units. These “special mission” forces — the Army Delta Force, Navy SEALs and the Air Force special operations aircraft and personnel who supported them — did not answer to General Hagenbeck. Instead, the so-called “Task Force 11,” commanded by Air Force Brigadier General Gregory Trebon, reported directly to General Franks. These units were also a part of the Joint Special Operations Command, headquartered at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Over the years, this command had developed into a mini-service separate from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, and its commander, Major General Dell Dailey, was a dominant personality.

Like the Army, Dailey wanted a command post in the region, and so Task Force 11 initially operated out of Masirah Air Base in Oman. But, like the Air Force, he liked to rotate units and commanders. Thus Trebon, a vastly experienced pilot but without experience in operations on land, came to lead Task Force 11 by the time of Operation Anaconda. Hagenbeck’s Task Force Mountain would plan the conventional operation in the Shah-i-kot, but Task Force 11 would be active in the valley as well, with a separate chain of command. Early in the campaign, these organizational barriers would be overcome by ad-hoc arrangements facilitated by General Hagenbeck and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Blaber, the commander of one of Task Force 11’s units. Blaber’s unit was responsible for reconnaissance activities in the Shah-i-kot. Later in Operation Anaconda, however, with different personalities at play within Task Force 11, communication and coordination between the special operators and Task Force Mountain would suffer.

As Hagenbeck and his staff planned the campaign, they encountered two principal challenges. The first was intelligence collection in this remote part of Afghanistan. There was a lack of information, and much of what existed was compartmented, that is, confined to separate channels and not shared. Not even General Hagenbeck had access to the most recent material. With separate chains of command for conventional forces, the CIA and special operations forces — and a tendency even at CENTCOM not to divulge sensitive intelligence to those in the field— developing a clear intelligence picture was a tall order.

The difficulty in acquiring intelligence was related to a second, larger problem: a fragmented chain of command. Hagenbeck oversaw all coalition conventional land forces, as well as some special forces, but did not command the air elements, CIA operatives or certain special operations forces in Afghanistan. The principle of “unity of command,” one of the most basic elements of fighting in war, would be broken in this campaign; indeed, Anaconda is a case study in how “unity of effort” — the term that describes hoped-for cooperation among disparate units — is an imperfect substitute for formal command authority. The jury-rigged command structure would demand crisp, timely and clear communication — with personal relationships overcoming organizational hurdles — if the campaign were to be carried out according to plan. (For command overview, see attached diagram, “Chain of Command”)

**OPERATION ANAconda: the plan**

In late January and February, plans were drawn up to assault the Shah-i-kot valley and its villages using Afghan militias advised and assisted by U.S. special operators. The plan called for
an Afghan-led attack into the valley, with U.S. conventional forces blocking the exits into Pakistan. The plan rested on four key assumptions:

1) As at Tora Bora, al Qaeda would fight a rear guard action while its senior leaders escaped; the enemy would not stay and fight a pitched battle.
2) The intelligence estimate had winnowed down the likely enemy force count to 150 to 250 fighters, plus 800 to 1,000 civilians, in the valley.
3) The enemy was interspersed with civilians in towns on the valley floor; al Qaeda and Taliban forces had not occupied the high ground.
4) The enemy was not heavily armed, and would rely on light and small weapons for firepower.

The plan also tried to exploit the terrain of the Shah-i-kot. By blocking the entrances and exits to the valley, the plan would seek to strangle the al Qaeda fighters in the villages, turning the mountains and ridges into walls that would hem in the enemy rather than keep the attackers out. The concept of operations for what would be called “Operation Anaconda” was, like at Tora Bora, the classic military “hammer and anvil,” where one part of an attacking force tries to pin down the enemy while a second element attacks to destroy it. And, as at Tora Bora, U.S. air power would provide the hammer. But unlike at Tora Bora, locally recruited Afghan militias would be stiffened by U.S. conventional infantry.

Three pieces of terrain were key to this plan: a long ridge that defined the western wall of the Shah-i-kot, which planners quickly named the Whale (a reference to a similar ridge at the Army’s National Training Center in California’s Mojave Desert, familiar to every commander in the service); the higher mountains to the east dominated by a peak known as Takur Ghar; and a smaller ridge that jutted into the valley from the south, which planners dubbed the Finger. (See attached map, “The Shah-i-kot Valley”)

The plan had four phases:

1) Insertion of special operations forces reconnaissance teams onto the surrounding peaks to see the valley, provide intelligence and call in air strikes.
2) Afghan militia and Special Forces advisors would block entrances to the valley at the northern and southern ends of the Whale.
3) Conventional U.S. infantry would stage a helicopter assault on the eastern side of the valley, leaving one route out of the valley open, which would draw al Qaeda forces into a trap (exposed to U.S. air support and additional U.S. airborne troops set to arrive in a later wave).
4) Target and destroy al Qaeda forces trapped in the valley, using as much air power as possible.

The aptly named “Task Force Hammer,” made up of Afghan troops and their U.S. Special Forces advisors, would be the main effort. After Task Force Hammer had established positions to the north and south of the Whale, and air power had diminished the al Qaeda presence in the valley, Hammer would enter the Shah-i-kot, clearing the villages of al Qaeda and Taliban troops and driving those who fled toward U.S. positions. This force, led by Zia Lodin, a
local power broker with zeal but little fighting experience, would give an “Afghan face” to the campaign.

The air assault would be composed of “Task Force Rakkasan,” consisting of units from the 10th Mountain Division and the 101st Airborne Division. The 101st would provide two battalions and take tactical control of the 10th Mountain battalion to direct the action on the valley floor. For fire support, the 10th Mountain and 101st Airborne would rely on U.S. Air Force and Navy aircraft, in keeping with practice thus far in the campaign. For the 10th Mountain and 101st Airborne units, relying on Air Force and Navy aircraft as the sole source of fire support was not the norm: typically, these units would have brought artillery, namely their 105mm portable howitzers, to the fight. A contingent of Apache attack helicopters – another common form of Army fire support – would be made available, but it was below normal strength.

These “caps” on U.S. forces were the result of Pentagon and CENTCOM limitations on the U.S. “footprint” in Afghanistan. This was a matter of policy, made with the Soviet use of massive land forces in the 1980s war — and the Red Army’s indiscriminate application of artillery in particular — in mind. This “light footprint” was representative of the type of war sought by General Tommy Franks, commander of CENTCOM, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Franks and Rumsfeld aimed to exploit high-end U.S. technology and expertise and avoid larger troop concentrations that might result in one of their great fears: a quagmire in Afghanistan akin to the one in Vietnam. (For a visual overview of the plan, see attached graphic, “Anaconda Plan”)

ANAconda UNFolds

On the last day of February, 2002, U.S. special operations forces infiltrated the area and set up observation posts. One observed the northern end of the valley; a second positioned itself near the area where the Afghan militias would enter the Shah-i-kot; the third and final team established an outpost on the Finger. While approaching its observation post, the team of Navy SEALs on the Finger observed a group of al Qaeda fighters standing by a Soviet heavy machine gun capable of taking down a helicopter — in a position overseeing the U.S. planned landing zones. With the help of air support, the SEAL team was able to eliminate this target at midnight on March 2, just minutes before the larger operation began.

Earlier that evening, the units of Task Force Hammer loaded onto their vehicles and left their base for the Shah-i-kot valley. Task Force Hammer consisted of an Afghan militia led by Zia Lodin and two U.S. Special Forces teams. The road was in poor condition and difficulties ensued. Several soldiers were injured after a “jinga” truck overturned, and the commanders ordered the trucks to use their headlights, destroying any element of surprise. Making matters worse, part of Task Force Hammer was mistaken by an AC-130 gunship as an al Qaeda or Taliban unit, and was attacked, leaving one American special operator and three Afghan soldiers dead, and the convoy demoralized.

Despite everything and not far behind schedule, the main body of Task Force Hammer reached its pre-assault point. It waited for the expected “55-minute” aerial bombardment of enemy positions. Particularly given the inexperience of many of the Afghan troops, air support was understood by the special operators as the sine qua non of a successful mission. Due to a
miscommunication, however, the bombardment lasted less than a minute and included only six bombs. This lack of air support demoralized the Afghans and frustrated the Special Forces.

Soon thereafter, mortar and small arms fire from the Whale began to target Task Force Hammer, stalling the Afghan attack west and well short of its entrance to the valley and suggesting that al Qaeda had known the assault was coming. With more than 40 casualties, Task Force Hammer would not reach the Shah-i-kot as planned. The main thrust of the campaign had derailed already. Hagenbeck, faced with a dilemma, decided to continue the operation, landing the conventional U.S. army units in the valley.

Thus, at dawn, the first wave of troops landed via helicopter along the eastern edge of the valley to await, or so they thought, the fleeing al Qaeda fighters at their assigned blocking positions. The 101st Airborne and 10th Mountain positions came under fire almost immediately after landing, and they remained pinned down by heavy mortar, machine gun and even artillery fire, locked in a fierce firefight throughout the day. Instead of 150 to 200 fighters in the valley as expected, the post-battle assessment held that the area contained up to 1,000 enemies dug in on the high ground around the valley. Al Qaeda and the Taliban were well armed and had resolved to fight; there would be no delaying action or retreat from the Shah-i-kot.

The 10th Mountain troops, led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul LaCamera, faced the toughest fighting at the southern end of the Shah-i-kot. Taking fire from small arms, heavy machine guns, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and more, the 10th Mountain troops gathered in a hollow in the valley floor they came to call “Hell’s Halfpipe.” The expectation of very limited enemy firepower meant that only a single 120mm mortar was brought along in the first wave of troops from the 10th Mountain. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Preysler’s battalion of 101st Airborne troops farther to the north also took heavy fire. Initial fire support for the troops was provided by two Apache attack helicopters that destroyed some enemy positions but were forced to withdraw after suffering significant damage. Throughout the day, forward air controllers and the special operations forces reconnaissance teams called in airstrikes.

At the end of the day, Hagenbeck faced a tough choice: whether to withdraw Preysler’s and LaCamera’s infantry, who had been pinned down, or to allow them to remain in the Shah-i-kot, reinforce them and continue to fight. Ultimately, Hagenbeck would elect to continue the operation and to consolidate the two battalions around Preysler’s position farther north in the valley.

Heavy bombers and ground-attack aircraft inflicted heavy casualties on the Taliban and al Qaeda fighters over the course of March 2, but this air support was often unavailable, and, even when it was available, was late in coming to soldiers’ aid. Too few aircraft would join the fight for a number of reasons, ranging from the belief in the planning stages that only limited air power would be needed to secure victory, to the operational constraints of the tiny airspace over the valley, to miscommunication between Hagenbeck’s and Moseley’s headquarters. After the campaign, the role of air power would become a flashpoint of controversy.

**The Battle of Takur Ghar**
In the late evening of March 3, Lieutenant Colonel Blaber, whose reconnaissance teams emplaced over the valley had been key to what success the operation had had so far and who was the overall Task Force 11 commander on the scene – and whose advice had been critical to Hagenbeck’s decision to persevere with his battle – received a call from Air Force Brigadier General Gregory Trebon, the senior Task Force 11 leader. Trebon told Blaber that his reconnaissance teams in the Shah-i-kot would be replaced by two fresh Navy SEAL detachments, one in the north end of the valley and a second on the peak of Takur Ghar, the mountain that dominated the Shah-i-kot. Moreover, these teams would not be under Blaber’s command, but that of Navy SEAL Lieutenant Commander Vic Hyder. Blaber was being cut out of the action.

Due to time constraints, the SEAL team set to establish a position on Takur Ghar would need to be lifted directly to the mountaintop by helicopters if it was to arrive before dawn. Hyder requested authorization to shift the insertion 24 hours to the next evening, but Trebon directed that the insertion should proceed. Landing helicopters directly on the Takur Ghar peak would indicate to all watchers — including the enemy — the precise location of the SEAL team, and amounted to a significant departure from normal practice. Additionally, an earlier intelligence briefing advised that enemy forces could be atop Takur Ghar. However, with clear orders to establish a position on Takur Ghar, the hours until daylight quickly running out, and overhead imagery and heat sensors showing no signs of life on the mountaintop, Hyder dispatched the SEAL team. Despite his late arrival to the battlefield, Hyder did not consult Blaber, who had been studying the Shah-i-kot for weeks, in this decision. Hyder also cut Blaber out of the loop by switching to a radio channel unavailable to the army lieutenant colonel.

At approximately 3 a.m. on March 4, several hours after they had planned to land, the Chinook transport helicopter carrying a SEAL team led by Chief Petty Officer Britt “Slab” Slabinski attempted to land atop Takur Ghar. As it approached the peak, the pilots and SEALs observed tracks in the snow, a heavy machine gun and other signs of recent human activity. As they discussed aborting the mission, the helicopter was met with RPG fire. Two grenades slammed into the helicopter, shutting down one of its engines, the electric system, and the hydraulic systems and causing SEAL team member Neil C. Roberts to fall out of the open ramp.

The Chinook pilots attempted to return and retrieve him, but the damage forced a crash-landing in the valley below, approximately four miles away. The SEAL team, determined not to leave a man behind, was picked up by a second Chinook and returned to the peak of Takur Ghar to retrieve Roberts and, if necessary, avenge his death. Although the Chinook was able to insert the team successfully on the mountaintop, the SEALs came under immediate fire. The SEALs attempted to assault their hidden and entrenched enemies, but lacked the strength. Air Force Technical Sergeant John A. Chapman, who was supposed to coordinate any needed air support, was killed, two SEALs were wounded, and the team was forced from the peak by withering fire.

At 3:45 a.m., a quick-reaction force of Army Rangers located at Bagram Air Base, north of Kabul, was directed toward Takur Ghar to assist the SEAL team. The quick-reaction force’s two Chinooks suffered a critical flaw, however: their radios were defective, hindering contact.
with Bagram and the reconnaissance teams most familiar with the terrain and enemy positions. The Rangers, led by Captain Nate Self, were flying into the mouth of a buzz-saw, with no idea of what awaited them.

At approximately 6:10 a.m., the first Chinook of the quick-reaction force reached the landing zone. The aircraft immediately began taking fire, and the right door mini-gunner, Sergeant Phillip Svitak, was killed by small arms fire. A rocket-propelled grenade then hit the helicopter, destroying the right engine and forcing it to crash-land. As the Rangers and Air Force special tactics team exited the aircraft, Private First Class Matt Commons, Sergeant Brad Crose and Specialist Marc Anderson were killed. The surviving crew and quick-reaction force took cover behind small rock formations and a fierce firefight began.

The second Ranger Chinook landed with the rest of the quick-reaction force and Lieutenant Commander Hyder at 6:25 a.m., but did so well below the mountain peak. It took the Ranger reinforcements several hours to hike up the steep slopes, and Hyder went off alone to locate the remnants of his SEAL team.

Air Force jets provided suppressive fire on the mountain with individual “gun runs,” using their air-to-air cannon to attempt to hit the al Qaeda positions, but the SEALs team and Rangers were too close to the al Qaeda position for bombs to be delivered safely. The Rangers tried a ground assault, but lacked the strength and fell back. Not until an armed CIA Predator drone struck the enemy’s bunker was it destroyed. The firefight continued throughout the day, with an enemy counterattack mortally wounding Senior Airman Jason D. Cunningham, a medic.

Worried about the risks to further helicopter operations, senior commanders refused to medevac the wounded during the daylight hours. Slowly, Hyder and the SEAL team moved down the mountain with their wounded, eventually finding a landing site suitable for a Black Hawk helicopter. The SEAL team set up defenses, attempted to warm the wounded and waited for dark when a recovery would be attempted. Meanwhile, Self rallied the quick-reaction force, fighting off al Qaeda forces until the final extraction after dark.

That night, al Qaeda forces not trapped in caves began to slip away from the Shah-i-kot and Operation Anaconda became the pursuit it was planned to be. Additional U.S. and Canadian infantry moved into the valley, as did coalition special operations forces. U.S. aircraft began a deadly hunt along the passes that led eastward. A vast honeycomb of caves would be discovered along the eastern ridge, and the rest of Operation Anaconda saw conventional forces work through this network, searching and emptying caves. On March 12, reconstituted Afghan militias, this time reinforced by an armored element from the Northern Alliance, commanded by the Tajik warlord Gul Haidar, swept through the Shah-i-kot villages. Operation Anaconda did, at last, have an Afghan face, but not the local “Pashtun face” that had been desired.

**ASSESSING ANACONDA**

Eight U.S. troops lost their lives in Operation Anaconda and 82 were wounded. Few parts of the battle went as planned, but the effect was devastating to al Qaeda. Estimates are about 200 enemy were killed, and double that number fled over the border to Pakistan. Blaber already was suggesting cross-border raids by his Delta operatives. Al Qaeda has never assembled a force of
comparable power in Afghanistan – that is, one trained, equipped and willing to contest and attempt to hold a battlefield against large U.S. forces. Further, much of al Qaeda’s “non-commissioned officer corps,” including those members who had operated training camps in Afghanistan before the attacks of 9/11, was eliminated and scattered by the battle. Al Qaeda has never been able to reconstitute such capabilities on such a scale.

But back in Tampa, General Franks was dealing with the echoes of Vietnam. And a prickly press corps was eager to poke holes in Secretary Rumsfeld’s vision of a new, transformed American way of war.
The ‘Anaconda’
Chain of Command

Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense

Gen. Tommy Franks
Commander, US CENTCOM

Lt. Gen. Buzz Moseley
CENTCOM Air Forces

Lt. Gen. Paul Mikolashuk
CENTCOM Land Forces

Maj. Gen. Dell Dailey
Joint Special Operations Command

Brig. Gen. Gregory Trobon
Task Force 11

Maj. Gen. Buster Hagenbeck
Task Force Mountain

Col. John Mulholland
Task Force Dagger
The Shah-i-kot Valley
Anaconda Plan

Four Phases, Three Days

Phase 1: Special forces units establish observation posts on key terrain.

Phase 2: Afghan militia with special forces advance to expel western exit from valley. Beyond the Whale...

Phase 3: Helicopter assault to block eastern passes, escape routes to Pakistan.

Phase 4: Precision fires destroy al Qaeda forces in valley and Afghan militia enters and clears valley.