

AFGHANISTAN By Ben Brown

Afghanistan is one of the most beautiful countries on earth, but also one of the most brutal. It is a place of wild extremes: you can suffer frostbite in the savage cold of winter temperatures as low as -25 degrees Celsius, and heatstroke in the scorching 50-degree summers. Many believe that it is Afghanistan's harsh climate and terrain that have helped breed generations of determined warriors, and also made it such a difficult place for foreign invaders to occupy. There are vast deserts, but much of the country is made up of soaring mountains, including the famous Hindu Kush, while the rugged terrain along the Pakistani border has often made it easy for Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters to hide and to slip away from NATO troops.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Population: 33,609,937 (July 2009 estimate)

Median age: 17.6 years

0-14 years: 44.5%

15-64 years: 53%

65 years and over: 2.4%

Birth rate: 45.46 births/1,000 population

Death rate: 19.18 deaths/1,000 population

Life expectancy at birth: 44.64 years

Ethnic groups: Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%,

Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%,

Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, other 4%

Religion: Sunni Muslim 80%, Shia Muslim

19%, other 1%

Languages: Afghan Persian or Dari (official)

50%, Pashto (official) 35%, Turkic

languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen)

11%, 30 minor languages (primarily

Balochi and Pashai) 4%, high level of

bilingualism

Literacy: 28.1%

male: 43.1%

female: 12.6% (2000 estimate)

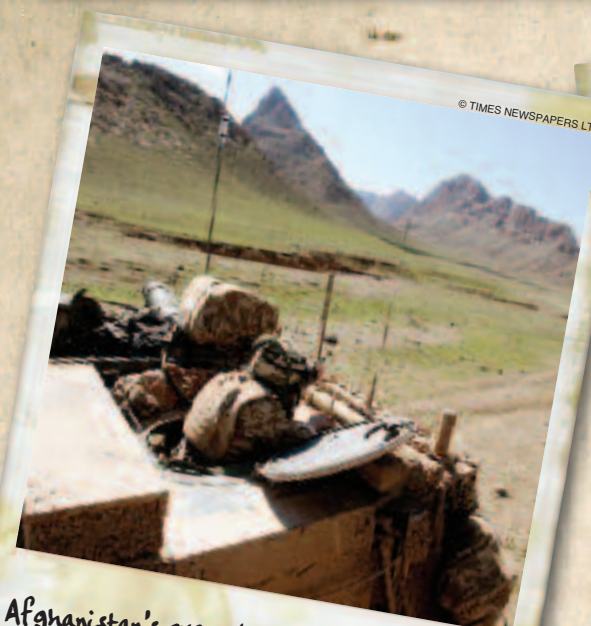
Afghanistan is completely landlocked, and shares its borders with six other countries – one reason it has been at the centre of so much war for centuries. It is also among the poorest nations in the world. Afghans farm and grow crops in only a small area of the country – about 12 per cent of the total landmass. In many places, life seems feudal, almost medieval, and people can only expect to live – on average – until their mid-forties.

Almost all Afghans are Muslim, but they come from many different ethnic groups – an amazing patchwork quilt of them. By far the biggest group is the Pashtun, who make up more than 40 per cent of the population and live mainly to the south of the Hindu Kush. They have ruled the country for long periods of its history, and most of the

WHAT IS PASHTUNWALI?

Pashtunwali, meaning 'the way of the Pashtuns', is fundamental to Pashtun identity and is an unwritten social code of honour, or *izzat*. *Pashtunwali* is defined by ideals of chivalry, hospitality, specific gender roles and council. Known as *ghayrat* or *nang* in Pashto, the notion of chivalry is based on honourable and courageous actions in battle. An important rule of chivalry is the defence of honour against shame. Under this code of conduct, an insult must be 'answered', or acted on. The notion of hospitality, or *melmastia*, includes feeding strangers and friends, giving gifts and defending any guests. According to *pashtunwali*, for honour to be upheld Pashtuns must also defend the rules of the gendered order, called *purdah* or *namus*. The rules of *purdah* vary from community to community – in stricter communities, women may only leave the house completely veiled, whereas in more liberal communities women do not veil their faces at all. The *jirga*, or council, is the legislative authority in *Pashtunwali*. To participate in the council, Pashtuns must be known for their honour. Often *jirga* are all male, although, on occasion, some women have been known to participate.

Taliban come from this group. There are many Pashtun in Pakistan as well, which is why there are close links between the Taliban and parts of Pakistan. The Pashtun speak Pashto and have an ancient code of conduct and honour called *pashtunwali*. Further north, there are different ethnic groups, including the Tajiks, who have long been rivals of the Pashtun. There are also the Hazaras, Uzbeks and Turkmens, among others. All these ethnic groups are subdivided into hundreds of tribes and clans, based on family ties that date back generations. These divisions mean that Afghanistan is an extremely difficult country to rule: different warlords and tribal leaders sometimes even switch sides in times of conflict, often for money. It can be tricky knowing who is your friend, and who is your enemy.



HARDWARE VEHICLES

© CHRISTOPHER PLEDGER / EYEVINE



WMIK

One of the vehicles with the most impact on the ground is a type of protected Land Rover equipped with a special weapons mounted installation kit (WMIK). Tough, manoeuvrable and armed with huge amounts of fire power – from the rapid-fire grenade machine gun and .50-calibre heavy machine gun to new night-vision sights and Javelin missiles – WMIKS have been dubbed ‘porcupines’ by local Taliban because of the spiky appearance of their mounted weapons. They are used to advance ahead of patrolling infantry in order to help hold back the enemy. The Land Rover can also be modified for use as an ambulance. The Land Rover battlefield ambulance can either carry up to six soldiers seated or four stretcher casualties, and it provides a high standard of medical equipment on board.

PANTHER

The Panther command and liaison vehicle is one of the British Army’s newest additions. It weighs around 7 tonnes and can be transported by air, suspended beneath a Chinook helicopter. The Panther is armed with a 7.62 mm general-purpose machine gun (GPMG) and its weapon system is fired by remote-control. This enables the gunner to operate the GPMG from within the relative safety of the vehicle, using a joystick and camera. It also has a sighting system for both day and night.



© CROWN COPYRIGHT

86

© PRESS ASSOCIATION



87

JACKAL

The Jackal is a ‘high-mobility weapons platform’. This means that it can be used for a range of tasks, including rapid assault, convoy protection, fire support and reconnaissance. Weighing 6.65 tonnes, the Jackal is one of the most agile vehicles on operations. It is extremely mobile off-road, where it can reach speeds of up to 80 km/h (its top speed on paved roads is 130 km/h). This versatility allows troops to avoid well-trodden routes, giving them a degree of unpredictability which is an essential tactical asset. The design of the vehicle’s hull incorporates advanced armour protection features.

JACKAL 2

The enhanced Jackal 2 features improved manoeuvrability and reliability, and can carry four crew members, including the driver – one more than its predecessor. The position of the top-mounted .50-calibre machine gun has been moved forward, allowing a greater range of movement. The chassis has also been upgraded, enabling the vehicle to carry a heavier load and giving it greater strength – vital if a vehicle is to survive the blast from a roadside bomb. The armoured door now locks back into the open position, allowing troops a wider field of fire. And the rear of the Jackal 2 has also been redesigned so that fuel or water containers can be carried on the outside of the vehicle, along with troops’ Bergen backpacks, extra ammunition or other equipment.

© PRESS ASSOCIATION

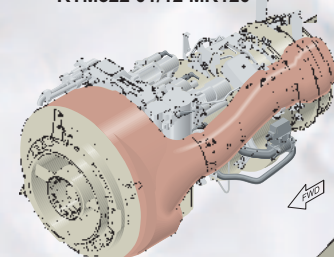
APACHE AH MK1

PORT VIEW

AIRFRAME

- 130. Left Environmental Control System (ECS) Evaporator
- 131. Left Main Landing Gear Wire Cutter
- 132. Main Wheel
- 133. Left ECS Compressor
- 134. Left Extended Forward Avionics Bay (EFAB)
- 135. Window Ejection Miniature Detonating Cord

ROLLS ROYCE/TURBOMECA RTM322 01/12 MK120



- 144. No.1 Engine Bay - ECU Removed
- 145. Engine Nacelle in Servicing Position
- 146. Footsteps
- 147. Stowage Compartment
- 148. Rear Fuselage Footsteps
- 149. Castoring Tailwheel
- 150. Moving Horizontal Stabilator
- 151. Tail Rotor Hub
- 152. Tail Rotor Hydraulic Servo
- 153. Tail Rotor Gearbox
- 154. Intermediate Gearbox and Cooling Fan
- 155. Tail Drive Shafts
- 156. Main Rotor Blade
- 157. Catwalk Access Panel
- 158. Pre-cooler By-pass Exhaust
- 159. Catwalk Access Panels
- 160. Main Rotor Head
- 161. Integrated De-ice De-rotational Unit
- 162. MRB Strap Packs
- 163. Swash Plate Assembly and Scissor Links
- 164. Static Rotor Mast
- 165. Left Transmission Air Cooling Intake

- 166. Pilots and Co-Pilot Gunners Integrated Helmet and Display Sight System
- 167. Canopy Jettison - Miniature Detonating Cord
- 168. Pilots Crew Station Access
- 169. Co-pilot Gunner Crew Station Access Door

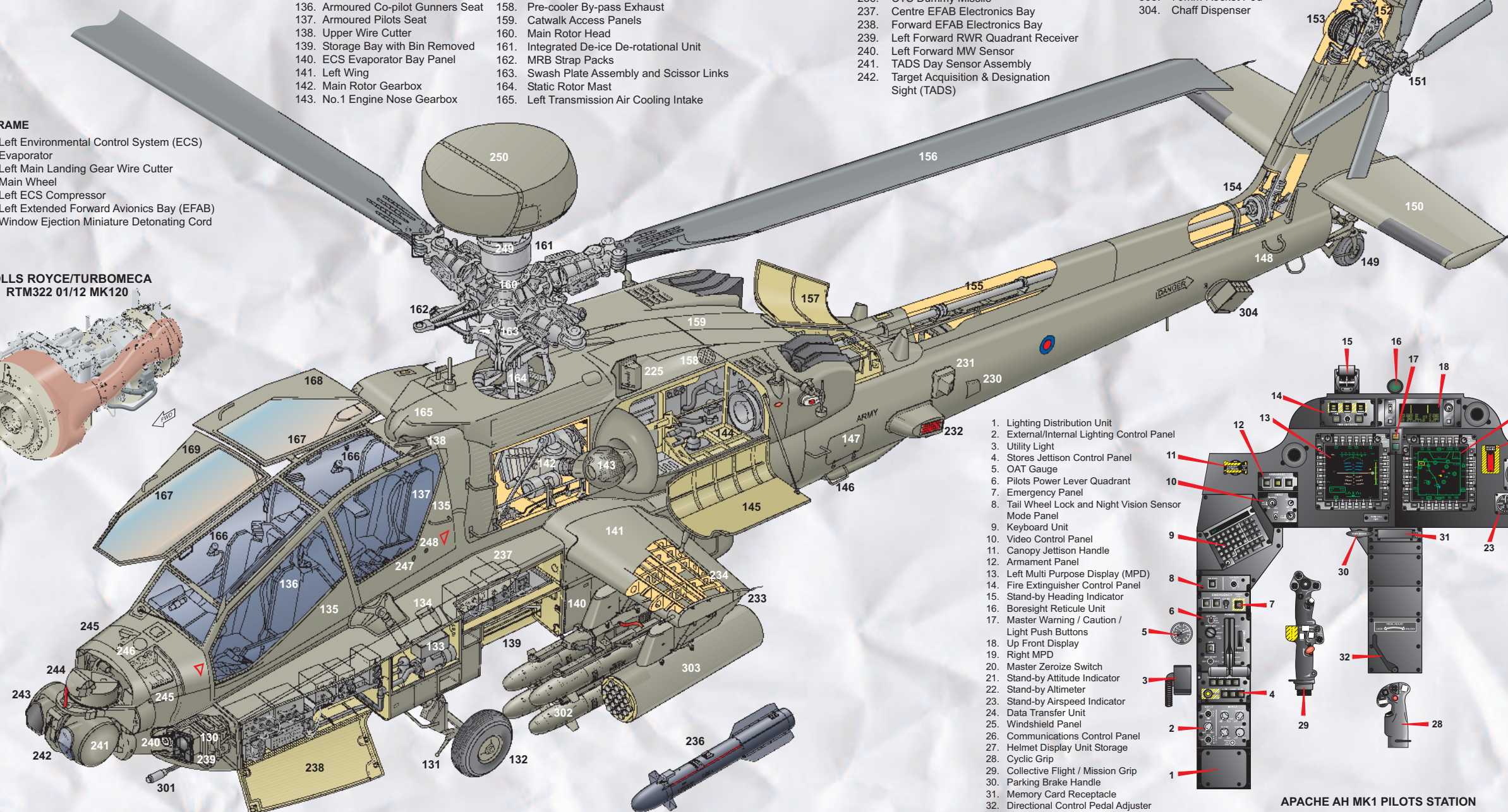
ELECTRICAL/AVIONIC

- 230. Left Aft Missile Warning Sensor
- 231. Rear Left Laser Warning Receiver
- 232. Left Flare Dispenser
- 233. Left Wing Intercommunication Receptacle
- 234. Left Wing Formation Light
- 235. Laser Warning Receiver Left Upper
- 236. CTS Dummy Missile
- 237. Centre EFAB Electronics Bay
- 238. Forward EFAB Electronics Bay
- 239. Left Forward RWR Quadrant Receiver
- 240. Left Forward MW Sensor
- 241. TADS Day Sensor Assembly
- 242. Target Acquisition & Designation Sight (TADS)

- 243. TADS Night Sensor
- 244. Pilot Night Vision Sensor (PNVS)
- 245. Embedded GPS Bays (Left and Right)
- 246. CTS GPS Antenna
- 247. Outside Air Temperature Probe
- 248. Static Vent
- 249. Radar Frequency Interferometer
- 250. Fire Control Radar (FCR) Mast Mounted Assembly (MMA)

ARMAMENT

- 301. M230EI 30mm Chain Gun
- 302. Hellfire Missiles
- 303. 70mm Rocket Pod
- 304. Chaff Dispenser



- 1. Lighting Distribution Unit
- 2. External/Internal Lighting Control Panel
- 3. Utility Light
- 4. Stores Jettison Control Panel
- 5. OAT Gauge
- 6. Pilots Power Lever Quadrant
- 7. Emergency Panel
- 8. Tail Wheel Lock and Night Vision Sensor Mode Panel
- 9. Keyboard Unit
- 10. Video Control Panel
- 11. Canopy Jettison Handle
- 12. Armament Panel
- 13. Left Multi Purpose Display (MPD)
- 14. Fire Extinguisher Control Panel
- 15. Stand-by Heading Indicator
- 16. Bore-sight Reticule Unit
- 17. Master Warning / Caution / Light Push Buttons
- 18. Up Front Display
- 19. Right MPD
- 20. Master Zeroize Switch
- 21. Stand-by Attitude Indicator
- 22. Stand-by Altimeter
- 23. Stand-by Airspeed Indicator
- 24. Data Transfer Unit
- 25. Windshield Panel
- 26. Communications Control Panel
- 27. Helmet Display Unit Storage
- 28. Cyclic Grip
- 29. Collective Flight / Mission Grip
- 30. Parking Brake Handle
- 31. Memory Card Receptacle
- 32. Directional Control Pedal Adjuster

APACHE AH MK1 PILOTS STATION