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App-y Trails

New NPS gadgets help soldiers track everything from travel to inside dope.

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Posted: Thursday, August 12, 2010
12:00 am | Updated: 5:58 pm, Thu May 16, 2013.

By Robin Urevich | [0 comments](#)

Students and professors at Monterey's Naval Postgraduate School aren't just cooking up top-secret stuff. Now some of the school's Afghanistan expertise is available in pocket-sized form worldwide free to anyone who owns an iPhone, iPad or BlackBerry.

Robert Davis and Christopher Joers, both Air Force investigators and NPS students, developed the MOBIAFG app as a handy crash course in culture, history, tribal dynamics, and even opium poppy production for war fighters and others on the ground in the country.

"This is the equivalent of a Lonely Planet guide for soldiers," Davis says. That is, without the hotel and restaurant tips.

The military handles those day-to-day details but soldiers sometimes need help when it comes to the context in which they operate. For example, a soldier airdropped into Southern Afghanistan can, with a few taps of a finger, call up a map that shows which tribal groups operate in the area. She can get details on tribal genealogy and centuries-old tribal disputes that still have resonance today.

Joers, who served in Kabul, says the app might help a soldier who wants to establish cred with a local official. "While meeting with a guy, you could pull up a photo of a local governor," he says. "It can validate what he's telling you or make him feel more comfortable that you understand."

The guide gets granular when it comes to the opium trade, explaining drug terminology in ways a soldier would get. "One tullee is a hearty amount of opium to be smoked in one day, although long-term addicts can smoke one or over two tullee per day... It is roughly the weight of one AK-47 (7.62X39mm) bullet or ten grams." And, the guide notes that in one Northeast province, "between three and six tullee are traded for one



Armed with Info: NPS students Robert Davis (left) and Christopher Joers show off MOBIAFG, their first-of-a-kind Afghan info app designed for use by soldiers and others on the ground in country.

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Ladies Clothing: Size 16 only. Pants, capris, shorts, blouses, jackets

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Entertainment Center: \$175 obo. 632-2211
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sheep.”

Content for the app comes from Professor Thomas Johnson’s Program for Culture and Conflict Studies website. Johnson’s has spent decades studying Afghan culture and using his knowledge to advise government officials.

Davis, who has a computer science background and Joers, an aeronautical engineer by training, finished off the app in one semester.

They built one for the Blackberry first, and last month released the iPhone version. The challenge was to create something that would be useful in the field where Internet access is spotty. So instead of pulling data from the web, all of it is stored inside the user’s phone.

“In a way, it’s a very primitive basic concept,” Davis says.

But, because it doesn’t depend on the Internet, it’s lightning fast. He notes Department of Defense personnel “were blown away by it.”

The two student-soldiers purchased a \$99 license from Apple that allows would-be developers to test drive an app on a phone, then upload it to the company’s developer portal so Apple can vet its usability and family-friendliness, and ensure it’s virus-free.

In its first two weeks in the App Store, some 170 people downloaded MOBIAFG, and the first person to give it a grade has awarded the app five stars.

Davis and Joers note its big drawback: In a country where dynamics are constantly shifting, much of the information is dated. They and Johnson hope to find a way to provide regular updates going forward.

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All's fair with a foul ball. @ Biscuit Stadium
[instagram.com/p/nuAGiPGDn_/](https://www.instagram.com/p/nuAGiPGDn_/)
Montgomery, AL, United States



Mark C. Anderson

@MontereyMCA

3h

Montgomery Biscuits (Tampa Bay Rays AA) and Jacksonville Suns tied at 1. @ Biscuit Stadium
[instagram.com/p/nt2MwwGDpl/](https://www.instagram.com/p/nt2MwwGDpl/)
Montgomery, AL, United States



Sara Rubin

@SaraHayleyRubin

6h

Looks like no one's going to jail, folks.



Sara Rubin

@SaraHayleyRubin

6h

2/2 "...any intentional violation of the closed-session rules that would give rise to criminal prosecution."



Sara Rubin

@SaraHayleyRubin

6h

1/2 Although Kingsley offers this to Assistant DA Terry Spitz: "As a preliminary determination, I don't find anything that would suggest..."



maryrduan

@maryrduan

6h

Well holy crap. Judge needs to deliberate, but tells

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