

## Leading expert on Afghanistan at UVU Campus

Dr. Roger Kangas's lecture addressed Afghanistan and the future of that country in the surrounding region. To understand the current condition of Afghanistan, one must understand the events that have contributed to its reformation. After 2001, the United States' mission was to eliminate Al-Qaeda and other branch groups like the Taliban through military action. The crusade to eradicate terror in Afghanistan was quickly won. Unfortunately the conflict had caused most remnant groups to retreat into Iraq and since then efforts have been made to free Iraq from these groups. Afghanistan is not currently the main focus of the War on Terror but it was the first country that was impacted.



*(Right to left) Matthew Rands with Dr. Kangas and Cadet Martin*

From 2001 to the present, countries from around the world had to re-evaluate their policies toward Afghanistan in terms of humanitarian aid, educational aid, political aid, etc... Thus far all efforts in Afghanistan have not been to rebuild Afghanistan but rather to build a new Afghanistan. For the United States, 2014 is an important year because President Obama has issued an order calling for the complete removal of American military in Afghanistan. In addition, the focus for this year in Afghanistan will be on transportation. Due to the fact that Afghanistan is a landlocked region, transport for trucks, trains, aircrafts as well as access to water are the main concern. These transportation routes reach countries like Germany, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and many others. It is a multifaceted system of various transportation methods. If efforts in Afghanistan are successful in implementing these

transportation methods these routes will become a modern day Silk Road. This is especially important because of past tensions between Afghanistan and surrounding actors. Because of the instability in the region it is believed that there will always be some outside presence to help maintain order. This integrated transportation system will open Afghanistan up to the rest of the world and connect them to other countries in their region.



***Dr. Kangas with members of Utah International Mountain Forum, hosts of his visit to UVU***

There are various conflicts of interest in this setting that might influence the success or failure of these programs in Afghanistan. These different interests do not come only from inside Afghanistan but also from surrounding countries. In Pakistan there are agendas to control Afghanistan and secure the power foundation in their own country through security measures. In both Pakistan and Afghanistan there are different ethnic groups who are in constant conflict. In Iran there are controversial interests that include trade with Afghanistan and support for the Taliban. In Russia their interests include containment of threats from their southern border and their self image of being a country with great power. In China their concern is the presence of “non-hemispheric powers” and Uyghur separatists. Each country has a solution for their problems through separate organizations that involve alliances with surrounding countries with similar interests. These are but some of the issues that surround Afghanistan’s transportation system and whether or not Afghanistan succeeds or fails there will be repercussions throughout the area.

As complex as these situations appear, the outlook is optimistic. Afghanistan has made great progress in becoming a stable country and further investment into Afghanistan will be beneficial to Afghanistan, the region, and the rest of the world.

***Arisha Franco, UVU student***

