

## Overview



Afghanistan Police Weekend Reads Only on AP George W. Bush Kabul Taliban  
**Afghan officer who fought with US forces rescued from Kabul**  
BY ALEX SANZ AND TAMMY WEBBER  
Aug 19, 2021

Time was running out for Mahammad Khalid Wardak, a high-profile Afghan national police officer who spent years working alongside the American military. Hunted by the Taliban, he was hiding with his family in Kabul, constantly moving from place to place as they tried — and failed — several times to reach a rendezvous point where they could be rescued.

Not long after the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan in late summer 2021, Haas Communications client [DeliverFund](#), a nonprofit that fights human trafficking, reached out to principal Christine Haas for strategic media guidance around several high-profile events. DeliverFund had been fighting for the safety of Afghan women and girls, providing housing to 50 Afghan families in the U.S.

Now, DeliverFund was involved in two massive rescue events: The rescue of Mohammad Khalid Wardak (“Khalid”), who had given years of service to the U.S. military in Afghanistan and became trapped there following the withdrawal, and “Operation Soccer Balls,” which successfully rescued

26 female Afghanistan soccer players plus 54 other adults, children and infants.

In addition to DeliverFund’s involvement, other individuals and groups of international repute that were involved included U.S. military and intelligence officials and allies, U.S. Sen. Chris Coons, former Bush administration official Robert McCreary, and other humanitarian groups.

The coalition successfully brought and resettled Khalid to the U.S., and led



Soccer International soccer Portugal Lisbon  
**Afghan girls soccer team in Portugal gets surprise visit**  
Sep 30, 2021

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — Girls from the Afghanistan national soccer team who were recently granted asylum in Portugal have had a surprise visit from the captain of the senior team. Farkhunda Muhtah, a professional player who from her home in Canada spent weeks helping arrange their recent rescue from Afghanistan, flew into the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, for an emotional reunion with the girls’ team late Wednesday.

the soccer team group through Pakistan to Portugal, where they received asylum. One final request DeliverFund made to Haas Communications was for Christine to travel to Portugal to navigate media around a surprise planned reunion between the girls’ soccer team and captain of the Afghan national woman’s soccer team, Farkhunda Muhtah, who had issued pleas for their rescue from her home in Canada.

All of the events had one thing in common: It would require Haas Communications to carefully balance the desired media attention with weeks of clandestine activities, while earning their client media coverage in a field of other unquestionably worthy, visible players and competing events.

By coordinating early on with the highly reputable Associated Press, the result was a cascade of international coverage for each event, linking one to another, and including features of DeliverFund’s role and their overall mission, weeks after the initial events concluded.

## Client Information

Dallas-based [DeliverFund](#) is a nonprofit intelligence organization that leverages cutting-edge technology in the fight against human trafficking in the United States. Its International Human Trafficking Analysis Center (iHTAC) serves as the central all-source, shared knowledge bank on trafficking activity, human traffickers and their networks. It is the central dissemination and coordination point for law enforcement, select nonprofits and other professionals working to end modern-day slavery.



Afghanistan Immigration Soccer Weekend Reads International soccer Portugal Professional soccer Premier League  
**Afghanistan girls soccer team given asylum in Portugal**  
BY ALEX SANZ  
Sep 21, 2021

The girls on Afghanistan’s national soccer team were anxious. For weeks, they had been moving around the country, waiting for word that they could leave. One wants to be a doctor, another a movie producer, others engineers. All dream of growing up to be professional soccer players.



Founded by former Navy Seal Jeremy Mahugh and CIA and Air Force veteran Nic McKinley, the 501(c)3 organization also provides subject-matter expertise in victim restoration services.

## Challenges & Goals

Haas Communications knew that the two massive and highly dangerous rescue operations were bound to get international attention despite the outcome, presenting the agency with three primary challenges:

- Timing – balancing secrecy and media coverage
- Crisis – developing crisis communications plan and media training for their client
- Client coverage – getting her client a balance of media coverage commensurate with their role in the field of other high-profile and critical international players involved in each operation

The situation demanded balancing the delicate timing of preserving the necessary secrecy around planning and executing each rescue operation, and later the reunion in Portugal, with “breaking” the information to the right media contact within a media organization that would serve as a worldwide mouthpiece – at just the right time – while gaining her client some coverage in a crowded field of players and events.

Haas Communications was also acutely aware that much could go wrong, either with each rescue operation itself or with a leak to the media. This necessitated a crisis communications plan including media training for DeliverFund spokespersons.

Following each event’s success, Haas Communications also wanted to maintain media momentum after each event to allow a continuum of coverage, and in particular highlighting DeliverFund as a key player in piercing global human trafficking.

## Approach

Haas Communications principal Christine Haas knew that the fastest way to maximize coverage with the greatest speed was to get it into the hands of the Associated Press, which “feeds” other outlets around the world. As a trusted, independent, non-profit global news organization, AP is known for its balanced and factual reporting. The right AP contact was critical for this mission, which is where Christine’s experience as an investigative journalist came into play. She also had to make sure her client was prepared with messages suited to any outcome scenario, and that they came across as one of the many key players involved in the operation.

She could then use her media success to other top-tier outlets, pitching them to take a different angle on stories that received early credibility through top-tier coverage that began with the AP.

## Results

By utilizing both the reputability and role of the Associated Press as a “feeder” to other global outlets, including regional and hyper-localized media, worldwide, Haas Communications principal Christine Haas secured a cadence of media coverage that told an unfolding narrative of the drama and danger surrounding each rescue operation, and the emotion of the reunion between the Afghan girls’ soccer

team and the women's national coach. Several of the stories referenced each event to create chapters of a cohesive story that continued long after each event concluded.



From global reports to a [feature](#) in DeliverFund's founders' home state of Montana, all stories included mentions of DeliverFund. Principal Christine Haas was also able to secure two separate interviews on Glenn Beck's radio show – one remote and one in-studio – for DeliverFund co-founder and spokesperson Nic McKinley.



The lingering, cascading media coverage later led to reports in such publications as People, Forbes, and Vice, which [highlighted](#) the anti-trafficking efforts central to DeliverFund's mission. By successfully linking a Facebook outage to DeliverFund's use of social media, Christine was able to later secure an exclusive [feature story](#) in People highlighting DeliverFund's role in the efforts as well as their overarching mission.



Some examples of the coverage:



<https://apnews.com/article/only-on-ap-kabul-7d9adb63dfed93b6d222a1e9ee902da5>

<https://apnews.com/article/police-afghanistan-only-on-ap-kabul-taliban-95cd2970fbc007111b9e54aeebffdcb>

<https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2021-09-07/afghan-officer-rescued-from-kabul-starts-new-life-in-us>

<https://www.clickorlando.com/news/national/2021/09/07/afghan-officer-rescued-from-kabul-starts-new-life-in-us/>

<https://apnews.com/article/soccer-immigration-sports-portugal-professional-soccer-b2097da4ac6ba491b31ffc2431091d3>

<https://newstalk955.com/the-montana-vets-behind-operation-soccer-balls-in-afghanistan/>

<https://nypost.com/2021/09/22/afghanistan-girls-soccer-team-given-asylum-in-portugal/>

<https://www.glennbeck.com/radio/behind-the-scenes-afghanistan-girls-soccer-team-miraculously-rescued>

<https://people.com/politics/afghan-girls-soccer-team-successfully-rescued-asylum-portugal/>



<https://apnews.com/article/soccer-sports-europe-international-soccer-portugal-cf7b69708ca8d5ae2275ceec4c9b3e3e>



<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-girls-soccer-squad-find-new-home-ronaldos-portugal-2021-09-30/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MZS9EqHplw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkxyX38i0AE>



<https://people.com/human-interest/how-facebook-outage-impacted-developing-nations-that-rely-on-whatsapp/>

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7e5bx/the-anti-trafficking-movement-is-pivoting-to-afghanistan>



### About Haas Communications

Haas Communications was founded by veteran news anchor and investigative reporter, Christine Haas, with the mission of being THE premier marketing and communications agency, applying results-driven strategies to help clients achieve their most ambitious marketing goals and communications objectives. With her extensive background as an investigative reporter and on-camera experience, Christine quickly rose to become one of the most sought-after media training professionals in the country. Christine also leads the Haas Communications team as they offer strategic public relations services, media relations counsel, broadcast interview training and presentation coaching to a wide variety of clients around the world.