***Afghanistan --- an overview: Physical, Cultural, and Political***

Afghanistan has had a long history of conflict including

* 2 wars with the UK in 1800
* Invasion by the Soviet Union in 1979
* When the USSR left in 1989 Afghanistan has experienced infighting over control of the country

***A crossroads and buffer state***

Afghanistan is:

* Caught between neighboring states
* Crossroads on ancient trade routes
* Buffer between differing religions

***American interest began with:***

Terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre (9/11)

Osama Bun Laden was identified as the leader of a terrorist organization with headquarters Afghanistan that planned the attack

***Background***

In 1996 a group named the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. They were accused of supporting the terrorist the attacked the world trade center.

The U.S. military started conducting air strikes on the Taliban facilities in Afghanistan began on October, 7, 2001

***Afghanistan in spatial terms***

**Absolute location:** 33N, 65 E

**Relative location:** landlocked in south Asia

**Neighbors:** N and W Pakistan, east of Iran, South of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan

***Physical systems***

**Topography**

Afghanistan is mainly mountainous with steep isolated valleys the Hindu Kush mountains extend northeast to southwest through Afghanistan. The Paropamisus Mountains lie in the northwest. Several peaks rise above 20,000 fee

Afghanistan has a wide array of natural features including deserts plains and fertile valleys. The country has 3 main land regions:

* The *northern plains* is the northernmost region in Afghanistan
* The *central highland* covers 2/3 of the country. This region contains the Hindu Kush. Most people live in the valleys in the Hindu Kush
* The *Southwest Lowlands* mainly consists of deserts

***Climate***

Afghanistan has a harsh continental climate. Harsh winters are amplified by high elevation. Summers are warm except in the highest elevation. Much of the country is arid or semi-arid. Precipitation is light, falling mostly in winter and spring almost none from June to October