

Kandahar (2023 film)

Kandahar, titled ***Mission Kandahar*** in Canada, is a 2023 American spy action thriller film directed by Ric Roman Waugh and written by Mitchell LaFortune. The film stars Gerard Butler (who is also a producer) and features a supporting cast that includes Ali Fazal, Navid Negahban, Bahador Foladi, Nina Toussaint-White, Tom Rhys Harries, Vassilis Koukalani, Mark Arnold, Corey Johnson, and Travis Fimmel. Loosely based on actual events, the story follows a CIA operative and his translator who flee from Afghanistan after their covert mission is exposed.

The film was released in theaters on May 26, 2023 by Open Road Films.

Plot

Tom Harris is a freelance undercover operative working for the CIA to insert malware into a secret Iranian nuclear research facility. Tom's cover is a field technician for a Swiss communications contractor. His mission is successful, and the malware causes the facility to self destruct, preventing the Iranians from acquiring more nuclear bombs.

The Iranian government has been monitoring a British journalist Luna Cujai. She receives evidence from a whistle blower of the CIA's ongoing sabotage of Iran's nuclear programs. After the facility is destroyed, she is arrested by an Iranian security agency led by Farzad. She tells the Iranians she suspects a link between the facility's destruction and the Swiss contractor because their contracts are next to government sites. The next day, Harris's partner in the operation, Oliver, is killed by the Iranian Special Force after both Oliver and Harris's identity are compromised.

Tom leaves Iran en route to London via Dubai. While in Dubai, his flight to London is delayed, and he visits his CIA handler, Roman Chalmers. Roman is a Muslim convert, living under the outward pretense of a Dubai socialite, a lifestyle he secretly despises. Roman claims to have delayed the flight to force this meeting. Tom accepts Roman's lucrative CIA contract for a job in Herat, Afghanistan.

After he arrives in Herat, due to an intelligence leak, the news names Tom as the operative responsible for the destruction of the nuclear facility. With his cover now blown, the mission in Herat is



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Ric Roman</u> <u>Waugh</u>
Written by	Mitchell LaFortune ^[1]
Produced by	<u>Basil Iwanyk</u> Erica Lee Brandon Boyea <u>Gerard Butler</u> Alan Siegel Christian Mercuri Scott LaStaiti Ali Jaafar
Starring	Gerard Butler <u>Navid</u> <u>Negahban</u> <u>Ali Fazal</u> Bahador Foladi <u>Nina Toussaint-</u> <u>White</u>

aborted. Roman directs Tom and his Afghan-American translator Mohammad “Mo” Doud to an extraction point in Kandahar. Farzad and Pakistani security services learn Tom is in Herat, and each sends operatives to apprehend him, with Pakistan wanting to ransom Tom to the highest bidder. Tom and Mo are chased by Farzad and ISI agent Kahil Nassir but they elude both pursuing parties and escape to the desert.

En route to Kandahar, Tom and Mo are attacked by Farzad in a helicopter. Tom destroys the helicopter and kills Farzad and its crew. Now on foot, Tom and Mo seek aid from Tom's friend, an Afghan warlord not associated with the governing Taliban. Mo reveals to Tom and the warlord that the warlord killed Mo's son years ago. Despite angering the warlord, he provides Tom and Mo with a vehicle and they depart the warlord's camp.

Meanwhile, Roman stops communicating with the CIA and arrives in Afghanistan to join the Afghan SF Commandos masquerading as an ISIS-K unit. Tom and Mo are captured by a Taliban warlord paid by Kahil. Tom concludes his warlord friend sold him out. Roman and the commando fighters attack the compound where Tom and Mo are held captive. The Taliban warlord is killed. Kahil arrives at the scene of the battle and realizes the attack is a ruse backed by the CIA. Roman, Tom, and Mo escape by vehicle from the compound while the battle continues. Speculating that Tom will use an old CIA airbase to extract, Kahil organizes another Taliban unit to intercept Tom.

As Tom, Roman, and Mo reach the extraction point, Kahil attacks their vehicle. Roman is mortally wounded, and jumps from the vehicle to buy the rest time. Before dying, Roman recites the Shahada. After the Taliban fighters knock out their car, Tom fights

	<div>Vassilis Koukalani</div> <div>Mark Arnold</div> <div>Corey Johnson</div> <div>Ravi Aujla</div> <div>Ray Haratian</div> <div>Tom Rhys Harries</div> <div>Travis Fimmel</div>
Cinematography	MacGregor
Edited by	Colby Parker Jr.
Music by	David Buckley
Production companies	<div>Thunder Road Films</div> <div>G-BASE</div> <div>MBC Studios</div> <div>Capstone Global</div>
Distributed by	Open Road Films
Release date	May 26, 2023 ^[2]
Running time	120 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Box office	\$9.4 million ^{[3][4]}

Kahil and severely wounds him. A CIA director orders an unauthorized missile strike on the remaining Taliban pursuers. This enables Tom and Mo to escape on a British military cargo plane. The British journalist is released while Tom and Mo reunite with their families.

Cast

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|---|--|
| ▪ Gerard Butler as Tom Harris | ▪ Corey Johnson as Chris Hoyt |
| ▪ Navid Negahban as Mohammad "Mo" Doud | ▪ Travis Fimmel as Roman Chalmers ^[5] |
| ▪ Ali Fazal as Kahil Nasir, ISI agent | ▪ Ravi Aujla as Siraj Agha |
| ▪ Bahador Foladi as Farzad Asadi | ▪ Ray Haratian as Ismail Rabbani |
| ▪ Nina Toussaint-White as Luna Cujai | ▪ Olivia-Mai Barrett as Ida Harris |
| ▪ Vassilis Koukalani as Bashar Hamadani | ▪ Rebecca Calder as Corrine Harris |
| ▪ Mark Arnold as Mark Lowe | ▪ Faizan Munawar Ibrahim as Ahmed Nasiri |
| ▪ Tom Rhys Harries as Oliver Altman | ▪ Elnaaz Norouzi as Shina Asadi |

Production

In June 2016, former military intelligence officer Mitchell LaFortune sold his *spec script* *Burn Run* to Thunder Road Films. He based it on his experiences working for the [Defense Intelligence Agency](#) and being deployed to Afghanistan in 2013 during the [Snowden leaks](#).^{[6][7]} In June 2020, it was announced [Gerard Butler](#) would produce and star in the film, which had been retitled *Kandahar*, reteaming with *Angel Has Fallen* and *Greenland* director [Ric Roman Waugh](#).^{[7][8]}

[Ali Fazal](#) and [Navid Negahban](#) joined the cast in December 2021. Majority of filming commenced on December 2, 2021 in [Saudi Arabia](#). This made the film the first big-budget U.S. feature to shoot in the country's [Al-Ula](#) and [Jeddah](#).^[9] [Nina Toussaint-White](#) and [Bahador Foladi](#) joined the cast later that same month.^[10] Filming wrapped in January 2022.^[11] The production takes advantage of the [Saudi Film Commission's](#) 40% cash rebate.^[12]

Release

In September 2022, [Open Road Films](#) acquired the film's U.S. distribution rights in an eight-figure deal.^[5] In January 2023, it was announced that the film would be released in theaters on May 26, 2023.^[2]

Kandahar was released for digital platforms on June 16, 2023, followed by a [Blu-ray](#) and [DVD](#) release on July 18, 2023.^[13]

Reception

Box office

Kandahar grossed \$4.8 million in the United States and Canada, and \$4.6 million in other territories, for a worldwide gross of \$9.4 million worldwide.^{[4][3]}

In the United States and Canada, *Kandahar* released alongside *The Little Mermaid*, *The Machine*, *About My Father*, and *You Hurt My Feelings*. The film made \$921,000 from 2,105 theaters on its first day, a total of \$2.3 million in its opening weekend, and \$2.8 million during the four-day Memorial Day frame.^[14]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 45% of 102 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.4/10. The website's consensus reads: "Gerard Butler remains a sturdy screen presence, but even for hardcore action fans, *Kandahar* is hardly worth watching."^[15] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 52 out of 100, based on 23 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[16] Audiences surveyed by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B+" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled by PostTrak gave it an overall 75% positive score, with 36% saying they would definitely recommend it.^[14]

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External links

- [Kandahar](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5761544/) (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5761544/>) at *IMDb*
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