

## Business Journal

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## Afghanistan offers diverse opportunities for those willing to work in a war zone

Phoenix Business Journal - by Chris Casacchia

## Hearts and minds

Dina Ortiz is hoping to land a teaching job next year in Afghanistan to help women establish small businesses.

The business professor and professional musician knows combat zones well. In 2002, her band traveled to Afghanistan shortly after the U.S. invasion. Careening through the air like a corkscrew to avoid sniper fire, the band and crew sat in silence as the four-engine turboprop aircraft flew in darkness into Afghanistan.

"The plane just got so quiet," said Ortiz, who teaches at Paradise Valley Community College in Phoenix and adjuncts at the **University of Phoenix**.

In Kandahar, she had to walk 300 yards in 20-degree temperatures to take a shower, and she donned a bulletproof vest and helmet when she traveled in convoys, acutely aware of the land mines scattered across the terrain.

"I know we were in a war zone, but I didn't feel threatened personally," she said, though she admitted: "It can be a little daunting."

The Dina Preston Band has performed 20 Armed Forces Entertainment and U.S. Embassy tours, representing Arizona and the U.S. as "Goodwill Ambassadors" in more than 32 countries, including Bosnia. The Ortizes want to return to Afghanistan and leave their instruments with the troops.

"Morale is really needed in those areas, and music really lifts the spirit," said Ortiz, founder of **DEO Entertainment Group**.