



RIGHT: Capt. Gina Wellik examines Bas-Mar Jan under the watchful eye of her father before she leaves for surgery in India. The surgery was paid for by military and civilian volunteers from Task Force Phoenix.

BELOW: As a result of years of low oxygen levels in his blood, Welayat Khan is suffering from clubbed toes.



Task Force Phoenix saving lives one heart at a time

Story and Photos by Task Force Phoenix

Two local Afghan children will be getting lifesaving heart surgery in India this week as a result of generous donations from the military and civilian members of Task Force Phoenix.

Welayat Khan, a 9-year old boy from Kabul and Bas-Mar Jan approximately 6 years old from Jalalabad, were born with Tetralogy of Fallot, a rare condition where the heart chambers are not completely developed and oxygenated blood does not properly flow to the body.

“Without these operations both of these children would never live past the age of ten,” said Dr. Siyd, an Interpreter whom also works at Task Force Phoenix. “I am amazed that they have lived this long.”

Dr. Siyd will accompany the two children and their fathers to India and also monitor the recovery.

In normal children the oxygen levels are around 98 percent. In the United States, if you have a level of 85 percent you qualify for portable oxygen; these children are living with life-threatening saturation levels of 74 percent.

Welayat can no longer walk to school or play for more than a few minutes before passing out. Bas-Mar must be carried by her devoted father because of her difficulty breathing.

Oxygen deprivation causes the lips and extremities to be blue in color and their fingers and toes to be “clubbed.”



With the generous donations from the military members and civilians, Task Force Phoenix raised more than \$11,000 needed to pay for all the costs associated from the operation to include travel, hotels, meals and transportation for the 14 day trek.

When Welayat was asked what he would do after the surgery, he replied, “Play football and I want to go back to school and become a doctor.”

“If the operations are successful, the children should be fully recovered in about three months,”

said Dr. Siyd. “These children are survivors and with everyone’s help they will have a good future.”

