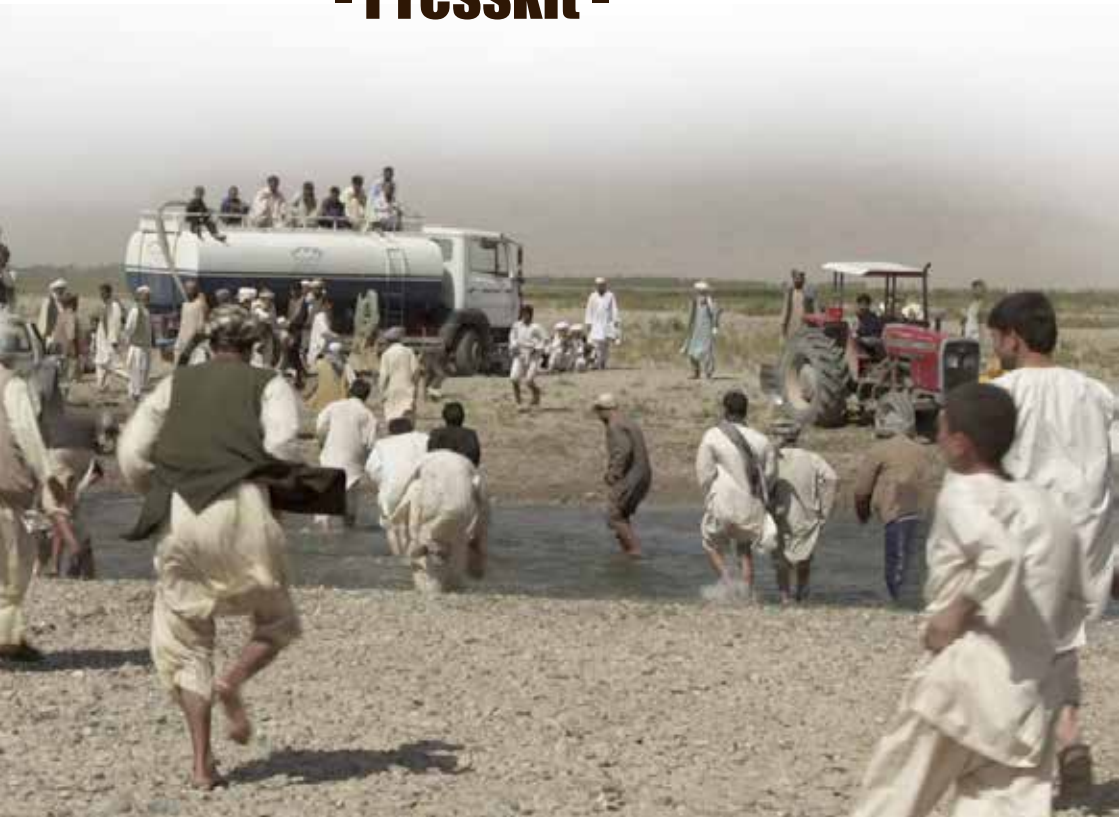
KUNDUZ

the new film by Oscar® Nominee Stefan Gieren

- Presskit -



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Logline

A German-Afghan photographer witnesses the air-strike on two petrol trucks near Kunduz in September 2009.

Heavily wounded he boards an airplane that shall bring him out of Afghanistan. As the crew and a traveling doctor fight for his life he tells the true story of this fatal incident.



Film Data Sheet

Original Title:	KUNDUZ
Production:	Fiction 2.0
Director:	Stefan Gieren & Simona Gieren
Script:	Stefan Gieren
Photography:	Sin Huh
Exec. Producer:	Albert Schwinges, Najib Yousofy
Prod. Design:	Hans Zillmann
Editing:	Anne Beutel
Sound:	Max Kober, Simone Weber
Music:	Florian Tessloff
Cast:	Arash Marandi, Ulrich Matthes Julia Dietze, Proschat Madani Jeff Caster, Leili Novi
Format:	HD35 / iPhone
Running time:	27 min
Completion:	July 2012
Locations:	Germany, Afghanistan
Languages:	German, English, Persian
Funded by:	FFHSH - Gremium 2

Fiction Zwei Null

F 2.0

Filmförderung Hamburg
Schleswig-Holstein



Synopsis

During the fatal air-strike on two petrol trucks near Kunduz photographer Faisal gets involved with the war in Afghanistan.

More than twenty years ago he had left Afghanistan with his parents to flee to Germany. After having fallen out with his girlfriend Clara he returned six weeks ago.

For the first time he got to know the country of his birth – and planned to travel across Afghanistan by foot. His journey led him to a small village a few miles outside of Kunduz where he became an eyewitness of the airstrike commanded by German troops.

Following the air-strike German authorities claim that there had been no civilian casualties. Faisal is the only one who can proof that there were almost hundred civilian victims.



Synopsis ...

Now only a few weeks after his arrival in Afghanistan he finds himself breathing heavily in the lavatories of an aircraft. During the bombardement he got severely injured in the thigh by a piece of shrapnel and saved himself aboard of an airplane.

Without knowing whether he would survive the flight he locks himself up and films himself with his cellphone to tell his story.

One thought keeps him alive: leaking to the public what really happened during the air-strike. When he collapses a flight attendant breaks the door open and calls a doctor.

Walter Grewe who worked in Afghanistan for a medical NGO tries to save Faisals life and gets closer to his patient than he wanted to.



Background

On the 4th of September 2009 international forces under German command conducted an air-strike on two petrol trucks kidnapped by insurgents in the province of Kunduz. According to different sources between 91 and 142 people have been killed. Despite contrary assertions of the German government during the days after the attack a large number of civilians were among the victims. Local villagers, even kids, who have been admitted to collect fuel from the trucks by the Taliban.

According to independant observers many casualties could have been avoided if the ISAF hadn‘t ignored or violated mandatory tactical procedures. The German officer on duty requested close air support by falsely stating there were „troops in contact“. Even though the trucks had obviously been stuck in the river for hours after trying to escape to the rural areas, a bombardment has been requested claiming the



trucks were an „imminent thread“.

Inquiries of the pilots whether to conduct a „show of force“ - a standard procedure whenever civilians might be endangered – were negated by the German command post along with the order to destroy „the trucks AND the people“. The US-pilots repeated their request five times. This is quite unusual. They stated later that the number of people on the ground had appeared to high to be only Taliban.

A parliamentary commission has come to the conclusion that not conducting the airstrike would have been „the better choice“. German government still denies missconduct or mistakes by their troops or individual officers.

Families of 102 approved victims have nevertheless received 5.000 USD of blood money each by German officials.

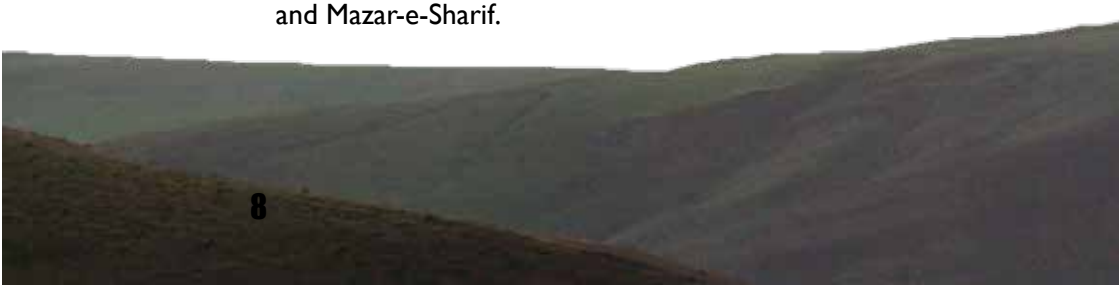


Production Notes

The Oscar nominated filmmaker Stefan Gieren sets out to explore the frontier between film and journalism with his new film KUNDUZ. The airstrike on two petrol trucks 2009 close to the Afghan city of the same name is still being remembered by most Germans. Between 91 and 142 civilians became the victim of a bombardement commanded by German troops. The incident is being regarded as the greatest German military mistake after WWII because of the high number of civilian losses and because numerous combat rules of the international forces in Afghanistan have been violated.

Beyond the journalistic documentation the makers of the movie try to capture the emotional drama inflicted by the bombs. In this effort the film consequently shows the Afghan perspective. KUNDUZ tells the story of a fictional German-Afghan photographer who became a witness of the airstrike and got severely injured. He saves himself aboard an airplane to leave the country and shares what he has seen with a German doctor who tries to save his life.

The screenplay builds upon genuine eyewitness reports. „It was most important for us to show this other side that is so inaccessible for us Germans due to the distance and scarcity of information." Gieren says. He has a strong connection to Afghanistan. Since 2006 he supervises the development of a network of educational TV stations in the provinces of Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif.



This enabled the team to reenact the incident directly in Afghanistan. „German films about Afghanistan are usually being shot in Morocco. But the real Afghanistan – the landscapes, the people – are so unique that you can immediately tell the difference." cinematographer Sin Huh tells. And Stefan Gieren adds: „We shot on a river bank on the countryside. It was a former frontline. While searching a position for a distance shot we suddenly found ourselves in the middle of a minefield. Such a production can only be done with the support of the local chiefs and they were surprisingly welcoming."

This is Gieren's first work as a director after he has received numerous accolades as a producer and author. The project has been funded by the Film Commission of Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein (FFHSH). „And with a decent amount of self-exploitation" the director / producer laughs. „This has been an enormous teameffort. So many talented people committed themselves to this adventure because they believed that there was a story that had to be told."

Gieren wrote the first draft of the screenplay within 4 days and nights. Then he involved his team: The two lead actors Arash Marandi and the award-winning German A-list actor



Production Notes ...

Ulrich Matthes have joined in long before the shoot and collaborated in developping their characters and the dialogues.

Gieren's co-director and wife, newcoming theatre director Simona Gieren, rehearsed with the actors over months starting during script-development. „We've learned an incredible lot about the characters in this process." Simona Gieren says. „It may be uncommon for a film to rehearse so intensely, but we realized at a very early stage that this project would be all about the actors. This film features so many intense dialogues and long monologues."

„KUNDUZ is a crossover between film and theatre. We want this film to challenge its audience." says Stefan Gieren. „Our troops do great on an extremely difficult job in Afghanistan. That's why it's too easy to say ‚in this case they had no other choice'" The film will be completed in July 2012 and start to travel the festival circuit. There will be two distinct versions: a 27-minutes short and an extended 60-minutes director's cut.



Director‘s Note

„I am convinced that filmmakers have an important responsibility in a democracy.
A feature film can give a face to anonymous historic incidents. It gives the audience the opportunity to change perspectives and to rediscover the story behind the headlines and common prejudiced opinions.

The airstrike in Kunduz marks the gravest military mistake in the post-WW2 history of the Federal Republic of Germany and many of those who carry responsibility still work in their positions.

Had I been in the movie industry for ten more years I had probably advised myself not to make a film about it only two years after the incident.

But I have just graduated from filmschool. I take my first steps in this industry as an author and filmmaker and I work in a network of committed young filmmakers and artists who share my opinion that we should make some noise – if it‘s too quiet on the streets.“

Stefan Gieren





Stefan Gieren (director, writer)

studied film at Hamburg Media School

Awards:

Nominee 84th Academy Awards – Best Live Action Short,
Student Academy Awards 2011 Bronze Medal for „Raju“
Studio-Hamburg Newcomer Awards
Sehsuchte Producer‘s Award
L.A. Shorts – Best Foreign Film
Angelus Awards – Grand Prix



Simona Gieren
(director)



studies directing at the
Academy of Dramatic Arts Hamburg



Sin Huh (cinematographer)

studied cinematography at Hamburg Media School
Films:
Raju, Scars in Concrete, Tidelanders





Arash Marandi („Faisal“)

studied acting at the University of Music and Theatre Hamburg

Films:

Like a stranger

Ulrich Matthes
(„Dr. Walter Grewe“)



member of the ensemble at the German Theatre Berlin

Films:

Novemberchild, The Downfall, The Ninth Day





Julia Dietze („Clara“)

studied acting at the Bavarian Academy of Dramatic Arts

Films:

Iron Sky, Room 205, 1 1/2 Knights



Proschat Madani („Nasrin“)

Films:

Salami Aleikum, A Year Ago in Winter, The Last Cop



Film Stills



film01: Faisal (Arash Marandi) has been wounded in an ISAF airstrike.



film02: The crew (Jeff Caster, Proschat Madani) finds the journalist on board.



film03: Faisal (Arash Marandi) grew up in Germany.



film04: Clara (Julia Dietze) is the reason for his trip to Afghanistan.



film05: Dr. Walter Grewe (Ulrich Matthes) tries to keep Faisal awake.



film06: Flight attendant Nasrin (Proschat Madani) calms down the stranger.

Hi-Res Versions available
www.kunduz-film.com/EPK



film07: Faisal (Arash Marandi) tells the true story of the airstrike...



film08: ... while the doctor (Ulrich Matthes) looks after his leg.



film09: Grewe (Ulrich Matthes) talks to a surgeon at Kabul airport.



film10: The condition of his patient worries Grewe (Ulrich Matthes).



film11: The scene of the bombing at the river Kunduz. At least 90 die.



film12: Most of the victims have been civilians picking up petrol.

Production Stills



prod01: Tupolev 134 in Finowfurt. Location for the airplane interiors.



prod02: Sin Huh (DoP), Stefan Gieren (dir) and the Afghan extras



prod03: Cinematographer Sin Huh and the Sony PMW F3



prod04: Stefan Gieren (dir) and actress Leili Novi



prod05: The two directors talk to actor Ulrich Matthes



prod06: Arash Marandi, Stefan Gieren, Simona Gieren during a break.

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prod07: Actors Arash Marandi and Leili Novi



prod08: Team-briefing by the directors



prod09: Family portrait. The major part of the German crew.



prod10: Stefan Gieren (dir) in Herat, Afghanistan.



prod11: Guerilla filmmaking in Afghanistan. Stefan Gieren and „his" Taliban.



prod12: Stefan Gieren (dir) shooting in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan.

Distribution

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Electronic Press Kit

http://www.kunduz-film.com/EPK

