

# JOIN THE ADVENTURE

## Today's foreign correspondents would be lost without a BGAN.

After years of use, from Pakistan, through Afghanistan to Iraq, I still get a thrill when I hit the send button, beaming my news reports for The Sydney Morning Herald to a speck of technology hovering over the Equator which, in turn, flick-passes them to the Herald newsroom in Pyrmont.

In 2007, however, things did not go quite as I had planned. On assignment with photographer Ash Sweeting in Kandahar, spiritual home to the Taliban in the south of Afghanistan, we had just begun to feed a big video file to Sydney when the first of a series of explosions rocked the morning quiet of our guesthouse.

We barreled from the guesthouse to investigate – spending hours on the road as we pieced together the story of another day of carnage ...all the time oblivious to the still-running BGAN which I had set to stream at the most expensive \$/minute rate.

By the time we returned to the guesthouse the meter had ticked up to a staggering \$9K for a transmission that should have cost no more than a few hundred dollars. I hit the disconnect button and then I hit the phone – calling TC Communications in Sydney, to plead with their bean counters before my bean counters at Fairfax media received a monster bill for the satellite feed.

I was at the mercy of the diplomatic skills of the TC Communications' team who were given the unenviable task of putting my case to Inmarsat and they pulled it off. Within hours TC was back on the phone, like an angel of mercy, to let me know that the impossible had happened – Inmarsat had agreed to forego the revenue because of the fraught circumstances in which I had left the meter running. The Gods had smiled...



Paul McGEOUGH –  
Walkely Award winning foreign correspondent and author