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Playing the Part

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Title: Playing the Part
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Abstract

Afghan immigrants are finding work in a job only they are qualified for. Through national recruiting companies like Specpro-Technical Services, Afghan nationals are being hired to portray residents of an Afghan village in elaborate military training missions.

The training exercises are conducted in replica Afghan villages like the one on the grounds of Camp Pendleton in San Diego. The missions are designed to train foot soldiers to better interact with the residents, villagers and tribal elders they will meet once deployed to the war in Afghanistan.

The number of Afghan immigrants gaining legal residency in the United States each year has nearly tripled since the war in Afghanistan began in 2001. But for Afghans with little work experience, employment in the United States can be difficult to find. Role-playing is a way for recent Afghan immigrants to utilize their language and cultural skills. Those hired to participate in training missions do what residents of a village in Afghanistan might do: converse in their native language, shop in the market, walk to school and interact with military officers.

But the job is also a source of controversy within the Afghan community as role players struggle with their ties to both countries.