

Subject: [Fwd: [Fwd: Helmand Province Afghanistan and Opium Production]]

Date: Sun, 17 Dec 2000 15:32:44 -0700

From: Black Mountain Traders

To: AskPublicAffairs@state.gov

PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE AND ATTACHMENT TO MR. KARL F. INDERFURTH,
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH ASIA

SIR, PLEASE FIND ATTACHED A RECENT COMMUNICATION I SENT TO MR. MICHAEL
A. SHEEHAN IN RESPONSE TO HIS RECENT STATEMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN AS THEY
RELATED TO OPIUM PRODUCTION IN THAT COUNTRY. MY COMMENTS ALSO RELATE
DIRECTLY TO YOUR RECENT STATEMENTS ON THE SAME SUBJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF
CONDEMNING THE TALIBAN ON A VARIETY OF ISSUES.

TO REPEAT SOMETHING I COMMUNICATED TO YOU ALMOST A YEAR AGO IN A FAX
DATED 31 JAN 2000, WE HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE OPIUM
PRODUCTION ISSUE IN AFGHANISTAN FOR AT LEAST THE PAST 5 YEARS BUT, FOR
WHAT EVER REASON, WE HAVE IGNORED THE OBVIOUS NEEDED ACTIONS, OUTLINED
IN BOTH COMMUNICATIONS, AND BEEN SATISFIED WITH SIMPLY CONDEMNING THE
TALIBAN FOR THE CONTINUING OPIUM PRODUCTION THAT STARTED LONG BEFORE
THEIR ARRIVAL ON THE SCENE. WHY NOT TAKE SOME POSITIVE ACTION TO HELP
RESOLVE THE ISSUE? I WOULD BE HAPPY TO HELP PLAN, ORGANIZE AND IMPLIMENT
THE NECESSARY ACTIONS.

A SECOND POINT: THE TALIBAN HAVE CONSISTANTLY ASKED FOR A DIALOGUE TO
SETTLE OUR LONG STANDING DIFFERENCES. THIS HAS NOT OCCURED AND WE ARE
ABOUT TO PLACE MORE SANCTIONS ON AFGHANISTAN BECAUSE THE ISSUES HAVE NOT
BEEN PROPERLY ADDRESSED. THE AFGHANS DO NOT RESPOND WELL TO COERSION,
THREATS, SANCTIONS AND CONDEMNATION. ASK THE RUSSIANS ABOUT THEIR
EXPERIENCE. IN MY OPINION WE HAVE NOT MADE A REASONABLE APPROACH TO A
POSITIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE TALIBAN. ON A RECENT VISIT TO PAKISTAN, I
NOTED IN THE NEWSPAPERS HEADLINE COVERAGE OF A MEETING BETWEEN OUR
AMBASSADOR AND THE TALIBAN AMBASSADOR TO PAKISTAN, APPARENTLY THE FIRST
OF ITS KIND. IF A MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO AMBASSADORS IS HEADLINE NEWS
BECAUSE OF ITS UNUSUALNESS, THEN WE HAVE NOT BEEN DOING OUR JOBS RIGHT.
IT SUGGESTS THAT OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE TALIBAN IS SUPERFICIAL AND
INFREQUENT. IF WE WANT TO SOLVE THE ISSUES OF DISAGREEMENT WITH THE
TALIBAN, THE DIALOGUE MUST BE FREQUENT, CONTINUOUS AND AT A HIGH LEVEL.

IF THE TALIBAN ARE TRULY AN INTERNATIONAL THREAT, WE NEED TO SIT DOWN
AND TALK TO THEM ON A REGULAR BASIS IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS TO THE
ISSUES, NOT THREATS AND DEMANDS TO TURN BEN LADEN OVER FOR TRIAL. IN THE
MORE THAN A YEAR OF WAITING FOR THE TALIBAN TO CAVE IN TO OUR DEMANDS,
WE MUST HAVE LEARNED THIS. THREATS AND SANCTIONS WILL NOT GET A POSITIVE
RESPONSE FROM THE AFGHANS. DISCUSSIONS IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS WOULD HAVE
RESULTS.

THE TALIBAN ARE NOT DIPLOMATS, BUREAUCRATS OR INTERNATIONAL LAWERS. THEY
ARE MOSTLY MULLAHS, LIKE SOUTHERN BAPTIST PREACHERS, IF YOU WILL. THEY
REQUIRE A DIFFERENT APPROACH. IN MY EXPERIENCE WITH THEM, THEY LISTEN,
THEY RESPOND, THEY CHANGE IN THE PROPER CONTEXT AND GENERALLY THEY DO
NOT LIE. THEY WILL CHANGE WITH POSITIVE, REASONABLE DISCUSSION BUT NOT
WITH VIOLENCE AND NEGATIVE SANCTIONS.

WE MUST RE-THINK OUR FOREIGN POLICY AND APPROACH TO THE TALIBAN IF WE
REALLY WANT TO FIND A SOLUTION TO OUR DIFFERENCES.

I WOULD BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS THESE ISSUES WITH YOU OR ANY OF YOUR STAFF
AT YOUR CONVENIENCE.

HOPEFULLY YOU WILL GET TO SEE THIS COMMUNICATION.

GOOD LUCK, RICHARD B. SCOTT

Subject: [Fwd: Helmand Province Afghanistan and Opium Production]

Date: Thu, 14 Dec 2000 18:59:29 -0700

From: Black Mountain Traders

To: AskPublicAffairs@state.gov

PLEASE FORWARD THIS MESSAGE TO MR. MICHAEL A. SHEEHAN AT STATE COUNTERTERRORISM SECTION. THANKS. RICHARD B. SCOTT

Subject: Helmand Province Afghanistan and Opium Production

Date: Thu, 14 Dec 2000 16:31:04 -0700

From: Black Mountain Traders

To: msheehan@state.gov

SIR,

AS A STUDENT AND PARTICIPANT IN AFGHAN AFFAIRS SINCE 1971, I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER A COMMENT AND MAKE SOME SUGGESTIONS ON SOME OF YOUR POINTS MADE TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE YESTERDAY.

ON YOUR CONDEMNATION OF THE TALIBAN ON THE NARCOTICS ISSUE, I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT THE TALIBAN AND THE FARMERS OF CENTRAL HELMAND, THE CENTER OF OPIUM PRODUCTION FOR AFGHANISTAN, HAVE BEEN ASKING FOR HELP FOR AT LEAST THE PAST 5 YEARS WITH THEIR IRRIGATION SYSTEM TO BRING IT BACK TO SOMETHING APPROACHING ORIGINAL SPECIFICATIONS WHICH WOULD ALLOW THEM TO RETURN TO THEIR PRE-WAR DOUBLE-CROPPING SYSTEM WHEN THE CASH CROP WAS COTTON, NOT POPPY. WE (THE U.S.) BUILT THAT IRRIGATION SYSTEM, THE LARGEST IN AFGHANISTAN, BEGINNING IN 1946. EXCEPT FOR A LIMITED AMOUNT OF DE-SILTING OF THE MAIN CANAL IN THE WINTER OF 1998-99, IN WHICH I PARTICIPATED AS AN EMPLOYEE OF MERCY CORPS INTERNATIONAL, THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM HAS SEEN LITTLE MAINTENANCE IN 20 YEARS. IT NEEDS WORK BUT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS TURNED A BLIND EYE TO THE NEEDS OF THE FARMERS OF THE AREA KNOWING THAT POPPY WOULD CONTINUE TO BE GROWN AT AN INCREASING RATE UNTIL THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM WAS REPAIRED. THIS IS A POINT CONSISTANTLY IGNORED IN OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AGONIZING OVER THE INCREASED POPPY PRODUCTION IN THE REGION.

AS A SIDE NOTE, IN MY OPINION, THE UNDCP NARCOTICS PROJECT IN KANDAHAR AND NANGAHAR PROVINCES WAS MISCONCEIVED AND NOT FOCUSED ON THE PRIMARY ISSUES.

THE TALIBAN AND THE FARMERS OF HELMAND KNOW AND STATE THAT POPPY IS AN EVIL CROP BUT IT IS THE BASIS OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND DIFFICULT TO SHIFT AWAY FROM WITHOUT SOME HELP.

IF WE WANT TO ELEMIMATE OPIUM PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN, WE MUST BE WILLING TO HELP THE ECONOMY TO MOVE AWAY FROM OPIUM PRODUCTION. THIS HAS NOT BEEN DONE.

MORE RECENTLY, MULLAH OMER HAS BAN OPIUM PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN. ACCORDING TO TWO OF MY AFGHAN CONTACTS WHO HAVE BEEN INTO THE AREA, THE FARMERS WERE FIRST DELAYING THE PLANTING OF ANYTHING AND THEN PLANTED THE TRADITIONAL WINTER CROP OF WHEAT. APPARENTLY THE POPPY BAN IS BEING RESPECTED. MY PLANNED VISIT TO THE AREA TO CHECK WAS PUT OFF BY THE CONTINUING MEDIA SPECULATION IN PAKISTAN THAT WE WERE ABOUT TO SEND MORE ROCKETS INTO AFGHANISTAN IN RESPONSE TO THE USS COLE INCIDENT. IN SHORT, MULLAH OMER IS MAKING AN ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS THE OPIUM ISSUE, HOPING BUT

NOT ASKING FOR SOME INTERNATIONAL HELP. HE HAS JUST BAN THE PRIMARY CASH CROP OF THE REGION WITHOUT HAVING AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF INCOME FOR THE AG (SOME 95 PLUS PERCENT) POPULATION. DOES THIS NOT DESERVE A COMMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF OPIUM PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN? I WOULD SUGGEST THAT WE TRY TO HELP THE TALIBAN AND THE FARMERS IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO MOVE AWAY FROM OPIUM PRODUCTION.

MANY OF THE FARMERS STILL GROW COTTON. THE COTTON GIN IN THE REGION, BUILT BY THE BRITISH IN THE 1960'S, STILL FUNCTIONS BUT IS IN NEED OF REPAIR. BUT WE HAVE PLACED AN EMBARGO THAT BLOCKS THE INTERNATIONAL SALE OF THE PRODUCE. INSTEAD OF TAKING ACTIONS THAT WOULD HELP IN THE MOVEMENT AWAY FORM OPIUM PRODUCTION, WE ARE TAKING ACTIONS THAT PRESSURE FOR CONTINUING OPIUM PRODUCTION. I WOULD SUGGEST A CHANGE IF A GOAL IS TO STOP OPIUM PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN.

I WOULD BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE WITH YOU OR ANYONE ELSE IN STATE THAT MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN THE SUBJECT. PLEASE SHARE THIS COMMUNICATION WITH ANYONE THAT MIGHT BE INTERESTED.

IF THIS GETS THROUGH, I WILL SEND ANOTHER UNSOLICITED COMMENT ON OUR FRUITLESS APPROACH TO GETTING BEN LADEN.

RICHARD B. SCOTT
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P.S. I HAVE A C.V. FLOATING AROUND IN THE SOUTH ASIA SECTION.