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10 FEB 01

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DEAR MR. EASTHAM:

AS AN ANALYST AND PARTICIPANT IN AFGHAN AFFAIRS FOR THE PAST 30 YEARS I WANT YOU TO CONSIDER ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO ME, TO YOU AND TO OUR GOVERNMENT RELATING FIRST TO RE-THINKING OUR FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN AND THE TALIBAN, AND SECOND, THE END OF OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION IN THAT COUNTRY.

I READ WITH DISAPPOINTMENT OF YOUR RECENT MEETING WITH MULLAH ABDUL HAKEEM MUJAHID, THE TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVE IN THE U.S., ORDERING THE CLOSING OF THEIR OFFICE. I REALIZE THAT YOU DO NOT MAKE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY BUT YOU CAN CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES TO WHAT WE ARE PRESENTLY DOING. WHILE THIS ACTION IS IN LINE WITH THE NEW U.N. SANCTIONS, IT WILL ACCOMPLISH LITTLE OTHER THAN PUT MORE DISTANCE BETWEEN US, THE U.S.A., AND A SOLUTION TO THE AFGHAN DISASTER.

POLICY

OUR POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN AND THE TALIBAN SHOULD BE ONE OF ENGAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS POSITIVE DIALOGUE CLEARLY IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS TO MUTUAL PROBLEMS, IN THIS CASE, APPARENTLY FOR US, BIN LADEN. AS A SIDE NOTE, THE TALIBAN'S PRIMARY PROBLEM AT THIS TIME IS THE CONTINUING CIVIL WAR. OUR PRESENT POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN IS ONE OF THREATS, CONFRONTATION, ATTEMPTED INTIMIDATION AND, I THINK, IN THE CONTEXT OF MIS-DIRECTED ALLIANCES. WE JOINED WITH THE RUSSIANS TO PUSH THE NEW SANCTIONS THROUGH THE U.N. THE RUSSIANS SHOULD HAVE LEARNED THAT THESE METHODS OF CONFRONTATION DO NOT WORK AGAINST THE AFGHANS. JUST THIS ALLIANCE, WITH A PAST AND PRESENT ENEMY OF AFGHANISTAN, WILL WIN US NO FRIENDS AMONG THE AFGHANS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO ARE RECEIVING AID FROM THE RUSSIANS. THE RUSSIANS HAVE AN AXE TO GRIND AND WE SHOULD NOT BE PART OF IT.

OUR PRESENT POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN SHOULD BE ONE OF ENGAGEMENT, INVOLVEMENT AND DIALOGUE AND NOT ATTEMPTED ISOLATION THROUGH PUNISHING SANCTIONS THAT IN FACT WILL ACCOMPLISH LITTLE OTHER THAN PUT HARDSHIPS ON THE AFGHANS GENERALLY, NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE RE-STATE THE INTENDED TARGET. ISOLATION AND WAITING FOR A GOVERNMENT TO CHANGE CAN TAKE A LONG TIME, TOO LONG, E.G., CASTRO IN CUBA.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE TALIBAN HAS BEEN THAT THEY LISTEN TO REASONABLE DISCUSSION FROM PEOPLE THEY TRUST AND ARE THERE TO HELP. THEY DO CHANGE.

I HAVE NOT MET ABDUL HAKEEM BUT THE TALIBAN I WORKED WITH IN HELMAND ON A DAILY BASIS DURING THE WINTER OF 1998-99 WERE NOT DIPLOMATS, TECHNOCRATS NOR BUREAUCRATS. AND I SUSPECT THAT THERE ARE NONE OF THESE WITH TRAINING OR EXPERIENCE IN THE RANKS OF THE TALIBAN. THE TALIBAN ARE GENERALLY MULLAHS, MANY KANDAHARIS, WITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND TRADITIONAL VALUES. THEY SHARE THE VALUES OF MUCH OF THE RURAL AND TRIBAL MUSLIM WORLD. I FOUND THE TALIBAN NOT TO BE BAD PEOPLE, AND IN HELMAND THEY WERE SMART, INDUSTRIOUS, COOPERATIVE AND INTERESTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THEIR AREA. AT LEAST ONE OF THE DEPUTIES ORIGINATED FROM THE AREA. THEY WERE TRYING TO DO THE BEST JOB THEY COULD IN JOBS FOR WHICH THEY HAD NO BACKGROUND OR TRAINING. THEY UNDERSTOOD THEIR LIMITATIONS AND ASKED FOR HELP. THEY VERY MUCH APPRECIATED THE HELP WE WERE GIVING THEM. I DID NOT ALWAYS AGREE WITH WHAT THEY WERE SAYING BUT I HAD LITTLE DOUBT OF WHAT THEY WERE THINKING. THEY WERE DIRECT AND TENDED NOT TO LIE, UNLIKE MOST OF THE OFFICIALS I EXPERIENCED IN THE SAME AREA BEFORE THE RUSSIAN INVASION. I LIKED THE TALIBAN I WORKED WITH.

BIN LADEN IS ANOTHER COMPLEX PROBLEM RELATED TO, PERHAPS, A TRADITIONAL VALUE OF GIVING SANCTUARY TO THE HUNTED, EVEN IF HE IS YOUR ENEMY. AND BIN LADEN IS NO ENEMY OF AFGHANISTAN. HE PASSED A GOOD PART OF HIS ADULT LIFE HELPING THEM. ELPHINSTONE, THE BRITISH SOLDIER/DIPLOMAT FIRST OUTLINED THIS VALUE AMONG THE AFGHANIS IN 1815. IT CAN BE FOUND IN A VARIETY OF PLACES IN MUSLIM WORLD RURAL AND TRIBAL ETHNOGRAPHIES. ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE A TRIBAL VALUE, IN THIS CASE PASHTUN, IT IS DEFINED AS ISLAMIC. FOR THE TALIBAN TO GO AGAINST IT WOULD BE UNISLAMIC, AND IN MANY RURAL/TRIBAL EYES, OUR PRESSURES AGAINST IT ARE DEFINED AS UNISLAMIC, NO MATTER WHAT WE SAY.

THE ACTUAL LEGAL DETAILS OF THE TALIBAN NOT BEING RECOGNIZED AS THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT BY US OR THE U.N., WITH NO EXTRADITION TREATIES WOULD BE A PROBLEM UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES. IF I REMEMBER, BRAZIL USED TO HAVE LIMITATIONS ON EXTRADITION AS DOES ISRAEL AND A FEW OTHER COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY IN CASES OF POLITICAL FIGURES AND OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

I SUSPECT THAT WE, THE U.S.A., WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY HANDING SUCH A PERSON OVER FOR TRIAL FOR A CAPITAL CRIME UNDER THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCES. WE PROBABLY MISSED OUR CHANCE A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO WHEN BIN LADEN OFFERED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY IN SECRET BUT WAS REJECTED. YOU DO NOT SHOOT QUAIL WHILE THEY ARE IN THE BUSH.

AS AN ADDITIONAL SIDE NOTE RELATING TO ONE OF THE MOST RECENT SANCTIONS: THE BAN ON THE SALE TO AFGHANISTAN OF THE CHEMICAL NECESSARY IN THE MAKING OF HEROINE. IF IT HAS TAKEN THIS LONG TO PLACE THIS BAN ON ANY COUNTRY, SOMEONE HAS BEEN SOUND ASLEEP. IN THE CONTEXT OF HEROINE PRODUCTION, IT WOULD APPEAR TO BE A POINTLESS GESTURE IN THE FIRST PLACE. ILLEGALS DO NOT RESPECT INTERNATIONAL BANS.

AS A REMINDER, WE HAVE HAD A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH AFGHANISTAN SINCE 1946 WHEN MORRISON-KNUTSEN CONSTRUCTION CO. OF BOISE, IDAHO WENT INTO SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN AND BEGAN WORK ON WHAT WAS TO BECOME THE LARGEST IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY. WE REMAINED THERE WITH A THOUGHTFUL FOREIGN AID PROGRAM UNTIL 1979 WITH THE RUSSIAN INVASION. WE SUPPORTED THE AFGHANS, INCLUDING MANY OF THE PRESENT TALIBAN AND THEIR RELATIVES AGAINST THE RUSSIAN INVASION AND OCCUPATION FOR A 10 YEAR PERIOD IN WHAT WAS TO BE THE LAST BATTLE OF THE COLD WAR IN WHICH THEY LOST MORE THAN A MILLION PEOPLE. IN MY OPINION, IT WAS THE TRADITIONAL

VALUES OF THE RURAL AFGHAN PEOPLE THAT HELD THE RESISTANCE TOGETHER AGAINST THE (GODLESS) RUSSIANS IN THE FACE OF HOPELESS ODDS. AND THESE ARE THE BASIC (KANDAHARI) VALUES OF THE TALIBAN.

WE IN FACT DID LITTLE TO BRING PEACE TO AFGHANISTAN AND WITHDREW AFTER A FEW YEARS WAIT FOR THE AFGHANS TO SORT OUT THEIR OWN ETHNIC GROUP PROBLEMS. THEY COULD NOT. THE TALIBAN EMERGED IN 1994 IN RESPONSE TO VIRTUAL ANARCHY IN THE COUNTRY IN THEORY RULED BY AN ALLIANCE OF THE MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS THAT WE AND THE U.N. NOW RECOGNIZE AS THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT. THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE DID NOT HAVE THE SKILLS TO GOVERN THE COUNTRY THEN OR NOW ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE SOME SKILLED LOBBYISTS LIKE DR. ABDULLAH. AND THEY ARE NOT PASHTUN.

THE PASHTUNS MUST FILL THE KEY ROLES IN ANY GOVERNMENT OR THERE WILL BE NO PEACE. THIS ASSUMES THAT THE TALIBAN (PASHTUNS) ARE WILLING TO STEP DOWN FROM RULING THE COUNTRY, WHICH SEEMS UNLIKELY.

A MINORITY GROUP GOVERNMENT CANNOT RULE IN AFGHANISTAN ALTHOUGH THEY MIGHT PARTICIPATE. THE SHIAS, SUPPORTED BY IRAN AND HARDLY RECOGNIZED AS MUSLIMS BY MUCH OF THE TRADITIONAL SUNNI WORLD, IS ANOTHER PROBLEM.

IN CONCLUSION ON FOREIGN POLICY, WE HAVE HAD A LONG AND FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH AFGHANISTAN AND WE STILL HAVE MANY FRIENDS THERE AND PEOPLE WHO TRUST AND RESPECT US. I DO NOT THINK THE TALIBAN ARE OUR ENEMIES YET BUT WE SEEM TO BE WORKING ON IT. WE MUST TAKE THE LEAD IN HELPING THE AFGHANS TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THEIR CIVIL WAR. WE SHOULD NOT MAKE ALLIANCES WITH THEIR ENEMIES, LIKE RUSSIA, OR EXPECT BASICALLY INCOMPETENT AND BIASED ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE U.N. AND THE 6 PLUS 2 GROUP TO HELP FIND A SOLUTION. THE TALIBAN HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN CONSOLIDATING MOST OF THE COUNTRY AGAINST GREAT ODDS. AT LEAST IN THE SOUTH THEY HAVE BROUGHT PEACE AND SECURITY. THEY DO NOT HOLD THE AREA BY FORCE. THEY ARE HARSH IN THEIR PUNISHMENTS BUT IN THE CONTEXT OF A COUNTRY THAT HAS BEEN AT WAR AGAINST CENTRAL AUTHORITY FOR 20 PLUS YEARS, THEY CANNOT BE SOFT.

AS NOTED, OUR POLICY SHOULD BE ONE OF ENGAGEMENT, INVOLVEMENT AND POSITIVE DIALOGUE IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS TO OUR MUTUAL PROBLEMS AND NOT A POLICY OF CONFRONTATION, THREATS AND NEGATIVE SANCTIONS, WHICH SOLVE NOTHING. AS MULLAH OMER HAS FREQUENTLY SAID, ALL PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE. WITH PASHTUNS WHO HAVE A LONG TRADITION OF LONG NEGOTIATIONS (AND VIOLENCE) TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO LOCAL PROBLEMS, THIS IS NOT A SHORT TERM PROCESS. IT MUST BE CONTINUOUS, PERHAPS DAILY, AND SHOULD INVOLVE A U.S. PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN OF AMERICANS KNOWLEDGABLE OF AND WITH EMPATHY FOR THE AFGHANS, AND CLEARLY NOT ANTI-TALIBAN. THEY MUST BE CLEARLY NEUTRAL AND HELPFUL, AND NOT CRITICAL OF TRADITIONAL VALUES.

POPPY

THE TALIBAN HAVE BANNED THE CULTIVATION OF OPIUM POPPY IN THE PARTS OF AFGHANISTAN UNDER THEIR CONTROL. THE FARMERS HAVE NOT PLANTED POPPY THIS CROP SEASON - AT LEAST IN THE CENTRAL HELMAND REGION OF SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN, THE CENTER OF OPIUM PRODUCTION. THIS IS A MAJOR EVENT IN THE REGION AND FOR THE WORLD AND IT IS BEING IGNORED. AS THE WORLD LEADER AND A LONG TERM FRIEND OF AFGHANISTAN, WE, THE U.S.A., MUST TAKE SOME ACTION IN SUPPORT OF THIS VERY BRAVE ACTION ON THE PART OF THE TALIBAN.

I HAVE PROPOSED AN ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN AND WHY. I HAVE GIVEN MR. RICHARD ADAMS OF STATE/INL/ASIA THE MORE DETAILED DISCOURSE ON THIS ISSUE AND PROPOSAL BUT NOT A BUDGET. I OFFER MY SERVICES TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE WITH YOU OR ANYONE ON YOUR STAFF, AND TO ORGANIZE AND FIELD THE PROPOSED PROJECT. I HAVE A LONG TERM AND STRONG ATTACHMENT TO THIS SOUTHERN REGION OF AFGHANISTAN WHERE I WORKED FOR SOME 8 YEARS. I HAVE BEEN VISITING THE REGION PERIODICALLY FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS. WE SHOULD TAKE SOME QUICK AND PRODUCTIVE ACTION IN RECOGNITION OF THE POPPY BAN. AND I AM READY AND WILLING TO ORGANIZE AND FIELD THE NECESSARY ACTION.

SUCH AN ACTION DOES NOT EXACTLY FIT WITH THE PRESENT U.S. FOREIGN POLICY OF ISOLATING THE TALIBAN FROM THE WORLD BUT IT MAKES SENSE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNILATERAL ACTION THE TALIBAN HAVE TAKEN AGAINST OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION.

SINCE MY RETURN FROM THE REGION IN LATE FALL 2000, I HAVE BEEN IN CONTINUOUS CONTACT WITH AFGHANS WHO GO TO HELMAND ON A REGULAR BASIS WITH VARIOUS NGO'S. THESE MEN ARE OBSERVERS AND INFORMANTS THAT I HAVE WORKED WITH FOR THE PAST 2 TO 5 YEARS. MY INFORMATION IS RELATIVELY CURRENT.

IN LATE SUMMER 2000, BEFORE OPIUM POPPY PLANTING SEASON IN THE FALL, MULLAH OMER, EMIR OF THE TALIBAN, BANNED THE PLANTING OF POPPY IN THE AREAS UNDER HIS CONTROL. THERE WERE MANY DOUBTING THOMASES THAT SAID "IMPOSSIBLE". THIS WAS A MAJOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC MOVE ON THE PART OF MULLAH OMER. HE BANNED THE PRIMARY CASH CROP, THE BASIS OF THE LOCAL AG ECONOMY, FOR THE SAME REGION WHERE HE ENJOYS A MAJOR PART OF HIS POLITICAL SUPPORT, THE HELMAND REGION.

THERE HAS BEEN SOME WISHFUL THINKING THAT THE DROUGHT WOULD CUT POPPY PRODUCTION. THIS MAY BE TRUE FOR SOME AREAS DEPENDENT ON RAIN FALL OR FOR KOREZ SYSTEMS BUT IT DOES NOT AFFECT THE PRIMARY PRODUCTION AREA OF CENTRAL HELMAND.

THE CENTRAL HELMAND REGION IS IRRIGATED BY THE BOGHRA CANAL, WHICH WE (U.S.A.) BUILT. THE WATER IS FROM THE HELMAND RIVER WHICH ENCOMPASSES 40 PERCENT OF THE SURFACE WATER OF AFGHANISTAN. SINCE THE HELMAND RIVER SOURCE IS FROM SNOW PACK IN CENTRAL AFGHANISTAN, THE DROUGHT DID NOT AND WILL NOT ON THE SHORT TERM REDUCE OPIUM PRODUCTION IN CENTRAL HELMAND. THERE IS ALWAYS SOME WATER IN THE HELMAND RIVER AND THE BOGHRA CANAL. THE POPPY CROP IS IRRIGATED FROM THE RIVER AND DOES NOT DEPEND ON REGIONAL RAIN FALL.

UNDCP CUT THEIR OPIUM POPPY PROJECT IN THE KANDAHAR AND JALALABAD REGIONS AT THE END OF 2000. I UNDERSTAND THERE IS ONE MAN REMAINING IN THE KANDAHAR OFFICE ONLY TO MAINTAIN A PRESENCE. AS I NOTED TO MR. GEDDES OF UNDCP IN 1996, THIS PROJECT WAS MIS-FOCUSED FROM THE START. IT DID NOT FOCUS ON THE AREAS OF PRIMARY PRODUCTION, WHERE PEOPLE HAD A HISTORY OF PRIMARY CASH CROPS BEFORE POPPY (TO WHICH THEY COULD RETURN) OR LIKE HELMAND, WHERE THE FARMERS HAD LIVING MEMORY OF AGREEMENTS NOT TO GROW NARCOTICS. I UNDERSTAND THAT IN THE KANDAHAR AREA THE PROJECT PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON AREAS IRRIGATED BY KOREZ SYSTEMS (RELATIVELY SMALL SCALE AGRICULTURE) AND HAD ABOUT 10 PERCENT OF THEIR LAND IN POPPY, AT THE START. APPARENTLY POPPY PRODUCTION INCREASED THROUGH TIME. ON THE SIDE, I WAS TOLD THAT THE AREAS WERE SELECTED BECAUSE OF SOME POLITICAL

CONSIDERATIONS RATHER THAN FOR POTENTIAL IMPACT. IN SHORT, FOR WHATEVER REASONS, THAT PROJECT FAILED AND IS GONE.

F.A.O. HAS A VERY SMALL SEED GRAIN PROJECT IN THE CENTRAL HELMAND REGION BUT NOTHING FOCUSED ON THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM OR A CASH CROP ALTERNATIVE FOR THE BANNED OPIUM POPPY.

WHEN I LEFT PESHAWAR IN NOVEMBER 2000, I WAS TOLD THAT THE POPPY BAN WAS HOLDING IN HELMAND, AND THAT THE FARMERS DID NOT PLANT POPPY THIS YEAR. EVERY COMMUNICATION WITH MY CONTACTS, INCLUDING E-MAIL THIS PAST WEEK, HAS REINFORCED THIS OBSERVATION. THE HELMAND FARMERS DID NOT PLANT POPPY THIS YEAR. THIS IS A POINT THAT THE MEDIA AND A VARIETY OF SPOKESPERSONS OF SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING OUR OWN, HAVE IGNORED. I HAVE POINTED THIS FACT OUT TO BOTH MR. SHEEHAN AND MR. INDERFURTH IN E-MAILS AS A RESPONSE TO SOME OF THEIR STATEMENTS TO THE MEDIA ON AFGHANISTAN AND NARCOTICS. I DID NOT EXPECT NOR RECEIVE RESPONSE TO THOSE COMMUNICATIONS.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT AND MUST NOT BE IGNORED: THE HELMAND FARMERS, IN THE CENTER OF OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION FOR AFGHANISTAN, DID NOT PLANT POPPY THIS YEAR. HELMAND IS A REGION WHERE WE HAVE HAD A LONG ASSOCIATION, BEGINNING IN 1946 WITH MORRISON-KNUTSEN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY OF BOISE, IDAHO, AS NOTED ABOVE. WE HAVE A LOT OF LONG TERM FRIENDS IN THE REGION THAT TRUST US.

SOME EFFORT MUST BE MADE TO SUPPORT THE PRESENT OPIUM POPPY BAN. THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT POPPY AS A CASH CROP WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETURN. OPIUM POPPY WAS THE ESTABLISHED MAJOR CASH CROP FOR THE REGION; THE BASIS OF THE REGIONAL AG ECONOMY WITH A WELL ESTABLISHED, IF SOMEWHAT INFORMAL, CREDIT AND MARKETING SYSTEM. MULLAH OMER, I UNDERSTAND, HAS ASKED FOR HELP WITH ALTERNATIVE CROPS AND/OR SOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL FARMER INCOMES VIS-À-VIS THE POPPY BAN. SINCE 1996, IN MY ON-GOING DISCUSSIONS WITH TALIBAN OFFICIALS AND FARMERS OF THE REGION THE SAME REQUEST IS REPEATED AND IS PARAPHRASED HERE: "HELP US WITH THE REHABILITATION OF THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM THAT WOULD ALLOW US TO RETURN TO THE DOUBLE CROPPING PATTERNS OF BEFORE THE WAR AND WE WILL END OPIUM PRODUCTION. IT IS AN EVIL CROP." AS I HAVE NOTED BEFORE, HELP IS NEEDED WITH CREDIT, FERTILIZER AND MARKETING THE ALTERNATIVES.

ACCORDING TO MY SOURCES AS OUTLINED ABOVE, NO ONE, NO ORGANIZATION, NO GOVERNMENT IS DOING ANYTHING TO SUPPORT THE OPIUM POPPY BAN. THIS IS A MAJOR MISTAKE UNLESS THIS INACTION RELATES TO A POLICY OF SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY. WE, AS WELL AS THE REST OF THE OF THE ILLEGAL DRUG CONSUMING WORLD SHOULD BE WORKING TO HELP END OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN, NOT SIMPLY CRITICIZE. OPIUM PRODUCTION WILL NOT END BY ITSELF.

SOME COUNTRY NEEDS TO HELP TO INSURE THAT OPIUM POPPY DOES NOT RETURN TO HELMAND, AND THAT COUNTRY SHOULD BE US, THE U.S.A. THE HELMAND FARMERS RESPECT AND TRUST US. IN MY EXPERIENCE, THE HELMAND FARMERS AND THE TALIBAN HAVE LITTLE RESPECT FOR OR TRUST IN THE U.N. THE BRITISH SHOULD ALSO BE ASKED TO HELP SINCE THEY BUILT THE COTTON GINS AND SUPPORTED THE GROWTH OF COTTON PRODUCTION IN THE REGION BEGINNING IN THE 1960'S. COTTON IS THE MOST OBVIOUS AND UNDERSTOOD CASH CROP ALTERNATIVE FOR HELMAND.

COTTON WAS THE MAIN CASH CROP BEFORE THE RUSSIAN INVASION. THE FARMERS KNOW AND CONTINUE TO GROW COTTON. ONE OF TWO COTTON GINS STILL

FUNCTIONS. WHILE THERE IS A GOOD INTERNATIONAL MARKET FOR THE COTTON, THE HELMAND COTTON INDUSTRY NEEDS ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT TO COMPETE.

A SERIOUS GESTURE SHOULD BE MADE TO SHOW OUR SUPPORT OF THE POPPY BAN BEFORE THE SPRING 2001 PLANTING SEASON. ONE SUCH ACTION COULD BE DONE WITHIN THE SHORT TIME PERIOD REMAINING WITH SEVERAL THOUSAND DOLLARS WORTH OF VEGETABLE SEED. THE STANDARD VEGETABLES OF THE REGION ARE ONION, TOMATO, CUCUMBER AND OKRA. QUALITY PEANUT SEED, A GROWING REGIONAL CASH CROP WITH A GOOD MARKET IN HERAT AND IRAN, WOULD ALSO BE WELCOMED. AND, AS NOTED, PRIMARY SUPPORT IS NEEDED TO ENABLE THE COTTON CROP TO BE PLANTED IN SPRING 2001. ALL SEED WOULD BE SOLD AT REASONABLE PRICES.

ON A SHORT-TERM BASIS AND USING EXISTING NGO'S, IT WOULD BE SOMEWHAT SIMPLE TO ORGANIZE AND FIELD A STRONG U.S. GESTURE OF SUPPORT FOR THE OPIUM POPPY BAN. THIS EFFORT WOULD GO FAR TO INSURE A NON-RETURN OF OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION. THE PROPOSED ACTION SHOULD BE COMBINED WITH CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH THE TALIBAN AND THE FARMERS ABOUT WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM THEM.

ASSUMING THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE AN END TO OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN, WE NEED TO TAKE ACTION NOW TO AT LEAST RECOGNIZE THE POSITIVE ACTION TAKEN BY THE TALIBAN. GIVEN THE TIME RESTRAINT, THE ABOVE SUGGESTIONS WOULD BE A FIRST STEP ON OUR PART. WHETHER WE POLITICALLY LIKE THE TALIBAN OR NOT OR RECOGNIZE THEIR GOVERNMENT OR NOT, THE GOAL SHOULD BE TO SUPPORT THE BAN TO END OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN.

I WOULD BE HAPPY TO ORGANIZE AND FIELD SUCH AN ACTION THROUGH ONE OR MORE NGO'S. IT IS A MATTER OF DRAWING TOGETHER AND ORGANIZING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WITH EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE HELMAND VALLEY OF AFGHANISTAN. IT COULD BE DONE QUICKLY AND RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVELY. IN THE PROCESS OF FIELDING THIS ACTION, OTHER SIMILAR, SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS COULD BE IDENTIFIED AND OTHER DONORS RECRUITED.

IN OCTOBER 2000, WHILE IN PAKISTAN, I WROTE A CONCEPT PAPER RELATING TO HELMAND. IT CONCERNED A RESPONSE TO DROUGHT RELIEF AND, AT THE SAME TIME, REHABILITATION OF THE BOGHRA IRRIGATION SYSTEM USING FOOD-FOR-WORK HAND LABOR DRAWN FROM DROUGHT HIT AREAS TO THE NORTH. IT WAS TO BE BASED ON THE ALREADY EXISTING PATTERNS OF FARM LABOR MIGRATION AND SHEEP HERDING PATTERNS OF TRANSHUMANCE MIGRATION INTO THE HELMAND REGION. IT WOULD BE MORE USEFUL TO HAVE PEOPLE DOING PRODUCTIVE REHABILITATION WORK FOR FOOD INSTEAD OF PARTICIPATING IN FEEDING PROGRAMS. THIS WORK WOULD ALSO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE INCOMES FOR PAST OPIUM POPPY FARMERS. I HAD THE PAPER DISTRIBUTED TO A NUMBER OF NGO'S AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES BUT TO MY KNOWLEDGE, NO WORK HAS BEEN ORGANIZED AROUND THIS CONCEPT. I WOULD BE HAPPY TO FORWARD A COPY TO ANY ONE INTERESTED. RICHARD ADAMS AND ELISABETH KVTASHVILI OF U.S.A.I.D. HAVE COPIES OF THIS PAPER.

I HAVE OUTLINED THE SITUATION WITH THE POPPY BAN IN THE HELMAND REGION OF AFGHANISTAN. THIS HAS BEEN THE REGION PRODUCING A VERY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF THE AFGHAN OPIUM. THE BAN MUST RECEIVE SOME RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT FROM OUTSIDE. PRESENTLY THERE IS NO SUPPORT OF THE OPIUM POPPY BAN FROM OUTSIDE, ALTHOUGH HELP HAS BEEN REQUESTED FOR ALTERNATIVE CROPS, SUPPLEMENTARY INCOMES FOR THE FARMERS AND IRRIGATION REHABILITATION.

WITHOUT SOME HELP, IT IS POSSIBLE AND LIKELY THAT THE FARMERS WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO POPPY PRODUCTION.

I FEEL VERY STRONGLY THAT WE, THE U.S.A., SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD IN RESPONDING TO AND SUPPORTING THE OPIUM POPPY BAN. CLEARLY NO ONE ELSE WILL TAKE THE NECESSARY ACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF A WORLD GROANING ABOUT AFGHAN OPIUM PRODUCTION. WE CANNOT DEPEND ON THE UNDCP TO TAKE ANY TIMELY, EFFECTIVE ACTION.

ALTHOUGH I HAVE BEEN TALKING FOR SOME TIME TO ANYONE WHO WOULD LISTEN ABOUT THE HELMAND SITUATION, THE LATENESS OF THESE OBSERVATIONS AND PROPOSALS IS THE RESULT OF MY MISTAKEN ASSUMPTION THAT THE WESTERN WORLD WOULD SEE AND UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TALIBAN BAN ON OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION. THE GENERAL REACTION SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SKEPTICISM, ANALYSES OF THE POSSIBLE REASONS FOR THE BAN AND INACTION.

I WOULD BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS THIS PROPOSAL WITH YOU, YOUR STAFF OR ANYONE ELSE THAT MIGHT HAVE AN INTEREST IN TAKING AN IMPORTANT AND MAJOR STEP TO INSURE THE END OF OPIUM PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN. I OFFER MY SERVICES TO ORGANIZE THIS PROPOSED ACTION, PUT IT IN THE FIELD, SUPERVISE AND MANAGE IT. I WOULD ORGANIZE THE WORK THROUGH NGO'S THAT I KNOW, THAT HAVE THE NECESSARY CONTACTS AND WORK EXPERIENCE IN THAT REGION. I HAVE THE NECESSARY EXPERIENCE, CONTACTS AND DESIRE TO DO IT. I HAVE A STRONG ATTACHMENT TO AND EMPHY FOR THE PEOPLE THAT LIVE THERE. WE MUST NOT LET THIS UNILATERAL POPPY BAN GO UNNOTICED AND WITHOUT SUPPORT. THE WESTERN WORLD IS THE PRIMARY CONSUMER OF THIS ILLEGAL DRUG FROM WHICH THE FARMERS EARNED A MARGINAL LIVING BY WESTERN STANDARDS. WE SHOULD HELP TO INSURE THAT OPIUM POPPY DOES NOT RETURN TO THE HELMAND REGION THROUGH WHAT WOULD BE A RELATIVELY MINOR INVESTMENT AND BY HELPING THE FARMERS TO MAKE THE CHANGE.

PERHAPS YOU REMEMBER ME FROM PESHAWAR IN THE 1980'S - I WORKED FOR U.S.A.I.D. AS HEAD OF THE TRIBAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT. AND I DID NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE YOU AS DCM IN ISLAMABAD WHEN I WAS MEETING WITH MR. JIM MC HUGH. CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW ASSIGNMENT.

SINCERELY,


RICHARD B SCOTT

CC. JEFF LUNSTEAD
DIRECTOR, SOUTH ASIA BUREAU