

**RICHARD B. SCOTT  
2598 Big Thompson Cnyn  
Drake, CO 80515**

25 March 2001

Mr. Richard Adams  
INL/Asia  
Dept. of State  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Adams:

In our discussion last Thursday, I did not outline for you exactly what I had in mind for putting a seed project in the field. Below I will outline for you more details about my ideas for methods and people to be involved.

**PROPOSAL:** Acquire and distribute \$25,000 worth of vegetable seed for sale/distribution in Helmand province as a gesture in support of the opium poppy ban.

- There is no magic in this figure; it will not produce crops that will make up for the loss of income from opium poppy; it is a figure large enough to get the attention of the farmers and the Taliban.
- If additional funds were available, we would get more of their attention. And when combined with an extended dialogue on the positive action of the poppy ban and the need for it to continue, it will communicate to both the farmers and the Taliban that we strongly approve of their action and are prepared to help with the transition. It is a start.

But we also must be prepared to follow up on this action with additional support in the following crop years:

- The transition out of opium poppy to other cash crops will take some time.
- The farmers and the Taliban cannot be expected to be able to manage this transition alone.

- We can assume there are and will continue to be great pressures from the international market for Helmand to return to opium poppy production. The international marketers of opium cannot be expected to help with the transition as they helped to establish opium poppy as the primary cash crop in the region.

In this case, in this country, the support for the switch out of narcotics will be technical/economic aid, like seed and perhaps later fertilizer, not military aid and weapons for enforcement. It will be up to the Taliban to maintain the ban on opium poppy production, which they will - assuming the farmers have viable alternative sources of income, alternative crops. My proposal for food-for-work or cash labor for the restoration of the irrigation system would also help to increase alternative incomes. This is economics for the farmers and politics for the Taliban. The Taliban do not and cannot hold these Pashtun regions by force, and they know it.

**WHERE:** I would focus the vegetable seed sales/distribution on the large, primary irrigated districts in central Helmand, areas irrigated by the Boghra canal, which had become the primary producers of opium poppy in Afghanistan. These are the very large areas that have irrigation water off the Helmand River and are generally not water-short. They can grow vegetables, melon, peanut and cotton in the hot season. The primary grain crop during this same season is corn, the preferred bread in many areas of at least central Helmand.

The people of central Helmand did not grow narcotics before the war when the primary cash crop was cotton. Melon, mung bean and some vegetables were also grown for cash and consumption. They have never been subsistence farmers except perhaps during the war. The land holdings are relatively large, the result of the land settlement practices between 1946 and 1978. And they are good farmers.

**SEEDS:** Nothing exotic or unknown would be included. A complete list could be drawn up quickly in consultation with some Afghan agriculturist from the region in both Helping Afghan Farmers Organization (HAFO) and Mercy Corps International (MCI) by telephone and e-mail. To start, the list would be short and simple:

- Watermelon, peanut, and the basic vegetables known in the area: onion, okra, cucumber, and tomato.
- Winter vegetable seed such as cauliflower and carrot.
- Some cotton seed could be included as well, like the varieties brought in 1998-99 that have the characteristics of the other cotton being grown in

the area: a fine, long staple with minimal seed. FAO brought in related varieties in the early 1990's using the same supplier from California.

#### **SEED DISTRIBUTION:**

- Sell/distribute through various outlets in the many small bazaars scattered through this area.
- Could enlist shopkeepers as distributors but the final decision on this would be determined after my arrival in the area with the seed and after consultation with a wide variety of key regional individuals, noted below.
- Certainly, the weekly bazaars held in key locations on different days throughout the region e.g., Lashkar Gah, Khalaj (central Shamalan), Chan-I-Anjir, Nad-I-Ali and Marja, would give the greatest exposure in the shortest time.
- The seed would be sold at rock bottom prices to be affordable to all. We would not expect to get our investment back in cash at this stage.

#### **KEY PLAYERS:**

On arrival in Helmand, Lashkar Gah, I would first contact **Maulavi Hashim**, the Taliban officer for foreign relations in Helmand and explain the project goal and the reason for the project. Throughout the period of the project activities, I would be in almost daily contact with this man who gave me full support during my last work in the area in 1998-99. Once he understands the goals and implications of the project, I have no doubt about his complete support. I would attempt to get him to call meetings with the farmers and their informal leaders in the administrative centers of the target region to explain the goals of the project, to sustain and support the poppy ban, as he did for our work in 1998-99.

After this initial meeting there would be follow up meetings with the governor of Helmand province, **Mullah Abdul Bari**. The head of Helmand Arghandab Valley Authority (HAVA) would also attend the meetings as he controls the functions of the irrigation system. I have not met this man but have worked in 1998-99 with his brother, **Mullah Abdul Samad**, who was the head of HAVA at that time. Abdul Samad was one of the most effective, non-technical, administrators around and had been in charge of the re-building of the Kandahar to Kajiki to Lashkar Gah power line.

As a side note, there was continued friction between the governor and Abdul Samad as a result of their overlapping responsibilities in the region. This administrative problem has always existed in Helmand except for the period of the early 1970's when one man filled both positions. The energetic and forceful personality of Abdul Samad with his insistence to make things happen resulted in

more political conflict and perhaps his transfer to Kabul. Anyone working in Helmand must be aware of this issue.

**Mullah Abdul Kayum Akunzada** would be brought into the project activities. He is a young, active HAVA deputy and originally from Marja, one of the target areas. He apparently organized a limited drain cleaning activity last year in Marja where I met with him. HAVA provided an old dragline and operator and the farmers provided the fuel for the machinery. This is an example of a farmer/government cooperative effort to address a major problem.

I would expect to re-hire **Haji Gul Gul**, a retired USAID driver, highly respected in the region who knows virtually everybody and is very forceful in seeing that things happen as would be expected by western technicians. He knows every corner of the irrigation system and can be delegated the authority to go into the field, make contacts and make things happen in an acceptable way. He has a natural intelligence and is most useful.

The two chief watermasters for Nad-I-Ali and Marja, **Mohammad Karim** and **Haji Sar Malim**, would be involved in at least the planning stages for the field activities. They were key participants in the planning, organization and supervision of the work in 1998-99 as they know and work with all the leaders of the extended families and sub-tribal groups in the area and understand the political relationships. Mohammad Karim was also involved as a committee member in the cotton and watermelon seed sales at the end of our project activities in 1999.

**Wakil Safar** is a key political/tribal leader in Nad-I-Ali, a member of the National Assembly before the war, would be involved in the planning of the field activity. Virtually all of these men grew some poppy before the ban, talk openly and are great sources of information (as long as they trust you) on what is going on behind the scenes.

**Nek Zad** is an agriculturist who worked for MCI in Nad-i-Ali and was a Deputy in the Agriculture Ministry before the war. He would be tapped for suggestions and contacts for the project. Presently he works for a different NGO but lives in Lashkar Gah. I would plan to hire him on a short-term basis for the project.

The list of key people to work with in the area is un-ending. These are a few of the most notable and virtually all are respected "gray-beards". Some would be consultants but some would require payment if they participated in the project on a daily basis. The point is that I would not be working alone to put the proposed activity in the field. I would be working in consultation with a very wide range of key individuals in the region that I know, that I have worked with and that I trust. And given past collaboration in related work, I assume that they trust me, and this is key to a quick and successful start up.

## **ADMINISTRATION:**

- Organize through MCI for quick funding.  
I would like the support of MCI in the field. They have the necessary vehicles, warehouses, administrative personnel and guesthouses. I can work well with their regional manager, Mark Pont in Quetta.
  
- Involve HAFO and Engineer Jawed  
Jawed is from this region, a village near Grishk on the Boghra Canal. He is from a respected Sayed family and communicates well with the Taliban. We work very well together. He has staff residing in the area that are effective and useful. As a rule, I would expect to have local people working with me in the field. They are more effective with more contacts than Afghans living in Quetta, for example.

This summary gives you an idea of the main points I have in mind for organizing and fielding the proposed vegetable seed distribution project. The two main ingredients for project success are the timely seed availability and the people to put it in the field. I know the irrigation system and the target region perhaps better than my hometown and I know the people necessary to put the project in the field. And I know, like and trust the Taliban that I would be working and communicating with on this key issue of the poppy ban. Under the circumstances, the project would not be that difficult to put in the field but our time is running out.

I would be happy to discuss this with you or anyone else that might have an interest.

Sincerely yours,

Richard B. Scott