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Greetings from Colorado. I wanted to take this opportunity to remind you all that I remain available to start a program in the Helmand Valley in Afghanistan and on short notice. There could be immediate impact on drought victims in that southeastern region, support the farmers in the context of the poppy ban and major improvements started on the Boghra canal irrigation system, central Helmand, that would increase food production in this time of shortage in much of the rest of the country. I have been proposing such a multi-purpose activity since sometime last October. I have the skills, knowledge of the region, local contacts and a strong desire to field the proposed activities.

But beginning Wednesday, 18 July, I will be at a regional weavers conference in Logan, Utah showing and discussing Afghan refugee carpets and kilims. I will return on 23 July. If you need to contact me, I will have my cell-phone with me at the number above. I will be able to access my e-mail in this period.

On Canadian TV, I recently saw the Canadian Ambassador to Pakistan wringing his hands over the disastrous economic situation the poppy ban has put many Afghan farmers and in the context of the worse drought in living memory. It was as if the fact of the results of the poppy ban were not common knowledge since last December, at the latest. Has he been asleep? He suggested that something should be done but did not indicate that Canada, or anyone else for that matter, had a plan to do anything in support of the farmers. Some of the media reports tend to suggest that the Taliban poppy ban was somehow a bad idea that is causing problems rather than focusing on the significance of a seemingly powerless government successfully banning poppy cultivation without any help, in a country that was the world's largest producer. Impossible but it happened. The Taliban can do no right.

In an interview within the past three days, the head of the Afghanistan Commission on Narcotics, Taliban Abdul Hamid Akunzada, reported in *The Frontier Post*, outlined again the reasons for the poppy ban and the present situation as he saw it and that there was no apparent support action from the international community, except from Iran. It is approaching a year since the ban was initiated. His statements reflected an attitude of dissatisfaction if not distrust toward the UNDCP in its past actions and lack of timely response to the poppy ban. This is an attitude I have experienced on several occasions

with the Taliban and Helmand farmers. Generally the feeling is that a lot of money was spent by the UNDCP failed project with little results.

The Iranian media (IRNA) covered the same interview with Akunzada, who pointed out that Iran was the first country to support the poppy ban with several joint projects in Helmand and other southern provinces. The second phase is to provide training for alternative crops, fertilizer, improved wheat seed, insecticides and agricultural equipment. This is interesting since the Taliban do not trust the Iranians any more than we do.

The point is that it has been almost a year since the poppy ban that everyone thought impossible was announced. It was successful without the army being called out for enforcement and without millions being spent by the international community. Time is passing and we, perhaps the primary consumers of illegal opium products, have done nothing. The near-subsistence farmers of central Helmand are the losers. Timing is very important in this situation. As I have been noting for the past several months, even a gesture of support, of quick action, is better than current non-action. There are several actions that could be taken quickly:

Insecticides: The time is now to take action with the provision of insecticides to control the insect that attacked the cotton crop last year. The plants are up and maturing. The needed insecticides are no doubt available in the cotton growing regions of Pakistan. Sprayers and insecticides are available.

Seed: The fall planting season is fast approaching. The FAO wheat seed project has been functioning for years. It is nothing new and can be continued but wheat is no crop/economic substitute for poppy. Peanut planting season has come and gone. But winter vegetable planting season is coming and could be the target for the future...beginning this fall planting season. But action should be taken now to get good quality vegetable seeds into central Helmand, vegetables that the farmers know and understand and for which there is a market. As previously offered, I would be happy to make something significant happen in this area in time for fall planting. I have a list of the most useful seeds. I have the contacts with the seed companies that can deliver an order in record time to Pakistan. Between MCI and HAFO personnel past and presently available, a fall seed program can be initiated in record time. But action is necessary NOW, not in September which is 45 days from now. The timing of some support action for impact is very important and even more important for the Helmand farmers. We have wasted almost a year to act in support of the poppy ban. This does not suggest the best of intentions in the minds of the Helmand farmers. Can we take some action soon in support even if it is only a gesture? Any action? A team of experts with a new super cash crop is not necessary. All the elements are present. All that is necessary is some action...now.

The poppy ban in Afghanistan is perhaps the most significant anti-narcotics action any country in the world has been able to accomplish in recent history. The international community, mainly the U.S., helped Turkey control the flow of illegal opium produced as

a supplement to the legally grown but poorly controlled commercial poppy crop in the 1970's. Stan Samuelson of INM was a key player in this event. But this hardly compares with the banning of the total illegal poppy crop in Afghanistan of the world's primary producer. And the international community as reflected in the U.N. has grudgingly given the event an approving nod. NOT RIGHT.

I got side tracked in this discourse. But I again offer my services to initiate some meaningful support development action in support of the poppy ban. It can be done quickly and effectively but action is needed now. Time is passing. Time has passed. You all have copies of most of the concept papers and proposals I have been writing for the past year. I can make them happen. I am but a cell-phone call away.

Best wishes,

Richard B. Scott