

18 OCTOBER 2001

**TO: CHRISTINA ROCCA
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH ASIA
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**FR: RICHARD B. SCOTT - U.S.A.I.D. /AFGHANISTAN (RETIRED)
2598 BIG THOMPSON
DRAKE, CO 80515
TEL/FAX: 970-586-8485
ALT. FAX: 970-586-6685
E-mail: bmt@frii.com**

**SUBJ: ANOTHER UNSOLICITED COMMENT ON OUR PRESENT POLICY
TOWARD THE TALIBAN AND THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN:**

A TRAGEDY IN THE MAKING

**DO WE UNDERSTAND WHAT WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF DOING TO
THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN? DO WE CARE? GIVEN OUR RECENT
AND PRESENT ACTIONS IN THAT COUNTRY, I SUGGEST THAT THE
ANSWER TO BOTH QUESTIONS IS NO.**

**WE ARE KNOWINGLY AND WILLINGLY ENGAGED IN FOSTERING WHAT
IS BECOMING ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST HUMAN TRAGEDIES
AGAINST THE TALIBAN AND PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN THROUGH OUR
MISGUIDED AND NOW VENGEFUL FOREIGN POLICIES OVER THE PAST
YEARS. I HAVE OUTLINED SOME OF THESE FOR YOU AND YOUR
OFFICES IN FAX/MEMOS OVER THE PAST YEAR OR MORE.**

**AS MULLAH OMER HAS SUGGESTED ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS OVER
THE PAST 3 TO 5 YEARS, WE SHOULD HAVE SAT DOWN AT THE
CONFERENCE TABLE AND AT LEAST TRIED TO HASH OUT OUR
DIFFERENCES. PERHAPS WE DIDN'T BECAUSE THIS MIGHT HAVE
SUGGESTED SOME LEVEL OF RECOGNITION OF THAT GOVERNMENT.
INSTEAD WE HAVE DECLARED WAR ON THE TALIBAN, AND YES, THE
PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN. WE CANNOT SEPARATE THE TWO ON THE
GROUND AS WE CAN WITH A TWIST OF A PHRASE TO THE MEDIA. WE
HAVE CONSISTENTLY DELIVERED ULTIMATUMS AND THREATS TO THE
TALIBAN/PASHTUNS. ANYONE WHO HAS STUDIED PASHTUNS KNOWS
THIS APPROACH INSURES REJECTION. UNFORTUNATELY THEY ARE AS
PROUD A PEOPLE AS WE ARE. IT IS RESULTING IN THEIR DEATHS.**

HAS ANYONE IN STATE DEPARTMENT ASKED THE QUESTION: *HOW DARE THE TALIBAN REFUSE OUR DEMANDS TO TURN OVER AN INTERNATIONALLY HUNTED MAN?* THIS IN THE CONTEXT OF:

- **FACING THE GREATEST AND MOST TECHNICALLY ADVANCED ARMY IN WORLD HISTORY WITH PERHAPS THE MOST UNDERDEVELOPED “ARMY” IN THE WORLD TODAY;**
- **FOUR YEARS INTO THE WORST DROUGHT IN LIVING MEMORY CAUSING FURTHER FOOD SHORTAGES, POVERTY AND DISPLACEMENT;**
- **A DRAINING CIVIL WAR AMIDST THE RUBBLE THE RUSSIANS LEFT BEHIND, INCLUDING MORE THAN A MILLION DEATHS;**
- **A GOVERNMENT WITH NO TAX BASE, MANNED BY PEOPLE WITH NEITHER TRAINING NOR EXPERIENCE IN THEIR JOBS;**
- **UNDERSTANDING THAT THEIR REJECTION OF OUR TERMS MEANS THE END OF THEIR GOVERNMENT, DEATH FOR THOUSANDS MORE AFGHANS (TARGETED OR NOT), INCLUDING THEIR OWN FAMILIES, AND CONTINUED DESTRUCTION OF THEIR COUNTRY;**
- **SEEING THEIR ENEMIES, THE RUSSIANS, STANDING ON THE SIDELINES CHEERING, AND WITNESSING US, THEIR PAST FRIENDS, BOMBING BIG RUBBLE INTO SMALL RUBBLE AND CALLING IT A “MILITARY OPERATION.”**

WHY?

THEY DON'T THINK LIKE US

THEY DO NOT THINK LIKE US. WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT THEM TO ACT LIKE US. WE SHOULD AT LEAST TRY TO UNDERSTAND THEM BEFORE WE GO MUCH FURTHER IN TRYING TO DESTROY THEM. THE STARTING POINT FOR UNDERSTANDING IS TO ESTABLISH A POSITIVE DIALOGUE, BASED NOT ON THREATS BUT ON FINDING A SOLUTION TO OUR MUTUAL PROBLEMS. THE TIME FOR NEGOTIATIONS, OR A BETTER WORD, DIALOGUE, IS NEVER TOO LATE WHEN SEARCHING FOR A REAL SOLUTION AND NOT SIMPLY VENGEANCE. THE PASHTUN TRADITION TO PROBLEM-SOLVING INVOLVES EXTENDED DIALOGUE, OFTEN REQUIRING DAYS AND WEEKS. SOLUTIONS DO NOT RESULT FROM A SCANT 2 HOUR VISIT BY A HIGH LEVEL U.S. DIPLOMAT.

THE AFGHANS, LIKE THEIR SOCIETY, ARE COMPLEX TO THE POINT OF CONFUSING, MADE UP OF MANY ETHNIC, LINGUISTIC, SECT, TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPS, MOST OF WHOM DO NOT LIKE ONE ANOTHER IN THE BEST OF TIMES. THE RUSSIANS USED THESE DIFFERENCES IN THEIR 10-YEAR ATTEMPT TO SUBDUE THE AFGHANS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE MID-1980S THE RUSSIANS SENT JAWSJANI

(UZBEK-AFGHANS) TROOPS INTO KANDAHAR, ASSOCIATED WITH OUR "FRIEND" GEN. DOSTUM, AND GIVEN A FREE HAND TO BREAK THE PASHTUN SPIRIT OF RESISTANCE TO THE RUSSIANS (AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK). THIS RESULTED IN ATROCITIES BY THE JAWSJANIS NEVER ADDRESSED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND NEVER FORGOTTEN BY THE KANDAHARIS.

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES ARE AT THE BASE OF THE CIVIL WAR. WE ARE ON THE EDGE OF PLAYING THIS GAME OURSELVES, STARTING WITH THE IMBALANCE OF THE MOST RECENT EMBARGO THAT ALLOWS THE RUSSIANS, INDIANS, IRANIANS AND USA TO SUPPLY AND SUPPORT THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE. THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE REPRESENTS THE COUNTRY'S MINORITY GROUPS, AGAINST THE DOMINANT PASHTUN TALIBAN. AND NOW WE HAVE BEGUN TO SHOOT UP THE PASHTUN (READ TALIBAN) FRONTLINES WITH OUR GUN-SHIPS.

NEED FOR RECOGNITION; A CALL FOR HELP

THE TALIBAN WANTED INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR WHAT THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED: RESTORING PEACE AND SECURITY FROM ANARCHY IN MOST OF THE COUNTRY. THEY HAVE USED HARSH MEASURES TO ACCOMPLISH THIS BUT WITH A POPULATION THAT HAD BEEN AT WAR WITH CENTRAL AUTHORITY FOR 15 YEARS, A SOFT APPROACH WOULD NOT HAVE WORKED. WE KNOW THIS BUT WE CHOOSE TO IGNORE THE FACT.

THE TALIBAN'S GESTURE OF BANNING OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION WAS A MOVE FOR RECOGNITION WHICH ALSO WE CHOSE TO IGNORE. THEY ACCOMPLISHED THE BAN BY SIMPLE DECREE. NO OTHER COUNTRY (INCLUDING OURSELVES) IN THE WORLD HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THE END OF A WELL-ESTABLISHED NARCOTICS PRODUCTION. AND THEY DID THIS MAINLY IN THE REGIONS (PASHTUN) WHERE THEY GET MOST OF THEIR POLITICAL SUPPORT, DESTROYING THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY IN THE PROCESS. THE ILLEGAL DRUG-CONSUMING INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, INSTEAD OF SUPPORTING THE BAN, SCRATCHED ITS HEAD AND CHOSE TO SPECULATE ABOUT TALIBAN MOTIVES. WE BARELY GAVE THEM A NOD OF RECOGNITION FOR THIS INCREDIBLE ACTION.

**DID WE UNDERSTAND THEN THE IMPLICATIONS OF OUR INACTION?
I DO NOT THINK SO.**

AMERICAN CONCEPTS OF UNITY DO NOT APPLY HERE

WITH THEIR RISE IN TRADITIONALLY CONSERVATIVE KANDAHAR, THE PASHTUN TALIBAN BROUGHT SECURITY TO MOST OF THE COUNTRY THAT HAD BEEN IN ANARCHY. YES, THEY USED HARSH MEASURES TO BRING INTERNAL SECURITY. BUT OUR CONCEPTS OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD NOT APPLY IN THAT COUNTRY WHERE CIVIL STRIFE FOR FIFTEEN YEARS PERSISTED GENERALLY AGAINST THOSE IN CENTRAL AUTHORITY.

WHAT IS NOW THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE SAT IN KABUL IN THE MIDST OF ANARCHY AFTER THE FALL OF THE COMMUNIST AND THE RUSSIAN WITHDRAWAL, UNABLE TO UNIFY ANY OF THE COUNTRY. OUR POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN AT THE TIME WAS NOT ONE OF INVOLVEMENT AND MEDIATION BUT TO SIT BACK AND WATCH. OUR FOCUS WAS ON THE SOVIET UNION THEN IN THE PROCESS OF FALLING APART.
OUR BIG MISTAKE.

WHAT DOES THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE DO AFTER WE HAVE HELPED THEM TO TAKE KABUL? WILL THEY CONTINUE ON SOUTHWARD INTO THE PASHTUN REGIONS? IF THEY ARE SMART – THEY WON'T.

THERE WILL BE NO PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN UNLESS THE PUSHTUNS ARE IN THE DOMINANT GOVERNING ROLES. THE MINORITIES MAY PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT BUT CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO RULE THE PASHTUNS. IT WILL NOT HAPPEN. AND THE LONGER THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORTS THE VARIOUS FACTIONS AGAINST ONE ANOTHER RATHER THAN GIVING AN ALL OUT EFFORT TO MEDIATE FOR PEACE, THE MORE DIFFICULT IT WILL BE FOR THE FACTIONS TO COME TOGETHER AGAIN AS ONE COUNTRY, IF EVER. AMERICAN CONCEPTS OF NATIONAL UNITY DO NOT APPLY HERE.

IN OUR ATTACKS, WE HAVE PROBABLY ELIMINATED OUR POTENTIAL ROLE AS MEDIATORS. WE ARE NO LONGER NEUTRAL IN THE CIVIL WAR. BASED ON MY RECENT OBSERVATIONS OF THE U.N. IN THE KANDAHAR REGION, THE U.N. IS NOT CAPABLE OF FILLING THIS ROLE. NOR IS THE U.N. CAPABLE OF HEADING THE AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT AS WE HAVE RECENTLY SUGGESTED, IF AND WHEN THE FIGHTING ENDS. THE U.N. HAS TENDED TO SEND THIRD RATE, THIRD WORLDERS TO REPRESENT THEM IN AFGHANISTAN.

THE AFGHAN EDUCATED ELITE, APPARENTLY OUR PRESENT ADVISORS, MOSTLY FLED THE COUNTRY WITH THE COMMUNIST COUP AND THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF 1978-79. THERE WAS ANOTHER BAIL OUT OF THE EDUCATED WITH THE RUSSIAN WITHDRAWAL IN 1988. TO MANY OF THESE PEOPLE, THE TALIBAN AND THE RURAL POPULATION OF THE COUNTRY, PERHAPS 85 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL, ARE IGNORANT AND STUPID. TRUE, THEY ARE GENERALLY UNEDUCATED OR NOT HIGHLY EDUCATED BY WESTERN STANDARDS BUT NOT STUPID. THEY HAVE A VERY STRONG SET OF TRADITIONAL VALUES, MANY OF WHICH WE DO NOT SHARE (THEY DON'T THINK LIKE US). BUT THESE VALUES ARE THE VERY FOUNDATIONS, THE STRENGTH OF THIS TRADITIONALLY-ORIENTED SOCIETY.

AS PREVIOUSLY NOTED, I HAVE BEEN A STUDENT, ANALYST AND LOW-LEVEL PARTICIPANT IN AFGHAN AFFAIRS FOR THE PAST 30 YEARS BY MY OWN CHOICE. AS WITH MANY AMERICANS THAT HAVE WORKED IN AFGHANISTAN WITH THE AFGHANS, ESPECIALLY AT THE SMALL TOWN AND RURAL LEVEL, IT IS DIFFICULT TO STAND BY AND WATCH US ATTEMPT TO DESTROY EVEN FURTHER THE VERY FABRIC OF THIS STRONG-WILLED SOCIETY WITH ITS VERY FOUNDATIONS BASED ON A CONSERVATIVE ISLAM. TO A GREAT EXTENT THIS SOCIETY IS UNEDUCATED BUT SMART, STRONG- WILLED, MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY TOUGH. WE HAVE BEEN JUDGING THE TALIBAN AND THE PASHTUNS THAT SUPPORT THEM ON THE BASIS OF AMERICAN VALUES AND THOSE OF THE AFGHAN URBAN ELITE THAT I ASSUME HAVE BEEN OUR CHIEF ADVISORS ON AFGHANISTAN. BUT MOST OF THE AFGHANS ARE RURAL PEOPLE WHO DO NOT SHARE THESE VALUES. RATHER THEY SHARE THE FUNDAMENTALIST'S (RELIGIOUS NOT POLITICAL, AND WE MUST TRY TO MAKE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TWO) ISLAMIC VALUES.

WHAT DO OUR PRESENT ATTACKS ON AFGHANISTAN ACCOMPLISH?

1. WE ARE TURNING OUR PAST FRIENDS, THE AFGHANS, AGAINST US.

WE ARE KILLING AFGHANS, PROBABLY A VERY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF PASHTUNS THAT ARE THE DOMINANT ETHNIC GROUP IN THE COUNTRY. ALL THE FOOD DROPS IN THE WORLD WILL NOT MAKE UP FOR THE KILLING. AND THE PASHTUNS HAVE A VERY LONG MEMORY. I ASSUME THAT THE PROPAGANDA LEAFLETS WE ARE DROPPING TO THIS PRIMARILY ILLITERATE PEOPLE ASSURING

THEM OF OUR FRIENDSHIP IS PRIMARILY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE U.S. PUBLIC. EVEN IF THE AFGHANS COULD READ THE LEAFLETS, THEY WOULD HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME UNDERSTANDING THE LOGIC. YOU CANNOT KILL PEOPLE AND ASSURE THEM OF YOUR FRIENDSHIP AT THE SAME TIME. WE CAN SEPARATE THE TALIBAN FROM THE AFGHANS AT THIS DISTANCE BUT BOMBING RUNS AND GUNSHIP ATTACKS DO NOT MAKE THIS DISTINCTION. OUR SPECIAL AFGHAN CHILDREN'S FUND SHOULD BE RE-NAMED THE ORPHAN'S FUND.

- 2. WE ARE TURNING MUCH IF NOT MOST OF THE MUSLIM WORLD AGAINST US.**

SEVERAL ISLAMIC GOVERNMENTS ARE NOMINALLY WITH US BUT YOU CAN BE SURE THAT THE POPULATIONS, AGAIN MOSTLY RURAL AND SMALL TOWN PEOPLE, DO NOT ACCEPT OUR ATTACKS ON WHAT THE WORLD KNOWS TO BE A DEFENSELESS BUT PROUD AND DEVOUT PEOPLE – THE AFGHANS.

- 3. WE HAVE MADE A FOLK HERO OF BIN LADEN.**

IT SAYS SOMETHING WHEN A MAN WITH A ONE MILLION DOLLAR (MORE NOW) PRICE ON HIS HEAD HAS BEEN WALKING AROUND IN A COUNTRY THAT HAS A PER CAPITA INCOME OF MAYBE \$1,000 FOR THE PAST 4 TO 5 YEARS. AS I REMEMBER, I WAS ASKED ABOUT THIS IN AFGHANISTAN IN 1997-98. FOR MOST RURAL AFGHANS AS WITH MUCH OF THE MUSLIM WORLD, BIN LADEN IS NOT AFGHANISTAN'S ENEMY...WE ARE.

- 4. WE ARE UNDERMINING THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN.**

OUR ALLIES FOR SOME 50 YEARS, WE NOW INSIST ON THEIR SUPPORT, KNOWING THAT A SIZABLE PERCENTAGE OF THE PEOPLE ARE AGAINST WHAT WE ARE DOING IN AFGHANISTAN. NOT EVERYONE GOES INTO THE STREET WITH THEIR BELIEFS. OUR ACTIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT'S ASSOCIATION WITH US IS UNDERCUTTING THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION AND HAS UNDERMINED THE ECONOMY, WHICH DEPENDS HEAVILY ON EXPORTS. ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD DOES NOT BUY POLITICAL SUPPORT AND CONFIDENCE OF A PEOPLE FOR THEIR

GOVERNMENT. AND OUR GOOD "FRIENDS", THE INDIANS, ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION WITH THEIR ATTACKS ON PAKISTAN.

5. WE HAVE SET IN MOTION THE LARGEST MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES SINCE THE RUSSIAN INVASION.

BEGINNING WITH OUR THREATS OF ATTACK AND WITH OUR ATTACKS, WE HAVE SET IN MOTION THE LARGEST MOVEMENT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL (TO PAKISTAN AND IRAN) REFUGEES SINCE THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN. ALREADY UNDER STRESS FROM DROUGHT CONDITIONS AND CIVIL WAR, WE HAVE ACCELERATED A PROCESS TO WHICH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, EVEN WITH OUR MASSIVE HELP, WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COPE. IN OUR MINDS, THE TALIBAN CAUSED IT. IN THE MINDS OF THE REFUGEES, THEY KNOW WE CAUSED IT. WE HAVE KNOWINGLY INITIATED A MAJOR HUMAN DISASTER - A TRAGEDY.

EXCEPT FOR A LOSS OF A BIT OF PRIDE AS THE MOST POWERFUL NATION IN THE WORLD, A BIT OF POLITICAL IMAGERY IN RESPONSE TO THE NEW YORK ATTACK, AND THE SWEETNESS OF VENGEANCE, IT IS NEVER TOO LATE FOR DIALOGUE - DIALOGUE IN LIEU OF KILLING PEOPLE, INNOCENT PEOPLE. THIS IS OUR CHOICE, NOT THEIRS.

IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THE SHIFT OF THE MEDIA RHETORIC, DRAWN FROM BRIEFINGS, THAT HAS ALLOWED "TALIBAN" TO BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH "TERRORIST". SIMILARLY, THE MISSIONARIES ARRESTED IN KABUL FOR PROSELYTIZING HAVE BECOME "HOSTAGES." TRUTH: THE FIRST CASUALITY?

I REMAIN READY TO DISCUSS ANY OF THESE ISSUES WITH ANYONE SEARCHING FOR A SOLUTION TO THE AFGHAN SITUATION OTHER THAN ANNIHILATION OF ITS PEOPLE. I OFFER MY SERVICES TO HELP IN ANY WAY TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT I HAVE SUGGESTED IN THIS COMMUNICATION. IT WOULD BE A VERY DIFFICULT TASK BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE. LET US STOP KILLING AFGHANS AND TRY TALKING TO THEM INSTEAD. THEY DO NOT THINK LIKE US.

**CC: J. MORRITY, SOUTH ASIA
E. KVITASHVILI, USAID/DISASTER RELIEF**