

~~27 March 1999~~

To: Mark Pont, MCI/Quetta

From: Dick Scott, MCI/Lashkar Gah

~~Subject: A Question on the FAO Seed Project~~

As noted in a previous memo, a Taliban with no ax to grind told me that our FAO seed project was buying seed off the local market in Lashkar Gah and Girish, cleaning it and re-selling it as something special at a higher price. Since this statement, I have been told by other sources that this is in fact the case. I was told by an MCI employee that the FAO project was a seed multiplication program where they bring in good seed, give it to select farmers, and re-buy it at harvest time. But this is apparently not what the Taliban have observed. When you start to get a variety of stories about what is happening, it is time to take a closer look. I do not think we need to have the Taliban get involved in the actions of one of our projects, especially if it involves not exactly above board arrangements. They tend to be harsh in their judgements.

I suggest that you warn FAO of the potential problem and have them do an independent audit of the program in the field. It is their money. If records start to disappear, it will tell you something.

It may be nothing but it is better to be too cautious than too late.