

1 April 1999

Mark,

In response to your memo of 31 March, here is some of the information. Virtually all of it has been included in more detail in past memos.

1. I have no information on crop substitution activities except that I know that FAO Mr. Shinwari appeared in Lashkar Gah on several occasions monitoring the FAO grain program. And I saw the fruit trees come in and go out. We all had our hands full with the desilting program during this limited period. See the accomplishments listing.

We did bring in 150 pounds of three varieties of Texas watermelon seed for sale and distribution. One of the varieties, 20 pounds, was of a hybrid variety, seeds will be good only for the first generation. The other two varieties were regular and the farmers can save the seeds for next year.

We brought in 150 pounds of three varieties of cotton seed from the U.S. These will be distributed to recognized cotton farmers with isolated fields in the Nad-i-Ali and Marja areas, some in north Shamalan where it can be monitored carefully. I had a meeting with and left a memo with Eng. Payenda, acting office chief, Nekzad and Habibullah to gather the necessary people together to decide on a price for the seed and get it distributed. It is planting time now. Delay would not achieve the goal of getting the seed out this crop season.

On my way through Kandahar, I learned that there was a stock of peanut seed there. If anyone goes that direction within the next week, a large supply of this seed should be taken to Helmand and try to get it distributed in the Shovel siphon area of Nad-i-Ali mainly and other interested areas. We saw field preparation in both Nad-i-Ali and Marja that were said to be for peanuts but we did not know of our supply of seeds at that time. Without very quick action, it will be too late for distribution this crop season. This is the kind of information that needs to be generally known so that it can be made use of. Seed does no good sitting in a store room.

It should be sent to the MCI ag. people in the two areas areas of focus. They will likely know individuals that can use the seed this year. Good PR and good for increased incomes locally.

To date there has been no one season cash crop seed distribution in these two key areas of focus for opium control. Wheat, which is not a cash crop and fruit trees which is a very long term investment but will not add to incomes this crop year have programs in the areas noted.

Korez...We pulled Aziz away for the korez work into the desilting program to organize the Marja hand labor program which he did. Soon after eid, he said that the weather would allow his work in the north to start again. We did get requests for more work on korez systems from villages in Nauzad, some having been channelled through the governors office. Photo copies of these requests are included in the folder I have left for your information. If I remember, I can send you a couple of articles on the history of korez systems and their distribution over the world, as I remember from the 1950s and '60's. At least one of them is the most standard reference on the subject in asian studies. Nothing better has been written since.

2. If individual field staff members can be pulled in to the central Helmand region, and I emphasize field staff, the desilting project can easily continue. But it will require full time supervision and monitoring. Presently we have lost the 3 HAFO people, Aziz and myself. Engineers Samad, Payenda and Wardak remain. Wardak should be preparing for the weir project as should Samad if this work is to get under way as scheduled for about July. This may require pushing Wardak a bit but also Samad has the best relationship with the HAVA guy who will send the machinery when needed, if it is still available. There is also independent engineer Gul Jan who lives in Lashkar Gah. But to bring the field work in silting of either canals or drains back up to the previous levels, you will need more people and people that are willing to stay at the work sites on a daily basis. If this can be done, then the following:

1. Continue the desilting down the Boghra to the Marja wasteway. When the backhoes get to the wasteway, continue on down the wasteway because this wasteway drains the drains of Marja.

2. As possible, clean both Nad-i-Ali and Marja wasteways as far as the Helmand river, which is a big task, a long way and some of it may not be reachable with the rather limited-reach backhoes. This is the very long term goal. But what ever cleaning down these channels that can be done will improve things for both area drains. What could happen is that MCI could get some of the regular drains in the region cleaned but the water still does not move. Both the Marja wasteway and the Nad-i-Ali wasteway are key exits for the water. But again, these are long term goals and cannot be done in one season.

The two old draglines, if they have not been moved, are still probably at the intake. These could be moved to the deep drains in both Nad-i-Ali and Marja, one in each location, and start to work. You must expect continual breakdowns as was the pattern in the past but they can work the deep drains as long as they run. But again, you need a staff member at each site to keep count of the hours worked each day. There must be no exception to this rule.

3. For immediate impact, get with Mohd. Karim in Nad-i-Ali and identify the most critical intermediate drains for cleaning by hand labor. This could be started in July after the second season crops are in the ground. The hot season is the best time to work these drains by hand. The men will be working in water.

After the backhoes are finished with the Boghra and some of the wasteway, move them into the Marja area to work on the larger drains that can be reached by this equipment. Some of the deep drains cannot be worked but since they will already be in the Marja area, they can get to drains that need work without the need of low-boys to move them, probably. Someone needs to take a look to see how this may apply. There have always been problems with getting the low-boy to move equipment. Sar Malim should be consulted to identify the drains to be worked.

Wardak will need one of these backhoes for his work on the weir. Keep them busy until he needs his. All of this assumes available funding to keep these machines working through this period of time.

If adequate numbers of supervisory staff can be found, hand labor cleaning can also be started in Marja but this would be spreading the available staff very thin and Marja will be a greater problem of supervision than Nad-i-Ali. Sar Malim did not get as involved with the work as Mohd. Karim. And this assumes that Mohd. Karim can be convinced to go to work for us again the way he did during the first work period. At that time, he went all out. To some great but unknown extent, it can be assumed that these men's involvement is critical to labor organization for hand labor. At some point, Eng. Samad raised a question about the number of shovels lost in the Nad-i-Ali hand labor exercise and tended to blame Mohd. Karim who was offended. It amounted to some 20 shovels which is nothing out of some 900 shovels we put into the area on many occasions, as the labor force expanded, by many different people without sign off paper work. Marja lost many more than Nad-i-Ali with a greater staff but more scattered work sites. And in all cases, the daily labor force varied according to the work needs at home for the laborers. I had originally planned to give the shovels to each worker at the end of the work season as a bonus for good work but we did not do it. It was about one days salary in value. We should have but we do have a lot of shovels available for work in the hand labor starts up again. I would guess it will not start up again. Engineers, who will be in charge now dont like hand labor on a large scale, too much work to keep up with them. And heavy machinery is what all modern engineers work with...tongue in cheek. But as things develop, keep this in mind. Hand labor puts more income into the hands of the local population. The use of heavy machinery does not do this.

4. The time for a major program in summer vegetable seed that I noted at an earlier time, is virtually past. Next year. You might aim at the coming winter vegetable season. Your ag guys can tell you what vegetables can be grown and in what quantities. In the areas of focus, the field work to sell the idea should start in the not too distant future. August and September, probably. But I would try for a really big program. The focus areas that I have always identified: Nad-i-Ali, Marja and now, Shamalan. Flood the area with vegetable seeds at rock bottom prices. If started early, it may give the impression that the Taliban are going to do something about poppy. Spread this rumor. If we can get Jim over to Lashkar Gah for discussions, it could become a reality. If he cannot go, then someone else can go. But it has to be someone with a positive view of the Taliban. But I think they are hoping for someone from the embassy. They are hoping for Jim. They will make an agreement that they will enforce if someone will respond to the letter they sent.

In whatever action is taken in development, it should be focused on the three major areas irrigated by the Boghra, noted above, it should be high profile and directly useful to the farmers, and if possible, immediate income producing for the rural population. And support cotton production in any way and every way possible. Get other organizations involved if possible. Get FAO to support a fertilizer for cotton credit program instead of the fertilizer for wheat program. Help establish a credit program in the cotton gin for this purpose. Like all past programs, there are people still around that helped run the cotton and credit programs and likely they are the ones that did much of the work. The administrators all left at the start of the war.

5. Increase the size and the speed of the Boghra canal gate repair project so that it will finish some time and can be seen by the farmers who will eventually benefit by the work. It is too slow and virtually invisible at present.

6. Boghra command area projects are aimed at poppy production as long as Jim and UNDCP are the donors. Therefore they should be focused on irrigation repair and cash crops. Increased incomes are the goal. Large scale hand labor projects. Increase incomes without poppy. Do the repair work. Strongly support immediate cash crops, cotton, vegetables, peanuts, etc. and the Taliban will backup poppy reduction. Some help with market identification and marketing would be appreciated. MCI does not have to, cannot do it all. But try to get other organizations involved. There is a lot of work for everyone. But whatever work, it has to be fast, effective and visible...large scale.

7. On percentage of reduction, it would depend on the speed of the replacement work. Presently the percentage would have to be very low. We have not done much that will actually change the farmers lives. Water is good but it must be used on something other than poppy and we need to show and help them select the profitable alternatives. Flood them with alternatives.

Probably 10 % next year if the Taliban will come in on it. If some of the alternative programs come into effect, along with Taliban involvement, reduction will take care of itself as the real alternatives develop. Not 10 years to stop poppy but 2, 3 or 4 maximum with an effective program, and Taliban involvement.

8. With all programs, keep the Taliban informed and involved but not as supervisors nor making decisions in programs. Periodically ask them for help with something, anything that you know they can make happen. But they have to benefit from the project as well as the farmers but in a different way. They should get credit for their participation in the program.

9. Things to help MCI in the field:

Communications. Communications. Communications. Communications.

Radio. Telephone. Whatever but an effective system or systems for communication between Quetta, Kandahar, Lashkar Gah and Girishk. A net is needed.

In addition, for field staff of anywhere the size we had during this work period, small short range radios so field supervisors can keep in touch without having to shake hands.

Effective message passing procedure.

Paperwork on all movement of goods and equipment.

Inventories of everything

All of the above have to do with paper work , the passing of information between all elements like the net noted for communications. There is little or no message passing at the present time. I did not even get E-mails on a regular basis at a time when a lot of people were coming into the area from Quetta, that in fact I learned about frequently by accident. There is no system of touching base when people from outside come through.

The cashiers must become service oriented not decision makers nor free lance operators. They must be responsible to central authorities. This will require a long term training exercise on what their jobs are about. Because they carry large sums of money and are trusted, they tend to have the impression that they are in charge and not a service provider. This is apparently a long term pattern that will be hard to break. But it should be changed. The job they are doing is not that good, running out of funds regularly in the middle of pay days. Accident or some game, I was never sure but it was highly ineffective and reflected badly on MCI.

Draw up a chain of command diagram and distribute it. Who reports to whom. Required reporting to the various offices on arrival in a province.

The importance of the sharing of information among all staff to keep everyone involved and participating. There should be no surprises to anyone in project events. There is a tendency for some of the senior staff to feel that information should not be shared. Samad for example. Information on what is going on is considered by some of the less enlightened to be the domain of the leaders. Hoarding of information is a common pattern. If everyone knows what is going on then this somehow reduces the status of the senior people...wrong if the senior people know what they are doing.

I have always tried over the past 35 or so years to document everything but document reality not only what I would like to be. The like it to be information should be labeled as such, like a VOA editorial. Documentation makes some people nervous but it should not assume everyone is functioning with reality. And I have always tried to keep everyone on the staff, from sweepers, drivers to office managers informed of project goals and what is happening. If we like it or not, every level of staff passes information on whatever project to outside people. Better this be based on accurate information than in ignorance...assuming the goals are legitimate.