

To: 8:32 UNM OIPS  
Ron McMullen (Afghanistan Desk)

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Subject: Developments in Afghanistan

I hope you will pardon the presumption of my involving myself in this matter, but over the weekend the Afghan network has been lighting up with concerns over developments in southern and western Afghanistan. I wanted to pass this along to you -- and to Lee if you think anything below warrants his attention.



TALIBAN

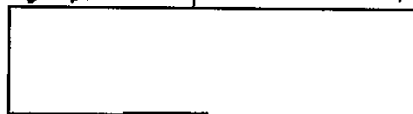
[Redacted] told me this AM that he is concerned that the GOP (ISI) is deeply involved in the Taleban take over in Kandahar and Qalat. He is worried that the GOP may be seeking to "pacify" Afghanistan, inter alia to open commerce from Central Asia to Karachi via the Herat-Kandahar-Chamman road. He suspects that the Mesteri plan will either be sabotaged or substantially altered by this undertaking.

An Afghan contact in Dushanbe told me this AM that there is a Rabbani-ISI deal according to which Rabbani has agreed to an ISI move into southern and western Afghanistan so long as it does not extend to a challenge of Ismail Khan in Herat. The thinking of this source is that Rabbani is exploiting the widening gulf between Gulbuddin and ISI -- growing out of ISI's impression that Gulbuddin will be unable to move beyond the Kabul stalemate as it (and HG) had expected. (A US journalist in Tashkent this AM called to say that he has heard the Taleban might be moving toward Gardez -- with involvement in Kabul intended.)

Afghans here in the U.S. who claim to be in phone contact with Afghans in Quetta allege that Pak Air Force officials are readying Kandahar airport for support of still larger military operations to include heavier fighting in Helmand and Farah. One Afghan asserts as fact involvement of Pak military with the Taleban and that old Khalqis are serving as enforcers in Kandahar. While many/most Afghan commanders would be constrained in condemning this alleged GOP intervention by virtue of their own dependence on Pakistan, there appears to be significant sentiment within the diaspora against the GOP move.

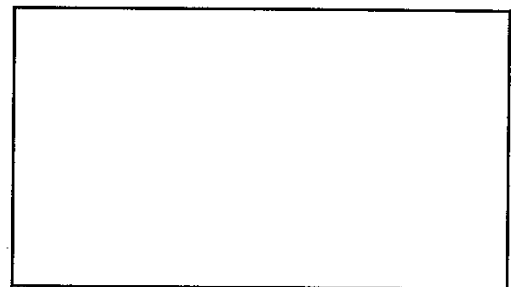
For what they are worth my own views are as follows: while action to end the chaos in Afghanistan, and to direct Central Asian commerce south rather than west, appears positive, my sense is that foreign intervention, especially by Paks who are not liked, notably in the South), ultimately will generate resistance. While the absence of any source of foreign support for such resistance may limit its intensity, it will mean at least long term instability. Continued GOP interference in Afghanistan could lead to Afghan-Pak conflict. Moreover, I fear the implications for Mesteri's efforts entailed in these developments. If the Mesteri plan is somehow linked to this intervention, it will undermine the plan. Alternatively, it could be aimed at sabotaging the plan.

Ron: This FAX was missent on 12/5. This AM I've heard that General Barbar is running this Taleban opp.



(12/7)

For info of [Redacted]



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