

RELEASE IN PART
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From: H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 10, 2010 1:44 PM
To: 'sullivanjj@state.gov'
Subject: Re: IN CONFIDENCE: Afghanistan: Analysis by [redacted]

B6

Did RCH share this w Gen P?
I will be reachable on my berry for the next few hours.

----- Original Message -----

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
To: H
Sent: Sat Apr 10 13:31:15 2010
Subject: Fw: IN CONFIDENCE: Afghanistan: Analysis by [redacted]

See below. Meeting with embassy folks now -- will report on that and dinner later.

From: Holbrooke, Richard
To: Singh, Vikram J; Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Sat Apr 10 08:59:21 2010
Subject: Fw: IN CONFIDENCE: Afghanistan: Analysis by [redacted]

From: [redacted]
To: Eikenberry, Karl W; Ricciardone, Francis J; Holbrooke, Richard
Sent: Fri Apr 09 09:02:14 2010
Subject: IN CONFIDENCE: Afghanistan: Analysis by [redacted]

Karl, Frank, Richard,

I hope in the next few days we can focus on some of the themes in the following:

1. On 9 April, I had lunch in Kabul with [redacted] expert on Afghanistan now based at [redacted] [redacted] was on his way back to Washington via a meeting in Paris with the French Political Director. He had just spend three weeks in Kandahar and Gardez, his first visit since August last year. He came across as patriotic, but deeply worried, speaking in a monologue, mostly in French.

OVERALL SITUATION

2. [] said that his assessment was that the overall situation had deteriorated sharply since his last visit. The Taliban were stronger, and more confident, than ever. ISAF was inflicting heavy losses on them, but the scale was as nothing compared with what the mujahideen had endured at the hands of the Russians. Moreover, the change in rules of engagement – to prevent civilian casualties, and fewer night raids – had been interpreted by the Taliban as signalling weakness on NATO's part. In [] view, most of the East, and Kunduz, was effectively lost to the Taliban and their fellow travellers. US forces in the East controlled the ground they occupied or passed over, but little more: they were in a similar position to the Soviet Army. Moreover, the population did not want to back them, and was resisting US attempts to set up tribal militias or implant US Special Forces in the villages. [] did, however, acknowledge that he had heard that the US Marines in Helmand were behaving much more sensitively towards the population than had been expected. But the situation in Marjah was not good. Of course, the Marines held the ground, but violence would continue for months or years. This did not offer the positive signal of momentum for which the Coalition had been hoping.

B6

KANDAHAR

3. [] said repeatedly that he did not understand the strategy in Kandahar. The Taliban had effectively penetrated, and largely controlled, a city of one million people. The ANP there were largely Barakzai, and working for either or both of the Taliban or Ahmed Wali Karzai's network. AWK was at the centre of a vast criminal enterprise: his brother-in-law was one of the largest drug traffickers in the south. When I said that surely ISAF could gradually occupy the city, squeezing the Taliban back and out, [] said he was not certain of that: he thought that there might well be quite violent resistance from the Taliban. He was also dismissive of the ISAF strategy of "managing" AWK: if the latter really did abandon his criminal ways, he would be dead. He would lose the protection of his militias. In such situations, one could only move forward, or go into prison or exile: there was no going back. AWK had just too many enemies to survive in Kandahar without the protection of his own criminal networks. [] guess was that AWK would promise to be good, but in reality stick to his old habits, and hope to profit from the action taken by ISAF against the Taliban. [] was dismissive of efforts to empower Governor Weesa, who would not survive five minutes in Kandahar without Western support and protection. Although Weesa came from the area, he had no power base, and, with his Canadian nationality, was regarded by the Kandaharis as a foreigner.

4. [] was also sceptical as to whether ISAF could "shura" its way to success in Kandahar. On the military side, he thought ISAF just couldn't generate the force densities necessary to control the city: for example, he thought the Argandab would require getting on for 15,000 troops to control it properly. The city of Kandahar would require some 10,000 fresh police, who were just not available.

NEXT STEPS

5. [] said he was worried about where the coalition was heading. The best that could be expected was a messy stalemate in Kandahar, but the probability was, by the early autumn, an outcome that would not look at all like success.

[] wondered whether ISAF really did need to go ahead with its plan to take Kandahar: in [] view, he was riding for a fall. I said that I did not see how we could pull back now. The planners were well aware of the risks, but wanted to generate positive momentum to enable a political process to take hold.

MAKING PEACE

6. [] said that, in his view, the only way out now was a negotiated peace with the Taliban and all the other parties to the conflict. He thought that Pakistan would need to help Karzai and the Americans open such a dialogue with the Taliban, but, sooner or later, both Pakistan and Karzai would need to be moved to one side, and there would need to be direct talks between the Americans and the Taliban. The Taliban would not make a final peace with Karzai, who had little credibility left. Similarly, the senior Taliban leaders would need to be brought across the border into Afghanistan, to get them out from under the control of the ISI. All this would need deception and trickery: for the first time in his career, [] could see that diplomats were needed, in this case to finesse a delicate process, involving multiple negotiations. Karzai would have to be eased out, but gently and with plenty of public respect.

7. [] said that there would need to be a cease-fire, and wondered why ISAF couldn't occupy the high ground by being the first to offer such a move. There would also have to be frank discussions about the withdrawal of foreign forces.

8. [] said that his main worry was that the Obama Administration would waste another year ploughing on with a military campaign which could deliver stalemate at best, and a serious reverse at worst. Then, with the 2011-12 Presidential election campaign getting going, the White House would panic, handing the problem to Pakistan, and pull US troops out more quickly than the situation merited. It was vital to get ahead of the curve, and start making preparations now for a messy political process that could last months or years.

9. [] said that he had known from 2001 that the Western intervention in Afghanistan had been fraught with danger. He had suspected then, and knew even more strongly now, that the Taliban could not be defeated or even properly contained by military means. Once again, he was sick with worry at the way things were going. He had thought that the Obama Administration had understood that the solutions in Afghanistan were political, not military. He was trying to think how he and other concerned experts could shock the Administration in getting a political grip on the situation: he was considering a joint op-ed by a group of experts. The seriousness of the situation meant that such an article would have to concentrate on essentials: much of the talk about counter-insurgency (in what was an Afghan civil war) and development and governance was no more than "poetry".

10. I pointed out to [] the political difficulties for the US and other Western governments in negotiating direct with the Taliban. Although the principle of a negotiated peace was accepted, more or less, in Washington and London, there was a long way to go before politicians fully addressed what that might involve. Hence the argument that we needed first to get on the front foot militarily. It would help if the Taliban could be pinned down on politically neuralgic issues, such as women's rights and social restrictions. [] said that, in a serious negotiation, he thought such undertakings could be extracted from the Taliban: again, however, the sooner work started on that, the more chance of a satisfactory result.

B6

11. I told [redacted] that much of this thinking coincided with the views expressed by the Foreign Secretary in his article in The New York Review of Books of 29 April 2010 ([redacted] had missed the MIT speech, as he had been in Kandahar). The UK election campaign meant that there was little that could be done over the next few weeks, apart from making sure that incoming or returning Ministers had the best possible advice. After the election, there was clearly a case for a good strategic discussion between the British Prime Minister and the American President: we all needed to raise our eyes from the urgent tactical preoccupations in the south to the really important strategic issues, of harvesting political success from military progress.

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[redacted]

[redacted]