

Email from Kabul to London 24 March 2008

Afghanistan: Meeting with Holbrooke, 24 March

REDACTED

1. On 24 March, I saw, at my house in Kabul, Richard Holbrooke, accompanied by his staffer, REDACTED.

2. Holbrooke (whom I had met only briefly before, when working for Robin Cook) REDACTED, and for his advocacy of aerial eradication (something Holbrooke had attacked Wood on, in a column in the Washington Post).

3. After about five minutes of this, I told Holbrooke that Wood was my friend and colleague, and that I was not here to debate his views. In my view, Wood was doing a good job in very difficult circumstances, and deserved credit for, for example, turning round the Administration position on reconciliation. REDACTED

I said that I thought Secretary Rice in particular understood the scale of the problems we faced here, as did Secretary Gates. It was quite unfair to say that the Administration as a whole did not get Afghanistan.

REDACTED

6. Holbrooke asked me a bit about Britain in Helmand, and about reconciliation. REDACTED

7. On CN, Holbrooke advocated a New Deal-style agricultural development programme for Helmand and the country as a whole. He was firmly against eradication of any kind, he said. He accepted that licit cultivation was not an answer either.

8. On reconciliation, Holbrooke listened carefully to what I said, REDACTED I stressed that this had to be an Afghan lead, and that we badly needed US engagement in practice, as well as in principle (which Wood had secured).

9. Holbrooke asked me quite a bit about Pakistan, having just spent three or four days at Peshawar. REDACTED and thought the US\$750 million allocated to the FATA was far from enough.

10. Holbrooke said that, when Obama had called for two more brigades for Afghanistan, he had advised Hillary to say only she would send as many troops to Afghanistan as the situation required. Holbrooke did not think we could possibly assess how many more troops were needed, without more detailed investigation. REDACTED In fact, REDACTED we had to go for innovative, Afghan-style, solutions, which were likely to be more durable in the long run.

11. Holbrooke made clear that he thought America was in Afghanistan for the long run, REDACTED

12. Holbrooke ended the meeting with warm words about Mark Malloch-Brown, John Sawers and Nigel Sheinwald.

Sherard

Email from Kabul to London 22 November 2009

1. I spoke to Holbrooke on 22 November to compare notes after Karzai's inauguration, and before the Obama announcement.
2. I gave him some of the Foreign Secretary's impressions, including the key point that we were at a fork in the road. REDACTED. I pointed out how we could use conferences in London and Kabul to help deliver the external and internal elements of any such strategy. REDACTED. Holbrooke appeared to be listening as I went through all this.
3. Holbrooke started on the Obama process. The "last" meeting was supposed to be at the White House at 1800 local on Monday 23 November, with the announcement set for Tuesday 1 December. But there had already been three "last" meetings, so there could easily be one more. The plan was for Secretary Clinton to travel to Europe immediately after the announcement, and attend the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting on 3-4 December.
4. REDACTED Holbrooke noted that the full deployment of all the new US troops would not be completed until early 2011, with the bulk arriving in the second half of 2010. Only a Marine battalion was ready to go more or less immediately.
5. Holbrooke continued that, in our absence in Kabul, the NSC had drawn up a list of potential contributions from Allies. As the Wall Street Journal of 21 November had reported in outline, the plan was to ask Allies to find 1200 additional training troops, plus a multinational brigade, plus \$2bn a year for five years for ANA training, and \$700m a year for police training. REDACTED
6. I said that we had already pledged 1200 additional troops, made up of holding over permanently the 700 sent for the elections, plus an additional 500, subject to certain conditions, but likely to be approved by Ministers shortly. REDACTED
8. Holbrooke said he would try to go over all this with the Foreign Secretary as well. We agree to talk again about the wider political strategy.

Sherard

Diplomatic telegram dated 12 January 2010

AFGHANISTAN: SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES' MEETING: ABU DHABI, 12 JANUARY

REINTEGRATION DINNER

2. At Japanese invitation, Generals Lamb and Barrons and I, plus Holbrooke and Minister Stanekzai, attended a brief working dinner on 11 January to prepare our presentations on reintegration at the main meeting on 12 January. The main feature of the dinner was a series of questions from Holbrooke to Stanekzai and Maj Gen Barrons implying great scepticism about how reintegration would work in practice in the provinces and districts of Afghanistan. REDACTED

QUAD BREAKFAST

4. At French invitation, Holbrooke, Muetzelburg (German SRAP) and I attended a short Quad breakfast on 12 January. REDACTED Holbrooke noted that Spanta had given no indication that Karzai was willing to postpone the elections until the autumn. Nor did the Afghan electoral laws make postponement straightforward: both the Chief Justice and Speaker Qanooni would need to endorse any such decision.

REDACTED

8. In discussion, Holbrooke led a series of generally positive reactions, in which speakers welcomed the principle of both a reintegration programme and an international fund on the lines proposed, but asked a number of detailed questions. REDACTED