

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Interviewee: **Afghan Vice President Karim Khalili**  
Location: Presidential Palace, Kabul, Afghanistan  
Date: Thursday, October 23, 2003  
Participants: Philip Zelikow, Kevin Scheid,  
Mike Hurley; David Sedney (Charge,  
U.S. Embassy Kabul)  
Drafted by: Mike Hurley  
Reviewed by: Philip Zelikow  
Additional Info: None

### Background

Karim Khalili is one of four Vice Presidents of the Afghan Transitional Administration headed by President Hamid Karzai. Khalili is a Hazara Shi'a and was a military commander and leader of Bamian Province, which has a substantial Shi'ite population. A large number of Shi'ites were murdered and inhabitants of Bamian suffered enormously under the Taliban regime.

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Personal Privacy

### Khalili Describes Pre-9/11

The Government of Pakistan, in particular ISID, supported the Taliban he said. The Taliban used the lawlessness prevailing in Afghanistan in the mid-1990's to offer an alternative to a people fed up with chaos and factional fighting, and this was how they consolidated control.

The Taliban hated the Hazaras and killed more than 10,000 in Bamian. Their oppression and cruelty broke the dignity and pride of people, he said, and Bamian inhabitants lost their fighting spirit for a time. The last six months of Taliban rule were the worst.

Khalili said Taliban forces were better trained than they have been given credit for. They had good communications and were effective in fighting the Northern Alliance.

#### **Al-Qaida-Taliban Ties**

Al-Qaida trained the Taliban. Usama bin Ladin provided money to Mullah Omar and the Taliban in general. The Taliban also made money through narcotics trafficking. He said that al-Qaida was "allied mentally, philosophically, religiously, and emotionally with the Taliban."

Khalili thought that the al-Qaida/Taliban brew was a lethal threat not only to the region but also to the West and in particular the U.S. "These people were your enemies," he said, "when you didn't even know it."

He said that U.S. diplomatic measures toward pressuring the Taliban to eject UBL from Afghanistan or turn him over to the Pakistanis or the U.S. were doomed from the start. He made clear that there was zero chance of this ever happening. "They [al-Qaida] were too tightly intergrated with Omar and the Taliban." Moreover, the Pakistanis had their own reasons for dragging their feet on the al-Qaida problem. The Pakistanis, he said, had created the Taliban, and supported it for a number of years. They would not likely turn on it now, unless great pressure were applied to them.

#### **Where Afghanistan and Bamian Are Now**

He lamented that the United Nations has done nothing significant in Bamian, this puzzled him and he asked: "Why is nothing happening? They are losing a good opportunity." Most financial aid has been given to NGOs and not been seen by the people. "We need road networks," he said. "In certain places there are people who are more than 60 years old who have never seen a vehicle. The first time they actually see one, they will think that a demon has come from the underworld."

"And there is a pressing need for clinics. We have one for about 300,000 people. Our needs are very basic, but we can do better than this." There is now a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) there, which he regards as a good development.

#### Democracy in Afghanistan

The Constitution that is being drafted is better than the 1964 Constitution. It is an important step in our journey toward democracy. It will say that the religion of Afghanistan is Islam but it will grant freedom of practice to other religions. "Unless we implement democracy, we will not be able to reach our goals of a stable and secure Afghanistan that is a good and reliable neighbor in Central Asia."

#### Relations with the U.S.

The people of Bamian were elated by the fall of the Taliban and are generally favorable toward the Karzai government and they "warmly welcome the presence of American Forces." He said that many U.S. commanders and soldiers have told him, "While we are in Bamian we think we are in Washington."

He assessed the level of cooperation with the U.S. as excellent. "We are grateful to the U.S.," he said, "and we are fighting on the same front against terrorism." We have to "defeat the mentality of the Taliban and of terrorists." He stressed that the U.S. must continue its presence in and assistance to Afghanistan for a long time, if not, "we will lose all that we have gained."