MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Interviewee: Local leaders in Bagram
Date: October 22, 2003
Location: Base at Bagram Air Field
Participants: 14 local leaders, Comm del, BG Bagby (Deputy Cmdr of CJTF-180), other US military
Drafted by: Zelikow

Names of the leaders were given but unclear.

The first speaker emphasized the importance of the meeting. He left a meeting with President Karzai to come, getting the President's permission. We will never forget 9/11. It has brought our nations close in the shared loss of life from the same enemy. "We are now blood brothers." On 9/9 they lost their great leader, Ahmed Shah Masood. Then came 9/11. They all looked forward to what countries have promised - the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

After the Russians withdrew, Afghans were forgotten. We became a playground for terrorists and drug traffickers. Don't leave us alone again! The terrorists must be eliminated here and in the neighboring country (meaning Pakistan). If not, they'll come back. The Afghan people are grateful. They know their friends from their enemies.

The second speaker, again returned to the theme of our 9/11 and their 9/9. He had time. AQ was contributing 90% of the best fighters. The battle line was right there at Bagram where we were sitting today. Five hundred meters to the east was the AQ position. Right here. They had tried to tell people about the AQ danger. No one listened.

After 9/11 first three, then ten, SOF soldiers came. They started from right here. The attack was coordinated with them. With their help, they inflicted severe damage on the Taliban and AQ. Many had thought the campaign would take six months. But it took only 45 days.

Once the enemy reached Pakistan, they were protected. Now the threat came from there. Solving it was up to the US and Afghan governments. We were side by side with you. We gave information to help the Americans even before they arrived. In Bagram they had cooperated with the US, and no terrorist attacks against America came from this province. Though the Taliban and AQ are gone, they are trying to regroup. They are on the move, about 50 km to the east and in other places. The narcotics problem is also very important. One hundred kilos were seized in Kabul just in the past week.

The Ministry of Defense has laid off many people. They are being recruited by the Taliban. This is a concern.
Asked about the relative role of AQ in Taliban Afghanistan, were just trying to defend, to hold on. They had no hope. Morale went way up when the Americans arrived. The Taliban and AQ were moving in one direction, together. Mullah Omar married UBL's daughter. (Note: This is widely rumored, but senior officials do not believe it is true.) There was no chance, none, that the Taliban would ever have kicked out AQ. AQ was also a key source for the Taliban's money. He added that the fanatic groups from Pakistan were also important.

The third speaker called Bagram "the land of resistance." No one was listening before 9/11. What the Taliban did ruined our country—killing, stopping education. In the US there was also much loss of life. Is there any difference between Afghan blood and American blood? Masood tried to warn the world that they would go after everyone. He wishes someone would have taken them seriously. He hoped we would not let this happen again. Next time, deal with the problem immediately. There are many ways to fight terrorists, including education and putting people to work, not just the military way. He praised the efforts of Colonel Boyle, CJTF-180's liaison officer. He said 70-80% of the people had benefited from this base. So there were no security problems in this area.

The fourth speaker went back to September 2001. The AQ had at least 18,000 soldiers massed in the Panjshir valley for their offensive to break us. The purpose was to break us so they would have a completely free base for operations, with no good locations from which to mount a counterattack.

AQ had promised many things, but they moved against the people and against Islam. After their defeat there was no place for them in Afghanistan. The people had no respect for them. They are not welcome. There was a nationwide uprising against the Taliban when the US started its attacks.

warned about cross-border infiltration from Pakistan. He saw them crossing 25 days earlier in Organ-e and Gardez. Watch what the Pakistanis do, not what they say.

The fifth speaker said that UBL considered Afghanistan the ideal base. One cannot call AQ Muslim. They want to destroy the free world. He stressed the importance of education and pressure on Pakistan.

Zelikow closed the meeting by asking the Imam to pray for a free and democratic Afghanistan and continued US-Afghan friendship. The Imam enthusiastically led such a prayer.