

RELEASE IN PART B5,B6
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REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION
ISAF & US FORCES AFGHANISTAN
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN
APO AE 09356

2150
28 Sep 2009

MEMORANDUM

From: Director of Communication, ISAF and USFOR-A
 To: CDEA, Ambassador Wayne

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON PLAN FOR PROVIDING CELLULAR TELEPHONE SERVICE FROM FORWARD OPERATING BASES (FOB) IN RC-SOUTH AND RC-EAST

1. PLAN FOR CELLULAR SERVICE IN RC-SOUTH

a. CONTEXT. The Telecommunications Sub-Working Group met for the second time on September 23, 2009. USAID, IPA, IRM, USFOR-A, ISAF, ECON and CDEA were represented. Task Force 41 (TF 41) briefed the group on the most recent plan for providing cellular phone service through towers-on-wheels located on U.S. FOBs in RC-S. As discussed previously, this mobile network will increase government legitimacy; build Afghan infrastructure; ensure reliable emergency coordination, and enhance the effectiveness of government and military and security efforts. The current plan is summarized below.

b. UPDATE.

(1) Towers-on-Wheels for FOBs. ISAF Director of Communication¹ has proposed to establish a secure government wireless network constructed with the cooperation of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and managed under the auspices of Afghan Telecom (Aftel). The network's primary purpose would be for emergency response and as a command and control network for Afghan government and military and security personnel. Due to DOD funding

¹ ISAF as it applies to Director of Communication and communication funding efforts is used as short for ISAF and USFOR-A in case of funding expenditure limitations by either authority.

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restrictions, ISAF will not own the towers, but will lease them from a vendor on a one-year basis with a renewal option. This DOD contractor (most likely an American company) will provide maintenance and technical support with staff living and working on the selected FOBs. ISAF is looking into employing an American telecom to provide service for ANSF, GIROA and FOB use through the towers-on-wheels on FOBs. Because of the technological and logistical complexities involved, only an American company would be able to provide service, which would be provided under Aftel's name to increase government legitimacy for the local population.

(2) Commercial Provider Options. Commercial cellular providers will have the option of co-using the towers-on-wheels for their equipment by potentially renting the space from the MCIT. ISAF will have to get a legal opinion as to the propriety of this action. ISAF will facilitate an agreement with MCIT to offer this space on the towers to any cellular providers and independent radio and TV networks, with the ministry acting as service broker. As the security situation improves, Afghan commercial providers will also have the option to assist in expanding their network through community-based towers.

(3) This is phase one of a complex operation, which focuses on RC South initially due to the tactical situation, but will be planned to expand into other RCs. Additionally, planning is under way in future phases to introduce mobile cell towers to remote communities, based off of this secure system. This will be defined later as the "community-based cell initiative."

(4) Handover plan being developed by DOS/USAID. DOD will support expansion of the Afghan Telecom network throughout RC-South, while a DOS/USAID team is looking into options for State "Communication and Counter Propaganda" money to donate the towers to GIROA or use the network to further build infrastructure for commercial providers. This handover plan is essential and should include a designated buyer for the towers at the end of ISAF's lease (possibly USG/ Communication Directorate, USAID, CERP funds or GIROA) to ensure service continues. For example, the USG could buy the towers and give them to GIROA for commercial use. The buyout cost is estimated at \$4 to \$5 million, depending on the number

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of towers. This will not include service of towers unless specified, which will increase the cost significantly.

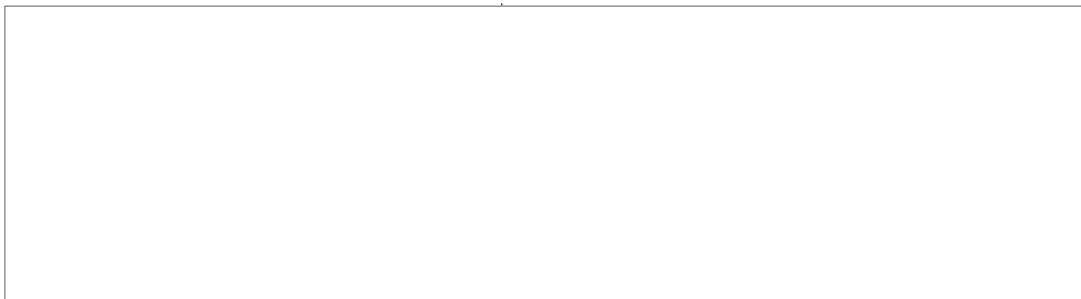
c. NEXT STEPS

(1) ISAF/ Task Force 41: Task Force 41 is conducting a detailed assessment and cost analysis on the towers-on-wheels program, which will include 20-40 to-be-determined locations in RC-South. TF 41's technical planning will be complete at the end of October. The towers' proposal should be approved by COMISAF by the end of November, which would be followed by a tender process and transport of the towers. Towers could be operational in Spring 2010. As total costs will be in the tens of millions, budget and corresponding number of towers will be determined by COMISAF's approval at the end of TF 41's cost assessment.

(2) DOS/USAID: Representatives from ECON, IPA, PAS, and USAID will be meeting this week to discuss options to take over the lease or buy the towers at the end of ISAF's lease so they can remain in place and in use by local communities.

(3) MCIT: We recommend a meeting with Minister Sangin to make clear to him the following points: 1) ISAF and DOS are working together on cellular provider expansion and will include MCIT as appropriate when planning progresses 2) MCIT will not own the towers; 3) Maintenance and upkeep of the towers will be handled by the DOD contractors on the FOE, not MCIT or Aftel; 4) MCIT may be able to charge a nominal fee from commercial cellular providers and media outlets for tower space. ISAF does not plan to include private cellular providers in the planning process at this point, due to security concerns and pending COMISAF approval.

2. PILOT PROJECT FOR CELLULAR SERVICE IN RC-EAST



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3. Point of contact for this memorandum is Erin Hart, IOTF-A
Embassy LNO, cell: unclass email:
hartex@state.gov.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. J. Smith', written over the typed name.

Gregory J. Smith
RADM, USN
Director of Communication
ISAF and USFOR-A

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