

RELEASE IN PART
B6

From: McHale, Judith A <McHaleJA@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2010 9:28 AM
To: H
Subject: FW: Afghanistan media coverage

Importance: High

See email chain below about media coverage of Afghanistan. I will work with SRAP to be sure we have a Haiti-like plan in place for Afghanistan.

jmis

From: Kaiser, Sandra L
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2010 9:07 AM
To: McHale, Judith A
Cc: DiMartino, Kitty; Douglas, Walter T; Perez, Lea; Singh, Vikram J; Crowley, Philip J; Breeden, Philip X; LeBaron, Richard B
Subject: RE: Afghanistan media coverage
Importance: High

Hi Judith—I am due to speak momentarily to Times editor James Harding on the cartoon. It's disgusting and completely unfair.

On overall Afghanistan coverage, Embassy London is also concerned. We engage every day on this topic, either through briefings, interviews with policy makers coming through (recent highlight was a brilliant interview by Newsnight's Paxman with Holbrooke), facilitating media embeds and reporting on the ground, making and pushing out speeches, discussions with journalists. We work closely with colleagues in Kabul, NATO and elsewhere. We get decent support from Washington and other field elements, although sometimes we struggle to get basic information from our colleagues, such as total number of troops involved in Operation Moshtarak.

One challenge for us is that we are tightly bound here in the public mind to HMG on this issue. And in the run-up to the UK election, some media outlets see criticism of the effort in Afghanistan as an effective way to campaign against Gordon Brown. Sometimes they ricochet a shot off of us in order to hit the main target. The Murdoch outlets, of which the Times is one, have a headline goal of getting Cameron elected, which is what [REDACTED] told me outright earlier this week. This cartoon was possibly one of those ricochet shots, but that sure doesn't excuse it. Thanks for your note—I really appreciate you thinking of us. We will continue to fight hard and we'll rely on your support.

Ambassador Susman and I will discuss the Times and other News Corporation coverage of the war with James Murdoch, whom we will see on March 15.

Sandy

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: McHale, Judith A
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2010 1:19 PM
To: Kaiser, Sandra L
Cc: DiMartino, Kitty; Douglas, Walter T; Perez, Lea; Singh, Vikram J; Crowley, Philip J
Subject: Afghanistan media coverage

Sandy:

I am increasingly concerned about the tone of the media coverage about Afghanistan. Note the reference to the Times cartoon below. As you know we waged a very successful campaign against the negative stories concerning our involvement in Haiti. Can you let me know what our strategy is with regard to Afghanistan and if you need any additional help/support from us. Any thoughts about the cartoon ?

jm

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February 26, 2010 – AFGHANISTAN // HEALTH CARE REFORM // TURKEY // FALKLANDS

AFGHANISTAN

This morning, media note the latest "Suicide attack on Afghan capital" (BBC on-line).

La Stampa on-line says the "Safi Hotel, where foreigners stay, was targeted.... The attack [comes] as India-Pakistan negotiations resume." *France 24* TV comments, "What needs to be understood is that this is a nine-level hotel in which all the windows exploded, up to the very top of the hotel, which proves how powerful the explosion was. Afghan policemen are very nervous." Meanwhile, print media report the "Afghan government hoists flag over Taliban stronghold Marjah" (Dutch daily *Trouw*). *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* notes that locals "testify that most of the Taliban withdrew from Marja without fighting, and they will try to return when the U.S. forces leave the area." *The Independent* says that "despite victories in the Marjah offensive, Afghans worry that militants have lived to fight another day." Other coverage notes civilian casualties. A day after leading with the story that "NATO admits that deaths of 8 boys were a mistake," *The Times* runs a large editorial cartoon showing U.S. soldiers in the pose of the Iwo Jima memorial, hoisting the Afghan flag into the bloody body of an Afghan civilian.