

RELEASE IN PART
B5,B6

From: pverveer [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2010 12:33 AM
To: H
Subject: Fwd:Letter to President Obama
Attachments: Document.pdf

B6

I just wanted to update you on a few things involving Afghan women, the London conference and my meetings in The Netherlands.

Sen. Boxer sent a letter to the President (attached) urging UA support for Afghan women's participation in the London meeting and expressing her regret that there was no mention or consideration of Afghan women's role in the Af-Pak strategy paper that was just released.

In London, there will be 2 Afghan NGO meetings -- one is being run by a UK group and 2 Afghans have been selected from that forum (a man and woman) with the approval of the UK govt to speak at the ministerial meeting. The Afghan woman is someone who has worked on education and related projects. Most everyone we've contacted, including embassy Kabul does not know her. We are hoping that she will link up with the other Afghan women who are at the 2nd meeting (sponsored by UNIFEM and Inclusive Security) and that her remarks will effectively reflect key issues. One of my staffers will be at both meetings. I don't know if there will be a chance for you to say hello to the Afghan women given your schedule.

When I was in The Netherlands last week I met with FM Verhagan and Development Minister Koenders. Both will be in London and both raised the issue of Afghan women with me. They felt that their role was being marginalized. Koenders and I spoke at a forum on the role of Afghan women and he talked about the investments the Dutch had made in women's economic and social development in the province where they have had the leadership of the PRT (as did I about our investments). He also said that Afghan women increasingly feel abandoned by the international community and invoked UN SC Res 1325 and its recent enhancement, Res 1889, and the urgency to improve the role of Afghan women in all stages of conflict resolution.

There appears to be a real differences of opinion in the Dutch coalition government about the anticipated withdrawal of their troops later this year. They are trying to square the move with the reality that development still requires security and trying to determine how they will reconfigure their continuing engagement in Afghanistan (and significant support) when they withdraw their troops from Uruzgan province -- as seems likely given the vote in Parliament.

[redacted] It seems to me that a good deal of our public support in the US and Europe for continuing engagement remains in some measure because people remember what the Taliban inflicted on the women there for so long.

B5

On a separate note, there was keen interest in your recent development speech by everyone in the Dutch government with whom I met. They had almost committed your speech to memory and kept quoting it back to me with favorable comments.