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Interviewee: Arlene Ferrill, Consul General, and Country Team, Peshawar
Date: October 25, 2003
Location: Consulate, Peshawar, Pakistan
Other Participants: Zelikow, Scheid, Hurley, Dylan Cors (NSC), Brooke Darby (Emb Islamabad)
Drafted by: Zelikow

Peshawar is a modestly sized post, with about 15 Americans at post at the moment (5 of them TDY). The US is one of the only countries still maintaining a diplomatic presence in Peshawar. The location is important at this time because it sits astride one of the two traditional transit routes into Afghanistan (and the one that leads to Kabul) and provides a presence on the border and in the Northwest Frontier Province. That province and Balochistan to the west are the two that border Afghanistan.

CG Ferrill began with the political situation. In an earlier meeting at the residence she had already explained that the presidentially-appointed governor of Peshawar has viceregal authority, through the political agents, over the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (the FATA). The provincial government controls Peshawar, other provincial territory, and the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA).

[Comment: The Peshawar region is regarded by coalition intelligence as a historic and continuing base for the Hekmatyar Islamic Group terrorists. The FATA, especially Waziristan, are believed to be the main base for foreign terrorists, like Al Qa'ida, and is a suspected area of interest for UBL, Zawahiri, and other high value targets. Balochistan is regarded as the principal base for Taliban activity. Staff suspects that Balochistan, and Quetta in particular, may also be an area for some continuing Al Qa'ida logistical support as well. End comment.]

CG Ferrill commented on the NWFP government that arose out of the parliamentary elections in the fall of 2002. Eveyone had been surprised, including the victors, by the success of the six-party Islamic coalition, led by the JI (Qazi Hussain Ahmed) and JUI (Fezlur Rahman). Their rhetorical agenda calls for restoration of Sharia law and stresses anti-American themes. [Comment: An Islamic coalition also won power at the same time in Balochistan.] The popular climate in the NWFP is anti-American. In that sense, not much has changed in Peshawar since 9/11. Though openly wearing guns has stopped in Peshawar, it continues in the tribal areas – as does the availability of a wide variety of arms in nearby bazaars.

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The security environment in the province is complicated by the continuing presence of very great numbers of Afghan refugees. The CG lacked good numbers, but thought the refugee population had made up more than a quarter of the province's population. A

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million refugees had returned to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban. But hundreds of thousands remain in various camps. (Commission staff drove over to one of these major camps, on the outskirts of Peshawar, later in the day.) Many of the Pashtuns don't want to go back, especially while they perceive that the Tajik Panjshiris dominate the current Afghan government. The Pakistani government doesn't exercise control in the camps, which are under the supervision of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Asked about the problem of cross-border infiltration, the CG [ ] broke down the problem as:

- Foreigners in remote, practically inaccessible geographic areas. Wana and Miram Shah are small towns.

- Pashtuns were local to the border areas, which was extremely conservative in religious beliefs, poorly developed, and prone to violence.

- Pakistanis from other parts of the country, some of whom were also being recruited for the Kashmiri jihad.

The team also offered further details about the governance of the tribal areas, especially the FATA. They focused on the roles of the tribal authorities (the maliks), the political agent and his tribal levies, and the Frontier Corps. The Frontier Corps enforced the will of the political agent (and the Governor) but actually reported to the Interior Ministry.

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