

## Re: OT: America is Ticking Timebomb Thanks to Bush Corruption

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**From:** Spehro Pefhany (*speffSNIP\_at\_interlogDOTyou.knowwhat*)

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Date: Mon, 04 Oct 2004 23:04:08 -0400

On 4 Oct 2004 18:33:53 -0700, the renowned Winfield Hill  
<Winfield\_member@newsguy.com> wrote:

>Spehro Pefhany wrote...

>>

>> *I recently listened to a top diplomat (under the Chatham House Rule,  
>> or I'd name names) tell us that things are going just swimmingly in  
>> Afghanistan...*

>

> *"The new amendment means that participants are free to use the information  
> received and can now also state that it was received at a Chatham House  
> meeting. This provides clarity for participants and will allow summaries  
> of meetings to be prepared."*

>

> *OK, we don't need nor care about the names, but we could use the facts.*

A few points at random from my notes (note that this is with the  
positive spin...)

\* Afghanistan is the most mined country in the world. Some money—  
in the tens of millions of dollars annually— is being spent on  
dealing with this— if the funding continues, 2012 is the  
target date for completion.

\* The economy is now very open to foreigners, especially compared  
to Pakistan and Uzbekistan. (He didn't mention how much  
foreign investment was actually happening).

\* Kabul is the most destroyed capital in the world— the US  
bombardment following the 1992–1996 civil war pretty much  
wrecked everything.

\* He says that of the 34 provinces, only 4 at present are badly  
affected by the insurgency.

\* The country is essentially a big arsenal— there are enough weapons,

including 4,000–5,000 heavy weapons for many months of high-intensity conflict. There has not been much real progress to date in disarming the warlords. On the plus side, flows of new weapons into the country are "not enormous".

- \* Foreign governments are DIRECTLY paying the salaries of most of the government employees in Kabul– police, judicial, civil servants etc. There is little control outside Kabul. Kabul, BTW, is very much more "cosmopolitan" than the rest of the country, which is very conservative. NGOs are less active in Afghanistan than in many similar situations. Money is also going to stabilization operations at the district level , National Solidarity, microfinancing, the election process.
- \* Schools (such as they are) are operating, but many, even in Kabul consist of kids sitting on the dirt in tents with just a blackboard. Kids have to go to school in shifts from 7AM to 9PM (up to 4 shifts per day– which by my calculations means they are only going part-time). The foreigners have been pushing for girl children to be educated, and this is happening.
- \* Their prospects for income-generation are pretty dismal. Tourism is a long-term possibility, for the near term, besides opium, dried fruit and perfume materials (roses) can be exported, mostly to the EU. Afghanistan produces 85% of the world's opium. No change is likely to this for decades to come.
- \* The much-heralded "voting with the feet" of 4–5 million Afghans returning to Afghanistan (out of 6 million refugees) is mostly due to Pakistan and especially Iran pushing the refugees out, not by their choice.

For a slightly more dated and far more negative view on Afghanistan, \_Imperial Hubris\_ by Anonymous (outed as CIA headquarters (not a field agent) counter-terrorism specialist Michael Scheuer)– it's not a heavy read, with a radically different take on things (though I don't agree with some of the things he says, they are always thought-provoking). Here are a couple of critical summaries/reviews:

<http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2004/sep/joynerSept04.asp>  
[http://www.powells.com/review/2004\\_08\\_10.html](http://www.powells.com/review/2004_08_10.html)

As Richard Clarke wrote, perhaps more interesting even than Mr. Scheuer's insights is the fact that the CIA even allowed it to be published.

Best regards,  
Spehro Pefhany

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"it's the network..."

"The Journey is the reward"

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