

Betrayal of Haq Showed Folly Of U.S. Policy

by Edward Spannaus

A devastating critique of the current U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan, has been provided to *EIR* by a journalist who spent most of the 1980s in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theatre of war, and who observed first hand and reported the folly of U.S. policy in that period. And, the conclusion that one can draw from his remarks, is that the same mistakes are being made again.

Author Kurt Lohbeck's 1994 book, *Holy War, Unholy Victory*, was a searing account of the 1979-89 war against the Soviet occupation; a war in which the United States and Britain consistently supported, trained, and armed the most fanatical, anti-Western groups in Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet occupation. Readers of *EIR* know that this was part of the Zbigniew Brzezinski "arc of crisis" policy—to promote radical Islamic fundamentalism as a battering ram against the Soviet Union, but also against the very concept of the modern nation-state. It is this policy, which is responsible for the rise of the terrorist networks now symbolized by the Afghanistan-based al-Qaeda and its figurehead leader Osama bin Laden.

Kurt Lohbeck also has a unique historical connection with both Afghanistan and Iran through his late father, Don Lohbeck, the biographer of Gen. Patrick J. Hurley. Hurley served as President Franklin Roosevelt's personal emissary to those countries during the latter years of World War II. Through Hurley's efforts, Roosevelt planned for the postwar development of both countries, as a means of getting them out from under the yoke of British imperialism. (See "How FDR Planned To Outflank The British," *EIR*, Oct. 13, 1995, reprinted in "How To Defeat Global Strategic Warfare," LaRouche in 2004 campaign, September 2001.)

During the 1980s, Lohbeck became an unabashed supporter of rebel leader Abdul Haq, and maintained contact with him after the war, talking to him by phone at least once a week for the past eight years. Lohbeck was part of a small group who had been trying for more than a year, in contacts with the Pentagon, the U.S. State Department, the CIA, and with staffs of the Vice President and President, to obtain support for a plan to topple the Taliban and hand over these "wacko Arabs"—referring to bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network. "We received some sympathy from individuals, but zip as far as any support . . . nothing ever happened," Lohbeck told *EIR*.

It has been reported elsewhere, that there were major factions in the U.S. government and intelligence community supporting the Taliban up through at least this past Summer, if not up until Sept. 11. This is indirectly confirmed by a recent account given by former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane, who was also working to obtain support for Haq against the Taliban over the past year. In one meeting with CIA officials earlier this year, McFarlane says that he was told (in paraphrase): "We don't yet have our marching orders concerning U.S. policy; it may be that we will end up dealing with the Taliban."

Now, we will pick up Lohbeck's account, as provided to *EIR*, of the betrayal of Abdul Haq, which led to Haq's capture and execution last month. As will become clear, Lohbeck is enraged that the CIA failed to provide support and security for Haq, whom Lohbeck regards as the only Afghan opposition leader of sufficient stature to have been able to lead an effective opposition to the Taliban.

Haq's Mission

In mid-August, weeks before the Sept. 11 attacks, Haq decided to go ahead, without U.S. support, to return to Afghanistan to mobilize opposition forces. In late September, Haq went to Peshawar, Pakistan, from Dubai, where he had been living and working as a businessman. From there, according to Lohbeck, Haq began working to put together an anti-Taliban alliance of anti-Soviet commanders and tribal chiefs. On Oct. 20, two CIA representatives met Haq in Peshawar. "With them was a Pakistani translator . . . obviously from ISI," Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, Lohbeck states, adding that Haq, who spoke perfect English, didn't need a translator.

After Haq went into Afghanistan, he encountered two Americans—not the same two whom he had met in Peshawar. Lohbeck said one was from the CIA, and the other was either CIA or from MI6 (British intelligence), and with them was another Pakistani translator, clearly from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. Those three left during the evening of Oct. 25, and within 45 minutes, Haq was surrounded by Taliban, and was captured a few hours later. Haq was executed, and his body thrown on the street in Kabul, on Friday, Oct. 26.

"There's no doubt in my mind," Lohbeck says: "ISI told the Taliban where he was and where he was going, and they found it out from the CIA translators."

"Abdul never talked to ISI. Never, ever, ever, ever," Lohbeck emphasized. "ISI told the Taliban where he was and what was happening. And now he's dead. Can I be any stronger?" he said.

Lohbeck does not directly accuse the CIA of betraying Haq to the ISI and the Taliban, but he blasts the Agency for failing "to provide operational support for a mission that was in their best interests." As to charges that Haq was working for the CIA, Lohbeck scoffs, saying: "Abdul Haq never

worked *for* them, never worked *with* them, and never got money from them. But they knew what he was doing, and it was in their interests, and they didn't back him up."

This was not the first time that Haq could not get backing from the United States. During the 1980s Afghanistan war, the British, and the U.S. CIA, military, and State Department consistently supported the most radical anti-Western groups. This was justified in part by the assertion that "fanatics fight better," and much of this was at the behest of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence, through which most of the U.S. military aid and support for the Afghanistan resistance was channelled. The bulk of U.S. aid ended up with the most fanatical and corrupt factions in Afghanistan, such as that led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who were also deeply involved in the drug trade.

"We had the mistaken idea that fanatics fight better than patriots," Lohbeck told *EIR*. "Tell that to the men at the bridge at Lexington."

"So now we're stuck with the fanatics. We made them, we bought them, we paid for them, we supported them; now we have fanatics, and we are ignoring the patriots. How stupid can we be?" he asked.

Parenthetically, it is important to note, that although the 1980s operation supporting the Afghan mujahideen was seen as a "CIA" operation, the bulk of the \$3 billion in official U.S. funds for that effort came out of the Pentagon's "black budget," not from the CIA.

Intelligence Failure

Lohbeck believes that one of the biggest problems, is that "we have an eight-year gap in our institutional knowledge of Afghanistan," because the United States walked away after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. "We are now trying to play catch-up in a few short weeks. We are ignoring the people—Afghans and Americans—who could be helpful."

Referring to current U.S. intelligence teams working on Afghanistan, Lohbeck states: "The new breed of cowboys has no institutional knowledge of the neighborhood. We're not even contacting the last generation of cowboys; as bad as they might have been, at least they know more than these guys do." As to the CIA, Lohbeck says it "has become so bureaucratized, that they don't have a mission, much less a means of accomplishing that mission."

Lohbeck urged that U.S. intelligence should return to the model of the OSS—the World War II Office of Strategic Services—"and get away from this stupid bureaucracy." In recent years, no intelligence officer would want to be posted to Kabul, or Islamabad, or Marakesh, or Khartoum, or Algiers, because it would be a bad career move, Lohbeck explained, adding that OSS head Col. William J. Donovan "would have put people there, as his eyes and ears."

Later in the interview, Lohbeck returned to this theme, saying, "If we revert to a new OSS, then that intelligence operation has to work in tandem with our political

operation, not as a private, separate government. It's this secret government-within-a-government that has gotten us into trouble."

The U.S. Bombing Campaign

Asked for his assessment of the current U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan, Lohbeck responds: "We're in a mess. The first five weeks of our war are identical to the five first weeks of the Soviet invasion; we have not hurt the Taliban significantly." All that the bombing is accomplishing, Lohbeck says, is angering the people on the ground who otherwise oppose the Taliban. (It has been reported by other sources, that Abdul Haq, in his meetings inside Afghanistan, was besieged by citizens outraged at the U.S. bombings and the civilian deaths the bombings are causing.)

"If we don't coordinate with Afghans, who have demonstrated their patriotism with ten years of war against the Soviets; . . . if we get bogged down like the Soviets did, then we are beyond stupid."

As to the Northern Alliance, to which the bulk of U.S. efforts are now directed, Lohbeck describes them as "a nice street gang," who "have an influence in a little bit of their neighborhood" in the north, but who can never control or govern the whole country. "They are a piece of the pie; they are not the pie."

"We have to use the Pushtuns; it's a Pushtun nation," Lohbeck stresses, and "we're *not*" doing that. As to Hamid Karzei, another opposition leader in the south, Lohbeck assesses him favorably, but he cautions that Karzei is a regional figure, not a *national* figure, as was Abdul Haq.

Regarding the situation with Iran today, Kurt Lohbeck says, "We have a 'Nixon-goes-to-China' opportunity here; we have the opportunity to repair situations with Iran, and if we miss this and don't take advantage of it, then, down the road, we're going to regret that we didn't do it. . . . We don't have to love the ayatollahs, but Iran is Iran. For us to isolate them, when we now have an opportunity to create dialogue, is stupid."

Not Like Hitler . . .

Concluding the interview, Lohbeck declared: "I don't want my country to lose. I want my country to be victorious. But I don't want us to be victorious like Hitler moving into Poland. I don't want us to be victorious like Mao Zedong in Manchuria."

"I want us to export the ideals of freedom and individual liberty. And that's what the people of Afghanistan are begging for," Lohbeck said. "Those poor people. Ten years of the Soviets bombing the hell out of them, six and one-half years of the Taliban imprisoning them. Why should they now hate us? Why don't we export those ideals of freedom?"

Returning to the death of Abdul Haq, Lohbeck declared: "I lost my best friend, but their country lost a patriot. They lost the Nathan Hale of their country. . . . It's a tragedy."