

Jobs for Afghans

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**Jobs for Afghans Briefing,
March 14, 2009**

**Biden in Brussels Agrees with Jobs
for Afghans Analysis, what is next
Step to Slow the Insurgency?**

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The Jobs for Afghans Solution for Winning the War in Afghanistan

“The problem with US policy in is that it has been a man trying to walk on one leg. The military side must complement the economic side, and the latter has been completely missing.”

- Ralph Lopez, Founder, Jobs for Afghans

Coming Up:

Congress must pass an Afghan "Emergency Works" program before the Spring offensive

- **Large-scale hiring for infrastructure trench-line project**
- **Military focus on protecting work crews, not chasing Taliban**
- **The Goal is to provide breathing space for the informal economy to develop, build goodwill, and exit soon.**

Joe Biden said in Brussels on March 11, 2009 : "Roughly 70 percent [of Taliban] are involved because of the money, because they are getting paid." Biden said this 70 percent of Taliban may be persuaded to lay down arms.

Still No Concrete Proposal

There is still no concrete proposal from the Obama administration to address this driver of the war: 40 percent unemployment. Taliban is employer of last resort, pays good wage by country standards (\$8 per day.)

Afghans Agree That Jobs Are a Key Part of the Solution

**Noor Ahmed Qarqeen, Afghan
Minister of Labour and Social Affairs
has affirmed: "*Men who work, have
no time to make war.*"**

U.S. Commanders Agree That Jobs Are a Key

"Much of the enemy force is drawn from the ranks of unemployed men looking for wages to support their families." - Gen. Karl Eikenberry, Former Commander of US Forces in Afghanistan, to Congress in 2007

"The vast majority of Taliban fighters are essentially economically disadvantaged young men." - Col. Tom Collins, Top Pentagon Spokesman in Afghanistan

The Question:

How do we employ, in a short turnaround time, large numbers of Afghan men who would otherwise join the Taliban for the pay?

Problems to Be Solved:

- Major works program is needed to frustrate Taliban recruiting, but construction is difficult in a hostile environment.
- Major changes in USAID reconstruction policy aimed at creating jobs take time. Bidding/contracting process needs to be overhauled (see Jobs for Afghans Agenda.) But need for jobs is immediate, before Taliban Spring offensive can radicalize population.

Infrastructure Opportunities

Three-fourths of population has no access to safe drinking water, a major source of high infant mortality and preventable disease. Most of country has no electricity. What do both of these key infrastructures have in common? Both depend on digging thousands of miles of trench to hold water and electrical "pipes." These are the foundations of development which benefits population.

Solution: In Immediate "Pre-Spring Offensive" Phase of Works Program

- Focus on digging paths for "pipeline" infrastructure with hand-tools, meaning thousands of miles of trench which will carry basic water, electricity, and sewage pipeline, which is the foundation of rural infrastructure.
- Actual pipeline need not be laid immediately, but trenches can be dug using labor-intensive methods.
- Prioritize Kabul's unsanitary open-trench sewage system, potential to hire thousands of workers in easy-to-secure environment.

Project is Technically Feasible

- Minimum requirements for trench-digging works program would be surveying and staking out trench-line, importation of hand tools.
- Only native supervision required, minimal technical skills. This minimizes exposure of foreign engineers needed for more complex infrastructure projects like bridges and other structures, which require more secure environment.

You Can't Blow Up a Ditch

Works program focusing on trench-line has the advantage of being more difficult for enemy to blow up or sabotage, once built, than structures like schools and bridges . You can't blow up a ditch.

Dovetail the Military Strategy

Focus mission on using forces to protect work crews rather than chasing Taliban around the countryside. Minimizes civilian casualties.

Dovetail the Military Strategy, Defeated Russian Generals Agree

"I believed as sincerely as American officers do now that we were fighting there to help make our country safer," said Grachev, who later became defense minister and sent in Russian units to quell Chechnya during the 1990s, a campaign that also ended in disaster. "After the war, as a politician, I could see this war had been pointless."

That said, Grachev offered some advice: Post soldiers to guard road projects and irrigation systems, and send in an army of engineers, doctors, mining experts and construction advisers.

Pouring billions of dollars into infrastructure would be a lot more productive than firefights in far-flung villages, he said. -Source: McClatchy

Basic Wage: \$10 Per Day

Pay basic wage of \$10 per day at end of each work shift, administered by U.S. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) or district authorities. Monitoring regimen to be designed and implemented by newly created Special Inspector General for the Afghanistan Reconstruction.

Will Jump-Start Economy

This is a sustainable model due to enterprising Afghan nature. Afghans are natural businesspeople. Infusion of capital to poorest segment will jump-start informal economy. Afghans will use funds to buy vendor stands, taxis, and other means of earning income, and distribute income through the tribal-clan structure to other Afghans.

Institute of War and Peace Reporting: “Few Choices for Helmand’s Troubled Youth”, Nov. 9, 2007:

"Joining the Taleban gave Mahmud a chance to save up enough money to start his own small business. Nowadays, he buys goods in the provincial capital Lashkar Gah and sells them in the districts at weekly "mila" or markets. "Now that I have work, I am not with the Taleban any more.""

Obama and Congress Should Immediately

Pass the “Emergency Works Program for Victory in Afghanistan.” Order military to requisition hundreds of thousands of hand-tools: picks, shovels, sledge hammers, and other trench digging equipment. Send Army Corp of Engineers to begin surveying and marking trench-line, call on allies to join. Basic wage of \$10 per day.

Cost of Program

Creating 1 million jobs at \$10 per day for one year would cost about \$2 billion. This is far less than the cost of the entire military occupation in Afghanistan for 1 month. One million jobs would:

- Significantly impact the 40 percent unemployment rate,
- Jump-start the vital informal economy,
- Deprive the Taliban of fighters, and
- Begin work on much-needed infrastructure.

U.S. Goals and Exit Strategy

Goals are:

- Provide breathing space for the informal economy to develop
- Build goodwill
- Exit and allow Afghans to take over own security from Taliban, which is widely disliked but is “the only job in town.”

Food for Thought

"Most Afghans, after the dispersal of the Taliban, were full of hope and ready to work. The tangible benefits of reconstruction -- jobs, housing, schools, health-care facilities -- could have rallied them to support the government and turn that illusory "democracy" into something like the real thing. But reconstruction didn't happen." - Journalist Ann Jones, "The Road to Taliban-Land"

Citizens' Action: Key Congress

- Senator Claire Macaskill (D-MO)
- Congressman Walter B. Jones (R-NC)
- Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)
- Senator John Kerry (D-MA)
- Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)
- Congressman Ron Paul (R-TX)
- Congressman Ed Whitfield (R-KY)
- Congressman Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD)

Citizens' Action: To Do

- Download this presentation from Jobs for Afghans www.JobsForAfghans.org
- Send it to your own congress member.
- Call your congress member and ask him/her to view the presentation, verify it has been viewed.
- Ask them to sponsor legislation which accomplishes goals.
- Ask them to contact “Key Congress” above and to work with them in support of this strategy for Afghanistan.
- Contact the White House and ask them to adopt the Jobs for Afghans program.

Citizens' Action: Hints

- When you call your congressman and senators (202-224-3121 capitol switchboard), ask for “point person” on Afghanistan issue. Speak to him/her or leave a voicemail asking for an email address to send this presentation to as an attachment.
- Call back to ask if the member has seen the presentation, and ask to speak to your representative to solicit his/her views.
- Ask what they are doing to insure we are on the right course in Afghanistan. Then ask them to work to pass the Emergency Works Program for Victory in Afghanistan. Give them the names of “Key Congress” above, to work with.

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