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MAY 2005

REVISED

MEMO TO: Secretary Rumsfeld

DATE: September 23, 2001

FROM: Paul Wolfowitz

SUBJECT: Using Special Forces on "Our Side" of the Line

Don,

In addition to using Special Forces to attack targets associated with Al Qaida or the Taliban, we should consider using those as a kind of armed liaison with anti-Al-Qaida or anti-Taliban elements in Afghanistan.

The concept would be to use the mobility of our Special Forces to make contact with elements throughout Afghanistan whom our covert operation identifies as potentially cooperative. U.S. special forces could deploy to establish temporary links with those potential allies at times and places of our choosing.

Such contacts could be used to exchange information, to bring in key elements of logistical support (including some appropriate weapons) or to provide communications gear. It could also facilitate coordinations of our offensive strikes with action by our internal allies.

It might even be possible, for short periods of time, to establish logistics points inside Afghanistan where we could bring in larger quantities of supplies with fixed wing aircraft.

Using Special Forces in this way could have both military and political-strategic advantages:

Military Advantages

- It would provide us with better intelligence – including opportunities to assess intelligence from the covert operation and to monitor the conduct of our "rented" tribal allies.
- It allows us to use our forces at times and places of our own choosing. As long as we can avoid being drawn into a trap by some treacherous covert contact – or hedge against such a risk with AC-130 gunships or other protective cover – we could move about Afghanistan relatively freely instead of going after targets that are actively defended.

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- It can help us to enlist allies throughout the country as word spreads around that the Americans are able to help those who help us;
- Conversely, it would send a strong message, to those who are sitting on the fence, that being on the wrong side will have serious costs. After the initial bombing strikes, most of our potential opponents may cease to be afraid of US airpower. They will be much more fearful of what we can do to them if they see us working actively in coordination with their competitors;
- The nature of this kind of operation minimizes the risk of early failures, which could be disastrous for our campaign;
- This kind of action allows us to minimize collateral fatalities. We could focus on killing our enemies, not innocent Afghans;
- Perhaps most importantly, if this strategy develops, it gives us the opportunity to use our air power in a way that could be truly effective instead of merely pounding sand.

Political-Strategic Advantages

- This type of direct action would underline that we are not fighting the Afghan people, but only those in Afghanistan who conduct or support terrorism;
- It emphasizes that we are using Afghans to do the fighting for us instead of gratuitously sacrificing Americans. At the same time, the boldness of our actions will make it clear that we are not unwilling to take risks;
- This would be particularly true if we can use this strategy to bring humanitarian relief to those areas of the country that have been deliberately starved by the Taliban;
- It would demonstrate to the American people and to the world that we know how to fight smart;
- It allows us to leverage the many elements of opposition to the Arab presence in Afghanistan, to the leadership of Mullah Omar within Taliban and to the Taliban itself;
- By improving our ability to manage our internal allies, it helps to reduce the chances that we will have a vacuum inside Afghanistan if the key elements of the Taliban are neutralized;
- As it becomes clear that this is part of our strategy, it will help to underscore that we are in for a sustained, but intelligent campaign, countering the impression either that we expect quick results or that we are heading for a long-term

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occupation of Afghanistan with all of the potentially catastrophic consequences,
which that entails.

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