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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

22 December 1989

CDI
28/12/89

Dear Charles,

Afghanistan

Thank you for your letter of 18 December about Sandy Gall's letter.

I enclose a draft reply. Arms supplies cannot readily be discussed in open correspondence, and though we can rely entirely on Mr Gall's discretion we cannot be certain that others (eg his secretary at ITN) will not have access to his mail. I suggest, however, that you might draw on the following points, which we would be happy to make to him but not to see recorded on paper, in a telephone call to supplement the letter:

- our own information about supplies to Massoud is very much the same as Gall's - he and those with him have been complaining for some time that no weapons have been reaching them;
- the reason for this does indeed seem to be a basic difference of opinion between Massoud and the Pakistan military authorities about how the war ought to be fought;
- we have now seen reports suggesting that some supplies may have been sent to Massoud, though it is not clear whether any of them will have found their way through the passes before the snows cut the routes through the Hindu Kush;
- we shall have to see whether this help reaches him, and if so, whether it is the start of better things for Massoud, or just a temporary relief from continuing problems;
- we shall in any case continue to make it clear to the US and Pakistan that we see Massoud as a competent and politically mature operator, who deserves their political and material support; indeed we see him as an indispensable ingredient in any political or military solution in Afghanistan.

Sandy Gall believes - rightly - that Pakistan military intelligence, who control the flows of supplies to the resistance, are biased against Massoud and in favour of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (whose fanatical and unscrupulous

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organisation has, incidentally, just sent a characteristically unpleasant death threat to the BBC's Pakistan correspondent). He believes - again rightly - that the CIA measure Massoud's value to them largely in terms of his willingness to carry out military operations of their choice according to their timetable, an approach which they know we (and most other outside observers) believe to be misguided. But he knows that our ability to influence Pakistan and American tactics in Afghanistan is limited.

Lord Brabazon is hoping to have a talk with Sandy Gall in the New Year.

John
Stephen Wall
(J S Wall)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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IN CONFIDENCE

Mr Sandy Gall
ITN
48 Wells Street
LONDON W1

Thank you for your letter about Afghanistan, which you gave me when we met on 15 December.

I agree with you about the importance of Massoud, and that his strength and skills will be needed both in turning Najibullah out of Kabul, and in building an acceptable future for Afghanistan once Najibullah does fall (as I am sure he will, though not perhaps as quickly as we all once hoped). We can only share his wish to see free democratic elections decide the future government of Afghanistan - it would be a tragedy if one unelected, intolerant and anti-Western autocracy were to give way to another. Our views on these subjects are well known to the American and Pakistan governments - and, I believe, broadly shared by them. But you know, as well as anybody, what the problems are. Our own ability to influence the conduct of the war is very limited.

Thank you again for taking the trouble to write. Your reports from Afghanistan will have served to focus public and parliamentary concern on issues which, with so much happening in other parts of the world, are far too easily forgotten, and deserve not to be.

C D Powell
Private Secretary

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cc PC

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

18 December 1989

From the Private Secretary

AFGHANISTAN

I enclose a copy of a personal letter which I have received from Sandy Gall. It would be helpful to have any comments which I could pass on.

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

(C. D. POWELL)

R. N. Peirce, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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268296 Newsroom: World News
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Friday.

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Dear Charles,

I enclose a VHS of the
Afghan stories. The first is the key one.

It was very good to see you.

Yours ever,

Caroly.

Sandy Gall, ITN

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Afghanistan

Dear Sir:

I have just come back from a mission in Afghanistan. I came away with a very strong feeling that the situation is critical. I think this is true generally, as you are aware, but I can only speak to what I understand knowledge of the northeast, now largely under the control of the so-called Shah MASUD'S forces. I met Masud in Herat, near the town of Taloqan, the main city of Badkhis Province.

The mission was started from a couple of talks with Masud, who has received no supplies via the Pakistani pipeline at all this year. The air routes to the north are now blocked by snow. This is a deliberate policy, he says, enforced by the Soviets. He says he will not fight the war their way. They have always resented his independence and his refusal to take ISI military instructions. He says he has received instructions from ISI to the extent of cutting off his arms supply. I believe that the capture of Kabul is only possible with Masud's participation. It is not only a matter of Masud's own efforts and prestige, but affects the whole of the Afghan war effort as well.

His chief aide, Mr. Reshad, subsequently told me that Masud has organized a committee of top mujahideen military commanders inside Afghanistan to work up a plan for an attack on Kabul. Obviously, the Pakistani Government would like Masud to do everything to sabotage the peace. Many of the mujahideen in Afghanistan might well welcome the idea, but I believe that only a joint effort based on a single agreement can have a chance of getting Kabul. I believe Masud's regime. Such a plan, Masud says, will be drawn up by the mujahideen's leadership. I believe that the

Sandy Gall

Sandy Gall, ITN

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Afghanistan

Dear Charles

I have just come back from a mission in Afghanistan. I came away with a very strong feeling that the situation is critical. I don't think this is true generally, as you know, but I can only speak from my first-hand knowledge of the north-east, now largely under the control of General MASUD'S forces. In the North, I met Masud in the town of Taloqan, the main city of the Farda Province.

The main problem started from a couple of talks with Masud. He has received no supplies via the Pakistan pipeline at all this year. The arms routes to the north are now blocked by snow. This is a deliberate policy, he said, enforced by the Soviets and Bangladeshis who will not fight the war their way. They have always resented his independence and he refuses to take ISI tactics and military intelligence instructions and has now infuriated them to the extent of cutting off his arms supply. Some believe that the capture of Kabul is only possible with Masud's active participation. This is not only a serious blow to Masud's morale and prestige but also affects the role of mujahideen war effort as well.

His second-in-command, Hekmatyar, subsequently told me that Masud's organization is the site of top mujahideen military commands in the Afghanistan. He drew up a plan for an attack on Kabul. Hekmatyar, Hekmatyar, Hekmatyar Masud will do everything to sabotage the plan. Many of the commanders in Afghanistan might well welcome the idea. Hekmatyar is only a joint effort based on a single agreement. Hekmatyar is getting nervous. Hekmatyar Masud's regime is drawing up the mujahideen's fee schedule. Hekmatyar is the main...

Sandy Gall

Sandy Gall, ITN

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Afghanistan

Dear Charles,

I have just come back from a month in Afghanistan. I came away with a very strong feeling that the situation is critical. I think this is true generally, as I'm sure you know, but I can only speak with first-hand knowledge of the north-east, now largely under the control of Ahmad Shah MASUD'S Council of the North. I met Masud in his 'capital' of Taloqan, the main city of Takhar Province.

The main fact I learned from a couple of talks with Masud is that he has received no weapons via the Pakistani pipeline at all this year (the arms routes to the north are now blocked by snow). This is a deliberate policy, he says, enforced by the Pakistanis because he will not fight the war their way. They have always resented his independence and his refusal to take ISI (Pakistani military intelligence) instructions has now infuriated them to the extent of cutting off his arms supply. Since I believe that the capture of Kabul is only possible with Masud's full participation, this is not only a serious blow to Masud's own effectiveness and prestige, but affects the whole mujahideen war effort as well.

His brother Yahya, in Peshawar, subsequently told me that Masud wants to organize a conference of top mujahideen military commanders inside Afghanistan to draw up a plan for an attack on Kabul. (Obviously Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who hates Masud will do everything to sabotage the plan, but many other commanders in Afghanistan might well welcome the idea.) Masud's argument is that only a joint attack based on a single, agreed plan will have any chance of getting rid of President Najib's regime. Such a plan, Masud says, must be drawn up by the mujahideen's best commanders, of whom he is particularly sure, independent of the politicians in Peshawar. Only after a military solution, he argues, can there be a political solution, and "free, democratic elections."

My conclusion is that unless Masud gets some in substantial quantities next year, the prospects for him, his Council of the North and the wider mujahideen cause will be seriously if not fatally flawed. He is the main power in the strategic Salang Highway area, the only commander who can block access to Kabul by road, and in my opinion the key player for the eventual attack on Kabul. If the mujahideen, under ISI control, could not even capture Jalalabad, the same combination minus Masud have no hope at all of taking Kabul, in my opinion.

< Sandy Gall

Sandy Gall, ITN

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Sandy Gall

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