ON LOCUST AND SUNN PEST CONTROL

IN SAMANGAN AND BAGHLAN

(NORTH AFGHANISTAN)

Report on a "cross line" mission to Samangan and Baghlan as a participant of a Salam Mobile Unit, 15 to 21 November 1990

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DACAAR

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ABBREVIATIONS

DACAAR = Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
GCA = Government Controlled Areas
HIA/H = Hizb-e Islami (Hekmatyar)
HIA/K = Hizb-e Islami (Khales)
MCA = Mujaheddin Controlled Areas
NACPP = Northern Afghanistan Crop Protection Project
SCA = Swedish Committee for Afghanistan

MEMBERS OF THE MISSION

Dr. Mehary (UNOCA, Mazar) leader of mission; Mr. Shrestha
(UNICEF, Mazar); Mr. Haris (WFP, Mazar); Mr. Said Daud (UNOCA,
Mazar); Mr. Wessa (UNOCA, Kabul), Dr. Glatzer (DACAAR/UNOCA,
Peshawar), and two drivers.
PURPOSE OF THE MISSION

Wheat distribution, Survey of health situation and clinics, survey on locust/sunn pest infestation and preparations for pest control.

ITINERARY OF THE MISSION

15 Nov. Mazar → Aibak → Darrah-e Zendan.
16 Nov. Darrah-e Zendan → Aibak → Anjir Darrah → Barghazak.
17 Nov. Barghazak → Aibak.
18 Nov. Aibak → Robatak → Pul-e Khumri.
19 Nov. Pul-e Khumri.
21 Nov. Pul-e Khumri → Dand-e Ghorī → Tashqurghan(Khulm) → Mazar-e Sharif.

THE TRIP

From Peshawar to Samangan:

On 12 November 1990 I left Peshawar for Islamabad. In the afternoon I had a talk there at UNOCA office with Mr. Donini. Next morning I flew with an OSGAP flight to Kabul. At the UNOCA office Kabul I shortly met Mr. M. von Schulenburg and Mr. J. Tacon who were about to leave for Islamabad. In the afternoon I was briefed by Ms. C. Lobato, UNOCA and had meetings with Mr. J. Clelland, UNDP on security and maps, with Dr. Hari Diwan, FAO on matters of procedure, and with Mr. Husssaini, FAO on the locust/sunn pest situation in Baghlan and Samangan. On 14 November I continued meetings with Dr. Dewan and Mr. Hussaini. In the afternoon I visited Bazaars of Kabul and prepared for my trip to the North.

On 15 November I flew with the UNOCA plane "Salam-01" via Faizabad to Mazar-e Sharif where I was picked up by the above mentioned members of the mission (a "Salam Mobile Unit").

Mazar to Aibak

After a short stop at UNOCA office Mazar we started at around 11 a.m. for Aibak (Samangan). We travelled in a Toyota
Land Cruiser and a Toyota pick-up, both clearly marked as "UN" vehicles. The asphalt road between Mazar and Aibak, and also further on to Pul-e Khumri is in excellent condition with very heavy traffic of trucks and military vehicles in both directions; also civilian busses and pickups were frequent.

At 12 o'clock we reached Aibak and after lunch in a tea house we met the Mayor of Aibak together with about 20 elders of the town. I explained the Northern Afghanistan Crop Protection Project (NACPP) and collected information about infested areas (see next chapter, p. 10).

Darrah-e Zendan - Maulawi Zaher

In the evening we proceeded to Darrah-e Zendan, 8 km south of Aibak. At the southern outskirts of Aibak we crossed for the first time from a Government controlled area (GCA) to a Mujaheddin controlled area (MCA). Government and Mujaheddin posts were only a few hundred metres away from each other and did not take notice of us. In Darrah-e Zendan we were received by Maulawi Zaher (Amir-e Omumi [General Commander] of Jamiat, Samangan), a Tajik, with utmost hospitality. Although there is no locust and sunn pest infestation and hatching sites in his area (only three years ago there was a locust problem) he assured me all his assistance in carrying out the programme. His area of influence is rather stable and quiet, there seems to be a tacit understanding of mutual tolerance between him and the Government, therefore I consider his area a good place for training extensionists and for passing over chemicals from the GCA to the MCA. However, Maulawi Zaher is not without opposition among the Mujaheddin, particularly he seems to be at odds with the Hizb-e Islami-ye Hekmatyar (HIA/H), therefore a second training and delivery site for Samangan should be considered, e.g. in Tashqurghan (Khulm).

Kokjar - A Shooting Attack

Next morning we drove back to Aibak and proceeded towards the place of commander Maulawi Quddus in Barghazak. At noon we left Aibak in northern direction and took the dirt road leading to Darrah-e Suf. We were told by Government officials that the road cannot be used because there are fights between Government and Mujaheddin forces on the way to Darrah-e Suf. About 10 km north of Aibak in sight of the village of Kokjar we turned in western direction on a track leading to the canyon of Anjir Darrah. A few meters after we left the road we heard shooting from a nearby Government or militia post and saw the shots hitting the ground around us. The drivers lost their nerves and pressed the accelerators, so we sped away into MCA.
Barghazak - Maulawi Quddus

After a five hours' difficult drive through the canyon of Anjir Darrah (MCA) in western direction and through an even narrower side gorge in southern direction we reached Barghazak the camp of Maulawi Quddus on a hilly high plateau above the canyons. We were told that we were not far from Sar Bagh. Maulawi Quddus, an Uzbak, claims to be commander of several parties (Harakat, Mahaz, Nejat). He is on open war with Aibak, a week ago he had fired several rockets on Aibak, we could see more rockets directed towards that city. A few days after we left we were told that he had resumed rocketing Aibak. This might explain the shooting on us by the post near Kokjar. However, we were greeted and treated with great friendliness and hospitality and I was promised all possible help for the NACPP. We got also detailed informations on locust hatching sites. On our whole trip, with one exception, nobody had ever heard of sunn pest or "kafshak" or of any pest which fits to a description of sunn pest. Instead people almost everywhere complained of a 2 to 3 cm long whitish, yellowish worm (white grub ?) which eats the roots of wheat plants. One farmer explained: "In the first year you may find only a few kirm [worms], in the second many more, in the third year they are everywhere and destroy completely a harvest of an area". For the list of locust hatching areas see next chapter.

Next morning commanders of the surrounding areas came to visit us, including Muhammad Qassim ("Qassim Jan") of Sar Bagh, a Dawlat Khel Pashtun (HIA/H), Abdu Manan (Harakat) of Kokjar, and the following sub-commanders under Qassim Jan were also present (all HIA/H): Ubaid Ullah, Qazi Hatef, Mullah Ahmad. An ad hoc shora was formed and tasks of the mission discussed and informations on locust and sunn pest gathered. Again, sunn pest was not heard of in the area but informants did not rule out that Darrah-e Suf in the very west of Samangan might be affected.

Aibak - President Agriculture

We went back to Aibak without incidents and spent the night in the municipality's guest house. There I met Mr. Khan Bahadur, President Agriculture Samangan Province. His informations on locust hatching sites were vague. He guessed that Khurram/Sar Bagh, Sar Bagh, Baba Kambar (near Sar Bagh), and Robatak were locust egg laying areas. He had never heard of sunn pest (or kafshak). According to him crops are also affected severely by aphids, smut and wire worms. He pointed out that the local Government has four dusting machines for BHC: two old (probably
not in working condition, two new ones, and a stock of 96 MT BHC. He could not inform me about the age and condition of the chemical. They used the dusters the years before, this year there was no locust problem. The Mujaheddin also accepted these machines driven by Government employed operators to work in their areas. This interesting statement was later confirmed by all commanders we asked.

Robatak - Another Shooting Incidence - Commander Ghulam Rasul

On 18 November we proceeded towards Pul-e Khumri and stopped at Robatak. Robatak lies on the border of Samangan and Baghlan. Maps differ as to which province Robatak belongs. I put it to Baghlan because due to its geographical and political situation it is an ideal place for distributing the chemicals in North Baghlan.

The exit to Robatak from the asphalt road is controlled by a government/militia post. When we left the road there for Robatak we heard areal shots. After stopping and talking to the guards we were allowed to proceed.

Robatak lies @ 5 km West of the asphalt road in MCA. We were received there warmly by Commander Ghulam Rasul, a Pashtun. He told us he is Amir-e Omumi of Mahaz and at the same time commander of HIA/K. The villages and areas he claims to command are: Shorawak, Bay Saqal, Ai Bagun, Kabuli, Shirikyar, Khoshbara, Qala Qoduq, Alma, Gau Darrah, Qarasay, Ab Darrah, Shor Qoduq, Sholo Qoduq. He admitted that in some of the mentioned places he controls only a part of the area/population.

Ghulam Rasul was the only informant who had heard of sunn pest but could not indicate affected areas. He was very eager to attract other aid and rehabilitation projects for his area. E.g., he showed us a new large school building with 12 spacy class rooms build of mud. Teachers and a had man (Abdul Matin) are already appointed, what is missing is teaching material and the salaries for the teachers. They have also built a motorable road to Sar Bagh on which the latter can be reached within 4 hours.

Ghulam Rasul promised his assistance in case we would select his place as a training centre and distribution point for the chemicals.
Pul-e Khumri

In the afternoon we went on to Pul-e Khumri. Entering the town we met the young Governor of Baghlan Gen. Sayid Jaffar (son of the Ismaili and militia leader Sayid Mansur of Kayan). He invited us to stay in the cement factory's guesthouse (the cement factor is still working). Having reached there we found out that high generality was staying in the guest house including the Air Force Commander for North Afghanistan Gen. Atsak. As we were told they were directing a major operation against Mujaheddin of Baghlan. For reasons of UN's political neutrality we decided not to stay with these gentlemen but to move to the state's guest house. There we met the Mayor of Pul-e Khumri who invited us to the municipality's guesthouse in the centre of the city. We accepted and stayed the following three nights there.

For me there was not very much to do in Pul-e Khumri except making contacts with people from the surrounding areas, collecting informations on locust and sunn pest affected areas, and meeting the President Agriculture Baghlan Province Ghulam S. Ghayrat. He had taken over his position only recently and was ill informed. He invited me to his office near the Sugar Factory of Baghlan and wanted to show me the chemicals deposit and the dusting machines, but on the proposed day access to his office was impossible due to bomb attacks between Pul-e Khumri and the Sugar Factory. There seem to be at least two dusting machines and a rather big amount of BHC, enough for several years. He also told that there was no problem for crop protectionists and dusting machines from the Government side to work in MCAs.

In Pul-e Khumri we visited also the Government house for returning refugees, a solid two storey building with @ 5 rooms furnished with double storey beds. We came unannounced and we could not see a single returnee in the house. After our request one returnee, an elderly whitebeard, was fetched from the bazaar. He told us that he had come from Khorasan Camp near Peshawar. The director claims that in 1990 2300 returnees so far stayed in this house, 876 came from Pakistan individually and 700 from Iran in an organized way by aircraft. The rest were obviously internal refugees. We were told Pul-e Khumri was an important stage for returnees because the way to 8 different provinces passes through this town. Last year each returnee got 75 kg wheat, 5 kg fat, 250 g tea, 3 peaces of soap. This year no provisions are distributed.

It was astonishing to see that people moved freely between MCAs and GCAs, in the streets they showed us openly letters from
Mujaheddin parties; messengers from Mujaheddin commanders came even into the municipality's guesthouse, and in the presence of the Mayor and Deputy Governor they invited us to visit those commanders.

Dand-e Ghori I - Hazaras

Dand-e Ghori is a fertile plain with paddy fields and orchards west of Pul-e Khumri, controlled by Mujaheddin. The population is Hazara and Pashtun. Both ethnic groups are organized in different parties and under different commanders. The Hazara parties have joined in the Hizb-e Wahdad ["Party of Unity"] their important local commander is Sheykh Dawlat. On the 20th November we followed his invitation to Dand-e Ghori but due to a misunderstanding we did not find him and met only his deputy commander Hajji Zabihullah. We were told that the following villages are under Sheykh Dawlat: Gawargan, Gharawshakh, Kohna Masjid, Larkhabi, Bibi Gahhawra, Chashma-ye Sher, Ali Khel, Qar Say, Khwaja Alwan, Aral, Qari Khwola, Qari Morak, Alamli, Kalta Miyana, Zardakamar, Karez Sar-e Qoruq, Karez Sayidha, Qarya Chalu Darrah, Safed Nan, Surkha Chashma, Ozgari. It is obvious that Sheykh Dawlat does not control this area entirely, he rather has followers in all these places.

Some of the mentioned places are notorious locust hatching sites (see next chapter). Here we could not get any precise information on locusts and sunn pest. Instead, Hajji Zabihullah complained of lack of drinking water and asked us to assist them with a drinking water project.

Dand-e Ghori II - Pashtuns - Dr. Ismail - Air Attack

On 21 November, 10 a.m. the mission was received by the Governor of Baghlan Sayid Jaffar (see above p 7, paragraph Pul-e Khumri) in his Pul-e Khumri office. He showed no objections to our cross line operation and to our intent to visit Commander Dr. Ismail who is considered as particularly hostile and dangerous to the Government. After our complaints about the two shooting incidents he gave us a an informal little piece of paper on which he scribbled a few words that we should be given free passage. He advised us to present this paper when passing posts (who are sometimes situated on hill tops at quite a distance from the road). Half an hour later we started for a second trip to Dand-e Ghori, this time to meet Dr. Ismail (HIA/H), a Pashtun, chief commander of the Non-Hazaras west of Pul-e Khumri. The contact
with Dr. Ismail was established by one Eng. Khwaja Muhammad, a well known go-between of Mujaheddin and Government in Samangan and Baghlan. At 11:30 a.m. we met Dr. Ismail in a half ruined farm house in an orchard not far from the hill range which separates Pul-e Kumri from the plain of Dand-e Ghori. On these hills Government posts could be seen. After about 40 minutes - we were talking about wheat distribution and I had not yet found a chance of talking about the NACPP - we heard a jet fighter approaching us an were shocked by the detonations of several bombs in our close vicinity, on not farther than @ 200 m. There was no doubt the bombs were aimed at Dr. Ismail and his men so we quickly and unceremoniously left the place an sped for the asphalt road. We decided to end our mission and to return to Mazar.

Return to Mazar

Originally the mission had the plan to proceed to Doshi in South Baghlan, but for political reasons we were not allowed to go there. Instead we were asked by UNOCA Kabul to travel further north to Kunduz in order to "open" that way. However, the day after we arrived in Pul-e Khumri bombardments around the sugar factory of Baghlan started - obviously part of fightings between the Government and the Mujaheddin of Mamur Ghayur (HIA/H) and Mullah Shams (Jamiat) of Baghlan. The road to Baghlan Town and further on to Kunduz was thus totally blocked, even for local traffic. Therefore we did not see a reason for staying longer in the area and returned back.

In Tashqurghan we made a short stop to see whether we could talk to people in the Mujaheddin controlled part of the town but were stopped by militia at the entrance to Tashqurghan. At 4:00 p.m. we reached the UNOCA office in Mazar.

Mazar - Kabul - Islamabad

The next Salam-01 flight back to Kabul took place on the 25th November. I spent the waiting days in Mazar with collecting more informations from Government officials and UN staff concerning the NACPP, with finding out whether there will be a way of meeting the DACAAR field manager in Mazar next February, and with writing a report.

In Kabul I had intensive meetings and briefings with Ross Mountain and John Steward, UNDP, and with Michael von Schulenburg, Chantal Lobato and John Tacon, UNOCA.
On 27th November I boarded the OSGAP flight to Islamabad, next morning after meeting Antonio Donini at UNOCA Islamabad I went back to Peshawar.

**LOCUST HATCHING SITES**

The following site names are collected from local farmers, commanders, Government and UN officials. Due to the shortage of time I could not see most of the sites myself and had no technical means to verify the presence of locust eggs empirically. Here I enter only those names which were given to me by more than one informant independently. I am not convinced that these include all sites and that these sites actually will be hatching grounds in 1991. Therefore our Field Manager and the Trainers/Supervisors have to carry out a more detailed survey in winter 1990/91 in both provinces. They have to establish exactly how many extensionists and sprayers are needed and the amount of chemicals required.

**Samangan:**
- Sar Bagh
- Khurram/Sar Bagh
- Baba Qambar
- Bar Ghazak (?)
- around Aibak Centre, Kokjar
- Dahan-e Darrah-e Kalan
- Hazrat-e Sultan
- Pir (Firuz) Nakhchir
- Lower Shirikyar (only last year)
- Alasha (last year)
- Dasht-e Khayrabad (East of Tashqurghan/Khulm).

This does not include the very West of Samangan (Darrah-e Suf) because we had no chance to get there. Since Darrah-e Suf is much easier accessible from Balkh province it will be covered by SCA.

**Baghlan:**
- Robatak
- Dasht-e Bay Saqal
- Dasht-e Gawhar (Bibi Gawhara ?)
- Qarasay (?)
- Khwaja Alwan (near Robatak).

We could not get informations about the South and East of Baghlan. Since heavy fighting broke out there I do not see a way to carry out NACPP in those areas.
SUNN PEST

With the exception of Darrah-e Suf in the West of Samangan I am rather sure that sunn pest has not yet reached these two provinces. However, our DACAAR team got the order to further search for sunn pest in the whole area. We have to expect that sunn pest will soon spill over from neighbouring Balkh. As mentioned above SCA will take care of Darrah-e Suf.

SOME POLITICAL OBSERVATIIONS

In the Government Controlled Areas

In the two Provinces the Government controls only the cities and asphalt roads. In the areas we visited there is practically no agricultural land under Government control. The main bazaars are in the Government controlled cities, we could hardly observe any restrictions for people from MCA to visit the bazaars in the GCAs. Young men, however, have to be careful not to get drafted to the army. Government officials in general were friendly and helpful towards our mission but were by far not as enthusiastic about our visit as the Mujaheddin. I got the impression that Air Force and Militias are not fully under Government control otherwise the shooting incidents and air attack on our mission would hardly have occurred.

In the Mujaheddin Controlled Areas

Power is executed here by very autocratically ruling commanders maintaining a strict political and military hierarchy. This differs from the more anarchic and sometimes almost democratic shora system in the South and East of Afghanistan. Party membership seems to play a secondary role, some of the commanders maintain multiple party membership. In Samangan I observed political conflict lines along ethnic boundaries: Tajiks on the one side (predominantly Jamiat), Uzbaks, Pashtuns and others on the other. In the areas we visited in Baghlan the dichotomy is between Pashtuns and Hazaras.

There is a confusing range of tacit pragmatical "agreements" between Government and Mujaheddin. Persons and goods shift easily between the two spheres which on the other hand does not exclude very fierce fighting.
We did not come across one functioning shora. The commanders we contacted quickly understood that UN prefers to deal with shoras, so they appointed and staged shoras from among their followers in order to please us. I am sure these "shoras" were dissolved in the moment we went out of sight. Of course political neutrality and dealing with proper representatives of the population is essential, but instead of initiating mock-shoras one should rather deal with different representatives of an area, be they commanders, or other dignitaries. Particularly one should see to it that no ethnic group is excluded. People tend to deny even the existence of groups they are on bad terms with.

Important commanders in the visited areas:

Tashqurghan: Amanullah (Jamiat)
Nur Gul (HIA/H)
Moh. Taher (Nejat)
in Gozari: Haji Rostam
Aibak / Darrah-e Zendan: Maulawi Zaher (Jamiat)

Bar Ghazak (near Sar Bagh): Malawi Quddus (Mahaz, Harakat, Nejat)

Sar Bagh: Muhammad Qassim Jan (HIA/H)

Robatak: Ghulam Rasul (HIA/H)

Dand-e Ghori: Dr. Ismail (HIA/H)
Sheykh Dawlat (Hizb-e Wahdad (Hazarah))

Bay Saqal: partly also Ghulam Rasul, partly Mamur Ghayur (HIA/H) and perhaps others.

* * *

1 Our mission actually did this, therefore this is not meant as a critique of any member of our mission, but rather of UN policy.