

A7
620.007
A257
Roberts
C2

PD-AMU-837

15N-23365

TERMINAL REPORT

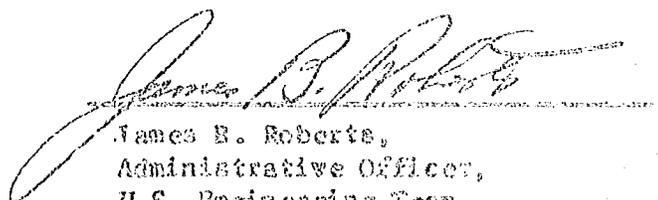
To Director, USAID/Afghanistan

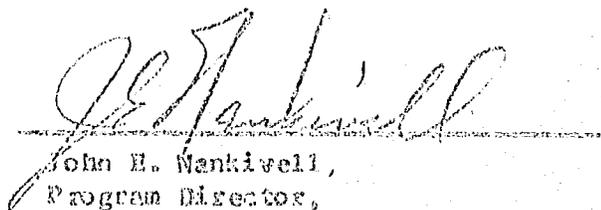
A.I.D.
Reference Center
Room 1658 NS

Submitted by: James B. Roberts

Period Covered: October 13, 1965 thru December 6, 1968

Date of Report - November 23, 1968


James B. Roberts,
Administrative Officer,
U.S. Engineering Team


John H. Nankivell,
Program Director,
U.S. Engineering Team

I. INTRODUCTION

The writer served as Administrative Officer of the United States Engineering Team on 13 October 1965 through 6 December 1968. It is intended that this report will cover only those views which it is felt will be beneficial to individuals or agencies with responsibility for present and future United States efforts in Afghanistan. Further elaboration will be given in writing, or verbally where appropriate.

My employer is the Education Development Center (EDC), Newton, Massachusetts, which is the prime contractor under Contract AID/USA-76. EDC in turn subcontracts with individual members of the Consortium of Universities as provided in the Work Plan of the prime Contract. EDC was formerly named Educational Services Incorporated (ESI). EDC continues to operate as a non-profit organization funded by contracts and grants through public and private sources. The predecessor of ESI and EDC was the Physical Science Study Committee formed and directed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in response to national concern for the status of U.S. physical science education. The Kabul Afghan-American Program is patterned after a similar successful program of somewhat greater scope at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India.

Individual accomplishments are most difficult to identify. This point is one of the primary reasons for the sometimes extreme disappointment and frustration reflected in the end of tour reports of many former staff members of USET and of other similar programs. My personal efforts are to be considered relative to the overall contribution of the Team (with its supporting consortium of eleven universities and the Education Development Center), and as an American citizen.

II. USET SUPPORT

Support for the U.S. field staff requires liaison and cooperation with USAID/A on matters of contract management, local logistics and commodity procurement, and with both AID and the American Embassy with regard to local regulations which affect the USET program. In addition, field support involves assisting staff members and their dependents with

a myriad of details which might otherwise tend to reduce their effectiveness in the job at hand.

Throughout my tour the secretarial and office functions have been managed almost entirely by Mrs. Darsner, Miss Van Duyn and Mrs. Heuckroth. We have also been fortunate in having Mrs. Pillsbury and Mr. Rattan to support this effort.

It is essential to understand and respect the personal and professional background and status of our staff members and to represent them in that light. Staffing, with regard to competence and availability of candidates, is simplified through the Consortium organization. Of those professionally qualified, available and willing, some can be identified as having personal qualities or problems which might make it difficult for them to work effectively in such an unusual environment as in Afghanistan. As more experience is gained, the Consortium Steering Committee is better prepared to deal with this matter. However, engineering and scientific personnel are so often held in such high professional esteem that personal qualities which might be undesirable in a remote, rather restrictive and foreign environment can easily be overshadowed. This point leads to the following recommendation:

It is recommended that all professional staff members (perhaps above a certain academic rank and/or salary level) be allowed the privilege of resigning at any six-month period within their appointed tour without financial penalty or loss of professional prestige.

Such an arrangement would give recognition to those who sincerely attempt to contribute to U.S. foreign assistance but find themselves unable to do so. Similar arrangements are common at the senior level in many fields. It is felt that this could prevent considerable waste of talent and of money and would be a reasonable counterbalance to the present one-sided provision for early resignation in the absence of extenuating circumstances which is so ungraceful and unpleasant that it rarely is considered seriously.

III. RELATIONS WITH MISSION

The USBP has received good housing and other general services support in most cases. When AID has been unable to provide supplies and services such as stationery, office machines and their maintenance, etc., the Team has not been restricted from providing for itself.

The Mission control and auditing function is to some extent an AID deterrent to the Contractor in maintaining a positive operation. This is due largely to the fact that not only are there very few Americans who understand the rationale followed by project oriented people in general, and engineers in particular, but the examination of our judgment is left mostly to non-Americans who cannot be expected to understand. The record of past audit disallowances which have been set aside after months and years of arbitration is the basis for the preceding comment. Placing of the contractor in a constantly defensive position on relatively small matters can only suppress its ability to do the job. Absolute and final delegation of authority to the Contractor for limited operational expenditures should be considered. Minimum amounts (not subject to Post Audit) up to \$100 (equivalent Afghania) for local currency and \$200 in contract dollars per transaction is recommended.

It has often been suggested that one of the principal responsibilities of the Mission is to help us to keep from making mistakes. While mistakes are inevitable, it would be meaningful if those who have AID cognizance of our program were to have a better understanding of the realities of dealing with our hosts at the working level. A few days spent at my desk occasionally by personnel of the Education Division, Controller and Administrative Offices of USAID/A would be beneficial to all concerned.

Procurement of program commodities was taken over by the Mission on 1 July 1968. This action further reduces the necessary cohesiveness of the originally intended project responsibility of the contractor. The

Mission Supply Division personnel have been making a sincere effort to adapt the U.S. Government procurement system to meet project support requirements. However, the general lack of flexibility increases the already difficult problem of coordinating the utilization of program materials with the tours of U.S. technical advisors and with the training of Afghans. Considerably more USST manpower is now required in processing commodity orders. This and the involvement of several AID offices having no apparent relation to the program will likely obviate any expected overall cost savings.

IV. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Aside from general assistance to the returned Participants in re-adjustment, my work has been mainly directed to development of supporting staff and operation of facilities. After the first year of my tour the Faculty Business Manager was replaced by Mr. Moosa, who is considered to have sufficient potential to warrant U.S. business training. The Faculty has also employed a skilled machinist at a higher than average rate of salary in order to retain him.

My work with a University committee on a proposal for establishment of a special salary scale for qualified laboratory technicians, included preparation of the final English version of the proposal which has been before the University Senate for more than a year. Since higher salaries are recommended for technicians than are allowed under the civil service scale for University professors and administrators, the principal opposition is based on academic principle only. It is important to note that the Deans of the technical faculties fully supported the proposal. The German advisors, who originally submitted the proposal to the University, felt strongly enough to advise the University that they would consider withdrawal of their assistance unless a satisfactory arrangement is to be made to develop and retain competent laboratory technicians. I have been told that the German Ambassador has taken the matter to the Ministry of Education also. It is felt that the problem of professional salaries for teachers is a

completely separate matter and must not impede the development of a supporting staff without which the Faculties of Science, Agriculture and Engineering cannot become fully effective.

Buildup of laboratories in the present facilities has been almost entirely an American effort in both materials and manpower. Each task, large and small, has required consideration of the Contract Work Plan, the Project Agreement, the PIO/T and the CAP relative to responsibility. Generally the Afghans have not been prepared to support the basic provisions of the joint agreements. The USSET is not in a position to attempt to prepare them at any level other than the Faculty. It is felt that USSET could have been more effective if given specific guidance based on periodic review of the Project Agreement at appropriate levels of both the RGA and AID. One such effort was initiated in May 1968 with regard to USA/RGA responsibility for purchase of project commodities.

It is obvious, after more than five years of effort, that a capable supporting staff cannot be developed without a concentrated program which would require a departure from current RGA and USAID policy on several points. The principal points proposed are:

1. Foreign business training should be provided for six (6) persons including Mr. Moza. From these, the four (4) principal faculty business officers would be selected; i.e., Business Manager, Asst. Business Manager, Student Affairs Officer, Property & Purchasing Officer. Four of the candidates should be enlisted from outside the Faculty with the full privilege of competing for the principal positions after training.
2. A training program for laboratory and shop technicians should be established in Kabul under AID sponsorship. Two or more persons should begin training for each ultimate position. At the end of a trial period (6 months to 1 year) the most promising trainees should be given either third country or U.S. training, or a combination of both.

It is suggested that the SIU Team provide the initial training utilizing the AIT and Faculty of Engineering facilities. This would likely require addition of one or more U.S. advisors for at least one year solely for this program. After the screening of trainees, third country or U.S. training would be less costly and would provide incentive as in the case of participants for the teaching staff.

Arrangements might also be made for on-the-job training with the Siemens and Heineemann Companies and with USAID/A.

It would not be necessary to supplement standard Afghan Civil Service salary for trainees during the initial training period if the incentive of foreign training and/or on-the-job training at local foreign salary levels is offered.

The cost of a two-year crash program might well be from \$150,000 to \$200,000. However, if such a program is not carried out, the U.S. investment in facilities and equipment and training of Afghan professors under the USBT program will have much less effect.

V. U.S. vs RUSSIAN EFFORT

It is my opinion that the Russian Polytechnic program is very likely to squeeze out the technically strong, but politically and managerially weak, U.S. technical education program. In anticipation of continuous Russian efforts to overshadow the U.S. effort, the following move should be considered.

1. The U.S. should arrange to establish, for a limited trial period, what in essence would be an "American Engineering College of Kabul". Such an operation would demonstrate vividly the difference between the present slow-moving University systems and a businesslike school with organization, staff and student standards, salaries, tuition and other typical international criteria to be set and managed without local cultural and administrative restraint. If, at the end of a three to four year trial period the results are not convincing nor acceptable to the RGA, then we could leave much more gracefully than if we wait for the squeeze.

It would be necessary to overcome the RGA conviction that it could not afford to operate the University according to international standards. A well planned and managed program should demonstrate not only that they could afford it, but that they could not afford not to.

VI. PROBLEMS

Of the few unresolved serious matters which have occurred during my tour only one will be referred to in this report; that is, the loss of local currency which was in my custody. My report on the loss, dated September 30, 1967, is attached to introduce the subject. A considerable file on the subject is available through me, or through the USEF. It is understood that "classified" communications between USAID/A and AID/W exist which I have not seen. I intend to pursue the matter to the ultimate absolution from the officially documented inference of irresponsible conduct.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally, I wish to acknowledge with thanks the extensive consideration and assistance which I have received both personally and toward supporting the USEF. Specific acknowledgments will be addressed directly to individuals and groups and, thus, are not included in this report.

Ha-shuan-e Khoda

attach. A

ATTACHMENT A

M E M O R A N D U M

September 30, 1967

TO: Dr. O.P. Bergelin
FROM: James E. Roberts *JER*
SUBJ: Loss of Revolving Fun.

Correspondence and discussions which have followed the official opinion of the USAID Controller dated June 15, 1967 indicates that some further explanation and provision of detail regarding the loss of Afs 42,901 from the USET revolving fund might help to support a request for a review of the matter by the Mission Director. The following points were either omitted or might not have been sufficiently clear to all concerned in my original report of June 6, 1967:

1. The fund was short of 20,000 Afs on February 1, 1967.
2. An additional 22,901 Afs were short on March 1, 1967.
3. The entire matter was reported to the USAID Security Officer, Mr. Gilbert Dietz during the first week in March, 1967.
4. Mr. Dietz reported it to the U.S. Embassy Administrative Officer who is the post security officer by telephone in my presence and then arranged a meeting on the same day with the Embassy Officer. No record of the report date was kept by either USAID or Embassy Security Officers.
5. Mr. Dietz obtained a Fluorescent Mineral Detection kit from the U.S. Air Force Station in Peshawar (Pakistan) with the assistance or advice of the Embassy Security Officer.
6. Upon the return to Kabul of Mr. Dietz with the detection equipment he and I treated some local currency and placed it in the safe from which the shortage had occurred.
7. I do not recall the date on which I personally reported the matter to the USAID Controller.
8. The Controller indicated to me that he did not agree with the use of detection in that it may possibly lead to loss of the additional currency used in the detection scheme.
9. In my discussions with the Controller both before and after filing of his opinion I stressed the fact that the environment in which the USET works made it extremely difficult to say or do anything which could possibly offend the Afghans with whom we work. Hence the

Dr. O.P. Bergelin
September 30, 1967

Attach. A-0.2

rather considerable delay due to checking and rechecking our records before reporting to anyone outside of our own office. I could not have been certain that the USAID Security Officer would not have begun an investigation and unintentionally created an embarrassing position between USBT and the Faculty of Engineering and other University people. I feel that my judgement in that case has not been given proper consideration. In order to gain full appreciation of this point I will add that the senior Afghan in the Faculty suggested that the matter be kept quiet within the University until he has had an opportunity to consult a palm reader. That inference was made very brief in the first paragraph, page 2 of my June 6 report.

I request further consideration by the Mission regarding my judgement and understanding in dealing with the Afghans on a daily basis. I feel that the entire loss of 42,901 Afs should be ruled to be a trust fund operating cost due to the local environment.

JBR/rr

9