

Diary Entry 3

The following diary entries are Ron Hamilton's personal observations, musings and thoughts while commissioned by World Bank to review governance and monitoring in the SOE sector in Kabul during 2009.

7 May 2009

"If you don't know where you are going, any road will lead you there." – unknown

I spent the day putting thoughts and papers into the system. And then finished the day at a meeting with US AID people. Interesting, just getting into the compound. One of the hassles is that an accepted route may be closed for reasons no one knows. And this necessitates finding a round-about route. Very impressive processes and personnel to go through the entry. Cell phones with cameras are, for example, prohibited. We met four Americans – the intensity one expects from American officials. As I said to J. later, I think they were trying to make me out – another situation where people worry about their patch being invaded.

I had some sympathy for the Americans in their living conditions. One pointed out rows of container-like "huts". This is where the junior staff live. Inside high walls, supplemented by the ubiquitous large, square, metal-bound sand bags.

Now, it's rum and coke time and, tomorrow being Friday, a weekend to look forward to. Of course, we rent-seekers don't have weekends.

I haven't mentioned TV. One of the pleasures is the number of Indian films. Particularly the Bollywood ones! Love all the dancing, flashing teeth and wiggling. And there are movie channels in several languages. And an excess of cricket and soccer. But South African TV has rugby, though sometimes with the commentary in Afrikaans.

8 May

Friday – and it is a holiday for locals. Indeed, my neighbour (an American chap doing Bank work with the Ministry of Justice) and I had to make our own breakfast! Supper might be "interesting" but we note the fridge is full of eggs. We won't starve and I already love the local bread.

Leith and I just had our first and second Skype call. Dick Smith's finest camera seems not to have a good mike. I couldn't get the gist of how her flights went though understood that she had a good time in Singers. Perhaps an e-mail will be forthcoming?

I wonder if Grant Fox knows that he appears on Kabul television? Just think, the Taliban may be keen viewers of the Super 14 and that might explain some of the odd names in New Zealand's "virtual rugby" competition. Rugby is, probably, too tame for a people whose sports include carrying a goat or sheep carcass on fast, manoeuvrable horses. Pushing, punching and shoving other participants throughout the match. Perhaps this might be the solution to improving the Highlanders' Super 14 performance?

Lunch at J's house was Italian, with lashings of rum and Pepsi. Sorry, Matters but Pepsi ("fepsi") as all we could get. Only the two of us, with J recalling bits and pieces. J and I first met when we engaged him to scope the Rural Bank for privatisation. I took my camera in the hopes of having another perspective of Kabul but no, there wasn't. And both ways were, of course, by armoured SUV. I am about ready to seek a car for shopping though.