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R. B. Scott, Program Office

The long wait in the North Shamalan

The information presented here comes from the farmers of the North Shamalan over the past two weeks. The HAVA position has not been explained to me in the recent past.

A year ago September we began digging the new Shamalan lateral without making the payment for right-of-way. The HAVA public relations tactic of the time (if it can be referred to as such) was to delay relations with the farmers until the last. According to the older son of the owner of the first plot (the man with whom arrangements had to be made), payment of 24,000 afs for the corn crop was made only after the construction equipment appeared in the area and a face-to-face exchange between the parties occurred. There apparently was AID pressure to get construction underway at that time. To date, the right-of-way has not been paid.

As noted in previous memos, the farmers have used this lack of payment as indication of bad faith on the part of the government. They are probably correct. They were told in the September meetings that the checks were ready but that the Governor's presence was needed for payment. He returned more than two weeks ago. Apparently the farmers chose one of their group, a respected, old, partially blind man, to represent them in negotiations over the payment through the courts. They have since suggested that he no longer maintain these contacts that have had no results. It appears to be a kind of withdrawal from relations with the government over the issues, a normal middle eastern tactic in situations between groups that are likely to lead to conflict. There is no acceptance of land development by the farmers of the North Shamalan. It should be kept in mind that these events are outlined on the basis of farmers statements which may or may not coincide with "fact". The statements do, however, coincide with present attitudes which, for our purposes, are probably more important than "fact".

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The corn crop should be off by about the end of the month. We might expect the farmers to attempt to get the wheat planted as quickly as possible. It does not seem likely that all the official preparation for the project will be completed by that time, e.g., clearing titles, consolidation plans, because some of these steps require farmer agreement. Whether by plan or by chance, there are two alternatives open to HAVA in dealing with the farmers on land development. If AID does not push for the construction to begin, on inadequate preparation, HAVA will likely let the construction period between crops pass and continue with the canal, which does not differ greatly from what they have proposed for some time. If AID pushes for construction to begin, HAVA has a justification to use *vis-a-vis* the farmers, the project control is out of their hands...not responsible. Perhaps *right-of-way* payment will be made by then, to soften the blow. In any case, construction would begin under the guise of pressure with inadequate preparation of the farmers who must to some degree cooperate if the 200 acre plot is to stand as an example for the future development. AID stands in a position to pressure for either alternative, neither of which are in our long term better interests. The farmers are waiting and watching developments, and as one said, metaphorically, "We are sharpening our axes".

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