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June 13, 2012

The Honorable Hillary R. Clinton
Secretary of State
US Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense
US Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Secretaries Clinton and Panetta,

In December 2011 the China National Petroleum Corporation, a state owned enterprise, was approved by the Afghan national government to develop three oil fields in Afghanistan located in Sar-e Pul and Faryab provinces, which is estimated to hold 87 million barrels of oil. The winning offer was a widely reported non-commercial bid for a 25-year contract was a joint effort between CNPC and the Watan Group, a conglomerate owned by the Popel brothers who are cousins of President Hamid Karzai. Qayum Karzai, President Karzai's brother, is reported to be the largest shareholder in the Watan Group. The Watan Group has never before been involved in upstream oil field exploration and development. Moreover, the Chinese and Karzai family company beat out a private sector American oil company to win the bid.

According to reports of a Afghan Security Council meeting, General Abdul Rashid Dostum's supporters—which means Uzbeks who live in these provinces—are being accused of interfering with the Chinese engineers. As you know General Dostum is an important member of the National Front, the most significant opposition group in the country. He has expressed his concerns as well as many Afghans that the benefits of such energy development must accrue to the Afghan people and not a corrupt Afghan leader who sees the Afghan government as a family business. That the Afghan government in Kabul has threatened to possibly arrest Dostum and his followers is a transparent move against the Uzbek people of these provinces for challenging the corruption and the Chinese oil company which supports such corruption and is yet another indication of President Karzai's anti-non-Pashtun stance and efforts at ethnic division as a method of rule. There is a very real possibility that Karzai could seek retribution against Dostum considering last week's assassination attempt on Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, another member of the National Front, who accused the Afghan government for the failed attack on his life.

This situation raises three very troubling issues; why is the United States continuing to support President Karzai and his obviously corrupt regime and why are Chinese state owned companies, not American companies, being allowed to develop the resources in Afghanistan? But more significantly, why is our Government ignoring a growing movement of Afghan people turning against President Karzai and his corrupt ways.

The Watan Group is one of the many vehicles the Karzai family is using to enrich themselves off of the war in Afghanistan. The Watan Group was implicated in the 2012 "Warlord, Inc." report and was exposed as having paid bribe money to the Taliban while they had contracts to truck US supplies in Afghanistan. Our tolerance of high-level Karzai family corruption undercuts all American credibility and fundamentally weakens our position in the region. The CNPC is also not the first Chinese state owned corporation to operate in Afghanistan. The Metallurgical Corporation of China won the contract to exploit the massive Aynak copper mine, again out bidding a US company with non-commercial terms.

Why are Americans dying, why is our country going deeper into dept to help secure resources for the Communist Party of China?

General Dostum is one of the ethnic leaders which made up the Northern Alliance who originally defeated the Taliban in 2001. He is doing exactly the right thing challenging a corrupt Karzai government and the companies that support such corruption in Afghanistan. It has been a tragedy that the US has backed the corrupt and ineffective Karzai government for so long. Karzai now embraces the Communist Chinese and the radicals in Iran and Pakistan in order to maintain his own hold on power. Our current strategy must be changed in order to justify our troops remaining in Afghanistan. To salvage the situation the United States should again form an alliance with the Uzbek, Tajik, Hazara, Turkmen, and Baloch ethnic groups, as well as the non-Taliban Pashtuns and support their long-standing call for a more decentralized, federal form of government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Rohrabacher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress