

DANA ROHRBACHER

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October 31, 2012

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Panetta:

I recently received a letter from the law firm of Whiteford, Taylor & Preston LLP on behalf of its clients, convicted Karzai-klan drug smugglers Rateb and Rashid Popal who were tried and sentenced for their crimes in the United States. Rateb was sentenced to twelve years. These two felons own Watan Oil and Gas Afghanistan Limited, a firm whose contracting and bidding partnership with China National Petroleum Corporation was endorsed by the U.S. Department of Defense. The letter asks me to help clear the reputation of this felon led firm by writing to you and Secretary Hillary Clinton.

The strategic economic inroads China has made in Afghanistan are deeply troubling. I am also shocked by the Pentagon's facilitation of the criminal Popal brothers participation in a contract to develop Afghanistan's largest oil field. Let us not forget that in 2001, Rateb Popal was the spokesman for the Taliban in Islamabad. According to the Wall Street Journal, he also arranged business deals between the Taliban and China. The Popal-Taliban-China relationship poses a grave threat to American security interests and to the future of Afghanistan.

In a letter written on your behalf to me dated July 15, 2012, it was claimed that the contract was awarded to CNPC and Watan "in an open and transparent manner." This puts the Pentagon right in the middle of this strategic blunder and in bed with the disreputable Popal brothers. I would hope that now that you have been informed personally about the record of the Popal brothers as drug smugglers and of Rateb's prior ties to the Taliban and China, you would do all that you can to reverse this blunder.

It is our duty to ensure that the more than 2,000 brave American soldiers (and many thousands more wounded) were not sacrificed for the benefit of the Beijing regime and a small clique of Karzai-related wheeler dealers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Rohrabacher".

Dana Rohrabacher
Chairman

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee