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Embassy The Hague

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NSC FOR TOBY BRADLEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/18/2019

TAGS: PREL, AF, NATO, PGOV, NL

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/AFGHANISTAN: ENGAGING LABOR PARTY
LEADER BOS - PART OF THE "GETTING TO YES" STRATEGY FOR
EXTENDING DUTCH DEPLOYMENT IN AFGHANISTAN POST-2010

REF: A. THE HAGUE 543

B. THE HAGUE 514

C. THE HAGUE 419

D. THE HAGUE 0092

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Andrew Mann
for reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: Post requests a senior USG official (ideally NSA General Jones) engage Dutch Finance Minister and Labor Party leader Bos in a pull-aside at the Pittsburgh G20 Summit to emphasize continued Dutch participation in such fora is based on their active international role, not their economic/financial power. Post suggests a follow-up call by SRAP Amb. Holbrooke to Development Minister Koenders to make sure Bos "gets" the message. END SUMMARY.

2. (S/NF) After his July 14 meeting with the President, Prime Minister Balkenende understands the Dutch were invited to the Pittsburgh G20 Summit because of their role in Afghanistan, where they are viewed as a serious partner who shoulders their international responsibilities. Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Labor Party leader Wouter Bos, however, believes the reasons the Dutch are going to Pittsburgh are (1) their participation in previous G20 meetings; (2) their financial prowess (16th largest economy, 11th largest financial center, 6th largest development assistance provider); and (3) their substantive views on and experience in international economics and finance. Comments by Crown Prince Willem-Alexander after his September 11 visit to the White House that the President wants the Dutch as permanent G20 members ("The President indicated that he truly values the Dutch input") re-enforced Bos's position.

3. (S/NF) Following USNATO Amb. Daalder's visit (ref A), senior Dutch officials, including the Prime Minister's Foreign Policy and Defense Advisor Karl van Oosterom, have repeatedly asked the Embassy to have a senior Washington

official convey to Bos the real reason for the Dutch G20 invitation. They complain “he just doesn’t get it,” reflecting the frustrations of the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Defense Minister, who support the Dutch remaining in Afghanistan post-2010.

4. (S/NF) In late August, Bos indicated to the Ambassador the Labor Party would likely support an extension of Dutch deployment in Afghanistan after 2010, but not in Uruzgan (ref B). He has not said so publicly or within his party, however, and the Labor Party rank and file (and the public at large) are increasingly opposed to Afghanistan. Recent Task Force Uruzgan fatalities led to heavy media coverage of a perceived decline in public support for the Afghanistan mission and a questioning of Dutch development efforts in Uruzgan - “what are we doing there?” Allegations of corruption during the recent presidential election are also generating concerns about whether Dutch diplomacy efforts have yet borne fruit. Bos’ failure to see the connection between the Dutch NATO/ISAF involvement and its G20 participation could cause him to change his mind from likely supporting an Afghanistan extension to opposing it. The Labor Party is currently the hold-out in the three-party governing coalition for Cabinet approval to extend the Dutch deployment after 2010. While Bos is guided on the Afghanistan issue by Development Minister Koenders (a leading member of Bos’s Labor Party), the final decision will be Bos’s to make.

5. (S/NF) Post believes a pull-aside for Bos by a senior USG official such as NSA General Jones at the Pittsburgh Summit would be beneficial. It would make Bos aware of how important we view international leadership -- measured by a country’s actions across the board. A pull-aside would also demonstrate to Prime Minister Balkenende our support for his efforts to get Cabinet approval of continued Dutch deployment. We would suggest comments along the following lines:

- We respect the Dutch political system and know the upcoming

decision on whether to continue deployment in Afghanistan after 2010 is a difficult one. That decision is for the Dutch to make, but we are ready to provide any information to assist with the Cabinet’s decision.

- We value Dutch partnership - not only in Afghanistan but in NATO, the OSCE and G20 - across the breadth of international issues and fora. The countries around the table in Pittsburgh are not here just for their economic weight/views

but because they are world leaders. There are a number of countries who sought a seat at this G20 table, but only countries with an understanding of their international responsibilities were invited.

6. (S/NF) As a follow-up to the G20 pull-aside, we request SRAP Amb. Holbrooke call Development Minister Koenders to make sure Bos got the message. We understand Amb. Holbrooke is interested in contacting Koenders now, but we recommend a later call to take into consideration the G20 pull-aside and other developments. For example, CENTCOM Commanding General Petraeus will meet with senior Dutch Members of Parliament September 21. We will report on that discussion so it can inform both the pull-aside and Holbrooke/Koenders call.

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