

Afghan call for ethnic cleansing

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Washington, May 18 (UPI) -- A tract calling for wholesale ethnic cleansing in Afghanistan is circulating there and in Pakistan, according to the French television station TF-1.

The booklet, written in Pashto, calls for the non-Pashtun Tajik and Hazaras populations to be removed from key areas and replaced by Pashtuns from the south of Afghanistan. The Islamist Taliban that rules most of Afghanistan is made up of Pashtuns. Analysts consider that its extreme beliefs are a form of Sunni Islam distorted by Pashtun tribal culture. The book, analysts said, appears to share the Taliban view of the situation in Afghanistan.

While they are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and have been dominant in its politics for the past two centuries, it is only with the Taliban taking power in Kabul in 1996 that the Pashtun have sought to impose their mores on other Afghan peoples.

The book, titled "The Second Water Bearer," compares Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, the Tajik leader of resistance to the Taliban, to Habibulla Kalakani, known as the Waterbearer. Kalakani was a Tajik adventurer who ruled as king of Afghanistan from January to October 1929 before being overthrown and eventually put to death. Mas'ud is described in the book, which first appeared in Afghanistan prior to a Taliban offensive against him in 1998, as the second Waterbearer.

Mas'ud and his supporters in the Panjshir valley in the northeast of Afghanistan are being aided by Russia, Iran and India. The tract says of them, "Foreigners and those who serve them have made the Panjshir a center of thought hostile to the other peoples of the country."

So that they are no longer manipulated by foreigners nor exploit their

geographic and military position, the Panjshir population must be cleared out and given equivalent land in the south and west of the country, the book says. While the Panjshir is a center of agriculture, the south is known for its deserts, TF-1's Leonard Vincent noted on Monday.

"The national (Taliban) government has the right to move people temporarily or permanently from one region to another if their presence is a threat to national unity," says the book.

The tract also urges that a buffer zone be created between Kabul and the Panjshir and Bagram, a strategically situated town to the north of the capital. It would be settled by homeless from Pashtun areas and would prevent Kabul being pillaged by "bandits coming from the North" -- a reference to Mas'ud's forces.

So as to "cut off Iran's hand" in the Bamiyan area of central Afghanistan, the Hazara population there should be removed, the book proposes, and replaced by Sunni Muslims from Pashtun areas. Like the Iranians, the Hazara are Shiite Muslims.

The Taliban massacred hundreds of Hazara when it occupied the town of Yakaolang in January of this year. According to the watchdog body, Human Rights Watch, the Taliban arrested 300 male civilians, and took them to various assembly points where they were killed in public by firing squads. Elderly villagers who had come to town to parlay with the Taliban were also killed during the massacres that lasted four days.

Taliban officials subsequently denounced reports of the massacres as lies but refused to allow United Nations observers access to the area, Vincent reports. The analysts saw the massacres as Taliban revenge for the killing of Pashtuns when the Hazara area was earlier occupied by forces of the Northern Alliance. This is the resistance headed by Mas'ud that is loyal to the deposed Burhanuddin Rabbani, who remains the internationally recognized president of Afghanistan.

When the Taliban took the western city of Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998, they conducted massacres against Hazara civilians there on a large scale and

killed a number of Iranian diplomats, bringing Tehran close to war with the Pashtun government.

"The Second Waterbearer" was written by a pseudonymous Samsur Afghan, according to TF-1. It is well known in Afghanistan and at Peshawar in Pakistan, a center of expatriate Afghan activity. But the work appears to have been published in Germany. The book's cover bears the emblem and name of a Verein zur Förderung der afghanischen Kultur Germany" or Association for the Advancement of Afghan Culture in Germany.

While "The Second Waterbearer" calls for banning the import of anything contrary to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, the school to which the Taliban claims to adhere, the publication comes out of a quite different background, according to TF-1. It reflects the views of a shadowy group of Pashtun nationalists living in Germany who derive from leftist Pashtuns educated there going back to the 1950s. More recently these expatriates have been involved in a German Pashtun and Baluch Committee and a Pashtun Social Democratic Party. These were set up by members of the Afghan Communist Khalk faction that had lived in Germany, TF-1 said, and returned there after the collapse of the Communist government in Kabul in 1992.

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