

Diary Entry 2

The following diary entries are Ron Hamilton's personal observations, musings and thoughts while commissioned by the World Bank to review governance and monitoring in the Strategic Grain Reserve in Kabul during 2012

I hope today, Saturday will see more activity. Friday, being the rest day, gave me a chance to catch up on sleep, though I was going on all cylinders to begin with. New Zealand does not have a good image, as far as TV is concerned. First, the Black Caps went down – and seem to be going the same way, now – and the Highlanders didn't quite make it. I hope these were not omens for the work of New Zealand consultants. They even cut my power off in the middle of the night! If you have woken in a pitch dark and silent room, you will appreciate how disorienting this is. When some lights came on, I groped to the telephone and called the guards. I think they forgot someone was in the building.

Over breakfast, yesterday, I met again the IMF representative I first met in 2009. What stunned me was that he is reviewing the SOE Act, again! He hadn't been given my reports, which I had done for the Bank to pass onto the IMF. At least, I can rectify that, now.

Had another lovely talk with Leith, though the quality of the transmission leaves something to be desired. Fortunately, it was in a break between the periodic circuits of military helicopters. These are low and noisy and, as I have said on Facebook, are more of a pest than the Kohimarama Tui's!

I am left to my own devices – the team leader has three projects on the go and is happy for me to manage the Strategic Grain Reserve on my own. Which is what I am doing. It seems I have a new staff member to manage meetings for me.

I am told that my passport should be released "in a couple of days". Which should solve Steph's White Christmas issue.

Then they presented me with a flask of schnapps, and I sent half of it down my throat at once, and felt the fiery warmth running back along my limbs. I poured a little into my palm and rubbed it on my face and neck – a trick Mackenzie taught me in Afghanistan; nothing like it for the cold, if you can spare the liquor.

Royal Flash, p.235, Pan edition, 8th printing, 1978.

Well, if all my meetings come to fruition, it will be a busy few days. The Minister was dropped from the Tokyo contingent and is still in town. Otherwise, I would have had to extend my stay to attend the Saturday group meeting.

And I can thank the news, last night, for now knowing why there were so many helicopters in the area. Hilary Clinton had made a short visit to Kabul and President Kazai. The US Embassy is a very short distance from here. Of which, I am now advised that the weekly bazaar is definitely closed.

Many workmen annoyingly in the vicinity today. Panting and scraping. A few guards wander among them. I would dearly like to handle one of the latter AK 47s but it might be so misconstrued as to make the TV One News! But I found a military helmet in one of the cupboards and a photo of my wearing it is tempting.