I was delighted to get away on holiday to Canada with my family after an exhausting and difficult year. The personnel officer, Colin Reynolds having failed to bring back the answer they wanted, while I was on leave the FCO sent a political officer, Dominic Schroeder, to Tashkent. The excuse was a "Crisis" they had themselves produced by suspending my five most senior members of office staff.

Schroeder came back and dutifully reported he had found allegations of mismanagement, alcoholism, financial corruption and offering sex in exchange from visas.

I was summoned back immediately from holiday and arrived back to meet Howard Drake of Personnel Department. I went straight from the airport to his office after a 16 hour overnight flight from Vancouver via Chicago, having not slept for 60 hours. As I walked in the door I had no idea I was about to face a huge raft of false allegations and be asked to resign.

In the circumstances I am amazed by how well I managed to defend myself at this meeting! You should bear in mind that this is Howard Drake's record of this meeting; it therefore puts the best possible gloss on what the FCO was doing.

Craig Murray May 2006

From: Howard Drake, PD-SMS

Date: 27 August 2003

- cc: PS/PUS
 - Peter Collecott o/r, DG Corporate Affairs Alan Charlton o/r, Director Personnel Linda Duffield o/r, Director Wider Europe Simon Butt o/r, Hd/Eastern Dept
 - Dominic Schroeder, Eastern Dept
 - Simon Pease, PD-PM Tessa Redmayne, PD-PP
 - Mike Balmer, SSU
 - Craig Murray, HMA Tashkent

CRAIG MURRAY, HMA TASHKENT

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1. At my request, Mr Murray came to see me on 21 August prior to his return to Tashkent following a leave absence. The meeting was also attended by Tessa Redmayne of PD-PP and Kate Smith representing the DSA.

2. I explained both Personnel and Wider Europe Directorates were now of the view that he should withdraw from post on operational grounds. We had very serious concerns about the way the post was being run under his leadership. There were also a number of very serious allegations which had been made about Mr Murray's personal conduct. We were bound to investigate these allegations (as yet unproven). Some of them also raised concerns on security grounds, which SSU would be exploring given that Mr Murray's DV was coming up for review in any case.

3. I handed Mr Murray copies of the reports (copies attached) by Colin Reynolds and Dominic Schroeder following their separate recent visits to Tashkent. I recognised that Mr Murray had seen neither of these before (the Schroeder visit took place after Mr Murray had departed on leave, but the contents of the Reynolds' report had been discussed in full with him) and so invited him to take them away and consider them.

The operational factors which strongly argued for his withdrawal were as follows:

- (a) Mr Murray's handling of the Hirst/Moran cases showed a clear failure to meet the standard of management required of a senior member of the Diplomatic Service. It also demonstrated a failure to exercise a proper duty of care for other staff at post in view of the acts of violence which had taken place. In particular, Mr Murray had not responded adequately to a request by the Uzbek Foreign Minister that the Embassy do something about the behaviour of Chris Hirst. Advice from London on handling the issue appeared not to have been followed.
- (b) There had been a substantial breakdown in the relationship between UK-based and LE staff at post, which Mr Murray had failed to address. We understood that respect had

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broken down following the handling of the Hirst/Moran affair, such that the LE staff wrote to the Director General Corporate Affairs asking for action to be taken. There had been completely inadequate support for the efforts of Steve Brown and Angela Clark, junior officers in the post, to grapple with the situation.

- (c) As noted in Colin Reynolds' report, there appeared to be an absence of standard management procedures at post. There were also indications of inadequate financial controls in place. The Post Account was not submitted on time eg the May one had not yet arrived.
- (d) Wider Europe Directorate also felt that Mr Murray's managerial performance, taken alongside elements of his conduct and security concerns, argued for his leaving post.

5. In addition to these major operational concerns, Dominic Schroeder had reported a series of very serious allegations from members of the UK-based staff in Tashkent. The FCO was duty bound to look into them, and determine if there were a disciplinary case to answer. Some of the allegations related to potential vulnerabilities from a security point of view, and SSU had been concerned given the very explicit warnings given to Mr Murray prior to taking up post on his conduct.

6. I said that Mr Murray should be in no doubt that this was a very serious matter. We were asking Mr Murray to agree to withdraw from post as soon as possible is returning to Tashkent to pack up and leave during September. We were also very mindful of Mr Murray's own well-being, and his own consideration of an early departure in discussion with senior management a month or so earlier.

7. I invited Mr Murray to comment, adding that given the circumstances (he had come direct to the meeting after an overnight flight from Canada, and was en route back to Tashkent) he was free to add to anything he might say at our meeting when he'd had time to consider the details more carefully.

- Mr Murray made the following points:
- (a) Mr Murray explained that he was shocked and would try not to be emotional. If the Office wanted to suspend him while the disciplinary issues were investigated, fine. But he was not going to leave post on the grounds I had outlined.
- (b) The allegations reported in the Schroeder note were wrong and largely untrue. For example, he had never had any say in LE staffing in Visa Section or salary levels. He did not tell anyone not to co-operate with Colin Reynolds ahead of his recent visit. Overall, the allegations were a load of malicious gossip or a malicious twisting of the facts (for example, it was true the May account had not been signed off, but this was because of the many other preoccupations in the aftermath of the Chris Hirst withdrawal). The band was regularly used by the British Council, and its visit was paid for under the Directorate programme budget. Overall, Mr Murray did not believe that the majority of allegations were backed by four UK-based staff as claimed. He believed they were 80% the views of Angela Clark.
- (c) Mr Murray acknowledged that he had an unconventional lifestyle: he liked parties, going to bars and having fun. This did not make him a bad Ambassador. Mr Murray quoted from the Colin Reynolds' report on how his staff enjoy working for him, the respect in

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which he is held by the business community, and the very high turnout at the QBP. Indeed, there seemed to be a very clear difference between the sentiments reported in the Reynolds' report and those in the Schroeder report.

- (d) Mr Murray had not initiated any maladministration, and the claim that he was failing on administrative grounds was unfair. Mr Murray pointed out that his management resource constituted 40% of a B3 officer. With all his other preoccupations, it was not surprising that Mr Murray had not been able to improve deficient procedures that he had inherited. He recognised that Angela Clark and Steve Brown would have liked more support. But this was against a backdrop of having just lost a DHM and another member of staff. He also felt that Angela and Steve had a problem with the LE staff, for which he could not be held responsible.
- (e) Mr Murray absolutely denied any maladministration on handling of the Hirst case. He asked me to look at the letter he had written to Simon Butt on his handling of the issue. 90% of the attacks by Hirst on members of the public had happened before Mr Murray arrived. Mr Murray said his predecessor had been called in by the Uzbeks about Hirst's behaviour, but nothing had been done about it. Mr Murray felt that at that stage Personnel Directorate had supported Chris Hirst. Mr Murray had requested a meeting with Personnel Directorate in January 2003 because he felt that there were real problems with Hirst, and that he did not believe Hirst anymore. It was on that occasion that Mr Murray learnt for the first time that there was a history of violence on Hirst's part: Mr Murray should have been told that at the outset. Eastern Department were also aware of that history, but they too had not told Mr Murray. None of the violent incidents towards the LE staff had taken place while Mr Murray had been in post. Mr Murray confirmed, in response to my question, that the advice he was given at the January 2003 meeting was that moving Hirst to another house was the approach to follow. He had followed that advice. Simon Butt had visited at the end of March, when they agreed that a written warning should be given to Hirst about his behaviour towards LE staff. Mr Murray sought advice from PP on that written warning. Mr Murray told Hirst that such a warning was imminent, to which Hirst's response had been that he would resign. Mr Murray had told Hirst that would be an over-reaction. Mr Murray acknowledged that there was a two-week delay before giving the written warning: this was because of the pressure of work for which he needed Hirst and Moran eg the QBP in late April, the AGM of the EBRD held in Tashkent under UK Chairmanship, a visit by Clare Short, and a British cultural festival. The warning in the event was overtaken by the Foreign Minister calling Mr Murray in around 5 May seeking Hirst's removal. All the while Karen Moran had been destroying MFA notes about Hirst's violence, and so Mr Murray was not in the picture. Overall, Mr Murray did not honestly think he had mishandled the situation. He had followed London advice, and he could not be faulted if his DHM was not telling him what was going on. Mr Murray was mystified why the LE staff, who like him, did not come to him to talk about the Moran/Hirst issues.
- (f) Mr Murray said the FCO had every right to investigate the misconduct allegations. But Mr Murray was not prepared to withdraw on spurious administrative grounds. It was true that prior to his leave Mr Murray had wondered whether he really wanted to go on. After four weeks away he was convinced he did. It would not be fair to judge Mr Murray on the basis of the circumstances he had had to confront in his first year. Mr Murray had

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- (g) Mr Murray said that the move to get him was being conducted by Eastern Department. Personnel Directorate needed to consider whether policy disagreements were leading to a bias against Mr Murray. Mr Murray acknowledged that he was not the usual FCO personality, and that he asked difficult policy questions (by way of illustration, he described in outline a highly classified telegram concerning intelligence obtained via torture). Mr Murray firmly believed that policy differences were at the root of all this: he had clearly got up the noses of senior management. Eastern Department would sling any mud they could at Mr Murray. The claim on the overspend on the DHM house was a very good example. He had been given an allocation from London for that and it was true it was overspent. But the contract had been drawn up in London, and the scope of the work to be done had been drawn up in London. The vouchers did not come through the post, so Mr Murray didn't know of the overspend until afterwards. This had been investigated. Unless one were malicious, one could not lay that at Mr Murray's door. It was a completely unfair accusation.
- (h) Mr Murray repeated that he was not going to agree to leave the post on operational grounds, only for us then to pursue the disciplinary complaints and throw him out of the Office. It would be newsworthy to take disciplinary action while he was serving as an Ambassador. If he was in London, it would be less so. Mr Murray repeated that he had not had a fair chance. He had had very bad staff up to now. He was very happy for some of these very serious allegations to be investigated, and he would co-operate fully. But the administrative case for withdrawal was nonsense. Only a month earlier, Linda Duffield had told him of her support for him staying on if that was what his decision was to be. So how did the Schroeder visit change everything?

9. I told Mr Murray, in response to his direct question, that his response did not change our view that his withdrawal from post was the right thing. I saw no point in our arguing back and forth the specifics at this meeting: he would have time to do that. But he should know that his account in several areas was different from our understanding. Mr Murray asked why I was not instructing him to leave as opposed to asking him or suspending him while the disciplinary investigations were pursued. I reiterated that our hope was that he and we would agree that his withdrawal would be the right step. We also had in mind his well-being and dignity. Withdrawal in itself was not a disciplinary penalty. At the same time, he needed to know that in any case we would have to investigate the misconduct allegations which had come to light and SSU would be looking carefully at these allegations in considering his DV status. I said that I had noted Mr Murray's statement that he would not withdraw on what he called spurious administrative grounds. I asked him to go away and think the matter through more carefully, and asked that he let us know his decision by Thursday 28 August at the latest. In view of others' and my leave absences at that time, he should convey his response to Dominic Schroeder as acting Head of Eastern Department, and copy it to Tessa Redmayne. Once we knew what he had decided to do, we would consider next steps.

10.Mr Murray took note. He asked whether, were he to withdraw, the FCO would be able to help in connection with housing costs (his UK property is let to tenants) and school for his children. I said that we would be prepared to consider that sympathetically. I also pointed

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out that we would not seek to impose any financial penalty for what would effectively be a short tour (eg he would get the full paid baggage allowance etc as if he were completing a full tour).

11. Tessa Redmayne outlined the process which would be followed for the misconduct investigation. The FCO's Misconduct Procedure (set out in FCO Guidance Volume 1. Chapter 21) would be followed. At this stage, the facts needed to be established to decide whether there was a disciplinary case to answer. The staff who had raised the allegations would be asked to substantiate them with a full written statement. Mr Murray would be asked similarly for his account. The report would conclude whether there was a case of misconduct for Mr Murray to answer, and if so, the level of seriousness involved. Normally this initial fact-finding exercise would be carried out by the line manager. Mr Murray felt that it should not be any of his immediate line managers because of their potential to be prejudiced against him because of disagreements at a policy level. Tessa undertook to reflect on this and see if a different colleague might take this on. In the meantime, the staff concerned would be alerted to the fact that Mr Murray had been told of the allegations in general terms. He should not discuss any of this with them or take any action which might be seen as putting pressure on them, and they would be instructed to report any such pressure. It was in everyone's interest to move things forward quickly so Mr Murray could expect to hear soon who had been appointed and how they would be proceeding.

12. I should record my recognition that this was a very difficult discussion for Mr Murray, and that he conducted himself entirely properly throughout. Tessa Redmayne and I reminded him of the help available on a confidential basis from the Welfare staff to talk the issues through. In recognition of the circumstances, I have agreed the content of this note with Mr Murray and this represents our agreed view of our conversation.

Howard Drake Assistant Director PD-SMS

Tel: 7008-1352 Fax: 7008-0788