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TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES

(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAM B. MILAM.
REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: SA ASSISTANT SECRETARY
INDERFURTH AND S/CT COORDINATOR FOR
COUNTERTERRORISM SHEEHAN AT A JANUARY 20 MEETING
WITH TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES DISCUSSED THE INDIAN
AIRWAYS HIJACKING, TALIBAN SUPPORT FOR USAMA BIN

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LADIN, AND THE NEED FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT TO THE AFGHAN CONFLICT. TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES RE-
STATE PREVIOUS POSITIONS. NO NEW GROUND WAS BROKEN. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) SA ASSISTANT SECRETARY INDERFURTH, S/CT AMBASSADOR SHEEHAN, NSC DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH ASIA CAMP, S/CT SPECIAL ASSISTANT BIBBINS, AMBASSADOR MILAM AND POLOFF (NOTETAKER) MET FOR TWO HOURS ON JANUARY 20 WITH TALIBAN DIRECTOR FOR ADMINISTRATION, COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, AMIR KHAN MUTTAQI, TALIBAN AMBASSADOR TO PAKISTAN SYED MOHAMMAD HAQQANI, AND TRANSLATOR NAIM DINDAR. MUTTAQI, THE TALIBAN'S FORMER INFORMATION MINISTER, FLEW FROM AFGHANISTAN FOR THE MEETING.

3. (U) A/S INDERFURTH OPENED THE MEETING BY EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED DIALOGUE, DESPITE DIFFERENCES. HE NOTED THAT THE MANY MEETINGS USG REPRESENTATIVES HAVE HELD WITH TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES DEMONSTRATE THE CONFIDENTIAL

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IMPORTANCE THE U.S. PLACES ON DIRECT COMMUNICATION. TALIBAN AMBASSADOR HAQQANI REMEMBERED THAT HE HAD MET INDERFURTH IN KABUL WHEN THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY ACCOMPANIED THEN UN-AMBASSADOR BILL RICHARDSON. HAQQANI, INTRODUCING MUTTAQI, NOTED THAT MUTTAQI WAS EQUIVALENT TO THE CHIEF OF CABINET FOR THE TALIBAN. INDERFURTH ASKED S/CT SHEEHAN TO DISCUSS U.S. CONCERNS REGARDING TERRORISM.

4. (C) SHEEHAN SAID HE WANTED TO DISCUSS TWO ISSUES, THE RECENT INDIAN AIRWAYS HIJACKING AND A RECENT CONVERSATION HE HAD HELD WITH TALIBAN FOREIGN MINISTER MUTTAWAKIL. REGARDING THE HIJACKING, SHEEHAN SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THE TALIBAN DID NOT HAVE ANY PART IN ARRANGING OR STAGING THE HIJACKING, NOR DID THEY WANT THE AIRPLANE TO LAND IN KANDAHAR. NONETHELESS, SHEEHAN CONTINUED, HE KNEW THAT ONCE THE PLANE LEFT INDIA, IT WOULD LAND IN AFGHANISTAN AND REMAIN THERE. IT WAS IN KANDAHAR -- NOT KABUL OR HERAT OR OTHER LOCATIONS -- WHERE THE HIJACKERS STOOD THE BEST CHANCE OF ACHIEVING THEIR ENDS, WHICH THEY WERE UNFORTUNATELY ABLE TO DO.
ULTIMATELY, IT WAS A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL VENTURE FROM THE HIJACKERS' POINT OF VIEW, SHEEHAN POINTED OUT: THEY GOT AWAY WITH HIJACKING THE AIRCRAFT, TERRORIZING THE PASSENGERS AND CREW, KILLING ONE INNOCENT INDIVIDUAL, FREEING THREE PRISONERS, AND THEY ESCAPED UNIMPEDED.

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5. (C) THE U.S. WAS GRATEFUL THAT THERE WAS NOT FURTHER LOSS OF LIFE AND THE PASSENGERS WERE RETURNED TO THEIR FAMILIES, BUT THE TALIBAN SHOULD REALIZE THE EPISODE'S IMPLICATIONS FOR THEM. INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE UNITED NATIONS' CONVENTION ON HIJACKING REQUIRES ALL SIGNATORIES, WHICH INCLUDES AFGHANISTAN, TO ARREST, TRY AND PUNISH HIJACKERS. THEREFORE, THE TALIBAN NEED TO COOPERATE WITH ALL AUTHORITIES TO TRACK THE HIJACKERS IN ORDER TO BRING THEM TO JUSTICE. HOW CAN THE TALIBAN MAKE CLEAR TO FUTURE TERRORISTS THAT THEY WILL NOT BE WELCOME IN AFGHANISTAN, SHEEHAN ASKED.


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ACTION SCT-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AID-00 A-00 ACQ-00 CA-02 CCO-00
CG-00 CIAE-00 SMEC-00 COME-00 CTME-00 INL-01 DODE-00
DOEB-00 DOTE-00 SRPP-00 DS-00 EB-00 EUR-01 FAAB-00
FBI-00 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 INSE-00 IO-00 L-00
MMP-00 M-00 AC-01 NEA-01 DCP-01 NRCE-00 NSAB-00
NSCE-00 OCS-03 OIC-02 OMB-01 PA-00 PM-00 PRS-00
7. (C) SHEEHAN EMPHASIZED THAT, WHILE HE HAD REFRAINED FROM CRITICISM DURING THE HIJACKING, IT WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A COUNTRY TO BRING TO JUSTICE CRIMINALS WHO COMMIT A CRIME ON THAT COUNTRY’S SOIL. HAD THE TALIBAN ARRESTED THE HIJACKERS AFTER THE HOSTAGES WERE FREED, THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A PERFECT ENDING. LETTING THEM GET AWAY, HOWEVER, COMES UP SHORT IN THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. SHEEHAN ADDENDED THAT HIS REMARKS WERE ALSO BEING MADE TO THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS INVOLVED, AS MANY MISTAKES WERE MADE. THE AIRPLANE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO LEAVE AMRITSAR, LAHORE, OR DUBAI. SHEEHAN SAID THE USG HOPED THE TALIBAN’S CONDEMNATION OF THE HIJACKING WAS HEEDED.

8. (C) MUTTAQI EXPLAINED THAT THE HIJACKERS HAD BEEN PROMISED BY UN AND INDIAN NEGOTIATORS THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE ARRESTED IN AFGHANISTAN, AND IT WAS ON THE CONDITION OF THAT PROMISE THAT THEY RELEASED THE HOSTAGES. IT WOULD BE UN-ISLAMIC,
MUTTAQI ADDED, FOR THE TALIBAN TO BREAK THE WORD GIVEN TO THE HIJACKERS. SHEEHAN DISPUTED THIS POINT, SAYING INTERNATIONAL LAW DID NOT VIEW A PROMISE MADE UNDER DURESS AS BINDING.

9. (C) SHEEHAN BROACHED HIS SECOND TOPIC, SAYING HE WANTED TO RAISE WITH THE TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES IN PERSON WHAT HE HAD DISCUSSED CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ISLAMA 00567 02 OF 05 010734Z WITH THEIR FOREIGN MINISTER TELEPHONICALLY -- USAMA BIN LADIN AND UNSCR 1267. SHEEHAN BEGAN THAT HE BELIEVED THE TALIBAN DO NOT WANT TO ATTACK THE U.S. AND THAT THEY ARE NOT COORDINATING TERRORIST ACTIVITIES WITH BIN LADIN. NONETHELESS, THE USG KNOWS THAT BIN LADIN'S PEOPLE CONTINUE TO PLAN AND CONDUCT TERRORIST ACTIVITIES, WITH THE ARREST OF A CELL IN JORDAN PROVIDING THE MOST RECENT PROOF. SHEEHAN EMPHASIZED THAT THE DETERMINATION OF THE GROUP'S LINK TO BIN LADIN WAS NOT MADE BY THE USG. IT IS FORTUNATE FOR THE TALIBAN, SHEEHAN CONTINUED, THAT THE ATTACK WAS NOT ENACTED.

10. (C) THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WATCHES HOW THE TALIBAN INTERACT WITH BIN LADIN IN AFGHANISTAN, SHEEHAN SAID. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO FIND A WAY TO COMPLY WITH UNSCR 1267 AND EXPEL BIN LADIN TO JUSTICE. WHEN A PERSON HAS A CRIMINAL IN HIS HOUSE FOR SEVERAL YEARS, AND THAT CRIMINAL CONDUCTS TERRORIST ACTS FROM THE HOUSE, THEN THE OWNER BECOMES ASSOCIATED WITH THOSE CRIMES, SHEEHAN ILLUSTRATED. EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS ACTS, BY KNOWING THAT HE COMMITTED THEM AND DOING NOTHING TO PREVENT THEM, YOU BECOME ASSOCIATED. BECAUSE BIN LADIN HAS BEEN IN AFGHANISTAN SO LONG AND HAS COMMITTED SO MANY TERRORIST ACTS, THE U.S. WILL HOLD THE TALIBAN RESPONSIBLE IF HE COMMITS ANY FURTHER CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTS.

11. (C) SHEEHAN REITERATED THE NEED TO COMPLY

12. (C) MUTTAQI QUOTED AN AFGHAN PROVERB SAYING

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INFO LOG-00  NP-00  AID-00  A-00  ACQ-00  CA-02  CCO-00
CG-00  CIAE-00  SMEC-00  COME-00  CTME-00  INL-01  DOD-00
DOES-00  DOTB-00  SRPP-00  DS-00  EB-00  EUR-01  FAAE-00
FBIB-00  H-01  TEDE-00  INR-00  INSE-00  IO-00  L-00
MMP-00  M-00  AC-01  NBE-01  DCP-01  NRCE-00  NSA-00
NSCE-00  OCS-03  OIC-02  OMB-01  PA-00  PM-00  PRS-00
ACE-00  P-00  SP-00  IRM-00  SSO-00  SS-00  TRSE-00
T-00  USIE-00  USSS-00  SA-01  ASDS-01  PMB-00  DSC-00
FRM-01  DRL-02  G-00  NFAT-00  SAS-00  /019W

P 010721Z FEB 00
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3996
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY DHAKA
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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MANY NATIONS NOW CONSIDER HIM A HERO. WHOEVER TRIES TO COMMIT TERRORIST ACTS AGAINST THE U.S. IS TRYING TO CREATE PROBLEMS FOR BIN LADIN. THERE ARE MANY INTERESTED IN CAUSING DIFFICULTIES. IF BIN LADIN WERE ARRESTED, IMPRISONED OR KILLED, ALL WHO ARE SYMPATHETIC TOWARD HIM WOULD TURN AGAINST THE UNITED STATES. THE TALIBAN DO NOT SUPPORT BIN LADIN, BUT THESE ARE THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION.

14. (C) MUTTAQI REPEATED TALIBAN ASSURANCES THAT BIN LADIN CANNOT COMMUNICATE WITH HIS ORGANIZATION TO GIVE COMMANDS. HE SAID THE TALIBAN HAD SPOKEN WITH THE JORDANIAN EMBASSY AND THOSE ARRESTED "WERE ONLY INVOLVED IN THE AFGHAN JIHAD." SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE CAME TO AFGHANISTAN DURING JIHAD, MUTTAQI NOTED. NOW THE U.S. CLAIMS ALL ARE CONNECTED TO BIN LADIN. MUTTAQI ASKED THAT THE U.S. NOT MAKE BIN LADIN SUCH A BIG ISSUE. DOING SO MAKES TROUBLE FOR THE U.S. AND FOR AFGHANISTAN. HE REITERATED THE TALIBAN'S THREE PROPOSALS FOR RESOLVING THE UBL PROBLEM -- PROVIDING EVIDENCE TO TRY BIN LADIN IN AN AFGHAN COURT, AN ULEMA CONFERENCE, OR SUPERVISION OF UBL BY THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC). THE U.S. REJECTED ALL THESE SUGGESTIONS, MUTTAQI LAMENTED. BUT THAT WHICH HAPPENED IN THE PAST IS DONE, AND IN THE FUTURE, BIN LADIN WILL NOT CONDUCT ANY ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE U.S. IF THE USG REMAINS CONCERNED, THOSE CONCERNS MUST BE ADDRESSED, MUTTAQI ADMITTED. HE ASKED THE U.S. TO MAKE PROPOSALS ON HOW TO DO SO.

15. (C) AFGHANISTAN HAS MANY DIFFICULTIES, MUTTAQI POINTED OUT. HE ASKED THAT THE DELEGATION UNDERSTAND THE MESSAGE HE CARRIED: THE TALIBAN WANT FRIENDSHIP, NOT ENMITY. THEY WISHED THAT THE NEW MILLENNIUM MIGHT BE ONE OF FRIENDSHIP AND AFFECTION BETWEEN NATIONS, ONE WHERE LARGE COUNTRIES CONSIDER THE RIGHTS AND NEEDS OF OPPRESSED AND WEAK NATIONS. AFGHANISTAN HAS BEEN SEVERELY DAMAGED BY TWO DECADES OF WAR. THE COUNTRY NEEDS REHABILITATION. AFGHANS EXPECTED THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO HELP, NOT MAKE MATTERS WORSE WITH SANCTIONS.
NEVER FORGET THE ASSISTANCE OF OTHERS, THEY ALSO
NEVER SUBMIT, NO MATTER WHAT THE HARDSHIP.

16. (C) SHEEHAN RESPONDED THAT AMERICANS STILL
SHARE DEEP FEELINGS OF RESPECT AND WARMTH FOR THE
AFGHAN PEOPLE, AS WELL. INDERFURTH NOTED THAT
THE U.S. REMAINS THE LARGEST HUMANITARIAN
ASSISTANCE DONOR TO AFGHANISTAN. THEY POINTED
OUT THAT THE U.S. HAS NO DESIGNS ON AFGHANISTAN
AND ONLY WANTS THE AFGHAN PEOPLE TO LIVE IN PEACE.
AND FREEDOM, TO BE ABLE TO FEED THEIR FAMILIES. THE U.S. ALSO SINCERELY WANTS RESOLUTION OF THE BIN LADIN ISSUE. WE UNDERSTAND YOUR POLITICAL PROBLEM, SHEEHAN SAID, AND YOUR NEED TO MAINTAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE. IT IS UNFORTUNATE YOUR PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND BIN LADIN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR KILLING MORE THAN 200 AFRICANS AND BLINDING AND WOUNDING THOUSANDS MORE IN THE AFRICAN BOMBINGS.

17. (C) THE U.S. ALSO UNDERSTANDS THAT THE TALIBAN BELIEVE BIN LADIN IS SAFE WHERE HE IS AND UNABLE TO DO HARM. THE TALIBAN BELIEVE THE U.S. SHOULD NOT TRY TO BRING HIM TO JUSTICE. THE U.S. ALSO RECOGNIZES THE POTENTIAL FOR A BACKLASH IF HE WERE ARRESTED. BUT, SHEEHAN EMPHASIZED, THE USG DECIDED IT CANNOT LET TERRORISTS GET AWAY WITH THE CRIMES THEY COMMIT AND IS DETERMINED TO BRING BIN LADIN TO JUSTICE. THIS HAS BEEN U.S. POLICY FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS AND WE THINK IT HAS LESSENED TERRORISM, BECAUSE TERRORISTS KNOW THE U.S. WILL NOT FORGET THEIR ACTS. WE THINK THIS POLICY ALMOST ELIMINATED HIJACKINGS; THAT IS WHY THE U.S. IS SO CONCERNED THAT THE INDIAN AIRWAYS HIJACKING WAS SUCCESSFUL. THERE COULD BE A SHORT-TERM BACKLASH IF BIN LADIN WERE ARRESTED, BUT IN THE LONG-TERM, THE WORLD WOULD BE A SAFER PLACE IF HE WERE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE.

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18. (C) THE TALIBAN CONTINUE TO PROPOSE THREE WAYS OF DEALING WITH BIN LADIN, SHEEHAN CONTINUED -- THE ULEMA CONFERENCE, OIC MONITORING, OR A TRIAL IN AFGHANISTAN. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO DO ANY OR ALL OF THESE STEPS, SHEEHAN SAID. THE TALIBAN DO NOT NEED TO WAIT FOR U.S. ENDORSEMENT TO TAKE ACTION. YOU MAY TRY HIM ON ANY CRIMES YOU LIKE. BUT FOR THE CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST OUR INTERESTS, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT BIN LADIN BE SENT TO U.S. COURTS. IF THE ULEMA CONFERENCE OR OIC MONITORING ARE INTERIM MEASURES YOU WANT TO TAKE WHILE YOU FIND A WAY TO IMPLEMENT THE UN RESOLUTION, THAT WOULD BE FINE. THE IMPORTANT
THING, SHEEHAN EMPHASIZED, IS FINDING A WAY TO IMPLEMENT THE RESOLUTION. I UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFICULT THIS IS, SHEEHAN SAID, BUT I ENCOURAGE YOU IN ALL SINCERITY AND FRIENDSHIP TO FIND A WAY TO RESOLVE THIS SOON. DESPITE YOUR ASSURANCES THAT HE CANNOT COMMUNICATE WITH HIS NETWORK, WE HAVE EVIDENCE HE IS PLANNING ACTS OF TERRORISM. WE AGAIN ENCOURAGE YOU TO ACT SOON.

19. (C) SHEEHAN POINTED OUT THAT EVEN IF BIN LADIN IS UNDER SOME RESTRICTIONS, TWO ISSUES REMAIN. WERE HE NEVER TO COMMIT ANOTHER TERRORIST ACT, BIN LADIN MUST STILL BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE FOR HIS PAST ACTS, AS NOTED IN THE UNSCR. SECOND, EVEN WHEN PEOPLE ARE IN CUSTODY, THEY CAN STILL COMMUNICATE. THE U.S. HAS SEEN THIS MANY TIMES WITH ITS OWN JAILED CRIMINALS.

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20. (C) INDERFURTH TURNED TO THE ISSUE OF THE CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN, EMPHASIZING THAT THE U.S. SUPPORTS A PEACEFUL, RATHER THAN A MILITARY, SOLUTION. HE EXPLAINED THAT PAKISTAN'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAD TOLD THE DELEGATION THAT PAKISTAN WOULD WORK WITH IRAN TO GET A PEACE PROCESS GOING IN AN EFFORT TO BRING A CEASE-FIRE AND FORESTALL RENEWED FIGHTING IN THE SPRING. WITH A CEASE-FIRE WOULD BE TALKS AMONG THE FOUR PARTIES AND WITH THE UNITED NATIONS TO BRING A BROADER RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT. THE U.S. SUPPORTS THIS INITIATIVE, INDERFURTH SAID, AND HOPES THE TALIBAN WILL COOPERATE.

21. (C) THE U.S. ALSO SUPPORTS EFFORTS OF EXPATRIATE AFGHANS TO HOLD A LOYA JIRGA AND HOPES THE TALIBAN WILL MEET WITH EXPATRIATE REPRESENTATIVES TO DISCUSS AND POSSIBLY SUPPORT THE INITIATIVE. ALL AVENUES TOWARD A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT SHOULD BE EXPLORED, HE DECLARED. WITH PEACE, AFGHAN REFUGEES CAN RETURN AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CAN ASSIST AFGHANISTAN IN REBUILDING THE COUNTRY. THE U.S. WANTS TO ASSIST IN THAT RECONSTRUCTION, INDERFURTH CONCLUDED.
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TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES

22. (C) CONCLUDING FOR THE TALIBAN DELEGATION, MUTTAQI STATED THAT THE TALIBAN WILL WORK FOR PEACE. THE TALIBAN WANT AND NEED TO FIND A SOLUTION, HE SAID. OURS WAY OF FINDING A SOLUTION DIFFER, SO WE MUST FIND A WAY TO RECONCILE THESE DIFFERENCES. MUTTAQI EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT SOMEDAY THE DELEGATIONS COULD MEET TO DISCUSS REHABILITATION.
23. (U) A/S INDERFURTH AND S/CT SKEHAN CLEARED THIS CABLE.

MILAM

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