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AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY

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AMEMBASSY SANAA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DHAKA
COMUSNAVCENT //POLAD, IMMEDIATE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPB JS//
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
AMEMBASSY ALMATY

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1. (U) THIS MESSAGE WAS COORDINATED WITH CONSULATES KARACHI, LAHORE, AND PESHAWAR.

2. (C) THE FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY’S SEVENTH SITUATION REPORT (7:00 P.M. LOCAL; 10:00 A.M. EST) ON PAKISTANI/AFGHAN REACTION TO THE AUGUST 20 U.S. STRIKES ON THE TERRORIST NETWORK OF USAMA BIN LADEN. (NOTE: SEE REFTELS FOR PREVIOUS SITREPS.)

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SECURITY SITUATION
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3. (C) AS HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, PAKISTAN APPEARS BASICALLY CALM. ASIDE FROM SMALL DEMONSTRATIONS, ISLAMABAD WAS VERY QUIET. CONSULATE KARACHI REPORTED THAT KARACHI AND QUETTA WERE QUIET. A SOURCE IN QUETTA TOLD POLOFF THAT THE AFGHAN COMMUNITY THERE WAS NOT GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE EFFORTS OF SOME MUSLIM EXTREMISTS TO FOMENT DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE U.S.

4. (C) CONSULATE LAHORE NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE CITY ON AUGUST 25 (SEE LAHORE SEPTEL), BUT THE SITUATION WAS QUIET ON AUGUST 26. LAHORE PO COMMENTED THAT IT APPEARED THAT MOST PAKISTANS ARE FOCUSED ON DAY-TO-DAY CONCERNS; IT IS ONLY THE EXTREMISTS WHO ARE AT ALL WORKED UP. REPORTED THAT HE HAD NO REPORTS OF PROBLEMS IN PESHAWAR OR OTHER PARTS OF THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE.
TOLD CONOFF TODAY HIS IMPRESSION WAS THAT
NOTHING HAD REALLY CHANGED AMONG THE GENERAL PAKISTANI PUBLIC
FOLLOWING THE AUGUST 20 MISSILE STRIKES. HE SAID MOST PAKISTANIS
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STILL HAD A FAVORABLE IMPRESSION OF THE U.S. AND AMEQS. HE
CONCEDED, HOWEVER, THAT "RELIGIOUS EXTREMISTS" AND OTHER
"FANATICS" (HE CITED THE JAMAAT-I-ISLAMI AND HARAKAT UL ANSAR AS
EXAMPLES) COULD POSE A DANGER TO AMERICANS. THIS
(#) PARTICULARLY TRUE IN THE NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCE, WHERE
PEOPLE TEND TO BE MORE RELIGIOUS, LESS EDUCATED AND MORE RIGID IN
THEIR THINKING.

5. (U) EMBASSY KABUL ONCE AGAIN REPORTED THE CITY QUIET ON
AUGUST 26.

6. (C) ATTENTION IS NOW FOCUSED ON SCHEDULED AUGUST 27-28
DEMONSTRATIONS IN VARIOUS CITIES. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT RELIGIOUS
EXTREMISTS WILL TRY HARD TO WORK THEIR FOLLOWERS INTO A FEVER
PITCH TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR POLITICAL CLOUT. HOWEVER, THE OVERALL
IMPRESSION REMAINS THAT THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT INTENDS, AND IS
ABLE, TO CONTROL ANY DEMONSTRATIONS LIKELY TO ARISE. THE BASIC
FEELING IS THAT IF PAKISTAN CAN GET THROUGH THE SECOND FRIDAY
PRAYER DAY WITHOUT UNDUE INCIDENT, THEN THE DANGER OF SERIOUS
DEMONSTRATIONS WILL HAVE PASSED. FOR EXAMPLE,

TOLD POLOFF THAT HE KNOWS SOME FAMILIES WHO LEFT
PAKISTAN RIGHT AFTER THE STRIKES WHO ARE USING THE "TWO FRIDAY
RULE" AS THE GUIDEPOST ON WHEN TO RETURN, I.E., IF THINGS ARE
CALM UP TO AND ON AUGUST 28, THEY CAN SAFELY RETURN.

(##) GARBLDED TEXT CORRECTIONS WILL FOLLOW

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AMBASSADORS MILAM AND SIMONS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/26/08
TAGS: PGOV, ASEC, MOPS, PTER, PK, AF
SUBJECT: SITREP 7: PAKISTAN/AFGHANISTAN REACTION TO U.S.
STRIKES

7: (C) WE ARE EXPECTING A SUBSTANTIAL DEMONSTRATION AT MID-DAY
AUGUST 27, SPONSORED BY THE YOUTH WING OF THE JAMAAT-I-ISLAMI

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WHICH, ACCORDING TO POLICE SOURCES, COULD TURN OUT A CROWD NUMBERED IN THE THOUSANDS. POLICE PREPARATIONS ARE WELL IN HAND. FOLLOWING A MEETING WITH THE ORGANIZERS TODAY, POLICE ADVISE THAT THE DEMONSTRATION WILL BE HELD A SUBSTANTIAL DISTANCE FROM THE EMBASSY (NEARER THE FRENCH THAN WE, IN FACT) AND A HALF-DOZEN DEMONSTRATORS WILL BE ESCORTED TO THE EMBASSY TO PRESENT A CONFIDENTIAL PETITION, WHICH A SECURITY OFFICER WILL ACCEPT. WE EXPECT TO SEND ALL BUT ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL SECURITY PERSONNEL HOME UNTIL THE DEMONSTRATION IS OVER AND WILL SAFEHAVEN THE COMPOUND-DWELLERS OUTSIDE THE WALLS.

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PAKISTAN
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8. (C) IN THE WAKE OF REPORTS FROM A NUMBER OF SOURCES DURING THE PAST TWO DAYS THAT VC JCS GEN JOHN RALSTON WAS IN PAKISTAN MEETING SENIOR GOP MILITARY LEADERS DURING THE EVENING OF AUGUST 20, THE GOP MILITARY PRESS OFFICE (INTERSERVICES PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTORATE) RELEASED ITS OWN OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON HIS PRESENCE THE EVENING OF THE AIR STRIKES. THE STATEMENT IS CLEARLY AIMED AT ACCOUNTING FOR THE ALLEGED PRESENCE OF GEN RALSTON IN PAKISTAN ON THE EVENING OF THE NIGHT IN QUESTION IN A WAY THAT SEEMS PLAUSIBLE, YET MAKES CLEAR THAT THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT HAD NO FOREKNOWLEDGE OF OR CONDONED IN ANY WAY THE U.S. ATTACK.

9. (U) ACCORDING TO THE STATEMENT (TEXT REPORTED REFTEL) GEN RALSTON REQUESTED PERMISSION TO MAKE A BRIEF STOPOVER AT ISLAMABAD AIRPORT ON AUGUST 20 IN RESPONSE TO PAKISTANI INQUIRIES TO CENTCOM ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF U.S. SHIPS IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS OFF THE PAKISTAN COAST. RALSTON ARRIVED AT 7:30 PM AND DEPARTED AT 10:30 PM. GEN RALSTON REPORTEDLY TOLD HIS PAKISTANI MILITARY INTERLOCUTOR, ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF KARAMAT, THAT THE SHIPS IN QUESTION HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH PAKISTAN AND WERE PROBABLY THERE FOR ACTION BEING CONTEMPLATED AGAINST TERRORIST CAMPS IN AFGHANISTAN. THE STATEMENT GOES ON TO SAY THAT GENERAL KARAMAT BROUGHT THE MATTER IMMEDIATELY TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CONFIDENTIAL PRIME MINISTER WHILE ALSO INDICATING TO GEN RALSTON THAT SUCH AN ACTION BY THE U.S. WAS UNWARRANTED. SINCE THE ATTACK CAME THAT VERY NIGHT, THE STATEMENT CONCLUDES THAT GEN RALSTON HAD ARRANGED TO BE IN PAKISTAN SO THAT, IF THE ATTACK WAS DETECTED BY PAKISTANI AIR DEFENSES, HE WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO CLARIFY WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE.
10. (C) THIS STORY ASIDE, THE PAKISTANI PRESS IS BEGINNING TO RETURN IN EARNEST TO OTHER MATTERS, WITH THE TALKS IN LONDON AND U.S. SUPPORT FOR AN EARLY PAKISTAN-IMF ACCORD TAKING THE LION'S SHARE OF THE HEADLINES TODAY.

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AFGHANISTAN

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11. (C) TALIBAN "SOFTEENING" ON TALKS WITH U.S.? TOLD POLOFF AUGUST 26 THAT THE AFGHAN ISLAMIC PRESS (AIP) WAS URGING FOREIGN JOURNALISTS NOT TO REPORT THAT THE TALIBAN HAD "REJECTED" TALKS WITH THE U.S. (NOTE: ON AUGUST 25, TALIBAN LEADER OMAR WAS SAID TO HAVE REJECTED A U.S. OFFER FOR TALKS -- SEE REF A.) AIP SAID THE ACTUAL TERM OMAR HAD USED IN AN AUGUST 24 INTERVIEW WAS "THE TALIBAN WERE NOT IN FAVOR" OF TALKS. WENT ON TO SPECULATE THAT THIS MIGHT REPRESENT A "SOFTEENING" IN THE TALIBAN'S POSITION ON TALKS. IN A

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EUR-01  FAAE-00  FBJE-00  FBO-01  H-01  IMMC-01  IM-01
TEDE-00  INR-00  INSE-00  IO-00  LAB-01  L-01  ADS-00
MMP-00  M-00  NEA-01  NRCE-00  NSAE-00  OCS-03  OIC-02
OIS-01  OMB-01  OPIC-01  OPR-01  PA-00  PM-00  PRS-00
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RELATED DEVELOPMENT:


LATER CONFIRMED IN AUGUST 26 PAKISTANI NEWSPAPER REPORTS, WHICH SAID THE TALIBAN HAD A LETTER FROM THE U.S. AND WERE REVIEWING ITS CONTENTS. (NOTE: AUGUST 26 PAKISTANI NEWSPAPERS QUOTED MFA AFGHAN GURU AS SAYING THAT THE GOP WOULD WELCOME ANY TALIBAN/U.S. TALKS.)
12. (C) UN ON AFGHANISTAN: TOLD POLOFF AUGUST 26 THAT THE UN WAS CLOSELY MONITORING DEVELOPMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN. SINCE LAST WEEK'S SHOOTING OF A UN EXPAT; AND ATTACKS ON FACILITIES IN HERAT AND JALALABAD, THE TALIBAN NOW APPEAR TO BE PROTECTING UN SITES. UN AIRCRAFT WERE STILL FLYING TO AFGHAN POINTS, BRINGING SUPPLIES TO OFFICES, WHICH WERE STAFFED BY AFGHAN EMPLOYEES. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT UN SECURITY OFFICIALS WILL TRAVEL TO KABUL ON SEPTEMBER 1 TO CHECK ON THE SITUATION THERE. IF IT IS CALM, SOME UN EXPATS MAY RETURN. (NOTE: ICRC REPORTEDLY IS ALLOWING SOME EXPAT STAFF TO RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN. ITS AIRCRAFT CONTINUE TO FLY TO AFGHAN POINTS.)

13. (C) FALL OFF IN PRESS INQUIRIES: PAO REPORTED THAT HE IS RECEIVING FEWER PRESS INQUIRIES ABOUT THE U.S. STRIKES, AFTER RECEIVING A DELUGE OF QUERIES IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE STRIKES. MANY CAMERA TEAMS FROM THE NETWORKS ARE PREPARING TO LEAVE ISLAMABAD.

14. (U) MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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