PAGE 02  ISLAMA 08102 01 OF 02 041734Z
POL: ALLEGRONE

DHAKA/COLOMBO: PLEASE PASS A/S RAPHEL
DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR DS/FAA

E.O. 12356: DECL: 09/04/00
TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, PINS, EAIR, IR, AF
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN TAKE SHINDAND AIR BASE;
HERAT THREATENED -- WILL IRAN INTERVENE?

REF: ISLAMABAD 8014

1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: IN A POSSIBLE WATERSHED EVENT, KABUL GOVERNMENT
AUTHORITIES HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THE TALIBAN SEIZED THE
STRATEGIC, SPRAWLING SHINDAND AIR BASE IN FARAH PROVINCE,
SEPTEMBER 3. THE TALIBAN ARE NOW REPORTED BY RELIABLE
OPPOSITION SOURCES TO BE LESS THAN 30 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF HERAT
CITY AIRPORT. THE KABUL GOVERNMENT SAYS A COUNTER-ATTACK TO
DRIVE THE TALIBAN BACK IS BEING PLANNED, BUT ISMAEL KHAN IS
CLEARLY POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY WEAKENED. WHETHER HE CAN
HOLD OUT MAY WELL DEPEND ON HOW IRAN REACTS TO THE TALIBAN
THREAT -- OPPOSITION FIGURES BELIEVE IRAN IS PLANNING TO GIVE
KHAN MORE SUPPORT. DOSTAM'S FORCES ALSO REPORTEDLY HAVE
ADVANCED IN BADGIS, ADDING PRESSURE ON THE HERAT GOVERNMENT.
IN THE EAST, THE TALIBAN HAVE BEGUN SHELLING MASOOD POSITIONS
FROM MAIDAN SHAHR, AND KABUL GOVERNMENT PRESSURE ON HEKMATYAR'S
FRONT-LINE AT SAROBI (LATABAND ROAD) REPORTEDLY HAS LESSENED AS
MASOOD WITHDRAWS TROOPS CLOSER TO KABUL. IN RELATED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03  ISLAMA 08102 01 OF 02 041734Z
DEVELOPMENTS, DOSTAM OFFICIALS SAID THEY INTEND TO KEEP UP
THEIR AERIAL BOMBING CAMPAIGN AND WARNED THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY AGAINST TRANSMITTING OPPOSITION AIR SPACE WITHOUT
PERMISSION. END SUMMARY.

Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL
3. IN A SURPRISING BLOW TO THE PRO-RABBANI FORCES OF ISMAEL KHAL, TALIBAN TROOPS ARE CONFIRMED TO HAVE SEIZED THE MAJOR AIRBASE AT SHINDAND, SEPTEMBER 3. USUALLY RELIABLE OPPOSITION FIGURES CLAIM THAT AS OF SEPTEMBER 4, THE TALIBAN FRONT-LINE HAD MOVED NORTH OF ADRASKAN IN HERAT PROVINCE AND WAS ONLY THIRTY KILOMETERS SOUTH OF HERAT AIRPORT (WHICH IS A MERE 20 MINUTE DRIVE FROM THE CITY OVER A VERY BAD ROAD). WITH FLIGHT OPERATIONS SUSPENDED BECAUSE OF REPEATED AIR ATTACKS AGAINST HERAT, THE UNCHA DIRECTOR MARTIN BARBER TOLD POLLOFF SEPTEMBER 4 THAT THE SITUATION THERE IS SUFFICIENTLY WORRISOME THAT THE 6-7 RESIDENT U.N. INTERNATIONAL STAFF HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE AUTHORITY TO LEAVE OVERLAND FOR IRAN OR TURKMENISTAN WITHOUT FURTHER CONSULTATION WITH HEADQUARTERS IN ISLAMABAD.

4. TOLD POLLOFF SEPTEMBER 4 THAT THE OPPOSITION RECENTLY HAD INTERCEPTED RADIO MESSAGES FROM KABUL INSTRUCTING HERAT GOVERNOR ISMAEL KHAL TO COME TO THE CAPITAL FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH AHMED SHAH MASOOD. INTERPRETED THIS TO MEAN THAT ISMAEL KHAL'S POSITION IN HERAT WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY UNTENABLE AND THAT THE KABUL GOVERNMENT SOUGHT TO INVOLVE ITSELF MORE DIRECTLY IN THE DEFENSE OF THIS IMPORTANT SUPPLY ROUTE -- FOR THIS REASON, HE CLAIMED, KABUL DEFENSE MINISTRY SPOKESMAN AND TOP MASOOD ADVISOR DR. ABDULLAH HAD VISITED HERAT SEPTEMBER 2. PREDICTING THAT THE TALIBAN MIGHT VERY POSSIBLY OCCUPY HERAT WITHIN THE
SELF-CREATED.

5. TOLD POLLOFF SEPTEMBER 4 THAT THE JUMBESH OFFICE IN TEHRAN HAD REPORTED THE PREVIOUS NIGHT THAT THERE WERE "CLEAR INDICATIONS" THAT IRAN WAS "PREPARING A RESPONSE TO THE ADVANCE OF THE TALIBAN WHICH COULD NOT BE DISCUSSED BY TELEPHONE." PROMISED TO SEND A FAX DETAILING THE SCOPE AND NATURE OF IRANIAN PREPARATIONS, BUT THE MESSAGE HAD NOT YET BEEN RECEIVED. NOTED THAT KABUL GOVERNMENT FORCES WERE PREPARING TO COUNTER-ATTACK THE TALIBAN, BUT SAID HE COULD NOT PREDICT WHICH SIDE WOULD BE VICTORIOUS. JUMBESH TROOPS UNDER RASUL PAHLAWAN HAD TAKEN THE NEIGHBORING BADGHIS PROVINCIAL
° 041135Z SEP 95
FM AMBASSAD Y ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4758
INFO AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY
AMBASSAD ROME
AMBASSAD RIYADH
AMBASSAD TASHKENT
AMBASSAD COLOMBO
AMBASSAD DUSHANBE
AMBASSAD PARIS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMBASSAD NEW DELHI
AMBASSAD MOSCOW
AMBASSAD DHAKA
DIA WASHDC
AMBASSAD LONDON

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 02 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 008102

LONDON FOR POL: TUELLER; ROME FOR POL: STORELLA; PARIS FOR
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02
ISLAMA 08102 02 OF 02 041736Z
POL: ALLEGROME

DHAKA/COLOMBO: PLEASE PASS A/S RAHHEL

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR DS/FAA

E.O. 12356: DECL: 09/04/00
TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, PINS, EAIR, IR, AF
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN TAKE SHINDAND AIR BASE;
- HERAT THREATENED -- WILL IRAN INTERVENE?

CAPITAL OF QALA-I-NAW, AND WERE PRESSING TOWARDS HERAT FROM THE
EAST, [REDACTED], BUT THE SITUATION WAS FLUID AND HE
OBSERVED THAT, WITH SUFFICIENT IRANIAN SUPPORT, "TURAJON ISMAEL
MAY BE ABLE TO HAVE A REPEAT OF A HALF YEAR AGO," WHEN HERATI

Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL
TROOPS HALTED AN ADVANCE NEAR SHINDAND AND PROCEEDED TO PUSH THE TALIBAN BACK.

6. MEANWHILE, IN THE EAST, HEKMATYAR'S OFFICIALS REPORT THAT PRESSURE ON SAROBI VIA THE LATABAND ROAD DIMINISHED SEPTEMBER 3 AS MASOOD PULLED SOME OF HIS TROOPS BACK CLOSER TO KABUL. IN WHAT JUMBESHI SOURCES DESCRIBED AS "A DEAL" BETWEEN HEKMATYAR'S COMMANDER ZARDAD AND LOCAL TALIBAN LEADERS IN WARDAK PROVINCE, TALIBAN FORCES AT MAIDAN SHAHR BEGAN ROCKETING MASOOD'S POSITIONS SEPTEMBER 4. JUMBESHI OFFICIALS SAY THEY EXPECT TO CONTINUE THEIR UPGRADED AIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST KABUL GOVERNMENT TARGETS AT BAGHRAH, HERAT AND KABUL AIRPORTS. IN THAT CONTEXT, DOSTAM'S OFFICIALS HAVE ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY THAT NO AIRCRAFT CAN OVERFLY THEIR TERRITORY WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL -- A MEASURE THEY PRIVATELY CONFIRM WAS TAKEN BECAUSE OF CONCERN THAT ARIANA AFGHAN AIRLINES, AS WELL AS RUSSIAN AND POSSIBLY INDIAN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03    ISLAMA  08102  02 OF 02  041736Z

AIRCRAFT, WERE BEING USED TO DELIVER BADLY-NEEDED MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR KABUL.

MONJO