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CASE 08185 01 OF 02

INFO LOG-00 AID-00 CA-02 CIAE-00 OASY-00 DOEE-00 SRPP-00
DS-00 EUR-01 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-02 LAB-01
L-01 ADS-00 M-00 NEA-01 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OCS-03
OIC-02 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-00 PRS-01 P-01 SCT-00
SP-00 SSO-00 SS-00 TRSE-00 T-00 USIE-00 PMB-00
DSCC-00 DRL-09 G-00 060840Z SEP 95

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ACTION SA-01

0 060840Z SEP 95
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4825
INFO AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
DIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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

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CURRENT CLASS: CONFIDENTIAL
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E.O. 12356: DECL: 09/06/00
TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, PINS, IR, AF
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: HEAVY FIGHTING RAGES WEST OF KABUL;
- HERAT' CALM AFTER TALIBAN TAKE-OVER

1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

HERAT SITUATION

2. AFTER TAKING HERAT SEPTEMBER 4, THE TALIBAN ISSUED A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT DECLARING A THREE-DAY HOLIDAY AND URGING RESIDENTS TO REMAIN CALM. THE CITY IS REPORTEDLY PEACEFUL, WITH U.N. OFFICIALS LEAVING HERAT FOR MASHHAD -- NOT BECAUSE OF THE SECURITY SITUATION BUT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE IMPROMPTU HOLIDAY. ISMAEL KHAN, ACCOMPANIED BY BETWEEN 300-600 OF HIS FOLLOWERS, IS SAID TO HAVE LEFT TAYBAT FOR MASHHAD. IRANIAN BORDER OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, DISARMED THE PLEETING GOVERNOR AND HIS ENROUTAGE BEFORE ADMITTING THEM TO THE COUNTRY. KHAN'S RETINUE INCLUDES MEMBERS OF A NEGOTIATING BODY FROM KABUL (DEFENSE MINISTRY SPOKESMAN AND KEY MASOOD ADVISOR DR. ABDULLAH, SAID NURULLAH, AND OTHERS, ALTHOUGH DR. ABDULLAH HAS NOW RETURNED TO KABUL), WHO WERE CAUGHT BY SURPRISE BY THE SUDDEN TALIBAN ADVANCE INTO HERAT. OTHERS FROM THE GROUP, INCLUDING SIDDIQUE CHAKIRI, PRESIDENT RABBANI'S ECONOMIC ADVISOR, WERE LESS LUCKY AND ARE NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE TALIBAN.

KABUL CONDITIONS

3. TALIBAN FORCES AT MAIDAN SHAHR ATTACK MASOOD'S POSITIONS

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JUST WEST OF KABUL AT COMPANY, ON THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 5. MASOOD ALSO HAS COUNTER-ATTACKED THE FORMER SAYYAF COMMANDER, SHER ALAM, WHO DEFEATED TO THE TALIBAN TWO DAYS BACK. RABBANI REPORTEDLY CHAIRMED AN EMERGENCY MEETING ON THE AFTERNOON OF
SEPTEMBER 5 TO DISCUSS HOW THE KABUL GOVERNMENT SHOULD REACT TO
THE LOSS OF HERAT. KABUL ENVOY MASOOD KHALILI TOLD POLOFF
SEPTEMBER 6 THAT RABBANI REMAINS SUPPORTIVE OF A U.N./OIC
EFFORT TO REACH A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS, AND WOULD
WELCOME MESTIRI’S PROMPT RETURN TO THE REGION. HOWEVER,
KHALILI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE "RABBIANI FORMULA" FOR PROVINCIAL
REPRESENTATION WOULD NOW GIVE A MAJORITY OF THE SEATS TO THE
OPPOSITION -- BUT HE INSISTED THAT A "FAIR" SELECTION PROCESS
WOULD RETURN A MAJORITY FOR JAMIAT. KHALILI SEEMED CONFIDENT
THAT THE KABUL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD ITS OWN
MILITARILY, ALTHOUGH HE PREDICTED AN ISMAEL KHAN COUNTER-ATTACK
WAS STILL SOME DAYS OFF. AS INDICATION OF THE CURRENT
EXCITEMENT OVER THE FALL OF HERAT, A RUMOR SWEEP ISLAMABAD
AFGHAN WATCHER CIRCLES (BOTH JOURNALISTS AND DIPLOMATS) LATE
SEPTEMBER 5 THAT FORMER COMMUNIST GENERAL BABA JAN HAD
SUCCESSFULLY STAGED A COUP D’ETAT AGAINST RABBIANI -- A RUMOR,
OF COURSE, WHICH SHORTLY TURNED OUT TO BE FALSE.

ELSEWHERE...

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4. HEAVY FIGHTING BY JAMIAT FORCES AGAINST HEKMATYAR COMMANDER
ZARDAD RAGED SEPTEMBER 5 AS THE KABUL GOVERNMENT SOUGHT TO
SECURE ITS LAND ROUTE TO JALALABAD. HEKMATYAR’S OFFICIALS
CLAIM ZARDAD HELD ONTO THE LATABAND ROAD, BUT ADMIT THAT
CASUALTIES ON BOTH SIDES WERE HEAVY -- MORE FIGHTING IS
PREDICTED. ZARDAD, MORE OF A BANDIT THAN A COMMANDER, IS
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NONETHLESS SAID TO BE A GOOD FIGHTER; MOST BET THAT MASOOD
WOULD DO BETTER TRYING TO BUY HIM THAN DEFEAT HIM. IN JAMIAT’S
HEARTLAND, BADAKSHAN PROVINCE, PROMINENT COMMANDER BASIR
ANNOUNCED HIS DEFECTION TO DOSTAM. JUMBESH OFFICIALS PREDICT
THAT THEY WILL SOON TAKE KUNDUZ, BUT THE KABUL GOVERNMENT
CLAIMS TO BE HOLDING ITS OWN THERE. FINALLY, U.N. OFFICIALS
HAVE CONFIRMED THAT DOSTAM’S FORCES UNDER THE COMMAND OF RASUL
PAHLAWAN TOOK TORGHUNDI ON THE TURKMENISTAN BORDER -- JUMBESH
HAS INSTRUCTED PAHLAWAN TO AVOID CONTACT WITH THE TALIBAN AND
UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES TO ENGAGE THEM.
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E.O. 12356: DECL: 09/06/00
TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, PINS, IR, AP
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: HEAVY FIGHTING RAGES WEST OF KABUL; HERAT CALM AFTER TALIBAN TAKE-OVER

AFP REPORTS THAT BOTH THE PAK AND ADJACENT BRITISH MISSIONS HAVE BEEN SET ALIGHT, NOR DO THEY HAVE INFORMATION ON THE PRESS REPORTING OF THREE INJURED PAKISTANI OFFICIALS. WE WILL KEEP THE DEPARTMENT INFORMED AS WE GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

COMMENT

6. THE SITUATION REMAINS VERY FLUID, WITH INDIVIDUAL COMMANDERS ATTEMPTING TO ASSESS WHO HAS THE UPPER HAND, AND...
WHEN TO SWITCH SIDES. THE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE SHIFTS REMAINS TO BE SEEN, ALTHOUGH THEY DO ADD TO THE OPPOSITION'S MORALE BOOST. THERE ARE SOME INITIAL INDICATIONS OF DIVISIONS BETWEEN MASOOD AND RABBANI, AS WELL AS MASOOD AND DR. ABDUR-RAHMAN AND GENERAL FAHIM -- THESE MAY INCREASE AS PRESSURE ON THE KABUL GOVERNMENT MOUNTS. THE BOTTOM LINE, HOWEVER, REMAINS THAT MASOOD'S MILITARY REMAINS THE MOST CAPABLE FORCE IN AFGHANISTAN -- WHETHER THEY HAVE BEEN SHAKEN UP ENOUGH TO CAVE TO THE TALIBAN IS STILL IN DOUBT. MONJO

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