Case Number: 200104094

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D)

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O 071243Z JUL 97
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8324
INFO AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
AMCONSUL JEDDAH
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMCONSUL KARACHI
DIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY MBABANE

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Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E AHMAD
DATE/CASE ID: 27 JUN 2003  200104094

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
AMEMBASSY ALMATY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 005710

DEPT FOR SA/PAB, NEA/NGA, AND EUR/CEN; LONDON FOR POL/TUELLER;
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/7/07
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, MOPS, KISL, AF, IR
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: OBSERVERS REPORT UPTICK IN SUPPORT FOR
ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS BY IRAN

REFS: (A) ISLAMABAD 5212; (B) ISLAMABAD 2001

(U) CLASSIFIED BY DAN MOZENA, ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR. REASON:
1.5 (C) (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: OBSERVERS REPORT AN UPTICK IN IRANIAN MILITARY
AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS IN THE PAST
SEVERAL WEEKS. BELIEVE IRAN'S ACTIONS ARE A DEFENSIVE REACTION TO THE
TALIBAN'S EFFORTS TO GAIN CONTROL OF THE NORTH. PAKISTANI
INTERLOCUTORS DISAGREE, SEEING IRANIAN ACTIVITIES AS INHERENTLY AGGRESSIVE. OBSERVERS AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT IRAN'S ACTIVITIES ARE
MOTIVATED IN PART BY ANTI-U.S. VIEWS, AND THAT THE REVOLUTIONARY
GUARDS AND INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES ARE PLAYING KEY ROLES IN SETTING
POLICY. END SUMMARY.

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UPTICK IN MILITARY SUPPORT

Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL
2. (C) OBSERVERS OF THE AFGHAN SCENE HAVE NOTICED AN UPTICK IN IRANIAN MILITARY SUPPORT FOR THE ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS IN THE NORTH SINCE THE OUSTER OF GENERAL DOSTAM, THE FORMER NATIONAL ISLAMIC MOVEMENT OF AFGHANISTAN (NIMA) LEADER, IN LATE MAY. TOLD POLOFF ON JULY 5 THAT HIS GOVERNMENT UNDERSTANDS THAT THE IRANIANS HAVE INCREASED THE NUMBER OF FLIGHTS FLYING BETWEEN IRANIAN AND AFGHAN POINTS IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. WHILE NOTING THAT SOME OF THESE FLIGHTS PROBABLY ARE CARRYING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE ITEMS, SUCH AS FOOD, MOST OF THE FLIGHTS ARE TRANSPORTING MILITARY ITEMS, INCLUDING SMALL ARMS, AMMUNITION, AND EXPLOSIVES. IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH POLOFF, HAVE OBSERVED VARIOUS IRANIAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT PARKED AT MAZAR-I-SHARIF AND BAMIYAN AIRPORTS IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS.

IRANIANS ON THE GROUND

3. (C) OBSERVERS ADD THAT THEY BELIEVE IRAN HAS INCREASED THE NUMBER OF "DIPLOMATS" IT HAS STATIONED AT ITS MAZAR-I-SHARIF AND BAMIYAN CONSULATES.

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REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS.

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A "REDOUBLING" OF EFFORTS

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4. (C) POLOFF ASKED _______ WHAT HE THINKS THESE VARIOUS REPORTS MIGHT MEAN. ____________ COMMENTED THAT IRANIAN DIPLOMATIS IN ISLAMABAD HAVE TOLD HIM IN RECENT MEETINGS THAT IRAN IS "REDOUBLING" ITS EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN. ASKED WHAT THAT MEANT, HE REPLIED THAT IRAN HAD MADE A DECISION TO INCREASE ITS SUPPORT TO THE ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS TO BUTTRESS THEM AGAINST FUTURE ATTACKS FROM THE TALIBAN.
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5. (C) ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, OBSERVED, IRAN CONTINUES ITS EFFORTS TO CONVINCE THE FACTIONS TO FORM A NEW "GOVERNMENT" TO COUNTER THE TALIBAN "GOVERNMENT" IN KABUL. THE POINT MAN FOR THESE EFFORTS IS DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER BORUJERDI, WHO HAS REPORTEDLY VISITED MAZAR-I-SHARIF AND BAMIYAN SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST SIX WEEKS. FOREIGN MINISTER VELAYATI HAS ALSO MET WITH A NUMBER OF ANTI-TALIBAN LEADERS RECENTLY, INCLUDING HEZB-I-ISLAMI LEADER GULBUDDIN HERMAYTHAR AND FORMER PRESIDENT BURHANUDDIN RABBANI.

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IRANIAN CONDUCT SEEN AS DEFENSIVE BY SOME...
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6. (C) CHARACTERIZED THE ENHANCED IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN AS "DEFENSIVE" IN NATURE -- "THE IRANIANS WERE GIVEN A FRIGHT WHEN THE TALIBAN ENTERED MAZAR-I-SHARIF IN LATE MAY AND THOUGHT THEY WERE LOSING THEIR STAKE IN AFGHANISTAN. ALTHOUGH THE TALIBAN HAVE BEEN PUSHED BACK, IRAN IS INTENT THAT ITS ALLIES NOT BE PLACED IN A SIMILAR POSITION AGAIN." IN A JULY 4 CONVERSATION WITH POLOFF, AGREED WITH THIS ANALYSIS, ASSERTING THAT "IRAN IS ANGERED BY PAKISTAN'S SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN AND WILL NOT ALLOW ITS ALLIES TO BE DEFEATED WITHOUT A FIGHT."

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AGGRESSIVE BY OTHERS

7. (C)

Saw Iranian behavior in a different light. Said he felt that Iranian policy objectives in Afghanistan are long-term and basically involve enhancing Iranian influence in Afghanistan vis-a-vis Pakistan and the U.S. -- "With the defeat of the Taliban at Mazar-i-Sharif, the Iranians are reacting to a target of opportunity which they feel will allow Iran to become confidential.

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Agree with views, and stressed what they see as Iran's aggressive designs in Afghanistan. For example, that Iran wants "to build a land bridge" from its territory through northern Afghanistan to connect with Tajikistan to create a "greater Persia."

IRANIAN ANTI-AMERICANISM

8. (C) While observers disagree whether Iran's behavior is defensive or aggressive in nature, they seem to agree that one motivating factor for Iran is anti-Americanism.

Told Poloff that he has encountered a visceral anti-Americanism among his Iranian interlocutors, who accuse the U.S. of being in league with Pakistan to support the Taliban against Iran. A specific source of anger for Iran, is their belief...
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Current Handling: n/a
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THAT THE U.S. IS STRONGLY BACKING THE TALIBAN AS A WAY TO ENSURE THAT UNOCA ILS ABLE TO BUILD THE OIL AND GAS PIPELINES CONNECTING CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA THROUGH AFGHANISTAN -- "THEY (IRANIANS) APPEAR TO BELIEVE THE U.S. WANTS THE PIPELINES BUILT TO UNDERCUT IRAN AND ISOLATE IT FROM CENTRAL ASIA."

WHO MAKES IRANIAN POLICY?

9. (C) POLOFF ASKED OBSERVERS WHO THEY THOUGHT SETS POLICY ON AFGHANISTAN IN THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT. THE UNIVERSAL ANSWER WAS THAT IRAN'S SYSTEM OF FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING IS SO OPAQUE THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO TELL. HOWEVER, [REDACTED] BELIEVE THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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PLAYS A SECONDARY ROLE IN POLICY FORMULATION IN COMPARISON TO IRAN'S OTHER NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCIES. IN ADDITION, THEY DOUBT THAT NEWLY-ELECTED AND PUTATIVE MODERATE PRESIDENT KHATAMI HAS EXERCISED MUCH INFLUENCE ON AFGHAN POLICY AS OF YET. AGREED STATING THAT HE BELIEVES THAT THE MINISTRY OF INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY, AND THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS, PLAY KEY ROLES IN POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION. HE ADDED THAT THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ALSO PLAYS A KEY ROLE, ESPECIALLY ALONG THE IRANIAN BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN. (NOTE: IRAN CLOSED THE BORDER TO ALL TRAFFIC IN EARLY JUNE. IT REPORTEDLY REMAINS CLOSED -- SEE REF A.) IRAN, HE ADDED, HAS ESTABLISHED A FORWARD BASE IN MESHED FOR ALL MINISTRIES WORKING ON AFGHAN ISSUES.