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Document Number: 2001STATE028054

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APPROVED BY: SA:AEASTHAM

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TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 028054

ISLAMABAD PASS LAHORE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/11
TAGS: AF, PTER, SNAR, PREL
SUBJECT: TALIBAN DELIVER LETTER FROM MUTTAWAKIL; SAY THEY
WILL COMPLY WITH OFFICE CLOSING IN NEW YORK

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E AHMAD
DATE/CASE ID: 28 JUL 2004 200400957

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SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS ALAN W. EASTHAM. REASON 1.5 (B)

1. (C) SUMMARY: ON FEBRUARY 8, TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVE ABDUL HAKIM MUJAHED GAVE ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS ALAN EASTHAM A LETTER FROM TALIBAN FOREIGN MINISTER MUTTAWAKIL TO SECRETARY OF STATE POWELL. THE LETTER URGES THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION TO RECONSIDER THE POLICY OF THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION ON AFGHANISTAN, BUT OFFERS NO NEW PROPOSALS ON COMPLYING WITH THE PROVISIONS OF UNSCR 1333. IN RESPONSE TO EASTHAM'S INSTRUCTION THAT, AS A RESULT OF U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1333 AND 1267, THE TALIBAN MUST CLOSE THEIR OFFICE IN NEW YORK, MUJAHED SAID THAT THEY WOULD COMPLY. MUJAHED LATER REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE WAS ONLY INSTRUCTED TO RESTRICT HIS MOVEMENTS. (END SUMMARY.)

MUTTAWAKIL LETTER BREAKS NO NEW GROUND

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2. (C) HEAD OF TALIBAN NEW YORK OFFICE, ABDUL HAKIM MUJAHED, CALLED ON ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS ALAN EASTHAM ON FEBRUARY 8, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS DEPUTY, NOORULLAH ZADRAN. ALSO PRESENT ON THE U.S. SIDE WERE SA/PAB DIRECTOR JEFFREY LUNSTEAD AND AFGHANISTAN DESK OFFICER JAMES COLE (NOTETAKER). A LETTER FROM TALIBAN FOREIGN MINISTER MUTTAWAKIL TO SECRETARY OF STATE POWELL GIVEN TO EASTHAM BY MUJAHED, CONTAINS NO NEW PROPOSALS ON RESOLVING THE BIN-LADEN ISSUE AND COMPLYING WITH UNSCR 1333. IT COMPLAINS THAT THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION USED THE ISSUES OF TERRORISM, DRUG TRAFFICKING, AND HUMAN RIGHTS AS EXCUSES TO ISOLATE THE TALIBAN. MUTTAWAKIL REPEATS TALIBAN ASSERTIONS THAT USAMA BIN-LADEN IS PREVENTED FROM ENGAGING IN "MILITARY" ACTIVITIES, THAT NO EVIDENCE REGARDING HIS TERRORIST ACTIVITIES HAS BEEN PRESENTED, AND THAT A TALIBAN OFFER TO HAVE A COMMISSION OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS TRY BIN-LADEN HAS BEEN DISREGARDED. MUTTAWAKIL WANTS THIS ADMINISTRATION TO RECONSIDER THE POLICY OF THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION ON AFGHANISTAN.

3. (C) MUJAHED REPEATED THE MANTRA THAT THE TALIBAN WANT FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND WANT TO SOLVE THE "INHERITED" BIN-LADEN PROBLEM, BUT MUST DO SO IN A MANNER THAT DOES NOT CONTRADICT PUSHTUN CULTURE AND ISLAMIC TEACHINGS. THE U.S. IS A BIG COUNTRY AND AFGHANISTAN IS SMALL, SO THE U.S. CAN COME UP WITH A

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SOLUTION, MUJAHED SAID. "IF WE EXPELLED BIN-LADEN, IS THERE A GUARANTEE THAT THE TALIBAN WILL GAIN U.S. CONFIDENCE AND RECOGNITION?" MUJAHED ASKED. MUJAHED ALSO
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 COMPLAINED THAT THE U.S. IS NOT GIVING THE TALIBAN CREDIT FOR REDUCING OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION. "COLOMBIA GETS BILLIONS, BUT WE GET NOTHING" HE ADDED.

4. (C) EASTHAM RESPONDED THAT ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS THE U.S. HAS DISCUSSED WITH THE TALIBAN STEPS IT MUST TAKE TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. THE U.S. HAS LOST CONFIDENCE WITH THE TALIBAN ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES, SUCH AS TERRORISM, HUMAN RIGHTS AND NARCOTICS, EASTHAM SAID. THE TALIBAN NEED TO COME UP WITH SOME CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES OF THEIR OWN, HE ADDED.

BUT THE TALIBAN MUST MEET THE PROVISIONS OF UNSCR 1333, EASTHAM SAID. NOTING THAT THE OPIUM POPPY HARVEST IS STILL MONTHS AWAY, EASTHAM SAID THAT WE WILL HAVE TO VERIFY THE TALIBAN'S CLAIMS OF PROGRESS ON POPPY REDUCTION.

SANCTIONS WILL REMAIN A FACT OF LIFE FOR THE TALIBAN

5. (C) EASTHAM TOLD MUJAHED THAT THE U.S. REGRETS THAT THE SANCTIONS EXIST, BUT THAT USAMA BIN-LADEN AND THE TERRORIST NETWORK IN AFGHANISTAN MAKE THEM NECESSARY. BIN-LADEN, WHO HAS ATTACKED OUR EMBASSIES IN AFRICA, IS APPARENTLY OPERATING FREELY IN AFGHANISTAN, SAID EASTHAM. EASTHAM URGED MUJAHED TO LISTEN TO THE TESTIMONY CURRENTLY BEING GIVEN IN NEW YORK BY PERSONS ACCUSED OF THE NAIROBI/DAR-ES-SALAAM EMBASSY BOMBINGS WHO ARE LINKED TO BIN-LADEN. WE DO NOT LIKE TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS BUT TALIBAN ACTIONS GIVE US NO CHOICE, EASTHAM TOLD MUJAHED. THE
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 U. S. IS NOT OPPOSED TO AFGHANISTAN OR ISLAM, BUT IT IS OPPOSED TO TALIBAN POLICIES. THE U.S. HAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED SUPPLIES TO THE AFGHAN PEOPLE OF OVER 100,000 TONS OF WHEAT TO PREVENT FAMINE, EASTHAM SAID. THE U.S. CARES ABOUT THE AFGHAN PEOPLE, HE ADDED, BUT BIN-LADEN AND THE TERRORIST NETWORK REMAINS THE CORE ROADBLOCK. THE TALIBAN MUST COMPLY WITH UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1333. THAT IS THE WAY TO OVERCOME THE ISSUE OF USAMA BIN-LADEN AND THE TERRORIST NETWORK IN AFGHANISTAN,

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EASTHAM EMPHASIZED.

"AFGHANS REALLY DON'T LIKE BIN-LADEN," MUJAHED CLAIMS

6. (C) MUJAHED CLAIMED THAT BIN-LADEN IS DISLIKED BY "80 TO 90 PERCENT" OF AFGHANS BECAUSE OF HIS WAHABI BACKGROUND. MUJAHED ASSERTED THAT MOST OF THE TALIBAN LEADERSHIP WANTS TO BE RID OF BIN-LADEN. NOORULLAH ZADRAN CHIMED IN THAT HE "WISHED YOUR MISSILES HAD HIT HIM (UBL)." EASTHAM RESPONDED THAT THE U.S. WANTS TO BRING BIN-LADEN TO JUSTICE WITHOUT VIOLENCE BEING EMPLOYED, BUT WARNED THAT IF BIN-LADEN IS FOUND REPOSIBLE FOR THE COLE

ATTACK OR IS PLANNING ANOTHER OPERATION, THE U.S. RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ACT IN ITS SELF-DEFENSE.

7. (C) MUJAHED THEN ASKED IF THE U.S. WOULD CHANGE ITS POLICY STANCE IF THE TALIBAN LEADERSHIP WERE OVERTHROWN BY THE HAKARAT "INQUILAB" ISLAMI (HII) OF MOHAMMAD NABI. "WOULD THIS HELP US SOLVE THE BIN-LADEN ISSUE?" MUJAHED ASKED. EASTHAM RESPONDED THAT THE KEY IS FOR THE TALIBAN
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 TO RESOLVE THE BIN-LADEN PROBLEM AND CLOSE THE CAMPS AS DEMANDED BY UNSCR 1333. (NOTE: HII WAS ONE OF THE SEVEN MUJAHIDIN GROUPS WHICH FOUGHT AGAINST THE SOVIET OCCUPATION. MUJAHED WAS A MEMBER OF THE HII AT THAT TIME.)

TALIBAN MUST CLOSE OFFICE IN NEW YORK

8. (C) AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING, EASTHAM INFORMED MUJAHED THAT, AS A RESULT OF U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1333 AND 1267, THE TALIBAN WILL HAVE TO CLOSE THEIR OFFICE IN NEW YORK. HE ADDED THAT THE TALIBAN CANNOT PERFORM ANY OTHER CONSULAR OR DIPLOMATIC FUNCTIONS. EASTHAM TOLD MUJAHED THAT THE U.S. TREASURY WILL BE IN CONTACT WITH HIM SHORTLY CONCERNING HIS RESPONSIBILITIES TO COMPLY WITH THE SANCTIONS MEASURES. MUJAHED RESPONDED THAT HE WOULD COMPLY WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO CLOSE THE TALIBAN OFFICE IN NEW YORK.

9. (C) MEDIA SOURCES LATER IN THE DAY REPORTED TO US THAT MUJAHED ASSERTED AFTER THE MEETING THAT HE WAS INSTRUCTED SIMPLY TO RESTRICT HIS MOVEMENTS, NOT CLOSE THE TALIBAN OFFICE. THIS CONTRADICTS FEBRUARY 11 PRESS

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REPORTING FROM ISLAMABAD THAT INDICATES TALIBAN FOREIGN
MINISTER MUTTAWAKIL UNDERSTANDS FULL MEANING OF U.S.
INTENTIONS TO IMPLEMENT UNSCR 1333 MEASURES. WE ARE
WORKING WITH TREASURY'S OFFICE OF FOREIGN ASSETS CONTROL
TO ENSURE THAT THE TALIBAN ARE NOTIFIED OF ALL OF THEIR
RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER UNSCR 1333.
POWELL

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