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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
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AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY RIYADH IMMEDIATE

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FOLLOWING ISLAMABAD 4099 DATED 24 MAY 99, SENT ACTION
SECSTATE, BEING REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO.
QUOTE:

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FOR P, SA, S/CT, AND SA/PAB; PLEASE ALSO PASS TO
ABU DHABI, LAHORE, PESHAWAR, AND RIYADH

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E.O. 12958: DECL: EXEMPT (1.6X4)
TAGS: PREL, PTER, AF
SUBJECT: USAMA BIN LADIN: PRESSING HIGH-LEVEL

TALIBAN OFFICIAL JALALUDDIN HAQQANI ON BIN LADIN

REFS: (A) ISLAMABAD 3716
- (B) ISLAMABAD 3491

(U) CLASSIFIED BY JOHN R. SCHMIDT, POLITICAL
COUNSELOR. EXEMPT UNDER 1.6X4.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: APPEALS REVIEW PANEL
APPEAL ACTION: RELEASED IN FULL
DATE/CASE ID: 03 SEP 2009 200706003

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1. (S) SUMMARY: IN EMBASSY'S FIRST MEETING WITH HIM IN OVER THREE YEARS, POLOFF MET MAY 22 WITH HIGH-LEVEL TALIBAN OFFICIAL JALALUDDIN HAQQANI, WHO IS KNOWN TO HAVE CLOSE TIES WITH ARAB MILITANTS (SOME OF HIS ARAB-LINKED FACILITIES WERE DESTROYED IN THE U.S. MISSILE STRIKE ON KHOST LAST YEAR). REITERATING U.S. POINTS, POLOFF URGED THAT THE TALIBAN EXPEL BIN LADIN TO A PLACE WHERE HE CAN BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. HAQQANI'S REMARKS TOED THE TALIBAN LINE; HE ASSERTED THAT BIN LADIN WAS UNDER CONTROL AND THAT THIS SOLUTION MAY BE BEST FOR ALL CONCERNED. ON THE OTHER HAND, HAQQANI GAVE VOICE TO A NUMBER OF CONCERNS, INCLUDING A RECOGNITION THAT THE TALIBAN'S POLICY ON BIN LADIN WAS ISOLATING THEM FROM THE U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA. HE URGED CONTINUED TALKS ON THE ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

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MEETING JALALUDDIN HAQQANI

2. (S) POLOFF MET MAY 22 WITH JALAUDDIN HAQQANI, TALIBAN "ACTING MINISTER OF BORDERS" AND ONE OF THEIR KEY OFFICIALS WITH LINKS TO ARAB MILITANTS. HAQQANI IS ALSO AN IMPORTANT KABUL SECTOR MILITARY COMMANDER AND WELL-KNOWN ANTI-SOVIET RESISTANCE FIGURE. THE MEETING WAS ARRANGED BY NAQSHBANDI SUFI LEADER AMIN MOJADDEDI WHO ALSO ATTENDED THE MEETING AS ENGLISH-PASHTU INTERPRETER. SEVERAL OF HAQQANI'S BODYGUARDS AND ASSISTANTS, INCLUDING AHMED SHAH, CHIEF OF HIS RAWALPINDI OFFICE, ALSO ATTENDED THE MEETING. LOOKING HAIL AND HEARTY, BUT OLD AT ABOUT 53, HAQQANI BEGAN THE MEETING BY DARKLY JOKING THAT IT WAS "GOOD TO MEET SOMEONE FROM THE COUNTRY WHICH HAD DESTROYED MY BASE, MY MADRASSAH, AND KILLED 25 OF MY MUJAHIDEEN (HOLY WARRIORS)." HEARING THIS, HAQQANI'S ASSISTANTS GLARED SULLENLY AT POLOFF. (NOTE: HAQQANI WAS REFERRING TO THE AUGUST 20 U.S. CRUISE MISSILE STRIKE ON USAMA BIN LADIN'S FACILITIES IN KHOST PROVINCE. HAQQANI HAD CLOSE LINKS WITH A NUMBER OF THE FACILITIES THAT WERE HIT, INCLUDING THOSE LINKED WITH BIN LADIN'S GROUP, KASHMIRI MILITANTS, AND OTHER EXTREMISTS. END NOTE.) HE ADDED THAT THIS WAS HIS FIRST MEETING WITH

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SOMEONE FROM THE EMBASSY IN THREE OR FOUR YEARS
BECAUSE HE HAD MAINLY BEEN IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE

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MIDDLE EAST. HE WAS HAPPY TO MEET WITH AMERICANS
AS LONG AS THE MEETINGS WERE KEPT QUIET--THE
TALIBAN DID NOT WANT HIM TO MEET WITH FOREIGNERS
SINCE HE DID NOT WORK FOR THEIR "MINISTRY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS."

DEFENDING THE TALIBAN

3. (S) CONTINUING, HAQQANI, STROKING HIS LONG
BLACK BEARD AND ADJUSTING HIS WHITE TURBAN,
RELATED THAT HE WAS DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE OF U.S.
ASSISTANCE DURING THE "JIHAD" (HOLY WAR) AGAINST
THE SOVIETS AND THE (AFGHAN) COMMUNISTS.
AFGHANISTAN WAS AT THAT TIME IN A POOR SITUATION
AND U.S. HELP ALLOWED THE MUJAHIDEEN TO WIN THE
WAR. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THE TALIBAN WERE NOT
NOW BEING CREDIT FOR WHAT THEY HAD DONE. THEY
HAD BROUGHT PEACE TO AFGHANISTAN'S BORDERS FROM
SPIN BOLDAK TO ISLAM QALA TO TORGHUNDI TO
HAIRATAN TO TORKHAM. FACTIONS SUCH AS THOSE LED
BY DOSTAM AND KHALILI AND AKBARI HAD BEEN
DEFEATED. THE TALIBAN HAD DISARMED THEM, AND
PROCEEDED TO BRING PEACE AND SECURITY. WHAT WAS
WRONG WITH WHAT THEY HAD DONE? WAS IT THE ISSUE
OF WOMEN? SAUDI ARABIA, A FRIEND OF THE U.S. AND
EUROPE, TREATED WOMEN THE SAME WAY AS THE
TALIBAN. IN ANY CASE, THE TALIBAN HAVE NO
INTENTION OF INTERFERING WITH ANYONE, SO WHAT
THEY DO SHOULD NOT BE INTERFERED WITH. MASOOD

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AND THE FORMER KING WERE NOT ANSWERS TO
AFGHANISTAN'S PROBLEMS--BOTH HAD MADE DEALS WITH
THE SOVIETS AND THE COMMUNIST REGIME, AND COULD
NOT BE TRUSTED.

TALIBAN OFFICIAL JALALUDDIN HAQQANI ON BIN LADIN

NEED TO TAKE STEPS TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE

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4. (S) POLOFF REPLIED THAT THE U.S. TRULY MAINTAINED DEEP, LASTING ADMIRATION FOR THE AFGHAN PEOPLE. THEIR RESISTANCE AGAINST THE SOVIETS DURING THE 1980'S WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED, AS WILL HAQQANI'S OWN LEADERSHIP IN KHOST REGION AT THAT TIME. AFGHANISTAN IS NOT FORGOTTEN; WE CONTINUE TO PROVIDE IT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE WHEN THE TIME IS RIPE. HOWEVER, WE HAD MANY CONCERNS ABOUT SPECIFIC TALIBAN POLICIES, INCLUDING ON TERRORISM, HUMAN RIGHTS, NARCOTICS, AND THEIR REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE AN END TO THE WAR. DESPITE YEARS OF INTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS, MOST RECENTLY BETWEEN (TALIBAN "DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER") MULLAH JALIL AND CHARGE (SEE REF B), NO PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE ON THESE ISSUES. WITHOUT SUCH PROGRESS, THERE WAS

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NO CHANCE OF THE TALIBAN RECEIVING INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE.

AROUND THE BLOCK ON BIN LADIN

5. (S) POLOFF UNDERScoreD THAT ONE OF THE KEY OBSTACLES TO IMPROVED RELATIONS WAS THE ONGOING PRESENCE OF BIN LADIN AND HIS ASSOCIATES IN TALIBAN-DOMINATED AREAS. THE U.S. HAD STRESSED TO THE TALIBAN MANY TIMES THAT BIN LADIN--WHO WAS CLEARLY RESPONSIBLE FOR REPEATED TERRORIST ATTACKS, INCLUDING THE EAST AFRICA OUTRAGES, WHICH HAD LEFT WELL OVER 200 PEOPLE DEAD--HAD TO BE EXTRADITED OR EXPELLED TO FACE JUSTICE. THE TALIBAN HAD REFUSED TO DO THIS. THIS MAJOR OBSTACLE HAD TO BE REMOVED OR TIES WOULD CONTINUE TO LANGUISH. THE U.S. WOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT FOR THE TALIBAN IF THE ISSUE REMAINED UNRESOLVED. IT WAS IN THE TALIBAN'S ADVANTAGE TO EXPEL HIM IMMEDIATELY.

6. (S) TAKING THIS ALL IN, HAQQANI AGREED THAT THE ISSUE OF BIN LADIN WAS "A PROBLEM" FOR THE TALIBAN. HOWEVER, IT WAS NOT AN EASY ISSUE, AND THE U.S. HAD NEVER PROVIDED PROOF THAT HE WAS GUILTY AS CHARGED. NONETHELESS, THE TALIBAN HAVE PLACED TIGHT CONTROLS ON HIM. THE TALIBAN HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT SENDING HIM AWAY, BUT WHERE COULD

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HE GO? IRAN? IRAQ? SUDAN? WOULD THAT HELP YOU?

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THE U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA SHOULD THINK ABOUT
THIS. MAYBE THE BEST SOLUTION IS WHAT IS TAKING
PLACE NOW WITH HIM REMAINING IN THE COUNTRY.

7. ~~(S)~~ POLOFF REPLIED THAT THE CURRENT SITUATION
WAS NOT TENABLE; THE TALIBAN WERE INTERNATIONALLY
ISOLATED ON THIS ISSUE. THE TALIBAN HAD TO
UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY HAD GOTTEN THEMSELVES INTO.
THEY COULD GET OUT OF A BAD SITUATION BY
CORRECTLY LABELING HIM A BAD GUEST AND EXPELLING
HIM TO JUSTICE. BUT A MAINTENANCE OF THE STATUS
QUO COULD LEAD TO BIGGER PROBLEMS: IF THERE WAS
ANOTHER INCIDENT PERPETRATED BY BIN LADIN AND HIS
GROUP, OR IF THE U.S. HAD INFORMATION THAT
SOMETHING WAS PLANNED, WE WOULD ACT IN SELF-
DEFENSE. IF THIS HAPPENED, TALIBAN FACILITIES
WOULD LIKELY BE HIT. WAS THE RISK REALLY WORTH
IT? WASN'T BIN LADIN'S PRESENCE TOO MUCH TO
BEAR? POLOFF NOTED THAT HAQQANI SHOULD ALSO
UNDERSTAND THAT THE TALIBAN SHOULD ALSO FACE UP
TO THE REAL POSSIBILITY OF BEING NAMED A
TERRORIST MOVEMENT THEMSELVES; THE U.S. HAD
ALREADY CHARACTERIZED AFGHANISTAN AS NOT
COOPERATING ON TERRORISM.

8. ~~(S)~~ CLEARLY UNSETTLED BY THESE POINTS,
HAQQANI RESPONDED THAT THE TALIBAN WANTED TO
SOLVE THE BIN LADIN PROBLEM IN DISCUSSIONS WITH
THE U.S. THE U.S. SHOULD ALLOW SUCH TALKS TO
TAKE PLACE. IT IS NOT HELPFUL TO SEND MISSILES
AT AFGHANISTAN; THE U.S. ATTACK (IN AUGUST 1998)

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DID NOT SUCCEED, IT KILLED INNOCENTS, AND DID NOT
KILL BIN LADIN. IT ALSO ANGERED MANY AFGHANS.
IT WOULD BE BEST NOT TO DO IT AGAIN. DISCUSSIONS
ARE THE BETTER ROUTE. THE TALIBAN WANT TO TALK
TO THE U.S. IRAN, CHINA, AND RUSSIA WANT TO TAKE
OVER AFGHANISTAN AND RUN IT FOR THEIR GAIN. THE

TALIBAN OFFICIAL JALALUDDIN HAQQANI ON BIN LADIN

U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA COULD HELP AFGHANISTAN
MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE. DO NOT TURN AWAY FROM
US ANY MORE, BUT DEAL WITH US. HAQQANI WRAPPED

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UP HIS COMMENTS BY SAYING "PLEASE DO NOT TRY TO PRESSURE SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UAE AWAY FROM US FURTHER." AT THE CLOSE OF THE MEETING, POLOFF URGED HAQQANI TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE EMBASSY AND CONSULATE PESHAWAR. HAQQANI SAID HE WOULD.

COMMENT

9. (S) ON BIN LADIN, HAQQANI WAS BASICALLY SAYING THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE HIM UNDER CONTROL AND THAT COULD BE THE BEST SOLUTION FOR NOW. THAT VIEW IS WHAT WE HAVE BASICALLY BEEN HEARING FROM THE TALIBAN FOR MONTHS NOW. NO PROGRESS THERE. THAT SAID, HAQQANI--WHO IS WELL-KNOWN TO HAVE CLOSE LINKS WITH ARAB AND KASHMIRI MILITANTS--APPEARED TO WANT TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH THE U.S. HIS WORDS BETRAYED WHY: HE

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CLEARLY HAD IMPRINTED ON HIS MIND CONCERNS ABOUT FURTHER U.S. MILITARY ACTION OF THE SORT THAT TOOK OUT THE KHOST FACILITIES LAST AUGUST. IT WAS NOT A NICE THOUGHT FOR HIM. IN ADDITION, HE BETRAYED CONCERN THAT THE TALIBAN WERE GROWING MORE-AND-MORE ISOLATED, ESPECIALLY AS THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA SPIRALED DOWNHILL. IN THIS CONTEXT, IT WAS INTERESTING THAT HE ASKED THAT THE U.S. STOP PRESSURING SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UAE TO TAKE STEPS AGAINST THE TALIBAN. THIS IS AN INDICATION THAT SUCH EFFORTS ARE INDEED PINCHING THE TALIBAN. WHETHER OR NOT HAQQANI'S WORDS WERE A MODERATION OF PREVIOUS HARD-LINE STANDS IS UNCLEAR BECAUSE WE HAVE NOT MET WITH HIM IN YEARS AND HAVE LITTLE TO COMPARE HIS COMMENTS WITH. HOWEVER, IT IS THE CASE THAT HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO MEET WITH SOMEONE FROM THE EMBASSY (ALTHOUGH THE MEMORY OF THE U.S. CRUISE MISSILE ATTACK STILL SMARTED), WHICH MIGHT MEAN HE HAS ASSESSED WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE RUPTURED RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., AND DECIDED THAT THERE MAY BE A BETTER WAY.
MILAM UNQUOTE ALBRIGHT

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