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PTQ7608

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)PAGE 01 ISLAMA 07841 01 OF 03 191354Z
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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0945
INFO AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMCONSUL LAHORE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 007841

DECAPTIONED

EXDIS

DEPT FOR P, SA, S/CT, AND SA/PAB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/08

TAGS: PREL, PTER, KISL, AF, SA, PK

SUBJ: USAMA BIN LADIN: COORDINATING OUR EFFORTS AND SHARPENING
OUR MESSAGE ON BIN LADIN

REFS: ISLAMABAD 7797, AND PREVIOUS

(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAM B. MILAM.
REASONS: 1.5 (C) (D).

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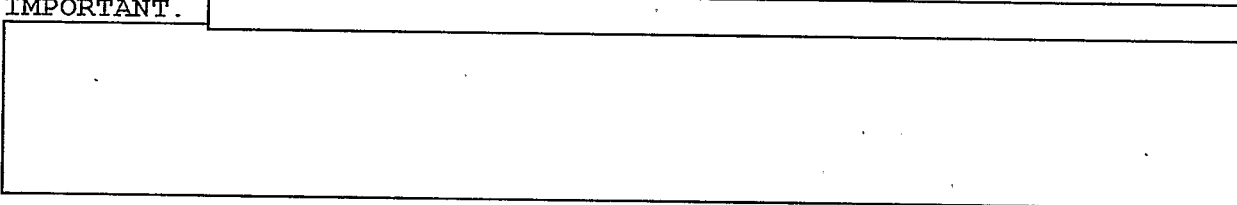
1. (S) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: WITH UN SPECIAL ENVOY BRAHIMI WRAPPING UP HIS TALKS WITH THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT AND THE TALIBAN, WE WANT TO ASSESS SEVERAL AFGHAN POLICY ISSUES OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO THE U.S. THAT HAVE BEEN RAISED DURING THE COURSE OF HIS VISIT. THE FIRST ISSUE CONCERNS TERRORIST USAMA BIN LADIN AND EFFORTS TO CONVINCING THE TALIBAN TO EXPEL HIM. IN TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH THIS OBJECTIVE, WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT WASHINGTON MOVE QUICKLY TO CLOSELY COORDINATE ITS EFFORTS WITH SAUDI ARABIA, WHILE SHARPENING OUR MESSAGE TO PAKISTAN AND THE TALIBAN. SECOND, IN AN ISSUE RELATED TO WIDER SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS, THE UN IDEA OF POSSIBLY DEPLOYING "HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORS" TO AFGHANISTAN (SEE REFTTEL) COULD HAVE SOME MERIT IF AND WHEN SECURITY CONDITIONS PERMIT. FINALLY, WE THINK THE UN AND

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RUSSIAN/UZBEKISTANI PROPOSAL TO HOLD A "SIX-PLUS-TWO PLUS THE FACTIONS" MEETING IN TASHKENT SHOULD BE CAREFULLY REVIEWED, POSSIBLY IN A PRE-TASHKENT "SIX-PLUS-TWO" IN NEW YORK. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

BIN LADIN

2. (S) OF THESE ISSUES, THE FIRST ONE -- THE CONTINUED PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN OF BIN LADIN AND HIS NETWORK -- IS BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT.



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3. (S) [REDACTED] WE BELIEVE THAT NOW IS THE TIME FOR THE U.S. TO SHARPEN ITS MESSAGE CONCERNING BIN LADIN AND INTENSIFY OUR COORDINATION WITH THE SAUDIS. IN SO DOING, WE BELIEVE THAT U.S. INFLUENCE CAN BE BEST BE USED WITH THE KEY ACTORS IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

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-- SAUDI ARABIA: THE CORNERSTONE OF U.S. EFFORTS TO BRING BIN LADIN TO JUSTICE SHOULD BE THE SAG, WHICH MAINTAINS SIGNIFICANT PRESTIGE IN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN. THE SAG'S RECENT DECISION TO DOWNGRADE TIES WITH THE TALIBAN HAS SHAKEN PAKISTAN AND EVEN THE TALIBAN TO SOME EXTENT. AS NOTED BY EMBASSY RIYADH [REDACTED], THE UPCOMING VISIT BY CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH TO PAKISTAN PROVIDES A READY-MADE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SAUDIS TO PRESS THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE TALIBAN CONCERNING BIN LADIN. THE SAUDIS CAN ALSO PROVE USEFUL IN UPPING THE PRESSURE ON THE TALIBAN BY UNDERTAKING EFFORTS TO CUT OFF THEIR ACCESS TO THE GULF STATES, MOST IMPORTANTLY WITH THE UAE, WHICH IS THE TALIBAN'S MAJOR ENTREPOT FOR TRADE AND SMUGGLING. WE BELIEVE THE U.S. SHOULD ALSO URGE THE SAG TO CUT OFF ALL MATERIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE TALIBAN, IF IT HAS NOT ALREADY DONE SO.

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-- PAKISTAN: PAKISTAN HAS THE CLOSEST RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TALIBAN OF ANY STATE AND SHOULD BE ABLE TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN CONVINCING THEM TO EXPEL BIN LADIN. THAT SAID, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT THE GOP HAS DONE ANYTHING SUBSTANTIAL IN THIS REGARD, SO FAR, BEYOND FLYING SAUDI INTELLIGENCE CHIEF PRINCE TURKI TO KANDAHAR. THAT MUST CHANGE AND, AS MENTIONED, THE VISIT OF CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH IS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO

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PUT PRESSURE ON THE GOP. SPECIFICALLY, THE GOP SHOULD BE MADE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE SAG AND THE U.S. WANT IT TO TAKE

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CONCRETE ACTIONS NOW TO PRESSURE THE TALIBAN, INCLUDING CUTTING OFF ASSISTANCE AND DOWNGRADING RELATIONS. WE SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF BIN LADIN IN AFGHANISTAN COULD INVITE FURTHER U.S. MILITARY ACTIONS OR OTHERWISE COMPLICATE U.S.-PAKISTANI RELATIONS.

-- THE TALIBAN: THERE IS LITTLE INDICATION THAT ANYTHING WE HAVE SAID ON BIN LADIN TO THE TALIBAN HAS REGISTERED WITH TALIBAN LEADER MULLAH OMAR, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT OTHER TALIBAN LEADERS ARE GETTING NERVOUS ON THE ISSUE. THE U.S. SHOULD CONTINUE TO PURSUE TALKS, MAKING CLEAR PRECISELY WHAT IS AT STAKE FOR THEM IN THEIR HANDLING OF THE BIN LADIN ISSUE. IN THESE DISCUSSIONS, THE U.S. SHOULD APPEAL TO THE NATURAL [] TRADING MENTALITY OF MANY AFGHANS -- AND PERHAPS SOME TALIBAN -- BY SETTING OUT WHAT THE TALIBAN STAND TO GAIN BY EXPELLING BIN LADIN AS WELL AS WHAT THEY STAND TO LOSE. ON THE "CARROT" SIDE, THE TALIBAN COULD GAIN AN ENHANCED LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE (POSSIBLY

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EVEN SOME FLEXIBILITY ON THE UN SEAT), MORE HUMANITARIAN
ASSISTANCE, INTER ALIA. ON THE "STICK" SIDE, THE TALIBAN MUST
UNDERSTAND THAT THE U.S. AND THE SAG WILL WORK AGAINST THEM IN
EVERY WAY POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THEY NEVER OBTAIN "RECOGNITION"
OR INTERNATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE. WE SHOULD ALSO

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REITERATE THAT THE U.S. RESERVES THE RIGHT TO TAKE MILITARY
ACTION CONCERNING BIN LADIN AND WILL HOLD THE TALIBAN DIRECTLY
RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY TERRORIST ACTIVITIES BIN LADIN ENGAGES IN.
ALTHOUGH IT IS DOUBTFUL OMAR WILL HEAR OR UNDERSTAND OUR
MESSAGE, OTHER TALIBAN MAY, THUS INCREASING THE LEVEL OF
CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT ON THE ISSUE.
SINCE MULLAH OMAR MAY ALSO RAISE HIS CANARD ABOUT EVIDENCE OF
BIN LADIN'S TERRORIST INVOLVEMENT, WASHINGTON MIGHT WISH TO
CONSIDER MAKING APPROPRIATE EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO THE SAUDIS
FOR USE WITH THE TALIBAN.

4. (S) THE U.S. SHOULD BE UNDER NO IMPRESSION THAT COORDINATING
OUR EFFORTS WITH SAUDI ARABIA, AND SHARPENING OUR MESSAGE WITH THE
GOP AND THE TALIBAN WILL NECESSARILY WORK. THE FACT IS THAT THE
LEADER OF THE TALIBAN APPEARS TO BE STRONGLY COMMITTED TO BIN
LADIN. IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER U.S. OR SAUDI EFFORTS CAN
INFLUENCE OMAR'S DECISIONS. MAYBE PAKISTAN CAN, BUT EVEN THAT IS
NOT KNOWN WITH ANY CERTAINTY. ALL THAT SAID, WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD
MAKE THIS EFFORT TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM POLITICALLY AND DO IT SOON
BEFORE THE U.S. STRIKES ON KHOST -- A WASTING ASSET -- BECOME OLD
NEWS TO THE TALIBAN LEADERSHIP. WE ALSO WOULD NOTE HOW
EXTRAORDINARILY UNHELPFUL WERE U.S. PRESS REPORTS OVER THE WEEKEND,
CLAIMING CREDIT FOR PRINCE TURKI'S INTERVENTION AND INSISTING
ANONYMOUSLY THAT BIN LADIN WOULD HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE U.S.
THERE IS A CHANCE THE TALIBAN WOULD HAND HIM OVER TO SAUDI ARABIA;
THERE APPEARS NO CHANCE THEY WILL GIVE HIM UP TO US, EVEN THROUGH
AN INTERMEDIATE STOP.

UN ACTIVITIES IN AFGHANISTAN

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5. (S) TURNING TO AN ISSUE RELATED TO WIDER SECURITY AND HUMAN

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RIGHTS/HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS, DURING HIS VISIT TO THE REGION (SEE REFTTEL), BRAHIMI BROACHED THE POSSIBILITY OF DEPLOYING UN "MONITORS" TO INVESTIGATE PAST HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND TO PREVENT FUTURE ABUSES. SEEMINGLY A BACK DOOR METHOD OF ENSURING A CONTINUED ROLE FOR THE UN SPECIAL MISSION, THIS IDEA WOULD BE A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT IF THE TALIBAN AND OTHER FACTIONS WERE TO TAKE STEPS TO ENSURE THE SECURITY OF THE MONITORS, WHILE GRANTING THEM UNLIMITED ACCESS. THE PRESENCE OF SUCH MONITORS MAY BE ABLE TO PREVENT INCIDENTS OF THE TYPE THAT TOOK PLACE IN MAZAR-I-SHARIF IN AUGUST WHEN HUNDREDS IF NOT THOUSANDS OF SHI'A AND OTHER NON-COMBATANTS WERE KILLED BY THE TALIBAN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE UN IS ALSO MEETING WITH THE TALIBAN TO DISCUSS CONDITIONS THAT WOULD PROVIDE FOR THE RETURN OF UN EXPATRIATE STAFF TO AFGHANISTAN. BEFORE RETURNING TO AFGHANISTAN TO ENGAGE IN "LIFE-SAVING" ACTIVITIES, THE UN WANTS TO ENSURE THAT THE TALIBAN ARE ADEQUATELY INVESTIGATING THE KILLINGS EARLIER THIS YEAR OF SEVERAL UN EMPLOYEES. BEFORE MOVING FORWARD, THE UN WANTS SECURITY GUARANTEES ABOUT THESE AND OTHER FUTURE OPERATIONS. UN OFFICIALS HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE EFFECT ON UN SECURITY OF THE PRESENCE OF LARGE NUMBERS OF ARAB AND PAKISTANI EXTREMISTS IN AFGHANISTAN. BRAHIMI HAS ALSO UNDERScoreD HIS FULL AWARENESS THAT THE U.S. HAS RESERVED THE POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST BIN LADIN AND HIS NETWORK, WHICH WOULD SURELY IMPACT ON THE SECURITY OF UN AND NGO PERSONNEL IN AFGHANISTAN. THE UN WILL MAKE ITS OWN DECISION AND INFORM US OF THE TIMING.

"SIX-PLUS-TWO PLUS THE FACTIONS"

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6. (S) AS NOTED REFTTEL, BRAHIMI ALSO RAISED THE SUBJECT OF A UN AND RUSSIAN/UZBEKISTANI PROPOSAL TO HOLD A "SIX-PLUS-TWO PLUS THE FACTIONS" MEETING IN TASHKENT. THIS PROPOSAL HAS ALREADY GAINED SOME MOMENTUM. FOR EXAMPLE: THE TALIBAN AGREED TO CONSIDER A BRAHIMI INVITATION TO THE MEETING; AND, DURING PRESIDENTS KARIMOV'S AND YELTSIN'S RECENT DISCUSSIONS IN TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN AND RUSSIA AGREED THAT ALL OF THE FACTIONS SHOULD BE INVITED TO TASHKENT. WE HAVE EVEN SEEN A REPORT EMANATING FROM TASHKENT THAT THE MEETING SHOULD BE AT "MINISTERIAL" LEVEL. IN HIS OCTOBER 16 MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR, BRAHIMI EXPLAINED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE IDEA BY ASSERTING THAT THE TASHKENT MEETING MAY BE A CHANCE FOR THE "SIX-PLUS-TWO" COUNTRIES TO SHOW SOME UNITY AND EXPLAIN TO THE TALIBAN HOW TO BEHAVE.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] WE ARE LESS SURE OF UZBEKISTAN'S OR RUSSIA'S MOTIVATION, BUT BASED ON WHAT WE HEAR FROM THE UN, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THEY WANT A "PEACE CONFERENCE-TYPE"

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ACTION SS-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0947
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MEETING IN TASHKENT WHERE ALL OF THE FACTIONS CAN MEET TO DISCUSS
THE FORMATION OF A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT, A CONCEPT THE TALIBAN
HAVE REJECTED MANY TIMES BEFORE.

7. (S) THE IDEA OF A "SIX-PLUS-TWO PLUS THE FACTIONS" HAS SOME
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MERIT, ESPECIALLY AS EXPLAINED BY BRAHIMI -- THE TALIBAN CERTAINLY
SHOULD BE MADE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS.
HOWEVER, THE WHOLE IDEA OF ATTENDANCE BY THE FACTIONS IN TASHKENT
NEEDS BETTER DEFINITION. AT THIS POINT, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHICH
FACTIONS WOULD BE INVITED. INEVITABLY, THE CONFUSION WILL LEAD TO
ALL OF THE FACTIONS AND MANY NON-ALIGNED AFGHANS, SUCH AS THE
ORGANIZERS OF THE "INTRA-AFGHAN DIALOGUE," WANTING TO ATTEND.
ADDITIONALLY, THE WAY THINGS NOW STAND, THE TASHKENT MEETING COULD
INCREASE REGIONAL TENSIONS AS COUNTRIES BACK THEIR CLIENTS' RIGHT

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TO ATTEND THE MEETING, OR IN PAKISTAN'S CASE, BACK THE TALIBAN'S CASE. TO BE THE ONLY AFGHAN FACTION THERE. TO AVOID SUCH PROBLEMS, WHICH MAY UNDERMINE THE "SIX-PLUS-TWO" GROUP AS A FORUM FOR DISCUSSION ON AFGHANISTAN, WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT A "SIX-PLUS-TWO" TAKE PLACE IN NEW YORK TO REVIEW THE TASHKENT MEETING'S STRUCTURE AND AGENDA.

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