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B1, 1.4(B); 1.4(D)PAGE 01 ISLAMA 01462 01 OF 04 131254Z
ACTION SCT-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AF-00	AID-00	A-00	ACQ-00	CA-02
	CCO-00	CG-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	COME-00	CTME-00	INL-01
	SCBE-00	DINT-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	DOFE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	EAP-00	EB-00	EUR-01	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VC-01	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	INSE-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00
	MMP-00	M-00	AC-01	NEA-01	NRCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OCS-03	OES-01	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00
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P 131251Z MAR 00
 FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5088
 INFO AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
 AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
 AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
 AMEMBASSY ALMATY
 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
 AMCONSUL KARACHI
 AMEMBASSY LAGOS
 AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
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 AMEMBASSY LONDON

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 AMCONSUL LAHORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 001462

LAGOS FOR ECON - MCCULLOUGH; LONDON FOR POL -
 SUTPHIN; PARIS FOR POL - HANSON; ROME FOR POL -

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: CHARLES L DARIS
 CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)
 DECLASSIFY AFTER: 13 MAR 2015
 DATE/CASE ID: 25 MAR 2008 200706003

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QUESADA .

ABU DHABI PLEASE PASS TO DUBAI; ALMATY ALSO FOR DUSHANBE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/10
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, EPET, PTER, AF, PK, TX
SUBJ: TURKMENISTAN AND PAKISTAN PREDICT WAR, EVEN WHILE "WORKING FOR PEACE" IN AFGHANISTAN, AND CONTINUE TO SUPPORT TALIBAN

REF: A) ASHGABAT 605 (NOTAL) B) ISLAMABAD 728 (NOTAL) C) ISLAMABAD 567 (NOTAL)

(U) CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR JOHN R. SCHMIDT. REASON: 1.5 (B) AND (D).

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SUMMARY

1. (C) DURING THE MARCH 4-6 VISIT OF TURKMENISTAN FOREIGN MINISTER SHIKHMURADOV TO ISLAMABAD, BOTH COUNTRIES DECLARED "FULL SUPPORT" FOR ANY EFFORT TO BRING PEACE TO AFGHANISTAN -- WHILE REMAINING CONVINCED OF THE INEVITABILITY OF CONTINUED FIGHTING BETWEEN THE TALIBAN AND THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE, AND OF AN EVENTUAL TALIBAN VICTORY. TURKMENISTAN ALSO BELIEVES PROGRESS WAS MADE TOWARD EVENTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF A GAS PIPELINE THROUGH AFGHANISTAN TO MULTAN, PAKISTAN. THE TURKMEN EMBASSY REHASHED POSSIBLE WAYS OF DEALING WITH USAMA BIN LADIN, INSISTING THAT THE TALIBAN ARE "HERE TO STAY." END SUMMARY.

TURKMEN GAS TO PAKISTAN

2. (U) TURKMENISTAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER SHIKHMURADOV VISITED PAKISTAN MARCH 4-6, MEETING CHIEF EXECUTIVE MUSHARRAF AND OTHER PAKISTANI OFFICIALS. A TALIBAN GROUP, LED BY DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ZAHID, ALSO CAME TO ISLAMABAD TO TALK WITH SHIKHMURADOV.

3. (C) AS PREDICTED REF A, [REDACTED] CONFIRMED THAT THE GAS PIPELINE FROM TURKMENISTAN THROUGH AFGHANISTAN TO

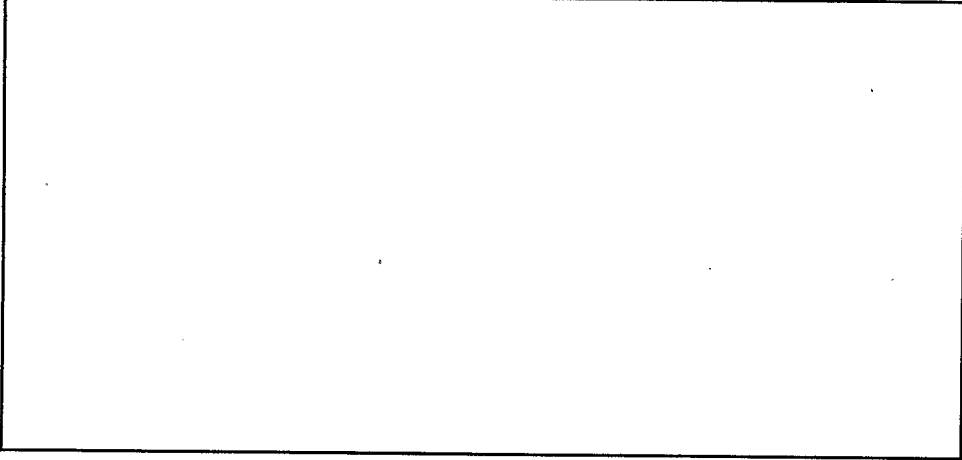
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MULTAN, PAKISTAN FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN DISCUSSIONS.

[Redacted]

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4. (C) COMMENT: THESE REMARKS DID NOT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THAT PAKISTAN HAS RECENTLY HAD SEVERAL LARGE DISCOVERIES OF GAS AND, CONTRARY TO [Redacted] S ASSERTIONS, DOES NOT NEED TURKMEN GAS. [Redacted] DECIDED BEFORE ITS WITHDRAWAL THAT THE PIPELINE WOULD BE ECONOMIC ONLY IF THE GAS COULD BE MARKETED TO INDIA. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH IRAN ON A PIPELINE TO INDIA ARE MORE ADVANCED AND A PAKISTAN DELEGATION WENT TO TEHRAN ON MARCH 11 TO PURSUE THESE NEGOTIATIONS. LONG-TIME OBSERVERS OF THE SCENE,

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P 131251Z MAR 00

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 001462

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QUESADA

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AND CONTINUE TO SUPPORT TALIBAN

HOWEVER, DO NOT BELIEVE THAT EITHER PIPELINE IS
LIKELY TO GO FORWARD IN THE MID-TERM. END
COMMENT.

PAKISTANI AND TURKMEN VIEWS OF AFGHANISTAN

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5. (C) SHIKHMURADOV ALSO DISCUSSED AFGHANISTAN WITH THE GOP, AND ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] BOTH SIDES AGREED THEY WOULD SUPPORT ANY EFFORT TO BRING PEACE TO AFGHANISTAN. THE TALIBAN ARE ALSO OPEN FOR ANY INITIATIVE, HE ADDED. HOWEVER, ASKED IF THE GOP AND GOTX TOGETHER, OR TURKMENISTAN IN ANY EVENT, SUPPORTED THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)-SPONSORED TALKS IN JEDDAH, [REDACTED] EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE EFFICACY OF THE IRANIAN-LED EFFORTS. [REDACTED] NOR THE COMBATANTS WANT PEACE, HE ASSERTED, POINTING TO THE RENEWED OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING TO BACK HIS CLAIM. MAYBE WHEN THE WINTER COMES AGAIN, PARTIES WILL BE MORE INTERESTED IN RENEWED TALKS, HE SAID, [REDACTED]

B1

6. (C) [REDACTED] RAISED THE JANUARY 31 VISIT OF TALIBAN "PRESIDENT" MULLAH RABBANI (REF B) TO ELABORATE ON TURKMEN AND PAKISTANI VIEWS ON AFGHANISTAN. PAKISTAN "WILL ALWAYS SUPPORT THE TALIBAN," HE STATED. GOP POLICY CANNOT CHANGE, HE CONTINUED; IT WOULD PROMPT REBELLION ACROSS THE NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCES, THE FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS, AND INDEED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE PASHTUN-DOMINATED PAK-AFGHAN BORDER. POLOFF NOTED THAT THERE WERE REPORTS CHIEF EXECUTIVE MUSHARRAF HAD DISCUSSED TERRORISM WITH RABBANI DURING HIS VISIT. [REDACTED] EXPOUNDED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT IN THE ASIAN MENTALITY, THE ATMOSPHERE OF A MEETING WAS MUCH

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MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT WAS ACTUALLY SAID. TERRORISM WAS BROUGHT UP, HE AGREED, BUT THE TALKS WERE CORDIAL AND FRIENDLY, AND THAT IS WHAT THE TALIBAN REMEMBER. NO ONE CAN DICTATE TO THE TALIBAN, HE DECLARED; MUSHARRAF UNDERSTANDS THIS AND WOULD NOT SEEK TO INSIST ON CHANGES THAT THE TALIBAN CANNOT AND WILL NOT DELIVER.

7. (C) [REDACTED] SAID THAT THE TALIBAN CONSIDERED BOTH THE RABBANI VISIT AND THE JANUARY 20 MEETING WITH A/S INDERFURTH AND S/CT SHEEHAN (REF C) SUCCESSFUL. IN BOTH CASES, THE ATMOSPHERE HAD BEEN OPEN AND RESPECTFUL; LAUGHING, [REDACTED] ADDED

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THAT THIS MIGHT BE ALL THAT COULD BE SAID OF THE MEETING BETWEEN TALIBAN DIRECTOR FOR ADMINISTRATION MUTTAQI, A/S INDERFURTH AND S/CT SHEEHAN. FROM THE GOP, HOWEVER, RABBANI ALSO GOT MUSHARRAF'S "FULL COOPERATION" ON TRANSIT TRADE, WAS ASSURED OF PAKISTAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE AFGHAN POSITION ON USAMA BIN LADIN AND TERRORISM, AND HAD TO MAKE FEW, IF ANY, CONCESSIONS.

TALIBAN ARE HERE TO STAY

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AND CONTINUE TO SUPPORT TALIBAN

8. (C) ACKNOWLEDGING NORTHERN ALLIANCE
COMMANDER AHMED SHAH MASOOD'S PROWESS AS A
FIGHTER, AND CLAIMING THAT THE TALIBAN ALSO
RESPECTED MASOOD'S FIGHTING CAPABILITIES, [REDACTED]
NONETHELESS CLAIMED THAT THE TALIBAN WOULD
ULTIMATELY DEFEAT THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE
MILITARILY. "THEY WILL DESTROY MASOOD," HE SAID
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-- ALTHOUGH NOT THIS YEAR ("MASOOD IS STILL VERY
STRONG"). THE TALIBAN ARE HERE TO SAY, [REDACTED]
INSISTED, BUT THEY ARE "LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT" OF
THE PROBLEM WITH BIN LADIN. THE U.S. SHOULD FIND
A WAY TO COMPROMISE WITH THE TALIBAN, HE URGED --
POSITING THAT THE TALIBAN ALSO SOUGHT COMPROMISE.

9. (C) STRESSING THAT HE WAS ONLY SPEAKING
PERSONALLY, [REDACTED] PROCEEDED TO SUGGEST SOME WAYS
THAT THE U.S. AND THE TALIBAN MIGHT USE TO BREAK
THE IMPASSE. (MOST ARE STANDARD FARE.)

-- THE POSSIBILITY OF A TRIAL IN A THIRD
(MUSLIM) COUNTRY; THE USG SHOULD CLARIFY WHETHER
THIS IS AN OPTION.

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-- U.S. ASSURANCES THAT BIN LADIN WOULD NOT FACE THE DEATH PENALTY.

-- A U.S. OUTLINE OF WHAT THE TALIBAN WOULD GAIN FROM EXTRADITION OF BIN LADIN.

-- IN A TWIST ON THE "ULEMA" CONCEPT, [REDACTED] ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY MUSLIM SCHOLARS FROM THE U.S. WHO COULD INTERACT WITH THE TALIBAN, "MULLAH TO MULLAH?" THE USG COULD "BRIEF" THE SCHOLARS TO ENSURE THEY WERE FULLY PREPARED TO REPRESENT U.S. VIEWS, HE SUGGESTED, IGNORING POLOFF'S ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

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10. (C) [REDACTED] ALSO ASSERTED, WITHOUT PROVIDING EVIDENCE, THAT THE TALIBAN ARE GROWING, CHANGING AND MODERATING, AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. THEY ARE TRYING TO MAKE AFGHANISTAN MORE MODERN, HE DECLARED -- THAT IS WHY THEY CANNOT SUPPORT THE LOYA JIRGA IDEA. [REDACTED] ELABORATED THAT A LOYA JIRGA, AS AN "ISLAMIC" INSTITUTION, IS COUNTER-MODERN. IT WOULD ONLY INCREASE INSTABILITY. LOYA JIRGA BACKERS ARE ONLY PUSHING THE IDEA BECAUSE IT COMES CLOSER TO WESTERN IDEAS OF DEMOCRACY AND THEY BELIEVE IT WILL SECURE WESTERN BACKING AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT. THE TALIBAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE INSTALLED A STRONG SYSTEM IN AFGHANISTAN. THEY HAVE SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. DISSENTERS ARE REALLY ONLY "TROUBLEMAKERS;" THEY DO NOT REPRESENT A SERIOUS THREAT TO OMAR'S HOLD ON THE TALIBAN, OR TO TALIBAN CONTROL OF AFGHANISTAN. THIS IS IN KEEPING WITH THE CENTRAL ASIAN MODEL, [REDACTED] SUGGESTED, NOTING THAT UZBEKISTAN, AZERBAIJAN, AND TAJIKISTAN ALL ARE RULED BY STRONGMEN, AND EVEN RUSSIA PERPETUATES THIS MODEL.

COMMENT

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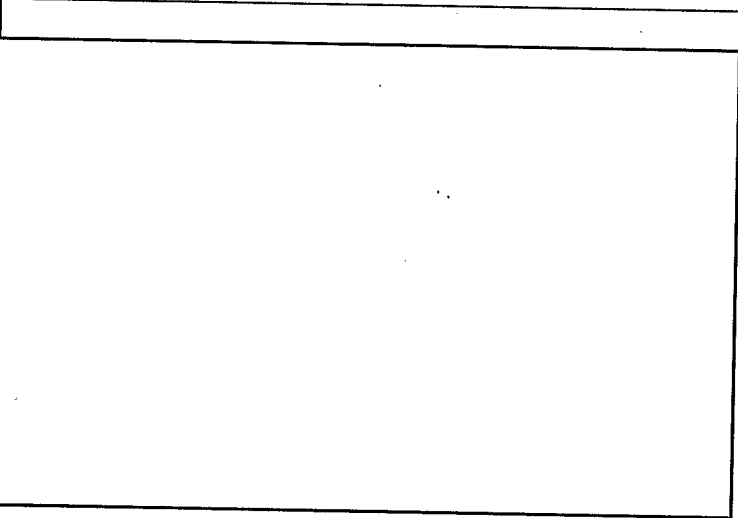
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11. (C)



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