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TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL PESHAWAR IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 154712

NODIS DECAPTIONED

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TAGS: PREL, PTER, PINR, AF, PK,

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN'S MULLAH OMAR'S 8/22 CONTACT WITH STATE DEPARTMENT

CLASSIFIED BY MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI, DIRECTOR SA/PAB.  
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

- 1. (C) SUMMARY: IN A TELEPHONE CALL ON AN OPEN LINE EARLY  
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AUGUST 22, TALIBAN SUPREME LEADER MULLAH OMAR TOLD A STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL IN WASHINGTON THAT THE TALIBAN WAS OPEN TO THE SUGGESTION OF ESTABLISHING A VEHICLE FOR SECURE COMMUNICATION WITH USG OFFICIALS, POSSIBLY THROUGH AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD. WHILE OMAR PARROTED SOME OF BIN LADEN'S HARD-LINE VIEWS, HE LISTENED TO U.S. ARGUMENTS ON THE REASONS FOR THE U.S. ATTACKS IN AFGHANISTAN AND SUDAN AND THE REASONS WHY BIN LADEN'S CONTINUED ACTIVITIES WERE NOT IN THE INTEREST OF THE AFGHAN PEOPLE. OMAR WARNED THAT THE U.S. STRIKES WOULD PROVE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE AND AROUSE ANTI-AMERICAN FEELINGS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD. WHILE HE WAS IN NO WAY THREATENING, HE CLAIMED THAT THE STRIKES COULD SPARK MORE TERRORIST ATTACKS. HE ASKED FOR EVIDENCE OF BIN

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LADEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN TERRORIST ACTIONS. END SUMMARY

2. (C) [REDACTED] WHO IS A SUPPORTER OF  
 AFGHANISTAN'S TALIBAN MOVEMENT APPROACHED SA/PAB DIRECTOR  
 MALINOWSKI AUGUST 21 TO SEE IF HE WAS WILLING TO  
 COMMUNICATE WITH ONE OF THE TALIBAN'S TOP LEADERS.  
 MALINOWSKI TOLD [REDACTED] THAT HE WAS ALWAYS OPEN TO SUCH  
 COMMUNICATION IF IT WAS SERIOUS. IN THE EARLY MORNING  
 HOURS OF AUGUST 22, MALINOWSKI WAS CALLED AT HOME AND  
 HOOKED INTO A CONFERENCE CALL ON AN OPEN LINE WITH [REDACTED]

B1

[REDACTED] AND TALIBAN HEADQUARTERS IN KANDAHAR.  
 [REDACTED] SERVED AS TRANSLATOR. AFTER CONVERSATION  
 BEGAN WITH A TALIBAN AIDE, MULLAH OMAR SURPRISINGLY CAME ON  
 THE LINE AND ENGAGED WITH MALINOWSKI. THIS IS THE FIRST  
 CONTACT THAT WE KNOW OF BETWEEN THE RECLUSIVE MULLAH OMAR  
 AND A USG OFFICIAL. OMAR ASKED FOR THE BONA FIDES OF  
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 MALINOWSKI, WHICH THE [REDACTED] TRANSLATOR PROVIDED. THE  
 TRANSLATOR, FAMILIAR WITH OMAR'S VOICE FROM PREVIOUS  
 CONVERSATIONS, VOUCHER THAT IT WAS OMAR.

3. (C) MALINOWSKI NOTED THAT WE HAD MUCH TO SPEAK ABOUT,  
 ESPECIALLY THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF OSAMA BIN LADEN IN  
 AFGHANISTAN AND THE THREAT THAT BIN LADEN POSED TO  
 AMERICANS. OMAR REPLIED THAT, WHILE HE HAD NO PARTICULAR  
 MESSAGE FOR US, HE WAS OPEN TO DIALOGUE. MALINOWSKI  
 SUGGESTED THAT OPEN TELEPHONE LINES WERE INAPPROPRIATE FOR  
 THAT SERIOUS DIALOGUE AND SUGGESTED THAT IT BE BEST  
 CONDUCTED IN PERSON WITH OFFICIALS OF OUR EMBASSY IN  
 ISLAMABAD. OMAR COUNTERED BY SAYING THAT WE COULD ENGAGE  
 WITH THE TALIBAN'S REPRESENTATIVES IN ISLAMABAD.

4. (C) OMAR SAID THAT WHILE HE HAD NO SPECIFIC MESSAGE HE  
 DID HAVE SOME ADVICE. HE SAID THAT IN ORDER TO REBUILD  
 U.S. POPULARITY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND BECAUSE OF HIS  
 CURRENT DOMESTIC POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES CONGRESS SHOULD  
 FORCE PRESIDENT CLINTON TO RESIGN. HE SAID THAT HE WAS  
 AWARE OF NO EVIDENCE THAT BIN LADEN HAD ENGAGED IN OR  
 PLANNED TERRORIST ACTS WHILE ON AFGHAN SOIL. PARROTING  
 MUCH OF BIN LADEN'S USUAL RHETORIC, OMAR SAID THAT THE U.S.  
 SHOULD REMOVE ITS FORCES FROM THE GULF AND HE WARNED THAT  
 THE U.S. WAS SEEN AS A THREAT TO ISLAM'S HOLIEST SITES,  
 INCLUDING THE KABBAH. HE ADDED THAT EVENTUALLY THE PEOPLE  
 OF SAUDI ARABIA WOULD FORCE THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT TO EXPEL  
 THE AMERICANS.

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5. (C) OMAR WARNED THAT THE STRIKES WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE TO THE U.S. THEY COULD SPARK MORE, NOT LESS,  
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TERRORIST ATTACKS. AND THEY WOULD FURTHER INCREASE ISLAMIC

SOLIDARITY AGAINST THE U.S. THE ISLAMIC WORLD WOULD RALLY TO AFGHANISTAN'S SIDE IN THE FACE OF THE ATTACKS. OMAR EMPHASIZED THAT THIS WAS HIS BEST ADVICE AND THAT HE WAS CONCERNED OVER THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE STRIKES.

6. (C) ON BIN LADEN, OMAR SAID THAT GETTING RID OF ONE INDIVIDUAL WOULD NOT END THE PROBLEMS POSED TO THE U.S. BY THE ISLAMIC WORLD. HE AGAIN SAID THAT HE HAD SEEN NO HARD EVIDENCE AGAINST BIN LADEN.

7. (C) MALINOWSKI REPLIED THAT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE AGAINST BIN LADEN AND THAT THE EVIDENCE WAS SOLID. HE NOTED THAT OMAR AND THE TALIBAN SHOULD BE WELL AWARE OF WHAT BIN LADEN HAD BEEN UP TO IN AFGHANISTAN. HE SAID THAT THE U.S. SOLELY HAD ACTED OUT OF SELF DEFENSE; THE PRESIDENT HAD ACTED AS A FATHER WHO HAD TO PROTECT HIS CHILDREN FROM JEOPARDY. OUR STRIKES IN NO WAY WERE DIRECTED AGAINST THE AFGHAN PEOPLE OR THE TALIBAN. OMAR SHOULD KNOW THAT THE U.S. HAD BEEN A FRIEND TO THE AFGHANS AND WANTED ONLY THE BEST FOR AFGHANISTAN. PICKING UP ON OMAR'S OBSERVATION THAT AFGHANISTAN NEEDED RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE, MALINOWSKI OBSERVED THAT RECONSTRUCTION COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO START AS LONG AS AFGHANISTAN REMAINED IN TURMOIL AND AS LONG AS BIN LADEN WAS POSING A THREAT FROM ITS SOIL.

8. (C) TURNING TO THE SUBJECT OF PUSHTUNWALI, OR THE CODE OF BEHAVIOR FOR THE PUSHTUNS THAT IS OFTEN USED AS TALIBAN RATIONALIZATION FOR THE CONTINUED SHELTERING OF BIN LADEN  
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IN AFGHANISTAN, MALINOWSKI SAID THAT WE WERE AWARE OF THE CODE. BUT HE ARGUED THAT NO PUSHTUN, INCLUDING OMAR, SHOULD ALLOW A GUEST OR REFUGE SEEKER TO ABUSE AFGHAN PUSHTUN HOSPITALITY. HE SAID THAT BIN LADEN WAS LIKE A GUEST WHO WAS SHOOTING AT NEIGHBORS OUT OF THE HOST'S WINDOW.

9. (C) USING PUBLIC STATEMENTS, MALINOWSKI URGED OMAR TO PLACE BIN LADEN AND OTHER TERRORISTS IN CUSTODY OR EXPEL THEM FROM AFGHANISTAN.

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10. (C) OMAR CONDUCTED HIMSELF IN A CAREFUL AND CONTROLLED MANNER. AT NO TIME DID HE BLUSTER OR THREATEN.

11. (C) COMMENT: OMAR'S CONTACT WITH A USG OFFICIAL IS RATHER REMARKABLE, GIVEN HIS RECLUSIVE NATURE AND HIS PAST AVOIDANCE OF CONTACT WITH ALL THINGS AMERICAN. IT IS INDICATIVE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF HOW THE TALL BAN VIEW THE U.S. STRIKES AND OUR ANGER OVER BIN LADEN. THE TALIBAN,

DESPITE IMPLYING THAT WE SHOULD INITIATE THE CONTACT, ARE INTERESTED IN A DIALOGUE WITH US ON BIN LADEN AND OTHER ISSUES. THIS IS A LONG WAY, HOWEVER, FROM THE TALIBAN DOING THE RIGHT THING ON BIN LADEN.

12. (U) MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.  
ALBRIGHT

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