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ACTION SA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-17	ACDE-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	OASY-00
	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-01	EUR-01	FAAE-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-02	L-01	ADS-00	M-00	NEA-01
	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	PA-01	PM-00	PRS-01
	P-01	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-09	G-00	/040W		

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O 041135Z SEP 95  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4757  
INFO AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
DIA WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 008102

LONDON FOR POL:TUELLER; ROME FOR POL:STORELLA; PARIS FOR  
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E. AHMAD  
DATE/CASE ID: 21 APR 2003 200104007

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 POL:ALLEGRONE

DHAKA/COLOMBO: PLEASE PASS A/S RAPHEL

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR DS/FAA

E.O. 12356: DECL:09/04/00

TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, PINS, EAIR, IR, AF

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN TAKE SHINDAND AIR BASE;  
 - HERAT THREATENED -- WILL IRAN INTERVENE?

REF: ISLAMABAD 8014

1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: IN A POSSIBLE WATERSHED EVENT, KABUL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THE TALIBAN SEIZED THE STRATEGIC, SPRAWLING SHINDAND AIR BASE IN FARAH PROVINCE, SEPTEMBER 3. THE TALIBAN ARE NOW REPORTED BY RELIABLE OPPOSITION SOURCES TO BE LESS THAN 30 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF HERAT CITY AIRPORT. THE KABUL GOVERNMENT SAYS A COUNTER-ATTACK TO DRIVE THE TALIBAN BACK IS BEING PLANNED, BUT ISMAEL KHAN IS CLEARLY POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY WEAKENED. WHETHER HE CAN HOLD OUT MAY WELL DEPEND ON HOW IRAN REACTS TO THE TALIBAN THREAT -- OPPOSITION FIGURES BELIEVE IRAN IS PLANNING TO GIVE KHAN MORE SUPPORT. DOSTAM'S FORCES ALSO REPORTEDLY HAVE ADVANCED IN BADGHIS, ADDING PRESSURE ON THE HERAT GOVERNMENT. IN THE EAST, THE TALIBAN HAVE BEGUN SHELLING MASOOD POSITIONS FROM MAIDAN SHAHR, AND KABUL GOVERNMENT PRESSURE ON HEKMATYAR'S FRONT-LINE AT SAROBI (LATABAND ROAD) REPORTEDLY HAS LESSENED AS MASOOD WITHDRAWS TROOPS CLOSER TO KABUL. IN RELATED

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 DEVELOPMENTS, DOSTAM OFFICIALS SAID THEY INTEND TO KEEP UP THEIR AERIAL BOMBING CAMPAIGN AND WARNED THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AGAINST TRANSITTING OPPOSITION AIR SPACE WITHOUT PERMISSION. END SUMMARY.

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3. IN A SURPRISING BLOW TO THE PRO-RABBANI FORCES OF ISMAEL KHAN, TALIBAN TROOPS ARE CONFIRMED TO HAVE SEIZED THE MAJOR AIRBASE AT SHINDAND, SEPTEMBER 3. USUALLY RELIABLE OPPOSITION FIGURES CLAIM THAT AS OF SEPTEMBER 4, THE TALIBAN FRONT-LINE HAD MOVED NORTH OF ADRASKAN IN HERAT PROVINCE AND WAS ONLY THIRTY KILOMETERS SOUTH OF HERAT AIRPORT (WHICH IS A MERE 20 MINUTE DRIVE FROM THE CITY OVER A VERY BAD ROAD). WITH FLIGHT OPERATIONS SUSPENDED BECAUSE OF REPEATED AIR ATTACKS AGAINST HERAT, THE UNOCHA DIRECTOR MARTIN BARBER TOLD POLOFF SEPTEMBER 4 THAT THE SITUATION THERE IS SUFFICIENTLY WORRISOME THAT THE 6-7 RESIDENT U.N. INTERNATIONAL STAFF HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE AUTHORITY TO LEAVE OVERLAND FOR IRAN OR TURKMENISTAN WITHOUT FURTHER CONSULTATION WITH HEADQUARTERS IN ISLAMABAD.

4. [REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF SEPTEMBER 4 THAT THE OPPOSITION RECENTLY HAD INTERCEPTED RADIO MESSAGES FROM KABUL INSTRUCTING HERAT GOVERNOR ISMAEL KHAN TO COME TO THE CAPITAL FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH AHMED SHAH MASOOD. [REDACTED] INTERPRETED THIS TO MEAN THAT ISMAEL KHAN'S POSITION IN HERAT WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY UNTENABLE AND THAT THE KABUL GOVERNMENT SOUGHT TO INVOLVE ITSELF MORE DIRECTLY IN THE DEFENSE OF THIS IMPORTANT SUPPLY ROUTE -- FOR THIS REASON, HE CLAIMED, KABUL DEFENSE MINISTRY SPOKESMAN AND TOP MASOOD ADVISOR DR. ABDULLAH HAD VISITED HERAT SEPTEMBER 2. PREDICTING THAT THE TALIBAN MIGHT VERY POSSIBLY OCCUPY HERAT WITHIN THE  
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 NEXT DAY OR SO, [REDACTED] SAID THE MOST IMPORTANT VARIABLE WOULD BE THE DEGREE TO WHICH IRAN CHOSE TO INTERVENE ON BEHALF OF ISMAEL KHAN. [REDACTED] ADDED THAT ISMAEL KHAN'S POLITICAL POSITION WAS WEAK; HE CLAIMED KHAN'S PREVIOUS RELIANCE ON PANJSHIRI TROOPS FROM MASOOD TO PUSH BACK THE TALIBAN SIX MONTHS AGO HAD ALIENATED HIS OWN HERATI COMMANDERS, WHILE HIS HABIT OF PRESS-GANGING YOUTHS INTO THE MILITARY HAD ANGERED THE USUALLY DOCILE CITIZENS OF HERAT. [REDACTED] WITH SOME SATISFACTION, DECLARED THAT ISMAEL KHAN'S SITUATION POLITICALLY WAS DIFFICULT AND LARGELY

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SELF-CREATED.

5. [REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF  
SEPTEMBER 4 THAT THE JUMBESH OFFICE IN TEHRAN HAD REPORTED THE  
PREVIOUS NIGHT THAT THERE WERE "CLEAR INDICATIONS" THAT IRAN  
WAS "PREPARING A RESPONSE TO THE ADVANCE OF THE TALIBAN WHICH  
COULD NOT BE DISCUSSED BY TELEPHONE." [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] PROMISED TO SEND A FAX DETAILING THE SCOPE AND NATURE OF  
IRANIAN PREPARATIONS, BUT THE MESSAGE HAD NOT YET BEEN  
RECEIVED. [REDACTED] NOTED THAT KABUL GOVERNMENT FORCES WERE  
PREPARING TO COUNTER-ATTACK THE TALIBAN, BUT SAID HE COULD NOT  
PREDICT WHICH SIDE WOULD BE VICTORIOUS. JUMBESH TROOPS UNDER  
RASUL PAHLAWAN HAD TAKEN THE NEIGHBORING BADGHIS PROVINCIAL

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O 041135Z SEP 95  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 008102

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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN TAKE SHINDAND AIR BASE;  
- HERAT THREATENED -- WILL IRAN INTERVENE?

CAPITAL OF QALA-I-NAW, AND WERE PRESSING TOWARDS HERAT FROM THE  
EAST, [ ] STATED, BUT THE SITUATION WAS FLUID AND HE  
OBSERVED THAT, WITH SUFFICIENT IRANIAN SUPPORT, "TURAJON ISMAEL  
MAY BE ABLE TO HAVE A REPEAT OF A HALF YEAR AGO," WHEN HERATI

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TROOPS HALTED AN ADVANCE NEAR SHINDAND AND PROCEEDED TO PUSH THE TALIBAN BACK.

6. MEANWHILE, IN THE EAST, HEKMATYAR'S OFFICIALS REPORT THAT PRESSURE ON SAROBI VIA THE LATABAND ROAD DIMINISHED SEPTEMBER 3 AS MASOOD PULLED SOME OF HIS TROOPS BACK CLOSER TO KABUL. IN WHAT JUMBESH SOURCES DESCRIBED AS "A DEAL" BETWEEN HEKMATYAR'S COMMANDER ZARDAD AND LOCAL TALIBAN LEADERS, IN WARDAK PROVINCE, TALIBAN FORCES AT MAIDAN SHAHR BEGAN ROCKETING MASOOD'S POSITIONS SEPTEMBER 4. JUMBESH OFFICIALS SAY THEY EXPECT TO CONTINUE THEIR UPGRADED AIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST KABUL GOVERNMENT TARGETS AT BAGHRAM, HERAT AND KABUL AIRPORTS. IN THAT CONTEXT, DOSTAM'S OFFICIALS HAVE ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY THAT NO AIRCRAFT CAN OVERFLY THEIR TERRITORY WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL -- A MEASURE THEY PRIVATELY CONFIRM WAS TAKEN BECAUSE OF CONCERN THAT ARIANA AFGHAN AIRLINES, AS WELL AS RUSSIAN AND POSSIBLY INDIAN

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AIRCRAFT, WERE BEING USED TO DELIVER BADLY-NEEDED MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR KABUL.

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