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ACTION SA-01

INFO LOG-00 CIAE-00 DEAE-00 OASY-00 DODE-00 EUR-01 OIGO-01  
FBIE-00 INM-02 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-14 ADS-00 NEA-01  
NSAE-00 OIC-02 PM-00 P-01 USIE-00 SNIS-00 NISC-01  
PMB-00 /024W

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O 151226Z FEB 95  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0815  
INFO USIA WASHDC 3121  
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
AMCONSUL KARACHI  
AMCONSUL JEDDAH  
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR  
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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LONDON FOR POL:TUELLER

USIA FOR NEA:OBEE

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E. AHMAD  
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CENTCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
 TAGS: KISL, MOPS, PINS, SNAR, UN, AF  
 SUBJECT: MEETING WITH THE TALIBAN IN KANDAHAR: MORE QUESTIONS  
 - THAN ANSWERS

1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: THE TALIBAN SAY THEY WILL TAKE KABUL, DISARM ALL THE COMMANDERS, AND INSTALL ONE GOVERNMENT ACROSS AFGHANISTAN WHICH WILL INSTITUTE SHARIAH LAW. THEY REFUSED TO BE DRAWN OUT ON THEIR LEADERS AND SOURCES OF RELIGIOUS ADVICE, BUT DENIED RECEIVING ANY OUTSIDE SUPPORT. TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES CLAIMED TO SUPPORT THE MESTIRI MISSION YET APPEARED UNWILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE U.N.'S INTERIM GOVERNING COALITION. THEY APPEARED WELL-DISPOSED TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES AND SAID THEY WOULD WELCOME FUTURE VISITS. ON DRUGS POLICY, THE TALIBAN WAFFLED, SAYING POPPY GROWING WAS UNISLAMIC, BUT THAT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS LEFT THE PEOPLE LITTLE ALTERNATIVE. THE TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES SEEMED UNLIKELY CANDIDATES TO LEAD A MOVEMENT WHICH HAS SWEEPED ACROSS SOUTHWESTERN AFGHANISTAN UP TO THE GATES OF KABUL. THEIR SECRETIVENESS LEAVES LINGERING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TALIBAN'S LEADERSHIP AND INTENTIONS. END SUMMARY.

3. PESHAWAR PO AND ISLAMABAD POLOFF MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TALIBAN IN KANDAHAR CITY, FEBRUARY 13, AT THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR'S OFFICE. SPEAKING FOR THE TALIBAN WAS MAULAVI ABUL-ABBAS, THE MAYOR OF KANDAHAR AND A MEMBER OF THE TALIBAN SHURA. ALSO PRESENT WERE MULLAH ATTIQULLAH, IN CHARGE OF U.N.  
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 AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN VISITORS, MAULAVI ABDUL HADIM, IN CHARGE OF INDUSTRY FOR THE SHURA, MAULAVI ABDUR-RAZZAQ, IN CHARGE OF ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS, MAULAVI ABDUL-SHUKKUR, IN CHARGE OF ELECTRICITY, AND MAULAVIS ABDUL ZAHIR AND ABDUL HALIM, SHURA

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MEMBERS. AVERAGE AGE OF THE TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES APPEARED TO BE ABOUT 40. TRANSLATION WAS PROVIDED BY A U.N. EMPLOYEE KHAN MOHAMMED, THE BROTHER OF DEPOSED JAMIAT COMMANDER MULLAH NAQIBULLAH.

4. FOLLOWING A BENEDICTION WHICH CALLED FOR CONVERSION OF THE UNBELIEVERS, ABUL-ABBAS BEGAN BY APOLOGIZING THAT MORE SENIOR TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES WERE UNAVAILABLE. MAULAVI MOHAMMED OMAR WAS IN HELMAND, MAULAVI RABBANI WAS IN GHAZNI AND MAULAVI HISSANULLAH WAS IN LOGHAR, THE MAYOR NOTED, AND THE TALIBAN LEADERSHIP HAD NOT RECEIVED MUCH ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE VISIT. PESHAWAR PO APOLOGIZED FOR THE SHORT NOTICE, NOTED THAT COMMUNICATION WITH THE TALIBAN DEPENDED UPON U.N. CHANNELS AND TRANSPORTATION, AND ASKED IF THERE WERE TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES OR CONTACT NUMBERS IN PAKISTAN WHICH THE USG COULD USE DIRECTLY. ABUL-ABBAS RESPONDED THAT THERE WERE NO TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES IN PAKISTAN AND THAT ALL COMMUNICATION SHOULD CONTINUE VIA THE U.N. HE SUGGESTED THAT IF THE USG DESIRED DIRECT CONTACT, IT SHOULD OPEN A CONSULATE IN KANDAHAR.

5. ASKED ABOUT THE GOALS OF THE MOVEMENT, THE MAYOR SAID THE TALIBAN SEEK TO ESTABLISH ONE GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN AND TO RESTORE PEACE TO THE COUNTRY. THE FIRST OBJECTIVE WILL BE DISARMAMENT OF ALL THE COMMANDERS, AFTER WHICH SHARIAH LAW WILL BE ESTABLISHED THROUGHOUT AFGHANISTAN. OUR MOVEMENT, HE NOTED, IS THE WISH OF THE AFGHAN PEOPLE. ABUL-ABBAS COMMENTED THAT STUDENTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES GO ON STRIKE AND SEEK TO EFFECT

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 SOCIAL CHANGE -- AS ISLAMIC STUDENTS THE TALIBAN SIMPLY WERE DOING THE SAME. THE MAYOR SAID THE EFFORTS OF THE TALIBAN ARE AIMED A BRINGING PEACE "TO THE WHOLE WORLD." THIS IS SOMETHING FOR WHICH ALL TALIBAN WILL SACRIFICE, HE OBSERVED. ASKED ABOUT RELATIONS WITH THE SHI'A, TAJIKS, UZBEKS AND OTHER ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, ABUL-ABBAS COMMENTED OMINOUSLY THAT "ANYONE WHO GETS IN OUR WAY WILL BE CRUSHED."

6. POLOFF ASKED THE MAYOR ABOUT THE TALIBAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SPECIAL ENVOY MAHMOUD MESTIRI, NOTING THAT THE U.S.

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SUPPORTS THE U.N. PEACE PROCESS. ABUL-ABBAS SAID THE TALIBAN HAD HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH MESTIRI AND "WE AGREE WITH HIM." WHEN QUERIED ABOUT THE ANNOUNCED FEBRUARY 20 CONVENING OF AN INTERIM GOVERNING MECHANISM IN KABUL, THE MAYOR SAID THE TALIBAN HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY FORMAL NOTIFICATION OR OFFICIAL CONTACT ON THE MATTER AND THEREFORE COULD NOT RESPOND.

7. ABUL-ABBAS WAS ASKED THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN THE TALIBAN SHURA, BUT REFUSED TO RESPOND. "THIS CANNOT BE TOLD," HE SAID. INQUIRIES INTO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT WERE ALSO TURNED ASIDE. ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE FORMATION OF THE

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0816  
 INFO USIA WASHDC 3122  
 AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
 USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
 AMCONSUL KARACHI  
 AMCONSUL JEDDAH  
 AMCONSUL PESHAWAR  
 AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
 AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
 AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
 AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
 AMEMBASSY LONDON  
 USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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LONDON FOR POL:TUELLER

USIA FOR NEA:OBEE

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MOVEMENT CAME FROM MADRASA TEACHERS AND THE PEOPLE OF  
 AFGHANISTAN, WHO HAD TIRED OF THE BEHAVIOR OF THE COMMANDERS,  
 THE MAYOR NOTED. THE TALIBAN DID NOT RECEIVE ANY SUPPORT FROM  
 OUTSIDERS, HE VOLUNTEERED.

8. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE MOVEMENT DERIVES FROM TAXES  
 LEVIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SHARIAH LAW, ABUL-ABBAS SAID.

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(NOTE: U.N. AND NGO SOURCES SAY NO TAXES OTHER THAN ROAD TOLLS ARE BEING COLLECTED. END NOTE) THESE FUNDS ARE COLLECTED ACCORDING TO THE ADVICE OF TALIBAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS, HE OBSERVED, BUT REFUSED TO NAME WHICH LEADERS IN PARTICULAR THE TALIBAN FOLLOWED. "ALL CAN HELP ADVISE US," HE NOTED. ALTHOUGH THE TALIBAN NAMED NO SPECIFIC SOURCE OF GUIDANCE, SEVERAL FLAGS OF THE PAKISTANI ISLAMIST JUI (F) PARTY WERE OBSERVED FLYING IN DOWNTOWN KANDAHAR, AND PRO-JUI (F) GRAFFITTI WAS IN EVIDENCE ON THE WALLS OUTSIDE THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE. ASKED IF MAULAVI TARAKHEL WAS AN INFLUENTIAL FIGURE IN THE MOVEMENT, ABUL-ABBAS RESPONDED VERY NEGATIVELY, SAYING TARAKHEL WAS A POLITICIAN NOT A RELIGIOUS LEADER AND WAS DISLIKED BY THE TALIBAN. WHILE NOTING THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS ADVICE, PO SMYTH NOTED THAT SOMETIMES PRACTICAL AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE WAS NEEDED. ABUL-ABBAS ACCEPTED THIS POINT, RESPONDING THAT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS GAVE BROAD POLICY DIRECTION TO THE

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 TALIBAN WHILE ENGINEERS AND TECHNOCRATS DEALT WITH PRACTICAL MATTERS.

9. THE TALIBAN WERE ASKED ABOUT THEIR COMMITMENT TO COUNTER-NARCOTICS EFFORTS AND OFFERED PARTICIPATION IN A TRAINING PROGRAM IN THE U.S. ABUL-ABBAS, IN A COMMENTARY WHICH GENERATED CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION AND OBVIOUS DISSENT AMONGST THE ASSEMBLED SHURA MEMBERS, SAID THE TALIBAN DID NOT HAVE ANY SPECIAL COUNTER-NARCOTICS OFFICE OR COORDINATOR AND DID NOT NEED TO FOCUS SPECIAL ATTENTION ON THIS AREA. "NARCOTICS IS PROHIBITED IN ISLAM, THIS IS VERY CLEAR," ABUL-ABBAS INTONED. "ISLAM IS A COMPLETE RELIGION -- ALL ISSUES AND MATTERS ARE ANSWERED IN IT," HE CONTINUED. ABUL-ABBAS DECLINED THE OFFER OF TRAINING IN THE U.S., SAYING THE TALIBAN SHURA WILL NOT LET THE PEOPLE GROW DRUGS, WHICH IS THE BEST WAY TO STOP IT. THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND POLICE WILL FOLLOW-UP AS A SECOND STEP TO ENSURE NO ILLICIT DRUGS ARE GROWN, HE ADDED.

10. THE MAYOR'S CATEGORICAL COMMENTS GENERATED CONSIDERABLE HEATED INTERJECTION FROM OTHER SHURA MEMBERS. HIS SUBSEQUENT RESPONSE TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION ABOUT DRUG PRODUCTION IN

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HELMAND WAS FAR LESS CATEGORICAL. "DRUGS IN HELMAND ARE AN ECONOMIC ISSUE," HE NOTED. THE PEOPLE ARE POOR AND HAVE SMALL PLOTS OF LAND -- UNTIL ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES EXIST IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO STOP THE GROWING OF POPPY, THE MAYOR COMMENTED. AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE DETERIORATION IN THE ECONOMY, ABUL-ABBAS SAID AGRICULTURAL LANDS ARE NO LONGER PROPERLY IRRIGATED AND THAT COTTON PRODUCTION HAS SHRUNK TO ONE PERCENT OF PREVIOUS OUTPUT. POLOFF ASKED IF THE SHURA WOULD BE WILLING TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS ON ANTI-NARCOTICS COOPERATION WITH THE U.S., AND WAS TOLD THAT SUCH A DELEGATION -- AND ANY OTHER U.S. VISITORS

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-- WOULD BE WELCOMED.

11. COMMENT: THE MEETING WITH THE TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES WAS MORE SIGNIFICANT FOR WHAT WAS OMITTED THAN FOR WHAT WAS SAID. SOME OF THE TALIBAN RESPONSES APPEARED COACHED AND THE OVERALL IMPRESSION WAS ONE OF DISINGENUITY AND A DEGREE OF DECEPTION. THE ASSEMBLED SHURA MEMBERS SEEMED UNLIKELY CANDIDATES TO LEAD AN ORGANIZATION WHICH HAS SWEEPED ACROSS SOUTHWEST AFGHANISTAN UP TO THE VERY GATES OF KABUL. THEIR UNWILLINGNESS TO COMMENT ON THEIR LEADERS, WHO THEIR ADVISORS ARE, AND THE NEED TO MASK THEIR INTENTIONS BEHIND PLATITUDINOUS ISLAMIST GENERALIZATIONS LEFT THEIR INTERLOCUTORS WITH MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS. END COMMENT.

12. THIS CABLE HAS BEEN COORDINATED WITH CONSULATE PESHAWAR.

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