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SPECIAL MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN
(UNSMIA)

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TO : MR. KIERAN PRENDERGAST, USG
DPA, UNATIONS, NEW YORK

FROM : NORBERT H. HOLL,
SPECIAL MISSION
UNSMIA, ISLAMABAD

DATE : 30 OCTOBER 1997

NUMBER : CIY 308 FAX OUT: SMA 1061

SUBJECT : PRESENT PAKISTANI INITIATIVES IN AFGHANISTAN

ONLY

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REF. FAX AMBASSADOR BRAHIMI, DATED 29 OCTOBER 1997

1. YESTERDAY, 29 OCTOBER, I MET AS MURSHID TO DISCUSS CURRENT PAKISTANI INITIATIVES WITH RESPECT TO AFGHANISTAN WITH HIM. I ASKED TWO QUESTIONS IN PARTICULAR:
WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OF THE RECENT "OFFER" FOR NEGOTIATIONS MADE BY MULLAH RABBANI ON 15 OCTOBER AND THE SUBSEQUENT VISIT OF CHIEF SECRETARY RUSTAM SHAH MOHAMED IN FAIZABAD? HOW DOES GOP ASSESS THE FIRST ROUND OF THE G8 ON 16 OCTOBER 1997? MURSHID ANSWERED AS FOLLOWS:

2. ON THE MORNING OF 15 OCTOBER, PM NAWAZ SHARIF HAD TELEPHONED MULLAH RABBANI. HE EXPRESSED HIS GROWING IMPATIENCE WITH THE LACK OF PROGRESS IN THE SEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND CRITICISED THE "STUBBORNNESS" OF THE TALIBAN. HE INVITED MULLAH RABBANI TO URGENTLY COME TO ISLAMABAD TO MEET HIM (THE PRIME MINISTER).

3. RABBANI ACCEPTED THE INVITATION. IN THE EVENING OF THE SAME DAY, HE MET NAWAZ SHARIF FOR A LENGTHY DISCUSSION, FOLLOWED BY A WORKING DINNER. FS SHAMSHAD AND MURSHID WERE ALSO PRESENT. THE PM "BLUNTLY" DEMANDED, THAT THE TALIBAN SHOULD MAKE A GESTURE OF GOODWILL. HE PROPOSED IN PARTICULAR, THAT MULLAH RABBANI SHOULD MEET WITH PROFESSOR RABBANI.

4. MULLAH RABBANI REFUSED TO DO THIS, CLAIMING THAT PROFESSOR RABBANI WAS A MAN WITHOUT POLITICAL RELEVANCE. AFTER A LONG AND DIFFICULT DISCUSSION, HE FINALLY AGREED TO MEET WITH ALL THE FOUR LEADERS AT THE SAME TIME, NAMELY: PROFESSOR RABBANI, MASOUD, DOSTUM (OR MALIK) AND KHALILI. THE MEETING SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN ISLAMABAD. MULLAH RABBANI DID NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION THE POW - OR VIP - ISSUE AS A PRECONDITION FOR TALKS. PM CONSIDERED THIS A SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL BREAKTHROUGH. MURSHID WAS MUCH MORE CAUTIOUS AND SAID THAT THE POW ISSUE HAD ALWAYS COME UP IN THE FINAL INSTANCE AND THAT THEREFORE OMITTING IT THIS TIME SHOULD NOT BE OVERESTIMATED.

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5. THE FOLLOWING DAY, 16 OCTOBER, I TRAVELED TO KABUL MYSELF AND TALKED TO THE NEW FOREIGN MINISTER MOHAMMED HASSAN, WHO REJECTED MORE ADAMANTLY THAN EVER ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE, CLAIMING THAT THEY WERE PEOPLE ONE COULD NOT TRUST (I HAVE REPORTED ON MY VISIT.) DURING MY VISIT IN KABUL, I WAS NOT AWARE OF THE VISIT OF MULLAH RABBANI IN ISLAMABAD ON 15 OCTOBER AND HIS SUBSEQUENT OFFER FOR TALKS. OTHERWISE I WOULD HAVE CONFRONTED MULLAH HASSAN WITH THE MORE POSITIVE STATEMENT OF THE TALIBAN PRIME MINISTER. HOWEVER, THE PAKISTANI FOREIGN OFFICE HAD DEEMED USEFUL NOT TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT ON RABBANI'S MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. NAWAZ SHARIF, NOTICING THIS OMISSION THE FOLLOWING DAY AND CRITICISING IT, INSTRUCTED THE FOREIGN OFFICE TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT ON RABBANI'S VISIT. THE STATEMENT WAS EVENTUALLY PUBLISHED ON 17 OCTOBER.

6. RUSTAM'S TRIP TO THE NORTH WAS A FOLLOW UP TO THE PRIME MINISTERS INITIATIVE. FIRST RUSTAM WANTED TO FLY TO MAZAR, IN ORDER TO TALK TO DOSTUM. HOWEVER, THE CHIEF SECRETARY DID NOT GET FLIGHT CLEARANCE. THE REASONS FOR THIS REFUSAL ARE UNKNOWN.

7. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES RUSTAM DECIDED TO FLY TO FAIZABAD, WHERE HE MET PROFESSOR RABBANI. MURSHID DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE FLIGHT. HE TOLD ME THAT RUSTAM HAD MADE NO PROGRESS. RABBANI HAD REACTED EVASIVELY TO THE PROPOSAL OF A MEETING OF THE "BIG 4" IN ISLAMABAD. MURSHID SEEMED TO SHARE MY SKEPTICISM THAT LEADERS LIKE RABBANI AND MASOUD COULD AGREE TO TRAVEL TO ISLAMABAD.

-B/KP
note

8. AS TO THE G8 MEETING ON 16 OCTOBER, MURSHID SHOWED GREAT DISCONTENT. THE MEETING HAD BEEN A "NON-EVENT." AMBASSADOR KAMAL IN HIS REPORT HAD DESCRIBED IT AS A "COMPLETE NON-STARTER." ALL COUNTRIES (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE US - ASS INDERFURTH) HAD BEEN REPRESENTED "ONLY" BY THEIR PERMANENT UN REPRESENTATIVES, WHICH SHOWED THAT THESE GOVERNMENTS ATTACHED LIMITED IMPORTANCE TO THE MEETING. TWO OF THE COUNTRIES (TURKMENISTAN, TAJIKISTAN) HAD NOT EVEN TAKEN THE FLOOR. UZBEKISTAN HAD ONLY REQUESTED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP.

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9. PAKISTAN HAD PROPOSED THAT THE AFGHAN SEAT AT THE GA SHOULD BE DECLARED VACANT, BUT HAD BEEN ISOLATED BY THE OTHER SEVEN PARTICIPANTS. IT ALSO HAD PROPOSED AN ARMS EMBARGO, WHICH WAS TURNED DOWN. ON THE OTHER HAND, PAKISTAN HAD NOT AGREED - AND WOULD NEVER DO SO - TO AN OIL EMBARGO AGAINST AFGHANISTAN. PAKISTAN, OF COURSE WAS AN OIL IMPORTER, NOT EXPORTER. THE POL SUPPLIES TO AFGHANISTAN HAD BEEN FUNDED FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS BY SAUDI ARABIA. THESE SUPPLIES HAD GONE TO THE RABBANI REGIME IN KABUL IN PREVIOUS YEARS. NOW THEY WENT TO THE TALIBAN. PAKISTAN WOULD NEVER AGREE TO IMPEDE THE POL TRANSIT. MURSHID EXPRESSED HIS SURPRISE THAT I HAD NOT BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING. HE INFORMED ME THAT THE NEXT GATHERING WOULD TAKE PLACE ON THE 30 OCTOBER..

10. IT MAY BE OF INTEREST, THAT I ALSO MET US AMBASSADOR SIMONS YESTERDAY. HE CONFIRMED THAT AFGHANISTAN HAD BEEN HIGH ON THE

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AGENDA DURING THE TALKS OF USS PICKERING WITH GOP. THE POSITIONS HAD BEEN THE SAME AS AT THE G8 MEETING. GOP HAD REQUESTED THAT USA SHOULD SUPPORT THE IDEA OF DECLARING THE AFGHAN SEAT VACANT AND OF IMPOSING AN ARMS EMBARGO. GOP USED TWO ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR REQUEST: FIRST, THE US HAD SET A PRECEDENT THEMSELVES BY DECLARING THE AFGHAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON VACANT. SECOND, IRAN CLAIMED THAT ITS MILITARY SUPPLY TO THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE WAS JUSTIFIED, SINCE PROFESSOR RABBANI WAS RECOGNIZED BY THE UN AS LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF AFGHANISTAN.

11. PICKERING DID NOT GIVE IN TO THESE PAKISTANI REQUESTS AND, IN RETURN, TRIED HARD TO CONVINCE THE PAKISTANIS TO AGREE TO AN POL AND WHEAT EMBARGO. GOP HAD NOT AGREED TO EITHER PROPOSAL. ON THE CONTRARY: GOP WOULD SIGN A NEW CONTRACT WITH THE TALIBAN TODAY, 30 OCTOBER, FOR THE SUPPLY OF 600,000 TONS OF WHEAT FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS.

12. AMBASSADOR SIMONS ADMITTED THAT PICKERING, AFTER HIS TALKS WITH GOP (PM, FM, FS, AS), HAD SHOWN "FRUSTRATION AND FATIGUE." HOWEVER, THE US DIPLOMAT WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE SITUATION WAS DYNAMIC AND NOT STATIC. CERTAINLY GOP CONTINUED TO BUY TIME AND TO KEEP ITS POLITICAL GAME IN AFGHANISTAN UNDISTURBED FROM OUTSIDERS, BUT ISLAMABAD REALIZED THAT THERE WAS AN INCREASING RISK OF INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO SOME OF ITS TRADITIONAL FRIENDS.

13. I WOULD APPRECIATE IF YOU COULD PASS THIS MESSAGE SPEEDILY TO AMBASSADOR BRAHIMI. NO NEED TO REPEAT MY VIVID INTEREST IN BEING BRIEFED ON THE OUTCOME OF THE G8 MEETING TODAY.

BEST REGARDS

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