

SECRET

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2334

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 009222

DECAPTIONED

NODIS

DEPT FOR P, SA, SA/PAB, AND S/CT; PLEASE ALSO PASS TO ABU DHABI,
CAIRO, PESHAWAR, AND RIYADH

E.O. 12958: DECL: EXEMPT UNDER 1.6X4

TAGS: PREL, PTER, AF

SUBJ: USAMA BIN LADIN: CHARGE REITERATES U.S. CONCERNS TO KEY
TALIBAN OFFICIAL, WHO STICKS TO WELL-KNOWN TALIBAN POSITIONS

REFS: (A) ISLAMABAD 9134 (C) STATE 229611
- (B) ISLAMABAD 9091 (D) ISLAMABAD 8803

(U) CLASSIFIED BY CDA ALAN EASTHAM PURSUANT TO 1.5 (B) AND (D).
EXEMPT UNDER 1.6X4.

1. (S) SUMMARY: CHARGE MET DECEMBER 19 WITH MAULAWI WAKIL AHMED,
MULLAH OMAR'S SENIOR ASSISTANT. CHARGE USED THE MEETING TO
REITERATE STRONG U.S. CONCERNS ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF TERRORIST
USAMA BIN LADIN AND HIS NETWORK. WAKIL STUCK TO WELL-KNOWN TALIBAN

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POSITIONS. THE MOST THAT CAN BE SAID OF THE MEETING IS THAT OUR
LATEST CONCERNS ABOUT BIN LADIN'S ACTIVITIES HAVE NOW BEEN PROVIDED
DIRECTLY TO A HIGH-RANKING TALIBAN LEADER WITH CLOSE ACCESS TO
OMAR. END SUMMARY.

REITERATING DEEP U.S. CONCERNS

2. (S) CHARGE MET DECEMBER 19 WITH MAULAWI WAKIL AHMED, MULLAH
OMAR'S SENIOR ASSISTANT. WAKIL AHMED, WHO IS BASED IN KANDAHAR,
WAS IN ISLAMABAD FOR A MEETING WITH VISITING UN SPECIAL ENVOY
LAKHDAR BRAHIMI. CHARGE, AS WAS DONE DURING A MEETING WITH HAQQANI

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EARLIER IN THE WEEK (SEE REF B), USED THE MEETING TO REITERATE STRONG U.S. CONCERNS CONTAINED IN REF C MESSAGE ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF TERRORIST USAMA BIN LADIN AND HIS NETWORK. NOTING RECEIPT OF THE TALIBAN'S MESSAGE ON THIS MATTER ON DECEMBER 15 (SEE REF A), CHARGE STRESSED THE NEED FOR THE TALIBAN TO REACT IMMEDIATELY. THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE THIS ISSUE IS FOR THE TALIBAN TO EXPEL BIN LADIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO A PLACE WHERE HE CAN BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE.

REPEATING WELL-KNOWN TALIBAN POSITIONS

3. (S) IN RESPONSE, WAKIL SAID NOTHING THAT FUNDAMENTALLY DIVERGED FROM THE TALIBAN'S WELL-KNOWN POSTURE ON THIS ISSUE. (NOTE: WE LAST MET WITH WAKIL ON NOVEMBER 28 -- SEE REF D.) BEGINNING BY GIVING HIS BEST WISHES ON THE START OF RAMAZAN (IN AFGHANISTAN), WAKIL SAID HE BEEN BRIEFED BY HAQQANI ON THE MEETING EARLIER IN THE

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WEEK. HE HAD ALSO PERSONALLY DISCUSSED THE U.S. CONCERNS WITH "AMIR-AL-MUMINEEN" (COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL) MULLAH OMAR. THE TALIBAN HAD CONCLUDED UPON RECEIVING THE "THREE-POINT" MESSAGE (IN REF C) THAT THE U.S. INTENDED TO ATTACK AFGHANISTAN, AND PERHAPS QANDAHAR ITSELF. THE TALIBAN HOPED THIS WOULD NOT HAPPEN; IF IT DID THEY COULD ONLY SUFFER MORE. WAKIL ADDED THAT OMAR HAD STRESSED THE NEED FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE U.S. CONCERNS. ANY INFORMATION PROVIDED MUST BE CONCRETE. BIN LADIN IS "A GUEST," HE IS NOT ALLOWED INTERVIEWS WITH THE PRESS IN WHICH HE COULD "INSPIRE MANY PEOPLE," AND HE HAS GIVEN A WRITTEN OATH THAT HE WILL NOT UNDERTAKE TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. (NOTE: WHEN ASKED, HE LATER ASSERTED THAT ALL OF BIN LADIN'S ASSOCIATES HAD TAKEN A SIMILAR OATH.) THE TALIBAN STILL CONSIDER HIM "INNOCENT" -- "IT IS UNBELIEVABLE THAT THIS SMALL MAN DID THIS TO YOU," HE ADDED. WITHOUT ANY FURTHER INFORMATION, THE U.S. CONCERNS ARE "AN ALIBI." THE TALIBAN DO NOT WANT U.S. "INTELLIGENCE, JUST ENOUGH DETAILS. CHARGE REPLIED THAT THE U.S. HAS SOLID INFORMATION; IT HAD LED US TO ISSUE WARNINGS TO U.S. FACILITIES AND CITIZENS IN THE GULF, AND IN AFRICA. THESE ARE SIGNIFICANT PRECAUTIONARY MOVES, BUT WE CANNOT TELL WHEN OR WHERE AN ATTACK IS PLANNED. OF COURSE, IF A PERSON INTENDS TO KILL SOMEONE OR DESTROY A U.S. FACILITY, THAT PERSON WOULD TRY TO CONCEAL THEIR ACTIVITIES, NOT PUBLICIZE WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

4. (S) SHIFTING FOCUS, WAKIL THEN ARGUED (IN A SECTION OF THE MEETING WHEN HIS COMMENTS BECAME A BIT CHOPPY) SOME REASONS WHY, HE SAID, THE TALIBAN HAD CHOSEN NOT TO EXPEL BIN LADIN. HE BEGAN BY ASSERTING THAT THE U.S. MUST DISRESPECT THE TALIBAN BECAUSE IT DOES NOT CONSIDER TALIBAN COURTS "GOOD" (ENOUGH TO TRY BIN LADIN FOR HIS

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CRIMES) SINCE THE U.S. NEVER GAVE THE TALIBAN COURT ANY EVIDENCE PROOVING BIN LADIN'S GUILT. (NOTE: A TALIBAN COURT EXONERATED BIN

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LADIN OF ANY CRIMES IN LATE NOVEMBER, CITING LACK OF EVIDENCE.)
THE U.S. MUST CONSIDER AFGHANISTAN "NOTHING" SINCE IT DID NOT GIVE
IT "PROOF." THE TALIBAN DO NOT CONSIDER U.S. COURTS A REAL COURT.
ONLY TALIBAN COURTS ARE CONSIDERED "GOOD" BY THE TALIBAN. SUDDENLY
CHANGING TACK, WAKIL THEN BLURTED OUT "THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF BIN
LADINS IN THE WORLD." TO THIS, CHARGE REPLIED THAT THE U.S. WAS
NOT CONCERNED WITH ANTI-AMERICAN STATEMENTS, BUT WITH MURDER.
WAKIL RAISED THE OLD TALIBAN CANARD THAT IF THEY SURRENDER BIN
LADIN THEY WILL BE OVERTHROWN BY THE AFGHAN PEOPLE, WHO WILL CALL
THE TALIBAN "SLAVES OF AMERICA." CHARGE CONTRADICTED WAKIL, NOTING
THAT THERE WAS LITTLE DANGER OF THAT.

THIS IS AN ISSUE THE TALIBAN CAN SOLVE

5. (S) CONTINUING, CHARGE RELATED THAT HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT
CHARGES MADE BY TALIBAN LEADERS, INCLUDING WAKIL, THAT THE U.S.

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CONCERN ABOUT BIN LADIN WAS AN ELEMENT OF "A CONSPIRACY" AGAINST

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THE TALIBAN BY THE U.S. THIS IS NOT RIGHT. THE U.S. AND THE TALIBAN HAVE DIFFERENCES, AND WE HAVE FOR A LONG TIME HOPED TO SEE THE TALIBAN MAKE PROGRESS IN A NUMBER OF AREAS. HOWEVER, THE MATTER OF BIN LADIN MUST BE SOLVED FOR THERE TO BE PROGRESS AND 'IT IS AN ISSUE THAT CAN BE SOLVED. NONETHELESS, IT IS THE CASE THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TALIBAN AND THE U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO BE TROUBLED UNLESS AN EFFORT IS MADE TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM. CHARGE ADDED THAT THE LONGER THE CURRENT STAND-OFF GOES ON THE MORE IT FOSTERS A VIEW IN THE U.S. THAT THE TALIBAN ARE NOT ONLY BIN

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LADIN'S HOST AND PROTECTOR, BUT ALSO HIS COLLABORATOR. WAKIL REPLIED THAT THE TALIBAN DO NOT COLLABORATE WITH BIN LADIN.

A NEW EMPHASIS ON THE KHOST MISSILE ATTACK

6. WAKIL THEN BROUGHT UP A POINT THAT WAS NEW IN THE EMPHASIS THAT HE PUT ON IT. HE SAID THE TALIBAN REMAIN DEEPLY UPSET: THE U.S. HAD KILLED AFGHANS IN KHOST (IN AUGUST DURING THE TOMAHAWK CRUISE MISSILE ATTACK ON TERRORIST CAMPS THERE). THE U.S. SAID BIN LADIN HAD KILLED INNOCENT PEOPLE, BUT HAD NOT THE U.S. KILLED INNOCENT AFGHANS IN KHOST TOO? WAS THIS NOT A CRIME? -- "I (WAKIL SAID) CONSIDER YOU (THE U.S.) AS MURDERERS OF AFGHANS." (NOTE: WAKIL TEMPERED HIS REMARKS HERE, INTIMATING THAT THE TALIBAN DID NOT CONSIDER AMERICANS "ENEMIES," A TERM HE RESERVED FOR THE SOVIETS DURING THEIR OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN.) CHARGE TOLD WAKIL THAT THE U.S. HAD TAKEN THE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE KHOST TERRORIST CAMPS AS A MATTER OF SELF-DEFENSE, AN INTERNATIONALLY ACKNOWLEDGED LEGAL RIGHT. THE U.S. DOES NOT WANT TO USE FORCE AGAIN, BUT A NATION MUST DEAL WITH THE THREATS THAT FACE IT.

COMMENT

7. (S) THE MEETING WAS CIVIL, BUT THE BOTTOM-LINE WAS THAT WAKIL SAID NOTHING THAT WAS FUNDAMENTALLY NEW. HE PUT GREATER STRESS, HOWEVER, ON ACCUSATIONS THAT THE U.S. KILLED AFGHANS IN KHOST THAN IN PREVIOUS MEETING WE HAVE HAD WITH THE TALIBAN. THIS IS A BAD NEW STRAIN OF TALIBAN THINKING SINCE IT WILL ONLY FURTHER POISON

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THEIR VIEW OF THE U.S. WE HOPE THEY NIP IN THE BUD. HE ALSO SEEMED TO BE PLEADING FOR US TO PROVIDE THE TALIBAN WITH "EVIDENCE" OR "PROOF" OF BIN LADIN'S ACTIVITIES HOSTILE TO THE U.S. AND IN TRANSGRESSION OF THE PROMISE THEY SAY HE HAS GIVEN THEM NOT TO

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CARRY OUT SUCH ACTIVITIES FROM AFGHANISTAN. UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE LITTLE INDICATION THAT ANYTHING WE SAID GOT THROUGH TO HIM, THE USUAL OCCURRENCE IN OUR MEETINGS WITH THE TALIBAN. THE MOST THAT CAN BE SAID IS THAT OUR LATEST CONCERNS ABOUT BIN LADIN'S ACTIVITIES HAVE NOW BEEN PROVIDED DIRECTLY TO A HIGH-RANKING TALIBAN LEADER WITH CLOSE ACCESS TO OMAR. END COMMENT.
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