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Counterterrorism Activities (Neo-Taliban)

Rise in Violence: The volume of violence in Afghanistan rose this year. Taliban tactics have shifted: the Taliban is making greater use of suicide bombings and IEDs and are trying to disrupt local governance by assassinating pro-GoA religious leaders, tribal elders, and local government officials. Persistent insurgent activity in the southern provinces (Helmand and Kandahar) will require a robust NATO role as it assumes responsibility for southern Afghanistan. The U.S. remains steadfast in its counter-terrorism mission throughout Afghanistan. Afghan security forces – which are key to defeating the insurgency – are taking on increasing responsibilities throughout the country.

Afghan-Pak Border: The Taliban continues to recruit fighters from its traditional support base among Pashtun tribesmen residing in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Taliban and Al Qaida leaders continue to provide guidance and support from Pakistan for cross-border operations. Some Taliban leaders operate with relative impunity in some Pakistani cities, and may still enjoy support from the lower echelons of Pakistan's ISI. Close cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan is critical to stamping out the flow of Taliban and other insurgents.

Reconciliation Program: The Afghan Government's program to reconcile lower and mid-level Taliban fighters has been moderately effective but has not yet realized its potential.

Talking Points

- The US remains committed to defeating insurgents in Afghanistan — as well as supporting the reconciliation process.
- As NATO assumes responsibility for the southern sector, the US will maintain the forces necessary to conduct counterterrorism activities throughout Afghanistan.
- We are encouraged by the increasing effectiveness of Afghan security forces.

2. (SBU) Programs designed to combat terrorism and lawlessness have continued. The Program for

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Strengthening Peace (PTS), which reconciles former Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) members,

founded six regional offices and reported that over 800 former fighters had joined the program, as of December 2005. The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program has processed over 63,000 former combatants. The Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) process began work in June, focusing on vetting parliamentary candidates to ensure they had no ties to illegal armed groups (IAGs). The DIAG disqualified a number of candidates,

[REDACTED]

The programs next phase will be a province-by-province effort to disband the most notorious IAGs, but progress has been slowed by the search for a successor to the Afghan head of the program, who left his post in October,

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Cleared: SA/FO:MQuinn –
SA/A:PMoon – ok
P:JDinger – ok
D:RWaller – ok
S/P:DMarkey – ok
S/CT: BSlaven - ok
PM/RSAT: HTucker - ok
OSD/NESA: MBradley - ok
JS/J5/Afghanistan Office: ok
EUR/RPM: WAnderson and JRathke – info only

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Reconciliation Program: The Afghan Government's program to reconcile lower and mid-level Taliban fighters has been moderately effective but has not yet realized its potential.

We support the reconciliation program and the decisions taken by the GOA. [REDACTED]

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FIGHT VS. AL-QAEDA AND THE TALIBAN

7. (U) Mr. Hadley asked [REDACTED] to clarify the GOA strategy for eliminating the Al-Qaeda and Taliban threat in the next two to three years. [REDACTED] said the GOA

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[REDACTED] strategy is based first on military action; second, on the Taliban reconciliation process; and third, improving relations and security cooperation with Pakistan. The strategic partnership is a further element that supports Afghanistan in the region and internally.

8. (S) The GOA supports restoration and reconciliation with former Taliban when possible. The Taliban Peace and Reconciliation Program (PTS) is a partnership between the GOA, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] to determine which former Taliban can be reintegrated into Afghan society. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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8. (C) The Afghan insurgency is not monolithic. The Taliban, HIG, al-Qaida, Haqqani network, Jaish-i-Muslimeen, and other extremists have varying agendas, and lack internal cohesion. For example, one of our veteran international contacts continues to hear of frictions between Kandahari and non-Kandahari elements of the Taliban. While these extremist elements may be able to agree on grand strategy, this generally does not translate into operational coordination.

(NOTE:

[REDACTED]

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END NOTE)