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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Strategic Thoughts

OFFICE OF THE
 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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The U.S. strategic theme should be aiding local peoples to rid themselves of terrorists and to free themselves of regimes that support terrorism. U.S. Special Operations Forces and intelligence personnel should make allies of Afghanis, Iraqis, Lebanese, Sudanese and others who would use U.S. equipment, training, financial, military and humanitarian support to root out and attack the common enemies.

Some air strikes against Al-Qaida and Taliban targets are planned to begin soon. But, especially in the war's initial period, I think U.S. military action should stress:

- indirect (through local, non-U.S. forces) action, in coordination with and in support of opposition groups;
- direct use of U.S. forces initially primarily to deliver logistics, intelligence and other support to opposition groups and humanitarian supplies to NGOs and refugees; and subsequently
- on-the-ground action against the terrorists as individuals--leaders and others--

rather than focusing too heavily on:

- direct,
- aerial attacks on
- things and people.

The U.S. should exercise care and restraint regarding initial air strikes until intelligence develops to permit impressive (worthwhile) strikes against Al-Qaida and other targets, strikes that in some instances can be coordinated to provide effective support to the opposition. We should avoid as much as possible creating images of Americans killing Moslems until we have set the political stage that the people we are going after are the enemies of Moslems themselves.

Public expectations still are shaped by conventional thinking rooted in recent history. It is therefore widely assumed that U.S. will strike soon and exclusively at Al-Qaida in Afghanistan.

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 MAY 7, 2009
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It would instead be surprising and impressive if we built our forces up patiently, took some early action outside of Afghanistan, perhaps in multiple locations, and began not exclusively or primarily with military strikes but with equip-and-train activities with local opposition forces coupled with humanitarian aid and intense information operations.

We could thereby:

- Garner actionable intelligence on lucrative targets, which we do not now have.
- Reduce emphasis on images of U.S. killing Moslems from the air.
- Signal that we intend to fight smart, rather than simply use direct force.
- Signal that our goal is not merely to damage terrorist-supporting regimes but to threaten their regimes by becoming partners with their opponents.
- Capitalize on our strong suit, which is not finding a few hundred terrorists in the caves of Afghanistan, but is the vastness of our military and humanitarian resources, which can strengthen enormously the opposition forces in terrorist-supporting States.

A key war aim would be to persuade or compel States to stop supporting terrorism. The regimes of such States should see that it will be fatal to host terrorists who attack the U.S. as was done on September 11. If the war does not significantly change the world's political map, the U.S. will not achieve its aim. There is value in being clear on the order of magnitude of the necessary change. The USG should envision a goal along these lines:

- New regimes in Afghanistan and another key State (or two) that supports terrorism (to strengthen political and military efforts to change policies elsewhere). 1.5.d
- Syria out of Lebanon.
- Dismantlement or destruction of WMD capabilities in [redacted] 1.5d
- End of [redacted] support for terrorism. 1.5d
- End of many other countries' support or tolerance of terrorism.

cc:
Vice President
Mr. Powell
Mr. Tenet
Ms. Rice

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CHIEF, ROD WITS

