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	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	SNIS-00	NISC-01	PMB-00	PRME-01
	PRMC-01	DRL-09	G-00	/039W			

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P 261235Z JAN 95  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0338  
INFO AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
AMCONSUL LAHORE  
AMCONSUL KARACHI  
AMCONSUL JEDDAH  
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR  
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
USMISSION GENEVA  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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LONDON FOR POL: TUELLER

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E. AHMAD  
DATE/CASE ID: 21 APR 2003 200104007

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: KISL, MOPS, PREL, UN, PK, AF  
SUBJECT: THE TALIBAN: WHAT WE'VE HEARD

REF: (A) ISLAMABAD 749

1. SECRET -- ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: RECENT VISITORS TO KANDAHAR CITY SAY THE TALIBAN ARE WELL-ARMED, MILITARILY PROFICIENT, AND EAGER TO EXPAND THEIR INFLUENCE. PRACTICING A HEAVY-HANDED STYLE OF CONSERVATIVE ISLAM, THE TALIBAN NONETHELESS PROFESS SUPPORT FOR THE U.N PEACE EFFORTS AND SAY THEY HAVE NO INTEREST IN SECTARIANISM. ALTHOUGH DENIED BY THE GROUP'S LEADERS, BOTH U.N. AND WESTERN JOURNALIST SOURCES BELIEVE THE TALIBAN CONTINUE TO RECEIVE FOREIGN SUPPORT, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]  
END SUMMARY.

3. WHAT FOLLOWS IS A COMPILATION OF REPORTS FROM SEVERAL SOURCES WHO HAVE TRAVELLED RECENTLY (WITHIN THE PAST TEN DAYS) TO KANDAHAR, AND A ROUND-UP OF WHAT WE HAVE HEARD HERE IN ISLAMABAD. [REDACTED]

WHAT THEY BELIEVE IN

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4. TALIBAN LEADERS TOLD [REDACTED] THAT THEY INTEND TO LIBERATE KABUL, AND AS MUCH OF THE REST OF AFGHANISTAN AS POSSIBLE, FROM

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THE MENACE OF THE COMMANDERS. SIMILAR COMMENTS WERE MADE TO

[REDACTED] WHO MET WITH THE TALIBAN

JANUARY 22. A RECURRENT THEME IN THESE CONVERSATIONS, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD, IS THE TALIBAN'S DESIRE TO REPLACE THE AD HOC BANDITRY AND LOCAL RULE OF SMALL MILITIAS WITH STRICT SHARIAH LAW. AS EXAMPLES OF THEIR INTERPRETATION OF ISLAMIC ORTHODOXY, [REDACTED] SAYS THE TALIBAN IN KANDAHAR HAVE BANNED THE PLAYING OF CHESS AND MARBLES, ALTHOUGH A THREE-WEEK BAN ON SOCCER HAD TO BE LIFTED AFTER WIDESPREAD PROTEST. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ALL WERE TOLD THAT WOMEN HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO STAY IN THE HOME, AND MALE DOCTORS HAVE BEEN REFUSED PERMISSION TO TREAT FEMALE PATIENTS, LEAVING DOUBTS AS TO WHERE THE WOMEN AND GIRLS OF KANDAHAR WILL BE ABLE TO TURN FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. WOMEN WHO TAUGHT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS HAVE ALSO BEEN SENT HOME, LEAVING MUCH OF THE YOUNG MALE POPULATION WITHOUT TEACHERS. HOWEVER, REPORTS THAT THE TALIBAN WOULD FORCE ALL ADULT MALES TO GROW BEARDS ARE NOT CORRECT, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] FOUND. [REDACTED] WHO SAYS HE SAW A DOZEN OR SO EX-COMMUNISTS WHO NOW DO THE "SMART WORK" FOR THE TALIBAN (WRITING REPORTS, SIGNING CHECKS FOR EMPLOYEES, ETC.), SUGGESTED THAT THE DECISION NOT TO FORCE THE GROWING OF BEARD MAY REFLECT A TALIBAN DESIRE TO ACCOMMODATE THE GENERALLY MOUSTACHIOED (BUT NOT BEARDED) EX-COMMUNISTS IN THE ADMINISTRATION.

5. IN TERMS OF RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDE FORCES, THE TALIBAN HAVE  
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 BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY STRONGLY OPPOSED WHAT THEY CHARACTERIZE AS "IRANIAN INTERFERENCE" IN AFGHANISTAN'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. MOHAMMAD OMAR AKHUND, THE REPORTED LEADER OF THE TALIBAN, HAS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TOLD THE BBC PASHTO SERVICE THAT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE IN AFGHANISTAN MUST END, SINGLING IRAN OUT FOR SPECIAL CRITICISM. HOWEVER, TAKING A POSITION CLOSE TO THAT OF KHALIS AND MOHEMMADI, THE TALIBAN TOLD [REDACTED] THAT AFGHAN SHI'A THEMSELVES ARE PROTECTED AS LONG AS THEY DO NOT ENGAGE IN "ANTI-AFGHAN" POLITICS. AT LEAST PUBLICLY, THE TALIBAN ARE STRONGLY CRITICAL

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OF PAKISTAN, WHICH THEY ACCUSE OF CRUSHING AN "ISLAMIC REBELLION" IN PAKISTAN'S MALAKHAND DISTRICT.

THE TALIBAN HAVE AGREED TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MESTIRI MISSION'S PROPOSED INTERIM GOVERNING MECHANISM.

POPULAR REACTION TO THE TALIBAN

6. BOTH [REDACTED] REPORT THAT THE EDUCATED ELITE OF KANDAHAR ARE "TERRIFIED" OF THE TALIBAN. ONE

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 FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0339  
 INFO AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
 AMCONSUL LAHORE  
 AMCONSUL KARACHI  
 AMCONSUL JEDDAH  
 AMCONSUL PESHAWAR  
 AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
 AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
 AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
 AMEMBASSY LONDON  
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 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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 SUBJECT: THE TALIBAN: WHAT WE'VE HEARD

FEMALE PHYSICIAN TOLD [ ] THAT THE TALIBAN ARE "A BUNCH OF IGNORANT THUGS," WHO ARE WILLFUL AND CAPRICIOUS. [ ] SPECULATED THAT MANY OF THE ELITE EITHER WORKED FOR OR HAD CLOSE TIES TO THE PREVIOUS GUL AGHA ADMINISTRATION, AND PROBABLY WORRY THAT THEY WILL BE SINGLED OUT FOR PUNISHMENT BY THE NEW ORDER. THE POWERFUL BAZAARIS OF KANDAHAR CITY, HOWEVER, TOLD [ ] THEY ARE PLEASED WITH THE RESTORATION OF STABILITY AND SEEM LESS THREATENED BY THE ORTHODOXY PREACHED BY THE TALIBAN.

TALIBAN FINANCES

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7. ALL VISITORS TO KANDAHAR HAVE TOLD US THEY BELIEVE THAT THE TALIBAN MUST HAVE ACCESS TO CONSIDERABLE FUNDING. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES TOLD [REDACTED] THAT THEY HAD OVER 4,000 FIGHTERS ON THE PAYROLL. [REDACTED] SOURCES IN ISLAMABAD SAY EX-COMMUNIST MILITIA OFFICERS, WHO APPLY INTERMITTENTLY FOR VISAS TO VISIT RELATIVES IN THE CIS, REPORTED THE TALIBAN WERE ABLE TO OFFER SALARIES "THREE TIMES" THAT WHICH COMMANDERS COULD PAY. ONE GROUP OF OFFICERS TOLD [REDACTED] THAT "AT LEAST" 40-50 EX-OFFICERS HAD JOINED WITH THE TALIBAN, AND THAT MANY MORE WERE CONSIDERING SIGNING UP. BOURKE SAID EXPERIENCED EX-COMMUNIST REGIME BUREAUCRATS WERE ALSO BEING HIRED BY THE TALIBAN -- HE SAW A DOZEN OR SO, BUT EXPECTED THERE WERE MORE. [REDACTED] SOURCES HAVE HEARD REPORTS THAT THE TALIBAN ARE HIRING

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 FORMER REGIME POLICE OFFICERS TO SET UP A POLICE ACADEMY IN KANDAHAR CITY. [REDACTED] ADDED THAT THE FOOD, FUEL AND OTHER INPUTS FOR TALIBAN MILITARY OPERATIONS MUST BE COSTLY. WHEN HE ASKED TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES ABOUT THEIR FINANCES, [REDACTED] SAID HE WAS TOLD THAT FUNDS COME FROM A COMBINATION OF CUSTOMS DUTIES AND A TAX LEVIED ON LOCAL MERCHANTS. YET LOCAL BAZAARIS DENY THAT THE TALIBAN ARE TAXING THEM AT ALL, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL TOLD [REDACTED] THEY WOULD HAPPILY PAY IF ASKED. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE RECEIVED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER AFGHAN FACTIONS, PARTICULARLY RABBANI, ALTHOUGH PROBABLY NOT IN AMOUNTS LARGE ENOUGH TO PAY THE KINDS OF BILLS OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE RELIGIOUS STUDENTS MUST BE RACKING UP. THE APPARENT GAP BETWEEN OBVIOUS SOURCES OF FUNDING AND EXPENDITURES SUGGESTS TO OUR INTERLOCUTORS THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE OTHER BENEFACTORS.

THE TALIBAN MILITARY

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8. [REDACTED] SAYS THE TALIBAN HAVE REHABILITATED A LARGE MILITARY COMPOUND EAST OF KANDAHAR CITY, MOST RECENTLY A BASE

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OF NIFA COMMANDER AMIR LALAI, AND BEFORE THAT A DIVISION HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME. ACCESS TO THE FACILITY IS REPORTEDLY STRICTLY CONTROLLED. VISITORS TO THE CITY REPORT SOUNDS OF HEAVY WEAPONS FIRING FROM THE VICINITY OF THE CAMP, WHERE THEY BELIEVE EX-MILITIA OFFICERS AND PERHAPS OTHERS ARE TRAINING TALIBAN CADRE TO USE ARTILLERY AND TANKS. NIFA OFFICIAL HAMID GAILANI BELIEVES THE TALIBAN ARE USING NEARBY MOUNTAINS FOR TARGET PRACTICE, MUCH AS DID NAJIB'S TROOPS. THE TALIBAN ADMIT TO CONDUCTING CONTINUOUS TRAINING EXERCISES AT THE FACILITY, INCLUDING ARTILLERY PRACTICE.

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9. IN TERMS OF ACTUAL MILITARY CAPABILITY, THE TALIBAN CLAIM TO POSSESS 200 TANKS, OF WHICH THEY SAY 100 ARE FULLY OPERATIONAL. THEY ALSO SAY THEY HAVE AN AIR FORCE COMPRISING 11 MIGS PILOTED BY EX-MILITIAMEN AND 9 TRANSPORT HELICOPTERS. DRIVING IN FROM CHAMAN, [REDACTED] SAID HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE ORDERLY TALIBAN CHECKPOINTS, PLUS THE "VERY LARGE AMOUNT" OF HEAVY AMMUNITION AND RPGS STACKED AT EACH CONTROL POINT. HE DID NOT SEE ANY TANKS OR ARTILLERY, BUT BELIEVED THE TALIBAN HAD PLACED THEM BEHIND NUMEROUS VISIBLE REVETMENTS. THE [REDACTED] SECONDED EARLIER OBSERVATIONS THAT THE TALIBAN HAD "NEW AK-47S, RPG'S AND LIGHT MACHINEGUNS."

MILITARY OPERATIONS  
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10. [REDACTED] WAS DENIED PERMISSION BY THE TALIBAN TO TRAVEL INTO HELMAND TO OBSERVE THE HEAVY FIGHTING THERE. HE WAS PERMITTED TO GO TO GHAZNI, WHERE GOVERNOR QARI BABA WAS DESCRIBED AS "ONE OF US," BUT ULTIMATELY DECIDED NOT TO GO. TRAVELLING 20 KILOMETERS OUT OF KANDAHAR CITY TOWARDS HELMAND, [REDACTED] SAID HE SAW "HEAVIER CONCENTRATIONS" OF WHITE-TURBANNED TALIBAN TROOPS, OFTEN CAMPED JUST OUTSIDE BUILDINGS. SOME OF THESE TROOPS TOLD

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	ADS-00	M-00	NEA-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01
	PA-01	PM-00	PRS-01	P-01	SCT-00	SP-00	SS-00
	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	SNIS-00	NISC-01	PMB-00	PRME-01
	PRMC-01	DRL-09	G-00	/039W			

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P 261235Z JAN 95  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0340  
INFO AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
AMCONSUL LAHORE  
AMCONSUL KARACHI  
AMCONSUL JEDDAH  
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR  
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
USMISSION GENEVA  
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TAGS: KISL, MOPS, PREL, UN, PK, AF  
SUBJECT: THE TALIBAN: WHAT WE'VE HEARD

[REDACTED] THAT FIGHTING IN HELMAND WAS VERY HEAVY, BUT THAT AT LEAST THE WOUNDED WERE BEING EVACUATED BY HELICOPTER FOR MEDICAL ATTENTION. [REDACTED] SAID HE DISCOUNTED THIS REPORT AT FIRST, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY MET WITH ICRC HOSPITAL OFFICIALS IN QUETTA WHO SAID THEY HAD RECEIVED 20 BADLY WOUNDED TALIBAN FROM THE FIGHTING IN HELMAND VIA HELICOPTER. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ALSO REPORT THAT THE TALIBAN TROOPS APPEARED ORDERLY AND MUCH MORE DISCIPLINED THAN THE OTHER AFGHAN FACTIONS.

SUPPORT FROM PAKISTAN  
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11. [REDACTED] TO KANDAHAR JANUARY 22 REPORT THAT THE TALIBAN LEADERS THEY SPOKE WITH SEEMED "COACHED" IN WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK AND WHAT KINDS OF ASSISTANCE TO ASK FOR. FUEL IN KANDAHAR CITY, WHICH FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS HAS BEEN SUPPLIED FROM IRAN, HAD BEEN REPLACED WITH DIESEL FROM PAKISTAN, THE MANAGER OF THE MAJOR "OFFICIAL" GAS STATION IN KANDAHAR CITY TOLD ONE [REDACTED] THE MANAGER SAID HE DISPENSED FUEL FOR ALL THE TALIBAN VEHICLES IN KANDAHAR. THE [REDACTED] SAID THAT, GIVEN RECENTLY-IMPOSED TIGHT BORDER CONTROLS AT CHAMAN, IT IS UNLIKELY THE LARGE AMOUNTS OF FUEL THE MANAGER SAID HE DISPENSED COULD BE SMUGGLED IN EASILY,

[REDACTED]

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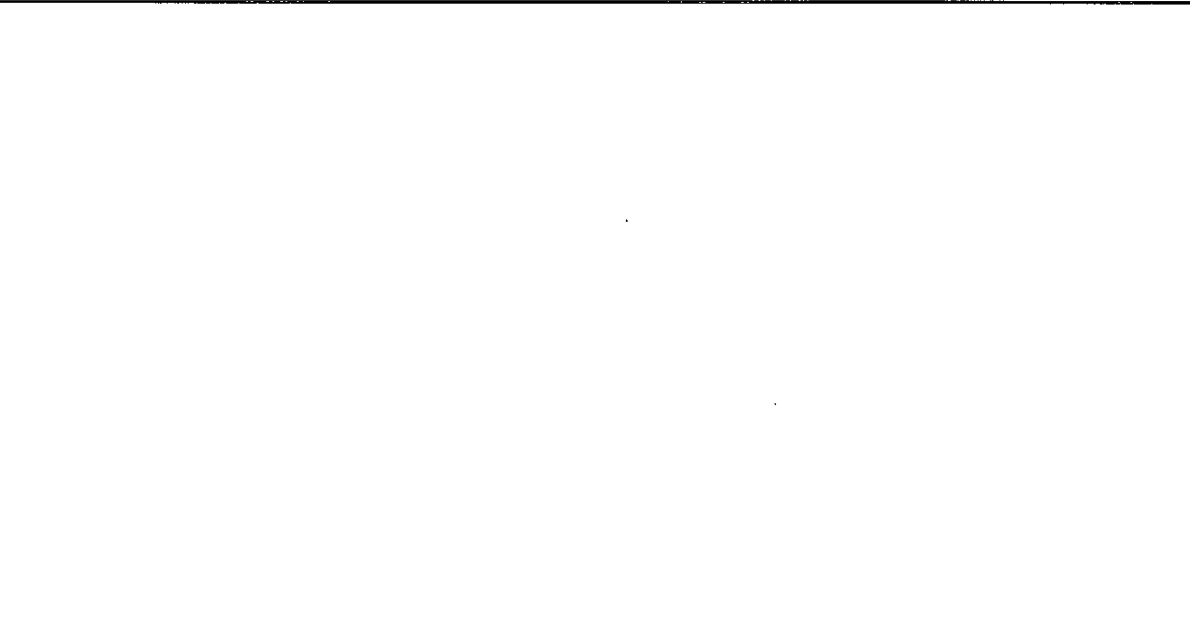
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13. COMMENT: THE IMPRESSIONS REPORTED RAISE MORE QUESTIONS  
THAN THEY ANSWER. EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO REPORT ON THE  
TALIBAN, [REDACTED]

HOLZMAN

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