

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: SECRET
Current Handling: NODIS
Document Number: 1998ISLAMA09488

Page: 1

E7

Channel: n/a

SECRET

PTO7398

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ACTION NODS-00

RELEASED IN FULL

INFO LOG-00 CCOE-00 SAS-00 /000W
-----9200AB 301314Z /38

O 301310Z DEC 98
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2618

DECAPTIONED

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 009488

NODIS

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

E.O. 12958: DECL: EXEMPT UNDER 1.6X4
TAGS: PREL, PTER, AF
SUBJ: USAMA BIN LADIN: CHARGE UNDERScores U.S. CONCERNS ON
INTERVIEWS; TALIBAN ENVOY SAYS BIN LADIN HOODWINKED THEM AND IT
WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN

REFS: (A) ISLAMABAD 9424
- (B) ISLAMABAD 9420
- (C) ISLAMABAD 9134

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

1. (S) SUMMARY: CHARGE MET DECEMBER 30 WITH LOCAL TALIBAN ENVOY
SYEDUR RAHMAN HAQQANI AND EXPRESSED DEEP U.S. CONCERN ABOUT
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TERRORIST USAMA BIN LADIN'S RECENT INTERVIEWS WITH THE PRESS (SEE
REF B), HIGHLIGHTING TE MANY PRIOR TALIBAN COMMITMENTS NOT TO
ALLOW HIM SUCH ACCESS. CHARGE REITERATED THAT THE U.S. WOULD HOLD
THE TALIBAN ACCOUNTABLE FOR ANY TERRORIST ATTACKS PERPETRATED BY
BIN LADIN AND HIS NETWORK. HAQQANI WAS UNCOMFORTABLE THROUGHOUT
THE MEETING. HE SAID THE TALIBAN HAD ALLOWED BIN LADIN TO BE
INTERVIEWED SO THAT HE COULD RENOUNCE TERRORISM, BUT HE HAD BROKEN
HIS PROMISE, THE U.S. SHOULD BELIEVE THE TALIBAN THAT HE WILL NOT
BE PERMITTED ANY MORE INTERVIEWS AND NOT ALLOWED TO ENGAGE IN
TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. END SUMMARY.

DEEP U.S. CONCERN

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER
DATE/CASE ID: 21-MAY 2004 200400827

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2. (S) CHARGE MET DECEMBER 30 WITH LOCAL TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVE SYEDUR RAHMAN HAQQANI. CHARGE BEGAN BY UNDERSCORING THAT THE TALIBAN HAD REPEATEDLY ASSURED THE U.S. THAT BIN LADIN WAS BEING PREVENTED FROM MAKING PUBLIC STATEMENTS THREATENING TO THE U.S. AND ITS CITIZENS. MOST RECENTLY, THE TALIBAN HAD GIVEN THE U.S. A NOTE DATED DECEMBER 15 SIGNED BY HAQQANI TO THE EFFECT THAT THE TALIBAN HAD BANNED BIN LADIN'S "PERSONAL ACTIVITIES" (SEE REF C). GIVEN THIS FACT, WE WERE ASTONISHED TO READ BIN LADIN'S RECENT INTERVIEWS AND THE THREATS HE MADE IN THEM. FIRST, BIN LADIN BEGAN BY STATING A LIE, WHEN HE SAID HE WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE EAST AFRICA BOMBINGS. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO SAY THAT HE PERSONALLY SUPPORTED THOSE BOMBINGS, WHICH KILLED OVER 200 PEOPLE. THIS LAST STATEMENT INDICATES BIN LADIN'S CRUELTY AND ABSOLUTE DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE TO A DEGREE WHICH IS DISGUSTING. SECOND, BIN LADIN SAID IT WAS PERMISSIBLE TO ATTACK, LOOT, AND KILL U.S., U.K., AND ISRAELI CITIZENS. THIS IS A CLEAR INCITEMENT TO MURDER. THIRD, BIN LADIN

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 ALSO ASSERTED A RIGHT TO OBTAIN AND USE NUCLEAR, CHEMICAL, AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS. THE TALIBAN MUST UNDERSTAND THE FULL RAMIFICATIONS OF SUCH A STATEMENT.

 ISSUE OF TALIBAN CREDIBILITY

3. (S) CONTINUING, CHARGE AGAIN STRESSED THAT BIN LADIN'S PRESS STATEMENTS WERE TOTALLY CONTRARY TO THE TALIBAN'S PRIOR ASSURANCES REGARDING HIS ACCESS TO THE PRESS. IF THE TALIBAN'S GUARANTEE ON PREVENTING PUBLIC STATEMENTS WAS NOT EFFECTIVE, THEN WHY SHOULD THE U.S. TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY WHEN THEY SAY THAT BIN LADIN WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO UNDERTAKE TERRORIST ACTIONS? CHARGE ASKED THAT THIS QUESTION BE POSED TO KEY OMAR ASSISTANT MAULAWI WAKIL AHMED.

 BIN LADIN HOODWINKED US

4. (S) AT THIS POINT, HAQQANI, WHO HAD BEEN LISTENING WITH A FROWN ON HIS FACE, WAS OBVIOUSLY UNCOMFORTABLE HE BEGAN SLOWLY: THE U.S. SHOULD NOTE THAT ON THIS ISSUE THERE WERE TWO SIDES: ON ONE SIDE THERE IS BIN LADIN AND THE TALIBAN ON THE OTHER. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND BIN LADIN ARE WELL-KNOWN. HE WANTS TO GIVE INTERVIEWS EVERY DAY AGAINST THE U.S., BUT IS PREVENTED. THE TALIBAN WERE UNDER A GREAT DEAL OF PRESSURE FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES TO ALLOW THE INTERVIEWS. THE PURPOSE WAS TO EASE

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TENSIONS, BUT THE INTERVIEW HAD ACTUALLY RAISED THEM. BIN LADIN WAS SUPPOSED TO USE THE INTERVIEW TO DENY INVOLVEMENT AND ANY SUPPORT FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT DO THIS; HE
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DID NOT DO WHAT HE PROMISED. THE TALIBAN ARE NOT SUPPORTIVE OF WHAT HE (BIN LADIN) SAID. WE DID NOT WANT THIS; IT WAS A MISTAKE. HIS COMMENTS COMPLAINING ABOUT IRAQ WENT TOO FAR: THE TALIBAN CANNOT SUPPORT HIS (BIN LADIN'S) COMMENTS AGAINST AMERICANS. IT IS NOT OUR POLICY. HE WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO GIVE ANY MORE INTERVIEWS. THIS IS HONESTLY WHAT HAPPENED. MULLAH OMAR HAS GIVEN AN INTERVIEW IN WHICH HE SAYS THIS; IT WILL BE PUBLISHED TOMORROW (DECEMBER 31). AS FOR THE TALIBAN, HAQQANI CONTINUED, IT IS CLEAR THAT WE WILL NOT SUPPORT TERRORISM. HOWEVER, THE U.S. SHOULD TRY TO CONTROL "THE MANY BIN LADIN'S WHO LIVE OUTSIDE AFGHANISTAN." THE U.S. SHOULD TAKE NOTE OF THE RECENT LETTER THAT GROUPS OPERATING OUT OF MASHHAD (IRAN) MAY TRY TO ATTACK THE U.S. (SEE REF A). IN REPLY TO A QUESTION, HAQQANI SAID HE DID NOT HAVE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE TALIBAN-REPORTED PLOT BEING PLANNED IN MASHHAD.

TALIBAN WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

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-----9200B4 301315Z /38

O 301310Z DEC 98
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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5. (S) CHARGE REITERATED THAT BIN LADIN'S RECENT INTERVIEWS HAVE SEVERELY HURT ANY CREDIBILITY THE TALIBAN HAD LEFT. THE INTERVIEWS WERE CONTRARY TO THE TALIBAN'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ASSURANCES. THERE IS A SHADOW ON THE TALIBAN PLEDGE TO STOP HIM FROM ENGAGING IN TERRORIST ACTS. THE TALIBAN MUST TAKE A DECISION ON THIS ISSUE ONCE AND FOR ALL. BIN LADIN SEEMS TO BE OUT OF CONTROL. IF TERRORIST ACTS OCCUR THAT ARE TRACED TO BIN LADIN, AS THE U.S. HAD

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 PREVIOUSLY NOTED, THE TALIBAN WILL SHARE RESPONSIBILITY AND BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE. IN RESPONSE, HAQQANI, CLEARLY IN A DOWNCAST MOOD, SAID THE FOLLOWING: "I HAVE BEEN HONEST WITH YOU. WE WILL NOT ALLOW HIM (BIN LADIN) ANY FURTHER PUBLIC STATEMENTS."

 COMMENT

6. (S) THE POINT ABOUT CREDIBILITY APPEARED TO HIT HOME: IT IS CULTURALLY IMPORTANT FOR AFGHANS TO BE SEEN AS HONORING THEIR WORD. IT WAS OBVIOUSLY DIFFICULT FOR HAQQANI TO ADMIT THAT THE TALIBAN HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO DO THIS IN THE CASE OF THE INTERVIEWS BECAUSE THEY HAD BEEN HOODWINKED BY BIN LADIN, ALTHOUGH A SIMPLETON COULD HAVE SEEN THE DANGER OF PUTTING HIM IN FRONT OF THE PRESS IN AN UNCONTROLLED SETTING. MOST CRITICALLY, THE PERTINENT FACT THAT BIN LADIN HAD TRICKED THEM DID NOT APPEAR TO AFFECT HIS STATUS IN AFGHANISTAN AS A "GUEST." (NOTE: A REUTERS REPORT DATED DECEMBER 29 CITES AN UNNAMED TALIBAN OFFICIAL AS STATING THAT BIN LADIN WOULD NOT BE EXPELLED, DESPITE HIS INTERVIEWS.) HAQQANI SIMPLY MADE MORE (BASICALLY WORTHLESS) PROMISES THAT HE WOULD BE CONTROLLED. NONETHELESS, HAQQANI'S COMMENTS DID PUT A BIT OF LIGHT BETWEEN THE TALIBAN AND BIN LADIN; AT LEAST MORE THAN HE HAS ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS. HAQQANI WILL GET OUR MESSAGE TO KANDAHAR (AN ASSISTANT WAS TAKING CAREFUL NOTES); THIS ENCOUNTER WILL CERTAINLY INCREASE THE PRESSURE; BUT WE DOUBT THE TALIBAN WILL TAKE CONCRETE ACTION (ASIDE FROM A RENEWED EFFORT TO KEEP BIN LADIN OUT OF THE PUBLIC EYE).

EASTHAM

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