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Approved for Release by NSA on
06-26-2006, FOIA Case # 41856.

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TEXT

SUBJ: IAC INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT - IA 7/96 (PARAS 1 - 31) (ANNEX)
APPROVED 17 OCT 96

AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN'S CHALLENGES, REGIONAL CONCERNS

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OVERVIEW AND KEY JUDGEMENTS

TALIBAN SUCCESS IN CAPTURING KABUL DOES NOT PRESAGE PEACE, AS THE MOST RECENT FIGHTING ILLUSTRATES. TALIBAN WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO MILITARILY EXTEND CONTROL TO THE NORTH; PROSPECTS FOR AN ACCOMMODATION WITH ANTI-TALIBAN FORCES ARE VIRTUALLY NIL. TALIBAN'S NEED TO FOCUS ON THE MILITARY DIMENSION WILL HINDER THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION. (C) THE COUNTRY COULD NOW MORE STARKLY DIVIDE INTO TWO DISTINCT PARTS - PAKISTAN-SUPPORTED PUSHTON/TALIBAN FORCES IN CONTROL OF KABUL AND MOST OF THE COUNTRY, AND TAJIK/UZBEK/SHIA FORCES OF DOSTAM, MASOOD, AND THE HEZB-I-WAHDAT'S KARIM KHALILI IN THE PANJSHIR VALLEY AND NORTH - [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE PROSPECTS ARE FOR CONTINUED SPORADIC FIGHTING OR RESUMPTION OF FULL-SCALE CONFLICT. (C)

THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THE TALIBAN WILL BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT A FURTHER DIRECT ROLE BY THE UNITED NATIONS IN BROKERING ANY COMPREHENSIVE PEACE INITIATIVES, UNLESS THEIR FORCES FACE SIGNIFICANT MILITARY REVERSALS.. AFGHANISTAN COULD FACE A MAJOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS THIS WINTER, WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DONOUR COMMUNITY. THE NEAR-TERM UN ROLE WILL OF NECESSITY FOCUS ON HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, MILITARY SOLUTION CONTINUES TO BE TALIBAN'S OBJECTIVE. THE RECENT FIGHTING AND TALIBAN REVERSALS NORTH OF KABUL HAVE ILLUSTRATED THE CHALLENGES IT FACES: TALIBAN MAY HAVE OVER-

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EXTENDED ITSELF BY FOREGOING NEGOTIATIONS AND CONCENTRATING ON TRYING TO ACHIEVE AN 'INSTANT OCCUPATION' OF THE ENTIRE COUNTRY.

~~(S)~~

2. FORMER DEFENCE MINISTER AHMED SHAH MASOOD AND HIS TAJIK FORCES STILL CONTROL THE DIFFICULT TERRAIN OF THE PANJSHIR VALLEY. THE NORTHERN PROVINCES ARE CONTROLLED BY THE MAINLY UZBEK NATIONAL ISLAMIC MOVEMENT (HIM) OF GENERAL ABDUL RASHID DOSTAM. TALIBAN MUST ALSO DEAL IN SOME WAY WITH THE HEZB-I-WAHDAT (SHIA) FORCES OF KARIM KHALILI, REPRESENTING SOME SEVEN MILLION HAZARA PEOPLE (TWENTY PERCENT OF THE POPULATION) IN THE CENTRAL AFGHAN PROVINCE OF BAMYAN. THE THREE LEADERS HAVE SIGNED A DEFENSIVE MILITARY ALLIANCE, WHICH LED TO THE LATEST, INITIALLY SUCCESSFUL, COUNTER-ATTACKS ON TALIBAN FORCES NORTH OF THE CAPITAL. (U)

3. TALIBAN'S SUCCESS IN CAPTURING KABUL HAS NOW MORE STARKLY FOCUSSED THE CONFLICT ON ETHNIC DIVISIONS, A TRADITIONAL ELEMENT OF AFGHAN CULTURE. THE MOVEMENT'S STRICT FORM OF ISLAMIC CONSERVATISM IS ALREADY CAUSING HEIGHTENED TENSIONS WITH NEIGHBOURING STATES, PARTICULARLY RUSSIA, IRAN AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES. WE EXAMINE THREE KEY ISSUES: WHAT DOES TALIBAN STAND FOR? IS THERE A ROLE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS IN FACILITATING INTERNAL RAPPROCHEMENT? WHAT HAVE BEEN THE ALTHOUGH THERE WILL BE CHALLENGES OF COORDINATION AND A DILEMMA OVER HOW TO RESPOND TO TALIBAN'S APPROACHES ON HUMAN RIGHTS/GENDER EQUITY. ~~(S)~~

TALIBAN IS UNLIKELY TO TEMPER ITS STRICT APPLICATION OF ISLAM, CERTAINLY NOT IN THE NEAR TER. ANY MODERATE ELEMENTS HAVE WITHIN THE MOVEMENT HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE. TALIBAN IS UNLIKELY TO BECOME A ZEALOUS EXPORTER OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM, BUT THE DEMONSTRATION EFFECT OF ITS PROGRESS THUS FAR COULD ENCOURAGE FUNDAMENTALIST ELEMENTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES. ~~(S)~~

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INTRODUCTION

1. TALIBAN ARE EXTREME FUNDAMENTALIST SUNNIS AND MAINLY ETHNIC PUSHTUNS. NOTWITHSTANDING THE LATEST SERIES OF ATTACKS BY THE LARGELY TAJIK AND UZBEK FORCES RAGED AGAINST THEM, TALIBAN IS AND WILL REMAIN A DOMINANT POLITICAL AND MILITARY ACTOR, THE IMPACT OF WHICH WILL BE FELT FOR SOME TIME TO COME. SINCE CAPTRUING KABUL, TALIBAN'S IMMEDIATE FOCUS HAS BEEN TO CONSOLIDATE CONTROL OF THE CAPITAL AND DEVELOP A STRATEGY TO EXTEND INFLUENCE OVER THE NORTH. PROGRESS WILL BE DIFFICULT IF A REACTIONS OF AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBOURS? ~~(S)~~

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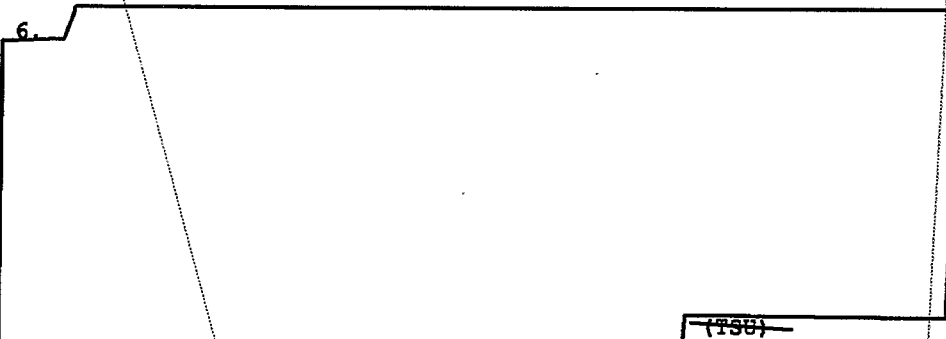
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THE TALIBAN

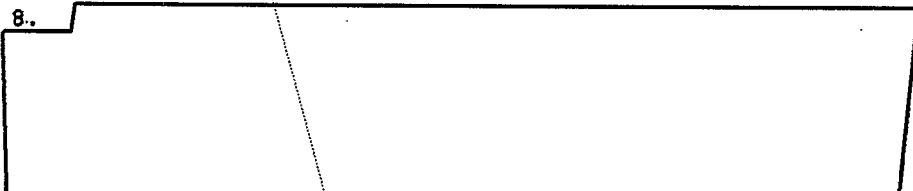
4. TALIBAN'S LEADERS ESPOUSE THE NEED FOR A STRICT ISLAMIC STATE. IN AREAS UNDER THEIR CONTROL, TALIBAN HAS IMPOSED ISLAMIC SHARIA LAW, INCLUDING PUNISHMENTS SUCH AS STONING AND AMPUTATION, AND IT HAS RIGIDLY ENFORCED THE SECLUSION OF WOMEN. RESIDENTS OF TALIBAN-ADMINISTERED AREAS HAVE ACCEPTED THESE HARSH POLICIES AS THE PRICE TO BE PAID FOR PEACE AND SOCIAL STABILITY. AN ISSUE IMPORTANT TO TALIBAN'S LONG-TERM CREDIBILITY IS WHETHER THESE SAME PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY IN KABUL, WILL, OVER TIME, BECOME ALIENATED BY TALIBAN'S STRICT APPLICATION OF ISLAM. (U)

5. TALIBAN HAS ESTABLISHED AN INTERIM ADMINISTRATION IN KABUL, A SIX-MAN 'SHURA' OR COUNCIL, WITH A SEPARATE COMMISSION IN PLACE TO GOVERN THE CAPITAL. TALIBAN HAS ALLOWED RESUMPTION OF HUMANITARIAN AID TO THE CAPITAL AND EXPRESSED READINESS TO COOPERATE WITH THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE HUMANITARIAN FIELD. IT HAS OFFERED ASSURANCES OF PROTECTION FOR DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS AND PERSONNEL. TALIBAN'S VERSION OF SHARIA LAW HAS SEEN WOMEN BANNED FROM WORKING, THE CLOSURE OF GIRLS' SCHOOLS, THE PUBLIC BEATING OF WOMEN FOR VIOLATING STRICT ISLAMIC DRESS CODES, AND INSISTENCE THAT WOMEN ONLY APPEAR ON THE STREETS ACCOMPANIED BY A MALE RELATIVE. OTHER PERCEIVED SYMBOLS OF WESTERN OR DECADENT INFLUENCE AND SOCIETY HAVE BEEN BANNED. (U)



~~(TSU)~~

7. UN REPRESENTATIVES HAVE GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT TALIBAN DOES NOT HAVE A CLEAR GRASP OF THE UN SYSTEM OR WHAT THE UN STANDS FOR IN TERMS OF VALUES. THE SECRETARY GENERAL HAS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED CONCERNS OVER THE TREATMENT OF WOMEN AND HAS SIGNALLED THAT UN PROGRAMMES COULD BE JEOPARDIZED IF THE UN IS PREVENTED FROM OPERATING ON THE BASIS OF INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED NORMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUITY. (C)



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A MORE DETAILED ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL REACTIONS IS FOUND IN ANNEX I. ~~(TSU)~~

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

11. TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE CONTROL THROUGHOUT AFGHANISTAN, TALIBAN STILL MUST CO-OPT OR NEUTRALIZE THE MILITARY STRONGMAN IN THE NORTH, GENERAL DOSTAM. UNTIL RECENTLY, AND EVEN AFTER THE FALL OF KABUL, HE HAD BEEN LARGELY NEUTRAL IN THE CIVIL CONFLICT. HE DECLINED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO INTERVENE DURING TALIBAN'S ADVANCE ON KABUL WHEN SUCH INTERVENTION MIGHT HAVE SAVED THE RABBANI GOVERNMENT. AFTER THE FALL OF KABUL, DOSTAM WAS SUPERFICIALLY COURTED BY TALIBAN AND MORE ASSIDUOUSLY BY OUSTED GOVERNMENT LEADERS. DOSTAM LIKELY CONCLUDED THAT TALIBAN OVERTURES TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION WITH HIM WERE TACTICAL ONLY. WHILE A NORTHERNER

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HAS BEEN INCLUDED BY TALIBAN IN THE SHURA, HE HAS BEEN DISAVOWED BY DOSTAM. AND TALIBAN INTENTIONS TO FORM A PERMANENT GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN LIKELY BEEN TAKEN BY DOSTAM TO MEAN A GOVERNMENT FORMED BY TALIBAN ALONE. ~~(S)~~

12. BASED ON A PRAGMATIC ASSESSMENT OF WHAT IS IN HIS BEST INTERESTS, DOSTAM SEEMS TO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT A FORMAL ALLIANCE WITH ANTI-TALIBAN FORCES WILL LIKELY BEST SERVE HIS PRIMARY INTEREST OF RETAINING CONTROL OF THE NORTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY. SUCH AN ALLIANCE HAS FORMED OCTOBER 9TH INVOLVING DOSTAM, MASOOD AND KARIM KHALILI, HEAD OF THE SHIA HEZB-I-WAHDAT PARTY BASED IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCE OF BAMYAN. THIS ALLIANCE PROVIDED ENCOURAGEMENT TO MASOOD'S FORCES, WHO HAVE CARRIED THE BRUNT OF THE MOST RECENT FIGHTING NORTH OF KABUL. DOSTAM HAS ALSO RECOGNIZED THE LEGITIMACY OF THE OUSTED RABBANI GOVERNMENT. HE HAS NOT, HOWEVER, FULLY COMMITTED HIS FORCES TO THE LATEST FIGHTING, SUGGESTING THAT HE IS STILL TRYING TO KEEP ALL HIS OPTIONS OPEN. ~~(C)~~

13. DOSTAM HAS RECENTLY EXPRESSED REAL CONCERN OVER THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNTRY OF PROLONGED CONFLICT AND THE POTENTIAL IT CARRIES FOR INTERFERENCE BY AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBOURS, IMPLYING THAT HE WOULD WELCOME SOME FORM OF FACILITATIVE ASSISTANCE TO REACH-OUT TO TALIBAN LEADERS. THIS MAY BE A TACTIC ON DOSTAM'S PART WHILE HE ASSESSES THE PROSPECTS FOR JOINING A MILITARY EFFORT TO DISLodge TALIBAN FROM KABUL. ALTERNATIVELY, HE MAY HOPE THAT TALIBAN, FEARING FURTHER MILITARY REVERSALS, WILL OFFER TO NEGOTIATE IN A MANNER PERMITTING HIM TO GAIN WHAT HE WANTS - CONTROL OVER THE NORTH. TALIBAN LEADERS HAVE SAID THEY WILL NOT NEGOTIATE WITH MASOOD BUT ARE PREPARED TO TALK WITH DOSTAM. ~~(C)~~

14. IF, WITH THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE PREVIOUSLY OPOSED THE TALIBAN, DOSTAM AND HIS ALLIES CONTINUE THEIR MILITARY RESISTANCE TO TALIBAN CONTROL, THE COUNTRY WILL MORE STARKLY DIVIDE INTO TWO DISTINCT BLOCS - THE PAKISTAN-SUPPORTED PUSHTUN/TALIBAN FORCES IN CONTROL OF KABUL AND MOST OF THE COUNTRY, AND THE TAJIK/UZBEK/SHIA FORCES OF DOSTAM, MASOOD AND THE HEZB-I-WAHDAT, SUPPORTED BY IRAN, RUSSIA, INDIA AND, TO VARYING DEGREES, THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES. ~~(C)~~

15. THE SITUATION IS LIKELY TO REMAIN ONE OF EITHER UNEASY STALEMATE CHARACTERIZED BY SPORADIC FIGHTING BETWEEN THE VARIOUS FACTIONS SUPPORTED BY THEIR FOREIGN BACKERS OR CONTINUING, FULL-SCALE CONFLICT. ~~(C)~~

16. EVEN IN A STALEMATE, THE TWO SIDES WOULD BE LIKELY TO INVOLVE REGIONAL COUNTRIES. THE KEY QUESTION WOULD THEN BECOME THE EXTENT TO WHICH REGIONAL NEIGHBOURS WOULD SEE IT IN THEIR INTERESTS TO PROMOTE STABILITY VIA DIALOGUE IN AFGHANISTAN OR ENCOURAGE A STAND-OFF AS A WAY OF INFLUENCING TALIBAN BEHAVIOUR. IN EITHER CASE, DEMANDS ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT WILL CONTINUE, IF NOT INCREASE. ~~(C)~~

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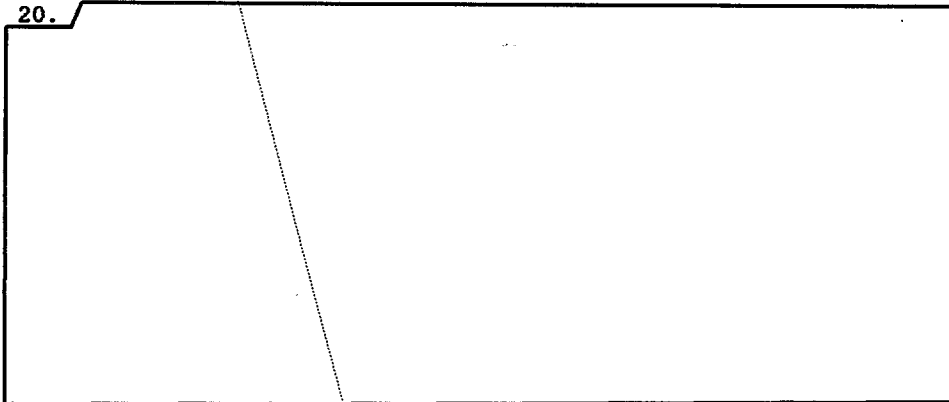
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17. SINCE MARCH, 1994, THE UNITED NATIONS HAS TRIED, UNSUCCESSFULLY, TO FACILITATE RAPPROCHEMENT AMONG THE WARRING AFGHAN FACTIONS. IN EARLY, 1995, WITH TALIBAN'S INITIAL SUCCESS ALREADY EVIDENT, THERE WERE SOME SIGNS THAT AFGHAN LEADERS WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE UN'S PLAN FOR AN INTERIM AFGHAN AUTHORITY. TALIBAN DEMANDS FOR REPRESENTATION PROVED UNACCEPTABLE TO OTHER FACTIONS AND THE RABBANI GOVERNMENT'S INSISTENCE ON RECOGNITION AS THE SOLE LEGAL AUTHORITY OF AFGHANISTAN PROVED UNACCEPTABLE TO THETALIBAN, SO THE UN PLAN ULTIMATELY FAILED. TALIBAN HAS CONSISTENTLY CLAIMED TO SUPPORT THE UN'S EFFORTS BUT IT GIVES LITTLE INDICATION THAT IT UNDERSTANDS WHAT THE UN STANDS FOR. ~~(S)~~

18. GIVEN THE OBSTACLES EARLIER PLACED IN THE WAY OF AN INTERIM ARRANGEMENT, AND STILL FLUSH WITH ITS CAPTURE OF KABUL, WE SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT TALIBAN WILL BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT A FURTHER DIRECT ROLE BY THE UN IN BROKERING ANY COMPREHENSIVE PEACE INITIATIVES; CERTAINLY NOT UNLESS IT COMES TO BELIEVE THAT THE FLOW OF EVENTS IS RUNNING ENTIRELY CONTRARY TO ITS INTERESTS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE TALIBAN IS YET AT THIS STAGE. THE STATEMENTS OF TALIBAN'S LEADERS THUS FAR HAVE BEEN UNCOMPROMISING ON THE NATURE OF THE STRICT ISLAMIC TENETS THAT NOW GOVERN THE COUNTRY AND THIS WILL SEVERELY LIMIT ROOM FOR COMPROMISE WITH OTHER GROUPS. WE JUDGE THAT WHAT FEW VOICES OF MODERATION MAY EXIST WITHIN TALIBAN HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE. ~~(S)~~

19. BY KILLING FORMER PRESIDENT NAJIBULLAH, TALIBAN HAS SHOWN SCANT RESPECT FOR THE ROLE OF THE UN. DURING THE PREVIOUS FOUR YEARS OF CONFLICT, ALL FACTIONS RESPECTED THE UN'S NEUTRALITY AND ALLOWED NAJIBULLAH SANCTUARY IN THE UN COMPOUND. IT WILL NOW BE MORE DIFFICULT TO DIPLOMATICALLY RECONCILE TALIBAN'S ACTIONS WITH THE UN'S ROLE. WHILE TALIBAN HAS EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WITH THE UN AND ALLOWED RESUMPTION OF HUMANITARIAN AID, TALIBAN'S STRICT INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF ISLAMIC LAW, ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN, WILL POSE AN OBSTACLE TO THE CAPACITY AND PERHAPS WILLINGNESS OF SOME INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES, BILATERAL DONORS, AND NGOS TO OPERATE IN TALIBAN-CONTROLLED AREAS. ~~(S)~~

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21. THE COMPLICATED MILITARY SITUATION WILL PREVENT TALIBAN FROM MAKING A CONCERTED EFFORT AT THE UN TO UN-SEAT THE CURRENT RABBANI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO CONTINUE TO REPRESENT AFGHANISTAN'S INTERESTS. THE UN CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE, RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH QUESTIONS AND ON WHICH RUSSIA HAS A VOTE, IS UNLIKELY TO CONSIDER ANY APPLICATION BY TALIBAN FOR A CHANGE IN REPRESENTATION. THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE OCTOBER 16TH HAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT A DATE FOR RESUMPTION. (S)

CONCLUSIONS

22. TALIBAN LEADERS WILL HAVE TO FOCUS ON ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE INTERIM ADMINISTRATION IN KABUL AND OBTAINING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AS THE DE FACTO AFGHAN GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY WITH THE RENEWED FIGHTING. THEIR MAIN ARGUMENT WILL BE THAT AS THEY EXERCISE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY, THEY CAN BRING LAW AND ORDER AND A DEGREE OF STABILITY TO THE COUNTRY NOT EXPERIENCED FOR SEVERAL YEARS. THEY WILL ALSO CLAIM THAT LOCAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY HAS REGENERATED IN AREAS UNDER THEIR CONTROL. THIS ARGUMENT WILL BE USED IN SUPPORT OF CALLS FOR FULL-SCALE RESUMPTION OF UN PROGRAMMES AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. (S)

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24. THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT TALIBAN WILL MODERATE THE APPLICATION OF FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAMIC POLICIES WITHIN AFGHANISTAN. TALIBAN LEADERS LIKELY REALIZE THAT IT IS THE SENSE OF ISLAMIC FERVOUR WHICH HAS SERVED AS THE KEY FACTOR OF COHESION AND MOTIVATION FOR TALIBAN FORCES AND THAT ANY MODERATION COULD DETECT FROM THAT MOTIVATION AND TALIBAN'S EFFECTIVENESS. THIS WILL BE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT AS THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN CONTINUES. (S)

25. TO THE EXTENT IT IS YET READY TO DEAL WITH INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AS A PUTATIVE GOVERNMENT, WE JUDGE THAT TALIBAN WILL NOT SEEK TO SHUT AFGHANISTAN OFF FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD (AS IN THE PAST HAS BURMA AND ALBANIA), IN PART BY FORCE OF GEOGRAPHY AND IN PART OUT OF RECOGNITION THAT TRADE WITH NEAR NEIGHBOURS WILL BE ESSENTIAL TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY. (S)

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26. THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT TALIBAN WILL SYSTEMATICALLY SEEK TO EXPORT ITS ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST FERVOUR. BUT CONTINUING ENCOURAGEMENT, TACIT OR OTHERWISE, OF ISLAMIC INSURGENTS IN THE CENTRAL ASIA REGION WILL BE A CONTINUING IRRITANT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS NEIGHBOURS. (S)

27. THERE ARE CLEAR SIGNS THAT, ASIDE FROM PAKISTAN, AFGHANISTAN'S NEAR NEIGHBOURS - RUSSIA, IRAN, INDIA, AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES - HARBOUR REAL CONCERNS OVER THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF TALIBAN'S ACCESSION TO POWER. THE PROSPECTS ARE FOR INCREASING TENSION. AT THE LEAST, WE CAN EXPECT REGIONAL COUNTRIES TO OFFER MORAL SUPPORT, AND POSSIBLY OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE, TO THE FORCES OF DOSTAM AND MASOOD. EVEN PAKISTAN MAY NOW BE CONCERNED OVER THE IMPLICATIONS OF A STALEMATE OR CONTINUED FIGHTING IN AFGHANISTAN. TALIBAN'S CAPTURE OF KABUL HAS NOT BROUGHT AN END TO AFGHANISTAN'S INTERNAL STRIFE NOR HAS IT EASED THE TENSIONS IN THE SUB-CONTINENT AND CENTRAL ASIA. (S)

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CANADIAN DIMENSIONS

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ANNEX I - REGIONAL REACTIONS TO THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

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PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS ARE IN A FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT IN KABUL WHICH COULD HELP OPEN TRADE ROUTES TO CENTRAL ASIA.

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2. GIVEN TALIBAN'S DRAMATIC ACHIEVEMENT IN CAPTURING KABUL, PAKISTAN MUST HARBOUR SOME CONCERN OVER WHETHER ITS INFLUENCE WILL NOW WANE AND OVER THE LONG-TERM PROSPECT THAT A FUNDAMENTALIST PUSHTUN GOVERNMENT IN KABUL, WITH STRONG LINKS TO PAKISTAN'S OWN PUSHTUNS, COULD CALL FOR CREATION OF A 'GREATER PUSHTUN NATION'.

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5. THE PROSPECT FOR INCREASING TENSION BETWEEN THE TALIBAN ADMINISTRATION AND IRAN REMAINS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT IRAN IS PREPARED TO INTERVENE DIRECTLY TO CREATE PROBLEMS FOR THE NEW REGIME IN KABUL, THE POTENTIAL FOR IRAN TO OFFER SUPPORT TO ANTI-TALIBAN ELEMENTS (OR MEDDLE ON AFGHANISTAN'S WESTERN BORDER) REMAINS, PARTICULARLY NOW

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THAT DOSTAM AND MASOOD HAVE JOINED FORCES. ~~(S)~~

6. MILITANTS RESISTING INDIAN CONTROL OF KASHMIR, WHO SEE THEIR STRUGGLE AS MUCH IN A RELIGIOUS AS SECESSIONIST PERSPECTIVE, WILL BE ENCOURAGED BY TALIBAN'S SUCCESSES, UNDERSCORING INDIAN WORRIES OVER THE IMPACT OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ON INDIAN UNITY.

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7. RUSSIA, WHICH FEARS THE SPREAD OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM THROUGH CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS, HAS EXPRESSED SERIOUS CONCERN, TO THE POINT OF ARRANGING AN OCTOBER 4TH MEETING OF LEADERS FROM FOUR CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES. RUSSIAN OFFICIALS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT TALIBAN HARBOURS AMBITIONS OF ANNEXING PARTS OF UZBEKISTAN. THEY HAVE CALLED FOR FURTHER RESISTANCE BY MASOOD AND DOSTAM TO THE EXTENSION OF TALIBAN CONTROL IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN. THE STRIFE IN AFGHANISTAN IS REGARDED BY RUSSIA AS A DIRECT THREAT TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS) - WHICH MAY ALSO OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR RUSSIA TO EXPLOIT THE SENSE OF INSECURITY AMONG THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, THE MEETING CONVENED BY RUSSIA PROMISED ONLY AN 'APPROPRIATE RESPONSE' TO ANY THREAT TO THE CIS BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN, AND CALLED FOR AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE AND A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT UNDER UN AUSPICES. WHILE TAJIKISTAN'S PRESIDENT PRESSED FOR FORMAL CIS SUPPORT OF THE ANTI-TALIBAN FORCES OF DOSTAM AND MASOOD, THE MEETING STOPPED SHORT OF THIS. GIVEN THE FLUID SITUATION ON THE GROUND, IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT RUSSIA, FOR ITS PART, WOULD ENDORSE EARLY UN SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION. ~~(S)~~

8.

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9. UZBEKISTAN HAS LONG OPERATED A TWO-TRACK POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN. IT SERIOUSLY FEARS THAT THE AFGHAN CONFLICT COULD SPILL-OVER IN CENTRAL ASIA, ALLOW ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST GROUPS TO MAKE GAINS IN THE REGION, AND CREATE CONDITIONS LEADING TO

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INCREASED DRUGS- AND ARMS-TRAFFICKING AND POSSIBLY TERRORISM. UZBEKISTAN HAS SUPPORTED DOSTAM BECAUSE HE IS AN ETHNIC UZBEK AND HAS BROUGHT SOME STABILITY TO THE BORDER IN THE AREA HE CONTROLS. WE SEE SUCH SUPPORT CONTINUING. UZBEK CRITICISM OF TALIBAN HAS, OF LATE, BEEN MUTED AND THE UZBEKISTAN GOVERNMENT HAS CALLED FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. IN PART, THIS REFLECTS LINGERING CONCERN OVER MOSCOW'S EFFORTS TO WIELD GREATER INFLUENCE OVER THE REGION AND AN INCLINATION TO AVOID AUTOMATICALLY FALLING-IN BEHIND MOSCOW'S APPROACH. NOTWITHSTANDING ANY UZBEKISTAN TENDENCY TO SEE TALIBAN'S SUCCESS AS HELPING BRING STABILITY TO AFGHANISTAN, AND PERHAPS CREATE OPTIONS FOR STEPPING-UP TIDE THROUGH AFGHANISTAN TO PAKISTAN, WE BELIEVE UZBEKISTAN'S PRIMARY CONCERN REMAINS THE FUNDAMENTALIST NATURE OF THE TALIBAN REGIME.

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10. THE ACTIONS OF TURKMENISTAN HAVE BEEN THE MOST AGNOSTIC. ITS PRESIDENT DID NOT ATTEND THE OCTOBER 4TH MEETING WITH RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTER CHERNOMYRDIN AND OTHER CENTRAL ASIAN LEADERS (IN PART BECAUSE TURKMENISTAN IS NOT PARTY TO THE 1992 CIS COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY). EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT TURKMENISTAN HAS IN PAST PROVIDED LIMITED SUPPORT TO DOSTAM AND HAS BEEN CONCERNED AT THE OVERALL FLOW OF EVENTS LEADING TO TALIBAN'S CAPTURE OF KABUL. OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES, HOWEVER, IT HAS MOST OPENLY ADVOCATED A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. WE VIEW THIS AS AN INDICATION THAT TURKMENISTAN PLACES MORE WEIGHT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ENHANCED TRADE OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH AFGHANISTAN TO PAKISTAN, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF A LONG-PLANNED GAS PIPELINE. HOWEVER, SHOULD TURKMENISTAN PERCEIVE THAT TALIBAN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GAIN EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER THE ENTIRETY OF AFGHANISTAN, IT WILL LIKELY BE INDUCED BY RUSSIA AND ITS CENTRAL ASIA NEIGHBOURS TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT DOSTAM AND OTHER ANTI-TALIBAN FACTIONS. ~~(S)~~

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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