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O 101150Z MAR 97
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5334
INFO AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 001873

OFFICIAL INFORMAL - FOR SA ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROBIN RAPHEL
AND SA/PABE.O. 12958: DECL: 3/10/07
TAGS: AMGT, AF
SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY JOHN C. HOLZMAN, DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION.
REASON: 1.5 (C) (D).2. (C) PRIOR TO YOUR MARCH 12 TESTIMONY ON THE HILL WE WANTED TO
PROVIDE YOU WITH SEVERAL POINTS ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN
AFGHANISTAN, HOW WE VIEW THE TALIBAN, AND HOW THE MISSION'S
AFGHAN COORDINATION GROUP THINKS THE U.S. COULD PROCEED ON
"MODERATING AND MODERNIZING" THE TALIBAN.-----
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THE CURRENT SITUATION

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3. (C) AT THIS TIME, THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND IN AFGHANISTAN IS NOT ENCOURAGING. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT THE WAR, WHICH IS CURRENTLY BEING FOUGHT ON TWO FRONTS--BAMIAN/PARWAN AND BADGHIS, IS ANYWHERE CLOSE TO A SETTLEMENT DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF THE UN SPECIAL MISSION FOR AFGHANISTAN. IT IS BY NO MEANS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT THE TALIBAN WILL ACHIEVE THE "TOTAL VICTORY" THEY CLAIM THEY WILL REALIZE "BY THE NEXT EID," WHICH IS IN MID-APRIL, SO THERE IS EVERY REASON TO EXPECT THE FIGHTING TO INCREASE IN THE NEAR-TERM. THE TALIBAN'S ADVANCE CONTINUES TO FUEL REGIONAL ANXIETIES AND THERE SEEMS TO BE NO ABATEMENT IN THE SUPPLY OF MATERIAL SUPPORT BEING FUNNELLED TO DOSTAM AND MASOOD FROM IRAN, AND POSSIBLY RUSSIA. IN THE MEANTIME, PAKISTAN APPEARS TO BE REVIEWING ITS AFGHAN POLICY, BUT IMPORTANT AGENCIES, SUCH AS ISID, STILL APPEAR COMMITTED TO AND EVEN SUPPORTIVE OF A TALIBAN VICTORY.

NOT A NEW PROBLEM

4. (C) AMID THIS SWIRL OF EVENTS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THE HISTORIC CONTEXT WE ARE DEALING IN AND UNDERSTAND THAT THE TYPE OF PROBLEM THAT THE U.S. FACES IN A TALIBAN-DOMINATED AFGHANISTAN IS NOT A NEW ONE IN OUR DIPLOMATIC HISTORY. WE FACED SIMILAR PROBLEMS IN DEALING WITH THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (REMEMBER CITIZEN GENET?), THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION, AND MOST RECENTLY, THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION (REMEMBER TRYING TO FIND THE IRANIAN MODERATES?). THE BASIC ISSUE IS HOW THE U.S. SHOULD REACT TO THE
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RISE OF RADICAL MOVEMENTS, WHICH ARE COMMITTED TO THE IMPOSITION OF THEIR BELIEFS ON EVERY STRATA OF SOCIETY, AND IN THE PROCESS, BECOME A SOURCE OF GREAT CONCERN TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. THE QUESTION BOILS DOWN TO WHETHER TO ENGAGE, AND IF THE CHOICE IS TO ENGAGE, HOW TO DO IT AND MAINTAIN U.S. CREDIBILITY. GIVEN THIS CONTEXT, WE ARE STRUCK BY THE HISTORIC PARALLELS BETWEEN THE CHALLENGES FACED BY AMERICAN DIPLOMATS OF PREVIOUS ERAS AND THAT WHICH WE FACE NOW WITH THE TALIBAN.

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THE TALIBAN'S TROUBLING RECORD

5. (C) WE SAY THIS BECAUSE AN ANALYSIS OF THE TALIBAN'S RECORD IS DEEPLY TROUBLING. EFFORTS BY THE U.S. AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO ENGAGE THEM, AND URGE THEM TO ACT RESPONSIBLY, HAVE ALL COME TO NAUGHT THUS FAR. FOR EXAMPLE:

-- NEGOTIATIONS TO END THE WAR: THE TALIBAN HAVE NOT ENGAGED IN GOOD FAITH NEGOTIATIONS IN THE UN-SPONSORED TALKS. THEY APPEAR TO WANT TO USE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE TALKS ONLY AS A COVER FOR FURTHER MILITARY ADVANCES.

-- BIN LADIN: THEY HAVE CONTINUED TO GRANT SANCTUARY TO OSAMA BIN LADIN, ALTHOUGH THEY SAY THEY HAVE TOLD HIM NOT TO ENGAGE IN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES WHILE IN AFGHANISTAN. SOME HIGH-LEVEL TALIBAN SAY THEY WOULD SEND HIM TO SAUDI ARABIA IF IT WOULD ACCEPT HIM.

-- TERRORIST CAMPS: THEY APPEAR TO HAVE WORKED OUT SOME SORT OF DEAL--PERHAPS BROKERED BY ISID--THAT ALLOWS HARAKAT-UL-ANSAR, THE
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KASHMIRI MILITANT GROUP, TO USE CAMPS IN KHOST, AND THEY HAVE NOT FOLLOWED THROUGH ON A PROMISE TO ALLOW A U.S. TEAM TO VISIT THESE CAMPS.

-- NARCOTICS: THE TALIBAN SAY THEY ARE AGAINST DRUGS AS A MATTER OF ISLAMIC LAW. HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE INDICATION THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE DONE ANYTHING TANGIBLE TO SUPPRESS OPIUM PRODUCTION AND IN FACT THERE IS SOME REPORTING THAT THEY ARE IN LEAGUE WITH TRAFFICKERS OPERATING OUT OF QUETTA. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THEY MAY HAVE REFUSED TO ALLOW SOME PAKISTANI TRAFFICKING GROUPS TO SET UP NEW PROCESSING LABS NEAR JALALABAD AND MAY HAVE MADE SOME SEIZURES OF NARCOTICS.

-- RELATIONS WITH NGOS, UN AGENCIES: THE CONTINUING DETENTION, AND POSSIBLE TRIAL, OF THE TWO FRENCH NGO WORKERS HIGHLIGHTS THE DIFFICULTIES HUMANITARIAN GROUPS HAVE IN DEALING WITH THE TALIBAN.

-- HUMAN RIGHTS: THE TALIBAN'S SHEER INTOLERANCE TOWARD DISSENT,

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THEIR WILLINGNESS TO INTERFERE IN THE SMALLEST DETAIL OF PEOPLE'S

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LIVES, AND THEIR RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN'S ABILITY TO WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME AND GIRLS' EDUCATION EPITOMIZE THEIR FAILURE TO LIVE UP TO INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS NORMS.

-- OVERALL: THE TALIBAN HAVE COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO SUPPRESSING OPPONENTS AND HAVE TAKEN STEPS THAT SUGGEST THEY ARE INTENT ON CREATING A THEOCRATIC STATE, SIMILAR IN SOME WAYS TO SHIA IRAN AND IN OTHERS TO THE REGIME IN SAUDI ARABIA, WITH WHICH THEY ARE WIDELY BELIEVED TO HAVE SOME SORT OF "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP."

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ON THE PLUS SIDE, THE TALIBAN HAVE RESTORED SECURITY AND A ROUGH FORM OF LAW AND ORDER IN THEIR AREAS OF CONTROL. ALSO ON THE PLUS SIDE, THE TALIBAN HAVE PUBLICIZED ANTI-NARCOTICS AND ANTI-TERRORISM STATEMENTS, USUALLY COINED IN ISLAMIC TERMS, TO WHICH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CAN CONTRAST LACK OF CONSISTENT FOLLOW-UP.

NOT MONOLITHIC, PERHAPS, BUT LEANING TOWARD THEOCRACY?

6. (C) OUR POINT IS NOT THAT THE TALIBAN ARE MONOLITHIC. THEY ARE NOT. WHILE WE DO NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT THEIR DECISION-MAKING, THERE IS ENOUGH ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THERE ARE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AMONG HIGH-LEVEL TALIBAN LEADERS. AND WHEN THEY DO REACH A DECISION, THERE IS NOT A WELL-DEFINED PROCESS FOR COMMUNICATING THAT DECISION TO ALL THE AREAS UNDER THEIR CONTROL, LET ALONE MAKING SURE THAT IT IS CARRIED OUT. THERE ARE ALSO MANY NON-IDEOLOGICAL AFGHANS (FORMER COMMANDERS, TRIBAL LEADERS, KHALQIS, ETC.) WHO HAVE JUMPED ONTO THE TALIBAN BANDWAGON FOR THEIR OWN MOTIVES. THERE IS THUS SOME EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT IN PROVINCES WHERE THEY ARE IN CONTROL, THEY -- OR AT LEAST THEIR IDEOLOGY -- ARE SPREAD THIN. IN ADDITION, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THEY COULD FACE ARMED OPPOSITION IN AREAS THEY OSTENSIBLY CONTROL, SIMILAR TO THAT THEY FACED RECENTLY IN KUNAR, IN HERAT, KABUL, OR EASTERN AFGHANISTAN. HOWEVER, AFTER TAKING ALL THIS INTO ACCOUNT, THE TALIBAN ARE A FACT OF LIFE IN AFGHANISTAN AND WILL NOT SOON DISAPPEAR. THUS ARISES THE POLICY ISSUE OF WHETHER AND HOW WE SHOULD ENGAGE WITH THEM. ASSUMING WE DO NOT WRITE OFF THE TALIBAN AND AFGHANISTAN WITH THEM--A CHOICE

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THIS MISSION WOULD OPPOSE--THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION WILL
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INEVITABLY BE MESSY AND THE POLICY WE FOLLOW WILL BE RIDDEN WITH
INNER TENSIONS, AS WE SIMULTANEOUSLY ENGAGE WITH THE TALIBAN AND
CRITICIZE THEIR ABUSES.

A POLICY OF "RESTRAINED ENGAGEMENT"

7. (C) NOT TO ENGAGE THE TALIBAN WOULD BE A MISTAKE BECAUSE SUCH
A POLICY WILL MOST LIKELY LEAVE THEM ONLY MORE ISOLATED, POSSIBLY
MORE DANGEROUS, AND CERTAINLY MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THOSE WISHING
TO DIRECT TALIBAN ENERGIES BEYOND AFGHANISTAN. ALL-OUT
ENGAGEMENT IS ALSO NOT AN ACCEPTABLE OPTION EITHER: FIRST, THERE
IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SUCH A POLICY WOULD SUCCEED; SECOND, IT COULD
LEAVE THE U.S. CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH A MOVEMENT WE FIND
REPUGNANT. INSTEAD, WE SUGGEST A POLICY OF LIMITED ENGAGEMENT TO
TRY TO "MODERATE AND MODERNIZE" THE TALIBAN. THROUGH SUCH A
POLICY, THE U.S. COULD CONTINUE TO ENGAGE THE TALIBAN ON ISSUES
SUCH AS THE IMPORTANCE OF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT LEADING TO THE
FORMATION OF A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT, TERRORISM, NARCOTICS, AND
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND ALSO RAISE THE HEAT ON THEM IN TERMS OF OUR
DECLARATORY POLICY. IN PURSUING THIS POLICY, WE SUGGEST THE
FOLLOWING INITIATIVES. DEPENDING ON HOW THE TALIBAN RESPOND, THE
U.S. COULD ADJUST ITS POLICY AND PUBLIC COMMENTS ACCORDINGLY.
OUR SUGGESTIONS INCLUDE:

-- RATCHETING UP OUR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: IN LINE WITH TALIBAN
BEHAVIOR, WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO HIGHLIGHT THE STARK DIFFERENCES
THE U.S. HAS WITH THE TALIBAN OVER THE ISSUES OUTLINED IN PARA
FIVE, E.G. SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM, NARCOTICS, INTOLERANCE, AND
HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES. BY DOING THIS, WE WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE

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TO APPLY PRESSURE ON THE TALIBAN TO CHANGE ITS WAYS: THEY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO GROW COMFORTABLE IN THEIR PRESENT PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR. IN PARTICULAR, AS WAS STRESSED IN YOUR NOVEMBER REMARKS AT THE UN, WE SHOULD FREQUENTLY REINFORCE THE POINT THAT THE TALIBAN ESPECIALLY, AS THE DOMINANT FACTION IN AFGHANISTAN, SHOULD WORK WITH UN SPECIAL ENVOY HOLL TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT ON AN IMMEDIATE CEASE-FIRE AND ON STEPS FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT.

-- PRESSING PAKISTAN: PAKISTAN IS RIGHTLY PERCEIVED AS A DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL SPONSOR AND AT LEAST A TACIT MATERIEL SUPPLIER OF THE TALIBAN. NAWAZ SHARIF'S VIEWS ON THE TALIBAN ARE PROBABLY NOT YET FULLY FORMED. FOR THIS REASON, WE MAY HAVE A BRIEF WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO SHARPEN HOW HE AND HIS NEW GOVERNMENT THINK ABOUT AFGHANISTAN OVER THE LONG-TERM. WE SHOULD URGE SHARIF'S AFGHAN TEAM TO PRESS THE TALIBAN TOWARD A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT AND TO USE PAKISTAN'S LEVERAGE, PARTICULARLY ACCESS TO THE PAKISTANI MARKET.

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[REDACTED] CONTINUING MILITARY STALEMATE--IF IT PERSISTS--WILL
ALSO CONTINUE TO COST THE PAKISTANIS ECONOMICALLY IN TERMS OF NOT
DEVELOPING TRADE ROUTES, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND EFFICIENT WAYS OF
EXPLOITING THE NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE NORTHWESTERN PART OF

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[REDACTED]

-- EXPELLING OSAMA BIN LADIN: WE SHOULD FIND COMMON CAUSE WITH
THE SAUDIS, THE EGYPTIANS, AND PERHAPS OTHER PRO-WESTERN MIDDLE
EASTERN STATES, AND MAKE AN ALL-OUT EFFORT TO PRESS THE TALIBAN
TO EXPEL BIN LADEN FROM THEIR TERRITORY. TO DO THIS, THE TALIBAN

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WOULD HAVE TO BE TOLD SPECIFICALLY WHY, WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW, TO DO THIS; WE MAY ALSO HAVE TO BE OFFER HELP WITH THE LOGISTICS OF EXPULSION/ DEPORTATION. PAKISTAN COULD PLAY A ROLE HERE, AND WE SHOULD CONSIDER APPROACH THE PAKISTANIS AT HIGH-LEVELS TO EXPLAIN WHY BIN LADIN IS DANGEROUS AND WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH HIM. FOR EXAMPLE, WE DOUBT THAT THE GOP WOULD WANT BIN LADIN EXPELLED INTO PAKISTAN. IF THE TALIBAN PUSH BIN LADEN OUT THE DOOR, IT COULD BE A SIGN THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH THE U.S. AND OTHER COUNTRIES CONCERNED ABOUT TERRORISM. THE "CARROT" FOR THE TALIBAN WOULD BE THE PROMISE OF GAINING SOME BADLY-NEEDED INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE AND GOODWILL.

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-- PUSHING THE OIC AND MODERATE ISLAMIC STATES: WE SHOULD APPROACH THE OIC AND URGE THEM TO MAKE A RENEWED EFFORT TO WORK WITH THE TALIBAN. THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO HAVE THE OIC ENGAGE HIGH-LEVEL TALIBAN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING MULLAH OMAR, IN A DIALOGUE ON THE NEED FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE WAR. BECAUSE THE OIC HAS SOME CREDIBILITY AS AN ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION, IT MIGHT HAVE AT LEAST SOME INFLUENCE ON THE TALIBAN. THIS HAS

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NOT BEEN TRUE SO FAR, BUT THE OIC HAS NOT REALLY TRIED TO ENGAGE THE TALIBAN YET, IN OUR VIEW. WE SHOULD ALSO MAKE A RENEWED EFFORT IN URGING MODERATE ISLAMIC STATES SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA, EGYPT, AND PERHAPS INDONESIA TO ENGAGE HIGH-LEVEL TALIBAN OFFICIALS BILATERALLY AND ON THE SIDELINES OF THE OIC WITH THE SAME OBJECTIVE OF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE WAR.

-- VISITS BY ISLAMIC CLERICS: A MUCH LONGER TERM APPROACH COULD BE TO PRESS FOR VISITS TO KANDAHAR BY MODERATE ISLAMIC CLERICS AND EXPERTS ON ISLAMIC LAW. THE OBJECT OF SUCH VISITS WOULD BE TO ENCOURAGE THE TALIBAN TOWARD A "KINDER, GENTLER" CONCEPTION OF ISLAM'S ROLE IN END-OF-MILLENNIUM SOCIETIES. IT IS SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT TO PIN DOWN WHAT SORT OF CLERICS THE TALIBAN MIGHT LISTEN TO, BUT THEY SHOULD PROBABLY BE HANAFI SUNNI, LIKE MOST AFGHANS. CLERICS FROM THE DEOBAND SCHOOL IN INDIA AND PERHAPS AL-AZHAR IN CAIRO WOULD PROBABLY GET THE MOST RESPECT FROM THE TALIBAN. THERE ARE SOME REPORTS OF EGYPTIAN CLERICS ALREADY CORRESPONDING WITH TALIBAN OFFICIALS ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION ISSUES.

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PERHAPS EGYPT COULD BE HELPFUL HERE ALSO.

-- FOSTERING TALIBAN/RUSSIAN DIALOGUE: AS IS CLEAR FROM THE RUSSIAN AIRCREW INCIDENT AND VIRTUALLY EVERY CONVERSATION WITH TALIBAN OFFICIALS, THE TALIBAN ATTITUDE TOWARD RUSSIA IS ONE OF DEEP-SEATED SUSPICION AND ANIMOSITY. THE DESIRE FOR REVENGE IS STRONG AND HELPS MOTIVATE THEM AGAINST DOSTAM IN THEIR DESIRE TO RID AFGHANISTAN OF "FOREIGN INFLUENCES." (NOTE: ONE ASPECT OF THE TALIBAN ATTITUDE TOWARD WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT COULD BE THEIR FEELING THAT BECAUSE THE SOVIETS AND PDPA PUSHED WOMENS' RIGHTS, THE CONCEPT IS IPSO FACTO WRONG.) WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE TALIBAN TO WORK WITH THE "NEW" RUSSIA AND URGE BOTH SIDES TOWARD SOME SORT OF RAPPROCHEMENT. BY DOING SO, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO

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TAKE SOME OF THE NASTY "EDGE" OUT OF EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND STOP THE TALIBAN FROM FIGHTING THE 1979-89 WAR OVER AND OVER AGAIN EVERY DAY.

-- FOSTERING TALIBAN/CENTRAL ASIAN DIALOGUE: SIMILARLY, ENCOURAGING DIRECT CONTACTS BETWEEN THE TALIBAN AND AFGHANISTAN'S CENTRAL ASIAN NEIGHBORS -- MOST PARTICULARLY UZBEKISTAN, TAJIKISTAN, AND KAZAKSTAN -- IS IN OUR INTEREST. ISLAMABAD SEEMS THE ONLY CAPITAL WHERE BOTH THE TALIBAN AND SOME OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES HAVE DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION. DIRECT CONTACTS SHOULD HELP THE TALIBAN UNDERSTAND BETTER THEIR NEIGHBORS' DEEP ANXIETIES AND STRONG DESIRE FOR A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT. THEY SHOULD ALSO HELP THE CENTRAL ASIANS UNDERSTAND BETTER THE TALIBAN'S LACK OF INTENTION OR INTEREST, AS BEST WE CAN ASSESS, IN TAKING THEIR MOVEMENT BEYOND AFGHANISTAN'S BORDERS. THE TALIBAN STILL REGARD THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS AS RUSSIAN PUPPETS AND REMEMBER THAT MANY UZBEKS, TURKMEN, AND TAJIKS WERE AMONG THE SOVIETS FIGHTING IN AFGHANISTAN. THE CENTRAL ASIANS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE TURKMEN WHO HAVE DAY-TO-DAY DEALINGS WITH THE TALIBAN ALONG THEIR SHARED BORDER, STILL VIEW THE

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TALIBAN AS PAKISTANI -- AND, TO A LESSER DEGREE, AMERICAN --
PUPPETS BENT ON EXPORTING A VERY EXTREME BRAND OF ISLAM.

-- MORE SUSTAINED SUPPORT FOR THE UN EFFORT: WE SHOULD BE MORE
PUBLIC IN SUPPORTING THE UN EFFORT, PARTICULARLY EMPHASIZING OUR
SUPPORT FOR ESTABLISHING A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT. THE TALIBAN,
RUSSIANS, CENTRAL ASIANS, AND PAKISTANIS SHOULD SEE WHAT WE SAY
IN PRIVATE REFLECTED MORE STRONGLY, MORE FREQUENTLY IN PUBLIC

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STATEMENTS. PERHAPS MORE FREQUENT USE OF THE DAILY STATE
DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING COULD BE USED TO GET ACROSS USG SUPPORT
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FOR THE UN EFFORT, IN ADDITION TO SUCH STATEMENTS AS YOUR NOV 19
REMARKS AT THE UN, AS OPPORTUNITIES PRESENT THEMSELVES. IN THE
LONGER TERM, IT WOULD BE GOOD TO FIND A KNOWLEDGABLE AMERICAN TO
REPLACE TOM GOUTTIERRE AS AN ADVISOR TO DR. HOLL, BUT ONE READY
TO COMMIT TO A FULL YEAR.

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-- AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION ESCROW FUND: AS SUGGESTED AT THE
SOUTH ASIAN CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE, THE U.S. COULD COMMIT
ITS OWN RESOURCES AND SEEK THE SAME FROM OTHER MAJOR DONORS TO AN
"AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION ESCROW FUND." SUCH FUNDS WOULD BE
DISBURSED WHEN A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT IS ESTABLISHED IN
AFGHANISTAN. THIS "CARROT" MIGHT PROVIDE SOME INCENTIVE, ALBEIT
SLIGHT, TO THE TALIBAN FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, AT THE SAME
TIME AS SHOWING TO DOUBTING AFGHANS THAT THE U.S. REMAINS
CONCERNED AND COMMITTED TO HELPING IN THE EVENTUAL RECONSTRUCTION
OF AFGHANISTAN.

-- NARCOTICS, GIRLS' EDUCATION: THE TALIBAN SAY THEY WOULD STOP
OPIUM PRODUCTION IF SOMEONE FINANCED CROP-SUBSTITUTION PROGRAMS.
SOME TALIBAN ALSO SAY THEY WOULD PROVIDE GIRLS' EDUCATION MORE
WIDELY IF THEY HAD FUNDS FOR SEPARATE FACILITIES. IN DISCRETE,
LIMITED, "TRIAL" CASES, THE U.S. COULD TEST THE TALIBAN, AND SEE
IF THEY REALLY MEAN WHAT THEY SAY. IF THEY DO NOT FOLLOW
THROUGH, WE WOULD KNOW EXACTLY WHERE THEY STAND ON BOTH ISSUES.
AT PRESENT WE ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO RAISE POPPY ERADICATION WITH
THE TALIBAN IN THE CONTEXT OF U.S. FUNDING FOR CROP SUBSTITUTION
PROGRAMS. LIFTING THIS RESTRICTION WOULD BE A SENSIBLE MOVE.

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