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PTQ3705

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(D)

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ACTION SCT-00

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	INLB-01	AID-00	A-00	CA-01
	CCO-00	CG-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	COME-00	CTME-00	INL-01
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-01
	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	H-01	IMMC-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	INSE-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	L-01	ADS-00	MMP-00	M-00	NEA-01
	DCP-01	NRCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OIC-02	OMB-01
	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00
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	SNIS-00	NISC-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00
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O 101336Z DEC 98  
 FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2125  
 INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY  
 AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY  
 USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
 AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
 AMEMBASSY ALMATY  
 AMEMBASSY BISHKEK  
 AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
 AMEMBASSY LONDON  
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 AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
 DIA WASHINGTON DC  
 AMCONSUL KARACHI  
 AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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 USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/CCJ3/CCJ5/POLAD//  
 AMCONSUL JEDDAH  
 AMCONSUL LAHORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 009020

NEW DELHI FOR DAS LANPHER AND SA/PAB DIRECTOR MALINOWSKI; DEPT FOR SA/PAB AND EUR/CACEN; ALMATY ALSO FOR DUSHANBE; ABU DHABI ALSO FOR DUBAI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/08  
 TAGS: PGOV, PTER, KISL, AF  
 SUBJ: AFGHANISTAN: LONGSTANDING TENSIONS BETWEEN TALIBAN LEADER OMAR AND DEPUTY LEADER RABBANI SAID TO BE ON INCREASE

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REFS: (A) FBIS RESTON VA DTG 081140Z DEC 98  
- (B) PESHAWAR 830 (NOTAL)  
- (C) ISLAMABAD 7297, AND PREVIOUS

(U) CLASSIFIED BY JOHN R. SCHMIDT, POLITICAL COUNSELOR. REASONS:  
1.5 (C) (D) .

1. (C) SUMMARY: THERE HAS BEEN A SPATE OF RECENT REPORTS THAT THE LONGSTANDING TENSIONS BETWEEN TALIBAN LEADER MULLAH OMAR AND DEPUTY LEADER MULLAH RABBANI HAVE GROWN WORSE. ONE OF THE ISSUES REPORTEDLY DIVIDING THE TWO IS HOW TO HANDLE TERRORIST USAMA BIN LADIN: OMAR IS SAID TO BE IN FAVOR OF HIS PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN, WHEREAS RABBANI WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE MATTER SETTLED. OBSERVERS DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT OMAR WILL ALLOW THE PROBLEMS WITH RABBANI -- WHO HAS MANY ALLIES -- TO RESULT IN AN OPEN BREAK. FOR HIS PART, RABBANI HAS PUBLICLY DENIED ANY PROBLEMS WITH OMAR. IN THE MEANTIME, IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SIGNAL OF THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT'S  
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CONTINUED DISPLEASURE WITH THE TALIBAN, BURHANUDDIN RABBANI, THE NOMINAL LEADER OF THE ANTI-TALIBAN ALLIANCE, HAS REPORTEDLY JUST COMPLETED A VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA. END SUMMARY.

INCREASE IN OMAR/RABBANI TENSIONS  
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2. (C) TENSIONS BETWEEN TALIBAN LEADER MULLAH OMAR AND DEPUTY LEADER AND HEAD OF THE KABUL "SHURA" (COUNCIL) MULLAH RABBANI, ARE REPORTEDLY ON THE INCREASE. ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS, THE PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO MEN HAVE GROWN SO DEEP THAT MULLAH RABBANI HAS DECIDED TO REMAIN IN DUBAI -- WHERE HE HAS BEEN SINCE EARLY DECEMBER -- FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS (SEE PARA FIVE). THE PRECISE REASONS FOR THE PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO ARE UNCLEAR. HOWEVER, IN A DECEMBER 9 MEETING WITH POLOFF, [REDACTED]

B1

[REDACTED] RELATED THAT TALIBAN SOURCES HAVE PRIVATELY INDICATED TO HIM THAT THE LATEST PROBLEM DIVIDING THE TWO MEN CENTERS AROUND HOW THE TALIBAN SHOULD DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF TERRORIST USAMA BIN LADIN: OMAR CONTINUES TO TAKE THE HARD-LINE VIEW THAT BIN LADIN SHOULD NOT BE EXPELLED OR EXTRADITED, WHILE RABBANI BELIEVES THAT THE TALIBAN MUST SETTLE THE MATTER BEFORE THEY BECOME EVEN MORE ISOLATED FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. EXPANDING ON THIS LAST POINT, [REDACTED] STATED THAT RABBANI IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED AT THE DETERIORATION OF THE TALIBAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SAUDI ARABIA BECAUSE OF BIN LADIN'S CONTINUED PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN. (NOTE: IN SEPTEMBER, THERE WERE REPORTS THAT RABBANI, UPSET OVER OMAR'S HANDLING OF THE BIN LADIN ISSUE, MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST OMAR. THESE REPORTS WERE NEVER SUBSTANTIATED -- SEE REF C.)

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A LONGSTANDING RIVALRY

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3. (C) ASIDE FROM THE DISAGREEMENT ON HOW TO DEAL WITH BIN LADIN, [REDACTED] OBSERVED THAT THE UNDERLYING PROBLEM BETWEEN OMAR AND RABBANI HAS BEEN THEIR LONGSTANDING RIVALRY FOR CONTROL OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT. ALTHOUGH OMAR IS BY FAR THE MOST INFLUENTIAL TALIBAN LEADER, [REDACTED] NOTED THAT RABBANI STILL MAINTAINS THE SUPPORT OF MANY TALIBAN OFFICIALS AND COMMANDERS. THESE PRO-RABBANI TALIBS WANT MULLAH RABBANI TO HAVE MORE INFLUENCE ON THE TALIBAN'S FUTURE DIRECTION. SPEAKING ALONG SIMILAR LINES, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] AGREED WITH THIS ASSESSMENT, TELLING POLOFF IN A DECEMBER 9 MEETING THAT THE LATEST FLARE-UP IS REALLY JUST ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF RABBANI'S OPPOSITION TO OMAR'S TIGHT CONTROL OF THE TALIBAN -- "RABBANI FEELS THAT HE IS TOTALLY POWERLESS IN KABUL AND HE CONTINUES TO MAKE HIS DISPLEASURE KNOWN TO OMAR," [REDACTED] SAID.

TALIBAN DENY ANY FRICTION

4. (C) FOR THEIR PART, TALIBAN AUTHORITIES HAVE DENIED THAT THERE IS ANY PROBLEM BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS, ASSERTING THAT RABBANI IS IN THE UAE ONLY FOR MEDICAL REASONS. IN RECENT INTERVIEWS WITH THE BBC AND VOA, RABBANI HAS ALSO CLAIMED THAT HE IS IN DUBAI FOR A MEDICAL CHECK-UP. HE SAID HE PLANS TO RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN SOON.

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ACTION SCT-00

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	INLB-01	AID-00	A-00	CA-01
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Q 101336Z DEC 98  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2126  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 009020

NEW DELHI FOR DAS LANPHER AND SA/PAB DIRECTOR MALINOWSKI; DEPT FOR  
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OMAR AND DEPUTY LEADER RABBANI SAID TO BE ON INCREASE

IN THESE INTERVIEWS, RABBANI ALSO VOICED STRONG SUPPORT FOR TALIBAN  
POLICIES, IN GENERAL, AND FOR MULLAH OMAR, IN PARTICULAR.

5. (C) [REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF THAT RABBANI'S PUBLIC DENIALS WERE  
"JUST FOR SHOW" AND THAT RABBANI PLANNED TO REMAIN IN DUBAI INTO  
THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. WHILE NOTING THAT IT MAY BE THE CASE THAT  
RABBANI DOES HAVE SOME UNIDENTIFIED HEALTH PROBLEMS, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] SAID HE HAD ALSO HEARD THAT  
RABBANI PLANNED TO REMAIN IN DUBAI FOR THE NEAR-TERM IN ORDER TO  
WAIT OUT HIS POLITICAL PROBLEMS WITH OMAR. (NOTE: [REDACTED] TOLD  
POLOFF THAT HE HAD HEARD THAT RABBANI MAY HAVE ALREADY LEFT DUBAI  
FOR KARACHI, WHERE HE IS MEETING WITH PRO-TALIBAN ELEMENTS WITHIN  
THE LARGE AFGHAN COMMUNITY THERE.)

DOUBTS THAT THERE WILL BE ANY FINAL BREAK

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6. (C) ALL OF POLOFF'S SOURCES SAID THEY DOUBTED THAT THE LATEST PROBLEMS BETWEEN OMAR AND RABBANI WOULD LEAD TO A FINAL BREAK BETWEEN THE TWO. FOR EXAMPLE, IN HIS DECEMBER 10 MEETING WITH POLOFF, [ ] CONTENDED THAT HIS SOURCES IN THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT HAVE TOLD HIM THAT "OMAR AND RABBANI ARE ALWAYS ARGUING OVER SOMETHING, SO NOTHING UNUSUAL IS HAPPENING." [ ] WENT ON TO NOTE THAT RABBANI'S CURRENT VISIT TO THE UAE FITS INTO THE PATTERN OF PAST INTRA-TALIBAN DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS: ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN THE PAST TWO YEARS RABBANI HAS SPENT WEEKS AT A TIME IN THE UAE AND SAUDI ARABIA. ALTHOUGH THE TALIBAN HAVE ALWAYS ASSERTED THAT THESE TRIPS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR MEDICAL REASONS, [ ] SAID HE SUSPECTED THAT THE REAL REASON FOR THE TRIPS WAS RABBANI'S DESIRE TO GET AWAY FROM AFGHANISTAN, ALLOWING TENSIONS WITH OMAR TO COOL. MEANWHILE, OMAR DID NOT WANT TO FORCE A FINAL BREAK WITH RABBANI BECAUSE THE LATTER WAS TOO IMPORTANT A FIGURE IN THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT AND AN OPEN RUPTURE WITH RABBANI COULD LEAD A "CIVIL WAR" WITHIN THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT, [ ] COMMENTED.

SAG SAID TO TURN DOWN RABBANI'S REQUEST FOR VISIT

7. (C) IN THE MEANTIME, OTHER PRESS REPORTS HAVE ASSERTED THAT WHILE IN THE UAE MULLAH RABBANI HAD APPLIED FOR A VISA TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA AND BEEN DENIED. [ ] SAID HE HAD SPOKEN TO AN OFFICIAL AT THE SAUDI EMBASSY IN ISLAMABAD WHO HAD CONFIRMED THE REPORT. ALTHOUGH THE SAUDI EMBOFF WOULD NOT CONFIRM THE REASON FOR THE DENIAL OF THE VISA, [ ] SAID HE THOUGHT THAT THE SAG DID NOT WANT TO BE SEEN AS "WARMING TO THE TALIBAN" WHEN THE TWO SIDES ARE STILL AT LOGGERHEADS OVER THE BIN LADIN MATTER.

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VISIT BY ANTI-TALIBAN LEADER

8. (C) THE SAG'S REPORTED THUMBS DOWN ON MULLAH RABBANI'S REQUEST TO VISIT WAS ESPECIALLY INTERESTING WHEN COUPLED WITH REPORTS THAT BURHANUDDIN RABBANI, THE NOMINAL LEADER OF THE ANTI-TALIBAN ALLIANCE, HAS JUST COMPLETED A VISIT TO JEDDAH. POLOFF WAS TOLD BY [ ] THAT BURHANUDDIN RABBANI HAD PERFORMED "UMRAH" (A VISIT TO THE ISLAMIC HOLY SITES) AND MET WITH SAG OFFICIALS IN JEDDAH. [ ] SAID HE HAD HEARD THAT RABBANI'S JEDDAH SCHEDULE HAD INCLUDED A MEETING

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WITH SAUDI INTELLIGENCE CHIEF PRINCE TURKI, WHO IS KNOWN TO HOLD PRONOUNCED ANTI-TALIBAN VIEWS BECAUSE OF TALIBAN INTRANSIGENCE ON THE BIN LADIN MATTER.

COMMENT

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9. (C) THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT IS OPAQUE, AND THE DEPTH OF THE CURRENT PROBLEMS BETWEEN OMAR AND RABBANI IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS. HOWEVER, BASED ON THE SUM OF THE REPORTS, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT TENSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO ARE GETTING WORSE. NONETHELESS, THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS OF AN IMPENDING PUBLIC BREAK: FIRST, THE TALIBAN ARE VERY CLOSE-KNIT AND ARE GENERALLY LOATH TO DISCUSS INTRA-GROUP PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC. SECOND, AS EXTREME AS HE IS, EVEN

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ACTION SCT-00

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	INLB-01	AID-00	A-00	CA-01
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AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/CCJ3/CCJ5/POLAD//  
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AMCONSUL LAHORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 009020

NEW DELHI FOR DAS LANPHER AND SA/PAB DIRECTOR MALINOWSKI; DEPT FOR  
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MULLAH OMAR WOULD PROBABLY THINK TWICE BEFORE TRYING TO COMPLETELY  
SIDELINE RABBANI, WHO HAS MANY ALLIES WITHIN THE MOVEMENT. THAT  
SAID, THE REPORTS, IF ACCURATE, THAT OMAR IS RECEIVING PRESSURE ON  
BIN LADIN FROM RABBANI -- AND NOT JUST FROM SOURCES OUTSIDE OF THE  
MOVEMENT -- WOULD BE GOOD NEWS. IN TERMS OF BURHANUDDIN RABBANI'S  
REPORTED VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE SAUDI  
GOVERNMENT WAS USING THE VISIT BY THE ANTI-TALIBAN LEADER -- HIS  
FIRST IN WELL OVER TWO YEARS -- AS A WAY TO SIGNAL ITS CONTINUING  
DISPLEASURE WITH THE TALIBAN.  
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