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PAGE 01

ISLAMA 05337 01 OF 02 241320Z

@INFO: D(01) INR(01) P(01) PM(01) S(01)
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@COMMENT: S/CT -- EO for Special Coordinator Taylor
INR -- EO only for A/S Ford PM -- EO for A/S
Bloomfield TF1 -- EO for Coordinator and PM
Coordinator

SA -- EO FOR A/S ROCCA

@INFO: SWO(00)

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 005337

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E.O. 12958: DECL 9/23/11
TAGS: PREL, PTER, PK, AF
SUBJECT: MAHMUD PLANS 2ND MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN

SECTION 01 OF 02 Islamabad 5337

(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR CHAMBERLIN; REASONS
1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (S) Summary: Chief of Pakistani Intelligence
General Mahmud plans to meet a second time with
the Taliban's Mullah Omar, perhaps as early as
September 25, to press him to meet our demands on
Usama Bin Laden and Al Quaida and to release the
Shelter Now detainees. Mahmud told the
Ambassador his mission was taking place in
parallel with U.S.-Pakistani military planning.
A negotiated solution would be preferable to
military action, he said, but his mission in no
way represented a change in Pakistan's
commitments to the U.S. on military cooperation.
"Pakistan," he said, "stands behind you." End
Summary

2. (S) Mahmud discussed his plans during a larger
discussion on military coordination with the
JCS/CENTCOM team led by Major General (S)
Chilton. Despite Omar's intransigence during
Mahmud's September 17 meeting with him, Mahmud
said he felt he had gotten through to him and
wanted to make one more attempt. He would ask
Omar to release the Shelter Now detainees,
surrender Usama Bin Laden and his Al Qaida
lieutenants, shut down terrorist training camps
and allow us to inspect them. Mahmud said he
would depart for Afghanistan as early as
September 25 and hoped to take several Pakistani
religious leaders with him so they could add
weight to his arguments, as well as witness
Omar's behavior.

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Mon Sep 24 09:54:47 2001 [Islamabad 5337] SA COPY 9 OF 12 Page 2 OF 3

(S) "But no matter what happens," Mahmud said, "Pakistan stands behind you." He agreed that joint military coordination meetings should begin immediately. (Note: Which they have. The JCS/CENTCOM team met for much of the day with their Pakistani counterparts.)

4. (S) Ambassador said she was pleased Mahmud had reiterated this commitment. She noted that neither of Mahmud's trips was being made at our request. We appreciated his objectives. But his trip could not delay military planning. "We are on a tight schedule and your efforts should not impede any of the military planning we are engaged in today," she said. Mahmud said he understood and accepted this.

5. (S) Ambassador added we had met with the Taliban repeatedly in the past but that our willingness to continue discussions ended September 11. The time for negotiation was past. People around the world needed to be protected from Bin Laden and the terrorists around him.

6. (S) "I implore you," Mahmud told the Ambassador, "not to act in anger. Real victory will come in negotiations." He said the Taliban were weak and ill-prepared to face an American onslaught. Omar himself, he said, is frightened. That much was clear in his last meeting. "We should get the Afghans to do this job for us," Mahmud continued. "Reasoning with them to get rid of terrorism will be better than the use of brute force. If the strategic objective is Al Qaida and UBL, it is better for the Afghans to do it. We could avoid the fallout." If the Taliban are eliminated, he said, Afghanistan will revert to warlordism.

7. (S) "We will not flinch from a military effort," Mahmud added. "But a strike will produce thousands of frustrated young Muslim men. It will be an incubator of anger that will explode two or three years from now."

8. (S) Ambassador and her staff responded that we understood Mahmud's concerns. But Omar had so far refused to meet even one U.S. demand and time is running out. We need to move forward with our military plans.

9. (S) On a related issue, Mahmud said Pakistan planned to withdraw its remaining diplomats from Afghanistan in the next 48 hours and was considering formally severing relations, as the UAE has done. But he said no decision has been made.

10. (S) Comment: Pakistan clearly fears the

SECRET

SECTION 02 OF 02 Islamabad 5337

elimination of the Taliban will leave a dangerous political vacuum. Mahmud is trying to persuade

the Taliban to save some of itself by surrendering Bin Laden and dismantling Al Qaida. Mahmud has virtually no chance of succeeding but nothing would be gained by pouring cold water on his efforts so long as they do not impede our

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Mon Sep 24 09:54:47 2001 [Islamabad 5337] SA COPY 9 OF 12 Page 3 OF 3



military planning. Mahmud's eleventh-hour mission also serves President Musharraf's domestic interests. Should military action commence, Musharraf wants to be able to tell the Pakistani people that he sought a peaceful solution up to the bitter end. Neither of these considerations weakens Pakistan's commitments to us. When Musharraf said Pakistan would stand by us no matter what, Ambassador looked at him and repeated his words back to him. Mahmud nodded affirmatively.

Chamberlin

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