

Current Class: CONFIDENTIAL  
Current Handling: n/a  
Document Number: 1995DUSHAN00515

Channel: n/a

Case Number:

PTQ9154

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.5(D)

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ACTION EUR-01

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	M-00	NEA-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	PA-01
	PM-00	PRS-01	P-01	SB-00	SCT-00	SP-00	SSO-00
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O 210343Z FEB 95  
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1758  
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DUSHANBE 000515

E. O. 12356: DECL: 2/20/05  
TAGS: PREL, UN, AF, US  
SUBJECT: RABBANI EMISSARY STATES RABBANI WILL NOT SURRENDER  
- POWER TO INTERIM COUNCIL UNTIL TALIBAN JOIN

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E. AHMAD  
DATE/CASE ID: 21 APR 2003 200104007

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 REF: ISLAMABAD 1770

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. ACTION REQUEST - PARA 18.

SUMMARY

3. DURING AN ALMOST TWO HOUR MEETING WITH AMB AND POL/ECON CHIEF, RABBANI'S ECONOMIC ADVISOR AND SPECIAL EMISSARY (AND ACTING HEAD OF THE AFGHAN NATIONAL BANK), ASHRAF SHAH, SOUGHT U.S. ADVICE FOR RABBANI IN LIGHT OF THE RISE IN POWER OF THE TALIBAN AND THE ECLIPSE OF HEKMATYAR'S POWER. SHAH DEPICTED THE TALIBAN AS A LARGELY DURRANI PASHTUN, RURAL, UNSOPHISTICATED, DEEPLY SOCIALLY CONSERVATIVE FORCE UNLIKELY TO WIN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF KABULIS BUT IN CONTROL OF SIX PROVINCES AND ENJOYING A DEGREE OF POPULAR SUPPORT. THUS, HE ARGUED, IT WAS IMPORTANT THEY JOIN THE INTERIM COUNCIL -- BEFORE RABBANI TRANSFERS POWER TO THE COUNCIL, LEST IT BE DEAD UPON ARRIVAL. WE ADVISED SHAH THAT IT WAS STILL BETTER THAT RABBANI SURRENDER POWER TO MESTIRI'S PLANNED INTERIM COUNCIL NOW. WE SEEK DEPT'S LATEST GUIDANCE ON MESTIRIS PLAN AND THE TRANSFER OF POWER QUESTION TO SHARE WITH SHAH. END SUMMARY.

INTRODUCTION

4. ASHRAF SHAH, ECONOMIC ADVISOR AND SPECIAL EMISSARY OF RABBANI, SOUGHT AN URGENT MEETING WITH AMB AND POL/ECON CHIEF FEB 20. PREVIOUS EVENING HE ARRIVED IN DUSHANBE  
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 FROM MOSCOW. SHAH TOLD US HE CAME TO DUSHANBE SPECIFICALLY TO MEET WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS BEFORE RETURNING TO KABUL VIA TASHKENT AND NEW DELHI. SHAH STATED HIS TRIP TO MOSCOW WAS SHORT, THREE DAYS, TO TEND TO BUSINESS OF THE AFGHAN NATIONAL BANK

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("AFGHANISTAN'S FEDERAL RESERVE BANK," AS HE DESCRIBED IT), OF WHICH HE IS ACTING CHAIRMAN BECAUSE THE CHAIRMAN IS SICK. SHAH DID NOT APPARENTLY COLLECT ANY MORE AFGHANIS, PRINTED IN RUSSIA, AS HE STATED THE RUSSIAN CONTRACT HAD BEEN COMPLETED. A GERMAN COMPANY NOW HAS THE CONTRACT TO PRINT AFGHAN CURRENCY.

TALIBAN - A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH BUT UNLIKELY TO FIND GREAT POPULAR SUPPORT AMONG KABULIS

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5. SHAH SUMMARIZED EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN SINCE THE MUJAHEDIN TAKE-OVER FROM THE SOVIETS, LAMENTED THE DWINDLING NUMBER OF EDUCATED "PROGRESSIVE" AFGHANS REMAINING IN AFGHANISTAN, AND FOCUSED ON RECENT POLITICAL EVENTS -- PARTICULARLY THE RISE OF THE TALIBAN AND THE DIMINUTION OF HEKMATYAR'S POWER.

6. ON THE TALIBAN, SHAH PORTRAYED THEM AS A PREDOMINANTLY DURRANI PASHTUN, LARGELY RURAL, UNSOPHISTICATED, EXTREMELY CONSERVATIVE FORCE. THEY HAVE SUCCEEDED IN GAINING CONTROL OF SIX PROVINCES (HELMAND, KANDAHAR, ZABUL, GHAZNI, WARDAK, AND PAKTIKA), AND, THEREFORE, A SIGNIFICANT FORCE WITH WHOM TO BE RECKONED. WE NOTE THAT RADIO KHORASAN FEB 19 REPORTED THE TALIBAN TOOK CONTROL OF PAKTIKA PROVINCE WITHOUT A FIGHT AS FORCES OF JAMIAT-I ISLAMI (RABBANI) AND HARIKAT-I INQILAB-I ISLAMI (MUHAMMAD NABI) IN EFFECT HANDED THEM THE PROVINCE.

7. THE TALIBAN ARE ALSO A DEEPLY CONSERVATIVE FORCE, BENT ON  
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 IMPLEMENTING DECREES IN THE SOCIAL ARENA BOUND TO GRATE ON MOST KABULIS, SHAH STATED. IN ADDITION TO THE BANS ON SOCCER, JUDO, AND KARATE MENTIONED REFTTEL, SHAH SAID THE TALIBAN HAD ALSO FORBIDDEN CHESS-PLAYING AND MUSIC. THEY WERE ACTIVELY DESTROYING MUSIC CASSETTES. WHILE KEEPING BOYS' SCHOOLS OPEN, THEY WERE CLOSING GIRLS' SCHOOLS. THEY HAD RELENTED A BIT ON EARLIER DECREES BANNING WOMEN IN THE BAZAARS, NOW PERMITTING THEM IF VEILED IN THE CHADOR/BURKA AND ACCOMPANIED BY A MAN. THEY, OBVIOUSLY, OPPOSED WOMEN WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOME. SHAH FELT THE SUM TOTAL OF THESE BANS WOULD WIN THEM LITTLE POPULAR SUPPORT

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AMONG THE MORE URBANIZED, SOPHISTICATED INHABITANTS OF KABUL. THEIR PREDOMINANT DURRANI PASHTUN ETHNICITY WOULD ALSO WORK AGAINST THEM IN WINNING OVER THE POPULACE OF KABUL.

8. NEVERTHELESS, SHAH ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE TALIBAN ENJOYED A DEGREE OF POPULAR SUPPORT IN THE AREAS THEY NOW CONTROLLED BECAUSE THEY HAD DISARMED RIVAL MUJAHEDIN GROUPS AND RESTORED SECURITY, PARTICULARLY FOR ROAD TRAVEL.

HEKMATYAR, A SPENT FORCE  
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9. SHAH CONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS OF THE PREVIOUS WEEK OF AN EASY

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O 210343Z FEB 95  
 FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1759  
 INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
 AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
 AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
 AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
 AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
 DIA WASHDC  
 CIA WASHDC  
 USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
 AMCONSUL PESHAWAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 DUSHANBE 000515

E. O. 12356: DECL: 2/20/05  
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 TALIBAN VICTORY OVER HEKMATYAR AT CHARASIAB. HE CLAIMED THAT  
 MASUD'S FORCES ACTUALLY ENTERED CHARASIAB ONE DAY BEFORE THE  
 TALIBAN ARRIVED, IMMEDIATELY AFTER HEKMATYAR'S FORCES FLED THE  
 CITY. MASUD'S FORCES TOOK POSSESSION OF HEKMATYAR'S HEAVY  
 WEAPONRY ABANDONED IN THEIR HASTY FLIGHT. MASUD'S FORCES, IN  
 TURN, ALSO VACATED THE CITY AT THE REQUEST OF THE TALIBAN, TAKING  
 THEIR NEWLY GAINED WEAPONRY WITH THEM. AT THE SAME TIME AS  
 OCCUPYING CHARASIAB, THE TALIBAN TOOK MAYDAN SHAHR AND CHOWK-I  
 WARDAK, AS WELL AS THE ROAD FROM GHAZNI LEADING TO KABUL, TO  
 CONTROL TOTALLY WARDAK PROVINCE.

10. SHAH CLAIMED HEKMATYAR HAD NOW FLED TO LAGHMAN, LEAVING  
 SAROBI (ALTHOUGH HIS FORCES STILL CONTROLLED SAROBI). MANY OF  
 HIS COMMANDERS HAD DISPERSED EVEN WIDER AFIELD FROM CHARASIAB.  
 HEKMATYAR NOW ONLY CONTROLLED ONE PROVINCE, LAGHMAN, IN SHAH'S

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ASSESSMENT. WITH THE LOSS OF HEAVY WEAPONRY, THE DISPERSAL OF HIS COMMANDERS, AND EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER ONLY ONE PROVINCE, SHAH PRONOUNCED HEKMATYAR A SPENT MILITARY FORCE.

11. IN SHAH'S ASSESSMENT, ONLY THREE SIGNIFICANT MILITARY FORCES REMAINED IN AFGHANISTAN: THE TALIBAN, DOSTOM'S JOMBESH, AND "THE GOVERNMENT," BY WHICH SHAH MEANT THE FORCES OF RABBANI, MASUD, AND ISMAIL KHAN (IN WESTERN AFGHANISTAN). HE DISMISSED GAILANI, KHALIS, SAYYAF, AND MUHAMMAD NABI AS INCAPABLE OF MOUNTING SERIOUS MILITARY CHALLENGES. THE SHI'A HIZB-I WAHDAT WAS ONLY MARGINALLY MORE CAPABLE.

SEEKING U.S. ADVICE  
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12. AMB AND POL/ECON CHIEF NOTED THAT AMB MESTIRI WAS IN KABUL  
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 AND THAT TODAY, FEB 20, WAS THE DATE PRESIDENT RABBANI WAS SUPPOSED TO TURN OVER POWER TO THE INTERIM COUNCIL MESTIRI HAD SO PAINSTAKINGLY PIECED TOGETHER. SHAH, IN LIGHT OF THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HE HAD DESCRIBED ABOVE, ASKED FOR U.S. ADVICE. WE RESPONDED THAT THE USG CONTINUED TO STRONGLY SUPPORT MESTIRI'S EFFORTS. WE BELIEVED THAT RABBANI SHOULD STILL TURN OVER POWER TO THE INTERIM COUNCIL UNDER UN AUSPICES. NOT TO DO SO NOW WOULD BE A SEVERE SETBACK TO UN EFFORTS AND MIGHT PROVIDE THE TALIBAN AN EXCUSE TO MAKE WAR ON KABUL. IN ADDITION, AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO BRING INTO EXISTENCE AN AFGHAN GOVERNING BODY OF GREATER LEGITIMACY IN THE EYES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WOULD BE LOST.

13. SHAH ARGUED THAT CONDITIONS HAD CHANGED SINCE MESTIRI'S PLANNED INTERIM COUNCIL. ALTHOUGH RABBANI STILL INTENDED TO RESIGN AT SOME TIME, HE SHOULD NOT TURN OVER POWER TO THE INTERIM COUNCIL IF THE TALIBAN WERE NOT MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL. IF THE POWERFUL TALIBAN, WHICH ENJOYED SOME DEGREE OF POPULAR SUPPORT, DID NOT JOIN THE COUNCIL, IT WOULD BE DEAD UPON ARRIVAL. WE RESPONDED THAT MESTIRI AND HIS AIDES WERE TALKING TO THE TALIBAN AND TRYING TO GAIN THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE INTERIM COUNCIL. FROM

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THE LITTLE WE KNEW ABOUT THE TALIBAN LEADERS, IT APPEARED THEY HAD NOT RULED OUT COOPERATION WITH MESTIRI -- ALTHOUGH THEY HAD FREQUENTLY RAILED AGAINST THE MUJAHEDIN LEADERS AND THEIR TANZIMAT. ALL IN ALL, WE BELIEVED IT BETTER FOR RABBANI TO SURRENDER POWER TO THE INTERIM COUNCIL, WHILE MESTIRI WORKED TO BRING ALONG THE TALIBAN.

14. SHAH ACKNOWLEDGED THE RATIONALE OF SOME OF OUR ARGUMENTS BUT HELD TO HIS BELIEF THAT RABBANI SHOULD NOT SURRENDER POWER AT THIS TIME. HE ASKED THAT WE CONVEY HIS VIEWS TO WASHINGTON

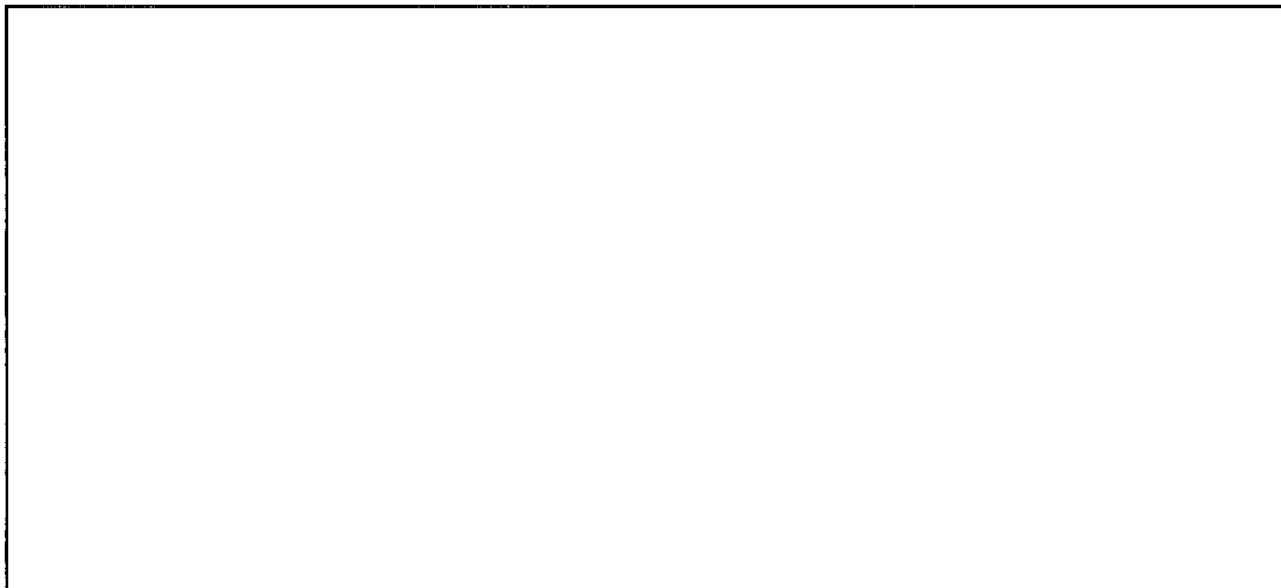
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POLICY-MAKERS, WHICH WE PROMISED TO DO.

COMMENT

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O 210343Z FEB 95  
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1760  
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
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E. O. 12356: DECL: 2/20/05  
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ACTION REQUEST  
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18. SEPTTEL SEEKS SPECIFIC GUIDANCE FROM THE DEPT IN RESPONSE TO ANOTHER QUERY FROM SHAH. AT THE TIME WE RESPOND TO SHAH ON THAT QUESTION, WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY FURTHER GUIDANCE FROM THE DEPT CONCERNING CURRENT U.S. POLICY VIS-A-VIS MESTIRI'S PLANNED INTERIM COUNCIL AND THE TRANSFER OF POWER QUESTION, WHICH WE WOULD LIKE ALSO TO SHARE WITH SHAH. OUR INTERLOCUTOR WILL WAIT IN DUSHANBE A DAY OR TWO LONGER FOR FURTHER ELABORATION.  
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