DEPT PLEASE PASS TO THE NSC: CLARKE AND RIEDEL

FROM AMCONSUL DUBAI

E.O. 12958: DECL: MAY 30, 2004
TAGS: PTER, PREL, ASEC, SA, PK, AF, TC
SUBJECT: U.S. REQUESTS DUBAI CLOSE ARIANA (AFGHAN) AIRLINES:
MISIMBRA DEMURS, SAYING IT WOULD BE INEFFECTIVE,
BUT LEAVES DOOR Ajar

REF: STATE 100503

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR. REASON: 1.5(D).

2. (S//NF) SUMMARY: ON MAY 29 AMBASSADOR REQUESTED DUBAI
CROWN PRINCE, SHAYKH MUHAMMAD BIN RASHID AL MAKTOM (MBR),
USE HIS AUTHORITY TO HALT ALL ARIANA (AFGHAN AIRLINES)
FLIGHTS TO AND FROM DUBAI. AMBASSADOR TOLD MBR THAT THE USG
HAD GOOD INFORMATION THAT ARIANA WAS USED BY USAMA BIN LADEN
(UBL) AND HIS ASSOCIATES TO MOVE MEN AND EQUIPMENT FROM
AFGHANISTAN VIA DUBAI TO VARIOUS LOCALES.

AMBASSADOR TOLD MBR THAT WASHINGTON WAS FAST LOSING PATIENCE
WITH THE TALIBAN AND THEIR CONTINUED SHELTERING OF UBL. FOR

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MORE THAN A YEAR, THE UAE HAD BEEN TRYING TO MODERATE TALIBAN BEHAVIOR AND PERSUADE THEM TO OUST UBL, SO FAR IN VAIN. THE USG HAD INFORMATION THAT UBL WOULD STRIKE AGAIN SOON. HALTING ARIANA OPERATIONS WOULD SEND A CLEAR MESSAGE TO THE TALIBAN THAT PROTECTING UBL HAD REAL CONSEQUENCES. IF UBL MANAGED TO HIT AMERICANS AGAIN, THE US WOULD STRIKE THE TALIBAN HARD, AND WAS CLOSE, IN ANY CASE, TO LABELING THEM A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION. SUCH A DESIGNATION HAD SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR THOSE DEALING WITH THEM. [MBR] SAID HE WOULD CONSULT WITH HIS ADVISORS ON OUR REQUEST. END SUMMARY.

3. (S//NF) AT THE CLOSE OF VISITING CONGRESSMAN RAY LAHOOD'S COURTESY CALL ON DUBAI CROWN PRINCE SHAYKH MUHAMMAD BIN RASHID AL-MAKTOUM (MBR), THE AMBASSADOR, CONSUL GENERAL, AND REPRESENTATIVE LAHOOD (WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE INTELLIGENCE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE) MET PRIVATELY WITH MBR FOR ALMOST AN HOUR TO CONVEY THE USG REQUEST (REFTEL) THAT DUBAI CLOSE DOWN ARIANA (AFGHAN AIRLINES) OPERATIONS TO AND FROM DUBAI. (NOTE: AMBASSADOR HAD RECEIVED DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTIONS, ORALLY RELAYED FROM EMBASSY ABU DHABI, ONLY 30 MINUTES PRIOR TO THE SCHEDULED LAHOOD-MBR COURTESY CALL. ARIANA DOES NOT FLY OUT OF ABU DHABI. EACH EMIRATE CONTROLS ITS OWN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY, INDEPENDENTLY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.) MBR WAS ATTENTIVE AND ENGAGED THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION, EVEN THOUGH HE HAD MANY PETITIONERS IN HIS OFFICE AND A LUNCH PENDING WITH PRESIDENT ZAYID AND YEMEN'S PRESIDENT ALI ABDULLAH SALIH.

4. (S//NF) AMBASSADOR TOLD MBR THAT THE USG WAS CONVINCED THAT USAMA BIN LADEN REMAINED ACTIVE IN AFGHANISTAN AND THAT HE AND HIS ASSOCIATES WERE PLANNING TO HIT AN AMERICAN TARGET SOON. WE HAD INFORMATION THAT UBL WAS USING ARIANA TO TRANSPORT MEN AND MATERIEL FROM AFGHANISTAN VIA DUBAI TO VARIOUS DESTINATIONS. IT WAS OUR BELIEF THAT CLOSING DOWN ARIANA OPERATIONS IN THE UAE WOULD IMPEDE UBL'S PLANS. THEREFORE, THE USG WAS ASKING DUBAI TO SHUT DOWN ARIANA NOW.
5. (S/NF) AMBASSADOR REMINDED MBR THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE
HARBORED UBL, EVEN IN THE FACE OF INTERNATIONAL, UAE, AND
SAUDI PRESSURE. FURTHER, THE UAE'S YEAR-PLUS EFFORT TO
MODERATE TALIBAN BEHAVIOR HAS NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL. HE WAS NOT "UNDER CONTROL." SHUTTING DOWN ARIANA AIRLINES WOULD SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO THE TALIBAN: YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR UBL HAS HARD CONSEQUENCES, EVEN WITH YOUR BEST FRIENDS. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT HE HAD ACCOMPANIED UAE

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MRB DEMURS, SAYING IT WOULD BE INEFFECTIVE, BUT LEAVES DOOR AJAR

STATE SECURITY DIRECTOR SHAYKH HAZZA ON HIS WASHINGTON CALLS THE PREVIOUS WEEK. IT IS CLEAR THAT DESPITE KOSOVO, SENIOR U.S. OFFICIAL, FROM THE PRESIDENT ON DOWN, ARE ASSIGNING THE HIGHEST PRIORITY TO ENDING UBL'S SAFEHAVEN. SHAYKH HAZZA SECRET

HEARD ALL OF THIS FIRSTHAND.

6. (S/NE) ANY NEW ATTACK BY UBL ON AMERICANS OR OTHERS WOULD BE MET WITH A STRONG AND SWIFT RESPONSE FROM THE U.S., TARGETED AT BOTH UBL AND HIS HOSTS IN AFGHANISTAN, THE AMBASSADOR SAID. THE MESSAGE TO THE TALIBAN NEEDS TO BE VERY CLEAR: KEEP UBL IN YOUR COUNTRY AT YOUR OWN PERIL.

MRB ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR HE WOULD CONFER WITH HIS SECURITY ADVISORS.

7. (S/NE) THE AMBASSADOR ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE TALIBAN DID NOT SCARE EASILY, BUT THEY HAD OTHER EQUITIES AT STAKE. THEY WANTED INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION, A SEAT AT THE U.N., AND MATERIAL SUPPORT. THEY HAD NO HOPE OF OBTAINING ANY OF THIS IF THEY CONTINUED THEIR SUPPORT OF UBL AND EIJI LEADER ZAWAHIRI. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT DUBAI'S SERVICE AND TOURIST-BASED ECONOMY WAS VULNERABLE TO TERRORISTS.

THE AMBASSADOR IMPLIED THAT THE REQUEST TO SHUT DOWN ARIANA ASIDE, THE U.S. WOULD NOT MIND ANY OTHER REASONABLE TACK THE UAE COULD TAKE TO PERSUADE MULLAH UMAR TO EXPEL UBL. BUT TIME WAS CRITICAL, UBL WOULD SOON STRIKE

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AGAIN. THE MESSAGE WAS CLEAR: OUR PATIENCE IS RUNNING OUT. THE TALIBAN HAD TO HAND OVER USAMA BIN LADEN OR PAY THE PRICE FOR SHELTERING HIM. FRIENDS OF THE TALIBAN NEED TO HELP, OTHERWISE THE TALIBAN COULD BE DESIGNATED A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION WITH ALL THAT IMPLIES.

8. (S/NF) MBR STATED AGAIN THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH HIS ADVISORS.

9. (S/NF) COMMENT: ARIANA AIRLINES OPERATES ONLY ONE WEEKLY PASSENGER FLIGHT TO AND FROM DUBAI (LEAVING DUBAI ON SUNDAY AND RETURNING ON MONDAY). ARIANA'S MAIN OPERATIONS ARE FROM SHARJAH'S AIRPORT. IN 1998, ARIANA SENT OVER 4 MILLION KILOGRAMS OF CARGO TO KANDAHAR ALONE. FROM JANUARY 1 TO MAY 31, 1999, THEY SENT 1,104,534 KILOGRAMS OF CARGO, 940,956 KG TO KANDAHAR, 36,487 TO JALALABAD, AND 122,551 TO KABUL. PASSENGER TRAFFIC AT SHARJAH, SO FAR IN 1999, IS MUCH SMALLER, HOWEVER, WITH ONLY 177 PASSENGERS LEAVING SHARJAH AND 67 COMING FROM AFGHANISTAN (ALL FROM KABUL, KANDAHAR, OR JALALABAD). WE WILL RAISE THE ISSUE WITH SHARJAH AUTHORITIES AS WELL, AT AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY.

END COMMENT.

10. (U) REQUEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT SHARE THIS MESSAGE WITH EMBASSIES RIYADH AND ISLAMABAD, NSC, AND HEADQUARTERS.

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RECEIVERS:

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/ARP, AND PM
LONDON FOR SUTPHIN; PARIS FOR LEAF
NSC FOR CLARKE AND REIDEL
10. (S) The Ambassador observed that many bilateral disputes within the GCC had come and gone (naming some of the more egregious ones), but that the six states ought to bear in mind that both Iran and Iraq wanted to dominate the region and that the U.S. wanted to work with the GCC states both bilaterally and collectively and to help defend against this and to prevent aggression. He expressed Washington's hope that the Saudi and UAE leaderships would deal with their differences directly and behind closed doors before they became more serious. He reiterated U.S. support for a negotiated resolution of the islands issue and, failing that, recourse to international arbitration. The U.S., he said, hoped to see this latest problem resolved without further damage to the GCC. The UAE was already working for stability in important ways, such as its support for OSW and its humanitarian effort in Kosovo.
12. (S) THE AMBASSADOR, REFERRING TO SHAYKH HAZZA' S RECENT DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON, UNDERLINED THE FACT THAT THE U.S. WAS ITSELF NOT ENGAGING IN A DIALOGUE WITH IRAN AND THAT ITS OFFER...
TO TALK TO TEHRAN ABOUT THEIR DIFFERENCES WAS A PUBLIC ONE.