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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY BEIJING

AMEMBASSY BISHKEK

AMEMBASSY ALMATY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 006433

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER DATE/CASE ID: 14 MAY 2004 200400628

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TAGS: PGOV, ASEC, MOPS, PTER, PK, AF

SUBJECT: TFXX01: SITREP 6: PAKISTAN/AFGHANISTAN REACTION TO

U.S. STRIKES

REFS: (A) ISLAMABAD 6398

(E) ISLAMABAD 6351

(B) ISLAMABAD 6360 (F) ISLAMABAD 6350 (C) ISLAMABAD 6353 (G) ISLAMABAD 6329 (ALL NOTAL)

(D) PESHAWAR 638

(U) CLASSIFIED BY ALAN EASTHAM, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES. REASON 1.5(D).

- 1. (U) THIS MESSAGE WAS COORDINATED WITH CONSULATES KARACHI, LAHORE, AND PESHAWAR.
- 2. (C) THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST -- SEE PARA TEN. CONFIDENTIAL

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3. (C) THE FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY'S SIXTH SITUATION REPORT (6:00 P.M. LOCAL; 9:00 A.M. EST) ON PAKISTANI/AFGHAN REACTION TO THE AUGUST 20 U.S. STRIKES ON THE TERRORIST NETWORK OF USAMA BIN LADEN. (NOTE: SEE REFTELS FOR PREVIOUS SITREPS.)

______ SECURITY SITUATION _______

- 4. (C) PAKISTAN: THE SITUATION IN PAKISTAN CONTINUED TO BE BASICALLY CALM TODAY. CONSULATE KARACHI REPORTED THAT THE CITY WAS QUIET. THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF ANY PROBLEMS IN QUETTA, THE CAPITAL OF BALUCHISTAN. KARACHI CG NOTED THAT PRESS REPORTS THAT A CRUISE MISSILE WAS FOUND IN A BALUCHISTAN DESERT HAVE RAISED SOME GRUMBLING IN THE REGION. LAHORE PO REPORTED THAT THERE WAS . A DEMONSTRATION OF SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE SPONSORED BY THE KASHMIRI TERRORIST GROUP HARKAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN. NO INCIDENTS WERE REPORTED. LAHORE PO NOTED CONTINUING REPORTS THAT EXTREMIST GROUPS ARE THREATENING THE U.S. WITH RETALIATION. MANY OF THESE REPORTS WERE IN THE URDU PRESS. ISLAMABAD ITSELF WAS QUIET, AMID CONTINUING REPORTS (REF A) THAT SOME MULLAHS AND ISLAMIC STUDENTS ARE PLANNING A DEMONSTRATION HERE ON AUGUST 27. THE PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES HAVE UNDERSCORED TO RSO THAT THEY WILL TAKE FIRM STEPS TO CONTAIN ANY PROBLEMS.
- (C) BECAUSE OF THREAT INFORMATION, CONSULATE PESHAWAR AMERICAN STAFF HAVE BEEN TEMPORARILY WITHDRAWN TO ISLAMABAD AS A PRECAUTION.

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6. (C) AFGHANISTAN: AN EMBASSY KABUL FSN CALLED IN THIS MORNING CONFIDENTIAL

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PAKISTAN

7. (C) THE PAKISTANI PRESS CONTINUES TO FAITHFULLY COVER LOCAL REACTION TO THE U.S. STRIKES. THE BIG STORY TODAY, REPORTED IN ALL THE MAJOR DAILIES, IS THE ALLEGED CONFIRMATION BY FOREIGN MINISTER SARTAJ AZIZ, SPEAKING IN THE SENATE, THAT AN UNEXPLODED CRUISE MISSILE HAD BEEN FOUND IN A REMOTE PART OF BALUCHISTAN AT A PLACE CALLED SHATINGAR, NOT FAR FROM THE SITE OF THE PAKISTANI NUCLEAR TESTS (ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS). AZIZ SAID THAT PAKISTAN INTENDED TO PROTEST THIS VIOLATION OF PAKISTANI AIR SPACE AT THE UN.

8. (C) MEANWHILE, HE AND OTHER GOP SPOKESMEN CONTINUED TO DEFEND THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST OPPOSITION CHARGES THAT THE GOP HAD EITHER FAILED TO DETECT THE U.S. ATTACK OR HAD GIVEN IT MATERIAL ASSISTANCE. IN A CONTINUING EVOLUTION OF HER OWN POSITION,

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FORMER PM BENAZIR BHUTTO CALLED FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF THE USE OF PAKISTANI SOIL BY THE U.S. IN CARRYING OUT ITS ATTACK AGAINST BIN LADEN TARGETS IN AFGHANISTAN.

9. (U) THE CENTRIST ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY "THE NEWS" ALSO CARRIES A SHORT FRONT-PAGE PIECE, DATELINE WASHINGTON, STATING THAT VC JCS GEN RALSTON WAS IN ISLAMABAD "HAND HOLDING" KEY PAKISTANI OFFICALS DURING THE STRIKES AGAINST BIN LADEN. THE STORY ATTRIBUTED RALSTON'S PRESENCE TO U.S. FEARS THAT THE PAKISTANIS MIGHT MISTAKE THE U.S. CRUISE MISSILE STRIKES FOR AN INDIAN ATTACK AGAINST PAKISTAN. RALSTON WAS THERE TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT IF PAKISTANI AIR DEFENSES DETECTED THE ATTACK, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 06433 02 OF 03 251423Z WHICH, AS IT TURNED OUT, THEY DID NOT.

10. (C) ACTION REQUEST. EMBASSY REQUESTS APPROPRIATE WASHINGTON GUIDANCE ON HOW TO RESPOND TO LOCAL INQUIRIES REGARDING THE BALUCHISTAN MISSILE AND RALSTON REPORTS.

AFGHANISTAN

- 11. (SBU) MULLAH OMAR SAYS U.S. OFFERED TALKS AFTER STRIKES: THE AFGHAN ISLAMIC PRESS (AIP) REPORTED AUGUST 25 THAT TALIBAN LEADER MULLAH OMAR CLAIMED IN AN INTERVIEW EARLIER IN THE DAY THAT THE U.S. HAD OFFERED TO TALK WITH THE TALIBAN IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE AUGUST 20 STRIKES ON TERRORIST CAMPS IN KHOST. OMAR WAS ALSO CITED AS SAYING "THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO TALK ABOUT AFTER THE MISSILE RAID." WHEN QUERIED ABOUT THE REPORT, PAO WAS QUOTED AS STATING THAT THE U.S. WAS ALWAYS OPEN TO TALK WITH THE AFGHAN FACTIONS, INCLUDING THE TALIBAN. (NOTE: FOR MORE ON STORY SEE FBIS BANGKOK DTG 250820Z AUG 98.) PAO TOLD POLOFF THAT HE WAS RECEIVING MANY PRESS INQUIRIES ABOUT THIS STORY.
- 12. (C) OMAR SAID TO RECEIVE BIN LADIN'S ASSURANCES: RAHIMULLAH YUSUFZAI, A JOURNALIST WITH CLOSE CONNECTIONS TO THE TALIBAN, REPORTED IN AUGUST 25 "THE NEWS" THAT BIN LADIN HAD GIVEN MULLAH OMAR ASSURANCES THAT HE WILL LISTEN TO THE TALIBAN LEADERSHIP. YUSUFZAI CLAIMED THAT HE PICKED UP THIS INFORMATION FROM MULLAH OMAR ASSISTANT MAULAWI WAKIL AHMED, WHO HE INTERVIEWED ON AUGUST 24. YUSUFZAI'S REPORT COMES AFTER HIS AUGUST 24 STORY THAT OMAR WAS UPSET WITH BIN LADIN FOR CONTINUING TO MAKE THREATS AGAINST CONFIDENTIAL
- PAGE 04 ISLAMA 06433 02 OF 03 251423Z
 THE U.S. WHILE IN AFGHANISTAN. OMAR PURPORTEDLY FELT THAT THIS MEANT THAT BIN LADIN WAS SETTING HIMSELF UP AS AN ALTERNATE LEADER IN AFGHANISTAN SINCE THE TALIBAN HAVE TOLD HIM MANY TIMES TO CONTROL HIS ACTIVITIES. WAKIL AHMED SAID THE TALIBAN WILL NOT HAND OVER BIN LADIN TO ANYONE, BUT WILL TRY HIM IF SOLID EVIDENCE IS PRESENTED TO THE TALIBAN THAT HE IS INVOLVED IN TERRORISM.
- 13. (C) COMMENTS BY FORMER RESISTANCE LEADER: IN AN AUGUST 25 MEETING,

 MEETING,

 A WELL-KNOWN RESISTANCE LEADER (AND ONE OF "THE PESHAWAR 7") WITH CLOSE LINKS TO THE TALIBAN, TOLD POLOFF THAT THE U.S. HAD THE RIGHT TO FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM. HOWEVER, HE SAID THE STRIKES ON KHOST WERE INAPPROPRIATE SINCE THE TALIBAN HAVE REPEATEDLY PROMISED TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST BIN LADIN IF EVIDENCE WAS PRESENTED TO THEM TYING

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HIM TO TERRORISM. POLOFF NOTED THAT THE U.S. EVIDENCE WAS UNIMPEACHABLE. COMMENTED THAT THE STRIKES HAVE ANGERED MANY IN THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT WHO CONSIDERED THEMSELVES FRIENDS OF THE U.S. HE SAID THE U.S. SHOULD MEET WITH THE TALIBAN AND TRY TO WORK OUT DIFFERENCES. HE NOTED THAT TALIBAN POSITIONS SEEM TO BE HARDENING. EXPANDING ON THIS POINT, HE

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CONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS THAT TALIBAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS, INCLUDING KEY MULLAHS ZAKIRI AND SHINWARI, HAD RECENTLY ISSUED A "FATWA" REQUIRING MUSLIMS TO PROTECT BIN LADIN.

14. (C) JOURNALISTS REPORTEDLY FREED BY TALIBAN: EMBASSY IS TRYING TO CONFIRM PRESS REPORTS THAT FOUR PAKISTANI AND AFGHAN NATIONALS WORKING FOR INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICES HAVE BEEN FREED BY THE TALIBAN. THE STRINGERS WERE REPORTEDLY HELD BY THE TALIBAN WHEN THEY ENTERED KHOST PROVINCE ON AUGUST 21. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE TALIBAN SMASHED THE REPORTERS' EQUIPMENT. EASTHAM

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