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 AMCONSUL KARACHI
 AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
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 E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PGOV, KISL, MOPS, PINS, AF
 SUBJECT: THE TALIBAN - WHO KNOWS WHAT THE MOVEMENT MEANS?

REF: A) ISLAMABAD 11002 (NOTAL), B) ISLAMABAD 10840 (NOTAL),
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E. AHMAD
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1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. THIS MESSAGE WAS PRINCIPALLY DRAFTED BY CONSULATE PESHAWAR AND COORDINATED WITH EMBASSY ISLAMABAD.

SUMMARY

3. THE ORIGINS, GOALS AND SPONSORS OF THE "TALIBAN" (RELIGIOUS STUDENTS) MOVEMENT REMAIN UNCLEAR, EVEN TO WELL-INFORMED AFGHANS. THE ORGANIZATION APPEARS TO HAVE ITS ORIGINS IN THE JEHADI GROUP OF THE SAME NAME, WHICH CONSISTED OF PASHTUN MADRASA STUDENTS FROM AFGHANISTAN'S SOUTHWEST WHO FOUGHT WITH DISTINCTION AGAINST THE SOVIETS. AFTER THE WAR, THE STUDENTS RETURNED TO THEIR RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS AND NOW SEEM TO HAVE BEEN RE-MOBILIZED THROUGH A COMBINATION OF FRUSTRATION WITH EXTORTIONIST PARTY COMMANDERS AND FOREIGN FINANCING -- PROBABLY BY CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN PAKISTAN. TALIBAN LEADERS ARE POLITICAL ISLAMISTS WHO HAVE DECLARED SHARIAH LAW IN KANDAHAR, AND ARE REPORTED TO FOLLOW A CONSERVATIVE, TRADITIONALIST RELIGIOUS LINE.

4. THE TALIBAN NOW CONTROL MOST OF KANDAHAR PROVINCE, HAVE
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 MOVED INTO ZABUL AND GHAZNI, AND APPEAR TO ENJOY THE OPEN ADMIRATION OF MOST AFGHANS FOR TAKING ACTION AGAINST EXTORTIONIST PARTY COMMANDERS AND UNRESPONSIVE PARTY LEADERSHIP. THE UNCONTROVERSIAL, CONSERVATIVE VALUES ESPOUSED BY THE TRADITIONALIST, MULLAH-LED GROUP (FREEING THE ROADS FROM BANDITS, RESTORING LAW AND ORDER AND RESPECT FOR TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS NORMS, ETC.) HAVE MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR BOTH FACTIONAL AND NEUTRAL AFGHAN ACTIVISTS TO PUBLICLY EXPRESS THEIR RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE POPULAR MOVEMENT'S PATRONS AND POSSIBLE ULTERIOR MOTIVES.

5. PRIVATELY, HOWEVER, PARTY LEADERS ARE WORRIED BY BOTH THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT AND ITS OBVIOUS POPULARITY. BOTH RABBANI AND HEKMATYAR ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO COOPERATE WITH OR COOPT THE ORGANIZATION, WITH HEKMATYAR PARTICULARLY WORRIED BY THE SUPPORT THE GROUP HAS RECEIVED FROM PRO-RABBANI MULLAH NAQIB IN KANDAHAR. A NUMBER OF AFGHAN POLITICAL OPPORTUNISTS AND HAS-BEENS ARE FLOCKING TO THE TALIBAN IN HOPES OF RESUSCITATING MORIBUND POLITICAL CAREERS.

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HOW SUCCESSFUL OUTSIDE ELEMENTS -- BE THEY AFGHANS OR PAKISTANIS -- WILL BE IN CONTROLLING OR INFLUENCING THE TALIBAN REMAINS VERY MUCH IN DOUBT.

6. SOME AFGHAN OBSERVERS ARGUE THAT, DESPITE PROBABLE ASSISTANCE FROM PAKISTAN'S JUI, THE TALIBAN LACK THE LOGISTICS, TRAINING, ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE AND FINANCIAL BACKING TO EXPAND MUCH FARTHER. THE CONSTERNATION OF THE AFGHAN FACTIONS WOULD TEND TO SUGGEST OTHERWISE. ALTHOUGH MUCH ELSE ABOUT THE TALIBAN IS MURKY, ONE FACT IS CLEAR: THE STRONG SUPPORT THE TALIBAN RECEIVE FROM THE AFGHAN PEOPLE REFLECTS POPULAR FRUSTRATION WITH THE PARTY LEADERS AND A STRONG DESIRE FOR

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 PEACE AND STABILITY. END SUMMARY.

MEET THE NEW BOSS...

7. THE "NEW" TALIBAN (RELIGIOUS SEEKERS OR STUDENTS) MOVEMENT BEGAN IN KANDAHAR PROVINCE LAST SPRING WITH A DECLARED MISSION TO OPEN UP THE ROADS AND END THE ORGANIZED BANDITRY OF LOCAL COMMANDERS. AFTER SOME MINOR SUCCESSES, INCLUDING THE EXECUTION OF A RECALCITRANT "TOLL-COLLECTOR", THE GROUP ROSE TO PROMINENCE IN LATE SEPTEMBER AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE "RELIEF CONVOY" ORGANIZED BY PAKISTAN'S INTERIOR MINISTER BABAR ATTEMPTED TO ENTER AFGHANISTAN.

8. FOLLOWING SHARP FIGHTING WITH HIG AND ITTEHAD-AFFILIATED COMMANDERS, AND THE APPARENT COOPTION OF THE MAJOR JAMIAT COMMANDER IN THE REGION (MULLAH NAQIB), THE TALIBAN CONTROL ALL BUT TWO OR THREE NORTHERN DISTRICTS IN KANDAHAR PROVINCE, ARE SEEKING TO BRING INDEPENDENT COMMANDERS IN ORUZGAN TO HEEL, AND HAVE A SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE IN HELMAND PROVINCE. HELMAND

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GOVERNOR GHAF FOUR AKHUNZADA OF HARAKAT, HIMSELF A CLERIC, HAS REPORTEDLY DECLARED "I AM A TALIB," ALTHOUGH WHETHER THIS SHOULD BE READ AS WELCOMING THE PRESENCE OF THE TALIBAN OR INDICATING THAT THEY ARE UNNECESSARY IN HELMAND IS UNCLEAR.

9. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCES, THE TALIBAN ARE SAID TO HAVE MADE AGREEMENTS WITH THE GOVERNOR OF ZABUL AND GHAZNI GOVERNOR QARI BABA TO ALLOW THEM TO POLICE THE KANDAHAR-KABUL ROAD. RECENT TALIBAN SUCCESSES IN GHAZNI AND ZABUL, HOWEVER, IN CONTRAST TO EARLIER ONES, ARE SAID TO DEPEND MORE UPON BRIBING COMMANDERS THAN FIGHTING THEM. YET DESPITE THIS SIGNIFICANT

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ACTIVITY, THE SPECIFICS OF THE MOVEMENT'S SPONSORSHIP, MEMBERSHIP, AND OBJECTIVES REMAIN MURKY.

10. HERAT GOVERNOR ISMAEL KHAN (WHO STANDS TO GAIN CONSIDERABLE CUSTOMS REVENUES IF THE CENTRAL ASIA-PAKISTAN ROAD IS OPENED) HAS ALSO PUBLICLY ENDORSED THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT. SPEAKING TO VISITING WESTERN AID DONORS, HOWEVER, ISMAEL KHAN WAS MORE CRITICAL IN HIS ASSESSMENT. HE SAID THE TALIBAN WERE THE PRODUCT OF LOCAL FRUSTRATION WITH DISORDER AND INSECURITY. WHERE AFGHANISTAN WAS STABLE AND AT PEACE (E.G., PRESUMABLY, HERAT) THE TALIBAN WOULD NOT BE NEEDED. KHAN ADDED THAT IN KANDAHAR THEY HAD BECOME EXTREMISTS, WHO HAD DESTROYED RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS, APPARENTLY FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS. AS A RESULT, KHAN SAID HE HAD SENT A DELEGATION TO THE TALIBAN TO ASK THEM TO MODERATE THEIR BEHAVIOR. HE ALSO CONFIRMED THAT THE GROUP HAD RECEIVED FUNDING FROM RABBANI TO OPEN UP THE

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 KABUL-KANDAHAR-HERAT ROAD.

SAME AS THE OLD BOSS?

11. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCES, THE CURRENT TALIBAN MOVEMENT DRAWS ITS INSPIRATION (AND SOME OF ITS LEADERS) FROM THE OLD TALIBAN ORGANIZATION, A GROUP OF RELIGIOUS STUDENTS AND MULLAHS WHO FOUGHT WITH DISTINCTION IN THE KANDAHAR REGION DURING THE JEHAD. FOLLOWING THE END OF THE WAR, MANY OF THESE TALIBAN RETURNED HOME TO STUDY AND TEACH IN RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS (MADRASAS). THIS OLDER GROUP, JOINED BY YOUNGER STUDENTS FROM THE AREA, NOW COMPRISE THE CORE OF THE CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENT, KNOWLEDGABLE KANDAHARIS REPORT. THESE OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE TALIBAN ENJOY THE SUPPORT OF THE BAZAARIS, WHOSE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN HAMPERED BY HIGHWAY "TOLL BOOTHS." GIVING A BLACK EYE TO "ARROGANT" LOCAL COMMANDERS AND CAUSING DISCOMFORT TO THE STUBBORN PARTY LEADERS ARE IN AND OF THEMSELVES ACTIVITIES WITH ENORMOUS MASS APPEAL, LEADING SOME SOUTHERN PARTY COMMANDERS SUCH AS ABDUL RAZAK (HIZB-I-ISLAMI-KHALIS) [REDACTED] TO PITCH IN THEIR LOT WITH THE TALIBAN.

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WHO ARE THESE GUYS AND WHO ARE THEY WORKING FOR?

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12. MANY OBSERVERS, [REDACTED] BELIEVE THAT THE MOVEMENT WAS INITIALLY SPONSORED AND ASSISTED BY PAKISTAN (REFTELS A AND E). THE APPEARANCE OF A NEW FORCE, WITH NEW WEAPONS, AT THE PRECISE MOMENT THAT PAKISTAN CLAIMED THAT OPENING THE ROAD FROM CHAMAN TO KANDAHAR, HERAT, AND ON TO THE
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CAR WAS ONE OF ITS PRIORITIES WAS TOO MUCH OF A COINCIDENCE TO RESIST. WHILE THE CURRENT DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF THE GOP MAY BE OPEN TO QUESTION, ALL AGREE THAT PAKISTAN'S JAMIAT-I-ULEMA-I-ISLAMI (JUI) LEADER FAZLUR RAHMAN CONTINUES TO BE ACTIVE IN SUPPORTING THE MOVEMENT. MOST AFGHAN SOURCES, HOWEVER, NOW SAY THAT EVEN IF THE GOP (AND PARTICULARLY INTERIOR MINISTER BABAR, A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE "CENTRAL ASIA ROAD") WAS ONE OF THE INITIAL SPONSORS, IT NO LONGER CONTROLS THE MOVEMENT.

13. CERTAINLY IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS SO FAR, THE TALIBAN HAVE REJECTED LINKS WITH THE GOP. SINCE THE CREDIBILITY OF ANY AFGHAN ORGANIZATION DEPENDS ON DEMONSTRATING THAT IT IS FREE OF FOREIGN CONTROL, THIS POSITION IS NOT SURPRISING. HOWEVER, IN BOTH EARLIER PRESS ACCOUNTS AND A NOVEMBER 17 INTERVIEW IN SPIN BOLDAK, TALIBAN COMMANDER HAJI MOHAMMED GHAUS TOOK PAKISTAN TO TASK FOR FAILING TO COORDINATE THE TRUCK CONVOY WITH KABUL, FOR TRUSTING COMMANDERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WARRING PARTY FACTIONS; FOR FAILING TO USE AFGHAN TRUCKERS IN THE CONVOY, AND FOR CONTINUED BOTTLENECKS IN THE TRANSIT TRADE AT KARACHI.

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14. [REDACTED] TOLD CONSULATE
 PESHAWAR PRINCIPAL OFFICER THAT THE MOVEMENT HAD MULTIPLE
 SPONSORS, INCLUDING (IN DECLINING ORDER OF IMPORTANCE):

--RABBANI AND SAYYAF;

--PAKISTANI POLITICO-RELIGIOUS LEADER FAZLUR RAHMAN;

--THE KANDAHAR AND QUETTA BUSINESS COMMUNITIES EAGER TO HAVE THE
 HIGHWAY OPENED TO TOLL-FREE TRAFFIC; AND,

--CERTAIN MARGINALIZED POLITICAL FIGURES (COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE
 HAJI DID NOT EXPLICITLY SAY SO, PO BELIEVES THAT THIS IS A
 REFERENCE TO [REDACTED] WHO HAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED HIS
 SUPPORT FOR THE MOVEMENT).

15. [REDACTED] ADDED THAT HE WAS "QUITE SURE" THAT THE
 DECISION TO UNLEASH THE MOVEMENT WAS TAKEN AT THE MID-SEPTEMBER

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MEETINGS IN JALALABAD BETWEEN PRESIDENT RABBANI, PROFESSOR SAYYAF, AND OTHERS, FOLLOWING A DIRECT SUGGESTION OF FAZLUR RAHMAN. THE MOVEMENT WILL BACKFIRE, [REDACTED] WENT ON TO OPINE, BECAUSE IT IS CLEAR THAT THE TALIBAN ARE BOTH NATIONALISTS AND PASHTUNS; MANY OF THEM ARE PROBABLY ROYALISTS, [REDACTED] ADDED, AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT A LASTING ALLIANCE COULD BE FORMED WITH THE ANTI-ROYALIST TAJIKS OF JAMIAT. WHILE [REDACTED] ALLEGATIONS COULD NORMALLY BE VIEWED WITH SOME HEALTHY
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 SKEPTICISM, THERE HAS BEEN SOME CONFIRMATION FROM JAMIAT SOURCES OF AT LEAST A TACIT CONNECTION BETWEEN THE RABBANI GOVERNMENT AND THE MOVEMENT.

16. IN A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION [REDACTED] PESHAWAR PO'S DIRECT QUESTION ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT WAS RESPONDED TO WITH A "NO COMMENT" AND A PROMISE TO HAVE A REPRESENTATIVE DISCUSS THE ISSUE IN PERSON. ON NOVEMBER 20, [REDACTED] (A FORMER HAKAKAT COMMANDER WITH STRONG JAMIAT TIES) CALLED ON PO AT [REDACTED] REQUEST." VISITING FOR THE FIRST TIME WITHOUT AN INTERPRETER, THE ETHNIC PASHTUN EXPLAINED IN FARSI THAT TALIBAN LEADER MOHAMMAD OMAR (REFTEL E) AND MAULANA FAZLUR REHMAN HAD REQUESTED PERMISSION FROM PRESIDENT RABBANI IN JALALABAD TO "CLEAN-UP" THE CHAMAN-KANDAHAR HIGHWAY. PERMISSION WAS GRANTED BY RABBANI, [REDACTED] SAID, "BUT RABBANI DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HE WAS GETTING INTO."

THE TALIBAN - THREAT OR MENACE TO THE PARTIES?

17. DESPITE THIS REPORTED EARLY APPROVAL FROM THE RABBANI GOVERNMENT, OFFICIAL SPOKESMEN FROM THE MAJOR PARTIES (INCLUDING BOTH HEKMATYAR SON-IN-LAW HUMAYUN JARIR AND JAMIAT'S MASOOD KHALILI) HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO AVOID EITHER DIRECT CRITICISM OR PRAISE OF THE MOVEMENT IN BOTH THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND IN MEETINGS WITH EMBASSY AND CONSULATE OFFICERS. WHEN PRESSED FOR AN OFFICIAL POSITION, DR TALEEB OF HEZB-I-WAHDAT AND THE PESHAWAR RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE SUPREME COORDINATION COUNCIL (SCC) WOULD ONLY SAY -- OFFICIALLY
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-- THAT THE SCC HAD NO FORMAL POSITION, AND HAD DISPATCHED A DELEGATION LED BY DR HASMATULLAH MOJADEDDI TO QUETTA TO ASSESS THE SITUATION.

18. INFLUENTIAL PLAYERS OUTSIDE THE PARTY STRUCTURE ARE ALSO RELUCTANT TO PUBLICLY CRITICIZE THE MOVEMENT, [REDACTED] NOTING THAT "IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER THEY ARE GOOD OR BAD" AND [REDACTED] CLOSE ASSOCIATE, [REDACTED] TELLING EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT THE TALIBAN ACTIONS HAVE "SO FAR BEEN FREE OF ANYTHING TO CRITICIZE." [REDACTED] HAS STATED BLUNTLY THAT HEKMATYAR, RABBANI, AND MASOOD ARE BEWILDERED EVEN THOUGH ONE OF THEM (WHICH ONE HE REFRAINED FROM IDENTIFYING) SUPPORTS THEM.

19. PRIVATELY, HOWEVER, ACTIVISTS FROM OUTSIDE THE TALIBAN WILL EXPRESS THEIR FEARS. [REDACTED] HAS TOLD PESHAWAR PO AND ISLAMABAD POLOFF THAT THE TALIBAN ARE "QUITE DANGEROUS -- EVEN MORE DANGEROUS THAN THE PARTY LEADERS (SIC)." THE PARTY LEADERS, HE CLAIMS, CAN AT LEAST TALK TO EACH OTHER EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH THEIR "EDUCATED SUPPORTERS." THE

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TALIBAN, HOWEVER, "ARE HALF-EDUCATED AND NAIVE." ABDUL HAQ, WHILE UNWILLING TO CHARACTERIZE THE MOVEMENT, ADMITS TO THE DANGERS IT POSES SAYING, "IF THIS GETS OUT OF HAND, ALL OF THE UN WORK COULD BE FOR NOTHING. IT LOOKS LIKE AFGHANISTAN WAS FIRST DESTROYED BY THE COMMUNISTS, THEN BY THE FUNDAMENTALISTS, AND NOW WE MIGHT BE DESTROYED BY THE MULLAHS."

20. EVEN SOME OF THE MOVEMENT'S APPARENT SUPPORTERS HAVE EXPRESSED UNEASE. [REDACTED] WHO IS APPARENTLY COOPERATING WITH THE TALIBAN IN HELMAND PROVINCE, HAS BEEN QUOTED BY JAMIAT SOURCES AS SAYING, "I'M A TALIB; BUT WE MUST SEE WHERE THE MOVEMENT IS GOING." KANDAHAR'S [REDACTED] WHO POST BELIEVES LOOKS UPON THE TALIBAN AS HIS VEHICLE FOR GETTING BACK ON THE NATIONAL STAGE, ADMITS "THAT THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW TOO MANY UNNECESSARY HANGINGS."

INTENSE ATTRACTION

21. THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT HOLDS OUT HOPE FOR WAR-WEARY AFGHANS DISGUSTED WITH THE FAILURE OF NATIONAL-LEVEL LEADERS TO COMPROMISE AND THE FAILURE OF LOCAL COMMANDERS TO ESTABLISH LOCAL SECURITY. MOST AFGHANS PERCEIVE LOCAL COMMANDERS AS THE GREATEST THREATS TO RESIDENTS AND TRAVELERS ALIKE.

PRESSURE ON THE PARTIES - COPY-CAT CRUSADERS?

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22. THE TALIBAN'S APPARENT FREEDOM OF ACTION HAS FACTIONAL LEADERS CONCERNED THAT THEIR OWN MONOPOLY ON POWER AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS IS AT STAKE. HOWEVER, SEVERAL SOURCES -- INCLUDING THOSE FROM HIG, SCC, JAMIAT, THE UN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL, AND THE COUNCIL FOR UNDERSTANDING AND NATIONAL UNITY -- DOUBT THE STAYING POWER OF THE KANDAHARI TALIBAN. "THEY'RE TRAINED TO BE MULLAHS," SAID ONE SOURCE, "AND THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND LOGISTICS OR ADMINISTRATION. HOW FAR CAN THEY GO?"

23. HOWEVER, THERE IS CONCERN THAT THE MULLAH-LED TALIBAN, EVEN IF ULTIMATELY UNSUCCESSFUL, WILL ENCOURAGE A HOST OF COPY-CAT ORGANIZATIONS EAGER TO TAKE ON THE WARRING FACTIONS. ONE FIGURE FREQUENTLY MENTIONED AS ONE WHO COULD CARRY AN ARMED NON-PARTISAN CAMPAIGN FORWARD IS SAID AGHA, THE MAULAWI OF TERAKHEL. MAULAWI TERAKHEL, AS HE IS USUALLY KNOWN, IS A WELL-RESPECTED RELIGIOUS FIGURE WITH SOUND NON-PARTISAN MUJ CREDENTIALS (IT WAS HIS SUMMER 1979 ATTACK ON KABUL AIRPORT THAT PRECIPITATED THE EVACUATION OF AMERICAN DEPENDENTS FROM KABUL) AND A FOUNDING FATHER OF THE NON-PARTISAN COUNCIL OF UNDERSTANDING AND NATIONAL UNITY (SHURA-E TAFAHOM WA WAHDAT-E MILLI). WITH ABDUL HAQ, GENERAL KATAWAZI, AND AMIN WARDAK AS COUNCIL MEMBERS, THE GROUP HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN FOR ITS YEARNING FOR A "THIRD FORCE."

24. IN A NOVEMBER 17 MEETING WITH PO, THE MAULAWI SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN OFFERED, AND REJECTED, LEADERSHIP OF THE KANDAHARI TALIBAN. "I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THEM," HE SAID, "OR WHO REALLY SUPPORTS THEM, OR HOW LONG THEY CAN KEEP GOING." "NONETHELESS," HE WENT ON, "I THINK THE PEOPLE THAT ARE USING THE TALIBAN ARE IN FOR A SURPRISE, AND THE TALIBAN HAVE A GOOD

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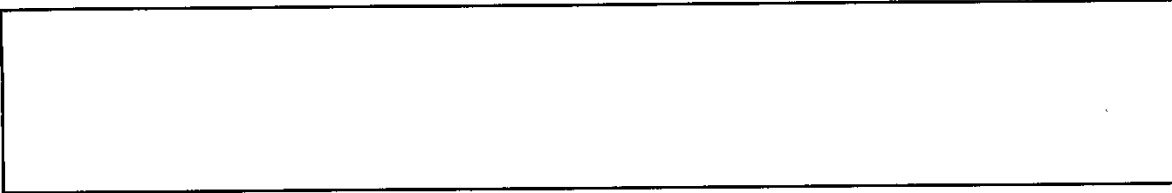
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26. WHILE THIS CHALLENGE SOUNDS LIKE HYPERBOLE, IT AT LEAST ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF THE NEUTRAL NANGARHAR SHURA WHICH DISPATCHED (ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] AN ADDITIONAL 400 MEN TO THE TORKHAM BORDER TO GUARD AGAINST "DISTURBANCES." THE [REDACTED] DEEP-SEATED DISLIKE OF ABDUR-RASUL SAYYAF, WHOSE ITTEHAD FORCES MAN A POST AT TORKHAM, WAS PROBABLY NOT INCIDENTAL TO THE SHURA'S DECISION.

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ACTION SA-01

INFO	LOG-00	CIAE-00	OASY-00	DODE-00	EUR-01	FBIE-00	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-16	ADS-00	NEA-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	PM-00
	P-01	SNIS-00	NISC-01	PMB-00	DRL-09	/032W	
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P 280616Z NOV 94
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9022
INFO USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
USIA WASHDC 2659
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMCONSUL JEDDAH
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
ISLAMIC CONFERENCE COLLECTIVE

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 E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PGOV, KISL, MOPS, PINS, AF
 SUBJECT: THE TALIBAN - WHO KNOWS WHAT THE MOVEMENT MEANS?

27. [REDACTED] DISMISSED EARLIER REPORTS THAT HEKMATYAR HAD DISPATCHED MEMBERS OF HIS YOUTH WING TO WORK WITH HIM. "I PRAY THE DAY WILL NEVER COME WHEN I NEED HELP FROM HEKMATYAR," THE [REDACTED] SAID, NOTING THAT HEKMATYAR HAD BEEN A VERY POOR THEOLOGY STUDENT DURING THE HIG LEADER'S PESHAWAR DAYS.

28. [REDACTED] NOTED THAT HE WAS VERY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE UN PEACE EFFORT, AND HOPED THAT THE KANDAHARI TALIBAN DID NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE PROCESS. THE GREATER DANGER TO THE UN PROCESS, HE SAID, WAS THE THREAT OF SABOTAGE BY THE OIC, SUDAN-BASED EXTREMISTS, OR PAKISTANI FUNDAMENTALISTS "WHO HAVE RUINED THINGS BEFORE. AS FOR ME, I HAVE ALL MY HOPES ON THE UN, AND CONTINUE TO PUT MYSELF AT MESTIRI'S DISPOSAL."

QUO BONO?

29. JUST AS THERE ARE CONFLICTING REPORTS ON THE SPONSORS OF THE TALIBAN, THERE IS WILDLY CONFLICTING SPECULATION ON EXACTLY WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THEIR ACTIONS. [REDACTED] EXPLICITLY NOTED THAT THE TALIBAN WILL "PERHAPS" BE USEFUL IN BRINGING THE PARTY LEADERS, PARTICULARLY HEKMATYAR, KHALIS, RABBANI, AND SAYAAF, TOGETHER TO FACE A COMMON THREAT.

[REDACTED] A THIRD FORCE ADVOCATE AND SUPPORTER OF THE UN PROCESS, SAYS THE CHALLENGE WILL BE TO "GET THEM ON OUR SIDE." OTHER OBSERVERS FEEL THAT THE LOCAL SUCCESS AT BREAKING THE MAJOR PARTIES' MONOPOLIES WILL GIVE RENEWED HEART TO THE

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 NON-PARTISAN TRADITIONALISTS/ROYALISTS OF KANDAHAR, OR THE PERENNIALY MENTIONED COMPROMISE CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT AND TRADITIONALIST HARAKAT LEADER NABI MOHAMMADI, OR EVEN THE LARGELY MARGINALIZED HAMID KARZAI.

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COMMENT

26. THE TALIBAN'S ORIGINS AND FUTURE REMAIN AN ENIGMA, WITH EVEN THE MOST WELL-INFORMED SPECULATION CONFRONTED WITH PARADOXES. IT DOES APPEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE TALIBAN ARE CERTAINLY NOT ACTING TO THE EXCLUSIVE BENEFIT OF ANY OF THE ESTABLISHED VESTED INTERESTS, AND EVEN THOSE THAT HAVE LONGED FOR A "THIRD FORCE" SEEM SURPRISED AT WHAT HAS DEVELOPED. THE STRONG SUPPORT THE TALIBAN HAVE RECEIVED THUS FAR FROM THE AFGHAN PEOPLE REFLECTS THE DEGREE OF POPULAR FRUSTRATION WITH THE PARTY LEADERS AND A STRONG DESIRE FOR PEACE AND STABILITY.
END COMMENT.

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