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	EB-00	EUR-00	FAAE-00	FBO-01	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
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	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
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P R 121212Z JAN 01
 FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4039
 AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY
 INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
 USMISSION GENEVA
 AMEMBASSY ALMATY
 AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
 AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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 AMEMBASSY LONDON
 AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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 AMEMBASSY ROME

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 AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
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 AMCONSUL DUBAI
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 AMCONSUL KARACHI
 DIA WASHDC 1419

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 07 PESHAWAR 00021

DEPT FOR SA/PAB, DS/OP/NEA; LONDON FOR POL - SUTPHIN;
 PARIS FOR POL - HANSON; ROME FOR POL - QUESADA;
 ISLAMABAD ALSO FOR LAHORE; ALMATY ALSO FOR DUSHANBE

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/11

TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, ASEC, AF

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: MILITARY SITUATION REVIEWED

REFS: A) 2000 PESHAWAR 264 (SHOMALI); B) 2000 PESHAWAR 295 (SHOMALI OFFENSIVE ANALYSIS); C) 2000 PESHAWAR 544 (WAHIDI KILLING); D) 2000 ISLAMABAD 5902 (UNSMO ON TALOQAN FIGHTING); E) 2000 ALMATY 011523 (DUSHANBE CABLE ON MASOUD S TROUBLES); F) ISLAMABAD 090 (BAMIYAN FIGHTING)

(U) CLASSIFIED BY: DAVID J. KATZ, PRINCIPAL OFFICER, AMCONSUL PESHAWAR. REASON: 1.5 (D)

1. (U) SUMMARY: THE TALIBAN MADE SIGNIFICANT ADVANCES NORTH OF THE HINDU KUSH MOUNTAINS DURING THE PAST YEAR, AND ARE IN POSITION TO MAINTAIN AND
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INCREASE PRESSURE ON THE OPPOSITION WHEN FIGHTING RESUMES IN EARNEST, AS IT LIKELY WILL IN THE SPRING OF 2001. DESPITE THE TALIBAN'S IMPROVED MILITARY POSITION, THEY REMAIN UNABLE TO DELIVER A KNOCK-OUT BLOW. ON THE OTHER SIDE, THE OPPOSITION'S FUTURE IS INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO THE CONTINUED MILITARY LEADERSHIP OF AHMAD SHAH MASOUD AND HIS ABILITY TO PROCURE THE MATERIEL THAT HE NEEDS TO CONTEND WITH THE SUPERIOR MANPOWER AND FIREPOWER OF THE TALIBAN. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) THIS MESSAGE REVIEWS THE MILITARY GAINS THAT THE TALIBAN ACHIEVED BY THE END THE 2000 FIGHTING SEASON, AND OUTLINES THE ISSUES THAT THE CONTENDING SIDES FACE IN 2001. THE FOLLOWING REGIONS WILL BE DISCUSSED IN TURN: THE SHOMALI PLAIN, IMMEDIATELY NORTH OF KABUL; EASTERN AFGHANISTAN; THE NORTHEASTERN REGION OF BAGHLAN, KUNDUZ, AND TAKHAR PROVINCES; AND THE NORTH-CENTRAL PORTION OF THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE HAZARAJAT REGION. NOTE: ALL PLACE NAMES REFERRED TO IN THIS MESSAGE MAY BE EASILY LOCATED ON ANY MAP OF AFGHANISTAN WHICH SHOWS PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT BOUNDARIES. END NOTE. FINALLY, THIS MESSAGE DISCUSSES THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE OPPOSITION MIGHT BE STRENGTHENED IN 2001 THROUGH THE RETURN OF SUCH FIGURES AS ABDUL RASHID DOSTUM AND ISMAIL KHAN.

THE SHOMALI FRONT

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3. (SBU). THE FIRST HALF OF 2000 WITNESSED SPORADIC
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SKIRMISHING AROUND THE COUNTRY BETWEEN THE TALIBAN,
UNDER THE SUPREME LEADERSHIP OF MULLAH MOHAMMAD OMAR,
AND THE OPPOSITION, THE UNITED ISLAMIC FRONT FOR THE
SALVATION OF AFGHANISTAN (UIFSA, A.K.A. THE NORTHERN
ALLIANCE), WHICH IS NOMINALLY LED BY PRESIDENT
BURHANUDDIN RABBANI, BUT IN FACT IS RUN BY LOOSE
COALITION OF MILITARY LEADERS GROUPED AROUND AHMAD
SHAH MASOUD, RABBANI'S DEFENSE MINISTER. THIS INITIAL
FIGHTING WAS INCONSEQUENTIAL UNTIL EARLY JULY, WHEN
THE TALIBAN LAUNCHED THEIR FIRST MAJOR OFFENSIVE OF
THE YEAR, IN THE SHOMALI PLAIN REGION, JUST NORTH OF
KABUL, AS REPORTED IN REF A. IN A REPEAT OF THE
FAILED OFFENSIVES OF PREVIOUS SUMMERS, THE TALIBAN
SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES AND TOOK LITTLE NEW GROUND,
AS NOTED IN REF B. BY LATE JULY, THE FIGHTING HAD
GROUND TO A STALEMATE, AND ESTABLISHED THE CURRENT
FRONT LINE IN THE REGION. AT PRESENT, THE FRONT LINE
STRETCHES FROM A POINT SEVERAL KILOMETERS SOUTH OF THE
TOWN OF MAHMUD-I RAQI, IN KAPISA PROVINCE, DUE WEST TO
THE INTERSECTION OF THE SPUR ROAD THAT CONNECTS THE

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	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
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P R 121212Z JAN 01
FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4040
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY ALMATY
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
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AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
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AMCONSUL KARACHI
DIA WASHDC 1420

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 07 PESHAWAR 00021

DEPT FOR SA/PAB, DS/OP/NEA; LONDON FOR POL - SUTPHIN;
PARIS FOR POL - HANSON; ROME FOR POL - QUESADA;
ISLAMABAD ALSO FOR LAHORE; ALMATY ALSO FOR DUSHANBE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/11

TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, ASEC, AF

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: MILITARY SITUATION REVIEWED

BAGRAM AIRFIELD WITH THE KABUL TO MAZAR-I SHARIF
HIGHWAY. THE BAGRAM AIRFIELD IS CURRENTLY A NO-MAN'S-
LAND, AND THUS THE TALIBAN ARE SPARED FROM MASOUD
USING IT, AS HE HAS IN YEARS PAST, AS A LAUNCHING SITE
FOR ROCKET ATTACKS ON KABUL, WHICH IS A MERE FIFTY KMS
FROM THE FRONT. TALIBAN OPERATIONS IN THE SHOMALI
APPEAR TO BE UNDER THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THE MINISTRY
OF DEFENSE IN KABUL, AND ARE STAGED FROM THEIR SUPPLY
DEPOT AT SHAKAR DARA, JUST NORTH OF KABUL, AS WELL AS
FROM OTHER STRATEGIC BASES IN GHORBAND, PARWAN
PROVINCE, TO THE WEST OF THE SHOMALI, AND IN NIJRAB,
KAPISA PROVINCE, TO THE EAST OF THE SHOMALI.

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4. (SBU) THE TALIBAN HAVE EFFECTIVELY DENIED MUCH OF
THE FERTILE SHOMALI TO THE UIFSA, BUT THEY HAVE NOT
BEEN ABLE TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT ADVANCES NORTH OF THE
EXISTING FRONT LINE. IN PART, THE REASONS FOR THE

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TALIBAN'S LACK OF SUCCESS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE TERRAIN: AS THEY MOVE NORTHWARDS THROUGH THE SHOMALI, THEY ARE COMPELLED TO FIGHT UPHILL AND IN AN EVER-NARROWING APPROACH TO THE SALANG PASS. THE UIFSA FORCES HAVE THE CORRESPONDING ADVANTAGES OF POSITIONS ABOVE THE ATTACKERS FROM WHICH THEY CAN CONTROL THE ONLY AVENUES OF ATTACK. MOREOVER, THE UIFSA IS TAKING NO CHANCES WITH LOSING THIS STRATEGIC REGION, WHICH GUARDS THE SOUTHERN ENTRANCE TO THE UIFSA STRONGHOLD IN THE PANJSHIR VALLEY. A NUMBER OF KEY UIFSA COMMANDERS, INCLUDING ABDUL-RASUL SAYYAF IN GUL BAHAR; GENERAL BABA JAN IN CHARIKAR; AND HAJI SHIR ALAM NEAR NIJRAB, ARE LEADING THE UIFSA DEFENSE OF THE REGION. GIVEN THE TALIBAN'S HISTORY OF FAILURE AND FRUSTRATION IN THE SHOMALI, THEIR CHANCES FOR SUCCESS IN THE REGION IN 2001 APPEAR TO BE SLIM, BARRING SOME DRAMATIC DETERIORATION IN THE UIFSA'S GROUP COHESION OR LOGISTICAL SITUATION.

EASTERN AFGHANISTAN

5. (SBU) THE PAST YEAR ALSO WITNESSED SPORADIC BUT ESSENTIALLY INSIGNIFICANT FIGHTING TO THE EAST OF KABUL IN THE PROVINCES OF LAGHMAN AND KUNAR. THE RECENT KILLING OF ABDULLAH JAN WAHIDI, THE UIFSA COMMANDER WHO HAD DEFECTED TO THE TALIBAN ONLY TO

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REJOIN THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE A FEW MONTHS LATER, AS REPORTED REF. C, LEFT UIFSA OPERATIONS IN LAGHMAN IN THE HANDS OF HIS SUCCESSOR, MUALLAM NABI, WHO IS ALLIED WITH WAHIDI'S BROTHER, ABDULLAH HADI WAHIDI. IN KUNAR PROVINCE, UIFSA ALLIES SUCH AS JAN DAD, HAZRAT ALI, AND MALIK ZAREEN CONTINUED TO MOUNT HARASSING OPERATIONS AGAINST THE TALIBAN FROM THEIR MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLDS, BUT WITH LITTLE CONSEQUENCE. THE THREAT OF THESE FORCES TO THE TALIBAN SEEMS TO BE MORE APPARENT THAN REAL. ON THE TALIBAN SIDE, MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE REGION ARE UNDER THE IMMEDIATE DIRECTION OF MAULAVI ABDUL SALAM ROCKETI. THE TALIBAN'S OVERALL ADMINISTRATION IN THE EASTERN ZONE, HEADQUARTERED AT JALALABAD, IS RUN BY MAULAVI ABDUL KABIR AND HIS DEPUTY, MAULAVI SADR-I AZAM. LOGISTICS ARE OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO THE BALANCE OF FORCES IN THE EASTERN ZONE. THE TALIBAN LINKS TO KABUL, AND ALSO TO PAKISTAN, ARE ESPECIALLY STRONG HERE. IN CONTRAST, THE UIFSA ALLIES, LARGELY CUT OFF FROM THE MAIN UIFSA FORCES IN THE PANJSHIR VALLEY,

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RELY ON A MIX OF SPORADIC HELICOPTER RE-SUPPLY FLIGHTS FROM THE NORTH AND OCCASIONAL CASH INFUSIONS. MASOUD APPEARS TO BE USING SUPPORT FOR HIS EASTERN ALLIES AS A WAY TO COMPEL THE TALIBAN TO COMMIT MILITARY RESOURCES AWAY FROM THE MAIN SHOMALI FRONT, BUT BASED ON THE MODEST EFFORTS THESE ALLIES HAVE MADE OVER THE PAST YEAR, IT'S NOT CLEAR THAT MASOUD IS GETTING GOOD VALUE FOR HIS MONEY.

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	EB-00	EUR-00	FAAE-00	FBO-01	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
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P R 121212Z JAN 01
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 AMEMBASSY ALMATY
 AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
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 AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
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 AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
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 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
 AMEMBASSY PARIS
 AMEMBASSY RIYADH
 AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL DUBAI
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL JEDDAH
AMCONSUL KARACHI
DIA WASHDC 1421

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 07 PESHAWAR 00021

DEPT FOR SA/PAB, DS/OP/NEA; LONDON FOR POL - SUTPHIN;
PARIS FOR POL - HANSON; ROME FOR POL - QUESADA;
ISLAMABAD ALSO FOR LAHORE; ALMATY ALSO FOR DUSHANBE

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6. (C) REGARDING THE SITUATION IN EASTERN
AFGHANISTAN, IN A MEETING WITH CONOFF ON 12/28/00,

B1

THE PECULIAR CASE OF KHOST

7. (SBU) SOUTH OF JALALABAD, THE PAST FEW WINTERS
HAVE WITNESSED CHAFFING BY THE PASHTUN TRIBESMEN OF
KHOST PROVINCE, AND PAKTIA TO A LESSER DEGREE, AGAINST
THE TALIBAN ADMINISTRATION. UNLIKE MANY REGIONS OF
TALIBAN-OCCUPIED AFGHANISTAN, THE KHOST REGION HAS NOT
BEEN DISARMED, AND SO THIS RESTIVENESS GIVES THE
TALIBAN SOME CAUSE FOR WORRY. REPORTS PROVIDED BY
TRAVELERS RETURNING FROM THE AREA IN EARLY DECEMBER

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2000 SUGGEST THAT THERE HAS LATELY BEEN A RESURGENCE IN TRIBAL-BASED DISSATISFACTION WITH THE TALIBAN, WHICH RESULTED IN SOME ARRESTS OF LOCAL LEADERS FOLLOWED BY PUBLIC HUMILIATIONS AND PUNISHMENTS. STILL, THE TALIBAN HAVE THUS FAR CONTROLLED THE SITUATION IN KHOST THROUGH A MIXTURE OF OPPRESSION AND CONCESSIONS, SUCH AS WHEN THEY REPLACED AN UNPOPULAR GOVERNOR IN JANUARY 2000. IN KHOST, AS IN ALL PASHTUN-DOMINATED AREAS, THE TALIBAN'S OCCUPATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE HAS BEEN ASSISTED BY THE FACT THAT HOWEVER MUCH AFGHAN PASHTUNS DISLIKE THE TALIBAN, THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO ALLY THEMSELVES WITH THE TAJIK-DOMINATED UIFSA IN A MANNER THAT WOULD SERIOUSLY CHALLENGE THE TALIBAN. PASHTUN DISSATISFACTION WITH THE TALIBAN IN KHOST THUS BEGS AN INTRIGUING QUESTION:

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WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR A VIABLE PASHTUN-BASED
OPPOSITION TO EMERGE AS A CHALLENGE TO THE TALIBAN?

THE NORTHEAST: BAGHLAN, KUNDUZ, AND TAKHAR

8. (C) THE TALIBAN'S MOST DRAMATIC SUCCESS IN 2000 OCCURRED NORTH OF THE HINDU KUSH MOUNTAINS DURING AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER IN BAGHLAN, KUNDUZ, AND TAKHAR PROVINCES. IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE JULY 2000 ATTACK IN THE SHOMALI, DESCRIBED IN PARA 3 ABOVE, WAS MERELY A POORLY PLANNED, AND COSTLY EFFORT TO DIVERT THE ATTENTION OF THE UIFSA FROM THE TALIBAN OFFENSIVE IN THE NORTHEAST, THE PREPARATION FOR WHICH HAD BEEN LONG UNDERWAY. OVER THE FIRST HALF OF 2000, THE TALIBAN MOVED SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF TROOPS AND SUPPLIES INTO POSITION IN THE NORTH, USING MAZAR-I SHARIF AS A STAGING GROUND. THE TALIBAN'S NORTHERN ADVANCE, WHICH CULMINATED IN THE EARLY SEPTEMBER CAPTURE OF TALOQAN, THE CAPITAL OF TAKHAR, SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE UIFSA SUPPLY ROUTES CONNECTING THE UIFSA BASE IN THE PANJSHIR WITH SUPPLY DEPOTS IN TAJIKISTAN.

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	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
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 USMISSION GENEVA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 07 PESHAWAR 00021
 DEPT FOR SA/PAB, DS/OP/NEA; LONDON FOR POL - SUTPHIN;

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PARIS FOR POL - HANSON; ROME FOR POL - QUESADA;
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9. (SBU) THE FRONT LINE NORTH OF THE HINDU KUSH
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TODAY RUNS FROM A SALIENT IN KHINJAN DISTRICT, BAGHLAN PROVINCE, IN A NORTH-BY-NORTHEASTERLY DIRECTION TO THE BORDER WITH TAJIKISTAN. THE UIFSA HAS RETAINED CONTROL OF SUCH KEY DISTRICTS AS ANDARAB (BAGHLAN), CHAL, AND RUSTAQ (BOTH IN TAKHAR), BUT LOST OTHER IMPORTANT DISTRICTS SUCH AS NAHRIN (BAGHLAN), BANGI, AND TALOQAN (BOTH IN TAKHAR). THE UIFSA ALSO BRIEFLY LOST, AND THEN REGAINED, THE STRATEGIC DISTRICTS OF IMAM SAHIB AND ARCHI IN NORTHERN KUNDUZ, WHICH BORDER TAJIKISTAN. THE IMPORTANCE THAT BOTH THE TALIBAN AND THE OPPOSITION PLACE ON THE STRATEGIC NORTHERN REGION CAN BE MEASURED BY THE STATURE OF THEIR RESPECTIVE COMMANDERS IN THE AREA. ON THE TALIBAN SIDE, INTELLIGENCE CHIEF QARI AHMADULLAH HAS BEEN APPOINTED ACTING GOVERNOR OF TAKHAR. HE IS DIRECTING OPERATIONS JOINTLY WITH INTERIOR MINISTER MAULAVI ABDUL RAZAQ AND DEPUTY CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF MULLAH BARADAR FROM TALOQAN CITY. ON THE UIFSA SIDE, COMMANDER AHMAD SHAH MASOUD, AND HIS DEPUTY, GENERAL FAHIM (WHICH IS THE NOM DE GUERRE FOR ONE MUHAMMAD QASIM), ARE DIRECTING OPERATIONS FROM A BASE IN THE FARKHAR GORGE, TO THE SOUTHEAST OF TALOQAN CITY. THE LOSS OF THE STRATEGIC ROAD THROUGH TALOQAN HAS COMPELLED MASOUD TO RE-SUPPLY THE UIFSA FORCES THROUGH A COMBINATION OF TRUCK CONVOYS ALONG THE DIRT TRACKS THAT TRAVERSE BADAKHSHAN PROVINCE IN CONCERT WITH THE AIR SERVICE PROVIDED BY MASOUD'S BATTERED FLEET OF APPROXIMATELY 10

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HELICOPTERS. IN TAKHAR, THE TALIBAN SEEM TO HAVE THEIR FOOT ON MASOUD'S THROAT. IT ALSO APPEARS AS IF THEY HAVE RESIGNED THEMSELVES TO WAITING TILL THE SPRING TO TRY TO DELIVER A CRUSHING BLOW. GIVEN THE
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IMPORTANCE OF THE SITUATION TO BOTH SIDES, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THEY WILL BE READY TO CONTINUE THEIR STRUGGLE IN THIS AREA AS SOON AS THE WEATHER PERMITS.

DARA-YE SUF

10. (SBU) ONE OTHER REGION NORTH OF THE HINDU KUSH HAS WITNESSED PERIODIC FIGHTING, NAMELY DARA-YE SUF DISTRICT OF SAMANGAN PROVINCE, TO THE SOUTH OF MAZAR-I SHARIF CITY. ON THE TALIBAN SIDE THE REGION IS UNDER THE OVERALL COMMAND OF THE GOVERNOR OF BALKH PROVINCE, NOORULLAH NOORI, WHO IS ALSO GOVERNOR OF THE NORTHERN ZONE. HE AND COMMANDER GHAUSUDDIN, A KANDAHARI WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE TALIBAN'S 18TH DIVISION IN MAZAR-I SHARIF, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TALIBAN EFFORT TO QUASH THE RESISTANCE IN DARA-YE SUF, WHICH IS JOINTLY LED BY THE SHIA COMMANDER, MOHAQQIQ, OF HIZB-I WAHDAT, AND COMMANDER ATTA OF JAMIAT-I ISLAMI. THE UIFSA ALLIES HERE FACE A SITUATION SIMILAR TO THAT FACED BY THEIR COLLEAGUES IN THE EASTERN ZONE, AS DESCRIBED IN PARA FIVE ABOVE, SINCE THEY ARE EFFECTIVELY CUT OFF FROM RE-SUPPLY.

2001 OPENS WITH FIGHTING IN BAMBIYAN

11. (SBU) AS REPORTED IN REF E, THE NEW YEAR GOT OFF TO VIOLENT START WHEN THE RETURN OF HIZB-I WAHDAT

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UNCLASSIFIED

EB-00	EUR-00	FAAE-00	FBO-01	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00
NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
ASDS-01	FMP-00	SNIS-00	NISC-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02
G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/011W			

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P R 121212Z JAN 01
 FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4043
 AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY
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 AMEMBASSY ALMATY
 AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
 AMEMBASSY ANKARA
 AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
 AMEMBASSY BERLIN
 AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
 AMEMBASSY LONDON
 AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
 AMEMBASSY PARIS
 AMEMBASSY RIYADH
 AMEMBASSY ROME

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 AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
 AMEMBASSY TOKYO
 AMCONSUL DUBAI
 AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
 AMCONSUL JEDDAH
 AMCONSUL KARACHI
 DIA WASHDC 1423

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 05 OF 07 PESHAWAR 00021

DEPT FOR SA/PAB, DS/OP/NEA; LONDON FOR POL - SUTPHIN;
 PARIS FOR POL - HANSON; ROME FOR POL - QUESADA;
 ISLAMABAD ALSO FOR LAHORE; ALMATY ALSO FOR DUSHANBE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/11
 TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, ASEC, AF
 SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: MILITARY SITUATION REVIEWED

LEADER KARIM KHALILI TO CENTRAL AFGHANISTAN FROM IRAN
 ENERGIZED THE SHIA HAZARA FIGHTERS IN BAMIYAN
 PROVINCE. BY JANUARY 9, HOWEVER, THE TALIBAN MANAGED
 TO RETAKE THE GROUND THEY HAD LOST IN THE HAZARAJAT.

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INTRIGUINGLY, THE TALIBAN SENT INTELLIGENCE CHIEF QARI AHMADULLAH, WHO HAD BEEN OVERSEEING THE CRUCIAL TAKHAR FRONT, TO DIRECT THE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE IN BAMIYAN. THE TALIBAN'S RELIANCE ON QARI AHMADULLAH MAY SIGNAL HIS INCREASED IMPORTANCE WITHIN THE TALIBAN ADMINISTRATION. THE RECENT BAMIYAN FIGHTING MAY HAVE GIVEN A BRIEF MORALE BOOST TO THE UIFSA, AND EMBARRASSED THE TALIBAN, BUT THE QUICK RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO SUGGESTS THAT THE TALIBAN REMAIN FIRMLY IN

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CONTROL OF THE REGION.

WHAT'S UP WITH DOSTUM AND ISMAIL KHAN?

12. (C) THE YEAR PAST ALSO WITNESSED EFFORTS BY ABDUL RASHID DOSTUM, THE ETHNIC UZBEK GENERAL AND SOME TIME UIFSA ALLY WHO WAS EJECTED FROM MAZAR-SHARIF IN AUGUST 1998 BY THE TALIBAN TO RE-ENTER THE FIGHT IN SUPPORT OF MASOUD. DOSTUM'S MOTIVATIONS AND FOREIGN SUPPORT REMAIN UNCLEAR, AS HE HAS APPEARED TO HAVE HAD SUPPORT FROM IRAN, TURKEY, AND UZBEKISTAN AT DIFFERENT TIMES. MOREOVER, MASOUD'S ETHNIC UZBEK COMMANDERS HAVE URGED HIM TO RECONCILE WITH DOSTUM, WHO IS NOW LIVING IN TURKEY. OUR CONTACTS TELL US, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN THOUGH DOSTUM AND MASOUD ARE EAGER TO RE-FORGE THEIR ALLIANCE, THEY HAVE BEEN PREVENTED FROM DOING SO BY THE GOVERNMENT OF TAJIKISTAN'S PROHIBITION ON DOSTUM USING TAJIK TERRITORY AS A BASE FROM WHICH TO ASSIST MASOUD. OUR CONTACTS ALSO TELL US THAT DOSTUM AND HIS FIGHTERS WOULD BE SLAUGHTERED BY THE TALIBAN IF THEY ATTEMPTED TO CROSS INTO AFGHANISTAN FROM THE RELATIVE SAFETY OF UZBEKISTAN, SINCE THE TALIBAN COULD SUBJECT THE INVADERS TO A WITHERING FIRE WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO CROSS THE AMU DARYA (OXUS) RIVER INTO AFGHAN TERRITORY THAT IS FIRMLY CONTROLLED BY THE TALIBAN. DOSTUM'S ENTRY INTO AFGHANISTAN WOULD BE MUCH EASIER FROM TAJIKISTAN INTO THE UIFSA-CONTROLLED AREAS OF KUNDUZ AND/OR TAKHAR PROVINCE, BUT THE TAJIK GOVERNMENT'S FEAR THAT DOSTUM MIGHT SOMEHOW INCITE A REBELLION BY TAJIKISTAN'S UZBEK ETHNIC MINORITY HAS

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THUS FAR LED THE TAJIK GOVERNMENT TO FORBID DOSTUM FROM JOINING MASOUD VIA TAJIKISTAN. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THAT SOME OF THE UIFSA'S TAJIK COMMANDERS, WHO FEAR UZBEK DOMINATION OF THE UIFSA IF DOSTUM WERE TO

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RETURN HAVE ALSO BEEN LESS THAN SUPPORTIVE OF MASOUD'S EFFORT TO ENGINEER DOSTUM'S RETURN. WE SUSPECT THAT COLLEAGUES IN DUSHANBE MAY BE ABLE TO OFFER A BETTER-INFORMED ANALYSIS OF DOSTUM'S RELATIONS WITH THE TAJIK GOVERNMENT.

13. (SBU) IF DOSTUM IS ONE NORTHERN ALLIANCE EXILE FIGURE WHOSE RETURN HAS LONG BEEN RUMORED "TO BE JUST AROUND THE CORNER," THEN THE CASE OF ISMAIL KHAN HAS ENCOURAGED SIMILAR SPECULATION. AFTER ISMAIL KHAN'S DRAMATIC ESCAPE FROM A QANDAHAR PRISON IN THE SPRING OF 2000, AFGHAN WATCHERS, IN PESHAWAR AT LEAST, HAVE BEEN WONDERING IF AND WHEN ISMAIL KHAN, WHO BY MOST ACCOUNTS IS NOW BASED IN MASHAD, IRAN, WILL REJOIN THE FRAY. ASIDE FROM VARIOUS UNSOURCED RUMORS, WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING CONCRETE ABOUT ISMAIL KHAN'S PLANS. ISMAIL KHAN AND DOSTUM SHARE THE SAME BASIC PROBLEM: THE TALIBAN HAVE A STRONG HOLD ON THEIR RESPECTIVE HOME REGIONS OF NORTHWEST AND NORTH-CENTRAL AFGHANISTAN. AS A RESULT, ANY ATTEMPT BY EITHER OF THESE ASPIRANTS TO ENTER AFGHANISTAN IN A MAJOR WAY WOULD REQUIRE SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FROM IRAN AND UZBEKISTAN RESPECTIVELY. WHILE NEITHER OF THESE COUNTRIES APPEARS TO HAVE ANY LOVE FOR THE TALIBAN, IT IS ALSO THE CASE THAT NEITHER SEEMS WILLING TO RISK

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INFO	LOG-00	MFA-01	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00
	INL-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EAP-00
	EB-00	EUR-00	FAAE-00	FBO-01	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
	ASDS-01	FMP-00	SNIS-00	NISC-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/011W			

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P R 121212Z JAN 01
FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4044
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY

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INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY ALMATY
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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DEPT FOR SA/PAB, DS/OP/NEA; LONDON FOR POL - SUTPHIN;
PARIS FOR POL - HANSON; ROME FOR POL - QUESADA;
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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: MILITARY SITUATION REVIEWED

OPEN CONFRONTATION WITH THE TALIBAN BY GIVING EITHER
ISMAIL KHAN OR DOSTUM THE KIND OF SUPPORT THEY WOULD
NEED TO ENTER AFGHANISTAN IN FORCE.

HOW SERIOUS IS MASOUD'S SITUATION?

14. (C) REF E SUGGESTED THAT MASOUD'S SUPPLY LINES
ARE INCREASINGLY THREATENED BY THE GROWING
ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND THE TALIBAN. IT
DOES INDEED APPEAR THAT MASOUD MUST IMPROVE HIS SUPPLY
SITUATION, AND BE READY TO DEFEND HIS SUPPLY LINES
VIGOROUSLY WHEN FIGHTING RESUMES IN THE SPRING OF

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2001, IF HE HAS ANY HOPE OF CONTINUING TO CONFRONT THE TALIBAN. THE TALIBAN'S EFFORTS TO BLOCKADE UIFSA-CONTROLLED AREAS, IN DARA-YE SUF, KUNAR, AND ON THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF THE PANJSHIR, ALSO APPEAR TO BE EXACTING A TOLL. IN TAGHAB DISTRICT OF KAPISA PROVINCE, TALIBAN PRESSURE ON THE TRADE OF FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES WITH PANJSHIR, IN THE FORM OF HARSH JAIL SENTENCES FOR SMUGGLERS, HAS LED TO A TEN-FOLD INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES IN PANJSHIR AND RESULTANT SHORTAGES, ACCORDING TO A RELATIVE OF ONE OF OUR FSN'S WHO RECENTLY VISITED THE AREA. MASOUD IS GOING TO HAVE TO DIG DEEPLY INTO HIS EXTENSIVE MILITARY AND TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE, NOT TO MENTION HIS LUCK, IF HE IS TO CONTINUE HIS RESISTANCE TO THE TALIBAN. WE HAVE RECEIVED A RELIABLE REPORT THAT MASOUD, ON A RECENT VISIT TO FAIZABAD, BADAKHSHAN PROVINCE, ANGRILY BLAMED THE RUSSIANS FOR FAILING TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT SUPPLIES TO THE UIFSA. IN THE SAME SPEECH, MASOUD ALSO DECRIED THAT LACK OF SUPPORT THAT THE UIFSA IS RECEIVING FROM THE POPULATION OF BADAKHSHAN.

15. (C) [REDACTED] OBSERVED THAT, IN HIS VIEW, MASOUD MUST TURN THE TIDE IN THE NORTH BEFORE WINTER SNOWS CLOSE THE ROADS, OR HE MUST BE PREPARED TO DO SO IMMEDIATELY UPON THE SNOW MELT IN SPRING 2001. [REDACTED] NOTED THAT OF THE TWO SIDES, MASOUD'S IS THE BETTER PREPARED FOR COLD-WEATHER COMBAT, THOUGH FIGHTERS ON BOTH SIDES ARE WOEFULLY UNPREPARED FOR TRUE WINTER CONDITIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, BOTH SIDES LACK PROPER WINTER BOOTS. [REDACTED] NOTED THAT HE THINKS IT POSSIBLE THAT MASOUD MAY STILL TRY

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TO PUSH THE TALIBAN OUT OF TALOQAN IN EARLY 2001. AS OF LATE DECEMBER, RAIN AND WET SNOWS HAD RENDERED THE REGION A SEA OF MUD, BUT [REDACTED] THOUGHT THAT A FEW DAYS OF SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURES, PRIOR TO ANY HEAVY SNOWFALLS, WOULD GIVE MASOUD AN OPPORTUNITY TO GO ON THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE TALIBAN OCCUPIERS OF TALOQAN, WHO ARE AT PRESENT SURROUNDED ON THREE SIDES BY THE UIFSA FORCES. [REDACTED] ALSO NOTED THAT MASOUD HAD A HIGH INCENTIVE TO RETAKE TALOQAN, AND THE RELATIVELY COMFORTABLE RESIDENCES IN THE TOWN, BEFORE WINTER PROGRESSED ANY MORE, SINCE MANY OF MASOUD'S MEN ARE LIVING OUTSIDE OR IN TENTS.

16. (C) WITHOUT ELABORATING ON HIS EVIDENCE, [REDACTED] ALSO SAID HE BELIEVES THAT THE GOP IS

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WORKING FURIOUSLY TO ENSURE THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE ADEQUATE MILITARY SUPPLIES IN ADVANCE OF THE IMPOSITION OF UNSC RESOLUTION 1333 IN MID JANUARY.

[REDACTED] DID NOT HAVE ANY COMMENTS ON THE DEGREE TO WHICH INDIA, IRANIAN, AND/OR RUSSIAN SUPPLIES TO THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE MAY HAVE INCREASED IN THE RECENT PAST.

17. (C) COMMENT: USING THEIR SUPERIOR MANPOWER, SUPPLIES, AND THEIR IDEOLOGICAL FERVOR, THE TALIBAN HAVE USED THE PAST YEAR TO APPROACH THE BRINK OF A COMPLETE MILITARY OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN. INDEED, THEY HAVE BEEN IN VARIATIONS ON THIS POSITION SINCE 1996. WHY CAN'T THEY SIMPLY FINISH THE JOB? EARLY

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	EB-00	EUR-00	FAAE-00	FBO-01	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
	ASDS-01	FMP-00	SNIS-00	NISC-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/011W			

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P R 121212Z JAN 01
FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4045
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY ALMATY
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
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DIA WASHDC 1425

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 07 OF 07 PESHAWAR 00021

DEPT FOR SA/PAB, DS/OP/NEA; LONDON FOR POL - SUTPHIN;
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LAST SUMMER, JUST BEFORE THE TALIBAN LAUNCHED THEIR SHOMALI OFFENSIVE, WE HAD HEARD FROM [REDACTED] WHO IS AMONG THE BEST-INFORMED AND BEST-CONNECTED AFGHAN WATCHERS IN PESHAWAR, THAT THE YEAR 2000 WAS GOING TO BE DIFFERENT. THE TALIBAN, HE SAID, HAD DECIDED TO TRY A NEW APPROACH. MINDFUL OF THEIR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, INCLUDING THE DROUGHT, AND MINDFUL OF THEIR ABYSMAL INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION, THEY WERE GOING TO ADOPT A MORE SUBTLE STRATEGY TO WINNING THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. [REDACTED] SAID THAT HIGH-LEVEL TALIBAN OFFICIALS HAD TOLD HIM THAT THEY WOULD FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT, IMPROVING ADMINISTRATION, AND CONVERTING OPPOSITION

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COMMANDERS THROUGH BRIBERY AND DIPLOMACY. [REDACTED] HAD BARELY TOLD US OF THIS "NEW APPROACH" WHEN THE TALIBAN TOOK THE OFFENSIVE IN THE SHOMALI IN EARLY JULY. SO MUCH FOR THE NEW APPROACH.

18. (C) COMMENT, CONTINUED: AMONG THE TALIBAN'S WEAKNESSES IS THAT THEIR ONLY REAL SUCCESS HAS COME ON THE BATTLEFIELD. THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED SECURITY, AT LEAST RELATIVE TO THE ANARCHY THAT PRECEDED THEM, AND THEY HAVE MANAGED TO EXTEND THEIR MILITARY DOMINATION

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ACROSS PERHAPS 95 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY. THEY'VE
DONE PRECIOUS LITTLE ELSE, APPARENTLY BECAUSE THEY
LACK THE CAPACITY TO DO SO. THE TALIBAN ARE LIKE THE
PROVERBIAL CARPENTER WHOSE ONLY TOOL IS A HAMMER, AND
WHO THUS TREATS EVERY PROBLEM AS A NAIL. FIGHTING IS
ALL THEY REALLY KNOW HOW TO DO. THEIR MARTIAL
ABILITIES HAVE GOTTEN THEM THIS FAR, AND MAY
EVENTUALLY ENABLE THEM TO OCCUPY EVEN MORE OF THE
COUNTRY, BUT WE STILL SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT THEY CAN
BEGIN TO DO ANYTHING ELSE THAT REAL GOVERNMENTS DO.

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