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CONTROLS

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TEXT

TAGS: ~~PREL~~, MOPS, PARM, CIS, UN, AF, PK, IN, RS, IR, ZK
 COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJECT: A/S RAPHEL CONSULTATIONS WITH DEPUTY FM CHERNYSHEV

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY JOHN ORDWAY, A/DCM. REASON: 1.5 B) AN D (D) .
2. (C) SUMMARY. DURING A/S RAPHEL'S CONSULTATIONS ON AFGHANISTAN, RUSSIAN OFFICIALS DECLINED TO ENGAGE ON THE ISSUE OF RE-ENERGIZING THE UN MISSION, AND PARTICULARLY ON THE WIDESPREAD VIEW IN THE REGION THAT MISSION HEAD MESTIRI SHOULD BE REPLACED. THEY SHOWED

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VARYING DEGREES OF ENTHUSIASM FOR THE IDEA OF AN ARMS EMBARGO. THE RUSSIANS EXPRESSED A) GRATITUDE FOR U.S. EFFORTS TO FREE THEIR HOSTAGES IN KANDAHAR; B) HOPE FOR A QUICK RESUMPTION OF THE INTER-TAJIK TALKS; AND C) DETERMINATION TO PRESS INDIA TO SIGN THE CTBT. END SUMMARY.

3. (U) DEPUTY FM ALBERT CHERNYSHEV HOSTED VISITING SA A/S ROBIN RAPHEL APRIL 30 FOR TALKS DEVOTED MOSTLY TO AFGHANISTAN. CHERNYSHEV WAS JOINED BY KONSTANTIN SHUVALOV, ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE THIRD ASIA DEPARTMENT, AND VYACHESLAV TRUBNIKOV, DIRECTOR OF THE FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE. EMBASSY MOSCOW POLMINCOUNS, COUNSELOR FOR REGIONAL AFFAIRS, POL/EXT CHIEF AND POLOFF (NOTETAKER) ACCOMPANIED THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY..

 THE U.S. PERSPECTIVE ON AFGHANISTAN

4. (C) A/S RAPHEL BEGAN THE READOUT OF HER TRIP THROUGH PAKISTAN, AFGHANISTAN, AND CENTRAL ASIA BY OBSERVING THAT THERE IS A GROWING INTEREST IN WASHINGTON IN RESOLVING THE AFGHAN CONFLICT. IN ADDITION TO OUR TRADITIONAL CONCERNS -- RESTORING REGIONAL POLITICAL STABILITY, INTERDICTING NARCOTICS, AND RELIEVING HUMAN SUFFERING -- THE USG NOW HOPES THAT PEACE IN THE REGION WILL FACILITATE U.S. BUSINESS INTERESTS LIKE THE PROPOSED UNOCAL GAS PIPELINE FROM TURKMENISTAN THROUGH AFGHANISTAN TO PAKISTAN.

5. (C) THE CURRENT SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN IS FLUID, CONTINUED RAPHEL, WITH A MILITARY STALEMATE ACCOMPANIED BY LIVELY CONTACTS AMONG THE FACTIONS. MOREOVER, SOME OF THE OUTSIDE PARTIES WHO HAVE BEEN MANIPULATING THE FACTIONS (AND HAVE THEMSELVES BEEN MANIPULATED BY THE AFGHANS) ARE TIRING OF THE GAME. [

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] EMPHASIZING THAT THE U.S. DOES NOT BACK ANY FACTION. SHE HOPED THE RUSSIANS UNDERSTAND THAT RUMORS OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN WERE AN IRANIAN CANARD.

6. (C) THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO TRACKS TO PURSUE IN WORKING TO RESOLVE THE AFGHAN CONFLICT, RAPHEL CONCLUDED: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL. ON THE INTERNAL SIDE, A RE-ENERGIZED UN MISSION NEEDS TO PUSH THE FACTIONS TO CUT A DEAL. }

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THIS SENTIMENT IS SO PERVASIVE THAT IT IS BECOMING DIFFICULT TO IGNORE.

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7. (C) ON THE EXTERNAL SIDE, SAID RAPHEL, OUTSIDE POWERS MUST RECOGNIZE THAT A BROADLY-BASED AFGHAN GOVERNMENT THAT IS NOT UNFRIENDLY TO THEIR INTERESTS WOULD BE AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY OPTION OF HAVING THEIR FAVORED FACTION EMERGE COMPLETELY TRIUMPHANT. A LOGICAL MANIFESTATION OF THIS RECOGNITION, SHE ASSERTED, WOULD BE THE IMPOSITION OF AN ARMS EMBARGO ON ALL THE AFGHAN FACTIONS, AS UZBEKISTAN AND OTHERS ARE SEEKING. THE U.S., SHE CONCLUDED, WOULD BE ACTIVELY EXPLORING THIS IDEA IN THE COMING MONTHS.

CHERNYSHEV FAILS TO TAKE THE BAIT

8. (C) CHERNYSHEV BLANDLY OBSERVED THAT RUSSIA CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THE UN MISSION AND STANDS READY TO COORDINATE WITH US TO ENHANCE THE MISSION'S EFFECTIVENESS. [NOTION THAT MEST

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REGARDING AN ARMS EMBARGO, CHERNYSHEV ASSERTED THAT RUSSIA FAVORS A SYSTEM TO CONTROL THE FLOW OF ARMS TO AFGHANISTAN, BUT ADDED THAT HE DOES NOT YET SEE ANY EFFECTIVE MECHANISM FOR DOING SO. LATER IN THE MEETING, HOWEVER, TRUBNIKOV SPOKE APPROVINGLY OF THE POLITICAL VALUE OF AN ARMS EMBARGO, CALLING IT THE BEST POSSIBLE EVIDENCE THAT THE INTERESTED OUTSIDE POWERS NO LONGER BELIEVE IN A MILITARY SOLUTION.

9. (C) IN HIS OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT THE AFGHAN SITUATION, CHERNYSHEV SAID THAT

-- THE GOR IS NOT SUPPLYING ARMS TO ANY FACTION,

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-- RUSSIA TRIES TO MAINTAIN CONTACTS WITH ALL THE MAJOR AFGHAN GROUPS, THOUGH OBVIOUSLY THEIR CONTACTS ARE WEAKEST WITH THE TALIBAN.

-- MOST AFGHAN FACTIONS TELL MOSCOW THAT RUSSIA HAS A USEFUL ROLE TO PLAY IN THEIR COUNTRY. CHERNYSHEV ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT SOME OF THE SAME FACTIONS THEN TURN AROUND AND COMPLAIN ABOUT RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM TO THE IRANIANS AND PAKISTANIS. THERE IS NOTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT SUCH MANIPULATION, HE SAID, AND RUSSIA TAKES IT

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 THE KANDAHAR HOSTAGES

10. (C) RAPHEL, WHO HAD MET RECENTLY WITH THE RUSSIAN AIR CREW BEING HELD BY THE TALIBAN IN KANDAHAR, DESCRIBED THE HOSTAGES AS REASONABLY FIT AND HEALTHY. SHE PASSED CHERNYSHEV A VIDEO AND SOME PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN DURING THE MEETING. ALTHOUGH THE TALIBAN SEEM TO FEEL THAT THE SEVEN HOSTAGES ARE SOMEHOW ACCOUNTABLE FOR ALL THE SINS -- PAST AND PRESENT, REAL AND IMAGINED -- OF RUSSIA AND THE USSR AGAINST AFGHANISTAN, RAPHEL SAID THAT THE TALIBAN NEVERTHELESS SEEM TO REALIZE THAT THEY HAVE LOST THE MORAL ARGUMENT FOR CONTINUING TO HOLD THE CREW. THE DETENTION OF THE RUSSIANS CONTINUES, HOWEVER, BECAUSE A) THE TALIBAN HAVE BOXED THEMSELVES IN BY PLACING IMPOSSIBLE CONDITIONS ON THEIR RELEASE; AND B) THE TALIBAN SUPPOSEDLY MAKE DECISIONS BY CONSENSUS, BUT HAVE NO MECHANISM FOR DOING SO; THEY THEREFORE CLAIM VAGUELY THAT THEY MUST "CONSULT WITH THE PEOPLE" BEFORE RELEASING THE HOSTAGES. CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT THE PAKISTANI INTE

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11. (C) CHERNYSHEV EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S READOUT OF THE HOSTAGE SITUATION AND FOR THE U.S. EFFORTS TO FREE THE RUSSIAN AIR CREW.

 CIS ANXIETIES

12. (C) RELATING HER CONVERSATIONS WITH CENTRAL ASIAN LEADERS, RAPHEL OBSERVED CANDIDLY THAT THERE IS MUCH SUSPICION IN THE REGION ABOUT RUSSIAN MOTIVES AND INTENTIONS. RUSSIA IS NOT KEEN TO ACQUIESCE IN THE REGION'S INDEPENDENCE, SAY THE CENTRAL ASIANS, WHO ADD THAT THEY KNOW PRIMAKOV AND BELIEVE THAT HIS JOB AS FOREIGN MINISTER IS TO RESTORE THE EMPIRE. THE U.S. BELIEVES THAT RUSSIA'S LEGITIMATE INTERESTS IN STABILITY AND SECURE BORDERS ARE NOT INCONSISTENT WITH

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CENTRAL ASIAN INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY, SAID RAPHEL. THE U.S. HAS NO OBJECTION TO CIS INTEGRATION, SHE CONCLUDED, AS LONG AS IT IS VOLUNTARY AND DOES NOT COMPROMISE SOVEREIGNTY OR CREATE BARRIERS TO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE CIS. RAPHEL'S RUSSIAN INTERLOCUTORS DID NOT COMMENT ON HER REMARKS. (COMMENT: MANY -- THOUGH NOT ALL -- RUSSIANS RECOGNIZE THE IMAGE PROBLEM THEY HAVE IN THE "NEAR ABROAD," BUT IT STILL IRKS THEM TO HEAR ABOUT IT. END COMMENT.)

 TAJIKISTAN

13. (C) UNDERSCORING THAT THE TAJIK CEASEFIRE EXPIRES MAY 26, CHERNYSHEV EXPRESSED DISMAY AT THE DELAY IN RESUMING THE INTER-TAJIK PEACE TALKS. NEITHER SIDE SEEMS IN ANY HURRY TO RESUME THE NEGOTIATIONS, HE SAID,

" OF THE TAJOPP INTO THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE A/S RAPHEL COMMENTED THAT THE U.S. SHARES RUSSIA'S DESIRE TO GET THE CEASEFIRE EXTENDED AND THE TALKS RECONVENED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

 INDIA: KASHMIR AND NUCLEAR TESTING

14. (C) THE MEETING CLOSED WITH A DISCUSSION OF OTHER SOUTH ASIAN TOPICS, PRINCIPALLY RELATED TO INDIA. THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY EXPRESSED HER SENSE THAT THE INDIAN COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN IN KASHMIR IS WORKING, GIVING NEW DELHI A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SOME POSITIVE POLITICAL MOVES TOWARD THE KASHMIRIS AFTER THE INDIAN ELECTIONS.

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COMMENT

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18. (U) THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN CLEARED BY A/S RAPHEL.

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