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CONTROLS
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FOR SA A/S RAPHEL
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Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
() Release () Excise () Deny () Declassify
Date 6/9/07 Exemption B1

TEXT
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, KISL, OVIP, UN, PHUM, AF, PK
COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR YOUR VISIT TO ISLAMABAD: AFGHAN ANGLE

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY DCM JOHN HOLZMAN REASON 1.5 (D).
2. (C) WE'RE DELIGHTED THAT AFGHANISTAN WILL BE ONE OF THE MAJOR THEMES IN YOUR DISCUSSIONS IN PAKISTAN. THIS CABLE IS LABELED A SCENESETTER BUT CONSISTS MOSTLY OF JOHN HOLZMAN'S IMPRESSIONS BASED ON HIS THREE TRIPS TO AFGHANISTAN OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. SUGGESTED POINTS TO MAKE ARE IN PARA 13.

ALL'S WELL IN TALIBAN LAND

3. (C) THE TALIBAN ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL AND MILITARY FORCE IN AFGHANISTAN. IN KANDAHAR, THE CAPITAL OF TALIBAN LAND, THEY ARE ON THEIR TURF AND RULE EASILY. THE MARKETS ARE FULL BY AFGHAN STANDARDS (BUT NOT AT ALL IN COMPARISON TO OTHER SOUTH ASIAN

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COUNTRIES), AND EVEN SMALL PHARMACIES, WHICH IN THE EVENINGS OPEN ON A ROTATING SCHEDULE, ARE WELL STOCKED WITH MOSTLY PAKISTANI DRUGS. THE RUTTED AND DUSTY STREETS LEADING OUT OF KANDAHAR ARE CROWDED WITH HUGE TRUCKS LOADED WITH TIRES SMUGGLED FROM TURKEY AND ACROSS IRAN. THE REHABILITATION OF AHMED SHAH DURRANI'S MAUSOLEUM AND SPRUCING UP AN INNER CITY MONUMENT TO MARTYRS OF THE JIHAD SHOW THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE SOME CIVIC AND NATIONAL AWARENESS. THEY ARE REFURBISHING THE SHOT UP AND DECREPIT AIRPORT BUILT BY USAID YEARS AGO, AND HAVE BROUGHT IN BUSES FROM KABUL, AT LEAST SOME OF WHICH APPARENTLY PLY REGULAR ROUTES. THE ELECTRICITY IS OFF, BUT THE TALIBAN ARE LOOKING FOR DONOR HELP TO GET A NEARBY HYDEL PROJECT BACK IN OPERATION. SHROUDED WOMEN ARE FREQUENTLY SEEN SHOPPING IN THE MARKETS OR RIDING IN HORSE DRAWN TONGAS. BUT MANY OLD WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS DO NOT WEAR BURQAS. AT LEAST DURING ONE AFTERNOON IN EARLY RAMAZAN, TRAFFIC ON THE ROADS WAS NOT STOPPED DURING PRAYERS AND PEOPLE WERE NOT BEING FORCED TO PRAY. OUTSIDE THE CITY, THE ROADS ARE DEFINITELY SAFER, BUT OTHERWISE TALIBAN GOVERNANCE IS PROBABLY MINIMAL. MOST VILLAGES CONTINUE TO RELY ON TRADITIONAL TRIBAL LEADERS, WHO APPROVE OF THE TALIBAN BUT WOULD NOT WANT THEM TO DIRECTLY INTERFERE IN THEIR DAILY LIVES. IN SHORT, LIFE IS NOT SO BAD AND THE PEOPLE OF KANDAHAR WOULD BE CRAZY NOT TO PREFER TALIBAN THEOCRACY TO FACTIONAL WARFARE AND RULE BY BRIGANDS, AS EXISTED IN KANDAHAR FROM 1992-94.

IN KABUL AND HERAT--TALIBAN AN OCCUPYING FORCE

4. (C) KABUL AND, WE UNDERSTAND, HERAT ARE A DIFFERENT STORY. IN THESE CITIES, THE TALIBAN ARE AN OCCUPYING FORCE, GOVERNING PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT PREDOMINANTLY PASHTOON AND ARE NOT LIKE THE FOLKS BACK IN KANDAHAR, AND THEIR RULE IS HARSH AND OPPRESSIVE. WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE REPORTS THAT THE TALIBAN DETAIN TAJIKS, PANJSHIRIS, AND OTHERS INDISCRIMINATELY, SHIPPING AT LEAST SOME TO A PRISON IN KANDAHAR. WOMEN ARE NOT SEEN AS FREQUENTLY ON THE STREETS AS IN KANDAHAR, APPARENTLY OUT OF FEAR OF BEING ACCOSTED. THE STAFF OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS RAPPORTEUR CLAIMED THAT ONE TALIB LEADER HAD TOLD THE RAPPORTEUR THAT A WOMAN SHOULD NEVER APPEAR IN PUBLIC SINCE A MAN OTHER THAN HER HUSBAND MIGHT TAKE PLEASURE IN HER APPEARANCE AND THUS DISHONOR HER. WE ARE TOLD THAT AFGHAN WOMEN SENT HOME FROM THEIR JOBS NO LONGER RECEIVE PAY, CONTRARY TO TALIBAN PROMISES. SCHOOLS ARE NOT OPEN TO AFGHAN GIRLS, BUT OF COURSE THEY ARE NOT OPEN IN KANDAHAR EITHER. IT'S JUST THAT THE KABULIS AND HERATIS HAVE MORE OF A TRADITION OF EDUCATING GIRLS. THE TALIBAN OPERATE MAINLY THROUGH VERBAL--NOT WRITTEN--EDICTS AND THUS THEIR RULE IS OFTEN CAPRICIOUS AS WELL AS OPPRESSIVE. THE STORIES OF TALIB ABUSES AGAINST THE CLEAN SHAVEN OR THOSE NOT WEARING TURBANS ARE LEGION--AND MOST ARE PROBABLY TRUE. THUS IT IS SAFER TO LIE LOW RATHER THAN RISK THE IRE OF A WANDERING TALIB MILITIAMAN. IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS MULLAH OMAR HAS TRIED TO CREATE A KINDER, GENTLER TALIBAN OCCUPATION, WARNING HIS SOLDIERS THAT THEY WOULD BE BEATEN IF THEY BEAT UP CITIZENS FOR NOT CONFORMING TO TALIB MORES.

TALIBAN ATTITUDE PROBLEM

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5. (C) THE TALIBAN LEADERSHIP ARE DEVELOPING AN ATTITUDE PROBLEM ABOUT THE WEST AND ESPECIALLY THE UN AND THE NGOS--THE ORGANIZATIONS THEY DEAL WITH ON A DAILY BASIS, AND THE SOURCE OF MOST OF THE MEDIA CRITICISM OF THEIR POLICIES. BOTH MULLAH HASAN AND MULLAH RABBANI--AMONG THE TOP 3 OR 4 TALIB LEADERS--TOLD BRAD AND ME THAT THEY CARRIED A GRIEVANCE AGAINST THE NGOS. MULLAH HASAN, THE ONE-LEGGED GOVERNOR OF KANDAHAR, MADE THE SAME POINT BUT DID NOT DESCRIBE IT AS A GRIEVANCE. ALL COMPLAINED OF HIGH HANDEDNESS ON THE PART OF THE UN AGENCIES AND NGOS AND OF DISCRIMINATION, E.G. REDUCING AID AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER.

6. (C) WE'VE ALSO HEARD BUCKETFULS FROM THE TALIBAN THAT THEY, AS THE RULERS OF KABUL, HAVE NOT BEEN RECOGNIZED AS AFGHANISTAN'S GOVERNMENT. THE UN CREDENTIAL COMMITTEE DEFERMENT, WHICH LEFT JAMIAT IN THE AFGHAN UN SEAT, WAS AN ESPECIALLY HARD BLOW. THEIR SENSE OF BEING "PUT UPON" IS MADE MORE ACUTE BY THEIR CONVICTION THAT THEY ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WILL OF ALLAH, AND THAT THEIR MOVEMENT WILL DEFEAT THE OTHER FACTIONS AND ESTABLISH ISLAMIC RULE THROUGH OUT THE COUNTRY. THEY CLAIM THAT THEY COOPERATE WITH THE UN PEACE EFFORT, BUT THAT IS MOSTLY PRETENCE AND AN EFFORT TO MANAGE THE WEST. THEY DO NOT WANT TO BE LABELED AT HOME OR ABROAD AS THE REJECTIONIST PARTY AND THUS PARTICIPATE GRUDGINGLY AND ONLY TO ACHIEVE NARROW ENDS. IN THE JUST COMPLETED WORKING GROUP SESSION THEY REFUSED A RAMAZAN CEASE FIRE BUT AVIDLY PURSUED A PRISONER EXCHANGE, SINCE TRIBAL LEADERS IN KANDAHAR AND HELMAND ARE PUTTING PRESSURE ON THEM TO GAIN THE RELEASE OF FIGHTERS CAPTURED BY MASOOD. REPORTING IN OTHER CHANNELS INDICATES THAT VARIOUS RADICAL ISLAMIC GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE APPROACHING THE TALIBAN, AND WE THINK THEY ARE PROBABLY MAKING INROADS (E.G. USAMA BIN LADIN ENJOYING TALIBAN HOSPITALITY). WE CAN EXPECT THIS TREND TO CONTINUE AS THE TALIBAN BECOME MORE DISILLUSIONED WITH THE WEST.

DOSTAM: BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

7. (C) THE SUPREME DEFENSE COUNCIL (SDC) IS RIVEN WITH FISSURES BUT UNITED BY A COMMON FEAR OF THE TALIBAN.

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MASOOD HOLDS ON

8. (C) MASOOD IS A MUCH REDUCED FIGURE, HAVING LOST HEAVY MILITARY EQUIPMENT, TERRITORY, AND THUS LOSING POWER IN HIS BATTLES WITH THE TALIBAN SINCE SEPTEMBER.

PAKISTAN SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN

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10. (C) PAKISTANI AID TO THE TALIBAN IS MORE SIGNIFICANT AND PROBABLY LESS MALIGN THAN MOST IMAGINE. B1

DOES NOT SEEM TO SUPPORT PERSISTENT RUMORS OF LARGE AMOUNTS OF MILITARY AID. THIS IS ALSO CONSISTENT WITH THE PAKISTANI MILITARY'S BUDGETARY REALITIES. MILITARY ADVICE TO THE TALIBAN MAY BE THERE, BUT IS PROBABLY NOT ALL THAT SIGNIFICANT SINCE THE TALIBAN DO QUITE WELL ON THEIR OWN, MAINLY USING THE MILITARY TO SUPPLEMENT POLITICAL INFILTRATION. HOWEVER, PAKISTANI POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT IS CERTAINLY SIGNIFICANT. FOR EXAMPLE, PAKISTAN IS THE ONLY COUNTRY THAT DEFINITELY RECOGNIZES THE TALIBAN GOVERNMENT IN KABUL, B1

MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE GOP ALLOWS THE TALIBAN FREE ACCESS TO THE PAKISTANI MARKET TO BUY ANYTHING THEY WANT, INCLUDING SUBSIDIZED WHEAT FLOUR. THIS IS AN ENORMOUS ADVANTAGE OVER THE OTHER FACTIONS. MASOOD AND DOSTAM ARE ALSO RECEIVING SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE, BUT FROM IRAN AND PROBABLY FROM RUSSIA AND INDIA.

THE UN MISSION

11. (C) UN SPECIAL ENVOY NORBERT HOLL B1

AFGHANS
TELL US THAT THEY APPRECIATE HIS THOROUGHNESS AND INSISTENCE ON DISCUSSING ISSUES OPENLY. B1

12. HOLL HAS TAKEN IDEA OF A CEASE FIRE AND PRISONER EXCHANGE AND USED IT TO CONVENE A WORKING GROUP, COMPOSED OF SECOND TIER LEADERS FROM THE WARRING FACTIONS. THE WORKING GROUP HAS MET TWICE IN ISLAMABAD, MOST RECENTLY THIS PAST WEEK WHEN IT MET FOR TWO DAYS. THE GROUP AGREED TO MEET AGAIN NEXT MONTH. IT HAS NOT ACHIEVED ANY SUBSTANTIVE BREAKTHROUGHS, BUT HAS BROUGHT THE FACTIONS TO THE TABLE. AT THE MOST RECENT MEETING, THE WORKING GROUP MEMBERS AGREED TO REFER BACK TO THEIR LEADERS A "LIMITED" PRISONER EXCHANGE. IN THE COMING MONTHS HOLL PLANS TO ENGAGE GOVERNMENTS IN THE REGION, INCLUDING IRAN AND UZBEKISTAN. B1

13. (C) SUGGESTED POINTS TO MAKE FOR YOUR MEETINGS IN ISLAMABAD FOLLOW:

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PEACE PROCESS

- SUPPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN'S UNITY, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND SOVEREIGNTY.
- U.S. NEUTRALITY.
- CENTRALITY OF THE UN PEACE EFFORT.
- NO MILITARY SOLUTION, NEED FOR CEASE-FIRE, DEMILITARIZATION OF KABUL, NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO FORMATION OF A NEUTRAL SECURITY FORCE AND A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT.
- END TO OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE TO AFGHAN FACTIONS.

COUNTERTERRORISM

- AFGHANISTAN BECOMING A HAVEN FOR TERRORISTS.
- U.S. LEGISLATION ON STATE TERRORISM LIST.
- CLOSE THE MILITANTS, GIVE UP OR EXPEL USAMA BIN LADIN.
- FOR THE GOP: ENCOURAGE TALIBAN TO SUPPORT COUNTERTERRORISM.

COUNTERNARCOTICS

- READY TO COOPERATE WITH TALIBAN TO CLOSE HEROIN LABS AND ON CROP SUBSTITUTION.

HUMANITARIAN/HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

- AFGHANISTAN/TALIBAN LOSING FRIENDS BECAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, E.G., GENDER POLICIES, INTOLERANCE.
- STOP BOMBING CIVILIAN TARGETS.
- WORK CLOSELY WITH UN AGENCIES AND NGOS.

GAS AND OIL PIPELINES

- SUPPORT GAS AND OIL PIPELINES BUT PROJECT REALISTIC ONLY AFTER A BROAD BASED GOVERNMENT IS FORMED.

SIMONS

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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