

SECRET

PTQ3914

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ACTION NODS-00

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D), B7(A), B5

INFO LOG-00 CCOE-00 SAS-00 /000W
-----801D89 101410Z /38

O 101408Z NOV 98
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1444

DECAPTIONED

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 008369

NODIS

DEPT FOR P, SA, S/CT, DS, AND SA/PAB; PLEASE ALSO PASS TO EMBASSIES
ABU DHABI, CAIRO, AND RIYADH; AND CONSULATES KARACHI, LAHORE, AND
PESHAWAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/10/08
TAGS: PREL, PTER, ASEC, SA, AF
SUBJ: USAMA BIN LADIN: TALIBAN ANNOUNCE CUT-OFF DATE FOR RECEIPT
OF EVIDENCE; GOP OFFICIAL SAYS TALIBAN GROWING MORE INTRANSIGENT

REFS: (A) ISLAMABAD 8328, AND PREVIOUS
- (B) STATE 208394 (RIYADH 3776)

(U) CLASSIFIED BY ALAN EASTHAM, DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION.
REASONS: 1.5 (C) (D).

1. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST -- SEE PARA EIGHT.
2. (S) SUMMARY: THE TALIBAN HAVE ANNOUNCED A NOVEMBER 20 CUT-OFF
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DATE FOR RECEIPT OF EVIDENCE CONCERNING TERRORIST USAMA BIN LADIN
BY THEIR "SUPREME COURT." A PAKISTANI MFA OFFICIAL TOLD POLOFF
THAT THIS ANNOUNCEMENT SIGNALLED THE TALIBAN'S GROWING
INTRANSIGENCE ON THE BIN LADIN ISSUE. HE ATTRIBUTED THE HARDENING
OF THE TALIBAN'S POSITION TO PRESS REPORTS THAT THE SAUDI INTERIOR
MINISTER HAS EXONERATED BIN LADIN FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE KHOBAR
TOWERS AND RIYADH BOMBINGS, AS WELL AS TALIBAN FRUSTRATION THAT THE
U.S. HAS NOT PROVIDED THEM ANY EVIDENCE FOR THEIR PURPORTED
INQUIRY. IN LIGHT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT U.S. VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT,
ACTION REQUEST IS A SUGGESTION THAT DEPARTMENT CONSIDER ANNOUNCING

END SUMMARY.

B5

TALIBAN ANNOUNCE CUT-OFF DATE

3. (S) THE TALIBAN HAVE ANNOUNCED A NOVEMBER 20 CUT-OFF DATE FOR RECEIPT OF ANY EVIDENCE CONCERNING USAMA BIN LADIN. (NOTE: ON OCTOBER 25, THE TALIBAN ANNOUNCED THAT THEIR "SUPREME COURT" WAS OPEN TO RECEIVING EVIDENCE ON BIN LADIN. THEIR ANNOUNCEMENT AT THE TIME WAS OPEN-ENDED AND DID NOT MENTION A CUT-OFF DATE TO THEIR INQUIRY -- SEE REF A.) IN REMARKS LATER CONFIRMED BY THE PAKISTANI MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AS ACCURATELY REFLECTING TALIBAN VIEWS (SEE PARA FOUR), TALIBAN PRESS SPOKESMAN ABDUL HAI MUTMAIN WAS QUOTED IN THE PAKISTANI PRESS AS STATING THE FOLLOWING ON NOVEMBER 9:

"IF ANYONE HAS ANY EVIDENCE OF BIN LADIN'S INVOLVEMENT IN CASES OF TERRORISM, SUBVERSION, SABOTAGE OR ANY OTHER ACTS, THEY SHOULD GET IT TO THE COURT BEFORE NOVEMBER 20.

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IF BY THEN THERE IS NOTHING, WE WILL CLOSE THE CASE AND IN OUR EYES HE WILL BE ACQUITTED." (NOTE: ACCORDING TO ONE ARTICLE IN "THE FRONTIER POST," THE TALIBAN "SUPREME COURT" PLANS TO COLLECT EVIDENCE BETWEEN NOVEMBER 9-20. "CHIEF JUSTICE" MOHAMMAD SADIQ WAS ALSO QUOTED AS STATING THAT THE PROCEEDINGS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN.)

PAKISTANI MFA VIEWS

4. (S) QUERIED ABOUT THE TALIBAN ANNOUNCEMENT, [REDACTED] MFA, TOLD POLOFF NOVEMBER 10 THAT THE TALIBAN HAD DECIDED TO ANNOUNCE A CUT-OFF DATE FOR THE FOLLOWING TWO REASONS:

B1

-- (A) THE TALIBAN FELT THAT THE POLITICAL PRESSURE ON THEM OVER THE BIN LADIN ISSUE HAD BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY RELAXED BECAUSE OF THE REPORTED STATEMENTS BY SAUDI MINISTRY OF INTERIOR NAYIF BIN ABD AL-AZIZ AL SAUD TO THE EFFECT THAT THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT HAD CLEARED BIN LADIN OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE KHOBAR TOWERS AND RIYADH BOMBINGS (SEE REFTELS).

-- (B) THE TALIBAN WERE ANGERED THAT THE U.S. HAS NOT RESPONDED TO THEIR ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THEY WOULD ACCEPT EVIDENCE CONCERNING BIN LADIN. BECAUSE THEY ARE FRUSTRATED, THEY HAVE DECIDED TO LIMIT THE TIMEFRAME OF THEIR INQUIRY.

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GROWING INTRANSIGENCE

5. (S) FOR THESE TWO REASONS, [REDACTED] CONTINUED, THE TALIBAN HAD GROWN SIGNIFICANTLY MORE INTRANSIGENT ON THE BIN LADIN MATTER IN THE PAST WEEK OR SO. IN RESPONSE, POLOFF COMMENTED THAT AS FAR AS HE KNEW THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT'S DEFINITIVE VIEW ON QDIN MATTER HAD BEEN EXPRESSED BY CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH DURING HIS LATE OCTOBER VISIT TO LAHORE WHEN HE (ABDULLAH) HAD EXPRESSED BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY GREAT CONCERN OVER BIN LADIN'S PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN (SEE REF A). [REDACTED] REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT THERE WAS

[REDACTED]
AND THE TALIBAN WERE TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS FACT. POLOFF UNDERScoreD THAT WHATEVER THE CASE IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT -- AND NOT ONLY THE SAG -- PRESS THE TALIBAN TO EXPEL BIN LADIN TO A PLACE WHERE HE CAN BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. IT IS PAKISTAN THAT HAS THE GREATER INFLUENCE ON THE TALIBAN, POLOFF NOTED.

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1445

S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 008369

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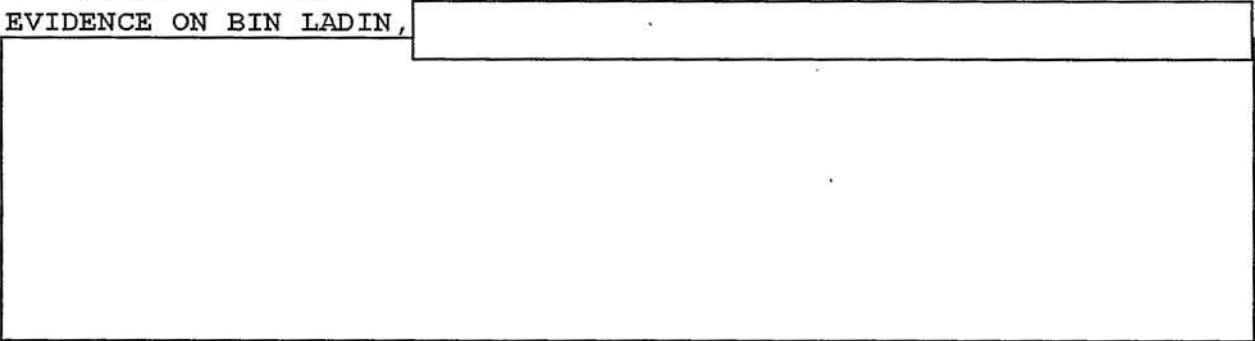
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6. (S) CONCERNING THE ISSUE OF EVIDENCE, POLOFF OBSERVED THAT WASHINGTON WAS AWARE OF THE TALIBAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT AND WAS REVIEWING THE ISSUE. HOWEVER, IT WAS WELL-KNOWN THAT THE GOP HAD EVIDENCE ON BIN LADIN,



B1, B7(A)

7. (S) ANOTHER OF POLOFF'S SOURCES AGREED WITH [REDACTED] THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE GROWN EVEN MORE HARD-LINE ON THE BIN LADIN MATTER OF LATE: IN A NOVEMBER 10 MEETING, [REDACTED] TOUCHING ON SIMILAR THEMES TO THAT OF [REDACTED], TOLD POLOFF THAT HIS SOURCES WERE ALSO TELLING HIM THAT NAYIF'S REPORTED COMMENTS HAD GIVEN THE TALIBAN AN INCREASED LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE THAT THE PRESSURE ON BIN LADIN WAS SOFTENING. [REDACTED] SAID HE COULD NOT DENY THAT THE TALIBAN WERE RIGHT SINCE "NAYIF IS KNOWN TO BE ONE OF THE TOP FIVE LEADERS IN THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT." [REDACTED] ADDED THAT THE TALIBAN HAD ALSO BEEN UPSET BY THE U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BIN LADIN INDICTMENT AND REWARD OFFER (SEE REF A), WHICH THEY (THE TALIBAN) FELT WAS UNWARRANTED SINCE THEY WERE HANDLING THE MATTER THROUGH THEIR SHARI'A COURT PROCESS. HE ADDED THAT MANY OBSERVERS FELT THAT IT WAS UNFAIR FOR THE U.S. NOT TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE TO THE TALIBAN WHEN THEY HAD REQUESTED IT.

COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST

8. (S) BASED ON [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] COMMENTS, SAUDI INTERIOR MINISTER NAYIF'S REPORTED REMARKS -- WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE INDICATIVE OF SAG POLICY -- APPEAR TO HAVE CHANGED PERCEPTIONS OF SAUDI VIEWS AND LESSENED ANY OF THE PRESSURE THE TALIBAN MAY HAVE BEEN FEELING TO RESOLVE THE BIN LADIN MATTER IN THE NEAR-TERM. AT THIS POINT, THE TALIBAN [REDACTED] APPEAR TO BELIEVE THAT THE SAG, WHICH MAINTAINS GREAT MORAL FORCE IN THIS REGION, HAS SEPARATED ITSELF FROM THE U.S., EFFECTIVELY LEAVING US

B1

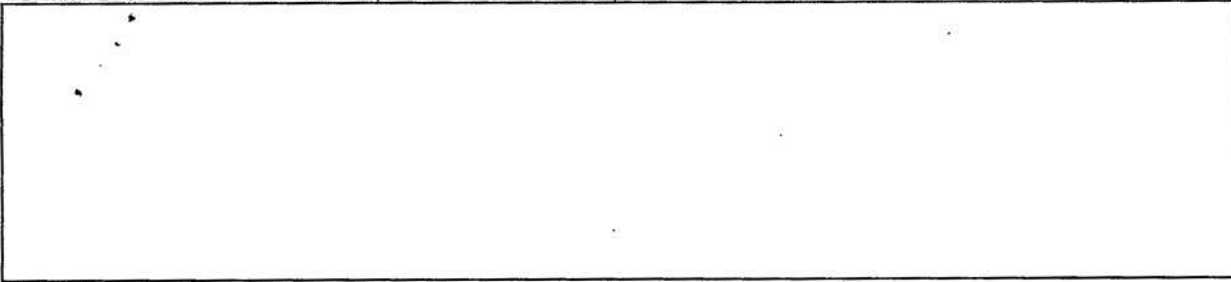
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ALL ALONE ON THIS MATTER. IN THE MEANTIME, THE TALIBAN APPEAR TO MANY OBSERVERS NOT TO BE TOTALLY UNREASONABLE IN THEIR DEMAND THAT THE U.S. PROVIDE THEM EVIDENCE ON BIN LADIN. SO FAR WE ARE

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UNINSTRUCTED ON WHAT, IF ANYTHING, TO PROVIDE THE TALIBAN. WE

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