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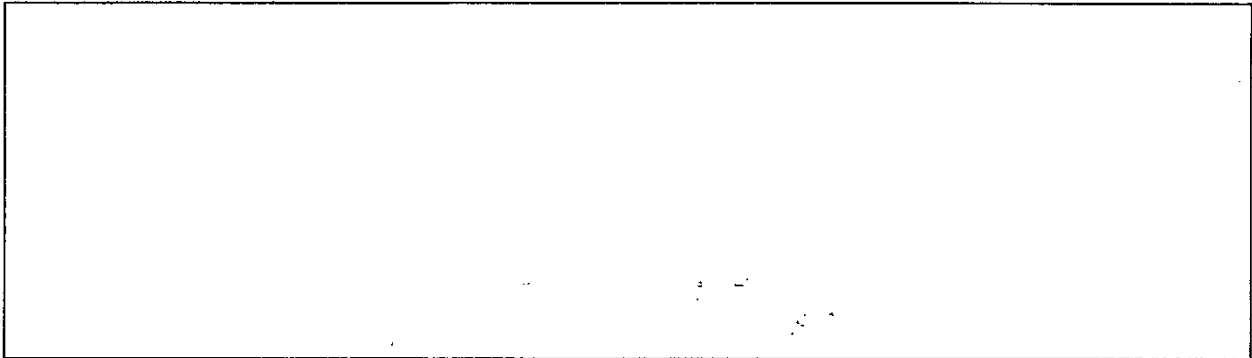
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/09/06

TEXT

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PHUM, PNUC, PTER, PK, IN, RS, IR, AF
SUBJECT: PAK FOREIGN MINISTER ASKS U.S. COOPERATION ON
AFGHAN I STAN

LONDON FOR TUELLER, PARIS FOR ALLEGRONE, ROME FOR STORELLA

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY LEE O. COLDREN, DIRECTOR, SA/PAB,
DEPARTMENT OF STATE. REASON: 1.5(D).

2. (C) SUMMARY:

PAKISTANI FOREIGN MINISTER ASSEF ALL MET WITH ACTING
SECRETARY TALBOTT FEBRUARY 9 TO REQUEST CLOSER POLICY
COORDINATION ON AFGHANISTAN AIMED AT REDUCING THE RECENT
INCREASE OF FOREIGN MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE KABUL
AUTHORITIES. THE ACTING SECRETARY NOTED THAT PAKISTANI
SUPPORT, AND THE PRESUMED BUT MISTAKEN IMPRESSION OF U.S.
ASSISTANCE FOR THE ISLAMIST TALL BAN MOVEMENT HAD STIMULATED
MOSCOW AND TEHERAN TO INCREASE ASSISTANCE TO RABBANI AND
MASOOD. THE U.S. SHARED PAKISTANI CONCERN OVER INCREASED
INTERFERENCE AND AGREED THAT AFGHAN INSTABILITY AND EXPORT
OF TERRORISTS AND DRUGS AFFECTED OUR COMMON INTERESTS.

HOWEVER, PAKISTAN WOULD NEED TO REESTABLISH A POLICY OF
MORE VISIBLE NEUTRALITY BEFORE IT WOULD BECOME PRACTICAL TO
ACT IN CONCERT TO STRENGTHEN THE UN SPECIAL MISSION TO
AFGHANISTAN. ALL CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT PAKISTAN
PROVIDED MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE TALIBAN AND URGED THE
U.S. TO WORK WITH PAKISTAN ON THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF A
PEACE PLAN WHICH WOULD BECOME THE UN PLAN. DURING THE 70
MINUTE MEETING ALL ALSO TOUCHED BRIEFLY ON INDO-PAKISTAN
RELATIONS, KASHMIR, U.S. EFFORTS TO PREVENT AN INDIAN
NUCLEAR TEST, AND U.S. MEDIA TREATMENT OF SINO-PAKISTANI
NUCLEAR COOPERATION.

3. (C) MISPERCEPTION OF U.S. AFGHAN ROLE IN CENTRAL ASIA

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IN HIS JANUARY 9 MEETING WITH PAKISTANI FOREIGN MINISTER SARDAR ASSEF ALL, ACTING SECRETARY TALBOTT RECALLED THAT HE VISITED AFGHANISTAN SEVERAL TIMES AS A JOURNALIST AND IS WELL AWARE OF WHAT IS AT STAKE THERE. THE RECENT INCREASE IN EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE IS SIMILAR TO POLARIZATION DURING THE COLD WAR. ONE PROBLEM IS THE WIDE BUT MISTAKEN PRESUMPTION THAT THE U.S. IS IN LEAGUE WITH PAKISTAN IN SUPPORTING THE TALIBAN. INDEED, WE ARE RECEIVING WARNING SIGNALS FROM CENTRAL ASIA STATES WHO ASK WHY PAKISTAN AND THE U.S. ARE SUPPORTING A MOVEMENT OF FANATIC ISLAMIC CRUSADERS. THE REPUTATION OF THE TALIBAN IS VERY UPSETTING TO COUNTRIES WHOSE GOVERNMENTS FEAR ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM, NOT ONLY IN CENTRAL ASIA BUT ALSO RUSSIA AND INDIA.

4. (C) ASSEF ALL MENTIONS NON-PRO AND INDO-PAK ISSUES

BEFORE RESPONDING ON AFGHANISTAN, ASSEF ALL TOUCHED BRIEFLY ON A RANGE OF REGIONAL AND BILATERAL ISSUES. HE THANKED THE ADMINISTRATION FOR ITS EFFORTS ON THE BROWN AMENDMENT, NOTING THAT HIS GOVERNMENT REALIZES THERE ARE NOW SENSITIVE IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES. SAYING THAT HE FREQUENTLY DISCUSSED PAKISTAN-CHINESE RELATIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO, HE AVERRED THAT CHINA WAS HELPING TO BUILD A POWER REACTOR IN PAKISTAN FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES ONLY. HE EXPRESSED SHOCK OVER THE CONTINUING MEDIA ATTENTION BEING GIVEN TO "THE MAGNET ISSUE". INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS CONTINUED TO DETERIORATE BUT THIS WAS LARGELY A RESULT OF THE POPULARITY OF BASHING PAKISTAN PRIOR TO NATIONAL ELECTIONS. IN INDIA HE REFERRED TO THE ROCKET THAT DESTROYED A MOSQUE IN AZAD

KASHMIR ON REPUBLIC DAY AS A SIGN OF INDIAN HOSTILITY. FINALLY HE EXPRESSED CONTINUING PAKISTANI CONCERN WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST, NOTING THAT INDIA HAS NOT GIVEN A CATEGORICAL PLEDGE NOT TO TEST. SUCH A TEST, HE SAID, WOULD PUT AN END TO CTBT HOPES. HE HOPED THE U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO RESTRAIN INDIA BY STRONGLY ADVISING THEM NOT TO TEST.

5. (C) PAKISTAN CONCERNED WITH INCREASED INTERFERENCE

TURNING TO AFGHANISTAN, FOREIGN MINISTER ASSEF ALL MAINTAINED THAT TWO YEARS AGO PAKISTAN FOLLOWED A POLICY OF NEUTRALITY TOWARD THE WARRING AFGHAN FACTIONS, AND SEARCHED FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION DRAWING ON BROAD-BASED SUPPORT. HOWEVER, OTHER COUNTRIES INTERFERED AND PAKISTAN WAS NOW THE ONLY COUNTRY WITHOUT GOOD RELATIONS WITH RABBANI AND MASOOD DESPITE PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN BROKERING THE ACCORDS THAT ORIGINALLY PUT THEM IN KABUL. ORIGINALLY PART OF A WIDER COALITION, RABBANI CULTIVATES OUTSIDE SUPPORT ONLY TO CONQUER EVERYONE ELSE. ALL ASSERTED THAT WHILE THE KABUL REGIME CONTROLS ONLY 4 PROVINCES AND REPRESENTS ONLY THE TAJIK MINORITY, IT NONETHELESS IS RECEIVING A MAJOR INFLUX OF ARMS. RUSSIA, IRAN AND INDIA PROVIDE HUNDREDS OF FLIGHTS OF AMMUNITION AND FUEL TO KABUL PER MONTH. ISLAMABAD HAS TRIED TO EXTEND THE HAND OF FRIENDSHIP TO KABUL, BUT HAS

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MET HARSH REBUFFS SUCH AS THE FATAL ATTACK ON PERSONNEL AND THE BURNING OF THE PAKISTANI EMBASSY LAST SEPTEMBER.

6. (C) IRAN HAS EXPANSIONIST AIMS

ELABORATING ON MASSIVE IRANIAN MILITARY SUPPORT FOR KABUL, ASSEF ALL ASSERTED THAT IRAN CONSIDERED PERSIAN-SPEAKING WESTERN AFGHANISTAN AS PART OF IRAN. TEHERAN HAD SHIFTED FROM PLAYING THE "SHIA CARD" TO ATTEMPTING TO EXTEND ITS INFLUENCE OVER ALL PERSIAN SPEAKING AFGHANS. INDEED, BY COURTING GENERAL DOSTAM THEY HOPED TO OBTAIN A FREE HAND IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN IN ORDER TO EXPAND INFLUENCE INTO TAJIKISTAN AND, ULTIMATELY, CHINA. MOREOVER, IRAN DID NOT WANT STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN AS THIS WOULD ENABLE AFGHANISTAN TO SERVE AS A COMPETING LANDBRIDGE FOR CENTRAL ASIAN TRADE.

7. (C) U.S. INVOLVEMENT TO PROTECT SHARED INTERESTS

CITING BOTH NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING AND THE EXPORT OF TERRORISM FROM AFGHANISTAN AS HARMFUL TO BOTH PAKISTAN AND THE U.S., ALL ALSO SAID THE EVOLVING VIEWS ABOUT AMERICA IN AFGHANISTAN WERE A PROBLEM. THE AFGHANS FELT THAT THEY HAD

BEEN ABANDONED BY THE U.S. AT THE END OF THE COLD WAR, AN EVENT WHICH WAS PARTIALLY THE RESULT OF THEIR RESISTANCE TO THE U.S.S.R. THE U.S. POLICY OF SUPPORTING UN SPECIAL MISSION LEADER MESTIRI, WHO IS CONSIDERED MORE AN OBSERVER THAN SERIOUS MEDIATOR, WAS SEEN, HE SAID, AS COVER FOR A BASIC LACK OF INTEREST AND COMMITMENT TO PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN. THIS VIEW WAS BEING USED BY RADICALS WHO PORTRAYED THE U.S. AS AN ENEMY OF ISLAM, THOUGH U.S. ACTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AND IN BOSNIA HAD UNDERMINED THAT VIEW.

8. (C) PAKISTAN WANTS TO COOPERATE WITH U.S.

ALL STATED THAT PAKISTAN SHARED THE U.S. VIEW THAT A MILITARY SOLUTION IN AFGHANISTAN WAS NOT POSSIBLE AND THAT FURTHER FIGHTING IN KABUL WOULD NOT DISLodge MASOOD BUT CAUSE GREATER SUFFERING, DEATH AND DESTRUCTION. WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS GREATER U.S. POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT, WHICH NEED NOT INVOLVE GREAT SUMS OF MONEY. THE PROBLEM WITH THE MESTIRI MISSION WAS THAT IT IS NOT GIVEN PRIORITY BY MAJOR COUNTRIES SUCH AS THE U.S. AND RUSSIA. PAKISTAN DID NOT WANT TO INVOLVE THE U.S. IN DETAILS BUT RATHER BROAD PRINCIPLES FOR THE COMPOSITION OF A TRANSITION GOVERNMENT AND THE CONDITIONS TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE. CRITERIA FOR THE COMPOSITION OF A TRANSITION SHURA (COUNCIL) SHOULD INCLUDE "REALITIES ON THE GROUND" I.E. THE AMOUNT OF TERRITORY CONTROLLED BY EACH FACTION, AND THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THOSE AREAS SUCH AS POPULATION AND ETHNICITY. MOREOVER, KABUL WOULD HAVE TO BE DEMILITARIZED AND A NEUTRAL SECURITY FORCE CREATED THAT WOULD NOT BE BOUND TO INDIVIDUAL FACTION LEADERS. IF THE U.S. AGREED TO THIS APPROACH, THE DETAILS

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COULD BE WORKED OUT AND THE PLAN PRESENTED TO THE AFGHANS BY THE UN.

9. (C) U.S. COOPERATION DEPENDS ON PAKISTANI ACTION

THE ACTING SECRETARY RESPONDED THAT THERE IS NO DISAGREEMENT ON FUNDAMENTALS AND THAT THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR THE U.S. TO SEEK STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN, NOT LEAST THE THREAT WHICH CURRENT INSTABILITY POSES FOR PAKISTAN, A COUNTRY IMPORTANT TO THE U.S. TALBOTT SAID THE U.S. CONSIDERS MUCH OF THE RECENT INCREASE IN FOREIGN SUPPORT FOR RABBANI TO BE A BACKLASH TO PAKISTANI SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN WITH WIDELY PRESUMED APPROVAL BY THE U.S. SINCE SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN UNDERCUTS ALL OUR SHARED GOALS, PAKISTAN SHOULD RETURN TO A POSITION OF NEUTRALITY AND RESTORE ITS RELATIONS WITH THE KABUL REGIME. THE VISCERAL REACTION TO THE TALIBAN BY MOSCOW MIGHT BE

MODERATED IF THEY WERE TO RELEASE THE RUSSIAN AIRCREW OF THE PLANE THEY FORCED DOWN IN KANDAHAR. PAKISTAN SHOULD CONTINUE TO PUSH THE TALIBAN TO DO SO. TALBOTT AGREED THAT THE UN SPECIAL MISSION NEEDS TO BE ENERGIZED AND PROMISED TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO STRENGTHEN MESTIRI, INCLUDING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT. TALBOTT TOLD ALL THAT HE HAD RECOMMENDED TO THE SECRETARY THAT THE ISSUE OF OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE BE RAISED WITH PRIMAKOV DURING THEIR DINNER IN HELSINKI THAT EVENING.

10. (C) PAKISTANI MILITARY SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN DENIED

WELCOMING U.S. WILLINGNESS TO RAISE INTERFERENCE WITH RUSSIA, ALL STRONGLY DENIED THAT PAKISTAN PROVIDED MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE TALIBAN. HE ASSERTED THAT IN ADDITION TO RELIEF SUPPLIES WHICH PAKISTAN HAS PROVIDED TO ALL FACTIONS, PAKISTAN'S HELP FOR THE TALIBAN CONSISTED OF PHONE LINES AND COMMUNICATION LINKS AND SOME FUNDS FOR RECONSTRUCTION IN KANDAHAR. THIS THEME WAS FURTHER ELABORATED BY LTG RANA IN A DISCOURSE ON THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT TO WHICH PAKISTAN GAVE "NOT ONE BULLET". POINTS OF INTEREST INCLUDED HIS ASSERTION THAT PAKISTAN'S ATTEMPTS TO BROKER AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE TALL BAN AND GENERAL DOSTAM WERE AIMED AT MODERATING THE VIEWS OF THE TALIBAN WHOSE "SIMPLE, RIGID, AND ANTIQUE" BELIEFS WERE FURTHER CONFUSED BY A LACK OF STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE MOVEMENT. SIMILAR TO ALL'S TREATMENT OF IRANIAN MOTIVATION, RANA ASSERTED THAT MOSCOW NEEDED INSTABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN TO JUSTIFY A MILITARY PRESENCE ON ITS OLD BORDERS AND TO BLOCK ALTERNATIVE TRADE ROUTES TO CENTRAL ASIA. THE DIFFERING U.S. VIEW OF RUSSIAN AIMS IN CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN WAS DISCUSSED DURING FOREIGN MINISTER ALL'S LUNCH WITH A/S RAPHEL (SEPTEL).

11. (C) UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF SUPPORTING MILITANTS

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WITHOUT CONCEDED PAKISTANI ASSERTIONS CONCERNING MILITARY AID TO THE TALIBAN, TALBOTT NOTED AGAIN THAT PERCEPTIONS OF PAKISTANI AND U.S. SUPPORT WERE PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INCREASE IN OUTSIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO RABBANI AND MASOOD. SUCH INTERFERENCE COULD NOT BE DECREASED WITHOUT COUNTERING THOSE PERCEPTIONS AND THIS NECESSARILY INVOLVED CHANGES IN PAKISTANI POLICY. AS THE MEETING CLOSED, THE ACTING SECRETARY DREW AN ANALOGY BETWEEN PAKISTANI SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE MILITANTS IN INDIAN CONTROLLED KASHMIR. WHILE SUCH SUPPORT WAS UNDERTAKEN TO SERVE PAKISTANI INTERESTS, THERE WERE UNINTENDED

CONSEQUENCES CONTRARY TO PAKISTAN'S AND THE REGION'S LARGER INTERESTS. ULTIMATELY SUCH GROUPS COULD NOT BE CONTROLLED AND INDULGED IN ACTIONS SUCH AS THE KIDNAPPING OF FOREIGNERS IN KASHMIR.

12. (U) ALL WAS ACCOMPANIED BY LTG NASIM RANA, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INTER-SERVICES INTELLIGENCE (ISI) WHICH IS TRADITIONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR DEALING WITH THE AFGHAN FACTIONS, AME MALEEHA LODHI AND NOTETAKERS. FOR THE U.S. SIDE SA A/S RAPHEL, INR PDAS KURTZER, AND SA/PAB DIRECTOR COLDREN (NOTETAKER) ATTENDED.

13. (C) COMMENT:

CHRISTOPHER

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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