

Current Class: SECRET
Current Handling: NODIS
Document Number: 1998STATE210511

UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 1 E2

Channel: n/a

SECRET

PTO8382

PAGE 01 STATE 210511 111906Z
ORIGIN NODS-00

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

INFO LOG-00 CCOE-00 SAS-00 /000R

DRAFTED BT:S/S-O:JROBERTS
APPROVED BY:S/S-O:JMROBERTS

-----80911E 111907Z /38

O 111908Z NOV 98 ZFF5
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY RIYADH IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 210511

NODIS

FOLLOWING ISLAMABAD 08410 DATE 11 NOV 98, SENT ACTION
SECSTATE BEING REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO
QUOTE

S E C R E T ISLAMABAD 008410

NODIS

DECAPTIONED

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
SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 210511 111906Z
PESHAWAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/11/08
TAGS: PREL, PTER, ASEC, AF, SA, PK
SUBJ: USAMA BIN LADIN: MESSAGE DELIVERED TO TALIBAN
REPRESENTATIVE

REFS: (A) STATE 210367
- (B) ISLAMABAD 8369
- (C) FBIS DTG 101055Z NOV 98
- (D) FBIS DTG 071002Z NOV 98

(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAM B. MILAM. REASONS: 1.5

Current Class: SECRET

Page: 1

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E AHMAD
DATE/CASE ID: 26 MAY 2004 200400774

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(C) (D).

1. (S) SUMMARY: IN A NOVEMBER 11 MEETING, THE AMBASSADOR DELIVERED REF A TALKING POINTS ON TERRORIST USAMA BIN LADIN TO LOCAL TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVE HAQQANI. IN RESPONSE, HAQQANI DID NOT SAY MUCH NEW ON BIN LADIN, BASICALLY STICKING TO THE TALIBAN'S HARD-LINE STANCE ON THE ISSUE. FOR EXAMPLE, HE STRESSED THAT BIN LADIN HAD TO BE TRIED BY THE TALIBAN SINCE AFGHANISTAN DID NOT HAVE EXTRADITION AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. HE ALSO ASSERTED THAT BIN LADIN WAS TOTALLY UNDER CONTROL. HAQQANI ALSO BROUGHT UP [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] ALTHOUGH NOT AN IMPORTANT TALIBAN FIGURE BY ANY MEANS, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT HAQQANI WILL SEND THIS LATEST U.S. MESSAGE ON TO KANDAHAR RIGHT AWAY. END SUMMARY.

DELIVERING U.S. POINTS

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 210511 111906Z

2. (S) ON NOVEMBER 11, THE AMBASSADOR REVIEWED REF A TALKING POINTS WITH SYEDUR RAHMAN HAQQANI, THE "CHARGE D'AFFAIRES" OF THE TALIBAN-CONTROLLED AFGHAN EMBASSY. FOCUSING HIS INITIAL COMMENTS ON THE QUESTION OF EVIDENCE, HAQQANI RESPONDED THAT HE DID NOT PERSONALLY KNOW WHETHER OR NOT THE TALIBAN HAD RECEIVED ANY EVIDENCE ON BIN LADIN. FOR EXAMPLE, HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THE

[REDACTED] HOWEVER, HE WOULD CHECK ON THIS. (NOTE: EMBASSY HAS PROVIDED THE TALIBAN EMBASSY HERE A VIDEO-TAPE OF BIN LADIN'S MAY 1997 CNN INTERVIEW, THE TEXT OF A JUNE 1998 INTERVIEW WITH ABC, AND A PHOTO-COPY OF THE RECENT INDICTMENT OF BIN LADIN AND HIS ASSISTANT MOHAMMAD AREF.) THE TALIBAN LOOKED FORWARD TO RECEIVING ANY EVIDENCE AVAILABLE ON BIN LADIN AND THE U.S. SHOULD SEND IT SUCH EVIDENCE. HOWEVER, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT BIN LADIN HAD BEEN ACCUSED OF CRIMES, BUT HE HAD NOT BEEN CONVICTED. FOR EXAMPLE, BIN LADIN HAS TOLD THE TALIBAN THAT HE HAS NEVER HAD ANY CONTACT WITH [REDACTED]. BIN LADIN HAS HAD MANY ASSOCIATES IN THE PAST -- 20,000 PEOPLE WERE TRAINED TO FIGHT IN THE "JIHAD" (HOLY WAR). HE (BIN LADIN) CANNOT BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR ALL OF THEIR ACTIONS.

WE WANT TO TRY HIM IN AFGHANISTAN

3. (S) CONTINUING, HAQQANI STRESSED THAT THE TALIBAN DID NOT HAVE ANY EXTRADITION AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. THEREFORE, THEY HAVE DECIDED TO TRY BIN LADIN IN AFGHANISTAN. THE DIFFERENCE WITH U.S. VIEWS IS THAT THE U.S. WANTS TO TRY HIM IN A THIRD-COUNTRY.

Current Class: SECRET

Page: 2

THESE ISSUES CAN BE DISCUSSED. THERE IS NO NEED TO RESORT TO THREATS OR FORCE. SPEAKING RHETORICALLY, HAQQANI ASKED THE AMBASSADOR WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH TRYING HIM IN AFGHANISTAN? THE
SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 210511 111906Z
AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT BIN LADIN'S TERRORIST ACTIONS HAVE RESULTED IN THE DEATHS OF HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD. AMERICANS, SAUDIS, KENYANS, TANZANIANS, AND MANY OTHERS HAVE DIED. HIS TERRORIST ACTIONS HAVE OCCURRED IN MANY PLACES. THEREFORE, OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE U.S., SAUDI ARABIA, KENYA, AND TANZANIA, INTER ALIA, HAVE A DIRECT INTEREST IN SEEING HIM BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. HAQQANI SMUGLY RESPONDED THAT THE SAUDI ATTITUDE WAS, IN FACT, UNCLEAR: FOR EXAMPLE,

THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT

THE TALIBAN SHOULD LOOK TO WHAT CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH SAID DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO PAKISTAN WHEN HE EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE FACT THAT BIN LADIN WAS HARBORED IN AFGHANISTAN. (NOTE: AFTER THE MEETING, THE EMBASSY SENT OVER A NOVEMBER 11 ARTICLE IN A PAKISTANI NEWSPAPER CITING CROWN PRINCE AS REITERATING CONCERNS ABOUT BIN LADIN DURING A RECENT INTERVIEW.)

BIN LADIN IS UNDER CONTROL

4. (S) SHIFTING FOCUS, HAQQANI SAID THE U.S. WAS INCORRECT: BIN LADIN WAS NOW UNDER FULL TALIBAN CONTROL AND IN NO POSITION TO COMMIT TERRORIST ACTS. REFLECTING BACK TO AN EARLIER POINT (SEE PARA TWO), HAQQANI SAID BIN LADIN COULD NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF HIS SUPPORTERS OR OF PEOPLE WHO HAD TRAINED WITH HIM YEARS AGO. THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO MAY BE TAKING THE TERRORIST ACTIONS. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THE U.S. AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY KNOWS THAT BIN LADIN REMAINS A CLEAR THREAT TO THEIR CITIZENS. HE WANTS TO STRIKE AND IS IN CONTACT WITH HIS NETWORK. HE WAS ALSO DANGEROUS TO THE TALIBAN AND THEY WERE JUST
SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 210511 111906Z
GETTING THEMSELVES DEEPER INTO PROBLEMS BY HARBORING HIM.

CONCERN ABOUT REPORTED STATEMENTS

5. (S) THE AMBASSADOR ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED BY THE MEETING TO EXPRESS HIS PERSONAL CONCERN ABOUT RECENT STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO THE TALIBAN IN WHICH THEY REPORTEDLY SAID U.S.

Current Class: SECRET

Page: 3

CITIZENS WOULD NOT BE SAFE ANYWHERE IF BIN LADIN WERE APPREHENDED AND MADE OTHER AGGRESSIVE REMARKS AGAINST THE U.S. (SEE REF C AFP WIRE SERVICE REPORT). SUCH REMARKS WERE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO THE EXTREME AND THE TALIBAN SHOULD MAKE CLEAR TO ALL THAT SUCH STATEMENTS WERE NOT ACCURATE REFLECTIONS OF THEIR POLICIES. HAQQANI REPLIED THAT THE STATEMENTS CITED BY THE AMBASSADOR WERE NOT OFFICIAL TALIBAN POLICY. FOR EXAMPLE, THEY HAD NOT BEEN MADE BY AN OFFICIAL TALIBAN SPOKESMEN. THERE HAD BEEN PLENTY OF INSTANCES WHEN HE (HAQQANI) HAD HAD TO DENY REPORTS THAT HAD APPEARED IN THE PAKISTANI PRESS, ESPECIALLY THE URDU LANGUAGE PRESS. MOREOVER, THE TALIBAN COULD NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANTI-U.S. COMMENTS BY PAKISTANI NATIONALS. (NOTE: HAQQANI WAS APPARENTLY REFERRING TO THE RECENT PRESS REPORTS CITING PAKISTANI EXTREMISTS' AS POSTURING, AS USUAL, ABOUT THE U.S. PURSUIT OF BIN LADIN -- SEE REF D.) THE AMBASSADOR ALSO NOTED ANOTHER PRESS REPORT WHICH PURPORTED TO QUOTE TALIBAN LEADER MULLAH OMAR AS STATING THAT THE U.S. WOULD "RECOGNIZE" THE TALIBAN IF THEY (THE TALIBAN) SURRENDERED BIN LADIN. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE: THE EXTRADITION OF BIN LADIN WOULD BE A VERY POSITIVE STEP BY THE TALIBAN. HOWEVER, ACCEPTANCE BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT WAS A SEPARATE ISSUE. THE BIN LADIN MATTER SHOULD BE JUDGED ON ITS OWN MERITS AND

SECRET

PAGE 06 STATE 210511 111906Z

IT WAS INCUMBENT ON THE TALIBAN TO DEAL WITH THIS ISSUE IN THAT LIGHT. AGREEING WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S POINT, HAQQANI REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE OMAR HAD MADE THE STATEMENT; THIS WAS PROBABLY ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE PRESS GETTING THINGS WRONG.

COMMENT

6. (S) HAQQANI IS NOT VERY HIGH UP IN THE TALIBAN HIERARCHY AND HE IS NOT KNOWN TO BE PARTICULARLY WELL-PLUGGED IN. HOWEVER, IN THE PAST HE HAS DELIVERED OUR MESSAGES TO KANDAHAR, SO THIS LATEST EXPRESSION OF U.S. CONCERN WILL BE PASSED ON TO OMAR SOON. HAQQANI'S COMMENTS CONTAINED LITTLE THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE NOT BEEN SAYING PUBLICLY. AS WITH OTHER INTERLOCUTORS IN RECENT DAYS (SEE REF B), HAQQANI BROUGHT UP [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] END COMMENT.
MILAM UNQUOTE TALBOTT

SECRET

Current Class: SECRET

Page: 4