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ACTION: PK (01)

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BABAR SEES THE STALEMATE CONTINUING

INFO: IN (01) SAF (04) SRA (01) AF (01)
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| | PMB-00 | DSCG-00 | DRL-04 | G-00 | NFAT-00 | SAS-00 | /025W |

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7633
INFO AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

AMEMBASSY ALMATY
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
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USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/CCJ3/CCJ5/POLAD//

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DAKA
AMCONSUL LAHORE

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DEPT FOR SA/PAB AND EUR/CACEN; PARIS FOR POL/RAVELING; LONDON FOR POL/TUELLER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/16/00
TAGS: PREL, PGOW, KISL, PK, AF
SUBJ: AFGHANISTAN; [REDACTED]
CRITICIZES GOP'S AFGHAN POLICY; SAYS IT IS LETTING POLICY DRIFT

B1

REFS: (A) ISLAMABAD 3557; (B) ISLAMABAD 1131

(U) CLASSIFIED BY DAN MOZENA, POLITICAL COUNSELOR. REASONS: 1.5 (C) (D).

1. (U) THIS MESSAGE WAS COORDINATED WITH CONSULATE PESHAWAR.

2. (C) SUMMARY: IN A JUNE 16 MEETING, [REDACTED] CRITICIZED GOP AFGHAN POLICY, ASSERTING THAT GOP POLICY LACKS A CLEAR SENSE OF DIRECTION. WARNING TO THIS THEME, [REDACTED] CLAIMED THAT THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT HAS MADE LITTLE PROGRESS IN CONTROLLING ITS BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN, DESPITE EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE SALE OF WHEAT. HE WENT ON TO DEFEND ISI (INTER-SERVICES INTELLIGENCE) INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHAN ISSUES, COMMENTING THAT IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT ISI NOT TO BE ENGAGED, GIVEN ITS INTERESTS IN REGIONAL FOREIGN POLICY. [REDACTED] MUSED THAT PAKISTANI AND AFGHAN PASHTUNS ARE INCREASINGLY

BEING DRAWN TOGETHER, A PROCESS HE CLAIMED COULD EVENTUALLY HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS FOR AFGHAN SOVEREIGNTY. END SUMMARY.

3. (C) POLOFF MET JUNE 16 WITH [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] FOR A TOUR D'HORIZON ON PAKISTAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH AFGHANISTAN. ASKED ABOUT THE PRESENT SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN.

[REDACTED] REPLIED THAT HE EXPECTS THAT THE MILITARY STALEMATE WILL CONTINUE AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. THE EFFORT BY AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON TO KICK START THE PEACE PROCESS DURING HIS APRIL 1997 VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN WAS WORTHWHILE, BUT IT IS A FACT THAT NONE OF THE FACTIONS IS PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE AT THIS TIME. BOTH SIDES -- THE TALIBAN AND THE NORTHERN GROUPING -- REMAIN CONVINCED A MILITARY SOLUTION IS POSSIBLE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IF ONE SIDE WERE TO SUFFER A SEVERE MILITARY SETBACK, IT WOULD BE MORE FORTHCOMING AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. HOWEVER, AT THIS POINT, [REDACTED] CONTINUED, IT LOOKS AS IF BOTH SIDES ARE FAIRLY EVENLY MATCHED, SO THE STALEMATE WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE INTO THE FALL, WHEN IT MAY BE POSSIBLE THAT NEGOTIATIONS COULD GAIN SOME TRACTION. (NOTE: [REDACTED]'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE POLITICAL-MILITARY SITUATION IS SIMILAR TO THAT EXPRESSED IN RECENT MEETINGS BY OTHER KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS, INCLUDING THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR -- SEE REF B.)

CRITICIZING GOP AFGHAN POLICY

4. (C) [REDACTED] WENT ON TO ASSERT THAT ONE KEY REASON THAT THE PEACE PROCESS HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO MOVE FORWARD IS THE LACK OF "A SENSE OF DIRECTION" IN THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT'S AFGHAN POLICY. [REDACTED] PREFACED HIS REMARKS BY NOTING THAT THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS IN REGARD TO AFGHANISTAN COULD BE CRITICIZED ON MANY FRONTS, BUT "AT LEAST THE POLICY WAS COHERENT -- WE TRIED TO BUILD THE TALIBAN UP AND THEN TRIED TO PUSH THEM TO NEGOTIATIONS (IN OCTOBER 1996) AFTER THEY CAPTURED KABUL." (NOTE: A [REDACTED] CEASE-FIRE IN OCTOBER 1996 WAS NOT IMPLEMENTED BECAUSE OF DISAGREEMENTS AMONG THE FACTIONS. [REDACTED]'S SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY ENDED WHEN THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT WAS FORCED FROM OFFICE IN NOVEMBER 1996. END NOTE.) THAT SAID, WITH THE NAWAZ SHARIF GOVERNMENT, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SUSTAINED EFFORT TO BRING THE FACTIONS TO THE BARGAINING TABLE, [REDACTED] ASSERTED. SHARIF HIMSELF FOCUSES ON AFGHANISTAN ONLY IN "FITTS AND STARTS." IN THE MEANTIME, THE GOP'S COORDINATOR FOR AFGHAN POLICY (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADDITIONAL SECRETARY IFTIKHAR MURSHED) DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH EXPERTISE ON AFGHAN ISSUES, NOR THE DOMESTIC PUNCH TO RUN AN EFFECTIVE AFGHAN POLICY. WHAT THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT NEEDS IS A COORDINATED EFFORT TO BRING THE FACTIONS TO THE PEACE TABLE. THIS EFFORT MUST BE MANAGED BY PROFESSIONALS AND SUPPORTED BY POLITICIANS.

SUPPORT FOR ISI INVOLVEMENT

5. (C) POLOFF ASKED [REDACTED] ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE ISI (INTER-SERVICES INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE) IN AFGHANISTAN. POLOFF COMMENTED THAT MANY OBSERVERS SAY ISI INVOLVEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE

TALIBAN UNDERMINES GOP CLAIMS THAT IT WANTS A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, SOME SAY ISI INVOLVEMENT WARPS GOP POLICY BY INFECTING IT WITH A "SECRET POLICEMEN'S MENTALITY." [REDACTED] DISAGREED WITH THIS ASSESSMENT. IT WAS COMPLETELY WRONG TO ASSUME THAT THE ISI COULD BE PREVENTED FROM INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHAN POLICY, ESPECIALLY GIVEN ITS STRONG INTERESTS IN REGIONAL FOREIGN POLICY. HE PERSONALLY SUPPORTED THE DEPLOYMENT OF ISI OFFICERS OPERATING OUT OF THE PAKISTANI EMBASSY IN KABUL, AND FROM THE HERAT, KANDAHAR, AND JALALABAD CONSULATES. WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT THESE OFFICERS PROVIDED THE TALIBAN WITH ADVICE, IT WAS ALSO TRUE THAT IT

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IT WAS BETTER FOR THE GOP TO BE ABLE TO MONITOR WHAT THE ISI WAS
DOING BY HAVING THEM OPERATE OUT OF AFGHAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS.

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THEIR LINKS TO THE REST OF PAKISTAN AND THEIR STRONGER ECONOMIC
SITUATION.

6. (C) ALL THAT SAID, [] NOTED THAT HE THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE
FINE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PAKISTANI MFA OFFICIALS AT POSTS IN
AFGHANISTAN. THE GOP, IN FACT, HAD RECENTLY SELECTED ABDUL HAMID
AFRIDI, A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER, TO BE PAKISTANI CONSUL GENERAL
IN KANDAHAR. AFRIDI WOULD REPLACE MAJOR GUL, A RETIRED ISI
OFFICER, WHO HAD BEEN IN KANDAHAR SINCE 1994. NONETHELESS, IT IS
IMPORTANT THAT THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT KEEP THE ISI INVOLVED IN
AFGHANISTAN. MANY OF THE ISI OFFICERS KNOW AFGHANISTAN WELL
BECAUSE THEY ARE PASHTUNS, AND MANY HAD ALSO SERVED IN ARMY BASES
IN THE PESHAWAR AND QUETTA AREAS, WHERE THEY HAD GAINED KNOWLEDGE
ABOUT AFGHANISTAN.

B1

COMMENT

GOP NOT SERIOUS ABOUT CONTROLLING BORDER

7. (C) QUERIED ABOUT PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO GAIN CONTROL
OF ITS BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN, [] RESPONDED THAT HE DID NOT

FEEL THAT THE PM NAWAZ SHARIF WAS SERIOUS ABOUT THE EFFORT. FOR
EXAMPLE, THE GOP HAD FAILED TO STOP WHEAT SMUGGLING. THE PROBLEM
WAS THAT PAKISTAN HAD SET THE WHEAT PRICE TOO HIGH IN ITS OCTOBER
1997 SALE AGREEMENT WITH THE TALIBAN. (NOTE: [] WAS REFERRING
TO THE GOP'S AGREEMENT TO SELL 600,000 TONS OF GOP-SUBSIDIZED WHEAT
TO BUYERS CHOSEN BY THE TALIBAN -- SEE REF A). BECAUSE OF THIS,
THE TALIBAN HAD BOUGHT VERY LITTLE OF THE WHEAT THAT PAKISTAN HAD
MADE AVAILABLE FOR SALE IN PESHAWAR AND QUETTA. IN ADDITION, THE
GOP WAS JUST NOT VERY SERIOUS ABOUT STOPPING SMUGGLING THROUGH LAW
ENFORCEMENT MEANS. DESPITE SOME INTERDICTIONS, THE GOP HAD FAILED
TO PROVIDE THE PERSONNEL AND VEHICLES NEEDED TO PATROL THE MAJOR
TRANSIT ROADS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

18. (C) [] S CRITICISM OF THE GOP ON AFGHAN POLICY MUST BE SEEN
FOR WHAT IT IS: THE VIEWS OF A LONGTIME AND BITTER POLITICAL
OPPONENT OF NAWAZ SHARIF. NONETHELESS, [] S POINTS REVERBERATE
BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN UNDERSCORED BY MORE NEUTRAL OBSERVERS WHO
AGREE THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS LETTING ITS AFGHANISTAN POLICY
DRIFT. THE RESULT IS CONFUSION AS EVIDENCED BY THE GOP'S
DECLARATORY POLICY, WHICH IS IN FAVOR OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND A

COUNTERVAILING POLICY OF ISI SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN. [] S
MUSINGS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PAKISTANI AND AFGHAN
PASHTUNS ARE INTERESTING, AND HE IS RIGHT THAT THESE LINKS HAVE
STEADILY STRENGTHENED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, ALTHOUGH MOST
OBSERVERS ARE MORE CIRCUMSPECT IN SPECULATING ABOUT POSSIBLE LONG-
RANGE RAMIFICATIONS.
SIMONS

8. (C) [] ADDED THAT ANOTHER AREA WHERE THE GOP HAD FAILED IN
TERMS OF CONTROLLING THE BORDER WAS IN TERMS OF RENEGOTIATING THE
TRANSIT TRADE AGREEMENT WITH AFGHANISTAN. (NOTE: THIS AGREEMENT
ALLOWS FOR MANY AFGHAN-BOUND GOODS TO ENTER AND TRANSIT PAKISTAN
CUSTOMS-FREE.) ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN MANY HOURS OF NEGOTIATIONS
WITH TALIBAN DELEGATIONS, THE TWO SIDES WERE NO CLOSER TO A NEW
AGREEMENT, WHICH WOULD TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF PAKISTANI
MANUFACTURERS (WHO WERE SUFFERING BECAUSE MANY AFGHAN-BOUND GOODS
WOUND UP IN PAKISTANI MARKETS, THUS UNDERCUTTING PRICES).

PAKISTANI AND AFGHAN PASHTUNS SEEN AS DRAWING CLOSER

9. (C) ASKED ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP OF PAKISTANI PASHTUNS WITH
AFGHAN PASHTUNS, [] COMMENTED THAT HE HAD
ALWAYS BEEN STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF THE DURAND LINE (WHICH DIVIDES
AFGHANISTAN FROM PAKISTAN). HE HAD ALWAYS THOUGHT THE IDEA OF A

"PASHTUNISTAN" WAS HOPELESS AND WAS RIDICULOUS TO ASPIRE TO,
ALTHOUGH A SMALL MINORITY CONTINUED TO SUPPORT IT IN ITS MILDEST
FORM BY CALLING FOR INCREASED AUTONOMY FOR THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER
PROVINCE. NONETHELESS, [] SAID, HE HAD TO ADMIT THAT IN THE
PAST SEVERAL YEARS, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF THE RAJIBULLAH
REGIME IN 1992, IT WAS THE CASE THAT THE BORDER SEEMED TO HAVE
ERODED AS A REAL FRONTIER. PASHTUNS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER
WERE NOW INTERMINGLING AS THEY HAD NOT DONE FOR WELL OVER A
CENTURY. IT WAS NOT CLEAR HOW THE RENEWAL AND INTENSIFICATION OF
CROSS-BORDER RELATIONSHIPS WOULD PLAY OUT IN THE LONG-HAUL.
HOWEVER, THE PROCESS -- IF UNCHECKED -- COULD NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE
SOVEREIGNTY OF AFGHANISTAN. ASKED TO ELABORATE ON THIS LAST POINT,
[] REPLIED THAT AS AFGHAN PASHTUNS BECAME INCREASINGLY ENTANGLED
WITH PAKISTANI PASHTUNS, PAKISTANI PASHTUNS WOULD DOMINATE BECAUSE
-- OF THE TWO GROUPS -- THEY WERE THE MORE ASSERTIVE BECAUSE OF