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Case Number: 200104094

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B1, 1.5(D)

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ACTION SA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	INLB-01	AID-00	ACQ-01	CIAE-00
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	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
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 FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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 INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
 AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
 AMEMBASSY ALMATY
 AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
 AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
 AMEMBASSY LONDON
 AMEMBASSY PARIS
 AMEMBASSY RIYADH
 DIA WASHINGTON DC
 AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
 USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/CCJ3/CCJ5/POLAD//
 AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
 AMEMBASSY DHAKA
 AMCONSUL JEDDAH

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: APPEALS REVIEW PANEL
 APPEAL ACTION: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELEASED
 REASON(S): B1, 1.4(D), B6
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 AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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 AMEMBASSY BEIJING
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 AMCONSUL LAHORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 ISLAMABAD 009531

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E AHMAD
 DATE/CASE ID: 18 JUN 2003 200104094

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DEPARTMENT FOR SA/PAB, INR/NESA, AND EUR/CACEN; ALMATY ALSO FOR DUSHANBE; LONDON FOR POL/SUTPHIN; PARIS FOR POL/RAVELING; KRACOW FOR POL-ECON/PTHIEDE; ABU DHABI PLEASE PASS TO DUBAI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/08
TAGS: PGOV, KISL, PINR, AF
SUBJ: AFGHANISTAN: THE TALIBAN'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

REF: 97 ISLAMABAD 11233 (NOTAL)

(U) CLASSIFIED BY CDA ALAN EASTHAM. REASONS: 1.5 (C) (D).

1. (U) THIS MESSAGE WAS COORDINATED WITH CONSULATE PESHAWAR.
2. (C) INTRODUCTION: SINCE THE FORMATION OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT IN LATE 1994, EMBASSY AND CONSULATE PESHAWAR HAVE PERIODICALLY PROVIDED MESSAGES REVIEWING "WHO'S WHO IN THE TALIBAN." THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO UPDATE OUR DECEMBER 1997 BENCHMARK REVIEW OF THIS SUBJECT (SEE REFTEL). END INTRODUCTION.
3. (C) SUMMARY: THE TALIBAN'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND
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LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE ARE OPAQUE. NONETHELESS, IT IS CLEAR THAT MULLAH MOHAMMAD OMAR PLAYS THE PREEMINENT ROLE IN TALIBAN DECISION-MAKING. IN GENERAL, INFLUENCE IN THE MOVEMENT CAN BASICALLY BE JUDGED BY ONE'S CLOSENESS TO OMAR, A FACTOR WHICH EXPLAINS THE IMPORTANCE OF KANDAHAR-BASED OFFICIALS WAKIL AHMED AND MULLAH JALIL. HOWEVER, A NUMBER OF TALIBAN MAINTAIN INDEPENDENT POWER BASES, INCLUDING MULLAH RABBANI (WHO HAS SEEN HIS INFLUENCE SLIP IN 1998), KANDAHAR GOVERNOR MULLAH HASSAN, AND COMMANDER JALALUDDIN HAQQANI. THERE WAS FURTHER EVIDENCE IN 1998 THAT THE TALIBAN'S INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, I.E., THE "INNER" AND "OUTER" SHURAS, WERE WEAKENING FROM DISUSE DUE TO THE HIGHLY-PERSONALIZED LEADERSHIP STYLE OF MULLAH OMAR. THAT SAID, THE "ULEMA SHURA" -- WHILE SHADOWY -- SEEMED TO HAVE AUGMENTED ITS INFLUENCE. WITH NO CLEAR SIGNALS FROM THE TALIBAN, AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF WHO WOULD TAKE OVER IF OMAR LEFT THE STAGE REMAINS ELUSIVE. END SUMMARY.

OMAR -- STRONGER THAN EVER

4. (C) AS AN ORGANIZED FORCE IN AFGHANISTAN, THE TALIBAN ARE NEW, -- THEIR ROOTS ONLY DATE BACK TO LATE 1994 AT THE EARLIEST.

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PRELIMINARY SOCIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS OF THEIR LARGELY-RURAL, RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS ARE ONLY NOW EMERGING, AND IT IS STILL DIFFICULT TO ASSESS WHO THEY ARE AND HOW THEY RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER. FOR THESE REASONS, THE TALIBAN'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE REMAINS OPAQUE.

5. (C) WITH THAT AS THE GENERALIZED CONTEXT, IT IS CLEAR THAT MULLAH MOHAMMAD OMAR PLAYS THE PREEMINENT ROLE IN TALIBAN DECISION-MAKING. HE IS AT THE APEX OF THE TALIBAN HIERARCHY AS LEADER OF

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THE TALIBAN'S "ISLAMIC EMIRATE OF AFGHANISTAN" AND AS THE MOVEMENT'S "AMIR AL-MUNINEEN" (COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL). THE TALIBAN'S TWIN POLICIES OF CONTINUING THE WAR UNTIL VICTORY AND IMPOSING THE TALIBAN'S VERSION OF "SHARI'A LAW" ON AFGHANISTAN STRONGLY BEAR HIS IMPRINT. IN ADDITION, MOST SOURCES IDENTIFY MULLAH OMAR AS THE MAJOR PROPONENT IN TALIBAN CIRCLES OF ALLOWING TERRORIST USAMA BIN LADIN TO REMAIN A "GUEST" IN THE COUNTRY. WITHIN THE MOVEMENT, OMAR'S LEGITIMACY RESTS ON FOUR PILLARS: (1) HIS REPUTATION AS A PIOUS MUSLIM; (2) HIS ROLE AS AN EFFECTIVE (IF RELATIVELY UNKNOWN) COMMANDER DURING THE AFGHAN-SOVIET WAR OF THE 1980'S; (3) HIS OPPOSITION TO THE CORRUPT MUJAHIDEEN COMMANDERS WHO RULED KANDAHAR AREA AFTER THE APRIL 1992 FALL OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME; AND (4) HIS SUCCESS IN GUIDING THE TALIBAN TO THE DOMINATION OF UP TO 85 PERCENT OR SO OF THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING ALL OF THE MAJOR CITIES.

6. (C) OMAR MAINTAINS AN IDIOSYNCRATIC, ALMOST OBSCURANTIST, LEADERSHIP STYLE. HE PRONOUNCES ON BIG TICKET ITEMS, I.E., MILITARY STRATEGY AND ISLAMIC STRICTURES, BUT GENERALLY LEAVES THE DAY-TO-DAY MATTERS TO HIS KEY LIEUTENANTS. (NOTE: THERE ARE REPORTS HE SWITCHES TO A MICRO-MANAGEMENT MILITARY ROLE WHEN ONE OR THE OTHER FRONT IS HOT.) IN THE PAST, HE HAS GENERALLY BEEN CONSIDERED A MAN OF FEW WORDS, WHO ISSUED SOFT-TONED ORDERS (WITH

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AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/CCJ3/CCJ5/POLAD//
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 06 ISLAMABAD 009531

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A DELPHIC QUALITY) FROM A SPARTAN ROOM IN A POORLY-MAINTAINED KANDAHAR BUILDING. HOWEVER, IN 1998, EVIDENCE ACCUMULATED THAT OMAR MAY HAVE BECOME MORE OUTSPOKEN, AS IF HE HAD BECOME MORE CONFIDENT AND COMFORTABLE IN HIS ROLE. THERE IS ALSO EVIDENCE THAT OMAR -- PERHAPS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF BIN LADIN AND OTHER EXTREMISTS -- MAY HAVE BECOME MORE SYMPATHETIC TO PAN-ISLAMIST THINKING. FOR EXAMPLE, HE WAS QUOTED AT LEAST TWICE IN 1998 AS CRITICIZING THE U.S. PRESENCE IN THE GULF, WHICH IS NOT USUALLY A GREAT CONCERN OF AFGHANS.

7. (C) THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT ANYONE ELSE IS EVEN CLOSE TO
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BEING ABLE TO CHALLENGE OMAR FOR LEADERSHIP OF THE MOVEMENT (SEE PARA 12 FOR COMMENTS ON SUCCESSION). SOURCES -- INCLUDING MULLAH MALANG, A FORMER RESISTANCE FIGURE WITH SOLID LINKS TO TALIBAN OFFICIALS -- HAVE REPEATEDLY COMMENTED TO POLOFF ABOUT THE TIGHT REINS OMAR HAS OVER THE MOVEMENT. HIS RULES ARE NOT ONLY OBEYED, BUT THEY ARE ENFORCED. TO DO THIS, OMAR USES "THE MINISTRY (FORMERLY DEPARTMENT) TO PROPAGATE VIRTUE AND PREVENT VICE," WHICH IS CONTROLLED BY A HAND-PICKED ALLY, MAULAWI MOHAMMAD WALI, AND THE "MINISTRY OF INTELLIGENCE," WHICH IS CONTROLLED BY ANOTHER ALLY IN MULLAH HAMDULLAH. TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE REMAINS OFF-BALANCE AND DOES NOT GROW OVERLY COMFORTABLE IN THEIR POSITIONS, OMAR ALSO ROTATES TALIBAN OFFICIALS FROM POST-TO-POST, APPARENTLY AT A WHIM.

OMAR'S KEY POLITICAL ADVISERS

8. (C) ARRAYED AROUND OMAR ARE SEVERAL KEY ADVISERS WITH VARIOUS RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE MOVEMENT. THERE HAVE BEEN FEW CHANGES IN THIS CLIQUE IN THE PAST YEAR; SOME OF ITS PROMINENT MEMBERS INCLUDE:

-- MAULAWI WAKIL AHMED MUTTAWAKIL: WAKIL IS CONSIDERED TO BE OMAR'S CLOSEST ADVISER ON POLITICAL ISSUES. HIS TECHNICAL TITLE IS "TALIBAN SPOKESMAN" AND HE OFTEN SPINS FOR THE TALIBAN WITH THE PRESS. IN 1997-98, HE HAS ALSO INCREASINGLY BECOME THE TALIBAN'S POINT MAN IN DEALING WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD, INCLUDING THE U.S. WAKIL IS YOUNG, PERHAPS AROUND 35 YEARS OF AGE, BASICALLY DETRIBALIZED, AND WITHOUT ANY EVIDENT POWER BASE IN THE COUNTRY!

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(ISI).

-- MULLAH ABDUL JALIL: ANOTHER OF OMAR'S IMPORTANT KANDAHAR-BASED STAFFERS. HIS TITLE IS "DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER." HE HAS LONGTIME LINKS WITH OMAR DATING FROM THE RESISTANCE PERIOD. HE IS HEARD OF LESS THAN HE ONCE WAS, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR WHY -- THERE IS NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT HE HAS BEEN PURGED. AZIZ AHMED, A WELL-CONNECTED AFGHAN BUSINESSMAN, HAS REPEATED TO POLOFF REPORTS WE HAVE ALREADY HEARD THAT JALIL, WHO SPEAKS SOME ARABIC, MAINTAINS A KEY ROLE AS MOVEMENT CONDUIT TO ARAB MILITANTS.

-- HAJI BASHIR: HAJI BASHIR COMES FROM A WELL-KNOWN KANDAHARI FAMILY. HE HAS NO TITLE, ALTHOUGH HE IS A MEMBER OF THE "OUTER SHURA" OF THE MOVEMENT. HE IS VERY CLOSE TO OMAR, HAILING FROM OMAR'S KANDAHAR DISTRICT, MAIWAND. ALTHOUGH OSTENSIBLY A LEGITIMATE BUSINESSMAN, THERE ARE PLENTY OF REPORTS THAT HAJI BASHIR IS A KEY PLAYER IN THE DRUG TRADE, AND THAT HE CONTROLS VARIOUS GANGS THAT RUN DRUGS TO QUETTA AND THROUGH IRAN. HE SEEMS TO PLAY THE ROLE OF MONEYBAGS FOR THE TALIBAN -- HE IS SAID TO PASS THEM A LOT OF CASH.

-- MULLAH ABDULLAH ZAKARI: TO REPLACE MULLAH MUTTAQI,

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AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
AMEMBASSY ALMATY

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AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
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AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
DIA WASHINGTON DC
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/CCJ3/CCJ5/POLAD//
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AMEMBASSY DHAKA
AMCONSUL JEDDAH

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AMCONSUL LAHORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 06 ISLAMABAD 009531

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WHO -- IN HIS CAPACITY AS POLITICAL COMMISSAR IN THE KUNDUZ AREA FOR MUCH OF 1998 -- SEEMS TO HAVE LOST CLOUT IN KANDAHAR, WE HAVE DECIDED TO PLACE ZAKARI ON THIS LIST. ZAKARI, WHO SPENDS A LOT OF TIME IN QUETTA, IS A RESISTANCE-ERA FIGURE WHO HAS CLOSE TIES WITH AFGHAN AND PAKISTANI CLERGY.

[REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF THAT ZAKARI IS CLOSE TO OMAR AS AN ADVISER ON SOCIAL ISSUES. A CONVINCED ISLAMIST, ZAKARI REPORTEDLY HAS ALSO TAKEN THE LEAD IN PROVIDING RELIGIOUS/POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TALIBAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH BIN LADIN. ZAKARI IS INVOLVED IN SOME WAY WITH THE TALIBAN'S "ULEMA

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SHURA" (SEE PARA 11).

TALIBAN LEADERS WITH INDEPENDENT POWER BASES

9. (C) THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF TALIBAN LEADERS WHO SEEM TO MAINTAIN POWER BASES DISTINCT FROM OMAR'S. IN THIS REGARD, THE FOLLOWING TALIBS COULD BE CONSIDERED RIVALS TO OMAR (ALTHOUGH FOR REASONS MENTIONED BELOW THEY PROBABLY ARE NOT SERIOUS RIVALS, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT):

-- MULLAH MOHAMMAD RABBANI: RABBANI HOLDS TWO IMPRESSIVE-SOUNDING HIGH-LEVEL POSITIONS: HE IS DEPUTY HEAD OF THE MOVEMENT AND THE HEAD OF "THE CARETAKER COUNCIL," I.E., THE "KABUL SHURA." HE HAS CLOSE TIES TO THE KANDAHAR TRIBES AND IS RESPECTED AS A RESISTANCE-ERA COMMANDER. NONETHELESS, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT RABBANI HAS THE ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE MOVEMENT'S DIRECTION. OMAR SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN THE PAST TWO YEARS IN SLOWLY EDGING RABBANI AWAY FROM THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. FOR EXAMPLE, RABBANI IS SAID TO BE UPSET WITH THE PRESENCE OF BIN LADIN IN THE COUNTRY, BUT ANY ADVICE HE MAY HAVE GIVEN HAS NOT BEEN HEHEDED. PERHAPS IN ANGER, PERHAPS BECAUSE OF A LINGERING MEDICAL CONDITION, RABBANI HAS TAKEN TO SPENDING MONTHS AT A TIME IN THE GULF STATES (WHERE HE IS NOW). THAT SAID, RABBANI CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED: HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE MANY ALLIES IN THE MOVEMENT.

-- MULLAH MOHAMMAD HASSAN (RAHMANI): HASSAN IS THE TALIBAN'S "GOVERNOR" OF KANDAHAR AND THE SOUTHWEST PROVINCES. HE HAS
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CLOSE LINKS TO THE TRIBES AND HAS SOLDIERS UNDER HIS CONTROL
IN HIS CAPACITY AS REGIONAL GOVERNOR.

AS HIS HEADQUARTERS AND POWER BASE IS IN KANDAHAR, HE IS WELL-POSITIONED TO INFLUENCE EVENTS SHOULD PUSH COME TO SHOVE.

-- JALALUDDIN HAQQANI: HAQQANI IS ONE OF THE TALIBAN'S TOP COMMANDERS IN THE KABUL AREA. LAST YEAR, WE PLACED HIM ON OUR

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LIST OF THE TALIBAN'S KEY COMMANDERS. HOWEVER, UPON REVIEW, IT SEEMS THAT HAQQANI PROBABLY SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ONE OF THE TALIBAN WITH HIS OWN POWER BASE. THIS PERCEPTION SPRINGS FROM THE FACT THAT HAQQANI CLEARLY HAS THE LOYALTY OF A LARGE NUMBER OF HIS KHOST-BASED ZADRAN TRIBESMEN. MANY ZADRANS HOLD LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE TALIBAN, INCLUDING "KABUL SHURA" DEPUTY CHIEF ABDUL KABIR. HAQQANI, WHO MAY BE AN OPPORTUNIST AS MUCH AS ANYTHING ELSE, ALSO IS CLOSE BUDDIES WITH MANY ARAB AND PAKISTANI ISLAMISTS; IT WAS HIS AREA IN KHOST THE U.S. HIT WITH MISSILES IN AUGUST. HE ALSO HAS IMPECCABLE MILITARY CREDENTIALS STRETCHING BACK TO THE EARLY DAYS OF THE FIGHT AGAINST THE SOVIETS, |

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OVERALL, HAQQANI SHOULD PROBABLY BE

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AMEMBASSY RIYADH
DIA WASHINGTON DC
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY DHAKA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 06 ISLAMABAD 009531

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CONSIDERED THE "KHOST-PAKTIA-PAKTIKA" PRETENDER TO THE TALIBAN
THRONE.

(NOTE: LAST YEAR WE HAD MULLAH HASSAN AKHUND, THE TALIBAN'S
"ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER," ON THIS LIST. ALTHOUGH HE HAS NOT -- TO
OUR KNOWLEDGE -- BEEN PURGED, HE IS APPARENTLY ON SABBATICAL.)

KEY TALIBAN COMMANDERS

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10. (C) OBSERVERS REGULARLY MENTION A NUMBER OF KEY TALIBAN
COMMANDERS, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

-- MULLAH BERUDAH: A POPALZAI/DURRANI TRIBESMEN FROM URUZGAN,
BERUDAH HAS STRONG LINKS IN THE SOUTHWEST. HE WAS A KEY
MILITARY STRATEGIST FOR THE TALIBAN'S ASSAULT ON THE NORTH IN
1998. HE WAS GOVERNOR OF HERAT UNTIL SEVERAL MONTHS AGO AND
IS BELIEVED TO BE BACK IN KANDAHAR NOW.

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-- MULLAH ABDUS SALAM "ROCKETI": ROCKETI IS THE MILITARY COMMANDER FOR THE EASTERN ZONE AND IS BASED IN NANGARHAR PROVINCE. A HIGHLY-RESPECTED RESISTANCE-ERA COMMANDER -- WHEN HE GAINED HIS NOM DE GUERRE FOR HIS PROFICIENCY WITH MISSILES, ROCKETI IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE TALIBAN'S BEST COMMANDERS, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER HE HAS FOUGHT IN THE PAST YEAR, EXCEPT FOR THE SPORADIC SHOOTOUTS WITH PRO-MASOOD ELEMENTS IN KUNAR PROVINCE.

-- MULLAH OBAIDULLAH: OBAIDULLAH IS THE TALIBAN'S "ACTING MINISTER OF DEFENSE" AND IN THAT CAPACITY IS SAID TO ACT AS KANDAHAR STAFFER ON MILITARY ISSUES FOR MULLAH OMAR. HE IS JOINED IN THIS TASK BY MULLAH ABDUL KHALIQ AND BAZ MOHAMMAD, WHO ARE SAID TO BE KEY IN TERMS OF LOGISTICS. OBAIDULLAH IS NOT KNOWN TO BE A FRONT-LINE COMMANDER OF TROOPS, BUT TO BE AN EXCELLENT MILITARY TACTICIAN AND STRATEGIST.

-- MULLAH DADULLAH: DADULLAH HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT COMMANDER FOR A LONG TIME. HE WAS INVOLVED IN THE TALIBAN'S SUCCESSFUL OFFENSIVE IN THE NORTH IN 1998. FOR A PERIOD IN 1998, THERE WERE REPORTS THAT DADULLAH WAS IN TROUBLE IN KANDAHAR, BUT HE SEEMS TO REMAIN IN GOOD GRACES AND WHEN LAST HEARD OF WAS

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DEPLOYED WITH HIS MEN NORTH OF KABUL.

-- MULLAH ABDUL RAZZAQ: RAZZAQ HAS HAD A CHECKERED PAST: CAPTURED BY NORTHERN FORCES IN 1997 IN MAZAR-I-SHARIF, HE WAS RELEASED SEVERAL MONTHS LATER. HE ALSO LED THE TALIBAN'S DISASTROUS ADVANCE NORTH IN OCTOBER 1996 AFTER THE FALL OF KABUL. HE WAS A FORMER GOVERNOR OF HERAT, WHO OWES HIS RISE TO HIS CLOSE TIES WITH MULLAH BORJAN, THE TALIBAN'S MAJOR COMMANDER FROM 1994-96 (BORJAN WAS KILLED SHORTLY BEFORE KABUL FELL). RAZZAQ IS BELIEVED TO BE STATIONED IN THE KABUL SECTOR AT THIS TIME. THERE WERE SOME RUMORS IN 1998 THAT HE WAS ABOUT TO BE PURGED FOR SOME UNKNOWN INFRACTION, BUT THE RUMORS DID NOT PAN OUT.

(NOTE: ONE KEY ENTRY FROM LAST YEAR -- MULLAH YAR MOHAMMAD, THE GOVERNOR OF GHAZNI PROVINCE -- WAS KILLED IN 1998 -- REPORTEDLY BY SHI'AS, ALTHOUGH SOME SAY THEY SAW OMAR'S CALLING CARD.)

A FADING INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

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11. (C) LARGELY BECAUSE OF OMAR'S PERSONALISTIC, AUTOCRATIC STYLE,

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INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	INLB-01	AID-00	ACQ-01	CIAE-00
	SMEC-00	INL-01	DINT-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	EAP-01	EUR-01	FBIE-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	L-01	ADS-00	M-00	NEA-01	DCP-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	FMP-00	SNIS-00
	NISC-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00

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O 311332Z DEC 98
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2674
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
AMEMBASSY ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
DIA WASHINGTON DC
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/CCJ3/CCJ5/POLAD//
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY DHAKA
AMCONSUL JEDDAH

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMCONSUL KRAKOW
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMCONSUL LAHORE

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DEPARTMENT FOR SA/PAB, INR/NESA, AND EUR/CACEN; ALMATY ALSO FOR DUSHANBE; LONDON FOR POL/SUTPHIN; PARIS FOR POL/RAVELING; KRACOW FOR POL-ECON/PTHIEDE; ABU DHABI PLEASE PASS TO DUBAI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/08
TAGS: PGOV, KISL, PINR, AF
SUBJ: AFGHANISTAN: THE TALIBAN'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

REF: 97 ISLAMABAD 11233 (NOTAL)

THE TALIBAN'S INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK LACKS REAL AUTHORITY. NONETHELESS, THE FOLLOWING FOUR INSTITUTIONS ARE STILL TECHNICALLY IN PLACE -- THE "ULEMA SHURA" MAY EVEN HAVE GROWN IN INFLUENCE IN 1998:

-- THE "INNER SHURA": THIS SHURA HAS ABOUT 20-25 MEMBERS, INCLUDING MANY OF THE PEOPLE DISCUSSED IN PARAS 4-10. AS WAS THE CASE IN 1997, THERE WAS LITTLE EVIDENCE IN 1998 THAT THIS BODY MEETS VERY OFTEN OR THAT IT REALLY DEBATES OR DECIDES IMPORTANT ISSUES. THE "INNER SHURA" WAS IMPORTANT IN THE 1994-96 PERIOD, HOWEVER, AND POTENTIALLY COULD BE IN THE
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FUTURE (SEE PARA 12). SOME TALIBAN WHO HAVE BEEN PURGED, SUCH AS FORMER "ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER" MULLAH GHASUS, REMAIN "INNER SHURA" MEMBERS, WHICH MAY PROVIDE THEM A PLATFORM FOR FUTURE ACTIVITY.

-- THE "OUTER SHURA": THIS SHURA IS A MUCH LARGER BODY, WITH OVER 100 MEMBERS. MANY RELIGIOUS AND PROVINCIAL FIGURES ARE MEMBERS. IT IS NOT KNOWN TO VERY INFLUENTIAL, NOR TO MEET VERY OFTEN.

-- THE "KABUL SHURA," A.K.A., "THE CARETAKER COUNCIL": MULLAH RABBANI IS THE HEAD OF THIS BODY, WHICH WAS FORMED AFTER THE TALIBAN'S CAPTURE OF KABUL IN SEPTEMBER 1996. ITS PURPOSE IS TO RUN THE TALIBAN'S "GOVERNMENT" IN KABUL. THERE IS NOT MUCH INDICATION THAT THIS BODY IS VERY IMPORTANT EITHER, ESPECIALLY WITH RABBANI -- FOR THE TIME BEING -- RECEDING FROM THE SCENE. THE CURRENT "DEPUTY HEAD" OF THE SHURA IS ABDUL KABIR, WHO IS YOUNG, BUT MAY BE AN UP-AND-COMER WITHIN TALIBAN RANKS.

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-- THE "ULEMA SHURA": EVEN FOR A TALIBAN GROUPING, THIS SHURA'S ORIGINS, MEMBERSHIP, AND PURPOSE ARE MURKY. IT SEEMS THAT THE HEAD OF IT, MULLAH SAQIB, IS ALSO HEAD OF THE TALIBAN'S "SUPREME COURT," HENCE THE SUSPICION THAT THE TWO GROUPS MAY BE ONE AND THE SAME. HOWEVER, THE "ULEMA SHURA" APPEARS TO HAVE WIDER POWERS. FOR EXAMPLE, THIS SHURA SEEMS TO BE THE BODY WHICH ORGANIZES LARGE-SCALE ULEMA CONVOCATIONS, SUCH AS THAT WHICH JUSTIFIED THE TALIBAN'S RELATIONS WITH BIN LADIN IN SEPTEMBER IN KABUL. THIS GROUP ALSO APPARENTLY ORGANIZED THE MASS MEETING OF MULLAHS THAT NAMED OMAR "AMIR" IN KANDAHAR IN APRIL 1996.

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WHO WOULD FOLLOW OMAR?

12. (C) THE TALIBAN HAVE NEVER PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED AN ORDERED SUCCESSION AND ANY ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF WHO WOULD SUCCEED TO TALIBAN LEADERSHIP IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO OMAR INVOLVES MUCH SPECULATION, LEAVENED WITH SOME GOOD OLD-FASHIONED ANALYTIC JUDGEMENT. IF OMAR DIED PEACEFULLY (IN AN ACCIDENT OR FOR HEALTH REASONS), THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

----- IS THAT MULLAH RABBANI, THE DEPUTY LEADER, WOULD TAKE OVER. RABBANI IS SAID TO HAVE THE SUPPORT NEEDED AMONG THE RANK-AND-FILE AND AT LEAST A SECTION OF THE LEADERSHIP IN ORDER TO PULL THIS OFF. THAT SAID, AS NOTED ABOVE, RABBANI'S ROLE SEEMS TO BE FALTERING, LEADING OBSERVERS TO WONDER WHO ELSE MIGHT BE IN POSITION TO TAKE OVER. KANDAHAR GOVERNOR MULLAH HASSAN IS ALSO A POSSIBILITY SINCE HE HAS TROOPS IN AND NEAR KANDAHAR, GOOD LINKS TO THE PASHTUN DURRANI TRIBES, AND CLOSE TIES TO MANY TALIBAN LEADERS. IF AN INTERNAL COUP OCCURRED, MULLAH HASSAN WOULD BE WELL-PLACED, BUT THE ULTIMATE RESULT WOULD PROBABLY BE DETERMINED ON THE BATTLEFIELD WITH VARIOUS TALIBAN FACTIONS FIGHTING IT OUT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE ARAB AND PAKISTANI EXTREMISTS RESIDENT IN AFGHANISTAN COULD PLAY A ROLE.

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ACTION SA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-08 ACDE-00 INLB-01 AID-00 ACQ-01 CIAE-00

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EAP-01	EUR-01	FBIE-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
L-01	ADS-00	M-00	NEA-01	DCP-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
SP-00	SSO-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	FMP-00	SNIS-00
NISC-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00

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O 311332Z DEC 98
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2675
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
AMEMBASSY ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
DIA WASHINGTON DC
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/CCJ3/CCJ5/POLAD//
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY DHAKA
AMCONSUL JEDDAH

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMCONSUL KRAKOW
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AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMCONSUL LAHORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 06 OF 06 ISLAMABAD 009531

DEPARTMENT FOR SA/PAB, INR/NESA, AND EUR/CACEN; ALMATY ALSO FOR
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WHETHER OMAR WENT
PEACEFULLY OR VIOLENTLY, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE TALIBAN
SHURAS, NAMELY THE "INNER" AND THE "ULEMA," COULD COME UP WITH
SOMEONE WHO WAS NOT WIDELY KNOWN. IN OTHER WORDS, WE WOULD EXPECT
A FREE-FOR-ALL OF SOME SORT AT THE END OF WHICH ANOTHER STRONGMAN
WOULD MOST LIKELY EMERGE.
EASTHAM

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