

10 NOVEMBER 1999

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BUREAU OF SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON, DC

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SUBJECT: AN UNSOLICITED COMMENT ON TALIBAN RELATIONS

THE TALIBAN ARE NOT OUR ENEMY. BUT WE APPEAR TO BE WORKING TO MAKE THEM OUR ENEMY. AND WITH THE U.S. INITIATED U.N. SANCTIONS COMING UP THIS WEEK, TIME IS RUNNING OUT. WITH A BIT OF TIME, SOME CAREFUL AND THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE TALIBAN, A SOLUTION CAN BE FOUND TO THE PROBLEM OF U.S.-TALIBAN RELATIONS. THREATS AND COERCION ARE SEEN AS PROVOCATION TO THE TALIBAN (TO ALL AFGHANS) AND ARE NOT TAKEN WELL. ASK THE RUSSIANS. IT IS A MIND-SET BASED ON PRINCIPLES, NOT THE REAL WORLD.

THE PRIMARY ISSUE, APPARENTLY, IS THE STATUS OF OSAMA BIN LADEN. THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF GIVING SANCTUARY TO THE HUNTED, EVEN ONE'S ENEMIES, IS ANCIENT AND WELL ESTABLISHED. AND BIN LADEN IS CLEARLY NOT AN ENEMY OF AFGHANISTAN. HE INVESTED YEARS OF SERVICE AND FUNDING IN THAT COUNTRY DURING THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION. THE TALIBAN RECOGNIZE THIS AND THIS FACT MAKES IT DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM, (IN THEIR EYES, THE MOST ISLAMIC OF GOVERNMENTS) TO TURN BIN LADEN OVER TO ANY COUNTRY, ESPECIALLY, IN THIS CONTEXT, TO A NON-MUSLIM COUNTRY. THE CONCEPT OF SANCTUARY IS NOT ONE GENERALLY RECOGNIZED IN DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES ALTHOUGH WE SEEM TO RESPECT SOME FORM OF IT IN THE CASE OF WANTED CRIMINALS IN ISRAEL WITH WHICH WE HAVE CLOSE DIPLOMATIC TIES. OUR REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE THE LEGITIMACY OF THE TALIBAN POSITION ON GIVING BIN LADEN SANCTUARY PUTS US IN THE POSITION OF BEING ANTI-ISLAMIC.

IN THE CASE OF THE TALIBAN, WE DO NOT RECOGNIZE THEM AS THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN NOR DO WE HAVE AN EXTRADITION TREATY WITH THEM BUT WE EXPECT THEM TO ACT AS THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH WE DO NOT RECOGNIZE. IN A COURT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, TO WHICH THE TALIBAN DO NOT HAVE ACCESS, THE SITUATION WOULD BE SOMEWHAT CONFUSING.

ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT RECOGNIZE THEM AS THE GOVERNMENT, WE EXPECT THEM TO MEET THE STANDARDS OF GOVERNMENT. WE TEND TO IGNORE THE FACT THAT THE TALIBAN ARE NOT TRAINED, EXPERIENCED GOVERNMENT CIVIL SERVANTS NOR TRAINED, EXPERIENCED DIPLOMATS...THEY ARE MULLAHS. THEY ARE CLEARLY NOT POLITICIANS. THEY DO NOT SHARE MANY OF OUR WESTERN/U.S. VALUES, ESPECIALLY AS THEY RELATE TO WOMEN, NOR DOES MUCH IF NOT MOST OF ISLAM. THEY ARE NOT GENERALLY BAD PEOPLE ANY MORE THAN STRICT SOUTHERN BAPTIST PREACHERS ARE BAD PEOPLE BUT THEY DO HAVE MANY WELL ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES THAT ARE BASICALLY NOT NEGOTIABLE. TRY NEGOTIATING THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF TAKING A SHOT OF JACK DANIELS WITH A RURAL SOUTHERN BAPTIST PREACHER. THE CONCEPT OF SANCTUARY FOR THE HUNTED MAY FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY.

IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE TALIBAN ON BIN LADEN, THE APPROACH SHOULD HAVE BEEN THAT BOTH PARTIES HAD THEIR OWN SET OF PROBLEMS, PRIORITIES AND LIMITATIONS. BOTH PARTIES WOULD BE EXPECTED TO GIVE SOME. THE PASHTUNS ARE EXPERTS AT LONG DISCUSSIONS THAT END IN CONSENSUS AND SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS.

MULLAH OMAR OPENED THE DOOR FOR DISCUSSION AND A SOLUTION IN SEPTEMBER WITH HIS LETTER TO THE WHITE HOUSE. THIS WAS A CONCESSION ON HIS PART. HE GENERALLY REMAINS DISTANT WITH OUTSIDE CONTACTS INCLUDING THE MEDIA. ACCORDING TO THE MEDIA, ALL TALIBAN PROPOSALS FOR A SOLUTION TO THE BIN LADEN PROBLEM WERE REJECTED. BIN LADEN WAS CLEARLY INVOLVED IN THE PROPOSALS, GIVEN THAT HE PROPOSED TO LEAVE AFGHANISTAN. HE HAD MADE SUCH A PROPOSAL BEFORE. HE UNDERSTANDS THE PROBLEMS HE IS CAUSING THE AFGHANS AND HE IS NOT THEIR ENEMY. THE PROPOSAL THAT BIN LADEN LEAVE AFGHANISTAN WAS ABOUT THE BEST THE TALIBAN COULD DO IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ESTABLISHED SANCTUARY. TO TURN BIN LADEN OVER TO THE U.S. WOULD BE UN-ISLAMIC. THE TALIBAN WOULD LIKE TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS PROBLEM BUT THEY ALSO MUST STAND BY THEIR PRINCIPLES.

THE SANCTIONS WILL HURT THE ALREADY IMPOVERISHED AFGHANISTAN BUT THEY WILL NOT BE FATAL. GIVEN WHAT THE AFGHANS EXPERIENCED WITH THE RUSSIAN 10 YEAR OCCUPATION (MORE THAN A MILLION DEAD), AND WHAT THEY CONTRIBUTED TO THE BREAKUP OF THE U.S.S.R., I WOULD SUGGEST THAT WE COULD DO MORE TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT IMPASSE AND TO ENDING THE CIVIL WAR. THE TALIBAN, THE AFGHANS GENERALLY, NEED AND WILL ACCEPT HELP IN SOLVING BOTH OF THESE PROBLEMS. THE AFGHANS GENERALLY TRUST THE U.S. WE WERE VERY MUCH INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THAT COUNTRY FROM 1946 (WHEN MORRISON-KNUTSEN

CONSTRUCTION COMPANY OF BOISE, IDAHO WAS ASKED BY THE AFGHANS TO COME AND BUILD THE LARGEST IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY) UNTIL WE DEPARTED DUE TO THE RUSSIAN INVASION IN 1979. THEY NEED HELP AND THEY WILL LISTEN IF APPROACHED PROPERLY. THE TALIBAN AND ALL THE AFGHANS I'VE EVER MET HAVE LITTLE RESPECT FOR OR CONFIDENCE IN THE ABILITIES OF THE U.N. IN HELPING TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS.

THE ADDITIONAL STRAINED U.S.-AFGHAN RELATIONS ABOUT TO OCCUR WITH THE U.N. SANCTIONS NEED NOT HAPPEN IF THE TALIBAN ARE APPROACHED WITH UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT, WHICH I SUSPECT MAY BE MISSING. THE DISCUSSIONS MUST BE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF UNDERSTANDING OF WHERE THE TALIBAN ARE COMING FROM (20 YEARS OF WAR) AND WHO THEY ARE ( MORE AKIN TO SOUTHERN BAPTIST PREACHERS AND NOT INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATS). THE PREVIOUS U.S. ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AND THE MISSILE ATTACK LAST YEAR DID NOT HELP MATTERS BUT AGAIN THEY WERE NOT FATAL TO U.S.-AFGHAN RELATIONS.

THIS PRESENT PROBLEM OF U.S.-AFGHAN RELATIONS AND THE BIN LADEN ISSUE CAN BE SOLVED WITH UNDERSTANDING AND DISCUSSION...NOT THREATS AND COERCION. THE AFGHANS DO NOT RESPOND WELL TO COERCION.

I WOULD BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS WITH YOU OR ANYONE ELSE THE POINTS MADE IN THIS FAX AT YOUR CONVENIENCE. I HAVE SENT SEPARATELY A COPY OF MY CV (DEVELOPED FOR OTHER PURPOSES) FOR YOUR INFORMATION THAT OUTLINES MY LONG TERM INTEREST AND INVOLVEMENT IN ISLAM AND AFGHANISTAN.

LET US NOT ALIENATE AFGHANISTAN, A COUNTRY AND PEOPLE WITH WHOM WE HAVE HAD LONG AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS.

SCOTT