

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

(03 January 2000) Taliban's ties to Bin Ladin remain strong

The Taliban Council of Ministers last month decided unanimously against expelling Bin Ladin from Afghanistan [REDACTED]. The Council's decision follows Saudi and UAE requests the previous week for the Taliban to extradite the terrorist, [REDACTED].

- Council chairman Rabbani, who has opposed Bin Ladin's presence in Afghanistan, was absent [REDACTED].

- Taliban [REDACTED] last week warned Bin Ladin to step up his security in case the hostage crisis in Qandahar was used by [REDACTED] or "other governments" to send in [REDACTED] against Bin Ladin, [REDACTED] suggesting [REDACTED] remains a key supporter of Bin Ladin.

The Taliban would deny Bin Ladin's involvement in a new terrorist attack, but the possibility of US retaliation would unnerve many Taliban members and bolster those-- [REDACTED]-- who question the terrorist's presence in Afghanistan. Pakistani Chief Executive Musharraf's concerns about terrorism spillover into Pakistan and international suspicions of Islamabad's role in the hijacking suggest he would react by increasing pressure on the Taliban to expel Bin Ladin.

- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]