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Central Intelligence Agency

Senior Executive Memorandum

26 March 2001

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[REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Afghanistan's Taliban and Bin Ladin [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Taliban is not likely to give up Bin Ladin for less than full diplomatic recognition and significant reconstruction aid. Even then, it would be difficult for the Taliban leadership to accept only assurances that the US would recognize the Taliban after it renders Bin Ladin.

— [REDACTED] the Taliban leadership is concerned that if the group gave up Bin Ladin, the US would demand more concessions, such as on human rights, before recognizing the group and delivering aid. [REDACTED]

The Taliban's heavy reliance on Bin Ladin's cash, materiel, and Arab fighters in its military effort against the Northern Alliance suggests it would be reluctant to render Bin Ladin before the war ends. Offers of international aid would not offset the Taliban's need for Bin Ladin's seasoned fighters or satisfy the Taliban's public requests for full diplomatic recognition.

— [REDACTED] but losing Bin Ladin's largesse and military aid before an end to the war would increase the odds that the Northern Alliance could hold out and prevent the Taliban from consolidating power. [REDACTED]

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For further information, contact the South Asia Issue Manager at [REDACTED] secure.

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Central Intelligence Agency

03/27/01

Senior Executive Memorandum

27 March 2001

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SUBJECT: Assessment of Hypothetical Taliban Crackdown Against Bin Ladin

The expulsion of Bin Ladin from Afghanistan would not diminish his organization's ability to conduct and support terrorist operations.

Without further interference from the Taliban, al-Qa'ida still would have access to most of its personnel and training facilities in Afghanistan, where it could use well-established channels for moving men, funding, and supplies.

- Al-Qa'ida cells conduct much of their terrorist planning without direction from the central leadership.

Taliban sympathy for extremist causes would make the group unlikely to crack down against other al-Qa'ida leaders without provocation. If Bin Ladin's expulsion led to his rendition to the US, however, his followers would blame the Taliban, setting the stage for a disruptive confrontation that could endanger the network's safehaven. Many Sunni extremists sympathetic to Bin Ladin harbor doubts about the Taliban's religious legitimacy, and anger over his capture could prompt them to retaliate against Taliban officials.

- Bin Ladin's lieutenants lack his prominence and public support in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and their arrest or expulsion would produce little additional backlash against the Taliban.

Without Afghanistan as a base, much of al-Qa'ida's membership would relocate to other areas where senior figures in the network reside. Others would join the *mujahidin* fighting in Chechnya or seek asylum in the West. The network could establish small-scale training and coordination centers in these areas, but political constraints and law enforcement scrutiny would limit their activities.

- Bin Ladin's followers would face difficulty coordinating between disparate locations, and the task of relocating personnel and establishing new logistic channels would consume much of the network's resources for years.

For further information, contact the Chief, DCI Counterterrorist Center Assessments Group, at [redacted] secure.

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