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PDB MEMO

DATE: 07/26/99
SUBJECT: Bin Ladin's "No First Strike" Policy Probably Disinformation
BODY:

26 July 1999

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1. Bin Ladin's claim to the Taliban that he will conduct anti-US attacks only in response to missile strikes in Afghanistan may not reflect his intentions. Bin Ladin previously told the Taliban that he had suspended planning for terrorist operations against the US, but [REDACTED] that preparations for attacks advanced steadily.

--- [REDACTED] said Taliban leaders were skeptical of Bin Ladin's denials and remained concerned that he would conduct attacks. [REDACTED]

2. Bin Ladin may hope [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will lead his hosts to reduce their scrutiny of his operations. If the Taliban react positively [REDACTED] he could portray his current terrorist preparations as contingency plans for a US strike and not a violation of the Taliban's request that he not conduct an unprovoked attack. [REDACTED]

3. Bin Ladin's "no first strike" statement may be an attempt to get word to the US of the consequences of strikes against Afghanistan, which several Pakistani press articles last week said are imminent. [REDACTED] reported on Bin Ladin's claim, suggesting his organization is spreading rumors intended for US consumption.

--- A Taliban prohibition on contacts with reporters earlier this year has limited Bin Ladin's ability to send messages to the West through overt channels. [REDACTED]

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