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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2012 8:52 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: (SBU) Afghan Protest Task Force Morning Update 24 February 2012

Fyi

From: Abbaszadeh, Nima
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2012 08:31 AM
To: Wells, Alice G; Sullivan, Jacob J
Cc: S_SpecialAssistants
Subject: FW: (SBU) Afghan Protest Task Force Morning Update 24 February 2012

This is an update with information current as of 8:00 AM EST 24 FEB 2012.

Afghan Protest Task Force Morning Update 24 February 2012 (SBU)

PROTESTS:

Day Four of protests related to Quran burning incident continue.

Kabul saw the country's largest demonstration, with 1,500-4,000 protesters gathered in the far eastern part of the city. ANP attempting to quell protests, but media is reporting that the ANP killed two protesters.

Notable protests broke out in Herat and Balkh provinces and in many eastern provinces.

Protesters gathered outside the Herat Consulate mid-afternoon, prompting all personnel to move to safe havens.

The German Ministry of Defense is confirming media reports that in light of protests, German troops withdrew from its outpost in Taloqan in Takhar Province.

The Germans had originally planned to shut the post altogether in late March as it had transferred security responsibilities to the Afghans on February 15.

In Pakistan, protests related to the Quran incident remain scattered and relatively small for the moment in both Sindh and Balochistan. In Karachi, the conservative Islamist organization Jamaat al Dawa appealed to its supporters to protest following Friday prayers. In Quetta, a small crowd of about 400 Islamists staged a demonstration on February 23 holding banners reading "Death to America."

POLITICS:

Two delegations tasked by President Karzai to investigate the incident at Bagram Airbase released a statement February 23 calling for restraint and demanding that those responsible be tried swiftly.

COMISAF General Allen called "on everyone throughout the country—ISAF members and Afghans—to exercise patience and restraint" as the investigation continued.

Minister of Interior Bismillah Khan Mohammadi reiterated in a February 23 statement that Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan citizens should avoid violence.

DSRAP Beth Jones enroute to Afghanistan for a previously scheduled visit.

MEDIA:

The incident at Bagram Airbase did not make the Afghan evening talk shows February 23 but it continued to be the lead story in the February 24 morning news.

International reporting shifted to questioning whether the United States could "defuse the uproar" in the wake of extensive coverage of President Obama's apology letter to President Karzai.

U.S. Special Representative to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Rashad Hussain did an interview February 23 with Tolo TV while at the Media Hub in Dubai, UAE. During the approximately five-minute interview, he stated that the United States understood the pain and frustration of the Afghan people but noted the Quran called for peaceful responses to such incidents. The interview has not yet aired in Afghanistan.

Embassy Kabul has made available to journalists a video of the roundtable discussion at the U.S. Foreign Press Center with Haris Tarin, Office Director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, on the Qur'an incident at Bagram. Video is here: <http://goo.gl/wiWHH>

In India, several Urdu language publications ran editorials on the burning of the Qurans, critical of the actions and calling for international condemnation.

EMBASSY KABUL:

The Embassy was continuously monitoring the security situation and held two Emergency Action Committee meetings. At mid-afternoon, all COM personnel were safe and movements outside the Embassy were being reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

All Lincoln Learning Centers (LLCs) were closed for the regular Friday holiday.

Gwendolyn "Wendy" Webb

Pol-Mil Team Leader
Office of Afghanistan Affairs
Bureau of South Central Asian Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Harry S. Truman Building, Rm. 1880
Washington, DC 20037
email: WebbGS@state.gov
tel: 202-647-5525

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