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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, August 31, 2012 3:47 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Schmitt, NYT: U.S. Seems Set to Designate Haqqani Network as Terror Group

This one from Schmitt

From: Feldman, Daniel F
Sent: Friday, August 31, 2012 03:31 PM
To: Nides, Thomas R; Sullivan, Jacob J; Grossman, Marc I
Cc: Macklin, Ronita; Pearce, David D
Subject: FW: Schmitt, NYT: U.S. Seems Set to Designate Haqqani Network as Terror Group

And a competing one from the Times. Lots of loose talk...

U.S. Seems Set to Designate Haqqani Network as Terror Group

Schmitt, New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/01/world/asia/us-seems-set-to-designate-haqqani-network-as-terror-group.html?hp=&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1346440540-JOUGBinUsDqevuCuuHAWyw>

WASHINGTON — With a Congressional reporting deadline looming, the Obama administration appears ready to designate the Haqqani network as a terrorist organization, risking a new breach in relations with Pakistan.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and top military officials are said to favor placing sanctions on the network, an insurgent group operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan that is responsible for some of the most spectacular assaults on American bases and Afghan cities in recent years, according to half a dozen current and former administration officials. But a spirited internal debate has American officials, including those at the White House, weighing the consequences that such a decision would have not only on United States-Pakistan relations but also on peace talks with the Taliban and on the fate of Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the only American soldier known to be held by the insurgents.

And perhaps most important, administration and Congressional officials say, is whether the designation would make any difference in hampering the group's ability to raise money from wealthy private donors in Persian Gulf countries and other patrons. Several of its leaders have already been designated individually as "global terrorists," so the issue now is what would be gained by designating the entire organization.

Even though Mrs. Clinton is leaning toward designating the Haqqani network as a terrorist organization, no final decision has been made, the officials said.

“The optics of designating look great and the chest thumping is an understandable expression of sentiment, but everyone has to calm down and say, ‘What does it actually do?’ ” said one administration official involved in the debate who favors designating the group.

Under pressure from Congress, the Obama administration must decide by Sept. 9 whether to declare the Haqqani network a terrorist entity. On one level, the decision seems clear-cut. Since 2008, Haqqani suicide attackers in Afghanistan have struck the Indian Embassy, five-star hotels and restaurants and, last September, the headquarters of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force and the American Embassy.

A senior American official said last week that it was now “likely” that one of the members of the Haqqani family leadership, Badruddin Haqqani, the operational commander of the network, was killed in a recent drone strike in Pakistan’s tribal areas. In May 2011, the State Department said that Mr. Haqqani “helps lead insurgents and foreign fighters in attacks against targets in southeastern Afghanistan.”

Critics cite several reasons that designating the Haqqani network a terrorist organization could further complicate relations between the United States and Pakistan, just as relations are getting back on track after months of grueling negotiations that finally reopened NATO supply routes through Pakistan.

One reason, officials said, is that such a move would seem to bring Pakistan a step closer to being designated as a state sponsor of terrorism.

American officials say that the Pakistani military’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate is covertly aiding the insurgents. Pakistani officials have rebutted the accusation — admitting that the agency maintains regular contact with the Haqqanis, but denying that it provides operational support — and contend that the Obama administration is trying to deflect attention from its own failings in Afghanistan.

Pakistani officials, however, said this week that Islamabad would not protest a designation, calling the decision “an internal American issue.” But administration officials reason that it is worse for Pakistan to protest the designation publicly because it would be almost a direct admission that it supports the group.

Steven Lee Myers contributed reporting.