

Tribals seize Pak airstrip; Laden 'hide-out' bombed

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 29. — Armed pro-Taliban tribals today seized an airstrip in Pakistan's border town of Chilas and broke open a jail in the area, as US jets hit the caves and tunnels, where Osama bin Laden is suspected to be hiding.

Tribals waiting to cross over into Afghanistan took control of the Chilas airstrip to prevent it from being used in the military campaign against the Taliban, media reports said.

In PoK's Gilgit region, *madrasah* students took control of an airfield to prevent foreign aircraft from landing there, BBC's Urdu service and Radio Zاهدان reported.

A Pakistani cleric today left for Afghanistan to offer fighters to the Taliban. Sufi Mohammed has several thousand Pakistanis

waiting to fight along with the Taliban. "Maulana *sahab* went to Afghanistan to meet Taliban leaders," Fazlullah, his son, said.

The four-day blockade of the road leading to the Karakoram Pass is still to be lifted. The protesters are demanding that Pakistan stop supporting the US strikes in Afghanistan. Authorities negotiated with pro-Taliban militants today, exhorting them to lift the blockade on four segments of the ancient Silk Route.

US raids: US jets resumed their assault on the Taliban frontlines north of Kabul today. Warplanes flew high above the Shomali plain before swooping lower to release bombs.

Explosions rocked Mirsambat, Tutakhan Hills, Kalai Nasru and Borik Au, Opposition commanders in Rabat said. About 25 blasts occurred during the three-hour attack, witnesses said.

Kandahar too was attacked, even as the US commander-in-charge of military operation, Gen. Tommy Franks, discussed with Gen. Pervez Musharraf the situation in Afghanistan.

US warplanes hit an area of caves and tunnels in eastern Afghanistan known to be a hideout of Osama bin Laden. Two persons were killed in the attack. Osama had built a maze of tunnels there while fighting the Soviet troops in the 1980s.

In a parallel offensive, the Northern Alliance launched a fresh attack on Mazar-i-Sharif.

Jihadis' bodies: The bodies of six Pakistanis killed fighting alongside the Taliban were taken to their border village today. Thousands gathered for the funeral procession in Chaman, demanding a *jihād* against the USA.

UN envoy in Pak: The UN en-

voy to Afghanistan, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, held "preliminary talks" with Pakistan foreign minister, Mr Abdul Sattar, on a broad-based post-Taliban government, the Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman, Mr Riaz Mohammed Khan, said.

'No N-arms': The US defence secretary today ruled out the use of nuclear weapons on Afghanistan. Pakistan too has opposed the use of nuclear arms.

Christians vow revenge

In Bahawalpur, mourners today vowed to avenge the massacre of 18 Christians in a church yesterday. Many Christians attended the funeral amid tight security.

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■ **More photographs, reports on pages 8 & 9**

THE STATESMAN

30 OCT 2001

18 shot dead in Pak church

Mubashir Zaidi & Agencies
Islamabad, October 28

NEARLY 100 Christians had assembled at a church in Punjab's Bahawalpur city this morning, when six masked men rode up in two motorcycles, killing first two policemen at the gate and then about 16 of the worshippers inside.

Ten of the worshippers in Saint Dominic's Church died on the spot as the gunmen shot indiscriminately, in an attack in which the Pakistani President saw terrorist involvement. Eight more died in Bahawal Victoria Hospital sometime later. At least 10 others are in a critical condition.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, for which there has not been any arrests so far. But AP quoted Intelligence sources as saying that a banned Islamic organisation was under suspicion.

Police have cordoned off the area and blocked all the main roads leading out of the city.

SCHROEDER BACKS PAK CALL FOR TALKS

THE PAKISTANI President on Sunday called for resumption of dialogue with India on the lines of the format that emerged at the Agra Summit. It was a call that German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder supported, souring the pitch for his talks with New Delhi.

Schroeder was non-committal as Pervez Musharraf bashed India at a joint Press conference in Islamabad, hours before he reached Delhi. The Pakistani leader said the Kashmir issue must be resolved in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people. He also accused India of harbouring hegemonic designs.

Schroeder did not comment on that, but backed the Pakistani leader's call for resumption of dialogue. Schroeder's statement is seen as a part of the West's insistence that India and Pakistan resolve their outstanding disputes. Coming as it does just ahead of AB Vajpayee's trip to attend the UN General Assembly, it is interpreted as a signal to New Delhi to respond positively to Musharraf's call for a summit on the UN sidelines.

The authorities have ordered tight security in churches throughout the country.

This is the first time that Christians have been targeted in a city notorious for violence between Sunnis and Shias.

Ali Shah, a young man who was in the front pew, told AP: "Some of us lay down. Some begged for mercy. They didn't listen."

Shamoon Masih, 34, who was shot in the leg and the arm, said most of those who died belonged to two families. He said the gunmen didn't select particular victims but merely fired into clumps of people.

"They had no mercy for the children. They had no mercy for the women. They could see that small children were being hit by bullets, but they kept firing," AP quoted him as saying.

President Pervez Musharraf has condemned the killings and said the culprits would be brought to justice. He said an investigation is already under way.

The way the gunmen went about the business clearly indicates involvement of terrorists out to create discord and disharmony, Musharraf said.

The attack coincided with the arrival of German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who reached Islamabad this morning for a working visit. An envoy from Pope John Paul II, who has condemned the shooting as a "tragic act of intolerance", was in Pakistan only yesterday.

Residents said the church is Roman Catholic, but that Protestants also participated in Sunday services because they do not have their own church in the area.

There was one Muslim victim in the church shooting: Mohammad Salim, one of the policemen at the gate.

The All India Christian Council has faxed a statement to President Musharraf expressing shock over the massacre.

Quetta bus blast: At least two people were killed and 18 injured today when a bomb exploded on a bus at Quetta in south-western Pakistan. Police feared the toll would rise.

There have been violent protests in Quetta, which is close to the Afghan border, against the US military action in Afghanistan.

Related reports on Pages 9, 10 and 11



Thirteen-year-old Jawad, the only survivor in a family killed in the US bombing of Kabul on Sunday.

America's war misses the mark

Kabul/Islamabad, October 28

THE US airstrikes claimed more civilian victims over the weekend with Osama bin Laden remaining as elusive as ever, bringing from Pakistan a word of caution against upsetting the Muslim world.

American bombs missed military targets to hit civilian homes not only in Kabul and other Taliban-controlled territory but also in a village controlled by the Opposition Northern Alliance.

A US bomb crashed through a mud-brick home in Kabul on Sunday, blowing to bits seven children and their father as they ate breakfast, their mother said.

A civilian was killed on Saturday when US planes mistakenly bombed a village north of the city in territory controlled by the

Northern Alliance. Al-Jazeera television of Qatar had earlier reported that 10 civilians were killed by a stray US bomb in the same area. Two other civilians died when a bomb hit the minibus in which they were trying to flee Kabul with their family.

Pakistan's Minister for Interior Affairs Moinuddin Haider has asked the US to review its military campaign as it has failed to destroy the Taliban and crack down on the al-Qaida.

Haider, who is believed to be close to his President, said yesterday at a meeting in Lahore: "Now the world, including Pakistan, has started thinking that whatever currently is happening in Afghanistan is not good. The Muslims are upset over the large number of civilian casualties."

Musharraf today said the mil-

itary action should be as short as possible and avoid civilian casualties. "The international community should focus not only on combating terrorism but also on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan, restoration of peace and formation a broad-based multi-ethnic government in Afghanistan."

Pakistani Intelligence officers also blame a botched CIA operation for the way Pushtoon leader Abdul Haq died on a Quixotic mission in Afghanistan.

Some of them told *The Washington Post* that Haq was on a CIA brief when he entered Afghanistan last Sunday with 19 companions, some satellite telephones and pouches of cash.

That the US campaign is going badly seems to have dawned on the American establishment too,

going by a report in the *Post*. It quoted unnamed officials as saying that America had suffered a week of setbacks, followed by the capture and execution of Haq.

"Despite 20 days of punishing airstrikes, the US military has yet to really engage the Taliban," it quoted an administration official as saying. "The Bush administration has begun to admit to itself what it has repeatedly insisted in public — that the war against the Taliban and the terrorists it shelters will be neither short nor easy."

"We are like wrestlers, with totally different styles," said one official referring to the US and the Taliban militia. "We are still trying to figure out whether leverage point is on these guys. We haven't found it yet."

Agencies

Air raids kill 13 civilians

KABUL, OCT. 28. American airstrikes, meant to "punish" the Taliban, spilled over into residential areas of the Afghan capital today, killing 13 civilians. The misdirected raids were the second such fatal error in as many days, coming only 12 hours after the apparent stray bombardment behind the opposition military alliance's battle lines north of Kabul on Saturday.

The U.S. jets were back over the skies of the Afghan capital and strong explosions could be heard in the direction of the main road from Kabul to the opposition-controlled Bagram airbase.

In Kwaja Bahuddine, the U.S. warplanes opened up a new front, dropping 10 bombs on militia positions in northeast Afghanistan, a top opposition General said. It was the first time since the air raids started on October 7 that the Taliban positions in northeast Afghanistan, close to the Tajikistan border, had been



An Afghan cries over the body of his child, which was killed during U.S. air raids, in Kabul on Sunday. — Reuters

targeted. Weeping families buried their dead, hours after the morning bombardment, apparently aimed at Taliban targets to the north and east of Kabul. "I have lost all my family. I am finished," said a sobbing woman in the Qali Hotair neighborhood on Kabul's northern edge.

The Taliban refused to return the body of the Afghan opposition figure, Abdul Haq, who was executed on Friday after he crossed over to mobilise support for the anti-Taliban cause. Haq was buried in his home village in Afghanistan. "We lost our brother, but our war will persevere," Haq's brother, Haji din Mohammed, told turbaned mourners in a simple prayer service in Peshawar.

The opposition spokesman, Mr. Abdallah Abdallah, called the damage to the Taliban frontlines from Saturday's raids significant and said if such heavy bombardment were routinely employed, "the objective of eradicating terrorism can be achieved much quicker." The civilian deaths, he said, were an unfortunate mistake. "Of course we know this wasn't a deliberate targeting..."

The Taliban claimed that it had arrested four persons who were working for the U.S. Three are of either Pakistani or Afghan origin, the Russian news agency, *Novosti*, said.

Pak. tribals line border

Over 10,000 heavily-armed Pakistani tribals lined up near the border to join the Taliban as hundreds of anti-U.S. protesters blocked the Karakoram highway for the fourth day, protesting the strikes in Afghanistan and the Musharraf regime's support to it.

The Taliban also said it had arrested an American who had entered Afghanistan with a detachment of Haq. The American had managed to break through the encirclement and escape in Jalalabad. — AP, AFP

'Civilians not targeted'

Sridhar Krishnaswami reports from Washington:

The Pentagon had no official comment on reports coming out of Afghanistan that the U.S. bombs had hit at least three villages, resulting in casualties. The official refrain is that the United States did not target civilians.

The Pentagon said that Saturday's bombing of the Taliban positions was the heaviest till date. Besides the carrier-based jets, several B-1s and B-52s participated in the raids, dropping dozens of 500-pound bombs.

Bush under pressure: Page 13

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PEACE BY PIECE

Building a government for Afghanistan

IN ruling out a predominantly Pakistan-influenced post-Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Colin Powell has more or less snatched away what Pervez Musharraf had hoped will be his second prize; the first, already awarded, being a place at the American table. Powell's snub to Musharraf is an important step in a very complicated business, which has more chances of failure than even regime-building exercises in the Balkans. To begin with, there is the question of timing. US military operations against Taliban run the risk of becoming too successful if the mullahs' rule collapses without a ready alternative for Kabul. Afghanistan without a government is a horrifying prospect, given its tribes, guns and mischief-makers. That is partly why, Pentagon's generals are held back by State Department's planners till such time as an Afghan government-in-exile is in the works. The Northern Alliance's ethnic composition — mostly Tajik and Uzbek in a country dominated by Pashtuns — creates problems also.

Then starts the even more difficult job. Putting together a government that will not only satisfy most Afghan groups but also, in order of global priority in this context, the US, Russia and its central Asian neighbours, China, Pakistan, Iran, and India. Russia, Iran and India like the Northern Alliance are aware of the need to supplement it with other ethnic representatives. China is playing its cards close to its chest and will get US briefings on the subject. Pakistan's balloon has been punctured by Powell but he had also agreed earlier with Musharraf that there is such a species as moderate Taliban. Russia and India have rather less hope of its existence and that will be a point of some considerable conflict. As will be Pakistan's anathema to the Northern Alliance, which cannot conceivably be kept out of the post-Taliban power sharing agreement. Even if all these differences can be sorted out — the US will have the job of playing as well as refereeing — big question marks remain on Afghans themselves, including tribal chieftains. Will they deal with each other long enough for a stable government to emerge? No one knows. Which is why the best short-term solution may be to convene a UN peace keeping force mandated with disarming Afghan ethnic and warlord factions. Ethnic and tribal arguments minus guns stand a chance of some rough resolution. But UN involvement too has become a complicated idea. Some Islamic countries as well as Pakistan-based and blessed Afghan tribal leaders and clerics have asked for a UN force comprising only Muslim soldiers. That is an absolutely ghastly proposal for no other reason than it questions the very basis of the UN. But rejecting that will need careful diplomacy so that Islamic nations and Pakistan cannot play the anti-Muslim card. Peace, if ever, will take a long time coming in Afghanistan.

THE STATESMAN

23 OCT 2001

Taliban death squad hunts for American

Kabul, Oct. 27: America capped a discouraging week with the most sustained bombing yet on the northern Afghan front line as the Taliban declared that they were searching for a man believed to be an American who had been travelling with executed opposition commander Abdul Haq.

"He was spotted with Abdul Haq and, as far as we know, his name is Jamber Jibi," information ministry spokesman Abdul Hanan Himat told Reuters. "We are searching for him."

On Friday, the hardline militia had dealt a devastating blow to US plans to build an alternative to the Taliban by executing Haq. The Pashtun warlord, on a mission to raise rebellion, was executed just hours after his capture. A planned meeting of Afghan opposition groups to be held in Ankara this weekend was delayed amid the turmoil triggered by Haq's murder.

Himat said he did not know how the American travelling with the legendary commander from the jihad against the Soviet occupation had disappeared and where he might have gone. Haq had slipped into eastern Afghanistan on October 21 to try to turn Pashtun tribes against Kabul.

The Taliban said Haq was captured in eastern Logar province, 30 km west of Pakistan's north-western frontier, after a chase on horseback. He was executed as a spy, they said.

The US sent an unmanned Predator spy plane, equipped with Hellfire anti-tank missiles but not ideally suited to a rescue mission, when Haq called for help. (See Page 6)

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said Haq's body will be handed over to his relatives in Kabul who will take it to Peshawar tomorrow for burial.

The Taliban also claimed to have arrested a CIA agent, identified as Major Mazhar Ayub, on the Spin Buldock mountains near the Pakistan border. A militia official told BBC that Ayub had served in the US army from 1971 to 1991.

He also fought during the Vietnam war besides having worked for CNN from 1992 to 1998, he said.

The AIP said the Taliban had hanged 20 Northern Alliance fighters, including five commanders, but the militia denied the report.

As the campaign enters its fourth week, the Bush administration has begun to hunker down and admit to itself what it has repeatedly insisted in public — that the war against the Taliban will be neither short nor easy.

Indeed, some administration officials say that despite 20 days of punishing — if limited — airstrikes, the US military has yet to really engage the Taliban.

"We're kind of like wrestlers, with totally different styles," said one official, referring to the US and the Taliban. "We're still trying to figure out where the leverage point is on these guys. We haven't found it yet."

Time may not be on America's side, especially as key Muslim allies Pakistan and Egypt, have begun to demonstrate open impatience with the pace and results of the campaign.

Although there is little evidence yet that the US approach is succeeding, officials said they are sticking to their original strategy. It isn't time to think about "Plan B", a senior official said, because the administration is still at the start of "Plan A".

LAT-WP & REUTERS

■ See Pages 4-6



Haq (Reuters)

Hate groups under scanner, no

THE TELEGRAPH
28 OCT 2001

■ Anthrax scare closes US apex court ■ Pak tells USA to kill Omar first

Heaviest raid on Kabul

Afghanistan ST-1 28/10

AGENCIES

KABUL, Oct. 27. — US bombers unleashed their heaviest raid on Kabul and Taliban front lines north of the capital today, as the militia reportedly hanged 20 Northern Alliance fighters, including five commanders.

The Taliban, however, denied executing the alliance fighters, reportedly captured in northern Afghanistan after militiamen regained control of Dar-e-Souf in Samangan province. Among them was a key opposition commander, Mohammed Bilal, Afghan Islamic Press said.

Fireballs lit the Kabul sky last night and people cowered in their basements as strings of bombs landed on central and southern Kabul. "It was one of the worst nights," said a resident. Another six or seven explosions shook the city at dawn.

Smoke was still billowing from a compound of the International Committee of the Red Cross, where warehouses were hit by US jets a day earlier.

North of the city, planes circled high and dived to release bombs and missiles on Taliban trenches and gun-positions. Northern Alliance commanders and witnesses saw at least a dozen explosions during three waves of flights over the Shomali Plain.

'Kill Omar first': Pakistan has told the USA that it would win the war against the Taliban only if it could kill Mullah Mohammed Omar, a report from New York adds. "The key to USA's success lies in killing autocratic, anti-American leader Mullah Omar," the *New York Times* said quoting Pakistani officials.

Musharraf: General Pervez Musharraf today said he would be worried if the USA's anti-terrorism campaign dragged on longer than expected. "Yes, it's worrying, and demands that besides trying to achieve the military



Pakistanis with arms ride a bus from Temergarah village in north-eastern Pakistan to the Afghan border on Saturday. Over 5,000 Pakistanis said they would fight the USA in the 'holy war'. — AP/PTI

objectives, we need to devise a political strategy which helps us accomplish the military objectives as well."

CIA: The Taliban today claimed to have arrested a CIA agent on the Spin Buldook mountains near the Pakistani border.

Mine dogs: A bomb has hit the UN "mine dog centre" in Kabul, killing two dogs and damaging two vehicles. The bomb fell on the centre on Thursday evening.

Anthrax: The Supreme

Court, another victim of the bio-terrorism threat, was shut down today for anthrax testing. "This is two-front war and we're going to win on both fronts," President George W Bush said. Investigators are searching for clues to the spread of anthrax that has killed three people, and infected more than 20.

■ Editorial: Peace by piece, page 6
 ■ More photographs, reports on pages 8 and 10

21 Afghan Sikhs, Hindus cross over into India

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, Oct. 27. — After foreigners, now Afghan Sikhs and Hindus have lined up to enter India, thanks to the US strikes on Afghanistan

After spending a month in privation in Pakistan, 21 Hindus and Sikhs from Afghanistan crossed over into India through the Wagah border on the Samjhauta Express.

In Afghanistan, they had faced the wrath of the Taliban. In Pakistan, they were victims of extortion.

Those who crossed into India said that at least 35 families were stranded in Pakistan, while several hadn't been able to move out of Kabul and Jalalabad.

Mehar Singh (a scripture reader from Kabul), Tarlok Singh and Manohar Singh (shopkeepers), Gobind Ram (a tea-stall owner) and others spoke in one voice about the exploitation of non-Muslim Afghans in Pakistan. Even those staying in Pakistani gurdwaras are not spared.

They praised the Minorities Commission member, Mr Tarlochan Singh, for waiving off their visa fee. They hope they would be given some subsistence in India.

THE STATESMAN

28 OCT 2001

Haq's killing dashes post-Taliban coalition hopes

CONTACTS RANGE FROM DOWNING STREET TO WHITE HOUSE

RICHARD BEESTON &
STEPHEN FARRELL
THE TIMES, LONDON

LONDON/ISLAMABAD, Oct. 27. — Plans to build a broadbased post-Taliban government in Afghanistan were dealt a blow yesterday with the execution of Abdul Haq.

British and US officials were shocked as news came through that one of the most respected anti-Taliban leaders in the Pushtun-speaking community had fallen into a trap set by his enemies.

Haq's body will be handed to his relatives in Kabul who will take it to Peshawar tomorrow for burial, the Afghan Islamic Press reported today, adds AFP.

Haq (43), persuaded to return to politics after the 11 September attacks on the USA, is regarded as irreplaceable. He combined credibility among his people with personal contacts that stretched to Downing Street and the White House. He was also one of the most able field commanders in Afghanistan.

British diplomats described Haq's role as unique. "He was trying to build a powerbase among other Pushtun leaders," said one.

His death is regarded as a significant propaganda coup for the Taliban and will make defections from within their religious movement more difficult. Mr Steven Simon, an expert on Afghanistan at the International Institute of Strategic Studies, said: "It will make the Taliban seem like an even tougher opponent, just as the US administration is

Book on Laden

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 27. — Osama bin Laden's new biography will include correspondence with the suspected terrorists involved in the 11 September terror attacks, a Pakistani journalist said.

Mr Hamid Mir, who has interviewed bin Laden several times during the past few years at hide-outs in southern Afghanistan, said this time he posed questions to bin Laden in writing through an emissary.

"He is soft-spoken and doesn't look like a terrorist," Mr Mir said. The biography goes on sale in Pakistan in December. — AP

starting to talk about them being a difficult force to beat."

From a military standpoint Haq was one of the country's most successful rebel commanders during the decade of Soviet occupation. He made a mockery of Moscow's claims to have subdued Afghanistan and at the head of a 5,000-strong guerrilla force laid siege to Kabul throughout the occupation. He blew up a Russian weapons dump in 1986 that held two years' worth of ammunition and his forces often took on the feared spetsnaz, Russian special forces, in bloody firefights.

As his reputation grew on the field, so his contacts opened in the West, particularly in Britain, USA and Germany, which were eager to support moderate Afghan command-

ers against the Communists. Haq caused a sensation in 1986 when he was invited to Downing Street for talks with Mrs Margaret Thatcher. He was rewarded by being secretly supplied by British Intelligence with Blowpipe anti-aircraft missiles and received training from the SAS.

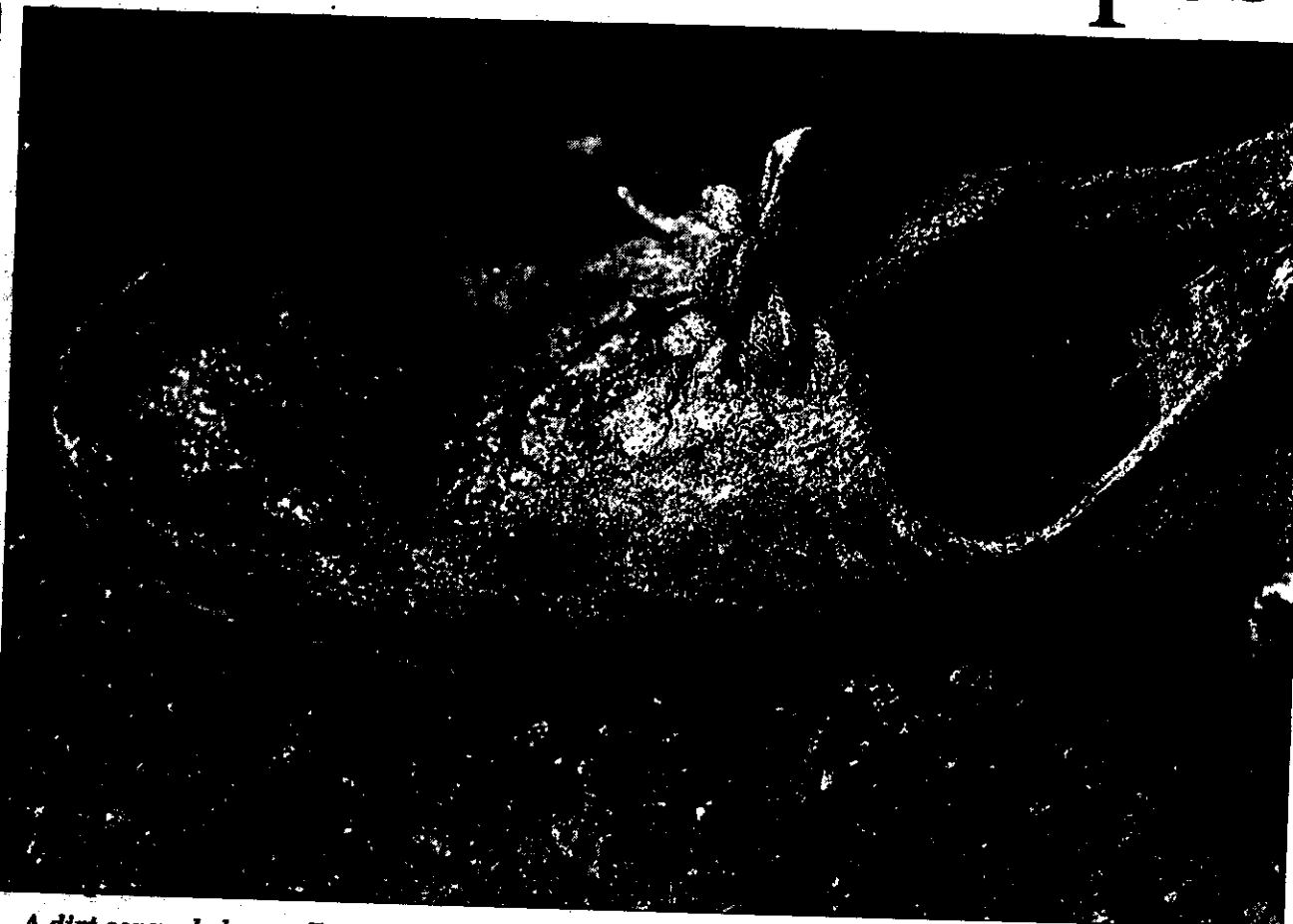
He was also a regular visitor to Washington where he met the then President Ronald Reagan whose administration backed him with Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, arms and funds.

The former academic was wounded 14 times in action and once had to be evacuated to Germany for treatment.

He was nearly killed when a bullet missed his heart by inches, he lost his right foot to a mine and had shrapnel removed from his head. Nevertheless, the Russians never succeeded in stopping his operations and he led victorious rebel forces into the capital at the end of Communist rule. Briefly appointed chief of police in Kabul after the Soviet departure, he quit as the mujahideen parties collapsed into fratricidal infighting and left for the Gulf where he made a fortune running an airline cargo business.

He suffered a personal tragedy in 1999 when his wife, son and family bodyguard were murdered in his Peshawar home at a time when he was canvassing Opposition to the Taliban.

Despite the loss he was willing to risk his life to help build up an anti-Taliban alliance from among the Pushtuns.



A dirt-covered shoe at Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island is one of thousands of items removed from the World Trade Center wreckage and checked by investigators to find victims' remains, personal belongings, airplane parts and other evidence. — AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

28 OCT 2001

Power game on Afghan board



AHMED RASHID

WILL the US reap the whirlwind that Afghanistan's neighbours have sown?

In the 12 1/2 years since the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, its neighbours have fuelled that country's civil war by backing different warlords who have acted as their proxies in the battle for power in Kabul. Even as these countries participate in the US-led alliance to depose the Afghanistan's Taliban regime, they are also jockeying to ensure that their Afghan favourites play a dominant role in a post-Taliban government.

The growing confrontation among these states — particularly over whether so-called Taliban moderates should have a role in a new regime — could endanger US hopes to establish a viable successor to the Taliban, say diplomats and other officials in the region.

Since the Taliban emerged in 1994 and gained support from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, regional rivals — Russia, Iran, India and the five Central Asian Republics — have backed the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. Also known as the United Front, it comprises ethnic minorities in northern Afghanistan. Over the years, these alliances have polarised in the region, isolating Pakistan from its neighbours and stymieing efforts by successive United Nations mediators to bring peace to the country. The newly appointed UN special representative for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, resigned from the same post in 1999 after blaming Pakistan and other regional countries for sabotaging peace talks between rival Afghan factions.

Enter the US, which after the September 11 terrorist attacks assembled a first-ever alliance among these countries in an effort to fight global terrorism. Pakistan, the Taliban's

principal backer, did a policy U-turn and pledged to back the US-led attempt to drive the Taliban from power and eliminate Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda organisation.

However, as international efforts intensify to form a broad-based, multi-ethnic government for Afghanistan after the demise of the Taliban, old regional rivalries are re-emerging with a vengeance as each country pursues its particular agenda.

Take Pakistan, which wants to ensure that the pro-Pakistani Pashtuns in the south of Afghanistan remain a dominant force. Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, Pashtuns make up between 38 per cent and 45 per cent of the country's 25 million people, and about 20 per cent of Pakistan's 140 million people. With US support, Pakistan is trying to get a bloc

of what it considers moderate Taliban leaders to defect and form part of a future government. So far, it's had no success.

"The Americans are getting impatient with the Pakistanis because of their singular lack of success at splitting the Taliban," says a Western diplomat in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital.



Who backs what

- 1 Backs Northern Alliance, is closest to its Tajik component; objects to Taliban in a post-war government.
- 2 Backs the Shiite Hizb-e-Wahadat, but sees a role for all ethnic groups. Objects to a Taliban role.
- 3 Back the Northern Alliance Uzbek commander Gen. Rashid Dostum.
- 4 Back Russian position (Turkmenistan is neutral)
- 5 Backs Northern Alliance; has reservations about Taliban element in post-war regime.
- 6 Opposes major post-war role for Northern Alliance. Many Afghans suspect Pakistan is trying to install another pro-Pakistan regime.

There are deep suspicions among many Afghans and rival states in the region that Islamabad is trying to create another pro-Pakistan government from the rump of the Taliban and other pro-Pakistani Pashtun tribal chiefs — just as Islamabad did with the Taliban seven years ago. Indeed, many suspect that Pakistan's ambitions were the motive for its hosting of more than 1,000 Afghans in Peshawar

PAKISTAN also vehemently opposes a major political role for the Northern Alliance, made up of non-Pashtun minorities. Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has forcefully told Washington that he would object to US support for the Northern Alliance, which he told Pakistan television Tuesday "has neither the political capacity

nor the military capacity to govern Afghanistan."

Musharraf's ultimatum has annoyed Russia, Iran, India and the Central Asian Republics, which have stepped up military and political support to the Northern Alliance and refuse to accept any Taliban participation in a future Afghan government.

"Russia and the Central Asian states are deeply suspicious that the US is pandering to Pakistani demands," says an Asian diplomat in Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital. "Even though the military campaign has hardly succeeded and we are far from forming a new government, the Americans are finding a very hostile mood here. The rift within the alliance against terrorism is widening."

After meeting with Northern Alliance leaders and Tajik President Imamali Rakhmanov in Dushanbe on Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow would step up arms supplies for the Northern Alliance and insisted that there would be no room for moderate Taliban in a future government. He said Russia's objective is "to allow the return of civilian life and to help install a state which is friendly toward its neighbours and Russia."

Likewise, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, who met the same leaders in Dushanbe on Oct. 19, told reporters that, "we don't see any place for the Taliban, but we see all the ethnic groups of Afghanistan in the (future) coalition government."

India has raised serious reservations about including moderate Taliban, saying the Kabul regime has sponsored terrorism in Indian Kashmir. The Northern Alliance has taken advantage of its allies' support to condemn Pakistan's efforts to bring moderate Taliban onboard. "There is no such thing as moderate Taliban," Northern Alliance Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah told reporters in Dushanbe on Monday. Abdullah called Thursday for more cooperation between the Northern Alliance and US-led forces, and said the UN would have a key role to play in Afghanistan's post-Taliban future.

Although all these countries back the Northern Alliance, they have their differences. Uzbekistan, along with Turkey, backs Uzbek commander Gen. Rashid Dostum, who leads one of the Northern Alliance's four factions and whose forces are close to capturing the largest city in the north, Mazar-e-Sharif.

Meanwhile, Iran backs the Hizb-e-Wa-

hadat, made up of the Shiite Hazara ethnic group based in central Afghanistan, which is also part of the Northern Alliance. Iran is predominantly Shiite Muslim. Russia is closest to the Northern Alliance's Tajik component, and according to Russian media is providing \$40 million worth of arms to the Northern Alliance through that faction, led by Gen. Mohammed Fahim.

There are deep suspicions among many Afghans and rival states in the region that Islamabad is trying to create another pro-Pakistan government from the rump of the Taliban and other pro-Pakistani Pashtun tribal chiefs — just as Islamabad did with the Taliban seven years ago. Indeed, many suspect that Pakistan's ambitions were the motive for its hosting of more than 1,000 Afghans in the western city of Peshawar. Their two-day conference ended Thursday demanding an end to hostilities in Afghanistan and calling on former King Zahir Shah, exiled in Rome since 1973, to help form a government.

Pakistani officials deny they are trying to install a pro-Pakistan regime in Kabul, but say cannot tolerate chaos in southern Afghanistan. "We cannot afford to see chaos, anarchy and a political vacuum on our western borders if the Taliban collapse," says an aide to President Musharraf. "The US has to give a clear commitment to a majority Pashtun government, even if it is the former king — to whom we have no objections."

Pakistan's regional rivals agree that Pashtuns must be included in the next government, but insist that they be anti-Taliban Pashtuns or Pashtun supporters of the former king. Western diplomats concede that their planning for a post-Taliban government is lagging far behind the US-led military campaign, which could create further divisions within the alliance once the Northern Alliance begins to capture key cities from the Taliban. Says a European ambassador in Islamabad: "The Western alliance needs to decide on who it wants to see come to power in Afghanistan, and then clearly back them."

(From The Wall Street Journal)

INDIAN EXPRESS

27 OCT 2001

27 OCT 2001

THE war crisis in Afghanistan confronts Indian policy makers with an uncomfortable range of new challenges. However the present emergency comes to be resolved, its consequences will linger, and even though the shape of the final outcome cannot yet be seen, some of the ramifications are already visible. Adjusting to these new realities is a challenge to some of our established policies.

A look across the border shows General Musharraf squirming uneasily in the grip of similar dilemmas. In the current state of Indo-Pakistani relations, his plight will provide considerable satisfaction on this side of the divide. The General has called for a quick war, to be over by Ramzan, and for strikes against Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, where the root of the problem lies. He seeks to play down the role of the Northern Alliance in any future dispensation for the country. All this makes sense from his point of view, but the campaign in Afghanistan rolls on with little overt regard for Pakistani sensibilities.

In the larger scheme of things, Pakistan is only a strategically placed pawn, a valuable one no doubt but not part of the guiding council of the battle. At the elbow of Mr Bush is not Gen Musharraf but Mr Blair. India is no less at the mercy of incalculable forces that it is hardly in any position to control or influence. The present crisis has made more plain than ever the deliberate threat to India mounted by the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. This cannot be permitted to continue indefinitely, so the complexion of the successor administration is important to this country. The Northern Alliance can be regarded as a useful ally in the shaping of the future regime but India's own role in the process is likely to be rather limited.

Moreover, it is not to be ignored that circumstances and presently shared interests rather than any deeper affinity have brought India and the Northern Alliance close to each other. This can change. With the onset of the crisis, there are many more players in the field, which means many more options for the Alliance. We also have to cope with the unyielding hostility of Pakistan which has succeeded over the years in

Adjusting to the crisis

keeping India firmly outside the pale of any sort of political consultation on Afghanistan, be it led by the UN or by anyone else. It will be no easy task for India to find a place at the conference table for Afghanistan's future.

The key issue for India is the impact of the current churning in Afghanistan on Pakistan-inspired militancy in Kashmir. The initial hopes of an international crackdown on Pakistan have been belied as that country has assumed the role of an ally in the fight

WIDE ANGLE SALMAN HAI DAR



Afghan Ambassador Masood Khalili at the Afghan embassy in New Delhi on Thursday. He escaped death when Northern Alliance commander Ahmed Shah Masood was fatally attacked in Takhor. — AP/PTI

against terrorism. Some be firmly set aside. All that it has led to so far is a war of words with our visibly fraught and tense neighbour,

statements that sound very much like threats of unilateral action against the terrorist bases in PoK. There is a certain logic to it: if the USA can pursue its attackers into Afghanistan, then why not India into PoK? But such statements bring with them a host of problems that can only add to our difficulties, and any thought of unilateral action needs to

leading nowhere and adding up to nothing but a series of acrid sound bites. Perhaps more significant at this point is the American endeavour to persuade both sides to cool things down and its expressed readiness to lend its good offices for revived dialogue on Kashmir. That is something India does not like to hear. It smacks of meddling in our affairs.

Yet it also offers an opportunity for us to urge our concerns upon the international community at a time when the reality of terrorism and its worldwide impact cannot be ignored. We may not have a great deal of leverage to make our views heard above the din of war but our genuine concerns need to be promoted as effectively as possible. It is obvious that the Afghan situation has sharpened the long-standing differences between India and Pakistan. Their relations have slumped.

Only weeks ago the leaders were at Agra amidst budding hopes, now it is a matter of harsh words and insinuations. In this constant up-and-down, there is little sense of a steady course and purpose from either side. However, as we fancy ourselves the more mature party, with wider interests and perspective, it is chiefly for us to set the tone. Shrill recriminations get nobody any credit. Even as the military operation continues, we have to cope with some of its consequences. The most troublesome of these may be the sight of a newly rampant Pakistan, especially as we have become accustomed to seeing it as a troubled and unsettled State across our border.

But its revival need not be regarded as a great worry, for a more secure regime in Pakistan will better keep in check the fundamentalist forces that are the biggest threat to us. Should such forces become dominant, then even the current faltering bilateral dialogue will become impossible. Today's need, despite the vastly discouraging circumstances, is to work towards some way of reaching out and putting the pieces of dialogue back together.

The crisis in the vicinity has dangerous implications that should encourage us in our own interest to look for such an engagement with our neighbour.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

100 YEARS AGO TODAY

OCTOBER 28, 1901

THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA

AS a supplement with today's issue will be found an announcement from which it will be seen that the

Times reprint of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" is being offered to subscribers in India by the Alahabad Pioneer on exceptionally favourable terms, the object being to place this well-known work within the reach of all; and although the "Encyclopaedia" has already been extensively sold in India, it is believed that the liberal proposals, in the matter of payments, now offered will appeal to a large class who have not availed themselves of the opportunities previously afforded. As to the value of the work itself, the "Encyclopaedia Britannica", by unanimous consent forms a most extensive reference and literary guide book in every sense of the term, and within its twenty five handsome volumes the publishers may fairly claim is included something of the whole circle of human knowledge.

It forms, in fact, a small but complete library in itself. The "Encyclopaedia" is a record of the experience of men from the beginning of time to our own age, and in every field of activity and thought. The contributors have said the last word, and probably the best word that is to be said on each topic treated. So true is this, that when the Ninth Edition was finally completed, after a very large expenditure of time and money, it astonished the

literary, mechanical, and commercial world, because it was found to cover practically everything belonging to

the reference. It is a work of reference, a collection of all histories, biographies, arts, literatures, and scientific, professional, and mechanical knowledge, presenting almost an embarrassment of rich information. In lately reviewing this important work, an appreciative writer observed: "No one's education was ever finished in a school. We are all, to a greater or less degree, self-educated. A great deal of what the schools give us as knowledge may prove worthless, and will probably be allowed to drop from the mind as soon as we are left to ourselves."

The better part of our education is that which we acquire independently — through reading, through observation, through intercourse with others — an ever-increasing stock of what is called general information." In possession of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" each man is enabled to pick out just that kind of information that will be of the greatest value to him in his calling, for there is hardly a trade, industry, or profession in the civilised world that is not treated in its pages. So, too, with the young student into whose hands it may fall. Hardly knowing what he seeks, he will find much that interests him, and almost unconsciously he will acquire stores of knowledge that some day may prove simply invaluable to him.

THE STATESMAN

28 OCT 2001

Taliban scores first, against the run of play

■ Captures, kills oppn leader Abdul Haq

ALAN ELSNER & SAYED SALAHUDDIN
WASHINGTON/KABUL, OCTOBER 26

IGNORING pleas for clemency, the Taliban captured and executed Abdul Haq, a top leader of the Opposition in exile. The killing underlined the difficulties facing the US in its efforts to orchestrate a post-Taliban administration in Afghanistan.

Haq, a famous mujahid who lost a foot in the 1980s war against Soviet occupation, entered Afghanistan last Sunday on a mission to rally Pashtun tribesmen against the Taliban and for Zahir Shah, whom the US is promoting as the figure-head leader of a future government.

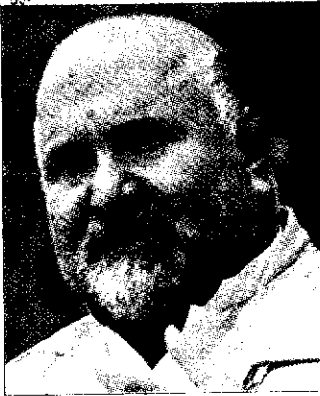
"The Taliban killed Abdul Haq along with two other people", an Information Ministry official, Abdul Himat Hanan, said in Kabul. "This happened on the basis of the verdict of the Ulema that anyone who assists the US is liable to be killed."

Taliban Education Minister Amir Muttaqi said the bodies of Haq and the others — one of whom is said to be his nephew — would be given to their relatives.

A Taliban spokesman in Jalalabad told the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press that Haq had been captured at Azra in Logar province, only 30 km west of Pakistan's northwestern frontier.

He said the Taliban had secretly surrounded for two days the place where Haq was hiding with his supporters. He tried to escape on horseback and even reportedly sought US help through his satellite phone. In response, said the spokesman, US helicopters bombed the Taliban to enable Haq to escape but he was caught around 2-30 a.m.

Haq — who was "shot with a Kalashnikov" at 1-30 p.m. IST — had with him the phone and a wad of dollars that he had allegedly brought to distribute to people in his bid to forge an al-



Abdul Haq. Reuters

END US CLUSTER BOMBING: TALIBAN

■ The Taliban appealed to international human rights groups to press the US to stop using cluster bombs, saying they were contaminating farm lands and destroying villages and that their effect would remain for years

■ Three Red Cross warehouses caught fire when they were hit in a US attack on Kabul for the second time this month

■ Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar called on its supporters to hold worldwide rallies within 72 hours

liance opposed to the Taliban.

The news cast a pall of gloom over Peshawar, where Haq's family is based. "We still do not believe this news, it is terrible", Haq's youngest brother Daoud Abdullah told Reuters. "If he is dead there are a lot of people who are still working for peace. There are thousands of Abdul Haqs."

Haq was a leading figure in moves to unite Afghanistan's warring Opposition groups around Zahir Shah to form a broad-based government to take over from the Taliban. His execution blows a hole in the Opposition's strategy of persuading Pashtuns, the main ethnic group, to switch allegiance from the Taliban to exile groups working to bring back Zahir Shah.

INDIAN EXPRESS

27 OCT 2001

West drafts blueprint to rebuild Afghanistan

By Pradipta Bagchi
Times News Network

BERLIN: The West is preparing a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan, which will be unveiled in the next two to three weeks. The plan, dubbed the Reconstruction and Sustainable Development Plan for Afghanistan, is the blueprint for the economic and financial support that the Western countries, including the U.S., the UK and Germany, will give Afghanistan to help it recover from the ravages of a two-decade-long conflict.

A senior German government official, Thomas Matussek, director-general for political affairs at the German foreign ministry, said that Western countries would pump in tens of billions of dollars into Afghanistan in the next decade to help rebuild the infrastructure as well as social institutions like schools, roads and hos-

pitals in the country.

The likely forum for unveiling the package is likely to be an upcoming UN conference on Afghanistan. Apart from 19 individual countries, the potential donors include the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the G8 group of developed countries, including Russia and Japan.

However, while the reconstruction plan may be explicitly for Afghanistan, there will be significant aid for Pakistan too, to help develop its social infrastructure. "There is no point in solving the Afghanistan problem if you continue to have madrassas in Pakistan that continue to breed new terrorists," said Mr Matussek. "Afghanistan and Pakistan are two sides of the same coin and unless the situation is viewed in that perspective, there is little chance of stability in the region," he added.

Mr Matussek said that the West and Pakistan had come to an agreement about the underlying causes of instability in the region and both would work to change the system. "We will help Pakistan introduce a proper education system across the country so that youngsters have an alternative to the madrassas. The stability of Pakistan is of the utmost importance at the moment, because beyond General Pervez Musharraf, there is no alternative to government but only chaos," he emphasised.

On the subject of Indo-Pak relations, Mr Matussek said that the West had been trying to impress on both sides that the "Kashmir problem should be kept in the box for the time being because any adverse developments there were bound to have an impact on the stability of the whole region". He praised India's restraint in the situation.

AFTER THE VENICE SALAAM, IT'S MASTI-MAZAA FOR MIRA NAIR

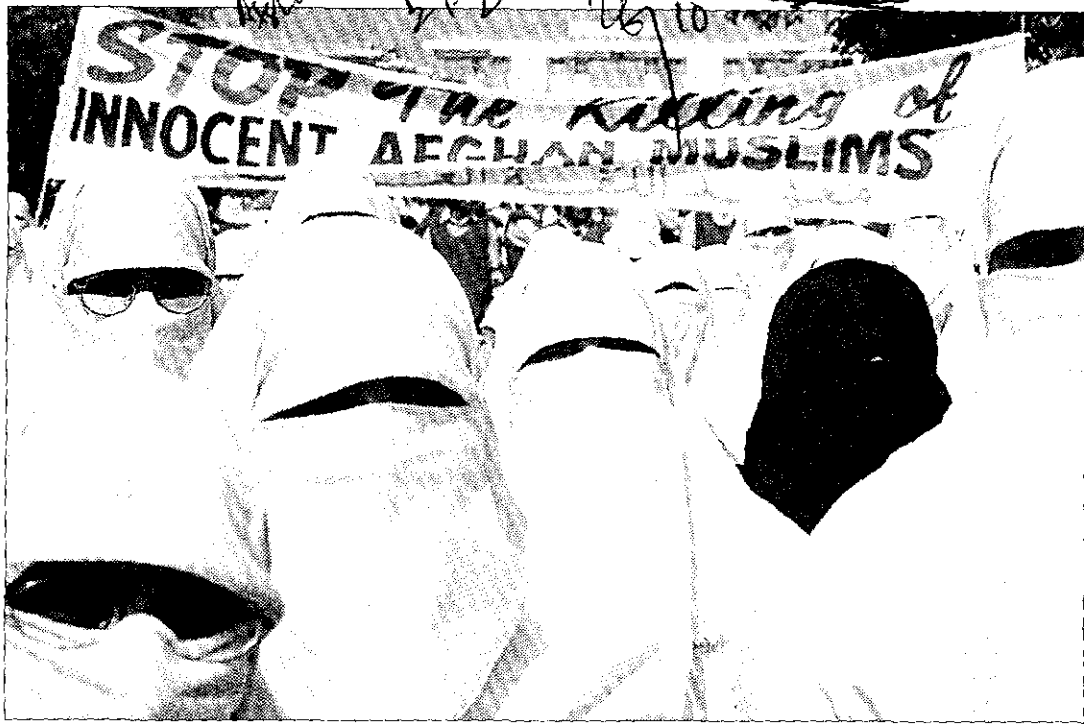
THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 OCT 2001

US refuses to toe Pak line on Afghanistan

Powell keen to seek views of Russia, China

T.V. Parasuram



EYES OF ANGUISH: Women members of Taliban protest the US bombing of Afghanistan in Islamabad on Wednesday. — AFP

The Economic Times

7 6 OCT 2001

US-backed rebel Pushtun commander ready to open second front in ground attack

Taliban calls OIC to check civilian toll

AGENCIES
KABUL/ISLAMABAD, OCTOBER 25

US WARPLANES hit a crowded bus and worshippers leaving a mosque on Day 19 of the raids to flush out Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan, the Taliban said today. No independent confirmation of civilian casualties from the attacks on Kandahar and Herat, respectively, was available. But Kabul spent a peaceful night today and the skies were quiet after one of the heaviest US raids yet on Taliban frontlines north of it on Wednesday.

The Taliban Information Ministry claimed US planes had hit a bus station in the southern town of Kandahar. "An unknown number of people were either killed or wounded," spokesman Abdul Hanan Himat told Reuters. He said eight nomads were killed and 25 wounded in another part of the city.

US planes also bombed the village of Ishaq Sulaiman near western Herat overnight, killing 20 civilians and injuring eight as they emerged from prayers, the Taliban spokesman said. "Eight or nine bombs hit the vicinity of the mosque and maybe the mosque itself was martyred (destroyed)," he said.

The Taliban also claimed that US warplanes had dropped cluster bombs in their attacks on the frontlines, including the Bagram air base, Keshendeh and Dara-e-Souf near Mazar-I-Sharif. "Cluster bombs were dropped and many have not yet exploded," the Taliban told AFP. The fist-sized anti-personnel and armour-penetrating explosives designed to scatter across a wide area have already been reported in Herat by the UN, but this is the first time they may have been dropped on frontlines. The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, which has given heavy backing to attempts to clear mines and other weapons from conflict zones, has urged the US and British governments to stop using cluster bombs in Afghanistan.

Determined to prove American claims of waging a clinical war, sparing civilians, wrong, the Taliban also invited the world's main Muslim organisation to send a team to Afghanistan to see the destruction caused by US air raids on the country, a minister said on Thursday. "The visit of an Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) team is needed because the people are suffering," Education Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi told Reuters. "Americans are targeting civilians, killing them and destroying their homes, but they are not confessing to this." The Taliban say the raids have caused at least a thousand civilian deaths.

In northwestern Afghanistan, Opposition forces said they planned to cut Taliban supply lines from Kabul to Mazar-I-Sharif. General Ustad Attah, who is leading the fight against the



A Taliban fighter at the Chaman border crossing, 130 km northwest of Quetta. Reuters

Taliban near Mazar-I-Sharif, said he hoped to take the town soon, although others in the Opposition said victory may not be so close.

If the Opposition cut Taliban supply routes running north and south, the hardline Islamic movement could be badly isolated in Mazar-I-Sharif. The town, which lies 60 km south of Uzbekistan, has seen the fiercest ground fighting since the September 11 suicide attacks on New York and Washington.

Northern Alliance Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah said today that the Taliban had been weakened by the US strikes from the air and by Opposition attacks on the ground. The Taliban command and control system had been hit, he said, and the Islamic movement was having problems reinforcing key towns. He was talking to reporters after a meeting of Northern Alliance leader General Mohammad Fahim and other commanders near the frontline in the northern province of Takhar, bordering Tajikistan. The Alliance has urged the US to intensify ground attacks if it meant to oust the Taliban.

There were reports today that US-backed anti-Taliban Afghan forces were gearing up to open a second front of ground attack against the militia with a senior rebel Pushtun commander, accompanied by a large force of supporters, having already crossed over from Pakistan. Abdul Haq had crossed into Afghanistan on October 21 to mount an offensive against the Taliban in eastern Nangrahar province, unconfirmed reports in *The Dawn* said. If Haq manages to open a second ground front against the Taliban in Pushtun-dominated areas in addition to the resistance stepped up by Northern Alliance, it could expedite the Taliban's fall.

On the humanitarian front, the Taliban on Thursday dismissed as US propaganda a Pentagon statement that they intended to poison food dropped by American aircraft.

Lost initiative by depending on US help: Rebels

■ DALLAN SANG: A leader of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance admitted on Wednesday that his forces had botched their best chance to capture a strategic city in northern Afghanistan by expecting too much from US airstrikes. The alliance now expects to be bogged down for weeks around Mazar-e-Sharif as it tries to recover from the military blunder and struggles to rearm its forces. "Our war in Mazar-e-Sharif wasn't a real war. It was a mistake," Mohammed Yunis Kanuni, the Northern Alliance's Interior Minister, said in his Panjshir Valley office on Wednesday. "Our forces' plan was to attack from four sides on Mazar-e-Sharif, but one side went very far ahead towards Mazar and the other sides were stopped. They weren't serious about this. All of the mujahideen thought the Taliban would be finished by the (US-led) bombing." Last week, the Northern Alliance had said it was on the verge of taking Mazar-e-Sharif and that its troops had reached the city.

In a clear sign of diminished expectations, the alliance's top official in neighbouring Uzbekistan said on Wednesday that the anti-Taliban army is "not in a hurry" to capture the city. "Our forces are not ready in one week to capture Mazar-e-Sharif," said Mohammad Hashad Saad, the alliance's acting ambassador in Uzbekistan. "In one month, there will be a change, maybe." —LATWP

INDIAN EXPRESS

25 OCT 2001

Campaign Kabul

With the war in Afghanistan moving into the second phase, the United States has started targeting specific Taliban installations and formations. The urgency is obviously on account of the approaching winter and the growing number of refugees clamouring to get into Pakistan. That the US wants to bring the operation to a quick end is suggested by its decision to overrule Pakistan's objections and start bombing the Taliban forces deployed to shield Kabul against the onslaught of the Northern Alliance forces. The American cover would make it easier for these forces to occupy Kabul as well as move into western and middle Afghanistan, though the Taliban is expected to put up a fierce resistance. There are fears that the entry of non-Pakhtun Northern Alliance into Kabul may result in ethnic cleansing. Already there has been a large-scale displacement of population within Afghanistan with the consequent swelling in the number of refugees. The task before the international community is by no means easy, and all the more so given that administration has virtually collapsed in Afghanistan. The establishment of a post-Taliban regime in Kabul will have to be accomplished with the minimum violence. Hectic diplomatic activity is currently on involving the US, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, major powers like France, Germany and Japan and other neighbours of Afghanistan. The exiled king Zahir Shah is also expected to play a mostly symbolic but nonetheless crucial role in unifying all the tribes. The biggest challenge right now is to find a Pashtun leader of stature.

Pakistan, of course, has been looking to foist one of its own candidates on Kabul under the guise of including moderate Taliban leaders in the new set-up. This is unlikely to go down well with the coalition, especially with the raids on Mullah Omar's compound throwing up evidence on the Pakistan-Taliban links. Perhaps the search for an acceptable Pashtun leader should be focused on the large Afghan diaspora that took shape following the overthrow of the king. The Afghan tribes are essentially accommodating. When the Taliban, with the support of Pakistan, overran Afghanistan in 1994 the tribes were easily bought over. The US commandos, needless to say, will try the same strategy, though any success in getting the tribes to switch loyalties will depend upon the formation of a credible and broad-based government involving all ethnic groups. The tribes will cross over only if it appears that the Taliban are finished. And once that happens, it should be possible to find among ex-khalkis (former Afghan communists) and non-partisan Afghans living outside, suitable candidates to run an interim government till a *Loi Jirgah* (council of tribal chiefs) can be convened and a consensual leadership emerges. Afghanistan will also need a large peace-keeping force in the interim period. Though revenge killings are often treated as a matter of honour by Afghan tribes, there is equally the concept of payment of blood money to break the cycle of vendetta. Taking these factors into account, the aim should be to raise a peace-keeping force that is drawn from Islamic countries not in the immediate neighbourhood of Afghanistan. The job of the peace-keeping force will become that much easier with a large UN presence and aid in the form of a massive programme of reconstruction.

THE TRIBUNE

25 OCT 2001

FIGHTING NEAR KABUL INTENSIFIES

Taliban stays put despite bombardment

AP 2/22/01
110-1

25/10

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

NEW YORK, OCT. 24. American jets are continuing to pound the frontlines of the Taliban, even as there are indications that the fundamentalist militia appears to be holding its positions in the face of heavy bombardment.

The strikes are taking place in and around Kabul, Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharief, with the U.S. seeking to provide some comfort zone to the Northern Alliance as it prepares its offensives against the Taliban. There have been reports here that the Taliban, in a bid to confuse the U.S. jets, is moving its positions closer to that of the Northern Alliance.

The Pentagon has also begun an investigation into who fired on American forces engaged in recovering the wreckage of a helicopter in Pakistan a couple of days ago. "We don't know who was firing on our forces," said Rear Admiral John Stufflebeem. The U.S. forces returned the fire but abandoned the crash site and left the wreckage behind. (A DPA report today said U.S. forces recovered the wreckage of the downed Blackhawk helicopter on Monday.)

Alliance reinforcements

An AP report from Korak Dana in Afghanistan, quoting the Northern Alliance, said it was reinforcing its troop strength in the area, bringing in thousands of additional fighters and weapons to the strategic Panjshir Valley north of Kabul.

The opposition's Commander Haji Bari said the Northern Alliance was bringing in thousands of new troops and weapons to Panjshir in anticipation of a green light from Alliance leaders to march on Kabul.

"We're waiting for the order,"



An 18-month-old Afghan child, Hameedullah, cries as his niece, 10-year-old Khanam, tries to comfort him with her teddy bear at the Al-Khidmat refugee hospital in Quetta, Pakistan, on Wednesday. Hameedullah was injured in a U.S. air strike in a village in Kandahar province. — Reuters

said Commander Bari, deputy brigade commander in the Rabat district.

U.S. war jets pounded Taliban positions north of Kabul on Wednesday in what witnesses called the heaviest U.S. attacks in four days of frontline assaults apparently aimed at helping the opposition advance on the capital.

At a frontline north of Kabul on Wednesday, Taliban soldiers fired missiles at U.S. jets roaring overhead. They also fired artillery and mortar at opposition forces a few hundred meters (yards) away.

'Ramadan not deadline'

An AFP report from Washington, quoted the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, as saying today the U.S. did not see the Muslim holy month of Ramadan

as a deadline for halting or curtailing military operations in Afghanistan. "We're sensitive to Ramadan, but we can't let that be the sole determinant of whether we continue our military action," Gen. Powell told reporters at a news conference with the visiting British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Jack Straw.

He noted that Ramadan coincided with the start of the harsh Afghan winter that would begin in mid-November and would make military operations targeting Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan's ruling Taliban more difficult.

"But the important point to remember is we have military objectives to accomplish and I would like to see all of those objectives accomplished in the next few days," Gen. Powell said.

THE HINDU

25 OCT 2001

Al-Qaeda
HO-1
2A/10

OIL SUPPLIES, AL-QAEDA BASE BOMBED

Northern Alliance closes in on Kabul

BAGRAM (AFGHANISTAN), OCT. 23. U.S. jets swooped down to strike Taliban frontlines and an Osama bin Laden stronghold north of Kabul on Tuesday, watched by Northern Alliance fighters hoping the American bombardment will open the way for their advance.

Opposition officials also reported U.S. attacks around the key northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, where a Northern Alliance offensive to recapture the stronghold faltered last week. U.S. missiles also set fire to critical Taliban oil supplies in the southern city of Kandahar.

"God willing, these bombs will let us move into Kabul," an opposition fighter, Mr. Saeed Rafikan, said as he watched at least five bombs hit Taliban frontline positions late in the afternoon.

The bombardment marked an increasing shift in U.S. strategy, drawing planes away from urban areas to target frontline posts of the Taliban and its allies in Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network. The goal is to enable the Alliance to advance toward Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif and break the back of Taliban resistance.

In Kandahar, the South Asian Dispatch Agency reported U.S. jets struck an oil depot and a fuel convoy, sending a thick cloud of black smoke rising into the clear blue sky.

U.S. planes also targeted an asphalt plant, setting back Taliban efforts to repair the runway at the Kandahar airport, which had been pounded repeatedly during the air campaign, the agency said.



OUT IN THE COLD: Women and children, innocent victims of the Afghan war, waiting to be allocated tents at the Matak camp inside Afghanistan, 3 km from the border with Iran, on Monday.— AP

The attacks, especially those in Kandahar, have sent tens of thousands of Afghans fleeing for the safety of neighbouring countries, even though they have sealed their borders.

Pakistan announced on Tuesday it would send Afghan refugees who entered the country illegally back to camps being set up by the United Nations and the Taliban inside Afghanistan.

U.N. officials agreed to supply

tents for the camp, but appealed again for Pakistan and other country's to admit the refugees.

Copters came under fire

Two U.S. helicopters came under fire in Pakistan as their crew attempted to retrieve the wreckage of another helicopter that had crashed during a covert weekend commando raid, the Pentagon said today. And officials acknowledged that yet another aircraft lost its wheels during that undercover

raid but returned safely to its base. In Monday's shooting incident, the retrieval crew was transporting a Black Hawk helicopter that had crashed on Friday. But a small radical group fired at them. The crew returned fire and left the area, leaving behind the wreckage it was trying to pick up. Lt. Col. George Rhyndance, Pentagon spokesman, said. — AP, Reuters

U.S. admits hitting civilian areas: Page 14

THE HINDU

10 OCT 2001

Cracks in international coalition over post-Taliban scene

By Atul Aneja

Afghanistan
NEW DELHI, OCT. 23. India is closely monitoring the tension creeping in among the key coalition partners fighting global terrorism, over the future of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan.

According to an assessment in the security establishment here, Russia and the U.S., which have so far been the pillars of the coalition, may be beginning to drift apart and differences between the two over the role of the Northern Alliance may be generating fissures.

Russia has pitched its stakes on a united Northern Alliance which has been battling the Taliban since the early 1990s. And, like India and Iran, it is hopeful that the alliance will make a headway on the ground in Afghanistan.

If the alliance acquires more territory, it will get a solid leverage in a power-sharing deal in an intra-Afghan dialogue in a post-Taliban dispensation.

The Northern Alliance represents most of the minority ethnic communities, including the Ta-

jiks, the Hazaras, the Shias and the Uzbeks. But a post-conflict settlement in Afghanistan is possible only after representatives of the alliance tie up with the Pushtuns, who are in a majority, in a new government.

The U.S. is yet to make up its mind on a post-conflict government in Afghanistan. But its distrust for the Northern Alliance in its present form is palpable.

Not surprisingly, the U.S., the sources pointed out, is no longer dealing with the Northern Alliance in its entirety.

In fact, it might have started engaging key factions within the grouping. The focus appears to be the Uzbek element within the alliance, led by Gen. Rashid Dostum.

The General himself has announced that the U.S. has contributed \$ 50 million to shore up the alliance.

The U.S. engagement of the Uzbek flank is worrying the Russians who feel that the Northern Alliance can be subjected to serious internal turbulence in case the U.S. acquires an overwhelming influence over Gen. Dostum.

Apart from the possible division

21/10
within the alliance, the Russians fear that the U.S. may have a larger gameplan of acquiring a permanent foothold in Central Asia through an opening which the Uzbeks might present.

The dialogue with Gen. Dostum is being seen by some in Russia as a follow-up of the U.S. moves in Uzbekistan.

The U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, has already visited Uzbekistan for talks with the Uzbek President, Mr. Islam Karimov.

Apprehending the weakening of the Uzbek flank, Russia has moved quickly to consolidate its hold over the other ethnic groups within the alliance.

The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, jointly signed a declaration of solidarity with Tajikistan's President, Mr. Emomaly Rakhmonov, in the presence of the leader of the Northern Alliance, Gen. Muhammad Fahim, on Monday.

Iran is also expected to exert itself to ensure that Gen. Ismail Khan and Gen. Abdul Rasul Sayaf, over whom it exercises influence, remain united.

THE HINDU

24 OCT 2001

Putin shows support for Rabbani

9 27/10 Afghanistan

Dushanbe, Oct. 22 (Reuters): Russian President Vladimir Putin pledged more military assistance for Afghanistan's opposition Northern Alliance today and said he saw no role for members of the ruling Taliban in a future Afghan government.

Giving a considerable morale boost to Afghanistan's opposition forces, Putin held talks in the Tajik capital early today with Burhanuddin Rabbani, recognised by the UN and most governments as Afghanistan's President.

"We all know that Russia supports Rabbani," Putin told reporters at the end of a three-hour stopover in Tajikistan on his way back from the 21-nation Asia-Pacific summit in Shanghai.

"We confirmed that Russia is going to continue its support to the (recognised) government of Afghanistan in the military sphere and confirmed our wish to give humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people."

Rabbani fled Kabul when the hardline Taliban movement seized the Afghan capital in 1996. He now heads the Northern Alliance opposition, which holds up to 10 per cent of Afghan territory and is led by ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks from the country's north.

Putin fully backs the US-led campaign against the Taliban, who shelter Saudi-born Osama bin Laden, prime US suspect in the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

Although US secretary of state Colin Powell told television talk shows yesterday that the US saw the Northern Alliance as an important component of its strategy



Exiled Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani (left), Russian President Vladimir Putin (centre) and Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov in Dushanbe. (Reuters)

against the Taliban, Washington has withheld wholehearted support for the opposition group.

In two weeks of aerial bombardment of Taliban targets, US-led forces have failed to clear a way for an opposition advance on Kabul. Washington apparently fears the Alliance's lack of support among Afghanistan's Pashtoon majority — which dominates the Taliban — could mean fresh conflict if it captured the capital.

Putin expressed doubts that so-called "moderate Taliban" could

be included in an ethnically-mixed Afghan government.

"We think the Taliban has been compromised because of their cooperation with international terrorists," he said. "I think the (recognised) Afghan government has well-grounded reasons to say that the Taliban should not take part in a future government."

Rabbani said support for the Northern Alliance was the quickest way to bring peace to Afghanistan. "We are fighting for peace and all countries that sup-

port us fight for peace too," he told reporters, adding that he hoped Afghanistan's political future would be free of foreign interference. Putin also briefly met the Alliance's military commander, Mohammed Fahim, shaking his hand firmly as they spoke quietly in front of reporters.

Northern Alliance officials said yesterday that a planned Taliban counter-offensive had not materialised and neither side had been able to break a standoff near the strategic of Mazar-e-Sharif.

China, Russia press for political solution

'Military action will not end crisis in Afghanistan'

MOSCOW: Russia on Monday pledged its support for the Northern Alliance as the "sole legitimate government" and signed a statement with ousted Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani on "the need to find a political solution for Afghanistan".

Meanwhile, many countries, including China and Russia, called for a switch from military action in Afghanistan to political efforts, even as the U.S. bombardment of the country entered its third week.

While expressing their support for the U.S. fight against terrorism, Washington's allies emphasised that the aim of the American military campaign which began on October 7 was above all to destroy the network of Osama bin Laden and any overlap with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban regime.

"We will never overcome the problems of Afghanistan by military means," Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov said. Speaking to CNN, Pakistan's Gen Pervez Musharraf expressed the hope that the U.S.-British strike against Afghanistan would come to an end before Ramadan and called for restraint if it continued during the Muslim holy month, which begins in November.

Gen Musharraf said, "One would hope for restraint during the month of Ramadan because this would certainly have some neg-

ative effect on the Muslim world.

Gen Musharraf said he hoped that the U.S. would achieve its military objectives so that the strikes could come to an end "as fast as possible".

However, he reaffirmed Pakistan's support for the anti-terrorism coalition as long as it lasted, saying his nation would stand beside the U.S. for "as long as it took to achieve the desired result".

Earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin, during a brief visit to the Tajik capital Dushanbe, said the Taliban regime in Kabul could have no role to play in a future Afghan government as it had "compromised itself by providing their territory to the international terrorist network and there is no place for them in the new broad-based coalition".

Mr Putin signed a joint statement with his Tajik counterpart, Emamali Rakhmonov, and Mr Rabbani "on the need to find a political solution for Afghanistan".

"All the ethnic groups should take part in forming the next Afghan government," the declaration released by the Kremlin press office said.

It said the formation of the new government in Kabul should involve a stronger role for the United Nations and "all foreign governments". (Agencies)



Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with Afghan opposition foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah (left) as deposed president of Afghanistan Burhanuddin Rabbani looks on in Dushanbe on Monday.

CHANGING CLIMATE

- ▶ Gen Musharraf calls for restraint during Muslim holy month
- ▶ Taliban can have no role in future Afghan govt, says Putin
- ▶ Dushanbe agreement calls for UN role in government formation

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 OCT 2001

Al-Jazeera shows chopper debris

Doha/Washington, October 22

AL-JAZEERA today aired pictures of debris said to be from a US helicopter the Taliban claim to have downed. The ruling militia in Afghanistan said it had found the wreckage of a second US helicopter which crashed in southern Helmand province.

Pentagon, however, dismissed Taliban claims that their forces had shot down US helicopters operating in Afghanistan.

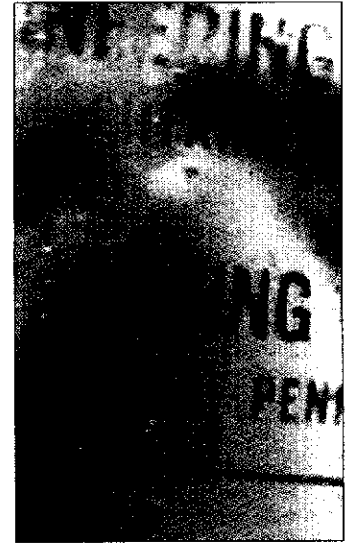
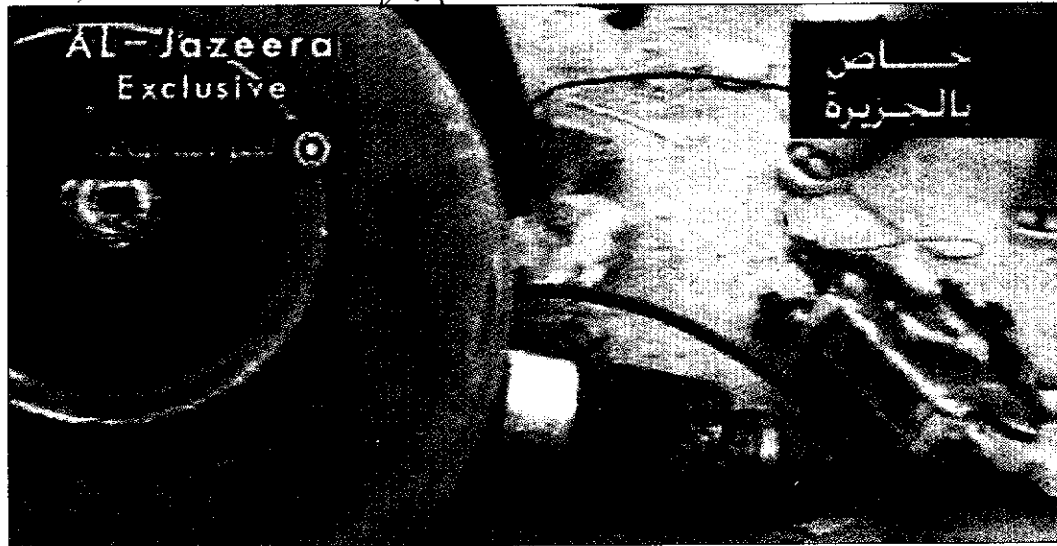
An Al-Jazeera correspondent, in a videophone report, showed landing gear, tyres and metallic pieces in Afghan mountains, 12 km north from Kandahar.

One large casing was stamped with the words "Boeing" and "Philadelphia, Pennsylvania" underneath. The top of the metal bore the word "shock" with a second word scratched beyond readability.

"This debris is from an American helicopter that the Taliban claim to have shot down in the night of Friday to Saturday in the mountains," an Al-Jazeera correspondent said in a report.

A Taliban diplomat in Pakistan said today that the wreckage of a US army helicopter had been found in Afghan mountains.

Maulbi Najeebullah, the Taliban Consul General in



AP PHOTOS

An Al-Jazeera video grab shows the debris of a US helicopter near Kandahar. (Right) A landing gear, marked Boeing, is shown in the footage.

Peshawar, said the helicopter had been found in Baba Sahib mountains near the southern city of Kandahar where US forces launched their first ground raids on Friday.

"I have just been told by the office of Mullah Omar that the Taliban have found the wreckage of a helicopter in the Baba Sahib mountains today," he told the Afghan Islamic Press News Agency.

"Some parts of the helicopter

were found and there are traces of blood in the area," he added.

Education Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said the wreckage of a second US helicopter was found today.

The helicopter crashed possibly after being shot down during daylight hours yesterday, somewhere to the west or southwest of the militia's southern stronghold of Kandahar, he added.

In Washington, Pentagon

spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Steve Campbell said he was "not aware" of any coalition aircraft downed in the region by the Taliban.

"The Taliban lie," Campbell said. "We are not going to comment on each and every report that comes out of the region."

The Pentagon today identified the two US soldiers killed when an army helicopters crashed in Pakistan. The US Defence Department, in a statement,

identified the two army rangers as John J. Edmunds, 20, of Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Kristofer T Stonesifer, 28, of Missoula, Montana.

The two were passengers in the Blackhawk helicopter that crashed Friday as it came into land at Dalbandin airport in the southwest province of Baluchistan — one of three bases in Pakistan opened up to the US military.

AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 OCT 2001

RACE AGAINST RAMZAN

FROM K.P. NAYAR
AND AGENCIES

Afghanistan 11 26/10

Washington, Oct. 22: American bombers pounded Taliban troops protecting Kabul and the key crossroads of Mazar-e-Sharif in direct support of opposition forces trying to capture the cities, reflecting a diplomatic shift on a post-Taliban government and an urgency to gain as much ground as possible before Ramzan.

Muslim nations in Asia, including Pakistan, have warned that the US could stir Islamic anger and drive moderates into the hardline camp if the strikes stretched into Ramzan, which begins in the middle of next month.

"Our efforts from the air clearly are to assist those forces on the ground in being able to occupy more ground," US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld told reporters as dozens of attack jets launched a second day of raids on Taliban troops on the northern front line.

The statement and the front-line blitz were clear indications from Washington that US warplanes had begun moving to open the way for the Northern Alliance forces in their drive to remove the Taliban. The opposition has been complaining that US planes were unwilling to target the Taliban's front lines because of uncertainty over the future governance of Afghanistan.

But today's attacks came as the US, wiser from secretary of state Colin Powell's shuttle diplomacy in South Asia last week, indicated that it has significantly shifted its position on post-Taliban governance in Afghanistan.

Appearing on CNN from Shanghai, Powell attributed solely to Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf the idea of "moderate elements of the Taliban" being given a role in a future government in Kabul.

Powell said: "My position and the US position are rather clear. There is no place for any element

of current Taliban leadership in a new Afghanistan.

"But, at the same time, there are many people within the Taliban movement in a leadership position who have not been active and who may well want to become part of a new Afghanistan. And unless you are planning to ethnically cleanse them all or ship them off to other countries, they are going to be there and they will have to be accommodated in what we hope will be a new arrangement that represents all of the people of Afghanistan. But there can be no place in a new regime for the current leaders of the Taliban regime."

If the Northern Alliance can take control of Mazar-e-Sharif, it will enable the opposition to streamline supplies of arms, fuel and food from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to the rest of

Mail deaths

Washington, Oct. 22 (Reuters): Two male postal workers at a facility that handles mail for the US Capitol and much of Washington have died in suspicious circumstances and two more are suffering from potentially deadly anthrax inhalation.

The deaths of the postal workers, who are on the front line of an anthrax scare involving letters tainted with bacteria, came amid attacks against US media and government targets. (See Page 4)

Afghanistan for its forces and people.

During his South Asian trip, Powell found himself buffeted by conflicting pressures from Pakistan, India, Afghanistan's former king Zahir Shah and the Northern Alliance over the future set-up in Afghanistan.

He was also exposed to the constant intrigues in Afghanistan's politics and mutual suspicions among key players which would have made any united front tenuous.



Smoke billows from Rahat, a Taliban front line 50 km from Kabul, after the US raids. American jets accidentally dropped two bombs near Northern Alliance posts, forcing its soldiers to flee. (AFP)

Chopper wreckage challenge thrown to America



Kabul, Oct. 22 (Reuters): The Taliban today turned their verbal artillery on the US, saying they had found pieces of an American aircraft near Kandahar and the wreckage of a helicopter in Helmand province apparently from the commando raid that publicly opened the land campaign.

They also accused US forces of killing over 100 people in a hospital in western Herat and of using chemical and biological weapons.

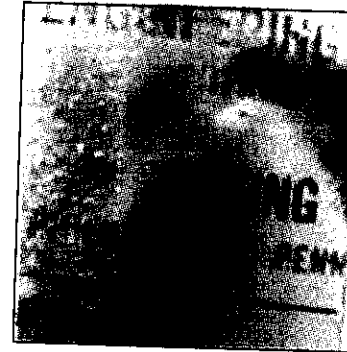
Qatar's al Jazeera television showed footage from near Kandahar, headquarters of Mullah Mohammad Omar, of what the Taliban described as aircraft wheels and a piece of metal stencilled with the English words "Shock. Loud Engineering".

A US company, Loud Engineering & Manufacturing Inc, based in Ontario, California, makes parts for the CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

A large casing was stamped with the words "Boeing" and "Philadelphia, Pennsylvania" underneath.

"Right now I have been informed by Amirul Monineen's (Omar) office that they have discovered pieces of an American helicopter in Baba Sahib hills... some burnt tyres and parts and traces of blood," Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press quoted Maulawi Najibullah, Taliban consul in Peshawar, as saying.

The US denied any loss in the weekend mission other than a Black Hawk helicopter that went down in Pakistan while on stand-



Al Jazeera television images showing the wheel (top) and other pieces of debris from an allegedly downed US helicopter near Kandahar. (AFP)

by for a search and rescue mission. "We have not lost any helicopters in Afghanistan. If they found wreckage, it wasn't ours," a Pentagon spokesman said.

The verbal clash comes as the wreckage of a US helicopter was airlifted by two other helicopters to Panjgore airport in Baluchistan, witnesses at the airbase said.

Taliban ambassador to Pakistan Abdul Salam Zaeef said there was a second report that the

wreckage of a helicopter, thought to be American, was found in Helmand. He said US helicopters trying to retrieve the wreckage had been driven off by the Taliban.

"It is now clear that American planes are intentionally targeting the Afghan people," Zaeef told a news conference. "The goal is to punish the Afghan people for having chosen an Islamic system."

"Today a 100-bed hospital in Herat was bombed by American and British planes," he said. "More than 100 people are reported to have been martyred; they were patients, doctors, nurses and other staff who were present there."

The US defence department said it could not immediately confirm or deny the Taliban charge that American warplanes had bombed the hospital but it denied that chemical and biological weapons were being used.

The charges that Washington had used chemical and biological weapons came from Taliban information ministry official Abdul Hanan Himat.

"Today, in my contact with doctors in Herat and Kandahar, they told me that they have found signs that Americans are using biological and chemical weapons in their attacks," Himat said.

It was the first time the Taliban, under severe pressure from US air strikes and opposition ground attacks, had made such accusations. "This is absolutely not true," a Pentagon spokesman said. ■ See Pages 4-7

QUOTE

Jihad fought with sword, tongue and pen is all jihad. Death is death and it must come one day

MULLAH OMAR

TALIBAN:

(Continued from page 1)
made it "impossible to seal" it, the magazine quoted a source as saying.

The Pentagon ruled out hostile fire as a cause of the US Army "Blackhawk" helicopter crash in Pakistan on Friday. "Hostile fire has been ruled out as a cause of the crash, which remains under investigation," the defence department said in a statement.

Today's air strikes were aimed at the Taliban front lines north of Kabul, where troops were massed to hold off any attack by the Northern Alliance. At least 15 civilians, including women and children, were killed and 23 wounded in raids this morning, the Taliban said.

More than 2,000 US troops and a large number of planes landed at Jacobabad, Pasni and Dalbandin airports, *The News* said.

'No more suicide attacks by Al-Qaida': There will be no kamikaze attacks by the Al-Qaida against any nation, the Taliban security chief, Qari Ahmadullah, said in an interview to a Teheran daily.

'USA wants to win war before winter': Gen. Colin Powell today said the USA wants to win the war in Afghanistan before winter, adds AFP from Washington. "I think it would be in everybody's interest to see this matter resolved before winter and it makes our operation that much more difficult," he said in an interview to Fox News.

'No Taliban in future govt': A Northern Alliance spokesman today said the idea of including "moderate Taliban" in a future government would be akin to including "moderate Nazis" in a post-World War II government in Germany.

Masood remembered: Alliance warriors remembered Ahmad Shah Masood at a feast to mark forty days of his assassination.

THE STATESMAN

22 OCT 2001

2,000 US troops land in three Pakistani airbases

Taliban to arm people in countryside

501
27/10
REUTERS, DPA & PTI

ISLAMABAD/ KABUL, Oct. 21. — More than 2,000 American troops landed at three Pakistani airbases as the US forces today used low-flying aircraft and choppers for the first time to target terrorist bases in Afghanistan.

The USA began a third week of air strikes against Afghanistan with blistering bombing around Kabul, even as a defiant Taliban vowed to bolster the country's defences. The militia's cabinet met at an unknown location and decided to deploy more ground troops, rocket launchers, heavy machine guns and anti-aircraft.

The Taliban meeting, chaired by the second-in-command, Mullah Hassan, decided to send extra ammunition to villages and districts under the militia control, the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press quoting Taliban education minister, Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, reported. The Taliban has also decided to arm people in the countryside to fight the US commandos.

The meeting voiced satisfaction at the response to Friday's midnight raid by US special forces near Kandahar. The Taliban claimed it had successfully repulsed the first US-led ground strike, which



KEEPING THE INVADER AT BAY? An Afghan refugee boy watches as an 'intruder' attacks his two fighting cocks for sale at a market in Peshawar on Sunday. — AP/PTI

included a search of a home used by Mullah Mohammad Omar as a command centre. In New York, the *Newsweek* magazine reported that top US

Intelligence officials said they had pinned down Osama bin Laden's location to a specific area full of caves and tunnels in Afghanistan just before the

first ground strikes. But the topography of the "20-by-20 mile area" (of Laden's location)

■ See TALIBAN: page 9

THE STATESMAN

7 2 001 2001

Commandos in Osama hunt

AGENCIES

KABUL/WASHINGTON, Oct. 20. — The Taliban today appealed to the Northern Alliance to wage a joint fight against the USA after American commandos launched their first ground raid in Afghanistan in search of Osama bin Laden.

US planes today attacked Taliban frontline positions in the northern province of Samangan, a Northern Alliance spokesman said. Last night, the jets struck Kabul, Kandahar and Herat. A Taliban official said 19 civilians had died in Herat and 10 in Kandahar.

In the clearest ever sign of its desperation, the Taliban urged its arch enemy, the Northern Alliance, to bury the hatchet and launch a joint defence against US attacks.

"Our appeal to all Muslims is to work with the Emirate (Taliban) against the assaults," said the militia's education minister, Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi. In an appeal to the Northern Alliance, he said: "It's time to bury the hatchet."

US officials said more than 100 special forces commandos launched raids to crush the Taliban and Osama's Al-Qaida network. The chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, General Richard Myers,



Former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani salutes troops near Dasht-i-Qala on Saturday. — AP/PTI

said the troops raided a compound used by the militia chief, but hinted that Mullah Omar was not there at that time.

The compound is being used as a command and control centre. The commandos also targeted an airfield.

"Special operations forces have destroyed targets linked with terrorism and Taliban command and con-

trol," Gen Myers said.

CNN said the troops raided Kandahar where the Taliban headquarters is located. NBC said the operation began last night and was over by dawn. The commandos reportedly returned safely to their bases outside Afghanistan.

Muttaqi, however, said Taliban fighters had foiled the commandos' mission. "Around 12 o'clock last night, several US helicopters carrying commandos landed on Baba Sahi mountain to the west of Kandahar. The Taliban fired at them and forced them to flee."

The Taliban today iterated that it wouldn't hand over Osama. "Our position is based on sharia that forbids handing over a Muslim to infidels," Mullah Muttaqi said.

Blast bid foiled

A security guard today foiled an attempt to blow up the Islamabad International Airport. He became suspicious of an abandoned briefcase and informed the bomb disposal squad. The briefcase was immediately taken to a nearby ditch where it went off.

■ More reports on pages 10 and 12

Nowhere people

Driven out of their land by hunger, drought, internecine wars and now American air raids, they have no one to turn to and nowhere to go.

B. Muralidhar Reddy
on the plight of the Afghans.

THE FACTS and figures on the plight of the Afghans make chilling reading. Five million to seven million people (over one-fourth of those who continue to live in the country) face starvation if enough food stocks do not arrive before the onset of winter (in the first week of November).

In a country where the average life expectancy is 40 years and 70 per cent of the population is believed to be mal-nourished, young children and pregnant women are at risk the most. Household food reserves are extremely low with famine-like conditions in some areas, though 85 per cent of the people are dependent on agriculture. Many displaced people in the northern provinces have been eating meals of locusts mixed with animal feed. And in the central regions, hunger has driven many to eat even poisonous grass.

The fate of those who have managed to get out of Afghanistan is little better. A mini sea of blue plastic tents marks the refugee camps along the borders of Pakistan and Iran. It was in camps like these that hundreds had succumbed to the severe winter last year. But they have nowhere else to go, these nowhere people. The UNHCR dole comprises some money, some grain and a blue plastic sheet — and yes, relative safety.

Millions were displaced by a combination of drought and civil war even before September 11 and October 7. But now, all the six countries bordering Afghanistan have sealed the traditional land routes to stop the influx. Two million Afghans have sought refuge in Pakistan and another 1.5 million in Iran. Islamabad has been quoting a figure of three million refugees. This April, in response to allegations of neglect of Afghan refugees, the Pakistan Government had accused the UNHCR of contributing less than



At a refugee camp set up by the Iranians in Afghanistan's Nimrouz province.

a dollar per refugee a year!

All international aid workers left Afghanistan after September 11. While the World Food Programme local staff continue distributing food in some locations, many may be forced to leave their duty stations if the situation continues to deteriorate.

Some agencies of the U.N. and NGOs deemed it necessary to make a passionate appeal to the U.S.-led alliance for a halt to bombardment to reach food and other emergency supplies inside Afghanistan. The appeal has been turned down.

Before the air strikes began, the UNHCR and other agencies had been waging a losing battle in getting aid for Afghanistan because of 'donor fatigue'. There is a change in the attitude of the world after September 11.

Country after country is lining up with pledges of dollar support. Pledges remain to be translated into action.

Pakistan and Iran are clearly suffering from what is being called 'host fatigue'. The same Afghans who were welcomed in the 1980s with open arms are today viewed with suspicion. They are accused of drug-peddling, thefts and even prostitution. The tendency on the part of the host countries has been to confine them to isolated squalid camps.

Driven out of their land by hunger, drought, internecine war and now American air raids, they have no one to turn to and nowhere to go. So we have the world's largest group of refugees — a proud people displaced from their land by economics and war. Life in the camps is, as

always, tough and option-less. The constant inflow makes the situation further unmanageable, especially hygiene.

The only job available is spinning wool on traditional hand-held spindles. Local contractors pay 15 Pakistani rupees for spinning a kg of wool but this is not a job one person can finish in a day. Despite the pittance paid, people hardly refuse the job. Often it is the only income in a family whose size ranges from five to seven. They cannot seek jobs outside of the camps and there are few options available inside.

But still the Afghans continue to throng Pakistan's borders as Iran has completely sealed its own. Now that Pakistan too has decided to close the traditional routes, a new racket in smuggling people has come into

operation. A safe passage through the rugged stretches of the border to Pakistan reportedly costs 1000 Pakistani rupees. For a family of six it is a neat \$100.

Today, along with operation 'Infinite Justice', aid is flowing in for the ordinary Afghans from all over the world. But will it reach them? Or will they continue to be mere statistics, with the dubious distinction of being the world's largest mass of nowhere people for the longest time. They have seen many experiments with governance over the past three decades. Perhaps the present generation of Afghans remembers little else other than war, fratricide, drought and deprivation.

As the U.S. and other players such as Pakistan plot over installation of a new political setup in Afghanistan to fill the vacuum likely to be created with the expected 'collapse' of the Taliban, will the hapless Afghans have any say in the matter?

Reports from Peshawar talk about hectic parleys among the erstwhile ruling elite of Afghanistan to cobble together a structure acceptable to all those who matter in the post-Taliban scenario. Most of these self-styled leaders fancy themselves as future Prime Ministers. Obviously the ordinary Afghans do not figure in their scheme of things.

A spiritual leader of Afghanistan, currently residing in Peshawar, has called a meeting of leaders to gauge the mood and move towards the post-Taliban phase. It is to be seen how many ordinary Afghans will be present on the occasion and more important how many will get a chance to voice their views. The former Afghan King, Zahir Shah, currently in exile in Rome, entered into a grand deal with the Northern Alliance a few days ago for convening a *loya jirga*, the traditional council of tribal chiefs, to decide on the future. But the move did not make much progress because of reservations among several vested interests.

The U.S., Pakistan, Iran, Russia, the Central Asian Republics, and even India, want to have a say in the future political setup of Afghanistan. As the humming and hawing continues, Pakistan appears to have finally conceded a role for the ex-king and even some elements of the Northern Alliance in the new setup. America on its part is willing to take 'moderate elements' of the Taliban on board. Others continue to sulk.

Limited liaison



Friends for now.

Russia and the U.S. pursue different agendas in Afghanistan, says Vladimir Radyuhin.

RUSSIA has backed U.S. strikes in Afghanistan, but an emerging clash of interests between Moscow and Washington may hamper their cooperation in the region.

The President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, has pledged non-military aid to the operation, sharing intelligence information on the Taliban and Osama bin Laden bases. Russia has also stepped up military assistance to the Northern Alliance, the only organised opposition force in Afghanistan. Besides, Moscow's allies in Central Asia have offered support facilities for the U.S. operation in Afghanistan.

Russia has ruled out any direct military participation, refusing not only to send its bombers or troops to Afghanistan, but even denying air space to U.S. planes.

Moscow is largely sceptical about the anti-terrorist value of the U.S. strikes in Afghanistan, regarding them as a largely psychological exercise to heal the American trauma from the September 11 attacks. Mr. Putin pointedly warned against fighting terrorism by striking at its fruit

with a stick instead of reaching for its roots. Moscow is convinced that the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda should be fought on the ground with the Afghan opposition forces. Nevertheless, it has gone along with the U.S.-led operation hoping it will help do away with the Taliban regime, which it regards as a threat to Central Asia. Also, support for the American war has helped Russia win greater acceptance in the West for its own war in Chechnya.

Before long, it has transpired that Russia and the U.S. pursue different agendas in Afghanistan. While Washington sees a role for "moderate" sections of the Taliban in a future political setup in Afghanistan, Moscow is opposed to inducting the militia in any form. Moscow has been pouring weapons to the friendly Northern Alliance, whereas the U.S. has been trying to split the alliance by backing only the Uzbek leader, Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, while denying air support to the Tajik component of the Alliance. This is seen in Moscow as an attempt to prevent the Northern Alliance

from gaining leverage in any post-Taliban power sharing, and also as part of a broader nexus between the U.S. and Uzbekistan to give America a foothold in the region.

Uzbekistan, which has been the most forthcoming among the Central Asian states in offering its military bases to the Americans, sees the new partnership with the U.S. as a golden opportunity to establish itself as a regional superpower. The Uzbek President, Mr. Islam Karimov, apparently counts on massive U.S. financial aid to prevent an Islamic backlash at home.

The American tactic of weakening Russian influence in Afghanistan may intensify rivalry between the two countries and affect the course of the military operation in Afghanistan. It is vital for Moscow to keep northern Afghanistan under the control of forces friendly to Russia. At a meeting with Russia's top military brass last week, Mr. Putin is reported to have decided to step up arms supplies to the forces of Gen. Mohammad Qasim. Other options include providing air support to the Northern Alliance from Russia's bases in Tajikistan and beefing up the anti-Taliban forces with ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks serving in the Russian 201st army division in Tajikistan.

CORRECTED

Taliban leader in Pak. for talks

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 20. Pakistan today confirmed that a senior Taliban Minister and 'Commander' of the Taliban Army, Maulvi Jalaluddin Haqqani, is here for consultations with the Musharraf Government and Afghan groups as part of the ongoing efforts for formation of a broad-based Government in Kabul.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Mr. Riaz Mohammad Khan, told correspondents at the regular press briefing that Maulvi Haqqani had met Pakistani officials dealing with Afghan affairs and discussed the idea of a broad-based government.

Mr. Khan confirmed that a U.S. helicopter crashed on Pakistani soil. However, he emphasised that it was an accident and that the helicopter was not engaged in any military operations in Afghanistan.

When a Western journalist wanted to know what kind of cooperation Islamabad was extending to Washington when it was allowing senior Taliban commanders to visit Pakistan freely, Mr. Khan maintained that Maulvi Haqqani "is not Taliban. He is affiliated to Taliban. You should know that Commander Haqqani is a veteran who led operations against the Soviet Union and resistance by commanders like him led to the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and contributed to the freedom struggle in Central Asia and the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union."

The Taliban Ambassador, Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaeef, who had just returned from Kandahar, had also met Pakistan officials and apprised them of the latest situation. He had not brought any proposal for a ceasefire. "The comments attributed to him about the peace proposal from Quetta are probably not correct."

Maulvi Haqqani has said that Pakistan has given him some assurances during his "special talks" in Islamabad. However, he denied that he was defecting from the Taliban.

Maulvi Haqqani, who was recently appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan militia by the Taliban chief, Mullah Mohammad Omar, spoke over Radio from Miramshah in Pakistan's North Waziristan Agency where his family lived.

He said that he was in Islamabad to discuss the Afghan situation and Pakistan's policy towards the

Taliban. "I am satisfied. But I cannot disclose the contents of the meeting," he said.

Pak. warned

In an interview to the Pakistan daily, *The News*, Maulvi Haqqani said it was impossible for the U.S. ground troops to capture some of the major Taliban strongholds like Kandahar and warned Pakistan that it stood to lose the much-needed strategic depth provided by Afghanistan, if the Afghan militia lost power.

"First of all, it is next to impossible for the Americans to capture the Afghan cities. Remember that the Soviets also controlled several of Afghan cities once. What happened to them? We never had a single city but look at us now."

"Even if the Americans or others manage to (capture Afghan cities) and a new government is installed there, we will not accept it. We will retreat to the mountains and begin a long guerilla war to reclaim our pure land from infidels and free our country again," he told the daily.

"We are eagerly awaiting the American troops to land on our soil, where we will deal with them in our own way. I tell you, the Soviets were a brave enemy and their soldiers could withstand tough conditions. The Americans are creatures of comfort. They will not be able to sustain the harsh conditions that await them." Maulvi Haqqani also rejected the proposal to join a new broad-based government. "The so-called broad-based national government will by its very nature be secular, which will never be acceptable to the Afghans. No one from the Taliban will be a part of such an unacceptable government, which will be filled with American, Russian and Indian stooges," he said.

In another development, four foreigners, believed to be associates of Osama bin Laden, were detained by Pakistan intelligence agencies when they tried to cross over from Afghanistan soon after the U.S. launched air strikes.

The Pakistan English daily, *Dawn*, quoting well-placed intelligence sources said three Germans and an Australian, who tried to cross into Pakistan from Afghanistan were recently arrested at the border town of Chaman. While one of the German nationals was extradited to Germany within 48 hours of his arrest, the ISI and American FBI agents were interrogating the rest, it said adding that they would also be shortly extradited to the U.S.

THE HINDU

21 OCT 2001

■ Taliban envoy hints at truce ■ N Alliance rejects militia's offer

American troops on ground

AGENCIES

KABUL, Oct. 19. — US special forces have joined the campaign to flush out Osama bin Laden even as jets, ignoring Friday, pounded Afghan cities today.

The planes struck Kabul throughout the day, dropping bombs on the premise of the Taliban army's 8 Division and near a hotel. Jalalabad (hub of the country's guerrilla training camps) and bases around the militia's headquarters in Kandahar, too, have been pounded.

The special force commandos have reportedly contacted tribal factions opposed to the Taliban. The *Washington Post* had earlier said the troops were in southern Afghanistan to boost CIA efforts to encourage Pashtun leaders to break away from the Taliban.

A US defence official said the arrival of the elite troops could be the first phase of a larger presence.

"The number of US personnel on the ground is just a handful now and is unlikely to resemble the large conventional forces assembled in the Gulf War," the *Post* quoted a defence official as having said. But another official told the paper that more commandos would be deployed.

The troops are likely to take up missions such as reconnaissance, identifying targets for bombings and "on rare occasions direct attacks on Taliban or terrorist leaders".

Mr George W Bush, however, refused to comment on the reported deployment of the troops.

The USA has deployed slow-moving EC-130E *Commando Solo* psychological operations aircraft, urging Afghans in local



An elderly demonstrator at an anti-America rally in Peshawar on Friday. — AP/PTI

dialects to ignore the Taliban. "We don't wish to harm you," a broadcast said. It vowed to give no quarter to the Taliban and Al-Qaida men who refuse to surrender to US forces.

The Taliban ambassador in Pakistan today said the militia wouldn't hand over Osama bin Laden, but hinted at a compromise.

"The issue of Osama hasn't changed. It's a matter of our faith — we might as well change

our faith," Mullah Abdul Salam Zaef. He didn't offer any new proposal to end the crisis, though, earlier in the day, he had said he had returned from Afghanistan with a ceasefire offer.

A Northern Alliance commander said eight CIA operatives had arrived in northern Afghanistan and had been moving with General Abdul Rashid Dostum.

Truce offer: The Taliban has

reportedly sent a truce proposal to the Northern Alliance, but it has been rejected. "Their offer was to have a truce with us and join forces to fight off the attacks. It was rejected," said an alliance commander, Kharim Khalili.

Osama aide dead: A key aide of Osama had died in the US bombing in Afghanistan. Abu Baseer al-Masri, an Egyptian militant, was killed on Sunday near Jalalabad. Two of his comrades, a Chinese and a Yemeni,

were injured, said Yasser al-Siri, leader of the Islamic Observation Centre in London.

India in touch with Zahir: India today said it was in touch with the former Afghan king, Zahir Shah. "We do have some contacts with the deposed king," a foreign ministry spokesperson said. She refused to disclose the details of the talks.

■ More reports on pages 4, 6 and 11

Pak says no to US N-cover

DESIKAN THIRUNARAYANAPURAM STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, Oct. 19. — Pakistan last week rejected a US proposal to provide security for Islamabad's nuclear arsenal, the *Washington Times* reported today. The offer to protect the weapons, believed to number about 20, was turned down "over fears that US security personnel might block the Pakistani military's deployment of the arms," it said.

The US offer came after tension between Pakistan and India mounted and "concerns that they might use their nuclear weapons," the report said. US Intelligence agencies fear that Islamic extremists may seize power in Pakistan because of the instability and they may then use the nuclear weapons. They fear the instability could lead to attacks on Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and theft of nuclear weapons.

The US secretary of state had planned to discuss nuclear security during his visit to Islamabad.

Pak minister: A Pakistani minister has defended the government's decision to support the US campaign, saying Islamabad has to "save its nuclear assets to fight a war against India," PTI adds. "Pakistan's destruction will be disastrous for the Islamic world," Mehmood Ahmad Ghazi told a ulemas yesterday.

THE STATESMAN

2 0 OCT 2001

N Alliance rejects Pak proposal on govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UNHQ, Oct. 19. — Afghanistan's opposition Northern Alliance has rejected a Pakistani suggestion that moderate Taliban elements should be included in any future Afghan government.

"The Taliban should be tried in a court of law for all the crimes it has committed and not rewarded with representation in the government," Afghanistan's ambassador to the United Nations, Mr Ravan Farhadi, said vehemently rejecting it.

The US secretary of state, General Colin Powell, had agreed to the proposal during his recent visit to Pakistan.

The Taliban had given shelter to terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden and indulged in international terrorist acts, Mr Farhadi, who represents the Burhaddin Rabbani government,

said. Earlier, he had presented a note stating his government's position on the issue to the US state department's director of policy planning, Mr Richard Haass.

The USA plans to build a broad-based coalition government in Afghanistan with the help of former King Zahir Shah but Mr Farhadi said the involvement of the Taliban could derail such a process.

The UN still recognises the Rabbani government and Pakistan's repeated attempts to get it replaced by the Taliban has failed, mainly of its poor human rights and political record.

Taliban challenged: A group of veteran Afghan mujahedeen, or holy warrior commanders, have challenged the ruling Taliban movement to give up power now or face attacks around the main eastern city of Jalalabad,



ANOTHER DAY'S BATTLE: Northern Alliance fighters near Duruq in Takhar province on Friday. — AP/PTI

adds Reuters.

At a strategy session also attended by five fighters linked to the Islamic fundamentalists ruling Afghanistan of Arab and other foreign Muslim followers of Saudi-born militant Osama bin La-

den, their concluding declaration said.

The meeting, at the Peshawar home of anti-Taliban commander Mohammad Zaman yesterday, was the first open threat of military action posed by a group supporting the return of former King Zahir Shah.

The commanders also urged the USA to stop its daily bombing raids, saying only Afghans could resolve the crisis brought on by the Taliban's unswerving loyalty to Bin Laden, Washington's prime suspect in the 11 September US terror attacks.

"We call on the USA to stop its attacks and on the Taliban to quit the government and transfer power to a Loya Jirga," their declaration said, referring to the grand assembly that Mr Zahir Shah wants to convene to pick a broad-based government to succeed the Taliban.

THE HINDU

20 OCT 2001

MULLAH ZAEEF RULES OUT CEASEFIRE

'Taliban waiting for ground war'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 19. Within hours after Washington disclosed that a small contingent of commandos were in Afghanistan in what could be the beginning of the deployment of ground forces, the Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaeef, declared here that there was no change in the Taliban policy on Osama bin Laden and that it was ready for a ground war.

At a crowded press conference on the lawns of the Taliban Embassy minutes after his arrival from Kandahar, Mullah Zaeef denied reports that he had brought back any proposal for ceasefire. He, however, said that he intended to meet people in the Pakistani establishment to discuss the situation in his country in the wake of the 13-day old military campaign by U.S.-led forces.

There was considerable excitement among the journalists who had gathered at the Taliban Embassy as the Mullah was quoted as saying in Quetta, enroute to Islamabad, that he was returning from Afghanistan with a plan to resolve the crisis. "I have brought a plan with me... I will discuss it with Pakistani officials and disclose it afterwards," he was quoted as saying.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Mr. Riaz Mohammad Khan, earlier said that if the Taliban envoy had any new proposal, Islamabad would like to listen to him. Mullah Zaeef, however, dashed all hopes by declaring that neither had he carried any message from the Pakistani Government for the Taliban chief, Mullah Omar, nor had he brought back any.

It was the first trip of Mullah Zaeef to Kandahar, the headquarters of Mullah Omar, after the U.S.



began its campaign on October 7. He claimed that he had gone to Afghanistan for first-hand knowledge of the situation there and had held consultations with Taliban leaders on the emerging situation.

"The purpose of my visit was to get information about the situation and hold consultations on certain issues that I cannot disclose. Since our communication network has been destroyed and it is not safe to discuss on cell-phones, I had to travel to Afghanistan."

Mullah Zaeef ruled out the possibility of any compromise on the question of Osama and dismissed as "bunkum" speculation about defections from the Taliban ranks. "There are no moderates in the Taliban. We are all the same and believe in Islam," he said to questions about the Taliban Foreign Minister, Mullah Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil.

He said that it would be a long drawn battle and that the Taliban was waiting for the U.S. and its allies to come down to ground level. "The claim by Washington that it has destroyed all our military installations is wrong. We are safeguarding our ammunition and

capabilities for the ground battle." He denied knowledge about presence of American troops in Afghanistan. The Taliban envoy said Osama and Mullah Omar were safe. When a journalist wanted to know if the Taliban had any role in the anthrax cases in the U.S., he shot back saying, "We do not know what it is all about."

U.S. ground troops on the move

WASHINGTON, OCT. 19. U.S. special forces have begun operations on the ground in Afghanistan, officials said on Friday, opening a significant and dangerous new phase of the assault against the Taliban and terrorists.

Members of the secretive forces were supporting efforts by the intelligence community to undermine the Taliban regime in southern Afghanistan, said a U.S. official.

A Pakistani official, also not wanting to be identified, said Pakistan was told by the Americans that special forces were dropped into Taliban territory on Thursday. "Their basic purpose will not be to seize anything, but to conduct hit-and-run operations, pinpoint installations, smoke out terrorists," he said in Islamabad.

U.S. warplanes eased their bombardment after dawn on Friday, Islam's holy day. In Pakistan, a Taliban official said his side had nothing to fear from U.S. commandos. "Fifteen or 20 troops will be able to do nothing," the Embassy spokesman, Mr. Sohail Shaheen, said. "If they want to send in soldiers, they should send in 1,00,000. Then it can be a fight between our soldiers and theirs." — AP

THE HINDU

20 OCT 2001

Taliban talk truce

US hints special forces have reached Kandahar

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, October 19

THE TALIBAN today sent up a diplomatic weather balloon to gauge US readiness for peace even as Washington geared for a campaign against Afghanistan.

The Taliban ambassador to Pakistan Abdul Salam Zaeef returned from Kandhar today to say in Quetta that he had brought a ceasefire plan drafted by Mullah Mohammed Omar. But this plan, he added, would not involve handing over Osama bin Laden to the US.

The ambassador however denied his Quetta statement at a subsequent press conference in Islamabad. He said he was in Kandahar to meet Omar because connecting the Taliban chief by

phone was difficult. He denied any peace plan had been discussed.

Both statement and denial came amid stepped-up US preparations for ground attacks.

In Quetta, Zaeef said, "I went to Kandahar to discuss a ceasefire plan with Omar. I am headed now for Islamabad to meet Pakistani officials tomorrow. I will spell out the objective of my Kandahar visit only after that."

A Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman said Islamabad would certainly consider the plan, but sources in the Taliban Embassy remained tight-lipped on its contours. Pakistani officials, initially curious about the details, seemed to lose enthusiasm after the Taliban ambassador said handing over bin Laden was not part of the

plan. "Any plan which does not include handing over of Osama to US is bound to attract immediate and outright rejection by the US and the international community," a Foreign Ministry official said.

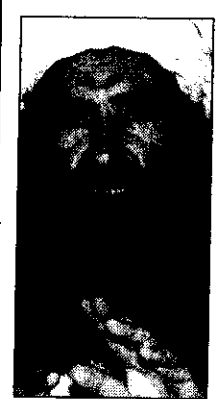
In Washington, a senior Government functionary confirmed today that US Special Forces soldiers were operating in south Afghanistan. The confirmation came amid growing indications that a "ground phase" was about to get underway.

The official said a small number of US forces were supporting efforts by the intelligence community to undermine the Taliban regime. Military action could increase significantly in the coming days but would not involve any conventional force matching those used in the Gulf War, the official said.

Other US Defence officials too confirmed soon after the air offensive had begun that Special Forces were operating in Afghanistan. British Special Forces too are believed to be in Afghanistan.

It was assumed till recently that they were helping only in target identification during the aircraft and guided missiles attacks. But there were indications today in Western capitals that ground operations could soon be under way.

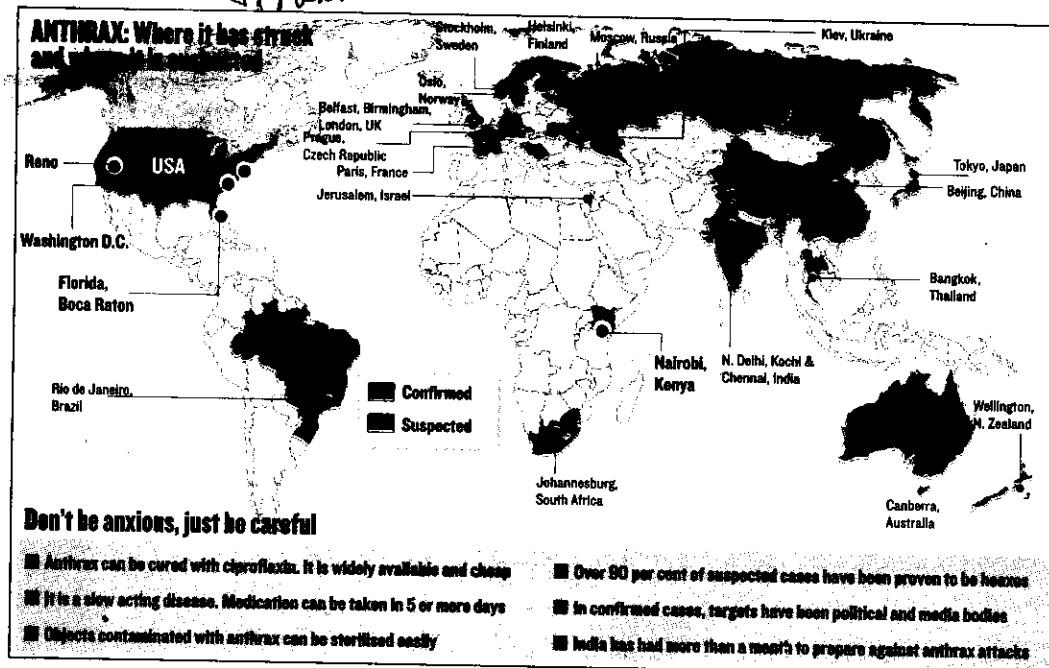
More reports on Pages 7, 9, 10, 11



KABULI WARLORD IS THE US'S 'MODERATE TALIBAN'

THE "moderate Taliban" that the United States and Pakistan hope will break the rule of Mullah Muhammad Omar is the Taliban military commander and border affairs minister, Jalaluddin Haqqani. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence has been holding negotiations with his representatives in an attempt to persuade him to defect. Washington is ensuring its bombers and cruise missiles do not target his strongholds.

Detailed report on Page 9



More countries in anthrax sweep, 3 new cases in US

Washington, October 19

THE anthrax scare that has gripped large parts of the world took newer areas in its sinister sweep today, with three more cases diagnosed in the US, a British High Commission employee in Pakistan receiving treatment after contact with mailed white powder and China banning all postal packets containing white powders from entering or leaving the country.

In Colombo, the US Embassy and the Australian High Commission feared they had been mailed anthrax over the past 48 hours. The missions promptly sent the suspect-looking packets they received for testing, while the postmen who had handled them were detained for questioning.

The new US cases were recorded yesterday when an aide to CBS News anchor Dan Rather and a New Jersey postal worker were diagnosed with cutaneous anthrax, the dermatological variant of the disease.

Rather's aide reported skin irritation around October 1 and was given penicillin after consulting her physician on October 4. The aide, whose name was not released, sought testing for anthrax after the NBC anthrax case became public. A biopsy came back positive early yesterday.

In Argentina, the Health Ministry said that preliminary tests on a letter from the US suggested

SCARE CLOSER HOME

WEST BENGAL came in the grips of an anthrax scare on Friday, as reports of people taking ill after handling parcels came in from many places. While the State Government rushed to allay fears, a team of experts visited the Boro Andulia post office in Nadia, where two suspect envelopes landed from Great Britain. They apparently contained a powdery substance and those who handled them complained of skin irritation. Similar cases were reported from South Dinajpur, Malda, Burdwan and Taratola.

Detailed report on Pg 4

almost certain presence of anthrax microbes. "The germ developed on the culture is 98 per cent likely to be anthrax spores," a Health Ministry official said.

The culture had been sent to the Malbran Institute, one of the two centres where more than 1,000 letters with suspected toxic substances were being analysed, he added.

In the US, the cases were announced even as Bush Administration officials sought to explain the extent and nature of the threat. Bill Winkenwerder, Assistant Secretary of Defence for Health Affairs, had stressed yesterday that the anthrax mailed to Senate Majority

Leader Tom Daschle "looked to be run of the mill".

But Senator John Kerry's office said the anthrax had been described far less innocently at Wednesday's briefing for all 100 Senators.

A bio-terrorism expert who works for the Government said in interviews that the anthrax spores mailed to Daschle, a South Dakota Democrat, had been manipulated perhaps to enhance their airborne qualities.

Officials also warned that 40 people in Florida, New York and Washington had so far tested positive. But they stressed that the findings were tentative. Subsequent analysis could alter the results. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention is investigating several more suspected cases.

Investigators said they had developed "substantive leads" on the medical and biological front to identify and trace the anthrax back to its source.

Meanwhile, Federal agents revisited areas where the 19 hijackers involved in the September 11 World Trade Center attacks lived. They are making inquiries at local hospitals to see whether any of the 19 or their associates had sought treatment for symptoms associated with anthrax in the months before the terrorist attacks on WTC and the Pentagon.

Agencies

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Pak Army tries to get even, pounds Indian posts

Arun Joshi
Jammu, October 19

PAKISTANI ARTILLERY gunners this evening pounded Army bunkers and pillboxes along the Line of Control in Poonch in what appears to be an attempt to avenge the humiliation piled on them by their Indian counterparts earlier this week.

The Pakistanis aimed their artillery pieces at three positions - Khari, Garmaro and Gillat. Two civilians were wounded at Gillat. The post at Chakkiwallah Bagh too was targeted.

Guns on the other side of the border opened up around 5 pm. "They raised the level of shelling using heavy weaponry, such as 82 mm mortars used in mountain warfare," an Army officer said.

Till last reports came in, shelling was continuing. Residents of Poonch said they could hear the Pakistani shells scream through the sky and the Indian guns boom in retaliation. Poonch is barely 8 km from the battle this evening's battlefield. On Monday, Indian guns had smashed 11 Pakistani posts. Six of them in Mendhar of Poonch sector. Five others were in Akhnoor.

The Northern Command confirmed the Pakistani assault. "Pakistan has launched a very heavy attack and we are retaliating in kind," an officer said. He didn't give any details of losses and damage in the Pak firing.

The Pakistani firing was on anticipated lines. The Indians saw this coming. The Army officer claimed that the Indian side had "replied effectively".

Last Monday, hours after India flattened the Pakistani posts, US President George Bush had counselled calm. He had urged both countries to remain restrained. "Both sides must react with utmost restraint at this crucial hour to make the global war against terror a success," he had urged.

New Delhi had then said that it was taking punitive action against the Pakistanis for trying to push in terrorists across the border.

The Mendhar and Akhnoor posts, it had said, were the weak spots and the Pakistanis used these two areas to push in militants. The Indian firing took place hours before Colin Powell reached Islamabad.

Italy, France back Zahir Shah plan

By Vaiju Naravane

PARIS, OCT. 17. The Foreign Ministers of Italy and France, Mr. Renato Ruggiero, and Mr. Hubert Vedrine, the highest ranking European officials to have called on Afghanistan's former ruler, Zahir Shah, said the King's plan for creating an alternative government to the Taliban could "quite quickly" become a reality. They suggested that Afghan elders could begin meeting in Rome to set up a new administration and draw up a constitution.

The two Ministers held a 40-minute joint meeting on Monday with the former ruler in his villa on the outskirts of Rome. Zahir Shah has been living in exile in Rome since his ouster in a coup d'etat by his cousin, General Daoud in 1973. On Oct. 1, the King signed an agreement with a delegation from the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan on the formation of a broad-based government through the nomination of a Supreme Council.

Mr. Ruggiero said events on the ground in Afghanistan could move quite quickly. "The political process of moving the country towards peace could also happen quite fast," the Minister added.

Mr. Vedrine said the interests of all of Afghanistan's neighbours must be kept in mind while forming a government of national unity. This specifically meant that Pakistan will have a definite say in who will form the post-Taliban government in Kabul. Mr. Vedrine's remarks went in the same direction as those of the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, who recognised that Pakistan was a key player in the fate of its neighbour.

On Monday, Zahir Shah's envoys led by Mr. Hedayat Amin Arsala, met Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, in Islamabad on acceptable post-Taliban scenarios in Afghanistan. Pakistan has been plain in expressing its opposition to the formation of a government by the Northern Alliance.

Both Mr. Vedrine and Mr. Ruggiero were careful not to spell out what role the former monarch would play if he returned to Afghanistan. Zahir Shah, who turned 87 on Oct. 15, has announced he is not interested in the revival of the monarchy and that all he wants is to serve his people. He has also appealed to the United Nations to spare his people additional suffering.

The Northern Alliance leaders are reportedly unhappy about the discussions underway between Pakistan and the King's envoy and fear they might be marginalised if a fresh agreement emerges.

Under the agreement they concluded with the King, they would be given 60 of 120 seats on the Supreme Council of Afghan elders which will then convene a Loya Jirga or a meeting of tribal and ethnic chiefs to elect a head of State and a transitional government.

On its side, the royal family is worried that the Northern Alliance might retaliate by launching a precipitous attack on Kabul. The Tajik element of the Northern Alliance led by Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani indicated on Tuesday that it would opt out of the tentative agreement with Zahir Shah to convene a Supreme Council, an official in the exiled Afghan Government said.

Mr. Mohajeddin Mehdi, first secretary of the Afghan embassy in the Tajik capital Dushanbe, said his Government still supported forming a "loya jirga" but not in the next few years.

The embassy represents the Government of Mr. Rabbani, ousted by the Taliban in 1996. With the Taliban under pressure from U.S.-led air strikes, there have been expectations that the council would meet soon. But Mr. Mehdi said his Government now believed it should be formed in two or three years, "after the Taliban are completely defeated."

He also said delegates should be chosen by the Afghan people in a general election, rather than by the leaders of the country's ethnic and political groupings.

THE HINDU

19 OCT 2001

Taliban seize UN food aid

Washington, Oct. 17 (Reuters): The Taliban seized more than half of the United Nations' food aid in Afghanistan, seriously hindering international efforts to feed millions in the region as winter approaches, a UN official said today.

Catherine Bertini, executive director of the UN's World Food Programme, said Taliban soldiers took over two warehouses filled with wheat supplies in Kabul and Kandahar. "Our staff has been asked to leave and the military has taken over both warehouses," Bertini said. No UN staff workers were injured or arrested.

The loss of two out of six WFP warehouses late yesterday in Afghanistan was a significant blow to its efforts to double the amount of food supplies reaching Afghans, she said.

Bertini said if WFP failed to deliver 52,000 tonnes of food a month, the Central Asian country could face a "humanitarian catastrophe."

As the lead food aid agency in Afghanistan, WFP currently feeds some 1.7 million people a day inside the country and fears that up to 7.5 million people could eventually be dependent on international aid to survive the coming winter months.

The United States is the largest donor to WFP operations.

Earlier this month, US President George W. Bush announced a \$320 million humanitarian aid package to ease a growing refugee problem within Afghanistan, triggered by daily US military bombings.

The strikes on Afghanistan began on October 7 and are aimed at forcing the Taliban to surrender Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect behind last month's airliner attacks on the United States.

Humanitarian agencies have faced adversity in the midst of bombing and attacks from both the Taliban and the United States.

Yesterday, the Pentagon said a US Navy F/A-18 jet dropped 1,000-pound (454-kg) bombs that inadvertently hit one or more warehouses used by the International Committee of the Red Cross in northern Kabul.

UN Human Rights Commission Mary Robinson on Friday said she hoped that there could be a halt to the bombing to help the aid agencies with their work. "There is no question we face enormous challenges of communication, transportation and now even the security of our warehouses," Bertini said.

THE TELEGRAPH

THE TELEGRAPH

18 OCT 2001

ASST. AMB. HD-1
18/10
'U.S. TROOPS LAND IN KANDAHAR'

Taliban relenting?

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 17. The Taliban Foreign Minister, Mullah Abdul Wakil Muttawakil, has asked the Americans to slow down the bombing campaign so that moderates in the Afghan leadership can reconsider their refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden, according to a Western diplomatic source. And on the war front, Iranian state radio said U.S. troops landed from helicopters today near Kandahar in southwest Afghanistan, stronghold of the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, and Osama.

Mullah Abdul Wakil Muttawakil, asked Pakistan to convey the message on handover of Osama during a secret visit to this country within the last few days, the source said on Wednesday on condition of anonymity.

It was not clear whether the issue was raised when the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, met the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, and if so what the U.S. official's response was.

"As far as I understand, he asked (Pakistan) to negotiate with the Americans concerning the air strikes to let the moderate Taliban regroup and rethink their policy," the source said.

A Western intelligence source, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said Mullah Muttawakil met the chief of Pakistan's intelligence agency on Friday, Saturday and again on Sunday to discuss Afghanistan policy.

"Pakistan is interested in seeing moderate Taliban" figures in a post-Taliban government in Afghanistan, and Mullah Muttawakil is the most prominent candidate, the intelligence source said.

Fuel dumps hit

A report from Kabul said on Wednesday that Opposition forces, aided by U.S. bombing, closed in on a key northern city. U.S. jets struck fuel dumps in Kabul, setting off a huge fire, and the Taliban claimed U.S. planes hit two trucks, killing seven civilians trying to flee the onslaught.

In the north, the Afghan opposition claimed it was 5 km from the key city of Mazar-i-Sharif and was shelling its outskirts, said Mr. Abdul Vadud, the



A Taliban fuel dump near Kabul goes up in smoke after U.S. air raids on Wednesday. — Reuters

Northern Alliance military attache in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Elsewhere, a Taliban official, Mr. Amir Khan Muttuqi, claimed U.S. jets struck two trucks on Tuesday afternoon near the southern Taliban stronghold of Kandahar, killing seven civilians.

The Taliban claimed that 47 civilians had been killed in bombing in Kandahar over the past two days. — AP, AFP

THE HINDU

18 OCT 2001

Afghanistan looks to its once and future ruler

Former king Mohammad Zahir Shah's exit from his land was followed by a run of instability and blood-letting that still hasn't stopped. Yet, many Afghans don't seem enthused by his return, reports **TINA SUSMAN**

THE scent of onions and garlic is as thick as the densest fog as Gul Khan picks his way through the hawkers in Islamabad's main vegetable market, peddling strips of cloth from a bulging plastic sack. At 62, he's old enough to remember life in his native Afghanistan under former king Mohammad Zahir Shah, but there's no waxing nostalgic, no yearning for the days of the monarchy as Khan takes a break from the work that has sustained him for two decades. There's only a sense of slightly bemused wonder that, after all these years, the man who was driven by a coup from his throne in 1973 is suddenly back on Afghanistan's checkered political map and being hailed as the best bet for bringing peace to the bombed-out, bullet-riddled, mine-ridden nation.

It didn't take long for Zahir Shah's name to emerge after the US bombardment of Afghanistan began two weeks ago, and he is already playing the role of leader-in-waiting as the United States and its allies anticipate the collapse of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban regime. He sent a delegation to Pakistan on Monday to meet with officials of Pakistan's government, once a Taliban ally but now a backer of the US action, and has been visited at his Rome home by representatives of the United Nations, the US Congress and the Northern Alliance guerrilla army fighting the Taliban.

For all the high-level diplomatic fuss, though, it's hard to find average Afghans, jaded by decades of abysmal governments, bubbling with enthusiasm at the idea of yet another government, even one

led by a man who presided over four decades of peace.

"He was good in the sense that he didn't breed enmity in the country, but he did nothing for the development of Afghanistan in those years. So how can I expect him now to come and do anything good?" said Khan, his snow-white beard falling to his chest and a gray turban wound carefully around his head. "He was really doing nothing wrong — nor right."

That may be the biggest selling point for the exiled ex-king: his ability to seem



Zahir Shah (R), at large in Rome. Reuters

relatively benign, even to his critics. In a country like Afghanistan, which has suffered a string of failed governments, warlords and civil wars since the 1970s, finding a potential leader who doesn't have a downright despicable legacy is a chore in itself, and at this stage, Zahir Shah, 87, seems the only candidate.

"At the end of the day, it's a question not so much of who's the best man for the job, but who's the least unacceptable man for the job," said Najam Sethi, Pakistani journalist and editor of *The Friday Times* independent news magazine, citing two

crucial credentials of Zahir Shah: his Pashtun ethnic background, the same as most Afghans, and the support — albeit grudging — from the Northern Alliance. Composed of ethnic minorities, the Northern Alliance is looking to him to promote ethnic tolerance similar to that of his reign, which would give it a share of power in a post-Taliban government, political analysts said.

Equally important, Zahir Shah alone has clean hands among lead-

ers of a country saturated by blood; hence he could ensure foreign financial support for a post-Taliban system, said Rasul Rais of Islamabad's Quaid-I-Azam University. "He is the only respectable Afghan left untouched by the events of the past decades, so why not try him?"

Zahir Shah's biggest support comes from those who thrived during the monarchy, the middle- and upper-class elite whose fortunes crashed in the decades of instability that followed his ouster. "He was good for the poor as well as the rich.

There was employment for everyone," said Zain-ul-Abiddin, 50, who worked as a government engineer during the king's days. Now he drags a plastic jug through the vegetable market selling water to thirsty traders. "Nobody can unite the people the way he can. When the king left Afghanistan, people came to realise how beneficial he had been."

Those too young to have known the monarchy, who have seen only failed governments since Shah's, also tend to favour his return but for vague reasons or for no reason at all. "I like the king, but I don't know why," said one produce seller.

"Zahir Shah is good because I've never



REUTERS

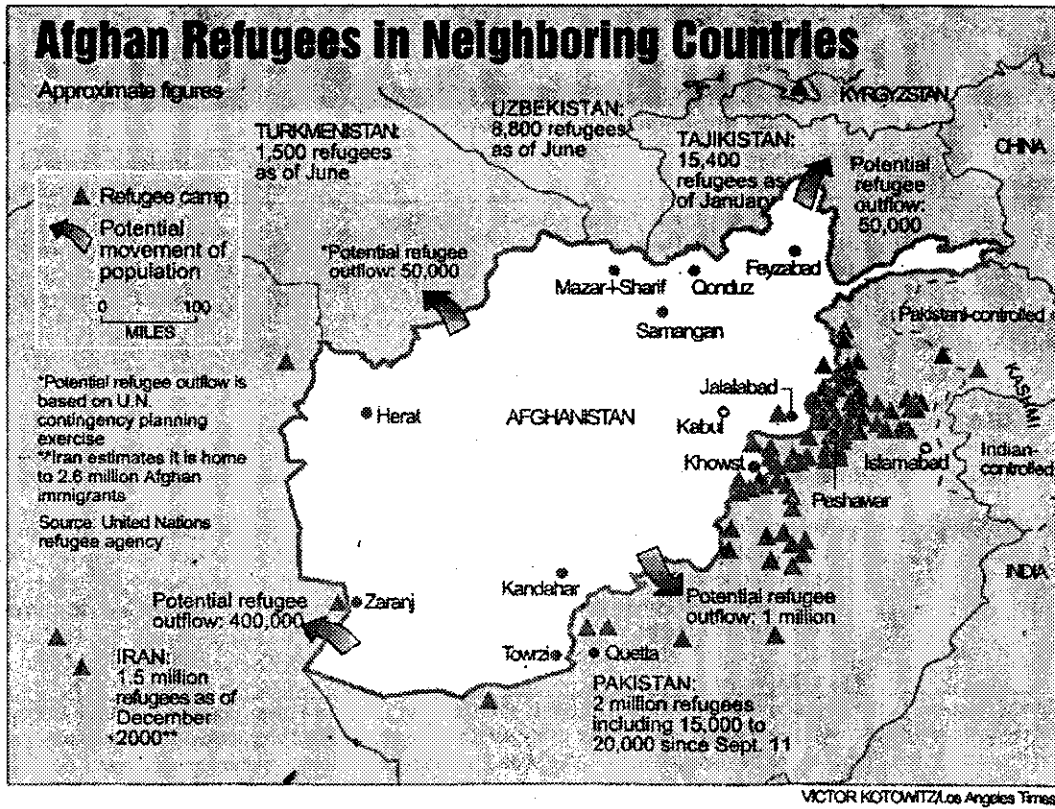
heard anything bad about him," said another, Sarfaraz Khan, 30. Such is the mood among many Afghans, who seem willing to accept anyone, even a king they barely know, to replace what they've got now.

Already, though, problems may be brewing for Zahir Shah. The Northern Alliance, which had agreed with him on plans for an interim leadership to take over if the Taliban falls, began backing away on Tuesday as it claimed gains against Taliban forces. The Alliance had supported convening a traditional council quickly to plan a government. But it now says that council should not materialise for two or three years — "after the Taliban are completely defeated" — and that the ousted government of Burhanuddin Rabbani, driven out by the Taliban in 1996, should dominate any interim leadership. That would clash with Zahir Shah's idea of an ethnically diverse selection of Afghans deciding how to run the country if the Taliban goes.

Zahir Shah must also contend with those who blame the ex-king himself for much of the country's current strife, who say he abandoned Afghanistan and its people by never returning after the 1973 palace coup.

(Los Angeles Times-Washington Post)

There's no nostalgia, no yearning for the monarchy, only a sense of bemused wonder that, after all these years, the man who was driven by a coup from his throne in 1973 is suddenly being hailed as the best bet for bringing peace to the bombed-out nation



INDIAN EXPRESS
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Taliban unity frays under US bombs

Agencies

Islamabad/Washington, Oct 17

THE US bombing seemed to have shaken loose a second opinion among the closed ranks of the Taliban. Taliban Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil Muttawakil was reported to have asked for a slow-down in the US bombing so that Afghan moderates can "reconsider" an earlier refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden. Washington's response has been to escalate bombing a further notch.

Further evidence that the Taliban's fundamentalist core was starting to crack came in a statement by the group's supreme leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, on Wednesday urging his followers to be patient. He predicted the defeat of the US in his

first public statement since Saturday. This was seen as a move by Omar to shore up support for his hardline policy.

Muttawakil passed on this message to Pakistani authorities during a secret visit to that country in the past few days. However, his counter-offer of a trial for Bin Laden in a third country without the US providing evidence of Osama's guilt was clearly unacceptable to Washington.

Bush had said the US would not negotiate over its demand for the unconditional handover of Bin Laden, his aides and the dismantling of his network.

Muttawakil reportedly met CIA and ISI officials in Islamabad on Monday. According to *The Guardian*, US sources pressed him to carry out sweep-

ing changes in the Taliban regime. "They are trying to persuade him to get the moderate elements together," a Pakistani source was quoted as saying.

The US has escalated its bombing attacks with 100 warplanes, including low-flying gunships, now involved in the attacks. It has begun carrying out attacks on the Taliban frontline in a move designed to encourage defections and apply pressure on the core leadership in Kandahar.

There were reports of the Afghan Foreign Minister defecting after he surfaced in Doha recently. The Taliban, however, issued a strong denial, insisting that he still remained part of their fold.



ABDUL WAKIL MUTTAWAKIL

Related reports on Pages 9 & 10

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Emerging dilemmas in Afghanistan

49-10

By V. R. Raghavan

16/10

A military campaign against a single individual and a Government which has no recognisable structure has meant that there is no representative element with which the end game can be played out.

The telling comment, the U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, that one might hope for the Taliban to collapse upon itself, raises more dilemmas than resolves them. If there is a precipitate collapse of the Taliban, there is no clarity on who will fill the vacuum in Kabul. The partners in the alliance which might come about with the Northern Alliance are more likely to come apart, going by their past record. The Taliban will have the field open for employing its acknowledged skills of irregular warfare against a divided opposition. The NA will not command either acceptability or respect among the Pashtuns. The NA will also have to be supported by a strong military capability which it does not have. It cannot also be indefinitely supplied by the impossibly long logistic routes to Kabul from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

If a decisive outcome has to come about, occupation of Kabul is a critical necessity. That will require considerable cooperation between the coalition military and the NA. An advance against Kabul will require a major air support component from the coalition forces for the NA. This will require a strong presence of advisers, air operations coordinators, and substantial military supplies from the coalition to the NA. Even after the NA reaches Kabul, an entirely uncertain prospect, a major Pashtun governing element will have to be introduced which will lead to a conflict of interest with the NA.

The success of the plan to force a regime change in Afghanistan therefore depends on two factors. The first need is for a strong military force in Kabul capable of expanding its territorial control up to Kandahar. A military force which can guarantee the safety of the Kabul-Kandahar lateral would be a major ingredient for a successful regime change. If the NA and its yet-to-be-found Pashtun allies cannot ensure it, a foreign military pres-

ence will become necessary. It is not yet clear if the U.S. and its allies will be willing to commit themselves to a long military presence in Afghanistan. Pakistan's territory will be critical for maintaining this western military presence in Afghanistan. This will make a major Pakistani role inevitable, in ensuring that the logistic arteries for such a military presence are kept unaffected.

The lessons of the military operations in Kosovo are relevant to the effort in Afghanistan. The aim of the Kosovo operations was also to bring about a regime change. A local military force — the KLA — operating against the Milosevic regime could not make a serious impact because it could not attain the territorial objectives set for it. The allies also made the mistake of announcing that a ground offensive was not part of the Kosovo plan. What was expected to be a short and powerful air offensive had to be extended to over 70 days which still proved inadequate to budge the Milosevic regime. Finally, the threat of a ground offensive by NATO forces, and the moving of such forces in preparation for an offensive, which led to the capitulation. The public uprising against the regime, so dramatically witnessed on TV, also played a part. In Afghanistan, the NA seems incapable of being the military spearhead, with its limited and uncertain military force. The infrastructure in Afghanistan is unlike the developed facilities that were present in Kosovo. The air offensive will, therefore, be irrelevant beyond a certain point. There is no worthwhile public response against the Taliban. The main requirement will, therefore, be a ground offensive by a strong military. The NA is an uncertain player in this plan.

The offensive so far has followed the traditional pattern. The air attacks have won control of the skies and will soon eliminate the Taliban's major hardware, leaving it to fight entirely with its Kalash-

nikov warriors. That still leaves out the major requirements of reaching and occupying Kabul and installing a viable Government there. It remains to be seen if the NA can deliver on the first. The ability of the disparate groups of former military commanders and defectors emerging out of the woodwork to build a governing coalition is equally uncertain. The coalition will also come about with a large measure of bribes, defections and disloyalty among Afghan groups. The arrangement will, therefore, be based on an undependable political and military foundation.

A post-Taliban Afghanistan will in all probability have a Taliban component in governing it. That component will have past Taliban leaders, and also current Taliban individuals who would have changed sides but not their ideological moorings. Keeping this fractious and potentially divisive lot together and ensuring their adherence to civilised governance and international norms will require a major effort. That requires the glue of economic support and the binding force of punitive military action. The stamina required for both will stretch the capabilities of the major powers to the maximum.

In the interim, the offensive in Afghanistan will move from its mainly air attack mode to a widening set of ground operations. These would primarily be based on the offensive by the NA, which is yet to gather momentum. If it remains slow and uncertain we will see increasing use of helicopter-borne and para-dropped forces by the coalition to speed up the NA advance. Military pressure, not only air power pressure, has to be rapidly built up against the Taliban. Western forces conducting ground operations in Afghanistan in any meaningful numbers will raise the military stakes to high levels. There is every possibility, therefore, that political activity will pick up speed in the coming weeks. The focus may shift from getting Osama to getting his terrorist network outside Afghanistan. If that happens and the Taliban is willing to join a new political arrangement everyone, the U.S. particularly, would be relieved to sheath their swords.

THE HINDU

16 OCT 2002

Saudis unhappy, Pakistan burns

AGENCIES

RIYADH, Oct. 15. -- Keeping pace with the US fight against terrorism, Muslims across the globe are voicing protests against the strikes on Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia, a key US ally, has sent a clear signal that it disapproves of Washington's way of fighting terror, though it opposes terrorism. "We wish the USA had been able to flush out the terrorists in Afghanistan without... the current action... because this is killing innocents," the interior minister, Prince Naif, said last night. "We're not at all happy with the situation." Pakistanis today gave a mixed response to a general strike called by Islamic groups in protest against the US secretary of state, Mr Colin Powell's visit. In Karachi, police fired teargas shells to disperse hundreds of



A protester runs as police fire teargas shells in Karachi on Monday. -- AP/PTI

protesters who burned tyres and threw stones at police and shouted "Down with America". Violence and arson were reported from other cities too. "At this critical juncture, Colin Powell is coming to visit Pakistan to sprinkle salt on the Muslims' wounds," a statement issued by 11 Islamic groups said. "The nation won't tolerate his unholy steps on Pakistan's soil."

The authorities have reportedly put under house arrest the pro-Taliban Maulana Azam Tariq, who gave a jihad call against the USA. He's the third pro-Taliban leader to be interred. In Nigeria, violence broke out in Kano again today between Muslims and Christians, despite shoot-at-sight order to police. At least 200 people have been killed in the riots. US strikes on Afghanistan sparked the riots. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, today accused the USA of trying to drag the world into a war by continuing to attack Afghanistan. "Regional and, most probably, world peace is being jeopardised particularly by the actions and policies of American officials... This will serve the interests of arms manufacturers." He urged the world to step in and stop the attacks.

Iraq today condemned USA's "malicious aggression" against Afghanistan and called Mr Bush "the evil man No 1". The foreign minister, Mr Naji Sabri, said Washington was pursuing "reckless, irresponsible and supercilious policies". Mr Sabri's remarks followed Mr Bush calling Mr Saddam Hussein "an evil man" on Thursday. In Indonesia, several Muslims protested against the US strikes after President Megawati Sukarnoputri decried the use of military against terrorism, but stopped short of criticising Washington directly. The Yemeni Parliament Speaker today denied his country had supported the US bombing. "There's no support for what the USA is doing... not by President Ali Abdullah Saleh or the people or Parliament," Mr Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmer said.

THE STATESMAN

16 OCT 2002

Pak refuses to attach terrorist tag on Taliban

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 15 OCTOBER

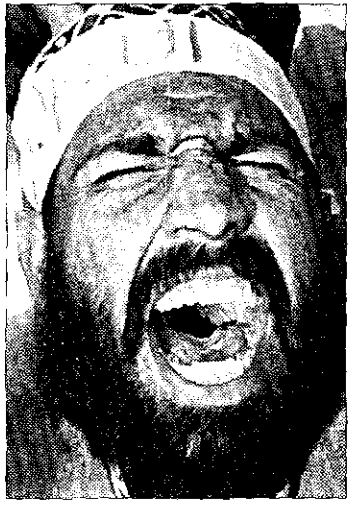
WITH PAKISTAN continuing to be in a tight spot over its alliance with the US, Islamabad on Monday publicly differed with the counter-terrorism alliance and said it did not consider the Taliban to be terrorists.

This came after the fundamentalists turned their Kalashnikovs against the police and killed two security personnel. Islamabad, which is under pressure from the fundamentalist set — indoctrinated, funded and patronised by various arms of the state — quickly modified its position and said the Taliban is not a terrorist band.

The refusal to disown the Taliban comes barely a week after Gen Pervez Musharraf confidently claimed that only an Islamic minority opposed his government's decision to offer the US the use of Pakistani airspace and logistics facilities to carry out strikes on the Taliban. Last week, he had also got rid of Taliban's mentors in his government.

But the mood across the country is changing rapidly and even the opinion makers, who supported the General initially, are voicing doubts about supporting the US. Angry protests have grown in the past week in cities like Quetta, Karachi and even Islamabad. Militant Muslim leaders, who term the General's support to the US a betrayal, have also called for his ouster.

General Musharraf's spin doctors like Rifaat Hussain of the Quaid-e-Azam University, who led the media campaign for the the



APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

General during the Agra summit, has said until the crisis ends, the Pakistani dictator will be living week to week.

"There is an emerging current of anti-Americanism that is turning people by default into Taliban sympathisers. People do not want Pakistan to act as a proxy of the Americans, and they are not sure if there is an exit strategy for our entanglement in the Afghan crisis. They fear the Americans will leave and we will end up holding the bag," Hussain told the Washington Post.

Musharraf's spin doctor's statement is significant as implicit in it is a call for some reassuring noises from the United States. It may be recalled that the General offered Pakistan's support for a price and it came only after Washington announced certain doles.

Atal feels need to join global alliance to nullify al-Qaeda

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 15 OCTOBER

PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee, on Monday, said al-Qaeda's warning to the US asking it not to help the Hindus is a serious matter, and said India has to fight the threat together.

"If this statement is true, then it is a serious challenge. We will have to combat it together," Mr Vajpayee told press persons at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Mr Vajpayee's remarks are along expected lines. The threat issued by the Osama bin Laden outfit to the US is seen as a blow to those opposing his government's decision to join the international coalition against terrorism. The statement, aired by Qatar's private Al Jazeera network, is confirmation of the gov-

ernment's contention about linkages between the alleged local terrorists operating in J&K and bin Laden's worldwide Jihad Inc. And to the extent its political rivals had based their attack on "why India should fight US' war," the government naturally feels vindicated.

The "if it is true" qualifier that Mr Vajpayee introduced is not relevant, and is seen in the light of his stress on the need to maintain communal harmony. The government is convinced about the veracity of the statement because Al-Jazeera's access to bin Laden's network is beyond dispute.

If anything, chances are the coming days may see India positioning itself more closely to the international alliance, now that Pakistan is finding it increasingly difficult to deliver on its pledge of "unstinted cooperation".

Monday's statement by Islamabad certifying that the Taliban are not terrorists has been seen here as indication of General Pervez Musharraf's deference to the growing pro-Osama bin Laden sentiment across Pakistan. The wily general can use his vulnerability to insist on more concessions from the US as the price for his "unstinted and unconditional" cooperation. But, it is also possible that the groundswell of resentment against the bombing of Afghanistan, best reflected in the siege of Jacobabad airbase, may reinforce Pentagon's worries about possible sabotage of its war efforts, leading it to explore other sources of support. India can, in the light of Sunday's threat from Al Qaeda, be expected to be more forthcoming with assistance than before.

Powell appoints special envoy to tackle crisis

Islamabad
15 OCTOBER

US SECRETARY of state Colin Powell on Monday named a special envoy to explore options for Afghanistan's future as the US stepped up its planning for a post-Taliban era.

Mr Powell said he would consult Pakistan and India on how they saw a new Afghan regime but added that no one country would have a veto over the next government in Kabul.

"In the last several days, we have picked up the beat on what we may have to do in a post-Taliban world," Mr Powell said as he began a delicate mission aimed at easing tensions between India and Pakistan. — AFP

US steps up raids, jets pound Kabul, Jalalabad

Kabul
15 OCTOBER

IN THE biggest daylight raids so far, US jets pounded targets around Kabul on Monday and attacked military headquarters and a suspected terrorist training camp near the eastern city of Jalalabad. The stepped-up attacks came a day after US President George W. Bush rebuffed the Taliban's latest offer to negotiate prime suspect Osama bin Laden's surrender — if Mr Bush called off the bombing.

In Pakistan, Muslim militants launched a nationwide strike to protest against President Pervez Musharraf's support for the US-led campaign in Afghanistan. The strike call, which drew only a limited response, came as US secretary of state Colin Powell flew to Islamabad for talks with Pakistan on the air campaign.

The ninth day of raids opened with jets streaking across the dawn sky over Kabul, striking in the area of the airport and a military base. Throughout the day, wave after wave of bombers, some too high to be heard in the streets below, pounded suspected military targets in the northwest of the capital.

In Afghanistan's east, a lone jet bombed the western outskirts of Jalalabad as shoppers went about their errands at an open market in the city centre. — AP

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The Economic Times

16 OCT 2002

Fresh strikes on Kabul after Friday break

Afghanistan
HT 1

HTC & Agencies
Kabul/Islamabad, October 13

US-LED FORCES resumed the bombing blitz over Afghanistan today after a 24-hour respite for Friday, sparking fresh Taliban rage over civilian casualties.

The seventh day of the coalition's air assault on the battered nation began with a pre-dawn raid on capital Kabul, which Taliban officials said hit at least seven houses.

US officials said a US warplane may have missed a Taliban military target at Kabul airport and a 900 kg bomb may have struck a residential neighbourhood. "We are checking on this," said one official.

Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan Abdul Salam Zaeef said seven houses in Kabul were destroyed in the attacks. According to the militia, more than 300 civilians have been killed since the bombings began on October 7.

"Over 200 people were killed in the village of Kadam alone, which is 125 km east of Kabul. The US is deliberately targeting civilians in its bombing campaign," an Afghan embassy spokesman told *Hindustan Times*.

Today's air raids zeroed in on the Taliban's communications systems in northern and western Afghanistan. The Afghan Islamic Press reported that one of the Taliban's radar systems in Pul-e-Khumri was severely damaged.

An official with the Taliban-run Bakhter News Agency said a communications centre in the strategically important city of Herat was targeted.

In what is believed to be the first daytime air attack on Mazar-e-Sharif, the US targeted the airport. The Northern Alliance is aiming to take over Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif in the run-up to the final push against the Taliban regime.

The alliance claimed fresh

victories and Taliban defections, but the extent of their coordination with the airstrikes remained unclear.

A senior commander said the alliance had wrested control of three villages within 20 km of Aibak, the capital of Samangan province in the north, adding that opposition forces were close to taking over Aibak and Bamiyan, which would help open supply routes from the northern command bases. The Taliban has reportedly launched a heavy offensive against opposition strongholds around Bamiyan, focusing their attack on Shahidan.

A Taliban official disclosed that Zaeef had left for Kandhar to hold discussions with Taliban chief Mullah Mohammed Omar on the latest situation. However, a Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman denied that the Afghan ambassador is carrying any message from President General Pervez Musharraf in the wake of the offer by President Bush that the coalition is ready to halt military action if the Taliban agree to hand over Osama bin Laden.



PAK ABDUL SALAM ZAEEF

More reports on Pages 9, 10, 11, 12

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 OCT 2001

Back to the future: Reviving Grand Council

STEVEN MUFSON

19/10
96-7

AFTER the 21st century satellites and fighter jets are done in Afghanistan, Bush administration officials are planning to turn to a 2,000-year-old political model that was used by Genghis Khan in the 13th century and was last summoned by a Soviet puppet regime 14 years ago. This step back to the future envisions a *loya jirga*, or grand council, that would gather hundreds of Afghan tribal and factional representatives to draw up a new constitution, government structure and political process for Afghanistan to replace the ruling Taliban militia that is allied with accused terrorist Osama bin Laden.

As the US-led military campaign moves into a second week, the *loya jirga* plan has become an urgent priority as the Bush administration seeks to head off a power vacuum, new chaos, and a widening refugee crisis in the impoverished country. Putting the grand council plan into practice is another matter. For the past decade, US and UN negotiators have labored in vain to bring together a grand council, only to be stymied by blood feuds, tribal animosities and personal hatreds among Afghanistan's disparate ethnic groups. Add to the mixture the elusive prospect of a trans-Afghanistan pipeline to move oil from Central Asia to Pak-

istan, and the rival interests of neighboring countries such as Iran, Pakistan, India and Russia, and the result has been deadlock. One administration official said that if American or UN mediators ever prod Afghans to attend a grand council, the delegates would probably spend their time plotting how to kill the people sitting next to them. He called the idea of the US helping put together a new Afghan government "delusional."

Barney Rubin, an Afghanistan expert at New York University, said that even if a *loya jirga* is convened, it could collapse given the country's bloody recent history. "The problem is the participants will be afraid of losing their lives if they make the wrong move and therefore they may act preemptively with the only tools at their disposal, meaning violence," he said. "There are no constitutional tools."

Most administration officials, however, said that promoting a *loya jirga* is the best hope for laying the foundations for a stable government, assuming the Taliban collapses under the US-led military assault. They said they see it coming together under the largely symbolic leadership of exiled King Mohammed Zahir Shah, and producing a loose confederation of the various ethnic and factional groups. The September 11 terrorist attacks on the United



Hamid Karzai, centre, with guests at his home in Quetta, Pakistan. Karzai, a former Afghan official, is aiding efforts to convene *loya jirga*

Some say even if the council comes together it will be flawed, because it is a negotiated rather than democratic process and is likely to exclude many of the professional groups that cross ethnic and factional lines

States and the US military response has spurred talks between the different factions, and even fairly detailed plans for an interim ruling council. But the task remains daunting. Until last month, there were four different *loya jirga* movements and there was little communication between the three. The first was based in Rome around the 86-year-old king, and it reflected the interests of moderate Pashtuns from southern Afghanistan, the same ethnic group from which the Taliban

draws much of its support. The Rome initiative called for fair elections, supporting Islam as the foundation for the Afghan state and respect for human rights.

Pakistan, which has backed the Taliban movement since 1994, has recently said it would support an initiative led by the king. The weakness of the aging king could help ease fears that he would dominate a new government, UN sources said. The second *loya jirga* initiative has been based in Cyprus, and led by Homay-

oun Jarir, a renegade member of the Islamic Party of his father-in-law, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, who fought a battle over Kabul with rivals before the Taliban took over in 1996.

Critics of the Cyprus initiative suspect it of serving the interests of Iran. The members of the Cyprus initiative, however, consider themselves closer to the Afghan people and regard the Rome group as too close to the long-isolated nobility. Two less important initiatives have been based in Bonn and Pakistan.

EVEN before the September 11 attacks, Bush administration National Security Council member Zalmay Khalilzad had been trying to bring the different initiatives together, but progress was difficult. In the wake of the attacks, the US and UN have been pushing for what one UN official called "*loya jirga plus*," a group that would include not only traditional ethnic-based groups but also the Northern Alliance fighters who control parts of the north and east of the country and have been battling the Taliban.

Some say that even if the council comes together it will be flawed, because it is a negotiated rather than democratic process and is likely to exclude many of the professional groups that cross ethnic and factional lines.

The Northern Alliance supports the government ousted by the Taliban in 1996. The president of the ousted government, Burhanuddin Rabbani, an ethnic Tajik, is the titular head of the group. For the past year his headquarters have been in the northern Afghan town of Faizabad. He leads one of five factions in the alliance, one backed by Iran and Russia.

Among the other factions are: the principal Shiite party with support mainly among the Hazara ethnic community; a mostly ethnic Uzbek group

led by Abdul Rashid Dostum; another Shiite party led by Ayatollah Muhammad Asif Muhsini; and a group led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and backed in the past by Saudi Arabia. Pakistan worries that the Northern Alliance, composed mostly of Tajiks and Uzbeks, would dominate the process and the Pashtun groups that have close ties to Pakistan. Representatives of the Northern Alliance are equally adamant about keeping Pakistani influence out of any future government.

UN officials who have been involved in negotiations before and after the Sept. 11 attacks said Iran is also suspicious that Pakistan is working to create a reformed Taliban that would still play an important role. Iran's Shiites are regarded as apostates by many of the Sunni Taliban members. Iran, the UN official said, is also worried that the US might want to make such a concession to Pakistan as a "reward for cooperating" in the current military campaign.

Though US officials have sought to win over Pashtun leaders, including disgruntled Taliban commanders, to undercut Taliban support, Fiona Hill, a Central Asia expert at the Brookings Institution, cautioned this process would require time. "It's a very delicate process," she said. "They can't make people into allies overnight."

(LATimes-Washington Post)

INDIAN EXPRESS

14 OCT 2002

Afghan war comes home while Pakistan burns

HTC and Agencies
New Delhi/Islamabad, Oct 12

FOR THE first time today, India witnessed widespread protests against US strikes in Afghanistan while violence erupted in Pakistan soon after the Friday prayers.

Stone-pelting protesters left at least 80 injured in Kashmir and Hyderabad. The police fired in the air and lobbed teargas shells as clashes erupted in several parts of Kashmir Valley on the first Friday since the US onslaught. Over 25 people were injured as the police chased away the demonstrators, who raised pro-Taliban and anti-US slogans.

A spontaneous general strike coupled with violent demonstrations rocked Srinagar despite the Hurriyat Conference's appeal not to protest against America.

In Hyderabad, worshippers poured out to the streets, denouncing the military campaign. They rained stones on shops, buses and passers-by. At least 50 policemen, including three top officials, and five Press photographers were injured in the old city area. Tension gripped the city as five persons connected to the violence were arrested.

In Delhi, the police disallowed Imam Syed Ahmed Bukhari and his supporters to take out a protest march to the US Embassy. A protest was, however, held inside the Jama Masjid, with the Imam telling a gathering that the US was the "greatest terrorist of the world".

A petition seeking registration of a "sedition" case against Bukhari for his provocative speeches in the wake of the terrorist strikes in the US was moved in the Delhi High Court today.

Left party workers also staged



AFP PHOTO

FIRE AND BRIMSTONE: Pro-Taliban demonstrators in Karachi burn tyres during a strike called by fundamentalist organisations on Friday.

demonstrations in different parts of the country. Carrying placards denouncing the US action, CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc and RSP workers marched to the American Center in Delhi as a heavy posse of policemen stood by.

Across the border, anger spilled out to the streets again as US bombers pulverised Taliban positions while the militia clashed with Pakistani troops in South Waziristan and Russian border guards in Tajikistan.

Karachi burned with large-

scale protests touched off by a grenade attack last night. Followers of radical parties set a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet on fire this morning. In Lahore, police preempted a similar attack. Leaders of major Islamic parties called nationwide demonstrations today and a nationwide strike on Monday.

But the Government said things were under control and warned it would deal firmly with anyone who protests violently or acts against Pakistan's interests.

Northern Alliance has brutal past, warn critics

Islamabad, October 12 ¹⁰
 IN A fever to rout the killers who attacked New York and Washington, the US is making common cause with rebels in Afghanistan who have themselves been accused of human rights violations including killing civilians, burning homes and ethnic cleansing.

America is relying on Northern Alliance insurgents — the United Front, as they prefer to be called — to fight the ruling Taliban on the ground, provide intelligence information about the success of US airstrikes and help locate bin Laden.

The Bush administration has not endorsed the Northern Alliance as its choice to take con-

rebels. The President and his aides have made clear their priority is ousting the Taliban, which has both provided bin Laden safe harbour and benefited from his financial support, while enforcing a strict interpretation of Islam that severely limits the rights of Afghanistan's 27 million people.

"We need to recognise the value they bring to this anti-terrorist, anti-Taliban effort," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said last week of the Northern Alliance.

The Northern Alliance too has its envoys in the United States lobbying Congress and putting forward a friendly Afghan face.

The leaders are promising a democratic future for

Afghanistan if the US helps them defeat the Taliban. They are committed to fighting terrorism, says a leading spokesman, Afghan special envoy Haron Amin in Washington.

He does not dispute allegations of past acts of brutality by Northern Alliance troops. But America must realise, he says, that this is war. "Regardless of who is right in the war, it leads to someone being killed... The only morality that prevails in certain instances is the morality of war," says Amin.

There is a realpolitik subtext to America's enlistment of these Afghan factions — a sense of ends justifying the means.

Ultimately, the Northern Alliance is the strongest thing

going. And so you start with that," says Michael O'Hanlon, defense analyst at the Brookings Institution.

But to ensure that one repressive Government isn't replaced with another, O'Hanlon says, it's critical that efforts be made to build broad support for a new Government in Kabul that includes all ethnic groups. The US can't, he says, "let this Northern Alliance just run roughshod over the country."

And the support for an ethnically broad Government needs to be built long before US forces leave the region, O'Hanlon and other experts say.

So far, the United States hasn't said it is trying to determine who controls Afghanistan — just that

it wants the Taliban out. But while President Bush said on Thursday that the US "shouldn't play favourites between one group or another," the air campaign in Afghanistan already has disabled the air power that has let Taliban forces dominate alliance forces.

White House officials won't say how closely the US is cooperating with the alliance, but rebel leaders say they're being kept informed of the US-led military operations.

It's assumed that the US is exchanging intelligence information about the Taliban with the Northern Alliance. And the US has encouraged Russia to increase arms shipments to the rebels in Tajikistan and Uzbek-

istan to provide safe haven for Northern Alliance leaders.

But Washington also has been cautious about anointing a particular rebel group for fear of alienating others. The ethnic Pashtun in the south, for example, would be upset if the United States overtly backed the Northern Alliance — made up primarily of ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks over them.

The White House also faces a delicate diplomatic challenge regarding Pakistan. Until this crisis, Pakistan had supported the Taliban. Its leaders distrust the Northern Alliance, in large part because the rebels have been accepted aid from Pakistan's archrival, India. The United States needs Pakistan's intelli-

gence, the right to fly on its airspace and access to its airbases. So far, Pakistan has been cooperating.

The White House has spoken only vaguely about a long-term US role in Afghanistan. If anything, the role might be limited. Bush suggested at his news conference Thursday night that the United Nations could "take over the so-called nation-building ... after our military mission is complete."

Human rights officials, say warlords guilty of savage acts against civilians and prisoners — whether from the Taliban or Northern Alliance — should be excluded from any future for Afghanistan.

USA Today & AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 OCT 2001

Afghanistan after the Taliban

By T. Sreedhar

40-12
12/10

SINCE THE last week of September, the media has been debating the post-Taliban scenarios for Afghanistan. We have also been hearing from people like Gen. Pervez Musharraf that the "Taliban's days are numbered". Suddenly the media is also reporting that some of the chieftains of provinces in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan are deserting Mullah Mohammad Omar and taking a neutral stand. All this implies that the Taliban Government in Afghanistan will collapse after the U.S. military operations. This may be possible. But one has to wait and watch.

What is interesting are the post-Taliban scenarios being discussed in the media. The most prominent of these is the return of King Zahir Shah, in exile since 1973 in Rome, to Afghan refugee camps first and next to Kabul. At a press conference on September 27 in Islamabad, Mr. Francis Vendrell, personal representative of the U.N. Secretary-General, said "though 90 per cent of Afghanistan is controlled by the Taliban, it does not mean that they have 90 per cent support of the people. Majority of the Afghans are hostages in their country". On a possible solution to the crisis, Mr. Vendrell said all Afghans should have a role in an interim broad-based Government. "I found King Zahir Shah to be in good health and willing to work for the betterment of his people... he is the only ruler who has not harmed the Afghan people," he added.

The U.N. thus is projecting him as head of state for a transitional government. He will consult Afghan elders and convene a *Loya Jirga* to get the decisions taken ratified. As the days pass, support to King Zahir Shah is increasing. There are reports that even some representatives of the Northern Alliance have called on him in his Rome villa and extended their support to him.

However, there is opposition to his return from Iran. The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 overthrew monarchy. The Iranians perceive return of monarchy in neighbouring Afghanistan as a grand design by the U.S. to attempt a similar thing

The international community must ensure that there is a broad-based Government in Kabul to begin with and also encourage revival of the democratic process.

in their country. Second, Gen. Musharraf is also apparently planning for a moderate Taliban coming to power in Kabul which will coopt minorities in the governance of Afghanistan. It will not be Pashtun-dominated, like Mullah Omar's Taliban, but will be a broad-based Government of all ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Pakistan plans to achieve this by politically eliminating Mullah Omar from the scene by stage-managing a coup in Kabul and Kandahar. This is because Pakistan perceives that any other Government, including that of King Zahir Shah, would be detrimental to its interests in the region. As a step in this direction, Gen. Musharraf declared Pakistan a frontline state for the U.S. and its allies in the fight against terrorism.

The third alternative being discussed is that since none of the factions in today's Afghanistan represents the will of the majority of people there, it is better to keep it as a U.N.-administered area for some time and then initiate steps for a democratic political process. This line of argument is advanced by those who feel that two decades of bloody civil war has fractured the Afghan polity. And therefore a cooling-off period is required. Some are even saying normality can be restored only if neighbours and their surrogates in Afghanistan are not given any authority in a future setup. Lastly, a few are arguing that Afghanistan must be handed over to the Organisation of Islamic Conference to evolve a suitable political apparatus to govern it for a transitory period.

No one has defined as yet what should be the parameters for a new Government and how it should be formed. The turmoil in Afghanistan is largely because Pakistan was given the responsibility of reestablishing a proper Government in Kabul. To install a Government amenable to it, Pakistan resorted to three

things. One, in the first five years after the Soviet withdrawal, Pakistan virtually played musical chairs with the Afghan leadership. Even at the slightest doubt about the person in authority in Kabul, the Government was toppled and another was brought in. How Pakistan played one leader against the other is now part of Afghan folklore. Two, to serve its interests, Pakistan created the Taliban exclusively of people dependent on it for anything and everything. After creating the Taliban, it systematically eliminated all the Opposition political groups.

Around 1996, people like Ghulam Ishaq Khan, former President of Pakistan, talked in terms of a confederation of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Three, by 1997-98, the Taliban had become an instrument of Pakistan's foreign policy to achieve its objectives. Pakistan went to the extent of violating U.N. sanctions covertly by sending its military advisers to assist the Taliban. The terrorist training camps that came up in Afghanistan became complementary to similar camps being run in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The similarity between the elaborate planning that went into the hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane in December 1999 and the September 11 bombings indicates that Pakistan is not above board regarding the Taliban-Al-Qaeda networking.

To avoid a repetition of a Taliban-type phenomenon creeping into Afghan polity again, or as a matter of fact, even in Pakistan, the international community must ensure that there is a broad-based Government in Kabul to begin with and if possible extend that effort to Islamabad; that any Government that comes to power must ensure good governance; and encourage the democratic process to start in Afghanistan. This too should be extended to Pakistan. The international community responded in the above fash-

ion in the case of the Kurds in Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War. The situations may not be identical but it is still an option worth trying.

All this is possible when the Taliban Government collapses. Till now, it has defied all threats. The Taliban supremo is even warning the U.S. that it may suffer the fate of the Soviet Union. As though these threats were not enough, Jaish-e-Mohammad, one of the arms of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine, attacked the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly building in Srinagar on September 29. The timing of the action is extremely important. When the U.S. and its allies were talking in terms of eliminating the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine, one of its wings struck in not-too-far-off Srinagar.

The attack also took place on the eve of the External Affairs Minister's visit to the U.S. The hectic parleys that took place between India and the U.S. since then indicate that the Srinagar incident is being viewed as a local development. If the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine realises this, the next act could be closer to U.S. interests.

In addition, one should also remember that the resources required by the Taliban-Al-Qaeda are nominal. According to counter-terrorism experts, to destroy an area of one square kilometre through conventional means, \$2000 is required; half the amount if nuclear weapons are used and probably one-fifth for a terrorist attack. Recall the events of August 1998. The U.S. embassies in Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi were destroyed by a suicide squad. The truck and the explosives loaded in it must have cost at the most \$8000. The U.S. responded by firing cruise missiles at the hideouts of those responsible. The value of the property destroyed is valued at less than \$100. All this makes one conclude that the means adopted by the U.S. and its allies to deal with terrorism and the violence of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine have to be unconventional.

(The writer is Senior Research Associate, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi).

THE HINDU

1 2 OCT 2001

USA yet to master skies

140 die on night of worst strikes; Omar son killed

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 11. — The USA today launched its biggest ever attack on Afghanistan, dropping laser-guided "bunker-busting" bombs and causing heavy casualties.

The Taliban accused the USA of targeting civilians, saying 140 have been killed in Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar since last night. About 100 died in Jalalabad, where a mosque has reportedly been destroyed.

In Washington, the US defence secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, said his warplanes were yet to achieve total air-supremacy in Afghanistan. "There's still an air-defence threat and it's triple-A (anti-aircraft artillery). The Taliban still has choppers and fighters."

The civilian casualties, he said, were unintentional. "When one is engaged militarily, there're going to be unintended loss of life. It has always been the case, and it'll certainly be the case this time."

Several Taliban leaders were reportedly killed in the first night's raid. Among them were the Taliban chief, Mullah Omar's 10-year-old son and stepfather, residents fleeing Kandahar said.

The use of 5,000-pound bunker-busting bombs can be the beginning of the US campaign's second phase. US officials said they may also use low-flying choppers to hunt Osama bin Laden, though this was not imminent.

A huge blaze was reported near Kabul airport late last night and a military academy, east of the capital, was reportedly hit. Twelve bombs reportedly fell on Kabul, prompting Taliban anti-aircraft gunners to fire from three positions. This evening, three bombs

struck a military base near Kabul airport, witnesses said. Four planes circled over the capital, dropping at least four bombs. Afghan Islamic Press reported explosions in Shamsaad, a military base east of Jalalabad.

A huge fireball was seen at a place in Kabul where Osama had a training camp.

In the day, US planes struck targets around Kabul and Kandahar. The first ever afternoon raid on Kabul prompted a heavy barrage of anti-aircraft fire. Three bombs fell on a hill-top near the airport.

In Kandahar, a guard said over phone that he had heard several planes flying and two blasts. "But the bombs seemed to fall outside the city and there was no anti-aircraft fire."

The Taliban envoy in Pakistan said the "real war" would begin when US ground forces entered Afghanistan. Abdul Zaef said Omar and Osama were fine.

Taliban tax: The militia has stopped a UN food convoy travelling to Herat, demanding that the world body pay \$32 for each of 475 tonnes of food. The convoy was stopped in Quetta. A UN spokesman said: "We've refused the unacceptable tax."

N Alliance: The Northern Alliance has claimed to have captured Gur province from the Taliban last night, while another 1,000 militia fighters have crossed over to the opposition camp. The alliance, now 20 km from Kabul, will not attack the city till an interim government was formed. The decision was taken after talks with the USA.

- Editorial: Propaganda coup, page 8
- More reports on pages 6 and 7



HOPE NEVER DIES: An Uzbek couple pray for their relatives living beyond the barbed wire fence in Afghanistan on Thursday. In Termez near Amu-Darya river in Uzbekistan. — AP/PTI

US troops in Pak, not to join action

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 11. — Pakistan today admitted US troops and military planes had arrived in the country, but said they would only provide logistic support to the strike force.

"I don't think they're combat troops," the government spokesman, Maj-Gen Rashid Qureshi, said today when asked whether US troops were on Pakistani soil. "Pakistan has implemented its support and cooperation in providing logistical support."

At least 15 US military planes, including C-130 transport planes, landed at Jacobabad air base in the past two days, officials and witnesses said. An airport at Panni, Baluchistan, is also being used by US forces. The government, however, claimed that planes taking off from the two airports would be used in search and rescue missions in Afghanistan.

In return of its "unconditional cooperation" to the fight against terrorism, Pakistan will get special aid from Washington, UN and World Bank, a report from Washington adds. "We'll work with Pakistan and UN agencies to help Pakistan shoulder the economic and social costs of the current crisis," the US assistant secretary of state, Ms Christina Rocca told a Senate panel.

Musharraf: Gen. Pervez Musharraf has expressed dissatisfaction with the local authorities for failing to curb anti-US protests, even as Jamaat-i-Islam announced to launch a campaign to force the military government either to withdraw support to the US campaign or give up power. Troops have been deployed in Quetta to prevent any anti-US protests.

WAR ON THURSDAY

The winter cold may kill over 10,000 Afghan children, warns Unicef

Man with 2,500 grenades held in Pakistan for plotting terrorists attacks

France may be part of USA-led war against terror. But its foreign ministry says: "Nothing has been decided as yet"



An anti-US protester in Jakarta. — AP/PTI

Mob, including Afghan refugees, stones foreign scribes' cars on Quetta-Chaman Road near Pak border in Baluchistan

Northern Alliance postpones assault on Kabul till interim govt is formed

China regrets civilian casualties, opposes Afghan-like campaign in other nations

ATTACK:

(Continued from page 1)

fire, CNN Television and Al-Jazeera reported. Electricity was cut shortly before the attacks were launched, but was restored two hours after the initial strikes, reports from Kabul said. Kabul's one million people are inured to war after more than two decades of relentless fighting that has destroyed most of the city.

CNN quoted a Taliban official in Kandahar saying Afghan command and radar systems there had been knocked out. Al-Jazeera said there was intense anti-aircraft fire in Kabul, with a large fire reported in the northeast. "This is broad ... Those explosions are not thunder," said one official, who added that cruise missiles fired from both US bombers and warships were being guided to their targets by satellite.

A Northern Alliance spokesman said the initial targets were Taliban bases in five areas. "A few cities in Afghanistan have been hit... Taliban bases have been hit," he said in an interview with CNN from the frontlines north of Kabul.

He said his forces were in "close contact" with the United States and that anti-aircraft batteries near Kabul had been hit. So were "at least three terrorist camps" near Jalalabad, east of the Afghan capital. In addition, a Taliban airbase in the northern province of Kunduz was targeted, along with targets in Kandahar and the western province of Farah.

Many of Kabul's one million residents have begun fleeing areas around the airport ignoring the all-night curfew, the Afghan Islamic Press said in Islamabad. An unfazed worker at the foreign ministry in Kabul told AIP: "Brother, don't worry. The planes dropped several bombs. It is nothing big."

Zahir Shah saddened: A top aide to former Afghan king Mohammed Zahir Shah said from Rome the monarch was "shocked and saddened" by the US attacks. "It is sad and tragic. Now my hope is that it stops quickly and that people are not hurt," the aide, Mr Amin Arsala, quoted the king as saying.

Bush informed Putin: Mr Bush telephoned Mr Vladimir Putin to inform him about the military attack shortly before the offensive, a top Kremlin aide said in Moscow.

Pak deals blow: Pakistan today cracked down on the Taliban, freezing 146 bank accounts and putting under house arrest a leading hardline, Jamiat-i-Ulema-Islami leader, Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

The US Vice-President, Mr Dick Cheney, was moved today to a secure location as a safety measure following the strikes, the White House said.

Schroeder backs attacks: German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder gave his "unreserved backing" to the USA.

THE STATESMAN

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Northern Alliance closer to Kabul



An Afghan woman with her child at a refugee camp at Zahedan in Iran on Wednesday. — AP/PTI

SRINJOY CHOWDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 10. — With the Northern Alliance cutting the road between Mazar-e-Sharief and Kabul yesterday, the ruling Taliban government is at a disadvantage. The Taliban forces will now have to go via Herat in the west, a much longer route, to reach supplies to the north of Afghanistan.

The strategic northern town of Mazar-e-Sharief is currently the first target in the ongoing war. If Mazar-e-Sharief and its surrounding areas are taken over by the Northern Alliance, it will allow their troops to link up with soldiers of General Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek commander of the anti-Taliban group, in a bid to control almost the whole of northern Afghanistan. Kabul, of course, is the other principal objective. Northern Alliance troops are inching closer to the Afghan capital by the day, and are reportedly within range of Bagram, the nearby airfield.

While that is the current strategic thinking, there is no urgency, believe top army officials, as the daily Ameri-

11/8
can air attacks on the military and infrastructural targets of the Taliban is likely to make the job easier. It will reduce the strength of the Taliban forces in terms of equipment, men and morale, making advance easier when it comes.

Senior officials said the Northern Alliance push could come in about a fortnight. Once Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharief fall, it would mean a large chunk of the country would be in the hands of the Northern Alliance and free of Taliban control. There is speculation, it would allow the setting up of an independent government, but a major hurdle remains. While Iran, Russia, India and Tajikistan have strongly supported the Northern Alliance for over a year, the United States has given no indication of accepting them.

Speaking to reporters today, Brigadier Jaspaul Singh, the designated spokesman, said the Northern Alliance was consolidating its position in the Badgis, Sumangan, Balkh and Gor areas. There have been no advances by the Alliance troops, he said.

THE STATESMAN

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11 OCT 2001

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Al-Qaida threats chilling but USA prepared: Powell

Defiant Taliban lifts curbs on Bin Laden

AGENCIES

KABUL, Oct. 10. — The Taliban has lifted all restrictions on Osama bin Laden and said he was free to wage a holy war against the USA.

"With the start of the American attacks, these restrictions are no longer in place," the Taliban spokesman, Abdul Hai Mutmaen, told the BBC's Pash-to service today.

"Jihad is an obligation on all Muslims of the world," he said. "We want this, Bin Laden wants this and America will face the unpleasant consequences of their attacks."

Echoing the Taliban stand, Osama's Al-Qaida too today urged "all Muslims" to join a *ji-had* against the USA and to attack Washington's interests around the world.

"From today onwards, the Islamic nation won't keep silent. *Jihad* today is a duty of every Muslim," Al-Qaida spokesman, Suleiman Abu Ghaith, has been quoted by *Al-Jazeera TV* as having said.

"Is it possible that America and its allies would kill over all these years and that would not be called 'terrorism'? And when the victim comes out to revenge it's called 'revenge'. Isn't this a trick? "This must not be acceptable. America must know the nation won't keep quiet and allow what happens against it.

FRENCH SCRIBE CHARGED WITH SPYING

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 10. — Jalalabad residents today reportedly stoned a French journalist, Michel Peyrard (44), and his two Pakistani guides, charged with spying by the militia.

"They have been formally charged with spying," Afghan Islamic Press quoted the Taliban Intelligence chief, Mullah Taj Meer, as having said. "We had warned all journalists that whoever entered Afghanistan illegally would be treated as US soldiers." He said spying equipment had been found on the three and that they would be tried in a special court.

Ridley: British journalist Yvonne Ridley, detained for 10 days by the Taliban, arrived in Britain today, a report from London said. — Reuters/AFP

The US secretary of state, Mr Colin Powell, today admitted Al-Qaida's threats were chilling but said the USA's anti-terrorism campaign would put a stop to such boasts.

"Chilling words from a terrorist, the kind of words you expect to hear from an evil person with no good intention in mind," Mr Powell said.

Earlier this morning, *Al-Jazeera* quoted Ghaith as having said that Al-Qaida would continue hijacked plane attacks in the USA till the Americans vacated all Muslim lands.

It was a virtual admission that the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon were carried out by Osama's men.

Among other demands of Al-Qaida were lifting of sanctions on Iraq and stopping all help to the Jews. In response, Mr Powell told NBC TV: "It's a chill-

ing challenge but I assure you we'll meet that challenge. We'll pursue that (anti-terrorism) campaign until that spokesman will no longer have any reason to make such boasts."

He said the US campaign was aimed at not only smashing the Al-Qaida network, but rooting out terrorism everywhere.

A former leader of Jaish-e-Mohammad, Abdullah Shah Mazhar, today threatened to launch suicide attacks against the USA and "infidel" forces. About 5,000 members of his new group, Tehreek-al-Furqa, took an "oath of death."

Strikes

US warplanes today launched daylight attacks for the second time in four days and followed them by heaviest night strikes, targeting Kandahar and Kabul.

Witnesses said 18 blasts were heard in Kabul. The militia claimed three houses were pounded and that 70 civilians have been killed since the strikes began.

Pentagon said it has plans to use of 2,250-kg laser-guided bombs, first used during the Gulf War. The USA had claimed total control of the Afghan sky after the third night of strikes.

Taliban gunners today opened fire from at least three positions in Kabul. Most of the firing appeared to be from the west of the city, around Rishkore and Kargah — where Osama is believed to have training camps.

It appeared that a large number of jets were flying towards the west of the city, in the direction of Darulaman Palace and Rishkore.

In Islamabad, Afghan Islamic Press said explosions were also heard in Shamshaad, a Taliban military base about four miles from the Pakistan border.

Threat to Blair: A Islamic group, Al-Muhajiroun, said today the British Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair, was a "legitimate target" for Muslims because Britain joined the US-led strikes, a report from London said.

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- For the defence? page 6
- More reports on pages 5 and 8

THE STATESMAN

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Day-night strikes on Afghans

Four UN aid staff among 35 killed, Omar's house hit

AGENCIES

KABUL/WASHINGTON, Oct. 9. — The USA today launched round-the-clock air raids on Afghanistan.

For the first time in three days, it pounded Taliban strongholds in daylight and bombed the house of the Taliban chief, Mullah Omar, in Kandahar.

Omar escaped unhurt because he wasn't in the house then, but 35 people, including a neighbour of Omar, died in the latest offensive.

Among them were four UN workers

clearing mines in Afghanistan. The UN has appealed to all nations to protect civilians from military attacks.

The US defence secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, said all but one airbases of the Taliban had been hit.

Though the daylight raids

suggested that the Taliban had lost most of its anti-aircraft facilities, the militia today claimed to have fired at two suspected US spy planes in Kandahar.

"Our guns fired at two planes that circled the city for a few minutes," said Nema Tulah, an information department official.

A late night report said Taliban gunners in Kabul were continuing the counter-offensive against US aircraft.

Among the places that were attacked after sunset are Kandahar, Herat and Shindand.

The Taliban has stationed its fleet of Russian MiGs and attack helicopters in Herat. The targets in Herat were believed

to be the airport and military sites on the city's edge. A Taliban official said that last night, three cruise missiles had hit the airport area, but they missed the target.

Pilots had to take care not to stray into the Iranian airspace during the Herat raid, because Teheran has not joined the US-led coalition against terrorism.

In Kandahar, a Taliban soldier said over phone that the Americans were striking targets just outside the city. "We

can hear the explosions. There's darkness all around us. Our anti-aircraft guns are trying to target them but they're flying at a very high altitude," he said.

Afghan sources in Pakistan said communications and air defence at Kandahar airport had been largely destroyed.

OSAMA bin Laden's Al-Qaida today unwittingly conceded that it had attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, by saying hijacked plane attacks would not stop, reports Reuters. Early on Wednesday morning, Al-Jazeera TV quoted Al-Qaida as having said that it would continue the battle till the USA withdrew from Muslim lands. It has vowed to take the battle to the heart of America.

CNN, quoting Pentagon officials, said many planes had returned to their aircraft carriers with undropped bombs because there were so few targets left.

Earlier today, US planes bombed Mewand, about 70 km west of Kandahar, where Osama bin Laden could be hiding, the Afghan Islamic Press said.

Taliban defiant: The Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, today said the militia was ready to offer up to 2 million lives to fight the Americans.

Khatami appeal: The Iranian President, Mohammed Khatami, today called for an "immediate end" to the military strikes on Afghanistan.



An Al-Jazeera TV image showing Afghans assessing the damage done to a UN building in Kabul on Tuesday after US military strikes. — AP/PTI

Taliban-Pak shootout on border

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 9. — Pakistan has seized three Taliban helicopter gunships that landed in North West Frontier Province where the militia today exchanged fire with Pakistani border guards. Four Pakistani jawans were injured in the gunfire.

The Taliban men fired at the Pakistani Rangers after the latter foiled their attempt to enter tribal-dominated Bajur. The gunfire lasted for three hours.

The Taliban were seized after a tip off by US airborne surveillance stations. The choppers had taken off from unnamed airstrips in Paktia province, bordering the tribal areas in NWFP, and landed at a place in Kurram yesterday.

"They were immediately seized by the Pakistani authorities," the News said. It didn't mention the fate of the pilots. This was the first time that Pakistan took military action against Taliban.

UN backs American strikes

The UN Security Council has backed the US and British military strikes on Afghanistan, said the council president Mr Richard Ryan.

Osama safe

Osama bin Laden is alive and living in Afghanistan, the Taliban said today. "He's alive... not in a location known to the people," said the militia's ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Salam Zaeef.

America's terror haunts Delhi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 9. — Crucial public utilities and foodgrain godowns in the capital face the threat of a possible militant strike. The Lieutenant-Governor, Mr Vijai Kapoor, today directed the government and the Delhi Police to ensure foolproof security at vital installations, including water sources and water treatment plants, Delhi Vidyut Board installations and other sensitive areas.

The chief minister, Mrs Sheila Dikshit, in the US on an official tour, reportedly telephoned her deputy and state finance minister, Mr Mahinder Singh Saathi, to discuss the government's response to the situation. Mr Saathi apprised Mrs Dikshit of steps taken.

There were specific intelligence inputs regarding the threat of retaliatory attacks by terrorist groups to protest against the American strikes, a Delhi minister said.

The matter was taken up at a meeting with the Lieutenant-Governor today attended by ministers, the home secretary and the commissioner of police. The commissioner has reportedly asked for additional central forces to tighten the security ring around the embassies.

"We have to step up security there and in other parts of the city, too," said a senior official.

The Governor has reportedly directed the ministers to ensure that the three crisis management centres are functional round the clock.

- Editorial: Velvet purge, page 6
- 5 killed in Pak, page 5
- Indonesia, Iraq seethe in anger, page 5
- More photographs and reports on pages 8 and 9

ANTHRAX PANIC

MANASSAS/WASHINGTON, Oct. 9. — A man in Virginia with symptoms similar to that of anthrax tested negative today, but sparked concern over the use of such a rare disease as a biological agent. Two persons in Florida had been infected with the disease; one of them died on Friday. The USA attorney-general, Mr John Ashcroft, and FBI today said they were yet to come across evidence linking the spread of anthrax to the 11 September attacks. A doctor in Virginia asked people not to panic because the disease can't transmit from person to person. — Reuters

NOT BAD FOR STARTERS!

5/16 Afghanistan begins to unfold 9/10

IT is a trifle too early to judge but the fear is that the Americans, for all their careful and reassuring words and intensive preparations have done again what they have always preferred to do — fought their wars long distance. Massive bombardment from the air, cruise missiles and smart bombs launched from submarines have rained down upon Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad in Afghanistan. President Bush says he is doing it with the support of the whole civilised world. Muslim nations are already uneasy, like Indonesia and Egypt, or downright opposed like Iran and Iraq. Pakistan is worried on two counts. One, mobs are on the rampage in Quetta and several other cities, including Karachi. Two, a tense Musharraf is worried that his friends the Taliban, for whom he and his predecessors sent Pakistani troops to fight the Northern Alliance alongside them in the north of the country and who are also trained for trouble in Kashmir, may fall and an alternative government take charge in Kabul with whom such cosy relationships amounting to abetment and encouragement, training and supply of terrorists may not be possible. The Americans are in no mood to listen to his pleas that somehow his friends the Taliban should retain a foothold on power in the Afghanistan to emerge from this experience. They are on the contrary trying to break them up, not too easy when you are dealing with people who are dying to go straight to heaven without a waiting period. Meanwhile both Osama bin Laden and his father-in-law, the spiritual head of the Taliban, Mullah Omar are safe and well and issuing defiant statements from hiding places the Americans know nothing about. It is for consideration what if anything the Americans will do if the same situation prevails a week or so from now. Musharraf has told his people the operation is limited in scope and will be short, the word from Washington and London is that it may take longer.

Part of the problem cannot be avoided; given the nature and extent of the attack on American cities, there had to be a response. And let it be conceded that initially this was the response expected. The question is what happens next. Committing ground forces, be they special forces, commandos dropped from the air or whatever, is not likely to make much difference. The winter is approaching, the terrain is impossible and the Taliban have nothing to lose. It is not often remembered that those who have nothing to lose are more dangerous than those who have other concerns.

The Americans have not succeeded in driving a wedge between Muslim nations and the terrorists. It might have been easier if they had stuck to their original position that this was a war on global terrorism and had nothing to do with Islam. They have not understood the nature of Islamic terrorism. It is the cry of Islam in danger that brings them to the point of being willing sacrifices for the cause; the power of the mullahs to move unthinking minds is being underestimated. Blair had the cheek to tell Vajpayee to wait until Bush had done with Osama bin Laden. This is another way of saying that Britain and America must secure themselves first, the rest may or may not follow depending on the convenience of the West after the event. This is no way to win friends and influence people; it is also no way to carry conviction or any level of sincerity.

A for America; B for the Bourbons. Remember those who learnt nothing and forgot nothing and lost their heads in the process. The only ones to have changed their position are the Russians. They have good reason to do so. They have already gained a free hand in Cechnya, they see a chance to avenge themselves through the Northern Alliance. Not bad for starters.

THE STATESMAN

2001

Day II: No respite for Afghans

Taliban vows to fight back

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD/KABUL, Oct. 8. US forces tonight resumed their attack on Afghanistan, pounding Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad, while the US resident vowed to bring "evildoers to justice". Among the northern cities hit were Mazar-Sharif and Kunduz.

Taliban fighters fired anti-aircraft guns as soon as the jets appeared over Kabul which has again plunged into darkness. The militia was undeterred in the face of the attacks. "We've decided to forcefully resist the American-British attacks," the education minister, Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, said. Tonight's offensive targeted terrorist training camps and Taliban military installations in Kabul and the militia's headquarters in Kandahar.

A witness said four bombs were dropped on Kabul: two were believed to have landed on the airport and two on a hill in the city where the main TV antennae stands.

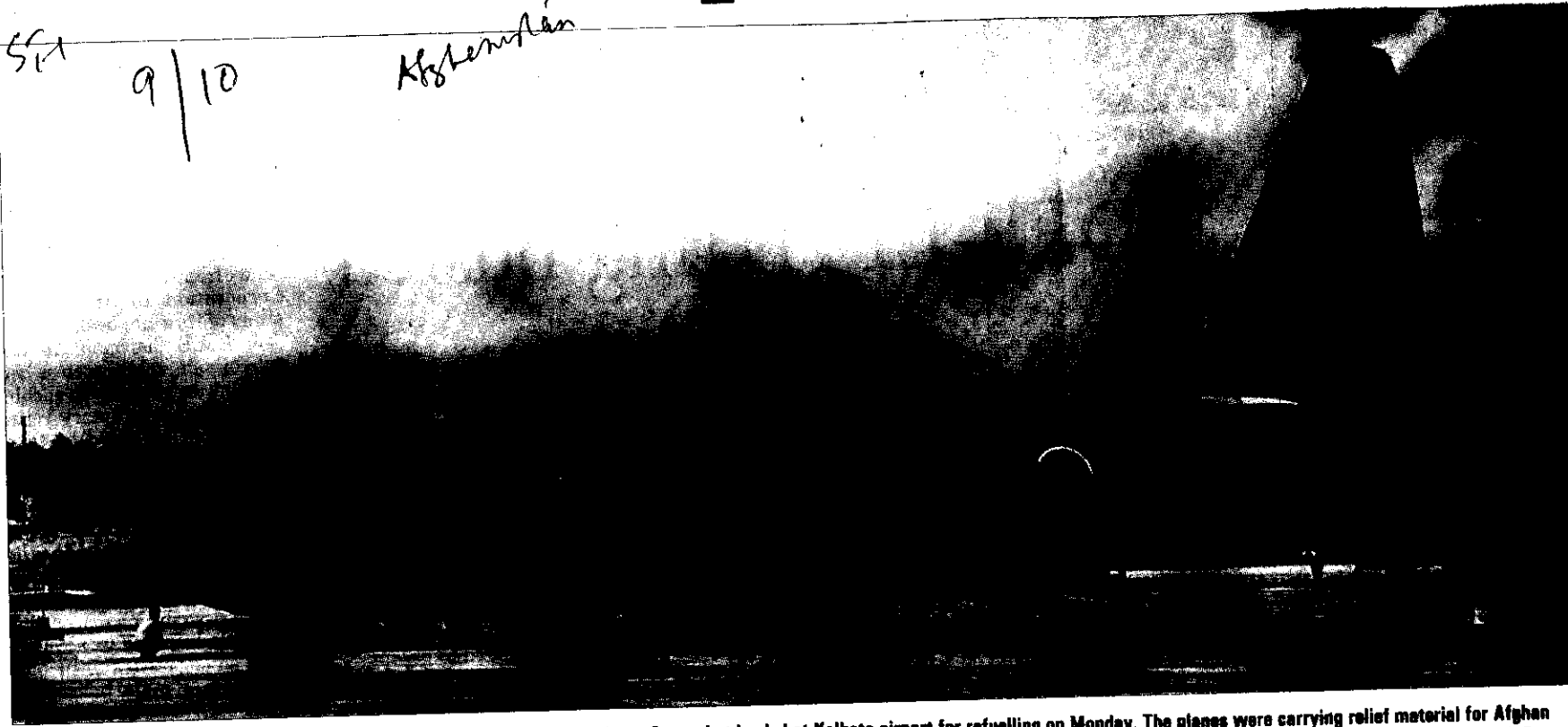
"The explosions were much more massive than last night. I could see flames and debris rising from the foot of TV Mountain. There were also big flashes from the airport."

The new offensive came nearly 24 hours after the opening onslaught in which US and British forces rained bombs and cruise missiles on Taliban's air defences, communication and radar facilities as well as camps used by Osama and his Al-Qaida men.

In the morning, the US defence secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, told TV channels that last night's sorties were "very successful".

He iterated Osama "is in Afghanistan", but said he was not the main target. "Killing or capturing the fugitive will not mean victory in war."

A Taliban health ministry official, however, said most of the planes last night missed



One of the six C-130 Hercules transport aircraft of Japan's Self Air Defence Force that landed at Kolkata airport for refuelling on Monday. The planes were carrying relief material for Afghan refugees. The fleet led by Commander Eichi Yamaji left for Delhi on its way to Islamabad. Eleven CPI-ML activists protesting against the landings were arrested near the airport. — Rajib De.

Pervez removes pro-Taliban generals

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 8. — Coinciding with the US strike on the Taliban, General Pervez Musharraf has reshuffled the army top brass, superseding two pro-militia generals. Among them was the ISI chief, Lt-Gen Mahmud Ahmed.

The Peshawar corps commander, Lt-Gen Eshanul Haq, has been appointed the new ISI chief. The *News* said Lt-Gen Ahmed has sought premature retirement after his supersession.

The deputy army chief, Lt-Gen Muzaffar Hussain Usmani, too was sidelined in the reshuffle. Lt-Gen Mohammad Aziz Khan and Lt-Gen Mohammad Yusuf have been appointed chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee and vice-chief of army.

Lt-Gen Khan, though promoted as a four

star general, was removed from the powerful position of corps commander and given the new post that is largely ceremonial. He had played a key role in the October 1999 military coup that toppled the Nawaj Sharif government.

The *News* said "all those elements who were not considered to be like-minded in the present demanding circumstances" have been ciphered.

(Islamabad today) — In a move to civilianise the military, Musharraf has ordered the closure of five of the country's military airports, five of them in the north-western border, a late night move.

Even though the Pakistani president claimed the US-led strike on Afghanistan would be "short, sharp and targeted", several hundred men took to the streets in Quetta, torching tyres and stoning police in protest against the US-led campaign.

Two protesters were killed in police firing

Shouting "Death to America", the crowd — including a number of Afghan refugees — marched through the city centre.

Witnesses said about 150 riot policemen were deployed to disperse the crowd, while shopkeepers downed shutters fearing violence.

Protests were reported from Peshawar too almost immediately after the US and British planes struck Taliban targets.

Gen Musharraf said the sites bombed last night were camps used by the Al-Qaida to train fundamentalists. He urged the Northern Alliance, anti-Taliban coalition, not to exploit the situation.

He said he was sure that authorities could cope with any anti-US protests. "There're some extremists who are trying to have this agitation. I'm very sure this will be controllable."



Gen Pervez Musharraf: Shedding Taliban baggage

targets and that only six to eight people were killed.

Mohammad Abbas, deputy health minister, told Qatar's *Al-Jazeera TV*: "The casualties from the US and British air strikes last night on various parts of our country had not been as high as had been expected."

Initial estimates had placed the toll at 20.

Less than nine hours after last night's strikes, two US military planes dropped about 37,000 food packets to thousands of displaced Afghan refugees in remote areas.

Mr George W Bush today said

Sunday night's attacks were "executed as planned" and that the war against Osama and the Taliban was part of "a global offensive against terror." **Tajik offer:** Tajikistan today said it would let the USA use its airspace and two airbases to strike Afghanistan.

Scribe released: The Taliban tonight released British journalist Yvonne Ridley and handed her over to Pakistani authorities at the border, Pakistani officials said.

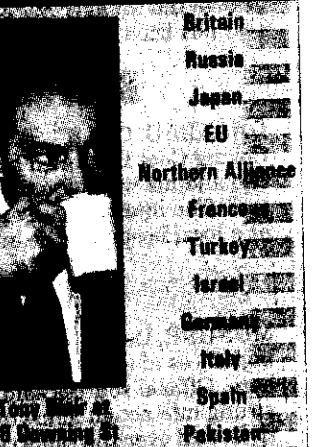
Iraqi warning: Iraq's foreign minister today said the strikes on Afghanistan had brought

several Muslim countries to the brink of war, a report from Doha adds.

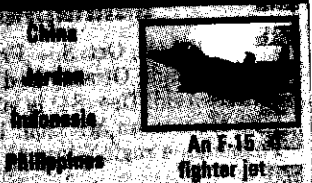
■ **Editorial:** Not bad for starters! page 6

■ **More reports, photographs** on pages 8, 9, 10

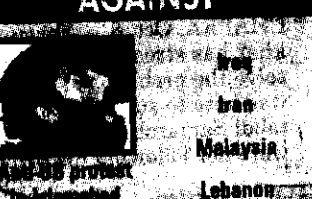
WITH AMERICA



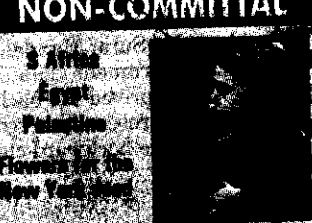
CAUTIOUS SUPPORT



AGAINST



NON-COMMITTAL



Relatives of 70-year-old Shah Babo, suffering from TB, wait at Torkham on the Pakistan border after leaving Jalalabad on Monday. — API/PTI

US rejects Taliban offer for trial

ALAN ELSNER AND ANDY SOLOMAN
WASHINGTON/ISLAMABAD, OCTOBER 7

AFGHANISTAN'S Taliban rulers, facing the threat of an imminent US-led military assault, offered on Sunday to put Osama bin Laden on trial but Washington swiftly rejected the proposal.

The Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, said his government was ready to try under Islamic law the Saudi-born militant accused of masterminding last month's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which killed nearly 5,600 people.

It was an abrupt turnaround by the Taliban, which has been diplomatically isolated and is now almost encircled by hostile military forces ready to mount an assault. Bin Laden

has been living as a "guest" of the Afghan government since 1996.

"If allegations are made against another person...he will be put on trial and then it will be established," Zaeef told reporters, citing the tenets of Islamic law.

Asked if there was a sufficient case to put bin Laden on trial, Zaeef said: "Yes."

However, he stressed that Afghanistan had yet to see any evidence from the US to ascertain bin Laden's involvement. "We have studied this point and our position is that if there is not sufficient evidence, still we are ready for his trial in Afghanistan," he said.

White House officials wasted little time in rejecting the offer. "The first step is that they hand over bin Laden and his lieutenants," a US official said. The official said President George W. Bush's original four demands—that the Taliban surrender bin Laden and

lieutenants in his al Qaeda network, close bin Laden's training camps, allow international inspections, and release detained aid workers—were not subject to negotiation.

In a radio address on Saturday, Bush gave his clearest warning yet that the hour of action was approaching. "Full warning has been given and time is running out," he said.

Senate Republican Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi said the Taliban offer was "totally unacceptable." Under intense pressure and with reports mounting of defections by some of its supporters, the Taliban is reacting with a mixture of defiance and attempts at conciliation. The Taliban said an extra 8,000 troops were being sent to its northern border with Uzbekistan to join several thousand already there.

"We have deployed our forces there at all important places. This is the question of our

self respect and we will never bow before the Americans and will fight to the last," Afghan Islamic Press quoted a Taliban spokesman as saying. Afghan Opposition forces fighting the ruling Taliban said on Sunday they had seized 11 villages in the central province of Ghori and were advancing on the provincial capital Cheghcharan.

An Opposition spokesman, Mohammad Habel, said Taliban defectors were partly responsible for the advance in Ghori, which followed reports on Saturday of similar movement in the northern province of Samangan.

"The probability of the fall of Cheghcharan is high," Habel told Reuters by satellite telephone.

The United States has sent 1,000 soldiers to Uzbekistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan. The *Voice of America* said the first planes had landed.

—Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS
OCT 8 2001

Pak clerics instigated Omar defiance

New Delhi, October 7

A DELEGATION of top religious clerics from Pakistan that was sent to meet Taliban chief Mullah Muhammad Omar to dissuade him from precipitating the crisis, did exactly the opposite.

Instead of convincing Omar of the necessity of saving Afghanistan and the Taliban regime by getting rid of Osama bin Laden, the delegation invoked Islamic scriptures to hail the Taliban leadership's stand and assured Omar of their support, according to Pakistani media reports.

The delegation was taken to Afghanistan by ISI Director-General Lt-Gen Mahmud. The clerics, however, conveyed to Omar Islamabad's concern on the likely US military campaign, said Pakistani weekly *The Friday Times*.

The clerics, led by Omar's "unofficial advisor" and Pakistan's top Deobandi religious figure, Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, assured Omar that several hundred youths were ready for jihad against the US if it attacked Afghanistan, members of the delegation told the weekly. Shamzai heads the country's biggest Deobandi madrasa. He and Mufti Jamil, another member of the delegation, are said to be very close to Osama and were invited to his son's wedding. The weekly said Shamzai is personally looking after the process of recruitment of hundreds of young men prepared to fight alongside the Taliban in case of a war.

Their efforts have the support of Deobandi parties and groups whose cadres have been given the task of mobilising the youths for performing their "sacred duty". "There is a sense of urgency because the clerics believe the Government has turned against the Taliban and their cause," the weekly quoted an



An Uzbek woman shoots with a pneumatic pistol at one of the shooting ranges in downtown Tashkent on Sunday.

insider as saying.

One of the Muftis in the delegation sent to Kandahar said the clerics discussed the strategy of resistance with Omar and his lieutenants.

The weekly said it had learnt that some Intelligence agencies

have already warned the Government of the possibility of suicide strikes on airports and embassies.

Shamzai's stand on the issue is also clear from the fatwa he issued last week in which he exhorted Muslims to join jihad

against the US if it launches the attack and declared that the Muslim countries supporting the US or any infidel forces would be committing a "sin".

Meanwhile, Pakistan police today put under house arrest the chief of pro-Taliban Jamiat

Ulema, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, to prevent him from leading nationwide anti-US rallies. The move came after Rehman's rabid pro-Taliban pronouncements at a public meeting yesterday in Peshawar.

PTI

Taliban chief is not mentally stable, says doctor

London, October 7

TALIBAN CHIEF Mullah Muhammad Omar is mentally unstable and suffered fits, a leading British daily said today.

"He locks himself away for two or three days at a time and the official line is that he is having visions, but in fact he is suffering from brain seizures," *The Sunday Telegraph* quoted the doctor attending Omar as saying.

This mental instability is the real reason why the 43-year old cleric was so reclusive, the daily said in a report from its correspondent in Quetta without naming the doctor who feared he would be killed.

Doctors believe Omar's mood swings may result from shrapnel lodged in his brain since 1989 when he lost an eye during a Russian rocket attack on his mosque.

The Sunday Telegraph said the Taliban leader also suffered from serious depression, with periodic bouts of childlike behaviour when he sat in the driving seat of one of his cars, turning the wheel and making the noise of an engine.

The newspaper said there was only one photograph of Omar, who rarely ventured outside the bomb-proof house Osama bin Laden built for him in Kandahar. Most Afghans had no idea what he looked like, the daily added.

Omar had never travelled abroad, except to Pakistan, and had seen little of his country, visiting Kabul only twice, it said.

When he ventured out, it was always in a convoy of Japanese off-road vehicles with darkened windows and gun-totting body-

guards, the newspaper said. Omar had issued edicts prohibiting kite-flying, football and music, apart from banning women from working and wearing high heels or shoes, the daily said.

Recounting one of the many legends about the man, the newspaper said Omar had pulled out his useless eye during the 1989 Russian attack and thrown it on to the floor.

Little else was known about the preacher, the son of a landless peasant, who had three wives and seemed determined to drag the country back into the middle ages, *The Sunday Telegraph* said.

Omar made his first mark in 1994 when he and some other former 'mujahideens' appaled by Afghanistan's descent into chaos and banditry, formed an organisation of 'taliban' or Islamic students who portrayed themselves as a liberation movement. Funded by businessmen and traders, they captured power in Kabul in 1995.

Once in power, they implemented the strictest interpretation of 'sharia' law that the world had ever seen, smashing television sets and videos, executing people for adultery, closing all girls' schools and banning all forms of entertainment.

A minimum length of beard was instituted, homosexuals were crushed to death under walls and women were beaten for such offences as wearing white socks.

Few dared question the man declared 'Amir-ul-Momnein' or ruler of all Muslims in 1998, only the third person ever to receive such a title, the newspaper said.

PTI

Pro-Taliban leader under house arrest

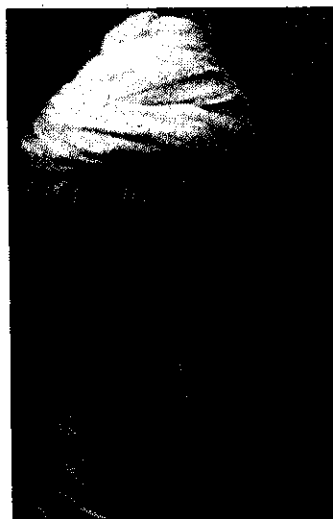
Aditya Sinha
Peshawar, October 7

A TOP religious leader with extensive ties with the Taliban regime, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, was placed under house arrest early today. It is a move that may prove potentially risky for Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.

It was midnight and Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Islami chief Maulana Rehman was sleeping when a posse of the Frontier Constabulary and the local police arrived at his house in the Dera Ismail Khan district of the NWFP. When Rehman awoke at 5 am, he was placed under arrest via a directive of the federal Government.

The JUI chief was to address a rally in Multan today. He has been addressing rallies, big and small, all over the NWFP ever since war clouds started to gather over Afghanistan, exhorting his followers to support Amir-ul-Momineen Mullah Omar's Taliban regime. The last such rally was in the old city in Peshawar yesterday, where he and other leaders told cadres to prepare fidayeen (suicide squads) to take action "inside and outside Pakistan" in the event of a US military operation against the Taliban and Osama bin Laden.

General Musharraf, who is walking a tightrope over his support to the US in its war against terrorism, risks angering many citizens, particularly those in the NWFP and Baluchistan, with his clampdown on Maulana Rehman. The residents of these border provinces are predominantly Pashtun, the same as those in the Taliban regime and the areas under its control, and the Pakistani Pashtuns are sympathetic



MAULANA FAZLUR REHMAN

to the Taliban cause.

But Musharraf is hoping that this action would send a message to the religious parties to stay within limits. A few street demonstrations help him try to limit his country's participation in any military operation against its neighbour, but he does not want it to lead to a threat to his rule.

Maulana Rehman, whose madrassas have trained Taliban cadres, has of late been directly attacking Musharraf, accusing him of selling out to the USA; he called the President another "Mir Jaffer". But what must have been the last straw was the JUI threats of joining the jihad against "US terrorism". The JUI supporters' reaction in the next few days should indicate whether General Musharraf's gamble will ultimately pay off.

AFP

'Laden has four lookalikes'

Dubai, October 7

OSAMA BIN Laden, the prime US terror suspect, uses lookalikes to confuse western intelligence agencies trying to track him down, an Afghan opposition leader said in an interview published today.

"According to our latest information he is in Jalalabad but we know that he has several doubles who move around in convoys to cover up and cause confusion," said Ahmed Wali Massoud, charge d'affaires for the Afghan opposition in London.

He told *Asharq al-Awsat* newspaper, "Several months ago, we received reports about the presence of four lookalikes of Osama in four different places in Afghanistan at the same time."

Massoud, brother of commander Ahmad Shah Massoud who was killed on September 9, just two days before the attacks on New York and Washington blamed on bin Laden, said the latter had become "the true leader of the Taliban".

"Since 1998 he has tightened his grip on the Taliban security services and their money," Massoud said. The Afghan opposition would support any US military action in Afghanistan "aimed at destroying the heavy weapons with which Pakistan supplied the Taliban," he said. "But that does not mean that we want the US to set up bases in our country with a view to a permanent presence."

Massoud said Washington and its allies should "support the legitimate government of Afghanistan as soon as the operation against terrorists is over and help it to rebuild the infrastructure and the economy of the country."

'Pak bomber set off Saudi blast'

Riyadh, October 7

A PAKISTANI suicide bomber may have carried out the powerful blast outside a shop in the eastern Saudi city of Khobar on Saturday, which killed two people, including an American, Saudi newspaper *al-Watan*, reported today.

The perpetrator's body was blown several meters, it said. Officials could not confirm the report. *al-Watan* did not quote any single witness directly, just paraphrases.

Okaz newspaper, also quoting witnesses, reported that the body of one of the two dead was sliced into two, which suggested he could have been carrying the bomb. Several other newspapers said the second dead man was probably a Filipino, but his body was burnt beyond recognition. Two of the injured were also Filipinos, they said.

Earlier on Saturday, a US Embassy official, speaking on condition of anonymity, had said a pedestrian tossed the bomb into the area, but police had reported the explosive device had been left outside an electronics and watch shop and detonated by remote control.

A Briton was also injured in the bomb blast, which a US official said was probably unrelated to the September 11 terror attacks on US targets.

Diplomats had visited the man, who has "superficial injuries," a British spokeswoman said in London.

In Riyadh, a British embassy spokeswoman said the man's condition was reassuring.

There was no information on

PAK FREEZES ACCOUNTS OF TOP TALIBAN MINISTERS

IN A major blow to Afghanistan's ruling Taliban regime, Pakistan has frozen 146 bank accounts belonging to the militia's leading ministers and officials along with three Afghan entities in order to comply with the UN resolutions. The UN resolutions passed in 1999 and 2000 called for freezing of bank accounts and assets of 146 Taliban officials, 10 Arabs including Osama bin Laden, and three Afghan entities.

PTI, Islamabad

the nationality of the other. Five others — including two Filipinos, a Briton and an American — were injured.

The powerful blast on King Khaled Street, a shopping district popular with foreigners, shattered windows and damaged cars shortly before 8 pm, according to witnesses.

Rescue workers and firefighters searched through the wreckage littered with broken glass as police sealed off the area in Khobar, a town on the Persian Gulf coast near Qatar, 250 miles north-east of the Saudi capital, Riyadh.

Security and immigration control were beefed up at the nearby King Fahd Causeway, a highway bridge leading to the neighbouring Gulf island nation Bahrain.

Saudi Arabia has seen a number of bomb attacks since 1996 — including two attacks in Khobar — that Saudi officials said were linked to a settling of scores between criminals.

AFP/A

U.S. AIRCRAFT BEGIN SORTIES OVER PAK.

Stop targeting us, we will free aid workers: Taliban

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 6. Amidst reports that the Taliban has attempted to shoot down an unidentified spy plane over Kabul, the militia has offered to free the eight foreign aid workers who are under detention since August this year on charges of preaching Christianity.

(A PTI report today said U.S. F-18 fighter aircraft have begun sorties in the air corridors over Pakistan airspace. Air Force jets carried out surprise sorties on October 4 using the air corridor provided by Pakistan, creating "panic" in the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), which has sent its own F-16 to provide security cover to Pakistan's "vital" installations, the *Pakistan Observer* said quoting official sources.)

The qualified offer on the aid workers along with the decision to release the British journalist detained for illegal entry into Afghanistan earlier this week came less than 24 hours after the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, put the militia on notice to either

'Ready for martyrdom'

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 6. "I am not afraid of death because I have to kiss martyrdom one day and I pray



God to ordain martyrdom," the Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, reportedly told the Karachi-based Urdu weekly *Takbeer*.

Osama said he considered Pakistan a sacred land and abode of pure people saying these people would protect him without caring for their lives. "Pakistan is a great hope for the Muslims of the entire world". He has been quoted as saying that fighting for the security of Pakistan was the greatest "Jihad" s Pakistan was the "fort of Islam".

Details on Page 8

surrender Osama bin Laden, alleged mastermind behind the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the U.S., or be prepared to face the consequences. A statement issued by the Taliban Foreign Ministry qualified its offer to release the foreign aid workers by saying that it could consider their release if the U.S. "halts its massive propaganda campaign."

Comparing the aid workers' situation with that of the Afghan people, it said the U.S. "should issue a statement that the (Afghan) people will be safe and will not be the target of attack and that they can go back to their homes. "If they stop issuing threats, we will take steps for the release of the eight foreigners," it said.

Scribe's release imminent

The Afghan Islamic Press, a Peshawar-based news agency, in a report said the militia's leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, had ordered the release of Ms. Yvonne Ridley, a British journalist arrested last month in Afghanistan. The agency said Ms. Ridley (43) would be released this weekend.

In a related development, the Taliban has accused Mr. Tony Blair of pushing the U.S. to destroy the Taliban and said Pakistan hurt the leadership of the ruling Afghan militia. The President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, had said in a recent interview that the days of Taliban appeared numbered.

Asking Mr. Blair to be aware of the aware of the consequences of war, the Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Zaeef, told the media here last night that "Blair encourages the Americans to go for war. Why Blair is trying such bad things? He should try for negotiations," Mr. Zaeef said.

The Taliban's Education Minister, Mullah Aamir Khan Muttaqui, said Gen. Musharraf's comments that the Taliban's days were numbered was uncalled for and unnecessary. He told the Pakistan daily *The News* over the phone from Kabul that "we realise that Pakistan changed its Afghan policy under pressure from the U.S. But we did not expect the Pakistan Government to start propaganda against the Taliban after remaining our friend for years."

10-11-2002

10-11-2002

Taliban will release UK journalist; U.S. fighter planes begin sorties

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban on Saturday said that it would release British journalist Yvonne Ridley who was arrested a week ago for entering Afghanistan illegally.

Taliban ambassador, to Pakistan Abdul Salam Zaeef told the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press that Ms Ridley would be released "either today or tomorrow."

"Taliban leader (Mullah Mohammad Omar) issued the order following the British government's request for her release," Mr Zaeef said. The statement, which came hours after British Prime Minister Tony Blair made a lightning visit to Pakistan, did not mention any conditions placed on Ms Ridley's release.

Ms Ridley was detained near Jalalabad, eastern



Yvonne Ridley

Afghanistan, on September 28 after slipping into the country disguised under an all-covering burqa cloak, accompanied by two Afghan guides. She was not carrying a passport or Taliban visa.

The Taliban had said Ms Ridley would be placed on trial and was being investigated on pos-

BEFORE THE ONSLAUGHT

- ▶ Taliban offers to release aid workers if U.S. withdraws threat
- ▶ USAF jets caused 'panic' in Pak air force
- ▶ High flying aircraft fired at in Kabul

sible spying charges. The Taliban also offered to release eight foreign aid workers on trial for preaching Christianity if the United States withdrew its threat of military strikes. The aid workers would be released if the U.S. agreed to "stop its

I have hideouts from Indonesia to Kashmir: Bin Laden

ISLAMABAD: Terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden has said that he would have no difficulty in finding a safer place outside Afghanistan. His hideouts were in places ranging from Indonesia to Algeria, Chechnya to Kashmir and Bosnia to Sudan.

In an interview to Pak's Urdu weekly *Takbeer*, Bin Laden said that there was no difficulty in finding hideouts from where he could carry out his "mission", as he had many safe places in a number of countries. The weekly has not specified where and when he was interviewed.

Stating that he considered Pakistan a sacred land, Bin Laden said the Pakistanis would pro-

Taliban foreign ministry said in a statement. Meanwhile, U.S. F-18 fighter aircraft have begun sorties in the air corridors over Pakistan. U.S. Air Force jets carried out surprise sorties on October 4 using the air corridor provided by Pakistan, the *Pakistan Observer* said. The use of the air corridor by U.S. planes created "panic" in the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), which has sent its own F-16s to provide security cover to Pakistan's "vital" installations, it said, quoting official sources.

"Later it transpired that U.S. fighters were carrying out reconnaissance missions in the allowed air corridor. Even during the early hours of Friday, U.S. jets carried out many sorties from its carrier on the Afghan border near Peshawar," it said.

In Kabul, anti-aircraft guns opened fire on at least one plane high in the sky on Saturday, and a defence ministry official said that the army was trying to shoot down an unidentified air-

Can the king and his men do it?

MOHAMMED ZAHIR Shah, the former ruler of Afghanistan who turns 87 on October 15, lives in a secluded villa surrounded by gardens in the northern Roman suburb of Cassia. Security is extremely tight and policemen will not allow anyone, including accredited journalists, to approach the constantly patrolled security perimeter without prior appointment.

"We cannot allow you anywhere near the villa. Those are the instructions," an Italian officer says tersely handing back special accreditation issued by the Italian Foreign Ministry. The King has lived in exile in Rome for the past 28 years, ever since he was ousted in a coup d'etat by his socialist-minded cousin and brother-in-law General Daoud, who himself came to a sticky end in 1978.

The sirens of police outriders and escort vehicles wail frequently at the Italian Foreign Ministry and various western embassies, particularly that of the U.S. in downtown Rome, as a continuous diplomatic ballet unfolds. Zahir Shah is at the epicentre of this storm of dialogue and consultations. The intense negotiations under way

Zahir Shah is at the epicentre of a storm of dialogue and consultations on an alternative regime in Afghanistan.
Vaiju Naravane reports.

absolutely clear that His Majesty is not a pretender to the throne," the former ruler's son-in-law, General Abdul Wali, told *The Hindu* earlier this week. "For a long time he has wished to place himself at the service of his people. He is a patriot, loved by his people. He wants to spend the remainder of his life doing whatever he can to help his countrymen." But while the king is remembered with affection and nostalgia by his people, he lacks military support on the ground from his own ethnic community, the Pashtuns.

Attempts to bring the king back as a unifying factor who would be able to knit together a government of national

dent, Mr. George W. Bush, has sent his special envoy, Mr. Richard Haas, for yet another round of talks with the king. The U.S. Charge d'Affaires in Rome, Mr. William Pope, is a seasoned diplomat who has several times played a crucial role for the U.S. in delicate negotiations. He has served in Croatia, Pretoria and was on the inter-agency task force on sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. Civil war and inter-ethnic conflicts are a familiar terrain for Mr. Pope who has held many, very long meetings with the king and his top advisers. A delegation of U.S. congressmen called on Zahir Shah to pledge American support and massive aid for reconstruction.

The king was praised by the U.N. special envoy to Afghanistan, Mr. Francesco Vendrell, who said the former monarch could play a major role in the political reconciliation of the country. The U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has just named Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian Minister, as his new special envoy for Afghanistan. Mr. Brahimi who has held the post once before has been given the task of paving the way to establish "a fully representative and multi-ethnic unity gov-

Sirat, one of the king's advisers said the Supreme Council or Shoura would become "the only legitimate institution to take decisions on important issues relevant to Afghanistan".

There are now reports of tribal and military chiefs defecting from the ranks of the Taliban to join the Northern Alliance, especially in the region of Paktia and Laghman. Dr. Abdullah, officially described as the Foreign Minister of the late commander Ahmed Shah Masood's forces, told journalists that "ten thousand men" could change sides and join the Northern Alliance which will have 60 of the 120 seats in the Shoura or Supreme Council. But there remains uncertainty as to who will hold the remaining 60 seats and relations between the king's entourage and the Northern Alliance have been described as delicate.

"The remaining 60 of the 120 seats on the Supreme Council will go to Afghan groups operating from outside the country. But it is important that all the ethnic groups are represented — Hazaras, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pashtuns." Dr. Abdullah also said that he had "held meetings with U.S. emissaries", most probably in Dushanbe.

A name that crops up regularly as someone who could give the king much-needed Pashtun support is that of the former Mujahideen commander, Haji Abdul Haq, who has held meetings with U.S. Congressmen and U.S. and Iranian diplomats, and other Afghan leaders, including members of the Northern Alliance. A famous commander of the Hizbi Islami (Khalis group) in the Kabul region in the 1980s, he lost a leg in fighting, and suffered further personal tragedy when his family was killed in an attack in Peshawar, largely believed to be the work of pro-Taliban Pakistani agents. His brother, Haji Abdul Qadeer, is an ally of Masood's United National Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan.

These behind-the-scenes diplomatic moves have understandably unnerved Pakistan who would like to see the installation of a pro-Islamabad Government in Kabul in the event of the Taliban being ousted. The king is unlikely to be acceptable to Pakistan.

"Pakistan has helped the Taliban, there is no point in denying this," General Wali told *The Hindu*. "It has followed a policy which it felt was in its own interest. Maybe they now realise this did not give good results."

Pakistan's Minister for Women's Rights, Ms. Atiya Inayatullah, told *The Hindu* in Paris: "We are not against the Rome Process but we have said it doesn't stand a chance because it cannot be extended to a hundred per cent of the population. We are talking about an entry point which has come from the king and the northern areas which represent five per cent of the population. At this point in time, there are at least three if not four tracks. Pakistan is in the loop in all of them and we are waiting for the best formula."

reconciliation are not a recent development. Last November, Zahir Shah proposed the holding of a *Loya Jirga*, a traditional gathering of tribes, which he said could heal the country, and sent representatives to Afghanistan to muster support for his plan. But the Taliban and Pakistan shot down the proposal, saying the king had done little or nothing for his people during ten years of Soviet occupation and at the critical juncture of the Red Army's withdrawal in 1989.

The U.S. belief that the former ruler represents the best chance to end the civil war and install a national unity government in Afghanistan was further underlined by the fact that the Presi-



King Zahir Shah with American Congressmen... can he be a rallying point?

have been described as "The Rome Process". Over the past several years, with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan consolidating its hold, introducing harsh, fundamentalist and obscurantist policies, exporting terrorism, drugs and radical Islam, the former king has been increasingly viewed, not only by the U.S. but by several western states and the U.N., as the sole unifying, acceptable figure. They say a national coalition government could be built around him to bring peace and stability to a country battered and ruined by 23 years of war and civil war. Attempts to explore a possible return of the former ruler have gained more urgency since September 11. "I would like to make it

Rebels in demand



Northern Alliance fighters hold a position near Kabul.

IF YOU are wondering about the delay in U.S. counter strikes on Afghanistan, then shift focus to the Northern Alliance and its increasing clout and control over territory. The advances this loose grouping of anti-Taliban forces has achieved in the last 20 days would take any Afghanistan watcher by surprise. In fact, the Northern Alliance is the convenient Afghan face of the United States' war.

As its name suggests, the Northern Alliance mainly comprises Afghanistan's ethnic and religious minorities — Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen and Hazaras — from the northern areas which are its main support base and not southern Afghanistan. The Alliance, also known as the United Front, was formed in end-1996 to thwart the northward advance of the Pashtun-dominated Taliban.

Two major groups that joined hands to form the Alliance were the Jumbish-i-Milli led by the former communist chief of the Afghan Government's Uzbek militia, General Abdur Rashid Dostum, and the chief of the Tajik Shura-i-Nazaar, Ahmad Shah Masood. Two other major groups to join in were the anti-Taliban Pashtun leader of the former mujahideen outfit Harkat-i-Islami, Prof. Abdur Rab Rasool Sayyaf, and the Shia Hazara militia from the central Bamiyan province.

Initially, the Alliance emerged as a formidable challenge to the Taliban but it weakened over the years as the

The Northern Alliance could be a key factor in a successful Afghan policy for the U.S., writes B. Muralidhar Reddy.

Taliban was able to cash in on the internal differences. By the turn of the century, Taliban was practically in control. All this changed this year when 15,000-odd fighters led by Masood started gaining ground. Masood, called the Lion of Panjshir, had managed to keep his guerilla fighters in shape despite the reversals and acute manpower shortage. Backed by Iran and Russia, he was even able to engineer defections from among the Taliban. On September 9, he was killed by two Arab assassins. Even as the Alliance was dealing with the shock of Masood's death, the U.S. decided to take on the Taliban and the rebels seemed a logical choice as allies.

Gen. Fahim, Masood's loyal lieutenant, Gen. Dostum and the Hazara leader, Mr. Karim Khalili, are the new faces of the Alliance. If they can set aside their squabbles and add the crucial Pashtun face by convincing King Zahir Shah to take up the mantle or by any other design, the Alliance could be the key factor in a successful Afghan policy of the U.S. And there rests the future of the Alliance as well.

The grand plan of the U.S. to

install a new setup in Kabul under the patronage of King Zahir Shah has expectedly raised hackles in Pakistan. After all, Islamabad had banked on its ties with the Taliban for its so-called 'strategic depth'.

As Gen. Pervez Musharraf himself acknowledged, in one of his candid television interviews early this week, the days of the Taliban are numbered. But the military regime has serious reservations about a new dispensation in Kabul as contemplated by the U.S. Iran and China share these fears.

They believe the new regime would be a puppet of the U.S. and could seriously jeopardise their interests in the region. The theme song of Islamabad is that it would not like a 'hostile' regime in Kabul and the Northern Alliance is a 'sworn enemy'. Islamabad is convinced that the Alliance is propped up by its enemies — read India and Russia. There have been allegations galore about military and material support from New Delhi and Moscow to the Alliance. From Gen. Musharraf downward, every important functionary in Pakistan has sought to remind the world about the fate of the 'puppet governments' in Kabul.

What is the way out? The warnings from Islamabad are no doubt motivated by its own self-interest, but no one denies an element of truth in them. The picture is still hazy despite the categorical assurance by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, that Pakistan's interests would be protected in a future setup.

Putin, Blair discuss future of Afghanistan

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, OCT. 5. The post-war political arrangement in Afghanistan was one of the subjects discussed by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, during his lightning visit to Moscow on Thursday night, Russian sources said. 10.15

It was crucial for Mr. Blair to sound out the Russian position on the issue before he met General Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad on Friday. Moscow, which is the prime backer of the Northern Alliance, would like the anti-Taliban forces to play a leading role in the future coalition government in Afghanistan. However, the U.S. will hate to see Afghanistan revert to the Russian sphere of influence, the sources said. In its turn, Pakistan is keen to ensure that "friendly" Pushtuns continue to dominate the Afghan political scene. 6/10

After the talks, the Russian and British leaders sought to stress proximity of their views. "We fully share all the main ideas you set out in your speech in (British) Parliament (on Thursday)," the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, said.

For his part, Mr. Blair hailed Russia's support for the anti-terrorist struggle and said the two countries shared a "unified" approach to the problem. "We have met as partners to find answers to today's challenges," Russian agencies quoted Mr. Blair as saying.

THE HINDU

6 OCT 2002

US, Russia on mountain mission

HTC and Agencies
Islamabad/Moscow, October 5

SMALL TEAMS of Russian and US soldiers have entered north-eastern Afghanistan and are working their way towards Osama bin Laden's suspected hideout, say reports in the Pakistani press.

US special force teams entered Afghanistan from bases in Tajikistan last Thursday, The News reported. Russia's President Vladimir Putin, initially reluctant to join the US action, opted to send in soldiers after a week-end phone conversation with his US counterpart, George W Bush.

Provided with US equipment and reinforced with Russian Spetznaz commandos, the Russian 201st Motorised Rifle Division established bridgeheads across the Pyandzh River in the past few days. The 201st Division is based in Tajikistan.

Diplomatic sources in Islamabad say Pathan and Dari-speaking Russian troops are assisting the Americans. These are Afghanistan's two main languages.

There were earlier reports, quoting Pakistani intelligence sources, that Osama bin Laden and a few hundred followers had taken shelter near an old Soviet base in the Pamir Mountains in Afghanistan's Wakhan corridor. It was also reported that the US had confirmed this by satellite intelligence.

Bin Laden built this underground bunker after US cruise missile strikes against his camps in 1998. The US-Russian mission will be difficult. The Pamirs, called "the roof of the world", range from 20,000 feet to 25,000 feet.

According to The Times of London, the underground hideout has exit routes to Tajikistan,



AP PHOTO
Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and British Prime Minister Tony Blair address a joint press conference in Islamabad on Friday.

China's Xinjiang province and northern Pakistan. The parts of China, Tajikistan and Pakistan neighbouring the Wakhan corridor are areas where Islamic terrorists, many with links to bin Laden, are active. During the past fortnight, China has mobilised thousands of troops along the Afghan border to seal it against infiltrators.

The US commandos' main task, say experts, will be to confirm bin Laden's presence and fix the location of his hideout. This would then allow the US to

carry out missile and aerial strikes, followed by airborne troop assaults. The US has moved over a thousand paratroopers to nearby Uzbekistan and is believed to have more in Tajikistan.

The firepower the US has concentrated in the Persian Gulf area would be used largely against Taliban forces in southern Afghanistan. Britain's Royal Air Force is also on a 24-hour strike alert.

Related reports on pages 9 and 10



Blair, Pervez agree on a post-Taliban Govt

HTC and Agencies
Islamabad, October 5

UK PRIME Minister Tony Blair, the first Western leader to visit Pakistan since the September 11 terrorist attacks, and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf agreed on Friday that any post-Taliban Government in Afghanistan would have to be "broad-based" and include all key ethnic groups, including the majority Pathan ethnic group.

Blair said the Afghans were not "the enemy." He assured Pakistan that military action against Afghanistan would be proportionate, targeted and "not directed against the Afghan people."

Blair is believed to have come to Pakistan in an attempt to drum up support for planned strikes against the Taliban. The British leader, it is apparent, feels that Musharraf's support is vital to the fight against terrorism.

At a press conference, Blair said Pakistan's support for the global coalition against terrorism would improve its relations with the entire world. "I believe Pakistan has made the right choice," said Blair who arrived in Islamabad earlier today.

Reports in London say that Blair believes the Taliban, if sufficiently isolated, could be dislodged from power. Blair will meet Indian leaders tomorrow.

Blair said he was convinced the Saudi renegade Osama bin Laden was behind the attacks. Musharraf only went as far as to admit there was "evidence" that

bin Laden could have been behind the Black Tuesday attacks.

Pakistan closed its airspace along the Afghanistan border today in anticipation of US strikes against the Taliban. A Ria-Novosti report from Islamabad said Pakistan had closed its airspace up to the Afghanistan border.

Blair arrives: Blair arrived here tonight for consultations with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He would apprise Vajpayee and his Cabinet colleagues of the progress in the efforts to forge a global coalition against terrorism.

Tomorrow, Blair will take a few questions from reporters after their meeting at 7 Race Course Road. The Indian delegation at the first round of consultations is likely to include External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra and Foreign Secretary Chokila Iyer.

The political component of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) will join the two leaders for breakfast to be hosted by Vajpayee. Barring Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, who is not in town, all other CCS members - L K Advani, Jaswant Singh and K C Pant - will participate in the talks over breakfast.

A Foreign Office spokesperson said Blair's was a working visit for exchange of views on developments in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the US.

Islamabad convinced, but 'hesitant' to pass judgment on Osama role

Evidence concrete: Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 4. — Pakistan has said the USA presented "impressive evidence" of Osama bin Laden's involvement in the 11 September attacks, and asked America to publicise it all over the world to enable people to make a fair judgment. "The USA should be confident that it has impressive evidence," foreign minister Mr Abdul Sattar said in an interview to CNN yesterday.

He said Pakistan would respect the conclusion reached by the USA on the basis of the evidence but at the same time would not "sit on judgment" on the issue. "We are hesitant to pronounce a judgment".

Mr Sattar revealed Pakistan was shown 20 pages of documents besides an oral presentation and his government was evaluating the evidence.

TALIBAN TO TRY UK JOURNALIST

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 4. — The Taliban plans to put British journalist Yvonne Ridley on trial for illegally entering the country, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said today.

"She will be tried because she broke the laws of our land and entered our country without permission," AIP quoted Taliban deputy foreign minister Mullah Abdur Rahman Zahid as saying. "Right now the investigation of the British journalist is under way and then her case will be sent to the courts for a trial," he was quoted as saying, adding that it was irrelevant whether she was a journalist. — Reuters

Stating that the USA should publicise the evidence for the people of the world to see and evaluate it, he said people would be impressed by the good work done by the USA in a short time after the attacks.

Mr Sattar said, "We really respect the judgment that the USA itself has made but once again request it to please publicise this information because it is the world community that

will be making judgment." "Of course we are not saying that this should be taken to a court of law as that is for the USA to decide", he said. He added, "We apprehend that if the world community is not made aware of this information they will not be convinced that the action that is taken is justified." "We in Pakistan are particularly concerned about this issue (of making the evidence public) be-

cause there is a segment of public on our country which has extremist tendencies and they would exploit the absence of information in order to mislead people. We have vested interest that this information should be publicised. There is no harm in making the information and evidence public," Mr Sattar told CNN.

On the possibility of the evidence being "fabricated", Mr Sattar said those who say this were in a small minority and they had pre-conceived ideas. "They have already made up their minds and will not accept any evidence."

The USA for the first time provided material and documentary evidence to General Pervez Musharraf yesterday. The material was reportedly discussed at a joint meet of the cabinet and National Security Council held here yesterday.

THE STATESMAN

— 5 OCT 2002

Proof or not, USA won't get Laden: Taliban

REUTERS

DUBAI, Oct. 4. - The Taliban ambassador to Pakistan today said the militia wouldn't hand over Osama bin Laden even if there was evidence to implicate him in last month's attacks.

Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef told the UAE's *Al-Khaleej* newspaper the Taliban would "thoroughly check" US documents linking Bin Laden to the attacks before putting him on trial in an Islamic Sharia court.

"If we get evidence from them (USA), we will check it... and conduct a trial in a Sharia court. If this court convicts him, we'll see what to do," he added.

Zaeef's comments, which couldn't be immediately verified, were the first indication by the Taliban that it would not hand over Bin Laden under any circumstances.

The militia had earlier said it would give him up if provided with convincing evidence.

The USA has massed military forces within striking distance of Afghanistan to root out Bin Laden and the US defence secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, has begun a regional tour to win support for possible military action.

Zaeef told *Al-Khaleej* he still hoped for a "peaceful resolution" to the stand-off between Washington and Kabul. "Negotiations are the way to solve problems; war will complicate things," he said.

USA to use "smart" weapons: The USA plans to use "smart" or precision weapons to the maximum extent during its impending strikes on terrorist bases in Afghanistan, but will spare civilian infrastructure, adds PTI from Washington.

■ More reports on page 9

THE STATESMAN

5 OCT 2002

U.N. aid reaches Kabul

KABUL, OCT. 3. Urgently needed United Nations humanitarian relief convoys reached the Afghan capital Kabul on Wednesday and aid workers said the hardline ruling Taliban were cooperating. "The convoys come without any problem. The Taliban are fully cooperating with us at the distribution sites," said Mr. Yosuf Yosufzai, a World Food Programme logistical officer in Kabul.

"Along the way we didn't have any problems... There is no security problem for the transportation of convoys and no restrictions in the distribution," he said. At various feeding points in the city, the WFP's main beneficiaries — women swathed in the mandatory all-enveloping burqa, children and elderly men — lined up to receive their rations.

After three years of drought and two decades of war, conditions have deteriorated further since the deadly September 11 hijack plane attacks on the U.S., with people fearing U.S. military reprisals fleeing the cities.

The U.N. has launched a \$584-million emergency appeal as it prepares for up to 1.5 million Afghans who may try to enter neighbouring countries, with most believed likely to end up in Pakistan and Iran. The WFP, which halted food convoys after September 11 when the Taliban told all foreign aid workers to leave the country, says at least six million of Afghanistan's 24 million people are dependent to some extent on food aid. — Reuters

Pervez open to talks with deposed ^{HFA} Afghan king ^{4/10}

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, October 3

GENERAL PERVEZ Musharraf is willing to discuss the possibility of a new regime taking over in Kabul and has asked the former Afghan King, Mohammed Zahir Shah, to send an emissary to Islamabad for discussions, Italy's Deputy Foreign Minister Margherita Boniver said here today.

Zahir Shah lives in Italy and Boniver said she believed he had a role to play in helping form a Government in Afghanistan should the Taliban regime fall. The minister met General Musharraf yesterday and had a detailed discussion on the "Rome process".

Boniver said she gathered the feeling after meeting with Gen Musharraf that he was discussing a post-Taliban scenario. "He did not mention bin Laden, but definitely spoke all the time of a post-Taliban scenario when Afghanistan is liberated from the presence of bin Laden," she told newsmen.

But Gen Musharraf said any process to bring a new Government should be under UN supervision. The latest position by President Musharraf has put his Foreign Office in an embarrassing situation, for yesterday, it had termed the Rome peace process as a "so-called process".

"Basically she informed us that Italy is not a participant in the so-called Rome process. However, Italian government facilitates any contacts people may wish to have with former King Zahir Shah, being his host for last so many years," a Pak Foreign Office spokesman had said yesterday.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 OCT 2001

Fear of strike over Afghanistan

SRINJOY CHOWDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 2. - The Pakistani navy has begun exercises beyond Karachi harbour and its armymen (serving and retired) have started leaving Afghanistan fearing US air strikes.

Pakistan may have had 7,000 retired army officers, ISI agents and irregulars and other men in Afghanistan. Among them was Maj-Gen. (retd) Qamar Zaman, Taliban's chief of operations for at least two years, who returned to Pakistan last week.

The exercises reportedly began in the third week of September, senior officials said. "They've been on alert for over a fortnight and... patrolling the coast, coming back into harbour and returning. They are being moni-

PAK ARMYMEN LEAVE TALIBAN COUNTRY

tored," an official said.

The Pakistani navy, in operation comprises frigates and submarines (old Leander and Type-21 class British frigates and Daphne- and Agosta-class subs), and isn't considered very threatening. About five frigates and four subs are in operation.

The exercises are seen as a political necessity, for two huge US aircraft-carrier battle-groups are just 240 km south-west of Karachi. The battle-groups comprise two aircraft carriers - *USS Enterprise* and *USS Carl Vinson* - and their supporting ships, including destroyers, cruisers and submarines. The carriers may have more than 100 planes, including the F-14 Tomcat, usually for air-defence and the F-18

Hornet. Some ships too may be able to fire the Tomahawks.

"There were many retired armymen, including senior officers... helping the Taliban for the past five years. Among the retired officers was a lieutenant-general," an official said.

Agencies today said the elite Special Services Group members were in Afghanistan too along with ISI agents.

Hundreds of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Mohammed activists are still in Afghanistan, Pakistani media said. A Peshawar-based army sub-unit was in Kabul and a Cherat SSG unit was sent to Afghanistan.

A Pak parachute regiment was with the 11th Nangarhar Division of Taliban, commando sub-

units were stationed in the Nangarhar artillery headquarters, the reports said. A group of Pakistani military advisers were at Taliban's Bagram air base.

The ISI had opened two new offices in Kandahar and Kabul about two months ago "ostensibly to liaise with Taliban authorities" and for "greater and more effective coordination." Another office was "opened in Mazar-e-Sharif to facilitate coordination with Islamic forces in Uzbekistan," reports in *The Friday Times* and *The Dawn* said.

The ISI-army combine has been "using abandoned chemical factories... and closed cotton textile mills in Mansehra, Lakki Nowshera and Charsadda of NWFP "as staging posts for onward despatch of arms and ammunition to the Taliban." //

THE STATESMAN

7 OCT 2001

TALIBAN AND THE ANTI-TERROR STAKES

THE TALIBAN 'GOVERNMENT' has put itself on a collision course with the United States by openly acknowledging that Osama bin Laden, the suspected evil genius behind the latest terrorist strikes against America, is actually present in Afghanistan itself. This confirms Washington's assertions about Osama bin Laden's established access to Afghanistan as a sanctuary, despite America's own dim view of the Taliban's low credibility quotient. More significantly, the larger international community is seized of the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar's intransigence in refusing to let Osama bin Laden be brought to justice in a due process of law. Of equal salience is the Taliban's bluster that the chief suspect is under its firm "control". Indeed, the notorious Kabul regime's cavalier attitude regarding this issue has raised the global community's anti-terror stakes. This can only signify a heightened confrontation between the Afghan powers-that-be and the civilised world. Yet, it must be emphatically underlined that a clear distinction exists between the obscurantist Taliban and the ordinary people of Afghanistan. What should end is the long and dark nightmare that the Afghan people have helplessly endured under the Taliban's unpardonably regressive rule since 1996. So, the gathering political and humanitarian crisis inside Afghanistan is of utmost concern to the entire international community and not just the United States as the prime mourner in the latest terrorist saga.

Mullah Omar's regime has never been recognised by the United Nations. This aspect has much to do with a congruence of the political preferences of the vast majority of the U.N. members. Yet, the fact remains that the Taliban's unrelenting campaigns against the basic canons of humanism and modernity within Afghanistan have transgressed the known practices of historically repressive 'governance'. Any strategy to replace the Taliban will, therefore, be welcome insofar as it furthers the genuine interests of the

ordinary citizens of Afghanistan. Pakistan, whose strategic 'connections' to the genesis of the Taliban are being made use of by the U.S., has now clearly indicated that the Kabul regime has become a law unto itself (as the saying goes). Pakistan's ongoing efforts to influence Mullah Omar's thinking have virtually come to naught. On a different but related plane, the U.S. at the moment seems to be ready with several alternative plans to try and dislodge the Taliban even while seeking to track down its "guest", Osama bin Laden. A note of prudence will be in order, though. While it is true that the U.N. does not at all recognise the Taliban, it will be statesmanly of the U.S. to try and build a consensus within the U.N. system while intervening in Afghanistan to confront Mullah Omar over Osama bin Laden.

A simple matter of far-reaching logic is that the U.N. deserves to be privy to the U.S.' thinking in some substantive way or the other. It bears mention that the U.N. holds the ultimate moral responsibility to redress any humanitarian tragedy that might be triggered by a conflict between the Taliban and the international community. By defying a pervasive opinion in the present volatile context, Mullah Omar insists on comprehensive and not just circumstantial evidence against Osama bin Laden. While this argument is not without some resonance within the worldwide Islamic fraternity, there is little or no opposition to the idea that Afghanistan can do without the Talibanised system of 'governance'. Some of the options now being considered by the U.S., with or without an official acknowledgment, relate to a possible role for the former Afghan monarch, 'King' Zahir Shah, as the initiator of a new government of national unity and reconciliation in Kabul. The anti-Taliban 'Northern Alliance' has evinced interest in braving the Taliban with external help or even independently. These and other options need to be harmonised so that the Taliban can be consigned to the scrapheap of history.

THE HINDU

3 OCT 2001

'Broadbased govt. planned for Afghanistan will include Taliban'

#19-13
2/10
Afghanistan

By Vaiju Naravane

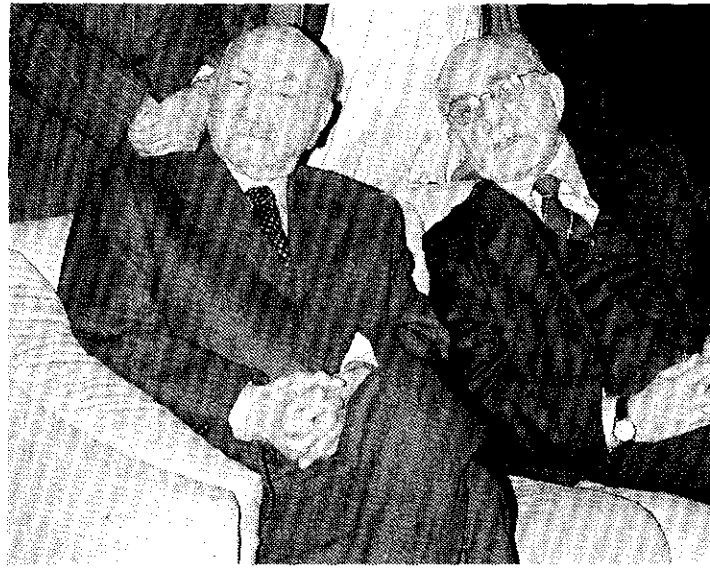
ROME, OCT. 2. General Abdul Wali, brother-in-law of Afghanistan's exiled former ruler, Mohammed Zahir Shah, today spelt out the details of an agreement reached on Monday between Shah and a delegation of the Northern Alliance, in an exclusive interview with *The Hindu*.

The agreement proposes ways to establish a broadbased, popular government in Afghanistan by convening a *Loya Jirga* — council of ethnic and tribal chiefs — to set up a new transitional government. The Taliban will not be excluded from this process.

Gen. Wali, who is married to the King's sister, Princess Bilkees, and has been close to the King throughout his 28-year exile, suggested that India might be missing a historic opportunity to play a constructive role in shaping the future of Afghanistan. "May be India had an Afghan policy and perhaps it supported the successive governments in Kabul more than it supported the resistance. I hope India will now formulate an Afghan policy that corresponds to reality, that means not only in the light of their relationship to Pakistan. A policy for Afghanistan that would be for Afghanistan and Pakistan."

Asked if India's support to the Northern Alliance was belated and opportunistic, Gen. Wali said: "Your leadership should interest itself more in the people of Afghanistan, to help us get out of this situation of misery and servitude. India has assisted in constructing and running one or two hospitals in the past. We could think about that on a larger scale. Many years ago, His Majesty received India's Foreign Minister (Mr. Natwar Singh) who called while he was passing through."

On whether India had sent emissaries or attempted to make contact in recent days, Gen. Wali said: "I have met Indian ambassadors or personalities at receptions. More than that I cannot



A file photo of Afghanistan's ousted King, Mohammad Zahir Shah (left) with General Abdul Wali. — AP

say. But I can assure you we like Indians."

The former ruler of Afghanistan received promises of support from a delegation of U.S. Congressmen who called on him last weekend. But, despite international support, the logistics of holding a *Loya Jirga* appear to be insurmountable at this point in time, given the Taliban's control of 80 per cent of the territory.

The Taliban and Pakistan have described the King as a "puppet of the United States." Asked whether he saw a turnaround in Islamabad's policy towards Kabul in the light of the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf's remarks that the Taliban's days appeared to be numbered, Gen. Wali said "Pakistan has followed a policy which it felt was in its own interest. May be they now realise this did not give good results. They have helped the Taliban, there is no point in denying this. I hope Pakistan understands that the type of government that will exist will be friendly towards Pakistan. Pakistan is our neighbour, we have various things in com-

mon and we do not wish to have a hostile attitude towards them. We must create an area of peace in the region and India's role is very important. I hope that the differences that exist in the subcontinent involving mostly India and Pakistan will be settled in the interests of the people of the area."

Referring to what is now being described as the "Rome Process," Gen. Wali said: "His Majesty believes that sovereignty is of the people. This new plan is to convene the *Loya Jirga*, an old Afghan institution which differs from the parliament in that it does not meet regularly but only on very special occasions of great import. Its decisions are accepted by all.

So this new government will have to come through a *Loya Jirga* and will have two essential qualities necessary for a government to function: legitimacy for the head of state who will be proclaimed or elected and it will have legality by the government. He will be presented to the *Loya Jirga* and obtain a vote of confidence." With legality and legitimacy, Afghanistan could hope to attract

help from foreign governments to rebuild the shattered country.

Mr. Mohammed Younus Quanooni, who heads the Northern Alliance delegation described the three days of talks as a unique opportunity and "the start of a new era for the Afghans to bring unity to the country."

The new agreement could lead to the holding of an "emergency *Loya Jirga*," for the first time in 37 years and is considered by experts to be a turning point in the present impasse in which the country finds itself.

"It was decided that a supreme council or a Shoora should start functioning as soon as possible to prepare for the emergency *Loya Jirga*."

After a period of transition which might last eighteen months to two years, another, normal, traditional or non-emergency *Loya Jirga* will be convoked in order to ratify the constitution and take other necessary measures," Gen. Wali said.

The location of the Shoora would be in Afghanistan whenever that became possible and would include "all the ethnic communities in Afghanistan."

The door was not closed to the Taliban, Gen. Wali said. "I would like to make it absolutely clear that His Majesty is not a pretender to the throne. He is an Afghan patriot who has decided to place himself at the service of the Afghan nation."

He is now 87 and wishes to spend the rest of his life to help resolve the country's problems. And the most important problem now is that of leadership."

Describing the former ruler as "a patriot and wise man," Gen. Wali said he was considered by many Afghans as the father of the nation. "He is a much-loved person. People refer to him as Baba, a word of respect. Only one other King of Afghanistan was given that honorific title, and that was Ahmed Shah Durrani."

Taliban decries pact: Page 14

USA shares Laden proof with allies

YOMIURI SHIMBUN
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

WASHINGTON, Oct. 2. - The USA has begun the process of providing its allies with evidence that purportedly links Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaida network to the 11 September terrorist attacks in the country, CNN reported.

CNN quoted US government officials as saying the evidence is contained in diplomatic cables to certain US embassies. The first round of cables were being sent to English-speaking countries, including Britain, Canada and Australia. The next round is expected to go out within 48 hours to Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Nato member countries.

The second round of messages will not reveal as much as the initial cables, CNN said. US state department officials said Washington was providing evidence to its allies that "makes the case in a logical kind of way" without providing "every morsel of evidence," CNN said.

Shortly after the second round is transmitted "everyone else" will receive cables, CNN quoted US officials as saying. Again, those cables will contain less-



ARMoured CORPS: Taliban fighters sit atop a Russian tank during a patrol in Kabul on Tuesday. - AP/PTI

detailed information than that in the first two rounds.

Pakistan will receive information, but it will be a "special case". The evidence is likely to be presented "eyeball to eyeball" in a meeting between General Pervez Musharraf and US ambassador to Pakistan, Ms Wendy Chamberlin, CNN reported.

Hijacker held by USA: Mr George W Bush has said the effort to bring terrorists to justice and freeze their assets are paying off, add agencies. "We're slowly but surely bringing them to justice," he said yesterday. He said the authorities had caught a "known terrorist", linked with the 5 September 1986 hijacking of Pan Am Flight 73 in Pakistan that left two US citizens dead. He would be charged with murder.

Taliban shores up defences

REUTERS

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 2. - The Taliban leaders today tried to prop up old alliances, woo new friends and retain their own men as they stood firmly behind Osama bin Laden.

With USA getting ready for possible military strikes against Afghanistan, the Taliban pitched the crisis as a battle of Islam against the US forces.

Reports from within Afghanistan said many ministers travelled to Kandahar to confer with their spiritual and supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar. Some toured the south and the east to forge new alliances and tell their troops to fight till death for the cause of jihad.

The defence minister, Mr Obaidullah, went to the eastern city of Jalalabad to meet his fighters. Striving to prevent internal disintegration, the Taliban struck a deal a yesterday with tribal leader in three eastern provinces.

The position of the Taliban, and their leader, has never been more perilous. There are signs of dissent within the territory, the Opposition is nipping at the frontlines and Washington has threatened strikes if they don't surrender to Bin Laden.

But Omar is still not willing to compromise on his "guest" - the top suspect in masterminding the suicide plane attacks that toppled the twin World Trade Center towers and crashed into the Pentagon. For the first time since the attacks, the Taliban admitted Osama was still under their control.

PAK DENIAL

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 2. - Islamabad has said the Pakistani air squadron at Sungli air base near Quetta, flown out yesterday, would return after completing its routine exercise. The aircraft were shifted to accommodate UN aid flights to the city. - UNI

THE STATESMAN

3 OCT 2001

Musharraf: Taliban's days are numbered

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 1. The first signs of an imminent attack on Afghanistan were visible today when the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, told an international television channel that the days of the Taliban militia appeared "numbered." *10-1-2001*

In response to a question by the BBC if the Taliban's days are numbered, he said, "It appears so." In another interview to the CNN on Sunday, the President said that he saw the "danger of damage" coming to the Taliban as it continued to defy world opinion for the handover of Osama bin Laden.

"It appears that the United States will take action in Afghanistan, and we have conveyed this to the Taliban," Gen. Musharraf told the BBC. He was at pains to emphasise that Pakistan had done its best to avoid a confrontation.

Gen. Musharraf had sent two missions — an official one, led by the ISI chief, and the second, consisting of ulema (Muslim leaders) accompanied by the ISI chief — in a bid to persuade the Taliban supremo, Mullah Mohammad Omar, to heed the advice of the international community and agree to hand over Osama. But both the missions failed.

That there is no hope of any reconciliation between the Taliban and the U.S. was evident from a hard-hitting statement of Mullah Omar daring the Americans to launch an attack on Afghanistan. He once again denied the involvement of Osama or any of his asso-

ciates hiding in Afghanistan in the September 11 terror strikes in the U.S. In Kabul, the first World Food Programme convoy since the start of the crisis arrived on Monday. Eight trucks carrying 218 tonnes of wheat made it through to the city, the WFP spokesman, Mr. Khalid Mansour, said. A U.N. humanitar-

Alliance halts military operations

MOSCOW, OCT. 1. The anti-Taliban Northern Alliance has halted its military operations against the Afghan militia forces on all fronts ahead of imminent U.S. strikes on Afghanistan, commercial channel NTV reported today.

"In the course of Northern Alliance offensive in the recent days all the Taliban positions have been pinpointed and information about their dislocation has been passed on to the Americans. We are expecting a U.S. strike within hours, NTV correspondent reported. — PTI

ian aid delivery of 40 tonnes of food and other supplies for Afghan children also arrived in Turkmenistan.

Pact to oust Taliban

A Reuters report from Rome said the ex-King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan had reached an agreement with the opposition Northern Alliance aimed at ousting the Taliban rulers in Kabul, the two sides said today.

Handwritten: THE HINDU
- 7 OCT 2001
4

Anti-Taliban bloc seals deal

FROM CRISPIAN BALMER

Rome, Oct. 1 (Reuters): The former king of Afghanistan struck a deal today with the country's main opposition force, the Northern Alliance, designed to oust the ruling Taliban and establish a moderate government in Kabul.

Under the terms of the groundbreaking accord, drawn up in a bid to end more than two decades of war, the two parties said they had established a "Supreme Council for National Unity".

This would shortly convene a traditional grand assembly of Afghan leaders — the so-called Loya Jirga. "I am convinced that the agreement we have reached today will be the start of a new era for Afghanistan," said Younus Qanooni, the head of the Northern Alliance delegation.

The Loya Jirga, which groups elders, tribal chiefs and spiritual leaders, would elect a new head of state and establish a transitional government ahead of free elections. Supporters of 86-year old former king Mohammad Zahir Shah, who has lived in Italy in exile since 1973, said the Taliban would not be barred from the assembly but made it clear they expected the hardline Afghan regime would soon be ousted.

Pakistani military ruler Gen. Pervez Musharraf said as much earlier today, telling the BBC that the Taliban's days appeared numbered because it would not hand over Osama bin Laden, prime suspect in last month's devastating attacks on the United States.

The US has threatened to punish the radical Islamic movement if it fails to surrender bin Laden.

Under today's deal, the Supreme Council will gather before the end of the month and will act as de-facto government of Afghanistan ahead of a Loya Jirga, the parties said.

"Within one or two weeks of its

inception, the Council will be the only legitimate body to take decisions relative to Afghanistan," the ex-king's representative, Abdul Sattar Sirat, said.

"We must be ready if there are drastic changes in Afghanistan's political scene to resolve our problems and fill the power vacuum," he said.

Former king's role

Western diplomats believe the former king, who reigned for 40 years and brought relative peace and prosperity to Afghanistan, is the only figure with enough authority to assemble a broad and moderate front to replace the Taliban.

The Northern Alliance is the main force still fighting the Taliban. It is still recognised by the United Nations and most of the world as the legitimate Afghan government even though it controls less than 10 per cent of Afghan territory.

The Alliance delegation and the king's supporters issued a plea to Afghanistan's neighbours, especially Pakistan, not to interfere in their dealings, saying that after 23 years of conflict, the Afghan people had to decide their own fate. Pakistan is the only country still to recognise the Taliban and, according to the Northern Alliance, it has kept it alive with regular supplies of arms and fuel.

"As far as we understand it, one of Afghanistan's miseries lies in Pakistan's position," Qanooni said. "We say that the council we have created does not threaten any country. It is in everyone's interest that there is peace in our region."

Provincial support

The Taliban said today they had agreed to involve tribal elders and war commanders in governing three provinces, the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said.

THE TELEGRAPH

2 OCT 2001

UK blocks Taliban's £61 million

FROM SHRABANI BASU

London, Oct. 1: Britain has cut off £61 million of funds belonging to the Taliban, in its effort to fight international terrorism, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown announced today.

The crackdown will affect several organisations which are run as fronts for the Taliban and Bin Laden's al Qaida network and also the small unlicensed bureaux de changes all over the country from which funds are transferred illegally.

Addressing the Labour Party Conference at Brighton, the Chancellor urged other governments to

also cut the financial networks through which the terrorists operated. "This is a step of international solidarity, it is the cause of the people of conscience everywhere, whatever the colour, whatever the religion, whatever the background and whatever the country," he said. "There should be no hiding place for terrorist funds." France has frozen assets worth around £2.5 million.

The government has estimated that up to £4 billion a year leaves the country through the bureaux de changes and that 65 per cent comes from illegal sources. Only eight per cent is for holiday travel. Financial regulators are to be

given powers of inspection and it will be an offence for banks to deal with unlicensed bureaux. Police will also be given powers to monitor bank accounts suspected of being used for terrorist purposes. Similar powers already exist in Northern Ireland.

The treasury also wants to give the police powers to freeze a suspect account at the start of an investigation related to terrorism. At present they can freeze it only when there is considerable proof, by which time the money has often gone through. The Chancellor also said Britain had followed up the cutting down of terrorist funds by also stopping sales of

weapons to over 60 countries, and urged other countries to do the same. "We must cut off the supply of weapons to these countries and restrict arms selling to these countries," he said. He also announced that Britain would give £38 million aid to the Afghan refugees.

The UN's top emergency relief coordinator Kenzo Oshima arrived in Islamabad today for a fact-finding trip to Pakistan as it prepares to help thousands of Afghan refugees displaced or in flight from hunger and war. "He has been sent by Kofi Annan who is extremely worried by the situation of the Afghan people," a UN official said.

THE TELEGRAPH

2 OCT 2001

Pak counts Taliban's days

FROM SAYED SALAHUDDIN

Kabul, Oct. 1 (Reuters): The likelihood of military strikes on Afghanistan appeared to grow today after the Taliban stepped up their defiance of US demands to hand over Osama bin Laden.

Even Pakistan, the only country still to recognise the Afghan leadership, distanced itself from Kabul when President Pervez Musharraf was asked if the Taliban's days were numbered.

"It appears so," he told the BBC in an interview. "It appears that the US will take action in Afghanistan. Because of the stand the Taliban have taken, confrontation will take place."

The Taliban had said yesterday they were hiding bin Laden.

Pakistan said it had not lost all hope that the Taliban will surrender the Saudi exile and repeated that it would not sever diplomatic ties with the militia regime.

"Whatever hope is left, whatever possibilities exist, we will certainly remain engaged to see these possibilities are expended and some kind of diplomatic effort succeeds with the Taliban government," Pakistani spokesman Riaz Mohammad Khan said.

The fate of the Taliban and their spiritual leader Mullah Mohammad Omar has never looked more perilous, with signs of dissent at home, the opposition nipping at their frontlines and the world's most modern military machine at their doorstep.

A sign of the building storm

came from Japan. A US Navy spokesman said the American carrier Kitty Hawk, with some 70 warplanes on board, had sailed from its home port near Tokyo for duty in "Operation Enduring Freedom" — the code name for the US war on terrorism.

Iran's defence minister Admiral Ali Shamkhani sounded a warning to Washington, saying that Iranian forces would confront US planes if its airspace was used for strikes. But Uzbekistan has allowed the US to use its airspace.

A beleaguered Taliban said they had agreed to involve tribal elders and war commanders in governing Khost, Paktya and Paktita.

See Page 4

THE TALEBANS

Taliban decries pact between Zahir Shah, Northern Alliance

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 2. Both Pakistan and the Taliban militia appear convinced that the agreement between the Northern Alliance (NA) and the former Afghan King, Zahir Shah, for convening a grand council to explore the possibility of the formation of a new government in Kabul would not go far.

While the Taliban denounced the agreement outright and said it was doomed to fail, Islamabad was a little circumspect. Without directly referring to it, Pakistan sought to remind the world that the two-year rule of the NA from 1992 neither provided stability nor brought peace to Afghanistan.

"What is it that would work in Afghanistan? It should be remembered that the NA was at the helm of affairs in Kabul for two years. They neither brought stability nor peace. Any effort in Afghanistan should be for a broadbased government," the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Mr. Riaz Mohammad Khan, said.

He was at pains to emphasise that Pakistan had been part of the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Countries effort for reconciliation and formation of a broadbased government in Afghanistan. "There is an immutable quality to relations between people of Afghanistan and Pakis-

an. Sometimes this relationship transcends the nature of relations between Islamabad and Kabul. Interests of the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan are intertwined. We would always seek friendship and co-operation with Afghanistan."

He said Pakistan would not like to see a hostile government in Afghanistan and that it was the conviction of Islamabad that a government acceptable to the people of Afghanistan would not be hostile to it. "People of both countries would ensure that there is convergence in their interests. A government hostile to Pakistan would not be a representative government."

The Taliban said that the U.S.-backed attempt to change their rule was doomed to fail, the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported. "The decisions in Rome are being taken under the instructions of the U.S. and would have no positive result," AIP quoted Maulvi Abdul Rehman Zahid, Taliban's Deputy Foreign Minister, as saying. He was commenting on the agreement reached between Mr. Zahir Shah and the NA on calling a 'Loya Jirga' (grand council) to decide the fate of the country.

"The people of Afghanistan do not accept a government selected from outside. We will definitely

fight against these kinds of elements. The people who gathered in Rome are the same who filled their pockets during the jihad against the Soviets and now want to collect money in the name of Afghanistan," Maulvi Zahid said.

The 'Loya Jirga', which comprises elders, tribal chiefs and spiritual leaders, would elect a new head of state and establish a transitional government ahead of free elections. Supporters of the 86-year old former King, who has lived in exile in Italy since 1973, said the Taliban would not be barred from the assembly but made it clear that they expected the hardline Afghan regime to be ousted soon.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman said that Islamabad had conveyed to Taliban the urgency of the situation. "We have told them that there is not much time left. Afghanistan is an independent country and it is for the leadership to take a decision on what is expected from them by the international community."

Mr. Khan said there was no effort to take up the subject again with the Taliban leadership. "There can be an effort on the spur of the moment. The situation is fast changing. I cannot say anything with certainty."

THE HINDU

2 OCT 2001

Bush approves covert aid for Afghan rebels



Laura Bush (left), George W. Bush and their dog Barney step down from Marine One on their way to the White House on Sunday. (AFP)

**FROM MICHAEL R. GORDON
AND DAVID E. SANGER**

Washington, Oct. 1: President Bush has approved a covert effort to strengthen a diverse array of groups fighting the Taliban, administration officials said yesterday.

Separately, Bush has authorized \$100 million in new relief aid to Afghan refugees, as part of an effort to quell resentment in Pakistan as thousands pour over the border each day.

Administration officials are also actively considering a plan to air-drop food into Afghanistan to forestall starvation as winter approaches, though military planners are hesitating because they have not yet figured out a way to ensure that the food does not fall into the Taliban's hands.

The administration's programme of covert support for anti-Taliban groups has emerged as a

key element of its plan to oust a government that Washington has accused of sheltering Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network.

The aid is not only intended to help the Northern Alliance, the rebel group that operates from bases in northern Afghanistan, it is also aimed at stirring up resistance to the Taliban among Pashtun tribal groups in the south.

"The purpose is to enhance their ability to their move against the Taliban," a senior official said. "It is not limited to political support." Administration officials indicated that the assistance included financing, but they declined to say how much money would be spent or to provide details of the effort. The money could enable the rebels to buy weapons, to recruit new fighters, to bribe Taliban commanders to switch sides or to undertake other efforts to weaken the regime.

American officials have previ-

ously suggested that if fighting broke out, the rebels could provide intelligence data and serve as proxy fighters in a US-led effort to track bin Laden and target the Taliban.

Encouraging defections in the ranks of the Taliban is also a prime goal. In the 19 days since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, one administration official said yesterday, the US has been in contact with "people who are loosely affiliated with the Taliban and have separated from them" or are likely to switch sides if they believe the regime's days are numbered.

Administration officials declined to say whether Bush had signed a presidential decision directive—a secret document that would specifically authorise covert activity. But one official said, "appropriate legal authority exists" for a full range of activities

in Afghanistan.

Bush's decisions came as anti-Taliban Afghans continued their effort to form a broad coalition centered on the former king, Mohammed Zahir Shah. The former king, 86, has been meeting in Rome with representatives of the Northern Alliance and commanders from southern Afghanistan.

Mostapha Zahir, the king's grandson, said in a telephone interview yesterday that negotiations to form a common front were continuing and that the king, the Northern Alliance and southern commanders planned to issue a declaration today.

The leaders include Abdul Haq, the former mujahideen commander who fought against Soviet troops in Afghanistan and who recently returned to the region, as well as a half-dozen other commanders. The king also plans to convene a "loya jirga," an assembly of Afghan leaders.

The Northern Alliance has been fighting the Taliban for years. It controls only a small amount of territory, and its leader was recently killed in a suicide bomb attack that American intelligence officials believe was instigated by bin Laden. It is dominated by ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks and thus is unacceptable to many Afghans.

The dominant group in Afghanistan is the Pashtun, and the Bush administration has been careful to support that group as well. The former king is a Pashtun, and the Taliban leadership are also Pashtun. "There's no question but that there are any number of people in Afghanistan, tribes in the south, the Northern Alliance in the north, that oppose the Taliban," defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said yesterday alluding to the decision to support the rebel factions.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

THE TELEGRAPH

2 OCT 2001

War in Afghanistan

By V. R. Raghavan

A regime change in Afghanistan is likely to be the major strategic purpose of the U.S.-led military operations.

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A NEW Afghan war is about to commence shortly. A massive coalition of countries interested in eliminating terrorism has agreed to combine its resources to cleanse Afghanistan of its terrorist ideology. The fact is that terrorism is a response of the weaker adversary in a conflict where the other side holds overwhelming military and economic power. It is the response to an unequal military conflict and has been correctly termed asymmetric war. An asymmetric war can be continued without fronts, without military forces and by attacking the people instead of the military. Now that economic power drives all aspects of security, economic assets become targets in asymmetric wars. That was what the attacks of September 11 were all about. They struck at the people and the economy. The response is also an asymmetric buildup of military power. The conflict between massive military power and massive terror response is about to reach unprecedented levels.

The Taliban made the strategic error of claiming legitimacy for terrorism by giving it state support. It has placed itself in the invidious position of neither being able to hand over Osama bin Laden nor of disclaiming its role in international terrorism. Since it will not hand over Osama, it has become the target of war against terrorism. This combined with the Taliban's medieval manner of Islamic governance has turned almost all Islamic states against it. It represents the majority Pushtun population of Afghanistan, but has squandered that population's loyalty by its barbaric rule. That opens the possibility of targeting the Taliban as a separate entity from the Pushtun population.

The U.S. coalition against terrorism has deployed a massive military force. Much of it comprises air attack capabilities based both on land and at sea. The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Naval Fleets are assembled in addition to long range bombers, AWACs, stealth aircraft. Cruise missiles form part of this awesome military buildup. There are nearly 30,000 ground troops getting ready for the impending operations. The Taliban's military capability is entirely asymmetric in comparison. Its military hardware consists of a little over 500 as-

sorted tanks with poor maintenance standards. There are about 1,000 artillery pieces, some multi-barrel rocket-launchers, a few combat aircraft and some helicopters. Much of the munitions, crew for tanks, instructors for artillery, and command and control facilities were Pakistan dependent. This hardware can be destroyed by the coalition air power within a week or two of the start of the operations.

The strategic objectives of the military operations being planned by the U.S. have not been spelt out. They are also unlikely to be listed to retain surprise and flexibility of options. It is, however, not difficult to make an estimate. The immediate purpose of the strikes in Afghanistan would be to assuage a justifiably angry and seriously shaken public in the U.S. That would require air strikes against known and anticipated locations where Osama may have taken shelter. The operations against Osama would continue until he is eliminated. Fired by his personal brand of martyrdom he would rather perish and be a hero than be captured and stand trial. The Osama saga will become folklore in the Islamic world. There are children named Osama by their parents, in adoration of a man they see as a martyr. We shall before long see, the dramatic pictures from the cameras mounted in combat aircraft showing laser guided munitions destroying Osama locations. War as a spectator sport will have everyone glued to the TV. Hopefully it will also satisfy the desire for justice being done to the man behind the horrendous events in New York and Washington.

The Bush administration has apparently had a major change of focus in foreign and security policy since the September 11 attacks. Terrorism offers not only a long term policy focus but also unlimited opportunities in advancing U.S. strategic interests. Control over Afghanistan would link the energy-rich Central Asian region to a proximate U.S. presence. The U.S. influence and military presence in Afghanistan and Central Asian states, not unlike that over the oil-rich Gulf states, would be a major strategic gain. The NATO's eastern

limits are already on the eastern shores of the Black Sea. The U.S. has put in place an ongoing military arrangement with Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan is not lagging in its desire to regain influence in Afghanistan with U.S. assistance. A western military presence in a region extending from Turkey to Tajikistan would have a far-reaching strategic impact. The energy scenarios for the 21st century would be reconfigured substantially by such an arrangement. This is not to say that the arrangement would be undesirable. The region can be a major source of wealth and political stability by eliminating terrorism and replacing radical Islamic influences.

A regime change in Afghanistan is more likely to be the major strategic purpose of the U.S.-led military operations. It would not be a difficult objective to attain in military terms. The Taliban's military hardware will be destroyed within a fortnight once operations commence. Its command setup, communications hubs and ability to move forces would be neutralised soon. Taliban forces would be isolated into groups and forced to be on the move by the coalition's unrelenting air operations. It will get no replenishment of munitions and oil and its ability to offer a cohesive military response would be ended. That is where the Northern Alliance and the coalition's ground forces would join the battle. Every attempt would be made to capture and eliminate the Taliban leadership. A new political alliance would be put in place. In all this, the willing participation of the majority Pushtun population will be critical. It is unclear if a new political alliance will be able to obtain and sustain that participation. The Taliban leadership could escape to Pakistan, which would strain U.S.-Pakistan relations to breaking point.

A major geopolitical change of the order envisaged above will require a substantial role for Pakistan. Its geographic, political and cultural linkages and its own strategic considerations make Pakistan central to a future dispensation in Afghanistan. In short, control over Afghanistan necessi-

tates control over Pakistan. The Central Asian states long under threat from a Taliban-led Afghanistan, can provide the instrument of a Northern Alliance. However, it is Pakistan which will bring the ballast necessary for long term stability in Afghanistan. This will require a major change in Pakistan, whose social, religious, economic and political systems have been permeated by the Afghan condition. That change will have to be brought about by the military-led Government. In the absence of credible political alternatives, a very long spell of military government will become inevitable if the strategic vision for Afghanistan and Central Asia has to become a reality. Pakistan's military high command has the potential to be split, on continuing a long campaign against its erstwhile proteges in Afghanistan. What that would do to the long term prospect of stability in Pakistan, and its zeal to continue a conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, is not difficult to imagine.

Afghanistan should not divert attention from the Middle East which is critical to international terrorism. Its wealth, its deep antipathy to what is perceived as persecution of Arabs, its terror technology sophistication and its close links in Europe and U.S., make it the fount for terrorist acts. That region needs to be addressed as urgently as Afghanistan, if terrorism is to be truly eliminated. Advancing strategic interests at the expense of the causes of terrorism, will be counterproductive to the new-found urge to put an end to it. Unless that is taken in hand, asymmetric wars will not end. In fact they would be fought with new tools. That is where Pakistan figures high in terrorism's risk profile. A divided polity, armed groups fired by religious fervour, availability of nuclear weapons, and military rulers divided among themselves all add up to a volatile combination of destabilising factors. Controlling and bringing around Pakistan to being a modern and liberal state — which it is eminently capable of being — will take a major effort and even more time. An unstable or unwilling Pakistan cannot be a recipe for a stable Afghanistan. It remains to be seen if the major powers have the stamina to stay the course. Afghanistan will sorely test the will of all states, big or small.

THE HINDU

Chances of Bin Laden's hand-over dim: Musharraf

Osama under our control: Taliban

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD/WASHINGTON, Sept. 30. — The Taliban has admitted that Osama bin Laden is under its "control" and said it was willing to negotiate with the USA if the latter could provide proofs of his involvement in the 11 September attacks. Washington has however, immediately rejected the stand.

The Pakistani President too has said the chances of the Taliban handing over Osama was "dim" and ruled out Pakistani troops crossing into Afghanistan in any campaign against terrorism.

The Taliban ambassador in Islamabad, Mullah Abdul Zaeef, said Osama was "under the control of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and only security people know where he is." The militia had kept him hidden for his safety, he said.

The White House chief of staff, Mr Andrew Card, rejected the Taliban's offer of talks. "The President has said 'we aren't negotiating'. We've told the Taliban what it should be doing. They've got to turn not only Osama over but all Al-Qaida operatives."

The defence secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, thinks the USA has no reason to believe what the Taliban says. "It was just a few days ago that they said they didn't know where he was. I've no reason to believe anything a Taliban representative has said," he told NBC.

Mr Rumsfeld had dismissed as laughable the Taliban's earlier statement that Osama couldn't be found.

'STRIKE IN 48 HRS'

LONDON, Sept. 30. — Military operations, led by the USA and Britain, on bases controlled by Osama bin Laden are expected to begin within 48 hours, media reports said here today. The strategy is designed to kill Osama and his forces, and will be launched along with strikes against air and ground forces of the Taliban, the *Observer* said. — PTI

In London, the British Prime Minister said he had seen "powerful and incontrovertible evidence" linking Osama to the attacks and warned the militia to hand over the Saudi dissident. "They either help us or they become the enemy themselves," Mr Tony Blair told the BBC TV.

Gen Pervez Musharraf tonight admitted Pakistan has failed to "moderate Taliban's views on surrendering bin Laden...The hope is dim. One can carry on engaging them but the signals that come are certainly not encouraging... I would urge the Taliban to do (surrender bin Laden) it."

On the chances of Pakistani troops entering Afghanistan, he told CNN: "I wouldn't like Pakistani troops to cross into Afghanistan. I don't think that is the requirement from our troops also." He denied there were any Pakistani troops in Pakistan.

Is the Taliban regime coming to an end? Gen Musharraf said: "With all the coalition forming against them, certainly there is a danger of damage coming to the-

m". Pakistan was "suffering" for its ties with the militia, he said.

The former Afghan king, Zahir Shah, has met some Northern Alliance leaders in Rome. Shah's spokesman said the talks were "fruitful" and the two sides were working on a joint statement.

However, the Alliance's acting foreign minister, Mr Abdullah Abdullah, today denied there had been any agreement with Shah.

Shah also met some US politicians today and received a "firm pledge of support" to his efforts to form a broad alliance to oust the Taliban. "We came away very much impressed," said Republican Congressman, Mr Curt Weldon, who led the 11-member team.

Denial: The Northern Alliance today denied that any US forces were operating from its territory. "There's no American in our zone, and at this stage I don't think it's possible for ground forces to be in position in the Taliban-held zones," Mr Abdullah said.

Rabbani: The former Afghan President, Mr Burhanuddin Rabbani, has urged the USA to strike the Taliban early if it wants to oust the militia, the *Washington Times* said.

Help: A Red Cross lorry with medical supplies has arrived in Kabul, ICRC officials in Geneva said today. The aid will be distributed to ICRC-backed hospitals where about 500 war injured are being treated.

■ More reports on page 10

THE STATESMAN

7 1 001 201

UN resumes Afghan food aid to avert humanitarian crisis

Islamabad, September 30

FEARING WIDESPREAD starvation in Afghanistan if America attacks, the United Nations on Saturday sent its first food shipments there since the September 11 terrorist attacks, a UN spokesman said.

A spokesman for the World Food Programme, Khaled Mansour, said convoys carrying 200 tonnes of wheat left Peshawar on Saturday for Kabul.

Other shipments would be dispatched in a few days for Kabul and the western city of Herat, he said.

"We are resuming food deliveries into Afghanistan on a trial basis. Once we ensure that food aid is reaching the most needy ... we will move more food into Afghanistan."

Humanitarian groups have been warning of impending starvation inside Afghanistan because of political turmoil, drought and the threat of American attack.

The UN fears that if the US attacks Afghanistan, up to 1.5 million Afghans will seek shelter in Pakistan and other neighbouring countries. In preparation for such an influx, the UN refugee agency announced its first emergency flight of supplies to Pakistan to prepare for a possible influx.

An Ilyushin-76 cargo plane flew in nearly 50 tonnes of plastic sheeting for emergency shelter and plans to shuttle more supplies from Copenhagen, Denmark, to Pakistan.

The UN and international relief organisations evacuated their foreign staff from Afghanistan after the terror attacks, leaving local Afghan staffers to tend to an estimated 5 million people who rely on outside aid for survival.

Last week, the UN said its offices in the southern city of

NGO office ransacked

THE OFFICE of a Danish aid agency was ransacked and robbed by armed men in Kabul, an eyewitness said today, raising fresh concerns about the law and order situation in the Afghan capital.

According to a guard posted outside the office of the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (Dacaar), half-a-dozen armed men broke into the compound late Friday.

All foreign humanitarian workers were pulled out of Afghanistan in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the US and the resulting threats of retaliatory strikes against the Taliban.

Reports of rising crime in major Afghan towns have been interpreted as a sign the Taliban militia has been forced to move its troops to the frontlines and is losing its grip on security.

AFP, Kabul

Kandahar were shut down and occupied by the Taliban — and that most of its staff have been prohibited from using satellite phones, cutting off communication with the outside world.

On Saturday, UN spokeswoman Stephanie Bunker said UN offices have been looted in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, though it wasn't clear what was stolen or by whom.

The UN decision to resume shipments comes as hopes for peacefully resolving the standoff between the US and the Taliban are fading.

The Taliban have refused to hand over bin Laden and the chief lieutenants in his alleged terror network, al-Qaida.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 OCT 2001

America's script for Afghanistan

By T. Sreedhar

The script-writers in Washington will have to come up with a proper plan for a responsible government in Kabul in a post-Taliban scenario.

1110
HD-12

THE DEVELOPMENTS in the international system since September 11 clearly indicate that the U.S. is attempting coercive diplomacy to defeat its adversary in Afghanistan. To begin with, it had caged Afghanistan by sealing all its borders. All of Afghanistan's neighbours including Iran cooperated with the U.S. in closing the borders. Simultaneously, by ordering its military to move closer to Afghanistan, the U.S. made it clear to its adversary in Afghanistan that in the event of not surrendering, it was likely to take severe punitive action. This was followed by the opening of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. By this the U.S. made room for the Taliban and its sympathisers in Afghanistan to escape its wrath. In the process it is also meeting the criticism of a section of the international community that innocent civilian population will be victims in the event of U.S. military operations. By delaying the military operation, the U.S. can now say it is giving time for the civilians to move out. Making the anti-Taliban forces re-launch their offensive against the militia followed these two measures.

If the media reports are to be believed, Osama bin Laden's godfather in the Saudi establishment and King Fahd's nephew, Prince Turki al Faisal, was replaced as the director-general of Saudi intelligence around the middle of September by Prince Nawaf Bin Abdul Aziz. After this change, Saudi Arabia announced the breaking of diplomatic relations with the Taliban. The U.S. thus seems to have ensured that there is no support from Riyadh to Osama and his Al-Qaeda organisation. Having put into operation these tactical moves, the U.S. on September 24 announced the freezing of assets of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine and 26 other organisations that work with them and whom the U.S. considers as being primarily responsible for the tragic events of September 11 in New York and Washington.

All these measures will have a visible impact, say in 3-4 weeks on the U.S. adversary in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar,

and Osama bin Laden have appealed to their fellow faithful to rise in revolt against the U.S. Here four questions arise. First, enough to inspire their fellow faithful to launch a jihad against the U.S. and its allies. The plethora of statements from Washington indicate that though the U.S. acknowledges that Osama has remarkable organisational skills, it feels that he and Mullah Omar are not charismatic enough. If this assessment is right, the American script for Afghanistan will work.

However, if the U.S. assessment is wrong, the consequences can be disastrous. It may be alienating a large number of countries in the Islamic world. The result of such an alienation can have a profound impact on the emerging post-Cold War world order.

Second, the extraordinary situation in which it was placed forced the U.S. to co-opt Pakistan into its strategy. Everyone understands the compulsions behind this move, but Pakistan is a fragile polity. The Taliban's philosophy is being increasingly accepted in Pakistan. If we go by Pakistani media reports, the provinces of NWFP and Baluchistan, adjacent to Afghanistan, are alienated from Islamabad. One can be reasonably certain that in the coming weeks, Mullah Omar, a Pashtoon, will appeal on both sides of the Durand line, the Pak-Afghan border, by saying that the Pashtoons' honour is at stake. In a society governed by tribal loyalties and age-old customs, such an appeal will have a considerable impact. The Pashtoons feel they were cheated by the British while leaving the Indian sub-continent in 1947 by not granting them separate nationhood. Over the years the Punjabi mafia that ruled Pakistan further alienated the people of the NWFP and Baluchistan through their lopsided policies. The "hate Islamabad" relationship between the NWFP and Baluchistan was

clearly reflected in the decision of tribal chiefs of NWFP meeting on Sept. 25 and unanimously deciding to join their fellow Pashtoons in their fight against the U.S.

Within 24 hours of this announcement, Gen. Pervez Musharraf announced that Pakistan would not cooperate with the U.S. if it launched an attack on the Taliban and replaced it with the Northern Alliance or Zahir Shah, the ex-King.

This extraordinary u-turn in policy can also be attributed to two other reasons. The Pakistani elite has always looked upon China as its closest ally in the region and often described Sino-Pak. relations as an all-weather friendship. Hours before the new Pakistani shift in policy, China decried Pakistan as just another "neighbour". This sharp reaction can be considered as China's clear disapproval of Pakistan's new relationship with the U.S. This must have rung alarm bells in Islamabad. Similarly, Iran, another neighbour of Afghanistan, unlike Pakistan refused to yield to any U.S. offer in return for providing facilities to the proposed action by Washington in Afghanistan.

Gen. Musharraf may also be thinking that like Gen. Zia during the U.S. 'fight' against the Red Army in Afghanistan, what the Americans are offering financially is 'peanuts' to the risks he is taking by being a frontline state to the U.S. "crusade" against global terrorism. In the coming weeks, the U.S. may offer more incentives to Pakistan to stay with it. That is a different story. But the U.S. has to keep its fingers crossed over the extent of support Gen. Musharraf will be able to extend.

Third, the Americans appear to be depending excessively on the Northern Alliance in their fight against the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine. Everyone in this part of the world knows that the Alliance is a loosely knit organisation without any proper agenda. Some of its leaders like

Dostum and Hekmatyar failed to give up their egos in their fight against the Taliban. With the result that inspite of considerable assistance from several countries bordering Afghanistan, the Alliance was defeated by the Taliban.

Since the beginning of September, the gains being claimed by the Northern Alliance in and around Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif can be attributed to the Taliban vacating these areas to re-group to face the U.S. attack.

Even if one assumes that the Alliance would succeed in the fight against the Taliban, one is not sure that there will not be a fight for leadership. In addition, Pakistan is not going to accept such a development. Already Pakistan has made public its reservations about the role of the Alliance in any future political setup in Afghanistan. Therefore, one is not certain how far the Alliance can be an alternative to the Taliban.

The U.S. may argue that it is in no mood for nation-building in the post-Taliban period. Like in 1989, if it leaves Afghanistan without establishing a broad-based government there is every possibility of the country returning to radical politics. Therefore, the script-writers in Washington will have to come up with a proper plan for a responsible government in Kabul in a post-Taliban scenario.

Last, any campaign in Afghanistan by an external power must take into consideration the weather. According to a study done at the IDSA, any U.S. operation against the Taliban must be completed before the end of November. From December to February, airborne or ground operation will be extremely difficult in the inhospitable terrain.

Can the U.S. in the next 60 days, achieve its objective of catching Osama dead or alive and punish those who harboured him? Every informed person on Afghanistan doubts very much the U.S. capabilities in achieving this objective before November-end.

(The writer is Senior Research Associate, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.)

THE HINDU

1 OCT 2001

No agreement with King yet: Opposition

Khawaja Bahuddin (Afghanistan), Sept 30

ACTING FOREIGN Minister in the Afghan opposition Abdullah Abdullah today said there had been no agreement with the country's former King, Zahir Shah, for a joint military or supreme council to take power from the ruling Taliban.

Abdullah was speaking from the opposition's northern stronghold at the same time that a delegation from the alliance was meeting with the former King in Rome.

Earlier today, the ex-monarch had said that talks in Rome had been "very fruitful" and the group was working on a joint statement.

Abdullah, however, denied reports that an agreement had been struck that would see a "Joint Afghan Council", under the auspices of the former King, govern post-Taliban Afghanistan.

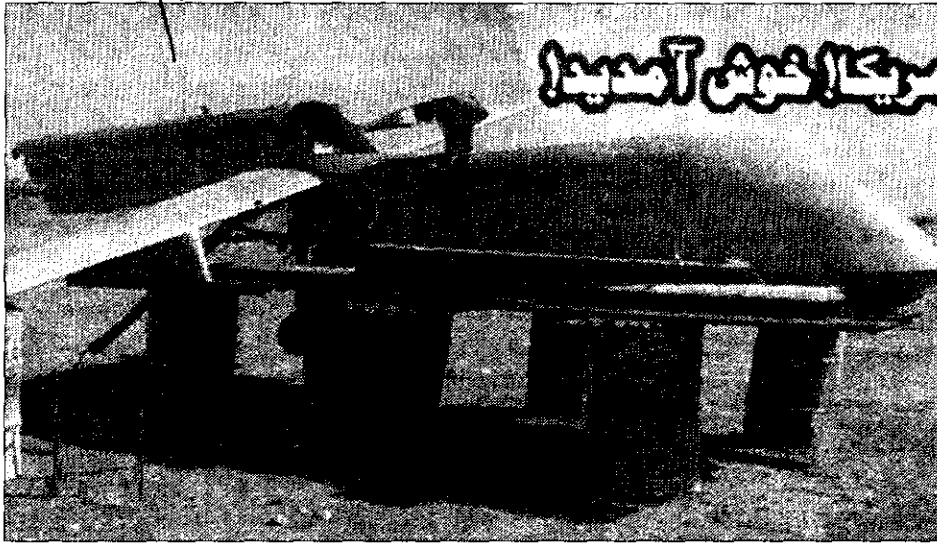
"We discussed yesterday and today but no formal agreement has been signed so far," Abdullah said.

Mostapha Zahir, the former King's grandson and spokesman, earlier said, "It was a very fruitful meeting, very friendly." The participants "discussed in front of the king current affairs, the problems, the possible solutions" to the crisis in Afghanistan.

The US lawmakers include Californian Republican Dana Rohrabacher, vice-chairman of the House's East Asia and Pacific Subcommittee, Republican Curt Weldon, chairman of the Armed Services Military Readiness Subcommittee, and Solomon Ortiz, the subcommittee's top Democrat.

They had already held meetings in Moscow with Russian officials to discuss Washington's anti-terror campaign and other strategic defence issues.

The Opposition figures, including members of the Northern Alliance, which is fighting a civil war against the Taliban, had yesterday met at a Rome hotel to discuss the pos-



A photograph of the wreckage of the US spy plane that the Taliban claim to have shot down. It appeared in the September 27 issue of the pro-Taliban Pakistani newspaper, *Zarb-e-Momin*.

sible formation of a supreme council.

The US is backing an attempt by Opposition groups to build a broad coalition around the popular 86-year-old ex-monarch which would form a post-Taliban Government in Afghanistan.

The planned Afghan council, which would convene under the auspices of the former king, would govern a post-Taliban Afghanistan for an interim period until democratic elections would be held, Opposition sources said earlier.

Before today's meeting, Afghan commanders said they intended to tell the US officials that they did not want a US military strike on their country, but rather military aid in order to oust the Taliban themselves.

The deposed King has been exiled in Rome since 1973 after he was ousted in a coup. He has expressed a desire to return to Afghanistan, but ruled out any formal role for himself.

In an interview to be published by the *Newsweek* tomorrow, Zahir Shah said: "I have an urge to go back to Afghanistan."

Meanwhile, Reuters has reported Taliban claims to have arrested six people on Sunday for distributing pro-US pamphlets that called for a return of the former King.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quotes Mullah Abdur Raof, governor of Eastern Khost province, as saying that three people were arrested in Gardez and another three in Khost.

Taliban promise fair trial to aid workers

Kabul, September 30

A TALIBAN Supreme Court Chief Justice told eight foreign aid workers today that they would be treated fairly, and that the threat of a US military assault would not play a part in their trial on charges of preaching Christianity.

The trial resumed today after a three-week suspension following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US and fears of American retaliatory strikes. Afghanistan has protected the main suspect in the attacks, Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden.

Eight employees of the German-based Christian group Shelter Now International appeared before Supreme Court Chief Justice Noor Mohammed Saqib, who told them they would be treated according to Islamic justice.

One of the defendants, German Silke Duerrkopf, at first didn't show up to today's proceedings because she said she felt ill. But the court sent for her at a Kabul detention centre, saying her presence was necessary. She later arrived, looking pale.

The chief investigator, Mohammed Umer Hanif, read the charges aloud and recited a list of items that had been seized from the aid workers' offices, including what he said were cassettes and reading material related to Christianity.

AFP

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 OCT 2001

U.N. resumes food shipment to Afghanistan

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEP. 29 The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) today started the shipment of the first emergency food rations into Afghanistan since the suspension of food deliveries into the country on September 12.

Deteriorating security conditions and lack of commercial transport had forced the WFP to halt food shipments to this country shortly after the agency had launched a multi-million dollar appeal to save millions of Afghans from the hunger caused by a vicious cycle of drought and war.

The WFP said here today that 400 tonnes of food would be trucked this weekend from its warehouses in Pakistan across the borders to help feed tens of thousands of hungry people in Afghanistan.

The first convoy, carrying 200 tonnes, left Peshawar today for Kabul and two other shipments are scheduled to truck 100 tonnes of food each to Kabul and Herat. The food should arrive in the two cities in a few days.

"Once we ensure that food aid is reaching the most needy people inside Afghanistan and local trucks continue to be available to move it from our warehouses inside the country to the rural areas, we will move



Afghan refugees loading sacks of U.S. wheat on waiting trucks at the U.N. World Food Programme warehouse in Peshawar on Saturday. — AFP

more food into Afghanistan," Mr. Khaled Adly, Regional Director for the Mediterranean,

Middle East and Central Asia, WFP, said here.

"So far we have been lucky

that this has not turned into a major refugee crisis. In contrast, the situation inside Afghanistan is extremely critical and could end with a major humanitarian crisis. Even before the current developments, many Afghans have resorted to eating grass and locusts to survive and pre-famine conditions were observed in various parts of the country," Mr. Adly said.

The WFP had been expanding its operations to cover 5.5 million people who would become critically dependent on food aid this winter. Trucks carrying WFP food are ready to move into Afghanistan from Iran, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to replenish food aid stocks in the northern provinces within the coming few days.

"Our local staff together with aid workers from various NGOs are working under very adverse conditions to help avoid starvation in Afghanistan. Existing restrictions on communications from Afghanistan make effective coordination extremely difficult. But despite the ongoing crisis, the WFP has continued to feed up to a million people inside Afghanistan. These are the people whom the WFP could access after the international staff were withdrawn and the local transport network almost crumbled," Mr. Adly said.

THE HINDU

30 SEP 2001

UN resolution on counter-terrorism

Taliban for talks, USA for strikes

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD/MOSCOW, Sept. 29. - The Taliban is ready for talks with the USA if it adopts a flexible attitude, Mullah Omar said today, even as the Northern Alliance said Washington might begin strikes on Afghanistan on Monday.

In New York, the UN Security Council adopted a sweeping counter-terrorism resolution asking all countries to freeze suspected terrorists' accounts and crack down on groups helping them.

The Taliban supremo's statement comes a day after the President George Bush refused to negotiate the surrender of Osama bin Laden, prime suspect in the 11 September attacks on the USA. Maulana Muhammad Jamil, a member of the religious delegation to Kandahar, told journalists after returning to Pakistan last night that Mullah Omar was willing to talk to the USA to resolve the crisis.

"If the USA shuns stubbornness and gives up its anti-Muslim policies we are ready for talks," Mullah Omar said. But the Taliban spiritual leader refused to hand over Bin Laden, whom he described as his "guest".

Another delegation of religious and political leaders, headed by the Jamaat-e-Islami chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, may fly to Kandahar soon. Despite the failure of its two earlier efforts, Pakistan today said it planned to hold more talks with the Taliban and try to persuade its leaders to hand over Osama bin Laden.

'US strikes': The Northern Alliance is regrouping its forces for a massive offensive as it expects USA to begin

strikes from 1 October, the NTV said today from the Alliance headquarters at Khoja Bahautdin in Takhar.

The Russian deputy foreign minister and US deputy secretary of state discussed "the issues of combating terrorism and strategic stability", the Russian foreign ministry said. Earlier, both held talks with Uzbek leaders.

Pakistan today denied reports that US troops had landed on its soil to begin military operations, as US officials said American special operations troops had slipped into Afghanistan on a small of reconnaissance missions.

But the troops have not begun hunting down Osama bin Laden or other terrorists, the *Washington Times* quoted the officials as having said.

At the UN headquarters, the US-sponsored resolution, approved yesterday by a 15-0 vote, has dramatically expanded UN's role in building a global coalition against terrorism. The resolution requires countries to deny safe haven to anyone responsible for, or supporting, a terror

attack and criminalises financing of such attacks.

Harkat

Pakistan ordered the shut down of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen's office, hours after the UN resolution. Harkat said it was closing down its seven offices under government orders. Harkat is one of the largest militant organisations operating in Kashmir and was declared a terrorist organisation by USA years ago.

■ More photographs, reports on pages 10 and 12



A Bin Laden supporter shouts anti-US slogans at a pro-Taliban rally in Karachi on Saturday. He is wearing a headband which reads 'Allah-O-Akbar'. - AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

30 SEP 2001

Taliban supremo says no to handing Osama over to U.S.

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban regime has no intention of handing over Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, Pakistani Islamic clerics said on Friday following talks with the militia's supreme leader.

"The Taliban clearly said there was no question of handing over Osama bin Laden on moral or religious grounds," said Karachi-based cleric Mufti Mohammad Jamil, who was part of a ten-member delegation that met Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar in the militia's southern Afghan stronghold of Kandahar.

"But the delegation was successful in helping the two sides to understand each other's point of view," he said after his return to Karachi.

Pakistan, warning the Taliban to listen to its last 'friend', had sent the delegation, which also included ISI chief Mehmud Ahmad, to Kandahar in yet another bid to persuade Mullah Omar to hand over Osama bin Laden and avoid a military operation. However, leaders of three pro-Taliban religious parties had refused to join the delegation, saying they would visit Afghanistan only after being invited.

The meeting was held a day after the Taliban delivered a message to Bin Laden, prime suspect in the terror strikes in the U.S., asking him to leave Afghanistan voluntarily.

At the same time, Pakistan agreed to allow the U.S. to use its bases as a launching point for small, clandestine commando raids and air strikes. However, it would

position is," Mr Powell said in Washington.

Even as it continued its military deployment, the U.S. on Friday intensified efforts to get the UN's backing for its war against terrorism by introducing a resolution in the Security Council which will make it mandatory for member nations to take a series of tough measures. Indications are that it will be adopted before the end of the month.

Meanwhile, President George W. Bush got a major boost in his attempt to forge a coalition to combat terrorism as several Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Qatar, extended their full support to the fight.

Saudi Arabia agreed to allow the U.S. to use its state-of-the-art air command facilities to fight Bin Laden and the Taliban. According to a Gulf diplomat, "Saudi Arabia has no objection to the use of the facilities at Prince Sultan air base."

The Washington Post also quoted senior U.S. officials as saying that Saudi Arabia had signalled that it would permit U.S. troops stationed on its soil to take part in action against Bin Laden. (Agencies)

PREPARING THE PITCH

- ▶ Pakistan will allow its bases for U.S. commando raids, air strikes
- ▶ Powell rules out mediation by Jesse Jackson
- ▶ U.S. seeks UN backing for war against terror
- ▶ Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Qatar to help America

not permit large numbers of American troops on its soil, *The Wall Street Journal* said.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell rejected a reported suggestion by the militia that civil rights leader Jesse Jackson could mediate to break the deadlock. "We have nothing to negotiate, they know what our

THE TIMES OF INDIA

29 SEP 2001

Pak team draws blank

FROM IDREES BAKHTIAR
AND REUTERS

Islamabad, Sept. 28: A delegation of clerics and a spymaster carried back to Pakistan an agreement to talk again as well as a culinary testimony to the Taliban's hospitality but insisted that Osama bin Laden was not discussed.

"Osama bin Laden was not a subject of our discussion. We only discussed how war could be prevented. They told us they don't want war," Mufti Mohammad Jameel, a member of the 10-man team, said in Karachi.

The delegation, over a lunch of boiled rice, meat, lassi as well as grapes and pomegranates with Omar, agreed on the need for more such meetings, Jameel said. The talks were successful, he added, but declined to explain why.

Pakistan had earlier said it

hoped that the delegation — made of adherents to the Deobandi school from where the Taliban draw their strict interpretation of the Quran — could succeed where diplomacy had failed.

Foreign office spokesman Riaz Mohammad Khan said the director-general of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ahmed, was accompanying the clerics. "It is important that he (the ISI chief) is accompanying the delegation. He had led the earlier Pakistani delegation to Afghanistan and is fully conversant with the position of the Pakistan government," the spokesman said.

Khan added that the clerics carried no negotiating mandate, but merely an appeal from fellow Muslims.

"The delegation talked to (Taliban leader) Mullah Mohammad Omar," the Taliban's consul in Karachi, Rahmatullah

Kakazada, said. "They decided on future delegations to discuss further cooperation."

Under siege from the rest of the world, the Taliban's position has never appeared more perilous since they seized control of the country five years ago.

When the delegation flew to Kandahar, residents of Kabul scurried for cover as the sound of anti-aircraft fire echoed around the hills surrounding the capital. It was just a test of the Taliban's defences, but highlighted the growing sense of insecurity among Afghanistan's people.

The message that bin Laden should voluntarily go was one of the themes of sermons at Friday prayers in Kabul. But defiance was another, and preachers called on Afghans to fight if the US does attack.

US undersecretary of state John Bolton is in the Uzbek capital for talks on terrorism.

THE TELEGRAPH

29 SEP 2001

Afghan clerics' edict conveyed to Osama

Afghanistan

101
28/9

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 27. Exactly one week after a gathering of clerics in Afghanistan asked the Taliban regime to encourage the man most wanted by the United States, Osama bin Laden, to leave the country voluntarily, the militia today claimed to have succeeded in communicating the message to the Saudi dissident.

The Taliban Ambassador to Pa-

kistan, Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaeef, disclosing this here tonight, said the clerics' recommendation had been approved by the Taliban supremo, Mullah Omar. "Now it is up to Osama to decide, he said."

The gathering of religious leaders in its recommendation on September 20 urged the Taliban regime to encourage Osama to voluntarily leave Afghanistan at the time of his choosing and to a

place of his choice. That the Taliban's decision to deliver the message to Osama is not likely to avert a confrontation between the U.S. and the militia was evident from two factors.

First, Mullah Zaeef made it clear that it was entirely up to Osama to take a decision. Second, he said the Taliban was not willing to have any compromise with the U.S. on the issue of Osama and his Al Qaeda.

"No, it is not the tradition of Muslims to compromise," was his cryptic reply to a question if the Taliban was ready to negotiate a deal with the U.S. on its demand for the handing over of Osama and access to his alleged terrorist networks inside Afghanistan.

Asked about his earlier statement that Osama has been missing, Mullah Zaeef said, "We have not lost Osama, but he is out of sight of the people". To a question about the attack on the American embassy in Kabul, he said, "The people are very emotional and angry because the United States is sounding threats to attack Afghanistan. The Taliban security forces tried their best to stop the mob from the attack but failed to control the largely attended demonstration."

Team to visit Kandahar?

A silver lining has emerged in the stand-off between the U.S. and the Taliban. A group of religious leaders from Pakistan is said to have decided to visit Kandahar in Afghanistan at the behest of the Musharraf Government. The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), a Peshawar-based news agency, quoted Mullah Zaeef as saying that the delegation would include Pakistani officials as well as religious scholars.

The mission of the delegation is ostensibly to make a last-ditch effort to persuade the Taliban supremo, Mullah Omar, to adopt a "face saving formula."

Leaders of the Council for Defence of Afghanistan, an umbrella outfit of religious parties and groups, denied in the evening that they had any plans to travel to Kandahar unless there was a specific request either from the Government of Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Earlier in the evening, the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Mr. Riaz Mohammad Khan, maintained that the Government had no plan to dispatch yet another delegation to the spiritual headquarters of the Taliban.

Solidarity Day

Amid the confusion over the proposed visit of the religious leaders, the Musharraf Government organised a 'Solidarity Day' throughout Pakistan in a bid to mobilise people behind its decision to back the U.S. in its fight against Osama and the Taliban.

By all accounts it was a good show though there was nothing spectacular in terms of crowd turnout at various rallies and demonstrations presided over by functionaries of the military Government. It was essentially meant to counter the critics of Government policy as well as pro-Taliban elements, in the wake of the September 11 incidents.



Participants holding flags and banners during the state-sponsored Solidarity Day rally in support of the Pakistan Government's policies against terrorism in Lahore on Thursday. — AP

U.S. rethink on military action?

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, SEPT. 27. The Bush administration is making it clear that the U.S. will be very careful about how it goes about the exercise of rooting out terrorism. It is now trying to dispel the impression that an imminent military action is necessary. The message is that the war against terrorism is multi-faceted, the military being only one of the several components. "I think it cannot be stressed enough that everybody who is waiting for military action... needs to rethink this thing," the Deputy Secretary of Defence, Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, said in Brussels after a meeting with Defence Ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

The President, Mr. George W. Bush, not long ago argued that it really made no sense for a million dollar Cruise missile to be chasing ten dollar tents.

There are different aspects to what is taking place here and in the operational muscle that is being put in place in and around Afghanistan, mainly in the forward bases of the U.S. in West Asia, in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. One view is that the military operations may have already begun, with the Special Forces of the U.S. and the U.K. having entered select areas of Afghanistan.

The expectations of a military strike and perhaps even the impatience aside, there is no question that the Bush administration is finding this coalition building a difficult task. Foreign leaders visiting Washington in the recent past have had very little problem talking about being on the side of America on terrorism. However, many want details of Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaeda's direct involvement in the September 11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. before

embarking on any major military show of force. And the U.S. is not really too keen to show the "evidence," not because there was none, but out of fear of exposing its intelligence gathering mechanisms.

But for those nations which really did not have a choice in backing the U.S. or were desperate to settle regional scores, the response to any possible military action has not been forthcoming, from America's allies in Europe and from among the Arab world. Cooperation from allies has already started on other fronts, especially in the realm of intelligence and in following the financial trail.

In terms of the scenarios for Afghanistan, the Bush administration, while flirting with the Northern Alliance and almost any group that may have anti-Taliban credentials, is also exploring the possibility of generating momentum within Afghanistan so that the Taliban leadership itself would crack, leaving the more "moderate" ones to come out.

Washington does not want to antagonise Islamabad by opening aligning with the Northern Alliance. The administration is also quite wary of taking on a nation-building role, something that Republicans have been too quick to criticise the Clinton administration.

Politically, the Bush administration has broad bipartisan support, but this did not mean that Capitol Hill has given a blank cheque to the White House to go about the crisis as it wished. As it is, many senior Democrats are miffed that their Republican colleagues are not playing their side of bipartisanship in a fair fashion. And senior Republicans like Senator John McCain have told the administration to stay focused — on Afghanistan, and not get carried away into other places like Iraq.

28 SEP 2001

Osama located, says Taliban envoy

Islamabad, September 27

THE TALIBAN tonight said it has finally located Osama bin Laden and officially delivered him the decision of the Islamic clerics' council asking him to leave Afghanistan voluntarily in order to spare the country of US attacks.

Osama has been delivered the Shooras decision as well as its approval by Taliban chief Mulla

Mohammad Omar, Taliban's Ambassador to Pakistan. Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaeef, said here.

Asked about the Taliban's earlier statement that Laden was missing, Zaeef said: "We have not lost Osama, but he is out of sight." On whether the Taliban were willing to enter into some kind of compromise on Laden to avert a war, the ambassador said, "No. It has not been the tradition of Muslims to compromise."

On the attack on the American Embassy building in Kabul yesterday, Zaeef said, "The people are angry because the US is sounding threats to attack Afghanistan. Taliban security forces tried their best to stop the mob but failed to control the demonstration."

He said about 300,000 people had offered to wage jihad against the United States. "Not only these 300,000, the whole nation is ready for jihad. Every man and woman

is ready to wage jihad. All the people are mujahideen. They are soldiers. They are well-trained."

On plans to instal former Afghan monarch Zaheer Shah in Afghanistan, Zaeef said, "Shah is the major cause of all evil in Afghanistan. He did nothing for Islam and promoted Western and Russian cultures. Zahir Shah has gifted nothing but problems to the people of Afghanistan."

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 SEP 2001

Taliban can stay if Bin Laden goes, says U.S.

11-1
27/9

Afghanistan

Powell doctrine triumphs, war talk toned down

By Chidanand Rajghatta
Times News Network

WASHINGTON: After a fortnight of bellicose and anger-driven talk of war and retribution following the terrorist carnage, the United States has toned down its rage and rhetoric, indicating that it may restrict its action to small surgical strikes aimed at Osama bin Laden and his terrorist camps. Washington is also suggesting it is not interested in toppling governments and may even allow the Taliban to continue ruling Afghanistan if it hands over Osama bin Laden and closes down the terrorist camps.

The new line of thinking is a triumph for secretary of state Colin Powell against the hawks in the administration who initially convinced President Bush that he should hit hard against Bin Laden, the Taliban, and any country seen remotely to be promoting terrorism or harbouring terrorists and their camps.

But Mr Powell has advocated a more restrained line of action, warning about the consequences of waging a larger war that may roil the Islamic world. He has also stressed the need to build a consensus among allies and using diplomacy in concert with, if not ahead of, force.

In some ways, Mr Powell has diluted the strong and uncompromising message President Bush delivered last week, including indications that the U.S. would decimate the universally-despised regime in Afghanistan. In talk shows over the weekend, Mr Powell backed down from such a threat saying, "With respect to the nature of the regime in Afghanistan, that is not uppermost in our minds right now."

"I'm not going to say that it has become one of the objectives of the United States government to either remove or put in place a different regime," the secretary of state said, expressing hope that the Taliban would "come to its senses" and send Osama bin Laden out of Afghanistan. Mr Bush endorsed this line of thinking on Tuesday saying pretty much the same thing.

The Powell doctrine of restraint and limited warfare has come in for criticism from

conservatives who are already talking of how the secretary of state is winning the battle within the government.

Until a few weeks back, the chatter in the administration was about how Mr Powell was being eclipsed by vice-president Dick Cheney and defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

The new policy of offering a window of opportunity to the Taliban also appears to have several objectives. The first of this is a transparent attempt to bring about a rift between the Taliban and Osama bin Laden; or even within the Taliban between those sworn to Bin Laden and those who don't care much for him.

Already, there are reports from Afghanistan that several Taliban fighters are defecting to the Northern Alliance.

By not striking out against the Taliban, Washington also appears to be paying heed to the plea of its rediscovered ally Pakistan, which has come out strongly against toppling its repugnant poster-child.

Pakistan's foreign minister Abdul Sattar on Tuesday warned the U.S. and its allies in the anti-terrorism coalition against taking sides in the Afghanistan conflict, saying the Afghan people "are

fiercely protective of their independence and have never acquiesced to a proxy government imposed on them from the outside".

"We are concerned to read news that Afghan groups are asking for foreign military assistance," Mr Sattar said on Tuesday at a press conference with a European Union delegation. "We fear any such decision on the part of a foreign power to give assistance to one side or the other is a recipe for great suffering for the people of Afghanistan."

The statement was clearly aimed at preserving Pakistan's own equity in Afghanistan through the Taliban, which it founded, funded, and helped take over and retain Kabul. Russia, India and Iran, among other countries, have backed the rebel Northern Alliance and its more broad-based allies.



GEORGE BUSH COLIN POWELL

STRATEGIC SHIFT

- ▶ Powell wins battle within administration
- ▶ U.S. tones down rhetoric against Taliban
- ▶ Targets only Osama bin Laden and his terrorist camps
- ▶ Washington heeds Pak plea to spare Taliban

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 SEP 2001

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2001

ENCIRCLING THE TALIBAN

AK/Amber
19-10

THE DIABOLICAL TALIBAN may have now suffered an almost irreversible isolation except for a singular jarring note of indirect support from Pakistan. As the notoriously barbaric 'rulers' of Afghanistan, a failed state that borders Pakistan, the Taliban regime has found itself in the dock since September 11 when America came under a cataclysmic terrorist offensive. With the United States losing no time to call upon the Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect who is also its honoured "guest", the fanatical 'government' in Kabul could not have asked for more trouble. As on September 11, the Taliban was recognised by only three Islamic countries. However, with Saudi Arabia now joining the United Arab Emirates in snapping diplomatic links with the Taliban, the renegade Afghan regime's residual lifeline of sorts is the one that Pakistan might choose to sustain or snuff out in a rapidly changing international environment. The traditional cross-currents within the Islamic bloc have had much to do with the Taliban's diplomatic alienation from 1996 when it captured power in Kabul, the Afghan capital ravaged by external interventions and internecine wars. Now, it is plain logic that the UAE and Saudi Arabia have broken ranks with the Taliban in the specific context of America's newly internationalised concerns. Moreover, it is doubtful whether the larger international community will shed any tears over the Taliban's downfall if that were to happen as a consequence of the current U.S. efforts to track down Osama bin Laden. Yet, if Pakistan appears to have sounded a discordant note, the U.S. may indeed find that it has something to mull over.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, is of the view that any external support for the anti-Taliban factions within Afghanistan might only prove to be a recipe for disaster in that impoverished country at this critical juncture. His warning of this kind is being interpreted in the West as the sign of a possible rift in the nascent

strategic understanding which the U.S. reached with Pakistan in the context of the terrorist outrage of September 11 and the American efforts to avenge it. In one sense, the international community's suspicions regarding Islamabad's benevolent links with the Taliban have virtually been confirmed by the circumstances in which Pakistan joined hands with the U.S. prior to Mr. Sattar's latest warning. Now, it is obvious that Islamabad, which is increasingly befriended by the many allies of the U.S., wants to ensure that no regime inimical to Pakistan's interests comes to power in Kabul in the context of any U.S.-inspired destabilisation of the Taliban. This certainly is of much strategic salience to Pakistan which is still not sure about how a U.S.-India equation might evolve in line with Washington's pledges of a truly international campaign against universal terrorism.

In all, Pakistan still draws the distinction between a campaign to trace the trail of Osama bin Laden as a suspect and an all-out strike against the Taliban. This may have dismayed large sections of the international community. But the U.S. seems to keep its options open at this stage about any move to dislodge the Taliban. This may not be due to the apparent differences between Pakistan and the U.S. over the Taliban's culpability. More important is America's new refrain about an aversion to "nation-building" (the search for an alternative to the Taliban in this case). This certainly has nothing to do with the dubious claims of the Afghans about having defeated the Soviet superpower on their own. Yet, if the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance seems to be the only relevant existing alternative to the Taliban within the Afghan spectrum, a note of caution will be in order. The Alliance, made up mostly of Afghan minorities, should first be seen to live up to the pan-Afghan credentials of its recently assassinated leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud.

THE HINDU

27 SEP 2001

War theatre shifts north

Praniti Pal Chaudhuri
New Delhi, September 25

SOUTH ASIA can breathe easy, the war against the Taliban is breaking out in the north. Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdus Sattar and his Taliban counterpart Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil highlighted this on Wednesday by issuing warnings against Afghanistan's northern neighbours.

Sattar, speaking after Russia promised to arm the rebel Northern Alliance, warned against foreign "foisting" regimes on Afghanistan. Muttawakil specifically warned Uzbekistan, the country fast emerging as the West's frontline state against the Taliban: "One of the American planes that entered our territory came from your country."

The *Daily Telegraph* reported on Tuesday that 1,500 US special forces and a few British SAS commandos had arrived in Uzbekistan and were "moving into Afghanistan". US defence sources were quoted saying the US planned to use commandos and air strikes to secure Bagram airbase, near Kabul.

An attack from the north follows from the huge US military deployments in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. F-15E fighter-bombers and other aircraft have been landing at Tuzel airbase near Tashkent alone the past week. The US has also indicated plans to link up with the Northern Alliance. "Former Soviet Republics are key to US effort," said *The Washington Post* recently.

Other Central Asian countries have welcomed the US. Kazakhstan has offered base facilities. Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday offered air corridors.



A Northern Alliance soldier looks through the bullet-marked window of his car with the portrait of Ahmad Shah Massoud somewhere near former Soviet base Baghram on Tuesday.

Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov rolled out a red carpet for the US just five days after Black Tuesday. A key reason for his enthusiasm: he was nearly assassinated by the extremist Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in 1999. According to Anita Sengupta, an Uzbek expert at the Maulana Azad Centre for Asian Studies, Karimov believes the IMU is backed by the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. President George W Bush cited the IMU in his speech before the Congress. Second, Uzbekistan would like

US funds and weapons to help fulfil its ambition to be Central Asia's hegemon. Says Russia expert Professor Hari Vasudevan of Calcutta University, "Karimov is looking for a superpower prop." Sengupta says Karimov's writings show a desire to make his country "part of the West," rejecting Russia or Islam.

The lone airbase Tajikistan has provided has previously been home to F-16s. Dushanbe is also allowing special forces to set up shop. But, says Vasudevan, it is too politically fragile to pub-

lise this fact. Tajikistan would have needed a green signal from Moscow, says Sengupta.

The US decision to draw its second line across Central Asia, reducing South and West Asia to secondary theatres, has many reasons. Central Asians are less touchy about a US military presence than South or West Asians. The Pentagon is openly scared to use bases in volatile Pakistan. A senior Indian Government official said, "It is unlikely the US will ever use bases in India. They may never use them even in Pak-

istan. Our offers were largely political statements." Indian military sources second this view. The Pentagon has cultivated links with Central Asia for three years. This summer, the US 5th Special Forces Group held exercises in Uzbekistan. Reports say the US has attack helicopters stored in the country. Finally, attacking Afghanistan from the north has tactical pluses as the Taliban hold on northern Afghanistan is tenuous.

More reports on Pages 7, 9, 10, 11

SAUDI SNAPS TALIBAN TIES

SAUDI ARABIA has cut all ties with the Taliban, saying Afghan leaders are defaming Islam by harbouring terrorists. The Saudi statement did not mention Osama bin Laden, but added that it would continue to stand by fellow Muslims in Afghanistan. This now leaves Pakistan as the only country with diplomatic ties with the Taliban.

Agencies

3 feared dead as blast rips NE Express

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, September 25

THREE PERSONS were feared killed and 30 injured when a powerful bomb derailed the Guwahati-bound North East Express in Bongaigaon on Tuesday night. The blast, which took place around 6.45 between Bijni and Chaprakata stations, derailed the engine, a parcel van and seven bogies of 5622 Up.

The explosion ripped the arterial broad-gauge tracks. It's believed to have been the handwork of the outlawed National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) that has been left out of the Bodo peace process. But the outfit did not claim responsibility.

The report of the blast reached the North-east Frontier Railway (NER) headquarters here around 8.30 pm. According to an NFR spokesperson, some 30 persons sustained minor injuries. But sources in Bijni and Bongaigaon said three persons had died and a dozen were severely injured.

The Bongaigaon SP could not be contacted while the Bijni police were tight-lipped.

The NFR spokesperson said a recovery van was dispatched from here to bring back the injured as well as the passengers left stranded. She said efforts were being made to repair the tracks within 48 hours. "Traffic between Guwahati and Shilpuri won't be affected as we have decided to operate all goods and passenger trains on the South Bank route via Jogighopa."

Senior police officers who rushed to the spot said a remote-controlled device could have caused the blast. They based their theory on the fact that the NE Express was running an hour and a half late.

15/8

New axis in Kabul

26/9

JUST TO keep history in focus, we must remind ourselves that the painful record of terrorism in Kashmir coincides exactly with the entrenchment of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The reality is also acknowledged that it was Islamabad that called the shots in Kabul. It is a matter of record that the ISI actively built up the Taliban fighting machine from scratch, providing weapons, training and funds. Once the edifice was up, terrorism in the guise of 'Islamic *jihad*' was ready for launch as an instrument of Pakistani policy against India with a view to wresting Kashmir. The rest, as they say, is history.

After the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, India made the plea internationally that a broad-based, non-aligned and representative government should be installed in Kabul. This was not to be, principally because the US showed no special interest in the project. The world watched passively as Pakistan converted Afghanistan into its backyard and warehouse, more than making up for the loss of the erstwhile East Pakistan, and providing it with 'strategic depth'. After the events of September 11, life appears to be

coming full circle. The difference is that now India is not alone in seeking a post-Taliban dispensation in Afghanistan that would represent all of its people, and would not kowtow to Pakistan.

The issue is believed to have figured in diplomatic dialogues involving India, Iran, Russia and the US. It is clear to each that the matter concerns them all, as they have all suffered at the hands of Talibanised Afghanistan. The process of configuring a Taliban replacement will demand patience and the true spirit of multilateralism, much like the proximate objective of freeing Afghanistan from the clutches of Pakistan. The politics and economics of energy may be expected to impinge on the exercise since Afghanistan provides key transit routes for the Caspian Basin storehouse of gas. As the world's only superpower, the US would no doubt wish to dominate the proceedings. The steps towards an eventual settlement will be of considerable interest to all countries of the region, including Pakistan. India will need to exert itself as a key political player since events in Afghanistan have always impacted on its concerns.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 SEP 2001

MAY HELP U.S. IN CHOKING FUND SUPPLY TO TERRORISTS

Saudi Arabia also severs ties with Taliban regime

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (Bahrain), SEPT. 25. Saudi Arabia today cut off all ties with the Taliban, accusing the militia regime of aiding terrorists who defame Islam and harm the reputation of Muslims. With the United Arab Emirates too having cut ties with the Taliban on Saturday, Pakistan remains the only country having diplomatic relations with a force that is reviled by every other country.

The Saudi decision could also presage intensive cooperation with the U.S. administration in its effort to cut off the sources of funding to terrorist organisations.

The Saudis had lowered diplomatic relations with the Taliban to the charge d' affaires level since 1998, following the militia's refusal to accede to the kingdom's requests for the extradition of Osama bin Laden.

In a statement issued through their official news agency today,

the Saudis accused the Taliban of using its land to harbour, arm and encourage "those criminals who carry out terrorist attacks which frighten the innocent and spread horror and destruction in the world. These attacks defame Islam and defame Muslim's reputation in the world".

The Taliban had made Afghanistan into a centre for attracting, recruiting and training a number of "deceived people" from different nationalities to carry out

criminal acts that violate any faith and creed, the kingdom added. The Saudi Government said the "deceived people", especially, included citizens of the kingdom. It accused the Taliban of resisting all pleas to hand over those criminals to justice.

While Saudi Arabia had deprived Osama of his citizenship, it was an open secret in these parts that the kingdom's intelligence services had in the past tried to keep the Al-Qaeda leader quiet, either through direct contacts or through the offices of the Taliban.

While not as enthusiastic supporters of the Taliban as Pakistan has been, Saudi had nevertheless tended to treat the militia as means for the advancement of its own interests in Central Asia.

It is not clear what arrangements will be made for providing consular services to the thousands of Afghans who work in the kingdom. The Saudis have not indicated that they are about to reverse course totally and establish ties with the Government of Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani that is still recognised as the legitimate Government of Afghanistan by the United Nations.

Saudi Arabia's decision could also mean that the kingdom is ready to cooperate with the drive launched by the U.S. on Monday to dry up the sources of funding to terrorist organisations. The assistance of the kingdom and the other governments of the Gulf Co-operation Council would be crucial if this drive is to succeed.

Bush briefs U.S. lawmakers

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, SEPT. 25. As the U.S. troops in and around Afghanistan are awaiting the order to launch what is generally believed to be a quick and severe strike against select targets, the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, met Republican and Democratic Congressional leaders at the White House today.

Mr. Bush briefed the top law-makers not only on the U.S. response to the terror attacks, but also the other implications. The U.S. President and leading law-makers are believed to have discussed airline security and broader economic measures to get the country back on track.

With respect to the ongoing U.S. operational readiness in and around Afghanistan, the minority leader in the House of Representatives, Mr. Richard Gephardt, said after the White House breakfast meeting that the war aims were clear. "In a way it's meeting guerrilla warfare with guerrilla warfare, but it's also meeting it with financial efforts and political efforts and diplomatic efforts," he said.

The Congressional delegation included Mr. Gephardt, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Dennis Hastert, the Senate Majority Leader, Mr. Tom Daschle, and the leading Republican Senator,

Mr. Trent Lott. After meeting with Congressional leaders, the President is meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Junichiro Koizumi. Only last week, the third aircraft carrier being sent to the Persian Gulf area sailed out of its port in Japan. And according to reports from Tokyo, Mr. Koizumi would be offering his country's role and support as well in the realm of intelligence and surveillance missions.

The President has been keeping Congress informed of the decisions being taken, including the calling of reserves.

In a letter to the members of the Congress, Mr. Bush said he had ordered the deployment of "various combat-equipped and combat support forces to a number of foreign nations in the Central and Pacific Command areas of operations".

Military analysts say the U.S. objective is not for a full-scale invasion of Afghanistan, rather it is one of going after select targets of Osama bin Laden and his terror network. Reports say the elite forces of the U.S. and Britain have already identified the areas and are ready to launch operations.

The thinking is also that the commando units will be supported from the air in a massive fashion.

THE HINDU

26 SEP 2001

Pak. warns nations backing Taliban's rivals

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 25. For the first time since the September 11 terrorist attacks in the U.S., the military establishment in Islamabad has openly articulated its concern over the "integrity" of Afghanistan, even as the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, urged countries and groups against the temptation of taking sides between the warring factions in the country.

The observations made by the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, during his meeting with a group of political and religious representatives of Pak Occupied Kashmir (PoK) in Islamabad's concern assume significance in the wake of speculative reports about jockeying among various countries on scenes in "post-Taliban" Afghanistan.

His remarks made by Mr. Sattar at a news conference, in the presence of a high-level European Union (EU) delegation, now on a visit here, are equally important. The E.U. was believed to have opened a "soft corner" for the Northern Alliance. Weeks before the assassination of a general of the army, Ahmed Shah Masood, Musharraf went on a tour to the E.U. capitals and the tumultuous welcome he received was a matter of record here.

Islamabad also reiterated that it does not intend to snap diplomatic ties with the Taliban. After such a move, first by the UAE and Saudi Arabia today, Pakistan is the only country to recognise the Taliban regime.

Musharraf's concerns over



The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar (right), with the European Union foreign policy chief, Mr. Javier Solana (centre), and the EU External Affairs Commissioner, Mr. Chris Patten, prior to talks in Islamabad on Tuesday. — AFP

the integrity of Afghanistan and the warning by Mr. Sattar to other countries against any military help to the Northern Alliance that is engaged in a fierce battle with the Taliban, clearly suggest that the military establishment is preparing for the prospect of the fall of the Taliban in the near future.

However, it appears the Musharraf regime is still not decided on what should follow the possible "collapse" of the Taliban regime.

Mr. Sattar said Pakistan was concerned about reports of the Northern Alliance appealing to foreign countries for military help.

Asked whether Pakistan favoured external intervention in Afghanistan, Mr. Sattar said those who had done so in the past had paid a price. "We ourselves are learning from history. We did not

intervene in Afghanistan in the past and we would not do so in the future. The Afghans are a fiercely independent people."

The E.U. delegation led by Belgian Foreign Minister, Mr. Louis Michel, was all praise for the "courageous decisions" taken by the Musharraf Government to work with the U.S. in its fight against terrorism and said the E.U. would do everything possible to strengthen the political and economic bonds with Pakistan.

Mr. Michel also announced the E.U. decision to donate 20 million Euro to Pakistan to help it look after Afghan refugees.

Among others, the E.U. delegation had a meeting with the Pakistan President and the Finance Minister, Mr. Shaukat Aziz.

Taliban vows to attack any aggressor

'Kashmir struggle not terrorism'

Fighting escalates in north Afghanistan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL, Sept. 25. - Fighting raged across northern Afghanistan today, as Opposition Afghan forces, emboldened by the massive US military build-up against the ruling Taliban, captured several villages in fierce, overnight battles. Opposition spokesmen said, clashes erupted in three provinces across Taliban-held north Afghanistan, near the Uzbek-border, where US forces are already believed to be based and the Tajik-border, which is guarded by thousands of Russian soldiers.

"The fighting continued the whole night and this morning," spokesman. Mr Mohammad Ashraf Nadeem said from a place near the frontlines. "Our forces have been advancing in the east of Sang Charak district," he claimed, referring to an area 50 kms north of Sar-i-Pul, a small provincial centre south of Balkh province that borders Uzbekistan. "We have captured several villages to the east of Sang Charak and we are advancing towards the district's centre, which is only 6 km away from the frontline now." Scattered fighting was continu-

TALIBAN FOES SEEK US SUPPORT

ing in Samangan, Sar-i-pul and Balkh, the sources said.

Battles were also underway in the north of Sar-i-Pul, in Akupruk district, 70 kms south of the Balkh capital, Mazar-i-Sharif, the main town in northern Afghanistan.

Mr Nadeem claimed, a pro-Taliban commander, Abdul Samad, defected to the Opposition, along with an unknown number of armed men yesterday, near the strategic Dara-e-Souf valley in Samangan.

Taliban officials were not available for comment.

The anti-Taliban Northern Alliance has demanded multi-lateral "political, information and technical support" from the USA, to fight the Taliban in Af-

ghanistan, the first secretary of the Afghan Embassy in Russia, Mr Ghulam Sakhi Ghairat said in Moscow today, reports UNI.

According to a Novosti report, Mr Ghairat confirmed reports that negotiations have been held between the USA and the

Alliance. Addressing a press conference today, the diplomat said the talks focussed on ways to combat terrorism. He said the Alliance needed multi-lateral support which would guarantee victory.

The Afghan diplomat also said, the terrorist attacks on the US, said in Quetta. "Formally the border opened this morning at Chaman and waiting Afghan families in Weesh, have started entering Pakistan," he told Reuters over telephone.

The border was closed last week to Afghans without valid visas, amid fears of a new influx of refugees.

ces like Chechnya. **Pak opens border: for refugees.** Meanwhile, Pakistan today reopened a southwestern border crossing point, to allow entry to thousands of Afghan refugees fleeing possible US at-

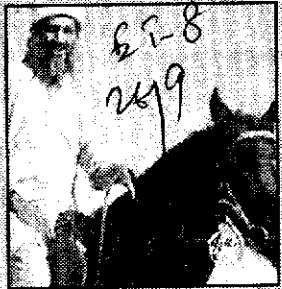
tacks, an immigration official said in Quetta. "Formally the border opened this morning at Chaman and waiting Afghan families in Weesh, have started entering Pakistan," he told Reuters over telephone.

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THE STATESMAN
26 SEP 2001

AFGHANISTAN IN THE UNMAKING

1933: Zahir Shah crowned King of Afghanistan. His 40-year reign is ineffectual, but is largely well remembered because it was the last time the country was to have peace.



1955: Afghanistan approaches the United States for military ties, but Washington considers the country too far away to be important. Afghanistan develops ties with Moscow.

April 17, 1973: Amid unrest over a stagnant economy, Mohammed Daoud Khan, the king's nephew, seizes power.



er while the king is away on vacation in Italy. The king stays in Italy.

July 17, 1973: Afghanistan's Republican government is created with Khan as the first president of Afghanistan.

April 27, 1978: Pro-Soviet leftists stage a new coup in Afghanistan. Nur Mohammad Taraki becomes prime minister, and Babrak Karmal and Hafizullah Amin become deputy prime ministers. They win recognition from the Soviet Union.

Summer 1978: The Taraki regime announces Marxist-Leninist reforms such as the elimination of usury, equal rights for women, land reforms and administrative decrees.



Summer 1976: Violent protests erupt over the reforms, many of which challenge Afghan cultural patterns. Taraki's political repression antagonises others.

March 28, 1979: Hafizullah Amin becomes prime minister but Taraki retains other high political posts. Revolts in the countryside expand, and the Afghan Army collapses. The Amin regime asks for and receives Soviet military aid.

September 14, 1979: A confrontation between Taraki and Amin removes Taraki from power.

October 10, 1979: Taraki assassinated by Amin supporters.

December 24, 1979: Soviets begin their invasion of Afghanistan.

December 27, 1979: Amin and many of his followers are killed, most likely by Soviet troops flooding into Kabul. The Soviets throw their support behind Babrak Karmal.

1980: Resistance to the Soviet occupation forms within Afghanistan, and across the border in Peshawar, Pakistan. The groups call themselves "mujahideen", from the Persian word meaning "warriors". The CIA begins supporting the rebels with arms supplied through Pakistan.

1984: Covert military aid to the mujahideen increases under the Reagan administration.

February 25, 1986: Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev expresses pessimism about the future of the Afghan war, calling it "a bleeding wound" and declaring he would like to bring troops home "in the nearest future."

April 1986: President Reagan decides to supply the Afghan resistance with heat-seeking Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.

May 4, 1986: The Kremlin removes Karmal in an attempt to find an internal political solution. He is replaced with Sayid Mohammad Najibullah, the former head of the secret police.

July 20, 1987: In their first public meeting, Gorbachev tells Najibullah that Soviet troops will be out of Afghanistan in 12 months.

November 1987: New Afghan constitution adopted. Najibullah is elected president but much of his support comes from the Soviets, and many Afghans revile him as a communist.

April 14, 1988: The U.N.-sponsored accords on Soviet troop withdrawal are signed in Geneva by Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union and the United States. Gorbachev announces the start of Soviet troop withdrawals.

February 15, 1989: Last Soviet soldiers leave Afghanistan.

April 15, 1992: Mujahideen guerrillas and other Islamic rebels move in on Kabul. President Najibullah agrees to step down, but before he can leave, Afghan rebels with the assistance of Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, leader of the government's secret police, seize the city and keep him there.

December 30, 1992: More than 1,300 delegates from around the country, comprising rebels, religious leaders, and intellectuals meet in Kabul to quickly form an Islamic republic. They elect Burhanuddin Rabbani as president. But the majority of the rebels boycott the meeting and the council falls apart.

March 1993: Rebel groups outside Kabul designate Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as their prime minister. Hekmatyar is the leader of the Hezb-i-Islami, the most favored of all the rebel factions nurtured by the CIA.

June 17, 1993: Hekmatyar is formally sworn in.

September 27, 1993: An interim constitution is approved with elections announced.

September 19, 1994: The Taliban emerges from the southern province of Kandahar, swiftly seizing power there. Over the next two years, they overrun southern, western and eastern Afghanistan.

November 1994: Hekmatyar and his guerrillas move in on Kabul, seeking to oust Rabbani as president. In nearly daily fighting, the city is reduced to rubble. Meanwhile, Pakistan's ISI dumps Hekmatyar in favour of the Taliban.

March 1995: The Taliban decimates Hekmatyar's army.

Fall 1995: Thousands flee Kabul amid fierce fighting between the Taliban and Rabbani forces.

June 19, 1996: Hekmatyar signs a peace pact with former enemy Rabbani becoming prime minister in Kabul.

September 27, 1996: The Taliban take Kabul, forcing Hekmatyar, Rabbani and his military chief Ahmad Shah Massoud, the man most credited with ousting the Soviets, to flee. They take Najibullah from his refuge in a UN compound, torture him to death, and hang his bloated body outside the presidential palace.

May 24, 1997: Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum, the former military commander under Najibullah and the Taliban's major opposition, suffers a major blow as his second in command defects to the Taliban.

May 25, 1997: The Taliban takes control of Dostum's stronghold, the ancient northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, marking the first time Afghanistan is largely united under one power since

the Soviets left.

May 28, 1997: Taliban forces retreat from Mazar-i-Sharif after losing 100 men in 18 hours of fighting. This marks the first retreat in the Taliban's history.

August 1998: The Taliban tries to take Mazar-i-Sharif again. They succeed, but commit what has been called the worst slaughter of civilians in the Afghan civil war. Many



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of the victims are Shiite Muslims; the Taliban are Sunnis.

Current: The Taliban are the de facto rulers of Afghanistan, having taken control of 90 per cent of the country. The Taliban still face opposition, mostly from a loose union of rebels called the Northern Alliance.



Economic Times

26 SEP 2001

S Arabia: Taliban has defamed Islam

Riyadh severs diplomatic ties with Kabul ■ Russia gives USA leads on Osama whereabouts

AGENCIES

DUBAI/ISLAMABAD, Sept. 25. — Saudi Arabia today severed diplomatic ties with the Taliban for defaming Islam by harbouring and supporting terrorists even as Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda group today issued a fresh warning to the USA against attacking him or Afghanistan.

Al-Qaeda's chief military commander, Naseer Ahmed Mujahed, faxed a message to Islamabad's news agencies: "We can defend ourselves. The holy warriors are fully prepared. Wherever there are Muslims, they should prepare for a jihad, and by the grace of God, the victory will be Islam's."

A statement carried by Saudi Arabia's state-run news agency said Taliban "is continuing to use its land to harbour, arm and encourage those criminals who carry out terrorist attacks that frighten the innocent and spread horror and destruction in the world". These acts "defame Islam and Muslims". Without naming Osama, the Saudi government accused the Taliban of "refusing all pleas" to handover "those criminals to justice".

Saudi Arabia has been under pressure from the USA to break off ties with the Taliban ever since the 11 September attacks. The decision further isolates the militia which is now recognised by only Pakistan. The UAE had earlier snapped ties with the Taliban. Even Pakistan has withdrawn its diplomatic staff from Afghanistan, citing "abnormal conditions" there. Islamabad, however, doesn't want to sever ties with the beleaguered regime because it feels such a move will cut the



Northern Alliance fighters head towards Baghran, 30 km north of Kabul, on Tuesday, as fighting between the alliance and Taliban intensified. — AP/PTI

only link between the militia and the world. Gen Pervez Musharraf today said there was no harm in maintaining diplomatic ties with the Taliban. At least one country must be in touch with the regime, he told PTV after meeting European Union leaders. **Denial:** The Al-Jazeera TV has denied telecasting a statement by Osama asking Pakistani Muslims to fight "American

crusaders". Pakistan's official news agency APP said last night that the channel's Islamabad correspondent had denied that his organisation had released any such statement. **Osama whereabouts:** The USA has learnt about Osama's whereabouts from Russian intelligence agencies, a report from Washington says. Novosti quotes NBC as having said that

Washington would rely on those data while fixing targets during the war against terrorism. **Pak warning:** Pakistan has warned foreign powers against siding with anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan, saying it would be a recipe for disaster. The foreign minister, Mr Abdul Sattar, said Islamabad was greatly concerned at the Northern Alliance's request for "foreign military help" to fight

the Taliban. "We fear that any such decision on the part of any foreign power to help one side or another in Afghanistan is a recipe for great suffering for the Afghans." The Russian President has, however, said Moscow would provide weapons to the Northern Alliance.

■ More reports on pages 4, 6, 9 & 11

Centre to fight biochem terror

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 25. — As the Prime Minister today warned of a war in the neighbourhood, the government hurried to put together contingency plans to counter man-made disasters. "War clouds are again hovering over us. The conflict can take place at any time and in any form," Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said at Nagla Chanderbhan village, near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, after launching the Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojana. This centrally-sponsored scheme, involving an annual expenditure of Rs 10,000 crore, aims at providing employment and food security to the rural people.

"Bombs can fall anywhere, anytime. People must remain united, ensure that peace prevails and security forces are able to discharge their duties," the Prime Minister said. At Kilianwali in Punjab, where Mr Vajpayee addressed farmers from Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan gathered to observe the 88th birth anniversary of Devi Lal, he said the 11 September attacks vindicated India's stand that terrorism should be countered globally. Without naming Pakistan, he took the country to task for nurturing terrorism and said India was prepared to talk to "everybody" — within the country or without — to eliminate terrorism. "We hoped we wouldn't have to spend our resources on armaments, but that was not to be. Long ago we warned of the need to tackle terror but we were ignored. Terrorism was nurtured in our neighbourhood. Innocents can't be killed in the name of jihad."

In Delhi, a disaster management committee headed by the Cabinet secretary, Mr TSR Prasad, reviewed India's preparedness to face man-made disasters, including biological and chemical ones. A National Disaster Management Agency will be set up to tackle such disasters. Secretary-level officials from the Union ministries of home, health, defence, information technology, I&B and agriculture met Delhi's chief secretary and commissioner of police to spell out the need for "optimising response" and "maintain systems at maximum efficiency level." The committee discussed the kinds of terrorist attacks that India could face. US investigators believe one of those involved in the hijacking had inquired about crop-duster planes. This heightened fears that India could come under an aerial assault.

■ Editorial: War games, page 8

THE STATESMAN

26 SEP 2001

Afghan rebels fight America's war

Islamabad pulls out diplomats from Kabul

HTC & Agencies
Washington/Islamabad,
September 24

PAKISTAN TODAY said it had pulled out its diplomatic staff from Kabul but clarified it was not severing ties with the Taliban regime in embattled Afghanistan. "We are withdrawing our diplomats because of security reasons," a Pakistan Government spokesman said.

A high-level Pentagon team reached Islamabad late yesterday, possibly to work out US deployments in Pakistan. Government representatives confirmed the visit, but refused to divulge any detail.

Virtually hemmed in by US and allied troops and fighting a grim battle against the Northern Alliance, the Taliban showed no signs of softening. Its supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar today kept up his anti-America rhetoric insisting that the US clear out of the Persian Gulf. A statement attributed to him said: "They must wind up operations in the Gulf and back the Palestinians in their legitimate struggle for a homeland if they want an end to terrorism. The Americans must not mislead themselves. They can never emerge out of this crisis by murdering me and Osama bin Laden."

There were reports of the Taliban shooting down a second US spy plane today. Washington refused to confirm the report, but said its campaign was not against any individual, but against State-sponsored terrorism. "Meting out justice to bin Laden is only a little piece of the anti-terrorism measures we are putting in place," an US official said.

Bolstered by the presence of US and allied forces, the Northern Alliance pounded Taliban positions in northern Afghanistan through the day. A Taliban spokesman confirmed the loss of Zaare, a town close to the strategic city of Mazaar-i-Sharif. As artillery shells rained in on Taliban

forces, Alliance generals said Keshanda district had fallen to them. Taliban official Abdul Hai Mutmaen confirmed the loss of Zaare, but said his men remained entrenched in the neighbouring areas. Zaare's importance lies in the fact that it is the key trijunction of the roads heading off to Balkh, Jozjan and Samangan.

Besides the build-up of US forces in West Asia, there was other good news for the Northern Alliance as well. Newspaper reports from Moscow said Russia was mulling beefing up its presence in Tajikistan, and even joining the campaign to oust the Taliban. President Vladimir Putin, the reports said, was firmly of the view that not only must Kremlin prepare for war, but also take part in it. *Vedomosti*, a local daily, quoted Government sources as saying: "The Kremlin believes stability in Central Asia hinges on Russia's collaboration with the Northern Alliance." Moscow is also planning to pull out its diplomats from Kabul.

In Kabul, Taliban militiamen today took over UN offices and ransacked the abandoned US mission. On a day when hundreds of students from Kabul's seminaries marched through the city streets crying "death to America", Afghan Defence Minister Mullah Obaidullah said his Government had mobilised an additional 30,000 mujahideen fighters to take on the might of the US war machinery. "They are experienced fighting holy wars," he said.

As the Taliban showed no signs of relenting, Islamabad stepped up force levels and got ready to defend itself in case of an offensive from Afghanistan. Pakistan also withdrew its military advisers from Afghanistan. Confirming that Pakistani diplomatic staff had moved out of Kabul over the weekend, foreign office spokesman Mohammed Riaz Khan said: "We have not cut off ties with them. The US does not want us to sever ties, so as to keep contact with them."



A Northern Alliance soldier spies on the position of Taliban fighters through his binoculars.

Osama breathes fire, Bush freezes assets

Islamabad, September 24

AS GEORGE W Bush moved to choke off Osama bin Laden's financial support today, the Saudi exile called on Pakistan's Muslims to fight "the American crusade forces".

The US froze all bin Laden's assets and prohibited transactions with groups linked to terrorism. White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said Bush signed the order last night.

The order freezes US assets of Osama and his al-Qaida network. It also bars transactions with persons or groups suspected of committing terrorism.

Yesterday, US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said drying up financial support would be an important part of an international "war against terrorism" the US is seeking to lead.

"We're going to have to start thinking about the need to really cut off what makes these terrorist networks work. What makes them work is not one man. What makes them work is that they do have access to financial flows that allow them to buy training, to buy access," Rice said on Fox News Sunday.

"We've got to go after the guts of this... While, of course, Osama and his lieutenants are part of the story, the real part of it is to choke off the bloodline of this network," she said.

Washington is also using financial incentives to reward supporters of what it calls its new-style war against terrorism.

The call to arms came amid reports of the Taliban taking control of a UN office in Afghanistan and a statement from the militia's leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, warning against US aggression.

Bin Laden's statement, which was aired on Qatar's al-Jazeera satellite channel today, said: "I announce to you, our beloved brothers, that we are steadfast on the path of jihad with the heroic, faithful Afghan people, under the

'BIN LADEN LOCATED'

BRITISH intelligence may have pinpointed the location of Osama bin Laden, a British tabloid has claimed. The report said a specialist MI6 unit working undercover in Afghanistan had traced the terrorist leader to "a desolate region close to the town of Jalalabad" in northeastern Afghanistan.

The paper claimed that Tony Blair's official spokesman has confirmed this piece of information.

HTC, London

leadership of Mullah Mohammed Omar."

The statement dated yesterday was signed by bin Laden. Bin Laden often communicates with the outside world through al-Jazeera, known among Arabs for its wide reach and its independent and aggressive editorial policies.

Today message informed that some "of our Muslim brothers in Karachi [Pakistan] were killed while expressing their opposition to the aggression of the American crusade forces and their allies on Muslim lands in Pakistan and Afghanistan".

"We hope that they are the first martyrs in Islam's battle in this era against the new crusade and Jewish campaign led by the big crusader Bush under the flag of the cross."

Bin Laden said he was calling on all Muslims in Pakistan to use all they possess and all their effort to stop American troops from invading Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Demonstrations have been held in the Pakistani cities of Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta supporting bin Laden.

The Guardian & Reuters

Related reports on Pages 7, 9, 10 and 11

U.S. TEAM IN ISLAMABAD TO EXCHANGE NOTES

Pak. withdraws diplomats from Afghanistan

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 24. In a day of fast-moving developments, Pakistan today announced that it had temporarily withdrawn all its diplomatic and non-diplomatic staff from its mission in Kabul and consulates in different cities of Afghanistan, even as a high-level military delegation from the United States arrived here to exchange notes with the military establishment on the nature of co-operation it expected from Islamabad in its fight against Osama bin Laden and the Taliban regime.

The ostensible reason for the decision of the Musharraf Government was the "prevailing security environment," but it was obvious that Islamabad had decided to distance itself from the militia as the hour of reckoning apparently approached.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman was at pains to emphasise that Islamabad's decision did not amount to snapping of diplomatic ties with the Taliban, as the United Arab Emirates had done two days ago.

He pointed out that the Taliban

Embassy continued to function in the Pakistani capital with limited staff, as mandated by the United Nations Security Council sanctions of January this year. The spokesman recalled his observations made on Saturday that in the perception of the Musharraf Government the Taliban Embassy in Islamabad served as a window to the world to know the Taliban and vice-versa.

The announcement to withdraw the staff from Afghanistan came even as the high-level U.S. Defence Department team, led by

Air Force Brig-Gen. Kevin Chilton, was engaged in parleys with their counterparts here on the nature of co-operation the U.S. expected from Pakistan in the coming days and weeks in its fight against Osama bin Laden and the Taliban.

The spokesman maintained that the delegation was in Islamabad basically for the purpose of information-sharing. "We would like to know what the U.S. would like to do in its pursuit against international terrorism. The U.S. mission is preliminary in nature," he maintained at a crowded news conference.

The spokesman reiterated that the declared U.S. goal was to combat terrorism and to bring to book the culprits responsible for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

Asked if Pakistan had sought any guarantee from the U.S. against possible aggression by India, the spokesman said Islamabad was not looking for any guarantees and its forces were fully prepared to thwart any evil designs.

When a journalist asked about media reports about plans of certain countries to bring back the former King of Afghanistan, the spokesman said Pakistan was not in the game of placing governments in various capitals. "No puppet government in Afghanistan has survived. The people of Afghanistan are fiercely independent."

In a related development, Pakistan, while insisting on the Taliban to abide by the U.N. resolutions to hand over Osama bin Laden for trial by appropriate authorities, also told the Bush administration that any decision to use force in Afghanistan should be mandated by the U.N. Security Council.

Pull out from Gulf, Taliban tells U.S.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 24 The Taliban supremo, Mullah Omar, today said the United States should withdraw its forces from the Gulf and support the cause of the Palestinians if it was serious in addressing the issue of terrorism.

In a brief statement issued from Kandahar, circulated here by the Taliban authorities, Mullah Omar asserted that elimination of Osama bin Laden would not help resolve the issue of international terrorism. "If the Americans want to eliminate terrorism, they should withdraw their forces from the Gulf and put an end to the partial attitude on the issue of Palestine", the statement said.

He alleged that "America wants to eliminate Islam and they are spreading lawlessness to install a pro-American government in Afghanistan".

The Taliban Ambassador in Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaef, today once again maintained that so far the militia has not been able to deliver the message of the clerics asking Osama bin Laden to leave Afghanistan to the Saudi dissident.

He told a news conference that the militia has begun mobilisation of its people for a possible war.

In a separate statement, the Taliban has claimed that it was mobilising three lakh troops to help it ward off any threat. It said hundreds of thousands of volunteers were joining the efforts of the militia to fight a "jihad" in the event of an attack by the U.S. and its allies.

At a separate news conference, the Pakistan For-

eign Office spokesman said it was up to the Taliban leadership to decide on the recommendation of the religious leaders urging it to encourage Osama to leave Afghanistan.

Taliban threat

AP reports:

The Taliban has threatened to execute any U.N. workers who use key equipment in their offices in Afghanistan, a move that has nearly shut down the remaining relief work being done in the country, U.N. officials said on Monday.

The militia began raiding U.N. offices in cities such as Kabul, the capital, and Kandahar, where Taliban leadership is based, over the weekend and sealing their satellite telephones, walkie-talkies, computers and vehicles to bar them from further use, Ms. Stephanie Bunker, chief U.N. spokeswoman, said here.

Defend Afghans: Osama

DUBAI, SEPT. 24. Qatar's al-Jazeera satellite television on Monday quoted Osama as urging Pakistanis to fight any assault on Afghanistan by "crusader Americans".

"We incite our Muslim brothers in Pakistan to deter with all their capabilities the American crusaders from invading Pakistan and Afghanistan," the television reported him as saying in a statement.

The statement faxed to Jazeera was typed in Arabic, signed "Osama bin Laden" in typed letters and signed in handwriting by "Osama Mohammad".

— Reuters

THE HINDU

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Afghan battle scenes

If the US seriously aims to rid Afghanistan of the taliban, it will have to rid Pakistan of the idea of jihad, writes V.R. Raghavan

How will the United States conduct military operations in Afghanistan? What would be the scope and purpose of the military action? How long will the military action last? How will the military action in Afghanistan fit into the US call for a global war against terrorism? There are many uncertainties and even more doubts on the whole range of questions.

Osama bin Laden has been asked to leave Afghanistan of his own accord. That is the recommendation of the country's clergy to the government. The recommendation is no more than a compromise. It is a compromise between not wanting to hand over bin Laden to the Americans and not wanting to be hit by the power of the American military. The US will be left with little choice other than to undertake military operations in Afghanistan.

What would be the strategic purpose of the US in Afghanistan? Much will depend on the strategic purpose of the Bush administration. If there is one strategic purpose of the US which is shared by the two political parties and the military establishment, it is the need for the US to lead the world. Leadership of the free world, for the American psyche, means being the most powerful nation, in every sense, of the world. That includes economic, technological and military power. That even includes putting down any entity which threatens US interests. Bin Laden and the taliban pose that threat. The anger and frustration in the Arab and Islamic world against American policies are another threat.

The US would see an opportunity to ensure a permanent presence in central Asia through a new Afghan policy. If the US can control Afghanistan, it will be in direct contact with the land mass separating central Asia from the warm water ports of Pakistan. An American presence in central Asia and in Afghanistan would bring immense influence over Iran. That would change the geopolitics of a wide region extending from Turkey to the western frontiers of China. It would bring a major strategic influence over Russia from its southern underbelly of central Asia.

US requirements today demand that its people's anger against the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks be pacified. That is only possible by military action against the most visible and widely accepted target, which is bin Laden. If he is not handed over quickly, the taliban is the obvious target which rules 90 per cent of the territory of Afghanistan. It also represents the majority Pushtun population of Afghanistan. Therefore, by striking against the taliban, the US will be striking against the majority Pushtun population.

The US would like to make a distinction between the two. The taliban may be Pushtun, but it has only brought disrepute to Islam and misery to the people of Afghanistan. The taliban rules by terror and brutal use of arms against its own people. That offers the US the opportunity to target the taliban and yet achieve the image of not attacking the people of Afghanistan.

The US is rapidly building up a military infrastructure in the region around Afghanistan. Its forces have been built up

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Last action heroes?

from the Gulf to the Arabian Sea. It has the capability to destroy the taliban's military capability by air attacks. The aircraft needed for this are already located in west Asia and on the powerful naval fleets in the Mediterranean and the Arabian Sea. Additional military hardware is being positioned in all these areas. Pakistan will have no choice but to provide airbase facilities, which will put US attack aircraft almost next to Afghanistan.

The taliban's military capability rests in some 500 tanks, many more artillery guns, multi-barrel rockets and some combat aircraft. All this will be de-

stroyed within days of the US strikes. With its military hardware destroyed, the taliban will be left with its warriors, who may be fired by ideological zeal, but will be no match to the US and its coalition forces' attacks.

The attacks on the taliban will continue with the destruction of its headquarters, transport, radio and telephone communications. Bridges and roads which facilitate the taliban's movements will be knocked out, making it impossible for the leadership to function. Attempts will also be made to get the oppressed people of Afghanistan to rise against the taliban.

‘The US attacks on the taliban will continue with the destruction of its headquarters, transport, radio and telephone communications’

The main source of every form of help to the taliban is Pakistan. It would be forced to close the Afghan borders and to provide intelligence and other facilities to further military action against the taliban. If the US forces get an opportunity to locate bin Laden, special forces will be moved in to isolate and eliminate him.

In any case, he will have to be continuously on the move every few hours for safety. His movements will be tracked by satellite and surveillance aircraft, and there is every chance that he would meet his end in one such air strike. As of now, no country will accept him without having to either hand him over for trial, or, be targeted for action by the coalition against terrorism.

The long term question is about US intentions on a regime change in Afghanistan. If the US is serious about eliminating terrorism, there are greater threats to it from west Asia than from Afghanistan. There is more wealth, greater antipathy to the US and a better technology base for terrorists to operate from there. Even as the US prepares to launch military operations against the taliban, information is coming in on possible links between the September 11 attacks and west Asian sources. Does the US have the intention or the stamina to undertake the long and costly military operation in Afghanistan?

Past record would indicate that once its immediate purpose of a spectacular military strike against bin Laden or the taliban is attained and American public opinion assuaged, it will focus its attention elsewhere.

If the US seriously aims to rid Afghanistan of the taliban, it will have to rid Pakistan of the idea of *jihad*. It would also have to rid the minds of the Pakistani elite of the fixation on India. Pakistan is central to controlling Afghanistan. Pakistan's commitment to be free of its jihad mentality would have to be demonstrated, before Afghanistan can be brought under liberal Islamic traditions. The fundamentalist elements in Pakistan are a force to reckon with even for the military government of General Musharraf.

Can the US control Pakistan when the polity there is sharply divided? There are no indicators to confirm that possibility. The US is therefore likely to be under many compulsions to its costs in the Afghan military endeavour and return to its major strategic interests in west Asia. The Afghanistan military operations will be a demonstration of what the US can do to those who are militarily weak. It will be the preparatory operations before the US turns its long-term attention to tackling terrorist elements in west Asia.

In these uncertain times, there is not much India can do in the military dimension of a global war against terrorism. However, there is a lot it can do to help military operations against the taliban and bin Laden. There is substantial intelligence capability about the taliban and its militant groups in Afghanistan, who can form the basis for a future liberal government in that country. India, with its large and liberal Islamic population, can be the bulwark of a peaceful future in south Asia. The battle against bin Laden may be won easily, but the war against the *jihadis* in Islam who use terrorism will be a long one.

The future of Afghanistan should lie at the root of western political thinking

Beyond Bin Laden

BY FRED HALLIDAY

EVENTS OF the past week have underlined both the importance and pitfalls that beset discussion of international affairs. All areas of political and social life involve controversy and commitment: this is as true of debates on the family, the role of the State in the economy, education and the causes of crime. But in no area of public discussion is there as high a dose of posturing, misinformation and irrationality as that of international issues.

There are, in broad terms, two conventional stances that arise in regard to international issues — complacency disguised as realism and irresponsibility posing as conscience. These poles have been evident in regard to the major cases of humanitarian intervention in the Nineties (Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo) and are present in much of the debate on the causes of globalisation and world inequality. They are present in very specific form in the question of what can be the future political system in Afghanistan.

For hard-headed realism, the international is a domain of power, mistrust and recurrence of conflict. This is the way the world, or god, or the market make it, and there is not much you can do. The most dangerous people are the do-gooders who make a mess of things by trying to make the world a better place: foreign aid, human rights, a lowering of the security guard, let alone education in global issues, are all doomed to failure.

Last week, in a typical realist column, one that allows legitimate international action only to States, President Bush cast responsibility for the terror attacks on, among others, NGOs (he had to spell out that this meant 'non-governmental organisations'). More ominous are the voices, now pushing a realist agenda, that were already under starter's orders on the morning of September 11 and are now in full canter: identity cards, immigration controls, National Missile Defence.

In the field of cultural speculation, the great winner has been the theory, first espoused by Samuel Huntington in 1993, that says we are entering an epoch that will be dominated by 'the Clash of Civilisations'.

The alternative view to realism has its own, equally simplistic, answers. This assumes that there is a straightforward, benign way of resolving the world's problems and that there is one, identifiable



WE. THE CONDEMNED: Homeless Afghan women

and single, cause of what is wrong. Two centuries ago, the cause was monarchy and absolutism, then branded as the cause of poverty, ignorance and war; over the past two centuries, it has been capitalism and imperialism; now it is globalisation. More specifically, the US is held responsible for the ills of the world — global inequality, neglect of human rights, militarism, cultural decay.

It is not always clear what the 'America' so responsible is — this Bush administration, all US administrations, the whole of 'corporate' America, Hollywood or, in the implication of September 11, the whole of the American people and, indeed, all who choose to work with, or visit, or in anyway find themselves in the proximity of such people.

Both of these positions are, perhaps, caricatures, yet the themes they encompass are evident, and will be even more evident, in the crisis that has engulfed the world. There are, however, some core issues where, perhaps, an element of reason about international affairs may be sustainable.

First, history: much is made of the antecedents. Some involve the Crusades, others *jihad*, but the image of the Cru-

sades means little to those outside the Mediterranean Arab world; *jihad* is quite an inappropriate term for the proper, Koranic, reason that the armies of Islam sought to convert those who were conquered to Islam.

As for the Cold War, it has contributed its mite to this crisis and, in particular, to the destruction of Afghanistan but in a way that should give comfort to few. One can here suggest a 'two dustbins' theory of Cold War legacy: if the Soviet system has left a mass of uncontrolled nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and unresolved ethnic problems, the West has bequeathed a bevy of murderous gangs, from Unita in Angola to the Mujahideen in Afghanistan.

A second issue that is present is that of culture. It takes two to have a 'Clash of Civilisations' and there are those on both sides who are using the present conflict to promote it.

Huntington's theory misses what is the most important cause of the events of recent days, and which will define the consequences in the Muslim world of what is to come, namely the enormous clash within the Muslim world between those who want to reform, and secularise,

and those whose power is threatened, or who want to take power in the name of fundamentalism. This has been the basis of the conflicts going on these past decades in Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, Turkey and, most violently of all, Afghanistan.

Religious fundamentalists in all societies have one goal: it is not to convert other people to their beliefs, but to seize power — political, social and gendered — within their own societies. Their greatest foe is secularism.

The third and, arguably, most important and difficult issue underlying the crisis is that of the most effective and just way to combine the two instruments of international politics — force and diplomacy. Under international law, States are entitled to use force in self-defence. An element of retribution is part of any legal system, domestic or international. The UN is not some pacifist, supranational last resort, but a body which, in its charter and in the Security Council resolution 1368 of September 12, has authorised military action by States in this case.

At the same time, any use of force, in the immediate future or in the longer conflict promised by both sides, has to be matched by diplomatic and political initiative. This can cover each of the separate issues that make up the greater West Asian crisis underlying these events, from Kashmir to Palestine, and on to Kosovo, but it must, above all, address the future of Afghanistan itself.

Here, the UN has, since 1993, been on record, and with the support of all the permanent members of the Security Council and all the neighbouring States, in calling for the setting up of a new government. The UN has insisted that this be broadly based, fully representative, multi-ethnic and opposed to terrorism. This is a goal which the current crisis requires and brings closer to view. It is also one which, it is generally agreed, the great majority of Afghans would support.

Freud once argued that the aim of psychoanalysis was to reduce extreme hysteria to everyday common misery. The function of reasoned argument, and an engaged scepticism, in international affairs is to do just that.

The writer is Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics and author of 'The World at 2000'

Guardian News Service

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Plan to prop up Taliban rivals

By Atul Aneja

Affghanistan

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22. Visualising a key role for the Taliban opposition in a global campaign against terrorism, India, Russia and Iran have activated their consultations on ways to bring stability to Afghanistan.

According to highly-placed Government sources, the three countries are keen on jointly promoting the Northern Alliance, which is battling the Taliban, chief benefactor of international terrorism, headquartered in Afghanistan. They feel that a revived Northern Alliance, backed by a U.S.-led coalition, should spearhead the military assault on Taliban strongholds in Kandahar, Kabul and Jalalabad. The opportunity is there, as Taliban's strength is likely to be sapped soon.

Anticipating the ouster of the Taliban, leaders of India, Russia and Iran are engaged in

hectic consultations on forging a stable alternative in Afghanistan. Such an arrangement, they feel, should not only be central in rooting out international terrorism, but also for protecting their own national interests.

Not surprisingly, a post-Taliban arrangement in Afghanistan was the focal point of discussion between the National Security Adviser, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, and his Russian counterpart, Mr. Vladimir Rushailo, during his visit to Moscow last week. A discussion on Afghanistan also featured in the telephonic conversation between the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, and Mr. Jaswant Singh, on Sunday last. So was the case with Iran, when Mr. Singh spoke to his counterpart, Mr. Kamal Kharrazi. The Russian Ambassador to India, Mr. Alexander Kadakin, also met the Foreign Secretary, Ms. Chokila Iyer, on Friday.

All the three countries are veering round to the view that an indiscriminate campaign against terrorists in Afghanistan is not in their best interests. Such a campaign, they feel, will flood them with refugees. India is apprehensive that the inflow of Afghans in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the Northern Areas may translate into enhanced militancy in Jammu and Kashmir.

As international diplomacy gets into high gear, the key now lies in convincing the U.S. to back the Northern Alliance as a Trojan horse in the anti-terrorist campaign.

The necessity of getting Washington on board is likely to be one of the prominent issues which Mr. Mishra will discuss with his U.S. counterpart, Ms. Condoleezza Rice, as would Mr. Jaswant Singh with the Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, on October 2.

THE HINDU

23 SEP 2001

55-12 279 Afghanistan: History's graveyard for invaders

REUTERS

ISLAMABAD, Sept. 22. — They call it the graveyard of invaders.

Afghanistan, the likely locus of the next US military foray abroad, proudly looks back on one of the modern world's longest and bloodiest records in defeating foreign invaders.

Its fearless tribesmen defeated or held off Britain three times between 1839 and 1919, cloudbusting the sun that supposedly never set on the Empire.

The ragtag Mujahideen humiliated the erstwhile USSR in the 1980s when Moscow was still a superpower with nuclear arms and imperial reach.

Now the Taliban, that seized power in Kabul in 1996, vows to stage and win another David and Goliath struggle against the world's only remaining superpower.

"We will never surrender to evil and might," Mullah Abdul Salaam Zaeef, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, said yesterday.

Washington's warning that they have no choice but to hand over Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect for last week's devastating attacks in the USA, makes little impression on men used to living and dying their own way.

"We are the same Afghans, we haven't changed," the Taliban's deputy ambassador to Pakistan, Sohail Shaheen, had said on Thursday.

The question now is whether enough other factors have changed for the US plan — which hasn't yet been announced in detail — to succeed where others so spectacularly failed.

Afghan tribesmen were guerrilla

fighters long before the term was coined. With their stamina and culture of revenge, they have repeatedly used the rugged mountain terrain to best advantage to ambush and massacre invaders.

Britain learned this for the first time in the mid-19th century when it installed a pliant ruler to keep Kabul from tilting towards Russia and sparking off a popular revolt.

After several British officers were murdered, a caravan of 4,500 British and Indian troops and 12,000 civilians left Kabul in January 1842 to march to the safety of British India.

Only one man, the army doctor, William Brydon, survived the savage ambushes in the snow-filled mountain passes to make it to Jalalabad, near the Khyber Pass, and tell the harrowing story.

Britain fought the Afghans twice after that, in 1878-1879 and in 1919, without ever subjugating them.

The next to take on Afghan warriors was the USSR, more than a century later.

By invading Kabul in December 1979 and installing a communist puppet in power, it repeated the British mistake of trying to dictate who should rule Afghanistan.

Moscow deployed far more firepower than Britain ever did, using fighter jets, bombers, attack helicopters and tanks in a bid to subdue disorganised Mujahideen groups armed mostly with Kalashnikov automatic rifles and assorted small rockets.

Soviet and Afghan government troops kept a shaky grip on the cities, especially Kabul, but dreaded moving through the mountain passes and steep valleys where

they could easily be ambushed.

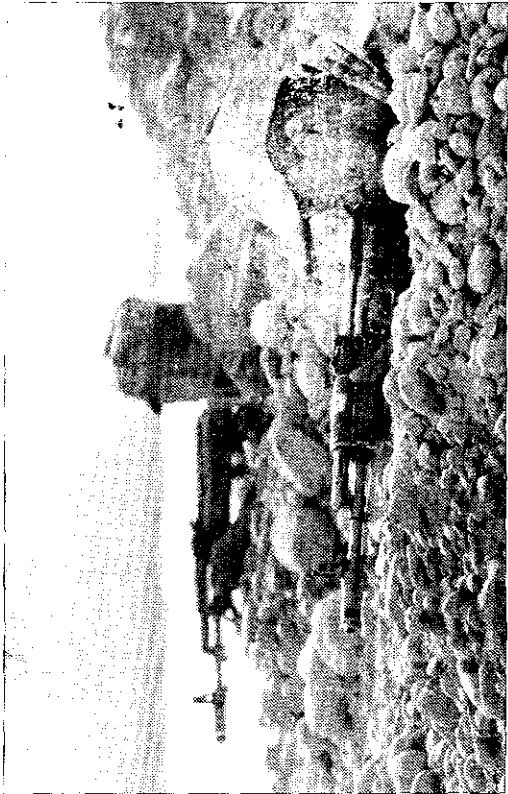
After failing to subdue the countryside, Moscow in the mid-1980s began relying more and more on commando attacks to murder rebel commanders and block arms caravans from Pakistan.

Informed by Afghan spies, "Spetznaz" special forces scrambled in Mi-24 attack helicopters, often before dawn, to wipe out rebels within hours of arriving in villages along supply routes.

The strategy was so successful that the USA in 1986 began arming mujahideen with Stinger missiles, the most sophisticated ground-to-air weapon available.

The loss of air superiority marked the beginning of the end for Moscow's Afghan war and Soviet troops pulled out in 1989.

More than 13,000 Soviet troops had lost their lives there.



Russian border guards observe the territory controlled by the Afghan Opposition alliance on the Tajik-Afghan border near the Tajik village of Moskousky recently. — AP/PTI

Brutal terrain, cultural complexities make Afghanistan a hard mission

BY SOUVEN MELIKIAN
International Herald Tribune

Here is a measure of the complexity of the cultural and political mosaic that is Afghanistan:

Osama bin Laden, the suspected terrorist mastermind who is now the target of US military planners, is an outsider to the country — protected by a Taliban government that appears to represent a minority of Pashtun-speaking Afghans from the region bordering Pakistan, who themselves may be a minority of that extraordinarily diverse land.

To many Afghans, Bin Laden's presence is a bitter irony: He is a wealthy Saudi, stripped of his nationality, hiding out in a desperately poor, mountainous country that normally has little love for the Bedouins of the Arabian Desert. Indeed, many find Bin Laden as alien to his current surroundings as a Portuguese fisherman might be amid Turkish herdsmen in Central Anatolia.

Bin Laden's outsider status is only one of the complications facing the United States as it plans military retaliation for the

September 11 terrorist attacks against New York and Washington. With its many ethnic and religious divisions, the country seems closer to a pre-modern warlord state than a modern nation. Whoever might try to conquer this Afghanistan would have to adjust to its endless diversity. They would have to deal with a profound sense of communal identity and solidarity. Loyalty is expressed toward the family, then to the community, including its religious orientation, then the city or province and, last, to the country.

As a cultural historian of the Iranian world, I travelled extensively in Afghanistan from the late 1960s until the Communist takeover in 1977. Since then, in addition to my work as art critic for this newspaper, I have studied the history of that part of the world and published many monographs in scholarly journals. And I remain in contact with Afghan exiles.

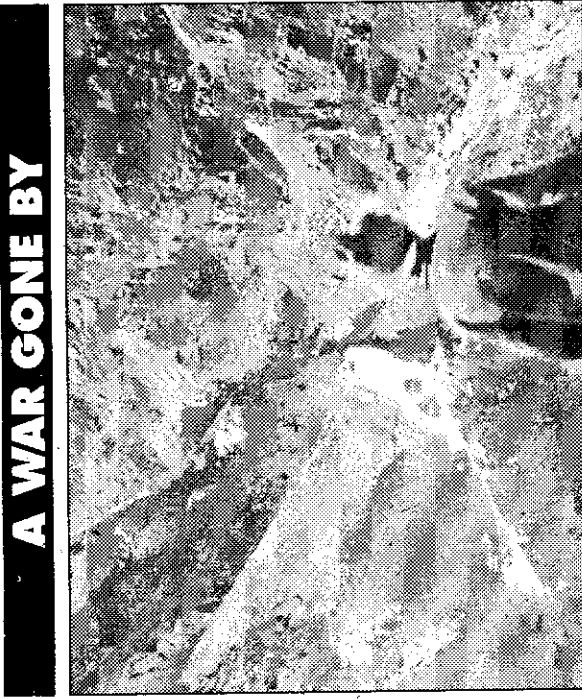
The most important and least understood cleavage is between the Pashtun speakers, who are mostly Sunni Muslims and have recently been looking to Pakistan for backing, and the Persian speakers — Shias who look

to Iran. The Pashtuns are officially declared to be the majority in Afghanistan, but some observers believe they are substantially outnumbered by Persian speakers — including those Pashtuns who have long forgotten their own dialect, which is one of the most archaic and difficult Iranian languages.

The Taliban — self-styled students of theology, whose name is the Persian plural of the word for a "student" of the Quranic text — managed to triumph over other factions in the chaotic aftermath of the Russian retreat from Afghanistan in 1989.

But by some estimates, they may represent as little as 10 per cent of the population. They dominate a land that is a patchwork of human and religious communities. The largest single common denominator is Persian in its Dari form, "the courtly" speech of the Afghan elite. It has always been the language of culture and literature and is today, as in the past, the country's intercommunal language.

Where spoken as a vernacular, it varies as much from the courtly form as a broad Scottish accent does from mellifluous Oxbridge English. Under the



A WAR GONE BY

TOUGH TIME AHEAD: As the United States points to Saudi-born militant Osama bin Laden as the prime suspect in the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, talk is rising of the once unthinkable: that America could go to war in Afghanistan, the country that shelters him. It is no secret that Afghanistan is one of the toughest places on earth to wage a war. Its brutal geography and battle-hardened locals resisted occupation by Russia and Britain for centuries. Moscow's forces pulled out of the country in 1989 after a decade of war. This photograph, taken in 1987, shows a Russian soldier looking at Soviet troops heading for combat operations in Afghanistan. (Reuters)

gave sermons in support of Bin Laden explained. (Reuters)

monarchy, toppled in 1973, and during the republican interlude that preceded the Communist takeover of 1977, a precarious cohabitation was in place. The top positions in the administration, the military, the judiciary, were held by town-dwelling Pashtuns largely Persianised in their way of life as in speech. The Royal Court itself, of pure Pashtun stock, spoke virtually no Pashto. Their connections with their Pashtun kinsmen living in the southeastern highlands were loose. In only one main city, Kandahar, did one hear Pashto widely spoken on the streets. There, the Pashtun majority represented roughly 75 per cent of the city's neighbourhoods — roughly, that is, because Afghanistan is not the place where statistics are an exact science.

On the eve of World War II, there had been efforts to transfer Pashtuns to other parts of the country, in particular in the area of Herat, the great Persian metropolis wrested from Iran in the mid-19th century with British backing. But they often backfired. The Persian culture prevailed. A generation after the migra-

tions of the late 1930s, the Pashtuns to speakers established in cities became Persianised in many of their customs in their speech. The capital, Kabul, is a good illustration of this process. Persianised or not, the Pashtuns ran the show. They still do.

The Persian speakers — called "Fars", or "Farsiwan" — occasionally played a role if they followed the Sunni path of Islam. It made little difference whether they were from the northern Khorasan region with its cities of Herat, Balkh, Mazar-i-Sharif, or from Badakhshan, also in the north; from Sistan, south of Khorasan; from the vast highlands of Hazarajat, in the heart of the land, or from the capital, Kabul, one of the oldest Persian-speaking cities in the world. They are now excluded from power.

Persian speakers of the Shia branch of Islam, which includes a vast proportion of the urban population in the north, have always been conspicuously absent from official positions. But even among the Shias there are nuances. Those who get the worst of the deal among the Shias are the Hazaras. They represent one of

the great enigmas of Afghan history. Their features single them out at a glance, even within the highly diverse ethnic mix of Afghanistan. Their narrow eyes, broad noses, their shorter build and yellow complexion bring them close to the populations of Nepal and Tibet than to any of the surrounding groups. The Persian they speak is strikingly archaic. In Kabul, the Hazaras represent a vast underclass who take the jobs that other groups refuse — as bearers, street sweepers and other common labourers.

On the eve of the Soviet invasion, through gritty, hardworking determination, some were beginning to hoist themselves into a small lower-middle-class. They ran very modest hotels and *chaykhana*s, or "teahouses," the Kabul equivalent of the lowliest coffee shop. Other groups remain excluded, foremost the Turkic-speaking communities in the northern countryside including the Uzbeks, numerous in the Khorasan region, the Turkmen to the west, and the Kazakhs in the northern eastern tip of Afghanistan, when the Red Army occupied Central Asia in the 1920s.

UAE snaps ties with Kabul

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) broke off diplomatic relations with Afghanistan's ruling Islamic militia on Saturday, thereby cutting one of the Taliban's last links to the outside world.

"The government of the UAE has decided to break relations with the Taliban government in Afghanistan," a foreign ministry spokesman told the official Wam news agency. "The Emirates authorities have made intense efforts to persuade the Taliban to give a favourable answer to the (UN) security council request to hand over Bin Laden, so that he can be given a fair trial by an international court on the charges linked to the terrorist attacks," the spokesman said.

However, in Islamabad, the Pakistan government said it had no intention of following the UAE's lead in snapping diplomatic ties with the Taliban. Foreign ministry spokesman Riaz Mohammad Khan said maintaining diplomatic relations with Kabul was a "geographical compulsion" based on humanitarian and political considerations. "We do not want to close this link," he said.

"Even during the Soviet intervention, we maintained our embassy in Kabul. It's a kind of geographical compulsion that we have to maintain our links with Afghanistan which is a landlocked country." (AFP)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 SEP 2001



Pro-Taliban demonstrators holding posters of Osama bin Laden during an anti-US rally in Quetta, Pakistan, on Friday. — AP/PTI

WE seem to be heading inexorably towards a military showdown in Afghanistan. The build-up of American forces promises no other outcome. Afghan clerics have asked that the prime cause of these events and the principal American quarry, Bin Laden, may be asked to leave voluntarily, which would be helpful but probably unachievable. Moreover, it will not meet current US demands.

It is another matter that the advanced weaponry now being deployed may be of little use in catching hold of Bin Laden. He has evaded earlier attempts upon his person and may well do so again. He will be at risk only if the Taliban regime turns against him, and of that there is as yet no sign.

Bin Laden can even turn his present danger into an advantage: if he is killed, he will be seen as a martyr by his sympathisers in many lands; if he fights his way out of trouble, he becomes a hero. There is no easy choice for the USA in this fraught situation, especially as military action may endanger the civilian population, and this can provoke strong reactions throughout the Muslim world.

If there is to be an American-led military operation, the brunt of it would have to be borne by the civilian Afghan population.

They cannot follow Bin Laden and simply disappear into the wilderness. For them, the fear of death and destruction from the air is very real and already a stream of refugees is heading towards the neighbours.

Afghan countdown

The defiant words of the Afghan leaders and the preparations to resist attack have done nothing to stem the flow.

For the refugees, even the squalid refugee camps into which they might be herded are a better prospect than the dangers that beset their homeland.

For the moment, the anti-terrorist campaign has narrowed down to Afghanistan, and with it the nature of the Taliban regime has come under fresh scrutiny.

It has not escaped attention that, ironically, the Taliban came into being with considerable US backing as a bulwark against the former USSR, and could not have succeeded without sustained Pakistani support — the same two countries that are now pushing them into a corner.

For long, the ideological underpinning of the Taliban did not cause any real bother to America, which preferred to see them as just another Afghan faction jostling for position in an unsettled country.

The change of attitude came about when, after consolidating their authority, the Taliban adopted increasingly hard positions on religious and social issues. Their readiness to train and export militants could not be accepted, and the last straw was their willingness to give refuge to identified enemies of America like Bin Laden.

Since then, there has been no going back.

The evolution of America's view of the Taliban is worth noting, especially the centrality of Bin Laden in shaping American attitudes: should he disappear from the scene, a less hostile US view of the Afghan regime may re-emerge.

There is a considerable difference in the Indian

WIDE ANGLE
SALMAN HAIDAR

approach, for the terrorist challenge we face out of Afghanistan is not closely focused on one individual or group.

Thus the disappearance of Bin Laden would not greatly diminish India's worries.

The sudden twist in US-Pak relations brought about by the present crisis has confounded earlier calculations. The deliberate downgrading of Pakistan in comparison with India that we have recently witnessed seems abruptly to have been reversed.

All American attention is now concentrated on Pakistan, and Indian expressions of solidarity and offers of help have received only rather routine acknowledgement.

What is particularly galling to India is the way in which the global campaign against terrorism has been steered away from Pakistan despite its damaging record in Kashmir.

This turn of events derives from the US perception that it is at war. At such a time, only the immediate objective matters, and all necessary means have to be mobilised.

Pakistan is the indispensable conduit to the Taliban. It thus becomes necessary for America to set aside its differences with that country in order to pursue the objective that today crowds out everything else.

Not that this makes for much comfort for Pakistan, which has been under pressure and been forced to act under duress.

The perception that Pakistan has been compelled by American pressure to move against its Islamic allies in Afghanistan has not gone down well with a considerable segment of the Pakistani public, and President Musharraf has been hard pressed to make a convincing case before his own countrymen.

His troubles can only increase in the event of US military strikes against Afghanistan.

In this very complicated situation, it is almost impossible to see how events will unfold. Despite its brusque rejection by the USA, the proposal of the Afghan clerics that Bin Laden may be asked to leave voluntarily could be a chink to let in a little light. Interestingly, this clerical opinion does not derive from theological considerations but sounds like a native Afghan wish that the Arab foreigner might be induced to depart and take with him the troubles that are being heaped on their country.

In the present circumstances, the wholehearted support expressed by India for the USA is appropriate and commands wide approval.

Yet there is some unease at the precipitate nature of our response, and this needs proper explanation.

And finally, we should not fail to react to the predicament of the ordinary people of Afghanistan, our historic friends and close neighbours, who are forced to flee their homes in fear of overwhelming attack from an all-powerful adversary.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

100 YEARS AGO TODAY

SEPTEMBER 23, 1901

A BENGALEE GRAMMAR

STUDENTS of Bengalee will welcome a neat little work on Elementary Bengalee Grammar, which has been published by Mrs M.A.C. Moorat, formerly head mistress of the Church Missionary Society's Girls' School at Bhagaya in Santalia. The book has been designed as a help to students, "especially missionaries, civilians, magistrates and merchants." A good part of it has been framed in the form of questions and answers in English, with, of course, the Bengalee characters accompanying. This special feature of the work renders it a useful aid to those desirous of obtaining a grammatical knowledge of the prevailing language of Lower Bengal.

THE STATESMAN

20 SEP 2001

Afghanistan
HD-17

A land devastated

AFGHANISTAN TODAY is a nation on the move. While the country's religious leadership has asked the "prime suspect" in the September 11 attacks, Osama bin Laden, to move out voluntarily and its ruling Taliban militia is shifting capital from Kabul to safer places, its 25 million commoners are the world's single largest refugee community for the 22nd year running. And, they have no place to go.

As if two decades of invasion and civil war were not enough, they have now invited the wrath of the world's only superpower and neighbours who had traditionally supported and hosted them are closing their borders while famine and fear of war offer them little solace at home.

Their rugged homeland can hide America's most wanted man, but holds little for them. The richer Afghans crowd the border points, hoping to escape the hopelessness of being a refugee in their own country. Others trudge to camps such as the one

Their rugged homeland may hide America's most wanted man, but holds little for them.
B. Muralidhar Reddy
on the plight of the ordinary Afghans.

near Herat where hundreds died of the cold last winter or to the relative safety of rural areas where the worst drought in living memory awaits them. The economy is in tatters; they expect little protection from the ruling Taliban which continues to espouse jihad and is ready to take on the might of America. The only protection the Taliban has so far "forced" on the people has turned half the population, the women, into a faceless entity.

The country, once the crossroads of culture, is adrift today. The Afghans, once hailed as valiant warriors, are today reviled as refugees. It cannot get more ironical. This very United States had put the people of Afghanistan on a pedestal in the 1980s and given them money and material support to fight the Soviet Union. Thousands of Afghans perished and millions were rendered homeless at the end of the decade-long proxy war between the U.S. and the erstwhile USSR.

The Soviet Union is gone. The U.S. is the sole superpower. But the Afghans' lot has only gone from bad to worse. As per U.N. estimates, over four million Afghans, nearly one-sixth of the population, are currently living as refugees — 2.5 million in Pakistan and another 1.5 million in Iran. And millions of others are lining up at the borders. About 800,000 Afghans have had to leave their homeland between September 2000 and August this year. And that was much before September 11.

Their two neighbours, Pakistan, to the east, which nursed the Taliban militia to its present stature, and Iran, on the west, have closed their borders. The Central Asian republics to the north too

three weeks in Afghanistan today. And since they and the NGOs have been forced to evacuate, there is no way to disburse these or replenish them.

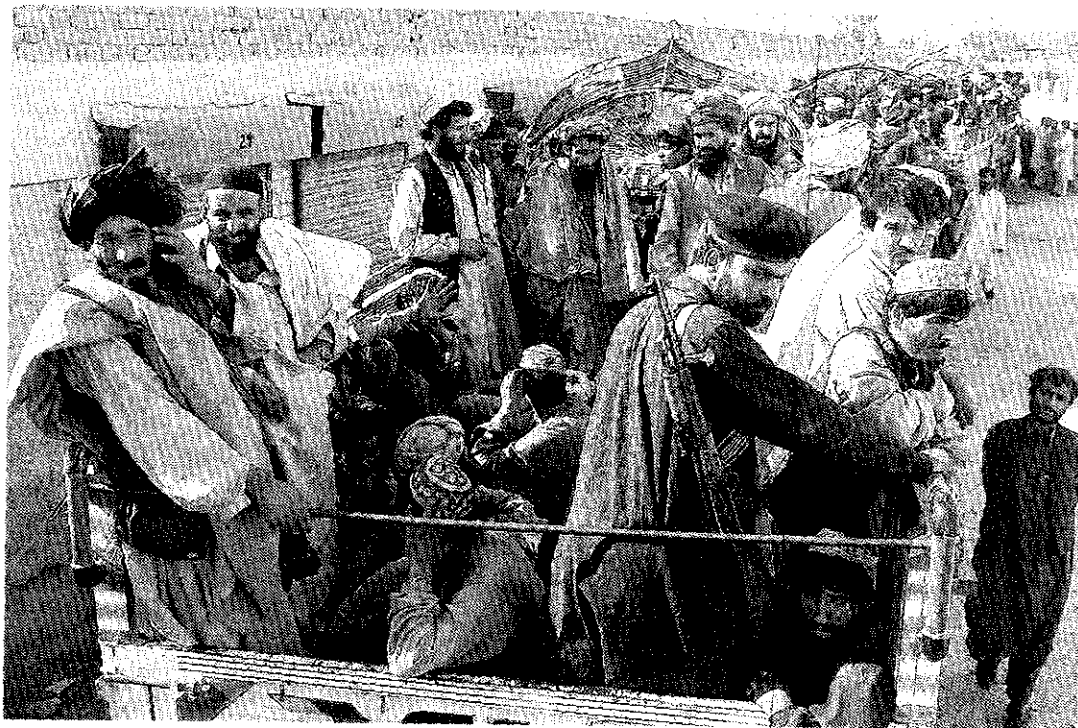
This year Afghanistan appealed for \$229 millions as aid from the world community but not even one-tenth came. Add to this the branding of international aid workers as zealots spreading Christianity in the Islamic Republic, with death as the penalty, and you have a recipe for disaster for the common Afghan. He has no source of income and has been deprived of dole.

Years of war have left the land once known for its orchards scorched. The irrigation systems have been blasted. Besides, vast tracts have landmines, even a

An indicator is the state of the Afghani, the currency. In 1979-80 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, the Afghani was four to one Pakistani Rupee. In 1992, it was 16 Afghani to a Pakistani Rupee. In 1993, when Afghanistan was in the first throes of a civil war, it went down to 380 Afghani to a Pakistani rupee. In 1996, it was 600:1 and this year it stands at around 1,300 Afghani to one Pakistani Rupee.

A doctor earns about \$10 a month. The salaries increase tenfold if you find employment with an international aid agency but even that opening is now closed.

During this time of economic adversity, the chief export of the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan was jihad. Over the past week, the Ta-



Afghan refugees rounded up by Pakistani policemen... unwelcome everywhere.

have shut their doors and Russia has deployed troops on the border.

Coming in the wake of a three-year drought that rendered most of western Afghanistan a virtual wasteland, an unending civil war, economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation besides a non-existent economy, the latest threat of war by the U.S. has further rattled a nation that has been on the brink of disaster for a while now.

The refugees who have been able to cross over are blessed compared to the others. Over one million people do not have the resources to see them through to the next harvest, which depends on the rain gods, of course. World Food Programme (WFP) officials say there are food stocks for just

dozen years after the Soviets left.

The trucking business, that supported trade via the land routes across Iran, Turkmenistan and Pakistan, which once generated Rs. 3 million a day and initially filled the Taliban coffers, has now dried up following increased border vigilance. Last year's decree by Mullah Omar banning poppy cultivation deprived his regime of around Rs. 300 million in annual collections. The depleting resources that coincided with the drying up of western aid led to an increase in import tariffs and other taxes. This was the last straw. The other fallout, of course, was the increase in the clout of the cash-rich Arabs, mainly the group led by Osama bin Laden.

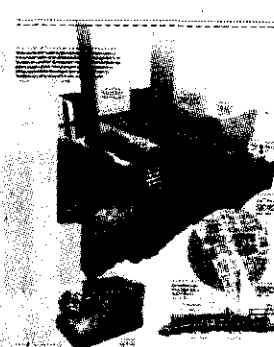
liban has called on Afghans and the Islamic *Ummah* (brotherhood) to get ready for another long war against the Americans, and, as a result they have started closing ranks. A visible fallout could be reduction in the militancy in Kashmir.

Ever since its emergence in September 1994, the Taliban has tied its Islamic credentials to the rigorous interpretation of the Shariat so that breaking a centuries-old statute becomes an internal, religious matter; supporting Osama bin Laden becomes part of Pashtun honour and a renewed call for a fresh jihad, an answer to 'Operation Infinite Justice'.



Star Struck!

Students in Delhi's new crop of astrology schools are a motley crew, discovers Vidya Shivadas



Our new science page is...

...Fun, interesting and informative. Find out what brought down the World Trade Center, apart from the planes

FLAIR

SEPTEMBER 23, 2001

It's a



The invasion route. Used, among others, by Alexander, Chengiz Khan, Taimur Lang, the Turks, the Lodhis and Babur, who carried gunpowder across the Indus for the first time. For the great invader route it was, Afghanistan only has 24km of railways and barely 3,000km of paved roads

Three-fourths of Afghanistan has been drought-affected for two years now. Only 12 per cent land is arable. There is little food for them and little aid. They lack food but they are the world's largest growers of poppy: 1,670 metric tonnes a year

The Silk Route. The commercial artery connecting China to the Roman Empire, which later inspired expansionism. Marco Polo travelled it in the 13th century, trading silk, spices, and culture

Since 1996, the Afghan people have lived under an oppressive Taliban regime that imposed strict religious codes and cut the nation off from the rest of the world. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas showed just how isolationist they are

Nearly five million Afghans live in refugee camps, displaced by wars and drought. Most are in camps in Pakistan and Iran. A sizeable number remain at home for the sheer lack of room elsewhere

Graphic: RUPAK GOSWAMI

battlefield

THE SUNDAY STORY

War is hovering over Afghanistan. So what's new?

T I M E L I N E

1747-1773

Afghanistan's ethnic groups come together to form a rudimentary nation-state under Pashtun ruler Ahmad Shah Durrani

1826-1933

Three Anglo-Afghan wars are fought; in between, several Pashtun leaders make a grab for the throne, but anarchy persists

1973

A military coup led by prime minister Mohammed Daoud results in the overthrow of King Zahir. Afghanistan becomes a republic

1978

President Daoud is killed in a bloody clash with pro-Soviet Leftists, paving the way for stronger economic and military ties with USSR

1979-80

After a Soviet-backed coup, Babrak Karmal is the new leader. For the next nine years, the USSR fights the Mujahideen

1987

The pro-Soviet Sayid Mohammad Najibullah is elected president. Soviet troops dig into Kabul but guerrillas continue battle

1989

Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan as fighting between Afghan rebels and government forces escalates

1992

President Najibullah is ousted. Burhanuddin Rabbani is elected president for a two-year term. Hekmatyar rebels

1993

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of the Hezb-i-Islami, is sworn in as prime minister. Elections are announced for 1994

1996

The Taliban seize Kabul. Najibullah is ousted. The Taliban gains control of 90 per cent of the country

Another war to end one

There is perhaps no such thing as an Afghan people. If there is a country called Afghanistan, it is merely an alien idea imposed upon a people who have never really understood the notion of a nation state. They have little in common other than an imaginary line called the international boundary — and now the dread of super-power strikes. But then, even war isn't new to them. When they have not been bearing up to invader hordes coursing from Central Asia or imperial powers pawing their way in, they have been quite busy tearing each other apart. Look back at any period in the history of the region called Afghanistan and you will find chaos enthroned: Pashtuns fighting the Hazaras, the Hazaras at war with the Tajiks and the Uzbeks, the Balochis invading Nuristan, the Moghols rampaging their way through a myriad tribal roadblocks. And often, it has got worse: Pashtun sub-tribes launching into each other and then those battles sparking fires right down the tribal hierarchy — sub-clans, area chieftains, village heads, families.

Consider a contemporary example. When the Soviets were in control of the land, the Mujahideen was one force fighting against a common enemy. The moment it began to appear the Soviet hold was loosening, they split apart and trained their guns on each other. There were, suddenly, close to a dozen big and small Afghan Mujahideen outfits lodged in fierce battle to take Kabul. Rarely, ever, in the permanent impermanence of Afghanistan have its people agreed on who should rule them. The eve of the Soviet pullout wasn't an exception. The war of succession that began in 1992 hasn't quite ended, even though the Taliban have established a temporary supremacy. The killing of Ahmed Shah Masood by a suicide squad last fortnight was neither the first nor the last act of that long kept tribal tradition: fratricidal war.

Cry, the Beloved People

The Taliban will escape any military assault, innocents will be hurt again, says emigre Afghan Tamim Ansary

I HAVE been hearing a lot of talk about "bombing Afghanistan back to the Stone Age." The host on a local Talk Radio allowed that this would mean killing innocent people, people who had nothing to do with this atrocity, but "we're at war, we have to accept collateral damage." And then he asked, "What else can we do? What is your suggestion?" Minutes later I heard a television pundit discussing whether we "have the belly to do what must be done." And I thought about these issues especially hard because I am from Afghanistan, and even though I've lived here for 35 years I've never lost track of what's been going on over there. I speak as one who hates the Taliban and Osama bin Laden.

But the Taliban and bin Laden are not Afghanistan. They're not even the government of Afghanistan. The Taliban are a cult of ignorant psychotics who captured Afghanistan in 1997 and have been holding the country in bondage ever since. Bin Laden is a political criminal with a master plan. When you think Taliban, think Nazis. When you think bin Laden, think Hitler. And when you think "the people of Afghanistan" think "the Jews in the concentration camps." It's not only that the Afghan people had nothing to do with this atrocity. They were the first victims of its perpetrators. I think they would love someone to eliminate the Taliban and clear out the rat's nest of international thugs holed up in their country. I guarantee it.

Some say, if that's the case, why don't the Afghans rise up and overthrow the Taliban themselves? The answer is, they're starved, exhausted,

damaged, and incapacitated. A few years ago, the United Nations estimated that there are 500,000 disabled orphans in Afghanistan — a country with no economy, no food. Millions of Afghans are widows of the approximately two million men killed during the war with the Soviets. And the Taliban has been executing these women for being women, they have buried some of their opponents alive in mass graves.

We come now to the question of bombing Afghanistan back to the Stone Age. The trouble with that scheme is, it's already been done. The Soviets took care of it. Make the Afghans suffer? They're already suffering. Level their houses? Done. Turn their schools into piles of rubble? Done. Eradicate their hospitals? Done. Destroy their infrastructure? There is no infrastructure. Cut them off from medicine and health care? Too late. Someone already did all that.

New bombs would only land in the rubble of earlier bombs. Would they at least get the Taliban? Not likely. In today's Afghanistan, only the Taliban eat, only they have the means to move around. They'd slip away and hide, if they haven't already. Maybe the bombs would get some of those disabled orphans, they don't move too fast, they don't even have wheelchairs. But flying over Kabul and dropping bombs wouldn't really be a strike against the criminals.

Let me now speak with true fear and trembling. The only way to get bin Laden is to go in there with ground troops. I think that when people speak of "having the belly to do what needs to be done" many of them are thinking in terms of

having the belly to kill as many as needed. They are thinking about overcoming moral qualms about killing innocent people. But it's the belly to die not the belly to kill that's required. Americans will die in a land war to get bin Laden. And not just because some Americans would die fighting their way through Afghanistan to bin Laden's hideout. It's much bigger than that, folks. To get any troops to Afghanistan, we'd have to go through Pakistan. Would they let us? Not likely. The conquest of Pakistan would have to be first. Will other Muslim nations just stand by? You see where I'm going. The invasion approach is a flirtation with global war between Islam and the West. And that is bin Laden's program. That's exactly what he wants and why he did this thing. Read his speeches and statements. It's all right there. At the moment, of course, "Islam" as such does not exist. There are Muslims and there are Muslim countries, but no such political entity as Islam. Osama bin Laden believes that if he can get a war started, he can constitute this entity and he'd be running it. He really believes Islam would beat the West. It might seem ridiculous, but he figures if he can polarise the world into Islam and the West, he's got a billion soldiers. If the West wrecks havoc in Muslim lands, that's a billion people with nothing left to lose, even better from bin Laden's point of view. He's probably wrong.

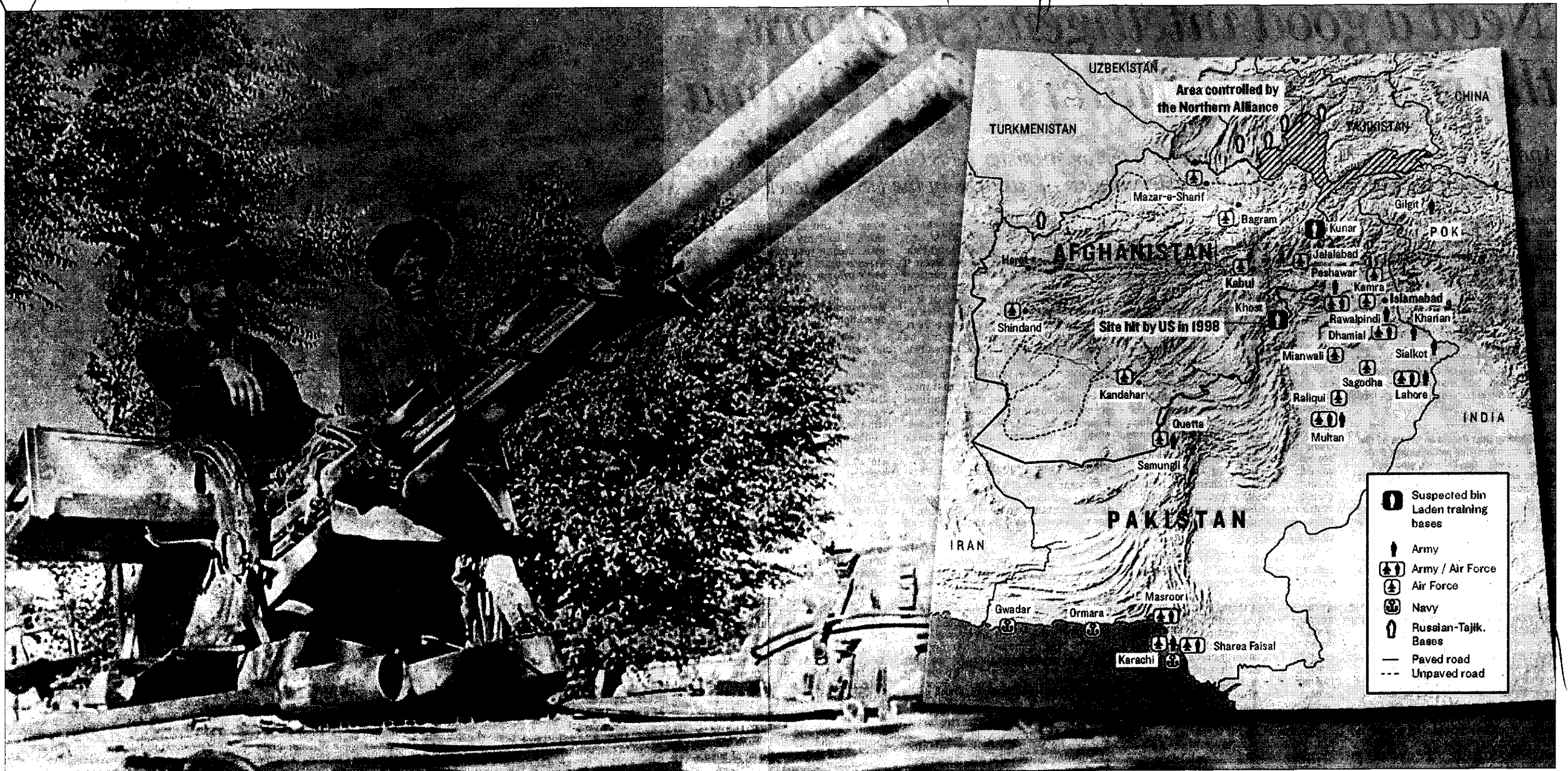
I don't have a solution. But I do believe that suffering and poverty are the soil in which terrorism grows. bin Laden and his cohorts want to bait us into creating more such soil, so they and their kind can flourish. We can't let him do that.

And woe following woe

There is no way of life in Afghanistan. There is, at best, a way of clinging on to life. Of surviving in the absence of water, food and shelter. The lucky have fled, only to be haunted by the loss of country, culture and family ties. For the rest, daily existence is shaped by an endless, terrible civil war. If there is any civic infrastructure in Afghanistan, it's because the Taliban hasn't yet razed it to the ground. There is humanitarian assistance, but just about. The per capita international aid for refugees in Kosovo was \$100; in Afghanistan, it is barely \$5. Health services are so inadequate that children die of minor illnesses like measles, and even the common cold. Of every 100,000 mothers, a frightening 1,700 die at childbirth. The United Nations vowed to raise \$212 million for Afghan refugees in 2000, but so far, the kitty hasn't increased beyond \$43 million. Perhaps the world is too horrified to look in the direction of Afghanistan. Or perhaps, the people are too far away and the land too remote for it to matter.

In a country of 25 million people:

- 70 per cent are undernourished
- 64 per cent are illiterate
- On an average, men don't live beyond 40 years, and women, 44
- Only 12 per cent has access to safe drinking water
- There are 100,000 TV sets; there's no cable, they see what the Taliban allow
- For every 1,000 inhabitants, there are 1.4 telephone connections
- One-fourth of all children die before reaching the age of five
- 25,000 families are headed by war widows; 7,000 families, by disabled men



A DIFFERENT WAR

So, how is the US going to fight its new war? The enemy is not just some armed zealots, but also their country's unique terrain and history

Manvendra Singh
New Delhi

'I don't think they play at all fairly,' Alice began, in rather a complaining tone, 'and they all quarrel so dreadfully one can't hear oneself speak — and they don't seem to have any rules in particular; at least, if there are, nobody attends to them — and you've no idea how confusing it is.'

Lewis Carroll — *Alice in Wonderland*

The immediate reaction of the United States and the coalition that is beginning to take shape is certain to be the military component of this 'new war'. Retribution for September 11 will involve, in its first phase, the use of military power to impose immeasurable damages on the planners of the terrorist attacks. And in the military aspect of this 'new war' the most important role will have to be played by the Special Forces of the coalition. For the Special Forces, by the very nature of their thinking, are the ideal weapons to tackle terrorists and insurgents. Lewis Carroll's classic certainly did not have the Special Forces in mind when those immortal words were penned, but in such simplicity nothing else captures the environment that the Special Forces live in. The world that they dwell in is a world where convention is anathema, and the unorthodox is venerated. And because terrorists and insurgents survive under precisely the same system that makes the Special Forces the ideal weapons in this unparalleled conflict that is emerging regionally and globally.

'War' does not adequately explain or make the pedestrian understand the contours of what is underway in the minds of the United States government in its response to the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. It is not quite a war, but it is also more than just war. It is not war in the sense of conventional armies clashing on a battlefield, but it is more than just war in that it is likely to involve every facet of governance in an active role and in which each is as important as the other. The role of, for example, an income tax official is going to be as critical as that of a helicopter pilot, or for that matter an intelligence analyst. Since September 11 changed the way the world is going to see itself containing a menace far more devastating than had ever been assumed the world is also going to respond differently. For

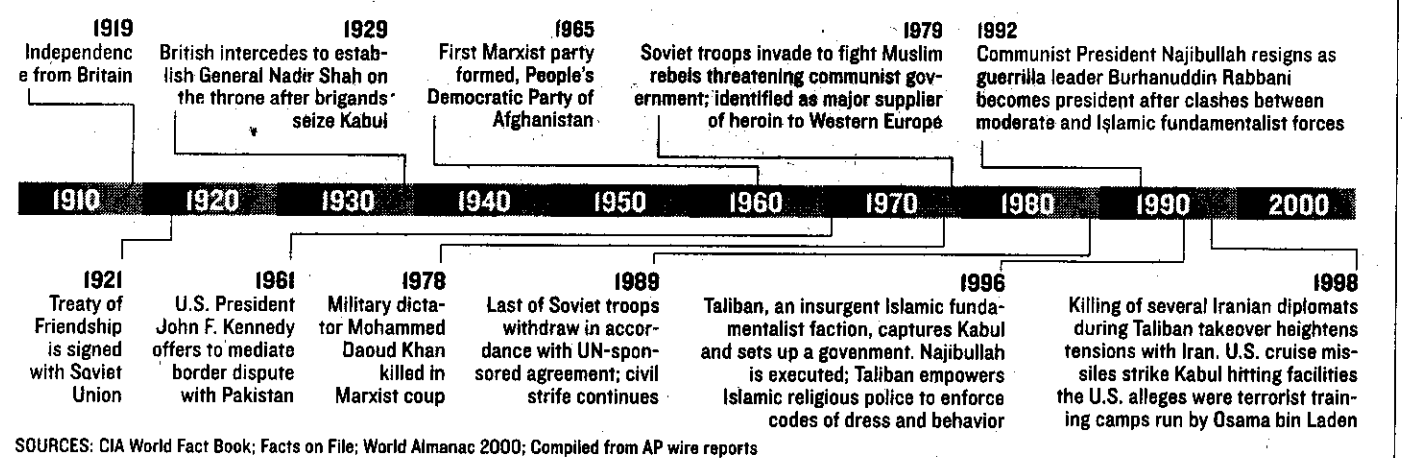


this is indeed the coming together of a new partnership. And the fight to overcome this menace is going to be global in its dimension, regional in its battle zone and ruthless in its implementation. As a US defence department official said, "What we're engaged in is something that is very, very different from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf war, Kosovo, Bosnia, the kinds of things that people think of when they use the word 'war' or 'campaign' or 'conflict'. We really, almost, are going to have to fashion a new vocabulary and different constructs for thinking about what it is we're doing." Unlike previous military ventures into Afghanistan, this is not going to be an occupation-centred campaign. That, above all, is the lesson learnt by all who have followed the course of Afghan history.

The British installation of Shah Shuja as the King in 1840-41 was a hugely successful venture, until the abundance of fruits, a salubrious climate and the flirtatious women of Kabul caught the fancy of those like Col Sir Alexander 'Bukhara' Burnes. Cricket and Croquet became regular features in Kabul and what ensued was the most harrowing chapter in imperial British history. More than a hundred years later in 1979, the Soviet Army

Afghanistan: A history of resistance

Throughout its history, land-locked Afghanistan has fought enemies from inside and out. In the late 20th century, Taliban Islamic fundamentalists took control of the country.



undertook a similar mission. While it did not play cricket in Kabul, and it lasted longer, in less than a decade it too had to withdraw, thus authoring the most humiliating portion of Soviet history.

This time around the priorities are very different, just as the partners in this venture are different. A military occupation is not on the cards for the simple reason that the goals are different. The aim is to remove the Taliban from power in Afghanistan whilst getting rid of Osama bin Laden permanently. "This is a new kind of evil," said the US President George W. Bush a week ago after a weekend war council with his senior aides at Camp David, "the American people are beginning to understand, this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while, and the American people must be patient... We will rid the world of the evil-doers." The commencement of hostilities with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is now only a matter of time. For in order to get to Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of September 11, the United States has to go through Taliban and ensure the destruction of its apparatus.

While this destruction also involves covert moves to bribe away amenable Taliban com-

manders, the first military steps are likely to be air and missile attacks on command centres. The rusty Taliban air force will be the first to be removed from the battle zone. Some Special Forces elements could well be in Afghanistan to help identify targets for air attacks. But largely speaking, it is only after the Taliban's limited air force is destroyed could the Special Forces assault teams be sent in to perform their tasks. During the Gulf War, British and US Special Forces were inserted into Iraq before Operation Desert Storm actually began. But then that war required a different set of tasks from the Special Forces, and this 'new war' demands a totally distinct rules of engagement.

The Special Forces soldier is most vulnerable during the insertion phase. As the US Special Forces Field Manual 7-83 declares, "The infiltration phase is the most complicated of any operation." Ensuring that the Taliban have no air assets to make the task more dangerous can only enhance safety. And it is after the first round of air attacks that in the dead of night low flying helicopters will drop Special Forces detachments at various locations in Afghanistan. Until the coalition forces are able to secure airbases, helicopters will be

used to insert the Special Forces detachments. The Russian Special Forces, the Spetsnaz, launched the most successful Soviet Army operations during the decade-long occupation. It was on account of heavy Afghan rebel casualties that the United States then introduced the Stinger shoulder fired surface-to-air missile into the war. Since many of those same Stingers are likely to appear now in this 'new war', the insertion will most likely be done from the more secure northern route rather than the use of Pakistan bases.

The 160 Special Operations Aviation Regiment of the US Special Forces Command is likely to be tasked to insert the American and British Special Forces soldiers. This regiment is called Nightstalkers in admiration of its ability to fly in troops even under the most adverse of conditions using MH-6H, AH-6G and MH-60K/L Pave Low helicopters. Bases in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan would most likely be used for these initial operations. The approach from the north poses less of a threat than does the Pakistani route. But it is still not going to be an easy task as the United States Vice President said, "It is a mean, nasty, dangerous, dirty business out there, and we have to operate in that arena."

Jonathan Steele

STANDING OUTSIDE the American embassy in Moscow the day after the atrocities in Manhattan, George Bush's representative spoke words which ought to resonate around the world today. Asked whether the attacks would change America's policy of condemning Russia's actions in Chechnya, the American ambassador, Alexander Vershbow, acknowledged there was an international terrorist dimension to the Chechen conflict. But with a wisdom which has been all but expunged in the days since the Manhattan bombings, he said: "The Russian approach in our view is leading down the wrong path. A military approach is only making a bad situation worse and we continue to emphasise that their interests lie in finding a

solution to the Chechnya crisis". What is true for Russian policy over Chechnya is just as true for American policy over the bombing of Manhattan and the Pentagon. Yet which of the west's politicians is going to be the first to say it on their visits to Washington this week? The dangers of American military retaliation seem to be understood, when diplomats and politicians speak privately. In public they prefer to talk in code. Tony Blair called for clear evidence to be given as to who was behind the attacks before any response was made. Other European leaders asked for cool heads and patience. There were warnings that no action should be launched which would provoke wider popular anger in the Middle East over American policy in the region. On the radio Clare Short warned it would be "unbearable" if

Force is not the answer

any US attacks in Afghanistan produced massive casualties. Behind many of these reactions there was a feeling that time would have a healing effect. If the first understandable urge to hit out could be restrained for a few days, then maybe the Americans would settle on an exclusively political response.

This line of argument is comforting and seductive, but not convincing. When terrorists blew up the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, Bill Clinton, like Bush today, talked of "a long war". It took him 13 days to launch his cruise mis-

siles on Afghanistan and Sudan. Given an arrogant but inaccurate command, Operation Infinite Reach followed the same words about cool heads and the need for evidence which we are hearing from European leaders now. Yet missiles were fired at Sudan and Afghanistan regardless of the coded calls for restraint. They did not hit Bin Laden, nor persuade the Taliban to extradite him, nor stop his terrorism.

Any military strike, let alone a sustained military campaign, in response to last week's attacks, would be wrong. Political pressures have to be put on states which harbour them. But the

"war" against terrorism has to be a combination of politics and the police. When George Bush called last week's attacks the first war of the 21st century, he seemed unaware that more than two dozen were already under way.

Other Americans have drawn parallels with Pearl Harbour, yet that attack was accompanied by simultaneous strikes against British positions in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaya — the opening shot by a Japanese government bent on imperial expansion and not targeted only at America. Osama bin Laden is a very different

enemy who has been operating for years. He is not interested in territory. This is a war of ideas which targets the corruption of Islamic rulers as much as the power of the United States.

There is another international figure at large who ordered the killing of a greater number of innocent people than died in the United States last week. They had hours, not seconds, to quake in terror as they faced death. They had no mobile phones to say goodbye to their loved ones. There is even an international arrest warrant, sanctioned by the UN, for their murderer's arrest. Yet General Ratko Mladic, the architect of 7,000 deaths in Srebrenica, has been "harboured" by governments in Belgrade and the Serbian part of Bosnia for six years.

Those who advocated war with Yugoslavia two years ago had various

reasons for intervention, but nobody saw the arrest of Mladic as the focus for resorting to force. Terrible though his crimes were, seizing him was, and still is, not worth war.

The same goes for Bin Laden. If the Taliban were to hand him over, American demands for justice might be satisfied. If the Taliban refuse, Americans should maintain their political campaign, but would be wrong to use force. The desire for revenge, and for a dramatic flexing of military muscle, are natural — they put Bush under tremendous pressure. But giving in will only exacerbate the wider problem of international terror. The world must say so directly, and it is up to Britain and other Nato leaders in particular to give the message.

U.S. plans to reinstate exiled Afghan king

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
Times News Network

LONDON: Before a single shot is fired in President George W. Bush's "first war of the 21st century", the Americans and a key NATO ally, possibly Britain, are pressing much of Europe to support plans for a "post-Taliban Afghanistan" governed by its 86-year-old exiled king Zahir Shah and a United Nations-led interim administration.

The revelations, which figure in a screaming lead, exclusive to *The Guardian*, quote secret diplomatic documents to say the U.S. "is bent on force to evict the Taliban from power" and will not stop at finding Osama bin Laden and destroying his training camps.

The documents quote the U.S.

administration as canvassing the views of the allies after "the liberation" of Afghanistan.

In a BBC interview on Friday morning, British foreign secretary Jack Straw refused to discuss "secret memos", but confirmed that the coalition of nations engaged in "the war on terrorism" was keen on ensuring that Afghanistan had a proper government.

Analysts say the revelations are typical of superpower foreign policy, which has something of a record in creating well-funded puppet administrations that later bedevil the region. But, the pundits add, Washington does seem to be altering the script this time because they want the Europeans to agree to plans to offer a key role to the

UN and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, without mentioning NATO. This may indicate "a major change of U.S. policy," say some European diplomats, indicating the broadness of the coalition being assembled by the Americans and the British.

Reports say that Washington is paying for and organising the visit to Rome of several members of the Northern Alliance, the Taliban opposition forces, for talks with Zahir Shah. The king, who was overthrown in 1973, is said to have already told the Italian authorities that he was willing to fill the void if the Taliban is toppled. Reports say he plans to call on the Afghan tribes to rise up against the Taliban.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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US, allies worried about post-Taliban scene

Defeating Taliban could leave a void

By JEREMY LOVELL

London, Sept. 21: The United States and its anti-terror campaign allies are looking beyond a possible military strike against the Taliban, and are already discussing the makeup of a new Afghan leadership, officials say.

A spokesman for Britain's foreign office said the coalition was reviewing all the possible outcomes if the Taliban is overthrown. "Our objective has always been to see a broad-based legitimate government in Afghanistan," the spokesman said on Friday. "We have always maintained contacts with all factions in the country." Citing diplomatic cables from Washington, Britain's *Guardian* newspaper said the US was canvassing opinions on a "post-Taliban Afghanistan after the liberation of the country."

Former King of Afghanistan Mohammad Zahir Shah, who was living in exile in Rome since 1973, has appealed for an emergency assembly of representatives of all Afghan groups to elect a head of state and establish a transitional government. Western intelligence agencies have blamed Saudi-born Osama bin Laden, a so-called "guest" of the Taliban in Afghanistan, for the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11 in which more than 6,000 people were killed. The United States has demanded the Taliban hand him over, and on Friday a blunt President George W. Bush said countries not in the anti-terror coalition

would be deemed enemies.

Experts say Washington faces a nightmare choice — do nothing and open the door to a repeat of the suicide attacks on New York and Washington last week, or overthrow the regime shielding Bin Laden and risk destabilising the whole region.

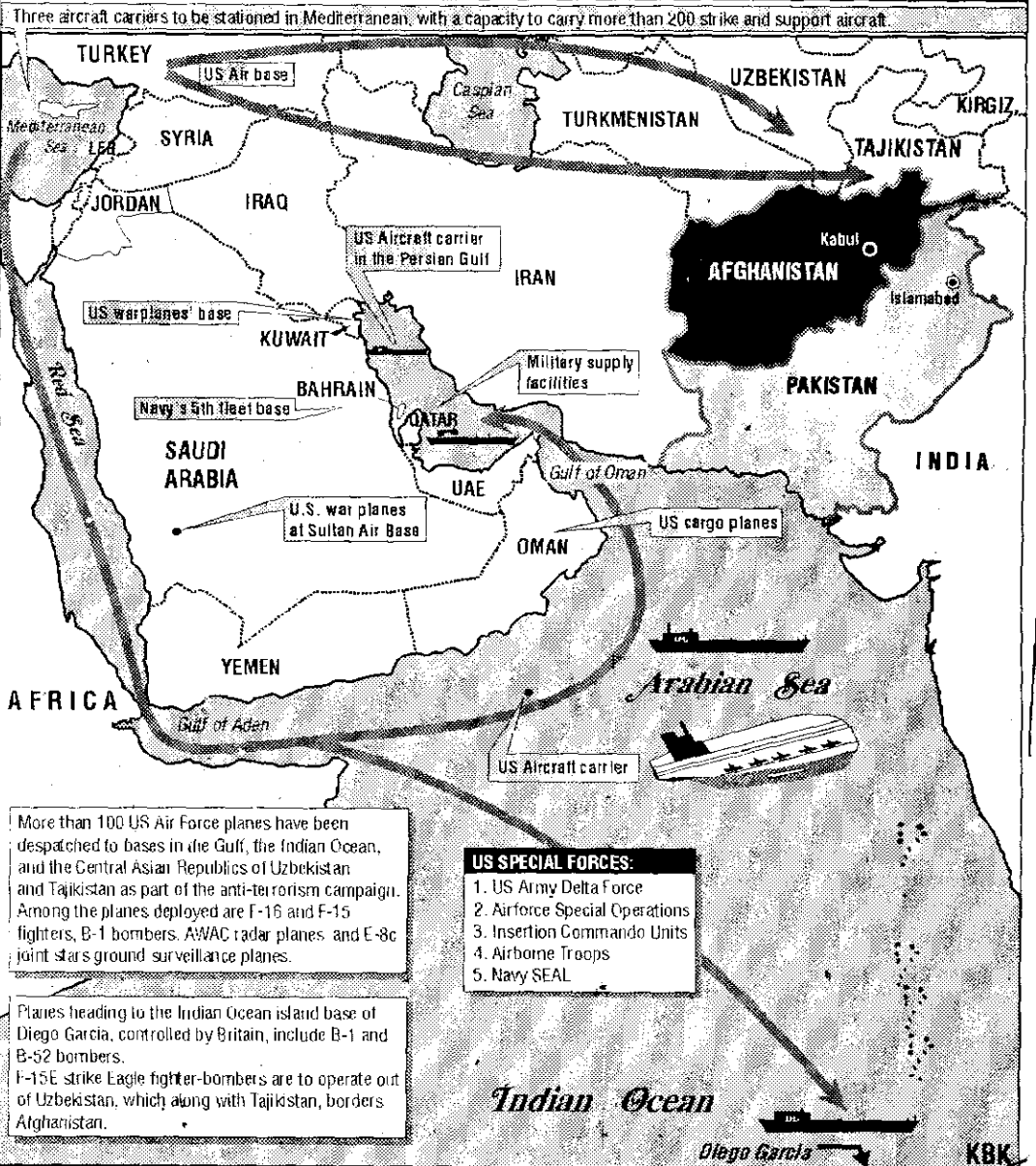
"Take out the Taliban? It really is a matter that you are damned if you do and you are damned if you don't," Rahul Bedi, India correspondent of *Jane's Defence Weekly*, said.

"Defeating the Taliban militarily is not that hard a task, although small pockets would remain in the mountains. What you put in their place is the nightmare question," he said.

What the United States does not want is a repeat of the dismal failure of the US-led bid to oust Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein after liberating Kuwait — a failure that left him in power and the region in limbo. But to break the military back of the Taliban would by definition leave a vacuum in a pivotal part of Central Asia.

"There are really only two scenarios — bring back the old King Zahir Shah, who by all accounts is very reluctant, or bring the rebel Northern Alliance into Kabul," *Jane's Bedi* said. "But Pakistan would never accept the Northern Alliance. It has close links with Russia and India and would give India back a foothold in the country that it lost in 1979 when it backed the wrong party in the Russian invasion," he said. (Reuters)

THE UNITED STATES PREPARES FOR WAR



THE ASIAN AGE

22 SEP 2001

27 SEP 2001

SC unseats Jayalalithaa as CM

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 21. The Supreme Court today dealt a severe blow to the political career of the AIADMK chief, Ms. Jayalalithaa, by quashing her appointment as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu by the then Governor, Ms. Fathima Beevi, on May 14.

A five-judge Constitution Bench, in a unanimous verdict of 5-0, held "a person who is convicted for a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment for a period of not less than two years cannot be appointed the Chief Minister of a State under Article 164 (1) read with (4) and cannot continue to function as such." In effect, the court rejected the argument that a popular mandate — or the 'will' of the people — could override the Constitution.

Holding that her appointment "was not legal and valid," Mr. Justice S.P. Bharucha, speaking for himself and Mr. Justice Y.K. Sabharwal, said "we are satisfied that in the appointment of Ms. Jayalalithaa as Chief Minister there has been a clear infringement of a Constitutional provision and that

a writ of *quo warranto* must issue." And Mr. Justice G.B. Pattanaik, speaking for himself and Mrs. Justice Ruma Pal, gave a separate but concurring judgment as did Mr. Justice Brijesh Kumar.

The Bench observed that it was not impressed by the submission that the court should not issue a *quo warranto* as the six-month period, allowed by Article 164 (4), would expire in about two months and it was possible for Ms. Jayalalithaa to succeed in the criminal appeals (in the TANSI cases) filed by her in the Madras High Court. "We take the view that the appointment of a person to the office of Chief Minister who is not qualified to hold it should be struck down at the earliest."

A non-legislator could be made Chief Minister or Minister under Article 164 only if he/she had the qualifications to become a member of the legislature, as enshrined in Article 173, and was not disqualified by reason of the disqualification set out in Article 191. It would be "unreasonable and anomalous" to say that a Minister who was a member of the legislature was required to meet the Constitu-

tional standards of qualification and disqualification, but that a Minister who was not a member need not. Logically, the standards expected of a Minister, who was not a member, should be the same as, if not greater than, those required of a member.

The Bench cited a situation wherein a party, with a majority in the legislature, could recommend to the Governor the appointment of a foreign citizen, who would not be qualified to become one under Article 173, as Chief Minister under Article 164 (1) read with 164 (4). The Governor, in the instance, would be obliged to comply; the legislature would be unable to pass a no-confidence motion against the foreigner "Chief Minister" because the majority party would oppose it; and the "Chief Minister" would continue in office till the next election.

"Such a dangerous — such an absurd interpretation of Article 164 has to be rejected out of hand. The Constitution prevails over the 'will' of the people as expressed through the majority party. The 'will' of the people prevails only if it is in accordance with the Constitution."

Referring to the submission of Ms. Jayalalithaa's counsel that the Governor, while exercising her discretion under Article 164 (4), could appoint any person as Minister or Chief Minister, the Bench said "to accept counsel's submission is to invite disaster."

"The Governor cannot, in the exercise of his/her discretion or otherwise, do anything that is con-

trary to the Constitution and the laws." Therefore, the Governor, having due regard to the Constitution and the laws, must decline to exercise the discretion in appointing as Chief Minister a non-member who was not qualified to become a member of the legislature.

The Bench did not accept the contention that once a sentence was stayed by the High Court and an appeal was pending, the conviction would not operate and Ms. Jayalalithaa suffered no disqualification, and said "conviction and sentence it carries operate against the accused in all their rigour until set aside in appeal, and a disqualification that attaches to the conviction and sentence applies as well."

The Bench held that the day Ms. Jayalalithaa was sworn-in, she was disqualified by reason of her convictions under the Prevention of Corruption Act and the sentences of imprisonment of not less than two years, under Sec. 8 (3) of the Representation of the People Act. "We are aware that the finding that Ms. Jayalalithaa could not have been sworn in as Chief Minister and cannot continue to function as such will have serious consequences."

To alleviate these consequences, the Bench invoked the *de facto* doctrine and declared that all acts, otherwise legal and valid, performed between May 14 and September 21 by Ms. Jayalalithaa as Chief Minister, by the Council of Ministers and by the State Government shall not be adversely affected by the order.

Fathima Beevi defends her action

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT. 21. The former Tamil Nadu Governor, Ms. Fathima Beevi, today defended her action in appointing the AIADMK leader, Ms. Jayalalithaa, as Chief Minister in May last. She took the decision according to her understanding of the law as it stood then, she said. "The decision was my own. I took it after considering various aspects like law and order in the State and the election results giving a massive mandate to the AIADMK," Ms. Fathima Beevi, reacting to the Supreme Court order quashing the appointment, said. — PTI

Successor, a surprise choice

By Our Tamil Nadu Bureau

CHENNAI, SEPT. 21. The day-long suspense on whom the mantle will fall in Tamil Nadu ended around 7.15 p.m. when the AIADMK chief, Ms. Jayalalithaa, named the Revenue Minister, Mr. O. Paneerselvam, as her successor. It was a total surprise even to her Cabinet Ministers and partymen. Mr. Paneerselvam himself looked shell-shocked.

An agriculturist and first-time MLA, Mr. Paneerselvam, elected from the Periyakulam constituency, was earlier a municipal chairman and the Theni district secretary of the party. Belonging to the Kallar community, he hails from the constituency represented in Parliament by Mr. T.T.V. Dinakaran, nephew of Ms. Sasikalaa, the associate of Ms. Jayalalithaa.

Mr. Paneerselvam, who was born in January 1955, did not figure in the list of "probables", whose names were circulating in the past few weeks. In the earlier phase, women were said to be the frontrunners. Today, the rumour mills churned out the names of the Speaker, Mr. K. Kalimuthu, and also a relative of Ms. Sasikalaa. Ms. Jayalalithaa announced the



The AIADMK general secretary, Ms. Jayalalithaa, introducing the Chief Minister-designate, Mr. O. Paneerselvam, before the swearing-in in Chennai on Friday. — Photo: Vino John

choice of the AIADMK legislature party at the Avvai Shanmugam Salai headquarters, with a visibly-shaken Mr. Paneerselvam seated beside her.

There was intense speculation in the morning whether Ms. Jayalalithaa would have to resign. In the end, it was said that no resignation "was necessary or given", since "she ceased to be the Chief Minister after the Supreme court verdict". Constitutional lawyers and Opposition leaders spoke of a

"possible constitutional vacuum" as the State was technically without a Chief Minister during the course of the day.

Ms. Jayalalithaa met the Governor, Dr. C. Rangarajan, at the Raj Bhavan a little before 1.30 p.m. and it was decided that a new Chief Minister would be sworn in later in the evening. By the evening, when the MLAs met at the party office, many of the Ministers were still in tears in the wake of the Supreme Court judgment quash-

ing Ms. Jayalalithaa's appointment. The Finance Minister, Mr. C. Ponnaiyan, who was considered to be one of the "more eligible" candidates for the top job, put on a brave face — and a broad smile — to demonstrate his loyalty and support. "I am quite a junior because I was away. It was a unanimous decision," he later told *The Hindu*.

Earlier in the day, Ms. Jayalalithaa told the party cadres to face the "emergency" courageously. She not only promised but also vowed to return as Chief Minister. A composed Ms. Jayalalithaa told the media that the present setback "was only a temporary phenomenon" and that the new Government "was only an AIADMK Government and MGR rule would continue in the State".

But there was another important message for the cadres — do not indulge in violence. The BJP-DMK combine was waiting to create law and order problems and clamp President's rule. She warned the partymen "not to fall a prey to the evil designs". The DMK chief, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, was waiting like "an eagle" to capitalise on such an opportunity, she alleged.

Force won't work: Taliban

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 21. Confrontation between the United States and the Taliban appears inevitable as the latter today categorically rejected the four demands of the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush, seeking the handing over of Osama bin Laden and access to the hideouts of the Al-Qaida in Afghanistan.

The Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaeef, told newsmen that there was no justification in the demands made by Mr. Bush and if the U.S. was bent on use of force to realise its goals, the Taliban would be left with little option but to declare a 'jehad' on it.

At the same time, Mullah Zaeef was at pains to emphasise that the Taliban was prepared to discuss the subject with the U.S. if it were to come forward with concrete and credible proof on the alleged involvement of Osama Bin Laden in

the crimes cited against him. Obviously, he maintained that the decision of the Ulema on Thursday was a mere recommendation and not a fatwa (edict).

"We are willing to cooperate with the U.S. and the rest of the world. But let it be clear that we would never surrender to the enemy and evil. It appears the goal of America is not attack on Afghanistan but several other Muslim countries. It is a crusade against the Islamic world," he declared.

When asked if the Taliban considered the decision of the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, to side with the U.S. in its fight against Osama and Taliban as a "hostile act," he said: "As we look at it, the offer of support made by Pakistan is conditional. Like us they are also asking the U.S. to produce evidence. We do not believe that a friendly country like Pakistan would allow its soil to be used by the Americans to

attack Afghanistan." The Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman, on his part, did not wish to react to the Taliban envoy's statement on the demands made by the U.S. President. He issued a brief statement urging the Taliban to take a prompt decision on the recommendation of the religious scholars.

Asked about the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden, the Taliban Ambassador maintained that he had no knowledge about where he was at the moment. A section of the Pakistani press has speculated that Osama had left Afghanistan four days ago.

PTI reports: Osama has "silently" left Afghanistan for an undisclosed destination, ahead of a meeting of Afghan Islamic clerics to discuss whether to extradite him, a newspaper here reported today, quoting sources close to the Taliban and a former Minister of Pakistan.



Policemen chasing people in Karachi for protesting planned U.S. action against the Taliban. — AFP (Report on Page 11)

Taliban must act now: Bush

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, SEPT. 21. Calling upon nations to join the war against terror and reminding them that they were either on the side of the United States or the terrorists, the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, vowed that justice would be meted out to those responsible for killing thousands last week in New York and Washington.

Addressing the joint session of Congress, Mr. Bush once again demanded that Afghanistan hand over the Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, prime suspect in last Tuesday's terror attacks, and be rid of terrorist outfits and operations. "The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share their fate," Mr. Bush declared.

"Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done," Mr. Bush

said. He bluntly reminded the nations, "either you are with us or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded... as a hostile regime."

Mr. Bush, in the course of his historic address to Congress and the nation, reminded the Americans that his campaign was directed at the extremists and terror networks and not against the Islamic faith. Cautioning his countrymen against singling out individuals on the basis of their ethnicity or religious belief, Mr. Bush said the people of different nationalities, including over 250 Indians, had died in the tragedy.

Mr. Bush took the opportunity to announce that a new Cabinet position had been created — Department of Homeland Security — and that his good friend, the Governor of Pennsylvania, Mr. Tommy Ridge, was going to head it and report directly to him.

TAMIL NADU / SOMBRE CEREMONY

Paneerselvam sworn in CM

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, SEPT. 21. In a sombre ceremony at the Raj Bhavan here today, the new Chief Minister, Mr. O. Paneerselvam, and his Council of Ministers were sworn in by the Governor, Mr. C. Rangarajan.

The attendant jubilation of a swearing-in ceremony was remarkably absent, instead a few Ministers, particularly women, broke into anguished sobs. The 24-member Cabinet retained the old pack of Ministers with just two changes — the Housing Minister in the Jayalalithaa Ministry, Mr. A. K. Selvaraj was dropped and Mr. S. M. Velusamy from the Palladam constituency in Coimbatore district, inducted.

Predictably, it came as a rude shock for Mr. Selvaraj, who gave a violent jerk when the national anthem was played, marking the end of the ceremony, without his being called to take the oath.

All through the one-and-a-half-hour ceremony held in the Durbar hall, most of the AIADMK functionaries, wore a mournful look. The AIADMK MP, Mr. T.T.V. Dinakaran, and the former Andipatti MLA, Mr. Thanga Thamizhavel, were the few who appeared cheerful.

While Mr. Paneerselvam was seen wiping away his tears before assuming office, the women Ministers — Ms. B. Valarmathi, Ms. R. Saroja and Ms. Valarmathi Jebaraj, took the oath in an emotion-choked tone. "We are with you," Ms. Saroja told Ms. Jayalalithaa, after taking the oath.

A majority of the Ministers besides the Chief Minister fell at the feet of Ms. Jayalalithaa before and after they were sworn in.

Just half-an-hour after the AIADMK Legislature Party came up with the surprise choice of Mr. Paneerselvam, the partymen began to assemble in the Durbar hall. The first to arrive was the Speaker, Mr. K. Kalimuthu, followed by the senior



The Governor, Dr. C. Rangarajan, administering the oath of office and secrecy to the new Chief Minister, Mr. O. Paneerselvam, in Chennai on Friday. — Photo: S. Mahinsha

Ministers, Mr. C. Ponnaiyan and Mr. M. Thambi Durai. The Chief Minister-elect came in at 8.02 p.m. and ten minutes later, Ms. Jayalalithaa arrived along with her friend, Ms. Sasikalaa. The three who were seated in a sofa posed for the waiting lensmen.

The ceremony began at 8.16 p.m. with the Chief Secretary, Mr. P. Shankar, requesting the Governor to administer the oath of office and secrecy to the new Chief Minister.

Mr. Paneerselvam and all the Ministers took the oath in the name of God.

After the ceremony, the new Chief Minister, along with his Cabinet colleagues, joined in for a photo session.

When scribes besieged Mr. Paneerselvam after the ceremony with queries on the Cauvery River Authority meeting scheduled for tomorrow, Mr. Ponnaiyan whisked him

away. However, Mr. Thalavai Sundaram, who held the PWD portfolio in the Jayalalithaa Cabinet, said he would meet the Chief Minister to decide on the further course of action.

Significantly, none of the leaders of the AIADMK's allies attended the function. After the ceremony, the Council of Ministers, led by the Chief Minister, called on Ms. Jayalalithaa at her Poes Garden residence.

While Mr. Paneerselvam retained the key portfolios including the Home Department held by Ms. Jayalalithaa, there was no change in the portfolios of his Cabinet colleagues, barring that of Mr. K. Pandurangan and Mr. R. Vaithilingam, whose portfolios — Rural Industries and Industries — were swapped. The newly-inducted Minister, Mr. Velusamy, was given the Housing portfolio.

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WAR CLOUDS

US moves troops, warships and fighters in key strike positions

Washington, September 20

PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH ordered heavy bombers and fighters to easy striking distance from Afghanistan today as the US set rolling its retaliatory attack, codenamed Operation Infinite Justice, after the Afghan cleric Osama bin Laden to America.

The military deployments ordered today involved about two dozen bombers, tankers and support aircraft. Besides, aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt and its accompanying battle group left Virginia and headed eastwards for an undisclosed location.

With the carrier's air wing of about 70 attack aircraft, US is moving nearly 100 planes to a region where there is already a robust American military presence. Today's deployments form the first wave of a Pentagon campaign that the President has described as a broad and sustained war against terrorism.

Operation Infinite Justice is likely to begin with air strikes, including cruise missile attacks, against bin Laden. These will be followed by an unprecedented British and US military long-term covert campaign on economic, diplomatic and political fronts against terrorist groups and those sheltering them.

President Bush's National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice today said, "The US is repositioning some of its forces to support the President's goal." She refused to elaborate.

The 100-odd combat craft expected to touch down in Kuwait and Bahrain will join 1500 planes on two aircraft-carriers already in the region. The combat units will most likely be preceded by teams of Air Force air controllers coordinating the refuelling of aircraft with fighters, and later bombers, and are expected to include F-16s, F-15s and possibly B-1 bombers. The combat planes may take a week to get in position.

The navy has sent an additional aircraft-carrier to the region, which could place up to 500 US warplanes in the Mediterranean, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean for strikes. The US is now in a position to put three aircraft-carrier battle groups in West Asia in

weeks as it seeks strong support from Saudi Arabia.

The navy already has one carrier battle group in the Persian Gulf — the USS Carl Vinson — and a second, the USS Enterprise, is in the Arabian Sea to the south. Sending land-based Air Force jet fighters to the Gulf would give the Pentagon leeway to move Carl Vinson into the Arabian Sea, closer to Afghanistan, while maintaining enough aircraft to continue enforcing the "no-fly zone over southern Iraq".

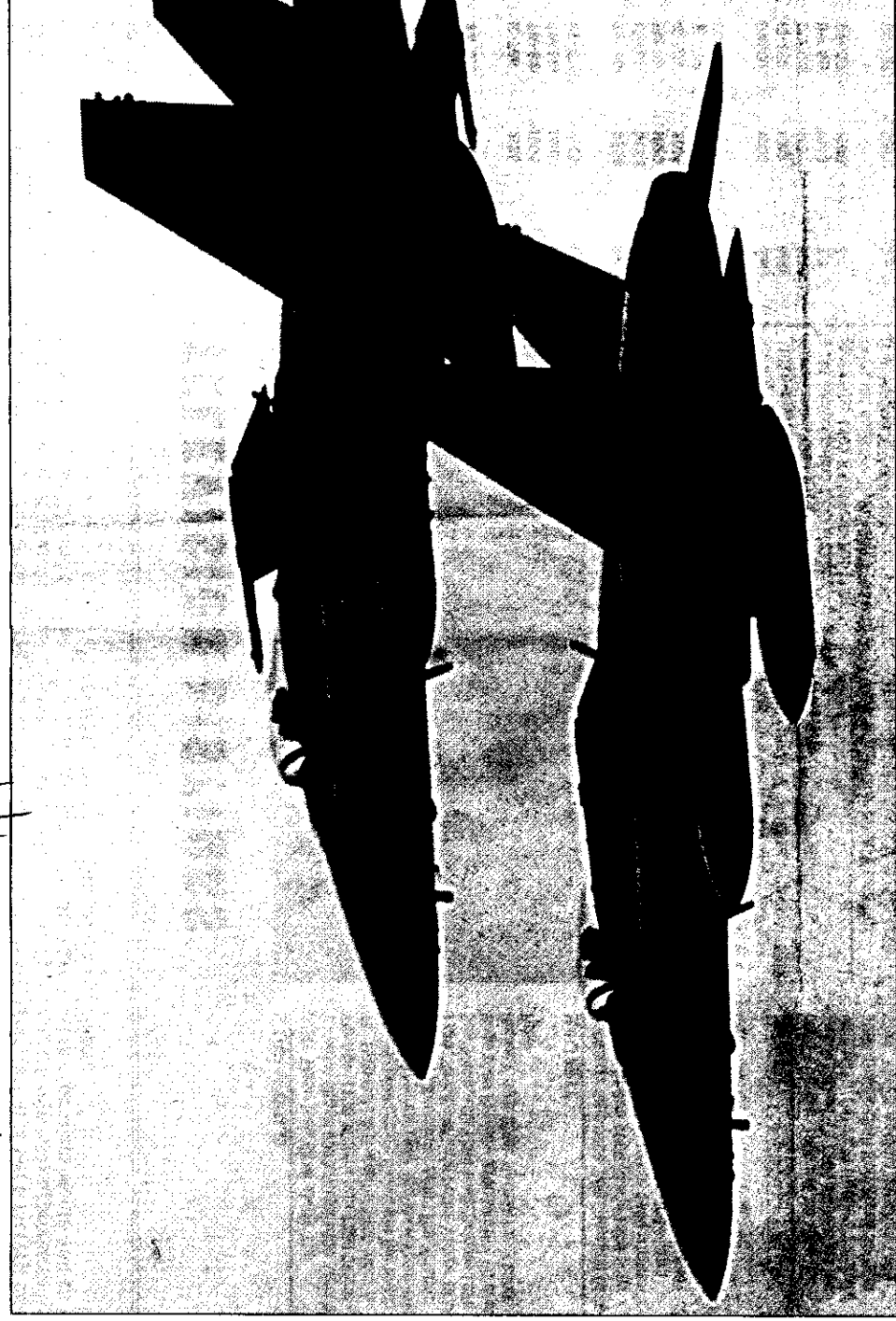
Britain already has substantial forces in the Gulf area as part of a long-planned joint exercise with Oman. This includes an aircraft-carrier, four frigates, two destroyers, other ships and troops. This is Britain's largest naval deployment since the 1982 Falklands war.

Afghanistan's opposition Northern Alliance has said the time was right for it to launch an attack on the Taliban, but it wanted to coordinate its action with the US. Diplomatic sources in Pakistan said the US has already begun meeting with leaders of the factions opposing the Taliban.

The SAS and American special forces are preparing for the Afghan mission and could be assisted by the French foreign legion, and even Russia and German special forces. Japan is announcing new anti-terrorism measures. Switzerland yesterday pledged to support Bush's scheme as the German Parliament voted to provide military support for the US and to spend \$1.42 billion next year on anti-terrorism security measures.

The US is welcoming offers of military support from allies and friendly nations. Officials continued to seek arrangements for access to military bases near Afghanistan. At Kharan, a city in southwest Pakistan, some US military personnel were spotted moving radar equipment at an isolated air base that has a long runway, according to a Western military official. Bush will address a joint session of Congress tomorrow to urge Americans to be vigilant. Some officials involved in the military planning want Bush to target Iraq, but sources say Saddam Hussein is not an initial target.

The New York Times



Jets take off from an American base headed for an undisclosed destination in the Gulf. President Bush on Thursday flagged off his Afghan mission

Lay off what? It's our fight: Jaswant

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, September 20

INDIA WILL NOT "lay off" from its role in the war against terrorism to oblige President Pervez Musharraf. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh today said: "Lay off what? This is our fight and we would welcome Pakistan if it wishes to join the forces of sanity."

The Pakistan President's address to his nation last night has raised New Delhi's hackles on two points: his use of the excuse that India may score points over Kashmir with the United States if Pakistan did not support Washington at this juncture, and the allegation that India was out to "harm Islam".

Jaswant is slated to visit the US towards the end of September or early October.

Jaswant today said, "Musharraf forgets that there are more people following the noble path of Islam in India than in Pakistan." He added that the speech reflected the "compulsive hostility that has fashioned Pakistan's relationship with India".

But he admitted that Pakistan was continuing to maintain "relaxative peace" along the LoC. He also said militants operating in Kashmir were leaving for Afghanistan.

The minister scotched all speculation of New Delhi offering military bases to the US. He pointed out that even President Bush expressed reservations about blanket bombings on Afghanistan.

On whether he anticipated any dilution in US support to India's stand on Pakistan's cross-border terrorism, Jaswant said it was his belief that the US would not buy Musharraf's "freedom struggle" line. He went on to say, "In any case, we are not dependent on any country for support." He spoke to British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw over the phone today.

Related reports, photographs on pages 7, 8, 10 & 11

Osama given marching orders

In their statement at Kabul today, the clerics said, "This Shooraa of Islamic scholars demands from the Government of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan that Osama bin Laden should voluntarily leave Afghanistan for a place of his choice at an appropriate time." A Taliban official was quoted by Afghan Islamic Press that the Shooraa's decision would be binding on the Taliban Government.

Over 700 Islamic experts participated in the two-day meeting convened after Taliban chief Mullah Omar held talks with a Pakistani delegation earlier this week to consider Islamabad's request to hand over Osama to the US. The decision has, however, stunned the Pakistan regime as the Foreign Office spokesman

in the daily briefing refrained from making any statement on the issue, saying that he has not yet seen the authoritative version of the Shooraa verdict.

He also refused comment when asked whether Pakistan would take Osama into custody if he enter its territory. But Jamaat-i-Islami chief Qazi Hussain Ahmed called the Shooraa edict "a ray of hope" and called upon the US to accept the decision and trust the Taliban.

The Shooraa meeting expressed grief and sorrow over the terrorist strikes and hoped that the US would not launch any attack on Afghanistan. It asked the US to carry out independent investigations with the help of the UN and the Organisation of Islamic Conference before contemplating

any action. But it also warned that the Taliban would be prepared for jihad if the US refuses to exercise restraint.

Hardline religious parties in Pakistan are gearing up for a show of strength tomorrow after the Friday prayers to observe nationwide demonstrations against the military Government for accepting US demands.

Last night's tough talk by General Pervez Musharraf in which he dubbed religious parties as minority has angered the Islamists. "The decision does not enjoy the support of the masses. His speech reflects that he has surrendered the country's sovereignty for petty gains," said the Jamaat chief. "Had there been an elected institution, the verdict of the people would have been different."

Afghans rally against US

Jalozai Refugee Camp (Pakistan),
September 19

AFGHANS AT a teeming refugee camp in Pakistan urged Muslim clerics in Afghanistan on Wednesday not to hand over Osama bin Laden, while Pakistanis a few miles away staged a fiery pro-bin Laden protest.

The outpouring of support for bin Laden and his Taliban protectors came as an Islamic council in neighboring Afghanistan met to decide his fate.

It also came amid growing tensions in Pakistan as the Taliban rulers in Afghanistan braced for a possible attack by stepping up military defences.

A Pakistani delegation this week delivered an ultimatum to the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar: either cease sheltering bin Laden or face a massive military assault by a US-led international coalition. Omar turned over the decision to hundreds of Muslim clerics meeting in Kabul.

In Jalozai, a refugee camp an hour's drive from Afghanistan, residents said extraditing bin Laden would be an insult to Islam. "Nobody should hand over Osama to US because he is the honorable guest of the Islamic Government of Afghanistan," said refugee Samar Gul.

On Wednesday, thousands of people marched through the streets of Peshawar, a Pakistani city near the Afghan border, shouting pro-Taliban slogans and burning an American flag.

"Will you fight the *jihad* if America attacks Afghanistan?" the protesters' leader, Mulana Abdul Malik, shouted over a

loudspeaker. "Yes!" roared the crowd.

"Will you obey the call of Mullah Omar?" he asked. "Yes! Yes!"

Shop owners shuttered their businesses as demonstrators marched, wielding sticks and waving banners. "Crush America!" read one sign. "Osama is the hero of Islam," read another.

Pakistan has pledged "full support" to America's new war, which in practical terms could mean allowing US troops to use Pakistani airspace and land in an attack on Afghanistan.

Many Pakistanis have expressed anger at the pledge, which President Pervez Musharraf hopes will keep his country from being branded a pariah state but which many ordinary people consider a betrayal of Islam. "Let the Americans come to Pakistan so that we can meet them face to face and show them what we're made of," Malik shouted to the crowd.

But, it's hard to find anyone on the streets of Pakistan who supports last week's terror attacks.

"We are sad over the killing of people in New York and Washington, but does that mean that America should kill innocent civilians in Afghanistan?" said 22-year-old Fazil Rahim, a refugee at Jalozai.

Across the border in Afghanistan, thousands of people fearing an imminent US attack scrambled to cross the border but were turned away. Pakistan closed the frontier out of fear the newcomers could stir unrest, though many Afghans have reportedly crossed anyway in recent days.

AP

20 SEP 2001

Taliban calls for jihad against America

SI-1
19/9

Afghanistan ✓

AP, PTI, REUTERS & AFP

KABUL, Sept. 18. — The Taliban has urged Afghans to prepare for a *jihad* (holy war) against the USA. The militia's Bakhtar news agency reported that leaders are sending a message across the country: "Stay united and prepare for jihad against US invaders."

The leaders said Osama bin Laden, who has been staying in Afghanistan since 1996, has been wrongly implicated in the terror attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

"The accusations against Osama bin Laden are baseless and a pretext to attack Afghanistan," the news agency said.

Islamic clerics, who were scheduled to meet today in Kabul to decide on Osama's fate, postponed their meeting to either tomorrow or Thursday, a Taliban official said. The meeting, expected to be attended by about 1,000 clerics, has been called by the militia chief, Mullah Mohammad Omar.

The clerics feel Osama shouldn't be extradited without concrete proof of his involvement in the terror attacks. "Even if the whole of Afghanistan is devastated we won't hand him over until there is a solid proof against him," said Mullah Mohammad Hassan, a representative of Paktika province. "If the USA is able to provide evidence or proof against him, we'll punish him here or will hand him over."

Another scholar, Moulvi Abdul Zahir from the Bagram district of Kabul province, said Osama's presence in Afghanistan was a pretext for the USA to attack the country.

"All these are pretexts. Some-

TOKYO PROBE

TOKYO, Sept. 18. — The Tokyo stock exchange president, Mr Masaaki Tsuchida, today said the bourse was investigating whether Osama bin Laden engaged in stock transactions in Japan immediately before and after the attacks.

"We're conducting a probe into whether he (bin Laden) has conducted any unjust trading in Japanese stock markets," Mr Tsuchida said.

US and Japanese media reports said Osama had made a fortune by selling stock futures in Europe immediately before the attacks and buying them back afterwards. — DPA

times it's human rights, some times it's statues (a reference to the outcry over the Taliban's destruction of two Bamiyan Buddhas) and now Osama. Their hostility is to the Koran." He said: "We're ready to defend ourselves if the Americans attack us. We've already defeated and taught a lesson to their British grandfathers and their Russian brothers."

National emergency: Anticipating US attack, the Taliban has been conducting military exercises, declared a national emergency, closed down seminars and armed students to fight back, a Taliban official said.

The regime is conducting the biggest ground and air exercises in Kandahar to keep the forces in fighting fit, said the Kandahar Governor, Moulvi Muhammad Hasan.

"Taliban conditions": A Pakistani daily has reported that the militia has set a few conditions for Osama's extradition.

These include lifting of UN sanctions against Afghanistan, trial of the Saudi fugitive in a neutral country, stopping of military support to the Northern Alliance opposition and resumption of international economic aid.

The Nation said Mullah Omar conveyed the conditions to the Pakistani delegation in Kandahar yesterday. The delegation was led by ISI chief, Lt-Gen Mehmood Ahmad.

All the six delegation members have returned home and have no plans for a second visit. "They have returned. There is no programme to go back," said the foreign office spokesman, Mr Riyaz Khan. He didn't give any details of the talks with the Taliban.

He said the team had gone to Kandahar not to strike a deal, but to convey a strong message from Gen Pervez Musharraf on the international community's demand to hand over Osama.

Meanwhile, there have been conflicting reports on Osama's whereabouts. *The Dawn* said he took leave of his 500 fighters and fled on horses to an unknown destination. Diplomats, however, don't believe that Osama would ride horses when US spy cameras are looking for him, round the clock.

Musharraf address: General Pervez Musharraf will address the nation tomorrow night.

Twenty religious parties in Pakistan have called a general strike on 21 September to protest against the government's decision to support any US military action against Osama.

■ More reports on pages 2, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11

THE STATESMAN

19 SEP 2001

HOPES RECEDE AS PAK. DELEGATION RETURNS FROM AFGHANISTAN

Clerics put off meet on Osama

19/9

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 18. As the world watched with bated breath for the decision of the Taliban militia on handing over Osama bin Laden, prime suspect in last week's terrorist attacks in the U.S., the much-publicised meeting of the grand council of clerics, scheduled to take place at Kabul today, was postponed by a day. Meanwhile, the Pakistani delegation returned here tonight apparently without much success in its mission.

The ostensible reason for putting off the meeting was that some clerics, who are arriving from various provinces of Afghanistan, could not reach Kabul.

It was evident from the remarks of the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman at a crowded news conference earlier in the day that the Musharraf Government has delivered a blunt message to the Taliban chief, Mullah Mohammad Omar, on the inevitability of a massive American retaliation if Osama was not handed over.

The Taliban continued to harp on "conclusive and credible evidence" against Osama for his alleged involvement in acts of terrorism as a precondition for handing him over. Reports from Kabul said that the militia had appealed to the people to enrol to wage a jihad in the event of an attack by the U.S. and its allies.

The fact that the Pakistani delegation returned without waiting for the outcome of the clerics meet does not augur well for peace in the region. The comments of the U.S. Defence Secretary that Washington would not be satisfied with the surrender of Osama further reinforced the perception.

A senior Government official declined to comment on whether the return of the delegation meant failure on its part. The Foreign Office spokesman was at

pains to emphasise that the Musharraf regime was not engaged in any dialogue with the Taliban on the issue and it had gone with a clear cut message.

Reports from Afghanistan and a

section of the Pakistani press talked about the Taliban putting forth a set of conditions for the extradition of Osama. These included the trial of Osama in a "neutral" country, the lifting of U.N. sanc-

tions, the suspension of aid and military supplies to the opposition Northern Alliance and international recognition for the militia.

There was no confirmation or denial of the reports. The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman said he was not aware of the details of the discussion between their delegation and the Taliban authorities. But he insisted that Pakistan was not engaged in any dialogue for a deal involving the Taliban.

"As a friend and well-wisher of the Afghanistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf sent a high-level delegation with a special message. The message conveyed in stark terms the gravity of the situation and wanted the Taliban to act in conformity with the expectations of the international community. It is for the Afghanistan leadership to take a decision. We hope they take a decision in the interest of the people of Afghanistan," he said.

The spokesman also clarified that the Pakistani delegation had neither set a deadline nor given an ultimatum to the Taliban on Osama. His observations came amid reports of protests within the country over the prospect of Pakistan allowing its soil to be used by foreign forces against Afghanistan.

Musharraf continues talks

Gen. Musharraf, meanwhile, continued consultations with groups within Pakistan and representatives of friendly countries. A special envoy of the Chinese Government was among those who met him today.

The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, had contradicted reports in a section of the press on Monday that Gen. Musharraf had cancelled his scheduled visit to Beijing for urgent discussions with the Chinese leadership. The Foreign Office spokesman did not give any details of the nature of

discussions between the envoy and Gen. Musharraf. "We are interested in their views and they are interested in ours," was his reply when asked if the Chinese envoy had come to convey the concerns of China on possible American strikes.

The spokesman denied reports about presence of U.S. military experts in Pakistan in preparation for the strikes. "To the best of our knowledge, the U.S. has not worked out any contingency plans."

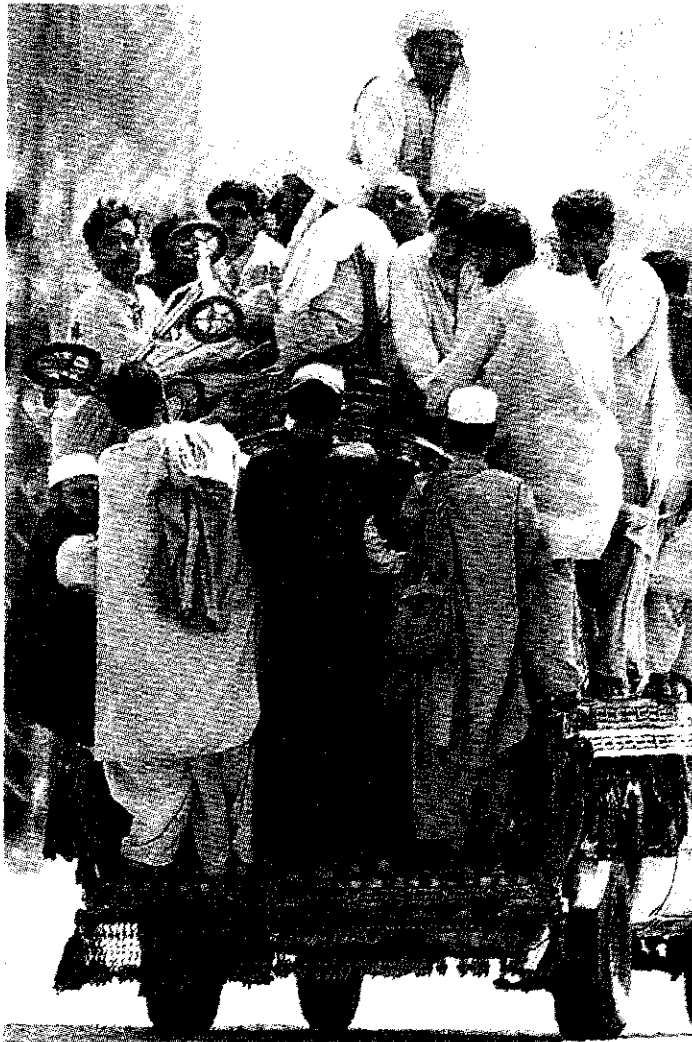
'Osama has fled'

There were conflicting reports about the whereabouts of Osama in Afghanistan. A section of the local press claimed that the Saudi dissident had taken leave of his 500 suicide fighters, known in Arabic as 'fidayeen', and fled on horses to an unknown destination.

Already reports had appeared in the local media two days ago that Osama, along with his four wives and children, had left his base in Kandahar and gone into hiding.

In another development, the Pakistan newspaper, *Dawn*, quoting senior law enforcement officials said that a contingency plan had been prepared to protect Gen. Musharraf, the U.S. embassy and U.S. citizens from suicide attacks. The American school in Islamabad has been closed for a day tomorrow as religious activists are planning a demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy.

Blackwill meets



IMPENDING HUMAN TRAGEDY: As war clouds are gathering over Afghanistan, its people are streaming across to Pakistan triggering a major refugee problem. Here a group on its way to the Jalozai camp, about 15 km from Peshawar on Tuesday.

— AFP (Report on Page 13)

THE HINDU
19 SEP 2001

PAK. TEAM TO CONTINUE TALKS WITH TALIBAN

Clerics council to decide Osama's fate today

110-1
18/9

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 17. The Taliban chief, Mullah Mohammad Omar, announced today that he would let a grand council of clerics decide the fate of Osama bin Laden tomorrow, even as the Pakistani team which went to Kandahar decided to extend its stay to continue negotiations with the Taliban on the U.S. demand for extradition of the Saudi fugitive.

According to Radio Shariat, run by the Taliban, 20 senior Mullahs would decide on Osama's extradition. It appears that the Pakistani team had left Kandahar for Kabul, where the grand council is scheduled to meet tomorrow.

Sources told *The Hindu* that the Pakistani delegation, which traveled to Afghanistan in the morning, had decided to stay after the Taliban authorities expressed a desire to continue negotiations. "The delegation after its meeting with the Taliban chief, Mullah Omar, was about to return to Islamabad around 6 p.m. when word came from the Taliban authorities that they wished to continue with the discussions," a senior Pakistani official said.

At the end of the first round of talks, a Taliban spokesman was quoted as saying by the Afghan Islamic Press, a private news agency based in Peshawar, that the militia was hopeful about the outcome. The spokesman, Mr. Abdul Hai Mu'taen, was quoted as saying that "the talks are positive but I cannot go into the specifics. At the moment we are 60 per cent hopeful that the situation will become normal."

However, another report circulated by the same agency quoted him as saying that the Pakistani

delegation had not succeeded in persuading Mullah Omar.

That the Pakistan team has extended its stay is a positive sign. There are no indications though that the Taliban has relented from its stand of not handing over Osama until "credible and conclusive proof" of his alleged involvement in terrorist activities is provided.

A statement by the Pakistani Foreign Office said the delegation, led by the ISI chief, Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, and which includes senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, carried a special message from the President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, for Mullah Omar.

The delegation would urge the Taliban "to act in the interest of the safety and security" of the Afghan people. In other words, a polite message would be conveyed to the Taliban to hand over Osama or be prepared for massive

retaliation by the U.S. and allies.

The Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, in an interview to CNN, said that the Pakistan delegation would urge the Taliban government to act responsibly. "Pakistan has always sought to give correct counsel. We have always emphasised in the past that it is important for Afghanistan and its people that the government should act in conformity with international law."

Another report quoted Mr. Sattar as saying that time was running out for the Taliban and that the U.S. had no "patience for arguments".

In another development, Mr. Sattar clarified that Gen. Musharraf had not yet scheduled visits to China, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

Pakistan contradicted a report by an international news agency that the Taliban was stationing

troops on its border with Pakistan. The report claimed that the Taliban had dumped a huge quantity of Scud missiles along the Durand Line. "The news is baseless and concocted," a Pakistani military spokesman said.

'U.S. agents arrive'

AFP, UNI report:

The U.S. had already deployed up to 50 agents, including some from the special forces, in Pakistan, Western and Pakistani sources, said. The majority of the agents arrived on Thursday and Friday when the Islamabad airport was closed mysteriously for five hours, the sources said.

The Americans are involved in advance liaison work and the selection of Pakistani officers to work with them in preparation for possible military operations in or against Afghanistan.

Taliban threats resented

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 17. The Taliban Ambassador in Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaef, has said that if Pakistan were to provide any logistical support to the U.S. in possible strikes against Afghanistan, the Taliban would deem it an unfriendly act and act accordingly. His remarks have provoked an angry reaction from the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar. In an interview to the CNN the Minister has said that Islamabad has taken 'very serious note' of these threats.

Mr. Sattar also told the TV channel that "we are terribly saddened that a Government and country that we have regarded always as a neighbour and friend should use such language against Pakistan".

He said that a high-level delegation from the U.S. would shortly visit Pakistan to discuss Amer-

ican plans to deal with terrorism and to the extent with which Pakistan could be a 'partner' in the fight. He said that Pakistan would not join any 'joint military force' against Afghanistan. In a press conference two days back he had said that Pakistan did not want to get involved in any fight outside its border.

Protests planned

Meanwhile pro-Taliban religious parties in Pakistan today warned the U.S. against any retaliatory attacks on Afghanistan, and threatened nation-wide protests condemning the Musharraf regime's support to Washington's moves.

They met in Lahore under the aegis of the Council for Defence of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Council was formed just after the U.N. had slapped the second round of sanctions against the Taliban for sheltering Osama.

THE HINDU

18 SEP 2001

Masood death plunges Taliban opposition into uncertainty

FROM SEBASTIAN ALISON

Jangalak, (Afghanistan), Sept. 17: (Reuters) The killing of Ahmad Shah Masood, commander of Afghan opposition to both the Soviet invaders and the ruling Taliban, has seemed to plunge the opposition into uncertainty.

Officially, senior opposition leaders appear confident that the Northern Alliance, which unites opposition to the Taliban and controls around five per cent of the country, can hold out and even flourish after Masood's assassination.

But many in the Panjshir valley, the opposition stronghold, are

worried that no future leader can match the military skills honed by Masood over more than 20 years.

"After the death, Ahmad Shah Masood, the great son of the Afghan land, has joined the ranks of the saints," said Muhammad Ajmal Faiz, governor of opposition-held Takhar province.

"But he has left behind him a good school for raising troops. After his death, there are still many aides who trained him, and they, with the help of the people, will follow the road, which Masood took."

Manzur Muhammad Hasan, the Northern Alliance's military commander in the Dashty Galal

region and an ethnic Uzbek, said he was encouraged by Masood's success in uniting ethnic minorities against the Taliban.

"Under his flag, Ahmad Shah Masood united many peoples of Afghanistan — Uzbeks, Tajiks and others. Surrounded by these minorities, he kept the road to northern Afghanistan closed to the Taliban."

Not every body, however, is so confident.

Following Masood's death, the alliance's military council named General Mohammad Fahim to replace him though they know he lacks the slain leader's skills.

"It's quite possible that we will

not find his equal again," Muhi-din Mehdi, the alliance's acting ambassador to neighbouring Tajikistan, said.

The alliance's forces were on display yesterday at Masood's funeral in the Panjshir valley.

His body was borne on a gun carriage towed by an armoured personnel carrier. The alliance had a number of functioning helicopters. Rockets were visible from a helipad at Maralok village, and uniformed troops marched in formation at the funeral.

But the extent of the forces remains unclear, as does the question of supplying them. While the valley is remote, the alliance ap-

pears to have adequate fuel supplies for now, with helicopters flying in and out, and vehicles on the move.

Much depends, says Nilab Mobaraz, a doctor, on whether the alliance can remain united after Masood's death, though she seemed optimistic that it would.

The Taliban also have their own problems.

Following last week's terror attacks in the US, the Taliban's main supporter, Pakistan, has promised to cooperate with Washington in catching Osama bin Laden who is in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

Given that the Taliban already

face sanctions from most of the rest of world, this would come as a severe blow to the group's military capabilities.

Northern Alliance foreign ministry officials say they have reports that senior Taliban officials are sending their families abroad in fear of reprisal bombing raids by the US.

The Northern Alliance would love direct US assistance in their struggle against the Taliban.

There may be no sign of this yet, but given their track record of preserving independence from governments in Kabul, it cannot be written off as a force even with Masood gone.



Ahmad Shah Masood

THE TELEGRAPH

18 SEP 2001

Pak's hard talk fails to pierce Taliban's resolve

Islamabad has taken serious note of Taliban threat to declare war: Sattar

ISLAMABAD: Talks between a Pakistani delegation and the Taliban held at Kandahar on Monday ended in an impasse, with the militia threatening to fight to the finish despite Pakistan stepping up pressure on them to give up Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect in the recent attacks on the U.S.

The Pakistani team, led by Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) chief Mahmood Ahmad and foreign ministry official Aziz Khan, held a series of meetings with Taliban leaders, including its chief Mullah Mohammed Omar, to persuade them to hand over Bin Laden. "Time is running out. You should solve the problem," Mr Khan told Taliban foreign minister Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil. Mr Khan reportedly made it clear to the Taliban that Pakistan would follow international law on matters of terrorism.

Although there was no clear discussion on the extradition of the Saudi fugitive, media reports quoted Taliban spokesperson Abdul Hai Mutmaen as saying that the talks were "positive".

The six-member Pakistani team first met Mr Mutawakil for three hours and then was taken to an undisclosed location to meet

Mullah Omar. Even as the delegation left Islamabad for the talks, the two nations had lined up their forces on either side of the Torakam border. While Taliban border guards installed 12.7 mm anti-aircraft guns close to the main checkpoint, Pakistani paramilitary forces, the Kyber Rifles, immediately took up positions on their side of the border.

The Taliban has threatened to attack any neighbouring Muslim country assisting the U.S. in its attack on Afghanistan.

In a related development, Pakistan's foreign minister Abdul Sattar on Monday said his government had taken "very serious note" of the Taliban's threat to declare war on Pakistan if it provided any help to the U.S. "We are terribly saddened that a government and country that we have always regarded as a neighbour and friend should use such language against Pakistan," he said.

Islamabad on Monday stopped all trade, except food, to Afghanistan and began sending more personnel to the North-West Frontier Province in order to implement a new order and confine the 1.2 million Afghan refugees to the dozens of camps. (Reuters)

THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS



THE GATHERING STORM—A member of Pakistan's Sipah-e-Sahaba (left) listens to a speech in Peshawar on Sunday where the militant group vowed to defend Osama bin Laden at any cost. (Right) A member of the U.S. National Guard wears an air filter mask before entering the area near the World Trade Center in New York on Sunday.

U.S. says Pakistan set no conditions for help

By Rajat Pandit and Siddharth Varadarajan
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Shortly before Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and President George W. Bush spoke on the telephone on Sunday night, the U.S. assured India that media reports of Pakistan having asked for Washington's help on the Kashmir issue in exchange for its cooperation in any American assault on Afghanistan were baseless.

A senior PMO official told *The Times of India* that U.S. diplomats informed the Prime Minister's Office that Gen Pervez Musharraf's conversation with Mr Bush did not touch upon Kashmir or the question of India and Israel being left out of any international military coalition the U.S. establishes. The official said the U.S. had sought urgently to clarify the matter as it realised media reports about the Pak stand might cause unease in India.

"It's clear that Gen Musharraf has spoken about pre-conditions in order to make his acceptance of U.S. demands more palatable domestically," the PMO official said. Asked about the remarks of U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell in an interview with CNN that Washington "understands the sensitivities that would be involved in anything that might involve India or Israel" in any military coalition against Afghanistan, the PMO official said Mr Powell had "adlibbed in general terms".

19 SEP 2001

Afghans left frightened and alone

Kabul, September 16

AFGHANISTAN WAS nearly isolated on Sunday as almost all remaining Westerners in the capital prepared to evacuate ahead of expected US attacks on Osama bin Laden and his Taliban protectors.

With Iran announcing it was sealing its eastern border with Afghanistan, opposition fighters controlling a narrow northern corridor and Pakistan pledging to support US anti-terrorism efforts, residents of the capital were feeling increasingly vulnerable. The International Committee of the Red Cross — which has stayed put through some of the worst conflicts in modern history — said it was pulling out its remaining foreign staff after the Taliban said they could not guarantee their safety. Other Western aid agencies — including the United Nations — have already withdrawn.

"We have not received any formal or informal letter from the Taliban about (leaving), but will have to go," said an ICRC official a day after hearing the Taliban's announcement. Frightened Afghans also continued to flee, ignoring the Taliban's calls to stay and wage a jihad against the United States and its allies if Washington attacks.

"People are so tense. Any moment of calm is seen as the calm before the big storm," one Kabul shopkeeper said on Sunday. Thousands of Afghans have poured across the border into Pakistan in the past few days, swelling refugee camps already near bursting point with around two million residents. But the hard-line Islamic Taliban remain unbowed, calling for Muslims to fight to the death against American aggression and threatening to attack neighboring countries helping Washington — remarks clearly aimed at Pakistan, formerly the movement's main backer.

The departure of foreign aid workers has been felt in particular by the residents of Kabul, a city devastated by years of war and where even the most basic of services have broken down. Their plight struck a chord even with a normally fiercely anti-Taliban group, which on Sunday urged the US to show restraint.

"We hope that the great American people could differentiate between the people of Afghanistan and a handful of terrorists," said a statement from the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. President Bush on Saturday declared the US was at war with global terror and named bin Laden as the prime suspect.

BRITAIN WARNS ITS CITIZENS TO LEAVE PARTS OF PAK

BRITAIN URGED its citizens on Sunday to leave parts of Pakistan amid fears that US retaliation for terror attacks on New York and Washington may target neighbouring Afghanistan.

The foreign office urged Britons who are still in Pakistan's Baluchistan province, Northwestern Frontier Province and other northern areas to get out immediately, said spokesman Peter Elder. "Pakistan is one of a number of countries where there's an increased threat to British interests," he said.

AP, London

GULF FIRMS PLAN TO PACK THEIR BAGS

FOREIGN OIL firms and trading houses in the Gulf are drawing up contingency plans to leave the region. Oil executives in Saudi Arabia and Dubai said companies had made evacuation plans in the aftermath of the US attacks.

A Japanese oil executive in Saudi Arabia said evacuation would depend on the gravity of the situation. A Dubai-based oil company executive said emergency plans have been standard since Gulf War. "We're just refreshing the data, but no one is expecting to leave for the time being," he said.

AP, Manama

Although previous attempts to kill or capture bin Laden have failed, Bush said this time the perpetrators of the attack dissident would be "smoked out" wherever they hide. Those who protect them also face retribution, he said.

The Taliban insist neither they nor bin Laden had the capacity to organise an international plot that saw trained pilots hijack large passenger jets and crash them into the World Trade

Center towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, leaving up to 5,000 people dead.

For many ordinary Afghans — poor, uneducated and unfamiliar with the ways of the West — such a sophisticated conspiracy is simply unbelievable, and they feel the victims yet again. It is this feeling of victimization, nurtured over two centuries of attempted occupation by foreign powers, that is bringing some Afghans together. While many

people tried to flee the country, others in refugee camps in Pakistan — many no friends of the Taliban — vowed to return and fight should the US attack.

"We will go back and fight as we did with the Russians," said Mohammed Ibrahim, referring to the ill-fated Soviet invasion of the 1980s. "We may have been fighting among ourselves, but when Afghanistan is under attack we will come together."

The extent of US retaliation probably rests most with Pakistan, which is under increasing pressure from Washington to comply with requests for assistance. Pakistan is one of only three countries to recognize the Taliban government, but has already withdrawn all but a skeleton staff from Kabul.

There has yet to be any clear word from Islamabad on just how much assistance it will give, although Secretary of State Colin Powell said Pakistan had offered to help "in whatever might be required." President Musharraf, facing what commentators say is Pakistan's toughest decision since independence from Britain in 1947, looked likely to support US military action while facing a possible backlash from a powerful Islamic fundamentalist lobby at home.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Pakistan, Taliban and Osama

By T. Sreedhar

10-12
17/9
The events of September 11 show that Pakistan underestimated the intentions of the Taliban-Osama combine... The authors of Islamabad's Afghan policy must be a worried lot today.

WITH THE U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, publicly announcing that the prime suspect in the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington is Osama bin Laden, the first question that arises is: why has he resorted to this ghastly act? Osama comes from a rich Saudi family close to the Saudi royalty. In the mid 1980s he was sent to Afghanistan to supervise the fight against the former Soviet Union's 'Red Army'. There he had his initial indoctrination in "pure" Islamic thought. After the end of the Afghan war, he moved to Sudan where he is reported to have done some extensive social work to alleviate the sufferings of fellow Muslims. When he shifted to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan in May 1996, he had already emerged as a cult figure in the politics of the Islamic world.

His arrival in Afghanistan was accompanied by a subtle shift in the agenda of the nascent Taliban, which was trying to capture power in that country. Osama's first priority was to accelerate the pace of the Taliban's consolidation of power. With his money power he was able to buy off most of the Afghan warlords opposing the Taliban; and successfully overcome the little resistance that was there in Kabul with the assistance of the Pakistani army, as in September 1996. By mid-1998, he succeeded in getting more than 90 per cent of Afghanistan under Taliban control. To cement his relationship on a permanent basis he even married the daughter of the Taliban's supremo, Mullah Omar. Simultaneously, he floated the organisation, Al-Qaeda with the avowed objective of fighting for the resurrection of Islam in the world. "Our fight will be against the enemies of Islam," he is reported to have told his followers. With this message, his organisation started networking with outfits of similar ideas all over the world. By 2000, his networking spread over 60 countries and four continents. By late 1999, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda had become synonymous.

His network's first attack was the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam in August 1998. In the quick U.S. retaliation, he had a providential escape. Being a fast learner, he realised the vulnerability of using modern gadgets to build his organisation. This

made him to switch over to traditional methods of human couriers to spread his network. He tested it in the attack on the USS Cole in Yemeni waters in early January this year in which 12 U.S. military personnel were killed.

Meanwhile, international pressure on the Taliban started increasing considerably. The second round of U.N. sanctions against the Taliban came into effect from January this year. These sanctions, being Taliban-specific, placed the militia at a disadvantage vis-a-vis its opponents. While the Taliban was not allowed to acquire any arms and ammunition, the forces opposed to it headed by Ahmed Shah Masood was rearmed with more effective weapons. The Taliban found it difficult to even acquire weapons in this new situation even clandestinely from countries such as Pakistan. This new situation started affecting the Taliban's fortunes in the battlefield. This July there were even reports that the Taliban was planning to shift its capital from Kabul to Kandahar to avoid Masood's aerial attacks on Kabul.

This automatically sent alarm signals to the Taliban. The carefully-built Taliban empire had come under serious threat for the first time. In this new situation, the first thing Mullah Omar did was to appoint Osama as the commander-in-chief of the Taliban forces. Afterwards, the Taliban retaliated first by arresting eight western aid workers working with the German-based organisation Shelter Now in August. The charge against them was that they were spreading Christianity in Islamic Afghanistan. Subsequently there were reports that the Taliban offered a swap to the U.S. — the aid workers, for a blind cleric from Egypt undergoing a 30-year prison term in the U.S. for assisting the World Trade Center bombing of 1993. With the U.S. refusing to yield, the Taliban announced that it had never made such an offer.

This was followed by a suicide attack on Ahmed Shah Masood within the Panjsher Valley itself on September 9. This has considerably thrown the anti-

Taliban forces into disarray and neutralised the immediate threat to the Taliban from those opposed to it. Two days later Osama's network struck at New York and Washington to demonstrate to the world in which direction they are moving. After the incidents of September 11, Osama issued a statement identical to those issued after the Embassy bombing in 1998 and the attack on the USS Cole early this year. "I am not responsible for these developments, but I thank Allah for inspiring people to do so." The next question that arises is whether Pakistan is cooperating with Osama's activities or not. Here, one should get the facts clear. According to the former Pakistani Interior Minister, Maj. Gen. Naseerullah Babbar, he created the Taliban movement to gain control of Afghanistan in mid-1994. Pakistan nurtured this organisation over the years through its intelligence agencies by providing logistic and infrastructural support. The reports prepared by the special representative of the U.N. Secretary-General observed that Pakistani armed forces participated in various Taliban military operations such as the capture of Kabul in 1996 and of Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998. The number of Pakistani soldiers participating in the Taliban's campaigns is estimated to be anything between 3000 and 5000. Pakistan providing infrastructure to the Taliban in terms of training facilities is also a well-documented fact.

A section of the Pakistani establishment is supposed to have been unhappy over the way Osama had hijacked the Taliban movement from them. But still they went along with the Taliban and Osama on the assumption that Islamabad's strategic objectives can be achieved with the help of these people. On this assumption, the pan-Islamic ideology of Taliban-Osama was supported by Islamabad. There were statements in December 1999 and January 2000 from Taliban sympathisers who visited Pakistan that the Pakistan army must be converted into an Islamic army.

Pakistan has always had a grouse

against the Islamic world. Though it possesses one of the most professional armies in the Islamic world, it is never taken seriously by them. Even though it is the first country to acquire nuclear weapons, others refused to acknowledge its prominence in the Islamic world. Pakistan, therefore, seems to have thought that it can achieve its objective by acting and cooperating with the Taliban and Osama. In the process, Islamabad championed the cause of the Taliban in various international forums. The events of September 11 show that Pakistan underestimated the intentions of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine.

The Taliban's warning to Pakistan on September 14 not to cooperate with the U.S. clearly indicates that it feels it has enough clout in the Pakistani polity; and can retaliate against Islamabad at a very short notice. With the ethnic linkages between the people of the two countries and Islamabad's lopsided policies towards its two provinces, Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan, bordering Afghanistan, this seems possible. The authors of Pakistan's Afghan policy must be a worried lot today. The proposed U.S. action against Afghanistan seems to be more like attacking the roots at the first instance. How it will deal with the vast network built by the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine spread over 60 countries and four continents afterwards is to be seen. Simultaneously, the U.S. has to ensure that this form of radical politics will not resurface again in the foreseeable future. Will the dealing with Osama's network be left to its allies? Can the allies deal with it as effectively as the U.S. hopes. They are some of the issues that need to be debated in the days to come. Many observers of global terrorism have reservations about the way the U.S. deals with the problem. They feel that terrorism and violence have become instruments of foreign policies for quite a few countries. They cite the example of the failure of the U.N. to evolve a proper definition of what constitutes terrorism.

One can be certain that the international security environment has been caught in an extraordinary situation. How nations will respond is to be seen.

(The writer is Senior Research Associate, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.)

THE HINDU

17 SEP 2001

AFGHANISTAN

BRACING FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF WAR AND SUFFERING

A prayer for homeland

After Tuesday's attack on the US, Afghanistan is on the centrestage. Exiles from this war-ravaged country hope the focus will spotlight civilian suffering. **SCOTT MILLER**, a *Wall Street Journal* staffer, reports from Frankfurt

AS Afghanistan seems an increasingly likely target for US military action, its huge exile community is begging Western governments not to compound their country's suffering by killing civilians, already victims of the Taliban regime.

Most Afghan embassies and many exile groups are fiercely opposed to the Taliban, currently ruling most of the country. In an effort to remind the world they also consider themselves victims of the current government and suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden, exile groups are condemning the attacks in the US and are staging rallies to show their sympathy for Americans.

"If there is to be retaliation, it should not be against the Afghan people," said Ahmad Wali Masoud, charge d'Affaires at the embassy of the Islamic States of Afghanistan in London. "The people of Afghanistan are not terrorists, they are victims of the terrorists."

Some 400,000 Afghans live in Europe, about the same number as in the US, many driven out of Afghanistan by the Taliban, which took over much of the country in 1995. The overwhelming majority of those exiles are thought to be loyal to the former Afghan regime, the Islamic States of Afghanistan, which is recognized by most of the world as the nation's rightful government and maintains 43 embassies, funded by issuing passports and other official documents.

Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Tuesday, the search for those responsible has focused on Osama bin Laden, a Saudi exile, who is being sheltered by the Taliban.

For many, the attention focused on Afghanistan is bittersweet. On the one



Some 400,000 Afghans live in Europe, about the same number as in the US, many driven out of Afghanistan by the Taliban since 1995. A majority of those exiles are thought to be loyal to the former Afghan regime, the Islamic State of Afghanistan

hand, they say it highlights the suffering of the Afghan people under the Taliban, and may eventually herald the end of the regime.

"For years we have told everyone that the Taliban and bin Laden are dangerous. Unfortunately, nobody believed us until now," said Humayun Tandar, representative of the Islamic States of Afghanistan to the United Nations in Geneva. "The people of Afghanistan are innocent, they are

hostages of bin Laden."

Sensing that Afghanistan's government in exile could be reinstated as a result of a possible US conflict with the Taliban, embassy officials in Germany and the UK said they hoped that any US or allied attack would be carried out only after consulting with the exiled government.

But others are worried about Afghanistan being caught up in any new conflict. That's the fear of Farouq Azam,

head of a UK-based academic group, Afghan Studies Forum. Having lived through the Soviet invasion in 1979, when he was tortured by having his fingernails pulled out, he said Western powers should take pains to keep from plunging the nation into war again. "Of course when people are victims, they sometimes rush to conclusions," he said. "I don't blame them, but we can now hope that wisdom will prevail."

He and others spoke of numerous threats made by Europeans to Afghan people in the wake of the US attacks. Tandar, for example, says he has received threatening letters since the attack. Others said that Afghan children have been verbally abused on the street or in school.

Afghan leaders in Europe are hoping to raise public awareness about their true political loyalties and sympathy with the US this weekend in Berlin, where they are to

hold a rally. The gathering, in a nation that is home to 100,000 Afghan exiles, could help prevent a public backlash, organizers hope. Other private groups are appealing directly to the US government.

Zabih Ahmad Popalzai, the coordinator of the Society of Afghan Residents in the UK, says he wrote a letter to the US ambassador to Britain on Thursday, offering sympathy and reminding him of previous good relations between Afghanistan and the US. Many Afghans, he said, still have not forgotten the help they received from Washington when

their nation was invaded by the Soviet Union more than two decades ago. "We really, really sympathise with the people of the US and feel sorry for them. Thousands of lives have been lost," said Popalzai, whose group says it represents about 35,000 people. "This shouldn't have happened."



AFGHANISTAN: A STATE IN SHAMBLES

◆ Area: 652,000 sq km ◆ Population: 17,000,000

Afghanistan, the target of possible US retaliation after Tuesday's attacks on New York and Washington, has long been at history's crossroads, despite its remote and rugged geography. If Washington decides to strike at Afghanistan for sheltering the prime suspect, Saudi-born dissident Osama bin Laden, it will be following others who tried and failed to tame the Afghans.

◆ Located astride strategic land routes between the Indian subcontinent, Iran and central Asia, its first invasion was when Alexander the Great conquered the hill tribes in what was then the Persian empire on his way to India several years before his death in 323 B.C. British Army tried twice to invade in the 19th century in a bungled attempt to build a buffer to protect India's borders. Moscow sent in troops on Christmas Day 1979 to protect its southern borders. Nine years later, it was forced to retreat, precipitating the collapse of the Soviet Union.

◆ The United States supported Islamic militants, including Osama bin Laden, to drive the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. Vast majority of Afghanistan is now controlled by the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban government, whose main backer is Pakistan. An opposition force, led by Ahmad Shah Masoud, has held out against the Taliban in the mountainous northeast. Masoud, 48, is reported to have died on Friday from wounds suffered in a suicide bomb attack on Sept 9. That's Afghan history in a nutshell.

◆ More than six million Afghans fled the country during the Soviet occupation, and 2.6 million still live outside their homeland - the world's largest refugee population.

◆ There are severe shortages of water, food, housing and other basic necessities and the country is experiencing its worst drought in memory.

◆ Afghanistan is the world's top producer of opium, from which heroin is made.

◆ Ten million landmines are scattered across more than 420 sq km of Afghanistan, making it one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Landmines have killed or maimed 400,000 Afghans.

Source: Reuters

IE Graphics/B.K. SHARMA

Afghans flee Kabul amid fears of US strike

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL, Sept. 15. - Beleaguered Afghans streamed out of Kabul today, fearing a US military strike against their Taliban rulers who harbour suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden. Taliban ruler Mullah Mohammed Omar urged Afghans, who have suffered two decades of civil war, to remain steadfast - telling them in a radio address to "stand proud as Afghans in the defence of Islam."

"There is no pleasure in life anyway, so I don't care if the bombs come and I have to die along with my children," said Leilama, a 38-year-old mother of six in Kabul.

Thousands of Afghans lined up outside a barbed wire fence on the Afghan-Pakistan border at Torkham, where Taliban fighters beat people back with sticks.

"I don't want my children to die in a war," said Sabira, who like many Afghans uses only one name. She waited

at the fence with her two boys and two girls, aged 4 to 9.

Nine-year-old Abdul escaped into Pakistan, but his mother, father and siblings were still stuck on the Afghan side. "I won't go back," he said. "I'll just wait and hope they will come too."

The Taliban have said they have no intention of handing over bin Laden to the USA unless Washington provides convincing evidence against him.

"I am not afraid of death or of losing power. I am willing to give up power and my seat, but I'm not willing to give up Islam," Omar said in his radio address yesterday. "We shall be victorious."

Another Taliban official, Abdul Hai Mutimain, said in a telephone interview with AP that the militia would exact "revenge" if Afghanistan is attacked. He didn't elaborate.

Afghans have grown accustomed to hardship, having lived through Soviet invasion, civil war, the rise of the radical Taliban movement and, in recent

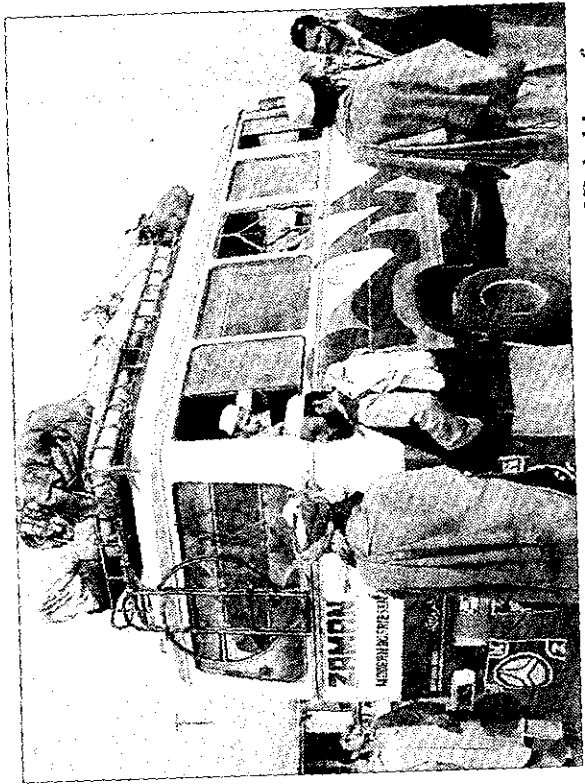
months, a punishing drought. The country hosts the world's worst refugee crisis, which has intensified since Tuesday's attacks. It can now expect less aid from the UN and foreign relief agencies, most of whose staff have evacuated in the past four days. Foreigners have been ordered to leave, and the Taliban have stopped issuing new visas.

"These days every night we sit by the radio and listen to the reports. We are afraid but don't have the money to leave," said Zabullah, a doctor and father of five.

Like many residents, he waited in line at a shop to stock up on food.

"Whatever happens, I leave myself and my children in the hands of God. This is a city of beggars," he said. "We can only hope and pray that the USA won't bomb us." Prices for basic food-

stuff have risen by 10 per cent or more since Tuesday, making it even more difficult than usual for people to afford them.



AWAY FROM HEARTH AND HOME: Residents of Kabul leave for their home villages on Saturday. Beleaguered Afghans streamed out of the capital, fearing US strikes. - AP/PTI

An Afghan guerrilla, a Taliban foe

Ahmad Shah Masood was undoubtedly the Taliban's biggest foe. The 48-year-old master guerrilla commander, known as The Lion of Panjsher, and leader of the Northern Alliance, died from his wounds last night in a hospital in Afghanistan, a spokesman said.

Masood, who had prevented the Taliban from taking control of the entire country, was hit by splinters from a bomb detonated by two Arabs posing as journalists, his aides said.

A military leader with charisma, Masood, in the 1980s,

OBITUARY/AHMAD SHAH MASOOD (1953-2001)

symbolised the Afghan refusal to submit to Soviet occupation. He was not officially the head of the resistance led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani. But friend and foe alike acknowledged that there was no other military leader of his stature in Afghanistan.

A year ago, the Taliban seemed poised to take control of the entire country and impose their austere brand of Islam. Masood rallied his forces

to hold off the Taliban offensive. He rebuilt the Northern Alliance to force the current stalemate on the battlefield.

Masood, whose family fled to Central Asia when the Bolshevik forces of the Soviet Union conquered the region, spent the whole of life in politics and armed struggle. Born in the Panjsher valley in the Hindu Kush mountains in 1953, Masood's life was shaped by the political ferment

among student movements in the 1970s. His father was a brigadier in the Afghan army before the Soviet invasion. He is survived by three brothers and three sisters.

Masood was in exile in Pakistan for his political activities when a Communist coup, followed by the Soviet invasion in 1979, brought him back to his country. An able mujahideen commander, he turned the valley into a no-go zone

for Soviet forces. The mujahideen forces overran the capital in 1992 and set up their own administration. But success on the battlefield never translated into peace.

The Taliban swept up from the south and east in 1996 and he could hold out no longer. By September 2000, the Taliban had managed to isolate Masood in Badakhshan.

He trained a core of good troops and equipped them well with the help of countries opposed to the Taliban. Ironically, Russia figured in the list.

THE STATESMAN

10 SEP 2001

Taliban threat follows Pak help offer

PTI, REUTERS & AFP

ISLAMABAD, Sept. 15. — Pakistan tonight said it would give full support to Washington and the international community in tracking the perpetrators of Tuesday's attacks.

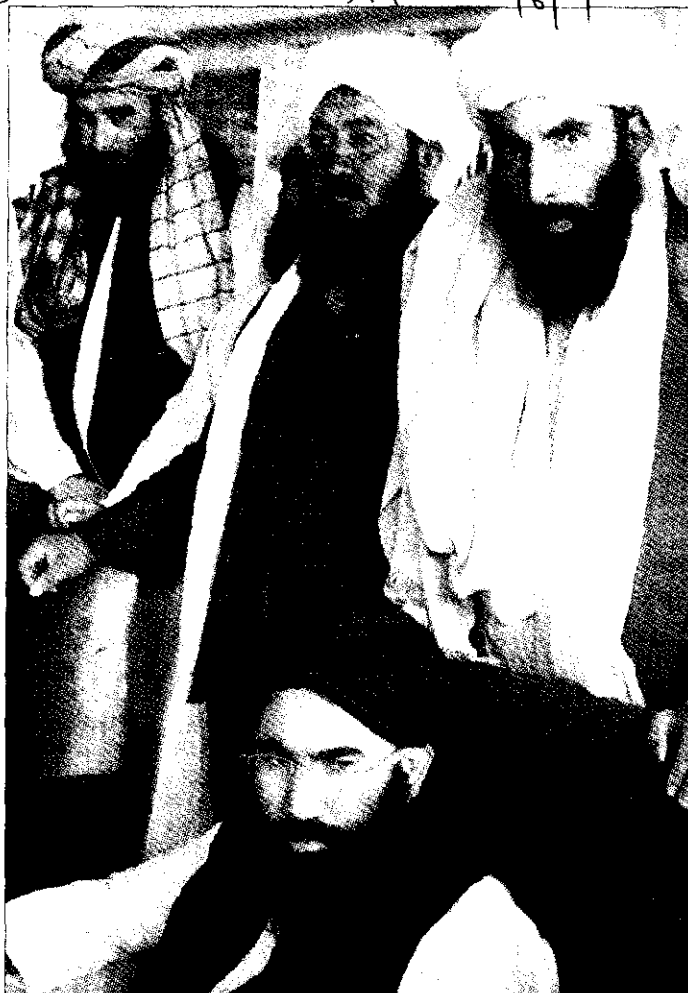
The Taliban, on the other hand, has threatened neighbours, including Pakistan, with a "massive attack" if they helped the USA launch military strikes on Afghanistan.

Pakistan, however, didn't clarify whether it would provide logistic support to the USA for military action against Osama bin Laden. After a meeting of the Cabinet and the national security council chaired by Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the foreign minister, Mr Abdul Sattar, issued a bland statement about a consensus on the policy of full support to international community to fight terrorism.

He iterated Pakistan "always has close ties with Afghanistan and we'll act in conformity with the policy of supporting the well-being of people of Afghanistan."

Mr Sattar said the meeting discussed the situation after the attacks and the specific request from the USA for co-operation in bringing to book the perpetrators.

About the Taliban's threat to wage a war against any



Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, during a press conference in Islamabad on Saturday. — AP/PTI

neighbouring country providing logistical support to the USA against Afghanistan, he said: "Afghanistan is a close neighbour of Pakistan and has always close ties with the people of that country. We have always extended mutual solidarity."

Pakistani military and diplomatic sources said that Islamabad has agreed to the full list of US demands for a possible attack on Afghanistan, including a multinational force to be based on its soil.

Gen Musharraf yesterday conveyed Pakistan's decision to the US ambassador, Wen-

■ Editorial: After shock, page 8

dy Chamberlin. Pakistan has also agreed to close its border with Afghanistan, allow its airspace to be used for possible strikes and cooperate in intelligence gathering.

Islamabad has denied that a contingent of US Marines and FBI officials landed in the country yesterday. Concerned about the tension among orthodox Muslims, Pakistan has reportedly sought assurances that the ground troops would be multinational.

Meanwhile, the Taliban has called for a *jihād* against anyone cooperating

■ See TALIBAN: page 12

THE STATESMAN

16 SEP 2001

A LAW UNTO HIMSELF

New Delhi: He is a slim, soft spoken man with the flowing robes and the beard of a jihadi. He describes himself as a "man of God" and although hero to a misguided generation is more an incarnation of the devil for those who have faced his violence. A civil engineer he has brains and charisma which have placed him irrevocably on the hit list of the most powerful nation in the world. He has a goal: to end US hegemony over the world. He has a mission: to get the US troops to leave Saudi Arabia. He has the money, the cadres and a worldwide network to create terror at will.

Osama bin Laden, the most wanted terrorist on the US hit list, has been flirting with death for over ten years now. The man who was, at one stage between 1980 and 1990, working with the US against the USSR troops and the Najibullah government of Afghanistan is now the terrorist against whom the Bush administration is expected to take direct retaliatory action.

Osama bin Laden has distanced himself from the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington but made it clear that he is totally supportive of those who were responsible. The investigations being carried out by the US administration, however, seem to suggest the involvement of Bin Laden who appears to be the only present day terrorist to have the means and the brains to carry out the precise operation that left thousands dead and the US paralysed for a full 24 hours.

Bin Laden changed from being a friend to a foe for the US sometime in the early Nineties, the period coinciding with his three-year stay in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries (1990-1993). He moved on to Sudan for another three years but was asked to leave when he openly embarrassed the Sudanese authorities by giving an interview confirming his presence in their country.

The Burhanuddin Rabbani government in Kabul at the time gave him asylum after all other Muslim countries rejected his plea. He arrived in Afghanistan to establish his by now well fortified and well known camp at Tora Bora Agam in the Nangarhar province adjoining Pakistan. He came under the protection of the Taliban in 1996 after this group had captured Jalalabad. He has been provided armed guards by the Taliban and reports here suggest that he also keeps 150 Arab volunteers as his personal body-guards. During this time he set up another base camp at Khost.

Osama bin Laden's relationship with the Taliban grew into something spe-



cial. He was looked after by this band of fanatical renegades, more so after he supported several Afghan groups during their jihad against the Najibullah government and the then Soviet Union troops in the country. His anti-US stance has also helped him consolidate his position with the conservative Islamic groups in the region. He has also been helping the Taliban financially, and has close links with the terrorist groups Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba operating out of Pakistan.

Interestingly, Bin Laden is married to a Pushtoon Pakistani woman and his daughter from this marriage is married to the Taliban Amir, Mullah Mohammad Omar, who has been very supportive of his father-in-law throughout. Newspapers have occasionally carried reports about differences within the Taliban about Osama bin Laden, with a section not particularly happy about the adverse international publicity arising out of his activities. The Taliban was particularly unhappy about his press conference at Khost in May 1998 where he announced the formation

SEEMA MUSTAFA profiles Osama bin Laden

He is also Mullah Omar's father in law

of an International Islamic Front for Jihad against the US and Israel. There are unconfirmed reports that the Taliban seized his satellite telephone and fax instrument after the earlier US bombings. The Amir, however, was not prepared to hear a word against him.

Osama bin Laden has grown in strength and has a force of committed youth of various nationalities. He has boasted in the past of having an army of educated men including engineers, scientists and others. He himself was a civil engineer and far removed from terrorism until he was cultivated by the US in the "war" against the then Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Laden who has managed to escape US detection till now, has built an extensive infrastructure in Afghanistan consisting largely of terrorist training camps for the cadres, he uses in his attacks.

These are said to include the training camps of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, earlier known as the Harkat-ul-Ansar, an organisation banned by the US and which had been in existence before the arrival of Osama bin Laden at Jalalabad. The camps of Gulbuddin Heck-

matyar, the Afghan Mujahideen leader, were taken over by the Taliban and handed over to Bin Laden. He is also in control of the camps set up by another Mujahideen leader Jalaluddin Haqqani who has since reported to have also joined the Taliban. Information with India suggests that these were not sophisticated training facilities, but were improvised for the trainees.

Interestingly, the ammunition storage dumps being used to store the arms and ammunition provided by the CIA were also taken over by these terrorist organisations, and were used for the same purpose. Analysts here expressed surprise that despite having full knowledge of the exact location of these storage dumps the American bombings of August 20, 1998 failed to hit any of the storage depots. An extensive paper prepared by the South Asian Analysis Group on the famous terrorist notes that these failed hits do not "speak well of the much vaunted Cruise missiles (Tomahawks)". It was the lack of success of this hit that is probably staying the US hand for the moment, as President George W. Bush will not be able to justify a failed strike to his people who are reeling under the impact of the simultaneous terrorist attacks.

Osama bin Laden is a moneyed man who lives an ascetic's life. He is under the protection of the Taliban but has a following that quite exceeds their reach. He is a law unto himself and a few days before the attack on the US his organisation, Al Qaida, had prepared a video tape projecting the indoctrination of young children. He himself has appeared on tape exhorting his followers, in soft tones, "your brothers in Palestine are waiting for you desperately, they are waiting for you to hit back at the US and Israel." He himself is highly motivated with a passionate zeal that makes him extremely dangerous. He is able to transfer this motivation to the cadres, and if he is behind the recent attack on America, then the frightening commitment of the young men flying the hijacked aircraft into specific targets has to be taken note of in any analysis.

He knows no remorse. His passion is reserved for his cause. He has no life outside it. He rarely raises his voice in public appearance although his words have the edge of a sharp knife. He has developed so close a relationship with the Taliban that it is unlikely that they, despite all differences, will hand him over to the US. Bin Laden himself has disappeared from view after his brief statement disassociating himself and his group from the attack. No one believes him. For he has established a reputation for terror. And is living up to it.

OSAMA HAS A NETWORK OF TERROR, THE ISLAMIC FRONT FOR JIHAD BEING THE UMBRELLA ORGANISATION

THE GROUPS

- Jamat-ul-Jihad of Egypt led by Dr Al-Zawahiri. Bin Laden understands English, but cannot speak fluently. Dr Al-Zawahiri, who speaks English without difficulty acts as his spokesman.
- Egyptian group led by Abu Asim ("Kuniyat" or assumed name), son of Sheikh Omer Abdur Rehman the blind Egyptian cleric who is imprisoned in the US for his involvement in the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York in February 1993.
- Egyptian group led by Shawqi Islam Bolo, brother of Khalid Islam Bolo, one of the assassins of President Anwar Sadat of Egypt.
- Harkat-ul-Mujahideen of Pakistan and its two splinter groups.
- Markaz Dawa Al-Irshad of Pakistan and its militant wing the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba.
- Sipah-e-Sahaba of Pakistan. An extremist Sunni organisation, it has been campaigning for the proclamation of Pakistan as a Sunni state.
- Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bin Laden's organisation exclusively comprising Arab volunteers of the Afghan war vintage. Most are Saudis and Yemenis with a small sprinkling of Egyptians, Sudanese and Palestinians from Jordan and the Israeli-occupied territories.
- Groups from Tajikistan, Xinjiang and the Philippines whose identities are not clear.

THE TRAINING CAMPS

- Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami runs two camps — Badr I and Badr II — in the vicinity of Khost.
- Salman Farsi camp, at Jawah, a few kilometres from the Pakistani border post of Saidgai, run by the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen of Pakistan was training Pakistanis, Kashmiris, Filipinos, Bosnian Muslims, Uighurs from Xinjiang etc. It was run by Maulvi Jabbar, an ISI trained cadre. This camp was started in 1989 by the Hizbul Mujahideen of J&K with the assistance of the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan for training Kashmiri extremists and Pakistanis. After the Taliban's relations with the Jamaat-e-Islami deteriorated due to the latter's support of Gulbuddin Heckmatyar, the Taliban ordered the Hizbul to quit the camp and handed it over to the Harkat-ul-Ansar, as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen was then known. After the US declared the Ansar a terrorist organisation in 1997, it changed its name to Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and of the camp to Hazrat Amir Mawia
- The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen runs two other camps. The one located near Zhavar is called the Khalid Bin Waleed camp and the other (name not known) is located near the Darwanta power station, close to Jalalabad.
- The camp of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, a splinter group of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. It was being used exclusively for training Pakistanis and Kashmiris. It was being run by one Mufti Bashir, a resident of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). The name of the camp is not known.
- The camp of another splinter group of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen at Liza near Tanai. It was being run by Qari Saiful Islam Akhtar, another ISI-trained cadre of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen.
- The Liza camp is located about 40 kms from the camps of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, which, in turn, are located about 5 to 20 kms from the exclusively Arab camps of Bin Laden.

THE ADVISORS

- Sheikh Taseer Abdullah, who is also known as Abu Hafs al-Misri. He could be Mohammed Atef, according to the FBI, the military commander of Bin Laden. Washington has charged Atef of being involved with Kenya and Tanzania bombings and announced a reward of US \$5 million for his capture. Sheikh Taseer is a former Egyptian police officer. He came to Peshawar in 1983 and started participating in the Afghan jihad. He was amongst the first Arabs to have responded to the call of the Afghan Mujahideen for foreign volunteers and was instrumental in persuading many other Arabs to join the jihad. He joined the jihad even before Bin Laden. Sheikh Taseer is also credited with persuading Azzam to resign his job as a lecturer in the Islamabad Islamic University and join the jihad. Azzam shifted to Peshawar and built up a vast network to help the Afghan refugees and arrange for the training of the Arab mercenaries and their subsequent induction into the jihad.
- Dr Ayam al-Zawahiri, of Egypt's Al Jihad, whose grandfather Abdul Wahad used to be Egypt's ambassador to Pakistan. The bespectacled Al-Zawahiri and his family have been living in Afghanistan for the last 18 years.
- Two sons of Sheikh Omar — Mohammad, 29, and Abu Asim. Their real names are not known.
- Abu Yasir Rifai Ahmed Taha (real name not known), an Egyptian.
- Shawki al-Islambouli, brother of Khalid Islambouli who killed President Anwar Sadat. His presence is rumoured about, but not confirmed.

Where is the evidence, asks Taliban

KABUL, SEPT. 13. The Taliban Foreign Minister, Wakil Ahmed Mutawakel, today dismissed reports that Western intelligence had linked Osama bin Laden to the terrorist attacks on the United States as lacking any credibility.

Mr. Mutawakel reiterated that the Taliban would consider extraditing Osama if it received "solid and convincing" evidence of his involvement in terrorism, but said the U.S. had so far failed to deliver this.

The U.S. Senator, Mr. Orrin Hatch, has said that FBI officials intercepted telephone calls which indicated Osama had been involved in plotting the attacks. A German Government spokesman said on Wednesday that the German, British, French and Israeli secret services had also linked the Saudi dissident to the world's worst terrorist atrocity.

But Mr. Mutawakel said such claims amounted to an attempt by U.S. intelligence agencies to justify their failure. "The intelligence services have to say something because they are responsible to the people of the U.S. and the Congress," he said. "So in order to mask their failure they will accuse anyone. If they were able to detect the telephone conversation, why were they not able to detect the big attacks?"

Mullah Mohammad Omar, the reclusive supreme leader of the Taliban, also said that Osama could not be held responsible for the attacks.

Arrest denied

The Taliban Government has denied reports of the alleged arrest of Osama and two of his immediate aides. According to a Novosti report, the Arab electronic newspaper, Ilaq, had reported that the Taliban had placed Osama, the al-Qa'ida Egyptian wing's leader, Aiman al-Zawahiri, and Osama's military adviser, Muhammed Atef al-Mukni, under home arrest. The Taliban embassy in Abu Dhabi did not confirm this information. — AFP, UNI

THE HINDU

14 SEP 2001

Masood sees no military solution

By A Special Correspondent

"If international pressure is increased on Pakistan, the Taliban will be compelled to sit at the negotiating table."

119-12
Afghanistan 12/9

THE FOLLOWING is the transcript of the interview given by Commander Ahmad Shah Masood to AIM Television on August 13. Commander Masood is the Deputy President and Defence Minister of the U.N.-recognised Islamic Government of Afghanistan. This is the last television interview he gave before the assassination attempt on Sunday.

Question: What is the current military position in Afghanistan?

Ahmad Shah Masood: We have information that the Taliban, with the help of Pakistan and Osama Bin Laden, had planned early this year to capture Badakshan. Their plan was to first take Badakshan and then cut off the supply line to Panjshir so that they could lay a siege to our positions. This was a programme that the Pakistanis and the Taliban pursued since early this year but could not succeed. This is because conflicts this year started in regions that were under Taliban control. Regions like Ghowar and Bamiyan witnessed intense fighting in early winter this year. The Taliban were so deeply engaged in the war in these regions that they could not pay any attention to their basic plan of taking Badakshan. In the northern parts of Afghanistan too, fights broke out in regions that were under the Taliban control. In the Zari region and other parts as well, the Taliban suffered heavy casualties. At present, heavy fighting is going on in the western part of Afghanistan in the regions of Faryab and Herat. In fact, the Taliban and the Pakistanis could not imagine that they would face such solid resistance in the western parts of Afghanistan which were under their control for many years. The United anti-Taliban front and the Islamic Government of the Republic of Afghanistan have succeeded in thwarting the designs of the Taliban and Pakistan through these uprisings.

Some months back, the Taliban with the help of Pakistan mobilised troops twice to take Badakshan but were defeated on both occasions. 1000 to 1500 of their men were killed and injured in that conflict. About four days, a popular uprising, organised by the Pashtoon commanders, began in northern Afghanistan and Mazar-e-Sharif. Owing to the oppression and negative actions of the Taliban and the presence of external forces, especially Pakistanis, in the north of Mazar-e-Sharif, the Pashtoon commanders, harassed by them, have revolted and had even established contacts with the Unified Front and the Islamic Government. Currently, a large number of Taliban and Pakistani forces are engaged in suppressing and preventing this coup within the Taliban, i.e., in Mazar-e-Sharif. These Pashtoon commanders who have risen in revolt were prominent members of the Taliban themselves and had earlier helped in bringing the Taliban into the north. Currently, the situation in Mazar-e-Sharif is very critical and it is expected that soon the Taliban will lose control of Mazar-e-Sharif.

What percentage of Afghanistan is held by your forces and what percentage by the Taliban?

The Taliban claim they hold 90 per cent of Afghanistan's territory. This is totally false if we see the map of Afghanistan. If they had held 90 per cent of Afghanistan's territory, such a situation would not have existed. The claim is totally false and carries no weight. In fact over 30 per cent of Afghanistan's territory which are influential and heavily populated are under our control.

Is taking Kabul your main target?

Our main target is to restore peace in Afghanistan and defeat the Pakistanis.

Do you envisage eventually capturing most of the country?

We believe that the problem of Afghanistan does not have a military solution. But our achieving a military balance and equilibrium is essential.

How do you then resolve this conflict? What is your plan, your aim?

As I have explained the current military situation in Afghanistan, the Taliban's advancement has been checked and they are actually retreating. I believe that sooner or later, the Pakistani Generals will feel and understand that continuation of fighting is beyond their power and will not be in their interest. We have repeatedly said that two steps are crucial for restoration of peace in Afghanistan. One that resistance is strengthened and expanded in Afghanistan and, secondly, international pressure is increased on Pakistan. In the area of strengthening resistance, the situation has been very good this year compared to earlier years. If international pressure is increased on Pakistan, I believe that Taliban will be compelled to sit at the negotiating table.

How long will it take?

It is linked to certain conditions. It de-



pends on how long Pakistan continues to help the Taliban and how long it stands behind them. Do you know we are not only fighting the Taliban at present but we are confronting three groups of forces comprising the Taliban, Arab mercenaries of Osama Bin Laden and elements from madrassas in Pakistan along with Pakistan's regular army. Among these forces, one is Afghan and the other two forces are non-Afghani.

You keep on mentioning Pakistan? Is Pakistan primarily behind the Taliban?

It is mainly Pakistan. I am sure if Pakistan is restrained, Osama Bin Laden cannot bring money and a single Arab inside Afghanistan. It is mainly Pakistan which provides men and equipment and has made conditions conducive to transfer of money and passage for Arabs. Pakistan plays a pivotal role in all these areas.

Who actually runs the Taliban now?

In the field of military affairs, it is mainly controlled by Pakistani advisors and Generals and in the foreign affairs department, it is basically run on the advice of Pakistanis. The remaining areas, that are controlled and administered by the Taliban, have no achievement to show.

What proof do you have of the direct involvement of the Pakistani army?

According to the information we have in our hand, we know the Pakistani Generals who are in Afghanistan, their names and status and their whereabouts. We have the names of Pakistanis who were killed in Afghanistan. And above all, General Musharraf has himself declared on many occasions that "we are the supporters of the Taliban, we help them and this is in Pakistan's interest and is necessary from the point of view of Pakistan's security". This is something which Pakistani politicians did not declare earlier but Musharraf has declared it quite clearly. Currently, we have hundreds of Pakistani prisoners.

Do you have the names of the Generals involved?

Currently, the Pakistani general who supervises the military operations is General Zaman.

Is Pakistan using the Taliban for a wider agenda?

Pakistan wants to make itself the axis of Islamic countries in the region. And the vacuum which has been created in Central Asia — it has been the strategy of Pakistan to fill it up. This way, Afghanistan is their first step to Central Asia. With these intentions, Pakistan has established madrassas within Pakistan for students from Central Asian countries, where they study and these students are trained by them for furtherance of Pakistani goals in Central Asia. Pakistanis are increasing their influence in the whole region and will not be only satisfied with Afghanistan. Of course, this is their first step and they will not confine themselves to just Afghanistan.

Is it only a political aim to dominate Afghanistan and then Central Asia or does it have an economic side to it?

The economic gains are part of their larger plans which have many aspects. But if it was only their economic interest involved, the best way for Pakistan would have been to restore peace in Afghanistan. And it would have been in the interest of all Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. But Pakistanis have greater plans, motives and expectations. I will tell you about their motives in one sentence. As I said earlier, Pakistan wants to become the axis of all Islamic countries in the region. But this is something which is beyond the capacity of Pakistanis.

And you and your forces are standing between them and that reality?

Undoubtedly without our resistance,

you would have been witness today to greater and bigger problems of war in different countries of Central Asia.

What is the role of Osama Bin Laden?
In the past, Bin Laden used to provide monetary help to the Taliban, i.e., helped solving the Taliban's monetary problems and needs. But gradually, his role has become obvious in other areas too. First, he has a crucial role to play in shaping the ideology of the Taliban. Secondly, in the field of financial help. Thirdly, from the point of view of the organised fighters (warriors), he has them under his control. So, he has now come to play a crucial role in three areas.

Is there a danger of growth in international terrorism now that, according to you, Osama Bin Laden is playing a greater role?

Definitely. The threat of Taliban in creating instability in the region and in the world has not been well comprehended, the way it should have been. They have created instability in regions and can create problems for the world through Osama Bin Laden. And also from the point of view of narcotics. Here again, the Taliban are the biggest exporter of narcotics to the world. Drugs trafficking and terrorism, the two problems which are causing great concern among the international community, are emanating from the Taliban.

What do you want the international community to do to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table?

The international community can put pressure on Pakistanis through various means. Pakistan should stop intervention in Afghanistan. We do not say that Pakistan should bring the Taliban to the negotiating table, but once they stop intervening in Afghanistan, the Taliban would have no other option but to talk.

What should the international community do to stop Pakistan from providing that support?

The big countries know what they can do to stop this. They could solve Kargil in a few days. They can use the same methods and pressurise Pakistan so that the Afghan problem is solved.

But America is nervous of pushing a nuclear power too far?

The pressure and means they employed in Kargil can be used in Afghanistan too.

The U.S. welcomed the announcement by the Taliban that it had stopped cultivation of poppy in Afghanistan. Do you believe that it has stopped?

When the Taliban announced that they had stopped the cultivation of poppies in Afghanistan, it was a good news which was welcomed by all in and outside Af-

"The nation now understands the real matter. And this is borne out by the fact that popular uprisings have taken place in the regions under the control of the Taliban."

ghanistan. We do not reject it. We welcomed this decision. We want the cultivation of poppy banned in Afghanistan. But, unfortunately, this is not their intention. The real matter is that the opium-poppies cultivation had increased so much that it had brought down the prices. The opium smugglers are members of the Taliban Government too. They went to the council meeting to ban the cultivation so that the surplus stocks of opium could be sold at much higher prices which will go up with depleting stocks. Thus they will be meeting their financial needs selling the current stocks at higher prices and once it runs out of stock and if the Taliban continue to exist, I am sure they will reverse the decision and restart cultivation.

In the 1980s, you were involved in fighting a foreign invader — the Soviet Union. But now you are fighting an army made up substantially of the Afghan people. How do you feel doing that?

In the past also, the Russians had with themselves Khalqis and Parchamites (the communists) fighting against us who were Afghans. Now the only difference is that earlier the invasion (aggression) was from the north and this time around it is from the south. In the past, aggression was very clear and their ideology was known to us but now the aggression is veiled, and all crimes are committed in the name of Islam and its defence. Which made it very difficult for the people to understand the motives of the current aggressors in the beginning. It is very fortunate that the nation now understands the real matter. And this is borne out by the fact that popular uprisings have taken place in the regions under the control of the Taliban, as I have

pointed out earlier. Visit the streets and the markets and the fields and ask farmers, shopkeepers and the masses yourself and see how much realisation has dawned upon them now that Pakistan has subjected Afghanistan to aggression and invasion. It is not only the case with the regions, which are under our control. But if you could find ways and means to visit Taliban-held areas and ask the people there about what they think of Pakistan, things will become clear to you.

Is the Taliban's approach to human rights and women's education rights coming from within or is this also being dictated by Pakistan?

I briefly want to mention one thing in this regard with the help of which you can analyse and interpret the actions of the Taliban. In order to swallow and usurp Afghanistan, it is one of the dangerous policies of Pakistan to reduce Afghanistan from the level of a state to tribalism. In this way, the Pakistanis have begun destroying foundations of the state so that no Government worth its name exists in Afghanistan in the future. It has been many years since the Taliban are governing a large part of Afghanistan but Pakistan has never wanted to see that the Taliban has a regular and an organised army. There is no doubt that the Taliban, when their real face had not yet been recognised, had gained popularity among the people and the nation. But, during this period, Pakistan never wanted to bring thousands of Afghani and Pashtoon educated scholars who were living in Peshawar and elsewhere in Afghanistan and make them part of the Taliban administration so that it could improve and the administrative condition become better. Instead they created worse conditions for them. They used the Hizb-e-Islam of Hekmatyar to threaten and murder Afghani scholars. Moreover under the threat of Taliban those scholars were forced to flee Pakistan and seek asylum elsewhere. The Afghans themselves initiated steps and established an University in Peshawar so that the Afghan refugees could study there but the Pakistanis closed down that University and constructed a mosque in that place. They let the Taliban establish more madrassas but did not allow an institution to continue which could serve the future of Afghanistan. Certain observers are of the view that Pakistan does not have enough control over Taliban to restrain them from taking steps on human and women's rights. It is Pakistan, which has been providing weapons, fighters and other financial help, how it is not possible for it to restrain the Taliban from destroying the Buddha. The problem is different. Actually, Pakistan want to show that Afghans are uncultured and uncivilised and they had nothing in past and have always led a tribal life and have become accustomed to tribal habits and will always re-

main so and thus it is their strategy to destroy the identity of Afghans. This is the most dangerous part of their strategy and policy with regard to Afghanistan. They want to bring down Afghanistan from the level of a state to tribalism.

What is the attitude of the Islamic Government to India today given that New Delhi appeared to support the regime backed by the Soviets?

Wide and deep relations have existed between India and Afghanistan during different periods of history. And such friendly and good relations continued during the reign of Zahir Shah and Muhammad Daud. Unfortunately, when the communists came to power India defended and supported those who had no standing among the people. At present, very good relations exist between the Islamic Government of Afghanistan and India. We have our Embassy in India and these relations are becoming better with time.

Is there a commonality of interests between India and your Government?

The main commonality is that both countries want peace and stability in the region and do not want tension.

What can India do to help bring peace?
India is a big country in the region and can be effective through different ways to restore peace in Afghanistan.

Does India assist your Government in any way?

As I said earlier, we have good relations. We thank India for the assistance, which is extended from time to time in the fields of humanitarian assistance for Afghan migrants. We have good political relations and we consider it to be a positive step.

Taliban hit back after Masood attack

REUTERS
KABUL, SEPTEMBER 11

AFGHANISTAN'S ruling Taliban movement launched a major offensive north of the capital on Monday, a day after a suicide bomber tried to kill their key military opponent, anti-Taliban sources said.

The Taliban, who have denied any link with Sunday's attack on guerrilla commander Ahmad Shah Masood, had no immediate comment on the offensive — which followed days of heavy clashes with Masood's forces in the same area.

But with the fate of Masood still unclear, the sound of fighting north

of Kabul could be heard in the city on Tuesday. Opposition sources with Masood's forces said the Taliban offensive was concentrating on two fronts leading to his stronghold and birthplace in the Panjsher valley, 120 km north of Kabul.

The Taliban forces were striking at the so-called old road, some 25 km north of Kabul, and in Kapisa province to the northeast, they added. "They have not gained anything from the attacks. We have foiled them all and there are heavy casualties on both sides," an Opposition official said.

Kabul residents could hear the roar of Taliban jet fighters — left behind by the Soviet forces Ma-

Masood replaced

KABUL: Afghan Opposition alliance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani said on Tuesday he had named intelligence Chief General Fahim to stand in for commander Ahmad Shah Masood who was injured in an assassination attempt on Sunday.

Rabbani said from northern Afghanistan that Masood was under treatment in a hospital in the area and there was no danger to his life.

— Reuters
Masood fought in the 1980s — making regular runs north of Kabul and the

explosions of artillery shells. Opposition sources said Masood survived an assassination attempt on Sunday by two Arab suicide bombers pretending to be journalists and was recovering from "superficial" injuries in Tajikistan. But Russian news agency IJAR-TASS and the British Broadcasting Corporation quoted sources in central Asia saying that the 48-year-old veteran commander had been killed by a blast.

The BBC said General Fahim, Masood's intelligence chief, had replaced him. "He has not died, but he is in the hospital," Opposition official Sayed Najibullah Hashimi said in Faizabad, the formal Opposition capital.

Brother says Masood alive

REUTERS
SINGAPORE, SEPTEMBER 11

BROTHER of Afghan guerrilla leader Ahmad Shah Masood said he was alive following an assassination attempt. Ahmad Wali Masood, Masood's brother and spokesman in London, was quoted on CNN on Tuesday saying "our information is that he's in a stable condition."

"Now he can communicate, but of course not frequently. He can communicate from time to time. He's better now," he said.

INDIA 12 SEP 2001

Masood escapes assassination bid

Kabul, September 10

THE GUERRILLA commander leading the Opposition to Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, Ahmad Shah Masood, was receiving treatment on Monday for minor injuries suffered in an assassination attempt, a spokesman said.

But Masood's whereabouts were unclear after Sunday's attack in which a suicide bomber, reportedly posing as a journalist, blew himself up after gaining access to his office in the far north of Afghanistan. "He is fine and in good health," a secretary for Masood told Reuters from the commander's stronghold in the Panjsher valley. "He is in Tajikistan for treatment and we have nothing to worry about his condition."

In neighboring Tajikistan, the Afghan embassy, which is under Masood's control, said the veteran leader was still in Afghanistan receiving treatment. It too said there was no concern for his condition.

Masood, 48, is the chief obstacle to the Taliban hopes of ruling all of Afghanistan. After appearing near defeat a year ago, he has kept Taliban forces off balance by guerrilla attacks dotted across the northern half of the country.

"There were two Arab journal-



A FILE PHOTO OF AHMAD SHAH MASOOD

ists with him for an interview at his office in Khoja Bahauddin (Takhar province)," said the secretary. "One of them had attached explosive devices on his body and blew himself up as a suicide bomber or devotee," he added.

"This person got killed on the spot along with a colleague of us and Masood himself received injuries on his leg, hand and chest. The wounds are minor ones," he said. The secretary said Masood's guards opened fire and killed the second Arab. He said they had not determined the nationalities or affiliation of the would-be assassins. Masood's forces control the north east of Afghanistan and are fighting the Taliban north of the capital Kabul, on the route toward the Panjsher valley, the commander's native stronghold. Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 SEP 2001

Foreign aid workers appear in Taliban court, plead not guilty

REUTERS

KABUL, Sept. 8. - Eight foreign aid workers on trial for promoting Christianity in Islamic Afghanistan appeared for the first time today in the ruling Taliban's Supreme Court, saying they were innocent of proselytising.

The hearing, now in its fourth day, was presided over by Chief Justice Noor Mohammad Saqib and 18 other judges.

"During the investigation we were accused of many things but that wasn't true," Mr George Taubmann, Afghanistan director for the Christian relief agency Shelter Now International (SNI), told the court.

"We have never converted anybody. We are shocked with the accusations," he added.

Today was the first time any of the detained foreigners - four Germans, two Australians and two Americans - had been seen or spoken in public since their arrest five weeks ago. Six are women and two men.

Islamabad-based diplomats from Germany, Australia and the USA, plus three relatives of the detainees and international media were allowed to attend the trial today.

Earlier the detainees arrived at court in a van accompanied by a pick-up truck carrying armed guards from the Taliban's ministry for the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice, or religious police.

Security, however, was less tight when they were taken away again a couple of hours later.

The Chief Justice reassured the accused, who all appeared healthy, that the trial would be fair and they were entitled to hire lawyers or defend



John Mercer, father of detained American aid worker Heather Mercer, and Nancy Cassell, mother of the other American Dayna Curry, leave the Supreme Court in Kabul after a trial of their daughters on Saturday. - AP/PTI

themselves, as they wished.

"We once again want to assure the detainees that the proceedings will be strictly in accordance with justice...and on the basis of Islamic Sharia (law)," he said.

"We also assure the accused that they should not fear that because we are Muslims so they will be punished," he added.

The small courtroom was hot and stuffy as around 70 people - judges, Taliban guards, diplomats, relatives and the accused - crowded in.

But the atmosphere was relaxed with detainees and diplomats free to speak as and when they wished, with all comments translated by an official Taliban interpreter.

The foreign women each covered themselves in long

shawls in accordance with the Taliban's strict dress code for women, while the two men wore traditional long shirts over loose baggy trousers.

The diplomats requested further consular access to their nationals, while some detainees said they were unsure what the accusations were. Saqib replied that was why the court hearing had been called. He said the initial phase of the investigation was coming to an end.

"When this initial phase is over it will be followed by a second phase in which a grand assembly of ulema (Muslim scholars) will be called," he said.

The Taliban say Mullah Mohammad Omar, the movement's supreme leader, has the final say on punishment. It was unclear whether the

detainees would be produced again tomorrow when the court next sits, and whether the 16 Afghans, who are expected to be tried separately, would be called to give evidence.

The diplomats said while the day's proceedings had helped, the legal process remained clouded with uncertainty.

"It looks like it's going to go on for some time, especially since they have given us the option to select legal representation," an Australian diplomat, Mr Alistair Adams, said.

The Taliban foreign minister, Mr Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, said on Thursday that a decree offering lenient treatment to foreigners accused of spreading Christianity didn't apply in this case.

AP/WIDE WORLD

Taliban deny envoys access, allow lawyers in court

BY SYED SALAHUDDIN *
 Kabul, Sept. 5: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban on Wednesday denied Western diplomats access to a court where eight foreign aid workers are on trial for promoting Christianity, but the chief justice said the defendants could hire foreign lawyers.

Judges and Islamic scholars under Afghanistan's supreme court completed their second day of deliberations over the trial and chief justice Noor Mohammad Saqib told reporters the aid workers would be sentenced according to Islamic Sharia law.

"If the crime is worthy of imprisonment they will be imprisoned, if the crime is worthy of hanging, they will be hanged," he added.

Three Islamabad-based Western diplomats in Kabul, frustrated at the lack of information about the case, were denied entry to the supreme court after arriving uninvited in a bid to meet the chief jus-

Mr Saqib told reporters he did not know how long the trial process would last, but the Pakistan Afghan Islam Press quoted him as saying the detainees could hire foreign, non-Muslim lawyers.

"Nothing will be said about the final punishment before a final verdict," he said. "The trial is continuing and going very fast."

Mr Saqib promised to deal with the case on a fair basis and stressed that the four Germans, two Americans and two Australians would be allowed to defend themselves in court.

"They have the complete right to defend themselves in court. If they want to use a lawyer we have no objection," AIP quoted him as saying. "They can even bring in foreign, non-Muslim lawyers to defend themselves."

Twenty-four staff of the German-based Christian relief agency Shelter Now International — the foreigners and 16 Afghan colleagues — were arrested more than four

weeks ago. It was unclear whether the 16 Afghans, who are expected to be tried separately, would be called to give evidence.

The trial process under the hard-line Islamic movement remained unclear and despite repeated requests from diplomats and journalists since the case began no Taliban officials have been either willing or able to clearly outline procedures in the Taliban judicial process.

Added to this Taliban statements have been inconsistent with officials often contradicting each other.

The diplomats from Germany, Australia and the United States, seeking to protect the interests of their nationals, arrived uninvited at the court.

Clearly frustrated as they waited in the street for around 30 minutes, they left saying they would make another attempt to meet the chief justice through the foreign ministry. (Reuters)



ACCESS DENIED: Western diplomats (from right) Helmut Landes of Germany, David Donahue of the US and Alastair Adams of Australia wait outside the supreme court building in Kabul on Wednesday. They were refused entry by the Taliban to witness the trial of the aid workers. (AP)

Taliban had 20-year-old American Johnny Walker in its ranks

Continued from Page 1
forces in Afghanistan do have in their control a man who calls himself a US citizen," Marine Major Brad Lowell, a Central Command spokesman, said.

"He was among the Al Qaeda and Taliban prisoners; he was held by the Northern Alliance in Mazar-e-Sharif. He is injured and is being given medical assistance by US forces," Major Lowell said.

The CNN clip showed the man appearing dirty, with a long beard and grinning as if in pain as he answered questions from a stretcher. He was described by *Newsweek* magazine's website as "a white, educated-sounding, apparently middle-class American" who identified himself as Abdul Hamid. It said he was taken into custody on Saturday at a hospital where he had been taken for treatment of minor gunshot and shrapnel wounds. Hamid was identi-

fied by his parents as John Philip Walker Lindh, of Northern California, according to *Newsweek*. His parents told *Newsweek* they had contacted officials at the US state department and the US embassy in Pakistan but had received no information.

Marilyn Walker said on Sunday that the photo of her son that appeared on *Newsweek* MSNBC.com was the first indication that she had had of his whereabouts since he left a religious school in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, where he had been studying the Quran, seven months earlier.

John Walker, who uses his mother's last name, told *Newsweek* he had travelled across the border to Afghanistan to help the Taliban build a "pure Islamic state." He told CNN he had gone to the Afghan capital, Kabul, and volunteered to serve the Taliban. Because he did not know the

local languages, he said, the Taliban told him to contact forces supporting Osama bin Laden. He said he received combat training at a camp in Northern Afghanistan, fought with Pakistani allies of the Taliban in Kashmir and then returned to fight recently with the Taliban at Kunduz, Afghanistan.

John Walker was born in Washington in February 1981, *Newsweek* said. He is the second of three children of a home health care worker and a lawyer, Frank Lindh. His mother said he spent the first 10 years of his life in the Washington suburbs of Maryland, moving to northern California in 1991. John's father, Frank Lindh, who is divorced from Marilyn Walker, said that his son took to Islam naturally. "I support him and his studies," Lindh said. "He's learned Arabic and is memorising the Quran. He's a very good scholar."

Marilyn Walker said she was shocked by her son's statements of support for the Taliban and bin Laden. "If he got involved with the Taliban, he must have been brain-washed," she told *Newsweek*. "He was isolated. He didn't know a soul in Pakistan. When you're young and impressionable, it's easy to be led by charismatic people."

The parents said they did not know if he would be charged with a crime but would stand by him. Referring to his son's study of languages and dedication to religious studies, Lindh told *Newsweek*: "I'm proud of John. He's a really good boy. A really sweet boy."

The special forces soldiers who detained Walker took him aside for treatment and later left with him, doctors told the magazine. A Northern Alliance military source said the US soldiers had taken him to Mazar-e-Sharif, *Newsweek* said, adding

that the US forces refused to comment on his whereabouts. Walker told *Newsweek* earlier he was a Washington native but indicated he grew up elsewhere in the United States. He said he converted to Islam at the age of 16 and later went to Pakistan to study the Quran, *Newsweek* said.

Walker said he came into contact with Taliban teachings while studying in Pakistan and travelled to Afghanistan six months ago to help "because the Taliban are the only government that actually provides Islamic law," the magazine reported.

He fought with the Taliban at the siege of Kunduz in northern Afghanistan and surrendered along with hundreds of other fighters after the two sides negotiated a deal. He was later transferred along with hundreds of other prisoners to Qala-i-Bhannig fortress west of Mazar-e-Sharif, where a revolt broke out a week ago. (Reuters)

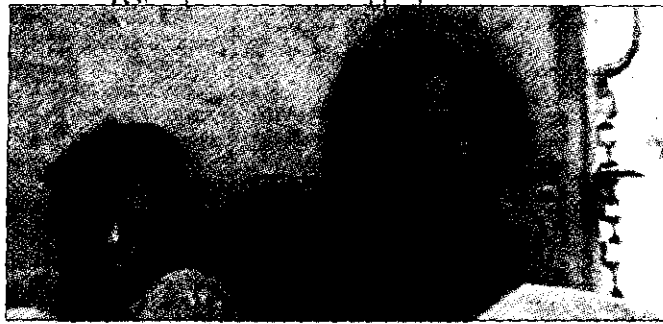
THE ASIAN AGE

4 SEP 2001

Taliban had Johnny Walker in its ranks

AP Photo
AP-1 *9/9*
Kabul, Dec. 3: A 20-year-old American who fought for the Taliban and survived a bloody prison uprising near the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif last week said his heart had drawn him to the hardline Islamic movement.

"I was a student in Pakistan, studying Islam and came into contact with many people connected with Taliban," John Walker said in an interview shown on CNN television on Monday. He was being held by US forces in northern Afghanistan.



THE CONVERT: A television grab of American Taliban fighter John Walker (right), who calls himself Abdul Hamid, at Mazar-e-Sharif on Saturday. (AP)

"I lived in the region, the North West Frontier Province (of Pakistan)," he said. "The people in general have a great love for the Taliban so I started to read some of the literature of the scholars, the history of Kabul... my heart became attached to that."

A spokesman for US Central Command, which is running the military campaign in Afghanistan, confirmed that a man who said he was an American was in the control of US military forces. "Military
Turn to Page 2

THE ASIAN AGE

- 4 SEP 2001

Taliban pound Opp bases

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

NO CASUALTIES REPORTED

KABUL Sept. 2. -- Jets from the ruling Taliban militia pounded Opposition bases as a new round of fighting erupted in northern Afghanistan early today, Opposition officials said.

Taliban troops launched their pre-dawn offensive in northern Kapisa province targeting positions held by forces loyal to Opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, they said.

"Taliban troops attacked our positions in Shokhi" outside Mahmud-i-Raqi, the capital of Kapisa province, Masood's aide Commander Besmillah said.

The Taliban aircraft twice bombarded areas under Opposition control, he said.

The jets attacked the frontline in Shokhi and the town of Ro-

kha at the entrance of Masood's Panjshir valley stronghold, about 100 km north-east of Kabul, he said.

There was no immediate report of casualties, Commander Besmillah said adding that the offensive had been repulsed and the fighting had subsided. Taliban officials were not immediately available for comment.

Aid workers in unknown place: The Taliban authorities have moved eight foreign aid workers detained for allegedly preaching Christianity in Afghanistan to an unknown place, guards at the detention centre here said today.

The detainees were transfer-

red late yesterday from Kabul's juvenile correction centre to an unknown place, Taliban guards at the gate of the detention centre said.

The aid workers -- two Australians, two Americans and four Germans -- from the German-based Shelter Now International were arrested in early August along with 16 Afghan colleagues.

A Taliban guard said the ruling militia's religious police came around 8:00 p.m. (9 p.m. IST) and took them away.

He gave no further details.

The Taliban foreign minister Wakil Ahmad Mutawakel today said investigations into the case were about to be concluded

and the aid workers would soon be brought to trial.

UN for fair trial: The UN today called for a fair trial of all 24 foreign and Afghan aid workers detained by the Taliban, Reuters adds.

The trial by an Islamic court is expected to begin later this week after the Taliban authorities said on Saturday an investigation the aid workers was almost over.

"The UN wants a fair trial of these people on the basis of justice," said a UN official who declined to be identified.

He said the UN wanted an early resolution of the case, which began when the Taliban arrested the SNI staff early last month and shut down the agency's offices in the war-torn country.

THE STATESMAN

SEP 2 2001

AFGHAN REFUGEES / EAST TIMOR OPTION DROPPED

UNHCR presents 3-point plan

1/9
GENEVA, AUG. 31. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees presented a three-point plan today to Australian, Norwegian and Indonesia officials to try to end the standoff over 460 Afghan asylum seekers stranded on a ship near Australia's remote Christmas Island.

The plan provides for the Afghans to be allowed to disembark temporarily on Christmas Island "for humanitarian reasons". The asylum-seekers would then be screened ei-

ther on Australian soil or elsewhere to determine which were genuine refugees and which were economic migrants. The plan also includes provisions for them to be transferred to third countries either for further screening or resettlement.

The UNHCR spokesman, Mr. Ron Redmond, said the proposals were made at a meeting of diplomats from the affected countries at the refuge agency's Geneva headquar-

ters. There was no immediate comment from Australian officials on whether they would agree to let the Afghans disembark.

"We are confident this is the most logical way of resolving this extremely complicated episode," said Mr. Redmond.

Mr. Redmond said the UNHCR welcomed East Timor's offer to allow the Afghans on board the Norwegian cargo boat, the Tampa, to land there.

"However, the Tampa is now close to the Christmas Island. The people have been on board for far too long, and that island is the most logical place for them to go for the time being," he said.

The meeting at the UNHCR was the first joint meeting of representatives of the three governments with the U.N. agency.

Australia not for E. Timor

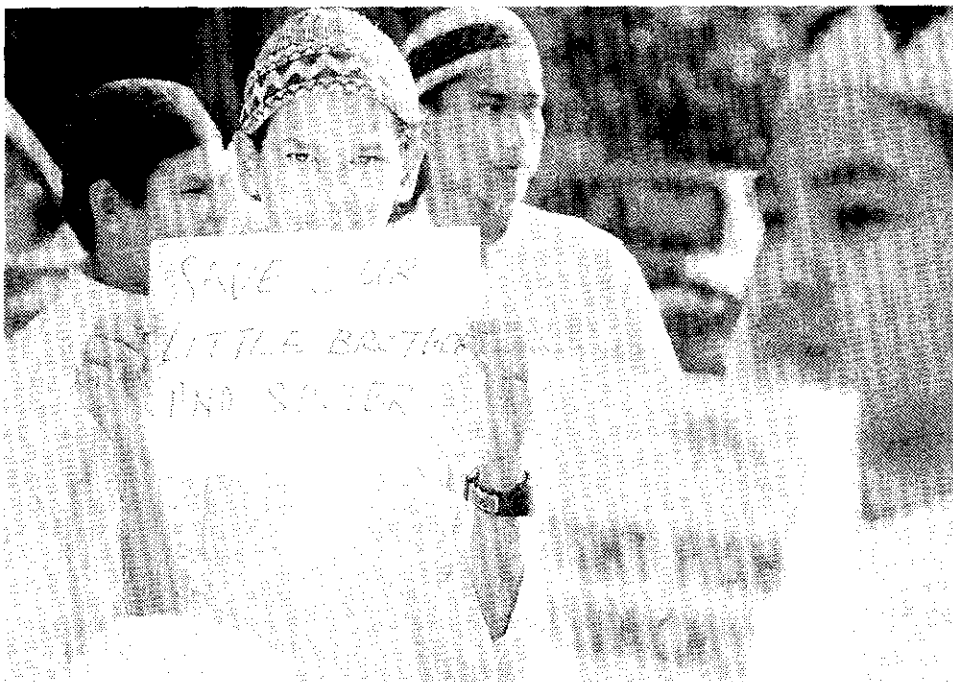
Meanwhile, Australia has decided against sending the stranded asylum seekers to East Timor, said the head of the U.N. Administration in the tiny territory today.

East Timor — which is run by the United Nations until it reaches independence next year — had offered to give temporary refuge to the asylum seekers.

"I have been informed by (Australian Foreign) Minister (Alexander) Downer that the East Timor option which was being looked at, among others, will not be pursued," the U.N. Administration chief, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, told reporters.

The refugees had been trying to sneak into Australia from Indonesia, but had to be rescued from their sinking boat last Sunday.

The plight of the asylum seekers has turned into an international standoff between Australia, Norway and Indonesia. — AP, Reuters



Muslim protesters hold posters during a demonstration demanding the Australian Government to reopen Christmas Island harbour and give permission for the asylum seekers to land on humanitarian grounds in Christmas Island, Australia, On Friday. — AP

THE HINDU

1991