

Pakistan helping Osama, says Qanooni

Kabul, December 30

AFGHANISTAN TODAY called for deployment of international peacekeeping troops along its border with Pakistan to combat its "Intelligence assistance" to Osama bin Laden.

Border Affairs Minister Aminullah Zadran said he has sent his agents to the frontier to investigate what he called suspicious activities by the ISI. Yesterday, Interior Minister Yunus Qanooni directly accused the ISI of helping Osama escape capture.

Slamming the "interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs", Zadran said: "If Pakistan, which helped the mujahideen in the past, interferes in our border management, they will become enemies." He voiced suspicion about Pakistani activities. "We



YUNUS QANOONI

have noticed that ISI agents are active on the border. They claim to be looking for Osama bin Laden, but we don't know what their objective is. At this stage of the hunt for Osama, we need these foreigners (troops from the international security assis-

tance force) and funding to stop drug trafficking."

In his interview to Iranian television, Qanooni said the ISI had been monitoring Laden's trips to Pakistan. "Undoubtedly, they knew what was going on. The fact that there has not been any reaction and that Laden has not been arrested indicates that he is somehow being supported by the ISI."

The Interior Minister added that the attitude of Pakistan's political leadership was "distinct" to that of the ISI. "When he is outside Afghanistan, he mainly goes to Pakistan. He has also been spotted in one of the eastern areas of Afghanistan. That means they are on the move. They are not in a fixed location. They are mainly in Pakistan or possibly in

Afghanistan." Afghan Defence Ministry spokesman Mohammad Habel repeated earlier claims by his ministry that Laden was using the Pakistani border town of Peshawar as base. "He is definitely in Peshawar under the protection of (militant party Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam leader) Fazlur Rahman," said Habel.

Habel said the onus should no longer be on Afghanistan for arresting Laden. "He has already left our country."

Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar denied his Government was redeploying troops from the Afghan border, where they are hunting for Osama. But he warned that Islamabad could be forced to move these forces to the border with India if tensions continue. AEP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Argentine Cabinet submits resignation

BUENOS AIRES, DEC. 30. The Argentine President, Mr. Adolfo Rodríguez Saa's week-old Cabinet has submitted its collective resignation following renewed unrest over economic policy and unpopular government officials.

However, the Argentine President did receive encouragement from the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, who telephoned Mr. Rodríguez Saa yesterday from his ranch in Crawford, Texas and urged him to stick with the IMF plan. Austerity measures introduced by the Government led to riots that toppled the previous Argentine President, Mr. Fernando De La Rúa and threaten Mr. Rodríguez Saa now that rioting has resumed.

"I deeply deplore the incidents of violence overnight Friday to Saturday," Mr. Rodríguez Saa said yesterday. "I call on all Ar-



THE WRITING ON THE WALL: A municipal employee cleans the street in front of the Argentine President's House, painted with slogans against the Government's economic measures in Buenos Aires on Saturday. — AFP

gentines to maintain peace." In a statement, Mr. Rodríguez Saa said he had not taken a decision on the resignations. The demonstrators demanded access to their partially frozen bank accounts and the resignation of Presidential advi-

sors tainted by allegations of corruption.

The largely peaceful protest turned violent when a group of teenagers tried to storm the palace and clashed with riot police,

who used tear gas and pressure hoses to disperse the crowd. Twelve policemen were injured and six are in serious condition, the federal police said.

Thirty-three demonstrators were detained.

There were no reports of serious injuries among the protesters.

Similar protests last week led to the resignation of Mr. Fernando De La Rúa from the presidency. "We'll have to see what the society is aiming at," the Labour Minister, Mr. Oraldo Britos said on entering the Presidential residence.

Speaking at his ranch on Friday, Mr. Bush had said he was prepared to give Argentina "technical assistance" through the IMF to its severe economic crisis, but that Buenos Aires must first get its fiscal and monetary policy in order. — AFP

THE HINDU

31 DEC 2001

No agreement on peace force

Agencies

KABUL, Dec. 30. — Talks between Afghanistan's interim government and British officials ended today without the expected final agreement on the deployment of a foreign peacekeeping force, a government official said. However, the Afghan foreign minister, Mr Abdullah Abdullah, had earlier said the interim administration had reached agreement on deployment of the International Security Assistance Force.

The secretary to Mr Yunus Qanooni, the Afghan interior minister, said: "The talks are over. There is no agreement. There is nothing to sign." He gave no further details, nor could he give an indication of when the talks would reconvene.

Earlier in the day, Mr Abdullah said: "We are willing to see peacekeepers stationed outside the capital eventually. But to begin with it should be in Kabul."

For the first three months Britain will lead the International Security Assistance Force with 1,500 soldiers. Germany announced yesterday that it will contribute 770 troops initially.

Bamiyan Buddhas to be restored

KABUL, Dec. 30. — Afghanistan's new government will restore the Bamiyan Buddhas, an emblem of culture destroyed by the Taliban regime, minister of culture and information Mr Raheen Makhdoom said today. The two giant statues, dating back some 1,800 years, were blown up by the Taliban in March 2001 by a 20-day barrage of dynamite, rockets and tank shells that sparked international outrage. — AFP



A US marine walks past unexploded missiles at Bagram Airbase, north of Kabul, on Sunday. — AP/PTI

Meanwhile, a US airstrike on a village in eastern Afghanistan to get the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaida members killed at least 15 civilians, the Afghan Islamic Press reported today. Most of the casualties were women and children, the sources said.

New Al-Qaida tapes scanned

Deutsche Presse Agentur

TEHERAN, Dec. 30. — The Intelligence service of Afghanistan is currently evaluating new videotapes which contained plans for further terrorist operations by the Al-Qaida network, Iran's official news agency IRNA reported today.

Deputy intelligence minister Mr Abdullah Towhidi said a number of new videotapes found in Al-Qaida bases in Afghanistan contain sabotage plans in several parts of the world.

"We are evaluating the tapes and will publish a relevant report," Mr Towhidi said without giving further details. "We also found several air-tickets to all around the globe," he said before adding that the main aim of the network was to attract young, emotional and preferably uneducated Muslims for suicide missions.

Also found were some books in which holy wars were propagated in the region - Middle East and Central Asia - and which also provoked Sunni Muslims against Shiite Muslims, who mainly live in neighbouring Iran.

"Those network members still on the run plan to start new operations against the Afghan interim government to resume their activities inside Afghanistan and want to use the forces of former premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in this regard," the minister said.

Kabul slams ISI for helping Osama

Agence France-Presse

KABUL, Dec. 30. — Afghanistan today called for deployment of international peacekeeping troops along its border with Pakistan to combat alleged Pakistani intelligence assistance to Osama bin Laden.

The border affairs minister, Mr Aminullah Zadrin, said he had sent his agents to the frontier to

investigate "suspicious activities" by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence.

Yesterday, the interior minister, Mr Yunis Qanooni, directly accused the ISI of helping the suspected terrorist mastermind escape capture.

Mr Zadrin slammed Pakistan's "interference" in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

"If Pakistan, which helped the mujahideen in the past, interferes

in our borders, they will turn enemies", he said.

He voiced suspicion about Pakistani activities. "We have noticed Pakistani agents from the ISI are active on the border. They claim to be looking for Osama bin Laden, but we do not know exactly what their objective is or if they are telling the truth."

"At this stage of searching for Bin Laden, we need these foreigners (troops from the

International Security Assistance Force), and funding during the second stage to stop drug trafficking", the minister added.

Mr Qanooni yesterday said the ISI was monitoring Osama's trips to Pakistan.

"Undoubtedly, they knew what was going on. The fact that there has not been any reaction and that Bin Laden has not been arrested, indicates he is somehow being supported by the ISI."

How Pak ruled Kabul by proxy

Yashwant Raj
Kabul, December 28

48 *Al-Hind*
HFI
29/12

NOW THERE is more evidence of Pakistani involvement in the Taliban regime. Interim Government sources claim they have the names of some Pakistanis who held senior positions in the Mullah Omar Government.

One was a minister, Mullah Razzaq. He headed the crucial Interior Ministry, held now by Younis Qanooni. "He had claimed he was from Kandahar." But no one in Kandahar has heard of him or his father by the names he had given. "How is it possible that no one knew him in Kandahar? We have asked around and we are yet to find people who knew him there," a source said.

Razzaq shaved his beard to evade identification. But when he was stopped at the border by Pakistani securitymen — Pak-



OSAMA BIN LADEN

istan had sealed its borders with Afghanistan — he showed them papers that proved he was a Pakistani. He was let in.

The Taliban-appointed Governor of Nangarhar, Maulvi Kabeer, too was a Pakistani. Sources said they had evidence

to prove he was from Qurom agency in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province. The Government's investigation is continuing. Some other names being investigated are Sardar Alam, Rahmat, Usman Ghani and Mahmood ul Hasan Tayeeb.

For now, investigators have their Pakistan address but are not sure of their respective designations in the Taliban regime.

Their Afghani identification papers were made by the Taliban, who were reportedly controlled almost entirely by the Pakistanis. Some of these Pakistanis are in jail, given up by their colleagues when the Taliban fled. And there are several thousand Pakistanis who were here to fight for the Taliban. The small Dohab jail in Panjshir, for instance, has about 10 of them.

Most belonged to terror outfits, but some were Pakistan Army regulars. Many of them

were evacuated from Kunduz, away from US bombing.

Curtains for a lie

The Afghan Government believes both Osama bin Laden and the former Taliban chief Mullah Omar are in Pakistan. The last bin Laden video telecast by Al Jazeera, the Government believes, was shot in Pakistan. The rugged Afghan landscape on the curtain behind "gave itself away. The curtain kept waving." It was meant to show bin Laden was still in Afghanistan. "But he is in Pakistan. No other country will give him shelter," a Government source said.

"He couldn't have escaped the US bombing on his strongholds in Tora Bora and Paktia. The Government here is certain that Osama and his operatives have left this country," he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 DEC 2001

Jaya acquitted

CHENNAI, Dec. 27. - AIADMK chief Ms Jayalalitha and all others have been acquitted in the Rs 6.5 crore coal import case by the special court. - PTI

Details on page 3

New Navy chief

MUMBAI, Dec. 27. - Vice Admiral Madhvendra Singh takes over as chief of naval staff on 29 December from Admiral Sushil Kumar. - UNI

CDS results declared

NEW DELHI, Dec. 27. - The UPSC today announced the results of the Combined Defence Services Examination. The results can be accessed on www.upsc.gov.in. - UNI

Laden 'alive' and defiant

Agencies

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 27. - Osama Bin Laden may now be confined to a shrinking corner of Afghanistan, and some reports have even suggested that he may be dead, but a videotape broadcast on Qatar's Al-Jazeera television yesterday showed he was still very much alive and defiant, at least till earlier this month.

In the new video shot probably on 7 December, Laden, looking gaunt and tired, hailed "the 19 students who shook the American empire," adding that their "blessed strikes" were "in response to what is happening in Palestine and Iraq."

Bin Laden in the tape said, he

wanted to review "the fierce crusade against Islam, two months after it was launched." "It is very clear the West in general, spearheaded by America, holds an undescribable amount of crusader loathing for Islam," said Osama, dressed in a camouflage combat jacket with a sub-machinegun propped up beside him.

All 19 who took part in the 11 September attacks were Arabs; 15 of them were Saudis, two came from the UAE, one (Mohammad Atta) was an Egyptian and another from the Levant, Bin Laden said.

The Levant is the area bordering on the eastern Mediterranean Sea, from Turkey to Egypt.

The White House has dismissed the tape as "nothing more than the same kind of terrorist propaganda we've heard before" and stressed there will be no let-up in the hunt for Laden. Some 500 US Marines are reportedly on stand-by for rapid deployment in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan around Tora Bora, to track down Osama and remnants of his Al-Qaida network still in the area.

In the first official reaction to the tape from Saudi Arabia, its Defence Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz said he believed that the tape was "genuine."

Laden also defended his group's actions as a just sort of terrorism: "Let those who repeat words about terrorism be careful about

what they say when they themselves perpetrate it," he said in an obvious dig at the USA.

"Laden wanted to show ... that he is alive," said Pakistani editor Mr Hamid Mir, the last person to interview Bin Laden in a secret meeting in Afghanistan on 8 November.

According to a Afghan defence ministry report today, Osama bin Laden has escaped to Pakistan and was being protected by followers of an Islamic radical leader, Maulana Fazalur Rehman.

The militant Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party denied reports it was harbouring Osama. "It is a conspiracy at the behest of India to malign Pakistan," said party leader Maulana Chahood Haddad.

THE STATESMAN

29 DEC 2001

Bin Laden in Pakistan: Afghan military

REUTERS

KABUL/ISLAMABAD, DECEMBER 27

OSAMA bin Laden is in hiding in Pakistan under the protection of supporters of a radical Islamic leader who helped to create the fundamentalist Taliban, Afghanistan's Defence Ministry spokesman said on Thursday.

"Osama himself is under the protection of Maulana Fazalur Rehman in Pakistan, but we don't know for sure in which part," Mohamad Habel told Reuters. "He lives in areas which are under the influence and control of Fazalur Rehman supporters. I cannot say from which sources we have received this information," he said.

"Bin Laden and his men are no longer here (in Afghanistan)," he added. Rehman, who is under house arrest, is head of the Jamiat Ulema-I-Islam party, a long time supporter of bin Laden.

Habel said bin Laden's support in Afghanistan had collapsed completely. "His supporters have no presence... anymore. There may be individuals here who have hidden, but altogether we can say that his resistance is over. His last remaining forces have fled to areas along the border with Afghanistan and Pakistan," he said.

Habel said pressure should be put on any country that had given refuge to bin Laden. "Attack is permissible on any country, be it Pak-

istan or any other which gives protection to Osama. We support that type of attack," he said.

Meanwhile, at least 40 people were killed when US jets bombed Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province, sources in Pakistan's border tribal rim said on Thursday. "The attack took place when the people were asleep," said one source quoting witnesses from Naka village, which was among those reportedly hit.

At least five houses were destroyed in the bombardment, including the house of one commander in the vanquished fundamentalist Taliban, Maulvi Taha, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP). Witnesses said he was not in

the house and was unharmed.

The source in the Waziristan tribal agency on the border with Paktika said 40 people were killed, up to 60 wounded and 25 houses destroyed in the raid. AIP put the death toll at 25 with four wounded and said the bombing was so severe that it was difficult to identify some of the dead.

The villagers said they did not understand why they had been bombed, saying that no members of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda militant network were in the area. "Neither Osama nor any other foreigner is in our village," the source quoted one villager as saying. The villagers said they supported the new Karzai government in Afghanistan.

INDIAN EXPRESS

28 DEC 2001

'Non-interference key to ties with Pak'

Yashwant Raj
Kabul, December 27

AFGHANISTAN FOREIGN Minister Abdullah Abdullah on Wednesday announced that resumption of diplomatic ties with Pakistan would have to be based on two principles: mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of the country.

He was addressing his first press conference after the interim government's inauguration. Abdullah also said Afghanistan would want India and Pakistan to resolve problems amicably. He said, "We expect all our neighbouring countries to live in peace with each other. There is awareness on both sides that the issue

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cannot be solved by force. It must be solved by non-violent means."

Abdullah's statement is being seen as a thinly-veiled endorsement of the Indian position on the Kashmir issue. That violence, sponsored by Pakistan through terrorists based on its soil, is not the solution to the problem.

With regard to Pakistan, Abdullah said, "We want normal and friendly relations with Pakistan but that should be based on mutual respect and non-

interference." At the moment Afghanistan does not have diplomatic ties with Pakistan. But he said, his government would not make an issue of the dispute with Pakistan over the Durand Line. "The policy on this will be made by the permanent government. We do not want to make an issue of it now."

The press conference was held after a marathon meeting of the cabinet that lasted several hours today. Among the important issues debated and decided upon today were constituting a reconstruction committee and empowering the cabinet to form an anti-narcotics commission.

Abdullah also announced the Foreign Ministry is in the

process of a complete overhaul - the words he used were "full review". He said ambassadors have been called to Kabul for discussions and work was in progress to review the status of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Taking questions from the press after a brief opening statement, Abdullah discussed the delay in the deployment of multinational forces, the government's commitment to ending opium cultivation and, albeit reluctantly, General Dostum's induction into the Government.

When asked about the reported bombing of a convoy of Afghan soldiers by US planes some days ago, he refused to make any specific comment.

THE AFGHANISTAN TIMES

29 DEC 2001

Karzai Govt. moves

Afghanistan +10-14 to form army 29/12

KABUL, DEC. 26. Afghanistan's four-day-old interim Government held its second Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, as it moved swiftly to establish unity and security after more than two decades of conflict.

In major steps, the Defence Ministry began planning for an army, a process which will involve integrating tens of thousands of fighters from the ranks of ethnic warlords throughout the country.

New leader, Mr. Hamid Karzai, has also appointed a feared northern Warlord, Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, as his Deputy Defence Minister in a move that defuses a potential source of opposition to the Government.

Mr. Karzai has promised that establishing security in the war-shattered nation will be a priority for the 30-member Cabinet charged with beginning the long and difficult task of rebuilding Afghanistan.

Afghan Ministers have been moving into their new offices over the past few days since being sworn in as members of the interim administration on Saturday. A second Cabinet meeting was in session today.

Senior Mujahedin commander, Mr. Atta Mohammad, said after the establishment of Mr. Karzai's Government, "a new chapter has been opened in our history, so we must have a new army as well".

He said the army would be recruited on a voluntary basis, ending the practice of forcing men and boys to fight.

Iran's Defence Minister, Mr. Ali Shamkhani, has suggested that Teheran help Afghanistan build its national army, which will contribute to local and regional stability, state radio reported yesterday.

And in a signal of confidence in Mr. Karzai's administration, which has a six-month mandate, Afghan refugees from Pakistan

started returning in numbers from Quetta and other border areas through the border town of Chaman. "On Tuesday alone 800 families returned," a Pakistani border official said.

The returning Afghans were buying up television sets, satellite dishes and video recorders to take home, and traders said the markets in Quetta, Chaman and Spin Boldak had run out of many items and prices were rising sharply as demand soared.

Women's magazine

Meanwhile, in a sign of the changing times in the country, the first magazine for women in nearly 10 years has hit the shelves of the war-ravaged country.

Seerat (attitude) does not look like a standard glossy magazine. Crudely churned out on an old-fashioned printing machine, it features the picture of a woman being pulled along by a rope. "We call on women to claim back their rights and to express themselves on an artistic level or by writing," said the 38-year-old Ms Mari, who is employed by the Ministry of Information. She is one of three journalists behind the project in a country where independent newspapers do not exist.

"We want to work for a youth that aspires to other things," said Ms Djamila Omar, a younger member of the trio.

The three women are funding the weekly magazine out of their own pockets. All they have asked is that the Ministry, which reads it for censorship, does not change any of the articles.

Five hundred copies of *Seerat*, which costs 2,000 afghanis (10 cents), are being distributed by its authors to colleges, bookshops and other institutions.

"The gates of hope are opening," reads *Seerat's* main headline, rejoicing over the beginning of the reopening of schools for girls. — AFP, Reuters



DUST SETTLES ON KABUL: Workers remove garbage from a street in Kabul on Wednesday as normal life returns. — AP

THE HINDU

27 DEC 2001

Australia
HD-129

AUSTRALIA / ARSON SUSPECTED, THOUSANDS EVACUATED

Raging fires threaten Sydney

27/12

SYDNEY (AUSTRALIA), DEC. 26. Up to 3,000 people have been forced to flee their homes as fires raged throughout Australia's largest State of New South Wales on Wednesday, ringing its capital, Sydney, and threatening outer suburbs.

As the number of fires jumped from about 70 on Christmas day to 100 on Wednesday, fire authorities worked with police to investigate seven cases of suspected arson. Winds of 60 kmph fanned the infernos which have destroyed homes, isolated towns and cut highways and rail links across New South Wales and around Sydney.

Other State Governments have offered to fly in fire crews while hundreds of firefighters from neighbouring Victoria State joined almost 5,000 New South Wales emergency workers, hundreds of whom have been battling fires for five days. Authorities have deployed 46 aircraft for water bombing and surveillance including five helicopters from the Department of Defence.

The Prime Minister, Mr. John Howard, pledged army resources after touring fire-raved areas around Sydney. The New South Wales fire chief, Mr. Phil Koperberg, credited firefighters with saving thousands of threatened properties. Ambulance crews estimated they had treated hundreds of firefighters and residents for smoke inhalation and breathing difficulties.

Dry conditions, winds gusting up to 90 kmph and temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius left emergency workers helpless to contain the blazes that were spreading at unprecedented speeds. "We have never seen anything like that before," said Mr. Koperberg. Crews were mostly no longer trying to contain fires but



Residents gather along a street after they were evacuated by firemen from their houses at Kurrajong in Sydney, on Tuesday. (Right) An aerial attack helicopter surveys a bushfire in the Blue Mountains on the western outskirts of Sydney. — AFP

concentrating on saving lives and property.

A grimy-yellow haze shrouded the central city from firestorms threatening outer suburbs only 20 km away. The State Emergency Services Minister, Mr. Bob Debus, warned that simmering hotspots around the perimeter could flare up at any moment.

A Wednesday afternoon firestorm leapt over the Nepean river, menacing the dense residential areas of Baulkham Hills shire in Sydney's northwest. In the western suburbs of Silverdale and Warragamba, 30 homes and a shopping centre were destroyed by another blaze.

"Everything's burnt around us, there's nothing left to burn," said a Silverdale resident, whose home now stands in a blackened wasteland. "It's just absolutely devas-

tating." To the city's south, the world's second oldest national park was being razed by a fire burning along a 10-km front that was estimated to have burned more than 100,000 hectares.

Two villages on the fringes of the Royal National Park and Sydney's southern waterways were also under threat. Firefighters hoped a late afternoon easing in the winds would allow them to burn containment lines overnight.

Residents in endangered areas were being told to hose down and fireproof their homes, stay indoors and await possible evacuation. The southern front of the same fire also threatened the outer suburbs of the city of Wollongong, 90 km south of Sydney.

Overnight it had hit coastal areas 50 km south of Sydney on the

park's southern fringe around the town of Helensburgh where about 1,500 people were evacuated along with most of the suburb of Waterfall.

About 12,000 homes remained without power and many without running water. Health authorities issued warnings to residents in many southern suburbs to boil their water after power failures stopped water filtration systems.

By evening, winds and temperatures had eased in many areas around the State, providing hope that fires may calm overnight.

However, the Bureau of Meteorology forecasts temperatures to soar in some regions by the end of the week. "We expect this campaign to go for four to five days but perhaps 10 days or thereabouts at worst," Mr. Koperberg said. — AP

THE HINDU

27 DEC 2001

Most Taliban leaders move about freely in Pakistan

Kabul, December 24

MOST TALIBAN leaders have escaped the American dragnet and remain free because the Afghan and Pakistani authorities lack the political will to arrest them, it was claimed yesterday.

Suspects wanted by the US are living openly after returning to their villages or slipping across the border into Pakistan, where they could be picked up within hours, according to an intelligence source who named the alleged location of several senior officials.

Secret deals with tribal leaders and Northern Alliance commanders appear to have paved an escape route for Taliban leaders ahead of US special forces. Some disappeared without trace but others are so confident of not being picked up that they have made little effort to cover their tracks, said Mullah Almaj Khaksar, a founding Taliban member who served as deputy interior minister in the Taliban regime.

He started providing intelligence to the Northern Alliance four years ago after growing disillusioned with the Taliban. In the past few weeks he has tracked the movements of several former colleagues, he said. Several officials were captured in the north by the Alliance but freed in exchange for agreeing to

DEPUTY INTELLIGENCE CHIEF IN US NET

US FORCES in Afghanistan have arrested the deputy head of the Taliban's Intelligence department Abdul Haq Wasiq, the AIP reported on Monday. The report said Wasiq was arrested last week by US commandos in the town of Maqaur in the central province of Ghazni.

It quoted unidentified sources for the report. The Pakistani authorities have tightened security around a northern prison where about 140 al-Qaida fighters who fled Afghanistan are being held. Some 700 common criminals have been transferred from the jail at Kohat to other prisons for security reasons, the Dawn has reported.

AFP, Islamabad

surrender their men. Others were spirited into the mountains in the south by fellow ethnic Pashtuns. At least six entered Pakistan through smuggling routes, said Khaksar.

US forces and their Afghan allies have detained around 7,000 Taliban and al-Qaida suspects in a growing number of improvised jails. But those screened so far by FBI and intelligence agents have turned out to be foot soldiers rather than leaders.

Khaksar named Taliban offi-

25/12
cials who have allegedly moved to Peshawar. Amir Khan Muttaqi, the former culture and education minister, had joined up in Peshawar with Noor Muhammad Saqib, who sat on the supreme council, and Abdul Kabir, former governor of Nangahar, he said.

The three men knew the movement was finished and had shunned calls by Anwar Dangar, a Taliban commander who also surfaced in the city, to rally together, said Khaksar. Haji Gulalai, intelligence chief for Kandahar, also accused Pakistani officials of sheltering their former Taliban allies. He named Nooruddin Turabi and Mohammad Tayyab Agha, the spokesman for the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, among those in Pakistan. Khaksar said Turabi had left Peshawar and moved to Quetta which has a substantial Pashtun population and home to many Taliban sympathisers.

Khaksar said rumours that the former interior minister, Abdul Razaq, was also in Chaman were incorrect because he remained a few miles inside Afghanistan, at Spin Boldak. Khaksar also said that the former deputy foreign minister, Abdur Rahman Zahed, had deliberately created the impression that he entered Pakistan but had in fact returned to his village in Loghar.

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 DEC 2001

Key defence post for Dostum

Agencies

KABUL, Dec. 24.—Afghanistan's new leader Mr Hamid Karzai today said he had appointed ethnic Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum as deputy defence minister in his two-day-old government.

"I am glad to announce today that, as proposed by our minister of defence, General Dostum has been appointed deputy minister of defence of Afghanistan," Mr Karzai told reporters after a meeting at the presidential palace with defence minister Mohammad Fahim and Dostum. "Today his letter of appointment was given to him by the minister of defence and I signed it gladly," he said.

Meanwhile some top and middle-ranking Taliban leaders are deserting the militia and seeking rapprochement with the new dispensation here even as the new Afghan government, at its marathon meeting last night, was inconclusive on ticklish issue of internal amnesty.

Top government sources, who did not want to be named, said the attempt to seek rapprochement was at the behest of Pakistani

'Uranium found in Al-Qaida base'

Agence France-Presse

LONDON, Dec. 24.—Uranium 238 and other material that could be used to make a radiological bomb has been found in an underground Al-Qaida base near the former Taliban stronghold of Kandahar in south Afghanistan, the *Daily Telegraph* reported today.

When anti-Taliban forces seized the base this month they found various kinds of dangerous materials stored in hundreds of drums, jars and metal cases in a tunnel complex, it said.

authorities which was increasingly feeling isolated in the new Afghan set-up. Topmost Taliban commander, Jalalludin Haqqani, strongman of the Khost region where key ISI and Al-Qaida camps were located and former minister for frontier region in the Taliban regime drove into Kabul last night quietly and sought a meeting with

Mr Karzai.

Though Afghan officials were tightlipped about Haqqani's clandestine journey to Kabul, the Peshawar-based Afghan International Press Agency reported that he had arrived here to meet Mr Karzai.

Pakistan is feeling isolated as foreign minister Mr Abdus Sattar's attempt to have a one-on-one meeting with Mr Karzai after the swearing-in ceremony failed to come through. Mr Sattar was also cold shouldered by other interim government bigwigs particularly from the Northern Alliance.

Though foreign minister Mr Abdullah Abdullah received him at the Bagram base, Mr Sattar did not find much warmth with interior minister Mr Younis Qannoni and the key man, the defence minister Gen Fahim.

The new Pakistani gameplan appears to be sending erstwhile middle-ranking Taliban commanders to Kabul, to test the waters.

Mr Karzai, has met a survivor from a convoy in which some 60 people were killed when it was bombed by the US jets last week, his spokesman said today.

Survivor Haji Wazir Mangal



The Afghan Prime Minister, Mr Hamid Karzai, with Cabinet colleagues and senior officials in Kabul on Monday. — AP/PTI

gave Mr Karzai his account of the Thursday night in the eastern province of Paktia, Ustad Stationer in Afghanistan, the Afghan Islamic Press agency reported.

Pashtun tribes were captured today.

AFGHANISTAN / KARZAI TEAM GETS DOWN TO WORK

40-14 25/12

Dostum made Dy. Defence Minister

KABUL, DEC. 24. Afghanistan's interim administration got down to work today with its leader, Mr. Hamid Karzai, pledging to rid the war-ravaged country of terrorism and hand over Osama bin Laden to the U.S. or any international tribunal. In a significant move, Mr. Karzai also appointed the Uzbek warlord, Gen. Rashid Dostum, as the Deputy Defence Minister, in a compromise to unite the feuding factions.

Mr. Karzai's action brings one of the new Afghan Government's early critics into his administration. Gen. Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek who controls the largest northern city, Mazar-e-Sharif, had been angry because the key Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and the Interior all went to an ethnic Tajik group from the Panjshir Valley. "I have just signed the letter naming him Deputy Minister of Defence," Mr. Karzai said. "It is the first step toward a national army."

Gen. Dostum will work under the Defence Minister, Mr. Mohammed Fahim.

A day after a marathon meeting



A NEW CYCLE BEGINS: Three friends share a bicycle as they ride on a street in Kabul on Sunday as the people of Afghanistan spent their first day under the rule of a new Government. — AP

of the 30-member Cabinet, the new Ministers got down to business placing on top of the agenda security and reconstruction of the country that faced war and civil strife for over 23 years.

Mr. Karzai said the U.S.-led foreign forces were welcome to stay in his country until all "terrorist elements" have been eliminated.

In an interview to CNN, Mr. Karzai said: "We will see to it that

terrorism is completely finished in Afghanistan in all its forms."

The first contingent of British Royal Marines patrolled Government buildings. The force, led by Britain, is expected to number 3,000 to 5,000, including pledges of 1,200 by Germany and 1,500 by Britain. Meanwhile, confusion continued over a convoy struck by U.S. warplanes on Friday in eastern Afghanistan. The Pentagon insists that the convoy of 15 to 20 vehicles contained fleeing Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders while one of the survivors reportedly told a Western news agency that the convoy carried only tribal leaders invited to Saturday's installation ceremony.

Mr. Karzai said although the Taliban regime, which harboured Osama's fighters were toppled, the Afghan forces were looking for individuals who may be hiding in parts of Afghanistan.

"I have no information about that," he said when asked about the whereabouts of Osama. "If he's been killed then it's good news for people all over the world" he said. — AP

THE HINDU

25 DEC 2001

11-8-29/12

A new beginning in Kabul

Affghanistan

THE SWEARING-IN of the 'interim' administration in Afghanistan is without question a milestone for a country wracked by 22 years of destruction and turmoil. But the very appellation given to the authority led by Hamid Karzai, inaugurated before an assemblage of dignitaries from all over the world on Saturday, suggests the incomplete nature of the processes capable of bringing durable peace to a ravaged land. How uncertain Afghanistan's circumstances remain is indicated by the fact that the Karzai regime will be succeeded six months later by a 'transitional authority', charged with holding free and fair elections within a stipulated time frame.

But for all the unpredictability inherent in the situation, and the patchwork nature of the new regime, the doughty people of Afghanistan are entitled to mark the event as a red-letter day. This is for the simple reason that it opens an avenue of hope, even if it is going to be lined with several imponderables. At the inauguration ceremony, Mr Karzai appropriately pledged himself to working hard to craft the unity of the people in a country which is a glorious mosaic of races, tribes, languages, sects and cultural

traditions. This monumental task can doubtless be within grasp if the cause of peace, development and reconstruction — goals that the chairman of the interim administration has alluded to — are pursued with sagacity and courage.

While this is a testing time for the leadership of Afghanistan, it is no less a moment when the generosity and selflessness of the leading players of the world community — in the economic field as well as the political — will have to be on display. It is not just the United Nations, which became the midwife of change in Afghanistan, that will be called upon to shoulder great responsibility in putting the country on the road to recovery, but also the United States. Without America's active assistance, the present situation could hardly have been conceived. But if Kabul is to be helped to emerge as a democracy, it will not do for foreign troops to prolong their presence in Afghanistan beyond a reasonable period. At this moment in history, it is inevitable to recall India's strong bonds with Afghanistan that go back into the mists of time. India truly shares its neighbour's joy and hope while wishing it peace and prosperity. //

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 DEC 2001

119-124

AFGHANISTAN / CIVIL SERVICE TO BE REVIVED

29/12

Security top priority, says Karzai

KABUL, DEC. 23. Afghanistan's new leader, Mr. Hamid Karzai, presided over the first meeting of his Cabinet today, addressing efforts to restore security to a country seeking peace after 23 years of war.

"Excellent, excellent. Absolutely perfect," a beaming Mr. Karzai told reporters in a courtyard of the presidential palace outside the building where the meeting was held, when asked to describe the atmosphere at the talks. "The main theme was security in Afghanistan," he said.

The 30 Cabinet members, many of whom returned to the country from exile to attend their inauguration yesterday, also discussed the re-establishment of a civil service in the whole of the country, he said. Mr. Karzai has appeared animated and self-confident since taking office in a ceremony

packed with turbaned tribal elders, soldiers in camouflage and Western-suited diplomats and the uniformed U.S. official commanding the war, Gen. Tommy Franks.

Asked if he had slept well in his first night on the job, he laughed. "Oh, I slept well," he said. Other Ministers shared his upbeat outlook. "The work began in a friendly atmosphere," said the Interior Minister, Mr. Yunis Qanooni, the powerful commander of the police. Mr. Qanooni arrived at the meeting in a red pick-up truck, the transport of choice for both the vanquished Taliban and the Northern Alliance that defeated it, accompanied by around six bodyguards armed with Kalashnikov rifles. He said Ministries had been ordered to draw up plans of action for re-establishing Government departments. "The meeting



went very well," said the dapper Foreign Minister, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, who arrived in a black Mercedes.

"The issues which were discussed were mainly the priorities of the new Government, which is mainly security in the country, as well as the revival of the adminis-

tration in the provinces as well as in the cities," he said. "It was very friendly."

Tribe's threat

An Afghan tribe today threatened to take up arms against the Karzai Government if American warplanes bombed its territory again, according to the Afghan Islamic Press agency.

Gen. Tommy Franks, commanding the U.S. war against terrorism in Afghanistan, said the convoy was targeted on the basis of intelligence information. In another development, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation has begun questioning the former Taliban Deputy Defence Minister, Mullah Mohamad Fazil, as it seeks the Taliban head, Mullah Mohammad Omar, a spokesman for the Kandahar Governor said today. — AP

THE HINDU

24 DEC 2001

USA claims convoy ^(U) fired first ^{RFV} on aircraft

REUTERS

KABUL, Dec. 22. — A convoy destroyed by US air strikes in eastern Afghanistan opened fire on US aircraft just before it was bombed, US officials in Kabul said today.

"We apparently had evidence that this convoy had Al-Qaida forces. We circled the convoy," said an embassy official. "I'm told by Centcom (Central Command) that we were fired on twice by the convoy using anti-aircraft missiles, which they took as a hostile act and proceeded to attack the convoy," he said.

However, local Afghans contested the US assertions that its planes had attacked a convoy of Al-Qaida leaders, telling Reuters at the scene today that dozens of dead were innocent villagers and tribal elders.

Residents of Asmani Kilai in eastern Paktia province said the strikes, lasting seven hours from Thursday night into yesterday, killed 50 to 60 people and destroyed 15 vehicles from a convoy of tribal elders bound for Kabul for the inauguration on Saturday of the interim government led by Mr Hamid Karzai.

About 10 houses and a mosque were also destroyed and several villagers not with the convoy, were also killed, they said.

However, US officials insisted the convoy had opened fire on US aircraft just before it was bombed and had been carrying leaders of the Al-Qaida network.

Earlier reports said 65 people were killed.

"The people who got hit were going to congratulate Mr Karzai on the transfer of power," said a villager, Khodai Noor, to Reuters Television in the first account of the bombing from the scene.

2 3 DEC 2001

Afghanistan
12.12 **Karzai pledges to bring peace** *23/12*

KABUL, DEC. 22. The soft-spoken aristocrat, Mr. Hamid Karzai was today sworn in as leader of Afghanistan in the first peaceful handover of power in 28 years before tribal elders, U.N. delegates, diplomats and a top U.S. General gathered to witness an end to war.

"I would like to promise you that I will fulfil my mission to bring peace to Afghanistan, that we cannot see again the chains of fighting and shooting in our country," Mr. Karzai said in a speech in both Pashto and Dari — the two main languages of Afghanistan — minutes before he was sworn in. In the hall in the Interior Ministry in the heart of Kabul, 2,000 tribal leaders, incoming Cabinet members and diplomats gathered for the ceremony to inaugurate Mr. Karzai as head of a government tasked to bring peace to a land riven by war for decades.

"This is indeed a momentous day for Afghanistan, but the challenges ahead are also momentous and everyone present today will have a share in facing up to those challenges," the United Nations Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi said. The ceremony to swear in the 30-member interim administration that took over from the outgoing President, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, a professor of Islamic Sharia law, and which will stay in power for six months began with a prayer by an Islamic cleric.

The national anthem played as curtains parted at the back of the stage to reveal a huge portrait of Ahmad Shah Masood, legendary leader of the Northern Alliance that defeated the Taliban and assassinated in a suicide bombing two days before the September 11 attacks on the United States.

Mr. Brahimi, who brokered the talks in Bonn this month at which Afghan groups agreed on the administration, spoke first and reminded his audience that "each and every" Afghan had been touched by tragedy in decades of civil war and foreign invasion. He reminded the incoming administration of "the people of Afghanistan whose prayers can almost be heard echoing through the valleys and mountains of this ancient land".

Armed British troops patrolled the Afghan capital for the first time to boost security. "It's a great day," said Mr. James Dobbins, U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan. He arrived with Gen. Tommy Franks, the man in command of the U.S. war in Afghanistan that wrested power from the Taliban after six years of fundamentalist rule when men were banned from trimming their beards and women could only walk the streets veiled in the all-enveloping burqa.

"I will safeguard the achievements of Jihad (holy war)," Mr. Karzai said in his oath of office, administered by the Acting Chief Justice. "I will try my best to rise above the ethnic, religious and linguistic prejudices to serve my country and work for national unity," Mr. Karzai said, speaking in Dari. To applause, he pledged to respect the role of women.

Among the women at the ceremony, none was wearing a burqa. They were wearing silk scarves over their hair, and many were wearing makeup — just weeks after the disappearance of the fundamentalist Taliban who banned them from appearing in public. A red carpet was laid out on the tarmac of the compound and an honour guard and a small military brass band were lined up beside it, giving a drum roll as Mr. Rabbani arrived.

"In my view the problems and hardships of our people are coming to an end. We are now tied with modern civilisation. We are now together with the international community," Mr. Rabbani said.

Security was tight in a capital that has been ravaged by war since the Soviet invasion on Christmas day 1979. Soldiers of the Northern Alliance that swept into Kabul on November 13 in the wake of the retreating Taliban, arrested three suspected armed fighters of the fundamentalist militia in the interior ministry compound. — AP



Mr. Hamid Karzai (left), shakes hands with Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, former President of Afghanistan, after being sworn in as leader of the Interim Government in Kabul on Saturday. — Reuters

'Triumvirate' keeps alive Masood legacy

KABUL, DEC. 22. The "triumvirate" of younger politicians leading the Northern Alliance kept their jobs at Kabul's key Ministries in the post-Taliban administration sworn in today.

The Interior Minister, Mr. Yunis Qanooni, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah and the Defence Minister, Mr. Mohammad Fahim are the political and military heirs of Ahmad Shah Masood, the famed commander assassinated by Arab militants in September.

Here are brief profiles on the three men. The Interior Minister, Mr. Yunis Qanooni, head of the Northern Alliance delegation in Bonn, was a close aide to the late commander, Ahmad Shah Masood. He succeeded Masood as the political head of the Jamiat-I-Islami party, the backbone of the Alliance.

Mr. Qanooni, 44, was born in the Panjsher valley but spent most of his youth in Kabul. He got involved in politics at 17 with underground work against the leftist President, Mr. Mohammad Daoud, who had overthrown King Zahir Shah in 1973.

When the Soviet Union invaded

Afghanistan in 1979, Mr. Qanooni took to the hills to work alongside Masood. He was also active in Pakistan procuring arms and funds for Masood's forces.

The Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, 41, has become the most recognised face of the Northern Alliance leadership thanks to his fluent English and easy manner before the cameras of international television networks. He also speaks French. Mr. Abdullah, a Panjsheri of mixed Tajik and Pashtun origin, gradu-

ated from Kabul University as an eye doctor in 1983 and left to work at a hospital for Afghan refugees in the Pakistani border city of Peshawar.

He later returned to the Panjsher valley north of Kabul to join Masood's forces as head of their Health department and then as a top political adviser.

Mr. Abdullah, a tall bearded man, served as spokesman for President Rabbani's Government from 1992. He later represented the Government for three years at

the United Nations and was appointed Deputy Foreign Minister in 1999.

The Defence Minister, Mr. Mohammad Fahim a longtime deputy to, and intelligence chief for, Ahmad Shah Masood, General Mohammad Fahim took over the Defence portfolio when the commander was assassinated in September.

While supporters praise his military acumen, they admit he lacks the charisma and political vision of his former leader. — Reuters



Mr. Md Fahim



Dr. Abdullah Abdullah



Mr. Yunis Qanooni

Keeping the peace

Multinational force necessary in Kabul

The Taliban may have been deposed in Afghanistan, but it is also necessary to do something about the ground conditions which allowed the Taliban to flourish — namely, warlordism, the sway of armed militias, and ethnic conflict between Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and Pashtuns, factors which combined to reduce Kabul to rubble when Taliban took over. The planned International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for Kabul is therefore a good idea — it should help establish a semblance of authority for the interim administration headed by Hamid Karzai and a UN mandate for the force should be forthcoming. In a welcome departure from previous ineffective peacekeeping missions which founder because they consist of poorly organised troops from third world countries, the British have said they will contribute 1,500 of the projected 3,000 to 5,000 troops and lead the ISAF for three months, after which leadership may pass to Germany. There is a curious dissonance of voices within the Afghan interim administration, with prime minister Hamid Karzai of the opinion that a peacekeeping force of any size necessary is welcome, while his defence minister Mohammed Fahim, formerly commander of the Northern Alliance, saying the security force would be only 1,000 strong. The Northern Alliance may object to the presence of foreign troops but greater problems could arise from having a Pashtun-dominated capital city policed by a Tajik-dominated alliance itself in danger of splintering since the enemy that held it together no longer exists — in the worst case scenario, Kabul could be back to the bad old days of the early 1990s.

For the interim administration to work, it would have to be in a position to maintain law and order and a visible international presence would boost its image of neutrality. Karzai is right to stress the utmost importance of having a unified national army and a national police force; international troops working in tandem with Afghan security forces offer the best chance of setting them up. There are also problems of jurisdiction — it remains to be seen how ISAF coordinates with troops under US central command. However, glitches like these must be worked out in the interests of staving off anarchy and providing Afghanistan with an interim administration that works.

THE STATESMAN

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Blair-Putin talks to focus on Afghanistan

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, DEC. 21. The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, whose support to the U.S.- led military action in Afghanistan, has earned Moscow huge diplomatic gains, arrived here today for talks with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair — their second summit after the September 11 terrorist attacks in America.

The talks, which would continue over a leisurely weekend at Chequers, were likely to be dominated by the situation in Afghanistan where an interim government assumes power tomorrow.

Downing Street stressed the “warm” rela-

22/12 HD-1A
tions which Mr. Blair and Mr. Putin had come to develop in recent months and said this would be their fourth meeting this year.

An official described the meeting as part of the continuing “dialogue” on international co-operation against terrorism, but declined to comment on reports that the two leaders might sign an anti-terrorism agreement at the end of their discussions.

Mr. Blair praised his guest for his support to the coalition’s aims and said Britain and Russia shared a common interest in Afghanistan, where in the past the two had competed for influence in what has come to be known as the “Big Game”.

According to reports, Britain and Russia planned to set up a joint working group on terrorism with the intelligence agencies of the two countries pooling their information in the hunt for Osama bin Laden.

The joint group was intended to “formalise” the growing co-operation between London and Moscow since the September 11 outrage.

Both Britain and Russia are opposed to the reported U.S. move to extend the war in Afghanistan to Iraq, and the issue was likely to figure in the talks between Mr. Blair and Mr. Putin.

THE HINDU

22 DEC 2001

Nearly 7000 persons arrested in Afghanistan

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 21. The Northern Alliance and the United States-led coalition have taken at least 7000 persons into custody in Afghanistan since the launch of the military operations in the first week of October. HD-1A 21/12

Disclosing this at a news conference here, the coalition spokesman, Ambassador Kenton Keith said here that the coalition would be interested in interrogating those who had committed crimes. Such members would be brought to justice. He said the screening of the detained persons would involve the determination of their role and to see whether they were hard-liners, had committed any bloodshed or were only late joiners and sympathisers of the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Mr. Keith said the coalition continued to pursue the al-Qaeda members. He described the cooperation with Pakistani authorities as "excellent" and said it involved surveillance and communication on the borders between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Pakistan Government had put in place very impressive assets to close the border and it was a clear commitment and support to check border-crossing, he said and made it clear that no foreign soldier was currently on Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan.

Answering a question, he said the coalition had no credible information about the escape of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban chief, Mullah Mohammad Omar, out of Afghanistan.

Mr. Keith said that between 3000 and 5000 troops would be deployed in Afghanistan for security in Kabul and its surrounding areas. These would include between 1000 and 1500 from Britain. An enabling British force of Marines had arrived in Kabul to be in place before the installation of the interim administration in Kabul tomorrow.

He said a large number of representatives from around the globe would be in Kabul for the installation of the interim Government led by Mr. Hamid Karzai on Saturday. The British enabling force would have some responsibility for the security but it would be working with the forces of the United Front.

The installation ceremony would begin at about 10 a.m. and go on till late in the afternoon. There would be speeches by members of the new administration and it would be followed by a press conference, he added.

To a query, Mr. Keith said the coalition was considering the possibility of billions of dollars for reconstruction in Afghanistan. He referred to the U.N. Secretary General's statement that they faced challenges in Afghanistan and needed global support.

Sattar to visit Kabul

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 21. Despite threats to personal security, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, is going ahead with his visit to Kabul tomorrow. He is leading the Pakistan delegation to the swearing-in ceremony to mark the takeover of the interim set up under the leadership of Mr. Hamid Karzai.

It is believed that the Afghan security officials have advised Mr. Sattar to stay away from the ceremony in view of the prevailing "anti-Pakistan" sentiment. A section of the Pakistani media today carried the report prominently much to the embarrassment of the establishment here.

It would naturally take some time for the new rulers in Afghanistan as well as the people to reconcile themselves to the fact that Pakistan was one of the closest allies of the Taliban militia. What was worse, the Pakistan establishment antagonized all the important leaders of the Northern Alliance.

In a last-minute decision, Islamabad appears to have decided on sending a high-level delegation led by Mr. Sattar, who was otherwise to have accompanied the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who left on a five-day official visit to China today.

By sending Mr. Sattar to Kabul, Islamabad is sending out a signal to the new rulers as well as the international community that it wants good relations with Afghanistan despite the serious differences between Islamabad and a number of Northern Alliance leaders.

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20 DEC 2001

Security Council votes for peacekeepers in Afghanistan

HR 1
24/12

UNHQ, December 21

THE UNITED Nations Security Council has unanimously voted to establish a multinational peacekeeping force in Kabul and surrounding areas. The resolution does not mention the number, but Britain says that the ultimate strength is likely to be between 3,000 and 5,000.

The force, which diplomats said will comprise several thousand from Britain, France and several other Nato states, will begin deployment on Saturday with an initial deployment of British troops.

The force has been authorised under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter, which allows it to use force if necessary. The initial authorisation is for six months, which was pressed by Russia. The council could extend the mandate beyond that date but that would require another resolution.

"We are moving visibly and in concrete terms in working with the new authority to provide a future for Afghanistan," Britain's representative at the UN Sir Jeremy Greenstock said.

The unanimous approval for the force came two days before an advance guard of some 250 British marines is due to land in Kabul. The peacekeepers would work in close cooperation and coordination with the interim government even though is slowly becoming clear that Afghans are against any large-scale foreign presence.

Reports from Afghanistan quote Interim Defence Minister Mohammed Fahim as saying the presence would be symbolic and only 1,000 troops would be involved in peacekeeping even though the strength might rise to 3,000.

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Three killed in hunt for Al-Qaida men

Agencies

PESHAWAR/KABUL, Dec. 20. — Three people were killed today as Pakistani border guards hunted for suspected Al Qaida fighters who escaped a day earlier after a bloody gun battle with their guards, an official said.

Two Arabs fighting for Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida and a Pakistani paramilitary officer were killed on a hill in the remote northwestern Kurram tribal areas near the Afghan border, bringing the death toll from two days of clashes to 18, he said.

Sporadic firing was reported as the military attempted to convince the mainly Arab followers of bin Laden to surrender, officials said. The prisoners, caught as they crossed the border from Afghanistan, staged a breakout yesterday as they were being transferred to a prison in northern Pakistan. Seven Al-Qaida fighters and six securitymen were killed.

The fighters were said to be surrounded in the Narary hills in the Khurram tribal agency, near the northwestern city of Parachinar. "They have made no demand but so far neither do they seem willing to surrender without a fight," officials said.

The Pakistani army and frontier forces were transporting 156 captives, mainly Arabs who had escaped from eastern Afghanistan, officials said. They had not been handcuffed, the officials said.

In the south, US Marines admitted the first 15 Al-Qaida and Taliban prisoners to a makeshift detention centre at the airport near the former Taliban powerbase of Kandahar for interrogations they hope may lead to bin Laden and other senior leaders.

Peace and stability were on the mind of Afghanistan's new designated leader, Mr Hamid Karzai, as he returned to the capital Kabul, after a lightning visit to Rome to pay his respects to ex-king Zahir Shah.

The former monarch, overthrown in a coup in 1973, is widely regarded by his people as a force for unity even though he is unlikely to hold office again. His close ties with Mr Karzai have lent legitimacy to Mr Karzai's UN-sponsored administration.

That new government, a mix of former Mujahideen (holy warriors) and exiled technocrats, will be sworn in on Saturday, marking the start of a new age for one of the world's classic failed states. But casting a long shadow over a hopeful beginning is Bin Laden, prime suspect in the 11 September attacks on New York and Washington.

Bin Laden's whereabouts are a mystery but some say he is still at large in Afghanistan despite a \$25 million bounty, his distinctive 6-foot-5 inch frame and one of the world's best-known faces.

However, Osama bin Laden is not in Afghanistan, said a spokesman for Pashtun field commander Mohammad Zaman, whose detachments were engaged in two-week military action in Tora Bora, a fortified district in the Spinghar mountains, southeastern Afghanistan.

Reiterating this statement in Kabul, Mr Mohammed Qassem Fahim, defence minister for



US Navy Seabee Lt Commander Len Cooke climbs upon the roof of a bathhouse next to the Kandahar International Airport to help make repairs to a water system on Thursday. — AP/PTI

the Afghan provisional government, said today that bin Laden and his entourage had probably escaped to Pakistan, Ria Novosti reports.

"The operation in Tora Bora is over" and there are no foreign mercenaries left in this area, Zaman's spokesman told the Afghan Islamic Press news agency.

According to the spokesman, Zaman's detachment seized 16 Al-Qaeda militants.

There are captives in other detachments too, he said.

In Kandahar, 15 prisoners brought in darkness to a makeshift detention facility at a US Marine base in Afghanistan were mostly young Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters, a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent said.

The agent said the prisoners did not include any of the FBI's most wanted fugitives.

Afghanistan

Kabul yet to know specifics of handover

Agencies

KABUL, Dec. 20. — Two days ahead of the transfer of power to Afghanistan's new interim administration, the people of Kabul are still in the dark about where the inauguration will take place and who will be there.

More importantly, they are also still to discover whether they get to have a day off for the occasion.

And while the world community has been queuing up to be involved in the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country, international representation at Saturday's ceremony looks like being limited to a handful of UN officials and foreign ministers.

Indications from the foreign ministry are that the ceremony will be held at the presidential palace before a small group of invited guests and a very limited pool of journalists.

So far only Iranian foreign minister Mr Kamal Kharazi and his Pakistani counterpart Mr Abdul Sattar are mooted to attend.

The United Nations has also announced that the man who presided over the talks in Bonn which shaped the interim administration, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi — the UN's special envoy to Afghanistan — and his deputy, Mr Frances Vendrell, will attend Saturday's ceremony.

'No death penalty for US Taliban'

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20. — US Attorney General John Ashcroft has opined against the death penalty for American Taliban fighter John Walker Lindh. He suggested that Walker faces charges that are less serious that carry a maximum of 10 years in prison, the *Wall Street Journal* reported today.

Mr Ashcroft suggested to President Mr George W Bush that Walker be charged with providing material support to a terrorist organisation, said the daily citing an unnamed administration official.

Karzai vows to end rule of gun in Afghanistan

Rome, December 19

HAMID KARZAI, chosen to lead the new Afghanistan, said on Wednesday that he felt the great weight of his task but vowed to end terrorism, "warlordism" and the rule of the gun in a country he wants to rebuild almost from scratch.

"I am very, very determined... Terrorism has made our people suffer unbelievably difficult times," he said in Rome.

Speaking at a hotel in the Italian capital soon after he had received the encouragement of Afghanistan's exiled former King, Karzai also said he would be happy with a foreign peacekeeping force of any size necessary to be beneficial to his country.

"They have killed us," he said of the ousted Taliban and their foreign allies in Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

"They tried to destroy the essence of Afghans. I am very determined to get rid of them, not only in Afghanistan but in the rest of the world too."

Shortly before, Karzai had received the blessing and the personal Quran of the ex-king, Mohammad Zahir Shah. "That was a tremendous, good gesture and a very good blessing," Karzai said.

Karzai, who was expected to return to Kabul later on Wednesday, said he felt the enormous load of his responsibility but that the possibility of success was great because of the backing of the international community.

He said he was not daunted by the challenge of trying to unify Afghanistan, where many of the groups that ousted the hardline Taliban from power were bitter foes of the past.

Memories are still fresh of the ethnic conflict of the early 1990s, when street battles between rival warlords, Tajiks and Hazaras, Uzbeks and Pashtuns, reduced much of Kabul to rubble. Karzai said he hoped there could be agreement on the size of an international peacekeeping force, adding that he would accept "any number that makes the task feasible, the task beneficial."



Hamid Karzai (left), Afghanistan's new leader, after accepting the personal Quran of exiled king Mohammad Zahir Shah (right) in Rome on Tuesday.

AP PHOTO

But he also stressed: "There is total agreement by all concerned that Afghanistan must have a national army that should be totally under the control of the Ministry of Defence and a national police force under the total control of the Ministry of the Interior."

"Warlordism must end and the rule of the gun must end in Afghanistan and the Afghan people must be able to choose their destiny themselves and have their government chosen themselves."

Karzai was asked what he would tell bin Laden if he were in the same room with the Saudi militant whom Washington has blamed for the September attacks against the US. "I won't meet him in the same room. I'll have him arrested before he reaches my room and have him tried," he said.

Asked where he would like to see bin Laden put on trial if captured, Karzai said: "Anywhere. Anywhere that he can see the evils that he has done to the peo-

ple of the world and to the Afghan people, that the Afghan people finally get some justice for what he and his friend Mullah Omar did to Afghanistan and to the rest of the world," he said, referring also to the fugitive Taliban leader.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's designated Defence Minister, Mohammad Fahim, said the foreign security force planned for Kabul will be 1,000-strong, with others involved in logistical support. "I do not think there will be more than 1,000 people," he said. "If there are more, then the rest will participate only in providing technical support and assist in humanitarian aid deliveries. The contingent providing support for peace and stability will be up to 1,000 people."

He told reporters after a visit to a Russian field hospital that the British-led force would be at one base and would stay for six months from the day the interim government takes power on Saturday.

Reuters

Kabul awaits peacekeepers

MSA News
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Agencies

KABUL, Dec. 19. - Foreign troops were today preparing to fly into Kabul to help prop up the fragile new interim government of Mr. Hamid Karzai, as he vowed to end the rule of the gun in Afghanistan. After weeks of dispute over the size and role of the UN-mandated force, Mr. Karzai's designated defence minister Mr. Mohammed Fahim said it would number 1,000 troops, with more providing logistical support. The first would arrive on Friday.

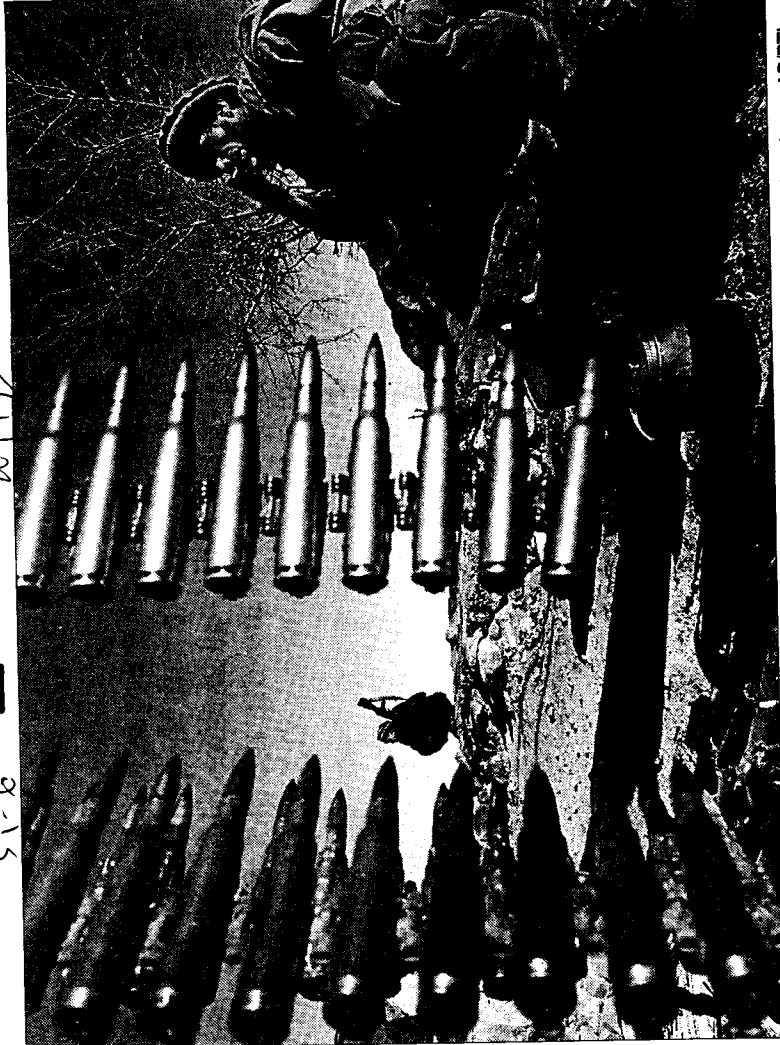
The international troops prepared to move into the capital as Afghan fighters and US and British special forces continued to hunt down the routed fighters of Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida network in the eastern mountains along the border with Pakistan.

The USA admitted it had no idea where Laden was, saying its chief suspect for the September 11 attacks might be dead at the bottom of a bombed cave or have fled the country. Eight FBI agents interrogated Al-Qaida fighters, captured during

the battle in the mountains of Tora Bora, at a newly built detention centre at Kandahar airport to find out if Laden had planned any more attacks on US targets. Twelve people were killed when Yemeni special forces used helicopters and tanks against the al-Jalal tribe, thought to be sheltering Al-Qaida militants 85 miles (140 km) east of the Yemeni capital Sanaa. The United States welcomed the raid.

A U.S. envoy arrived in Mogadishu to talk to political leaders in the Somali capital. Chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff Richard Myers said in Brussels that Somalia was "a potential country where you might have diplomatic, law enforcement action or potentially military action. All the instruments of national power, not just one."

In Rome today, Mr. Karzai bitterly condemned the havoc that Taliban wreaked on Afghanistan and urged the international community to remain engaged after the war on terrorism ends. "The international community saw the consequences of neglecting



Anti-Taliban fighters rest at a former Al-Qaida base in the White Mountains near Tora Bora on Wednesday. — AP/PTI

Al-Qaida POWs revolt, 12 killed

Reuters

PESHAWAR, Dec. 19. - At least 12 people were killed today when captured fighters loyal to Osama bin Laden grabbed weapons and opened fire while being taken to jail by Pakistani guards, a government spokesman said. Six of the prisoners and five security forces were killed in the revolt, Major-General Rashid Qureshi said. A bus driver also died.

Local officials said 156 prisoners were being taken by bus from a detention centre in Parachinar in the Kurram tribal agency near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to Peshawar when the revolt broke out. One of the three buses overturned during the uprising, the Pakistan secretary of information, Mr. Sayed Anwar Mehmood, earlier said. The prisoners were mainly Arabs who had escaped from eastern Afghanistan and had not been handcuffed, local officials said. Many of them were Yemenis, who had fled a blistering US bombardment of Tora Bora.

The revolt resembled a similar uprising by al Qaeda and Taliban prisoners in Qala-i-Janghi fort in northern Mazar-i-Sharif last month in which hundreds of the captives were killed.

about 3,000 to 5,000 troops that would be authorised to use force not only in self defence, but to keep the peace. "If it takes the use of force to keep the peace, why not?" he said. "Warlordism must end and the rule of the gun must end in Afghanistan," he said. In a reminder of problems facing the new administration, French journalists leaving Kandahar for Pakistan said guards near Takhteh Pol told them Taliban militia had attacked that town overnight and it was unclear national peacekeeping force of

who was in control. Kandahar governor Mr. Gul Agha told Reuters he was preparing to launch an operation against Taliban forces who had not surrendered. His intelligence chief said he was "100 percent sure" Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar was hiding in mountain north-west of Kandahar. Meanwhile, the Belgian police arrested a man suspected of recruiting Muslims for training at Al-Qaida military camps in Afghanistan, reports said.

Durga temple survives Taliban rule

Press Trust of India

ASMAL WATT (Kabul), Dec. 19. - "Taliban or no Taliban we have nothing to fear in Afghanistan. Nobody can touch the temple of Goddess Durga," says 60-year-old Uttam Chand, a pujari in the Asmal Watt temple, built a century ago on the outskirts of the capital city. Though he calls himself a *pujari*, he could be mistaken for an Afghan by anyone from India. He wears *salwar-kameez*, sports a beard and wears a Muslim *topi*. But he proudly shows his sacred thread and the kada, which the Taliban made the Hindus wear as an identification mark.

Contrary to earlier reports that Hindus were being forced to wear yellow badges, the Hindus said they were never forced to sport the piece of cloth. On whether they were persecuted by the Taliban, Ranjit Lal (35), a priest who shifted from the temple of Khost to Asmal Watt two years ago, said: "The Taliban were bad people as they tried to force their ideology on us," he said. "We are born here and consider ourselves to be Afghans. The only objection of the Taliban was that we were professing no other religion," he said. "Be it Taliban or anyone else in power in Afghanistan, we will not be covered into accepting another religion," he added. The Hindu ladies living in Afghanistan wear *salwar-kameez* and *bindis*. "There was fear in the air during the time of

Taliban but the fighters never misbehaved with us even when we went out without veils," said Rampyari, a regular visitor to the temple. "When a Taliban soldier used to ask about our identity, we used to show either the kada or the sacred thread and they never used to ask any further question," Khushhal Singh, Rampyari's husband said.

The Hindus are mainly concentrated in the Khost, Kandahar and Jalalabad areas apart from Karte Parwan in Kabul.

There is another temple near Asmal Watt called Dargah-e-Sharif Piratmath. The Hindu families numbering around 50 in the whole of Afghanistan visit these two temples in Kabul on two festivals - Holi and Ramnavami. But the festivities are guarded and do not spill over onto the streets like in India.

Saudi in Osama tape identified

NEW YORK, DEC. 17. The Saudi, who was seen visiting Osama bin Laden in the videotape released this week, is a 38-year-old veteran of conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya who left the Kingdom most recently on September 21, a senior Saudi official has said.

The official's account was the most authoritative yet in resolving the mystery surrounding the dinner guest, who was seen and heard on the tape paying effusive tribute to Osama and flattering him with news of Saudi clerics who he said had endorsed the September 11 attacks in their sermons, fatwas and other messages.

The official identified the dinner guest as Khaled al-Harbi, a legless former fighter in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya who was not regarded as a religious scholar, and he said earlier accounts by Saudi and American officials naming him as Ali Sayeed al-Ghamdy, a religious scholar, were incorrect.

Unlike Ghamdy, who had been banned from preaching by the Government in 1994, Harbi has never been arrested by the Saudi government or included on any kind of security watch list, the Saudi official said.

The official said Saudi Arabia did not know anything about Harbi's whereabouts between his departure from the Kingdom 10 days after the September 11 attacks and his appearance on the videotape, released in Washington on Thursday. — PTI

THE HINDU

18 DEC 2001

Captured Taliban paraded in Tora Bora

1981
Afghanistan

Reuters

TORA BORA, Dec. 17. — Shuffling and shell-shocked after three weeks of terrifying bombing, 19 Al-Qaida prisoners were ritually humiliated today by being paraded before the world's press.

Commanders of the anti-Taliban mujahideen are keen to show they have won the war against Al-Qaida in Tora Bora. But in spite of their saying that there's no more fighting in the dusty ridges, the frontline remains strictly off limits.

So commander Haji Zahir decided to show off his prisoners, the first to be displayed in public, to prove that he's winning.

They were paraded in a roped-off area of the dusty square in a village called Mia, 15 km north of the frontline, shaded by tall trees and surrounded by mud walls, mud houses and a mud-and-timber mosque.

The first to appear, a tall bearded man wearing a long striped robe, his head heavily bandaged, was led into the square and sat down on a simple bed.

"Where are you from?" the journalists asked. "They are all Arabs," shouted back one of Zahir's men, forbidding further questions. A second, older man came limping in, followed by a third. All three sat with their heads bowed until they were led away. And the most powerful air force on earth.



An Al-Qaida member tries to cover his face with a bandaged hand as two anti-Taliban fighters parade him before the press in Agom, Afghanistan, on Monday. — AP/PTI

Others have even taken positions in the new city government under new Governor Mr Gul Agha.

no more. "The rest are injured and in bed," he explained. "It's very difficult to get them out of their room." It was impossible to say how they were being treated, though one was wearing a watch.

After the Arabs were finished, it was the turn of five Afghan Al-Qaida members to make an appearance. They came out together and sat down in front of their guards, who smiled for the cameras. Glancing from prisoners to guards, all of whom wore a motley selection of clothes characteristic of the non-uniformed mujahideen army, it was hard to tell which was which.

Meanwhile thousands of former Taliban have quietly returned to their villages or melted back into city life.

Mullah Bismillah, a former Taliban, has now trimmed his beard, swapped his black turban for a traditional Pashtun cap and wants a job as a driver for the US army. He is typical of the legions of young, uneducated Pashtuns recruited by the Taliban, often by force.

CENT OF A NATION

The state of Afghanistan did not exist as a separate political entity before the 18th century, but it was through a process of political and religious evolution, arising out of the conflict of interests between Mughal India, the Safavid Empire of Persia and the Uzbek Khanates of Trans-Oxiana that made the Afghans emerge as a political force.

The mystery shrouding the obscure Afghan socio-political fabric could not be deciphered unless insight into its ethnic and demographic complexities, which as well holds a key to the success of Loya Jirga, now considered as the last prescription of enduring peace and political stability in Afghanistan. Afghans rank top in population with 47 per cent majority, Pushto as their language and Sunni being their sect.

They are concentrated in the oases of eastern Afghanistan and the Helmand and the Arghandab valleys. The major tribes are the Ghiljai and the Durrani. The Ghiljais are a formidable tribe and are both feared and respected by their neighbours, and those who come into contact with them.

The British during the first Anglo-Afghan war had to pay a heavy price when they thought that they could buy the Ghiljai loyalty with subsidies. It only ended for them with the loss of Ghazni and the terrible massacre in the Khurd Kabul Pass in 1842. Subsequent British relations with the Ghiljai tribe ceased after this experience.

The British, thereafter, preferred interaction with the Durrani who despite their martial qualities are more inclined to exercise moderation. With the result that they were able to forge a precarious cohesion among the diverse Pushto speaking tribes and the non-Pakhtun races through tactful and diplomatic handling rather than exercising coercion, undue force or intrusive manoeuvres something which is always outrightly rejected by the tribal Afghan society.

Tajik, another important segment with 26 per cent of the total Afghan population are predominantly Sunni with Dari (Farsi) as their language. A sedentary race, living in the highlands along the southern slopes of the Hindukush range subsisting on agriculture they are excellent horticulturists, artisans and farmers, they tend to form the urban elite of all the major population centres in Afghanistan.

Basically they are a mild-tempered but a courageous people, who have an ancient tradition of culture and education extending to pre-Islamic times. They have always looked down on Afghans as boors, and consider them-

IT IS THE GREAT GAME OF PERCENTAGE THAT WILL DECIDE THE COMPOSITION OF A LOYA JIRGA NEEDED TO BUILD AFGHANISTAN

BY YAYHA EFFENDI



HAUNTED BY THE PAST: An Eastern Alliance soldier carries a machine gun in Tora Bora (AP)

selves the custodians of the ancient Aryan civilisation of the region. Majority of the literate and intellectuals in Afghanistan are from the Tajik community.

Hazaras constitute 12 per cent of the population with Dari (Farsi) as their language and Shiaism as their sect. By origin, the Hazaras are Mongols. They claim to be the descendants of the trapped Mongol "Tuman" or formations who had garrisoned Afghanistan during the period of the Ilkhans. However, the complexity of the Hazaras is their division in the two major sects of Shias and Sunnis and call themselves Aimaqs while the tribes in the central massif of the Afghan highlands are orthodox Shias.

Uzbeks and the Turcomans together forming 8 per cent of the population are the major races living between the river Oxus and the Hindukush. The Uzbeks tend to predominate in the region. The Turcomans are mainly refugees who fled before the Czarist armies until the 19th century and later during the war after October Revolution of 1917. They are a very steady and disciplined people unlike the volatile Afghans. But since their population was comparatively less, as the bulk of the Turkic races live across the Oxus in the Russian Turkistan, the Uzbeks and the Turcomans were never able to play a major role in Afghan politics except in the recent past owing to increasing trans-frontier support lent to the Uzbeks forces under their warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum. The recent high profile role by the Uzbeks is likely to have its own ramifications with

its trans-frontier cultural and political affinities.

Other races in Afghanistan include Nuristanis and the Balochs who together form 7 per cent of the population. The Nuristanis are the descendants of some forgotten Aryan people cut off from the world, in their inaccessible valleys in the eastern arm of the Hindukush. Amir Abdur Rehman Khan forced their conversion to Islam in the later part of the 9th century. He pre-empted the British, who were thinking of sending Christian missionaries to proselytise among these fair skinned Eurasian people. The Baloch are confined to the desert zone, south of the Helmand River, and are a spillover of the race from Balochistan. They are more in number than the Nuristanis but they have

'Piryan' in Pushto with English translation of ghost is the current code word used in Pushto speaking parts of Afghanistan for foreign intelligence operatives. Ghosts are found in horror stories and so goes the Afghan history. The invisibility and destructive nature of this evil influence could be a logic behind the usage of this terminology

never played any important role in Afghan politics.

Amir Dost Mohammed Khan is remembered as the Amir-i-Kabir (The Great Amir). He consolidated his power by establishing familial links with all the major Pakhtun tribes and the other races in Afghanistan. He was a very broad-minded man who had no class or racial prejudices. His policy continued after him, with the result the ruling family of Afghanistan, the Mohammadzais, were linked to all the foremost Tajik, Hazara, Nuristani, and the Uzbek families other than their relationships with the major Pakhtun tribes of the country.

In other words almost everyone could claim a relationship, or at least close ties, with the Muhammadzais. It was a vast and complex exercise of establishing blood links, which probably had never been done before in the region lying between the Sulaiman Range and the River Oxus.

The Muhammadzais of Kabul even lost their language, Pushto, because a majority of them had non-Afghan mothers. By the turn of the century the Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and the Nuristanis all began to call themselves "Afghans" and became the part of a "nation". The later Muhammadzai ruler, Zahir Shah, even went to the extent of discouraging the royalty, and the noble Barakzai families from attaining influential positions in the government. This had its own unfortunate backlash for the royal family.

By opening the door to the corridors of power to commoners on a basis of some crude form of

meritocracy, those deserving Barakzais who could have strengthened the hands of the king were excluded by this rather liberal and idealistic attitude. Had there been no external influence at work in the social and political fabric of Afghanistan, instituted by no one less than the father of the nation Ahmed Shah Durrani, would have evolved from a tribal democracy of traditional respect and understanding between the chieftain families into a true national democracy. But this was unfortunately not to be in the Afghan case because of the aggressive and intrusive foreign manoeuvring which has not ceased till date.

The Durrani are divided into two main branches, the Zirak and the Panjppia. The Zirak branch of the Durrani was dominated by the Popalzai of which origin is the Prime Minister Hamid Karzai. Much would depend on Hamid Karzai's policy of reconciliation and appeasement than vindictive measures which might be expected from him by his behind the stage benefactors. Ahmed Shah was a scion of the chieftain family (Sadozai) of that clan.

"Piryan" in Pushto with English translation of ghost is the current code word used in Pushto speaking parts of Afghanistan for foreign intelligence operatives. Ghosts are found in horror stories and so goes the Afghan history. The invisibility and destructive nature of this evil influence could be a logic behind the usage of this terminology.

The recent death of a CIA agent in Mazar-e-Sharif attaches much significance to this terminology of the foreign power dependence on clandestine methods to influence Afghan affairs which in fact has been so far the recipe of disaster for Afghanistan.

After the Kingdom of Afghanistan emerged in 1747 under Ahmed Shah Durrani, the ghost of foreign spirits seems to haunt the Afghans till this day. The history of this unfortunate state seems replete with foreign imposed conflicts, tragedies and wars.

The Afghan story of the CIA closed on the eve of Soviet withdrawal. No rehabilitation of handicapped war victims or haven for orphans, destitutes and widows. Humanity seems to have gone into slumber. Chaos, internal conflicts and anarchy began to reign Afghanistan. Thousands more were to die while the world walked away leaving the innocent and hapless Afghans in the lurch.

YAYHA EFFENDI is King Zahir Shah's cousin and a defence analyst. By arrangement with Dawn

Can one man carry them all along?

HAMID KARZAI has been given the mandate to piece together an Afghanistan where peace remains an elusive goal. As he prepares to take over the reins, Mr. Karzai faces formidable challenges from within and without. Feuding warlords, ambitious superpowers and calculating neighbours have all played their part in the past and continue to do so now.

Hope lies, if anywhere, in the presence that the sole superpower (the United States) can exert on a small country of feuding and feudal people. But the moot point is whether America has the will, determination and capacity to play such a role? A dispassionate and closer examination of the realities on the ground seems to throw up a negative answer. Mr. Karzai is the much-needed Pashtun face to the interim setup and in actuality, his following among the Pashtuns seems limited, given the way he burnt his fingers over the Kandahar surrender deal. A day after being picked to head the new dispensation in Kabul, Mr. Karzai announced, with fanfare, a general am-

As Hamid Karzai prepares to take over the reins in Afghanistan, he faces formidable challenges from within and without. B. Muralidhar Reddy reports.

nesty for all those prepared to surrender to the Northern Alliance forces.

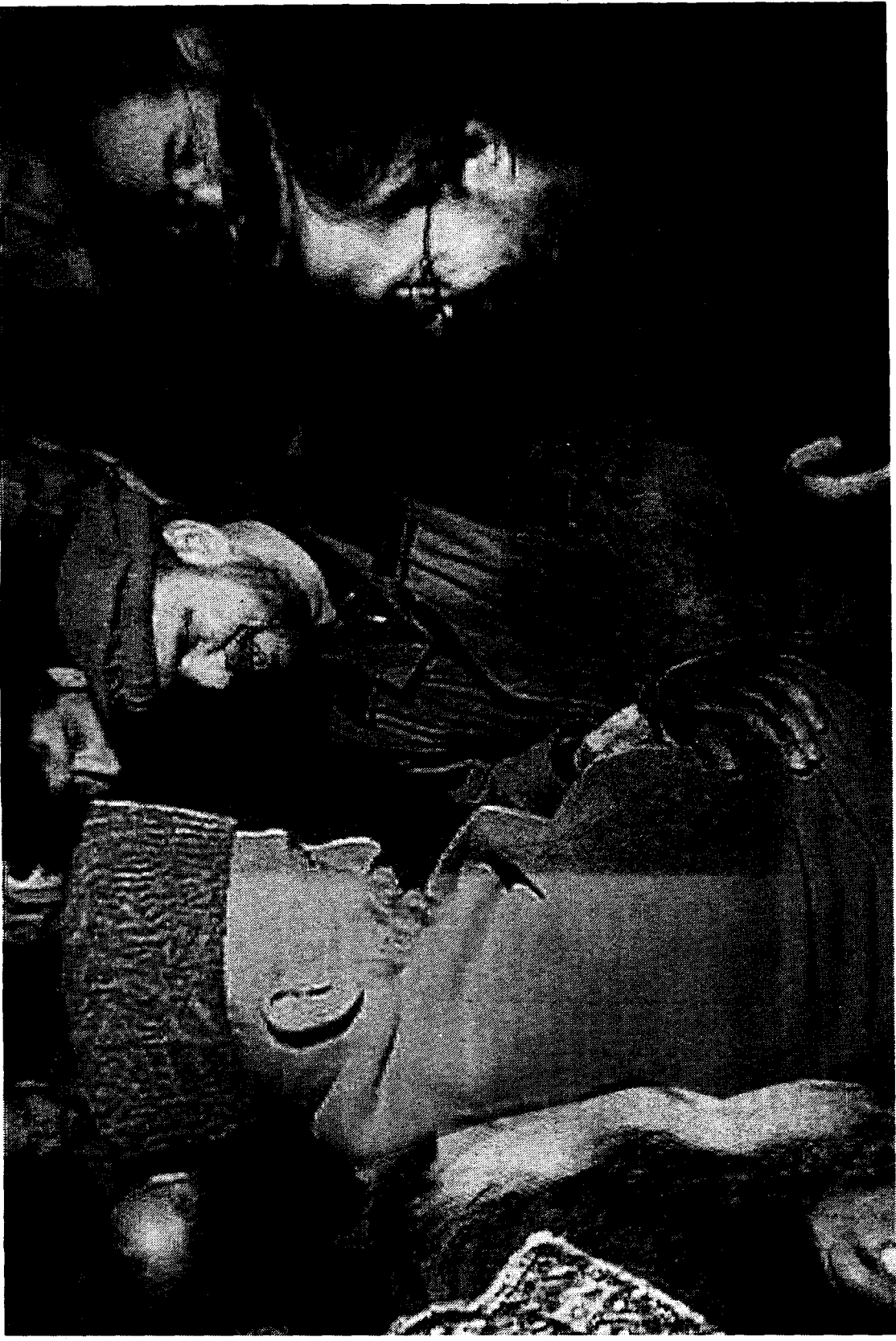
But in less than 24 hours he reversed his statement. Obviously under pressure from the U.S., Mr. Karzai said he had never talked about amnesty and that he had merely guaranteed "security" to those willing to lay down their arms. Later, as bloody feuds broke out among various warlords for control of Kandahar and other provinces vacated by the Taliban, Mr. Karzai was reduced to the status of a mute spectator. The Taliban supreme, Mullah Omar, has disappeared and no one has a clue about the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden either.

The disappearances of Mullah Omar and Osama have their own repercussions for the Karzai administration and its stability. Southern Afghanistan would continue to be the hunting

ground for not only the top two but also the remaining elusive targets of the militia and Al-Qaeda. No one knows how long the international coalition will continue its operation.

It is no coincidence that even as the Northern Alliance was in the grip of factional feuds, a group of former Ministers and diplomats of the Taliban militia surfaced in Islamabad to announce the revival of an old party. Their avowed objective is to restore peace in Afghanistan but the underlying message is clear. The Taliban as a ruling entity might be a thing of the past but its mindset is very much alive and kicking. It is anyone's guess if the group was acting on its own or had the blessings of Islamabad.

Besides the war in southern Afghanistan, the 'war' within the Northern Alliance for the spoils of power should be



Karzai, Fahim and Qanooni (right) in Kabul... will the bonhomie last?

of no less concern to Mr. Karzai. There was enough indication in the outburst of Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani on the Bonn Agreement. At a press conference in Kabul, he alleged that "foreign powers" had imposed a new interim government on the war-shattered country. "We hope this will be the last time that foreign countries interfere in our affairs. When we sent our people to the Bonn conference, we did not send them to sign an agreement, we just sent them to discuss and negotiate. They signed the agreement just because the international community pressured them," the 61-year-old leader complained.

Prof. Rabbani claimed that he himself had proposed that Mr. Karzai head the interim government, but said he had concerns about other members of the new Cabinet and had wanted the latter to appoint his own Ministers. Implied in the statement was the suggestion that the "foreign powers" had left nothing for the new leader and that he would be a mere puppet in their hands. Though Prof. Rabbani did not mention any names the obvious reference

was to the troika of Northern Alliance leaders — Mr. Abdullah Abdullah (Foreign Minister), Mr. Yunus Qanooni (Interior Minister) and Gen. Mohammad Rahim (Defence Minister). It is alleged that these three leaders, who hail from the same village, are manipulating internal and external policies with a view to influencing the *Loya Jirga* (Grand Assembly) to choose a two-year transitional government when it meets six months from now. By making important policy statements about the interim setup, the three Ministers have given the impression that Mr. Karzai is no more than a nominal head. Even as Mr. Karzai was trying to send across a message of friendship and peace with neighbours, Mr. Qanooni was in New Delhi making serious charges against Pakistan.

Interestingly, the Interior, Foreign and Defence Ministers of the new setup have either already visited or are expected in India soon. Of course, their families are there, but what has landed Mr. Karzai in a spot is the policy statements they made.

er," he quoted Gen. Dostum as saying. "Further, he goes on to make a commitment to exert every effort to ensure a secure environment for humanitarian aid convoys, and for the activities of the U.N. agencies and NGOs in Afghanistan. That is a very positive development and a very encouraging one indeed," Mr. Brahimi's spokesman said.

The fact that the U.N. Special Representative had to give such an elaborate explanation on the views of Gen. Dostum indicates the intensity of the factional feuds within the Northern Alliance over the Bonn Agreement.

The U.N. representative conceded that the U.N. had never claimed the Bonn Agreement to be fully representative. "We agree that the agreement has its flaws but it is the best we could do during the time available. You are not going to solve the problems of Afghanistan after two decades of war in a few days in Bonn. We got these groups together because it was the best selection that we could get together in that period of time," the spokesman said.

Time for a review

WITH THE military campaign in Afghanistan in its final stages, those who matter in Pakistan are no longer shy about admitting the changed realities. Gen. Pervez Musharraf is trying hard to sell his decision to align with the U.S.-led coalition as a great achievement. But there are no takers for the argument. The overwhelming view is that the military government had little option.

What is more, important commentators and thinkers in Pakistan are urging Gen. Musharraf to seize the opportunity and re-fashion foreign policy. The dominant opinion is that jihad is an instrument of foreign policy has run its course in the post-September 11 world.

The prestigious English monthly, *Herald*, ran its December issue under the title "end of jihad". The first two paras of the main report penned by the Editor, Mr. Aamer Ahmed Khan, speak volumes. "As the U.S.-led campaign against the Taliban nears endgame, what has already been bombed out of existence is Pakistan's 27-year-old Afghan policy. While foreign policy may not have been Pakistan's forte, never before has any Pakistani state policy exploded at such a global scale..."

"President Musharraf and the military dispensation will now have to rethink the entire jihadi regime that was created inside Pakistan to sustain the Afghan policy and its most critical spin-off — the 'jihad' in Kashmir. Their immediate task: to seek a viable formula for dismantling the jihadi re-

linkages with the establishment.

The much touted de-weaponisation programme and the ban on forcible collection of funds in the name of jihad best illustrate the point. The Interior Minister, Lt. Gen. (retd.) Moinuddin Haider, came under vicious attack from the fundamentalists for his 'un-Islamic' utterances and that was the end of the matter.

The military establishment is now trying to demonstrate a new sense of urgency to tackle the extremist element. A new ordinance is on the anvil to regulate the functioning of religious schools.

The impact of the American war on the fundamentalist outfits is beginning to be seen. Two interesting developments in the last few days throw some light. The Lashkar-e-Taiba insists that it has always been operating from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and not Pakistan. The Jaish-e-Mohammad has a new name. Now it is called Al-Furqan. Incidentally, the U.S. on December 6 put both the outfits on the 'terrorist exclusion list'.

The jihadi outfits continue to be in a defiant mood despite the developments in Afghanistan and the mood of the U.S.-led coalition. The general view is that elements in Pakistan continue to provide patronage and rely on them in pursuit of their objectives within and without. Gen. Musharraf has to succeed in taming the jihadis, he will have to put his own house in order. — B.M.R.

Opinion-makers in Pakistan are urging Gen. Musharraf to seize the moment and re-fashion foreign policy.

game before the U.S. runs out of patience and takes the task upon itself. With the collapse of the Taliban regime, Islamabad lost not only 2500 km of strategic depth on its western borders but also the ideological justification for continuing jihad in Kashmir. The prospect of the fallen warriors heading home and the growing voices around the globe against militant ways to espouse political causes should be matters of serious concern to Islamabad. After all, world attention is focussed on the region and the country like never before.

Gen. Musharraf is conscious of the dangers involved in pursuing the old policy of jihad in the 'new world', but the moot question is: can he afford to abandon it without endangering his own position? It is difficult to answer the question at this juncture given the fluid situation.

There have been half-hearted attempts by the Musharraf regime before September 11 to rein in the jihadi outfits. But they never made much headway as the policy from the top was never clear and the state apparatus was too scared to touch the religious fundamentalists given their

Bin Laden cornered in caves, says America



A US Marine radios in orders at Kandahar airport on Friday after US forces took over the strategic airfield.

US Marines seize airport

Kandahar, December 14

HUNDREDS OF heavily-armed US marines swept into Kandahar airport by land and air before dawn today to secure the facility in a high-risk push into urban areas of Afghanistan.

Securing the international airport will provide not only a new base for US military flights to Afghanistan but is likely to pave the way for delivering international humanitarian aid to the Afghan people, officers said. The operation, which initial reports indicated had encountered no resistance, came a week after Kandahar fell to Afghan opposition forces who made a preliminary security sweep of the airport yesterday.

US forces said they would hand it back eventually to Kandahar officials. Marines are charged with clearing the airport of booby traps and mines

LONGER STINT AT PAK BASE

PAKISTAN HAS accepted a US request for a long-term presence at its Jacobabad air base, the *Washington Post* has reported citing Pakistani security sources. The US wants to use the base for its peacekeeping and counter-terrorism operation in Afghanistan.

HTC, Washington

and overpowering any al-Qaida or Taliban fighters who may still be lurking in culverts by the runway. Classified briefings preceding the operation, Marines had been warned of snipers and suicide bombers.

The complex operation involved US land, air and naval forces across the region as well as cooperation from Afghan groups who assumed power in Kandahar. The main land and helicopter-borne

force was launched from the Afghan desert south of Kandahar at forward operating base Rhino as well as from the Bataan carrier in the Arabian Sea.

F-18 and F-14 Fighters were launched from the US aircraft carrier *Theodore Roosevelt*, also in the Arabian Sea, while KC-130 refuelling tankers and other planes took off from land bases in the Gulf and Indian Ocean region. Guarding the airport's perimeter were packs of Light Armoured Vehicles (LAVS) and others armed with 50-caliber machine guns, grenade launchers, mortars and anti-tank missiles from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU).

The 26th MEU were then to fly Marines by helicopter from the Bataan to the airport to conduct the sweep for explosives and fighters, and bring with them air traffic controllers to run the airport.

AFP

AMERICAN-BACKED forces are believed to have surrounded Osama bin Laden and the last of his hardcore fighters in a complex of caves between two valleys south of Tora Bora, a senior US military officer said tonight.

While US officials admit that they do not know Osama's exact location and that he could still slip out of the country, commanders are increasingly confident that a growing number of American, British and anti-Taliban Afghan ground forces have hemmed in the al-Qaida leader.

The US and allied navies started hunting the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf for al-Qaida ships after intelligence reports that Osama and his aides may try to escape by sea. It is feared that the ships could also be used to ferry arms, including weapons of mass destruction.

In Tora Bora, troops focused on the caves and tunnels that lie between the Agam and Wazir Valleys, a forbidding landscape of snow-dusted peaks and ridges that take in at least several square miles.

The Pentagon's belief that this may be Osama's place is partly based on the fierceness of al-Qaida defence in the area and reported sightings by troops with Hazrat Ali of the Eastern Shura, which took over from the Taliban there.

Afghan military commander in the eastern region, Hazrat Ali, said Afghan spies were trying to find Osama. He said his agents reported seeing a man, identified as Osama, in the Tora Bora area on Monday. The report could not be independently verified.

The hunt for Osama has drawn increasing numbers of allied commandos to the mountains of eastern Afghanistan, more than 100 in all, including specialised Army and Navy teams, military officers said.

Concerned that al-Qaida fighters may flee to Pakistan, the American military has doubled the number of commandos working alongside anti-Taliban Afghan forces to about 50 in the last few days. US Special Forces have been acting as liaison troops with the fighters of the Eastern Shura.

US tests Osama kin DNA

THE US has obtained DNA samples of Osama bin Laden's family to help identify the Saudi fugitive if he is killed and his body found, ABC news has reported.

But if Osama is killed, the problem for the US would be proving it, for Osama is one of 54 siblings.

AFP, Washington

The whereabouts of Mullah Mohammad Omar, leader of the collapsed Taliban Government, too remains a mystery. Military officers are hunting possible sites in Helmand Province, west of Kandahar.

The US will offer a \$10-million reward for information leading to the capture of Mullah Mohammad Omar, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has said.

"Within a short period of time, there will be reward money broadly communicated for a discrete number of Taliban officials," he said yesterday.

The fighting and the searching in the desolate mountain terrain of Tora Bora has intensified after failed attempts at negotiating a surrender.

Rumsfeld said in Washington today that the US had not rejected a proposed surrender agreement for al-Qaida fighters, but added that any settlement must be unconditional. "This is not a drill where we're making deals."

The Defence Secretary said he preferred that al-Qaida fighters give up, to avoid risking American lives and to provide important intelligence information. "The first choice clearly is surrender...It ends it faster. It's less expensive. And we can encourage people to surrender."

"If they surrender, they may come out alive. If they don't surrender, they may not. And it's kind of their choice. I, personally, would like to see people surrender. I, personally, would like to see us get our hands on them and be able to interrogate them and find out about the al-Qaida network all across the globe. These people know things, and I'd like to know those things," Rumsfeld said.

The New York Times

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 DEC 2001

Import of Osama tapes in eyes of beholder

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON/DOHA/ISLAMABAD, DEC 14

VIEWED around the world on Thursday, the much-awaited video that the US calls proof of Osama bin Laden's responsibility for the Sept 11 attacks met with sharply divided reaction: Those who already believed in the guilt of the Saudi exile felt their convictions confirmed; the doubters, especially in West Asia, dismissed it as a fabrication.

The video, with its barely audible Arabic conversation, was aired live both by Western satellite channels, such as CNN and BBC, and by the widely watched Arabic news networks — the Qatar-based Al Jazeera and Abu Dhabi TV, Al Jazeera, a station through which bin Laden chose to communicate with the world in recent months, broadcast a short interview with a US State Department official immediately after the tape.

The network dedicated the rest of the evening to topics seen by many as more urgent in the region: A possible US invasion of Somalia and Israeli missile strikes against Palestinian Authority targets.

"Most people who watched that (bin Laden) tape will say that this is insufficient evidence — modern methods let you make anything up," said Abo Elal Mady, a former leader of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood who now heads the centrist al Wasat party. Mady said he still doubts bin Laden's guilt — an opinion voiced across the Islamic world, where one of the favoured conspiracy theories blames the Sept 11 tragedy on the Israeli Mossad or the US CIA.

"One argument is that bin Laden is simply bragging in the tape about his role in something he didn't do. I don't think any court will take it as evidence," echoed Mohammed Shouqany, deputy editor of the *Saudi Gazette* and columnist for *Okaz*, one of the main Saudi newspapers. "In any case, it wasn't really clear what he was saying in Arabic — and from the phrases that I managed to hear, the translation was not reliable."

"It's a forgery, of course," an angry Mohamed Atta, father of the suspected ringleader of the hijacking plot, told news services in Cairo. "Damn America, the land of forgery and fabrication."

There was even more scepticism in Pakistan, where the national TV channel stuck to regular programming — a family drama — when the tape was released.

Once they get to see the video, many ordinary Pakistanis won't be persuaded because "what contradicts your belief, you tend to marginalise," said Rifaat Hussain, head of the Strategic Studies Department at Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad. Few ordinary Pakistanis seemed convinced that the video was the real thing.

"This is totally manufactured. It's a drama," a spokesman for the Jamaat-e-Islami party, Amirul Azeem, told Reuters. "Even American media and journalists have expressed their doubts about the tape."

A spokesman for the Lashkar-e-Taiba militant organisation, fighting to wrest the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir from Indian control, rejected the video as a fake, saying bin Laden would not have incriminated himself so obviously.

"This is to put life into the American military campaign in Afghanistan," LeT information secretary Yahya Mujahid said.

RUMOUR OF THE DAY

■ The tape released on Thursday was created by the US Government with the help of Hollywood filmmakers, to persuade Americans and others that bin Laden and Al Qaeda alone are responsible for the Sept 11 attacks. The WTC attack was really a CIA conspiracy using long-time double agent Osama bin Laden, according to rumours in Quito, Pakistan. The attacks by bin Laden gave the CIA and Washington an excuse to invade Afghanistan and topple the Taliban. Bin Laden also killed Princess Diana. According to the Globe tabloid, the Al Qaeda leader targeted the princess for encouraging Muslim women to fight for change. "He hated Di," says one FBI agent. Bin Laden suffers from Marfan syndrome, a potentially fatal disorder of the connective tissue that could kill him, at any time, according to several Internet media sources. Bin Laden is an owner of a company that produces the food ingredient gum arabic, Internet rumours report. — WSI

EXPRESS

15 DEC 2001

Pak scientists briefed Osama on N-weapons

By Kamran Khan and Molly Moore

ISLAMABAD: Two Pakistani nuclear scientists reportedly have told investigators they conducted long discussions about nuclear, chemical and biological weapons with suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden last August in Kabul, according to Pakistani officials familiar with the ongoing interrogations of the two men.

Pakistani intelligence officials said they believe the two retired nuclear scientists — who have been under questioning for more than two months — used an Afghan relief organisation partially as a cover to conduct secret talks with Bin Laden. The Pakistani officials characterised the discussions between the scientists and Bin Laden as “academic” and said they have no evidence the information resulted in the creation or production of any type of weapon.

The reported admissions by Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood, who held key appointments in each of Pakistan’s three most important nuclear facilities, and his associate, Abdul Majid, represent a turn-about from their earlier claims that they met with Bin Laden only to discuss their charitable endeavours in Afghanistan, according to the accounts provided by Pakistan intelligence authorities.

Mahmood and Majid, who are being detained by Pakistani officials at an undisclosed location, could not be reached to confirm the purported statements described by Pakistani officials. Because the interrogations are being conducted in secrecy, it’s impossible to determine the nature of the investigatory techniques being used. Neither of the men have

been charged with any crime. Officials here said the Pakistan government is now considering charging Mahmood and Majid with violating the National Official Secrets Act, a charge which carries a seven-year jail term for conviction. If so, it would be the first known case of a nuclear official charged with that crime, officials said.

Pakistani officials said Mahmood, who had experience in uranium enrichment and plutonium production, but was not involved in bomb-building, had neither the knowledge nor the experience to assist in the construction of any type of nuclear weapon. The Pakistani scientists were not believed to be experts in chemical or biological weapons.

Pakistan has been under intense pressure by the US government to pursue the investigation of the nuclear scientists’ relationship with Bin Laden at a time of heightened concerns by American authorities that Bin Laden may have acquired nuclear, biological or chemical materials or weapons. The investigation was a major issue discussed during CIA Director George Tenet’s recent visit to Pakistan, according to US and Pakistani officials. Though neither U.S. nor Pakistani officials say they have evidence that Bin Laden has obtained any such material, both intelligence agencies have indicated they believe he has sought it. Pakistani officials familiar with the investigation said representatives of the CIA and Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence agency are in contact almost daily on the investigation. Two other Mahmood associates, including a retired army general, have also been detained for questioning. (LAT-WP Svc)

RECEIVED BY INDIA

14 DEC 2001

Afghan leaders' nod to global force presence

HT-1
19/12

Kabul, December 18

AFGHAN LEADERS have agreed to accept an international security force of 5,000 troops after several days of tough negotiations and planning since British Major-General John McColl's arrival in the country.

Defence ministry officials said a formal agreement is likely to be announced later tonight. Deployment of the force is part of the accord under which an interim Government led by Hamid Karzai will take office on Saturday. Britain is expected to lead the international force.

The Northern Alliance had wanted a small force with the limited duty of defending Government ministries. Last week, Defence Minister General Mohammed Fahim said he wanted a maximum of 1,000 soldiers. A defence ministry official, Barnab Salihi, present at Sunday's meeting with McColl said: "They have agreed on 5,000 or more peacekeepers but they have not signed anything yet."

Another official, Dr Gul Duldin, said: "The problem is no longer the size of the force, it is its mission and where it will be based."

The US has sent special operations troops into Pakistan to help coordinate the hunt for Osama bin Laden and his associates. CIA officers at Pakistani detention centres are helping in the interrogation of prisoners.

The US now has hard Intelligence — much of it coming from prisoners just captured in Tora Bora — that Osama was in that area as recently as three days ago, but the trail has suddenly gone cold.

The Pentagon today said US forces were not crossing from Afghanistan to Pakistan in pursuit of fleeing fighters. "We are not chasing individuals across the border," said Rear Admiral John Stufflebeem.

RABBANI IRKED BUT WILL STEP ASIDE

Deadline passes without Al-Qaida surrender

Agencies

KABUL, Dec. 12. — Afghanistan's former President, Mr Burhanuddin Rabbani, complained anew today about terms of the UN-brokered accord setting up a transitional government, but said he would stick to his pledge to step aside when power is transferred in 10 days.

Mr Rabbani said he is happy to hand over power to Hamid Karzai, who has been appointed interim Prime Minister, but that he disagreed with the make-up of the 29-member Cabinet.

Meanwhile, a US bomber hit suspected Al-Qaida positions at Tora Bora heights in eastern Afghanistan today after Osama bin Laden's men failed to meet a deadline to surrender.

Haji Mohammad Zaman, an Afghan commander leading the assault on the Tora Bora cave complex, said yesterday that all Al-Qaida fighters had agreed to surrender unconditionally at 8 a.m. today. But even two hours after the deadline there was no sign of any surrender.

Just 50 minutes after the deadline passed, a B-52 bomber carried out the first of the two raids. It circled over the mountains before dropping two large bombs, closer than usual to the Pakistani border.

A spokesman for a US-backed Afghan commander, Haji Hazrat

Ali, said negotiations were on with Al-Qaida leaders who had set conditions for giving up. Mr Amin said fighters were insisting on sur-

they wouldn't surrender before him or commander Haji Zaman. The commanders are holding a meeting to decide the next step."

Yesterday, Pentagon officials said they had seen no signs of an imminent surrender by Al-Qaida men and vowed to press on with their assault. Gen Richard Myers, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, said Washington had no confirmation of surrender talks and no ceasefire had been ordered.

The Pentagon has warned that the reported surrender offer could be a ruse aimed at staging a breakout towards the Pakistani border. It isn't clear whether Osama is in Tora Bora, though US officials said yesterday there were "indications" that he was still there. "There were some indications that bin Laden was in the area when the daisy cutter was dropped," an official said.

The largest conventional bomb in the US arsenal, a 7.5-tonne daisy cutter, was dropped on a cave in Tora Bora over the weekend. *ABC News* had reported that besides causing mass destruction, the blast had sparked a series of panicked radio and satellite calls among Al-Qaida members.

Tora Bora, in the White Mountain range of eastern Nangarhar province near the Pakistani border, has an elaborate cave system built in the 1980s to house Afghan mujahideen fighting the Soviet Red Army.

B-1 bomber crew rescued

Agencies

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12. — The four member crew of a B-1 bomber was rescued at sea after their supersonic aircraft crashed today in the Indian Ocean, the first loss of a US warplane in the military campaign in Afghanistan, US military officials said.

The cause of the crash is not yet known.

The USA, on the other hand, may release a "locking gun" videotape of Osama bin Laden that officials believe proves the fugitive's role in the 11 September attacks. The tape reportedly shows Osama expressing disappointment over the fact that some hijackers didn't know they were on suicide missions.

rendering only to UN officials and in the presence of diplomats from Saudi Arabia and the other countries.

"Haji Hazrat Ali told us 10 minutes ago that they had said

THE STATESMAN

13 DEC 2001

X
The new government's performance will decide whether Afghans have learnt from past mistakes

Sewing up a tattered nation

HT-8
12/12
Afghanistan
By J.N. DIXIT

THE ANTI-TERRORIST campaign against the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda is in the last stage in terms of territorial dimensions. Most of Afghanistan is now under the control of the Northern Alliance backed up by the coalition forces led by the US.

There were undercurrents of competition for power and differences of opinion on the future political and security arrangements in Afghanistan. However, the important factions representing the major ethno-linguistic, political and religious constituents of Afghanistan met in Bonn in the last week of November.

The Northern Alliance — the dominant political and military entity — the Peshawar Group representing the Pushtoons, who fought against the Soviet Union but did not become part of the Taliban, the Cyprus Group representing Hazara and Shia interests and the Rome Group, representing the monarchical faction of Pushtoons led by Zahir Shah, sent representatives to the Bonn conference held under UN sponsorship.

The UN secretary general's special representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, and his deputy, Francesc Vendril, backed by special envoys from the US, NATO countries and the 'consultative group' of friendly countries managed to get these Afghans together through a complicated negotiating process spread over a period of three weeks before the Bonn meeting.

The Bonn conference has constituted an interim government consisting of 29 members which may increase to 31. These designated members of the interim government represent the major ethnic groups of Afghanistan. Abdul Hamid Karzai has been nominated as the president of this government. There would be five vice-presidents representing each ethno-political group.

The distribution of cabinet portfolios has given predominant power to the representative of the Northern Alliance. The ministries of foreign affairs, defence and interior have been allotted to its representatives. Two women have been included in this 29-member council. One of them will run health and women affairs and another the portfolio of education.

This interim government assumes charge on December 22. It is to convene a greater assembly of tribal leaders — *Loya Jirga* — to draw up a new Constitution for the long-term political dispensation in Afghanistan. There are indications that this Constitution may be based on the reformist Constitution which Zahir Shah had implemented in 1964.

Controversies have emerged within two days of the announcement of the interim government. The president of the Northern Alliance government-in-exile, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and the



PICKING UP THE PIECES: Afghan women in a Kabul market

Uzbek military leader, General Abdul Rashid Dostum, have announced that they will boycott the government, as they and their representatives have been excluded from the power structure.

Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani and Sibghatullah Mujadadi are unhappy about being marginalised. They wanted to play an important role in the new government.

Whatever the new initiatives the interim government may make, it is obvious that the international military force will have to remain deployed in Afghanistan till the political process envisaged in Bonn become fully operational. This means at least till the *Loya Jirga* is finalised and the new Constitution and a cohesive Afghan security set-up come into being.

Initially, the Northern Alliance was opposed to the deployment of any international peace-keeping force. But they have agreed to its deployment now under the umbrella of the UN for a short period till the new Afghan governmental authority organises a composite Afghan army and paramilitary security force.

Parallely, meetings are scheduled in Geneva and other capitals in western Europe as well as in Washington and New York to finalise projects and programmes for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. It has been clarified by UN officials and western powers that the flow of economic and developmental assistance will depend on the willingness and ability of Afghan leaders to set in motion a stable government.

These macro-level political initiatives are, however, subject to ground realities as they may emerge. The first question is whether the Taliban has really been decimated. While it is true that they have been militarily annihilated in formal

combat, it should be remembered that except in Kunduz and Kandahar, they did not fight Northern Alliance forces.

Their air force and armour have been destroyed but many cadres have disappeared into the countryside with all their other arms and equipment intact. The new government in Afghanistan is likely to face a simmering civil war situation.

Second, the Afghan representatives who participated in the Bonn conference are not the senior-most leaders of their respective factions. The decisions taken by them can be diluted or even rejected at a later stage by the more senior leaders if they have not learnt the lessons from the past.

Also, except for leaders of the Northern Alliance and to some extent the Iran-backed Cyprus group, the other groups who participated in the Bonn conference do not have any deep links with the rural or tribal leadership in Afghanistan. The decisions taken by Afghan representatives at Bonn may be implemented initially, but their becoming the basis of a longer-term arrangement will depend on the support, first from the advisory council of senior tribal leaders, and then from the proposed *Loya Jirga*. The *Loya Jirga* and the deliberations therein would be the most crucial factor affecting the stabilisation of Afghanistan.

It is obvious that the implementation of the decisions of the Bonn meet will depend to a great extent on the presence of the international force and its constituent elements which should be impartial and manifestly devoid of any links with any Afghan ethnic group or faction. Indications from the US-led coalition are that this force will not be a UN peace-keeping force. It would be a military force

of the international anti-terrorist coalition under the UN umbrella based on the UN Security Council resolutions.

The expectation is that these troops would consist of elements from the armed forces of NATO countries and some Islamic countries. Given the reluctance of major Islamic countries to send in their forces to Afghanistan, NATO forces would constitute the majority of this international force. Though Russia has sent a small contingent, there are reports of resurgence of Afghan resentment against them. So, Moscow may not be interested in any large-scale involvement in the security arrangements.

There are at present troops from the US, Britain, France, Jordan and military medical personnel from Japan. There is a likelihood of Turkish and Bangladeshi forces joining the international contingent. Given the psyche and the historical ethos of the Afghan people, the acceptability and presence of such an international force would be only for a short period. But such a force remaining there at least for a year or two would be necessary to counter the revival of Taliban resistance and to prevent the outbreak of factional conflicts within the proposed power structure.

The US does not seem to favour a long-term military presence in Afghanistan. The twin objectives of US policy are to eradicate the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban so that they do not generate terrorism in any part of the world, and to prevent narcotic trade originating in Afghanistan which finances such terrorism. Washington wants to put in place a governmental authority in Kabul which would ensure the continuing fulfilment of this objective. In return, the US will ensure economic assistance to Afghanistan.

The powers that be have wisely decided that none of the immediate neighbours of Afghanistan should participate in the international peace-keeping force. The potential of future mischief from Pakistan has been a particular consideration.

Afghanistan's stability and development will depend on its four neighbours — Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan — coming to an agreement not to interfere in its internal affairs and to support the international efforts under way. Out of these four, Iran has the most mature and practical approach, while Pakistan will be subject to contradictory political and emotional pressures in dealing with Afghanistan.

One views prospects for Afghanistan with caution. One does not know how the remnants of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda will affect Afghanistan's political processes and its security environment. It is also uncertain how far the Afghan political leadership will transcend ethno-religious factionalism to remain cohesive.

Smiles again, life: Afghan refugee girls wait for id gifts from a relief agency near Peshawar on Tuesday. — AP/PTI

Osama's men at Tora Bora agree to surrender

Press Trust Of India

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 11. — Crumbling under relentless air and ground assaults, Al-Qaida fighters holed up in the Tora Bora caves reportedly agreed to surrender today, even as whereabouts of Osama bin Laden and Mullah Mohammad Omar remained unknown.

Meanwhile, the UN special envoy for Afghanistan, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, held talks in Kabul with Afghan leaders to sort out difficulties in the transfer of power to the new interim government.

The anti-Taliban tribal militia, holding a siege on Tora Bora, declared a ceasefire to

discuss terms for the Al-Qaida men's surrender, said reports from the frontline. An anti-Taliban commander in Tora Bora, Mohammad Zaman, said Al-Qaida fighters, mostly foreigners, have agreed to hand over weapons at 8.00 am (local time) tomorrow. It was unclear whether all Al-Qaida fighters were willing to lay down arms there, as some reports suggested disagreement among them on the issue.

Anti-Taliban forces were reported to have dislodged the Al-Qaida from a key mountain peak, shelling them as they tried to come down a slope and flee to neighbouring Pakistan, which has deployed extra troops on the borders to prevent them from their entry.

American war planes bombed the caves

and tunnels where the Al-Qaida men were holed up. Hundreds of them were forced to move to the top of the mountain.

Tribal forces had been fighting for eight days to dislodge the estimated 1,000 Al-Qaida fighters amid reports of the capture of a supply tunnel and two Al-Qaida command centres.

With Osama and Mullah Omar remaining elusive, Afghanistan's new interim leader, Mr Hamid Karzai, today vowed to wipe out terrorism from Afghanistan. In an interview to The Washington Post, he said "We must finish them all, completely burn them out".

He also vowed to capture Omar and put him on trial. "Omar has committed crimes,

he's killed thousands of people, he's destroyed vineyards, he's butchered my country, he's brought terrorists here ... I want him tried," said Mr Karzai. He pledged to take all weapons out of circulation. "The gun has to stop ruling the country," he said.

Mr Brahimi, who flew to Kabul from Islamabad today, met the new foreign minister, Mr Abdullah Abdullah, and the defence minister, General Mohammad Qasim Fakhri. Among the thorniest issues for the interim government, set to take power on 22 December, is the deployment of an international security force, a key clause in the UN-brokered accord signed in Bonn.

More reports on page 6

THE HINDU

12 DEC 2001

2001

TALIBAN: RISE AND FALL

1996

Sep 27: The Taliban militia captures Kabul from the Northern Alliance, executes former president Najibullah and imposes Sharia, or Islamic law. Ahmed Shah Masood, defence minister in the ousted government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, withdraws to the Panjshir Valley and begins a military campaign to overthrow the Taliban.

1998

Aug 20: 13 days after bomb attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the US launches cruise missiles against extremist training camps in Afghanistan, aiming to wipe out Islamic militant Osama bin Laden, a 'guest' of the Taliban.

Sep 13: The Taliban gain control of the Hezb-i-Wahdat stronghold Hazarajat. They control more than 80 per cent of the country, but are recognised as the legal government only by Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

1999

Nov 14: The first UN sanctions against the Taliban go into effect, including an air embargo.

2000

Nov 3: Taliban agree to UN-backed peace talks. **Nov 20:** A peace plan drawn up by former king Zahir Shah, living in exile in Rome, is rejected by the Taliban.

Dec 20: UN sanctions renewed. Taliban walk out of peace talks.

2001

Feb 14: Taliban order closure of UN offices in Kabul.

Feb 20: UN announces that a starvation crisis looms in Afghanistan. **Mar 1:** The Taliban provoke international outrage by blowing up the giant Buddha statues of Bamayan.



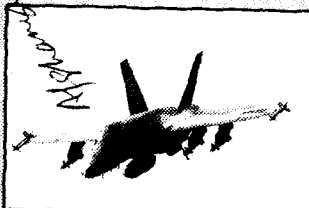
George W. Bush



Bin Laden



Gen. Musharraf



Mullah Omar



A.S. Masood



Hamid Karzai

Sep 25: Saudi Arabia cuts ties with Kabul. **Sep 26:** Taliban loses the support of chief ally Pakistan, which agrees to cooperate with the United States in its fight against the regime. **Oct 7:** First US-led military strikes launched on Afghanistan.

Oct 28: Afghan resistance hero Abdul Hag is executed by the Taliban after being captured while trying to persuade ethnic Pashtun tribes to turn against the ruling militia.

Nov 9: Northern Alliance opposition forces capture Mazar-i-Sharif and make sweeping gains against Taliban forces across northern Afghanistan.

Nov 13: Northern Alliance forces enter Kabul following an overnight pullout by Taliban troops.

Nov 17: Exiled Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani returns to Kabul and vows a broad-based government will be installed as soon as possible.

Nov 26: Northern Alliance forces mop up Taliban defenders, staging a bloody last stand in the Taliban's remaining northern foothold of Kunduz after a bitter two-week siege.

Nov 30: The final Taliban fighters surrender after staging a bloody prison uprising in a fort near Mazar-i-Sharif that resulted in hundreds being killed.

Dec 5: Four rival Afghan groups sign in Bonn an historic power-sharing agreement to form a post-Taliban interim government. Royalist ethnic Pashtun tribal leader Hamid Karzai is appointed head of the six-month interim body.

Dec 6: The Taliban agree to surrender their last stronghold of Kandahar.

Dec 7: Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai says Taliban fighters begin to hand over their weapons and control of Kandahar to local commander Mullah Naqibullah.

the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Sep 14: Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network named as leading suspect in the terror attacks on New York and Washington.

Sep 15: The Taliban order all foreigners to leave and warn of retaliation if any of its neighbours aid US attacks on Afghanistan.

Sep 9: Northern Alliance military commander Ahmed Shah Masood is fatally wounded in a suicide-bomb attack carried out by two Arabs posing as journalists.

Sep 11: More than 5,000 people are killed in New York and Washington when hijackers fly three passenger planes into the twin towers of

HO 1 12/12

Al-Qaeda given ultimatum *Afghanistan*

TORA BORA, DEC. 11 Afghan tribal fighters, backed by devastating U.S. airstrikes and night time raids by American Special Forces, overran Al-Qaeda's Tora Bora cave hide-outs today and set a deadline for the unconditional surrender of the remaining members of Osama bin Laden's terrorist network.

After making a last stand on a wind-swept mountain top, hundreds of foreign fighters tried to escape a relentless tribal advance but were trapped by shelling in a rocky canyon below. In radio contact, some pleaded for

mercy and said they were ready to give up.

Mr. Mohammed Zaman, Defence Chief for the tribal Eastern Alliance, declared a ceasefire. He demanded that the Al-Qaeda forces disarm and walk out of the Tora Bora and Milawa Valleys in Eastern Afghanistan by 8 a.m. on Wednesday or face a new attack. They would be handed over to the United Nations to face international justice, he said.

Mr. Zaman agreed to the truce after a two-way radio conversation in the Pashtun language. It was followed by a face-to-face meet-

ing with some of his officers and the Al-Qaeda commanders. "The Al-Qaeda fighters called me and said, please don't fight us, we want to surrender," Mr. Zaman said. They had agreed to surrender in small groups.

The contact came after Mr. Hazrat Ali, a commander with the Eastern Alliance, said his forces had taken one of two peaks on Enzeri Zur mountain. Despite the routing, Osama's whereabouts remain unclear. Another tribal commander claimed he had been spotted around Tora Bora on Monday, but no independent verification was possible.

Mr. Ali said many Al-Qaeda troops were trying to head south to escape into Pakistan. Other commanders said the Arab and foreign Muslim forces might beat a retreat along the Kharoti Pass, a high and often snowbound track that leads south into Pakistan. Across the border, Pakistani soldiers have been deployed on mountains south of Tora Bora to stop them from crossing the frontier.

However, it was far from certain if all the Al-Qaeda forces around Tora Bora would surrender. Because of heavy fighting, it was not possible to determine whether all of them had abandoned Tora Bora's vast network of caverns and tunnels or some were holding out deep underground.

Afghan troops said dozens of heavily armed U.S. soldiers made lightning raids against the Al-Qaeda command centres overnight and returned to a camp in the nearby village of Pacir before sunrise. — AP, AFP



Mujahideen forces firing an anti-aircraft gun on Al-Qaeda positions in Tora Bora mountains on Monday. — AFP

1 2 000 271

Afghanistan: a cauldron — II

By J. Daulat Singh

49-10
12/12

THE SAUR Revolution, Afghanistan's third moderniser regime, remained in power from 1978 to 1992. In more respects than otherwise, the Revolution was more a tribal, rather than an ideological (i.e. so-called communist) one. From April 1978 till Amin's ouster in December 1979, Afghanistan was, veritably and finally, exclusively ruled by the mainstream south-central and eastern Pashtuns. But Pashtuns savouring their newly-won predominance, eschewed moderation: Amin and his Khalq cohorts barnstormed their way up to causing the collapse of the Revolution by December 1979, thus necessitating the main-force Soviet military intervention commencing December 27, 1979.

The mainstream Pashtuns in the Khalq were effectively sidelined by Babrak Karmal whom the Soviets installed in power in Kabul in January 1980. Babrak was not mainstream Pashtun; many said he was a Tajik. Whatever his origin, there is no gainsaying that he created a greatly more ethnically representative regime in Kabul; and which, in tribal terms, could be said to mark the advent of the non-Pashtuns to rulership. It is quite another matter that he was looked upon as a Soviet puppet and stooge; and eventually had to give way to Najibullah, who again was an ebullient mainstream Pashtun, but noticeably wiser than Amin. The USSR withdrew from Afghanistan by 1990. Najibullah was ousted in 1992. The Mujahideen, or rather the congeries of groups comprising the Mujahideen, acceded to power in Kabul. There were Pashtuns of all hues; Tajiks; Uzbeks and Hazaras. While they could not agree on virtually anything, they could certainly have cobbled together a governing structure if left alone to do so. But alas, from the 19th century, the Afghans have never been left alone to chalk out their destiny. Now, and again, Pakistan fomented not consensus, but serious discord and violence. Its chosen vehicle was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an eastern Pashtun, but whom all Afghan regimes looked upon since the early 1970s (when he began his depredations against earlier regimes) as a Pakistani stooge. Hekmatyar harried and bombard-

ed Rabbani and his regime in Kabul during most of the 1992-95 period, but to no avail. Thousands died in Kabul and the city was extensively damaged or destroyed. When Hekmatyar was discovered to be a failure, Pakistan dumped him. Hekmatyar fled for his life, eventually appearing in Iran, where he is still ensconced. Rabbani and his so-called Government in Kabul remained an ineffective and ragged mob. There was a power vacuum for all intents and purposes.

India must now be in the vanguard of international efforts for relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Hindsight, and dispassionate scholarship, now tells us, however, that the so-called "power vacuum" was not an ineluctable consequence as much as it was a Pakistani contrivance. After having supported Hekmatyar, and because he did not find acceptance, he was dumped. Pakistan then financed and armed various Mujahideen groups and provoked internecine strife. And all this while, it was quietly nurturing its Taliban option.

The Taliban was a denominationally incandescent name given to a group of south-eastern (Kandahar) Pashtuns and Pakistani army and intelligence operatives, along with narco-hoodlums, who together set up a Government or a so-called emirate in Kandahar. With narcomoney and arms, the Taliban, after invoking the call for a jihad against the 'infidels' in Kabul and elsewhere, gradually bought out the quiescence and neutrality of some of the neighbouring Pashtun tribes. Slowly but surely from 1996, fully armed, staffed and led by officers and other ranks of the Pakistan Army and the ISI, the Taliban went on the offensive. The rest is history. The Taliban seized Kabul and the bulk of the country.

It is now fairly well established that Osama and most of the Al-Qaeda operatives were trained and funded by the CIA to fight the Soviet forces in Afghanistan during much of the 1980s. Also now established on the testimony of several American scholars and commentators is

the fact of the U.S. having initially tacitly acquiesced to the creation by Pakistan of the Taliban; but this to facilitate oil-gas pipelines from Central Asia and not mindless medieval barbarisms. And so it is not surprising that America's reaction against Osama and the Taliban has been so spontaneously ferocious. But will the Americans ever acknowledge that but for Pakistan none of these would have become monsters in the first place?

The combination of the U.S. formid-

able air power and the United Front ground forces will achieve final sway and victory over the Taliban before very long. Al-Qaeda will be found and eliminated. Osama too will not escape chastisement: though, during the foreseeable future whether the U.S. will officially acknowledge his neutralisation is doubtful, and remains to be seen.

What of the post-Taliban scenario and denouement? In a word, let alone the inter-ethnic rivalries and animosities, the intra-ethnic lack of unity and consensus will inhibit any smooth and trouble-free denouement in Kabul. Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Tajik, and Abdul Haq, the eastern Pashtun, were credible rallying points. But that's why the Taliban got rid of the former, and Pakistan (the ISI is most reliably said to have betrayed him to the Taliban) the latter.

King Zahir Shah is old and infirm; and he was not liked very much towards the end of his reign as it is. So he or any other Mohammadzai, even Hamid Karzai, are all non-starters. In short, the prospects in the short term for social and political order returning to a post-Taliban Afghanistan on an enduring basis are problematic in the extreme, but not impossible. If the world community is genuinely serious about preventing abominable human deprivation and deaths in Afghanistan, the following are incumbent:

a) the U.N. proclaiming some kind of

present-day trusteeship over Afghanistan. (the fourth moderniser?). b) The major powers and those in the broad neighbourhood must agree to be concretely engaged in the effort to restore a tranquil civil order in the country. c) The country is largely if not wholly demilitarised and de-weaponised. d) The country is endowed with a governing legislature and executive (and of course the other usual appurtenances of state) which is genuinely representative of the mosaic of ethnicities, and reflective of the country's own hoary institutions of this genre. e) The polity is made to function along democratic and liberal lines. f) Afghanistan is concretely and enduringly insulated and protected from interference or inimical acts by and from neighbouring countries.

And, finally, what might India do in this imbroglio? For one, let us deal with Afghanistan autonomously and not in reaction to what Pakistan says or does. But first and above all, let us prepare ourselves to deal effectively and proactively with any spillover into India of terrorists fleeing or deflected from Afghanistan.

For another, we have been grossly remiss in squandering our traditional and historical linkages with the Pashtuns of Afghanistan. We and the bulk of the world community may have had no option but to support the United Front after 1996. But why did we gratuitously sever all meaningful links and contacts with the Pashtuns? Most of Afghanistan's Pashtuns — particularly the eastern Pashtuns — looked askance at the Taliban. But they were left defenceless and unsupported against the brutally repressive, Pakistan-backed Taliban regime.

Accordingly, we must now be in the vanguard of international efforts for relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan. In point of fact, together with the ethnic groups of Afghanistan, particularly the Pashtuns, and since we do not covet territory or privileged place, access or returns, we must work together with them to restore peace and stability to Afghanistan in particular, and the region as a whole.

(Concluded)

19-10
11/12

Afghanistan — a cauldron

By J. Daulat Singh

AFGHANISTAN IN its present form came into existence with Dost Mohammad establishing himself as Amir in 1826. From then till the ouster in July 1973 of King Zahir Shah, it was un-interruptedly ruled by various branches of Dost Mohammad's Mohammaadazi family/sub-tribe, which itself belonged to the omnibus Saddozai-Poppalazai-Barrakzai Pashtun tribal group. This Pashtun tribal group, numerically not very large and hailing from the Kandahar region in south-eastern Afghanistan, had gotten used to wielding disproportionate politico-military power. The around 150-year-long rule of the Mohammadzais was unremarkable in most respects, and did not certainly endear itself to the greatly more numerous mainstream Pashtuns of south-central and eastern Afghanistan. All these Pashtuns could be said to belong to the omnibus Gilzai-Ahmedzai Pashtun tribal group, and emanating therefrom are the scores of tribes/sub-tribes such as the Afridis, the Wazirs and the Momands.

Afghanistan's total population is anyone's guess. In 1980, it was around 15 million. Today, with greater than usual mortality due to strife and pestilence, it could be around 20 million. Of these, the ethnic composition is: Pashtuns 42-44 per cent, Tajiks 36-38 per cent, Uzbeks 5-7 per cent, Hazaras 6-8 per cent, and the rest (Turkomen, Qizilbashs, Pharsiwans, Hindus, Sikhs) 2-4 per cent. South-central and eastern Pashtuns comprise 30-35 per cent of the total population.

While the Mohammadzais ruled like the familiar 19th century oriental despots within, they did not cavil at pandering to imperial Britain without. Despite taking serious casualties due to foolhardiness on two occasions in the 19th century, imperial Britain soundly thrashed the recalcitrant Afghan potentates on each such occasion and, thereafter, successfully enjoined them to desist from embracing the Russian bear! At the end of the 19th century, Amir Abdur Rehman was inveigled in 1893 to cede Afghanistan's perhaps most fertile arable lands to British India. Huge tracts east of the Sufed Koh mountain range all the way eastwards upto Attock on the Indus, were given away by the Afghans. The infamous Durand Line, in

the result, ran through the middle of the lands of the most important eastern Afghan Pashtun tribes; and, since then, even vis-a-vis the successor state of Pakistan, these eastern Pashtuns, have resolutely refused to recognise the 1893 division or the Durand Line (Any wonder, then, that Pakistan's preferred Pashtuns are the Kandahari south-eastern ones, who are fewer and had not suffered at all from the 1893 sundering?).

It needs to be mentioned that no Afghan regime after 1893, even the Taliban, has accepted the validity of the Durand Line, and, all of them in varying intensities prior to 1996 have voiced the demand

No Afghan regime has accepted the validity of the Durand Line... With what is being widely perceived by most Pashtuns now as Pakistan's perfidy, Pashtun irredentism could rear its head again.

for a "Pashtunist" from the "Oxus to the Indus". Indeed, with what is being widely perceived by most Pashtuns now as Pakistan's perfidy (i.e. after September 11, 2001), Pashtun irredentism could rear its head again and this time more enduringly and menacingly.

In point of fact, it is this spectre of Pashtun irredentism that has propelled Pakistan all along from the earliest days to want to influence if not control events in Afghanistan. Pakistan's actions in this regard have thus absolutely nothing to do with "strategic depth", or whatever else is trotted out from time to time; though, its Taliban misadventure during 1996-2001, in theoretical terms at least, gave Pakistan that 'depth' (of despair as it turned out) it is supposed to have wanted!

In short, Pakistan's direct and blatant creation of the Taliban was *nothing* but its simple-minded soldiery's attempt to, first, seek to permanently neutralise any danger of Pashtun irredentism; and second, to obviate any prospect of an Indo-Afghan pincer against Pakistan.

A brief flashback now to an earlier period. Afghanistan's first moderniser was King Amanullah (1919-1929), whose model was Kemal Ataturk of Turkey. But Kemalism lapping against Britain's brightest jewel, and Amanullah's strident

forays to establish relations with the new Bolshevik regime in Russia, was anathema to Britain. And so, with the aid and wiles of that provocateur-in-chief T. E. Lawrence, Amanullah was chased out of power in 1929. After a nine-month-long Taliban-like mayhem in Kabul in 1929, the British Government got hold of a peripheral Mohammadzai named Gen. Nadir Khan and installed him as king. After his assassination in 1933, the British ensured the succession of his 17-year-old son, Zahir Shah.

Zahir Shah's reign was idyllic for Kabul's infinitesimal affluent elite, but largely wretched for the rest of the coun-

try. During this entire period, thanks to the rudiments of education, industry and services, a new urban middle class gradually emerged. This process was galvanised and accelerated under the country's second moderniser Daoud Khan, during his Prime Ministership in 1953-1963. He was the King's first cousin and brother-in-law. He was dictatorial by nature, and more of a republican. By 1963, after a war scare vis-a-vis Pakistan, Zahir Shah sacked Daoud Khan and assumed the mantle of a hands-on monarch. But the King was weak and vacillating, and the state went from bad to worse.

Zahir Shah had deployed his Mohammadzai kin in all important civil and military posts. Daoud Khan, who in the meanwhile, was *chafing* at his oblivion, covertly enlisted the civil and military cadres of the Peoples Democratic Party (i.e. Khalq largely mainstream Pashtun and Parcham — largely Tajik but greatly more representative — so-called communists both) and ousted the King in a bloodless coup in July 1973. He abolished the monarchy and proclaimed himself as President of the Republic. But Daoud Khan was a veritable lame-duck *ab initio*. He was trapped in the Khalq and Parcham vice; and when he sought to wriggle free commencing 1976, the PDP had re-

solved to remove him, the only question remaining when and how. Apart from Daoud Khan's predicament, the PDP had something else going for it — a supportive external dimension. In Iran, the Shah was tottering and the U.S. was beefing its presence in the Gulf region. At the same time, the U.S. had advanced a good deal in its playing of the 'China card' vis-a-vis the USSR. Finally, at the U.S. behest and because Daoud Khan had so pleaded, Kuwait, Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia commenced significant aid and intelligence support programmes. From the perspective of the USSR, all this suggested an envelopment of its soft Islamic underbelly. It could not thus 'lose' Afghanistan (having 'won' it commencing 1954 when, because Pakistan had just become an ally, the U.S. rebuffed Daoud's request for economic and military aid). The immediate provocation was Afghan Foreign Minister Waheed Abdullah (a bit of a loose canon) having decided to wrench Afghanistan rightwards at the NAM Bureau meeting that was scheduled to be held in Kabul on May 4-6, 1978. The USSR thus sensed mortal danger. The PDP was accordingly instructed to prepare for a coup d'etat.

The PDP commenced preparation in December, 1977. There were hitches. The Pashtuns of the Khalq, particularly Hafizullah Amin, were pushy and impatient. The predominant Tajiks-Uzbeks of the Parcham counselled caution. Finally, on April 10, 1978, Kabul was jolted by the assassination of Mir Akhbar Khybar, a top Parcham leader. Daoud Khan flailed and floundered seeking the assassin. Little did he, or all others at the time know that Amin, having caused Khybar's elimination, thus ensured the transfer of Parcham's military cadres to Amin's tutelage. Finally, on the morning of April 27, 1978, in what was nothing but a straight-forward military coup d'etat (but the event called "Saur (April) Revolution"), the PDP seized power and proclaimed the People's Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The USSR's support for the Revolution, while total and decisive, nevertheless remained remarkably discreet. (The writer is a former Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs.)

THE HINDU

11 DEC 2001

Noose tightens around Osama

Kabul, December 10

THE US and its allies said today time was running out for Osama bin Laden, but the war on terror would go on, even if he was found in his bombed out mountain hide-out.

"Our judgement is that both Osama and Mullah Omar are in Afghanistan," coalition spokesman Kenton Keith said. "We have reason to think that progress is being made in closing the noose around Osama. We haven't caught him...but we think it's a question of when, not if."

A commander near the Tora Bora frontline said bin Laden's al Qaida forces had been driven from their caves complex, first into forests and now onto more exposed ridges.

"There is repeated day and night bombing. All of Tora Bora has been taken by our Mujahideen. The enemy is on mountain tops between Tora Bora and Waziri Gorge," an Afghan commander said.

Meanwhile, the tussle for Kandahar's control appeared resolved today, with head of the country's interim Government Hamid Karzai supervising a deal last night between Gul Agha Shirzai, Governor of Kandahar until it fell to the Taliban in 1994, and Mullah Naqibullah, to whom the militia surrendered the city on Friday.

But the big deal signed in Bonn to decide the immediate future of war-torn Afghanistan

LADEN WANTS DEATH ON CAMERA: MEDIA

OSAMA BIN Laden has planned to die on TV like a 'martyr' before the US-led forces can catch him, hoping the event will trigger a series of terror strikes on targets like the Capitol Hill, the Big Ben and the Eiffel Tower, the British media have said. *The Daily Record* has quoted his estranged wife Sabiha as telling Russian TV, "His elder sons will kill him and that will be the signal for a new wave of terror. The targets will be the Capitol in Washington, Big Ben in London and the Eiffel Tower in Paris." Sabiha said Laden wants his death aired on Qatar-based al Jazeera TV as goes down in history as a 'Muslim martyr.'

PTI, New Delhi

appeared under threat, with the Northern Alliance saying it would keep its troops in Kabul even after the deployment of an international security force.

"Of course, some units of the Northern Alliance will be in Kabul. General Fahim (Defence Minister) is a member of the Government. Of course his forces will remain here," a Defence Ministry spokesman said.

Under last week's inter-Afghan accord in Bonn, a UN-mandated international security force is to be deployed in Kabul and its surroundings before spreading progressively to other centres.

The agreement stipulates demilitarisation of Kabul, making it clear that Afghan forces would withdraw all military units from the capital and other areas where the multinational force is deployed.

"The participants of the UN

talks on Afghanistan pledge to withdraw all military units from Kabul and other urban centres or other areas in which the UN mandated force is deployed," an annex to the accord says.

In Kandahar, fears of the inter-tribal armed conflict spiralling out of hand receded last night when anti-Taliban commanders reached an agreement under which Gul Agha Shirzai, former Governor of Kandahar was reappointed with charge of the city's administration. He would be assisted by Mullah Naqibullah, the man to whom the Taliban surrendered the city on Friday.

Pakistan today lined up more troops along Afghan border, raising their number to 100,000 to stop the influx of non-Afghan members of al-Qaida. So far 24 men from Saudi Arabia, Albania and Sudan and two Turkish men have been arrested.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 DEC 2001

Keep powder dry!

The aftermath of Afghanistan

To say that the situation in Afghanistan is utterly confusing is to indulge in gross understatement. It is suggested that the Taliban are finished but there are contrary reports. One says that the retreating Taliban took with them from Kabul all the country's gold and exchange reserves leaving the treasury empty. This must take some doing! Who helped them? Another, that Taliban are surrendering in large numbers, yet thousands of them manage to smuggle their weapons into Rashid Dostam's fort where they are held prisoner but stage a bloody revolt resulting in the death of many of their men, but taking a heavy toll of their captors. Hamid Karzai, the well-spoken interim leader elected in Bonn, a place far away from Kabul, promises an amnesty to Taliban fighters and includes Mullah Omar if he renounces terrorism — he can then live peaceably in Kandahar. Within twenty-four hours he changes his tune. Omar, says Karzai, was given the choice two months ago, and refused so he will be caught and put on trial. The Americans must have leant pretty heavily on him and all to the good. And Karzai has been in Pakistan for quite a while.

Putting all these together some dangerous signals emerge. Omar and Osama are still at large; diverse statements made by the new individual leaders in Bonn may hide a common desire to be lenient with them, significantly more with Omar. This is not surprising. The Taliban who have avoided capture and death have made a beeline for Pakistan. That does not mean that that they will place themselves at Musharraf's disposal. If the Pakistani president harbours any such hopes he may be sadly disillusioned. As President Bush has hinted, they are not men with whom one can do business; they are rabid but have also shown that prospect of serious physical discomfort can force both religious fervour and zeal for martyrdom out of their systems. Will they now offer themselves to the highest bidder interested in terrorist acts, which translate as *jihad*?

This can have two consequences. The different attitudes discernible towards Omar and Osama in circles that matter must cause unease. As far as the Americans are concerned they have failed to nab Omar and Osama and both will live to hurt them and much else besides if they are not destroyed. The hunt for them must continue as a priority. The other is to watch Musharraf and the Pakistanis closely. Not only are intimate links between Pakistan and the Taliban indestructible, it is natural to suspect that the logical refuge for Omar and his followers, perhaps slightly less so for Osama, is Pakistan. This is based on two factors. Past history, proven beyond reasonable doubt, includes joint operations in Afghanistan and in Kashmir and protecting huge profits from the drugs trade. Osama and Omar both, have good friends there and Musharraf is not necessarily aware of them all. The ISI are capable of acting without the knowledge and consent of their military dictator. After all Musharraf has alienated several powerful ISI bigwigs by sidelining them under American pressure.

Idleness is not a shortcoming of the Omar/Osama group. They will seek new or renewed opportunities for activities to which they are accustomed. Getting their followers into Kashmir while America still practices a delicate discrimination, which no one else can see between terrorists and freedom fighters, depending solely on American interests is a clear and present danger, as Americans themselves would say. We can put President Bush on notice but we should keep our powder dry.

THE STATESMAN

11 DEC 2001

QANOONI: OMAR, OSAMA MUST FACE WORLD COURT

BY SEEMA MUSTAFA

New Delhi, Dec. 10: Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar should be turned over for trial to an international tribunal for justice, according to Afghan interior minister Yunus Qanooni. He was asked whether the two, if captured by the Northern Alliance forces, would be handed over to the United States, tried inside Afghanistan, accorded an international trial, or killed.

Mr Qanooni picked the third option maintaining that Osama bin Laden was a criminal and should be brought to trial.

The interior minister, who stayed on in New Delhi for at least two extra days, will be leaving shortly before foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah arrives in the capital on Wednesday. Mr Abdullah, in what the mission

here said was a sudden decision, has scheduled the visit to meet his wife and children. He will also meet Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, external affairs minister Jaswant Singh and Union home minister L.K. Advani. His family has been living in south Delhi for the past three years. He has three school-going daughters.

The interior minister was all in favour of a multinational peacekeeping force in Afghanistan, maintaining that he had been misquoted in saying that he was opposed to this at the start of the Bonn deliberations.

"Peace is very important to us," he said. Asked if he had a timeframe for the peacekeeping force in mind, Mr Qanooni replied in negative. "I think

the new government will need the force for maintaining peace, but I cannot say for how long," he added.

Mr Qanooni, a close aide of former commander Ahmad Shah Masood, was not particularly enamoured of Pakistan which, he said, would have to review its policy and strategy towards Afghanistan.

He said that this was important if good relations between Kabul and Islamabad were to be established. He insisted, however, that the quick visits by him and Mr Abdullah to Delhi should not be seen as a sign of animosity towards any other country. "We will be visiting others as well," he said.

Mr Qanooni, walking with the sup-

in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. In response to a question he said that the representation of Pashtuns would most certainly increase in the government.

"We are for justice, we believe in unity and nobody will be left out, all will be given full representation," he said.

The interim government will assume office in Kabul on December 22. India will send a special Air Force plane to Kabul on Wednesday carrying diplomatic staff, five doctors, supplies for the Indian mission and the hospital.

Unconfirmed reports suggested that Mr Qanooni would also be on the special flight to Kabul.

Civilian flights to Kabul, sources said, will be started only after the US military action comes to a complete halt in Afghanistan. Preparations to resume Indian Airlines flights, however, are being completed to avoid further delay as and when official clearance is given.

The Afghan interior minister took pains to emphasise the concern of the new government for security and peace. He wanted the refugees to return home, he wanted India to start regular flights to Kabul as soon as possible, and in his interactions with the media and refugees living here insisted that his government would soon facilitate their return. He said the first task was the reconstruction

India trips must not be seen as sign of animosity towards other nations'

Peace is very important to us. I think the new government will need the force for maintaining peace, but I cannot say for how long

port of a stick and speaking in Pashto, was clear that "we do not want problems between Afghanistan and other countries." He said that nobody should interfere

of Afghanistan and the government would concentrate on this in all its aspects.

Mr Abdullah, who has still to confirm his plans with the embassy here, is expected to reach on Wednesday. He is also a close aide of former commander Ahmad Shah Masood, as is Mr Qanooni whose residence is full of sketches he has himself drawn of the Northern Alliance leader.

Mr Abdullah's father has reportedly left for Kabul already, with his mother-in-law, wife and children still here. The duration of Mr Abdullah's stay is not certain although meetings are now being fixed with the Indian leaders.

Interestingly, Mr Qanooni has not met any leader from the Indian Opposition, spending his time with his family and colleagues in the embassy.

BIN LADEN LEADS HIS MEN AT TORA BORA

Osama fights for survival

Agencies

KABUL, Dec. 9. — Osama bin Laden was reportedly leading about 1,000 men in the defence of his mountain hideouts in eastern Afghanistan today, while the Taliban handed over the southeast province of Zabul to tribal leaders today, bringing its rule to an end.

The militia had agreed to hand over Zabul, Kandahar and Helmand under terms negotiated on Thursday by the newly appointed Prime Minister, Mr Hamid Karzai.

A Northern Alliance spokesman said anti-Taliban forces had pushed Al-Qaida fighters out of their bases in the Tora Bora heights and were attacking them in nearby forests. "Osama himself has taken the command of the fighting," Mohammed Amin said.

"He, along with about 1,000 of his people, including some Taliban men, have now dug themselves into the forests of Spin Ghar after we overran their bases in Tora Bora... He (Osama) is here for sure."

Though Mohammed Amin's accounts couldn't be verified, the chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, General Richard Myers, said Washington knew the region where Osama and Mullah Omar were hiding, but was not sure of their exact location.

The CNN said B-52 heavy bombers and smaller jets pounded Tora Bora from dawn. Al-Qaida fighters dug in there had kept up a barrage of mortar fire for several hours yesterday, cutting a road leading to Tora Bora and forcing their opponents' tanks to pull back.

The Taliban has suffered its first split, with six former ministers and diplomats joining a newly re-

vived Islamic group, Da Khudamul Furqan Jamiat. Its headed by Amin Mujaddadi, who recently returned here after years of exile.

The rebels are: former militia envoy to to Pakistan, Abdul Hakim Mujahid; deputy information minister, Abdur Rehman Ahmed Hotak; deputy higher education minister, Maulvi Arsalan Rehmani; deputy minister for refugees repatriation, Rehmatullah Wahidyar; deputy chief of Supreme Court, Abdul Sattar Siddiqi and former charge de affairs to Saudi Arabia, Habibullah Fauzi.

The six said today they had urged Mullah Omar to review the policy of giving shelter to Osama, but the Taliban chief didn't pay heed to it.

Mr. Karzai today chaired talks in Kandahar between Mr Gul Agha and Mullah Naquibullah whose power struggle threatens to return the province to pre-Taliban chaos, sources said. Mr Agha is the former city Governor, while Naquibullah was scheduled to take over Kandahar's control from the Taliban.

General Abdul Rashid Dostum has assured Washington that he will cooperate with Afghanistan's interim Cabinet, a US official said.

In Karimnagar (Andhra Pradesh), Mr LK Advani said India would soon send senior police officers to Kabul to help the Cabinet set up an efficient policing system.

Twenty-one people, including captured Taliban men and the family of an Alliance commander, were killed when their helicopter, caught in bad weather, crashed near Taloqan, an Alliance commander said.

Photograph on page 6

Osama tape

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9. — The US government has gained possession of a videotape in which Osama bin Laden speaks about the attacks in New York on 11 September and says the damage was greater than he had expected — an indication that he knew beforehand about the plans, the Washington Post reported today.

Meanwhile, Robert Fisk (55), British correspondent of London's *The Independent* was beaten up by a crowd on his way from Quetta to Chaman, the Pakistan border town.

— Agencies

Taliban splits; Ministers, diplomats revolt against Mullah Omar

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 9. Six former Taliban Ministers and senior diplomats, including the U.N. Envoy today floated a new outfit and vowed to work for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

Announcing the formation of a new political party, Khudamul Furqan Jamiat (KFJ), the rebel leaders claimed that they had consistently advised the Taliban leadership to review policies about Osama bin Laden and other issues and lamented that their counsel fell on deaf ears.

Those who have come together under the umbrella of the new party include the former Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Abdul Hakim Mujahid, the former Deputy Information Minister, Mr. Abdur Rehman Ahmed Hotak, the former Deputy Minister for Higher Education, Maulvi Arsalan Rehmani, the former Deputy Minister for Refugees Repatriation, Mr. Rehmatullah Wahidyar, the former Deputy Chief of Supreme Court, Maulvi Abdul Sattar Siddiqi, and the former Charge d' Affairs to Saudi Arabia, Qazi Habibullah Fauzi.

Headed by the Afghan spiritual leader, Mr. Amin Mujaddadi, the group said they were not happy with the Bonn Agreement and the new interim set up. Mr. Mujaddadi, speaking with the help of an interpreter, said that several former Governors, Ministers and Commanders have pledged support to his group. "Our doors are open for the Taliban," he said.

"The KFJ started its political activities once again to accomplish Islamic and national aspirations of the people by restoring peace and unity among all ethnicities and parties, and make national reconciliation," Mr. Mujaddadi said. "We have revived our group so that the former Taliban officials could not shatter." He said he was among the 1,500 religious scholars, who had gathered in Kabul three months ago and asked the Taliban leadership to convince Osama to leave Afghanistan. "We made the recommendation to avoid bloodshed in Afghanistan." He, however, lauded the Taliban for the establishment of peace and eliminating narcotics.

He said that 80 percent of the Taliban had roots in earlier incarnations of the KFJ and added that other officials of the Taliban, which lost its last stronghold on Friday, were in contact with his party. On the American attacks,

Mr. Mujaddadi expressed concern over the killing of innocent Muslims. He supported the U.N. process of 'loya jirga', provided it is impartial and inclusive in its efforts in holding the Grand Council.

"The U.N. must not repeat the mistake it made in Bonn by ignoring significant tribes and political parties and bestowing a great portion of slots on the minority group of the country."

About the new Afghan interim set up, he said Mr. Hamid Karzai will adopt the way of consultations with the Afghans to run affairs of the war-torn country, which he said still facing chaos.

Mr. Mujaddadi down played the criticism of Pakistan by the Afghan Interior Minister, Mr. Yunus Qanooni, and the Foreign Minister, Dr. Abdullah. "Criticism by a group cannot spoil friendly ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan."

"Today, Afghanistan is facing chaos and anarchy once again and it is passing through the most critical era of its history — being threatened by the danger of disintegration. There is no national unity, national security, and Central Government of national consensus. Rule of warlord and tribalism is prevailing all over the country," he said.

The people of Afghanistan are in search of a real leadership to save the nation by restoring national unity, national security and accepted Central Government for all the tribes and political parties.

"The KFJ is fully confident that by comprehensive support of the people and honest cooperation of the tribal leaders and political groups, it can bring national unity, keep national security and create a strong Central Government," Mr. Mujaddadi said.

He said the KFJ supports the idea of general election as a means of expression of political will of the people in shaping a representative Government and wants Afghanistan to be an Islamic republic. "But at this juncture of crisis as the country is in critical situation the KFJ will support a traditional loya jirga on proportional basis that all ethnicities and political parties could be represented in it."

As part of its measures to beef up security along the border facing Afghanistan, Pakistan has decided to change the 53-year-old border gate in Chaman within the next two weeks.

The Pakistan daily, *The Frontier Post*, has

reported that the gate was installed on April 14, 1948 on the occasion of a visit of the founder of the nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, to the Pak-Afghan border.

According to the report, the construction has been started and the gate has been painted on the pattern of Pakistan flag. One such gate was erected on the Pakistan border with India in Wahga.

Pakistan has been concerned over the possibility of the Talibans sneaking into its borders and has stepped up vigil along the 2,500-km border. There have been sporadic incidents of clashes between the Pakistan border security forces and Afghan refugees since the U.S.-led military operation inside Afghanistan in the first week of October.

There have also been media reports about Pakistan moving a checkpoint close to the Afghan border bringing it within a buffer zone created during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The checkpoint was moved closer to the Afghan town of Spin Boldak by the border guards amidst confusion following the fall of Kandahar. They also took over a former passport office managed till recently by the Taliban, media reports said.

India to help Kabul in internal security: Advani

By Our Staff Reporter

KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 9. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, has said that all possible assistance would be provided for rebuilding the war-ravaged Afghanistan and for its internal security.

Talking to presspersons at Nagunuru village today after inaugurating the Prathima Institute of Medical Sciences, he said he had assured the Afghanistan Interior Minister, Mohammad Yunus Qanooni, about the same. The Government had appointed five officers to visit Kabul to discuss about security and efficient policing.

Mr. Advani said he had also suggested that Mr. Qanooni visit the National Police Academy in Hyderabad for necessary inputs on establishing an efficient policing system in his country.

THE HINDU

10 DEC 2001

Taliban splits; 6 ministers, diplomats rise against Omar

K.J.M Varma

ISLAMABAD 9 DECEMBER

IN THE first signs of split in the ranks of Taliban, six former Taliban ministers and senior diplomats on Sunday came out in the open against beleaguered Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar and joined a newly revived Islamic group.

Announcing their decision to part company with Taliban movement at a press conference here, the dissident Taliban leaders said they have asked Omar to review policies about giving sanctuary to Osama bin Laden, but the Taliban chief has not paid heed to it.

Those who came out in open included former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Hakim Mujahid, deputy information minister, Abdur Rehman Ahmed Hotak, deputy minister for higher education, Maulvi Arsalan Rehmani, deputy minister for refugees repa-



EYE FOR AN EYE

triation, Rehmatullah Wahidyar, deputy chief of Supreme Court, Maulvi Abdul Sattar Siddiqi and former charge de affairs to Saudi Arabia, Qazi Habibullah Fauzi.

The Taliban dissidents joined the 63-year-old group Khudamul Furqan Jamiat (KFJ), headed by

Amin Mujaddadi, who recently returned here after years of exile.

The former Taliban ambassador to Islamabad, Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaeef, who was rumoured to join the group, however, stayed away. His aides said he continued to support Omar and preferred to wait for some more time before taking any steps to come out of Taliban. This is the first split in the ranks of Taliban after US-led coalition launched attacks against Afghanistan on October 7.

Mr Mujaddadi, who was present during the press conference claimed that several former Taliban governors, ministers and commanders have pledged support to his group. "Our doors are open for Taliban," he said.

The KFJ started its political activities once again to accomplish Islamic aspirations of the people by restoring peace among all ethnic groups and parties, and make reconciliation, he said. — PT

The Economic Time

1 0 DEC 2001

5000 Pak troops were fighting with Taliban: Qanooni

■ New Delhi-Kabul flights to resume soon

SONIA TRIKHA

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 9

PAKISTAN may not like the sound of this too much, especially when it's coming from the interior minister of the country where its writ ran for the past six years. Afghanistan's Interior Minister elect Younous Qanooni told *The Indian Express* in an interview that over 5,000 Pakistani Army officers have been fighting alongside the Taliban in his country. "The Taliban's politics and their Army have failed, but the ISI is still in Afghanistan, as are many Taliban primary soldiers," he said.

The number of Pakistanis fighting on the Taliban's side fluctuated — "sometimes they were more, sometimes they were less" — but Qanooni said "there were over 5,000 Pakistani Army officers" who trained and fought with the Taliban. He had a word of advice for his neighbour: "We hope Pakistan will change its policy and won't renew its interference".

Speaking at his brother's home in the Capital, Qanooni said the reason he was here was because "India supported us in a bad time". "Of course, there will be a reaction from Pakistan", shrugged the 44-year-old Tajik. But he added that his India visit didn't mean that his government was against any other country. Rather, he said, the post-Taliban regime would seek "good relations" with all neighbours.

Qanooni also promised that regular flights between Kabul and New Delhi would resume next week. "Indian Airlines and Afghan Airlines will be flying to Kabul and back," he said. India is also arranging the flight for his return to Kabul.

Home Minister L K Advani

'OSAMA LEADS HIS MEN'

■ Osama bin Laden believed to be leading around 1,000 men "in person" to defend his hideout in eastern Afghanistan's mountains.

■ Several Taliban officials announce formation of a political party to help bring peace to Afghanistan

■ A Northern Alliance military helicopter crashes overnight in the north, killing 21

■ UN peacekeeping experts reach Kabul to plan deployment of a multinational force to check any bloodbath. But President-elect Hamid Karzai on the backfoot as fighting among tribesmen rages on

■ Family of Laden's key aide Ayman al-Zawahri releases a death notice in Cairo that his wife and children have died as martyrs

■ Gen Abdul Rashid Dostum reportedly assures US he will cooperate with the interim government

and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh have assured him that India is "ready to assist in reconstruction" and in rebuilding the police and security set-up in his war-torn country. "Whether we will come here for training, how it will be done, those details are still being discussed," said Qanooni.

If Mullah Omar were to be captured alive, he would first be tried in Afghanistan for his crimes against their countrymen and then be handed over to the International Court of Justice, he added. "It has been clear to us for a long time that Mullah Omar has no support in Afghanistan. That he is now surrounded proves this."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INDIAN EXPRESS

1 0 DEC 2001

A minefield ahead

Hamid Karzai will need all the luck in the world to balance the contradictions and bring a semblance of governance to Afghanistan, says B. Muralidhar-Reddy

HOW LONG can the spider's web last? asked a cheeky one-line letter in a prominent Pakistani English daily referring to the Bonn Agreement reached among the various Afghan factions.

It would have been dismissed as the reaction of a born cynic if it did not pertain to Afghanistan's affairs. The unending strife of 23 years, thanks first to the proxy war between the United States and the erstwhile Soviet Union and later the civil war, has turned every optimist on the country into a pessimist.

This is what makes the Bonn Agreement an extraordinary achievement notwithstanding its limitations. However hard the U.S.-led coalition might try to sell the agreement as one by those truly representing the Afghans, the fact remains that the leaders were handpicked by America.

If the Taliban militia, which

of the Taliban. As an editorial in the English daily, *Dawn*, pointed out: "For Pakistan it is a matter of immense satisfaction that its western neighbour should have opted for peace, stability and progress after more than two decades of trauma and anarchy. No country was more seriously affected by the events in Afghanistan than Pakistan; conversely, no country stands to gain more from what one hopes will be a period of lasting peace and an enduring era of national reconciliation and reconstruction of Afghanistan."

The accord coincided with the Taliban's decision to surrender its

cadres gone? Have they just melted into the crowds? Answers to these questions are important for the future of Afghanistan. If the Taliban mindset is active, it is bound to impact on the work of the new setup.

The main concern of Mr. Karzai, head of the new setup, seems to be about the disgruntled Taliban cadres haunting the new administration. Strangely, the U.S. and the rest of the world which hailed the Bonn Agreement as historic were, in the same breath, undermining Mr. Karzai's authority on the question of the treatment of Taliban leadership.

The dilemma faced by Mr. Karzai on

U.S.-led forces leave the country, several threats lurking within and without will surface. In a way it is a no-win situation. The challenges from within are evident from the grumbling voices over the composition of the Council of Ministers with those left out denouncing it as "imbalanced".

The Uzbek warlord, General Rashid Dostum, and the Pashtun royalist, Pir Sayed Ahmed Gillani, have criticised the accord.

Though the interim setup is to be headed by one of them (Mr. Karzai), there is a feeling that Pashtuns have got a raw deal at Bonn. The fact that the Tajiks have managed to garner the important portfolios of Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Interior is the main grievance of the Pashtuns.

Several others in the Northern Alliance, including the Acting President, Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, and Commander Ismail Khan, are unhappy over the way things have gone in Bonn. There are

Coup for peace

Observers in Koenigswinter were unanimous. What Lakhdar Brahimi had helped achieve was like pulling a rabbit out of a hat. Vaiju Naravane reports.

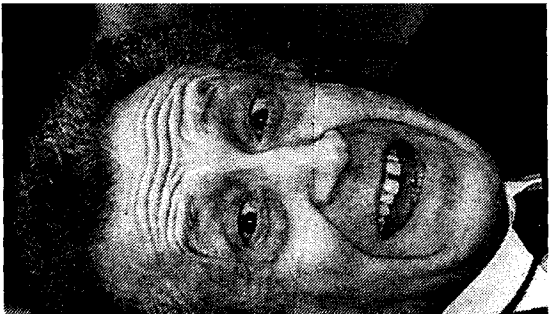
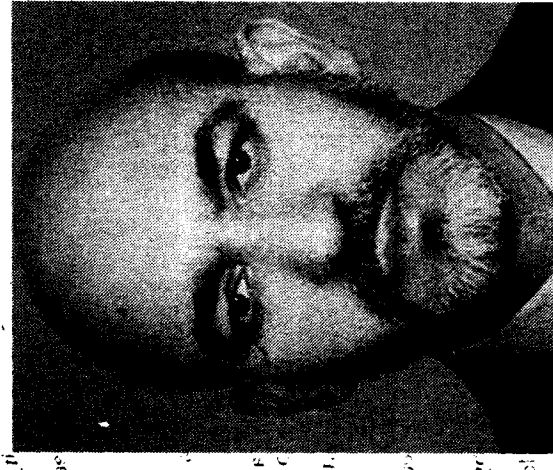
THE AGREEMENT signed on Wednesday last in Koenigswinter, near Bonn in Germany, has been described as a "historic step forward" for Afghanistan, mired in war and civil strife since the Soviet invasion in December 1979.

And while the 30-odd participants deserve praise for the wisdom they displayed in burying age-old animosities in order to move towards durable peace and stability, the hero of the day was undoubtedly the United Nations Special Representative to Afghanistan and former Algerian Minister, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, who was able to guide, nudge, prod and push and even occasionally shove the delegates in the right direction.

For many years, Mr. Brahimi struggled in vain to obtain some kind of agreement from the many warring factions and tribal groups that make up the incredibly intricate and complex mosaic that is

described as "a golden opportunity". The international community dangle the carrot of massive reconstruction aid while prodding the delegates forward. However, the signing of the agreement does not necessarily mean it is going to work. "The main question mark is how coherent the Northern Alliance will be," Mr. Christophe Jaffrelot, Director of the prestigious French Centre for Research in International Relations (CERI), told *The Hindu*.

"Will these bosses really collaborate and join hands. Dostum, for instance, may play his own card in the Uzbek area. But if these people do not hold together, then the role of the U.N. may become much more important and the role of Mr. Brahimi may be that of a pro-consul in Kabul, the real strongman because the others are divided. It might also be relevant for him to play that role because the others may not want another faction leader at the centre. They may themselves put him at the



THE MEN WHO MATTER:

controlled over 90 per cent of Afghanistan before its collapse, could not claim to represent Afghans despite being at the helm for six years, there is no way the Northern Alliance and other groups brought together at Bonn could claim the status.

Nevertheless, the various Afghan groups did surprise the world community. No one expected the accord to be reached so soon and so smoothly. Of course, the tremendous pressure from the international community and the billions of dollars of donor commitment for the "reconstruction" of Afghanistan would have helped expedite the process.

For Pakistan, the accord is a great solace given its stakes in Afghanistan and all that it lost with the collapse

account of the Kandahar surrender and the fate of Mullah Omar indicate the challenges ahead.

The U.S.-led coalition has left no one in doubt that it will be guided by its own interests in deciding the course of events even after the Karzai Government takes charge.

Those who matter in the Bush Administration have said the military campaign will continue as long as deemed necessary. Of the three objectives the U.S. had set for itself before the campaign, two remain — the capture of Osama bin Laden and the dismantling of Al-Qaeda.

It is indeed a peculiar situation for the Karzai Government. As long as the U.S. continues to dictate the agenda, it will be a "puppet regime".

On the other hand, the minute the

also reports of some disgruntled Northern Alliance members trying to reach out to the Taliban.

It would indeed be a Herculean task for the Karzai Government to establish its authority and make a meaningful contribution within six months as there are too many warlords demanding their slice of the cake.

The Bonn accord provides for some kind of international peace force. But for the time being it would be limited to Kabul. Besides, there are serious differences within the Northern Alliance on the desirability of such a force.

Mr. Karzai will need all the luck in the world to balance the contradictions and bring a semblance of governance to the war-ravaged country.

the Alliance, a diverse, multi-ethnic and religious grouping made up mainly of Tajiks, Uzbeks and Shia Hazaras. Not only did Mr. Qanooni obtain 17 of the 23 ministerial positions in the interim administration, he also won for his group three of the five vice-chairmanships. He also managed to retain the key portfolios of Defence, Foreign Policy and the Interior.

What made the agreement possible was also the realisation that the world, which was taking a renewed interest in Afghanistan after turning away for over a decade, could well look the other way again, once Kandahar had fallen and Osama bin Laden had been captured or killed. It was a now or never situation, and the delegates gathered in Bonn seized what Mr. Abdul Sattar Strat, a former King's close confidante,

centre. That's the real question mark. If they are divided, the U.N. will be more prominent. The emergence of the younger, more modern technocratic leaders is the most encouraging development. In addition, the speed with which they reached the agreement was impressive — in seven days they tried to convince President Rabbani and then sideline him. The Peshawar Group was able to resist Pakistani pressure. And they interiorised the notion that no ethnic group can really dominate in Afghanistan. That they really have to compromise. Otherwise, the reconstruction of Afghanistan will not be possible. Now the incentives are also important. They will join hands if the financial package is attractive and if they realise that they must remain united to get it," Mr. Jaffrelot added.

Omar mystery deepens; search for Osama on

9/12/51-1
Afghanistan

THE TIMES, LONDON, & AGENCIES

KABUL, Dec. 8. — As the Taliban loses control of its spiritual stronghold of Kandahar amid chaos and confusion, there are conflicting reports about the whereabouts of the militia supremo.

A spokesman of Kandahar's ex-Governor, Mr Gul Agha, said Mullah Omar was being held in a "friendly environment" near the city by a warlord said to be sympathetic to the Taliban. Another report said Omar was being held by Mullah Naqibullah, a local *mujahideen* commander who was scheduled to take over Kandahar's administration from the Taliban.

However, a Taliban official in Pakistan said Omar had left Kandahar and was not being held by anyone. "He is out of Kandahar. I've checked it with my people and they've told me that he is in no one's custody. Beyond this I don't know his whereabouts."

Afghanistan's would-be Prime Minister, Mr Hamid Karzai, too said the reports of Omar's capture were "all lies... We don't know where Mullah Omar is. We're looking for him. He's fugitive."

He said Omar must face trial because he had missed his last chance to renounce terrorism and repudiate Osama bin Laden.

Pakistan has denied reports that Mullah Omar and Osama have escaped into its territory and said it has deployed a substantial number of troops and armed helicopters along the porous border with Afghanistan to prevent them from crossing into the country.

A Taliban fighter who had fled Kandahar said armed militia men were still roaming the city. "No one is in control of the city. Mullah Naqibullah should be in control but no one is," said Hafiz Abdul Rub in the Pakistani border town of Chaman.

A Pashtun chief said tribal leaders have formed a council to try to resolve their differences over Kandahar's control. The *shura* (council) included Mr Karzai, Mullah Naqibullah and Mr Agha, said Mr Khalid Pashtoon. "Mullah Naqibullah is the biggest obstacle. We've to convince him to step aside."

Anti-Taliban and US-led forces were climbing the foothills of eastern Afghan mountains in their search for Osama and hunting Mullah Omar in the south. US jets kept up air strikes on suspected Osama hideouts in the Tora Bora region, about 55 km south of Jalalabad.

Pakistan today denied the allegation of Afghanistan's interim home minister, Mr Younus Qanooni, that Islamabad has been interfering in Afghan affairs.

■ More reports on pages 10 & 12

THE STATESMAN

9 DEC 2001

Germany plans rights campaign in Afghanistan

By R. Gopalakrishnan

BERLIN, DEC. 8. Germany is well aware of the need to attack the root causes for the spread of terrorism, be it in Afghanistan, Jammu and Kashmir or anywhere else and towards this end it would emphasise the respect for human rights, including women's rights as a basic strategy, Foreign Ministry sources said here.

As a follow-up to the military action in Afghanistan by the U.S.-led coalition, Germany will campaign for a human rights dialogue and the need to implement minimum standards, including in the case of women who have been the worst victims of more than two decades of civil war in Afghanistan, Dr. Michael Fernau, deputy head, South Asia division of the Foreign Ministry, said.

Talking to *The Hindu* on Friday, Dr. Fernau said the other components of the anti-terrorism strategy would include development assistance-linked efforts aimed at eradication of poverty and illiteracy.

Referring to the phenomenon of terrorism in the context of India-Pakistan relations and the Jammu and Kashmir issue, he said Germany's message to both countries was the same: activate confidence-building measures,

including respecting the existing *de facto* international borders, irrespective of how they are called — line of control or line of actual control. "This is an absolute prerequisite for any solution to the (territorial) dispute between the two countries", he said.

Germany's specific message to India was that the problem of Jammu and Kashmir "cannot be solved through repression and India should appeal to the heart and mind of the people of Jammu and Kashmir". While Berlin wanted the restoration of democracy in Pakistan, it also desired that both India and Pakistan try to keep their border more open to enable increasing exchanges of people and goods.

Some major mechanism, be it SAARC or any other, should be used in South Asia to promote discussion on differences, including security matters. This would be a valuable tool, considering the European experience in building peace and security over a few decades. The "neglect" of even existing confidence-building mechanisms such as no-flight zones or hotlines between India and Pakistan had led to the shooting down in 1999, of a Pakistan (reconnaissance) plane carrying personnel and flying over Indian territory, he said.

THE HINDU

9 DEC 2001

Karzai: Link to USA both help and hindrance

REUTERS

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 8. - Mr Hamid Karzai's links to the USA give the head of the new interim Afghan government power. They also leave him vulnerable to charges of being a foreign puppet.

That dilemma was apparent yesterday, when Mr Karzai vowed that the defeated Mullah Mohammad Omar would have to face trial - an echo of US statements issued after Mr Karzai the previous day offered the Taliban supreme leader safety if he condemned terrorism. "He has not made even a statement regretting what he's done. He must face trial," Mr Karzai said, using that opening to escape the apparent confrontation with US leaders demanding Mullah Omar's arrest.

Mr Karzai, a 46-year-old leader of the Pashtun Popalzai tribe, was named on Wednesday to head the interim administration for Afghanistan that will rule for six months and prepare the way for a transitional government that will take power for the following two years.

It was not the first time since the start of the US war in Afghanistan that the former deputy foreign minister in a pre-Taliban government in Kabul has had to slip out of embarrassing close relations with Washington.

He entered Afghanistan soon after the US attacks began on 7 October in an effort to raise a revolt among the dominant Pashtun tribesmen who had been backing the Taliban. His mission paralleled one further north in Afghanistan by another anti-Taliban tribal leader, Mr Abdul Haq.

When Mr Haq was captured and summarily executed by the Taliban, it appeared Mr Karzai would soon suffer a similar fate. The Taliban chasing him inside Uruzgan

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RIVAL MEET TO THRASH OUT DISPUTES

QUETTA, Dec. 8. - Leaders of Afghan Pashtun tribes, squabbling over control of the former Taliban stronghold of Kandahar, have formed a council to resolve their differences, a tribal spokesman said today.

"There is a shura (council) in the city now to try and figure out how to control the situation," said Khalid Pashtoon, spokesman for former Mujahideen Kandahar governor, Gul Agha Sherzai, who seized the city's Governor's House yesterday. He added the council included Mr Hamid Karzai, appointed to lead Afghanistan's interim government from 22 December, Mr Gul Agha and Mullah Naqibullah, who accepted the Taliban surrender yesterday. - Reuters

province came close to capturing him in one gun battle.

To Mr Karzai's dismay, US defence secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, announced US helicopters had rescued him and ferried him to safety in Pakistan before depositing him back inside Afghanistan for another try at raising a revolt.

"We are being squeezed between the Americans saying one thing and the Taliban saying something else," Mr Karzai's younger brother Ahmad said, denying he had ever left Afghanistan or that US forces had saved him.

Diplomats in Pakistan say he had been lifted to safety by a helicopter but acknowledge indiscrete US statements about it can only weaken someone trying to describe himself as an Afghan nationalist.

"If he is backed by America, it will be very difficult for him to win over the people," a

chief of the Brahui tribe, Nawab Mohammad Aslam Raisani, warned at the time. But his links with the USA, where he has lived, have benefits. Diplomats say Pakistan's acceptance of Karzai as the next Afghan leader reflects not only his roots in the dominant Pashtun ethnic group that Islamabad has traditionally promoted but also the realisation that he has strong backing from Washington.

In a country that will need billions of dollars to rebuild and is anxious not to see Washington walk away as it did after the Soviet invaders were driven out in 1989, ties to America are no bad thing for an Afghan leader.

He speaks fluent English, as well as Urdu learned during his years of residence in Pakistan. Although Pakistan told him before the 11 September attacks that he would have to leave the country, he has generally enjoyed good relations

with them. He also has another vital attribute to head an administration - he has a different background from the Mujahideen leaders who waged a disastrous power struggle after the Soviet withdrawal and ultimately paved the way for the rise of the Taliban.

"He was never involved in the factional fighting within Afghanistan, he never took sides," brother Ahmad said after the announcement of the new government.

"For the past 20 years he has been dealing daily with Afghanistan. He knows people all over Afghanistan and is very well known," he added.

But, if he missed the factional fighting, he has proved his military credentials over the past month by raising revolt in southeastern Afghanistan and leading the capture of the last Taliban stronghold, Kandahar. He was even lightly wounded by an errant US bomb.

Hunt down terrible two, appeals Karzai

'Omar, Osama will be brought to justice'

KABUL: Afghanistan's would-be prime minister Hamid Karzai called on fellow Afghans on Saturday to capture Saudi renegade Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. He also promised to bring the duo to "international justice".

His comments came as rumors swirled among some U.S. officials and tribal officials that Omar might still be in the surrendered city of Kandahar. Mr Karzai said the whereabouts of Omar were unknown and that neither he nor Bin Laden were in the custody of anti-Taliban forces. Reports that Omar had been captured, he said, were "all lies".

Mr Karzai said he thought Omar and Bin Laden could still be in Afghanistan but rejected reports that Omar was being held under tribal protection in Kandahar.

Earlier, British media reports suggested that Omar had been captured and was in the custody of a warlord sympathetic to the militia.

Omar was captured on Friday and was being held near Kandahar by warlord Khalid Pashtoon in a "friendly environment", *The Times* said, quoting a spokesman for Gul Agha Sherzai, a Kandahar commander.

Britain's Channel 4 also said Omar was being held by Pashtun forces. "The city's new rulers told Channel 4 news they were holding the Taliban leader," the private TV network said.

There has been no independent confirmation of the capture.

However, a Taliban official denied the capture, saying Omar had "definitely" left Kandahar following the militia's surrender. "I can confirm it to you that he is no longer in Kandahar. He is out of Kandahar," he told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"I have checked it with my people, and they have told me that he is in no one's custody. He is not in Kandahar. Beyond this, I do not know his whereabouts."

The Pentagon said the news of Omar's

'capture' was "potentially interesting" but added that it had no independent verification from the U.S. Special Forces in Afghanistan. "In the absence of that, we will tend to see what comes out," a Pentagon spokesman said.

Gen Tommy Franks, commander of the coalition forces in Afghanistan, said minutes before the reports of Omar's detention that the Taliban leader had "vanished". He said he did not know where the reclusive leader was, *The Times* report said.

The Times quoted Gul Agha's spokesman as saying that his group would demand that Omar be handed over—probably to the new interim government—at a tribal meeting on Saturday.

AFP quoted the spokesman as saying that they believed Omar was still in Kandahar and may be huddled with would-be prime minister Hamid Karzai or the man Karzai had appointed to run the city, Mullah Naqibullah.

He said Agha's forces were searching for Omar, who reportedly struck a deal with Mr Karzai on Thursday under which his fighters would surrender

their arms and hand over Kandahar in return for a general amnesty.

"Mullah Mohammad Omar is a criminal and the main culprit," he said. "Whether he is with Hamid Karzai or Mullah Naqibullah, our men are chasing him and they will track him down along with his close aides," he said.

On Friday, Mr Karzai had denied any amnesty deal with Omar.

Meanwhile, Hazrat Ali, an Afghan commander, said Osama bin Laden was hiding in the mountains of Tora Bora and local fighters expected to hunt him down in a matter of days. Ali said his men were closing in on Osama.

In a related development, Pakistan on Saturday denied reports that Omar and Bin Laden had escaped into its territory. It said it had deployed a substantial number of troops along the border with Afghanistan to prevent the duo from crossing into Pakistan. (Agencies)

THE SEARCH FOR OMAR



An Afghan tries to detect landmines close to the Bagram air base near Kabul on Saturday

'THEY WILL BE BROUGHT TO INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE'

Mullah Omar, Osama not in our custody, says Karzai

KABUL, DEC. 8. Afghanistan's interim leader, Mr. Hamid Karzai, said on Saturday that the whereabouts of the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, were unknown and that neither he nor the Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, was in the custody of anti-Taliban forces. Reports that the Taliban chief had been captured, he said, were "all lies".

Earlier today, *The Times* of London said that Mullah Omar had been captured on Friday night and was in the custody of Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, a warlord sympathetic to the militia. A Pentagon spokesman said the news of Mullah Omar's capture was "potentially interesting" but added it had no independent verification from U.S. special forces in Afghanistan.

Mr. Karzai called on fellow Afghans to capture Osama and Mullah Omar and promised to bring the two to "international justice".

Washington had raised strong objections to suggestions that Mr. Karzai might have struck a surrender deal with Mullah Omar to allow the fugitive Taliban supreme leader to remain in Afghanistan.

"We will make sure we will get rid of terrorism. We want to finish terrorism in Afghanistan and in the world", Mr. Karzai said.

He asked ordinary Afghans, as well as his own troops, to arrest thousands of Arabs and other foreign fighters in Afghanistan. Haji Bashir, a commander in Kandahar, said Mullah Omar was not being held in Kandahar. "Nobody knows where he is," he said.

Pakistani journalists with good contacts in Kandahar said armed conflict could erupt any time. Pakistani border guards refused to allow journalists into southern Afghanistan, saying the situation was too volatile.

"There was a meeting at the Governor's house and another meeting is in progress right now.



Northern Alliance forces watching the explosion of a bomb dropped by U.S. planes in Tora Bora on Saturday. — AFP

The room is full of tribal notables and military commanders."

"We have sent neutral people to Mullah Naqib who is at the main military headquarters in

**Pak. steps up vigil: Page 8
Victory will be ours, says
Bush: Page 12**

Kandahar. We need a response from him, yes or no. Give up or be ready for fighting." Mr. Agha's forces from the Pashtun clans of southern Afghanistan fought their way to the edge of Kandahar before the Taliban agreed to surrender on Thursday.

His men were closing in on the world's most wanted man and his hardcore Al-Qaeda fighters holed

up in the caves. He said he had reliable information from an Al-Qaeda prisoner that Osama was in the area.

War not over: Rumsfeld

A Washington report quoted the U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, as saying that despite the fall of Kandahar he believed the war was far from over. He told the *Washington Post* in an interview published today that the situation remained "dangerous".

He expressed confidence that U.S. and Afghan Opposition forces would take greater precautions in Kandahar to avoid a repeat of Mazar-i-Sharif, where Taliban prisoners revolted two weeks ago.

No truce or treaty: Bush

The U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, pledged victory in the ongoing war against "heirs to fascism", which he said would not end in a truce or a treaty.

He was speaking on Friday on the 60th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour from the deck of aircraft carrier Enterprise.

Army Gen. Tommy Franks, head of the U.S. Central Command, said Marines attacked the fleeing Taliban fighters from the air and ground around Kandahar, but he offered few details. The Taliban are legitimate targets as long as they are armed, he said, but he had not seen any evidence that large numbers of armed Taliban had fled. — AFP, AP, Reuters, PTI

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2001

A NEW RAY OF HOPE IN AFGHANISTAN

THE UNITED NATIONS seems to have drawn a rough but promising road map that might help steer Afghanistan, a failed state, towards a civilised political future. There can be no doubt whatsoever that Afghanistan must be liberated from the clutches of the notorious Taliban and its cohort, Osama bin Laden, the suspected czar of international terrorism. Their agenda of grisly political terror as also social obscurantism has already ravaged the country that straddles an important region in the geopolitical neighbourhood of India. With the Taliban now clearly on the retreat in the face of nearly two months of a massive military offensive by the United States, Afghanistan is generally regarded to have become increasingly inhospitable to Osama too. In one sense, a critical matter of concern to the international community is that the actual fate or present whereabouts of Osama as also the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, are still far from clear. Yet, the overall international mood in regard to Afghanistan is to count out the Taliban-Osama axis as a durable factor of instability within that country itself. It is in this context that the U.N. has found it possible to take an optimistic view of the lingering uncertainties. A subtle, unstated, distinction appears to have been drawn by the U.N. between the possible future of Afghanistan as a Taliban-free society with a democratic polity, in one scenario, and a larger international order without the scourge of political terror, on a separate plane. This alone can explain the current efforts by the U.N. to place Afghanistan on a slow track towards an orderly polity even before the Taliban-Osama axis has been conspicuously decimated in line with the stated objectives of the U.S.

If the U.S. as also its allies and friends can exercise due care to ensure that the residual battle against the Taliban-Osama axis does not ruin Afghanistan's march towards a civilised polity,

the U.N.'s current efforts may be seen to be truly meaningful. The Northern Alliance, the anti-Taliban force with some basic Afghan characteristics, is now in control of much of the country including the capital, Kabul. As America's present-day proxy on the ground in Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance has not only gained from the U.S.' air strikes against the Taliban but also contributed to the American war plans in some measure. This aspect accounts for the Alliance-weighted power-sharing formula worked out by the U.N. for the Afghan transition towards democracy over an estimated period of about two-and-a-half years from now.

The rough blueprint, approved by the Afghan delegations that have held intensive discussions under U.N. guidance for over a week in Germany, provides for an interim 'Prime Minister' with a Cabinet. In about six months, a *loya jirga* or a traditional national convention will be called, perhaps under the moral authority of the former Afghan monarch ('King' Zahir Shah), to establish a new dispensation. The 'government' so formed is expected to put the country through the paces of a transition to a democratic order which will be ushered in through polls to be held on the principle of political pluralism. While the interim 'Prime Minister' will be from the majority Pashtun community, the Northern Alliance will get the pivotal portfolios of defence as also foreign policy and internal affairs in the run-up to the *loya jirga*. On paper, the division of power for this proposed 'interim' period reflects the ground realities. Yet, the success of the U.N.-engineered plan will depend on a number of imponderables including the likely equation between the Northern Alliance and the planned international security force, which (if it takes off) may have more to do with turning Afghanistan into a terror-free zone rather than a democratic society.

THE HINDU

7 DEC 2001

Mullah Omar to give up Kandahar

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 6. The collapse of the Taliban appears to be complete this evening with the militia agreeing to surrender tomorrow the last of its main stronghold, Kandahar, to the local tribal leaders.

The former Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaeef, who confirmed the news of an agreement with the local tribal leaders, maintained that the Taliban supremo, Mullah Mohammed Omar, took the decision

in the larger interest of Afghanistan people.

Mullah Zaeef said under the agreement with the local leaders, Mullah Omar would enjoy protection. But the guarantee is not likely to go down well with the U.S.-led coalition which is determined to take Mullah Omar hostage. The decision of the Taliban to give up Kandahar would mean the end of the militia as a political force, at least for the time being.

The decision to give up Kandahar did not exactly come as a surprise as the U.S. coalition

spokesman, Ambassador Kenton Keith, earlier in the day had given enough indications about the plans of Mullah Omar. Mullah Zaeef said the handover would begin on Friday and that Mullah Omar would be allowed to stay in the city under tribal protection. The militia has decided to surrender to Mullah Naqib Ullah, a former commander against Soviet invasion in 1979.

"We have agreed to surrender weapons not to Hamid Karzai but to the tribal elders," Mullah Zaeef said. "Mullah Omar has taken the

decision for the welfare of the people, to avoid casualties and to save the life and dignity of Afghans."

'Taliban is finished'

Mullah Zaeef agreed with the observation of a journalist that the Taliban was finished as a political movement. "I think we should go home," he said.

The new chief of the interim administration in Afghanistan, Mr. Hamid Karzai, was quoted on Wednesday as saying that his administration intended to grant general amnesty to all Taliban prisoners in Afghanistan. "I don't know about the guarantees, but Mr. Karzai and the tribal leaders have promised him protection," Mullah Zaeef said.

However, the U.S.-led coalition here claimed that he (Mullah Omar) is "negotiating to save his own skin". The U.S.-led Coalition Information Centre spokesman, Ambassador Kenton Keith, told a news conference here that the reports about surrender negotiations by Mullah Omar should be taken seriously.

At the same time, Mr. Keith made it clear that in the event of surrender by Mullah Omar, the coalition forces would like to take him into custody and interrogate him. "As some one who has sheltered Osama and the Al-Qaeda, Mullah Omar comes in the category of criminals". (The U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, ruled out any arrangement that allowed Mullah Omar to remain free and "live in dignity" in the region.)

'Nabbed terrorist is Osama's man'

By Our Special Correspondent

MUMBAI, DEC. 6. The Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. Chhagan Bhujbal, today told the Assembly that four suicide squads had been formed by the Al-Qaeda to carry out attacks on Parliament House in New Delhi and on targets in U.K. and Australia along with the September 11 strikes on the World Trade Center and elsewhere in the U.S.

Making a suo motu statement, he disclosed that this startling information was revealed by a member of Osama bin Laden's outfit, Mohammad Afroz Abdul Razak, arrested by the Mumbai police on October 2.

During interrogation it was learnt that Mohammad Afroz had been sent to Melbourne, Australia to get trained in flying a commercial airliner, to Texas in the United States for getting trained on a Boeing simulator and to the United Kingdom for further training.

They had formed four groups of suicide pilots, one to hit the Pentagon, another the Rolta Tower in Australia, the third the British Parliament and the fourth to target the Parliament House in New Delhi.

Mr. Bhujbal said Mohammad Afroz was in the

group whose target was the British Parliament. The Navi Mumbai police had tumbled upon the terrorist living in a guest house. It wondered how come an ordinary looking man's passport bore stamps for so many foreign trips and immediately handed over the case to the Mumbai police.

The matter was conveyed to the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani who asked him to keep the matter under wraps. "I am making this statement, revealing only limited details because Mr. Advani himself talked about it in New Delhi yesterday," Mr. Bhujbal said, ignoring the Opposition demand to know the nationality of Afroz.

The terrorist was interrogated by the Police Commissioner, Mr. M.N. Singh himself, the Deputy Chief Minister said. He told the interrogator that Al-Qaeda had put funds in different banks and the operative cell members were withdrawing money, using electronic facilities. He was found to be receiving a lot of e-mail messages.

PTI reports:

Mohammad Afroz was produced amidst tight security today before a Mumbai court which remanded him to judicial custody till December 20.

THE HINDU

- 7 DEC 2001

Omar trail gets hot

Washington, December 8

TALIBAN CHIEF Mullah Mohammad Omar has been captured and is near Kandahar in the custody of Khalid Pashtoon, a warlord sympathetic to the militia, British media said today.

He was being held in a "friendly environment," *The Times* reported, quoting a spokesman for Gul Agha Sherzai, a Kandahar commander. The paper quoted the spokesman as saying that his group would demand the handing over of Omar, probably to the new interim Government, at a tribal meeting today.

Britain's Channel 4 too said Pashtun forces in Afghanistan were holding Omar. "The city's new rulers told 'Channel 4' news they are holding the Taliban leader Mullah Omar," it said.

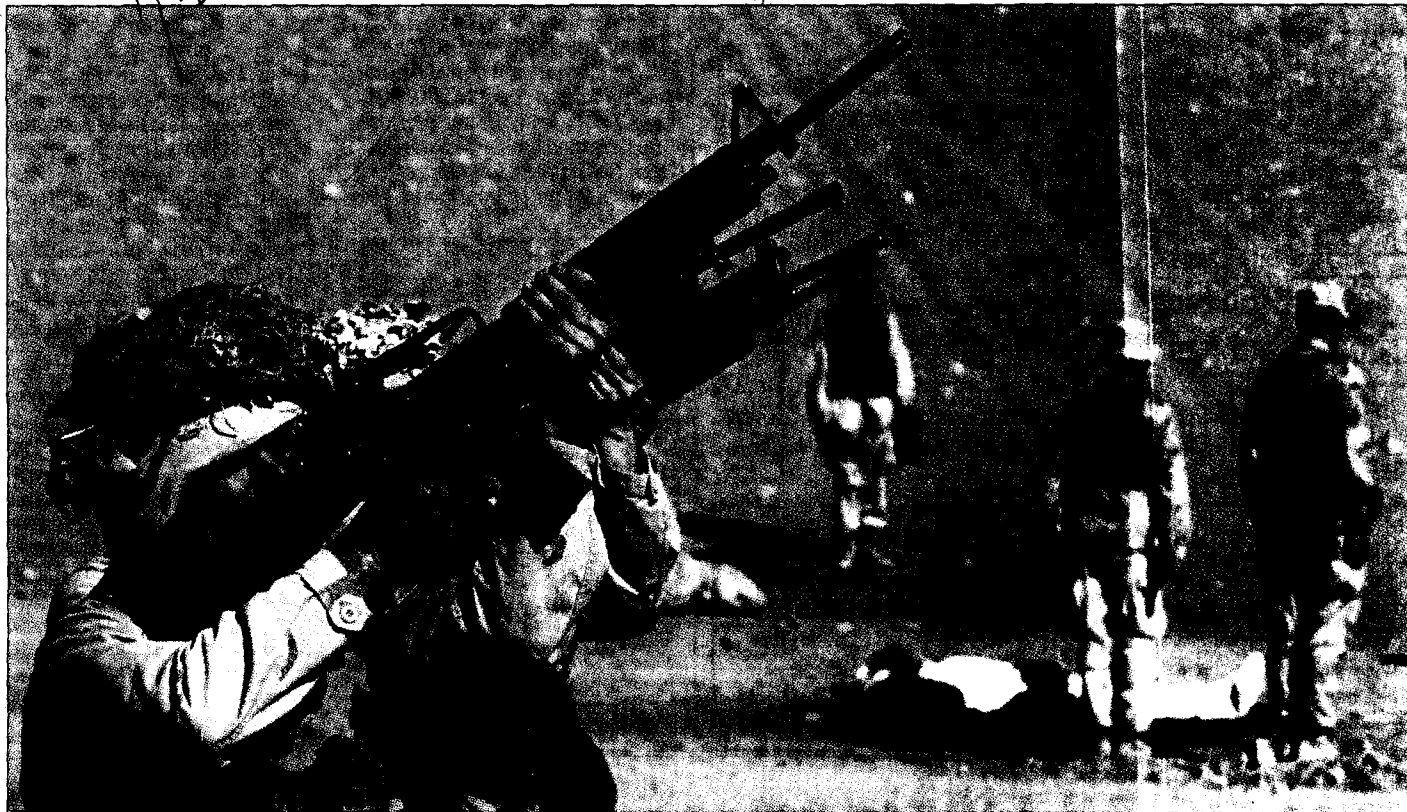
The Pentagon reacted, saying the news of Omar's capture was "potentially interesting" but added that it had not had confirmation from US Special Forces. "In the absence of that, we will see what comes out," a Pentagon spokesman said.

Gen Tommy Franks, the coalition commander in Afghanistan, said minutes before receiving reports of Omar's detention that the Taliban chief had "vanished." He said he did not know where the reclusive leader was, the *Times* report said.

Leader of Afghanistan's newly-formed interim Government Hamid Karzai said yesterday that Omar's whereabouts were unknown, but he would be arrested if found.

But Osama remained elusive. An Afghan Commander said the Saudi-born terrorist was holed up in the mountains of Tora Bora and local fighters were expecting to hunt him down in a matter of days.

The commander said his men



REUTERS PHOTO

US Marines fire in the air in honour of a Northern Alliance fighter who was accidentally killed during air raids on Kandahar. Three American soldiers too died in the B-52 bombing.

were closing in on Osama and his fighters hiding in the caves of this rugged, snow-capped region of eastern Afghanistan.

"Our mujahideen are willing to fight. Today or tomorrow we are going to launch a big attack and I think they will surrender to us," he said. He said he had reliable information from an al-Qaida prisoner that Osama was in the area, which has been pounded by US warplanes since the start of this month.

"Three days ago we captured a prisoner from al-Qaida who told us that Osama was living here but had moved to the top of the

mountain. I think he is probably here," Ali said on the frontlines facing Tora Bora mountain about 30 km south of Jalalabad.

Meanwhile, Pashtun tribal leaders, squabbling over control of Kandahar, had formed a council to resolve their differences, a tribal spokesman said today.

"There is a shura (council) in the city now to try and figure out how to control the situation," said Khalid Pashtoon, spokesman for former Mujahideen Kandahar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai, who seized the city Governor's house yesterday.

Agencies

PAK TO TRY TALIBAN CO-FIGHTERS

THE PAKISTAN Government has said it would put on trial its citizens who went to Afghanistan to fight along with the Taliban and al-Qaida. Defence spokesman Maj. Gen. Rashid Qureshi said while each of its nationals who fought with the militia would be tried under the law of the land, the Government would also not hesitate to discuss their role with the US-led coalition against terrorism. Meanwhile, US Navy ships in the northern Arabian Sea are monitoring all ships leaving Pakistani ports by radio as part of a search for Osama bin Laden or his al Qaeda members who may be trying to flee, CNN reported quoting US Navy officials. Even in the ports, passenger and crew manifests are being checked by US military and Intelligence officials in cooperation with local Pakistani authorities and cargo records are also being monitored.

HTC, Islamabad

Taliban begins Kandahar surrender

Afghanistan
 51-6
 418

KABUL, Dec. 7. — The besieged Taliban today began surrendering Kandahar, its final bastion and birthplace, which would allow US forces to concentrate on hunting down Osama bin Laden in his suspected mountain lair.

Anti-Taliban forces captured Bin Laden's main base in the Tora Bora mountains of eastern Afghanistan, but failed to find the Saudi-born militant, blamed for the 11 September attacks in the USA.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press said Taliban fighters began handing their weapons to a commission of tribal elders, Islamic scholars and mujahideen commanders in the city where the Islamic militia began a march to power seven years ago.

The handover of Kandahar was agreed on Thursday in negotiations between the Taliban and the leader of Afghanistan's new interim government, Mr Hamid Karzai. AIP had no immediate word on the fate of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar or his top aides.

The Taliban yesterday demanded amnesty for Omar, bin Laden's protector — a price Washington said it would not pay.

But Mr Karzai said today that high-ranked Taliban officials "must face trial" if there is a case against them. The US defence secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, left open the possibility that Washington may not handle justice for the Taliban's senior leaders. The US goal is "to bring justice" to the Taliban and Al-Qaida leadership "or bring them to justice".

But he added, "There are a variety of different ways that can occur, and it will depend on the individual and it will depend on whether or not we get them." While Mr Rumsfeld said the deal Mr Karzai has negotiated



Marines of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit take positions inside a bunker in Afghanistan after an alert on Friday. — AP/PTI

with the Taliban was unlikely to conflict with US interests, he warned that US support for the anti-Taliban forces would end if it did. Under the still sketchy agreement, Omar's life would be saved, but it was unclear if he would be arrested.

"Both sides, the Taliban and Mr Karzai, agreed to the surrender of Kandahar for the welfare of the people, to decrease casualties to life and to protect the dignity of the people," former Taliban envoy to Pakistan Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef said yesterday.

Asked about the fate of Omar, Mullah Zaeef said, "His life will be

saved and he will be allowed to live with dignity. He is a *mujahid* (holy warrior), he has worked for the people of Afghanistan and he is not guilty." But Mr Karzai, when asked about an amnesty for Omar, said, "I have offered amnesty for the common man." He told CNN that Omar must "clearly denounce terrorism and make explicitly clear that terrorism has brutalised Afghanistan society and destroyed our country. This is our demand."

Anti-Taliban forces captured the cave-riddled mountains of Tora Bora after a week of intensive fighting backed by heavy US air strikes against Al-Qaida fighters, a

military spokesman said. "The last and main base of Osama in Tora Bora was captured last night," Mohammed Habeel, a spokesman for the militarily dominant Northern Alliance, said adding there had been fierce resistance as the assault was pressed home.

"Our troops led by commander Hazrat Ali said that we have taken almost all of Tora Bora and its main caves. We have staged a mopping up operation to clear remaining parts of Tora Bora." He said Arab family members, including women, had been captured, along with weapons and vehicles, but there was no sign of Bin La-

den. "Osama was not in Tora Bora during the past days of fighting and if he had been, he has probably slipped into Pakistan," Mr Habeel said.

On the southern front, US officials say B-52s have pounded the road between Kandahar and the Pakistani border to prevent Taliban fighters and their allies in Al-Qaida from fleeing and scores of people have been reported killed or wounded. A Pakistani border official said Taliban forces were in control of the border town of Spin Boldak but surrender talks were under way.

US shifts stand on Omar's trial

March 1
 2
 2
 The Times, London

Dec. 7. — America indicated for the first time yesterday that Mullah Mohammed Omar could be tried by Afghanistan's new government. That backdown has failed, however, to avert an imminent showdown with that country's new leader over the terms of an agreed surrender of Kandahar today, which may permit the Taliban chief to escape justice altogether.

President George W Bush "believes very strongly that those who harbour terrorists need to be brought to justice", the White House insisted as it backed away from the administration's earlier insistence that Mullah Omar be turned over to the USA.

The surrender of Kandahar, the Taliban's spiritual capital and final stronghold, heralds the final days of the 61-day war in Afghanistan, allowing the USA and Opposition forces to focus almost all of their resources on the hunt for Osama bin Laden, thought to be in the Tora Bora mountains south of Jalalabad.

In another huge blow to the Al-Qaida leader, Downing Street said that it believed that Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's second-in-command and long-time mentor, had been killed by an American airstrike near the Tora Bora complex.

A spokesman for Hazrat Ali, Jalalabad's military chief, said that Osama may have fled to the Spin Char mountains east of Tora Bora. The Pentagon said that US warplanes and commandos were helping an army of local tribesmen as they advanced in the face of heavy mortar fire from the estimated 1,500 fanatical Arab and Chechen fighters who are defending those caves and tunnels.

Mr Tony Blair declared that the Taliban was on the verge of total collapse. "That regime is effectively now disintegrated," he said. "The terror camps can be shut down."

As the regime fell apart America's political problems grew. It cannot force Afghanistan's anti-Taliban forces to turn Mullah Omar over. Nor does it necessarily want them to, because the USA could turn him into a martyr by executing such a prominent Muslim.

Mr Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, said that a deal that allowed Mullah Omar to "live in dignity" would be unacceptable, and declared that US relations with Afghanistan's new interim government would "turn south" if Mullah Omar was granted any sort of amnesty. Washington could withdraw its military support and promise of financial aid.

But he would not rule out "some formulation" that "dealt effectively" with the Taliban and Al-Qaida leadership or allowed them to be tried under a non-American judicial system.

World happy with Govt but not everyone at home

UN waits for US nod for sending in forces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UNITED NATIONS, DECEMBER 6

THE UN security council is set to endorse the agreement reached among Afghan factions to set up an interim government in Afghanistan but is awaiting a go ahead from the US on establishing a multinational force to provide security initially in Kabul and surrounding areas.

"The security council declares its readiness to support the implementation of the (Bonn) agreement," council president Moxtar Qaane of Mali said after a meeting yesterday.

The council was debating on the formal language to be used for a resolution to endorse the accord. A vote on the resolution was expected today, diplomats here said. Britain and France had yesterday introduced a resolution in the 15-member council to express its support for the accord and the provisional arrangement agreed to in Bonn.

France's UN ambassador Jean-David Levitte said 14 of the 15 members are likely to vote but the US delegation was yet to receive instructions on the course to be adopted. But a more important resolution that would authorise establishment of a multinational force would have to wait till the US finalises it position and spells out finally whether it wants one at this stage and if so, on what terms. UN officials say they would like to have an operational force to provide security at least in Kabul initially before Dec 22 when the new arrangement comes into force.

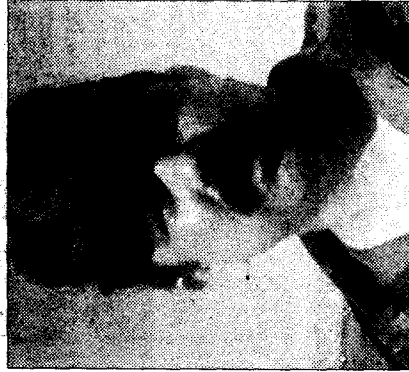
But Washington is considering it in its overall strategy of prosecuting war against terrorism and so far has shown no interest in participating in it. "We are working against a deadline of Dec 22 when we hope the security arrangements will not only be agreed on but will be deployed," chief United Nations spokesman Fred Eckhard said.



Hekmatyar blasts Bonn decisions

■ **TEHRAN:** Sidelined Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has dubbed the Bonn conference as US-managed. "The Americans have imposed their solution and that puts in doubt the legitimacy of the authority to emerge from this conference," he said.

"The conference was held while the US was savagely bombarding Afghanistan. It was held under the auspices of the US, not the UN," said Hekmatyar of Afghanistan's majority Pashtun ethnic group, who presides over the Hezb-i-Islami party.



Dostum to boycott new Afghan govt

■ **KABUL:** Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum said on Thursday he would boycott the interim Afghan government.

Dostum, whose forces dominate a swathe of northern territory including Mazar-i-Sharif, said by satellite telephone his mainly Uzbek Junbish-i-Milli faction was not fairly represented in the Bonn accord. "We are sad," Dostum said. "We announce our boycott of this government." He said he had demanded foreign ministry for his faction. "This is a humiliation for us."



Gailani says Afghan deal unbalanced

■ **ISLAMABAD:** Pashtun spiritual leader Sayed Ahmad Gailani said on Thursday the accord was "unjust". "Injustices have been committed in the distribution of ministries," he said in Islamabad. "Those with an important role in the jihad against Soviet occupation have not been represented."

"Although the new set-up is not balanced, I hope the UN will form a committee for a *Loya Jirga* so that things are settled later," Gailani leads National Islamic Front of Afghanistan and is a supporter of former king Zahir Shah.

Kandahar surrender today

Islamabad, December 6

BELEAGUERED TALIBAN chief Mullah Mohammad Omar today agreed to surrender Kandahar, the only city under his control, exactly two months after the US-led coalition began military operations against terrorism in Afghanistan.

But the country's new interim head said the militia leader would not be granted amnesty till he renounced terrorism. The Taliban would begin handing over the control of Kandahar from tomorrow to local tribal elder Mullah Naquibullah to avoid further bloodshed in the heavily-bombed city, former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan Abdul Salam Zaeef told reporters at his residence here.

Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai, who negotiated the surrender, confirmed that the militia had agreed to surrender Kandahar and said he had offered a general amnesty to the "common Taliban" but Mullah Omar would have to renounce terrorism.

"If he does not, then he will not be safe," Karzai told CNN, adding, "If he does, he would be afforded protection." Making it clear that would be no safe passage for those linked to terrorism, he said, "They must leave the country, they are criminals."

Karzai said it would take two to three days to work out transfer of power. It would be done in a "slow and orderly" manner.

Zaeef conceded that the Taliban were finished as a political force and said, "I think we should go home." Zaeef said Mullah Omar would be allowed to stay in the city under tribal protection.

But he said the Taliban had agreed to surrender weapons to tribal elders, not Karzai.

"Mullah Omar has taken the decision (to surrender Kandahar) to avoid casualties and to save the lives and dignity of Afghans," he said.

The Pakistan-based Afghan



A US Marine prepares to patrol Camp Rhino in southern Afghanistan on Thursday.

REUTERS PHOTO

Islamic Press said quoting an unidentified Taliban spokesman "A decision has also been taken to form a commission which would be headed by Mullah Naqibullah who will also act as Governor of Kandahar."

"Mullah Omar has taken the decision in consultation with tribal leaders and his associates and ulema," the spokesman said. Karzai said he did not know the whereabouts of Omar and Osama bin Laden.

Meanwhile, an anti-Taliban force of some 2,000, backed by relentless US air strikes, captured some cave-riddled hills in the rugged Tora Bora region of eastern Afghanistan, killing 22 foreign fighters loyal to bin Laden, a spokesman said today.

Mohammad Amin, a spokesman for Hazrat Ali who is leading local fighters in pursuit of the Saudi-born militant, told Reuters by satellite telephone that bin Laden might have fled

to the Spin Ghar mountains west of the Tora Bora area.

He said fighting was intense in areas of Tora Bora, a rugged district 35 miles south of eastern Jalalabad. "We found the bodies of 22 foreign supporters of Osama in a couple of caves and areas which we took overnight and yesterday afternoon," Amin said. "We believe that Osama may have already left Tora Bora for the Spin Ghar mountains," he added.

About 2,000 anti-Taliban fighters set out from Jalalabad on Tuesday to hunt down bin Laden and the mainly Arab fighters of his al Qaida network.

Osama kin killed: Report Unconfirmed Intelligence reports suggest that US air strikes on Afghanistan may have killed a son or son-in-law of Osama bin Laden, a US official said on Wednesday.

Agencies

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 DEC 2001

Afghanistan as a land bridge

By C. Raja Mohan

A cooperative endeavour to build pipelines and transport corridors in the region with Afghanistan as a key transit nation will help reinforce the efforts to have a moderate regime in Kabul.

WITH THE diplomatic effort to establish an interim authority in Kabul completed in Germany, the focus now shifts to the quick delivery of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, which has seen nothing but war for nearly two decades. The plans for immediate relief and long-term reconstruction in Afghanistan are expected to be one of the largest international efforts in recent memory.

Afghanistan desperately needs this assistance. The rich western nations owe it to themselves and the Afghan people not to leave the country in the lurch this time. After the Russian troops withdrew from Afghanistan in the late 1980s, America and the West celebrated their victory over the Soviet Union and turned their backs on Afghanistan.

The Bush Administration has given firm commitments that the United States will not walk away from Afghanistan this time. Although Washington remains reluctant to get directly involved in "nation-building" in Afghanistan, it is likely to mobilise the United Nations system and the international community in a big way to put Afghanistan back on its feet.

While international commitments to stay engaged appear credible at the moment, it is important to underline the fact that Afghanistan will not be able to thrive on aid alone. Nor will it be realistic to expect that the generosity of the international community will last very long. Along with the aid for relief and reconstruction, there must be a strategy to help the Afghan people help themselves. This requires a basic concept for long-term growth and prosperity. And that idea will have to be based on Afghanistan's unique location as the land bridge between the subcontinent, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.

Afghanistan's history is testimony to its special position on the ancient Silk Road that for centuries connected Europe and Asia and helped move people, goods and ideas across continents. The Bamiyan Buddhas destroyed by the Taliban and the exquisite arts of the Kushans symbolised the importance of Afghanistan on the cultural highways of a bygone period. Returning Afghanistan to that pivotal role is an objective that must inform the international efforts to reconstruct it. This would call for a fundamental reversal of Afghan-

istan's isolation from the international community in the last 200 years.

In the 19th century Afghanistan shut itself down. To avoid colonisation and prevent the Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Great Game from undermining its sovereignty, it de-linked itself from the world. A nation which once linked Europe and Asia shunned engagement with the European world. Afghan rulers banned their people from travelling on railways. As the British built railroads in the subcontinent right up to Peshawar and the Russians brought rail links down to Termez on the Amu Darya or the Oxus, Kabul was determined not to let the rail lines penetrate its interiors. Kabul saw railroads bringing unwanted foreign influence and making Afghanistan vulnerable to European marauders and soldiers. Afghan isolationism continued into the mid-20th century despite occasional international efforts to modernise the nation.

The Soviet military intervention at the end of 1979 smashed forever the remoteness of Afghanistan and brought it to the centre stage of global geopolitics. But the Russian communists failed to deliver the much needed modernisation or integration with the world. And Pakistan's intervention during the 1990s produced the Taliban and its anti-modernist ideology. As the international community grapples with the future of the war-torn nation, a deliberate integration of Afghanistan into the regional and global economy will be essential to positively transform the nation.

Today in a world that is globalising, Afghanistan must be encouraged to rediscover its natural propensity to serve as a bridge between different people and cultures. In encouraging commerce and energy flows across Eurasia and in providing the much needed access to transportation corridors from inner Asia to the Indian Ocean, it can earn sustainable revenues and create modern infrastructure. The country's limited natural resources and its

subsistence level agriculture are unlikely to lift Afghan society towards growth and prosperity. But natural gas pipelines and transportation corridors connecting energy rich but landlocked inner Asia with consumption centres in Asian rimlands and overseas could bring substantive riches to Afghanistan.

In recent years, the Great Game metaphor has been reinvented to describe the contest to exploit the natural gas riches of Central Asia and transporting them across Afghanistan. The U.S. energy company UNOCAL's failed efforts to build a pipe-

WORLD VIEW

line from Central Asia through Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean have already acquired mythical proportions. The company with apparent backing from Washington in the mid-1990s had made a substantive bid to encourage the Taliban.

First, UNOCAL's assessment that Afghanistan can be a thriving "transit" country remains a sound one. The country has no other realistic alternative to moving its economy quickly forward. Second, a conflictual approach to building these pipelines is unlikely to work. The intense competition among the U.S., Russia and Iran to shape the pipeline politics of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea was bound to be counter-productive. The U.S. sought to cut the Russians and Iranians out of the pipeline routes. And Moscow and Teheran in turn were determined not to let other plans succeed. But the U.S., Russia and Iran have now cooperated, openly or tacitly, in ousting the Taliban. If they can extend the cooperation towards an efficient exploitation of the Central Asian natural gas resources, it should be possible to move away from the metaphor of the Great Game. The biggest beneficiary of such a shift will be Afghanistan. A network of gas pipelines and highways crisscrossing Afghanistan could connect the former Russian republics of Central Asia with the energy markets in the subcontinent, and link the gas grids of Iran

and inner Asia. The pie is large enough to ensure a stake for each of the key players.

A cooperative endeavour to build pipelines and transport corridors in the region with Afghanistan as a key transit nation would also help reinforce the efforts to build a moderate regime in Kabul. Only a modernising and outward-looking Government in Kabul can fully exploit the natural advantages of Afghanistan as a land bridge. It is also important for a bridge state to remain in harmony with its neighbours and not allow hostile activity on its soil against other states. Equally important is for the neighbours not to disturb the tranquility of the bridge state through which so much beneficial commerce could flow.

The biggest obstacle to creating a Eurasian land bridge in Afghanistan lies in Pakistan. For the last decade Pakistan has nursed ambitions not only of creating a pliable regime in Kabul, but also to eventually gain control over the Afghan land bridge. But the romance in Pakistan in recent years about finding strategic depth in Afghanistan and exploiting its geopolitical location have come to a disastrous end. Pakistan, however, will be able to take advantage of the political geography of the region only if it is ready to transform itself into a "bridge state". The attempt of the international community must be to encourage Pakistan to become a transit state along with Afghanistan. The U.S. success in Afghanistan will depend on the ability to transform Pakistan into a state that is in harmony with its neighbours, sheds its obsession with gaining more territory and seeks prosperity through open borders and expanding trade linkages.

India has viewed with some suspicion the various proposals for trans-border pipelines within its Western neighbourhood. India needs to see these pipeline projects — that connect it with Iran through Pakistan, or integrate Central Asia to the Indian market through Afghanistan and Pakistan — as vehicles to transform the region. As the biggest economic force and the largest consumption centre for energy, India has a natural say in how these projects are structured. Instead of stepping back, India should leverage these projects to nudge the badlands to its west in a positive direction.

THE HINDU

- 7 DEC 2001

Alexander
110-15

Al-Jazeera moves east

8/12

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, DEC. 5. Al-Jazeera, the Qatar-based television channel, has moved East. Select news bulletins of the West Asian television channel can now be seen in Malaysia and Brunei in South-East Asia.

The channel, which made waves in the early stages of the American military response by carrying exclusive pictures and news clips, seems to be emerging as an alternative to the Western channels like CNN and BBC.

A spokeswoman for Astro, Malaysia's private satellite broadcasting service, told this correspondent from Kuala Lumpur today that four-hour-long programmes are shown at 8 am and 6 pm every day. Astro, which broadcasts to some 650,000 households in Malaysia, has an audience of 12,000 households in Brunei as well, the spokeswoman stated.

She said that the channel was available both in Arabic as well as in Malay, which is the main language in both Malaysia and Brunei. According to her, the news broadcasts carried by Astro are "current".

Asked what had been the response of viewers to the telecast of Al-Jazeera bulletins, the spokeswoman said the company had not yet carried out any surveys to ascertain the impact. The broadcast it-

self started on November 21.

There is little doubt that alternative news sources are being welcomed. The Malaysian Government, for instance, is a known critic of the West and will obviously welcome a channel that presents a different viewpoint.

The Al-Jazeera experiment in South-East Asia is a very new one. It will be closely watched in other parts of the world.

There is little doubt that the exclusive footage of the Saudi-born terrorist, Osama bin Laden, did much to popularise the channel in other parts of the world.

The creditline of Al-Jazeera was seen on television channels across the world — in a sense the channel did what CNN had done with the Gulf War. A channel like Al-Jazeera is important for permitting a hundred flowers to bloom. Pluralism in the media can only be a good thing for the world.

The fact that the United States, albeit belatedly, recognised the power of Al-Jazeera and officials began to give interviews to the channel, is recognition of its strength.

Many in this part of the world feel that news coverage is dominated by Western, principally American, channels.

But now viewers in Malaysia and Brunei have an option — they can watch Al-Jazeera.

THE HINDU

6 DEC 2001

■ NEW GUARD IN KABUL

A 29-member executive cabinet will rule Afghanistan for the next six months. It will take over on Dec 22.



HAMID KARZAI: A royal ethnic Pashtun tribal leader, he will head the interim government. Pashtuns are the traditional rulers of Afghanistan. The 44-year-old former deputy foreign minister, currently on the battlefield fighting the Taliban in Kandahar, is an ally of the exiled Afghan King Zahir Shah



ABDULLAH ABDULLAH: Foreign minister. An ethnic Tajik, who belongs to the Northern Alliance, is to retain his post as foreign minister. Close aide of Alliance general Ahmed Shah Massoud

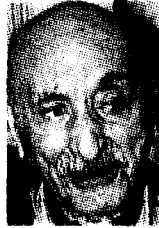
TWO WOMEN
Sima Samar, Deputy premier to look after women's affairs
Suhaila Seddiqui, Health minister



YUNUS QANOONI: Interior minister. Another ethnic Tajik belonging to the Alliance. He has been serving in the current position. Close aide of Massoud



MOHAMMAD QASIM FAHIM: Defence minister. He too is a Tajik from the Northern Alliance. Held the same portfolio in the outgoing government



ZAHIR SHAH: The former king who lives in exile in Rome gets a symbolic role, presiding over the Loya Jirga or the grand traditional assembly of elders

■ DUMPED

BURHANUDDIN RABBANI:

The 61-year-old ousted president is out. Even his deputies don't care much about him. Rabbani's departure has cleared the field for a group of younger Afghan leaders more aware of the people's needs



ABDUL RASHID DOSTAM: One of the arch turncoats in Afghanistan, shifting sides repeatedly in the past, stands to lose out from normalisation in the country. No role in the new regime

HAMID KARZAI TO HEAD 30-MEMBER INTERIM CABINET

Afghan groups sign deal

Agencies

KOENIGSWINTER (Germany), Dec. 5. — The first decisive step to restore peace and stability to Afghanistan was taken here today. The four Afghan factions at talks here signed a pact aimed at setting up of a new administration headed by a Pashtun commander, Mr Hamid Karzai.

(A late night report said Mr Karzai was slightly injured by an errant US bomb that also killed three American soldiers and injured 20. US officials said Mr Karzai was in an area north of Kandahar when it was struck by a B-52 bomber. Mr Karzai, however, denied he had been injured.)

Envoys of the Northern Alliance, former king Zahir Shah and two smaller exile groups signed the UN-mediated accord after nine days of talks at Petersberg Hotel.

The UN envoy for Afghanistan, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, won the deal after a final 10 hours of talks over the composition of an interim set-up that'll govern Afghanistan for six months, till Zahir Shah returns from exile and convenes a meeting of the council of tribal elders (*loya jirga*). The deal also provides for a UN force in Afghanistan.

The consensus on the 30-member Cabinet triggers a speedy transfer of power in Kabul, scheduled for 22 December, and secures billions in promised aid to reconstruct the country. It's the first step towards the formation of a broad-based government representing all regions and ethnic groups.

Mr Brahimi admitted that the delegations at Bonn talks represented only part of Afghan society and urged the new leader-



An Afghan child passes a hen to another across a barbed wire fence at a refugee camp in Chaman, Pakistan, on Wednesday. — AP/PTI

ship to induct all groups, as well as women.

After intense haggling over posts, the Northern Alliance has got more than half of the 30 ministries, including defence, foreign and home portfolios. The Rome-based royalist delegation received at least eight ministries, including finance, education and reconstruction. Two women from the Alliance have been included — Ms Sima Samar (women affairs minister) and Ms Suhaila Seddiqi (health minister).

The final list, culled from about 150 candidates, has not been released, but about 10 candidates could be contacted to formally accept the posts, the UN spokesman, Mr Ahmad Fawzi, said. The replies were expected later today.

The delegates were jubilant after completing the deal. The signing ceremony was attended by the German Chancellor, Mr Gerhard Schroeder, and foreign minister, Mr Joschka Fischer. They shook hands with

the Afghan envoys and Mr Brahimi embraced them after they all signed the deal. The head of the royalist delegation, Mr Mostapha Zaher (Zahir Shah's grandson) said: "Maybe it's not perfect, but under the circumstances it's something honourable, some thing good. I think the future of Afghanistan looks very bright."

The head of the Alliance team, Mr Yunus Qanooni, said the accord showed his side's readiness to compromise.

The Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf welcomed the Bonn agreement and offered to help the reconstruction and rehabilitation activities in the war-ravaged country.

Mr George W Bush said the deal was "a positive development", while the UN secretary general, Mr Kofi Annan, urged the Cabinet members to work "closely together", saying the world would help a "reliable government" in Kabul.

The Taliban has dismissed the interim Cabinet as a puppet government.

Mr Karzai (44) is a moderate Muslim whose 4,000 fighters are part of the final push to oust the Taliban from its last stronghold in Kandahar.

He was in Pakistan during the Soviet occupation and later became the deputy foreign minister in the Burhanuddin Rabbani government. But he resigned after being disillusioned by constant bickering in the government.

Meanwhile, local Afghan militia backed by tanks and a US B-52 bomber attacked Al-Qaida positions at the Tora Bora cave complex in eastern Afghanistan today, a report from Agam says.

US bombers, tribesmen attack Osama's mountain hideout

Karzai at Kandahar gate

Kabul/Quetta, Dec. 5 (Reuters): US bombers and Afghan tribesmen attacked suspected mountain cave hideouts of fugitive Osama bin Laden today as Hamid Karzai, the man named at talks in Bonn to head a post-Taliban government, said his men were on the outskirts of Kandahar.

"We are continuing our movement towards Kandahar and let's hope we can be there as soon as possible," he added.

Karzai said he was negotiating with some of the city's defenders. The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted a Taliban spokesman as saying a Taliban delegation met Karzai at Shah Wali Kot. "We discussed (ways) to prevent bloodshed in Kandahar and solve problems peacefully," AIP quoted the spokesman as saying. "A top Pashtoon leader in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta said senior Taliban officials in Kandahar had contacted him to seek guaran-

tees that they would be safe if they surrendered. He declined to identify the Taliban involved.

Karzai was speaking moments before a UN spokesman said Afghan factions had picked the Pashtoon chief to be chairman of a post-Taliban multi-ethnic government

Marines on the move

US Marines have moved from a desert airstrip in southern Afghanistan towards the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar to block roads in the area as part of the siege of the city, officials said today.

"We have stepped into a new phase of the campaign, and that is participating in offensive actions," said Major Jim Parrington, executive officer for the battalion landing team of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Parrington said a substantial raid force had left the airstrip, codenamed Rhino, yesterday and was preparing to start offen-

sive action. He declined to say how many or what type of vehicles or troops were involved in what may be the first major combat for the Marines, who seized the airstrip without a fight.

"The marines were excited," Parrington said. "Every single one of them was very focused on what they were going to do."

"We're conducting operations in conjunction with the other coalition forces as they're putting pressure on Kandahar."

Reporters had seen a large number of armoured vehicles loaded up with food, water and weapons departing from the airstrip on different occasions over two days.

Parrington said the goal was to cut lines of communication from Kandahar in order to support Afghan Opposition fighters who he said were closing in on the city. "In cutting the lines of communication we're orienting on the Taliban, we're orienting on al Qaida, we're orienting on

things of military value to the Taliban and al Qaida," Parrington said at the airstrip.

Light armoured vehicles and all-terrain humvees carrying anti-tank weapons regularly go out on patrol from the airbase and reconnaissance missions have been pushing further away from the base in recent days.

The Marines have not said how many troops, vehicles or aircraft they have on the ground, and military ground rules bar reporters from giving those numbers or details of ongoing or future operations.

Pak crackdown

Pakistan arrested 18 foreign nationals suspected of having close links with the al Qaida network. Those arrested include three women, who are believed to be relatives of Osama bin Laden, and their arrested spouses are presently being interrogated by Pakistan's military intelligence service.

The Bonn accord is no guarantee of durable peace

A step on a thorny path

Whatever the new balance of power between different ethnic groups in Afghanistan, it is the United States of America which calls all the shots. But for the softening of the entrenched taliban positions by relentless US bombing, it would have been impossible for the Northern Alliance even to reoccupy Mazar-e-Sharif, not to speak of Kabul and the larger part of the country. Nor would the Pashtun and other tribal leaders loyal to Zahir Shah have had a chance to secure any say for the long exiled king in the affairs of the country he left in the wake of a coup over thirty years ago.

It was this realization of their double dependence on the US for carrying the war to the point where the country is completely rid of the taliban and al Qaida scourges and mobilizing the requisite resources for rebuilding the country most of whose cities have been reduced to rubble, which made the four Afghan groups at Bonn reach a consensus not only on the interim government of the country for six months but on the roadmap for a new constitution and democratic system.

Thus when Lakhdar Brahimi feels upbeat over having nudged and coaxed the delegates belonging to different ethnic groups into accepting more or less the proposals mooted by him, it is less as the special United Nations envoy for Afghanistan than as a surrogate for Colin Powell. His persuasive skills may have helped the key Northern Alliance delegates to snub Burhanuddin Rabbani by dissociating themselves from his hardline position in opposing the composition of the interim government being settled in Bonn, a matter under discussion until Tuesday, and the stationing of an international peacekeeping force in the Afghan capital.

But what really counted in ironing out differences was the realization by most delegates that a society riven by inter-ethnic hatreds and plagued by widespread hunger and destitution had no choice but to seize the only chance they had to prevent the country from going to pieces.

No one in the war coalition is under any illusion that the Bonn accord by itself is a guarantee of durable peace or smooth transition to a more democratic and civilized order in a state ravaged by over twenty years of war and civil strife, brutalized by five years of taliban rule and turned into a major base for international terrorism even as its people sank into ever lower depths of misery and their minds were warped by a most odious form of fundamentalism. It will be a very long haul for Afghanistan as it settles down to repair the damage done to its body and soul during two decades of strife and to reweave its social fabric now reduced to tatters. The Bonn accord can be regarded only as the first step along a road full of potholes and hairpin bends and dangers of sniping and ambush lurking at every corner.

The impediments in the way of a

smooth transition to a new order are indeed too many to be counted. The US is yet to get hold of Osama bin Laden, dead or alive. His very presence will be incentive enough to recruit more fanatics for terrorist outfits in the name of religion. The war itself is far from over. The very fact that the taliban are using human shields in a bid to defend their last redoubt in Kandahar makes it difficult for those fighting them to distinguish between terrorists and civilians as they mount the final assault on the city.

Even the seizure of Kandahar will not mean necessarily the end of the tal-

ular areas will come to an end.

There is also the danger of a large part of the funds put at the disposal of the central government or local governors for reconstruction work finding its way into private pockets. The best course will be to entrust the job to internationally known non-governmental organizations, with stringent accounting for every dollar spent and continuous monitoring of progress in relief and other activities by a UN body.

The priorities are clear enough. The first need is rushing ample food supplies to drought-stricken areas

many as sixty countries. What is more, the fragile and, in some ways deceptive, character of the alliance itself becomes clearer every day, with hundreds of troops and volunteers of some allied states fighting on the side of the taliban.

The answer to the question of whether the US prefers to call this doublecrossing or by some less pejorative phrase may depend on the need for discretion in a dicey situation. But in the larger context of the war on international terrorism, such betrayals cannot but gravely compromise the integrity of the whole enterprise. The same applies to the conduct of allies who have been surreptitiously funding al Qaida and other equally murderous outfits. It is immaterial whether they do so to protect their own territories against the contagion of terrorism or as a token of their secret sympathy for the *jihadi* cause. The result in either case is equally disastrous.

The wrapping up of an accord at Bonn can be legitimately hailed as a good augury for bringing, in the long run, both peace and stability to a society in an advanced state of dissolution. But for the war on international terrorism to achieve both greater credibility and effectiveness, the contradictions which riddle the present coalition have got to be removed. Otherwise they will burst into the open with a new violence as has already happened in west Asia where the pretence that the peace process can make steady progress in the midst of daily acts of terrorism has exploded in the US administration's face, forcing George Bush to concede Israel's right to take what measures of self-defence its government thinks necessary.

One of the bitter ironies of the globalization process is that, even as it disrupts and hybridizes national cultures, it also promotes virulent forms of separatist subnationalisms with a religious, sectarian, regional or ethnic face, which seek to legitimize use of terror in the name of self-determination. The war against international terrorism cannot be fought successfully unless the US and other Western powers come to grips with this problem which threatens the integrity of most multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies.

They cannot reserve the right of taking whatever action they think necessary for their own security while denying it to others. Nor can they go on nudging hostile neighbours into holding peace talks in a climate vitiated by raging terrorism and in the absence of any common ground between them. Just as terrorism does not shed its evil character merely because those who resort to it do so in the name of a holy war, the blood on its hands is not washed away by hailing those who indulge in killing innocent people as freedom fighters. In cases where freedom fighters enjoy the patronage of military dictators and are happily reconciled to the subversion of all democratic institutions, the story becomes all the more weird.

SHAMLAL



Lakhdar Brahimi is upbeat less as special UN envoy than as a surrogate of Colin Powell

where many are dying of hunger, and provision of adequate clothing and shelter to those rendered homeless. As things are today, tens of thousands of families have to bear the rigours of a severe winter in shoddy tents more suited to a temperate climate than to subzero temperatures and winds that freeze both body and spirit.

Even the work of completing the unfinished job in Afghanistan, which has been the main theatre of the war on international terrorism so far, is circumscribed by too many ifs and buts. As for the task of extending it to other areas of cross-border terrorism, it has not yet received even cursory attention from the US-led war coalition. This is not surprising for many reasons. The first is the enormity of the task. According to US official statements the activities of al Qaida itself cover as

Afghans build peace pillars

Bonn, Dec. 5 (Reuters): Afghan rivals signed an accord today to form a government hoping to rebuild their devastated country with billions of dollars in international aid after two decades of war.

The deal, reached before dawn on the ninth day of grueling talks, creates an interim administration in which the militarily dominant Northern Alliance shares power with exile groups. It takes power on December 22.

Hamid Karzai, the Pashtoon chief spearheading the attack on Kandahar, had an inauspicious crowning as head of the interim government when he was slightly injured by a stray American bomb.

Four delegations, representing the country's main ethnic groups, signed the deal at Petersberg hotel outside Bonn hours before the start of a Berlin aid conference.

Yunis Qanuni, the top Bonn delegate for the Northern Alliance, which has taken much of Afghanistan, said: "This is proof that if the Afghans know how to fight well, they also know how to make peace." Karzai, designated chairman of the administration, told the BBC his priority will be to restore "peace and stability" so that Afghans can "work and earn a living".

Nations pledged \$600 million in aid and Western donors in Berlin are this week expected to approve the immediate flow of funds. Afghanistan may need up

THE AFGHAN AGREEMENT



Graphic: RA

Who gets what in 29-member interim govt

- Pashtoons get to lead it with Karzai being the chief executive
- Northern Alliance, which is backed by Russia and India, corners more than half
- Zahir Shah's group second largest with 8 members
- Blow to Pakistan as Peshawar exiles manage only one representative



Hamid Karzai

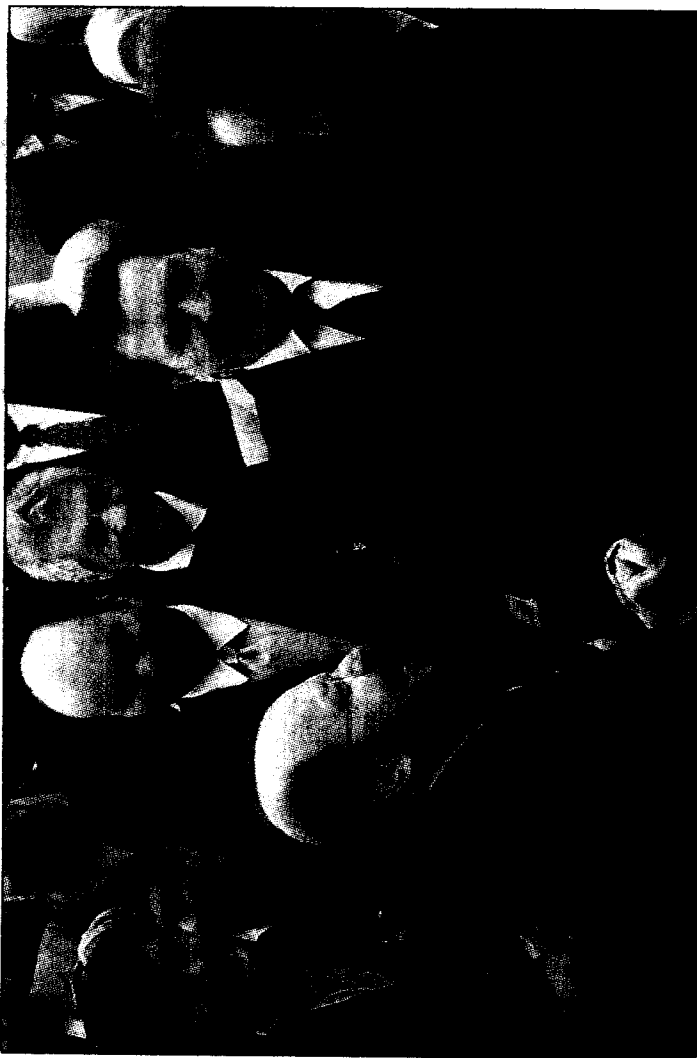
to \$10 billion over 10 years.

Signatories in Bonn were the Northern Alliance and three exile factions — the pro-Rome group, the Pakistan-based Peshawar group and a Cyprus group of intellectuals. All wearing dark Western suits and ties, Qanuni and leaders of the three exile groups signed the deal. The roughly 20 remaining delegates, including two women and one in traditional turban and khaki military jacket, then signed. The deal was

greeted by a chorus of approval from Western leaders. US secretary of state Colin Powell said his country's diplomats would soon return to Kabul.

The new government includes two women, a contrast to their repression by the Taliban. One of them will be Sima Samar, a doctor, who, as one of five deputy chairpersons, will be responsible for women's affairs.

Showing a changing climate after five years of the Taliban, Sima Wali, of the group support-



Celebration after the breakthrough on the interim government in Afghanistan. (AFP)

ing the former king, breached Afghan tradition to sign without her hair covered, a silk scarf around her shoulders and high heels on her feet.

The interim administration will rule for six months. The Northern Alliance keeps the three most powerful ministries — Yunis Qanuni as interior minister, Mohammad Fahim as defence and Abdullah Abdullah as foreign minister. The accord also invites the UN Security Council to mandate international peacekeepers to guarantee security in Kabul.

It sets out a symbolic role for former king Zahir Shah in calling a loya jirga to approve a more permanent government ahead of the drafting of a constitution and elections within two years.

UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, who pushed the argumentative Afghan groups towards an accord, said he would visit the former king in Rome and fly to Kabul to thank Alliance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani

for his cooperation. Rabbani came under massive international pressure as he repeatedly held up progress in Bonn. He is still recognised by the UN as president, a status that will lapse when the new government takes power. The US is putting pressure on him to step aside.

"The eyes of the world will be on you and you carry a huge responsibility," Brahimi told delegates after the signing, dark rings under his eyes from long nights of negotiating.

Born in USA, battling for Taliban

Name: John Phillip Walker
aka Abdul Hamid
Citizenship: American
Calling: Taliban fighter
Fought in: Kashmir and Kunduz
Last seen in: A prison in Mazar-e-Sharif

The hosts of America's Public Enemy No. 1 have found in Walker at least one American willing to shed blood for them.

The 20-year-old American, who fought for the Taliban and survived a bloody prison uprising near 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," Walker said in an interview shown on CNN. He was being held by US forces in northern Afghanistan.

He then went to Kabul, where the Taliban urged him to join forces supported by Osama bin Laden because he did not speak any local language.

Walker said he followed the advice and reached a training camp in Afghanistan where bin Laden appeared several times. The American said he learned to fire a Kalashnikov.

Walker said he was then sent to the Kashmir region, where he fought with Pakistanis against



Walker on CNN. (AFP)

Indians, and returned to fight recently with the Taliban at Kunduz in Afghanistan.

"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 the 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.

"He was among the al Qaida 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," a Central Command spokesman said.

The CNN clip showed the man appearing dirty, with a long beard and grimacing 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 identified by his parents as John Phillip Walker Lindh, of northern California. His parents told *Newsweek* that they had contacted officials at the state department and the US embassy in Pakistan but had received no information.

Walker, who uses his mother Marilyn Walker's last name, said he had travelled to Afghanistan to help the Taliban build a "pure Islamic state".

Walker was born in Washington in February 1981. He is the second of three children of a home health care worker and a lawyer, Frank Lindh.

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 brainwashed," she said.

The parents said they did not know if he would be charged with a crime but would stand by him. (Afghan reports on P 4)

WRITTEN WITH REUTERS REPORT

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 8 2001

King's loyalists get top posts in Afghan deal

Bonn, December 3

AFGHAN GROUPS have reached an agreement on the power-sharing deal for the interim Government in Kabul. The council would be led by royalists loyal to former King Zahir Shah, while the Alliance would hold onto the defence ministry.

The royalist delegation said it had voted to make Abdul Sattar Sirat — its mild-mannered, ethnic-Uzbek chief negotiator — the Prime Minister of the interim Cabinet designed to rule the war-torn country for six months.

Three other names put forward for other leading posts were: Pashtun tribal leader Hamid Karzai, former President Sibghatullah Mujadadi and Pashtun spiritual leader Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani.

"A complete agreement has been reached. It will be signed on Tuesday," a source said. Details of some amendments still had to be incorporated into a clean text in English, Pashto and Dari.

"The quota to head the interim administration is theirs (royalists)," Alliance Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah said. "We will keep the defence ministry because we want to avoid any immediate breakdown of law and order. This ministry is related to the destiny of the mujahideen as well, and anyway, this is an interim period."

"The delegation of the Islamic State and United Front has the authority to select one of the four proposed candidates ... as the head of the interim administration," a resolution adopted at the meeting said. But it did not authorise the

delegation in Bonn to make decisions on the composition of the Cabinet and other details, saying these "should be made in front of the leadership council".

Delegates examined a UN draft accord providing for a six-month interim authority leading to the convening of a *loya jirga*, or grand council of elders.

Earlier in the day, Alliance president Burhanuddin Rabbani had told *The Washington Post* that he had a new plan to keep him and his coalition in power for up to six more months.

ALLIANCE MARCHES INTO KANDAHAR AIRPORT

THE NORTHERN Alliance today reportedly entered the Kandahar airport. Its troops and the Taliban were engaged in fierce fighting when reports last came in.

"We have lost 12 fighters, but they (Taliban) have lost at least three times as many," said a spokesman for former Kandahar Governor Gul Agha Shiraji. A Pashtun tribal commander with forces near Kandahar claimed that al-Qaida troops were stopping Afghan Taliban troops from surrendering.

Afghan Islamic Press said American commandos landed in Jalalabad yesterday to search the Tora Bora caves for Osama, and that US bombing around the caves today had killed nearly 60 civilians.

Agencies

SNAPSHOTS



FUTURE AHEAD: Haleema Siddiki, 34, a teacher returning to teaching for the first time since the Taliban took over Jalalabad, takes her daughter to school in Jalalabad on Wednesday. (AP)

Pak doses its border with Afghanistan

Peshawar: Pakistan closed its Torkham border post on Thursday after the new authorities on Afghanistan side objected to Pakistan putting up a fence there, reports said on Friday. Tension has risen at the site as Afghans wanting to cross either way were stranded there, according to the Afghan Islamic Press agency. Border guards said work on the barbed wire fencing was stopped after the Afghan authorities in the area raised objections. (DPA)

Aid only to avert Afghan terror haven, says UN

Kabul: Unless the United States and its allies make a long-term commitment to rebuild war-crippled Afghanistan, the country will remain a potential haven for terrorists, a senior UN official said on Friday. Mr Mark Malloch Brown, leading the UN's efforts to rebuild Afghanistan, said the international coalition hunting Osama bin Laden had a moral obligation to reconstruct Afghanistan after often ignoring it during 23 years of war. (Reuters)

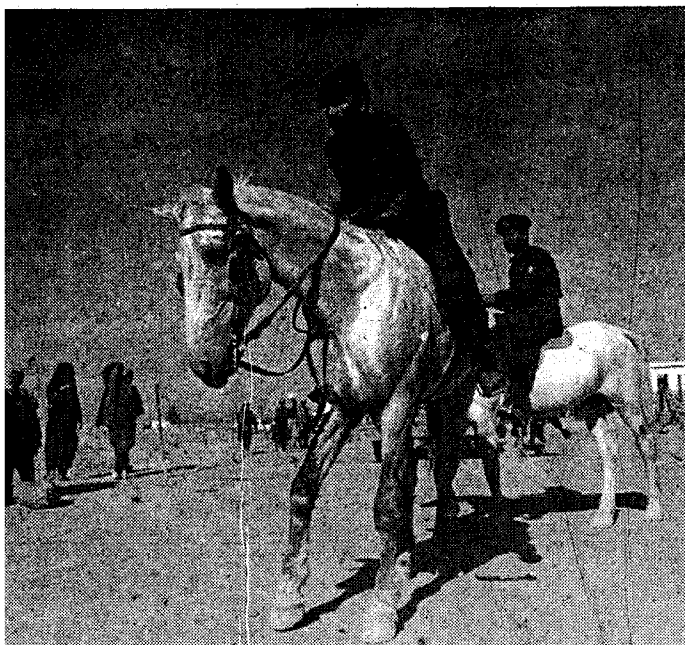
US drops 2 millionth food aid packet

Berlin: The number of food packages dropped by the United States over Afghanistan topped 2 million in an overnight mission by US Cargo planes, with no end in sight yet to the airdrops, an Air Force spokesman said on Friday.

The crew of a US C-17 cargo plane symbolically dropped a package marked as the 2 millionth, said Master Sgt. Joe Bela, a spokesman for US Air Force Europe at Ramstein air base in Germany. He said no end had been set for the airdrops, which will continue "until we're told to do otherwise." "At this point our mission is to keep dropping humanitarian daily rations," Sgt. Bela said. (AP)

Laden unlikely to hide in Somalia, says paper

Dubai: Somali President Abdugassim Salad Hassan said in remarks published on Friday that fugitive Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect in the September 11 attacks on the United States, was unlikely to take refuge in Somalia. Mr Hassan's remarks, published in the London-based Arabic-language *Asharq al-Awsat* newspaper, came after a United States official said on Thursday that US warships were watching for Bin Laden off Somalia in case he fled there from Afghanistan. "There is absolutely no way for such a possibility," Mr Hassan was quoted as saying by the newspaper. (Reuters)



ON ALERT: Pakistani border guards patrol the Chaman border on Thursday. (Reuters)

US LAUNCHES FIERCEST RAIDS ON KANDAHAR

BY SAEED ALI

Chaman, Nov. 30: US warplanes pounded Taliban troops dug in at the airport of their last stronghold, Kandahar, on Friday, while ethnic Pashtun tribal leaders told the Northern Alliance to steer clear of south Afghanistan.

The US air raids on the southern city of Kandahar, spiritual birthplace of the Taliban and seat of power of their leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, were among the fiercest since the war began 55

days ago, said tribal commander Mohammad Anwar.

"The raids started in the morning and are still continuing," Mr Anwar told Reuters by satellite phone. "US warplanes are hitting all suspected sites of the Taliban and Al Qaeda in and around the city."

Coming under attack were the Taliban garrison area of Shera-e-Nau and Sarpoza, where many tanks are believed to be in position, to the west of Kandahar, Mr Anwar said. Threatening Kandahar was an

army of about 3,000 fighters led by former mujahideen city governor Gul Acha and massed six km south of the airport, but they had no immediate plans to advance further, said Mr Agha's spokesman Khalid Pashtoon.

"Bombing is going on right now, but there is no fighting," Mr Pashtoon told Reuters by satellite telephone.

He said Agha's forces could look down on the airport as the bombs struck. Taliban forces, which he said were likely to include foreign

fighters feared for their determination to stand to the last man, were sheltering in bunkers. Mullah Omar's fundamentalist militia has been driven back to Kandahar and a few surrounding provinces after seven weeks of intense US airstrikes and swift advances by the ethnic minority Tajik and Uzbek-dominated Northern Alliance.

In less than three weeks, the Northern Alliance has swept the Taliban out of northern Afghanistan and from the capital,

Kabul. Afghanistan's Pashtuns, the war-torn country's largest tribe, are besieging the Taliban in their remaining southern outposts, while the first US ground troops, a deployment of around 1,000 Marines, have taken over a desert airstrip within striking distance of Kandahar.

Surrounded by mountains, the ancient walled city of Kandahar was where the Taliban's extreme interpretation of sharia, or Islamic law, first set root.

Dr A.B. Haqqani, a Pakistani

who runs clinics for women and children in Kandahar, said the Taliban's hold over the people of the city was breaking down.

"The people are sure the Taliban won't be there (long) and their trust in the Taliban is going," Haqqani told Reuters after speaking to his staff in Kandahar on Thursday evening. He said all roads out of Kandahar were closed or dangerous, with US aircraft hitting vehicles that dared to leave. Underlining the mistrust between the Pashtuns and the ethnic-minor-

ity Northern Alliance after more than two decades of Soviet occupation, civil war and Taliban rule, Pashtoon issued a warning to the Northern Alliance not to advance south from Kabul. He described reports that Alliance forces had entered Kandahar province as a bluff. "The Northern Alliance are always bluffing on this kind of stuff and we don't like that," he said. "If they are marching to Kandahar, then it must be in their dreams. We have enough people here in Kandahar." (Reuters)

US coalition to quiz arrested Al Qaeda man

Islamabad, Nov. 30: A suspected leader of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network, captured by anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan, will soon be handed over for questioning to the US-led coalition against terrorism, a spokesman said on Friday.

Coalition spokesman Kenton Keith, confirming comments by a senior US official in Washington, said the Northern Alliance had seized alleged Al Qaeda recruiter Ahmad Omar Abdel-Rahman.

The 35-year-old Abdel-Rahman is the son of blind Muslim cleric Qheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, who with nine other militant Muslims was convicted on charges stemming from a deadly car bombing of New York's World Trade Centre in 1993.

"We expect him to be handed over to coalition authorities shortly," Mr Keith said at a news briefing in Islamabad.

He said the younger Abdel-Rahman had been closely associated with Osama bin Laden and the training of Al Qaeda militants.

"US authorities will want to

question him about these very serious allegations," Mr Keith said.

The *Los Angeles Times*, which first reported Abdel-Rahman's capture, quoted US intelligence officials as saying he was a high-profile figure in Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan.

It said the Northern Alliance was holding him at an undisclosed location.

Earlier this month a pan-Arab newspaper, *Asharq al-Awsat*, reported that another son of Sheikh Omar, Assad Abdel-Rahman, 29, had been killed in an American air raid on Afghanistan. Sheikh Omar was sentenced to life in prison in 1995 for the World Trade

Centre bombing, which killed six people and injured at least 1,000. The WTC's twin towers were demolished on September 11 when two hijacked airliners were rammed into them, an attack that Bin Laden is suspected of masterminding.

US-led forces began bombing Afghanistan on October 7 to crush Al Qaeda and its Taliban protectors. (Reuters)

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US-led forces began bombing Afghanistan on October 7 to crush Al Qaeda and its Taliban protectors. (Reuters)

Rabbani to soon meet President Musharraf

Kabul, Nov. 30: A meeting will be held "soon" between Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and the President of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance, Burhanuddin Rabbani, an aide to Rabbani told AFP on Friday.

He said Iran was organising the meeting, which is likely to be the first between Gen. Musharraf and Mr Rabbani since the Taliban militia from Kabul on November 13.

Speaking at a press conference later, Mr Rabbani said he sought close cooperation with all of Afghanistan's neighbours.

"We like to have friendly relations with our neighbours. We will maintain this idea. There should be mutual cooperation," he said, adding "this tendency has been shown by Pakistan as well."

He said both sides were under pressure from a variety of countries to hold the meeting and mend relations.

Pakistan had been the main ally of the Taliban militia until the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States forced it to reverse its policy. (AFP)

Bandits obstruct food supplies to needy Afghans

BY GREG MYRE

Kabul, Nov. 30: Food supplies are rising as aid groups gear up for winter, but banditry on the roads is making it too dangerous to deliver help to many remote areas where millions of hungry Afghans are effectively cut off.

Sixty-nine trucks loaded with wheat rumbled into Kabul on Thursday, part of almost daily deliveries for the World Food Programme. At one school, the UN refugee agency handed out blankets, sweaters and charcoal to some 2,500 impoverished people.

While many in the Afghan capital are hunting, the city's markets are full of food, aid is being distributed and hospitals are functioning.

The weather in Kabul and points south is above freezing for now, but snow and cold have already come to the mountainous north.

The most urgent problem is the rugged countryside. Of 6 million Afghans requiring food aid, 4 million are in the "hunger belt" that arcs across the north, including Afghanistan's most isolated pockets. Even in quiet times, these areas are tough to reach. Winter

snows have begun to block roads winding through the Hindu Kush mountains in the northeast, and many paths will soon be impassable. Three years of drought have shrivelled local food supplies. Two months of fighting has sent many fleeing their homes.

Aid officials say the greatest single obstacle to delivering supplies is the lack of security on the rutted roads, where robbers and warlords are seizing supplies and preventing aid groups from moving freely.

"I think (road) security at the moment is an issue everywhere," said Mr Burkard Oberle, head of the World Food Programme in Afghanistan. "We cannot go very far out of urban areas." The Red Cross and Medecins Sans Frontieres, two of the largest aid groups operating in Afghanistan, echoed his comments. The Northern Alliance, which has captured most of the country from the Taliban, has been unable to secure the roads. The bandits emerged almost immediately after the Taliban fled.

Militia leaders, some loosely linked to the Northern Alliance, and others operating independently, are carving out patches of territory every day. (AP)



GEARING UP: United States Navy "Seabees," the construction battalion of the Navy, get dressed as the sun rises at a US Marine forward base in southern Afghanistan on Thursday. (Reuters)

Shadow of war lingers on at Mazar

Mazar-e-Sharif, Nov. 30: Three weeks after this town in northern Afghanistan was liberated from the Taliban, a semblance of normal life is returning, but the legacy left by 20 years of conflict and upheaval will take much longer to shake off.

The people here, who lived under the Taliban's strict interpretation of Islam for the past three years, are savouring their new-found freedoms.

Men are shaving their beards, people are watching television and listening to music again, schools are re-opening.

But they are cautious too, having seen too many new dawns for their country disintegrate into renewed fighting.

"Of course we're glad that the Taliban are

gone," said one man, Mohammed Khalil. "But right now the most important thing for us is there is no more war."

The results of years of conflict and, more recently, economic isolation under Taliban rule can be seen everywhere in Mazar-e-Sharif, a once wealthy trading centre which is home to about one million people.

Hundreds of street urchins hang around on the streets, begging or helping street traders in exchange for a pittance.

Many of them play in the ruins of bombed-out houses, apparently oblivious to the skulls, blown-off hands and other body parts of dead Taliban fighters strewn among the rubble.

For most people here, the only means of earning an income is through trade. The town's cen-

tral bazaar and several streets are lined with stalls.

But with few people able to buy anything, it makes for a meagre living. The Afghan currency has been heavily devalued by deflation. At night, the town is pitched into darkness because electricity is in chronically short supply.

It used to come from neighbouring Uzbekistan, but the supply was cut three years ago leaving the town to generate its own power. There is only enough for about 10 per cent of the city's needs, making electricity a luxury reserved for the few who can pay for it. Many older inhabitants look back with fondness on the ten-year period when the town was controlled by occupying Soviet troops, until they pulled out of Afghanistan in 1980. (AFP)

Mr Kharrazi saw no divergence between the views of Pakistan and Iran over the idea of setting up a broad-based government in Kabul.

In reply to a direct question to the effect, he said: "I think everybody is looking forward for a stable government in Kabul."

He admitted that there had been differences between Iran and Pakistan over the question of supporting the Taliban.

"Taliban fall to improve our relations"

Islamabad, Nov. 30: Iran and Pakistan, saying the downfall of Afghanistan's Taliban rulers had removed "clouds" in their ties, pledged on Friday to work together for a broad-based government and reconstruction on their war-ravaged neighbour.

"The sun is shining," Pakistan foreign minister Abdul Sattar told a joint press conference with his Iranian counterpart Kamal Kharrazi in Islamabad. "Pakistan and Iran today are rid of the shadow that existed over our relations."

Echoing Mr Sattar's views, Mr Kharrazi said: "We are now entering a new era of our relationship. There is no more gap between Iran and Pakistan. Both must play an important role for the establishment of a broad-based government and the reconstruction of Afghanistan."

Shia dominated Iran and mainly Sunni Pakistan have long been at odds over the Taliban. Islamabad backed the Sunni fundamentalist militia, while Tehran supported its foes in the Northern Alliance. (Reuters)

Geneva, Nov. 30: Afghan refugees are returning in greater numbers from Iran, but the daily exodus towards Pakistan has nearly tripled as forces close in on the besieged Taliban stronghold of Kandahar, the United Nations said on Friday.

Spokesman Peter Kessler said that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees appreciated the "flexible approach" of Pakistan, whose border remains officially closed. But he also told a press briefing that Iran had deported 240 Afghans aboard six buses on Thursday, a "disturbing sign" it hoped would not be repeated given the precarious situation.

"The rate of spontaneous returns from Iran is gathering pace, with average daily returns numbering some 1,200 persons," Mr Kessler said, adding that there had been 1,500 on Thursday. UNHCR expatriate staff is returning to Herat in western Afghanistan to prepare distribution of food and shelter supplies to thousands of displaced people living in desperate conditions there. The number of Afghans fleeing the southern region between Spin Boldak and Kandahar for Pakistan has nearly tripled. (Reuters)



IN DISTANT LANDS: US Marines from the 15th Expeditionary Unit raise two flags at a Marine forward base in southern Afghanistan on Friday. (Reuters)

Afghans from Iran return, only to flee to Pakistan

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Delegate to Bonn meet raises women's rights issue

BY STEVEN ERLANGER
New York Times Service

Bonn, Nov. 30: Ms Sima Wali left Afghanistan 23 years ago when the Soviet Army swept into her country. Afghanistan was thrown into a downward spiral of violence, rivalry, civil war and harsh religious rule that finally forced Afghan women out of public life, jobs and education.

"In these 23 years, Afghan women have had to fight their own jihad for peace and equality," Ms Wali said. "It was a jihad, really. But it has also politicised Afghan women, even from behind the veil."

Ms Wali, who settled in the United States and has worked to better the lives of Afghan women, is one of three women taking part as delegates in the UN talks in Bonn on a provisional government for post-

Taliban Afghanistan. She and Ms Rona Mansuri, who came to Germany in the 1960s when her father was Afghanistan's ambassador, are delegates from the so-called Rome group, loyal to Afghanistan's former king, Mohammad Zahir Shah.

Before he was deposed by a cousin in 1973 and moved to Rome, the king, now 87, ruled an Afghanistan in which women had important public roles as legislators and ambassadors.

Under a 1964 Constitution, women were granted the right to work. Four then served as Cabinet ministers and two others were members of the National Assembly — a move into public life that accelerated during the 1979-89 Soviet occupation, when many women wore Western dress.

Under the rule of Burhanuddin Rabbani, the titular head of the

Northern Alliance who was President before the Taliban took over, women had to be accompanied by male relatives in public, a restoration of old laws that the new Islamic police enforced.

But under the Taliban, who took power in 1996, the status of women plunged. Education for those over 8 was banned and women were forced out of public life and jobs. Many were beaten for exposing their faces and some were killed, in public executions, after accusations of sexual misconduct. Part of the popularity of the former king now is the sense of a lost idyll, before Afghanistan spun apart. But Ms Mansuri and Ms Wali are using their positions to go beyond a return to the past. They are here to argue for women to take full and responsible roles in any future Afghan government — and for the reaffirmation and protec-

tion of women's rights to equality.

"We are not waiting any longer to be invited to sit at these tables where peace is being discussed and the reconstruction of our economy," Ms Wali said. "We are the silent voices that need to be heard."

Pressure from the United Nations and the West, including the United States, was vital to get women represented as delegates in Bonn, Ms Wali said. But now that she is in the room where the decisions are being made, she said, "I'm a constant presence to raise the issue of women." A third woman in the delegation, Ms Amena Safi Afzali, an exile now living in Iran, represents the Northern Alliance. Requests to interview her were not answered. Another exile, Ms Fatima Gailani, is an adviser to the Peshawar group, who are mostly Pashtun.



LONELY VOICE: Ms Sima Wali, the only female member of the Rome delegation of former Afghan King Zahir Shah, adjusts her headscarf during a press conference on the third day of UN talks on Afghanistan at Koeningswinter, near Bonn, on Thursday. (Reuters)

Memories of ISI's skewed Afghan policy are still fresh for the Alliance

■ KHALED AHMED

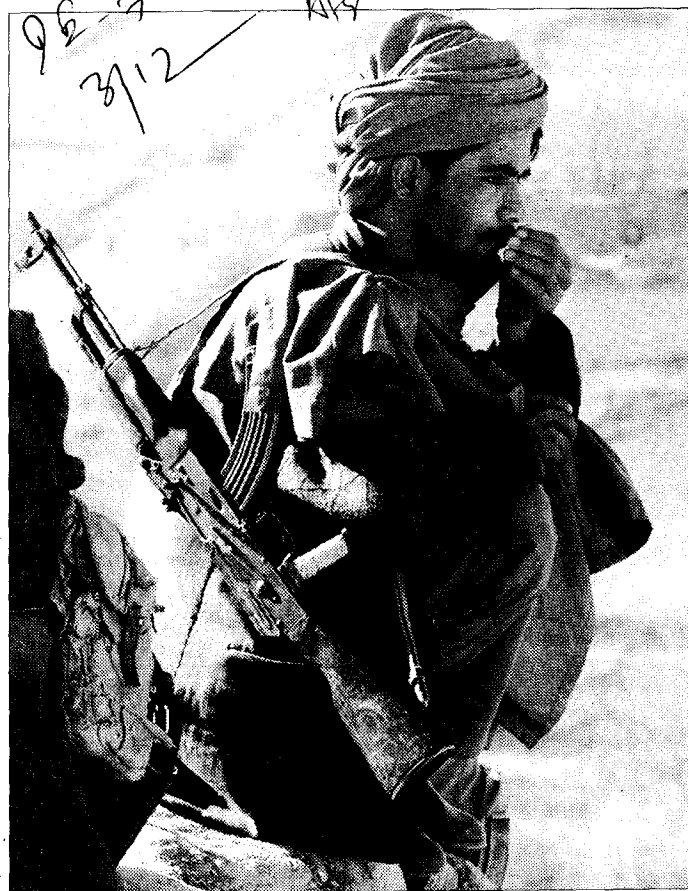
THE entry of the Northern Alliance into Kabul has unleashed fears in Pakistan. Jamiat Islami and its allies ruled in Kabul from 1992 to 1996, during which period it killed 50,000 Kabulis and raped and pillaged the hapless population of the city. Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud ordered the bombing of Pakistan embassy in 1996, climaxing his bad relations with Pakistan. Within the year, he had to flee into Panjsher Valley as Pakistan evened the score by seating the Taliban in Kabul.

Why does the Northern Alliance (Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Ismailis) hate Pakistan so much? The answer lies buried in the past, much of it in the way the ISI was allowed to handle the Afghan jihad from 1979 to 1989.

A report in *The News* quoted an ISI officer as saying: "The previous ISI bosses thought that it was a sin to have contact with the anti-Taliban Afghans. In the business of secret intelligence operations you can never close any windows, but in the past the ISI rebuffed every attempt by the anti-Taliban elements to open a dialogue with it". It suited the ISI and CIA to ignore the Jamiat Islami of Rabbani and Massoud and support Hizb-e-Islami of Hekmatyar. Massoud, locked in a personal vendetta with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, followed a policy of negotiating with the Soviet occupying army.

The ISI and CIA preferred outfits that did their bidding more readily. Saudi Arabia, attracted to wahhabi elements in the Kunar province, followed in their wake, backing ISI's preferential funding of Hizb-Hekmatyar and his Kharuti colleague, Ittehad Islami's Abdur Rasool Sayyaf. Jamiat and Hizb leaders arrived in Peshawar in 1975 after being driven out by the communist allies of President Daud. Prime minister Zulfikar Ali

Pakistan and Northern Alliance: new 'friends', older adversaries



Bhutto used Hekmatyar to needle Daud through random bombings in Kabul to dissuade him from reviving the Pakhtunistan issue.

When the Afghan war started in 1979, the jihad leaders residing in Peshawar multiplied. Seven jihadi parties were 'recognised' by General Zia and his ally, Jamaat Islami. According to Barnett R. Rubin in *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State*, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia 'subcontracted' their dealings with the mujahideen groups to Jamaat Islami which supported Zia's Islamisation programme.

Massoud began to complain about the pro-Hekmatyar policy of Pakistan. He parleyed with

the Soviets and obtained for himself a strong position in Panjsher. He told a Norwegian reporter in 1986 that one-third of his income came from booty, another third from the sale of lapis lazuli and emerald which he mined in Panjsher, and only 4.5 percent from Jamiat in Pakistan, while five per cent accrued from the Panjsheris in the Kabul government and businessmen. Because he received very little from ISI, he was less 'controlled' than the other mujahideen leaders.

Later, the ISI formed a similar one-sided relationship and told Islamabad there was no alternative to the Taliban policy after the Taliban became defiant. The ISI's tilt towards Hekmatyar foreclosed Pakistan's options

with Massoud. The present animus against Pakistan among the Northern Alliance also owes to the ISI's tilt in favour of Osama bin Laden and the latter's assassination of Massoud.

In 1989, the Soviets declared that they would leave Afghanistan. The ISI and General Zia had rejected the Geneva Accords which prime minister Junejo had signed. Thus began the 'tradition' of 'going it alone' within the ISI, a trend that has haunted every ruler in Pakistan down to General Musharraf.

In 1989, ISI thought it should send an interim government of its Peshawar-based mujahideen to 'fill the vacuum' after defeating President Najibullah's government. The ISI blundered by excluding the Shia mujahideen based in Iran — which Tehran was to unite under Hizb-e-Wahdat in 1994. This isolated Pakistan in Afghanistan further after the Taliban's collapse.

Rubin tells the story: "The seven parties appointed all 519 representatives to the shura, excluding all participation by the Kabul regime and the Shia parties. The shura was composed almost entirely of Peshawar-based party officials, mostly Pakhtuns from eastern Afghanistan. The Saudi intelligence service spent 26 million dollars per week during the shura. The ISI chief promised the presidency to Mujaddidi. Sayyaf became prime minister in deference to the Saudis who promised to fund a conventional Islamic Army if their wahhabi sect was adequately represented".

The same year General Hamid Gul's plan to capture Jalalabad as a base for the Islamic Interim Government of Afghanistan failed because the mujahideen, including ISI's favourite Hekmatyar, never seriously took to the field against the PDPA forces. Then, Mujaddidi

Former ISI bosses thought it was a sin to have contact with the anti-Taliban Afghans. It suited the ISI and CIA to ignore Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Massoud and support Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. This tilt foreclosed any options Pakistan had with Massoud

thought he could take Kunduz but that plan too failed after Hekmatyar's men murdered ten commanders of Massoud's army. Mujaddidi called Hekmatyar a criminal and a terrorist who then stopped attending meetings.

When Najibullah fell in 1992, the mujahideen hurriedly announced a government under a Peshawar Accord, but without Hekmatyar. The ISI could not support any setup without him; therefore, Nawaz Sharif in 1993 put together another government. He discovered to his dismay that no one among the mujahideen was willing to support Hekmatyar despite the bullying of Jamaat Islami's Qazi Hussain Ahmad. Mujaddidi was left as president but Hekmatyar was included as prime minister, who immediately said he would dismiss Massoud as defence minister. The result: Hekmatyar could not enter Kabul, which was ready in the hands of Rabbani and Massoud.

(The Friday Times)

Afghan draft deal ready but not clinched

39/12
5/11
Agencies

KOENIGSWINTER, Dec. 2. — Delegates to a UN meet on Afghanistan's political future today completed a draft document, outlining terms for the Northern Alliance to transfer power to an interim council.

But tough bargaining over power-sharing is only beginning. The key issue the four Afghan delegations, meeting at the Petersberg hotel, face in their sixth day of talks is the make-up of an interim executive council.

"The hard part of this doesn't come until you begin negotiating names and they're still not there," said the US envoy, Mr James F Dobbins, who is exerting pressure for a deal from the sidelines.

The UN spokesman, Mr Ahmad Fawzi, said the world body presented the delegations with a draft proposal for an interim administration. It includes an interim council with 25-28 seats, an independent council of elders to convene a national tribal council, or *loya jirga*, at the end of the interim phase, and provisions for an international security force, he said.

Plans for a second larger assembly with quasi-legislative functions were dropped yesterday to speed up the talks. "They are looking at the text. We hope we can clean it up by the end of the day," Mr Fawzi said.

Iran has proposed a rotation system for the head of the interim government in order to overcome the present impasse in Bonn talks.

The Iranian foreign minister, Mr Kamal Karazi, who was in

Islamabad for a two-day visit, said: "No interim government in Afghanistan should have a permanent head irrespective of its tenure...Instead, each member of the council should be made head of the government on rotation basis."

On the other hand, the USA today carried out one of its heaviest strikes on Kandahar to weaken Taliban positions and focussed its hunt for Osama bin Laden on two mountainous areas. There were conflicting reports about the capture of Kandahar airport with some reports suggesting that a part of it was captured by anti-Taliban forces. But BBC said it seemed they were holding off an attack on the town itself.

The US warplanes focussed their hunt on two mountainous areas, one near Kandahar and the other in the eastern region of Tora Bora, about 50 km south of Jalalabad.

In what could be an embarrassment to the Pervez Musharraf government, senior Pakistan government officials were today quoted as saying that about 8,000 Pakistani citizens, who went to Afghanistan to fight along with the Taliban, are either dead or missing. The *Washington Post* said Pakistan has been "unhappily riveted by the plight of its own warriors but uncertain what to do about it." Many were apparently killed in the prison uprising near Mazar-e Sharif.

VHP sings its mantra anew

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 2. — The VHP says people have vowed to chant *Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram* 77,220 times for 65 days. The number will double in the next few days and eventually create 10,000 *siddh kshetras* (enlightened areas) across India which will help clear the obstacles in the construction of the Ram Temple next year, it adds. Guru Ramdass chanted the hymn 13 crore times to help Chhatrapati Shivaji establish a Hindu state. Likewise, a VHP leader said, "we hope because of this (chanting the hymn 13 crore times) sense will prevail upon the government and our wish will be fulfilled." Each *siddh kshetra* will comprise 2,000 people who will count the rosary beads 11 times daily.

Details on page 2

Kandahar battle at culmination point

Kabul/Bonn, Dec. 2 (Reuters): The US military said today the battle for Kandahar, the last main Taliban bastion in Afghanistan, may be reaching "culmination point" as efforts to form a power-sharing government neared a climax.

In Washington, secretary of state Colin Powell said the US believed Osama bin Laden was in the "southern and eastern part" of Afghanistan and it was "just a matter of time" before he was found and the Taliban were defeated.

US bombers pounded Kandahar and ethnic Pashtoon fighters attacked the southern city's air-

port. A tribal spokesman said they had met strong resistance from hundreds of bin Laden's Arab forces entrenched there.

"The Arabs are really fighting, they know they have no choice, they are fighting to the death," Khalid Pashtoon, a spokesman for Gul Agha Sherzai, the former mujahideen governor of Kandahar, said.

A senior US Marine officer said at a desert airstrip in southern Afghanistan that he had expected the city to fall last week but the Taliban were still in control — for now.

"But you have a lot of forces at play. Opposition groups com-

ing from the north down, from the southeast up, and us coming potentially from where we are," Major James B. Higgins told reporters at the base, seized on November 25.

"Everywhere the Taliban is looking... a lot of pressure, kind of a snake squeezing in on them, and hopefully we can get them out of there in the near future."

The Marines based at the desert airstrip have made no immediate move on Kandahar, spiritual home of the Taliban and powerbase of their revered leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar.

With thousands of Taliban

troops believed to be concentrated in the ancient walled city, the mullah has raised the spectre of fierce street battles, urging his men to fight to the death.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press said 13 civilians had died today in air strikes on Kandahar airport and the city's southern outskirts.

An official in the eastern city of Jalalabad said US air strikes had killed about 20 civilians in the mountainous Tora Bora area where bin Laden is reputed to have an underground hideout.

Powell said US officials did not "know exactly" where bin Laden was "but we think that he

is still in Afghanistan and there is reason to believe that he is in the southern and eastern part of the country."

The secretary of state told CBS television that President George W. Bush "wants Osama bin Laden, he wants al Qaida ripped up and the Taliban has to be totally removed from power..."

"It is just a matter of time before we achieve our objectives," Powell said.

The Red Cross said it was seeking access to about 80 survivors found in a fortress in northern Afghanistan where hundreds of Taliban prisoners

and foreign bin Laden fighters were killed this week after staging a revolt.

The survivors, some injured, had surrendered and were taken from the Qala-i-Janghi fortress near Mazar-e-Sharif to another detention centre yesterday, said Bernard Barret, spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The suppression of the revolt, using US air strikes, Northern Alliance tanks and US and British special forces, prompted concern from the human rights group Amnesty International, which called for an investigation.

THE TELEGRAPH

3 DEC 2001

BONN TALKS MAY EXTEND TILL MONDAY

Rabbani differs, but Northern Alliance for signing pact

By Vaiju Naravane

KOENIGSWINTER (GERMANY), DEC. 1. There appears to be a growing rift between the leader of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, and his delegation at the Bonn talks on the country's future. On Saturday, the Interior Minister, Mr. Yunus Qanooni, who leads the talks, indicated that he would be willing to sign a deal in Bonn despite opposition from Mr. Rabbani.

The talks between four major Afghan factions, the Northern Alliance; the Pakistan-backed Peshawar Group, the Iran-backed Cyprus Group and the Rome Group, which represents the former king, Mr. Zahir Shah, have reportedly reached a stalemate and could run into Sunday or even Monday, informed sources said.

Though a broad agreement has been reached on the structure of an interim administration and council, there is no consensus on the names of those who would serve on these bodies. The Northern Alliance delegation had demanded a 10-day adjournment of the talks to consult their leaders in Kabul. The request was turned

down by the three other delegations and by the United Nations.

There was enormous pressure on Mr. Qanooni to strike a deal on a broad-based Afghan Government. The pressure was all the more intense ahead of a major donors' conference scheduled for Berlin next Wednesday. The donor nations have made it clear that no aid would be forthcoming if the parties failed to reach an accord. There are billions of dollars in development and reconstruction at stake and Mr. Qanooni would not like to take the blame for dashing that cup to the ground.

Mr. Qanooni today gave the first hint that he would be willing to break ranks and sign an agreement despite reservations expressed by Mr. Rabbani, who said the nominees to an interim administration and governing council should be selected at a later date in Kabul or be chosen through a popular vote.

Sources say the talks have made "significant progress" and the envisaged solution will give former King Zahir Shah a "federating role" at the head of the proposed 120-member Supreme Council,



The U.N.'s envoy to Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, (left) welcomes Mr. Mohammad Nazar Mohammad, delegation member of the 'Civil Society Conference for Peace and Reconstruction in Afghanistan' in Koenigswinter near Bonn on Friday. — AFP

which has been likened to a Parliament. The Council would give 50 seats to the Northern Alliance, 50 to the King's supporters, with the Peshawar group and the Cy-

prus group getting 10 each. The major sticking point is getting an agreement on the Cabinet-style interim administration which would have between 15-20 seats. Just who will head this Government and who will serve on it and with what portfolios are the key questions.

U.N. officials firm

United Nations officials said they were determined to extract an agreement from the four factions before they left Bonn. The U.N. Special Representative for Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, in a telephone call appealed to Mr. Rabbani to show more flexibility and resolve the deadlock.

"In the event that Ustad Rabbani does not agree, we will refer to public opinion. We want to stand with our people, not with personalities," Mr. Qanooni told AFP. The inference was clear — Mr. Qanooni would not allow the rivalry for top position between Mr. Rabbani and Mr. Zahir Shah stand in the way of aid flows.

The German Foreign Minister, Mr. Joschka Fischer, also asked the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, to intercede with Mr. Rabbani. The U.N., the three other delegations and observer nations, including India, want as full an agreement as possible to emerge from Bonn.

The Alliance suffered another reverse on Friday when the number two of its Bonn delegation, Haji Qadir, left the conference.

'Team has limited authority': Page 11

'Afghan village destroyed'

JALALABAD (AFGHANISTAN), DEC. 1. Witnesses said a coalition bombing raid in eastern Afghanistan destroyed a village and killed between 100 and 200 civilians on Saturday. The U.S. military said the bombing "just did not happen."

A senior provincial official said he believed the village had been bombed but thought the toll was exaggerated. He said local anti-Taliban authorities had complained to the Americans that they were bombing the wrong place.

Lalgul, a 33-year-old farmer who claimed he witnessed the attack from a neighbouring village and helped rescue four survivors, said warplanes made four passes over Kama Ado, 50 km south of Jalalabad, and dropped more than 25 bombs.

Lalgul and other witnesses said all 30 mud brick and wooden homes in the mountain village were flattened.

But Marine Corps Maj. Brad Lowell said that although U.S. bombs did hit a target in the area, it was not civilian. He said the witnesses' account "doesn't jibe with our imagery," adding: "It just did not happen."

Pentagon officials have said they are focusing their bombing campaign on two parts of Afghanistan — southern Kandahar province where the Taliban still has control, and the mountains south of Jalalabad, where more than 600 non-Afghan Taliban fighters and members of Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network are reported hiding in caves.

Kama Ado is located in the foothills of the White Mountains, where the hide-outs are reportedly located. The area is nominally under the control of the anti-Taliban Eastern Shura, led by former guerillas in the war against Soviet occupiers in the 1980s.

A report from Islamabad said U.S. warplanes today carried out one of the fiercest bombings so far targeting Kandahar and Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network in the mountains as anti-Taliban forces closed in on the only remaining militia stronghold, raising the spectre of bloody street battles with thousands of Taliban troops being ordered by their supremo, Mullah Omar, to fight to the death.

As the U.S. bombers pounded Kandahar, the Taliban claimed to have shot down a U.S. warplane

which was promptly denied by Washington.

Acknowledging that Kandahar came under heavy bombardment overnight and today, the former Taliban Ambassador to Islamabad, Mr. Abdul Salam Zaeef, said the militia would never surrender to the "forces of infidels". "We have decided to defend Kandahar to our last. We will not hand over Kandahar to anyone," he was quoted as saying by the Afghan Islamic Press.

"Our leadership prefers death over humiliation. Mullah Omar has ordered everyone to fight and not to bow before the forces of infidels," he said.

In Washington, the U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, said the military campaign in Afghanistan had entered "an even more dangerous phase" and that America would oppose any deal to give Mullah Omar either amnesty or safe passage.

The U.S. Vice-President, Mr. Dick Cheney, said the hunt for Osama was focussing on Tora Bora caves in the east of Afghanistan. "We have narrowed the amount of space inside Afghanistan that he feels safe in," he said. AP, PTI

THE HINDU

- 2 DEC 2001

Some Taliban leaders ready to surrender

KEITH B. RICHBURG
KABUL, DECEMBER 1

TEN days ago, as the Taliban's crumbling forces regrouped in the southern city of Kandahar, cassette tapes and a handwritten letter were secretly delivered to top Northern Alliance officials in Kabul with the message that some top Taliban leaders were ready to surrender, and they wanted to work out the details, in person, with two dozen specific alliance commanders whom they trusted. The arrival of the cassettes and the letter launched a clandestine mission by at least a dozen alliance commanders — all Pashtuns, the same ethnic group as the Taliban leaders.

Some travelled by road from Kabul, others crossed the border from Quetta, Pakistan, and others made the journey east from Iran, and opened secret talks which, officials with the alliance hope, will soon lead to a peaceful takeover of the last parts of the country under Taliban control. "They were sent in at the request of the Taliban," said Wahidullah Sabawoon, the alliance's finance minister and a senior member of its leadership council. "These people were called upon because of traditional reasons — they belong to the same clan or the same village," said Sabawoon, revealing in an interview the first details of the secret talks now underway. "You will hear soon the result of these negotiations."

Sabawoon provided the names of more than a dozen commanders sent to the three provinces to launch the surrender talks. A top Northern Alliance commander, Gen. Almas, confirmed the extent

of the secret mission. "Yes, we can say it's the truth," he said. "Some of them have already made contact." He said about 20 to 30 commanders were involved, all of them natives of the areas to which they were dispatched.

The emergence of details about face-to-face talks between the opposing sides offered insight into how the alliance hopes to wrest control of the remaining Taliban-held areas without sending its forces south. "As the first priority, we prefer negotiations," said Sabawoon, adding that "if the negotiations fail, we will fight." —LATWP

A boy carries a bowl as he arrives at a Kabul school where UN distributes aids. Reuters photo



US seeks tribal help to hunt out Osama

■ JALALABAD: The US has enlisted tribal warriors in its hunt for Osama bin Laden in the inaccessible network of caves cut into a rugged mountain south of here. The self-appointed government has agreed to help the US flush hundreds of suspected terrorists and hard-line Taliban forces out of a honeycomb of caves and tunnels around the village of Tora Bora, commander Haji Mohammed Zaman said.

Developed by mujahedeen fighters with the CIA's support, Tora Bora served as an underground hide-out and headquarters during the war against the former Soviet Union in the 1980s. Having seized control two weeks ago, officials claimed that bin Laden is hidden

with as many as 2,000 foreign fighters and terrorists in Tora Bora. Zaman said, last week, that he was ready to surround Tora Bora and cut off its supply lines — but not without money and arms from Western allies.

Zaman refused to elaborate the action the two governments might consider and what contribution each would make. "We've asked for a variety of opposition leaders to help us find al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders wherever they may be in Afghanistan," Rear Adm. Craig Quigley, spokesman for the US Central Command, said.

Tora Bora is an attractive hide-out: remote, relatively close to an isolated stretch of the Pakistani border and a nearly untouchable

target. The caves can only be reached by walking three hours from the nearest village. Thick canopies of trees camouflage the headquarters from the sky, and nobody can approach on the ground without being spotted.

Some of Zaman's 6,000 fighters know the terrain intimately, having helped build the complex two decades ago. The commander has insisted he needs no men, only money and weapons.

Bin Laden's ties to this mountain city are strong. When the government of Sudan asked him to leave that country in 1996, he flew to Jalalabad. He built a home on the hilly outskirts of town, brought in a wife and children and erected terrorist training camps. —LATWP

Now job training for Afghan refugees

NORA BOUSTANY
WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 1

REPRESENTATIVES from the American Refugee Committee, the first US relief organisation licensed to operate in Iran, met State Department officials and House representatives on Wednesday to outline their plans to help train and eventually repatriate nearly 2 million Afghan refugees.

A team from the Minneapolis-based group returned on Saturday from a week-long visit to Tehran, the Iranian capital, and the border cities of Mashhad and Zahedan, where concentrations of Afghan refugees live in "barrios" rather than camps, said Steve Miles, ARC's senior medical adviser.

While the media have focussed on the more recent flow of refugees fleeing war and drought, some refugees have been in Iran for 20 years. Some families are entrenched in the Iranian economy as low-wage workers in construction and sweetshops, while many are physically disabled or were injured by land mines. A disproportionate number of doctors, teachers, midwives, engineers and journalists are underemployed.

"Labourers and farmers will not go back unless they know there are midwives, doctors and teachers there," Miles said, explaining why his group would like to focus on the development of skills as the precursor to sending refugees back to Afghanistan. Developing skills such as sewing, and then providing refugees with sewing machines and

equipment to dig wells once they are on the Afghan side of the border, are envisioned as steps in a long-term strategy.

It took ARC two years to get into Iran, winning approval first from the US Treasury — necessary because of US economic sanctions against Iran — and then from Tehran.

The Iranian government is on a learning curve in figuring out how to deal with international groups, and there are questions of trust, but personal relationships and operational patterns are evolving, he said.

"There has been enormous attention on Pakistani refugees, but the lack of a working relationship in Iran has left us paying less attention to an equally important set of issues, so we have to balance the equation," Miles said. —LATWP



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Grave errors may have led to massacre

Afghanistan

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, DEC. 1. A series of "catastrophic" errors by Northern Alliance commanders and U.S. "miscalculations" might have been responsible for the "massacre" of Taliban prisoners in a fortress near Mazar-e-Sharif this week, a leading British newspaper reported today after a detailed investigation into what has been described as arguably the "bloodiest" incident in the eight-week U.S.-led war in Afghanistan.

The report, in *The Guardian*, came as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson and the Amnesty International condemned Britain and America for refusing to order an impartial inquiry into allegations that their men used "disproportionate" force in dealing with the prisoners and were in breach of the international law on the treatment of war prisoners. An anti-war group, Christians against NATO Aggression, said it would go to court to seek permission to prosecute the British Defence Secretary, Mr. Geoffrey Hoon and his U.S. counterpart, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld on the plea that the "massacre" was the result of a "policy decision taken at the highest level". A similar appeal by the group in 1999 in relation to the Kosovo war had failed.

The Guardian investigation, based on the account of the Alliance commander who negotiated the surrender of several hundred Taliban fighters, claimed that according to the original plan they were "never supposed" to be taken to Mazar-e-Sharif, let alone Qila-i-Jhangi which turned into a Taliban graveyard. Foreign Taliban from Kunduz — mostly Arabs, Pakistanis and Uzbeks — died in U.S. bombing and shooting by Alliance forces after they revolted, fearing that they had been brought there to be killed. The decision to move the Taliban to Mazar-e-Sharif was taken after American forces "vetoed" a plan to take them to an airfield, barely 12 miles from where they were captured, according to Mr. Amir Jan, the Alliance Commander who persuaded them to surrender.

This was the first mistake, he



The U.S. special operation forces survey the terrain at the airport near Mazar-e-Sharif, Northern Afghanistan, on Thursday. — AP

said. The second was the choice of the Qila which was known to be "full of heavy weaponry", later used by the rebel prisoners to attack their captors. The third was to let the Taliban believe that they would be allowed to go free after they gave up their weapons. "The foreigners thought that after surrendering to the Northern Alliance they would be free. They didn't think they would be put in jail," Mr. Amir Jan said.

When they discovered that they were in a prison, they suspected that they might be killed, especially after they were dumped into a basement with their hands tied to their backs. This was done after nine prisoners blew themselves with hidden grenades. "After that, I decided they were hardliners, that they were dangerous. We agreed it would be better to tie up their hands and put them in the basement," Mr. Jan admitted. He also acknowledged that the Taliban were not properly searched for weapons.

Perhaps the most "fatal" error was made by the two CIA operatives on the scene "David" and "Michael" who started interrogating the agitated prisoners in the presence of two Western TV channels — Reuters and Germany's ARD. The prisoners "as-

sumed that the television journalists were American soldiers who had come to film their execution" and attacked one of the guards, Mr. Jan told *The Guardian*. Another grabbed Michael and set off a grenade, blowing him up. This, the newspaper said, conflicted with the CIA account of Michael's death that he was shot dead. Prof. Adam Roberts, an expert on laws of war at Oxford University, described the conduct of the two CIA agents as "incredibly stupid and unprofessional".

But even as demand for an independent investigation grew and Ms. Robinson said Western nations, particularly those who had troops on the ground in Afghanistan had legal and moral obligation to adhere to international law, the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Jack Straw, maintained that there was no need for an inquiry.

"This is not some easy Western circumstance. This was in the middle of a terrible situation where law and order had broken down," he said echoing the U.S. view that once the prisoners acquired weapons and turned on their captors they effectively became combatants, and were dealt with accordingly.

THE HINDI
- 2 DEC 2001

A jigsaw puzzle called Afghanistan

HO-16

AS THE U.S.-backed Afghan groups struggle in Bonn under U.N. aegis to reach an understanding on an immediate political setup to fill the vacuum in Kabul, the military establishment in Islamabad is trying its best to adjust to the new realities in its neighbourhood.

The impact of the developments in Afghanistan, from the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif to the Northern Alliance's march into Kabul, is so profound for Pakistan that it is a stupendous task for the Musharraf Government to emerge relatively unscathed.

Therefore, it is only natural that the priority for Islamabad is to establish contact with the "wannabe" rulers in Kabul. This is no mean task considering that Islamabad has always dismissed the Northern Alliance as a bunch of opportunistic warlords eating out of the hands of its enemies within and outside the region. Why, before the Taliban gave way, Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman admitted that the last contact between Islamabad and the Northern Alliance was over a year ago! What complicates the task is the deep antagonism of the Northern Alliance towards Pakistani rulers. Pakistan had put all its eggs in the Taliban basket.

But, as they say, you can choose your friends but not your neighbours. With the collapse of the Taliban, Pakistan now has little option but to make up to the Northern Alliance, at least a section of it. Already, there are feverish efforts by the military Government to re-connect with the Northern Alliance and make some kind of a return to the Afghan chessboard. The first signs were evident when the President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, informed his Cabinet colleagues at their weekly meeting that the whole international community was now working on Islamabad's two-decades-old agenda in Afghanistan — the formation of a 'broad-based and multi-ethnic' Government, if not long term then at least interim. The diplomatic community was amused at the 180-degree turn of the Pakistani establishment vis-a-vis Afghanistan. But the simple truth is that Gen. Musharraf had little option. Though perhaps he could have been a little less brazen.

Then came his assertion during an hour-long interview on State-run Pakistan Television (PTV): "Pakistan has nothing to worry on account of the Northern Alliance". He argued that after all the Alliance leaders had always been part and parcel of Afghan society and polity.

Even as Gen. Musharraf was preparing the people of Pakistan for the harsh realities in Afghanistan, his managers were quietly working behind the scenes to establish contacts with the Northern Alliance. It was out in the open when an official delegation went calling on the 'acting President' of Afghanistan, Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, in Dubai, last week.

Prof. Rabbani, on his part, went out of his way to assure Pakistan that he had no illwill against its rulers and he was

In Afghanistan, equations are changing so fast that it is difficult to guess who stands where, says B. Muralidhar Reddy.

Assessment

eagerly looking forward to an early meeting with Gen. Musharraf. The Pakistan Foreign Office promptly welcomed this desire of Prof. Rabbani but took care to describe him as 'former President'.

Prof. Rabbani's visit to Dubai, when there is chaos and turmoil all over Afghanistan and various factions are engaged in an intense power struggle, has raised eyebrows. The Professor, who was President in the U.N.'s book and for most of the world even in the glorious days of the Taliban, is clearly sending out a signal: he intends to cling on to power in Kabul as long as possible.

His initial statement that the U.N.-sponsored Bonn conference had little significance beyond symbolism did not go unnoticed. The U.S. almost chided him for the statement and within days the State Department was addressing him as the 'former President'. Thereby hangs a tale.

Another story is that of the tussle between the U.S. and other major powers such as Russia and Iran on the future of Afghanistan. If reports in a section of the press are to be believed, Russia and Iran are backing Prof. Rabbani in his bid to stay on. On the other hand, having driven out the Taliban after a bloody war, America cannot be expected to give up

easily. The Bush Administration seems to be backing the former King, Zahir Shah. Before the collapse of the Taliban, Islamabad gave an impression of endorsing the candidature of the former King. But the equations are changing so fast that it is difficult to guess who stands where. Efforts are also on by Iran and Pakistan to patch up and adopt a common approach. Iran has very close contacts with the Northern Alliance and can help Islamabad establish an equation with it.

There have been a number of visits by Iranian leaders to Pakistan in recent days. Gen. Musharraf also made it a point to stop over in Teheran on his way to New York. Last weekend, the Iranian Foreign Minister, Mr. Kamal Kharrazi, was in Islamabad and met Gen. Musharraf.

The stakes for Teheran and Islamabad are very high. Both share long borders with Afghanistan and between them host five million refugees. But despite a number of parleys, serious differences persist. For instance, Pakistan favours deployment of a multinational Muslim force in Afghanistan to ensure the safety of the transitional Government and all ethnic groups. But Teheran is opposed to the idea.

Pakistan is reaching out to Iran even as its relations with the U.S. have be-

come strained in the post-Taliban scenario. The newly set up press centre of the U.S. coalition forces in Islamabad is also proving to be a daily source of embarrassment for the Pakistan Government. Invariably, the coalition spokesman ends up contradicting one statement or the other of the Pakistan Foreign Office.

Irrespective of the outcome of the Bonn conference, Gen. Musharraf is in for tough times on the domestic front in the coming days and weeks.

The noises being made by the jihadi forces and their daily advertising of their military escapades in Kashmir can only be expected to add to his woes. Sooner than later, the U.S.-led coalition could be expected to focus its attention on these forces and Pakistan.

Pashtuns who dominate the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan are not happy over the turn of events in Afghanistan and the approach of the military Government.

There is a feeling of betrayal. If the arrangements for power-sharing in Afghanistan do not work out, it is bound to impact on Pakistan's internal situation. Plus there is a real danger of the Taliban using the border areas of Pakistan for staging guerilla warfare.

Gen. Musharraf has hinted at tough action against 'extremist elements' within Pakistan. But the trouble is these elements swear by the Kashmir cause. And he has been describing the developments in Kashmir as an 'indigenous freedom struggle'.



Life is cheap in a land ravaged by war.

Alliance agrees to UN-backed interim council

AGENCIES

KABUL, Dec. 1. — The Northern Alliance has said it is ready to transfer power to a UN-backed transitional council and that its leader, Mr Burhanuddin Rabbani, wouldn't be the head of that body.

Diplomats monitoring the Bonn talks said the former king, Zahir Shah, was not being considered a "practical option" to lead an interim Cabinet, while Mr Rabbani "was not seen as a unifying figure".

The Alliance foreign minister, Mr Abdullah Abdullah, said: "We're are ready to transfer power to a transitional authority and the head of the transitional authority won't be the head of the Islamic State of Afghanistan (Mr Rabbani)."

He also said his group could be "flexible" on the issue of international peacekeepers in Afghanistan but they must have a UN mandate and their stay in the country should be limited.

Earlier reports from Bonn said the four Afghan groups

have made a final push towards forming a post-Taliban government as the dominant Northern Alliance seemed to have put aside internal differences and agreed on forming a small interim administration.

The groups had been discussing setting up of an interim Parliament or council of about 150 members and a small Cabinet-like government, but differences emerged yesterday on names between Alliance delegates and Mr Rabbani.

But Mr Rabbani today said in Kabul that he had told the UN that he would accept an interim "leadership council" of up to 25 people, which could include the former king, Zahir Shah. He had outlined his plan to the UN special envoy, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, and told him to table it at the Bonn talks.

War: A bombing raid in eastern Afghanistan today destroyed a village and killed 100-200 civilians, witnesses said. The local anti-Taliban authorities had complained to the Americans that they

were bombing wrong places.

A witness said US jets made four passes over Kama Ado village, 50 km south of Jalalabad, and dropped more than 25 bombs. But the defence chief of Nangarhar province, Mohammed Zeman, said he had received reports that 15-20 people had been killed. A US military officer said had no information about the raid.

Pentagon had earlier said the air raids were being carried out on two parts of Afghanistan — southern Kandahar province and Jalalabad mountains where more than 600 non-Afghan Taliban fighters and Al-Qaida members are reported to be hiding.

Kandahar: Mr Abdullah Abdullah said anti-Taliban forces have not surrounded Kandahar and that it was firmly under the control of the Taliban.

A late night report, however, said Pashtun fighters have captured part of Kandahar airport.

■ More reports on page 11

THE STRAITS TIMES

2 DEC 2001

Cracks in N. Alliance visible

By Atul Aneja

DUSHANBE, DEC. 1. With the government-formation in Afghanistan under way, a new generation of Northern Alliance leaders are heading for a confrontation with its leader, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani.

The most visible new faces in the Northern Alliance are the acting Afghan Interior Minister, Mr. Yunus Qanooni, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah and the Defence Minister, Mr. Mohammad Fahim. All three are Tajiks, while Mr. Mohaqiq is a rising ethnic Hazara leader based in Mazar-e-Sharif. Apart from Mr. Rabbani, the other heavyweights in the alliance include the Uzbek leader, General Rashid Dostum, Mr. Karim Khalili who represents Hazaras and Mr. Abdul Rasul Sayyaf.

Afghan-watchers here say that the emerging leadership has a clear vision of the Northern Alliance's role in a new government. These leaders are of the view that the "security establishment of the new Afghan government must be in the hands of the Northern Alliance. The key portfolio is not that of the Defence Minister, but of the Minister of Interior. Analysts are of the view that Afghanistan's ex-

ternal security would be anyway guaranteed by the Russians and the Americans.

The assessment here is that the Alliance may not be unhappy if the Economic Ministries are handed over to the Pashtuns. These Ministries are lucrative as there is a clear anticipation here that international aid would begin to pour in and a serious reconstruction exercise is on the cards. Countries such as India have already positioned themselves well on the humanitarian track. India is reviving the Indira Gandhi hospital for women and children in Kabul and has pledged food supplies worth \$100 million to Afghanistan. A \$100 million creditline for reconstruction activity has also been opened up.

Foreign diplomats here say that the key alliance leaders may also be willing to accept a Pashtun head of State, such as the former Afghan King, Mr. Zahir Shah. But it is the tacit expression of this support that is bringing the new generation leaders into a direct confrontation with Mr. Rabbani. Such an accommodation, it is evident, threatens to marginalise him. Not surprisingly, Mr. Rabbani, at a Kabul press conference has opposed the installation of King Zahir Shah as the new head

of the Afghan Government.

While diplomats here acknowledge that without the support of the Northern Alliance military commanders, Mr. Rabbani is in some difficulty, they do not think that his political role in Afghanistan is over. Mr. Rabbani can be included in a *Loya Jirga*, Council of Afghan elders, possibly as its Speaker. But such an accommodation can be reached only after an understanding among the Afghans. In fact, the view here is that "quick fix conferences as witnessed in Bonn are not in line with the Afghan tradition and are unlikely to yield lasting results.

Analysts are of the view that the most serious lacuna in the Bonn conference is that it does not represent grass-root Pashtuns in Afghanistan. Unless such a leadership, either through the U.S. efforts of promoting prominent Pashtuns such as Mr. Hamid Karzai and Mr. Gul Agha, emerges, a new government in Afghanistan is unlikely to be stable.

As of now, hectic efforts are apparently on to persuade Mr. Rabbani to show flexibility to facilitate a new political arrangement. The U.S. Special Envoy on Afghanistan, Mr. Richard Haass, is in Moscow to seek Russian help in this exercise.

N Alliance stand stalls Afghan talks

AGENCIES

KOENIGSWINTER (Germany), Nov. 30. — Talks on Afghanistan's future stalled at a crucial phase today, with the Northern Alliance refusing to present a list of names for the interim body that will rule the country till a national council is set up, delegates and diplomats said.

Earlier in the day, Mr Burhanuddin Rabbani said his delegation had been pressured to agree to name members of interim bodies and accept an international security force. Members of the interim council, he said, should be decided only by the Afghans.

Meanwhile, indicating growing fissures among the Northern Alliance, the Governor of the Pashtun province of Nangarhar, Mr Abdul Qadir, walked out of the talks to protest against the lack of Pashtun representation, a spokesman for an Alliance delegate, Mohammed Natiqi, said.

Mr Rabbani, who is seeking closer cooperation with all of Afghanistan's neighbours, may meet Gen Pervez Musharraf

■ See TALKS: page 9

THE STATESMAN

NOV 30 2001

Afghan talks hit ethnic block

Bonn, November 30

ETHNIC TENSIONS surfaced at talks on a future Afghan Government today just as the UN-sponsored conference was starting to choose names of leaders meant to share power in a post-Taliban Government.

Haji Abdul Qadir, the top-ranking Pashtun at the talks, walked out in protest, saying his ethnic group was not adequately represented in the discussions being held in Bonn.

In Afghanistan, Karim Khalili, leader of a powerful Shia militia, complained that his Hazara community was under-represented and said another minority, the Uzbeks, also did not have enough delegates at the closed-door talks.

"He has gone." Alliance delegation head Yunis Qanuni said about Qadir, without saying whether the issue was ethnic — an explosive charge in the delicately balanced delegations.

A delegation advisor said: "He told the conference that Pashtun representation was not enough."

UN spokesman Ahmed Fawzi confirmed Qadir's departure but did not know his whereabouts. "It doesn't really affect the show, the show goes on."

The talks were due to turn to the tricky task of putting names to jobs in an interim Government in which the Northern Alliance will share power with returning Afghan exiles. The Alliance has agreed to an outline deal with three exile groups for

an interim parliament and executive with balanced representation of all ethnic groups.

Alliance delegates said they would accept the presence of foreign peacekeepers and a figure-head role of the former King, two concessions other factions had demanded.

Ahmad Wali Masood, the Alliance's London representative, said Pashtuns made up 58 per cent of the Afghans at the UN-sponsored talks on forming a post-Taliban Government.

"We protest strongly about the composition of the (delegation) members," Khalili said. "The UN talks about the fair treatment of tribes, but itself commits an oppression. Uzbeks and Hazaras are represented each by one person at the meeting."

Delegates said there had also been some discussion within the Alliance about Uzbek representation, but this had been resolved. According to the deal being worked on, Afghanistan's supreme council would be a parliament of up to 200 members, while a cabinet of about 20 would govern until a *Loya Jirga*. That should approve a post-Taliban Government to prepare a constitution and conduct free elections in two or three years.

Factional feuds threaten the storming of Kandahar. Pashtun leaders asked the Alliance to steer clear of south Afghanistan while US warplanes pounded Taliban troops dug in at Kandahar airport.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

BONN TALKS / REAL PROGRESS

Alliance addresses two stumbling blocks

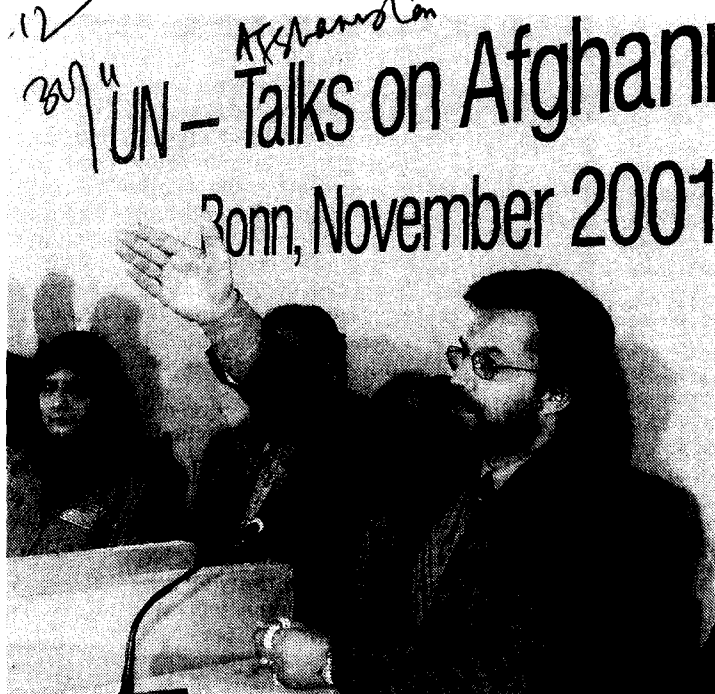
By Vaiju Naravane

KOENIGSWINTER (Germany), NOV. 29. The Northern Alliance on Thursday left open the possibility of a multinational force for Afghanistan and said it was ready to accept a role for the former King, addressing two key stumbling blocks to a post-Taliban political deal.

Mr. Yunus Qanuni, the leader of the United Front delegation made up of the various Afghan groups negotiating a power-sharing deal in Germany had repeatedly dismissed suggestions on Wednesday that a U.N. force might be deployed in Afghanistan. The softening of the Northern Alliance is an indication that some real progress has been made in these talks.

Mr. Ahmad Wali Masood, the brother of slain resistance commander Ahmad Shah Masood, confirmed to AFP that the issue was now "under examination" and a final decision would be deferred to the interim council the groups hope to appoint.

Diplomatic sources attributed the Alliance's shift to overwhelming international pressure backing the U.N.'s security proposals, a critical condition to donor aid and the flow of humanitarian assistance.



Mr. Yunus Qanuni, Interior Minister of the Northern Alliance, briefing mediapersons on the second day of U.N. talks in Koenigswinter near Bonn on Thursday. — Reuters

The delegations were expected to name the members of a supreme council, a parliamentary-style interim body, an aide to the former King told *The Hindu*.

There is some confusion over whether the council will be based

on the population of the country's 28 provinces, or along ethnic lines. There have also been suggestions that the council's seats be divided equally between the alliance - dominated by ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras - and

supporters of former King Zahir Shah. But the U.N. spokesman, Mr. Ahmed Fawzi, said he could not elaborate further. He said: "We are not there yet although their positions are quite close."

Western diplomats are attributing the rapid progress in the talks to the "carrot and stick method" adopted by the U.N. in conjunction with major western donors and Japan. "They have been told quite plainly that no agreement means no reconstruction money," a western diplomat told *The Hindu*.

Differences between the various factions that make up the United Front or National Alliance have also been reported. The Alliance is a loose grouping of mainly minority Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara (Shia) factions who have been fighting the Taliban.

A source from the Shi'ite Muslim Hezb-i-Wahdat faction, which did not enter Kabul and has complained of poor representation at the Bonn talks, suggested Kabul should be a demilitarised zone.

At present, the troops inside Kabul are mostly from the Jamiati-Islami faction led by Burhanuddin Rabbani — and not Shi'ite forces or troops loyal to ethnic Uzbek warlord Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostam.

THE HINDU

11/29/01

Afghan groups come closer

By Vaiju Naravane

KOENIGSWINTER (Germany), NOV. 29. In a dramatic turnaround, the Afghan groups meeting here are reported to have narrowed down their differences and are expected to name the members of a supreme council for ruling the country. The Northern Alliance and the Rome group have reached an agreement on the number of seats in the interim administration. They are now considering names which would be acceptable, informed sources said. "A committee, assigned for this purpose, is currently working on this," said Mr. Khaliq Fazal, who is representing the Rome-based former King, Mohammed Zahir Shah.

But U.N. officials, who have been prodding and nudging the four Afghan delegations towards a peace deal, sounded a cautionary note. Mr. Ahmed Fawzi, the U.N. spokesman, while confirming that the King's group and the Northern Alliance, led by Mr. Yunus Qanooni, were close to an agreement, said any agreement will have to be by consensus. The Iran-

backed Cyprus group, led here by the son-in-law of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar of the Hezb-i-Islami, and the Pakistan-backed Peshawar group will both have to be brought onboard for the talks to succeed. A supreme council, comprising 120 to 200 members, is one of two bodies outlined in a U.N. blueprint aimed at establishing a post-Taliban interim government.

Mr. Fazal said the four groups at the talks were also debating the composition of a smaller, Cabinet-style interim authority. "That has not been resolved yet," he said.

The question of the deployment of an international force to establish law and order and maintain security, however, could remain a sticking point. Mr. Yunus Qanooni, at a press conference on Wednesday, repeatedly ruled out the need for the deployment of U.N. troops in Afghanistan, saying Kabul was peaceful and that the Northern Alliance had been able to guarantee stability in the capital.

Two hurdles addressed: Page 12

'Alliance pushing into Kandahar'

KABUL, NOV. 29. Anti-Taliban forces were pushing on Thursday into the militia's last stronghold of Kandahar, the Northern Alliance Deputy Defence Minister, Mr. Bismillah Khan, said. The claim, however, could not be independently verified.

"We have entered Kandahar," Mr. Khan said here, about some 450 km northeast of the Taliban birthplace. The Opposition forces were fighting on the eastern outskirts of Kandahar and had not yet reached the centre of the city, he said. His information was based on radio communications with his commanders at the battle scene.

Residents of Kandahar could not be contacted by telephone to verify Mr. Khan's claim. Western journalists are not allowed in Kandahar.

The U.S. warplanes bombed positions near Kandahar's airport early on Thursday after the Taliban forces fired rockets at local tribesmen who radioed for American air support, an anti-Taliban official, Mr. Abdul Jabbar, said in Pakistan. Kandahar residents fleeing to the Pakistani border said bombs fell around the city overnight, but

could give no details of casualties or damage.

'Fight to the finish'

Meanwhile, the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, reportedly ordered his men to "fight to the death." Fleeing residents said the militia appeared determined to defend the city. "Every place you glance is occupied by the Taliban. There are lots of them. They're in a standby position for war," said one of them.

Growing numbers of the elite U.S. Marines and other Western troops and advisers have been entering other parts of Afghanistan.

Closing in on Osama

A report, quoting the Northern Alliance, said Osama was alive and hiding in eastern or southern Afghanistan. He and Mullah Omar could be hiding either in the Safi Koh mountains near Jalalabad or jagged ranges around Kandahar.

Lieutenant captured

The U.S. officials said the anti-Taliban forces captured a lieutenant of Osama bin Laden, who is a son of an Egyptian cleric, Omar

Abdel-Rahman, a report from Washington said.

The lieutenant, Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, was being held in Mazar-e-Sharif and his interrogators included Americans, said a Cairo lawyer, Mr. Montasser el-Zayat, who defends Islamic suspects.

And the Pentagon has said some senior Taliban officials have defected and in some cases, the U.S. officials have had access to them for intelligence purposes.

"It is very clear that there have been some defections of some of the more senior people," the Pentagon's chief spokesperson, Ms. Victoria Clarke, said. "I just don't have names that I can share."

CIA officer killed

Johnny "Mike" Spann, a Central Intelligence Agency officer, was killed in the prison riot at Mazar-e-Sharif. He was the first American known to be killed in action inside the country since the U.S. bombing began, the CIA said. His body was recovered today — several hours after the Northern Alliance quelled rioting by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda prisoners. — AP, AFP, Reuters

29 NOV 2001

30 NOV 2001

Interim council set to share power in Kabul

BONN: The Northern Alliance and the delegation representing former Afghan king Zahir Shah on Thursday agreed on a formula for an interim council that will run Afghanistan until a national council of tribal leaders can be convened in March, an advisor to the Northern Alliance said.

This is an important breakthrough because had it not come through, the talks would have been bogged down. Now they had focus, said an alliance spokesperson.

The two largest delegations at the talks have agreed that the council will comprise 42 members, with 21 members each from the Northern Alliance and Shah's delegation. The spokesperson said some provision might be made for representation from the two smaller delegations at the talks, exiles based in Pakistan and in Cyprus. The delegations will decide who will be included in the interim council during further talks.

There was disagreement, however, on whether the representation would be decided on the basis of the population of Afghanistan's 28 provinces or whether it would be based on the nation's ethnic make-up, the spokesperson said.

No one from the former king's delegation was immediately available for comment.

UN spokesman Ahmad Fawzi cautioned that a full accord on the interim council was still being hammered out. "We have to reconcile the four ideas into one clear idea," Mr Fawzi said. In Washington, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan reminded the sides that a broadbased interim administration was a condition for the massive aid promised by the international community.

Diplomats said all sides broadly agreed

that the popular Zahir Shah, exiled in Rome since his 1973 overthrow, should have a symbolic lead role in overseeing an initial interim administration.

The alliance rejected a UN proposal to send an international security force to Afghanistan, saying its own fighters were providing enough security. By rejecting the outside force, the Northern Alliance put itself at odds with the three other factions on a second crucial element in the talks on Afghanistan's future.

The UN has three proposals for a security force to ensure peace in Afghanistan once the Taliban is defeated—an Afghan force, a UN peacekeeping force and an international security force.

Meanwhile, Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Omar has ordered his commanders to stick to positions and fight, after apparently escaping a devastating U.S. air attack on a command bunker near Kandahar.

In the north, anti-Taliban forces began clearing the bodies of hundreds of fighters loyal to Osama bin Laden who were killed during a three-day prison uprising near Mazar-e-Sharif following their surrender

around the northern city of Kunduz. The U.S. deployed more marines near Kandahar and its warplanes hunted for Al Qaida and militia leaders. U.S. warplanes took off from an aircraft carrier in the Arabian Gulf towards Afghanistan to hunt down Al Qaida and Taliban leaders.

In Washington, the U.S. conceded for the first time that it could not rule out the possibility of Pakistani helicopters or planes evacuating Pakistani military or other personnel from Kunduz. (Agencies)



Rona Mansuri (left), Sima Wali and another member of the Rome group attend the UN talks on Afghanistan at Koenigswinter near Bonn on Thursday.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

29 NOV 2002

30 NOV 2001

Growing consensus on Zahir Shah

ASSOCIATED PRESS

5/1 29/11
BONN, Nov. 28. — Afghan factions today continued their talks on forming a multi-ethnic government with consensus growing around the country's former king, Zahir Shah, as head of a transitional administration, delegates said.

The first goal of the UN-sponsored talks, which started yesterday, is to decide on an interim administration in Afghanistan till a national council, or *loya jirga*, can convene, possibly as early as March.

The adviser to a delegation of exiles based in Peshawar, Ms Fatima Gailani, said the delegates appeared to be nearing agreement that Zahir Shah would run the administration. But the extent of his power or role is yet to be discussed, she said.

The deputy UN mediator, Mr Francesc Vendrell, reiterated Ms Gailani's statement and said discussions about the former king's role had been so far informal between the factions.

Mr Vendrell said: "The former king enjoys almost unanimous respect among the

Afghans. But that does not necessarily mean that everyone who is a powerholder in Afghanistan agrees to this role."

No faction favours a return of the monarchy, and Northern Alliance leader Mr Burhanuddin Rabbani strongly opposes the former king as head of state.

The Alliance, however, has indicated that it would accept a symbolic role for the

■ UN freeze on Taliban assets: page 5

■ Editorial: Bonn and Kabul, page 6

former king, the US envoy, Mr James Dobbins, said.

The four delegations were to meet in the afternoon in working session with the chief UN envoy to Afghanistan, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, following a meeting earlier in the day between the Northern Alliance and Zahir Shah delegations, the UN spokesman, Mr Ahmad Fawzi said. The other delegations represent exiled groups based in Cyprus and Peshawar.

The groups are under strong pressure from the UN, the USA and Afghanistan's

neighbours, who have observers at the talks, to come up with a formula for an interim administration to replace the Taliban and a security force.

Omar's call to militia: The Taliban chief ordered his beleaguered militia today to stand and fight as US troops and tribal armies closed in on their last strongholds, Reuters adds from Kabul. "Don't vacate any areas," Mullah Mohammad Omar was quoted as saying in a radio message to Taliban forces hemmed in to a shrinking area of southern Afghanistan.

US Marines have landed at a desert airstrip southwest of Kandahar ready for a push towards the city and the jagged hills where Osama bin Laden is believed to be hiding.

Taliban compound hit: Taliban troops have been "digging furiously" through bomb debris of a shattered leadership compound in southern Afghanistan, US defence officials said today, Reuters adds from Washington. But there is no evidence that top Taliban or Al Qaida men died there, the officials said.

THE STATESMAN

The unfolding situation in Afghanistan

By T. Sreedhar

19-10 28/4
THE SPECTACULAR victory of the U.S.-led grand alliance against the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine indicates that America has perfected the air-land battle even in as hostile a terrain as Afghanistan. The brilliant tactical move of making Northern Alliance troops move towards Mazar-e-Sharif around October 26 appears to have brought the Taliban-Al-Qaeda forces out of their hideouts and the U.S. air power through carpet-bombing did the rest of the job. The Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine had no answer except to retreat into southern Afghanistan. By November 9-10, Mazar-e-Sharif had fallen and three days later the Northern Alliance marched into Kabul. By November 26, even Kunduz, one of the important outposts of the Taliban, had fallen.

This defeat of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda forces clearly shows that they are not capable of fighting a highly professional army. Their success in Kabul in September 1996 and in Mazar-e-Sharif in August 1998 can now safely be attributed to the presence of a large number of Pakistani army personnel in their ranks. If we go by Indian Intelligence reports, some 6,000 Pakistani military personnel were in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan prior to September 11. One interpretation given for this is that Pakistan's ruling elite might have thought it could be part of the grandiose plan of Mullah Omar-Osama bin Laden about establishing a pan-Islamic empire.

Another equally important factor is that the U.S. and its allies froze the assets of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda network, crippling it. The free movement of men and material to launch a counter-offensive got disrupted suddenly. In the U.K. alone, the assets frozen of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda network are estimated at over £100 million.

From the Taliban-Al-Qaeda forces' view point, their assumption that Islam would be an unifying factor, that people in the other parts of the Islamic world would extend support for their cause proved to be wrong. In contemporary history, this is the third time the Islamic factor has failed to be the driving force in

transcending the territorial boundaries. In the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s, both sides tried to whip up the Islamic factor to their advantage. Again in 1991, Iraq tried to whip it up by attacking Israel with Scud missiles. Now, the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine has tried to repeat the same tactic. Except for some street protests in some countries, there was not much of a public show of support for the Taliban.

The Taliban-Al-Qaeda's second assumption that Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden were charismatic enough to command absolute loyalty from the cadres also proved to be wrong. Now it is known that their sphere of influence is

Instead of looking at the whole post-Taliban issue through the spectrum of ethnicity, it is better to request the Rabbani regime to make the Government representative of various groups and convene a Loya Jirga, say in 24 months.

restricted to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, that too through the barrel of the gun. Their access to the parallel economy in neighbouring countries and narcotic funds helped them buy the loyalty of the local chieftains in Afghanistan. When the international community launched a multi-pronged attack, their empire collapsed.

Lastly, Pakistan which played a significant role in sustaining them, seems to have never allowed them to acquire a professional army. If the Taliban-Al-Qaeda leaders believed that the Pakistani armed forces would eventually join them and become the Islamic army, at a critical juncture Pakistan distanced itself from them. This prompted Mullah Omar to declare that "Allah would punish" the Pakistan President. As the events unfold, it is becoming increasingly clear that phase one of the war against terrorism is likely to end by December-end. Now what remains is capturing Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, "dead or alive". Since most of their escape routes are closed, the U.S. ground troops are set to close in on them anytime now. It is only a matter of time

before the U.S. achieves this aim. If they are captured the involvement of various nations in allowing the growth of transnational terrorism could become public.

However, one can notice three disturbing developments in the post-Taliban period. First, some neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and China want the U.N. to step in and take over the management of Afghanistan. Their slogan is "everything from now onwards must be done under the United Nations control." Their attitude is understandable. Pakistan created the Taliban and nurtured it. China flirted with the Taliban instead of con-

fronting it as a terrorist outfit. Some observers even suspect that Pakistan and China used the Taliban as a pressure point against neighbours to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Now these countries feel marginalised because of the U.S.-led alliance's predominance in Afghanistan. These two can spoil the show in Kabul.

Another disturbing trend is the view that any peacekeeping force to be deployed must come exclusively from the Islamic world only. Already the countries from which such a force is to be drawn — Jordan, Bangladesh, Turkey, Egypt — are being mentioned to give substance to this school of thought. Is it correct to say what happened in Afghanistan is in some way related to Islam? A group of people indulging in terrorism and violence rationalised their actions through a great religion called Islam. The war launched by the U.S.-led grand alliance is not against Islam but it is against terrorism and violence. Therefore, to give religious overtones to the peacekeeping force will be a bad precedence. No international

peacekeeping force in the past was ever formed on the basis of religion. In the 21st century to talk in these terms is putting the clock backwards.

The last disturbing development that is taking place after the fall of Kabul on November 12-13 is that the international community has started looking at the entire post-Taliban scenario from an ethnic angle. Afghanistan lacks a charismatic leader for the people to rally round him. For a short while, King Zahir Shah was talked about because under his rule the least harm was done to Afghanistan. But this was quickly discarded as the 27 years of his absence from Kabul and his failure to visit Afghan refugee camps to enquire about his former subjects, made many Afghans reject him.

In these circumstances, instead of looking at the whole post-Taliban issue through the spectrum of ethnicity, it is better to request the Rabbani regime to make the Government representative of various groups and convene a *Loya Jirga*, say in 24 months. India did a similar thing in Maldives in 1988, when the Qayoom Government was overrun by a group of terrorists. However, there is one major difference between Maldives and Afghanistan. Maldives never went through two decades of civil war.

Finally, what will India's agenda be after getting included in the 21-member Afghanistan support group? Broadly, one can say that Indian efforts will be directed towards (a) national reconciliation (b) establishing peace and security and (c) initiating national reconstruction. Very few know that in 1977-78 India played a significant role in bringing together both the factions of the communist party of Afghanistan (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan). Similarly, a less known fact is that up to 1973 India was the second largest aid giver to Afghanistan. Therefore, with its three-point agenda, can India play a significant role in Afghanistan in bringing it back to the mainstream of international politics?

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

BONN AND KABUL

known *5-6* Talks may succeed if left alone *23*

IT is cause for some satisfaction that despite pressure from America's only Muslim ally and Britain's constant friend, Pakistan, the Taliban have been kept out of a conference in Bonn to see if it is possible to hammer out a framework for an interim government for Afghanistan. The prognosis is cautiously optimistic but that is only to be expected; by the same token it is prudent to keep in mind that whatever may be written on bits of paper, the complexities on the ground are so great and the capacity for intrigue so intense that it is better to retain a healthy degree of scepticism. Thousands of Pakistanis were taken out of north Afghanistan in Pakistani aircraft which were trapped with the Taliban and it goes without saying that such aircraft could land without US approval. So here we have one little debt of gratitude for Pakistan's help discharged; never mind that senior Pakistani officers, heavily indoctrinated are back home to play their mischief some place else, in Rumsfeld's phrase, despite his rhetorical question whether he could be expected to agree to let these people go to do just that.

Then there was a riot started by murderers and oppressors called the Taliban, taken prisoner and kept in a fort by General Dostum of the Northern Alliance. They managed to smuggle weapons under their tunics, in violation of the rules of war and turned on their captors in deceit and killed several. The Northern Alliance got the better of them eventually and defeated the mutiny but naturally many more of them were killed. Promptly Amnesty International calls for an inquiry into the massacre of the Taliban prisoners. Will a British judge travel to the middle of nowhere to hold the inquiry in Pushtu! In the real world, the Northern Alliance cannot be blamed if in future, they do not take any prisoners. This is not a cricket match that needs a match referee; this is a fight to the finish where lies are common, ambushes frequent, declarations of war dispensed with and a fearful fundamentalism banishes women to the home, keeps girls out of school and bans the playing of music and chess. No uniforms are worn and no rules of war respected. What can be said of Musharraf who fought a *jihad* with the Taliban against America and protested that he was part of the coalition to fight the Taliban and Osama bin Laden and world terrorism, all at the same time! While he was about it, he sent Abdul Huq to his death at the hands of the Taliban and continues to protest to cover his defeated army men being sent down to Kashmir to again fight a *jihad* on behalf of the Kashmiris who have not asked for help in the first place. Religion, what crimes are committed in thy name!

The Northern Alliance have behaved impeccably this time. Rabbani has called for a broad-based government and expressed willingness to share power with all sections except the Taliban. Musharraf has a stake in the Taliban which America understands but Britain cares nothing about. Rabbani would need to have his head examined if he were to go along and take the Taliban into government. The difficulty is different. It is to distinguish between *Afghan tribals* as they are now called and Taliban elements. It is the failure to distinguish these that caused the riot that exercises Amnesty. The real dialogue will commence out of the glare of publicity in Kabul after the preliminaries are completed in Bonn and that should take about a week. Meantime expect Musharraf's perfidy to continue.

The last time he handled Afghanistan, he quit

Nobody cried for Afghanistan when Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi was appointed the United Nations special envoy the first time round. This time, though, he has the world's eyes and ears, says **WILLIAM ORME**

THE last time Lakhdar Brahimi had the job of special envoy to Afghanistan, he quit in disgust.

Nobody cared enough about Afghanistan, despite his steady stream of reports about Taliban massacres of Shiite villagers, the murders by state gunmen of foreign diplomats and UN emissaries, the rising danger to relief efforts posed by the Osama bin Laden network. The Security Council had authorised him to promote dialogue among rebel factions and between the opposition and the Taliban, but all sides brazenly broke pledges to cease fighting during discussions. And there were no guarantees that wealthy nations would deliver the huge humanitarian aid package needed to undergird reconstruction in Afghanistan.

The Taliban was openly rebuffing UN demands that it surrender Osama. So on October 20, 1999, after two years of dead-end diplomacy, the famously calm Algerian diplomat shocked his UN associates by announcing his resignation as Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special envoy.

Afghanistan is "a sad, sad country," Brahimi said with uncharacteristic emotion. Its biggest neighbours—Iran and Pakistan—were making a dangerous situation worse, he warned. But if neither the warring factions there nor the world community was committed to confronting the crisis, he was wasting his time, he said.

"It was a stunning moment," said a close UN colleague. "You don't hear UN diplomats at that level speaking like that."

Now everybody cares intensely about Afghanistan, and Brahimi has no problem getting the world's attention. Coaxed back into the job last month, he almost immediately became the driving strategist in the global effort to replace the Taliban regime with a broad-based government and rebuild the country. His blueprint for a new governing coalition was quickly endorsed by the Security Council, a show of support that one US diplomat termed "extraordinary".

From the beginning, the UN's post-Taliban plan bore Brahimi's personal stamp, drawing on the lessons associates say he has learned not just from Afghanistan, but from assignments in



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Haiti and elsewhere—and from the bloody strife of his own Algeria. He has insisted that the United Nations avoid the kind of caretaker role it assumed in Cambodia and East Timor. The Afghans themselves "must have ownership" of the rebuilding process, he has repeated like a mantra.

At 67, Brahimi today seems the epitome of the urbane, pinstriped diplomat. Although known for a keen analytical intelligence that even close associates can find intimidating, he is lauded by colleagues as a careful listener and a natural conciliator. "I have never seen him lose his temper," said Brian Atwood, a former head of the US Agency for International Development.

In his youth, though, this polished product of the finest schools of Paris

and Algiers was an ardent revolutionary. For five years he was the Algerian National Liberation Front's Jakarta-based emissary to Southeast Asia, and after Algerian independence he spent much of his early diplomatic career in the Cairo headquarters of the Arab League.

Later, in 1991, as the league's undersecretary-general, Brahimi gained world prominence as a peacemaker by brokering an end to Lebanon's civil war. Returning to Algeria, he served for two years as the foreign minister of a military regime that suspended elections when it became clear that the Islamist opposition would win. In the vicious civil war that followed, more moderate Islamists were overshadowed by the Armed Islamic Group.

The experience strongly shaped Brahimi's views on Afghanistan, friends say. The UN then enlisted Brahimi as a specialist in hard cases, sending him to negotiate with then-President Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire and Sadaam Hussein in Iraq. As the leader of a team of UN observers in South Africa, Brahimi witnessed—and some say helped secure—the historic presidential election of Nelson Mandela in 1994.

He was then dispatched for two years as the UN special representative to Haiti. Although his immediate objectives were achieved—military despots were forced out; a democratically elected president sworn in—Haiti today is still a political shambles.

When he abruptly left the Afghanistan post two years ago, Kofi Annan tapped him for another sensitive assignment: the analysis of UN peacekeeping problems. The "Brahimi report" pulled no punches, critically assessing the performance of the Security Council and UN personalities, most notably Annan himself.

The report was welcomed by UN critics in Washington, and Brahimi's tenure in Haiti was marked by unusually close collaboration with US policymakers. Still, in what some interpreted as a deliberate attempt to open some diplomatic distance between the UN and Washington, Brahimi has been openly critical of US bombing strikes, and has publicly positioned himself as a spokesman for the Afghan people.

(LA Times-Washington Post)

INDIAN EXPRESS

23 NOV 2001

Alliance forces now hold entire northern half of Afghanistan

By Sharon LaFraniere

KUNDUZ: The fall of Kunduz last Sunday has left the Taliban with no large troop concentrations in the northern half of the country. Taliban fighters who surrendered at Kunduz and were taken to Mazar-e-Sharif on Saturday battled Northern Alliance guards for a second day inside the fort where they had been held captive. But the alliance, which controlled just 10 per cent of Afghanistan at the start of this month, now holds the entire northern half of the country, as well as a swathe in the west that extends to the southern border with Pakistan.

The siege of Kunduz dragged on for two weeks, largely because many of the Taliban troops inside the city were foreigners—Pakistanis, Chechens, Arabs and others—who vowed to fight rather than surrender, according to civilians who fled the city. Alliance commanders bargained throughout the siege, encouraging Afghans in the Taliban ranks to give up and promising to let them return to their homes. But the foreigners, widely reviled in Afghanistan, sought no quarter and were offered only the guarantee that they would be held for trial rather than executed on the spot.

The fragmentary casualty counts available on Monday suggested that, in the end, the foreigners who fought to the death were vastly outnumbered by those who surrendered or fled. One alliance fighter said on Monday morning that 300 to 400 Taliban holdouts surrendered after a U.S. airstrike overnight on their positions.

Some of the Taliban fighters fled about four miles west to the village of Chardara on Sunday. An alliance officer in Chardara said on Monday that the Taliban still held some pockets there but that alliance forces have occupied the center of town.

Throughout Kunduz on Monday, ample evidence could be found of the presence of the Taliban foreigners in this city, which had a population of 100,000 before the siege.

In a building that five years ago had been a secondary school, classrooms were no longer distinguishable by grade or by teacher, but by the nationality of the Taliban militants who used the school as a military base and training center.

"Pakistanis only", read the Urdu-language lettering on one white paper sign. "No unauthorised people allowed." Down the hall were the Arabs, the Chechens and the Uzbeks—until their name was crossed out in blue pen and replaced by the Bangladeshis.

All the rooms were empty, littered with filthy socks, empty packets of antacid, a handwritten notebook from five months of classes on guerrilla fighting techniques—and in the ammunition room, a rusty metal box of land mines.

Around the city, the Taliban's fall brought a general sense of relief and the pleasure of new-found freedoms.

Zabiullah, a businessman, flung away the plastic cover that hid the satellite dish on his roof and carried his small television set out of a

obvious destruction, except on the high, flat hilltop that through the ages has served as the city's strongest point of defence. Successively taken by the British, the Soviets, the Mujahideen, the Taliban and now the Northern Alliance, the massive hill looks like an ancient fort with a dry moat, lookout points and paths around the sides.

On Monday morning, after a night of U.S. airstrikes, the redoubt was black with ashes and littered with smouldering wreckage. Almost everything on the hill was blown apart, from a Taliban motor pool to a repair shop to wooden roofs of barracks to someone's thin mattress. A rocket launcher was little more than blackened, twisted metal, its tires still smoking. Tiny fires burned in the wreck-

age of other vehicles, now unrecognisable.

News services reported that alliance forces had brutalised the vanquished Taliban defenders. Angered by Sunday's fighting, Northern Alliance fighters roamed the streets of the city, shooting wounded Taliban fighters who lay crumpled against store awnings, the AP reported. Prisoners were piled into pickup trucks, their arms bound behind them, little children jeering as they passed.

The alliance's fractious commanders fought not only the Taliban but also one another. Despite recent assurances that the alliance's various ethnic militias were working smoothly together, fighters of General Abdurrashid Dostum turned back an alliance unit under General Mohammed Daoud Khan about 10 miles shy of the city on Sunday night.

General Khan's fighters had been moving from village to village outside Kunduz, firing warning shots and poking sticks into haystacks to flush out hidden Taliban fighters. In a mosque, they found 150 boxes of ammunition, which they loaded onto their truck. Then they ran up against General Dostum's troops.

"I captured this myself," announced one of General Dostum's officers, while his subordinates drew their guns, according to a TV crew that recorded the confrontation. General Khan's troops, outnumbered, were forced to retreat from their own comrades, the crew said. (LAT-WP Svc)



Northern Alliance soldiers arrest a Taliban fighter in Kunduz on Monday.

storage room. Not long ago, Zabiullah could have incurred the wrath of the Taliban's religious police, who enforced the movement's bans on TV, recorded music, photographs and many other things deemed un-Islamic. Tonight, he watched an American cowboy movie and played cards. And when his satellite dish malfunctioned, he was not afraid to ask a neighbour if he could tap into his line.

"I am very happy tonight because our lives will go on in a normal way now," Zabiullah said quietly after a dinner of rice, boiled meat and tea. The area remained dangerous, however.

A cameraman, Olaf Stromberg of Sweden's TV4, was shot and killed on Tuesday in the city of Taloqan, near Kunduz, his colleagues said.

They said he was shot after about six gunmen broke into the house where he was staying, apparently looking for satellite telephones and money.

Kunduz escaped without much

TALKS ON AFGHANISTAN GET UNDER WAY

All eyes on N. Alliance

By Vaiju Naravane

KOENIGSWINTER (Germany), NOV. 27. The United Nations-sponsored conference on Afghanistan began at the hilltop castle of Petersberg here today under tight security and pouring rain with a gaggle of demonstrators from the Afghan diaspora calling for durable peace and respect of human rights.

Thirty Afghan delegates and observers from 17 nations attended the inaugural session, presided over by the U.N. special envoy to Afghanistan and former Algerian Minister, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. The conference aims to reach an agreement on a future broad-based government in Afghanistan that would ensure durable peace and stability. Delegates agreed that the first step would be to

work for the formation of an interim council.

Inaugurating the conference, the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Joschka Fischer, said Afghanistan had a "great opportunity to win peace and reconstruction". He said, "The responsibility is yours. No one can relieve you of it and no one wants to. I urge you all to forge a truly historic compromise that holds out a better future".

Three Afghan exile groups and the U.S.-backed Northern Alliance, that now controls much of the country, face huge international pressure to make the talks a success. Mr. Fischer said the world had "clear expectations.". Germany had put aside 80 million euros (\$70.48 million) to help fund post-war reconstruction in Afghanistan.

The Northern Alliance Interior Minister, Mr. Yunus Qanooni, who leads the united front delegation, said he wanted Afghanistan to take its place in the international community. "We want Afghanistan out of the middle ages," he said.

Mr. Brahimi read out a message from the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, describing the meeting as the beginning of a "new age" for the Afghan people and urging delegates not to repeat past mistakes. "You must not allow the mistakes of the past to be repeated, particularly those of 1992," Mr. Annan said in the statement. At the press briefing today, Mr. Ahmad Fawzi, U.N. spokesman at the conference, said the delegates had agreed that talks would not go beyond one week. Earlier the U.N. official had indicated that he expected the discussions to last for as long as two weeks.

Mr. Qanooni's statement was the most keenly awaited of all four delegations. It appeared that the Northern Alliance was keen on sharing power with the other partners. However, informed sources here say the new masters of Kabul will hold out for at least 50 per cent of the posts as well as the leadership role.

The Northern Alliance holds many of the strongest cards in the talks as they now have military control over much of Afghanistan. Some experts fear a refusal by them to share political power could mean more civil war. The role of the former king of Afghanistan will also be crucial.

Mazar-e-Sharif uprising quelled

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (Afghanistan), NOV. 27. Northern Alliance fighters helped by U.S. special forces claimed on Tuesday to have quelled an uprising by captured Taliban soldiers after a third day of fierce fighting around a fortress prison.

With the battle raging during the day, there were gruesome scenes of dozens of bodies and body parts — of soldiers from both sides — scattered about. One television report showed some 60 bodies, believed to be Taliban, scattered across a courtyard in the sprawling, mud-walled Galai Janghi fortress.

Trucks carrying 200 Alliance fighters and an anti-aircraft gun arrived at the fortress in the morning. Desert camouflage-clad U.S. special forces and soldiers who appeared to be British moved in and out of the fort, some carrying Kalashnikov assault rifles, others toting guns fitted with laser scopes. By the evening, the Northern Alliance said it had wiped out the Taliban resistance inside the fortress. Alliance officers said about 40 of their troops had died in the uprising along with hundreds of resisters. Witnesses had reported heavy airstrikes on the fortress overnight. Five U.S. soldiers were seriously wounded on Monday when a U.S. JDAM smart bomb called in by special forces went astray, exploding near the Americans. — AP

Marines swing into action: Page 11

Pak. has nothing to worry: Page 11

THE HINDU

28 NOV. 2001

Bonn talks start on an optimistic note

AGENCIES
BONN/TEHRAN/DUBAI, NOV 27

AFGHAN talks on a post-Taliban government in Kabul opened in Bonn on Tuesday, with the United Nations warning rival groups not to squander their successes by unleashing a civil war as they did in 1992.

The Northern Alliance, which now holds most of Afghanistan, overshadowed the three delegations of Afghan exiles brought to the talks on an interim administration for the war-torn country.

After the talks opened, a top Northern Alliance member and head of the Shiite Muslim Harakat-Islami faction Hussein Anwari said, "We expect to have an agreement on a transitional authority within three days." Earlier, head of the Northern Alliance delegation to the talks, Yunis Qanooni had said his movement did not intend to take government power on its own.

The talks opened with a speech by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. "Afghanistan has a great opportunity to win peace and reconciliation, in a united, independent Afghanistan," he told the delegates. "The responsibility is yours."

In a reference to the way Western countries left Afghanistan after the Soviets retreated, Fischer said: "We want the people of

Afghanistan said in a statement read out by Special Envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi. The UN hopes the closed-door talks between the various delegates can result in the setting up of an interim leadership council of about 15 people that can then name a larger group of more than 100 to act as a parliament before elections are held in two years.

After the opening session, organisers broadcast a dramatic live call by satellite telephone from Hamid Karzai, a tribal chief now in his native Kandahar area working with fighters trying to drive the Taliban from their last stronghold.

"We are one nation, one culture, we are united and not divided," said Karzai, a Pashtun aristocrat tipped as a possible national leader. "We all believe in an Islam of tolerance."

Yunis Qanooni stressed the legitimacy of his group, the only one with many troops inside Afghanistan and men already in positions of power. But he assured the other groups, which deeply distrust the Alliance because it had taken power first in Kabul as it did in 1992, that it wanted to share power in a real broad-based government representing all Afghan ethnic groups.

He said that they were committed to leading Afghanistan "out of the Middle Ages". Most of the Afghan men were dressed in dark suits or jackets, with half of them wearing ties. Only two appeared in full

Pak, Northern Alliance looking to bury hatchet

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is seeking to recoup some of its lost political clout in Afghanistan by renewing ties with the Northern Alliance that were strained to the limit when Islamabad threw its weight behind the now-crumbling Taliban regime, analysts said.

Officials said Northern Alliance leaders recently established contact with Pakistan, heralding signs of a rapprochement. Pakistani officials confirmed to AFP that telephonic links had been established with key leaders of the new dominant political force in Afghanistan. Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf spoke of warmer relations in an interview on State-run television late on Monday. He expected friendly relations with any government that assumes power in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan to know that they will not be left on their own when the conflict with Al Qaeda terrorists and Taliban regime comes ends.

"You must prove the sceptics wrong," UN Secretary General Kofi

RULERS OF AFGHAN DESTINY



(From left to right) Abdul Rashid Dostum, Afghan King Mohammed Zahir Shah, ex-President Burhanuddin Rabbani, Ismail Khan and Hameed Gailani. AP/PTI



NORTHERN ALLIANCE (11 delegates)

Nominal head: President Burhanuddin Rabbani, a Tajik. Delegation led by Interior Minister Yunis Qanuni, a Tajik, and includes Haji Abdul Qadir, the Pashtun governor in Jalalabad, and the son of the independent Tajik warlord in Herat, Ismail Khan. Two more Pashtuns, two Uzbeks and two Shiite Hazaras also in the delegation.

The main components of the Northern Alliance are:
Jamiat-i-Islami: Formed in 1973 by

Rabbani. Backed by Persian-speaking Sunni Muslim Tajiks and Uzbeks.

Jumbish-i-Milli Islami: Founded in 1991 by General Abdul Rashid Dostum. Mainly Uzbek group with powerbase in Mazar-i-Sharif.

Hezb-i-Wahdat: Karim Khalili heads this Iranian-backed coalition of 8 Shiite Muslim guerrilla groups. Powerbase in Central Hazarajat region, with bastions in Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif.

Ittehad-i-Islami: Headed by Abdurrahman Rasul Sayyaf, Saudi-backed Pashtun.

Jamiat Shura-i-Nazar: Formed by Ahmad Shah Masood, a Tajik. Now headed by General Mohammad Fahim.

ROYALISTS (11 delegates)

Represents former King Zahir Shah, ousted in 1973. Delegation led by aide Abdul Sattar Sirat, includes grandson Mostapha Zahir, son-in-law General Abdul Wali, aide Hedazat Amin Arsalala and two women, Sima Wali and Rona Mansuri.

PESHAWAR GROUP (5 delegates)

Exiled Pashtun tribal leaders favoured by Pakistan and headed by Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, head of Sufi Islamic sect in Afghanistan. Delegation headed by his son Hamid Gailani, includes Shiite Hafizullah Asif Mohseni

CYPRUS GROUP

Iran-backed group launched in late 1990s as rival to ex-king's faction. Led by Houmayoun Jareer, son-in-law of Islamic radical Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Delegation includes Azizullah Ludin, former top official of Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami, one of the largest Mujahideen groups.

A FIFTH GROUP?

Press reports say another Pashtun group, the Loya Paktia movement headed by Badsha Khan Zagrani and apparently controlling the eastern province of Paktia, was also headed for Bonn — Reuters

when he was ousted by the Taliban, gave no further details of what his Northern Alliance wanted to achieve at the Bonn meeting. He appeared to rule out a prominent role for exiled king Zahir Shah in shaping Afghanistan's future, saying "imported leaders aren't welcome".

He also said that the Bonn talks would be the last Afghan meeting outside Afghanistan, saying future political representation will come through elections which he supports 100 per cent. Speaking from Tehran, the exiled former Afghan prime minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar blasted the UN-sponsored talks in Bonn on Tuesday as a US ploy to further its influence in Afghanistan. "Only groups fitting US requirements and interests have been invited to the Bonn conference," said the ethnic Pashtun leader who fled to Iran after the Taliban militia took control, and who has not been invited for the talks.

He said the US aimed to increase its regional hegemony under the guise of retaliation to the September 11 attacks.

The other battle for Kabul

By Pran Chopra

The implications of the Kabul drama ripple out... into the future oil map of the world.

HD-10 27/11

IN THE past few days, a play about Afghanistan has been on view in and out of Kabul. It is a miniature version of two much bigger dramas which were acted out in 1944-45. A common theme runs through the three, that large scale political calculations can displace military calculations.

In the closing phase of the Second World War in Europe, the Red Army broke through the German border and raced on to Berlin. This worried the Allied armies which were at that time busy in western and southern Germany, and they also wheeled round to head for Hitler's capital, because each side wanted to make sure it would not be left out of the city which had become the citadel of Europe. The first shots were then fired in what soon became "The Struggle for Europe", to quote the title of Chester Wilmot's fascinating book, published in 1951. That struggle is only now dying down (if it is) half a century later.

On the other side of the globe, American armies had practically brought Japan to its knees by that time, and according to many historians of that war complete victory could have been achieved with a few more weeks of conventional war. But a political task had to be accomplished first: to make a field trial of the ultimate weapon so that all future contenders for power could also be warned off. So a million Japanese lives and the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had to be sacrificed, and one particular contender was later named by Churchill quite clearly in his Fulton speech when he said "matters must be brought to a head with the Soviet Union before they too have the nuclear bomb".

What has all that to do with tiny little Kabul? A lot, because the implications of the Kabul drama ripple out into the politics of Pakistan and Central Asia, into the role of the United Nations, into the honeymoon between America and Russia, and into the future oil map of the world. All the strands of this drama go round and round Kabul, tying up the military battle

for Kabul with the political calculations of other battles for it.

Since one of America's top aims has been to see the Taliban Government thrown out of Kabul, it should have been happy when the Northern Alliance swept down from the mountains and got ready to do just that. But America directed it not to enter Kabul. Why? An answer for a time was that the directive was only a sop for Pakistan, which was nervous about the anti-Taliban Alliance ruling a next door neighbour.

But that answer faded when America initiated serious moves in the U.N. to block the formation of a Government by the Alliance. Its probable reason: America has invested in new-found friends in Uzbekistan, while the fighting arm of the Alliance is inspired by the charisma of the quintessential Tajik, the late Ahmad Shah Masood. The Uzbeks have drawn closer to America because lately they have been suspicious of Russia, while the Tajik force is backed by Russia (and behind that by India.)

America would also have calculated that once the victorious Alliance came to power in Kabul it would take the bit between its teeth, or else the same tribal disorder would recur as had forced the American oil giant, Unocol to write off the millions of dollars it had invested in a pipeline through Afghanistan to the new oil wealth discovered in Central Asia. So why not opt immediately for a pliable Government under the aging Pashtun king, Zahir Shah, strengthen it with European and American backing, and give it legitimacy by putting it in the Afghan seat in the U.N. General Assembly?

But these calculations have run straight into some political realities, local, national, international. The present occupant of the U.N. seat has been there for two decades, representing a country which is a full-fledged member of the U.N., and rec-

ognised to be so by many countries. He continued to occupy it when his Government had lost most of the country and its capital, Kabul. How is he to be replaced now when his Government has regained most of the country and the capital, and when an assertive, vigilant and veto-wielding Russia has already declared that the Alliance is the legitimate Government, and the Alliance has questioned the right of any country to send troops into Afghanistan without its permission?

If a tussle ensues now between Russia and America within the U.N. on this issue, it will only further heat up a very large and friction-prone issue which has already cropped up, involving competing Russian and U.S. interests in the Afghanistan region. This concerns the vast new sources of oil which have been lately discovered in Central Asia. The sources themselves come under clearly defined national jurisdictions about which there is no dispute. But American and other Western companies have quickly built financial stakes around them, and are now being advised to fence out Russia and Iran.

They are planning and building a system of pipelines in an East-West land corridor which runs north of Iran, south of Russia, mostly through Central Asian states, across the Caspian Sea and Black Sea, and thus into the lucrative oil markets of Turkey and Europe. There should be nothing wrong with that, except that one of the aims of system is being clearly stated to be what is bound to arouse tempers in Moscow, Teheran and Riyadh. This aim has been only mildly stated by the Caspian Studies Programme at Harvard, which says America should loosen "OPEC tentacles" and resist "political blackmail" by Saudi Arabia by getting more Caspian oil, and also to "by-pass Russia and Iran" through the new pipelines.

But a study at the Woodrow Wilson Centre is much more explicit, and offensive towards Moscow and Teheran. In a report published in September it says "the United States has important political and strategic stakes in the Caspian region" but the countries of the region would "remain vulnerable to Russia's hegemonic impulses" and therefore they must build "close, substantive relations with the West... independent of their huge neighbours to the north and south", that is Russia and Iran. Their "dependence on Russian pipelines would be dangerous".

Similarly, it says "Kazakhstan would be ill-advised to entrust its energy security to Iran". To reinforce the point it adds "a major role for American companies" had "contained Iran's regional influence at a time when that country's policies were particularly anti-American".

These rivalries, of course, are not new. They antedate the jostling for power which is now going on in Kabul for control over Afghanistan, and they began separately and from different causes. But they interact very closely with the long term interests of Russia and America in this region, and are therefore very relevant to the latest Afghan drama. In what manner and how far they will influence the power balance in the Caspian corridor or to the south or the north of it may not be known as yet. But they are fuelling and are being fuelled by the current military and political battle for Afghanistan.

The battle against the Taliban has given America a promising military presence right next to Afghanistan, in Uzbekistan, which it is seeking to enlarge and prolong. On the political plane, the hope of the Northern Alliance, now re-named United Front, that it will become the new ruler of Afghanistan, has now been matched by moves for a "provisional authority" to take over the country under the U.N. flag and in the name of law and order. If the Alliance could not be stopped at the gates of Kabul, why not confine it within Kabul?

Marines land near Kandahar

Kabul/Washington, Nov 26

HUNDREDS OF US Marines, who set up a base near Kandahar today, seized large tracts of territory around the Taliban's last stronghold and the hills where Osama bin Laden is believed to be holed up.

The Marines flew in by helicopter under the cover of darkness last night, established a position at an airport outside the city and quickly set up a communications network.

"There are several hundred US Marines on the ground in southern Afghanistan," an official said in Washington. "More marines will join them this week."

Local Afghans identified the captured facility as Dolangi airstrip, about 90 km southwest of Kandahar, rebuilt and used by Osama. They said Mullah Omar's personal helicopter had been parked there a few days ago.

Within hours of the landing, the Taliban forces in the Afghan border town of Spin Boldak began negotiating their surrender with Noorzai tribal leaders, a tribal leader said.

Abdul Khaliq Noorzai, a lead-



US Marines on way to Afghanistan relax aboard an amphibious ship.

ing supporter of ex-king Zahir Shah, said in Quetta, Pakistan, that he was heading toward the Afghan border to take charge of the peace talks, and hoped for a speedy result.

But reports from Mazar-e-Sharif dismissed Northern Alliance claims of having quelled a revolt by non-Afghan prisoners of war near Mazar-e-Sharif yesterday, when "hundreds" of the PoWs and an American described as a CIA agent were killed.

The battle still raged today, with more than 100 of these fighters using rockets to battle anti-Taliban forces in the prison - a mud-walled fortress.

An Alliance fighter who was inside this morning said these PoWs were holed up in a small tower. US jets - which had helped the Alliance tackle the uprising last night - were circling above the fortress.

Journalists, including two from Reuters, as well as Red Cross officials and two US

observers were trapped inside the fort for hours. Most escaped by climbing down the fort's 65-foot outer wall amid gunfire.

Meanwhile, the Alliance confirmed that its forces had seized the city of Kunduz, the last bastion of the Taliban in northern Afghanistan.

UN for multinational force:

A multinational force under a UN Security Council mandate would be the best option to ensure security in Afghanistan, UN spokesman Ahmad Fawzi said in Bonn today. He was talking to reporters on the eve of unsponsored talks on Afghanistan's future. As rival Afghan factions gathered for talks in Bonn this week, alliance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani offered an olive branch to the Taliban. He said former militia officials with clean records could join a new administration, but the Taliban, as an organization, couldn't.

Russian Army returns:

The Russian Army returned to Kabul today for the first time in 12 years with humanitarian aid. Three cargo planes also landed at Bagram airport.

Agencies

Marines seize airfield near Kandahar

AGENCIES

Afghanistan
GFI 27/11

WASHINGTON/KUNDUZ, Nov. 26. — US Marines seized an airfield in southern Afghanistan near Kandahar and Northern Alliance troops fought with Taliban forces in Kunduz that left about 100 soldiers dead on both sides today.

In the biggest US ground operation, Marines aboard helicopters landed near Kandahar, a Pentagon spokesman said. "The objective is to seize an airfield which they have done," Lt Col David Lapan said.

Helicopters from the USS Pelelieu and the USS Bataan began moving marines into the desert air strip yesterday and were expected to pour more than 1,000 Marines in for the operation, he said.

The Marines were operating in conjunction with other forces on the ground, including US special forces, he said.

In Kunduz, Northern Alliance troops

fought with Taliban militia that left about 100 soldiers dead on both sides, a Northern Alliance commander said.

Salim Mohammad said the situation in the last Taliban bastion in northern Afghanistan was later brought under control and hundreds of militiamen surrendered. "Some 500 Taliban surrendered today after fighting in the morning," he said.

By mid-afternoon, the Alliance had visibly asserted complete control of the city.

He said most of those who surrendered appeared to be ethnic Pashtuns but other Taliban groups were still battling in the district of Char Dara, 10 km west of the city.

In Qala-e-Jangi, a gunbattle raged through the second day today between foreign Taliban prisoners and Northern Alliance forces in northern Afghanistan, an alliance commander said.

They anti-Taliban forces were preparing a

final push to crush the revolt.

About 30 prisoners were still refusing to surrender after fighting near Mazar-e-Sharief that began when hundreds of captives seized weapons and opened fire on Sunday morning, bringing withering retaliation from their Northern Alliance guards and waves of bombing by US jets.

More than 400 Taliban men and 100 Northern Alliance fighters had been killed, as well as possibly one member of the US special forces along with hundreds of the Taliban prisoners — many of them slain by the US bombing, officials said.

But a spokesman for the US-led coalition said in Islamabad that no US army personnel were killed but "we are still investigating" if some other category of US personnel had been killed.

A final push to end the prison revolt would

■ See KANDAHAR: page 9

THE STATESMAN

27 NOV 2001

Scepticism over Bonn talks

By **Batuk Gathani**

BRUSSELS, NOV. 26. There is much speculation in the European media over the outcome of the Bonn talks on Afghanistan, scheduled to begin on Tuesday, amid fears that the talks may fail if the main leaders from Afghanistan do not attend the conference.

The talks are aimed at finding a multi-ethnic government in the post-Taliban Afghanistan. A senior United Nations official was on Monday quoted as saying that it was understandable that senior Afghan leaders who are currently in "places difficult to hold, may not want to leave the places". Hence, the fear is that they may use that as an excuse not to attend the meet.

Over the weekend and on Monday, delegates from various Afghan factions have been flying into Bonn. They are gathering at Petersberg resort in a forested hill

overlooking Bonn across the river Rhine. The conference was scheduled to begin on Monday but was postponed to Tuesday.

The silver lining on the Afghanistan horizon is that the former Afghan President and current leader of the Northern Alliance, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, was quoted as saying that he would be prepared to hand power over to an interim government and that former members of the Taliban could also have a place in the future government after the talks in Bonn.

The European observers note that so far, the warring Afghan groups have been staking their various "mutually exclusive positions" and at the same time, minimising the significance of the Bonn talks.

The Americans and European Union will closely monitor the Bonn proceedings, as American

military planners switch focus to the capture of Kandahar, the last remaining Taliban stronghold. E.U. officials note that Americans and the British have also been at odds over whether Western peace-keeping troops should be deployed in Afghanistan to consolidate the hold of the post-Taliban government. E.U. officials feel that this cannot happen without Western peace-keepers.

Meanwhile, after an emotive and often acrimonious weekend debate, the German Green party agreed to support the deployment of 3,900 German troops in the U.S.-led war on terrorism. On the political front, this may ensure the survival of the ruling coalition between the Greens and the Chancellor, Mr. Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democrats until the general elections in the second half of next year.

27 NOV 2001

10-11 **BONN MEET / BROAD CONSENSUS LIKELY ON REPRESENTATION FOR PASHTUNS**

Delegates aim to set up council in Kabul

By Vaiju Naravane

BONN, NOV. 26. The secluded and brooding hilltop castle of Petersberg is the venue of a U.N.-sponsored conference on Afghanistan which opens here on Tuesday. The conference, earlier scheduled for Monday, was pushed back by a day to give delegates time for pre-conference consultations. The talks begin against the backdrop of intensified fighting between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban forces in Afghanistan.

The meet will be presided over by the U.N.'s special envoy to Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and will attempt to lay the foundations for setting up a government of national unity in Afghanistan. German officials say representatives of four Afghan groups are expected to attend the talks. These are: the Northern Alliance, the Rome Group (also known as the Bonn-Frankfurt-Rome group) around the former king, Mr. Mohammed Zahir Shah, the Cyprus group composed of Hazaras close to the fundamentalist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar backed by Iran, and those of the Peshawar group representing the Pashtuns and led by Pir Syed Ahmad Gailani, backed by Pakistan.

Officials are tight-lipped about the names of the delegates. It is known, however, that Pir Gailani will be represented by his son, Mr. Hamid Gailani, and that the President, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, will not attend the talks. It is also doubtful whether Mr. Zahir Shah will make the trip. India has been invited as an observer nation. Its two-man delegation is headed by the Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Mr. S.K. Lambah, who has also served in the past as India's Ambassador to Pakistan and to Germany. Officials here say the talks could drag for as long as two weeks.

Delegations began arriving in the former West German capital on Sunday amid tight security. Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi wanted the

conference to be an Afghan-only affair, somewhat on the lines of the Dayton talks that brought peace to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995. This meant delegates would be practically interned, without any contact with the outside world until an agreement is brokered.

But due to pressure from several countries some of the sessions will be open to certain countries, India among them, who have been granted observer status. The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council will be present as well as all the states bordering Afghanistan.

"The perfect success would be that we come out of Bonn with an agreement on an executive council," said Mr. Hans-Joachim Daerr, Germany's special envoy to Afghanistan. "The executive council would then carry on the transition."

The details will have to be worked out by the Afghans, but the council is envisioned as a 15-person body that would begin taking over the functions of a government. Mr. Daerr, however, stressed that even if that were to happen at the Bonn conference "it would only be the first step, and many more will have to follow."

With growing disagreement between the various Afghan factions, officials privately say they are pessimistic about a durable outcome. In what would be the first major step toward establishing a government, delegates meeting behind closed doors will attempt to set up a 15-member council as the basis for an interim administration.

Afghanistan has been without a government since the Taliban fled the capital on November 13, and the U.N.-sponsored conference will be an important test of whether the groups can set aside their rivalries and find common ground to establish a broad-based government. The United Nations which has invited all the leading parties and ethnic groups in the country, is hoping the negotiations will not drag on

endlessly. "There is absolutely no room for the Taliban," Mr. Daerr said, echoing the position of the U.N. and the Afghan groups taking part in the conference. There is, however, a broad consensus that the Pashtuns, the country's largest ethnic group, will have to be represented if the new government is to have nation-wide support. Most Taliban leaders and supporters are Pashtuns.

None of the four groups heading for Germany is specifically a Pashtun delegation, though all will include Pashtun members. The Northern Alliance and supporters of Mr. Zahir Shah are expected to dominate the talks with 11 delegates each, while Afghan exiles backed by Pakistan and Iran — the so-called Peshawar and Cyprus groups — will have five delegates each. All four groups say they support a role for Mr. Zahir Shah in a future government, but the question of whether he will be an ordinary citizen, a figurehead or have real power is a source of disagreement.

The talks are part of a two-year plan to set up a democratic government approved by a traditional 'Loya Jirga' and representing Afghanistan's many ethnic groups. Initially supposed to start on Monday, the talks were delayed partly because the Northern Alliance could not arrive on time, U.N. officials said. Only U.N. negotiators and delegates from the Rome and Cyprus groups had made it to Bonn by late Sunday.

Mr. Ahmed Fawzi, spokesman for the U.N. Afghanistan envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, said the delegation lists had not yet been completed. The talks aimed to achieve consensus among the four factions about the next step towards a new government. "If that next step is a transitional authority, then we will have succeeded," he said. "If the next step is agreement to another set of talks, that would also be considered a success."

At the U.N. meeting today, Mr. Fawzi said

altogether delegations from 17 countries would be participating in the meet. This includes the E.U., members of the Security Council and others.

The U.N. has spoken of setting up an interim administration that would lead the country for about two years and draft a new constitution before giving way to a more permanent government. So far, only two women have been named as delegates for the Bonn talks. Ms. Amena Safi Afzali, widow of the Afghan general, Safiullah Afzali, who runs the Women's Islamic Movement of Afghanistan in the Iranian frontier city of Mashhad, is expected to be part of the 11-member delegation headed by the Interior Minister, Mr. Younis Qanooni. Sources close to Mr. Zahir Shah in Rome earlier said that Ms. Sima Wali, an Afghan living in the U.S., would also be a member of their delegation. Mr. Mostapha Zahir, grandson of the deposed monarch and a member of the Rome delegation, said all factions agreed the Bonn talks should set up a small interim council that would convene a larger body to oversee the transition.

Meanwhile, the Northern Alliance leader, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, an ethnic Tajik deeply distrusted by the majority Pashtun tribes, offered them an unexpected olive branch by saying that former Taliban officials with clean records could join any new administration. The Northern Alliance's Foreign Minister, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, said the Alliance, made up of Tajiks, Uzbeks and other minorities, was ready to share power — another nod to the Pashtuns who fear a repeat of the bloodshed and power struggles that marked the Alliance's disastrous rule between 1992 and 1996 when the Taliban came to power. "As an organisation or party, the Taliban will not be included," the Northern Alliance said in Bonn. However, they stressed this did not mean a ban on individuals who worked with the Taliban.

THE HINDU

27 NOV 2001

Kunduz evacuation begins

AGENCIES

KABUL, Nov. 24. - The Taliban today began its evacuation of Kunduz, its last northern stronghold, simultaneously strengthening its defence in the southern city of Kandahar, the Taliban headquarters. There were conflicting reports about the surrender of non-Afghan Taliban fighters, including Pakistanis, Arabs, Chechens and Uzbeks loyal to Osama bin Laden.

"The Afghan Taliban have decided to surrender, but the foreigners have decided to fight," said a surrendering Taliban fighter, raising fears of a bloodbath in Kunduz where thousands of civilians are also trapped. Many foreign Taliban fighters fear a massacre if they surrender.

The total number of Taliban surrenders in Kunduz reached 2,300, with some 1,700 surrendering to the Northern Alliance alone, an Alliance spokesman claimed. Kunduz guards strategic

routes into Tajikistan and is under siege for around two weeks now. It's the last Taliban stronghold except for Kandahar, home of the one-eyed Taliban supremo,



Afghan refugees cross into Pakistan near Chaman on Saturday.
- AP/PTI

Mullah Mohammad Omar.
Hundreds of Taliban men

with tanks and heavy weapons streamed out towards Mazar-e-Sharif today, base of the Northern Alliance warlord, Abdul Rashid Dostum. "We will now separate the local Taliban from the foreigners," said Dostum.

'Difficult times ahead': In Washington, Mr George W. Bush today told Americans celebrating the Thanksgiving Day to brace themselves for "difficult times ahead" as the offensive in Afghanistan enters a more perilous phase. He spent Thanksgiving at the Camp David retreat.

With Al Qaida and Taliban members retreating to caves and tunnels deep in the Afghan mountains, Mr Bush has warned that "the most difficult steps" lay ahead.

'Osama in Jalalabad': Hazrat Ali, the security chief of Jalalabad and a senior

■ See KUNDUZ: page 7
■ More reports on pages 7 and 10

THE STATESMAN

25 NOV 2001

One land, too many players



Triumphant troops

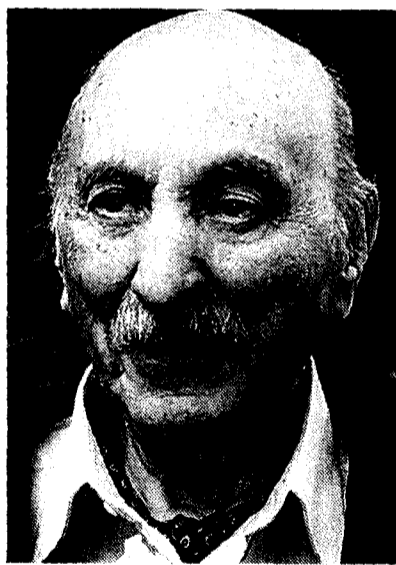
HISTORY HAS a habit of repeating itself, lest we forget. Bonn was born as the capital of West Germany after the victors of World War II carved Germany into smaller, less-menacing bits. On Monday, the city plays host to a similar set of victors to settle the future of another vanquished nation. Never mind if the resolution of the Afghan crisis proves much more complicated and, the negotiations, amid so many internal and external players, incomparably tougher.

The Taliban has retreated, but as they are saying here and in capitals where the battle against the militia was launched, the war in Afghanistan is far from over. If die-hard supporters here say the Taliban's withdrawal is but a tactical move, others keenly watch as the "war against terror" turns into a "war for Afghanistan". The rugged Afghan terrain still provides dramatic picture ops of bombings and surrenders, even as the endgame shifts to another theatre where the various Afghan power centres of any repute, of course sans the Taliban, gather with their mighty Western allies.

The time has come to split the pie and everyone who is anyone appears to be lining up for a slice. All in the name of the common people of Afghanistan. One wonders where these players were when the common Afghans were suffering under one repressive regime after the other, none of which could govern the land or administer the people in the real sense of the term.

On paper it is the United Nations which is the official sponsor of the conference in Bonn. But in reality, the United States and all those who have invested heavily in the war against the Taliban are the real players. This is evi-

The time has come to split the pie and everyone who is anyone appears to be lining up for a slice. All in the name of the common people of Afghanistan, writes B. Muralidhar Reddy.



Zahir Shah... regal authority

dent from the way events have unfolded in Afghanistan in the last few days, particularly after the Taliban's retreat.

All moves by the various actors are supposedly in the name of the U.N. but it appears that the U.N. resolutions which sanctioned strikes against the Taliban have been forgotten. Within hours of the Taliban vacating the Afghan capital, the Northern Alliance troops not only marched into the city but put themselves in the seat of power.



Burhanuddin Rabbani... In the limelight

The U.S. and its allies pretended that the Alliance had moved in without their consent.

The pulls and pressures on the U.N. on the proposed talks in Bonn are all evident. To be attended by leaders of Afghanistan's ethnic and political groups, the aim of the conference is to forge an interim government in the strife-torn country. According to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. Secretary-General's special representative in Af-

ghanistan, the meeting will be attended by four "processes" who have been convinced to come together to form a single process.

These are — the Northern Alliance, a mostly non-Pashtun Afghan grouping which spearheaded the land offensive against the Taliban and which now controls Kabul; the Rome Process that centres round former king Zahir Shah; the recent Pakistan-sponsored Peshawar Convention composed of Pakistan-cultivated Pashtun leaders; and the Cyprus group which includes Afghan refugees and Diaspora.

Diplomats from the U.S., Britain and Russia will be present while Germany will not be displeased with being given the honour of hosting a major though hurriedly called conference as it seeks to up its world profile.

While Mr. Brahimi will be in charge, Washington is to send its envoy to Afghanistan, Mr. James Dobbins, and Moscow will despatch Mr. Zamir Kabulov, who has had some experience in dealing with that country. It is an endeavour towards exploration of formation of "broad-based and multi-ethnic" transitional government in Kabul.

In fact, the search for an acceptable and representative government in a post-Taliban Afghanistan began almost along with the October 7 bomb attacks. And, with the fall of Mazar-i-Sharif, the activities for a broadbased government gained further momentum. The aim was to plug the power-vacuum in Kabul as quickly as possible. But after Mazar-i-Sharif fell and the Taliban fled the capital, the worst fears about a vacuum came true. The Northern Alliance leader, Gen. Mohammad Fahim, instantaneously set up the former President, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, of Tajik origin, in the seat of power. Within three days, Mr. Rabbani not only declared himself the President but also gave enough indications that the former King, Zahir Shah, had no place in the new scheme of things.

The U.N.'s grand plans of cobbling together a broadbased and acceptable setup in Kabul suffered a serious setback when, at one stage, Mr. Rabbani described the proposed Bonn conference as being only of "symbolic significance". The U.S. and its allies then averted a showdown by persuading the Northern Alliance to support the U.N. venture. The drama preceding the Bonn meet only underscores the pitfalls ahead and the serious challenges involved.

Amidst all the jockeying on Afghanistan, the frontline state, Pakistan, was crying for Pashtun representation and the West was exhorting the Northern Alliance not to enter Kabul. Diplomats and negotiators from all over the world began arriving in Kabul even as the Northern Alliance expressed reservations about the presence of Western troops, British soldiers in particular, on Afghan soil.

The outcome of the Bonn meet would be as important as the commitment of the various players, visible and invisible, to translate it into reality. Given the harsh realities of Afghanistan in the last two and half decades, Bonn could at the most be a small step in the process of accomplishing a Herculean task.

25 NOV 2001

US forces hit supply line on Taliban turf

By RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN

TUNGI (Afghanistan): Stopping their Humvees behind a sand dune, the U.S. Special Forces unit crept up to the six sleeping truckers without a sound or a glint of light. Some of the truckers were jolted awake with rifle barrels poked in their necks. Others were yanked out of their cabs by their feet.

Within seconds, they were handcuffed with plastic restraints and escorted to the Humvees, where one of the soldiers barked orders into a helmet-mounted microphone while another accused the truckers of hauling oil "to help terrorists."

Less than ten minutes later, two helicopters descended from the moonless sky and fired rockets at the trucks—two diesel tankers and a flat bed loaded with 85 barrels of gasoline and kerosene — setting off a searing explosion that catapulted some of the oil drums hundreds of feet into the air.

The operation, which was described in detail on Friday by two of the truckers, occurred last Friday near Tungi village in the central part of Kandahar province, less than ten miles from the border with Pakistan and only about 50 miles southwest of the city of Kandahar, one of the Taliban's last two strongholds.

The location of the attack and the accounts of witnesses provide a rare first-hand account of covert U.S. military activity in southern Afghanistan, illustrating the Pentagon's new emphasis on cutting off Taliban supply lines and the extent to which the U.S. soldiers are attempting to minimise civilian casualties.

Although the Pentagon has acknowledged that several hundred Special Forces personnel are in Afghanistan, the presence of those units near the Pakistani border suggests these U.S. ground troops are now active in a wide swath of southern Afghanistan. On Wednesday, the Pentagon showed a video of another tanker blasted apart by a U.S. warplane on a road west of Kandahar.

The increasing role of special operations units is part of a new phase of America's war in this country. With most of the north in the hands of opposition groups, the Pentagon has shifted its focus to targeting small groups of Taliban leaders and members of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terrorist network, who are hunkering down in the south.

Today a Taliban commander in the border town of Spin Boldak permitted an American reporter

and three Pakistani journalists to visit the site of the attack without Taliban guards. The Taliban on Friday ordered the departure from Afghanistan of more than 100 international journalists it had allowed to visit Spin Boldak for three days.

The Pakistani owner of the three trucks said that more than a dozen other oil tankers have been attacked by the U.S. forces in southern Afghanistan over the past ten days. In most cases, he said, the drivers had been removed before the trucks were hit. Plastic hand restraints were found in the sand next to the charred carcasses of the three trucks as well as near another burned-out tanker just a few miles down the dirt road upon which the three trucks were travelling. Pieces of lead shrapnel that appeared to have come from a rocket also were scattered about near the vehicles.

In fear and darkness the three trucks set out from Iran on November 12, plying a rutted, dirt road between the Iranian border and Spin Boldak that is a favourite route of smugglers. This is how much of Afghanistan's heroin is shipped out—and how oil, electronic goods and other commodities are shipped in. Normally the journey to Spin Boldak takes about three days. But since the war started, truckers do not drive at night, afraid that their headlights might invite an air strike.

Now the daylight trip takes five to six days. And in an often futile attempt at camouflage, drivers have started to cover the tops of their brightly coloured trucks with tree branches and scrub brush. The three truckers, hauling about \$5,500 worth of fuel in each vehicle, took similar precautions.

On Friday night, they stopped at dusk, for safety but also to pray. It was the first night of Ramadan, the start of the Muslim fasting month. A few hours later, they were fast asleep. Habibullah, the driver of the lead truck, the flat bed, was in his cab. Abdullah and Shahzada, the drivers of the two tankers, along with their three assistants, were sleeping on the soft, brown sand between the trucks. "The next thing I can remember is a gun pok-

ing into my neck and a man's knees on my chest," Abdullah said. Habibullah panicked.

"I first thought they were bandits," he said. "I thought they were going to kill me." When he opened his eyes, Abdullah said he initially could not see much because there was no moonlight.

He said he was quickly handcuffed with plastic restraints and hauled off toward a nearby sand dune. As he was being escorted to the soldiers' vehicles—his description matched that of a Humvee—he said he caught sight of six commandos on the ground, each holding onto a trucker.

Abdullah and Habibullah, both of whom use only one name, provided descriptions of equipment on the soldiers that are common to

The location of the attack and the accounts of witnesses provide a rare first-hand account of covert the U.S. military activity in southern Afghanistan, illustrating the Pentagon's new emphasis on cutting off Taliban supply lines and the extent to which the U.S. soldiers are attempting to minimise civilian casualties

Special Forces units: night-vision goggles, bulletproof chest plates and helmet-mounted radio microphones. "Their glasses were green and glittering," Abdullah said. "And they kept talking on the radio." After taking the men to the top of the sand dune, one of the soldiers began questioning the truckers in what Habibullah called "very bad Persian."

"He said, 'Who are you?'"

Abdullah said. "We said we are drivers. These are our trucks. We are taking fuel from Iran." But they said, "No, these trucks belong to terrorists and you are providing help to terrorists," he said. Abdullah said the soldiers then marched them up another sand dune that was several hundred feet from the trucks. "They told us, 'Don't try to run. We're going to hit your tankers,'" he said.

While the Persian-speaking soldier was conversing with the truckers, Abdullah said another one was talking on his radio. The others kept their guns trained on the truckers, he said. Less than ten minutes later, the two truckers said they heard the whump-whump of approaching helicopters.

Their lights were off, and with no moon, they were invisible to those on the ground, Habibullah said. "We started to panic," he said. "We couldn't understand what was going on." Then, without warning, the helicopters unleashed a barrage of rockets at the trucks, the

drivers said. Habibullah's truck was the first to explode, sending oil barrels shooting into the air. The tankers were hit moments later, emitting a massive fireball and a wave of intense heat that nearly knocked the drivers over. "I've never seen an explosion that big," Abdullah said. "It was so bright, it was like daytime."

After the fire began to subside, two of the soldiers pulled knives from their belts and cut off the truckers' hand restraints. The Persian speaker told a man hauling kindling with a tractor, who also had been sleeping nearby, to take the truckers to the nearest village. Then, without saying another word, the truckers said, the soldiers got back in their Humvees and sped off towards the south.

Oil for 'common people' acrid smoke still lingered in the air at the desolate turnoff where the trucks had been hit. Charred oil barrels, their tops blown off and their sides distended, lay sprinkled about like shattered aluminium cans. Nothing was left of the trucks except mangled metal. The plastic hand restraints were scattered on the second dune.

There were also tire tracks in the area and pocked footprints in the sand, from what appeared to be rubber-soled boots. "Afghans don't have shoes like that," said Abdullah, 32, a chatty man with a pointy black beard. Akhtar Mohammed, the owner of the trucks, said he cannot understand why his vehicles were targeted. The oil, he insisted, was destined for "common people" in Spin Boldak, although he did acknowledge that some of it likely would have been sent to Kandahar and some of it smuggled into Pakistan.

"In the name of Osama and the Taliban, they are just penalising the common people," he growled as he examined the wreckage. "This is cruel and excessive. It's farmers and ordinary people, who buy our oil, not the Taliban." He said he cannot afford to replace the Russian-built trucks, which cost about \$13,000 a piece. That means Abdullah, Habibullah, Shahzada and their assistants will be out of work, he said. "How will they feed their families now?" he asked. "What is the point of this?" Abdullah said he is grateful to be alive, but he is not about to thank the U.S. soldiers for extracting him before firing upon his truck.

"It's because of the grace of Allah," he said, "that we are alive today." (LAT-WP Svc)

Kunduz cloaked in fear of carnage

2/11/11
Nov. 23 (Reuters): The Taliban clung to their northern Afghan bastion of Kunduz on Friday amid fears of a bloodbath while confusion surrounded the location of their leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, in their southern redoubt of Kandahar.

Northern Alliance forces suspended attacks on Kunduz to allow besieged defenders more time to agree to surrender, but said they would resume attacks if no deal were struck by Saturday.

Despite the pause in ground attacks, US warplanes continued to bomb targets around Kunduz, the militia's last bastion outside the south where 15,000 Taliban soldiers and foreigners loyal to Osama bin Laden are mounting a bitter defence.

The discovery of up to 600 bodies in nearby Mazar-e-Sharif, taken by the alliance two weeks ago, and Washington's desire that the defenders of Kunduz should not escape have fuelled fears of a bloodbath if the alliance captures the city.

In a sign that the pressure was increasing, Taliban official Mullah Sayed Mohammad Haqqani, in Spin Boldak, near the Pakistani border, said Omar had left Kandahar for a more secure hideaway, leaving a deputy in charge.

"Mullah Omar has shifted to an unknown place for security reasons," Haqqani said. He added that the decision to appoint Omar's deputy as acting chief was taken at a meeting of Taliban leaders in Kandahar.

But the Afghan Islamic Press quoted Omar's spokesman Tayab Agha as saying: "He is still in Kandahar and still has contact with his fighters."

A three-pronged offensive was earlier launched on Kunduz amid reports of a split in the alliance over surrender talks.

Alliance warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek, announced he had reached an agreement with the Taliban and expected them to surrender by Saturday or Sunday. But alliance interior minister Yunus Qanuni, loyal to ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani, a Tajik, said the negotiations had failed and the attacks had resumed. He added that the alliance hoped to capture Kunduz by the weekend.

Later, it appeared, the alliance was seeking to paper over any rift. Announcing the suspension of attacks, its foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah said: "We have given them more time, until tomorrow morning. If there isn't a result after these negotiations, the fighting will resume."

THE TELEGRAPH

QUOTE

Kunduz besieged

HO 1 29/11 Afghanistan
BANGI (Afghanistan), NOV. 23. Anti-Taliban forces advanced on Kunduz on Friday and a spokesman for the Northern Alliance in Takhar province near Kunduz claimed that his forces had taken Aliabad, a town just east of Kunduz behind the Taliban front lines without a fight. The Taliban fighters there turned themselves in, he said.

A report from Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan, said that 500 Taliban supporters have surrendered to the Alliance forces in Kunduz. An Alliance official said the Taliban supporters began surrendering in small groups starting Thursday. In what would be a potentially damaging split, the Afghan Islamic Press quoted a Taliban spokesman as saying that two of the main wings of the Alliance were at loggerheads over plans for the surrender of Kunduz. The spokesman said terms agreed on Thursday by the ethnic Uzbek warlord Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum had upset the ousted President, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Meanwhile, forces loyal to Gen. Dostum advanced on Taliban positions from the west of Kunduz. "Tomorrow, we will have another meeting to work out the details of the handover," he said. "On Sunday, the Taliban should surrender to us and hand over the prisoners."

U.S. warplanes bombarded Taliban fighters trapped in Kunduz today. A Reuters television crew near Taloqan, east of Kunduz, saw

Straw disappoints Pakistan

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 23. The British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Jack Straw, appears to have disappointed Pakistan by reiterating the U.S.-led coalition viewpoint that persons holed up in Kunduz and Kandahar fighting with the Taliban should be brought to book.

At a news conference here after meeting the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, Mr. Straw, accompanied by the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, said that "our position is very straight forward: that is that if people are ready to surrender ... then the surrender should be accepted. If these people are found to have been fighting for Taliban they have to be detained".

See also Page 11

American B-52s flying overhead and then heard the sound of bombs exploding in the direction of the city. — AP, AFP, Reuters

THE HINDU

NOV 23 2001

Negotiations on new Afghan regime change venue to Bonn

CAROL J. WILLIAMS
BERLIN, NOVEMBER 22

UN ORGANIZERS of negotiations to form a transition government for Afghanistan have said that they were moving the talks to a secluded Rhine River retreat near Bonn in an attempt to sequester the fractious delegates and force swifter agreement. German Foreign Ministry officials, who cast their nation's role in hosting the talks that are expected to start on Monday, said the gathering was being relocated from Berlin as the Petersberg castle offered better security. But the move may be more focused on controlling what happens inside the meet-

ing site rather than outside.

While Berlin has a raft of hotels and conference centers, the castle in the town of Koenigswinter can be easily sealed off from media and other distractions. Diplomatic sources said Lakhdar Brahimi, UN special representative for Afghanistan, wanted a remote location so the Afghan factions can work without interference.

Negotiators will try to cobble an interim Afghan government from among politicians of the opposition Northern Alliance, supporters of exiled monarch Mohammad Zaher Shah, and representatives of major ethnic and refugee groups. The talks are

expected to last several days.

Brahimi has urged organizers to keep the number of delegates to a minimum — perhaps 30. But German Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Sabine Sparwasser indicated that preparations were being made for about twice that number. Representatives from the US, Britain, Russia and Pakistan also will take part. Top German officials are not expected to be involved.

Germany likely emerged as the site of talks because it has longstanding trade ties with Afghanistan and other Islamic states and is perceived as a more neutral than other Western nations.

—LATWP

INDIAN EXPRESS

23 NOV 2001

Taliban to 'surrender' Kunduz

BANGI (Afghanistan), NOV. 22. The Taliban agreed on Thursday to surrender its last northern stronghold of Kunduz and thousands of Arabs and other foreign fighters loyal to Osama bin Laden, Northern Alliance commanders said. Details about how the foreigners will be treated remain to be settled.

Fighting erupted along the frontline near Kunduz even as the agreement was announced. However, Alliance officials blamed the fighting on communications problems and insisted the deal had not fallen through.

A senior Alliance commander, Atta Mohammed, said the surren-

der agreement came at a meeting with top Taliban commanders, including the Deputy Defence Minister, Mullah Fazil.

The Alliance would send 5,000 fighters to Kunduz "possibly on Saturday" to oversee the surrender.

The fate of foreign fighters would be worked out in talks set for Friday in Mazar-e-Sharif. The Taliban had agreed to surrender the foreigners — mostly Arabs, Pakistanis and Chechens — but wanted guarantees about their treatment.

The issue had been the main obstacle to a surrender deal for days as the foreigners feared they

would be killed. The U.S. is pressuring the Alliance against accepting any deal which might allow them to escape.

Mohammed Daoud, a senior Northern Alliance commander, said fighting broke out on Thursday when the Taliban forces — not knowing about the surrender agreement — tried to prevent about 200 of their fighters from surrendering east of Kunduz.

In Islamabad, Gen. Musharraf urged the Red Cross to do all it can to prevent massacre of foreign fighters at the hands of the Afghans.

A surrender in Kunduz would leave only one major city — the southern base of Kandahar — in Taliban hands.

Its spokesman, Syed Tayyab Agha, vowed that the Taliban would fight to defend Kandahar and the surrounding provinces it still controls.

However, according to the Al-Jazeera satellite TV channel, the Taliban denied that its fighters in Kunduz had agreed to surrender.

It said the "office of Mullah Omar strongly denied that and the Taliban army chief, Akhdar Othmani, said the information was totally false."

Meanwhile, Northern Alliance forces launched an offensive on Khanabad, about 20 km east of Kunduz.

Taliban troops defending Kandahar came under heavy fire from U.S. air raids and ambushes by local tribesmen, Hamid Karzai, a supporter of the former Afghan King, Zahir Shah, said.

Iranian media today reported that three more journalists were killed in Afghanistan but the Afghan police chief denied it. — AP, AFP, Reuters



A Northern Alliance fighter chasing supporters of the former Afghan king, Zahir Shah, who gathered at the main mosque in Herat on Wednesday and raised pro-royal slogans. — AP

THE HINDU

25 NOV 2001

Neutralising Afghanistan

10-10 2/11

By C. Raja Mohan

AS THE American military campaign to oust the Taliban from its last strongholds continues and the first steps of a peace process unfold in the German capital Berlin on Monday, there is broad international consensus on four issues.

The first is on the absolute necessity of the international community staying engaged in Afghanistan. The defeat of the Taliban and the destruction of the Al-Qaeda network, hopefully, would not lead to an American and consequential Western withdrawal from Afghanistan. Given the past record of the West in Afghanistan, with the U.S. just walking away after pushing the Soviet Union out of the country, there is deep scepticism about the depth of international commitment this time around.

To be sure, there is a strong ideological reluctance within the American right at being dragged into "nation-building" in Afghanistan. The U.S. has already said that once the immediate objectives are met, its military forces will not be involved in either securing the political space for an interim administration in Afghanistan or propping up the future political order in the war-torn nation. At the same time, the U.S. has signalled that it will remain involved in promoting the peace process and reconstructing Afghanistan. This is not out of altruism. The long-term American security stakes in Afghanistan are real and Washington is aware of the consequences of leaving Afghanistan to its own devices at the moment.

The second area of agreement is about the nature of the international involvement. The management of the Afghan situation cannot be done unilaterally either by the U.S. or by its friends and allies, in proxy. The United Nations will be the only mechanism that will ensure the broadest possible involvement of all the countries with an interest in shaping the future of Afghanistan. But clearly the U.N. has its own political limitations.

The third agreement underscores the importance of a home-grown framework to resolve the Afghan crisis. Externally mandated structures are unlikely to work in Afghanistan. The international community has a role in facilitating and assisting

The management of the Afghan situation cannot be done unilaterally either by the U.S. or by its friends, in proxy. The U.N. will be the only mechanism that will ensure the broadest possible involvement of all the countries with an interest in shaping the future of Afghanistan.

the Afghan groups, but it cannot supplant them. The creation of a new state in Afghanistan must be seen to be the result of an all-Afghan process.

Fourth, everyone is agreed that the new political order in Afghanistan must be broad-based to include all the ethnic and religious communities in that nation. A genuinely representative character is the key to the stability and survivability of the post-Taliban political order in Afghanistan. Whether that will be achieved or not is of course a matter of political speculation at the moment. Almost all the groups within Afghanistan have fought each other in the past. It will be a huge challenge to prevent inevitable skirmishes among the groups from escalating into ethnic clashes in the coming days.

All this is about the internal orientation of a new Afghan government. As the world contemplates ways to reconstruct the sovereignty of the Afghanistan state after nearly 23 years of war, it is also important to raise questions about its future external orientation. That brings into view an entirely different set of issues from the immediate question of putting Afghanistan together again. The strategic direction of the future state in Afghanistan will have considerable bearing on the geopolitics of the region.

Unfortunately, all the neighbours of Pakistan have the ability to affect the dynamics of Afghanistan and inevitably get affected by them. Given the importance of preventing its neighbours from meddling in its internal affairs or influencing its external affairs, it is necessary to ensure the future neutrality of Afghanistan. Without the neutralisation of Afghanistan, that will proscribe intervention by its neighbours and great powers, the incipient peace process to stitch together an Afghan state

is unlikely to succeed. Neutralisation of Afghanistan holds the key to making viable the kind of internal arrangements in Kabul that are under consideration. By immediate necessity and tradition the new political structures for Afghanistan must be sufficiently loose to ensure local autonomy for all the ethnic communities.

As it turns out, all the communities have natural linkages with their kin across the borders. And over the last couple of decades these trans-border connections among ethnic communities straddling the

WORLD VIEW

frontiers have only deepened. Pakistan has used the trans-frontier Pashtun community to

brazenly intervene in the Afghan affairs over the last two decades. Gen. Musharraf has even proclaimed some time ago that the cross-border connections between the Pashtuns gives Pakistan a "legitimate" national security interest in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. It is a claim that Afghanistan's others neighbours too could make. Iran has the Baluch community straddling its borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan. The people inhabiting the Western provinces of Afghanistan as well as the Tajiks in the north-east have strong historic links to the Persian culture. The Hazaras in central Afghanistan share the Shia religious faith with Iran.

There are more Tajiks living in Afghanistan than in Tajikistan. Commander Ahmad Shah Masood, who was murdered by the agents of the Taliban days before the September 11 attacks in the U.S., had set up bases of operation in Tajikistan as he lost territory in north-eastern Afghanistan. Tashkent has influence among the Uzbek minority in north-central Afghanistan that shares a border with Uzbekistan, and has backed over the years the Uzbek commander, Gen. Rashid Dostum. Turkmenistan has natural affinities with the small Turkomen minority in north-

western Afghanistan. It will also be prudent to expect that in the coming days, as the world begins to rush humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, much of it will flow from the neighbouring countries rather than Kabul.

Besides the intervention of the neighbouring countries in Afghanistan, great power rivalry has had a big impact on Afghan affairs. The metaphor of the Great Game has long captured the quest of the major powers for influence in Afghanistan. The importance of transporting the rich natural gas resources of Central Asia to the hard currency markets has brought international attention to the questions of pipeline routes and who controls them.

Besides, Russia sees the border between its former Central Asian republics and Afghanistan as the frontier at which it defend its national security. China's sensitive province of Xinjiang has borders with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Iran sees itself as the principal gateway to Central Asia and its natural resources. The U.S. has over the decade sought to promote greater Central Asian independence from Russia and prevent a larger Iranian and Chinese role in the region. Neutralisation is an absolute necessity to insulate Afghanistan from becoming a victim once again to the interplay of global and regional rivalries.

Neutralisation of particular countries has a long tradition in international affairs. The most recent case is that of Austria which imposed neutrality on itself, with the tacit encouragement of the East and West after the Second World War. At its core, neutralisation is a simple concept.

The neutralisation of Afghanistan will involve reciprocal obligations from Kabul on the one hand and the neighbours and great powers on the other. Kabul would promise not to allow hostile activity on its soil against other nations. The neighbours and great powers will promise not to intervene in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. India, which has a big stake in the peace and prosperity of an independent and united Afghanistan, must take the lead in fleshing out the concept of neutralising Afghanistan and push for its acceptance by the international community.

No place for Taliban in government: coalition

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 20. — The US-led international coalition against terrorism today ruled out participation of the Taliban in the interim government being formed under the aegis of UN in consultation with various Afghan groups.

Mr Kenton Keith, principal spokesperson for the coalition forces, ruled out the likelihood saying: "The Taliban must cease to exist as a force ... there are no proposals to invite moderate Taliban forces to the meetings." The first meeting would take place in Europe on or after 24 November, he said.

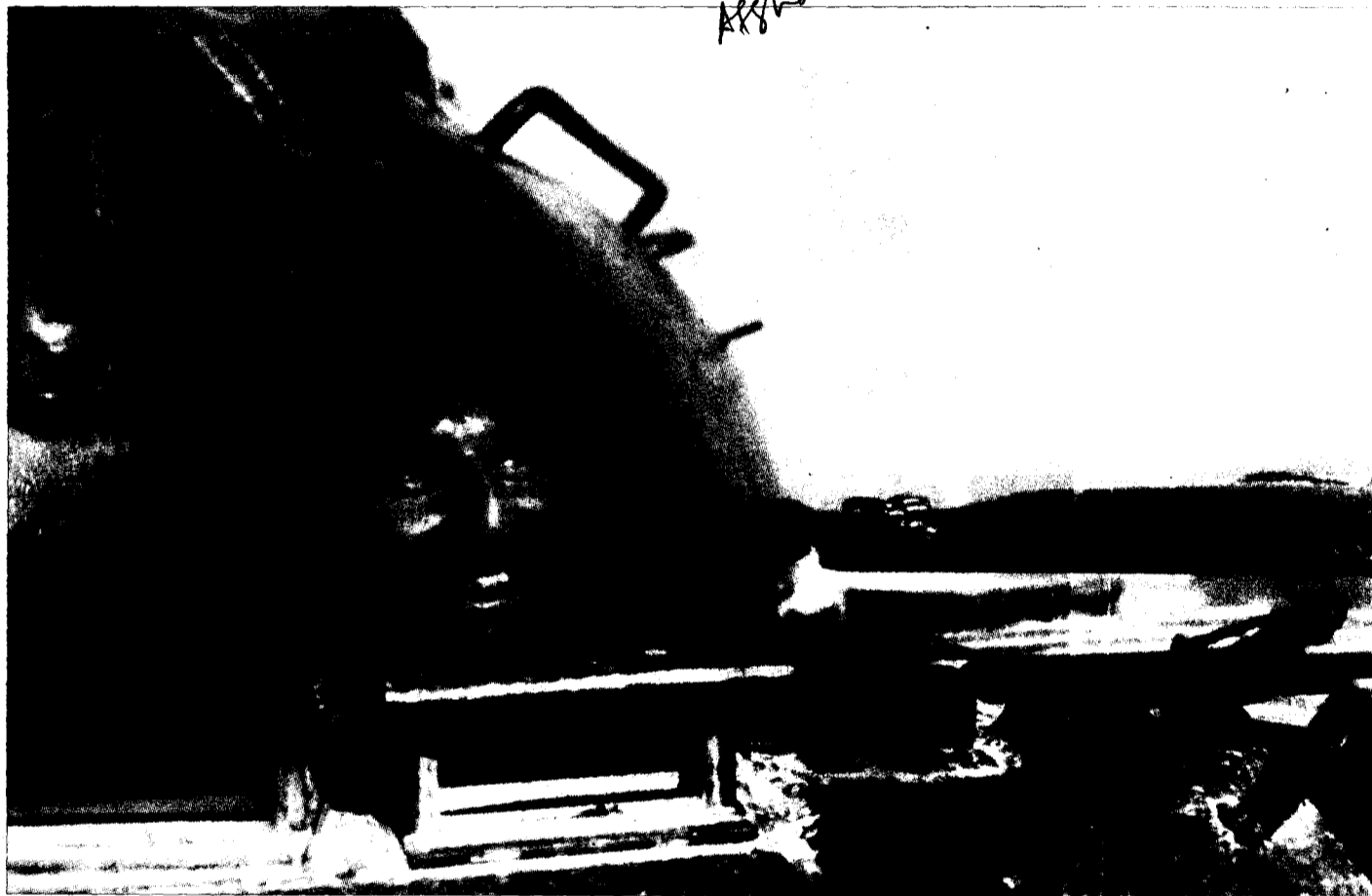
His ruling out Taliban participation could be a setback to Pakistan, which had said all Afghan groups, including the moderate Taliban, should be part of efforts to form a new government.

Mr Keith defended efforts of countries, like India, Britain and France, to open their diplomatic missions in Kabul. He said efforts to open the missions should be seen in the context of the need to conduct massive relief operations.

Pakistan foreign minister Mr Abdul Sattar said yesterday the question of countries opening their missions in Kabul did not arise as there was no government there to accord the necessary accreditation. "The UN resolution does not recognise any regime in Afghanistan today ... Countries have to wait for the establishment of a broad based government or certainly the transitional administration with whom foreign governments can deal," he said reacting to Iran's decision to re-open its embassy in Kabul.

The US envoy to Afghanistan, Mr James Dobbins, has said Kabul appeared to be safe and was hopeful the US embassy, closed since 1989, could reopen within a couple of weeks.

Mr Keith said Taliban forces, including foreign fighters, holed up in the besieged town of Kunduz should surrender to North-



HAPPY SOLDIER: A Northern Alliance tank driver smiles and revs his engine as he makes his way down a street in Kabul on Tuesday. — AP/PTI

ern Alliance troops. He said an estimated 12,000 Taliban fighters, including 3,000 of foreign origin, were held up there.

Regarding allegations of human rights violations by Northern Alliance forces, he said so far the Opposition forces had acted with restraint. He said they had agreed to permit coalition forces to take part in relief operations. However, the issue of a formation of Peace Keeping Force or a multi-national force was yet to be discussed by the UN.

Mr Keith said coalition forces believed both Osama bin Laden and Taliban chief Mullah Omar were still hiding in Afghanistan.

The White House today denied reports of a rift between Mr George W Bush and British Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair over

deployment of British troops to Afghanistan, reports from Washington add.

Osama hunt: The USA bombed northern and southern Taliban strongholds vowing to tighten the noose around Osama bin

■ More reports on page 5
■ Editorial: Kabul, Srinagar, page 6

Laden, reports from Kabul add. "We're hunting him down. He runs and he hides, but ... the noose is beginning to narrow, the net is getting tighter," US President Mr George W Bush told reporters in Washington.

Meanwhile, Germany said it expected to host talks by Afghan leaders on Saturday on the future of Afghanistan.

Trying to blunt criticism of US strikes during Ramzan, Mr Bush told ambassadors of Muslim nations at a Ramzan supper last night: "The terrorists have no home in any faith. Evil has no holy days."

The US military broadcast a radio message in Afghanistan conveying Gen Colin Powell's offer of a reward of up to \$25 million for information leading to Osama's whereabouts, the *New York Times* reported.

Taliban commanders in Kunduz have approached the UN with an offer of surrender, reports from UNHQ add. The UN was approached in Islamabad yesterday. The Northern Alliance offered amnesty to Taliban militants who surrendered in Kunduz but not to Taliban's foreign allies.



Anthrax vaccine in a Kabul laboratory, under the Taliban for 5 years. — AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

Troops close in on Osama

Taliban men kill each other

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 18. — A grim situation prevailed in the Northern Afghan town of Kunduz with hundreds of Taliban fighters, holed up in the besieged city, killing each other to avoid capture by the advancing Northern Alliance troops.

About 60 Chechen fighters drowned themselves in the nearby Amu River, while an Alliance commander said 25 trapped Taliban fighters fatally shot one another when they saw opposition troops advancing towards them, CNN reported today.

Reports in a London newspaper said Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida guards, comprising mainly Arabs and Pakistanis, are slaughtering Taliban men to prevent them from surrendering to the Alliance army.

In the first eyewitness accounts of life in the city, fleeing civilians last night told the *Sunday Telegraph* that an Arab Al-Qaida commander had ordered the massacre of 150 Afghan Taliban men who wanted to defect.

The Taliban and Al-Qaida are forcing local men to fight for them, and beating or killing them if they refused.

Mohammed Ibrahim (50) who escaped from the city yesterday, said: "A foreign commander ordered the killing of 150 Afghan Taliban men because they wanted to surrender."

The massacre took place on Friday and followed the defection of 1,000 Afghan Taliban men under General Mirai Nasery, a local commander. Al-Qaida soldiers had arrested more than 100 Kunduz citizens and were holding them hostage to stall an Alliance attack.

Details of the Kunduz massacre came as Alliance forces consolidated their grip on areas captured from the Taliban last week. The militia chief, Mullah Mohammed Omar, is reportedly trying to negotiate guarantees for his own safety and the safety of his fighters in their last remaining stronghold of Kandahar before surrendering.

There are still quite a few Taliban fighters in Kandahar and they have vowed not to give up without a fight.

Special forces hunting Osama believe they're closing in on him. Last night, a British official said special forces were "hours behind Osama as he fled from one hideout to another".

More reports on pages 5 and 8

AGENCIES

LONDON, Nov. 18. — British and US special forces have narrowed their search for Osama bin Laden to a 80-sq km hilly area in southeastern Afghanistan, the *Sunday Times* said today.

The report, quoting defence officials, said the troops have been air-dropped across the southern approaches to the area, near Kandahar, to prevent Osama from fleeing into Pakistan.

"The plan has always been to deny Osama space. The space he has now is very limited," the paper quoted the British defence secretary, Mr Geoff Hoon, as having said. The disclosure reflected the growing confidence among Intelligence officials that they would find Osama soon.

British Intelligence officials said Osama was believed to be "static" somewhere to the south-east of Kandahar. "For a variety of reasons we can be confident that he has not been able to move far."

Yesterday, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, had said Osama was still in Afghanistan, though he didn't know the exact place.

The US secretary of state, General Colin Powell, too said he hadn't come across any clues suggesting that the Saudi fugitive had left Afghanistan. "I think he's still there... It's getting harder for him to hide as more and more territory is removed from Taliban control."

The special forces arrived near Kandahar 10 days ago to block escape routes and engage the Taliban. American SAS troops have set up observation posts in the hills and running search-and-destroy patrols.

An Afghan fleeing Kandahar said he had seen a British questioning a Taliban deserter. Other Afghans crossing into Pakistan through Chaman border said western soldiers were on the outskirts of Kandahar, a base for Osama's Al-Qaida group and the Taliban.

Govt formation: The Northern Alliance today agreed to take part in a UN-sponsored conference, later this week in Europe, on the formation of a broad-based government after the former Afghan President, Mr Burhanuddin Rabbani, met the UN envoy, Mr Francesc Vendrell.

Mr Rabbani and Mr Vendrell reached Kabul yesterday. They met at Mr Rabbani's residence



SIA 19/11 Afghanistan

Northern Alliance fighters watch bombing of Taliban positions near Khanabad in Kunduz province on Sunday. — AP/PTI

said Mr Younis Qanuni, the Alliance interior minister. Mr Rabbani called for an end to enmity and revenge. "We've to put our efforts to rebuilding an independent and free country and work towards the ultimate end of war and a new era of peace."

Some senior Taliban officials in Kandahar have reportedly agreed with supporters of the former king, Zahir Shah, to join a national reconciliation government. "Some Taliban officials are in contact with us. They've agreed to national reconciliation and to set up a national government," said Mr Hamid Karzai, a supporter of Shah.

War: US jets struck targets around Kandahar, Afghan Islamic Press said, even as the stalemate over control of the southern Taliban stronghold continues. Forty-six people were

killed in the attacks that centred on the city's western part late yesterday and early today.

The jets also struck targets in Nangarhar province, killing 138 people in the past 48 hours. The province has a number of hideouts and camps of the Al-Qaida.

A Taliban spokesman said the militia had no intention to abandon Kandahar and denied that some of his comrades had been leaving the city. "Our orders are to live here in Kandahar and to defend our Islamic law," said Mohammad Tayyab Aga.

Mullah Mohammed Omar, he said, was still "in the area controlled by our forces."

Kunduz: The militia has reportedly offered to surrender Kunduz to the Northern Alliance. The city is the last Taliban stronghold in the north.

An Alliance commander, Mahi-

dullah, said the offer was made during negotiations over radio with the militia in the city. Hajji Omar, brother of a top militia commander in Kunduz, has relayed the offer to the Alliance.

Under the offer, the Taliban would surrender if the Alliance guaranteed that non-Afghans fighting with the militia would not be killed and if the surrender were witnessed by UN representatives.

There are an estimated 3,000 non-Afghans fighting with the Taliban in Kunduz, including Arabs (members of the Al-Qaida) and Pakistanis.

There was no immediate word whether the offer has been accepted, but it was clear that the Alliance is eager to avoid a protracted battle with the diehard militia and foreign fighters.

Alliance commanders had been delaying an attack on

Kunduz for days as negotiations proceeded, saying they wanted to avoid civilian casualties. Alliance officials and civilians fleeing the city had said the foreign fighters were pressing their Afghan Taliban commanders not to surrender.

Alliance leaders have said they regard the foreigners fighting for the Taliban as invaders and have vowed to kill them.

Guerrilla war: Thousands of Taliban fighters have retreated to Pakistan, which reportedly provided at least half of the militia's army, but many say they will return to Afghanistan to wage a guerrilla war.

If so, they may find themselves confronting a former ally that has been persuaded to switch sides by the USA. Washington is said to have offered Pakistan several dollars and several

Land Cruisers and Mercedes vehicles, media reports said.

The threat of guerrilla warfare raises the prospect of a long and bloody campaign against the Northern Alliance, southern Afghan commanders and western troops.

US move: The Bush administration has moved to put pressure on the Alliance to prevent it from taking over the reins of the country, the *Washington Post* said.

The report said US officials were concerned about the return of Mr Rabbani to Kabul despite assurances by the Alliance that he would stay out of the capital. The USA and its allies are apprehensive that Mr Rabbani's return may jeopardise plans to instal a broad-based government.

A post-Taliban dispensation

By Chinmaya R. Gharekhan

110-10
20/11

DESPITE ALL the talk about establishing a broad-based, multi-ethnic, representative post-Taliban government in Afghanistan, the recent history of that unfortunate country suggests that it is unlikely to enjoy peace and stability in the foreseeable future. The warlords and tribal leaders, who have accumulated weaponry and following and who have tasted power, will not easily give up their positions of influence in favour of even the former king should he be prevailed upon, against his better judgment, to return to Kabul and try his hand at forming a transitional government. And the outside powers love Afghanistan so much that they will always be offering more than advice and money to the Afghan people to help them run their affairs in the firm conviction that only they know what is in the best interests of the Afghan people.

The discussion about a post-Taliban dispensation has acquired urgency in view of the hurried abandonment of Kabul by the Taliban, its apparent disintegration as an organised fighting force and the prompt filling up of the vacuum by the Northern Alliance in the territories vacated by the Taliban. As of now, the Taliban seem to be making a determined stand at Kandahar, but given its extreme vulnerability to the American aerial bombardment, the militia could be forced to give up Kandahar soon.

Will the remnants of the Taliban — all those who would not have been bought over — take to the fabled caves and mountains of Afghanistan? Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden may not let go of the opportunity to achieve martyrdom and secure an everlasting place for them among the minds and hearts of their followers. If the Taliban manages to hold on to at least as much territory as the Northern Alliance did for ten years, the country could be the victim of a civil war for many years. A *de facto* partition of Afghanistan cannot be ruled out.

What is the definition of a broad-based, representative government? Even Pakistan supports the concept. Is Pakistan's idea of a such a government the same as India's? Or the United States'? Each external player has his own vision of a post-

The discussion about a post-Taliban dispensation has acquired urgency in view of the hurried abandonment of Kabul by the Taliban, its apparent disintegration and the prompt filling up of the vacuum by the Northern Alliance in the territories vacated by the Taliban.

Taliban government. Naturally, certain principles will have to find place in any such scheme, such as the right of women to education, work and dress of their choice, representation of all ethnic groups, elimination of terrorist training camps, and so on. But some powers have a more direct stake in the shape of the government in Kabul than others.

There is also the small problem of an Afghan government which, while not based in Kabul and which, until recently, controlled only 10 to 15 per cent of the national territory, is nevertheless recognised practically all over the world, and even occupies Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations, the ultimate seal of legitimacy. Will this government selflessly surrender this immense political advantage after having endured years of hardship, fighting the very Taliban whom much of the rest of the world has suddenly started despising? Would it not be justified in demanding the lion's share in a post-Taliban arrangement? While it would be owing a lot to the U.S. the latter too would be more than grateful to the Northern Alliance for making it unnecessary for the deployment of a large number of American ground troops — assuming everything works out according to the best possible scenarios.

The U.N. pointman for Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the evergreen diplomat for all seasons, is without doubt the best possible person to be entrusted with the unenviable responsibility of helping the Afghans put together a government which would provide a much-needed peaceful transition to a more permanent arrangement. He is certainly up to the task. But will he be allowed to function independently? He will inevitably have to operate within the confines of international realities. The U.N., after all, is only a reflection of the power politics at play in the world.

It is not clear what role the 6+2 forum is

expected to play in the exciting game of government-formation in post-Taliban Afghanistan. As is always the case, those in it would want it to play a crucial role and those out of it would want to minimise its importance. It will not be easy even for this relatively small group to find a consensus among themselves on the composition of a post-Taliban government. Mr. Brahimi admitted this in his speech to the Security Council on November 13: "The difficulty is securing agreement among interested parties to design a series of steps for reaching that goal" (of a broad-based government). Mr. Vladimir Putin's Russia will endeavour to achieve, without costing a single Russian life, what Brezhnev's Soviet Union could not, at the cost of thousands of lives. Pakistan, with a seat in the 6+2 mechanism, and with its re-established strategic relationship with the U.S., can be expected to secure its interests to a considerable extent, despite its atrocious record of having created and sustained the phenomenon of the Taliban, reportedly even during the ongoing war. Mr. Brahimi has publicly acknowledged Pakistan's (and Iran's) special role and legitimate interest in Afghanistan. The U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush's public call to the Northern Alliance not to rush to Kabul was a significant success for Pakistan. Strangely enough, it is the U.S., leader of the international coalition against terror, which alone would appear not to have any hidden agenda of its own. America's concerns seem genuinely to relate to the elimination of the source of terrorism and the illegal trade in drugs.

India has evident interest in what goes on in Afghanistan and in the post-Taliban dispensation there. It is consequently entirely appropriate for New Delhi to try to protect its interests, either by being included in an expanded 6+2 group, which is unlikely, or through its friends. Some

respected Indian analysts have suggested that India, given its long association with Afghanistan in developmental activities such as in agriculture, education, health, etc., should be included in the post-Taliban reconstruction effort in that country. They are being less than fair to the Government's efforts that are aimed at securing for India a role in the political processes surrounding government-formation in Kabul. It would be highly unflattering to India if it had to lobby even for an invitation to a future Aid Afghanistan club. The Vajpayee Government seems to be pursuing the objective with purpose and determination, although success cannot be guaranteed. India thus must depend upon its friends, some old and some new, to protect its concerns. India's special envoy, Mr. Lambah, has met Mr. Brahimi in New York.

The Security Council, in its resolution 1378 of November 14, has endorsed Mr. Brahimi's blueprint for dealing with the Afghan situation. It consists of 5 steps. (1) A U.N.-convened meeting of representatives of the Northern Alliance and all other "existing processes" at an appropriate venue, (2) this meeting will suggest steps to form a "provisional council" which would be a fairly large body, to be headed by an individual accepted as a symbol of national unity — in other words, the former king, (3) the provisional council will propose the composition of a transitional administration to last not more than two years, (4) An emergency *Loya Jirga* will approve the transitional administration, and (5) the transitional phase will conclude in a second *Loya Jirga* which will approve the Constitution to be drafted by the provisional government.

Mr. Brahimi has favoured a multinational force to provide security to the transitional administration, for reasons of expediency. It is not clear whether the need for such a force has been clearly established so far. Mr. Brahimi has presented a logical, gradual framework for dealing with what is an extremely complex situation. While objective realities and experience so far do not make for optimism, let us hope, for the sake of the Afghan people, that it will play out as intended.

FIRST DAY, FIRST SHOW: JOYOUS RESIDENTS RUSH TO SECURE

Kabul movie theatre opens its doors after five long years

Kabul

19 NOVEMBER

KABUL'S MOST famous movie theatre opened its doors on Monday for the first time in five years, prompting scenes of total chaos as joyous residents scrambled to secure seats for the first showing.

Police guarding the Bakhtar theatre managed to hold back the over-excited crowd some distance from the entrance, but when the doors swung open any semblance of order disappeared as people surged into the movie hall.

The box-office stalls were subjected to a full-scale frontal assault, while one ticket tout, hoping to cash in on the excitement, found himself surrounded by dozens of people thrusting fistfuls of banknotes in his face.

Within minutes, the temperature inside the cinema had noticeably risen as the mass of sweating, shouting and whistling bodies heaved from one side to the other. The hapless usher charged with checking the tick-



BACK TO SHOWBIZ:
Afghans rush to enter Kabul's only theatre for a film show. — AP

ets was perched precariously on a box in front of the entrance to the auditorium which two policemen were struggling to hold shut.

In a misguided attempt to restore order to the proceedings, other policemen simply started lashing out at the crowd with their fists and batons. The screening of any images, televised or otherwise, was totally banned by the Taliban as a form of idolatry.

"There were 17 cinemas in Kabul but they were all closed when the Taliban came to power in 1996," said Bakhtar's manager Mohammad Rafi. "I'm very proud that we are the first to reopen our doors," he added.

The auditorium bore all the marks of long years of neglect with rows of dilapidated wooden seats, a ceiling full of holes and a patched up cloth screen. But the owner had managed to save the most important items: 16 film reels and two projectors. "They are working fine because they have been well looked after," said the projectionist Ewaz Ali.

— AFP

The Economic Times

Taliban loses its bark and bite, ^{Amman} offers to surrender ^{20/11}

ISLAMABAD: Key Taliban commander Mullah Fazil on Monday said over 1,000 people had been killed in the U.S. air strikes in the northern city of Kunduz during the weekend and the militia was willing to surrender the city, but only under UN supervision.

In an interview to the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*, Fazil said the Taliban's offer had been prompted by the constant U.S. bombings which were killing civilians. "We have authorised the governor of the province to take the necessary steps in this respect," said Fazil, who is described as the chief Taliban commander in the north. However, he made it clear that the militia would under no circumstances surrender to the Northern Alliance. "We don't trust them," he remarked.

Fazil's comments came even as the Northern Alliance troops besieging Kunduz reportedly halted their assault to try and persuade the desperate Taliban defenders to give themselves up. An Alliance spokesman said the fighting had stopped and negotiations were on with the Taliban to persuade

it to surrender. The Afghans in the Taliban might find a way but the anti-Taliban alliance on Monday reiterated that it would not let foreign hardliners walk away free.

Dismissing Western suggestions that Afghan forces would be unable to unite due to the infighting, Northern Alliance envoy Haron Amin claimed that if left alone, Afghans could create their own form of government. He pointed out that they had done so once in the past, in 1747. He was obviously referring to the creation of the last great Afghan empire, which was second only in size to the Ottoman empire, and which collapsed half a century later.

At Washington, senior officials on Monday said although terrorist mastermind

Osama bin Laden and his fighters were on the run and their Taliban supporters in disarray, the military campaign to crush them was far from its end. Secretary of State Colin Powell and deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz said they had no reason to believe that Bin Laden had escaped from Afghanistan.

"I have seen no intelligence or information to suggest that he has left," Gen Powell said, adding that the fugitive's room for manoeuvre was shrinking and his options narrowing. "It's getting harder for him to hide as more and more territory is removed from the Taliban's control. I don't think there's any country in the region that will be anxious to give him guest privileges if he shows up," he remarked.

Meanwhile, World Bank president James Wolfensohn announced in Ottawa that the international conference to discuss a reconstruction programme for Afghanistan would be held in Pakistan from November 27-29. The meeting will be hosted by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the Asian Development Bank.

On the other hand, continuing with its flip-flop policy on the Taliban regime, Pakistan on Monday announced that it did not recognise the militia but did not derecognise it either. Reflecting its dilemma in the wake of the international campaign in Afghanistan and the fall of the government that was its protege, foreign minister Abdul Sattar said Islamabad was still to announce the de-recognition of the Taliban government. He added that Islamabad would continue to extend diplomatic recognition to Taliban ambassador Mullah Abdul Salam Zaef as, for the time being, the Afghan embassy represented Afghanistan in Pakistan. (Agencies)



POUNDING AWAY
A Northern Alliance soldier fires on Taliban positions near Kunduz in northern Afghanistan on Monday.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

20 NOV 2001

Britain puts despatch of forces on hold

20/11 By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, NOV. 19. Continuing confusion over the deployment of foreign troops in Afghanistan has delayed the despatch of additional British forces which were to have gone today, even as fresh doubts arose over the role of the 100 commandos of the Special Boat Service whose arrival at Bagram airbase last Thursday had provoked an angry reaction from the Northern Alliance.

The Defence Secretary, Mr. Geoff Hoon, was hopeful that the issue would be sorted out but he admitted that more discussions would be needed before sending in 6,000 troops who are on standby as part of a humanitarian and "stabilisation" force. "This is an international coalition operation and we need to make absolutely sure everyone is agreed on the next stage forward," he said even as he claimed that the discussions so far had been "encouraging".

Observers said the confusion seemed to have arisen because there was no unified Alliance authority in Afghanistan and competing warlords were making decisions on the hoof. The "authorities" with whom the British Government was in discussion did not always have control over local chieftains in other areas with the result that while some were more amenable to persuasion, others were not. One newspaper said there were fears that Afghanistan was in danger of "slipping into diplomatic and military chaos". It quoted Mr. Hoon as saying that the situation on the ground was "pretty grim". He made it clear, in an interview to *The Observer*, that there was no question of putting the safety of British troops at risk

suggesting that they might be pulled out if there was danger to their lives.

Reports indicated sharp divisions in the Northern Alliance over the induction of foreign troops with pro-Western elements such as the acting Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, inclined to be more accommodating than others. Many of the commanders, suspicious of British and U.S. motives, were opposed to foreign "interference", *The Times* said. The Foreign Office Minister, Mr. Ben Bradshaw, agreed that the Alliance leaders did always speak in one voice. The British media was full of conflicting statements from Alliance representatives — some categorically rejecting foreign troops, some grudgingly accepting them but only for humanitarian tasks, and a few saying they had no objection.

The most uncompromising reaction came from Mr. Younis Qanouni, the acting Interior Minister of the Alliance, who said he saw "no need" for foreign troops and made clear that "we do not expect any more" of them. The 100 commandos, now at the Bagram airbase, would be restricted to humanitarian work and helping with security for the British embassy, expected to reopen soon, *The Daily Telegraph* said.

Meanwhile, several thousand people took part in an anti-war rally in central London on Sunday — the biggest since the military action in Afghanistan started six weeks ago. The rally, organised by a loose coalition of civil rights groups, trade unions, politicians, Muslim representatives and public figures, demanded an end to the bombing.

Afghanistan
+10-1
20/11

4 scribes feared killed, Taliban holdouts pounded

LONDON, NOV. 19. Four foreign journalists are believed to have been killed by unidentified attackers in Afghanistan, the ITN Television and Radio Company reported here today quoting its reporter who was present at the site. The ITN correspondent was in one of the cars in the convoy which was attacked. He said that the reporters were held up by armed men, believed to be bandits, when they were on their way to Kabul from Jalalabad.

They were taken into the mountains and later shots were heard, the reporter said, according to Ria Novosti. Other cars turned back towards Jalalabad on seeing the attackers.

The incident is being investigated by the Northern Alliance. According to a Reuters report, the journalists included two from Reuters — Harry Burton, an Australian television cameraman, and Azizullah Haidari, an Afghan-born photographer. A Spanish journalist, Julio Fuentes of *El Mundo*, and an Italian journalist, Maria Grazia Cutuli of *Corriere Della Sera*, were the others suspected to be killed.

An AP report from Jalalabad said that the journalists were travelling in a province that recently came under the control of anti-Taliban forces. However, some Taliban stragglers and Arab fighters loyal to the Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, are still believed to be in the area.

Amid an intensive diplomatic push for setting up a new Afghan

Government, U.S. warplanes took to the skies on Monday for strikes at Taliban holdouts in Afghanistan's north, east and south, a Kabul report said.

Opposition fighters fired on Taliban positions outside the city of Kunduz, the militia's only remaining redoubt in the north of Afghanistan while U.S. planes pounded the front lines. Foreign fighters loyal to Osama are said to be preventing Taliban defenders from giving up the fight in Kunduz.

Sunday brought substantial progress toward arranging a U.N.-brokered conference on forming a power-sharing Government.

The head of the Northern Alli-

ance, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, wanted the meeting to take place in Kabul. But following talks in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, with the U.S. envoy, Mr. James F. Dobbins, the Alliance's Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, said the meeting "will be held outside Afghanistan," possibly as early as this week.

He said some locations proposed by the U.N. "were acceptable to us," citing Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

The U.S. had been putting heavy pressure on the Alliance to drop its insistence on Kabul as a venue for the talks. — UNI, AP

**No more business with
Taliban: Pak. — Page 12**

Now, Taliban 'anthrax factory'

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, NOV. 19. A British tabloid claims to have discovered a Taliban-run anthrax laboratory in Kabul alleging that Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network was "behind" the U.S. anthrax scare.

In a front-page splash today, *The Mirror* said the "factory", headed by the "anti-West" Qari Abdullah, was used to create vaccines from "highly dangerous wild bacteria". It was housed in a two-storey building which had been bombed by U.S. B52s.

"On a tour of the plant, *Mirror* saw an incubator to develop the bacteria, hundreds of test tubes ready for samples, and the word 'anthrax' scribbled on a container," it said quoting a "source" at the plant as saying that the Taliban were planning a chemical and biological warfare against the West. "I believe anthrax might have been first on their list," he said.

The *Mirror* story comes days after *The Times* claimed that it had found documents indicating that the Al-Qaeda was planning to make nuclear devices, and a deadly poison "ricin". These, it said, were found in safe houses abandoned by Al-Qaeda activists while fleeing the Northern Alliance offensive last week.

THE HINDU

NOV 20 2001

Aff Lamore
HD-15

Plan to rebuild Buddhas destroyed by Taliban

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BUBENDORF, NOV. 19. Two Buddhas blown up by the Taliban in one of their most extreme acts of vandalism are going to be rebuilt if a plan by two Swiss art lovers succeeds.

The 1,800-year-old Buddhas, hewn into a cliff face in the Bamiyan valley in central Afghanistan, were destroyed in April on the grounds that as "idolatrous" sculptures they offended Muslims.

Now a campaign is under way in Switzerland to raise more than £1 million to recreate them, first near Zurich and then in Afghanistan.

The campaign has been launched by Mr. Paul Bucherer, who runs the Afghanistan Institute and Museum in Bubendorf near Zurich, and Mr. Bernard Weber, a Swiss film maker and founder of New7Wonders.org - an internet project that invites participants to nominate the seven wonders of the contemporary world. The two men have assembled an international team of art historians and scientists, which they hope will work alongside Afghan craftsmen to recreate what were once the biggest standing Buddhas in the world.

As a trial run, the team will build a free-standing version of the Buddhas measuring about a third of the size of the originals, which will go on display at the Bubendorf institute next spring. The team hopes later to build a near-perfect duplicate of the sculptures in Afghanistan using reconstituted local red sandstone in the space where the originals once stood.

The Buddhas were built between AD200 and AD400 by the descendants of Greek artists who came to Afghanistan with Alexander the Great - which explains why they wore ancient Hellenic clothing. The larger one was 174ft high.

"We want to prove that even willful destruction cannot bring oblivion to that which mankind holds dear," said Mr. Weber.



A visitor walks past the 55-metre-high Buddha statue in Bamiyan, central Afghanistan, in this December 18, 1997 file photo. — Reuters

"They are among the first representations ever of the Buddha and their destruction was the destruction of the link between Western and Asian culture.

"Obviously we will have to wait until circumstances in Afghanistan have changed before we can rebuild them there, but we will be ready to go ahead within two years, if circumstances allow."

The team has been offered the

use of highly accurate measurements of the Buddhas made in the 1970s by Robert Koska, a Swiss cartographer from Graz University, Austria.

It is also using descriptions of the Buddhas written in the 12th and 13th centuries by Chinese pilgrims and Arab geographers. — ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2001

THE HINDU

20 NOV 2001

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Wrong Side Of Religion!

Afghanistan

EVER since America's **W**orld-wide campaign against terrorism in early October, we have been crying ourselves hoarse that Pakistan and Taliban are locked in an inseparable embrace and Pakistani inputs would be misleading. They are now finding out for themselves, which is always the best way to learn! Witness the fiasco over commando raids inside Taliban territory and the murder of Abdul Haq, a Northern Alliance commander, led to his death by Pakistani officers in league with Taliban. They did not even allow his family to bury him. Vladimir Putin, having failed to convince Bush of the true nature of the Pakistan/Taliban axis, did not waste time, black belt karate experts tend not to do so! He went straight to Burhanuddin Rabbani, once president of Afghanistan, living in Dushanbe, which per-

sueded Bush that if he wanted an end of Osama bin Laden and terrorism, he should be careful about humouring Musharraf. Bush and Musharraf then turn into traffic cops, a s k i n g Northern Alliance to stop o u t s i d e Kabul, meaning around it to the south, there to wait until Bush, Blair and Musharraf give further instructions. The Alliance have benefited from the fearful American bombing but Bush also knew that only their troops could defeat Taliban. The fall of Kabul was greeted with jubilation: television screens gave the lie to Musharraf's simulated fears.

It is time to correct misconceptions fed to America by Pakistan:
 1) *The Taliban must be part of any new government on ethnic grounds.* All Pashuns are not Taliban nor are all Taliban Pashuns. Pashuns include, Arabs and Pakistans among other fanatics. The impressive Foreign Minister of the provisional government set up by the Northern Alliance, Dr Abdullah Abdullah is a Pashun. The majority of commanders of the Northern Alliance are Pashuns.
 2) The reason for Musharraf's panic is clear enough. Pakistani regu-

lars fighting alongside Taliban were in danger of exposure; it transpires that 19 Urdu speaking Pakistanis were captured in Kabul in one go. Jubilant crowds greeted Alliance troops shouting — *death to Taliban!* Children spat on the dead mercenaries. Retreating Taliban took young women with them. *Protection of virtue and prevention of vice — my fool!*
 3) *Pakistan shares a long border with Afghanistan and therefore any new administration in Kabul must be friendly to Pakistan.* The short answer is that India has a longer border with Pakistan and no friendship! By Musharraf's logic, Islamabad should change its government! It is no part of the duty of any country to pass a friendship test imposed by a neighbour. Friendship is a two-way street; unless Musharraf is wanting yet another bonus from America — at Afghanistan's expense. 4) *A desperate Musharraf is demanding United Nations' intervention, which he can manipulate with American help.* This is merely absurd. Dr Abdullah has invited all groups to come to Kabul to discuss a new government. That is how it should be and the UN Annan has already asked all outsiders (including Pakistan) to stay out. 5) *Afghanistan is Pashun.* This is simply not true. The population is mixed; although Pashuns are the largest single group, they do not constitute a majority by themselves. Does Musharraf order his own country on ethnic lines? Does he allow representation for Shias, Mohajirs, Ahmediyas and the rest? Does he give any Pakistani for that matter, any say in the country's affairs? By what right then does he preach to others? *Mutatis mutandis*, this goes for Bush and Blair too. Religion plays no part in their affairs; neither does ethnic extraction. Why then must these be relevant in Afghanistan? Why cannot all those who inhabit Afghanistan be treated as Afghans?

6) Afghanistan has Islamic fundamentalists and the rest and the divide is sharp. The Taliban would not allow men to shave, women to work, girls to go to school or music or chess to be played. The name of the game is oppression and oppressors must be crushed, not invited into a new government! The first edict of the Northern Alliance in Kabul was to remove these restrictions. Music is playing, men are shaving and women have come into their own. Musharraf would herd these two incompatibles into one government, hoping that while the cats quarrel, he can run away with the nuts! The world is not that dumb.
 7) Now the riddle. Musharraf is not a fundamentalist, yet he has forged unbreakable links with the Taliban and is desperate to give them a place in the sun, something rightly denied by the Northern Alliance and other countries including France. Apart from the greed involved in drug trafficking, his excuse is religion, his objective, Kashmir. He needs fanatics to die for Islam there. It is now proven that Taliban have used mercenaries including Pakistanis. Why does Bush say he will not give Northern Alliance any favours? Nobody has asked him for any! Afghanistan has a right to be treated as a civilised country. We must not accept the wrong side of religion.

A desperate Musharraf is demanding United Nations' intervention which he can manipulate with American help

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Alliance agrees to early talks in Europe

19/11
FROM SEBASTIAN ALISON

Tashkent, Nov. 18 (Reuters): The anti-Taliban Northern Alliance in control of Kabul will take part in a meeting in Europe on the shape of a future government in Afghanistan as early as this week, Alliance foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah said today.

After meetings in the Uzbek capital with James Dobbins, US representative to the Afghan opposition, Abdullah said the alliance was ready to hold talks outside Afghanistan — a request made by the UN.

"It will be outside Afghanistan. Some of the venues proposed by (UN envoy on Afghanistan Francesc) Vendrell are acceptable to us — Germany, Switzerland or Austria," he said. "From our view it could be this week. There is no obstacle as far as timing is concerned," he said.

US secretary of state Colin Powell said he was "very pleased" with the Alliance's willingness to attend the planned UN-convened meeting but added: "Let's also keep in mind that our political objective was to get al Qaida, that terrorist network, and to get Osama bin Laden."

Dobbins said he had stressed to Abdullah the need for urgency. "Our view is that it should be this week," he said, speaking shortly after his arrival from three days of talks in Pakistan with officials in Islamabad and exiled Afghans.

Abdullah said the Alliance, or United Front, was committed to establishing a broad-based government despite recent military victories that mean it controls vast swathes of Afghanistan.

"The recent victories of the United Front by no means suggest that we want to impose our own solution upon the people," he said. "The victories and liberation of areas by our armed forces shouldn't affect our commitment

to the formation of a fully representative, multi-ethnic broad-based government, but it will rather encourage us to speed up our efforts with our national, regional and international partners in order to achieve that."

He said he saw no obstacle to members of the Pashtoon majority, from which many of the Taliban as well as Abdullah himself are drawn, participating in a new Afghan government.

"I think there are several Pashtoon leaders who could play a role in Afghanistan...in pacification. There should be a fair chance for everybody to play a role."

On the issue of the deployment of British troops at the Bagram airbase just north of Kabul, Abdullah said the alliance and the British were now in full agreement. "The presence of British troops in Bagram at this stage is based on an agreement between us and the British government and the aim of deploying them there is to provide security for humanitarian aid," he said.

"We are in the picture and in full agreement," he said.

Leaders of the rampant opposition Northern Alliance, suspicious about the presence of foreign troops on Afghan soil, voiced anxiety at the sudden deployment of US-British forces north of Kabul at the weekend.

Some 100 British special forces landed at Bagram airbase early on Friday and swiftly began to secure the airport in what officials in the Britain said was an operation to provide security for humanitarian operations in war-ravaged Afghanistan.

Swiss foreign ministry spokeswoman Daniela Stoffel-Fatzer said Switzerland would be willing to host a meeting on the shape of a future Afghanistan government. "Switzerland would be prepared to organise such a conference," she said.

THE TELEGRAPH

13 NOV 2001

Alliance will take part in UN¹¹¹-sponsored^{Afghanistan} talks¹⁸⁷⁴

TASHKENT/WASHINGTON: Foreign minister of the Northern Alliance Abdullah Abdullah on Sunday said the alliance would take part in a UN-sponsored meeting to decide the shape of the future government in Afghanistan. The meeting is slated to be held later this week in Europe.

After meeting U.S. representative James Dobbins at Tashkent, Mr Abdullah said the alliance was ready to hold talks at a venue outside Afghanistan, as requested by the UN. "It will be outside Afghanistan. Some of the venues proposed by UN envoy on Afghanistan Francesco Vendrell are acceptable to us. We are not opposed to holding the meeting this week," he said, reiterating that the alliance was committed to establishing a broadbased government despite the fact that its recent military victories had given it control over vast swathes of the country.

"The recent victories of the United Front by no means suggest that we want to impose our solution upon the people. The victories and liberation of areas by our armed forces will not affect our commitment to the formation of a fully representative, multi-ethnic government but encourage us to

speed up our efforts with our national, regional and international partners in order to achieve that," Mr Abdullah claimed, adding that he saw no obstacle in members of the Pashtun majority participating in the new government. Many of the Taliban and Abdullah himself are Pashtuns.

Even as tensions simmered over Britain's deployment of 100 royal marines north of Kabul, the

Fahim said. However, Qanooni struck a more neutral note, saying it had been confirmed that the existing batch of commandos would be restricted to humanitarian work, demining operations and providing security for the British embassy which is expected to reopen soon. But he reiterated that additional foreign troop deployments would not be welcomed.

Meanwhile, over 140 civilians are reported to have died in the last two days in air strikes by the U.S.-led forces against suspected terrorist targets. While at least 46 people have been killed in the raids on Kandahar, 93 people died in the eastern provinces of Khost and Nangarhar.

At Washington, concerned about the alliance moving too quickly to consolidate power, the Bush administration on Sunday once again urged the Northern Alliance to install a government representing the country's multiple ethnic groups.

Meanwhile, expressing concern about a serious fight breaking out between various factions, exiled king Zahir Shah said he would return to Kabul soon, "simply to be a member of the 'loya jirga' rather than the king". (Agencies)

OF TALKS AND BOMBS

- ▶ Meeting will be held outside Afghanistan
- ▶ Northern Alliance opposes the arrival of more foreign troops
- ▶ Over 140 killed in fresh air raids
- ▶ Zahir Shah plans to return home

Northern Alliance on Sunday said there was no need for additional foreign troops in the country. "We do not expect any more foreign troops. We see no need for that," Younis Qanooni, the alliance's acting interior minister, said.

The arrival of the British troops has been viewed with intense mistrust by the Northern Alliance, which accused the troops of operating without the anti-Taliban coalition's agreement. "The British forces perhaps have an agreement with the UN, but not with us," Gen

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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The Road Ahead: Zahir Shah, UN, elections

MASOOD KHALILI

The UN deputy special envoy for Afghanistan is expected in Kabul in the next two days and the Northern Alliance is very keen that they facilitate the setting up of an interim government. The NA is very clear that they are not going to set up such an interim arrangement. If tomorrow President Rabbani were to initiate such a process, the people would look upon him with suspicion and insist he was doing it to install himself as president. The initiative must come from the UN, we have reposed trust in them.

Two processes are possible. The arrangement will either be brought about at the initiative of the former King of Afghanistan Zahir Shah, or else the UN will have to set up a *loya jirga* where people will decide who their next leader is going to be. We are not against either scheme. A final government will only be set up after there have been elections.

The Northern Alliance will accept the decision either way. Once this broad-based, multi-ethnic government is in place, the UN

has to ensure that our neighbours, especially Pakistan, are not allowed to destabilise it as they have done in the past. After all, it cannot be forgotten that traditionally, problems in Afghanistan have been created for us not from insiders but from outsiders.

And the NA is not in favour of a UN peace keeping force being positioned inside our country. After all, we are no longer fighting one another.

In 1992, the scenario was different; at that time we were at war with each other.

But at this moment, we have won over practically the entire country. The three main south-east provinces including Jalalabad have slipped out of the Taliban control.

The morale of the Taliban has been broken. Even if they do regroup, I believe they have lost their capacity to strike back. That could explain why Pakistan has recently sent 1,500 madrasa-trained Pakistanis

to help the Taliban in Kandahar.

Pakistan is trying to confuse the issue by raising the issue of Pashtus. And President Musharraf's statement about the UN bringing a Muslim peace keeping force in Afghanistan is also mischievous. What does he mean by it? A peace keeping force is a peace keeping force whatever may be its composition. It should be made clear to him that there is no ethnic conflict in Afghanistan. Pashtus have suffered as much as other Afghanis. Najib was a Pashtu but

centuries in Afghanistan. Now Pakistan is trying to create a pseudo problem for us. Have we asked them why so many Punjabis have been included in their government and so many *mujahirs* left out?

And we are not anticipating any bloodshed. Rather, when the Northern Alliance soldiers entered Kabul, two million people celebrated our arrival. In 1992, too, it was the ISI who acted against us and forced the setting up of a stooge government. The Taliban was a creation of the ISI. Pakistan gave visas to thousands of Arabs. They were first trained in Pakistan before they made their way into Afghanistan.

I do not know where Mullah Omar and Osama Bin Laden are hiding. They could be in the suburbs of Kandahar or else they may have sought a safe haven in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Only two options are open to both of them. Either they commit suicide or else they escape to Pakistan. They are hated by our people on whom they have inflicted untold miseries.

(The Afghan Northern Alliance Ambassador to India spoke to Rashme Sehgal)

'I do not know where Mullah Omar and Osama are. They could be in the suburbs of Kandahar or the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Only two options are open to them: suicide or an escape to Pakistan'

he was never known by his ethnic identity, but as a Communist. He was a fanatic alright but then the Taliban are super fanatics.

It is for us to select the government of our choice. Different ethnic groups have lived together for

Pakistan will remain a player in the game

EJAZ HAIDER

With the Taliban routed, three questions assume immediate significance for Pakistan. Is the Pakistan-US alliance over? Would the Taliban now resort to prolonged guerilla war, which could destabilise Pakistan's tribal belt along the Durand Line? Finally, would any new set-up, even one dominated by the Northern Alliance, be necessarily anti-Pakistan? The answer to all three questions is a no. Washington cannot dispense with Pakistan for two reasons: One, the Taliban's departure may not result in a stable Afghanistan in the near future; two, it is simplistic to analyse Pakistan-US relations within the context of Afghanistan alone. Events in Afghanistan indicate a return of that country to the pre-Taliban days when small bands of warlords and their henchmen roamed the countryside while larger parties controlled different parts of the country with none being in a commanding position. For all their faults Taliban did manage to extend centralised control over the territory under their control.

In the current power vacuum, renegade bands and commanders have popped up and would not like the authority they wield within their areas, including what can be described as the tribe's solidarity space, to return to the jurisdiction of Kabul. A non-Pashtun dispensation in Kabul would especially find it difficult to control the eastern and southern Pashtun tribes.

It will not be an easy task for the US-led coalition to bring normalcy back to the post-Taliban Afghanistan. In fact, the real problem may just be beginning. It is

fashionable to speak of a broad-based government in Afghanistan, but as would be shortly clear, getting one on the ground and making it function will not be easy. It does not matter who has entered Kabul; what matters is the presence of the Pashtun component in any dispensation. That component is a demographic imperative and not merely born of Pakistan's (and before it Britain's) strategic fantasy. This is where Pakistan again comes into the picture. It has its own sizeable Pashtun population and would retain the leverage over any future political set-up that seeks to work towards a multi-ethnic arrangement on the basis of demographic realities. One reason both the regional as well as international actors have failed to develop viable Afghan policies is because there are no fallback positions in Afghanistan.

Regarding Pakistan, too, while the US cannot allow Pakistan to go under for a host of reasons, even if there were no Afghanistan, Washington did commit the folly of downgrading Islamabad in its strategic picture. Additionally, the sanctions regime because of Pakistan's nuclear ambitions allowed Islamabad to cut itself loose without much angst there was nothing much left to lose. The US cannot allow a repeat of that situation, not for Pakistan's sake but for its own.

Pakistan itself has to do some urgent revamping of its policies. Just as Pakistan holds the key to Afghanistan, Afghanistan has much to do with Pakistan. The strategic embrace in which the two have remained locked requires both a continuation as well as severance of the old equation.

The question about whether a

new set-up dominated by NA would remain hostile towards Pakistan again presupposes, firstly, that the NA would in fact dominate the new set-up and, secondly, that there are no structural constraints that govern Kabul's relations with Islamabad at an irreducible minimum. Both assumptions are wrong. The NA would be present in any new set-up, as it should be. If those groups represent a certain proportion of the population, that proportion cannot be wished away. Equally true is the fact that the Alliance cannot claim anything beyond the reasonable. This is the lesson from past years for those external players who opposed Pakistan and put all their eggs in the NA basket. It will be no good for the UN to continue to legitimise Burhanuddin Rabbani's government. It cannot pretend that nothing has happened on the ground since Rabbani was forced out of Kabul. True, it made that legal point to pressurise the Taliban, but that situation has now changed.

Similarly, history proves that relations between Kabul and Islamabad, even under hostile conditions did not spin out of control because of Kabul's economic dependence on Islamabad for trade routes and an opening to the port facilities. That fact remains unchanged. Kabul did refuse to accept Durand Line as the international border and fanned centrifugal Pashtun tendencies but that situation persisted even during the Taliban rule. The Taliban never accepted the Durand Line and while their fundamentalism managed to put down parochial tendencies, it spawned its own, more potent danger of obscurantism that did not respect any boundaries.

The final question relates to whether the Taliban would now conduct a guerilla war? One needs to first define the Taliban phenomenon. Who were the Taliban and where have they gone? This is important because they comprised the original madrassah students, former Pashtun commanders, elements of the PDPA (Khalq), tribal elements and non-Afghan volunteers. Except for the non-Afghans and the Taliban hardcore, most others have simply vanished as Taliban. They are in any case unlikely to wage any prospective guerilla war by the Taliban. Two, for any guerilla struggle by the Taliban hardcore, they would need bases, secure lines of communication and the ability to live off the countryside. That may not be possible since they cannot use any of the neighbouring countries to set up bases or lines of communication and their ability to do so within Afghanistan will be severely curtailed because of ground reverses.

Finally, the Taliban may not be able to live off the countryside because the Afghans have largely welcomed their fall. So, this is not like the previous situation when the mujahideen were fighting an unpopular communist government. The danger that some of them would try to get into Pakistan's remote tribal areas is clear and present. Also, in such an event, they would try to foment trouble, including making an attempt to subvert sympathetic tribesmen. But that can be countered through a combination of diplomacy and use of force. In any case, with their support base gone, such an exercise will not be sustainable over a longer period.

(The writer is news editor, The Friday Times.)

Rabbani returns, vows to form broadbased govt.



B. Rabbani

ISLAMABAD/WASHINGTON: Amidst conflicting reports of the Taliban withdrawing from its stronghold of Kandahar, former Afghanistan president Burhanu-ddin Rabbani made a triumphant return to Kabul on Saturday, four days after the capital was captured by the Northern Alliance.

Addressing mediapersons, Mr Rabbani said his Northern Alliance would not try to monopolise power after the downfall of the Taliban but try to form a broadbased government. Promising to speed up the process of government formation, he said reports of the alliance dragging its feet on the issue were not true. "If there is a delay because of

the UN, we should not be blamed for it. I have supported UN proposals in the past and we will support it now for the sake of peace."

The Northern Alliance, a loose coalition of ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks, has started forming an interim administration that Mr Rabbani is expected to head. Maintaining that the current arrangements would finally pave the way for a 'loya jirga' (grand council), he remarked, "The victory does not belong to one ethnic group but to all Afghan people."

But the Taliban has refused to throw in the towel. The militia's envoy to Pakistan Abdul Salam Zaef on Saturday made it clear that the Taliban would "fight to the last breath" to defend its stronghold of Kandahar. Denying reports

that Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar had ordered his men to move out of Kandahar, he said, "We have not decided to give Kandahar to anyone else. The rumours about us leaving Kandahar are false."

Meanwhile, continuing with its offensive, the U.S. military on Saturday dropped a 500-pound laser-guided bomb at Khost, which reportedly missed its target and damaged a mosque. The Americans also bombarded the town of Kunduz where thousands of Taliban forces, many of them hardline Arab and Pakistani volunteers linked to the Al Qaida, are thought to be holed up.

According to officials, British and U.S. commandos have secured an air-base north of Kabul and are readying it for the arrival of thousands of more crack troops and large shipments of humanitarian aid. Countries like France,

Germany, Canada, Turkey, Jordan and Indonesia have reportedly earmarked troops for what could become a UN-backed humanitarian or peacekeeping mission.

Osama bin Laden suffered a major setback when his deputy and top military commander Mohammad Atef was killed in a U.S. air strike near Kabul. U.S. defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said he had received authoritative reports that Atef, who carried a \$5-million reward on his head, had been killed.

Atef was killed in an air strike on a command-and-control centre a couple of days ago. A Pakistani source close to Bin Laden said Atef was a key player in Al Qaida's military and financial structure and his death would be a huge blow. (Agencies)

WAR ZONE UPDATE

- ▶ No pause in bombing during Ramzan, says U.S.
- ▶ Al Qaida's bomb and chemical factory survives Cruise missile attacks
- ▶ Special Russian commando team lands at Bagram air base
- ▶ Iran plans to reopen embassy in Kabul
- ▶ Pakistani forces prepare to tackle problems along Afghan border

RABBANI OFFERS GENERAL AMNESTY, BROADBASED GOVT.

Mullah Omar warns of 'big plan to destroy U.S.'

Afghanistan

HD-1
16/11

LONDON, NOV. 15. A defiant Taliban supremo, Mullah Mohammad Omar, today warned of a 'big plan to destroy the United States within a short period of time and refused to join a broad-based government in Afghanistan.

"We will not accept a government of wrong-doers. We prefer death than to be a part of an evil government," he said in an interview to BBC radio's Pashto language service over satellite phone.

He said "the current situation in Afghanistan is related to a bigger cause — that is the destruction of America.

"The plan is going ahead and God willing it is being implemented, but it is a huge task beyond the will and comprehension of human beings.

"If God's help is with us, this will happen within a short period of time. Keep in mind this prediction."

Asked if his warning was related to Osama bin Laden's threat to use chemical, biological and nuclear weapons against the U.S., the Taliban leader said "this is not a matter of weapons. We are hopeful of God's help. The real matter is the extinction of America and, God willing, it (the U.S.) will fall to the ground."

On the setbacks suffered by the Taliban, he said it was not important how many provinces were now under his control, because territories could be lost and re-

Freedom at last



German aid workers, Ms. Katrin Jellnek (left) and Ms. Margrit Stebner, arriving at the German Embassy in Islamabad on Thursday after they were airlifted from Afghanistan by a U.S. helicopter. — Reuters (Report on Page 13)

gained. He said the southern city of Kandahar still remained in the hands of the Taliban.

A report from Dushanbe said the former Afghan President, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, had announced a general amnesty soon after his arrival in the country.

Mr. Rabbani who reached Kabul yesterday had called upon the Afghan people to unite and confirmed readiness to form a broad-based government in the country under the U.N. aegis, including all political forces and ethnic groups, an Afghan embassy statement released in Dushanbe said.

Meanwhile the Taliban fighters have retaken control of the central Afghan province of Uruzgan, native state of Mullah Omar, and adjacent to the Taliban stronghold, Kandahar.

Quoting an Afghan tribal leader, a report said that local warlords had briefly seized the provincial capital, Tirin Kot, yesterday but retreated after the Taliban launched a fierce counter attack.

The Pashtun ethnic leader, Mr. Hamid Karzai, said from Uruzgan that "we didn't want any bloodshed so the Taliban took back control."

In other developments, U.S. warplanes bombed positions around the surrounded Taliban bastion of Kunduz but an opposition general said a threatened offensive had been held back to let civilians flee.

A reporter saw a B-52 warplane unleash a carpet of bombs on hills around the town of Khanabad, about 20 km east of Kunduz.

Northern Alliance commanders said they were trying by radio to get the Taliban to surrender, but Mr. Sayaf Baick, an Alliance com-

mander, said the foreign fighters had killed several local Taliban officials who wanted to give up the town.

Just who was in control of particular areas was difficult to say. The Taliban were reported to have left the eastern town of Jalalabad, but one Shia Muslim leader in the Alliance, Saeed Hussein Anwari, said in Kabul that the city's status was unclear.

On the eastern border, Pashtun tribesmen were said to be rising up against the Taliban who were reportedly taking shelter in the mountains. Mr. Anwari said the border provinces of Paktika, Paktia and part of Logar were all under the control of Pashtun forces.

New move against Osama

Meanwhile, U.S. special forces were watching key roads in southern Afghanistan, hunting for Taliban leaders, the U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald H. Rumsfeld, said. At the Pentagon, senior Defence officials said a new military plan was being prepared to hunt down Osama and other Al-Qaeda leaders.

Mr. Rumsfeld told the *New York Times* that his guess was that Osama would take a helicopter down one of those valleys that "we couldn't pick up and pop over to some part of the country where there is an airfield and have a plane waiting for him." — PTI, AFP, UNI.

More reports on Pages 13, 16 & 17

THE HINDU

16 NOV 2001

Healing Afghanistan

The world has been taken by surprise with the rapid advance of the Northern Alliance and the successive falls of Mazar-e-Sharif, Kabul and Herat; Jalalabad too has liberated itself from the Taliban rule and the tribal chieftains of southern Afghanistan are trying to follow suit. It is obvious that the intensity of the US bombing has virtually disabled the Taliban's heavy equipment and depleted its ranks, enabling the Northern Alliance to advance speedily. It is likely that the Pakistani personnel who were the real backbone of the Taliban quietly withdrew under orders from Islamabad. The fall of Kabul was the signal the Pashtun chieftains were waiting for to repudiate their allegiance to the Taliban and switch sides. A similar change of loyalties occurred when the Pakistan-backed Taliban advanced into Afghanistan in 1994-96; a reverse switch-over was expected even as the present campaign got underway. The core of the Taliban might seek temporary refuge in mountain caves. But as the snows of winter set in, the US will have the advantage of flushing them out using helicopter gunships fitted with thermal-sensing devices. These rapid developments have focused the minds of diplomats on finding ways and means of installing a viable and neutral government acceptable to all sections of the multi-ethnic Afghan society. There is also an urgent need to put in place a multinational peacekeeping force in all the major cities and other nodal points in rural areas to ensure that there are no reprisals and vendetta killings.

There is an overall consensus that ex-king Zahir Shah should be brought back as a symbol of Afghan unity and integrity. An interim apolitical government could administer Afghanistan for a specified period, supervising the distribution of humanitarian relief and laying the foundation of the massive reconstruction necessary. Such an administration should be seen to be scrupulously free from the influence of any of Afghanistan's neighbours, particularly Pakistan, the originator and sustainer of the Taliban. The multinational peacekeeping force has been proposed to be drawn from Islamic countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Jordan and Turkey. Such a force, under a commander with credentials in international peacekeeping exercises, would need infrastructural support from major powers. As such the suggestion that the multinational force should be backed by a stabilisation contingent drawn from countries like Britain is appropriate. Most of the relief and rehabilitation activities outside urban areas will have to be carried out with the active support of tribal chiefs and elders. With its administrative experience in dealing with tribal societies, India is in a position to play a constructive role in the reconstruction programme. New Delhi has already pledged a million tonnes of food assistance and other help in rehabilitation. As five out of the so-called 6+2 countries — the US, Russia, Iran, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — are now fully cognisant of Pakistan's role in nurturing and sustaining the Taliban, India need not at this stage be unduly exercised about not being directly involved in the process of government formation in Kabul. New Delhi's priority should be to play an effective role in rehabilitation and relief programmes in Afghanistan. New Delhi should try and get Kabul's Indira Gandhi memorial hospital, established by India, recommissioned and operational as soon as possible.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

16 NOV 2001

UN approves resolution on post-Taliban Afghanistan

UNHQS
16/11
UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

UNHQ, Nov. 15. — The UN Security Council has unanimously approved a resolution supporting the international community's efforts to provide security and work towards a political settlement in Afghanistan following the collapse of Taliban forces.

The 15-member Council voted for the British-French resolution encouraging all countries "to support efforts to ensure the safety and security of areas of Afghanistan no longer under Taliban control and in particular to ensure respect for Kabul as the capital for all the Afghan people." The resolution does not explicitly provide for an international force but provides enough authority for coalition troops already in Afghanistan to help maintain law and order in Kabul and areas vacated by the Taliban. Diplomats said the provision authorised USA and Britain to provide se-

curity initially. Besides, France and Russia have offered troops and Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Turkey and Bangladesh have also shown interest to join the force.

The UN has said it would like a group of countries to provide security under the Council's authorisation but is opposed to peacekeeping or the security forces under UN command, arguing that it would take a long time to organise such a force. The resolution also calls for convening an urgent meeting of the various Afghan factions to form a broad based multi-ethnic provisional government which respects human rights of all people, combats terrorism and fights drug trafficking.

Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, Mr Kofi Annan's special representative to Afghanistan, told the Council yesterday that the UN should convene a conference with the Northern Alliance and representatives of factions backed by Iran and Pakistan "as soon as humanly possible."

THE STATESMAN

16 NOV 2001

OSAMA'S WHEREABOUTS NOT KNOWN: TALIBAN ENVOY

Affhamda
HD 1

We will not monopolise power, says Rabbani

18/11

KABUL, NOV. 17. The former Afghanistan President, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, arrived today in Kabul, four days after it was captured, even as U.S. warplanes, not pausing despite the beginning of Ramadan, pounded Kunduz and Kandahar.

Mr. Rabbani insisted that the Northern Alliance would not try to monopolise power after the downfall of the Taliban. "We will try to form a broadbased government as soon as possible, it depends on the seriousness of the Afghan people and the U.N.," he told presspersons hours after his arrival.

He vowed to speed up the process and dismissed suggestions that the Alliance was dragging its feet on the formation of a government representing all Afghan groups.

The Taliban's Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, told reporters at Chaman on the Afghan border that the terrorist mastermind, Osama bin Laden, was still in Afghanistan but that his exact location was unknown. Crossing the border into

Pakistan after a visit to the Taliban's southern stronghold of Kandahar, Mr. Zaeef said "Osama is inside Afghanistan but I don't know whether he is in our (Taliban) territory or the area controlled by the Northern Alliance." Earlier the Qatar-based al-Jazeera satellite television channel quoted Mr. Zaeef as saying that Osama had left Afghanistan for an unspecified destination.

He is still there: U.S.

In Washington, a Pentagon spokesman said today that the U.S. military had no evidence that Osama had left Afghanistan and was still hunting for him there. "We have no evidence that he has left Afghanistan," Mr. Glenn Flood said.

The U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, also said there was every reason to believe that Osama was still in Afghanistan.

He cautioned that despite their recent losses, "the Taliban is still there".

On Friday, the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, was reported to have or-

dered withdrawal from Kandahar.

Mullah Najibullah, a Taliban leader in the border town of Spinboldak, said earlier today that Osama was alive, but said nothing more about his whereabouts.

U.N. initiative

At the United Nations, the Group of 21 countries on Afghanistan (G-21), including India, called for an early meeting of all Afghan factions for a political solution acceptable to all, even as demands were made for the withdrawal of Pakistani, Arab and other foreign fighters from the country.

The proposed meeting would include the former King, Zahir Shah, the Northern Alliance and the Pashtuns, the U.N. special envoy on Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, told presspersons after a two-hour closed door meeting on Friday.

Efforts were being made to revive the political process soon with "as many short-cuts" as Afghans would allow. Mr. Brahimi said the G-21 took the view that there was a need to "go as fast as



The former Afghanistan President, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, addressing a press conference in Kabul on Saturday. — AP

possible but not faster than possible."

Amidst hectic diplomatic efforts to establish a transitional administration in Afghanistan, the U.N. envoy, Mr. Francesc Vendrell, arrived in Kabul to persuade all factions to participate in a U.N.-backed conference next week to discuss the country's future.

The U.N. has held out against granting Mr. Rabbani any special status and has been trying to organise talks outside Afghanistan.

Mr. Vendrell, in an interview to the BBC, said while Mr. Rabbani remained head of the Islamic state of Afghanistan, that did not necessarily mean he would be the new President.

Mr. Vendrell's warning that Mr. Rabbani was not assured of the leadership came after Russia announced that it was also sending a delegation to meet the Alliance.

Today, the home of a key Taliban commander, Jalaluddin Haqqani, and a seminary were bombed near the eastern town of Khost, leaving two persons dead and many others wounded.

The Pashtun leader, Mr. Hamid Karzai, told the BBC that convoys of Taliban were leaving Kandahar and moving towards the north. Aid agencies with close links to the region also reported that Taliban forces were moving out of Kandahar. — Reuters, PTI, AFP



The fighters of the Northern Alliance standing behind Taliban prisoners at a police centre in Herat city, on Friday. — AP

Taliban withdraws from Jalalabad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 14. - The Taliban today withdrew from Jalalabad, which has been taken over by a local "mujahideen", led by Maulvi Younis Khalis, the Afghan Islamic Press said.

A spokesman for the new administration said the Taliban forces had fled the entire province of Nangahar, of which Jalalabad is the capital. The withdrawal followed a night of intense aerial attacks by the USA on Taliban targets in and around Jalalabad.

The militia has retreated without resistance from Khost, Kunar, Uruzgan, Nangarhar and Logar, too, leaving the places under the control of local "mujahideen".

The Northern Alliance has been consolidating its hold over Kabul, which it captured

yesterday, taking over key ministries.

Its not clear whether the Taliban is still holding on to Kandahar where its headquarters is located. While the alliance ambassador in Dushanbe, Mr Ibragim Khikmat, claimed that Kandahar had been captured after residents revolted against the militia, the US defence secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, said in New York that fighting in and around the southern city was on. He said he had no information where the alliance had taken over Kandahar airport.

The situation, he said, was fluid. If a place is captured by either side, it could be recaptured later. "I think one ought not to assume that anything is necessarily permanent at this point."

The alliance foreign minister, Mr Abdullah Abdullah, said the Taliban had lost control of

Kandahar and the city was in "total chaos."

Elite US forces were active in southern Afghanistan, Mr Rumsfeld said. Planes are targeting the fleeing militia while the Northern Alliance is preparing to launch attacks on Kunduz, Taliban's last bastion in the north.

Mr Abdullah said the Taliban was putting up resistance in some areas of Mazar-i-Sharif, "but we have put a complete siege around them, and since they are positioned in residential areas our forces are taking care not to harm civilians."

Most of Mazar-i-Sharif fell to the alliance on 9 November. Kabul fell yesterday after a five week US air campaign against Taliban targets across the country.

■ More reports on page 5
■ Editorial: Bombs and butter, page 6

THE STATESMAN

15 NOV 2001

AFTER THE FALL

The fall of Kabul signals without doubt the end of the first war of the 21st century. It may not, however, augur peace in the strife torn area called Afghanistan. In terms of military strategy and tactics, Afghanistan is a quadrilateral whose four corners are the cities of Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Kabul and Qandahar. Three of the four citadels have fallen, it is a matter of time before the last one succumbs to the advance of the Northern Alliance, now fortified not only by success but also by the presence of British and US military personnel. Sceptics about the purpose of the bombing carried out by US planes will recognize now that the pounding of the taliban from the air was not mindless and unnecessary. The bombs destroyed the fighting power of the taliban. Nowhere was this more evident than in Kabul into which the Northern Alliance soldiers just about walked in. Opposition was non-existent. Despite the strategic success of the air strikes, the campaign in Afghanistan reiterates the military truism that footsoldiers win wars, the artillery or the air force merely serves to make things easier for the infantry. The fall of Kabul means that Mr Osama bin Laden, in whichever cave he is hiding, like Adolf Hitler in his bunker in Berlin, is counting days and preparing for suicide.

The fall of Kabul has more than symbolic significance. The capital of Afghanistan is in the hands of the Northern Alliance, the principal foe of the taliban within Afghanistan. The Northern Alliance was welcomed into Kabul where the population rejoiced at being delivered from an oppressive regime. There are reports of shows of popular anger against the taliban. But more than anger there is relief especially among the women. But shows of emotion will have to be supplanted by the serious business of putting in place a viable and stable government in Kabul. In many ways, Afghanistan is not a modern nation state where the rules and conventions of civil society hold sway. On the contrary, it is a territory inhabited by a group of quarrelsome tribes for whom violence has been a way of life for centuries. It will be utopian to expect that these groups will suddenly give up their rivalries and live happily ever after. Any government presuming to have a semblance of authority in Afghanistan will have to strike a balance among the various fractious groups. The Northern Alliance, because of its dominant position, will naturally demand a large slice of the cake. The US and Pakistan will also want their fingers in the cake. Pakistan's position, after the triumph of the Northern Alliance, will obviously be weak. It is seen, and with considerable justification, as the main supporter of the taliban regime. The scene is set for hectic negotiations. The outcome of these will determine the nature of the peace that ensues after the end of the war.

THE TELEGRAPH

15 NOV 2001

Omar appeal to fight on

Islamabad, November 13

AMID REPORTS that Mullah Mohammad Omar has fled to Pakistan, the Taliban's spiritual leader today ordered his troops to stand and fight the opposition forces that have marched into Kabul.

"I order you to obey your commanders completely. Do not move around... Re-group yourselves. Put up resistance," he reportedly said in a radio address from his base in Kandahar.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press said Omar assured his followers in the address on Taliban wireless frequencies that he had not fled and was still in his southern stronghold. "Do not heed the propaganda unleashed by the opposition media. I am in Kandahar and have not gone anywhere. This is a fight for Islam... Those who leave their positions in this hour of crisis are like chickens with their heads cut off; they will eventual-

ly die and fall in a ditch."

A Taliban official told Iran's state news agency IRNA that Omar and Osama bin Laden were "safe and sound... In line with Omar's directive, Taliban forces have moved to the south".

But a senior representative of

US, UN MOVE FAST FOR NEW AFGHAN SET-UP

THE US along with the United Nations has stepped up diplomatic efforts to instal an broad-based interim Government in Afghanistan. While the United Nations has said it would send its top official, Francesco Vendrell, to Kabul, US Secretary of State Colin Powell has rushed his special envoy James F Dobbins to Rome. Dobbins will talk with exiled King Zahir Shah, who is being projected as the titular head of the interim Government. *HTC, Washington*

the Northern Alliance's Government-in-exile at Dushanbe insisted that Omar had fled to Pakistan. He also claimed that Alliance forces had taken over Kandahar.

Another Alliance leader told Iran's state television that the Taliban are completely "disorientated and their war machinery destroyed". Said Younis Qanooni: "The Taliban have lost everything." Qanooni is a senior aide to Burhanuddin Rabbani, President of the Afghan Government ousted by the Taliban in 1996.

"I have no official function. My men and me have been asked to ensure order and security in Kabul," Qanooni said, adding that opposition forces in Kabul are "headed by the Defence Ministry of the Islamic Government" of Rabbani.

Earlier in the day, a senior Northern Alliance leader had announced that Taliban forces had completely pulled out of the Afghan capital. **Agencies**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 NOV 2001

UN Security Council to consider draft for transitional govt. in Afghanistan

Rabbani rushes home as power jostle begins

Times News Network and Agencies

KABUL. Deposed Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani is returning here on Thursday to pronounce himself the head of territories now under the control of the anti-Taliban opposition, a senior Afghan envoy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, said.

"He will lead the provinces freed from the Taliban and also head the task of freeing the provinces now under the control of the Islamist militia," said the ambassador for the Afghan government-in-exile in Dushanbe.

In Kabul, senior Northern Alliance leader Younis Qarooni told presspersons that the Alliance-Mujahideen coalition was committed to an interim government ahead of elections in two years' time.

"We want this interim government to be a broad-based government that all ethnic parties in Afghanistan are involved in. And after two years, general elections will be held in our country."

Diplomatic efforts to put in place an interim government for Afghanistan have gained new momentum since the Northern Alliance captured Kabul on Tuesday.

The United Nations is considering a European draft resolution proposing a two-year broad-based transitional government in Kabul under the protection of a multinational security force even as various countries jostle for strategic and political space in Afghanistan.

The British and French drafted proposal will be presented before the UN Security Council on Wednesday by Lakhdar Brahimi, UN secretary general Kofi Annan's special envoy to Afghanistan. It urges the UN to play a central role in supporting the efforts of the Afghan people to establish urgently "a new transitional government." Member



Reuters

A young Afghan woman shows her face in public for the first time in five years—after being forced to wear a burqa following the strict interpretation of Islamic laws by the Taliban—as she waits at a food distribution centre in central Kabul on Wednesday. The Taliban deserted the Afghan capital as opposition fighters made rapid gains in the past five days.

countries are encouraged to help ensure the safety and security of areas of Afghanistan no longer under Taliban control.

The draft proposes a coalition of multinational troops from countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey and

Bangladesh, besides the European Union, to take charge while the political process unfolds.

The Northern Alliance which has said the UN will have to play an important role in the framework of negotiations has, meanwhile, sworn it will put Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar on trial if they are captured. Foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah said, "We consider them as war criminals and they must be brought to court and tried. They carried out massacres in Kabul and other regions of the

QUOTE HANGER

The UN will have to play the most important role to restore peace in the country and to guarantee, as an observer, the staffing of general elections in Afghanistan.

—Northern Alliance foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah

The future of Afghanistan will be the Ioya jirga (traditional council of elders) that will be convened rapidly and will bring representatives of the Afghan people into government.

—Exiled Afghan king Zahir Shah

I plan to go back to Kabul tomorrow (Thursday). There is no room for the Taliban in any political settlement in Afghanistan.

—Former Afghan government spokesman Rabbani

The people of Afghanistan need to find their leader themselves. The figure-head King Zahir Shah may be an acceptable single leader at the moment. There is no other alternative visible at the moment.

—Gen Pervez Musharraf

There is no preferential place at the bargaining table. All people will be treated the same. That's what we're working on with our friends, the Russians, and that's the concept we're working on with the United Nations.

We are waiting for the Americans and Britishers to come inside Afghanistan and then the real war will be started.

—Osama bin Laden

Meanwhile, the Taliban militia withdrew from its eastern stronghold of Jalalabad. The withdrawal followed heavy overnight aerial attacks by U.S. warplanes on Taliban targets in and around Jalalabad.

▶ See **Exit Securing The Peace**, Page 8

FALL OF KABUL

Lust for loot and blood

War Briefs

Women vocal

■ Peshawar, Nov. 13 (AFP): Afghan women who were among the chief victims of the Taliban's five-year hardline rule are shouting to be heard as plans unfold for a new regime in Kabul.

Forced behind the veil, sequestered in their homes and banned from the classroom and the workplace because of the Taliban's radical interpretation of Islamic law, Afghan women activists complain they are once again being cast aside by the debate on their country's future. "Of course we're angry," said Khorshid Noori, head of a coalition of relief agencies called the Afghan Women's Network, based in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar.

Money looted

■ Kabul (AFP): Millions of dollars were stolen from Afghanistan's main money market as the Taliban militia pulled out of Kabul and the opposition moved in, money changers said on Tuesday. "This was all our capital. Even the computers, carpets and tea pots have gone. This is a crime against Afghanistan, the Afghans and against Islam," said Haji Amin Jan Khosti, chief of the Shar-e-Shazada money exchange. He said unknown thieves looted 80 shops in the market, leaving none untouched and driving away with trucks full of the local Afghan currency.

Herat prison

■ Tehran (AFP): Groups of Afghans stormed the prison in the western Afghan city of Herat, liberating around 1,000 prisoners, an Iranian state radio reporter in the region announced. "After the liberation of the city (Herat), the people attacked the prison last night, forcefully entered it and liberated some 1,000 prisoners," the journalist said in a broadcast report. Opposition commander Ismail Khan on Monday captured Herat after an uprising against the ruling Taliban militia.

Al Jazeera

■ Doha (AFP): Al Jazeera television, which found fame and controversy with exclusive reports from behind Taliban lines, said on Tuesday that its Kabul office had been put out of action by a US missile. "US aircraft bombed the Al Jazeera offices in Kabul during the night," the Qatar-based satellite channel announced. Al Jazeera staff in the capital, which fell to Northern Alliance opposition forces at dawn, had not been wounded, but they could no longer be contacted, according to a news bulletin.

Cheap nukes

■ Washington (Reuters): A Pakistani journalist who interviewed Osama bin Laden last week said on Monday the Saudi-born dissident had told him nuclear arms could be bought on the central Asian black market for \$10 million to \$20 million. Hamid Mir, editor of the *Ausaf* newspaper, told CNN's *Larry King Live* that he had pressed bin Laden and his aide, Ayman Zawahiri, on the issue after they said they would retaliate in kind for any US use of nuclear warheads. "He said that if the US is going to use these kinds of weapons against us, then we reserve the right to respond back the same way," Mir said.



A Northern Alliance soldier shows his gun to a boy in Kabul. (AFP)



Northern Alliance fighters sing as they enter Kabul. (Reuters)

FROM DAVID ROHDE

Kalai Nasro (Afghanistan), Nov. 13: Near an abandoned Taliban bunker yesterday, Northern Alliance soldiers dragged a wounded Taliban soldier out of a ditch. As the terrified man begged for his life, the alliance soldiers pulled him to his feet. They searched him and emptied his pockets. Then, one soldier fired two bursts from his rifle into the man's chest. A second soldier beat the lifeless body with his rifle butt. A third repeatedly smashed a rocket-propelled-grenade launcher into the man's head. The killing occurred minutes after Northern Alliance soldiers, advancing toward Kabul, surged deep into Taliban territory. They chose to celebrate with executions. Ten yards away lay the body of a younger man who alliance soldiers said was a Pakistani. He was on his side with his arms extended. In the side of his head was a

bullet hole. Two hundred yards away, the soldiers who had minutes earlier shot the older man searched the possessions of a motionless Taliban soldier on the ground. After emptying his pockets, a soldier fired a burst from his rifle into the man. The soldiers moved on quickly, showing no emotion. A few minutes later, someone laid an unused mortar round across the man's throat. A fourth body a mile away had a bullet wound in the side of the head. The Taliban soldier, flat on his back, had his hands up, as if he had been surprised or surrendering when shot. Looting was widespread. Alliance soldiers, who have received extensive backing from the US, plundered Taliban bodies and bunkers, stealing shoes, bags of sugar, flashlights and anything else that they could find. "I got 700,000 afghani!" a soldier who was leaving an abandoned Taliban bunker shouted,

flashing a wad of bills worth \$20,000. The events suggest that alliance soldiers might prove difficult to control as their victories build. The looting and executions were an ugly ending to what began as a well-executed tank and infantry assault. Alliance forces breached Taliban lines near the Bagram Air Base and Khalazai in the western edge of the line. Taliban lines broke after a two-hour bombardment and an hour-long tank and infantry attack. The alliance reported few casualties, with one soldier killed and another wounded. Alliance soldiers reacted to the corpses in different ways. Nearly all stopped and gazed at the dead. Some searched for valuables. One, in a more dignified gesture, placed a cloth over a corpse. Attitudes on looting varied. One soldier bragged about his take, showing off a bag of sugar and a pair of sneakers that he had found in a bunker. Another

showed off the identification card of a Pakistani, Ahmad Bakhtiar, 22. Some told other soldiers about their take, particularly when it involved weapons. Others were more discreet. At one point, an officer screamed at his soldiers to stop and rejoin the fight. "Let's go!" he shouted. "Let's go!" Carrying sacks of loot, the soldiers followed. Taliban soldiers appeared to have left their posts quickly. In one compound, the freshly cooked head of a goat sat on a piece of wood waiting to be carved. At other sites, bags of clothing and transistor radios were left. "The defences appeared to be formidable, with a six-foot-deep trench along the front line and machine-gun nests and mortar positions behind it. The Taliban soldiers lived in simple mud huts and cooked food in large vats over open fires. Three Afghan refugees who left Kabul on Sunday and arrived in Peshawar, Pakistan, yesterday

said they were met at three separate highway checkpoints east of Kabul by tense Taliban soldiers. They described the Taliban they saw as disorganised, rattled, cowed by passengers who refused to be searched, and hungry for news from the capital. "They were terribly nervous," said Mohammed Azim, a Kabul pediatrician who fled Kabul with his family. Why the Taliban lines broke so quickly was unclear. American planes carried out their heaviest bombing before the attack in the afternoon. Six B-52s conducted broad-scale bombardment while fighter-bombers hit individual targets. As Taliban forces fled later in the day, American jets bombed their vehicles. Low morale after the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif in the north may have been a factor in the hasty retreat, alliance officers said. Some defections were also reported. The American raids appeared to have destroyed enough Taliban

tanks and artillery to swing the battle in favour of the alliance. Alliance tactics were simple. Two groups of assault troops, known as Zarbati, attacked with tanks across plains in Bagram, in the centre of the line, and in Khalazai, on the western edge. The units were created by Ahmed Shah Massoud, the alliance commander who was assassinated on September 9, to give his force more offensive punch. In Bagram, the Taliban fired scores of mortars at the armoured vehicles, but appeared to lack the tanks and heavy weapons to destroy them. The tanks, however, infantry, attacked along asphalt roads that cannot be mined. Officers on nearby roofs coordinated tank, artillery and infantry units in the attack. At 3:05, a voice shouted over the radio: "We're past the house! We're past the house!" That was a signal that alliance forces had breached Taliban lines. NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Taliban tumble pulls up stocks

New York, Nov. 13 (Reuters): Stocks rallied at midday today as the horror over the deadly earlier New York subway earlier and Wall Street bet on a speedy conclusion to the war in Afghanistan. "The big fear has been we'd get bogged down over there and wouldn't see any resolution," said Jon Brorson, director of equities for Northern Trust Co, which oversees \$330 billion. "Any progress on this front is a big psychological boost." The Taliban's hard-line Islamic rule of Afghanistan appeared to be in tatters after the opposition Northern Alliance took control of the capital Kabul and other key areas. The US has been waging war against the Taliban and their "guest," Osama bin Laden, top suspect in the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. US officials said early information suggested yesterday's crash of an American Airlines passenger jet was an accident. The crash, which killed more than 260 people, had raised fears another assault had been waged against the US. Airline and hotel stocks rebounded after steep losses in the wake of the crash, while semiconductor like Intel Corp jumped on hopes the chip industry had scraped bottom. The Standard and Poor's gold and precious metal index fell 1.81 per cent as investors ditched safe havens. The blue-chip Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 159 points, or 1.67 per cent, to 9,714. The broader Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 17 points, or 1.52 per cent, to 1,135. The tech-rich Nasdaq composite index jumped 46 points, or 2.51 per cent, to 1,886. Winners topped losers by a ratio of 2 to 1. More than 680 million shares changed hands on the New York Stock Exchange, and more than 1 billion on Nasdaq. "Today the political concerns have abated a little bit," said Rick Meckler, president of investment firm LibertyView, which oversees \$1 billion. "It has allowed those people who would prefer to focus on the economic stimulus in the market to go out and buy." Cisco Systems Inc, the world's largest maker of gear that powers the Internet, rose 57 cents to \$19.83. Investment bank AIG AMRO upgraded its rating on the network giant and set a stock price target of \$25. Analysts said they saw early signs of growth.

2-year govt, multi-nation force on UN radar

United Nations, Nov. 13 (Reuters): The UN today outlined a roadmap for a multi-ethnic two-year transitional government backed by a security force drawn from a variety of nations. The UN move coincided with a statement from Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf that a UN force, with Muslim participation, was urgently needed to ensure stability in Afghanistan and head off any danger of ethnic clashes. Musharraf, speaking at Istanbul airport after brief talks with Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, said Pakistan could also contribute to a peacekeeping force under UN auspices. Iran's interior minister left for an unexpected visit to Pakistan today hours after the fall of Kabul. Abdolvahed Mousavi-Lari, appearing on Iran's state television, evaded questions on the purpose of his trip to Pakistan, which has vied with Iran for influence in neighbouring Afghanistan. The Northern Alliance vowed to help prepare a transitional Afghan government. But the alliance cautioned that while it would not go on to formally occupy Kabul, it would not be told what to do by foreigners. Asked if he was worried about US and British pressure on the decisions of the alliance, interior minister Yunis Qanuni said: "We follow our own strategy and our own plans, and we are not looking for the leadership or recommendations of anyone outside of Afghanistan." Northern Alliance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani said he would return to Kabul on Wednesday after being deposed



The Taliban flag being lowered at the interior ministry in Kabul. (AFP)

more than five years ago. Rabbani said former king Zahir Shah could also return but only as a citizen. Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN envoy for Afghanistan, said the global body's political personnel had been asked to go to Kabul immediately, beginning with his deputy Francesco Vendrell, now in Islamabad. He said there needed to be a conference as soon as possible of all factions rather than "shadow diplomacy", along with a massive effort to get food and other supplies to ordinary Afghans who "want help" but "don't understand why they are being bombed". Relief workers say as many as seven million Afghans could be at risk of starvation as the winter snows set in. British foreign secretary Jack Straw told reporters that discussions were under way on getting a site for the meeting of the Afghan parties. "I hope the meeting will take place in the next few days," he said. Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister, proposed establishing an all-Afghan provisional council. This council would eventually set up a transitional administration, to last up to two years, and draft a constitution. The UN has been asked by the US and other countries to try and bring a political solution to Afghanistan so that any future government would have international legitimacy and not appear to have been imposed by Washington. Addressing a number of foreign ministers whose countries have seats in the Security Council, Brahimi said security was of utmost concern, especially around Kabul. The opposition Northern Alliance, known in the past for gross human rights abuses, has broken through Taliban lines. Brahimi said there were three choices, the best of which was an "all-Afghan" security force. If this were not possible, he proposed a multinational force, which diplomats said could include Muslim troops from Turkey and Jordan as well as European troops. The third and worst choice he said was a traditional UN peacekeeping force, which would take months to organise.

Pakistan fears loss of influence

Islamabad, Nov. 13 (Reuters): As Kabul fell to the Northern Alliance today, fears rose in Pakistan of a possible bloodbath and prolonged civil war as well as a loss of influence in a next-door neighbour it has tried to control for years. Pakistan seemed shocked when the alliance troops, after the ruling Taliban retreated without a fight, entered the Afghan capital despite US urging not to do so that echoed the desire of Pakistani military ruler, Pervez Musharraf. Political analysts voiced fears of a repeat of the bloodletting and destruction when Kabul was taken over by the same mujahideen factions that composed the alliance after the collapse of the Soviet-backed communist government in 1992. They predicted another round of prolonged civil war in the shattered country if the Northern Alliance used the Kabul takeover to block a major role for majority ethnic Pashtoons in a post-Taliban administration. Some see Pakistan's role as an important member of the US-led coalition against terrorism compromised. The Northern Alliance's stunning victories came after 38 days of US bombing of Taliban targets. "Americans have to come out more strongly and tell them to behave," Shirin Mazari, head of Islamabad's state-funded Institute of Strategic Studies, said. She said Pakistan had been "upfront and very honest" in its role in the coalition forged after the devastating September 11 attacks on the US.

Pleased Bush in rights plea

Washington, Nov. 13 (Reuters): The quick Northern Alliance drive into Kabul has left the US with a dilemma: how to prevent a bloodletting by the tribal fighters that will make it harder to govern Afghanistan and to get Osama bin Laden. Putting a brave face on the overnight push by anti-Taliban forces into Kabul, the White House today said President George W. Bush was "very pleased" despite his saying on Saturday that he wanted the Northern Alliance to stay out. Reports that the key US allies were shooting prisoners and looting revived fears of the bloody reprisals that marked Afghanistan in the early 1990s and were finally put to rest by the Taliban, much to the population's initial relief. The key US worry is that the military victory came before any political arrangement could be cobbled together among the country's tribes to govern Afghanistan if and when its Taliban rulers are ousted. South Asia analysts said. "The military is getting ahead of the political — that's obvious," said Richard Murphy, a former US assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs who is now at the Council on foreign relations think tank. "Nobody who knows the Afghans would not have expected a little bit of looting and pillaging and shooting of prisoners," said Stephen Cohen, a South Asia scholar at the Brookings Institution think tank in Washington. "It's distasteful but the Afghans

have been doing this for several centuries." The long-term problem is whether this will interfere with the humanitarian operation and with the operation to get Osama bin Laden and the Taliban leadership," he added. While accenting the positive, the White House hinted at similar concerns. "The President is very pleased with the recent events," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer told reporters. "This is a war. The purpose of this war is to defeat the al Qaeda and eliminate the Taliban who harbour terrorists." But the spokesman quickly added that Bush believed it was "important for all parties to conduct themselves in a way that is consistent with human rights," and told reporters that message had been delivered to the Northern Alliance. The US began air strikes against Afghanistan on October 7 after the Taliban refused to hand over bin Laden, whom the US has accused of organising the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington. In recent weeks, the US military has put special forces soldiers into Afghanistan with some reportedly acting as spotters to target US bombs at Taliban forces and to assist the Northern Alliance's offensive. But Bush warned the Northern Alliance over the weekend against moving on to Kabul, saying that all ethnic groups had to share power to avoid a recurrence of mass killings of the 1990s that followed the end of Moscow's 10-year involvement there.

Kabul captured, Taliban retreats

NA invites all groups to start negotiations

REUTERS

KABUL, Nov. 13. — Greeted by cheering residents, the Northern Alliance captured Kabul today in defiance of international pressure to stay out, after the city was abandoned by the Taliban under cover of darkness.

The alliance invited all Afghan groups to start negotiations on the country's future. The invitation was issued by the foreign minister, Mr Abdullah Abdullah. "We invite all Afghan groups at this stage to come to Kabul and to start negotiations about the future of Afghanistan and to speed up negotiations."

"We've taken Kabul," shouted an alliance fighter as he and his comrades stood in a group on a street in the city centre on the 38th day of the USA's war against the Taliban and Osama bin Laden.

Some Arab and Chechen fighters loyal to Osama climbed on trees to fire on opposition soldiers. But they were shot and their bodies hung in branches or lay sprawled on the ground.

In Shahr-i-Naw park in the city centre lay the bloody bodies of seven black-turbaned Taliban fighters. Bank notes had been stuffed in their noses and ears and children spat on the corpses.

For the first time in five years, music was played, some young men shaved off their beards or wore jeans — actions forbidden by the Taliban religious police who banned music and Western dress and made beards compulsory for men.

But central Kabul was tense, with shops closed and pick-up trucks filled with alliance soldiers, armed with Kalashnikov rifles and shoulder-held rocket launchers, patrolling the streets.

The Opposition defence minister, General Mohammad Fahim, and Mr Abdullah drove into the city in a Toyota Landcruiser, followed by a column of military police in dark green uniforms and with rifles. Behind them, moved hundreds of armed alliance fighters in camouflage.

Witnesses said armed men

had occupied all major government buildings, many of which were looted by residents. Prisoners broke out of jails.

The militia plundered Afghanistan's main currency market before fleeing in a convoy of tanks and battered pick-up trucks, heading for their stronghold of Kandahar.

They took with them eight Western aid workers — two Americans, two Australians and four Germans — facing charges of promoting Christianity in the country.

The Afghan Islamic Press agency said the Taliban supremo Mullah Mohammed Omar told the militia over radio to fight back. "You should regroup yourselves, resist and fight," Omar



An Afghan has his beard shaved after the retreat of the Taliban from Kabul on Tuesday. — AP/PTI

was quoted as having said.

Buoyed by the lightning capture of the northern part of the country over the weekend and by more than a month of US airstrikes, the alliance broke through Taliban frontlines outside Kabul yesterday.

By dawn today, their fighters had raced into the city, waving their assault rifles. Residents greeted them with shouts of "Down with the Taliban" and "Welcome the Northern Alliance". Crowds came out of the city and surrounded truckloads of soldiers poised to enter. They threw plastic flowers onto tanks.

An alliance commander, Gul Haidar, ordered his troops not to loot. "We should make sure that there is no problem for the people and no theft happens."

At Bagram airport, US special forces soldiers wearing civilian clothes and sunglasses and carrying M-16 rifles inspected alliance positions.

In trenches near the airport lay the bodies of 20 Pakistani Taliban fighters. About 20 Afghan Taliban men who had surrendered and who were still armed chatted with alliance soldiers. "We had made a deal a month ago with the Northern Alliance to surrender when they arrived."

Al-Jazeera: Qatar's *Al-Jazeera* TV today said its Kabul office had been put out of action by a US missile. The employees had not been wounded, but they couldn't be contacted.

Kandahar: Thousands of tribals were advancing towards Kandahar. Witnesses said about 5,000 people have taken over the airport, about 30 km from Kandahar.

Rabbani: The Northern Alliance leader, Mr Burhanuddin Rabbani, today said he would return to Kabul tomorrow. "God willing, tomorrow I'll be in Kabul," he told *Al-Jazeera* TV.

He was deposed as the Afghan President by the Taliban in September 1996. However, his government is still recognised by the UN and international community. The Afghan ambassador in Delhi, Mr Masood Khalili, said the alliance wouldn't tolerate Pakistan's influence in the formation of a post-Taliban government.

Embassy closed: The Taliban embassy in Pakistan closed down today after the Northern Alliance entered Kabul. The ambassador, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, left for an unknown location this morning. Later, the remaining staff too drove away.

Omar: The Taliban supremo, Mullah Mohammed Omar, has left for Pakistan. Ria Novosti said quoting an alliance official.

■ More reports on pages 5 and 8
■ Editorial: Kabul falls, page 6



TIME TO CELEBRATE: Residents of Kabul come out on the streets to welcome the Northern Alliance forces who entered the city on Tuesday. — AP/PTI

India modifies stand on new set-up

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

LONDON, Nov. 13. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today modified India's position on the post-Taliban set-up in Afghanistan by saying that the liberals in the militia regime could be associated with any future political dispensation there.

"The Taliban, as a name, should not be used in any new dispensation", Mr Vajpayee said at a press conference. The Prime Minister said he had discussed the developments in Afghanistan with Mr Vladimir Putin, Mr George W Bush and Mr Tony Blair. India's stand on the "Six+Two" process in the post-Taliban

MUSHARRAF FOR SPECIAL UN FORCE IN KABUL

DUBAI, Nov. 13. — General Pervez Musharraf today advocated creation of a special force under the UN umbrella with troops from OIC member nations to be stationed in Afghanistan till a political arrangement is restored there.

He called for immediate efforts to bring in a "political arrangement" in Afghanistan. Any delay in filling up the "vacuum" in Kabul would lead to increased infighting among ethnic groups.

"The UN force would give stability" and Turkish and Pakistani forces "can also play a role" in a future dispensation in Afghanistan, Gen. Musharraf said.

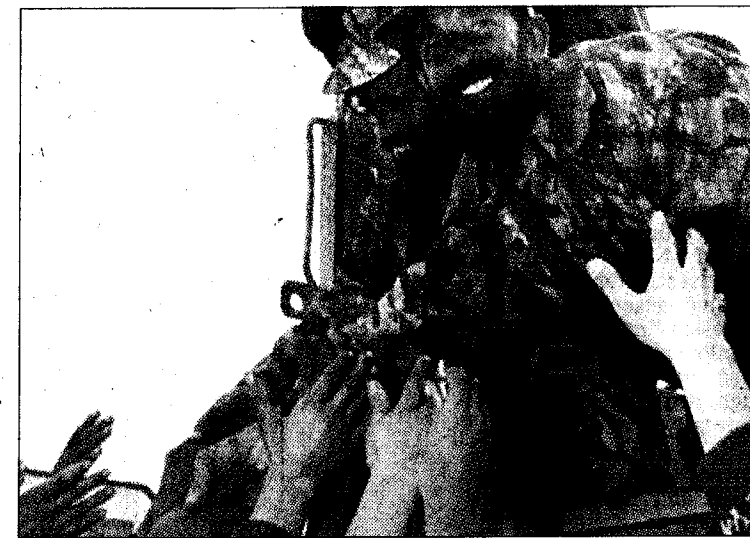
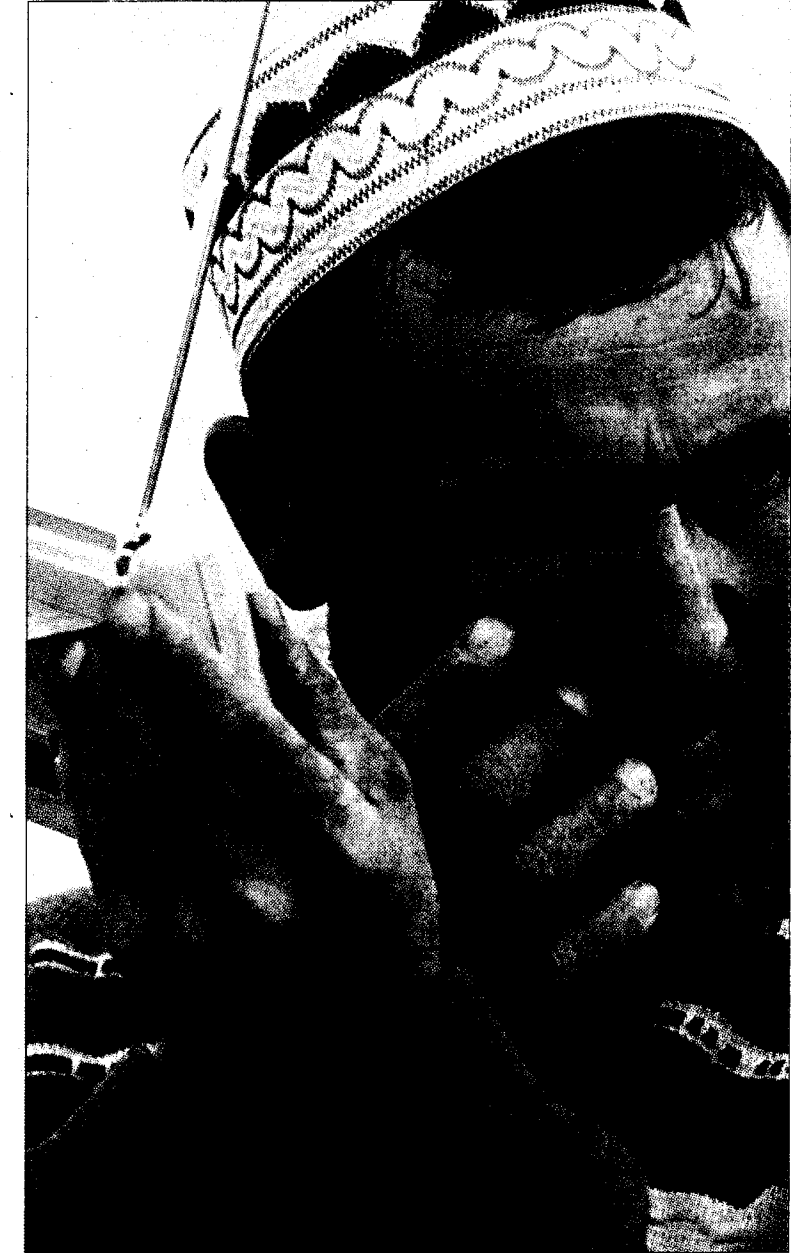
— PTI
dispensation was appreciated. Various ideas were being discussed about the political set up of Afghanistan but no common view had emerged yet,

Mr Vajpayee said. There is a general consensus among India, the USA and the UK on tackling and countering international terrorism.

"All the leaders agreed that terrorism should be tackled in a global and comprehensive manner and that no political, economic or ideological justification for terrorism is acceptable", he said. "The campaign against terrorism should not be aimed at any particular religion." Mr Vajpayee said there was no "question" of India joining any military alliance. He dismissed reports in this regard. The visit to the three countries "served to enlarge and deepen the areas of understanding and agreement". "The leaders exchanged views on the future dispensation in Afghanistan", he said. The Prime Minister returned to Delhi tonight.

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Afghanistan



THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH: (Clockwise from left) Dead bodies of Taliban soldiers lie in the middle of the road leading to Kabul; A hairdresser cuts a man's beard hours after the fall of the Afghan capital. Under the Taliban, even trimming beards invited harsh punishment; Mohammed Rasoull listens to the news broadcast by Radio Liberty in the city; Northern Alliance soldiers being greeted by locals; Jamila Mujahid returns to the airwaves as the first female radio newscaster after five years.

Razors & radios return to Kabul

Kabul, November 13

CLEAN-SHAVEN MEN rubbed their faces and an old man with a newly trimmed grey beard danced in the street holding a small tape recorder blaring music to his ear. The Taliban — who had banned music and ordered men to wear beards — were gone.

"Look this feels so good," Ahmed Shah said as he rubbed his freshly shaven face. "I hated the beard. It was always itchy."

Many women were still not ready to abandon the all-enveloping burqa. But there were signs, however, that some, perhaps most, of the younger, educated women would eventually abandon the burqa in favour of Western styles. In a rickety old blue bus, one woman quickly flipped her burqa up over her head. Male residents who were gathering around a group of Northern Alliance soldiers laughed.

One young soldier gestured to the women to take their burkas off. Most of the women who were holding

small children simply watched the soldiers. Some of the women closed the curtains that are on all buses that carry women in Afghanistan. Others simply looked away.

The one who slipped her burqa off quickly put it back on. Nearby, six women, all in burqas, were going to a wedding. "For now we will leave the burqa on. We don't know yet who are these people in the city," said Mariam Jan. Her husband, an ethnic Tajik, Mohammed Wazir, said: "It is our tradition. We are not sure that it will stop."

Residents of the Afghan capital peered through the open doors of abandoned Taliban military bases today and whispered to each other: "Are they gone?"

The bodies of two Arabs lay near the UN guest house, outside a military compound in a city that was taken over by the opposition Northern Alliance with virtually no resistance.

Bundles of burned clothes and blankets were piled on top of the corpses, and a charred rocket launcher

lay beside one of them. People gathered to look.

Sporadic gunfire pierced the crisp early morning air as Northern Alliance soldiers celebrated their victory over the Islamic militia.

Opposition fighters moved quickly through Kabul neighbourhoods, conducting house-to-house searches and seizing abandoned bases. Rifle fire was heard at some outposts on the edges of the city.

"I think there were some Taliban who were asleep when everyone left," said a smiling resident, Abdul Jan. "They have woken up and they are thinking 'Oh my God, what can I do?'" In some areas of Kabul, residents gathered on street corners to talk about what they had seen, and pointed out houses of former Taliban commanders. Opposition soldiers said they were collecting arms as they moved door-to-door.

Groups of five to 10 men huddled in the streets, wrapped in woollen shawls. Northern Alliance fighters sped through the streets in vehicles camouflaged with mud that had been left behind by Taliban troops.

In the northern Khair Khana district, inhabited largely by ethnic Tajiks who fled the earlier fighting north of the city, some people shouted: "Congratulations. Oh my God, they are here." Some men hugged each other.

"We leave everything to God. We don't know what will happen. We pray only for peace," said Sheer Agha, an elderly man wrapped in a striped shawl, his grey beard reaching almost to his chest.

"We are happy. Now I have to go to the barber to shave my beard," said Zabiullah, an ethnic Tajik. "Today is a happy day."

Houses used by Taliban leaders in Wazir Akbar Khan were abandoned. The large steel doors of home of the former Health Minister, Mullah Abbas Akhund, were wide open. Homes were also abandoned on street 15 of Wazir Akbar Khan, famous in this area as "the street of guests", a reference to the Arab, Chechen and Uzbek volunteers who were allied with the Taliban.

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NORTHERN ALLIANCE FORCES HUNT DOWN FOES

Kabul overrun, Taliban on the run

14/11

KABUL, NOV. 13. Greeted by cheering residents, Northern Alliance fighters captured Afghanistan's capital Kabul today in defiance of international pressure to stay out, after the city was abandoned by the Taliban under cover of darkness.

"We have taken Kabul," shouted one jubilant fighter as he and fellow soldiers stood in a group on a street in the city centre on day 38 of the war the United States launched following the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

Heavily-armed Alliance troops took over military bases, roamed the city, hunting down Taliban stragglers and their Arab, Pakistani and Chechen allies from Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda movement. At least five Pakistanis and two Arabs were killed.

Some Arab and Chechen fighters loyal to Osama bin Laden clambered onto trees to fire on the advancing opposition soldiers. They were shot and their bodies hung in the branches or lay sprawled on the ground.

In Shahr-i-Naw park in the city centre lay the bloody bodies of seven black-turbaned Taliban fighters, apparently executed with bullets to the head. Bank notes had been stuffed in their noses and ears and children spat at the corpses.

Music back in air

For the first time in five years, music was played, some young men shaved off their beards or wore jeans — actions forbidden by the Taliban religious police who banned music and western dress and made beards compulsory for men.

But central Kabul was tense, with shops closed and pick-up trucks filled with opposition soldiers armed with Kalashnikov rifles and shoulder-held rocket launchers, patrolling the streets.

The Opposition Defence Minister, Gen. Mohammad Fahim and the Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, drove into the city in a black Toyota landcruiser, followed by a column of military police dressed in dark green uniforms and armed with rifles. The Taliban had plundered Afghanistan's main currency market before fleeing in the night in a convoy of tanks, armoured



Northern Alliance fighters, singing patriotic songs, entering Kabul on Tuesday. — Reuters

personnel carriers and battered pick-up trucks, heading for their stronghold, the southern city of Kandahar.

The Al-Jazeera television, which found fame and controversy with exclusive reports from behind Taliban lines, said today that its Kabul office had been put out of action by a U.S. missile during the night.

'Resist and fight'

The Afghan Islamic Press Agency said the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar told the militia in a radio address to fight back and not to desert.

"You should regroup yourselves, resist and fight," Omar was quoted as saying.

Buoyed by the lightning capture of the north of the country

over the weekend and by more than a month of blistering U.S. air strikes on the Taliban, the Northern Alliance broke through Taliban frontlines outside Kabul yesterday backed by U.S. bombing and a fierce artillery barrage.

By dawn today, their fighters had raced into the city, waving their assault rifles. Residents greeted them with shouts of "Down with the Taliban!" and "Welcome the Northern Alliance!" Crowds came out of the city and surrounded truckloads of soldiers poised to enter. They threw plastic flowers onto tanks.

At Bagram airport north of Kabul, U.S. special forces troops wearing civilian clothes and sunglasses and carrying M-16 assault rifles inspected the Northern Alliance positions.

At trenches near the airport lay the bodies of 20 Pakistani Taliban fighters. About 20 Afghan Taliban who had surrendered and who were still armed chatted to opposition soldiers.

"We did a deal a month ago with the Northern Alliance to surrender when they arrived," a Taliban commander named Tour said.

'Kandahar airport captured'

Along the Pakistani border at Chaman, a Taliban official, Mullah Najibullah, said about 200 former guerrillas had mutinied against the Taliban in Kandahar and that there was fierce fighting around the airport, outside the city.

The Al-Jazeera satellite channel

reported that the Kandahar airport had been captured. Kandahar is 500 km southwest of Kabul. Also, Taliban guards on Tuesday abandoned the Torkham border station near the western Pakistani city of Peshawar.

In the west of the country, veteran Mujahideen commander, Ismail Khan, accompanied by 4,000 fighters, entered his former powerbase — the city of Herat — at dawn, a spokesman said.

The triumphant return of the warlord known as the "Lion of Herat" came six years after he was toppled by the Taliban.

"We have full control of Herat," the spokesman said.

Minister's denial

The Alliance's Interior Minister, Mr. Yunis Qanuni, said his troops were not occupying Kabul and that his movement wanted to set up a council to prepare for a transitional Government. "We have not entered here to establish a Government," he told Iranian television monitored in the United Arab Emirates. "We are here on a mission to provide security to Kabul and I am not here in the capacity of a Government official," he said. "The forces who have entered the city are only security forces. Our troops are not in the city, they are merely positioned on the outskirts of the city."

'Osama, Mullah Omar safe'

A Teheran report said that Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden were "safe and sound." An unidentified Taliban official told the IRNA news agency today that "in line with Omar's directive," the Taliban forces have moved "to the south," it said. — AP, AFP, Reuters

Appeal to U.N.

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 13. The Afghanistan ambassador to India, Mr. Masood Khalili, today said that most of the forces of the Northern Alliance are behind the northern and southern gates of Kabul. Around 3000 to 4000 men belonging to the alliance have entered the city to ensure peace and tranquillity there.

The Alliance is committed to a mechanism to ensure a broad-based multi-ethnic government in Kabul. "We have invited the United Nations to rush to Kabul to facilitate this process," he added.

"We also wish to involve 'different processes' to facilitate this task," he said.

Photos, more reports on Pages 13, 15 & 16

THE HINDU

14 NOV 2001

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19/11

ROUT OF THE TALIBAN

Afghanistan

A RAGTAG ARMY of radical Islamic students, who seized control of most of Afghanistan five years ago and set in motion an immensely harmful chain reaction in the volatile regions of Central and South Asia, is on the run. Considering all the chest thumping and bravura that characterised the early reaction of the regime in Kabul to the U.S. led bombing campaign, the collapse of the Taliban has been surprisingly rapid. Its flight from Kabul marks the beginning of the end of the fiercely motivated outfit and should be welcome news to neighbours like India and Russia which had suffered the debilitating poison that Talibanisation brought to parts of their countries. But it may be not yet celebration time in Kabul. The global forces that have hastened the departure of the Taliban now face the even more formidable and equally urgent task of bringing about political reconciliation among the different ethnic factions that make up the mountain country. The absence of a proper power sharing arrangement and a resulting political vacuum can push the country back to civil war. It is the responsibility of the international community, led by the United Nations, to ensure an orderly transition to peace and stability after three decades of war. Economic reconstruction may pose fewer problems.

The U.N.'s aid agencies are ready and prepared for a massive humanitarian operation to bring succour to the dispossessed and deprived population just in time before the onset of winter. Economic aid is also said to be in the pipeline, ready to start flowing in if and when a political arrangement is worked out. This is the crucial question now, with two months of hectic diplomatic activity failing to reconcile the conflicting interests of the different factions and the geostrategic objectives of their sponsors. Of the

forces that propped up and sustained the Taliban from the early days, Pakistan is the only country that finds it impossible to sever its ties, thanks to enormous domestic pressures that derive from religious, ethnic and sectarian links. Washington, after courting the Taliban with the aim of securing a route to the oil and gas wealth of Central Asia, joined the opposition when Osama bin Laden struck on September 11. All nations agree that the Pashtuns, who form the majority and from whom the Taliban raised its army, must be properly represented. India's support for the secular moderate forces represented by the Northern Alliance is known. For peace and stability in Afghanistan to endure, whatever arrangements are arrived at must be underwritten by the U.N., and supported by a multinational force, with the neighbours respecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the immediate term, the fall of Kabul can solve one major problem for the U.S. and its Islamic allies by facilitating an early pause and even a termination of the bombing campaign ahead of the holy month of Ramadan. Washington's military strategy has partially succeeded even as its larger objective of bringing Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda to justice remains. In the longer term, the global community must address the root causes — social, economic, political, religious — that made it possible for such a radical outfit to surface at all in the 21st century. For, though the Taliban may soon become a spent force, the radicalism it espoused and exported still has wide popular support in Arab countries. It is no longer a question of who wields political influence in Kabul or who gets first to the oil and gas in Central Asia. If a conflagration is to be averted, if unwelcome fallouts in the region are to be forestalled, all countries must join the effort to address the root causes.

THE HINDU

14 NOV 2001

Let U.N. take charge: Pak.

By B. Murallidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 13 Pakistan today said that the Northern Alliance must not occupy Kabul and, pending the establishment of a political set-up acceptable to all Afghans and friendly to the neighbouring countries, it should remain a demilitarised city under the control of a U.N. peacekeeping force or a multinational force, authorised by the U.N. Council.

In a statement released at the regular press briefing, the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Mr. Aziz Khan, said "we have seen reports of the withdrawal of the Taliban from Kabul and takeover by the forces of the Northern Alliance. It is our hope that calm prevails and bloodshed is avoided. Pakistan holds to the view that the Northern Alliance forces must not occupy Kabul."

Right from the day the U.S. launched its military offensive against Afghanistan on October 7, Pakistan has been maintaining that no one group or faction in the country should be allowed to march to Kabul. The reference was to the Northern Alliance as it was the only force fighting the Taliban on the ground and was being

helped by the U.S. and its allies.

There was a major shift in Pakistan's stance towards the Northern Alliance and it appears to have been influenced by the fact that the Alliance has come to occupy the centre stage thanks to the assistance it received in recent days from the U.S. and other quarters.

"We have been in contact with all the groups, including the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan and we have no hesitation in talking to them," the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman said in response to a specific question. Relations between Islamabad and the Northern Alliance have been strained for a variety of reasons. Pakistan sees the Alliance as a group aided and abetted by various countries opposed to the interests of Pakistan, including India.

THE HINDU

**Wishes its readers
A HAPPY DEEPAVALI**

**Our office will remain
closed today on account of
Deepavali and there will be
no issue of THE HINDU
dated 15th November, 2001.**

JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

14 NOV 2001

'N Alliance alone can't form Govt'

HT Correspondent & PTI
London, November 13

WITH THE anti-Taliban forces capturing Kabul, India and Britain today opposed the formation of a new Government in Afghanistan solely by the Northern Alliance, saying that any future dispensation should reflect the ethnic diversity of the war-ravaged country.

After a 90-minute meeting, Defence Minister George Fernandes and his British counterpart Geoffrey Hoon, however, said they were totally against any role of the Taliban in the future set-up in Afghanistan.

The two leaders were in complete agreement that the formation of a Government by the Alliance on its own would not be "sustainable" and would "not satisfy" the key conditions of a broad-based regime.

Fernandes said: "We in India want the Taliban to be kept out," while Hoon asserted that effort should now be made towards building a new united Afghanistan "ridding all Taliban influence".

Hoon, on a daylong visit to the capital, said: "India has an important voice and political arrangement for post-Taliban Afghanistan. The UK and India are consulting closely on the future of Afghanistan."

Meanwhile in a fruitful day's stay in London, Atal Bihari Vajpayee has convinced his hosts that India must have a major say in post-Taliban Afghanistan's political set-up, given the long historical and cultural ties between the two countries. He made it clear that there should be no delay in putting in place a political set-up in the country. "A political vacuum can only worsen matters."

Vajpayee said he found during his talks in the US and at the UN that there was no unanimity over former Afghan King Zahir Shah.

He hoped consensus would emerge for a broad-based, neutral and representative Government that would also enable the international community to rehabilitate and reconstruct the war-ravaged nation.

His proposal that the "6+2 process" should be expanded to make the next Government in Afghanistan more effective is being considered seriously by Tony Blair, said British officials.

For Vajpayee, it was a highly satisfying concluding day of his three-nation trip. The ambience and the trend of talks between the two Prime Ministers during the working lunch hosted by Blair at Downing Street amply showed the convergence of their views on all major international and bilateral issues. Relations between the two countries have never been so good, said Blair.

He has also accepted Vajpayee's invitation to visit India along with wife Cherie. If dates are suitable, the British Premier may be the chief guest at the Republic Day Parade.

The Kashmir issue did not, as in the past, overshadow the talks. Blair's response was cautious when prodded on it. "The British Government's position has not changed. All we want to see is that tensions in the area are reduced. It cannot be ever right that people pursue their cause by the slaughter of innocent civilians," he said, reiterating his condemnation of the attack on J&K Assembly.

Vajpayee said: "Both our countries have been familiar with the ugly face of terrorism long before September 11. We have to go beyond al-Qaeda in the war against global terrorism."

Defence deal: Fernandes said an agreement on purchase of British Hawk advanced jet trainers (AJTs) for the Indian Air Force was likely to be reached.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 NOV 2001

Aid to Alliance raises Pashtun hackles

MARTIN FLETCHER
THE TIMES, LONDON

WASHINGTON, Nov. 12. — American aircraft were dropping horse feed to the Northern Alliance last week as it mounted cavalry charges against Taliban tanks. Now, thanks to the rebels' capture of Mazar-e Sharif, the USA can channel heavy weaponry to the Alliance from Uzbekistan, but therein lies Washington's dilemma.

The more the USA helps the Alliance — a rag-tag collection of ethnic Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazaras — the more it will be perceived as the enemy by the Pashtun majority in southern Afghanistan. To secure a comprehensive and lasting victory in Afghanistan, Washington desperately needs the Pashtuns to turn on the Taliban and join the Alliance in a future coalition government.



Afghan children play at the Makaki refugee camp in Iran. — AP/PTI

"We don't like the Taliban, but we dislike the Northern Alliance even more," a senior Pashtun spokesman said recently. The Alliance's successes in northern Afghanistan in the past few days are the direct re-

sult of an American change of strategy. In the first few weeks of the war, the Pentagon hoped that a few pinpoint attacks on key Taliban and Al-Qaida targets, such as airfields, anti-aircraft

batteries and training camps, would flush out their leaders and cause defections.

Washington was also held back by covert efforts to foster a Pashtun revolt in the south, and diplomatic efforts to form an alternative government before the fall of the Taliban.

The plan did not work and some analysts believe that America's military restraint may even have bolstered the Taliban by making Washington's use of force appear half-hearted.

Early this month the Pentagon began to embrace the Northern Alliance. With commandos on the ground to select targets, it began intense bombardment of frontline Taliban troops - using B52 bombers, cluster bombs and 15,000lb "Daisy Cutters" - that helped the Alliance to capture of Mazar-e Sharif and other swaths in the north.

THE STATESMAN

15 NOV 2002

Push to set up new govt in Afghanistan

13711
ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNHQ., Nov. 12. - With Opposition forces driving Afghanistan's ruling Taliban fighters from their strongholds, foreign ministers from eight key nations agreed today to accelerate efforts to form an alternative government "on an urgent basis."

The ministers from Afghanistan's six neighbours as well as the USA and Russia met on the sidelines of a week-long General Assembly gathering as Opposition fighters claimed they had advanced to the gates of Kabul.

A declaration issued at the end of a 90-minute meeting endorsed efforts by the top UN envoy for Afghanistan "to facilitate efforts by Afghan groups committed to a free and peaceful Afghanistan to establish a broad-based Afghan administration on an urgent basis." In their declaration, the eight ministers backed efforts by the Afghan people to find a political solution they said should be "broad-based, multi-ethnic, politically balanced, freely chosen.... and at

peace with neighbours".

ST-1
War: The Northern Alliance today halted their advance 10 to 15 km outside Kabul and were awaiting orders from their commanders. "We will continue our victorious advance to the gates of Kabul. But for the time being we do not intend to enter the city," said Opposition spokesman, Waisudin Salik, adds AFP.

He said the Northern Alliance had captured the districts of Qara Bagh, Nejrab and Tagab districts during today's advance from the front lines 50 km north of Kabul.

Three bombs struck the city shortly after dusk, one of which hit the house of the Taliban's Kabul governor, Mullah Abdul Manan Niazi. His house was partially destroyed in the attack but witnesses said there were no known casualties.

The Taliban confirmed that the Alliance forces had broken through their front lines around Kabul, but said the advance had been halted and they retained control of the capital.

The militia denied the fall of the western province of Herat and the northeastern town of Kunduz.

THE STATESMAN

16 NOV 2001

Capture of Mazar-i-Sharif gives U.S. a strategic foothold

By Bradley Graham

The capture of Mazar-i-Sharif would give the U.S. and anti-Taliban forces an important strategic foothold in northern Afghanistan and would open the way to a dramatically increased flow of military supplies to the poorly equipped Northern Alliance and food aid to starving Afghans.

The strategic crossroads city has served as a crucial link in the Taliban's ability to resupply its troops in northern Afghanistan. Its loss would enable the Northern Alliance to sever roads and mountain paths that connect Taliban front lines, effectively isolating thousands of Taliban troops in half a dozen northern provinces.

If other Taliban forces near Mazar-i-Sharif are destroyed and the supply lines disrupted, the Northern Alliance could end up extending its control over northern Afghanistan by punching through Taliban lines that run from the Tajik border to just north of Kabul.

Most immediately, however, the city's seizure would open a strategic road link into Afghanistan from Uzbekistan about 40 miles to the north. It would allow the U.S. and its allies to transport substantial quantities of military gear and ammunition to the Northern Alliance, and would provide a route for far greater humanitarian relief supplies than U.S. air drops have been able to supply to up to now.

Establishing what U.S. defence officials are calling a land bridge for humanitarian and military supplies presents a major logistics and

security challenge. Pentagon spokesmen had no details Friday on preliminary plans, but Rear Adm John D. Stufflebeem, the deputy director of operations for the Joint Staff, told reporters that responsibility for securing the supply lines would involve more than just U.S. forces.

Mindful of the ebb and flow of fighting between the rebels and the better-armed, more numerous

Taliban attack.

From the start of the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan, Pentagon intelligence officials have argued that Northern Alliance forces should concentrate on seizing Mazar-i-Sharif, not only for the military advantages that would accrue but also the political ones. The city's fall, the argument went, would deliver a psychological blow to the Taliban. It would

seriously destabilise its rule and spur disaffection among Pashtun tribal leaders in southern Afghanistan who have supported the Taliban.

Several alternate scenarios for the unfolding ground war between rebel and Taliban forces also were considered. These included a Northern Alliance assault on Kabul first, or a combined attack on Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif.

But a takeover of Kabul by the Northern Alliance, a loose coalition of ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks, risks enraging the Pashtuns, the dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan. Such a move could spoil prospects for forming

a coalition government to replace the Taliban. Pakistan, too, has opposed letting Kabul fall into Northern Alliance hands.

For these reasons, Pentagon analysts have favoured taking Mazar-i-Sharif first. But aides to defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Army Gen Tommy Franks, the U.S. commander of the Afghan war, insist that U.S. authorities have not dictated to the rebels which way to move first. (LATWP Svc)

Beards and veils go, music blares in Mazar

ISLAMABAD: Afghans queued at barber shops to shave their beards, music blared from shops and women threw off the head-to-toe burqa veil as Mazar-i-Sharif, the first city taken from the Taliban, escaped their draconian rules, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said on Sunday.

The entry of opposition Northern Alliance forces late on Friday ended the grip of the feared Ministry of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice — better known as the religious police — whose job was to implement harsh rules regarded by the Taliban as embodying the purest form of Islam.

In streets patrolled now by uniformed Northern Alliance fighters, men with beards they have not been allowed to trim for years lined up to shave them off, the Pakistan-based AIP said.

The strains of music played from shops, which were previously only allowed to sell religious chants or martial songs, it quoted residents of the city as saying.

Under the Taliban, a man who trimmed his beard could face arrest and several weeks in jail while his beard grew back. The playing of music brought the penalty of a public lashing, audio cassettes were smashed and the tapes fluttered from telegraph posts in most cities. (Reuters)

Taliban militia, U.S. officials remained cautious about whether the Northern Alliance could hold Mazar-e Sharif.

They acknowledged the risk of a Taliban counteroffensive. They said that even if the rebels keep control of the city, the airports there may be of little use in mounting new air attacks on the Taliban and Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida network unless the approach and departure paths are freed from

THE TIMES OF INDIA
THE TIMES OF INDIA

12 NOV 2001

Osama waves nuke threat

FROM IDREES BAKHTIAR
AND REUTERS

Islamabad, Nov. 10: A Pakistani newspaper editor said today that in a recent interview inside Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden claimed he had nuclear and chemical weapons and might use them in response to US attacks.

The White House said it took such remarks very seriously and would do everything to prevent bin Laden from acquiring such weapons of mass destruction.

But the Pakistan foreign office refused to comment on the interview. However, some sources having knowledge of nuclear arms said the claim hardly holds any ground. One source said even if bin Laden possesses nuclear arm, he certainly does not have the launching facilities. "Besides, how could an individual, however rich, develop nuclear arms?" he added.

Hamid Mir, editor of the Urdu *Ausaf* newspaper, said he held a two-hour interview with bin Laden in Arabic in the early hours of Thursday at a secret location.

The interview was splashed on the front page of Pakistan's *Dawn*



Osama bin Laden with Hamid Mir during the interview. (AFP)

newspaper today.

Mir was taken blindfolded in a jeep from Kabul on Wednesday night to a place where it was extremely cold and one could hear the sound of anti-aircraft guns firing away. After a wait, bin Laden arrived with about a dozen bodyguards and Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri and answered questions.

"I wish to declare that if America used chemical or nuclear weapons against us, then we may retort with chemical and nuclear weapons. We have the weapons as

deterrent," bin Laden was quoted as telling Mir.

Asked where he got the weapons, bin Laden reportedly replied: "Go to the next question."

It was not possible independently to verify the report.

The *Dawn*, which printed a photograph apparently showing Mir with bin Laden and dated November 8, said it was the first interview the Saudi-born militant had granted to any journalist since the deadly September 11 attacks.

"We have said that we have sus-

pected all along that this organisation has been pursuing the acquisition of chemical, biological and nuclear materials," said White House spokesman Ken Lisaius.

"They have stated those goals themselves. We take those past statements seriously and we'll do everything we can to prevent their acquisition."

The Pakistani government last month dismissed as absurd media reports that bin Laden had obtained nuclear material from Pakistan's atomic arsenal.

Mir said he was picked up in Kabul on Wednesday night and taken to meet bin Laden.

"They picked me up... they blindfolded me.... The road was bumpy... For five hours I suffered that painful journey," he said. "They were not friendly with me. They searched my body very crudely."

Mir said when his blindfold was taken off, he found himself in a room, not a cave. He said bin Laden told him Terror Tuesday was justified but denied responsibility. "The attacks were not targeted at women and children. The real targets were America's icons of military and economic power."

Mazar-e-Sharif falls to Northern Alliance

Agencies

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 9. — The Northern Alliance today captured Mazar-e-Sharif.

The Taliban said opposition troops had entered the northern city. Quoting Taliban sources, the Afghan Islamic Press said the US-led coalition's heavy bombardment helped the opposition troops storm the city's southern outskirts. Reports say about 2,500 fighters under the command of the Uzbek warlord and opposition commander, General Abdul Rashid Dostum, entered the city.

Gen Dostum said: "In a short period of time, we entered Mazar-e-Sharif and we are in Mazar-e-Sharif. We have everything, including the airport." He told CNN that the Taliban seemed to have abandoned the city after they lost 90 soldiers in the battle. Russian NTV network quoted Gen Dostum's aide Mohammad Kargar as saying over telephone that more than 300 Taliban men had been taken as prisoners.

The Pentagon said the situation on the ground near Mazar-e-Sharif is fluid but "encouraging." Pentagon spokeswoman Ms Victoria Clarke said: "At the point where it's taken, it could facilitate a land bridge to Uzbekistan which could aid movement of humanitarian and other supplies...until things settle and we see where forces are after a day or two, our inclination is to withhold comment."

On the other hand, hundreds of opposition troops, backed by tanks, massed at the front line just north of Kabul. Commanders said they expected to advance within hours.

About 800 Northern Alliance fighters marched toward the front line along with four tanks and 40 artillery pieces while US jets roared overhead, dropping their bombs on Taliban positions overlooking the opposition-held Bagram airport. Commanders at the front said they expected to launch an offensive at about 2.00 a.m. (local time).

In another significant development, the Taliban has granted citizenship to Osama bin Laden and four leaders of the Arab terrorist groups, according to Russian news agency RIA Novosti report quoting Pakistani News Service.

"Now Sheikh Osama is no longer our guest but a citizen of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and his extradition is out of the question," a Taliban fighter told the PNS in Kandahar. The other leaders granted citizenship are Aiman al-Zawahiri and Sheikh Asim Abd ur-Rahman, the ring leaders of the banned Islamic Jihad, Al-Qa'ida's commander-in-chief Saif ul-Adil Abu Hafez and his deputy, Mohammad Atef.

Earlier in the day, American warplanes pounded Taliban front lines with renewed vigour. The F-18 jets trailing flares to deter anti-aircraft fire bombed Taliban targets in the villages of Estarghech and Raeasht overlooking the Bagram airstrip.

Nepal on alert: In Nepal, officials said security at the kingdom's only major airport was strengthened after receiving a threat that Osama supporters planned to hijack a plane and crash it into a target in India.

■ More reports on page 9

THE STATESMAN

10 NOV 2001

Pakistan braces for nationwide protests

Taliban told to close Karachi consulate

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 8. — Pakistan has ordered the Taliban to close down its consulate in Karachi without assigning any reasons even as it braces for a showdown tomorrow with pro-Taliban parties demanding ouster of the Musharraf regime.

Two days ago, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan was directed to "limit" his activities and barred from holding daily media briefings.

The Pakistan foreign office spokesman, Mr Aziz Mohammad Khan, said the Karachi Consulate, one of the four diplomatic missions the Taliban have in Pakistan, has been asked to close down and its staff withdrawn immediately.

In Paris, General Pervez Musharraf confirmed that his country was closing the Taliban consulate in Karachi. The consulate was "not serving any purpose" and was "even having negative effect", he said.

The Taliban said Pakistan's decision to close down their consulate was under pressure from the USA and resented the curbs imposed on the militia's last foreign envoy. "Pakistan is under immense pressure. They have barred us from holding press conferences and they have provided air space and territory to the USA", Mr Abdul Salem Zaeef said.

The Pakistan Afghanistan Defence Council has given a call for a *chakka* jam tomorrow. The agitation will begin during the Friday prayers and demonstrations will be held all over the country.

The government has said strong action would be taken against any one taking part in violent activities. Army units and police have been put on high alert.

General Musharraf said the

US-led military attacks on Afghanistan should be stopped as soon as possible because the world sees them as a war against innocent civilians. He said he would ask Mr George W Bush to suspend the bombing during Ramzan.

Harkat chief: The Harkat-ul Mujahideen chief, Fazlur Rehman Khalil, has crossed over to Afghanistan to join Taliban's fight against the US, amid reports that 85 militants of another Pakistani jihadi outfit were killed in the US strikes.

War: US warplanes bombed positions on or near the Taliban front lines north of Kabul, witnesses said today. In the afternoon, a B-52 bomber flew over the Taliban-held town of Qarabagh and enormous explosions followed. Earlier, Northern Alliance fighters said they saw 10 bombs fall near Estargeh, a Taliban-held town.

The Alliance forces said they were only seven km away from Mazar-e-Sharif. The troops were fortifying their position before a major assault, Qari Qudratullah, a spokesman said. **'Spies' held:** The Taliban today said it had arrested 20 Afghans accused of spying for the USA and trying to provoke a rebellion. Officials in Jalalabad said the men included two senior Opposition commanders.

Zahir Shah: The UN special envoy to Afghanistan has urged the country's former monarch Mohammed Zahir Shah to speed up efforts to form a post-Taliban administration, a top aide said today.

US aircraft carrier: The Pentagon is set to dispatch a fourth aircraft carrier *Battle Group* to waters near Afghanistan, the defence department said.

'No Indian Army officers helping Afghan Opp'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 8. — The defence ministry today denied charges by the Taliban ambassador to Islamabad that Indian Army officers were helping the Northern Alliance in its fight in Afghanistan.

The defence spokesman today said no Indian army officer was helping the Northern Alliance. He was denying a charge by Mr Abdul Salam Zaeef to Pakistani newspaper editors, that Indian and Russian officers along with the Americans were helping the Alliance. Mr Zaeef said a general and a brigadier of the Indian army were involved.

In the past, the Indian government has spoken of a hospital at Farkhor, Tajikistan, to treat soldiers of slain warlord Ahmed Shah Masood. This revelation came recently, much after reports in *The Statesman* on the subject. There is also a clear strategic alliance between Russia, Iran, India and Tajikistan against the Taliban but officials said no armymen have been sent to guide the alliance.

Mr Zaeef held a dinner for Pakistani newspaper editors last night, a few hours after it was revealed that the authorities had ordered him to stop his almost daily press briefings.

He said Indian officers of the rank of general and brigadier were involved.

■ More reports on pages 7 and 10

THE STATESMAN

Taliban thwarts bid to win over Pashtuns

CATHERINE PHILIP & STEPHEN FARRELL
THE TIMES, LONDON

QUETTA/ISLAMABAD, Nov. 7. — Attempts to stir up a revolt in the Taliban's Pashtun heartland were undermined yesterday when a senior Opposition figure believed to be playing a key role was said by the USA to have been flown out of the country.

The family of Mr Hamid Karzai (46), former Afghan deputy foreign minister, said Pashtun chieftains were rallying to him inside Afghanistan. But Mr Donald Rumsfeld, US defence secretary, said Mr Karzai had been "extracted" from the country (but not rescued) and was expected to return.

"He has been in Afghanistan with a number of supporters and troops, and we have delivered ammunition and some supplies to him. Within recent days, at his request, he was extracted from Afghanistan with a few of his supporters and fighters, I believe for consultations in Pakistan, and undoubtedly will be going back in there when those consultations are over," Mr Rumsfeld said.

If the supporter of the former King Zahir Shah has been forced to flee Afghanistan, it would be another blow to coalition efforts to find credible Opposition figures capable of challenging the Taliban. It follows the capture and execution of the former Mujahideen commander Abdul Haq during a similar mission into Taliban-held areas, and the confirmation yesterday that Mr Haq's nephew, Izzatullah, had also



An Afghan refugee carries a bag with wheat at a Dasht-i-Qala village market in Takhar province, northern Afghanistan. — AP/PTI

been captured and killed.

Mr Rumsfeld's statement followed claims by the Taliban that Mr Karzai was in Pakistan, not Afghanistan. However, his family deny that he has left the country, saying he is continuing his mission. His younger brother, Mr Ahmed Karzai, said he had spoken to Mr Karzai twice yesterday. "He is still in the same place as before and he is continuing with his work."

Pentagon officials say they sent US warplanes to help him when he and his supporters came under attack from Taliban forces last Thursday.

His mission to promote a Loya Jirga, or grand assembly, began on 8 October when, according to his family, he drove unrecognised from Quetta to Kandahar

through Taliban checkpoints.

Once he reached Oruzgan he received protection from people who respected him as an emissary of the King and as a leading member of the Popalzai Pashtun clan from which Afghan rulers have been drawn since the 18th Century "Father of Afghanistan", Ahmad Shah Durrani.

In Oruzgan he travelled from village to village, holding secret talks with local leaders. He was ambushed when Taliban forces, acting on a tip-off, walked for nine hours to reach his hideout, killing two of Mr Karzai's men.

US officials have confirmed that they sent helicopters in a rescue attempt during the gun battle, and that he had made periodic calls for help after taking refuge in the mountains.

THE STATESMAN

Northern Alliance reinforced, India lends support

SRINJOY CHOWDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 6. - The Northern Alliance, preparing for a major ground offensive to capture Mazar-e-Sharif and march towards Kabul, has been reinforced, defence sources said.

Even though the US bombers had repeatedly struck Taliban positions around Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, the Alliance was waiting for reinforcement and support.

Sources said the NA's original 30 to 40 T-54 and T-55 Soviet designed tanks have been supplemented with about 60 to 70 more tanks. Earlier, there were reports about a supply of 40 tanks. The Northern Alliance gets support from Russia, Iran, India and Tajikistan.

Besides the tanks, defence sources said the Northern Alliance has about half-a-dozen Scud missiles. Ahmed Shah Masood, the Tajik warlord who was killed several months ago, had reportedly told his supporters. The comparatively low-tech but potentially effective missiles were used by Iraq against the US-led alliance during the Gulf War. It had caused more anxiety than casualties as they are not very accurate. This could do considerable damage if they hit urban settlements.

The NA has also received reinforcements in terms of artillery. They have 122 mm guns, GRAD rocket launchers, used by the Indian Army during Kargil and RPG-7s. There is the usual amount of small arms for the soldiers, including assault rifles. Masood asked for reinforcements before his death. He felt that his soldiers were too small in number and he asked his supporters for supplies to build up his forces. Another 15,000 men, well-armed and well-trained, would be able to make a difference.

Before the 11 September attacks, there had been some support to the Northern Alliance, particularly Masood. But it was felt that Masood, despite his good intentions and honesty (he stayed with his troops and was not known to be corrupt) had not succeeded in breaking through and capturing Taloqan, considered his first objective. Now, with more support, Fahim Khan, his successor, could make a difference, it is felt.

The capture of Mazar-e-Sharif by General Rashid Dostum's forces is much-awaited as it could make Uzbekistan breathe more easily. For the town is just across the Amu Darya river, which divides Uzbekistan and Afghanistan and would ensure almost all of northern Afghanistan, from Faizabad to Herat in the west, along Shindat and Pulekumri would be in the Northern Alliance's hands.

Pentagon denies Taliban claim: The vice-chairman of the Pentagon's Joint Chiefs of Staff today denied the Taliban claim that four US military personnel were killed when their helicopter crashed in Pakistan after the militia fired at it. adds AFP. "There was no US helicopter shot down in Pakistan. There were not four or any other number of US servicemen killed in that non-shootdown," Gen Peter Pace said. A helicopter crashed in high terrain several days ago due to icing, he said describing an incident on Friday.

Explosion rocks Kabul: A loud explosion rocked Kabul today, minutes after residents reported hearing a helicopter flying over the city, reports AFP. The explosion came around 8.50 p.m. (IST). Residents said that it seemed to be inside the city.

■ More reports on pages 2, 5 and 8

THE STATESMAN

HPD-12 Strategic depth in Afghanistan

8/11
By V. R. Raghavan

Pakistan has had to pay a heavy price for the chimera of strategic depth in Afghanistan... Its economic revival has been hampered more by Afghanistan than by any other factor.

THE GAINING of strategic depth in Afghanistan has been a major objective of Pakistan's policy. Islamabad's anxieties about its northern neighbour commenced almost immediately after Independence. The combination of Pashtun ambitions in Pakistan, the uncertain status of the Durand Line, memories of long military campaigns in the North West Frontier Agency and the fierce independence of Afghanistan under King Zahir Shah had made Pakistan anxious. A strong military sense of geo-politics among its largely military rulers also led to the need to gain control over Afghanistan. The notion of strategic depth emerged even stronger after the socialist revolution in Afghanistan and became an obsession after the Soviet intervention in the country.

In the early years of its history, Field Marshal Ayub Khan was credited for having said that the defence of East Pakistan was best obtained in the west. This was attempted to be done by forcing India to concentrate its military deployment against West Pakistan. In later decades, the militancy in Punjab was seen as providing depth to Pakistan from an Indian military offensive through the State. This also applies to forcing a large Indian military presence in Jammu & Kashmir. On the Siachen dispute, arguments were advanced in Pakistan that the Indian occupation of the Saltoro mountain range was part of a Soviet-Indian pincer against Pakistan.

There was much talk in Pakistan's military establishment on the double jeopardy of a Russian-Indian pincer from the north and east. Pakistan's media and strategic analysts also developed the argument in favour of strategic depth. The phrase received its official seal when General Mirza Afzal Beg used it during his military manoeuvres called Zarb-i-Momin. Pakistan's search for strategic depth against India had been a continuous one since its military rulers took power.

In military terms, strategic depth has some meaning if it refers to a region that provides safety and resources to an army or a country. A buffer zone could be a

strategic depth in politico-military terms. Hitler's attempts to gain the oil-rich and grain-filled parts of Russia could be said to seek strategic depth. The NATO's eastward expansion can be said to offer strategic depth both to western Europe and to the erstwhile Soviet states. The Golan Heights offers the same to Israel. After the Cold War, strategic depth is better obtained by shaping relations through engagement and by adding depth to a country's economic capacity. In Pakistan's case, none of these requirements were capable of being met in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's beliefs in the value of seeking strategic depth in Afghanistan were influenced by two factors. The support it received from the U.S. in waging an armed response against the Soviet occupation triggered the belief. The success of that endeavour with no apparent costs to itself, gave Islamabad the illusion of being able to play a major role in the geo-politics of Central Asia. This more than anything else led to the belief that Afghanistan provided the strategic leverage Pakistan had long been seeking. The energy-rich Muslim states of Central Asia beckoned both Pakistan and the energy-seeking multi-nationals. Iran's standing up to western pressures was proving an obstacle to long-term plans for energy extraction from the region. Afghanistan offered both shorter energy routing and political control through Pakistan.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's attempts to control Afghanistan's post-Soviet rulers proved far more difficult than getting the Soviets out of that country. Pakistan tried various groups including those led by Hekmatyar. When these attempts failed, the Taliban was backed up by military hardware and technical support, to gain control over much of Afghanistan. In the process, Pakistan was permeated

with the 'Afghan condition', marked by extreme sectarian violence, and vitiation of political culture through narcotics. It also found it could not prevent fundamentalist Islamic groups taking root on its political soil. The military, known in its earliest years in politics as a reformist and liberal entity, itself came under such influences. To make matters worse, the political and military establishments lost control over the strategic partner, the Taliban. When the latter came under the influence of Arab fundamentalists of the Osama bin Laden kind, the situation was lost for Pakistan. After September 11, there is little to choose between Pakistan's strategic depth in Afghanistan and Pakistan as the strategic depth of the Taliban. The quest for strategic depth in Afghanistan has led to a strategic disaster for Pakistan's military rulers.

The warning signs about the impact on Pakistan by the choice of strategic depth were not lost on some. Ms. Benazir Bhutto had cautioned against it in 1998. In her opinion, it was the Zia-ul-Haq constituency which had dreamed of strategic depth. She herself did not see how a land-locked Afghanistan could provide strategic depth. She felt strategic depth would be better obtained through Iran, which could be of assistance if Pakistan was blockaded. Others have called strategic depth an albatross round Pakistan's neck.

Pakistan has had to pay a heavy price for the chimera of strategic depth in Afghanistan. Nearly 60,000 Pakistanis have died in Afghanistan. It has had to pay heavily for sustaining the Taliban leadership and its economic ineptitude. At least for ten years if not more, every policy, Ministry and Pakistan's polity have been held hostage by the Taliban. Pakistan's economic revival has been hampered more by Afghanistan than by any other factor. In the process, Afghan so-

ciety has been deprived of its moorings and the world alienated from the country. Iran's relations with Pakistan have been badly affected by the Afghan factor. The Central Asian Republics also view Pakistani policies with apprehension. Pakistan finds itself unwelcome and viewed with suspicion in most international fora. The price paid by its people is incalculable in terms of lost opportunities for political and economic stability. Investing for strategic depth in Afghanistan's unstable polity, has been a strategic folly in political, economic and social terms.

In the war now being waged in Afghanistan, Pakistan is doing its utmost to retain control over a future political outcome. This is understandable in view of the costs to Islamabad in any future outcome. The Talibanisation of Pakistan will produce an internal impact irrespective of the militia being in or out of power in Afghanistan.

If the Taliban continues to hold power, however tenuously, it will be Pakistan's burden to bear. If the former is out of power, the impact on Pakistani polity through internal upheavals will be long lasting. Either way, Pakistan will continue to pay a large price. Its compulsion to ensure the Taliban's representation in the future governance of Afghanistan, stems from the belief that it can retain a modicum of control in its strategic depth.

The explanation for Pakistan's dilemmas on Afghanistan is to be found in the military leadership's convictions. Strategic depth is a relational concept. Such depth is to be sought as protection against an adversary. Pakistan's search for strategic depth was to be a hedge against India. Neither Afghanistan nor the Central Asian states, nor for that matter Iran, posed a threat to Pakistan. The notion of strategic depth for Pakistan, combined in it a territorial base for terrorism and a proxy war against India, with the alibi of Pakistan not being directly involved. The failure of its policy lay in its inability to see the link between its needs of terrorism against India, and the price to be paid for its strategic depth spawning global terrorism.

S so often in the past, the call of Afghanistan is once more stimulating India's policy-makers into uncommon activity. Events in that country have compelled New Delhi to heighten its profile and adopt a more active posture.

There has been a flurry of initiatives against the drumbeat of war: substantial grants and loans have been offered, an able and experienced new ambassador has been appointed, and in a series of letters to numerous world leaders India has staked its claim to a say in the successor regime after the Taliban has been packed off.

This strengthened activity is a response to the looming repercussions of what is happening in Afghanistan, and India is making its most determined effort yet to carve out a role for itself in the region.

These initiatives serve as a reminder that India has been on the sidelines for all too long, even though its relations with Afghanistan have traditionally been very good. There is much mutual sympathy between the two and great depth of cultural association. Moreover, they once found common ground in dealing with the country that lies between them, Pakistan. Afghanistan, which took its place in the comity of nations long before we did, was the sole dissenting voice when Pakistan came up for entry into the United Nations in 1947 — it had its own reasons for this forthright negative, the most intractable being that of Pashtunistan.

This piece of old history illuminates the ancient adage that your neighbour's neighbour is your friend. Yet

519
4/11

Kabul's siren SONG

Ashtamulvan

WIDE ANGLE

SUVANN JAVINDAR

all the friendship fell away when the Soviet invasion took place. An altogether new situation developed within Afghanistan, and in the bitter strife and division within that country, India found itself on the wrong side of the argument.

We appeared to be lined up with the invaders rather than with those struggling to get rid of them. Since then events have turned again and again in bewildering fashion, and with each turn India has found itself further and further from the rulers of Kabul. In its latest phase, Afghanistan has evolved in a manner that causes us the gravest concern. Progressive Talibanisation has given a theological colour to the export of terror against us, making India one of the states most affected by this phenomenon.

Deeply involved in this activity is Pakistan, which has been one of the closest supporters — some would see it as the inspiration — of the Taliban from the start. They drew strength from the success achieved against the Soviet Union and reached the conclusion that it could be repeated elsewhere, most

particularly in Kashmir. The tactics developed in the anti-Soviet struggle were applied to this fresh target — recruitment and indoctrination, training camps, infiltration, death and destruction. This has been the story for over a decade,

being able to do very much about it. A huge security effort in Kashmir has contained the threat but not eliminated it, and so long as external support continues, the problem will not go away. How to deal with this external threat is a most difficult matter.

There is no communication with Kabul, none of the normal contact between states; on the contrary, we are at daggers drawn. We have been impatient, restive observers, powerless to persuade or compel Kabul. Pakistan has ensured that no UN-sponsored consultative group for Afghanistan should find room for India and we are conspicuously absent from the consultative process.

It has not even been possible for UN Special Representatives for Afghanistan to come to New Delhi for regular discussion. Yet we cannot afford to be passive, and successive governments in New Delhi have tried with varying degrees of success to find ways of handling this complicated situation. Kabul being unremotely hostile, India has been compelled to come closer to its opponents within

and notwithstanding the prolonged bombardment of Afghanistan over the last few weeks, there is no sign of an end to it. While India has seen itself become the target of sustained malevolence, it has suffered the frustration of not



Members of a Kashmiri militant Mujahideen group chant anti-US slogans during a rally after Friday prayers in Karachi. — AP/PTI

Afghanistan and on its periphery. India's relations with the Northern Alliance, irreconcilable foe of the Taliban, have strengthened greatly, in the expectation that it would create preoccupations at home that would inhibit the Taliban from sowing conflict abroad. India also made common cause with Iran which was deeply engaged in the effort to curb the Taliban. Russia also came into the reckoning, though late and somewhat reluctantly, for it was still licking its wounds from its earlier involvement and was in no hurry to get drawn in afresh.

With support from these and other sources, the Northern Alliance sustained itself in the battlefield and, just as important, denied international recognition to the masters of Kabul by retaining its hold on Afghanistan's seat in the UN. Thus, India's effort of the last few years has had some impact, even though it may not have compelled the Taliban to moderate its approach to us.

Now India is bidding for more. It wants a place at the table when the new arrangements take shape. A big investment of financial and diplomatic resources is being made. As we see all too well with America's experience, there are no easy answers in Afghanistan, and our endeavour can easily go awry.

Pakistan's hostility remains unchanged and its ability to keep India on the periphery is unimpaired. It will not be easy for Indian diplomacy to make a dent. Even so, the effort now under way has its merits and we would hope that it yields some benefit.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

Taliban claim downed copter, killed many

SAYED SALAHUDDIN
KABUL, NOVEMBER 3

AFGHANISTAN'S ruling Taliban on Saturday said they had shot down a US helicopter in the night in an operation south of Kabul, killing up to 50 US soldiers.

The aircraft was brought down after the Taliban opened fire on the helicopter in the Nawoor district of Ghazni province at around 11.00 pm while it was trying to rescue another aircraft that had crashed in the area, said Qari Fazil Rabi, an Information Ministry official.

"Between 40 to 50 Americans have died in both these incidents," he told *Reuters*. "You can see the bodies of the Americans on board the copters with their uniforms."

Taliban officials show parts of what they claim was a destroyed a US helicopter to the foreign journalists in Kandahar on Friday. *Reuters photo*

A US helicopter on a special forces mission in Afghanistan crashed in bad weather at about 1830 GMT on Friday, injuring four crew members, but all were rescued and evacuated from the country, the Pentagon said. The reports could not be independently confirmed.

The Taliban embassy had been notified of the incident by Education Minister and top government spokesman Mullah Amir Khan Muttuqi, a source said.

In Washington, Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Dan Stoneking said of the latest Taliban claims: "As we stated from day one, we don't respond to Taliban claims because more often than not, they turn out to be false." Pressed further, all Stoneking would say to counter the Taliban report was that the Pentagon's statements on Friday evening about the crashed US helicopter "speak for themselves".

CNN said the US Central Command denied the Taliban claims. "No US helicopters were shot down in Afghanistan," it

Taliban freed French and Pak journalists

ISLAMABAD: Taliban on Saturday said it had released French journalist Michel Peyraud after nearly a month in detention. "He was freed today and is heading for the Torkham crossing with Pakistan," said a Taliban spokesman in Jalalabad quoted by the AIP.

"One of the two Pakistani journalists, Irfan Qureshi, has been freed and the second, Mukkaram Khan, will be freed later," the spokesman said. —*AFP*

quoted the Central Command saying.

On Friday, the Defence Department said: "At approximately 1:30 pm today, a US Military helicopter crash-landed in Afghanistan due to severe weather.

"The landing severely damaged the helicopter. Four members of the crew were

injured, none life-threatening," the statement said. "The entire crew has been safely recovered out of Afghanistan and the four injured members are now receiving medical care."

The Pentagon said F-14 Tomcats from the carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt* destroyed the damaged helicopter, a standard US Military procedure in cases where high-tech items are lost in hostile areas and might be used by an enemy. Another helicopter rescued the stranded crew members.

Information Ministry's Rabi said the helicopter had come initially to rescue another helicopter shot down earlier and which had been destroyed by a jet that flew into the area and dropped bombs on the fallen aircraft.

"The burnt flesh and clothes and other items of the Americans are still lying there," the AIP quoted Muttuqi as saying. Heavy snow was falling in the area, he said. —*Reuters*

■ Taliban tell Al Jazeera they are determined to fight on during Ramadan

■ Opposition claims to have captured a key district in northern Afghanistan, Aq-Kurruk (70 km south of Mazar-i-Sharif). Troops led by Commander Atta Mohammad "take over" the district after 800 Taliban men change sides. Fighting on in nearby Khashendeh, aided by US airstrikes

■ US fighters pound Taliban frontline positions north of Kabul

■ Taliban release French journalist Michel Peyraud in Jalalabad on Saturday

■ Pentagon sends in two new spy planes, while Marine pilots fly their first bombing raids

■ Bush says American bombing tightening the net

■ Opposition says Taliban's attack on the takeover of Hamid Karzai could provoke the first revolt in their heartland

INDIAN EXPRESS

4 NOV 2001

Over 70 U.S. soldiers killed: Taliban

DOHA, NOV. 2. Between 70 and 100 U.S. soldiers have been killed in Washington's military campaign against Afghanistan launched on October 7, an official of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban said today. But, in a report from Washington, the White House flatly denied the claim. "Once again, the Taliban are just lying," said the spokesman, Mr. Ari Fleischer.

Between "70 and 100 American soldiers who landed in Afghanistan have been killed," the Taliban's "consul-general" in Karachi told Qatar's Al-Jazeera satellite TV channel.

A report from Islamabad, quoting the Afghan Islamic Press said the Taliban had threatened to hang captured supporters of a top aide to the exiled former king, Mr. Mohammed Zahir Shah, who is on an undercover mission in Afghanistan.

The militia was reported to have captured 25 followers of the former Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Hamid Karzai, in a confrontation in Deharwad in Uruzgan province overnight.

The Pakistan-based agency quoted Taliban sources as saying execution orders had been issued for "important" members of the detained group and they were expected to be hanged today, probably in the Taliban bastion of Kandahar. Militia fighters were still hunting for Mr. Karzai, AIP said. Mr. Karzai is believed to be on a mission similar to one undertaken by the Afghan resistance hero, Abdul Haq, whom the Taliban captured and executed last week. Haq was believed to be trying to encourage a rebellion against the Taliban. The Taliban said four U.S. helicopters had tried to rescue Mr. Karzai yesterday but failed after Taliban troops acted on a tip-off and raided a hideout in Deharwad.

Four supporters of the ex-king were killed and several others wounded in the battle. Sources said the Pashtun leader clandestinely entered the Taliban-held areas last week. He is close to Mr. Zahir Shah who is the focus of attempts to form a post-Taliban government if U.S. military operations, launched in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S., succeed in ousting the militia.

Mr. Karzai was influential in southern Afghanistan before the Taliban seized power in 1996. Meanwhile, some 1,200 armed Pakistani tribesmen entered Afghanistan today to aid the Taliban regime and its war, an Islamic party said. "Twelve hundred volunteers went into Afghanistan under the command of Malik Jan Mohammad. They left Bajaur around midday in 50 vehicles, they are armed," said Mr. Faizullah Farooq, spokesman for the Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat Mohammadi.

He said the 1,200 men were in addition to another 1,000 volunteers who crossed into Afghanistan yesterday. — AFP

Another report on Page 11

THE HINDU

3 NOV 2001

OVER 1000 PAK. TRIBESMEN CROSS OVER

U.S. citizens held: Taliban

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 1. The Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan today claimed that the militia had arrested some U.S. citizens.

Addressing a news conference here, Mullah Abdul Saleem Zaeef said, "we have a few American citizens with us. They have been arrested. Their identities are not known so far. The investigation is on".

A section of the media had reported that the Americans were captured when the Taliban forces apprehended the Afghan opposition commander, Abdul Haq, who crossed secretly into Afghanistan to raise a rebellion, and was executed last week.

(A PTI report said that 1,000 heavily-armed pro-Taliban Pakistani tribesmen had crossed into Afghanistan to join the militia in the war against the U.S. even as American strikes overnight and this morning damaged the country's biggest dam and power station and severely disrupted Taliban's lines of communication.)

On Turkey's decision to join the U.S.-led coalition fighting Afghanistan, Mullah Zaeef said soldiers

joining the U.S. forces would be considered enemies. "Soldiers from any Muslim or non-Muslim country joining the Americans are our enemies." He said any country that joined the war would have to face 'jehad'.

In another development, the Urdu daily, *Ausaf*, reported that the Taliban allowed an army comprising 10,000 activists of the Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) to come to Afghanistan to fight the "jehad" against the U.S.-led forces. The TNSM chief, Sufi Muhammad, along with a 100-member delegation had visited Afghanistan to seek permission in this regard. According to the report, the U.S. planes and the Northern Alliance forces attempted to target Sufi Muhammad's convoy, but Taliban's timely action foiled their attempt.

Another report in the Urdu daily, *Jang*, said the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, had ordered the killing of all pro-Zahir Shah commanders in and outside Afghanistan. A list of such commanders had been prepared after consulting the Al-Qaeda.

THE HINDU

2 NOV 2001

Afghan leaders meet UN envoy, discuss move

Islamabad, November 1

UN AFGHAN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi today met Afghan leaders arriving from inside the battered country to discuss replacing the Taliban, a United Nations spokesman said.

The talks, coming a day after Brahimi refused to meet Taliban ambassador Abdul Salam Zaeef, underlined the isolation of the Taliban regime.

"Mr Brahimi will be meeting with Afghans from inside Afghanistan," said UN spokesman Eric Falt yesterday. "We cannot disclose who for obvious reasons."

Falt said Brahimi also would meet representatives of Revolutionary Afghan Women's Association (RAWA), a group of Afghan women, who have opposed human rights abuses by all military groups in Afghanistan.

Brahimi is scheduled to leave for Iran tomorrow to consult Tehran on formation of a new Government that will include all ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

Zaeef accused Brahimi of working to advance US interests while Ahmad Wali Masood, the London-based brother of the late Ahmad Shah Masood, said Brahimi had had poor relations with the Alliance during an earlier peace mission.

Brahimi's snub of Zaeef reflects the Taliban's refusal to bow to a UN demand to hand over Osama bin Laden and their call for a jihad, or holy war, against the United States for launching air attacks on Afghanistan on October 7.

Meanwhile, the Taliban cla-

imed that they had repulsed a major opposition attack in a key valley in northern Afghanistan despite heavy bombing by US warplanes, a militia spokesman today said.

The Northern Alliance denied that there had been ground fighting. The Taliban spokesman said an offensive in the Dara-e-Souf valley, about 70 km south of Mazar-i-Sharif, started yesterday and continued for several hours.

"The opposition launched an offensive but it was repulsed and the frontlines remain unchanged," he said. One Taliban fighter was reportedly killed and five wounded, according to the AIP. There was no estimate of losses on the side of the Northern Alliance.

Their spokesman Mohammad Ashraf Nadeem denied the Opposition had launched an offensive, but admitted that one was still planned in Keshendeh district, part of the Dara-e-Souf valley.

Dam, power station damaged: After the overnight carpet bombing that damaged Afghanistan's biggest dam and power station and severely disrupted Taliban's lines of communication, US warplanes today pounded militia's positions on the northeastern frontline close to the border with Tajikistan.

With growing threat of nuclear terrorism, international atomic energy agency (IAEA) asked nuclear powers to tighten security at their nuclear plants to avoid them being targeted by terrorists.

Security stepped up at US nuclear facilities ■ N-arsenal safe, says Pakistan

Taliban refuses to meet Brahimi

UN spokesman:
envoy has no
time for militia

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 31. — The Taliban has refused to meet the UN envoy on Afghanistan, accusing the world body of being "a tool" of the USA. A UN spokesman, however, said the envoy, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, had no time to meet the militia's ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef.

The Taliban supremo, Mullah Mohammed Omar, has reportedly told Mullah Zaeef not to meet Mr Brahimi. "It's now proved that the UN isn't impartial. It has become a tool in the hands of America," the Afghan Islamic Press has quoted Mullah Omar as having said.

It quoted Mullah Zaeef as having said that Mr Brahimi's office was keen for a meeting. "We contacted Kandahar and the *Amirul Momeneen* (Omar) rejected the plea." Mullah Zaeef, however, met the UN high commissioner for refugees, Mr Ruud Lubbers, yesterday to discuss the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

The envoy said: "There's no need to meet Brahimi and nobody has any right to instal a broad-based government in Kabul."

Mr Brahimi has said demilitarisation of Kabul is essential to the success of any new Afghan government. Yesterday, he said there was no political solution on the table that would remove the Taliban from power.

The UN envoy arrived here on Sunday to discuss options for a

post-Taliban government. He met General Pervez Musharraf and exiled Afghan leaders yesterday.

The Indian high commissioner to Pakistan, Mr Vijay Nambiar, too discussed with him the possibilities of forming a broad-based alliance to replace the Taliban. Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee has written to the five nuclear powers and seven other countries, advocating a mechanism involving India, the group of eight industrialised nations and the UN to decide Afghanistan's future.

'N-arsenal safe': Islamabad has rejected reports that its nuclear weapons are in danger of falling into the hands of renegades as claimed by a US newspaper, the *News* said today.

The paper quoted military spokesman, Maj-Gen Rashid Qureshi, as having said: "This report is totally baseless and ridiculous. There is no question of anyone attacking or coming close to the nuclear weapons."

US troops: In Washington, the US defence secretary said American soldiers in Afghanistan are advising anti-Taliban forces and helping guide bombs to their targets.

Mr Donald Rumsfeld said a "very modest" number of US soldiers — fewer than 100 — are in northern Afghanistan, working with specific units of the Northern Alliance. Other US forces have been "in and out" of southern Afghanistan.

The AIP quoted a Taliban official as saying that about 500 US



Afghans stand outside a damaged Red Crescent dispensary in Kandahar in this television image taken on Wednesday. A doctor said the dispensary was hit in a pre-dawn air raid that killed 13 people. — AP/PTI

and allied military personnel were in Afghanistan.

Security around major nuclear facilities in the USA has been tightened after new threats of terror attacks. Washington has placed a week-long ban on aircraft movements within 20 km of more than 80 nuclear plants.

War: American jets today carried out one of the heaviest raids on the Taliban bastion in Kandahar and the militia claimed that three weeks of bombings had killed 1,500 civilians in Afghanistan. The jets

carpet-bombed frontlines north of Kabul and also pounded the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif. In the north, a B-52 bomber sent up a wall of orange flame and clouds of dust along Taliban positions overlooking Northern Alliance-held Bagram airbase north of Kabul.

Reports reaching here said that 13 civilians including five women and children, were killed when a bomb hit the Afghan Red Crescent Society clinic in Kandahar, where the airport and military installations were targeted.

Mullah Zaeef said the US efforts to help anti-Taliban forces to capture strategic city of Mazar-e-Sharif showed that the goal of American campaign was to "wipe out our Islamic identity and not to combat terrorism."

Kandahar has been crippled by more than three weeks of US bombing and the houses of Osama and Mullah Omar have been flattened and other key Taliban ministries and military facilities heavily damaged.

The Taliban invited foreign journalists to visit the city and

see the destruction. "We brought you here to see for yourselves that there is no military camp or Taliban base here," a Taliban guard told journalists.

Saudi stand: The Saudi government has frozen assets of individuals and groups suspectedly linked to terrorism, a US official said. A Saudi minister said Osama and the Taliban were responsible for the civilian deaths in Afghanistan.

■ More reports on pages 5 & 8

Algeria Taliban refuses to meet U.N. envoy

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 31 The Taliban said today that it will not meet the U.N. envoy to Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, because he "is serving the interests of the United States." The Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, told a news conference here that the United Nations was indifferent to the U.S. "atrocities" and not neutral to the issues concerning Afghanistan.

"We will not meet him and let him interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan," Mullah Zaeef said. He claimed that Mr. Brahimi requested a meeting with the Taliban on October 26. The request was brought before the Taliban authorities, but it was turned down.

Earlier, Mr. Brahimi turned down a request by Mullah Zaeef for a meeting on the plea that he did not have the time.

Diplomatic and political observers here were, however, not

convinced with the explanation over the inability of Mr. Brahimi to meet the "only Taliban Ambassador in the world". After all the U.N. envoy is here on a mission for discussions with a broad range of people about how to form an Afghan government.

Obviously, at this delicate juncture, the U.N. envoy does not want to give an impression of conferring any degree of legitimacy to the Taliban. The Taliban, on its part, had previously refused any dealings with U.N. peace envoys since the U.N. Security Council imposed sanctions on them in January for refusing to hand over Osama bin Laden.

The United Nations has been dealing with the Taliban only in relation to the humanitarian work being undertaken by several U.N. and international aid agencies inside Afghanistan.

On Tuesday, the U.N. High Commissioner, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, called on the Taliban Ambassador here and brought to his

notice the difficulties faced by the aid agencies. Mr. Lubbers has not been able to persuade Pakistan to receive more refugees. Pakistan is not impressed with the arguments of the U.N. agencies in favour of opening its borders to let in Afghans fleeing the war zone.

In fact, Islamabad today made it a point to deny reports attributed to the UNHCR that Pakistan had agreed to let more Afghan refugees cross over. The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Mr. Aziz Mohammad Khan, maintained that there was no change in Islamabad policy of keeping its borders closed.

On Tuesday, when Mr. Lubbers sought to stress the need to open the borders, the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, made it a point to mention the presence of three million Afghan refugees and inability of Pakistan to absorb any further inflow.

The Minister on Kashmir Affairs told Mr. Lubbers bluntly over a luncheon meeting that Pakistan

should not be expected to be the sole torch-bearer. "If the Western world feels hesitant to accommodate a few hundred Afghan refugees on its soil, why is Pakistan expected to open its borders to millions of new refugees without adequate financial back-up from donors," he asked.

Nambiar meets Brahimi

The Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr. Vijay K. Nambiar, called on Mr. Brahimi and appraised him of the Indian viewpoint on the situation in Afghanistan.

He told Mr. Brahimi that India favoured formation of a 'broad-based and multi-ethnic' government to replace the Taliban militia. New Delhi did not subscribe to the idea of accommodation of 'moderate' Taliban in the proposed set-up in Kabul. He also briefed him about the efforts being made by India to contribute to the humanitarian effort within Afghanistan.

WAR IN AFGHANISTAN / U.S. FAVOURING TAJIKS

A. P. B. K.
119-11

India monitoring changes in tactics

11/11

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, OCT. 31. India is closely monitoring the current U.S. inclination to target the Taliban frontline near the Northern Alliance strongholds in Afghanistan. Highly-placed sources in the security establishment point out that the U.S. planes are raiding Taliban positions close to a vital road link which leads out of Tajikistan towards the city of Mazar-e-Sharif.

In case these strikes continue, they can, for the first time, help the Tajik flank of the Northern Alliance, succeed in the battlefield. The Northern Alliance, which is close to Russia, India and Iran, represents the ethnic minorities of Afghanistan, including the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras and Shias.

Analysts here are attaching considerable importance to the change of military tack by the U.S. Sources pointed out that by favouring the Tajiks, the U.S. maybe tacitly acknowledging that it cannot solely depend on the Pakistanis for countering the Taliban in Afghanistan.

According to an assessment

here, the U.S. still relies heavily on Pakistan. But there are two developments that are forcing it to review its tactics on the ground. First, the disintegration of the Taliban, which both the Americans and the Pakistanis expected, has not taken place. On the contrary, the bombings, according to one view, may have only reinforced the resolve of the Taliban to fight. In fact, the Taliban could consolidate further in case the air raids continue during the month of Ramzan.

Second, the murder of Gen. Abdul Haq, a pro-U.S. Pashtun leader, by the Taliban has served as a "wake-up call" for the U.S. It is now widely perceived that the Pakistani intelligence may have knowingly played a role in compromising Abdul Haq's security.

The U.S. willingness to promote a possible advance by the Tajiks may also be on account of its failure to push its favourite Uzbek faction leader, Gen. Rashid Dostum, into Mazar-e-Sharif. Sources confirm that Gen. Dostum had recently received around \$50 million from the U.S. Doubting Gene.

Dostum's loyalty, the Tajik military commander in Mazar-e-Sharif, Ustad Atta, pulled out the Tajik forces that were also jointly attacking Mazar-e-Sharif recently. Consequently, the city has still not fallen.

The absence of a land route from Uzbekistan to the stronghold of Gen. Dostum has also hampered his advance towards Mazar-e-Sharif. This is because the Taliban maintains a strong presence along this passage. As a result, arming Gen. Dostum with heavy military equipment, necessary for a final assault on Mazar-e-Sharif, has become extremely difficult.

Faced with the possibility of the campaign against the Taliban getting bogged down, the U.S. has begun to explore the Tajik option. Intelligence inputs received here show that the U.S. planes are now striking the city of Taleqan, which is currently held by the Taliban. In case Taleqan falls, this can facilitate a parallel Tajik assault on Mazar-e-Sharif as a road which cuts through Taleqan heads towards this embattled city.

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