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Crisis Simulation Final Exam

UCLA Department of Public Policy
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MEMORANDUM

TO: SecState, SecDef, SecHS, NSAdvisor

FROM: POTUS (President of the United States)

DATE: June 5, 2006, 1:55 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time

Several days ago, a U.S. special forces team apprehended Adullah Ahmed Abdullah in Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan. As you know, Abdullah is believed to be a senior al Qaeda leader; he is already under indictment for his role in the 1998 U.S. African embassy bombings and is on the FBI's most wanted terrorists list. Lt. General Karl Eikenberry, the senior U.S. commander in Afghanistan, reports that Abdullah has not cooperated with our debriefers there. However, Eikenberry's intelligence field team has been working around the clock to analyze Abdullah's computer files. An hour ago, they found documents suggesting that al Qaeda is in the final phases of an operation to purchase 120 pounds of Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) from Pakistani military officials. HEU is the key ingredient for a nuclear bomb. With only about 100 pounds of this fissile material, terrorists could easily design and detonate a simple gun-type nuclear device. We are facing the nuclear terrorism scenario that experts have long feared.

No meeting dates are mentioned. However, the field team and the DNI's office¹ believe that these documents are consistent with end-stage planning found in other al Qaeda operations. They believe the transfer of the HEU could occur as soon as tomorrow, and will likely take place sometime in the next four weeks.

John Negroponte, the Director of National Intelligence, has been fully briefed. All 16 U.S. intelligence agencies have received urgent tasking to gather additional information about this possible sale, potential U.S. targets, modes of delivery, and timelines of attack. Much, however, remains murky.

Eikenberry's team and the DNI's office concur that:

- The evidence in Abdullah's files is genuine. Abdullah's scar on the right side of his lower lip enabled confirmation of his identity, and Eikenberry is certain that Abdullah was caught by surprise in the Afghanistan raid.

¹ Director of National Intelligence. The DNI is currently John Negroponte.

- The threat of a terrorist nuclear attack is imminent. Although HEU by itself is not a nuclear weapon, construction of a crude nuclear device using HEU could be achieved quickly and with ease.
- The intended target of a nuclear attack is a major metropolitan area in the United States.

Eikenberry's Team and the DNI's Office are uncertain about:

- When or where the sale will take place
- Whether Abdullah's capture will compromise the sale and allow the trail to go cold
- When, where, or how the weapon would be constructed and ultimately deployed.

I would like you to take two next steps. First and most immediately, we must do everything possible to prevent this fissile material from falling into al Qaeda hands. You should develop a realistic interdiction plan for my authorization by 10:00 a.m. tomorrow. Second, I have called an emergency NSC meeting for Thursday, June 8th, from 2-5:00 p.m. to determine what appropriate steps the United States should take against the government of Pakistan.

For Thursday's meeting, each team should prepare a 5-minute oral briefing in its policy area. The State Department team should consider the historical context of U.S.-Pakistani relations, allied positions and anticipated reactions, and diplomatic considerations more generally. The Defense team should examine military options given current constraints, capabilities, and strategic objectives. The Secretary of Homeland Security Team should analyze key vulnerabilities and likely targets and recommend steps to prevent and respond to a possible nuclear terrorist attack on the United States. The National Security Advisor team should consider how this particular crisis fits into the broader contours of the Administration's foreign policy, particularly the war on terror and Operation Iraqi Freedom. You need not confine your team's analysis to the specific points listed above, but you should be certain your briefing covers them. Briefings should include an oral presentation and accompanying overheads with key facts, assessments, and proposals. Select one person to lead your team's briefing during the NSC meeting. Your briefing should be based on actual facts in your area of expertise. Director Negroponte has attached a preliminary packet of sources and some background materials to get you started. I

should emphasize that these materials are only a point of departure: I expect you to conduct additional research. I need facts, and fast.

You should also come prepared to debate/discuss policy options with other members of my national security team. Be sure to anticipate criticisms from other participants and have backup material available to support your positions. I am most persuaded by hard facts and logical arguments rather than unsupported assertions.

Finally, you should draft a 2-4 page policy memo to me that lays out the critical facts, options, recommendations, and rationale of your briefing.

If your team wishes, you may hold pre-meetings with other foreign policy advisor teams to flesh out positions, garner support for your proposals, and strategize about how to approach the NSC meeting.

All teams should check email frequently for breaking news reports and private communications from key government agencies and foreign countries.

You should enter class in role. That means you should be appropriately dressed for a meeting in the Oval Office with the President of the United States, you should sit with your team members, and you should bring name plates. All necessary materials should be prepared and photocopied ahead of time. Equipment also should be checked in advance.

Good luck. America is counting on you.

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Director of National Intelligence

June 2, 2006

General Sources

- (1) Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/npp/>
- (2) Center for Nonproliferation Studies: <http://cns.miis.edu/>
- (3) Combined Forces Command in Afghanistan: <http://www.cfc-a.centcom.mil/>
- (4) Council on Foreign Relations: <http://www.cfr.org>
- (5) Department of Defense: www.dod.gov
- (6) Department of Homeland Security: <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/>
- (7) Department of State: <http://www.state.gov/>
- (8) Federation of American Scientists: www.fas.org
- (9) Government Accountability Office: <http://www.gao.gov>
- (10) Lexis Nexis search (use guided search of print, broadcast news; congressional hearings) Available through UCLA library home page
- (11) Nuclear Threat Initiative: <http://www.nti.org/>
- (12) RAND: <http://www.rand.org/>

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Specific Issues and Reports

Port Security Background Report:

http://www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2006/RAND_RP1220.pdf

LA preparedness: <http://www.rand.org/news/press.06/01.23.html>

Model simulating 150 kiloton nuclear blast in NYC:

<http://www.atomicarchive.com/Example/ExampleStart.shtml>

National Military Strategy to Combat WMD, Department of Defense, February 2006,
at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/pdf/NMS-CWMD2006.pdf>

CIA World Fact Book (country background information):

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

GAO report on DHS efforts to prevent smuggling of nuclear materials into US:

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06389.pdf>

GAO report on DHS Homeland Security Emergency Response Efforts:

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05652.pdf>

US Military Deployments around the world:

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/global-deployments.htm>

Nuclear blast fallout calculator:

<http://www.fas.org/main/content.jsp?formAction=297&contentId=426>

Recent speech by US Amb. To Pakistan, Ryan Crocker:

<http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/pakistan/h06051902.html>

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