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SECTION 1 OF 4

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/***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****/

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SUBJ:

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DIA COMMONWEALTH INTSUM 251-95/5 SEP 95

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{U} THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED BY

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AFGHANISTAN: SITUATION UPDATE {U}

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Pages 3 and 4 are non-responsive and are not included

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AFGHANISTAN: SITUATION UPDATE {U}

AS OF 2200Z 5 SEP 95

1. (C) ISLAMIC MILITANT **TALIBAN** FORCES ENTERED THE KEY WESTERN CITY OF **HERAT** ON 5 SEPTEMBER.

2. (C) THE FALL OF **HERAT**, THE LAST GOVERNMENT STRONGHOLD IN WESTERN AFGHANISTAN, FOLLOWED THE 3 SEPTEMBER **TALIBAN** SEIZURE OF THE MAJOR GOVERNMENT AIRBASE AT SHINDAND. THE **TALIBAN** ADVANCES LIMIT PRESIDENT RABBANI'S CONTROL TO KABUL AND THE NORTHEAST AND COMPLICATE GOVERNMENT RESUPPLY. **HERAT** GOVERNOR ISMAEL KHAN, AN ALLY OF THE KABUL GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT RABBANI, REPORTEDLY FLED TO IRAN. THE CITY FELL ALMOST WITHOUT A SHOT AS ISMAEL KHAN'S SUPPORT BASE COLLAPSED. SEVERAL OF THE **HERAT** GOVERNOR'S COMMANDERS, ALIENATED BY KHAN'S USE OF TROOPS LED BY GOVERNMENT MILITARY COMMANDER MASOOD TO REPULSE **TALIBAN** ATTACKS EARLIER THIS YEAR, ARE SAID TO HAVE SWITCHED SIDES AND JOINED THE **TALIBAN** IN THE LATEST OFFENSIVE. THE **HERAT** POPULACE WAS ALIENATED BY KHAN'S FORCED MILITARY RECRUITING, AND MANY OF THE NEW CONSCRIPTS RALLIED TO THE **TALIBAN**. TROOPS OF NORTHERN WARLORD DOSTAM, A DE FACTO ALLY OF THE **TALIBAN**, REPORTEDLY ARE MOVING SOUTH AND WEST THROUGH BADGHIS PROVINCE, TO THE NORTH OF **HERAT**, AND COULD LINK UP WITH THE ADVANCING **TALIBAN**.

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3. ~~(C)~~ MASOOD PROBABLY WILL TRY TO REINFORCE COMMANDERS STILL LOYAL TO ISMAEL KHAN TO COUNTERATTACK THE **TALIBAN**. IRAN ALSO MAY ATTEMPT TO RESUPPLY REMAINING ISMAEL KHAN FORCES. NONETHELESS, THE FALL OF SHINDAND AND **HERAT** WILL GREATLY COMPLICATE ANY RELIEF EFFORTS.

4. ~~(C)~~ THE EXPECTATION OF RENEWED HOSTILITIES IN KABUL MAY SPARK A MASS EXODUS OF THE CITY'S RESIDENTS. OPPOSITION PREDICTIONS OF THE FALL OF KABUL, HOWEVER, APPEAR PREMATURE. DESPITE OPPOSITION CLAIMS THAT MASOOD FORCES ARE DEMORALIZED BY **TALIBAN** ADVANCES IN THE WEST, MASOOD'S TROOPS ARE WELL ARMED, EXPERIENCED, AND DUG IN AND WOULD BE MORE THAN A MATCH FOR THE **TALIBAN** IN A **BATTLE** FOR KABUL. ~~{DECL OADR}~~

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