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To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy of Sciences Study on Social & Behavioral Science and Improving Intelligence for National Security" <baruch@cmu.edu>

From: Lloyd Etheredge lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net

Subject: The Personality and Politics chapter: Who leads the Taliban?

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

Remarkably, America is now expanding into the ninth year of war against the Taliban without most of the US news media using the name of the Taliban's leader. And even many Americans who watch PBS News may not know his name.

This is egregious and bizarre. America is spending \$75 billion/year for intelligence services with a focus on war/peace decisions. *What is being said about this man and his motives to President Obama?* What does our government believe to be true? And on what basis?

Thus, I hope that your Committee makes a rigorous scientific audit of our nation's data systems and analysis, concerning personality and politics, inherited from the Bush-era national intelligence/DNI system. In the early days, CIA's Center for the Analysis of Personality and Political Behavior under Jerrold Post [e.g., his edited The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders (2005)] pioneered a range of informative approaches about foreign leaders. How strong and adequate a capacity does the National Academy of Sciences believe exists today?

A Highly Moral Man or a Sociopath?

Mohammed Omar, leader of the Taliban, is - according to the current Wikipedia entry - either "tall" or "short and frail." And the authenticity of different alleged photographs is in dispute. Surely, more is known (by someone): Mullah Omar was, after all, *de facto* head of state from 1996 - 2001. And it would be in the interest of well-informed decisions and policy, and democratic processes, to release CIA/DNI assessments and seek wider discussion of knowledgeable people. And to challenge - if appropriate - whatever secret briefings have been saying to Presidents.

Is Mullah Omar a messianic sociopath (Hitler or Pol Pot) or a highly moral man? I do not know, but one piece of Omar's biography, cited in the Wikipedia summary, is that he put his life on the line and began his Taliban (student) movement with thirty students from his religious school, whom he led in an armed attack to rescue two women (who had been kidnapped and raped by corrupt warlords) and to kill the corrupt warlords. The commitment to end corruption and restore an Islamic code of justice was central to the original Taliban movement. Notwithstanding the historical fact that strict moralistic, anti-corruption programs often are an early part of revolutionary movements - and the leaders can evolve to horrendous violence, dictatorship, and oppression after they gain power - there may be insights that President Obama can use.

For example, if President Obama/America is truly going to train, pay, and embed US supervising troops within, the new police and security forces of Afghanistan's major cities, there could be a settlement that the Taliban's leadership might accept - if Mullah Omar's goals are truly moral and he will accept a semi-democratic system with the survival of Islam, economic growth, *and* an end to corruption in exchange for (verifiably) keeping Al-Qaeda terrorist training camps out of Afghanistan. It is possible that, if President Obama and Mullah Omar were to meet, they might like each other and would each recognize someone that they could work with.

The DNI/CIA and a Jervis Misunderstanding?

Could I suggest to your social/behavioral science advisory panel that, to an alarming degree, the desire by Mohammed Omar and his followers to kill Americans *might* be a compound of (Jervis) misunderstandings? <1> [It would be interesting to evaluate what the DNI/CIA told President Bush and the analysis for President Obama.] The extraordinary degree of possible misperception on the other side should not be compounded by simple media labels (e.g., "insurgent") or stereotypes that obscure some of the complex personality pieces that President Obama - with so much in motion - might be able to use.

Lloyd Etheredge

<1> If it is a misunderstanding, should not the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy have much greater resources, to make the case loudly and effectively - and with authentic anger that communicates, rather than public rhetoric?

Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge - Fellow, World Academy of Art & Science
Director, Government Learning Project
Policy Sciences Center Inc.
127 Wall St., Room 322 - Box 208215
New Haven, CT 06520-8215
URL: www.policyscience.net
301-365-5241 (v); lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net;
lloyd.etheredge@aya.yale.edu (email)