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National  
Intelligence  
Estimate

[Redacted] Afghanistan: Implications  
of a Taliban "Victory"

NEB, NIE 2001-06H



0515

NIE 2001-06H  
May 2001



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*NIE 2001-06H*

[redacted] Afghanistan: Implications  
of a Taliban "Victory"

This Estimate was approved for publication by the National Foreign Intelligence Board under the authority of the Director of Central Intelligence.

[redacted]

[redacted]

*May 2001*

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[redacted] **Scope Note**

[redacted] **Afghanistan: Implications  
of a Taliban "Victory"**

[redacted] This Estimate assesses the implications of the Taliban becoming the de facto ruler of Afghanistan over the next five years. The Estimate assumes that the Taliban's momentum on the battlefield will continue and that during 2001 the Afghan civil war will reach a point that most observers would characterize as a Taliban military "victory," with no negotiated settlement. The postulated scenario does not assume the end of all armed resistance by the Northern Alliance led by Ahmed Shah Masood, but it does assume that Masood will either be confined to his stronghold in the Panjshir Valley or leave the country and that neither he nor any other anti-Taliban element will play a wider role in governing Afghanistan. The purpose of the Estimate is not to forecast near-term military events in Afghanistan, although boxes address this subject and the status of international efforts to mediate a settlement.



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## [REDACTED] Key Judgments

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### [REDACTED] Afghanistan: Implications of a Taliban "Victory"

[REDACTED] After a military "victory," the Taliban will remain a largely insular movement whose top priority will be to consolidate its power and impose its version of Islam within Afghanistan while seeking diplomatic recognition as the country's sole legitimate government.

[REDACTED]

- Demobilized Taliban fighters will be available for mercenary service in neighboring states and Muslim conflicts.
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] A Taliban "victory" will not prompt the Taliban to expel foreign extremists who use Afghanistan as a training and staging area. The Taliban is ideologically sympathetic to Islamic insurgents, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Kashmiris, and Chechens.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The Taliban will continue to resist pressure to force Usama Bin Ladin from Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

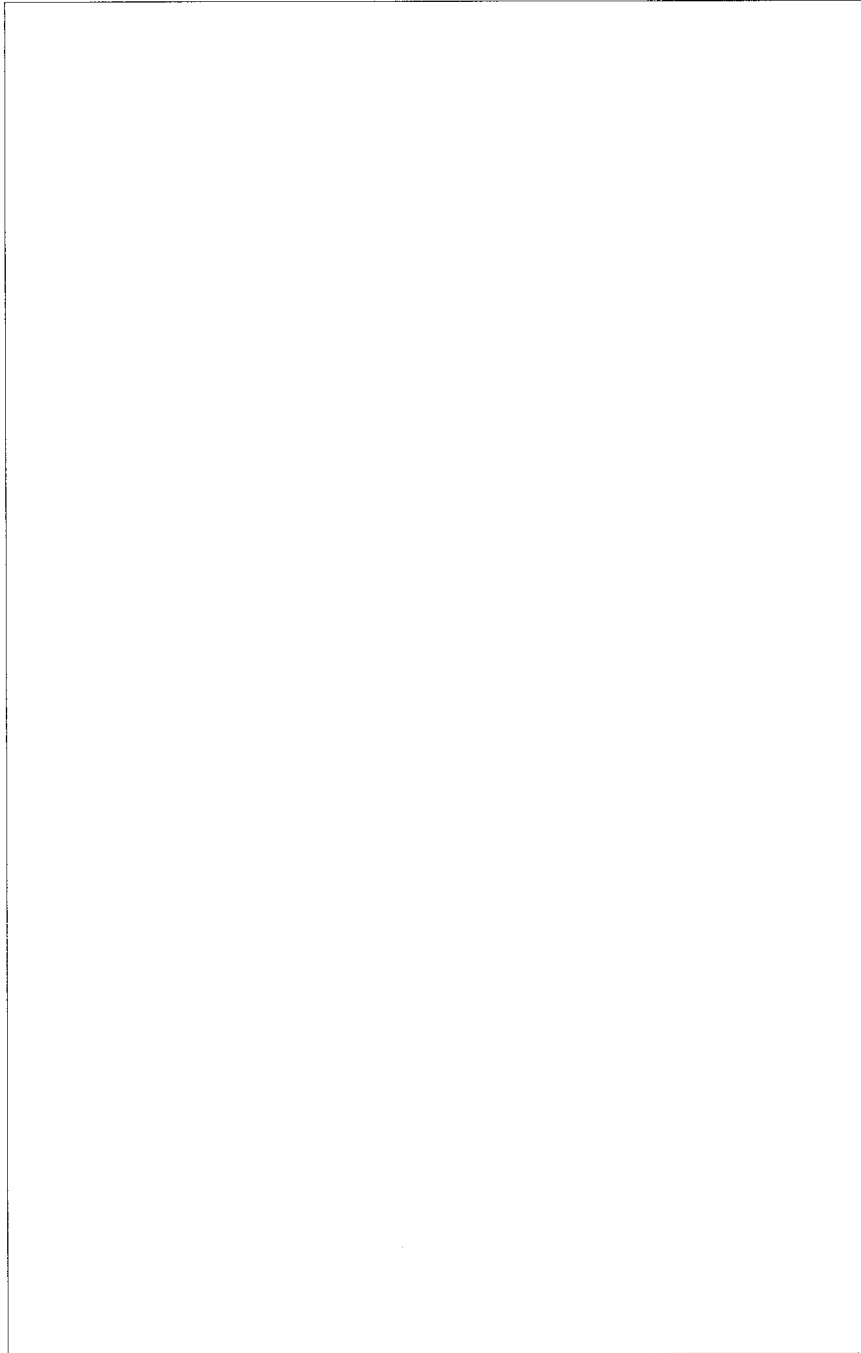
- An end to the war, however, will diminish the relative value of Bin Ladin's military assistance, compared to the value of international recognition. In the near term, therefore, Taliban officials—hopeful that a victory will attract recognition and development funding—may feel less reliant on Bin Ladin.
- If such outside help does not materialize, Taliban officials may grow even closer to Bin Ladin, who makes financial and other contributions to Afghanistan's civilian infrastructure.

[REDACTED] The paramount role of Taliban leader Mullah Omar will be a major impediment to changes in the regime's policies.

- Military "victory" will tend to strengthen Omar's hold on power in the near term, although it will eventually widen existing rifts within the leadership.

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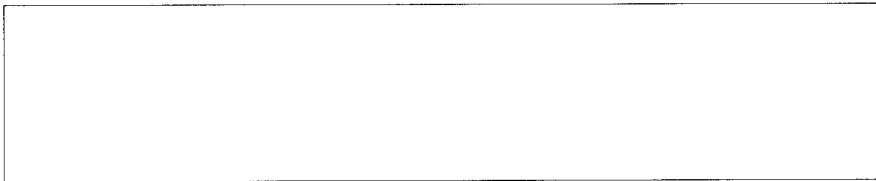
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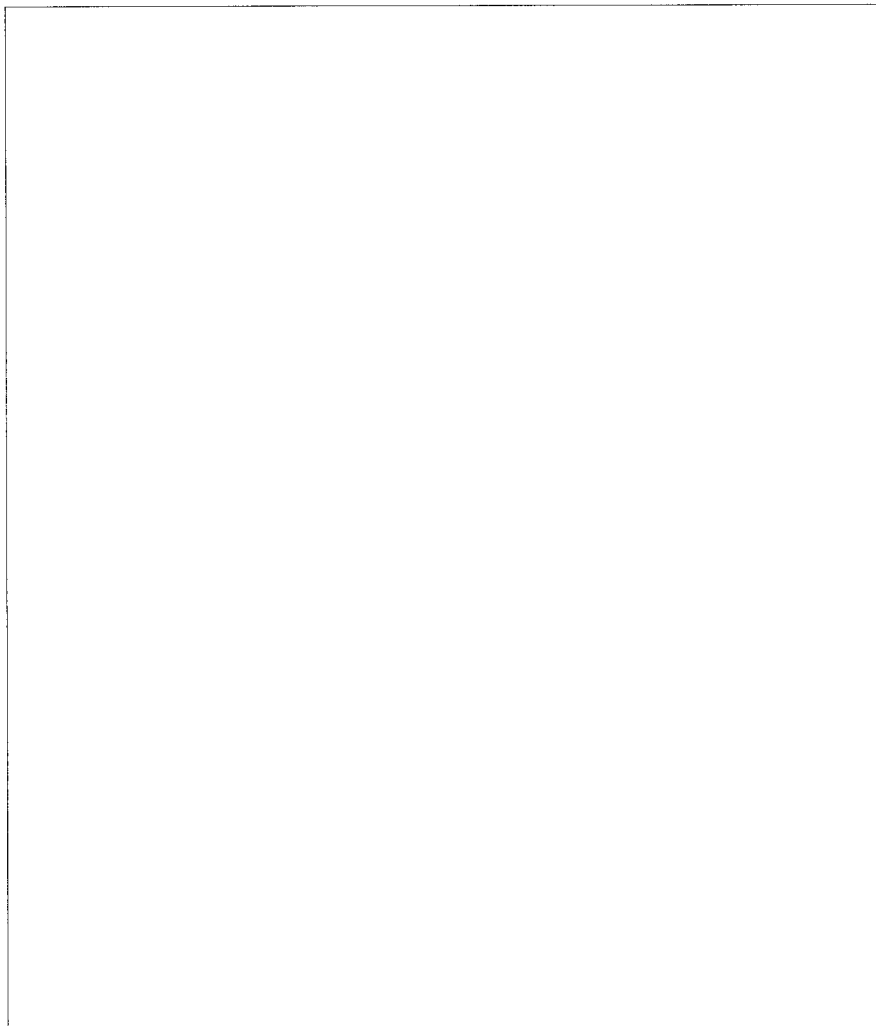
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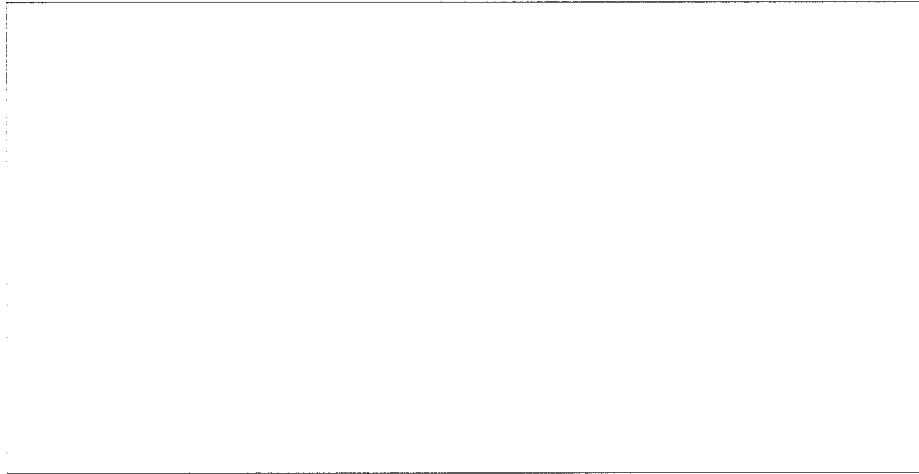
- Anti-Americanism is not a basic component of Afghan culture, but Taliban leaders—who blame Washington for abandoning Afghanistan after the Soviets withdrew in 1989 and resent the US cruise missile attack in 1998 and US-Russian cooperation on UN Security Council Resolution 1333—are increasingly adopting the radical rhetoric and political agenda of transnational elements, such as Bin Ladin, who have championed their cause.



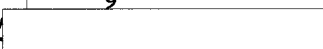
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## Discussion

### Priorities for a "Victorious" Taliban

The Taliban leadership is consumed with achieving military victory and fulfilling a messianic mission to bring what it regards as a more authentic Islam to all Afghans.

### The Desire for International Recognition

A victory would lead the Taliban to step up its campaign for international recognition to legitimize the group's claim as the sole government of Afghanistan. The group already believes it "deserves" recognition because it controls the vast majority of the country.

### Ethnic Pashtun Dominance

The chauvinistically Pashtun Taliban will be unwilling to share power with other ethnic groups, apart from a token minister or two. The current Taliban leadership is overwhelmingly Pashtun.

Several factors will lead the Taliban to focus on consolidating its power and imposing its ideology on Afghanistan.

### Challenges to Internal Control

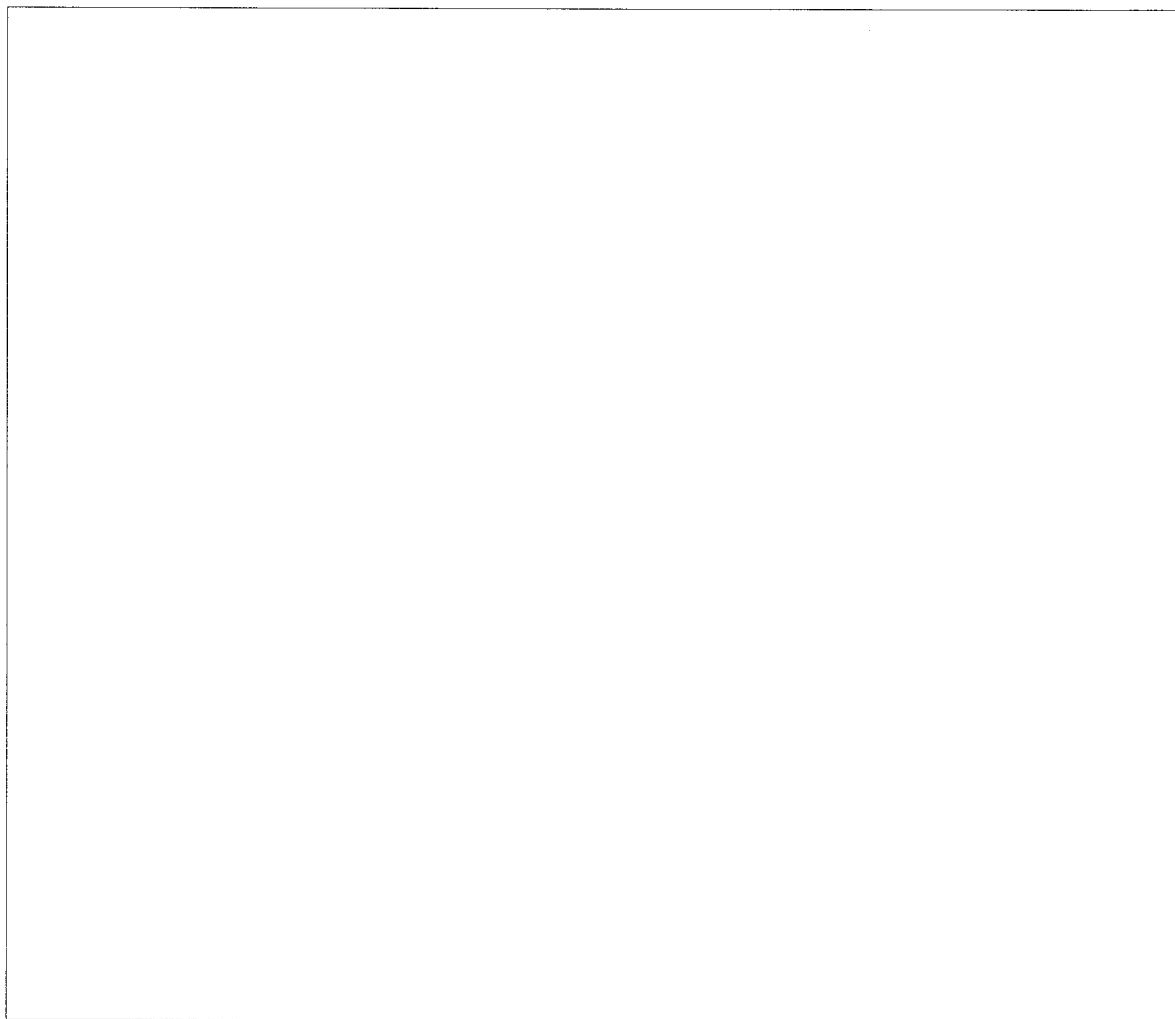
### The Taliban's Version of *Shar'ia* Law

The Taliban believes it has a divine mandate to institute a "proper" Islamic government and rid the country of warlordism.

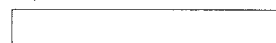
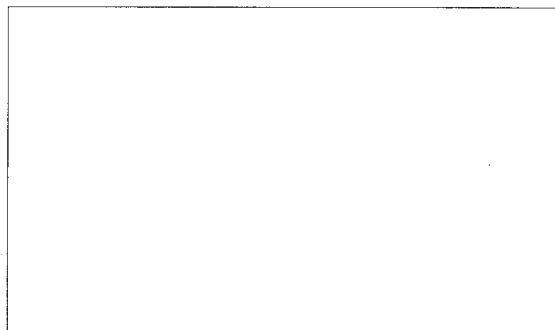
- Upon victory Taliban officials are likely to redeploy fighters to try to enforce and maintain their edicts, especially in areas that are newly under their control.

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- No Afghan government has effectively controlled most of the countryside, however, even under the monarchical rule that ended in the early 1970s.

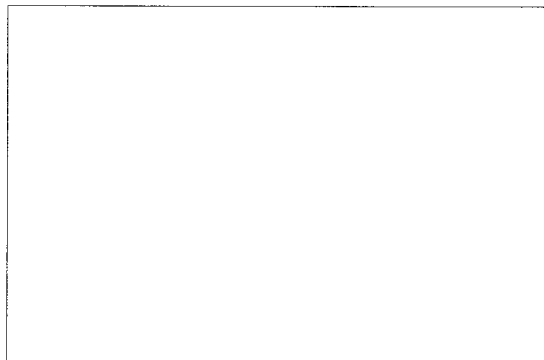
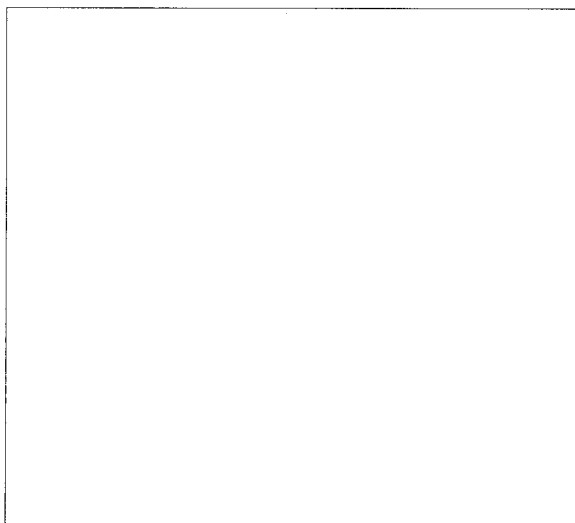
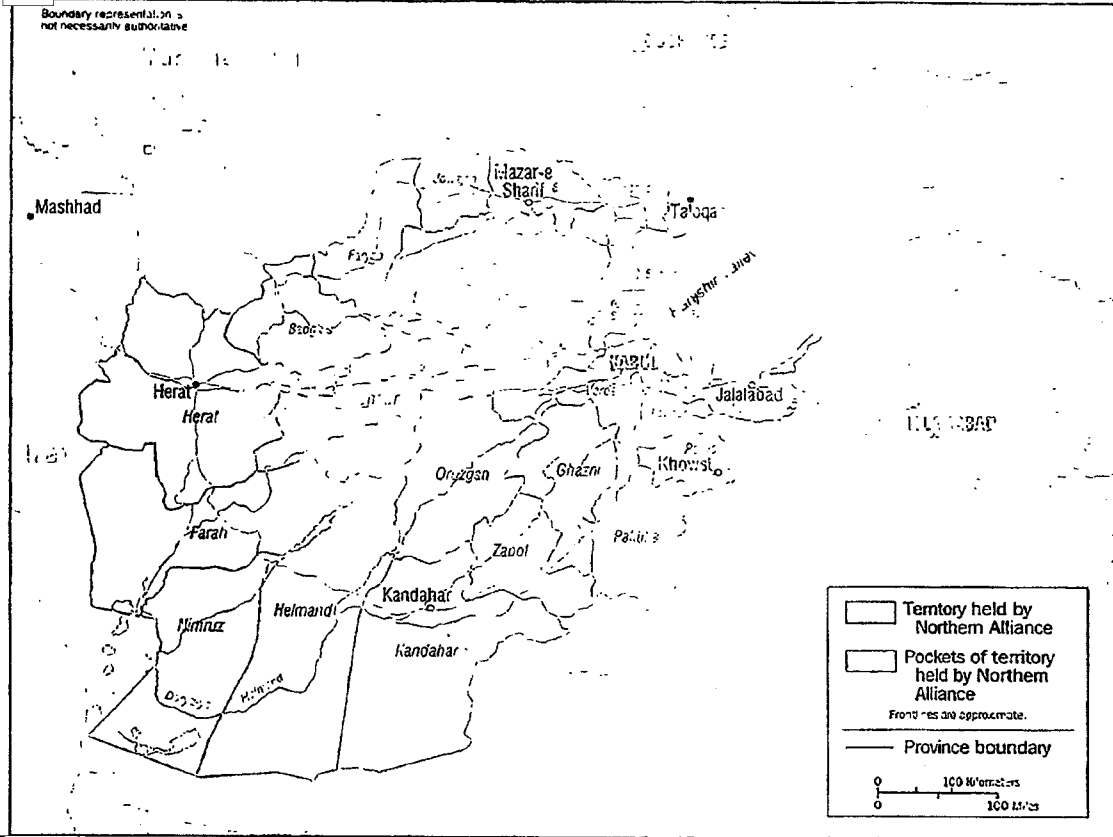


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### Afghanistan: Frontlines as of Early May 2001

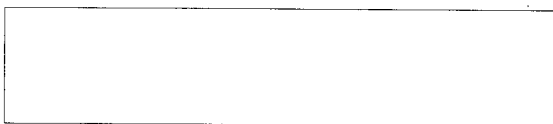
Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative



Pashtun tribes' historic inability to unite, however, will keep a viable alternative Pashtun group from forming.

[Redacted]

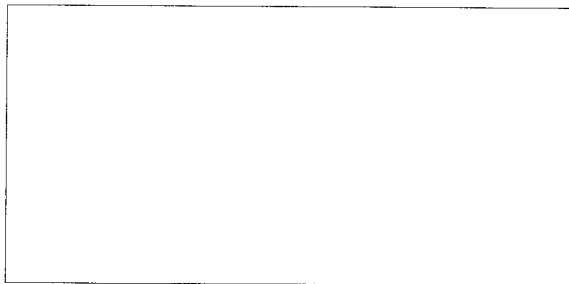
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█ If it feels secure in its victory, the Taliban may make at least limited attempts to moderate its strict interpretation of *Shar'ia* law—especially if encouraged to do so by international aid or recognition, in addition to the need to preclude domestic opposition. Some evidence suggests that from time to time the Taliban has moderated its rigid social policies.

- In early September 1998, aid workers reported signs of relaxation of Taliban strictures, such as women at work and girls in schools, in Kandahar—the main stronghold of the movement—and claimed that the more secure the Taliban feels about its control of the country, the more freedom it has been granting citizens, according to press reports.
- In July 2000, however—when faced with the prospect of new UN sanctions—the Taliban banned the employment of Afghan women in foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

#### █ Terrorists Likely To Remain

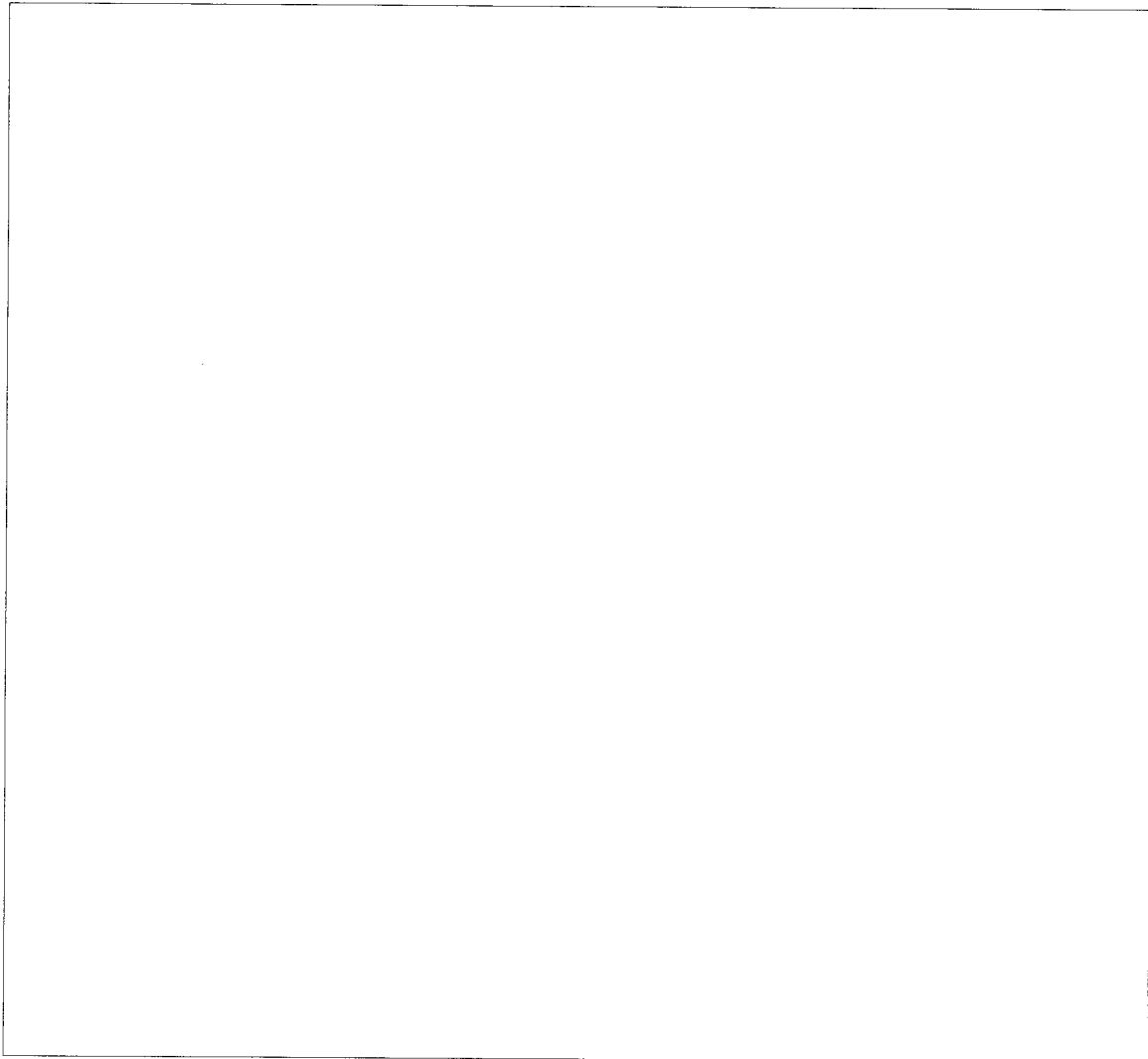


█ An end to the civil war would diminish the Taliban's need for Bin Ladin's military assistance. In the near term, therefore, Taliban officials—hopeful that a victory will attract recognition and development funding—may feel less reliant on Bin Ladin.

- Taliban officials might grow even closer to Bin Ladin, however, if they believed the international community was unlikely to provide the Taliban with diplomatic recognition and reconstruction aid.
- Bin Ladin already makes contributions to Afghanistan's devastated infrastructure, for which the Taliban takes credit.

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[redacted] Bin Ladin's ability to remain in Afghanistan rests in large part on his close relationship with Mullah Omar. Omar appears to have been influenced by Bin Ladin's thinking.

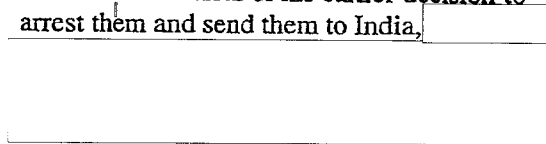


since 1996, Omar has made several



statements that the United States should withdraw its forces from Saudi Arabia.

- Omar's decision to grant asylum to the hijackers of the India Air flight in December 1999 was a reversal of his earlier decision to arrest them and send them to India.



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*The Taliban's Path to Power*

*The Taliban emerged in late 1994 as a movement of zealous religious school students motivated initially by the desire to cleanse rampant lawlessness from Afghanistan's second-largest city, Kandahar. Victories over local warlords quickly bolstered the Taliban's confidence and propelled its ambitions well beyond its originally limited objectives.*

*The Taliban's goal of ruling the entire country came within reach when it captured Kabul in September 1996. By then, the Taliban, encountering minimal armed opposition, had extended its presence over large areas of the country outside the ethnically Pashtun south. The Taliban came close to achieving countrywide ascendance with the capture of Mazar-e Sharif in 1998 and Taloqan in 2000.*

*The Taliban's version of Islam is a mixture of Koranic principles and Pashtunwali, or Code of the Pashtuns. It is based on an extreme form of the Deobandi school of Islam, which Afghan refugees—many of whom would later found the Taliban—learned in refugee camps in Pakistan in the 1980s and early 1990s. Deobandism does have a history in Afghanistan but was not prevalent at the time of the rise of the group in 1994.*

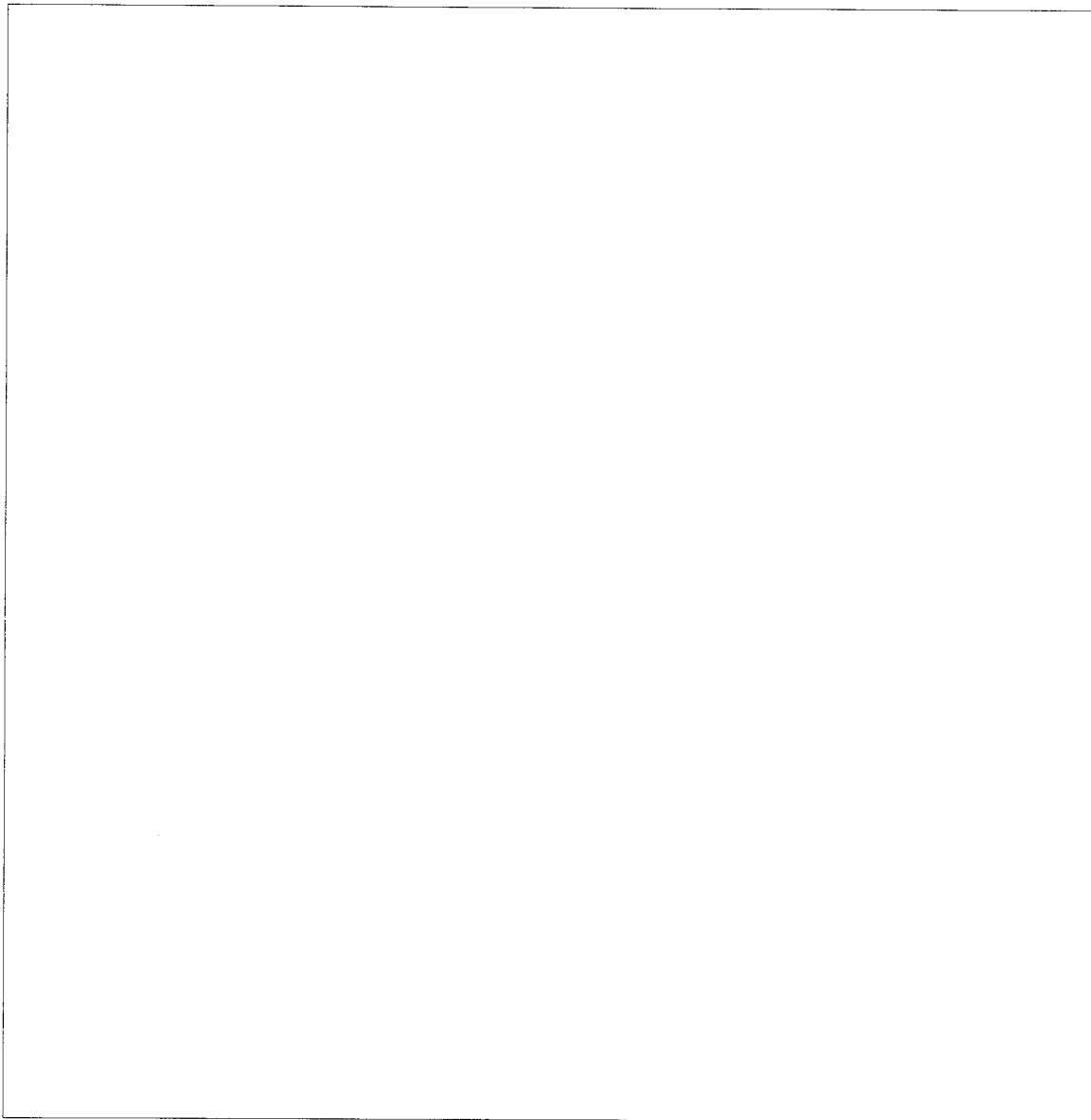
Omar's support for Bin Ladin would soften if Bin Ladin tried to exert increased influence over Afghan affairs.

As long as Bin Ladin is in Afghanistan, the Taliban will be reluctant to enforce significant restrictions on him—especially if the group continues to rely on him for military or reconstruction aid. The Taliban will continue to perceive that Bin Ladin's public support for the group gives the Taliban stature in the Muslim world.

- During an interview in 1998, Bin Ladin claimed that "we support the Taliban, and we consider ourselves part of them. Our blood is mixed with the blood of our Afghan brothers. For us, there is only one government in Afghanistan. It is the Taliban government."

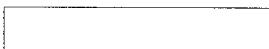
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[redacted] A Taliban "victory" would not prompt the Taliban to expel other foreign extremists who use Afghanistan as a training/staging area on a large scale. The Taliban is sympathetic to several Islamic insurgent groups, such as the Kashmiris, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and the Chechens. In addition, many

Arabs who came to Afghanistan have acquired land, married Afghan wives, and become fully integrated into Afghan society.



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- In February 1999, the Taliban claimed it did not know the whereabouts of Bin Ladin to publicly distance itself from the terrorist and avoid what the group perceived as impending US airstrikes.

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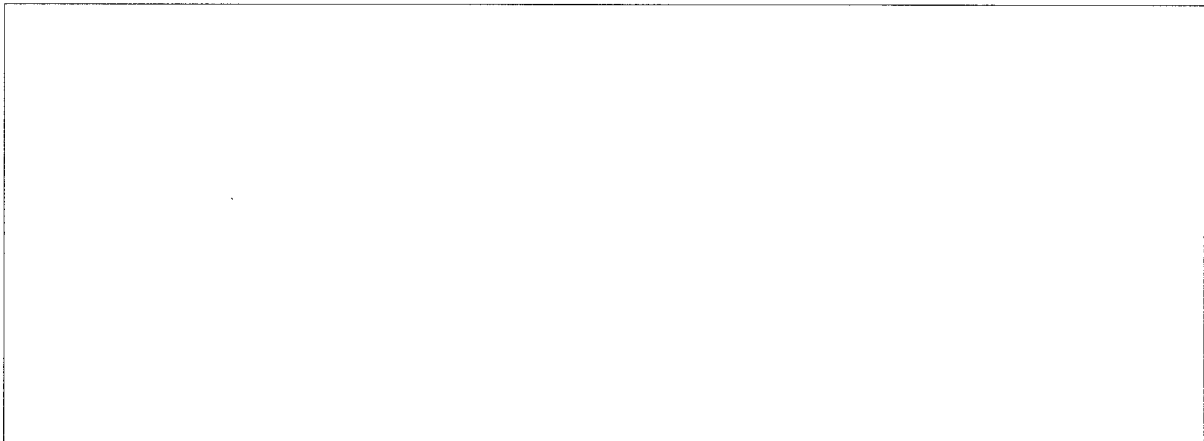
 *Bin Ladin's Aid to the Taliban*







 *Bin Ladin also planned to build a new 1,000-student religious school with dormitories and a 50-bed clinic and a large mosque north of Kabul.*



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**[redacted] Terrorism Linked to Taliban-Ruled Afghanistan**

**[redacted] Suspects in several major terrorist incidents have been trained in, directed from, or given safe haven in Afghanistan since the Taliban gained control of most of the country in 1996.**



*from the Taliban. The Taliban did not arrest the hijackers, [redacted]*

- *According to press reports, suspects in the attack on the USS Cole also trained in Afghanistan.*

- *The hijacking of India Air Flight 814 in late December 1999 also underscored the ties between Kashmiri militants and Afghanistan. The hijackers ordered the aircraft to Afghanistan, almost certainly expecting to receive sympathetic treatment*

*(continued)*



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[redacted] *Terrorism Linked to Taliban-Ruled  
Afghanistan (continued)*

- *Last year, Israeli authorities announced the arrest of a Palestinian who went to Afghanistan for support and training and returned to establish terrorist cells in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.*

[redacted]

[redacted]

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***[redacted] Afghanistan: Host to Terrorists  
Without the Taliban***

*[redacted] Afghanistan's role as a terrorist safe haven is not solely a product of the Taliban. Afghanistan's use as a pan-Islamic training ground for indoctrination and instruction predates the Taliban's existence. Muslims from around the world, some of whom later joined terrorist groups, came to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets in the 1980s.*

*[redacted] The Taliban will continue to face periodic bouts of financial difficulties and may have to prioritize its spending as it has in the past.*

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*The Humanitarian Crisis*

*Poor food production, inadequate infrastructure, and the lack of social welfare assistance render Afghans vulnerable to famine and displacement. This past year, the shifting frontlines of war combined with the worst drought in 30 years caused a huge flow of refugees. The Taliban has offered little or no assistance, with the burden left to international aid organizations.*

- *An estimated 2.6 million refugees now live outside Afghanistan's borders in Iran and Pakistan, according to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). Another 500,000 Afghans are internally displaced. Pakistan has absorbed 200,000 refugees since September 2000. According to press reports, hundreds of Afghans seeking food and shelter have died from starvation and exposure.*
  - *According to UN statistics, Afghanistan's low food production, mainly grain, is due primarily to the long-term loss of nearly 25 percent of cultivated area—nearly*
- *1 million hectares—taken out of production over the past 40 years because of warfare, landmines, and land abandonment. Moreover, average yields—about 1 metric ton (mt) per hectare compared to a world average of 2.9 mt per hectare—are constrained by the lack of fertilizer, shortages of irrigation water, and a scarcity of high-yielding wheat varieties.*
  - *According to UN estimates, more than 3 million people inside Afghanistan will require emergency food aid this summer.*
  - *Major pockets of displaced persons as of early 2001 include the northeastern region around Taloqan—as well as the Tajik-Afghan border—with roughly 100,000; the northern region around Mazar-e Sharif, 100,000; the central region around Bamian, 50,000; the western region around Herat, 100,000; and the southern region around Kandahar with 70,000, mainly Kochi nomads.*

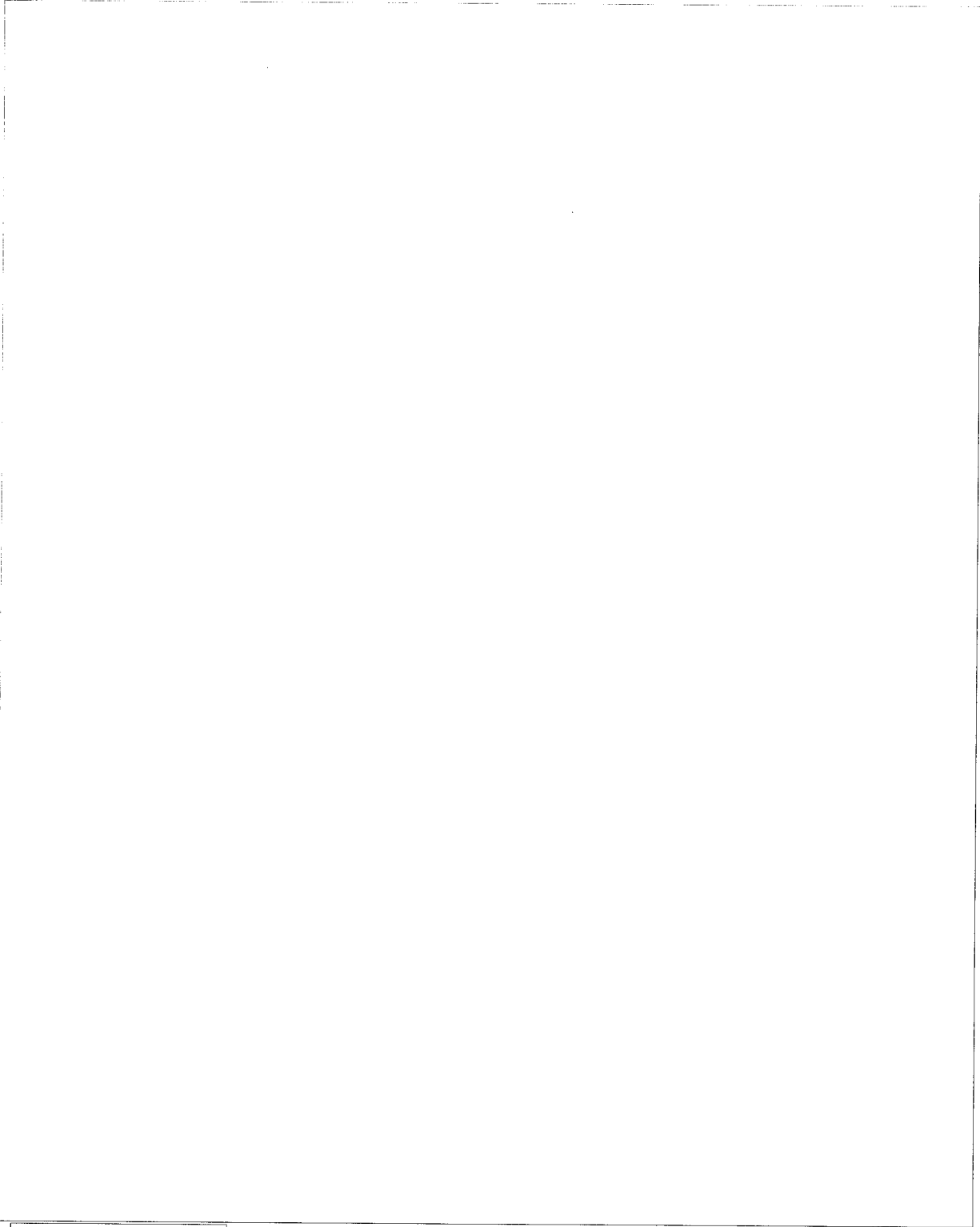
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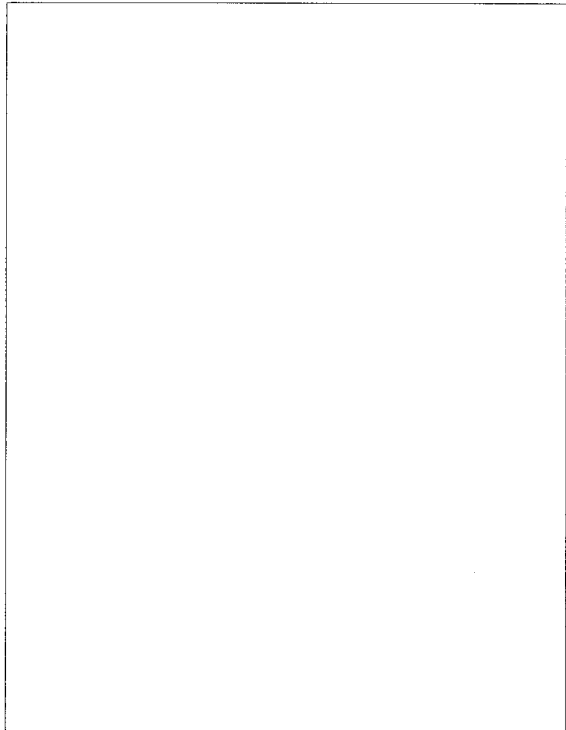
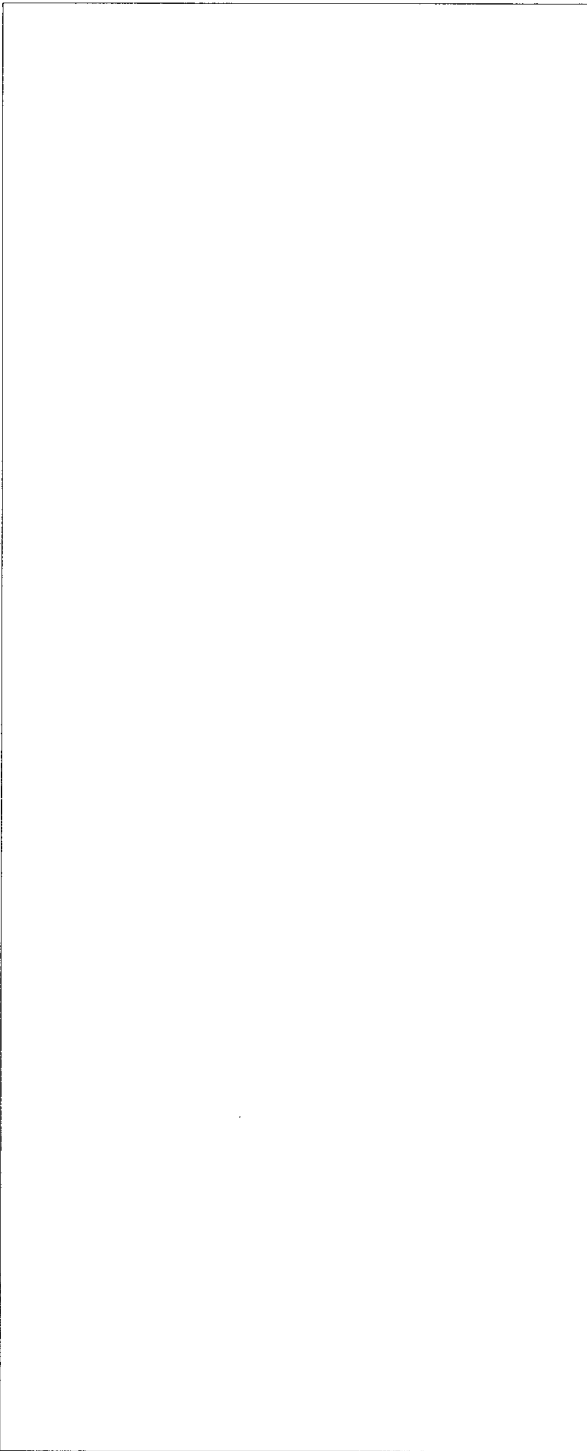


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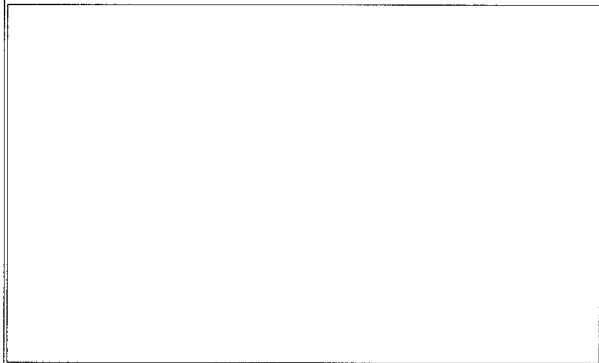
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To the extent the Taliban becomes more secure, the pragmatists' views may increasingly influence the group's policies, although without a change in leadership any policy changes are likely to be incremental.



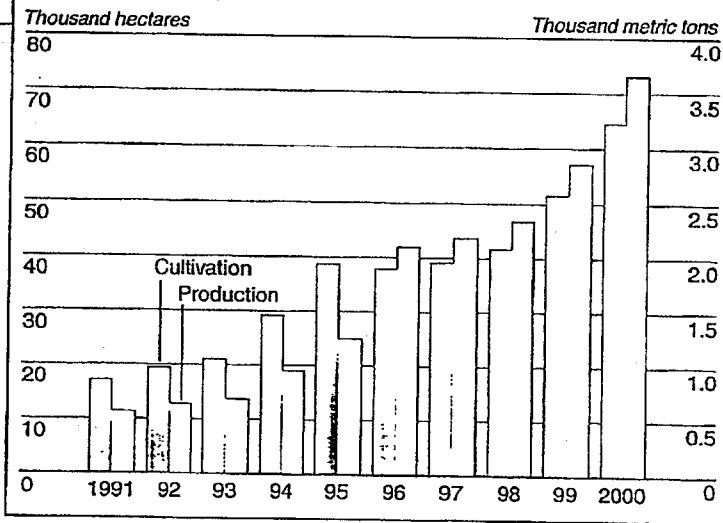
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### Opium Poppy Growing Areas in Afghanistan



#### Afghanistan: Opium Cultivation and Production, 1991 to 2000



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[redacted] **Afghanistan's Narcotics Industry**

[redacted]

- *Afghanistan became the world's leading illicit opium producer in 1998, and the upward trend continued in 2000 with Afghanistan supplying an estimated 72 percent of the world's illicit opium. Poppy cultivation increased 25 percent to 64,510 hectares and opium production rose by another 28 percent to 3,656 metric tons, further solidifying Afghanistan as the primary source of opiates to Europe, Central Asia, and Russia.*

[redacted]

- *Over the past several years, Afghan producers have switched from supplying mainly morphine base to Turkish distributors to producing and supplying more heroin to international markets.*

[redacted]

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[redacted] **Perceptions of the United States**

[redacted]

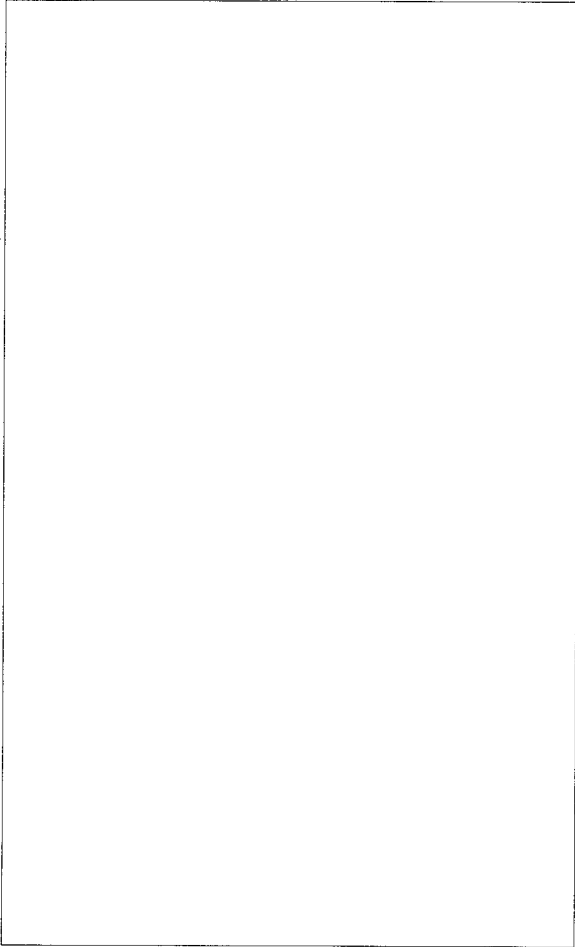
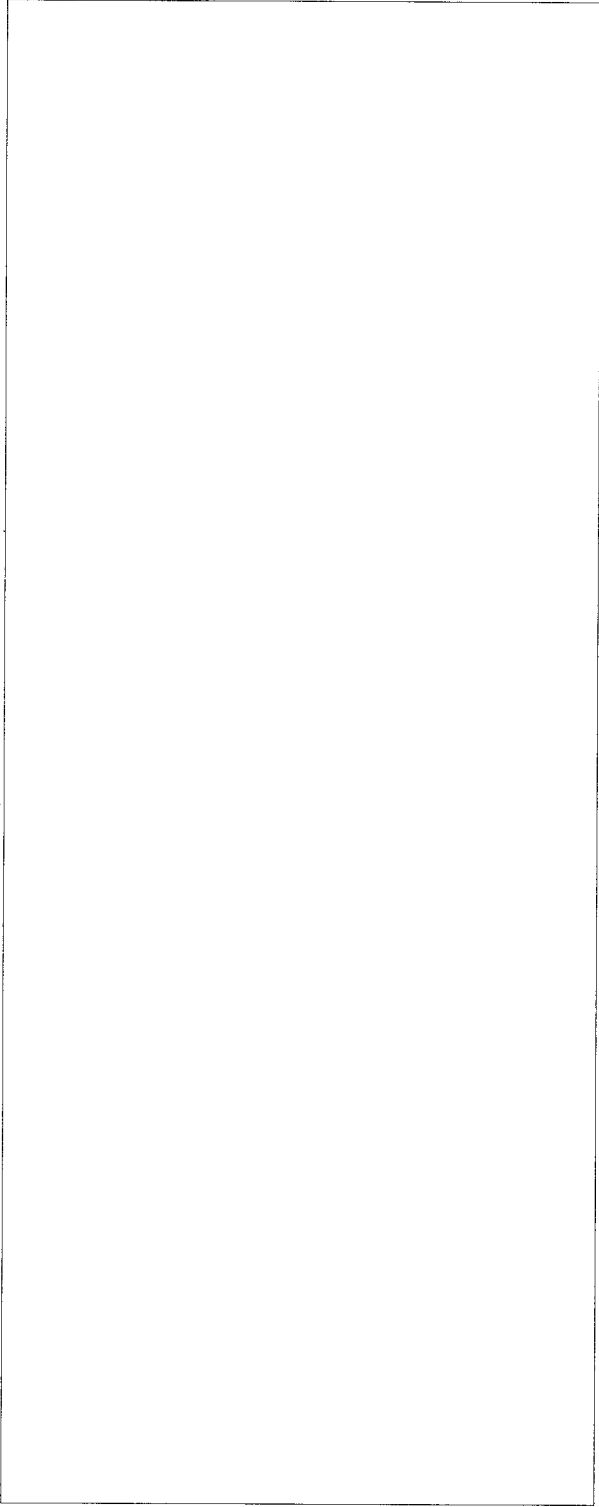
Anti-Americanism is not a basic component of Afghan culture. It is common for Afghans—including Taliban members—to express appreciation for the help the United States provided them during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This appreciation is, however, usually accompanied by expressions of confusion over why the United States "abandoned" them after the Soviets withdrew, resentment over the 1998 US cruise missile attack, and US-Russian cooperation on UN sanctions Resolution 1333. The Taliban has

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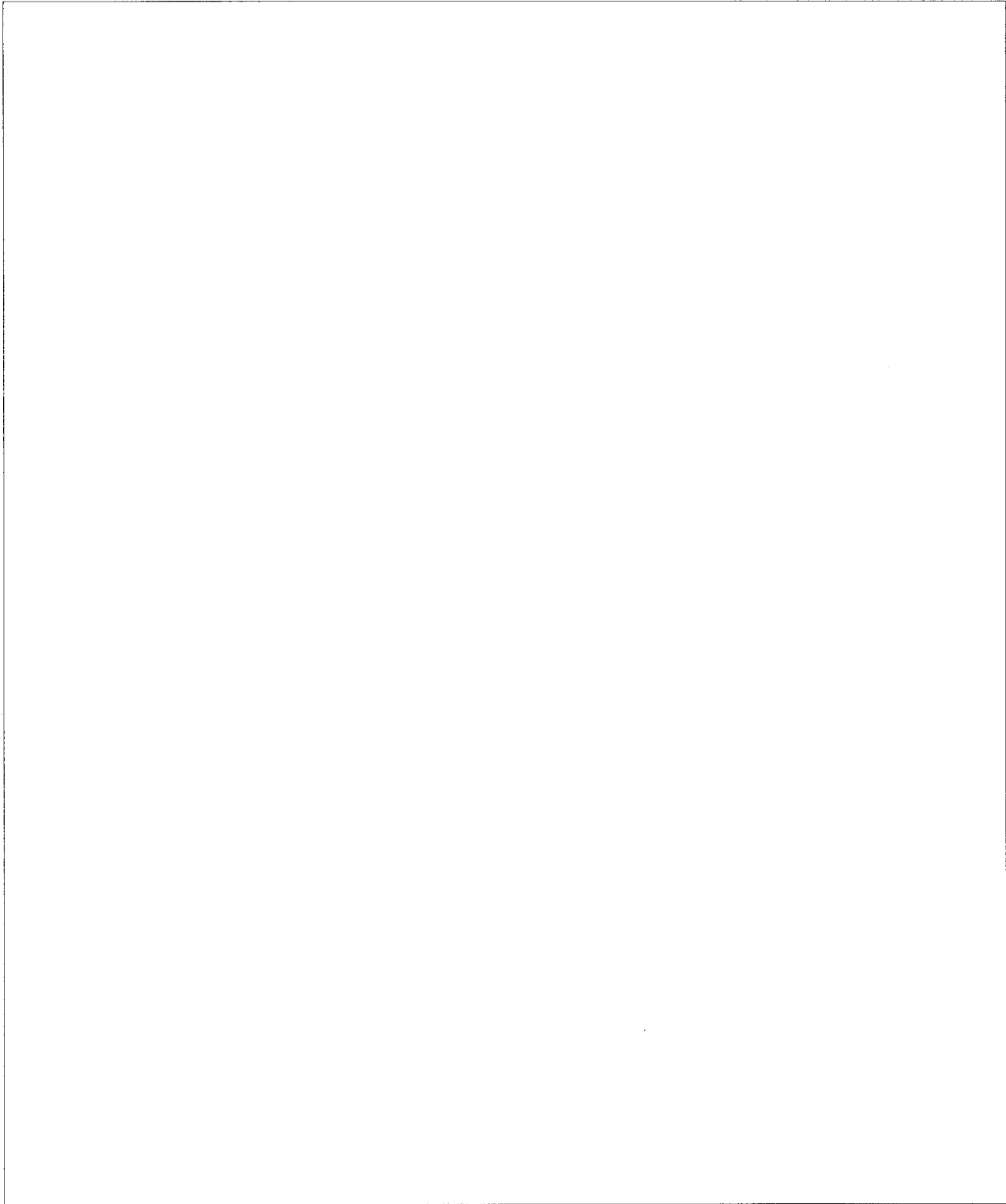
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capitalized on this confusion to foment anti-American sentiment—but in reaction to specific US and Western policies viewed as hostile toward Afghanistan.

- The President of the United States was burned in effigy at protests the Taliban organized in major Afghan cities after UN sanctions went into effect in late 1999.
  - Mullah Omar—probably under the influence of Bin Ladin—has resorted to anti-US rhetoric in criticizing US-led actions, such as UN sanctions, and has accused the United States of anti-Muslim behavior.
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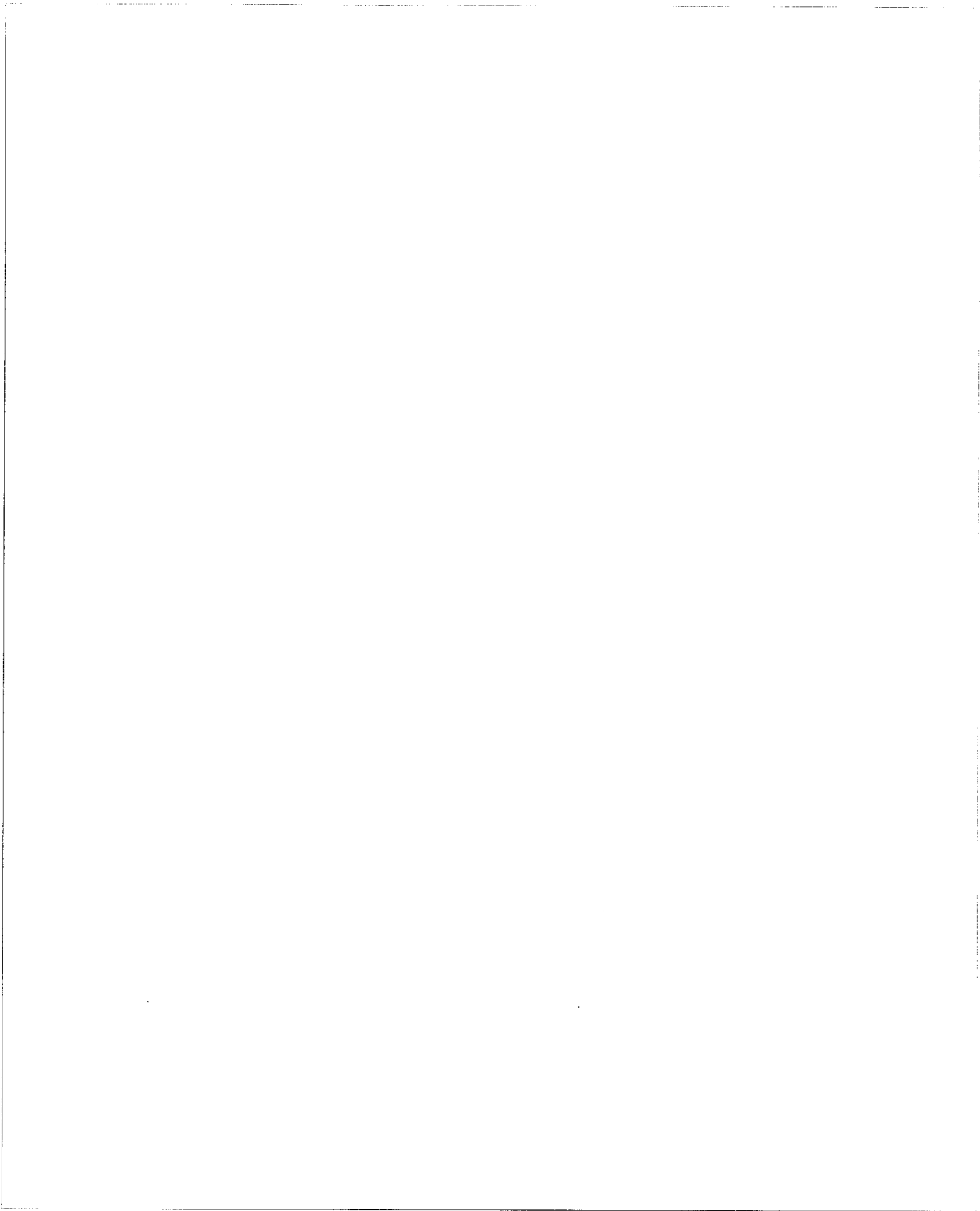
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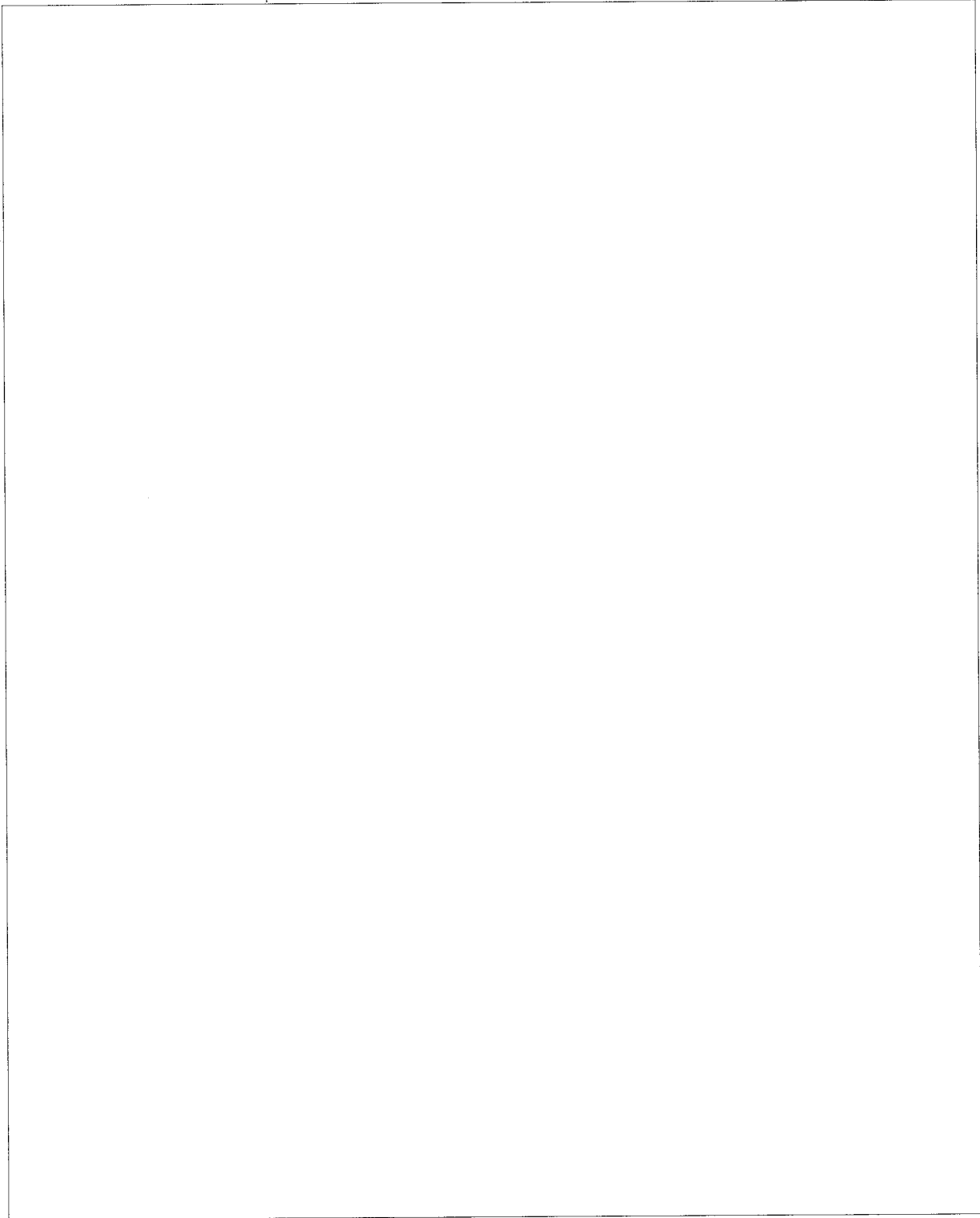


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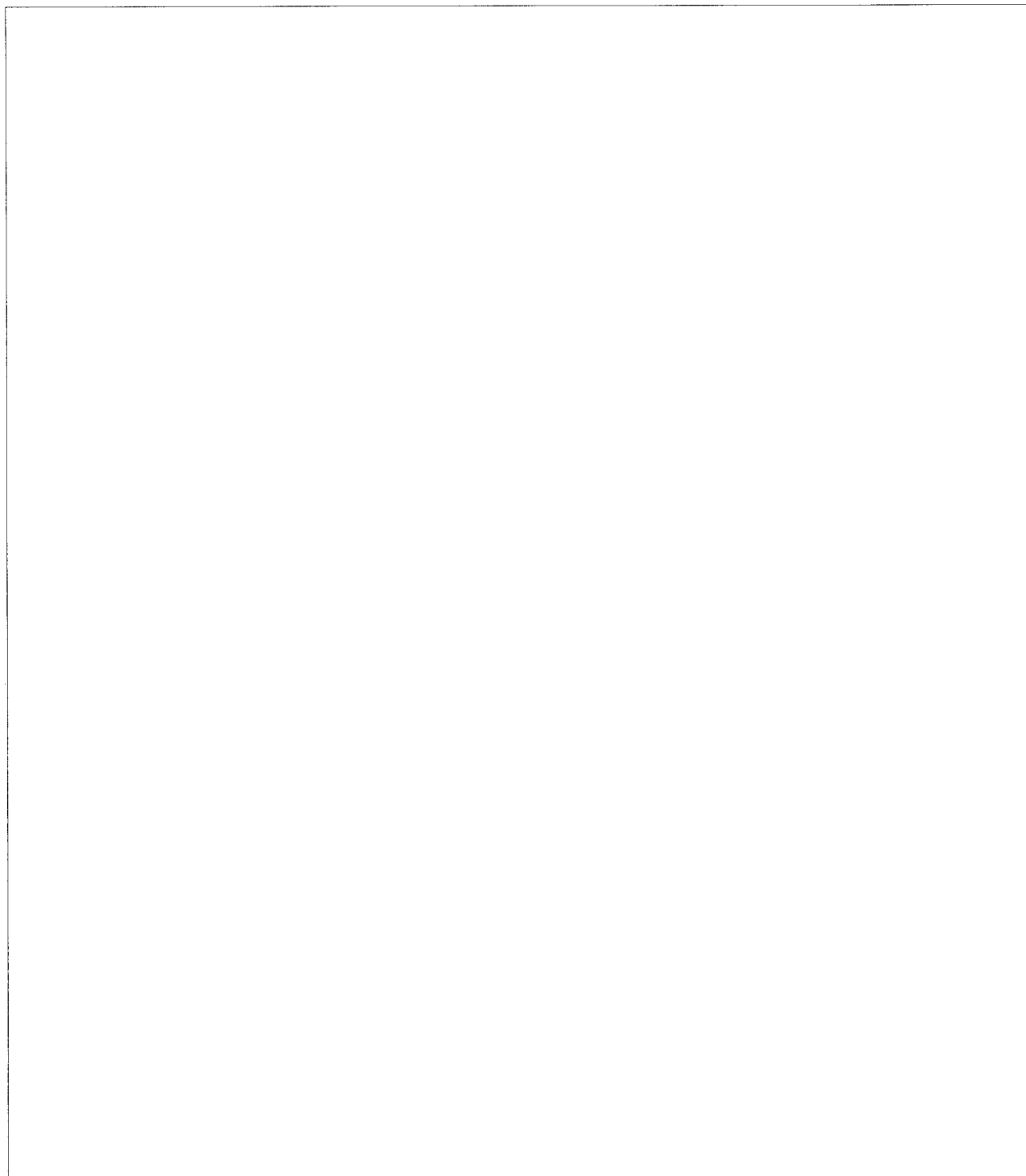
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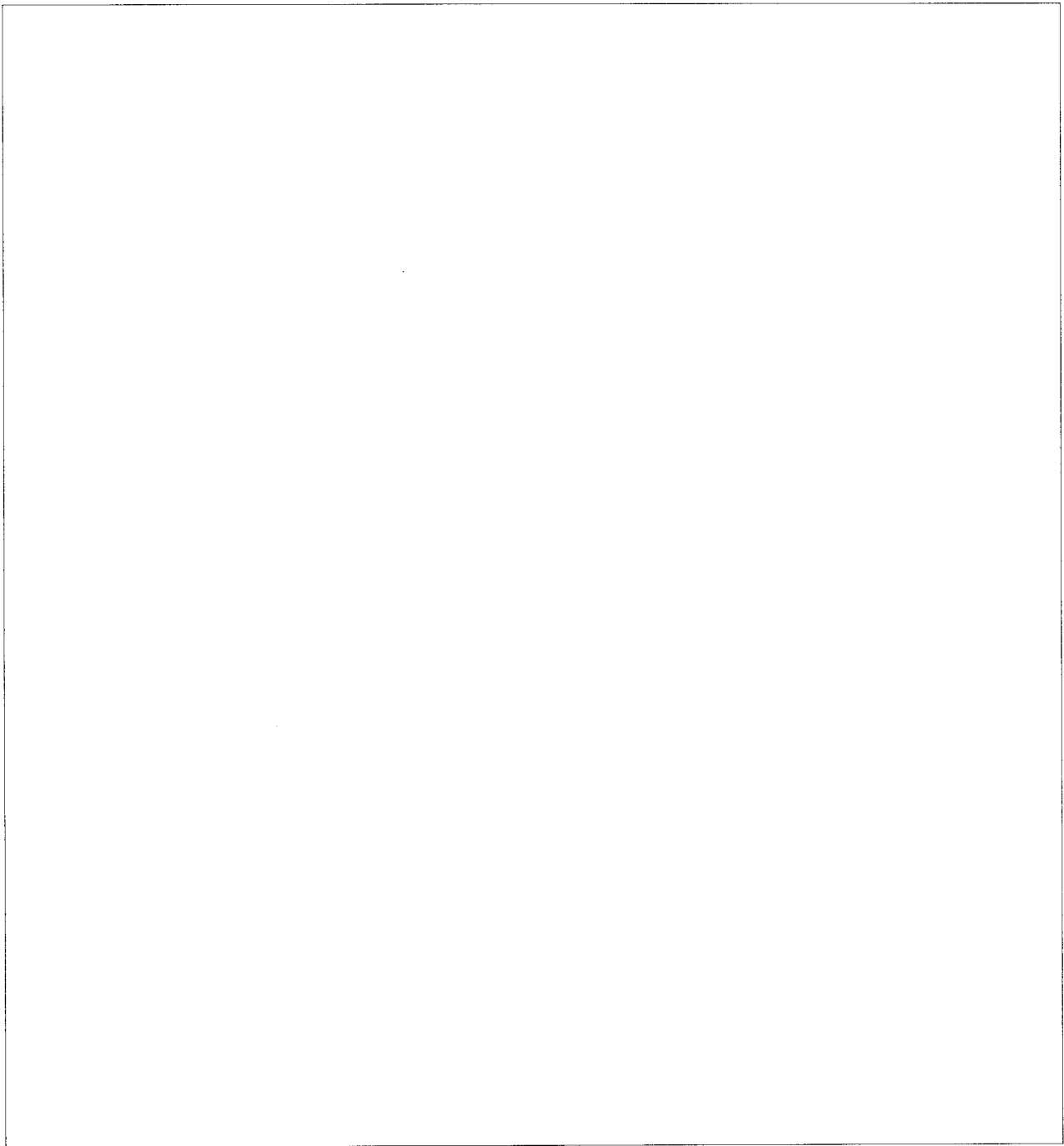
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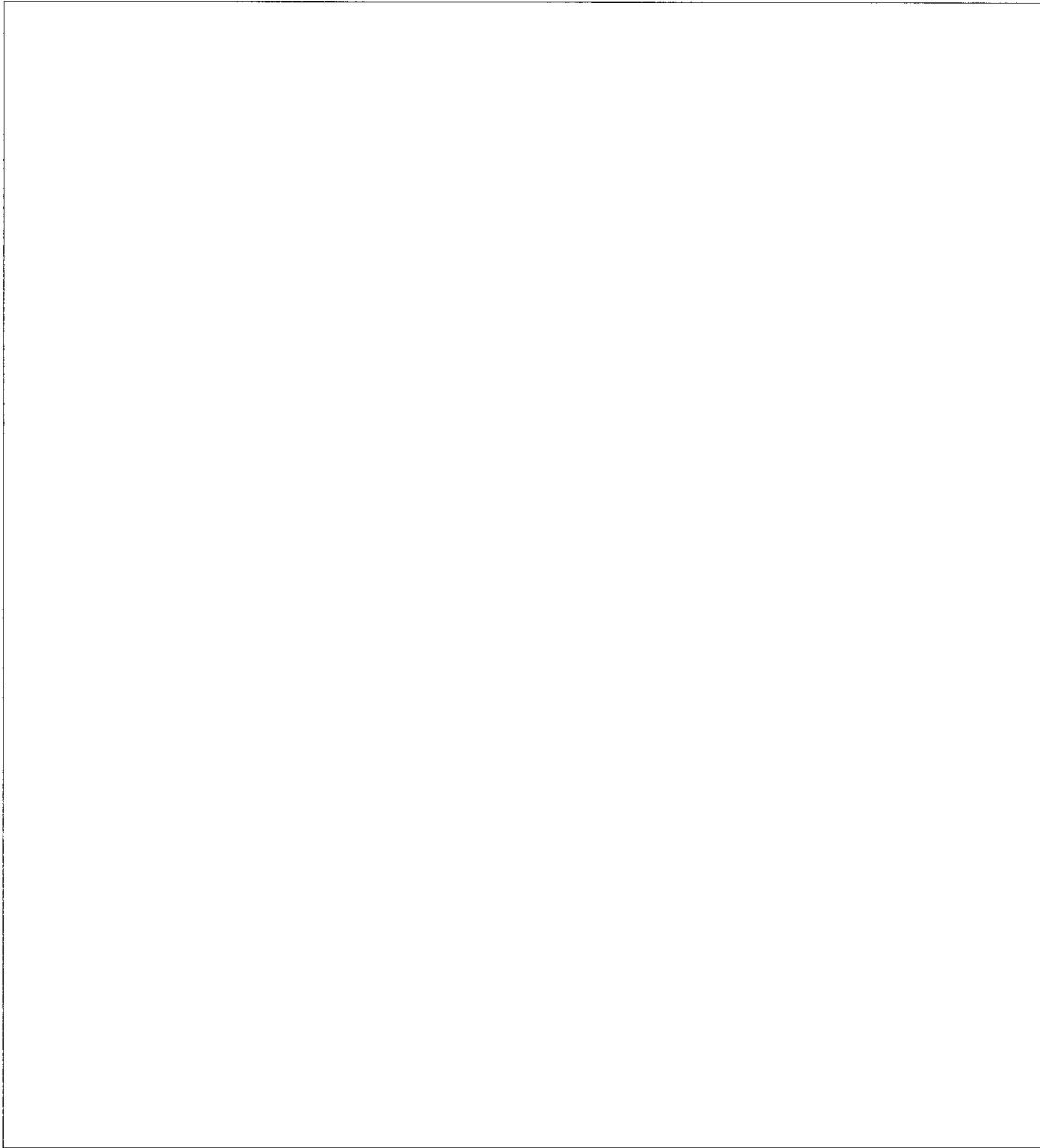
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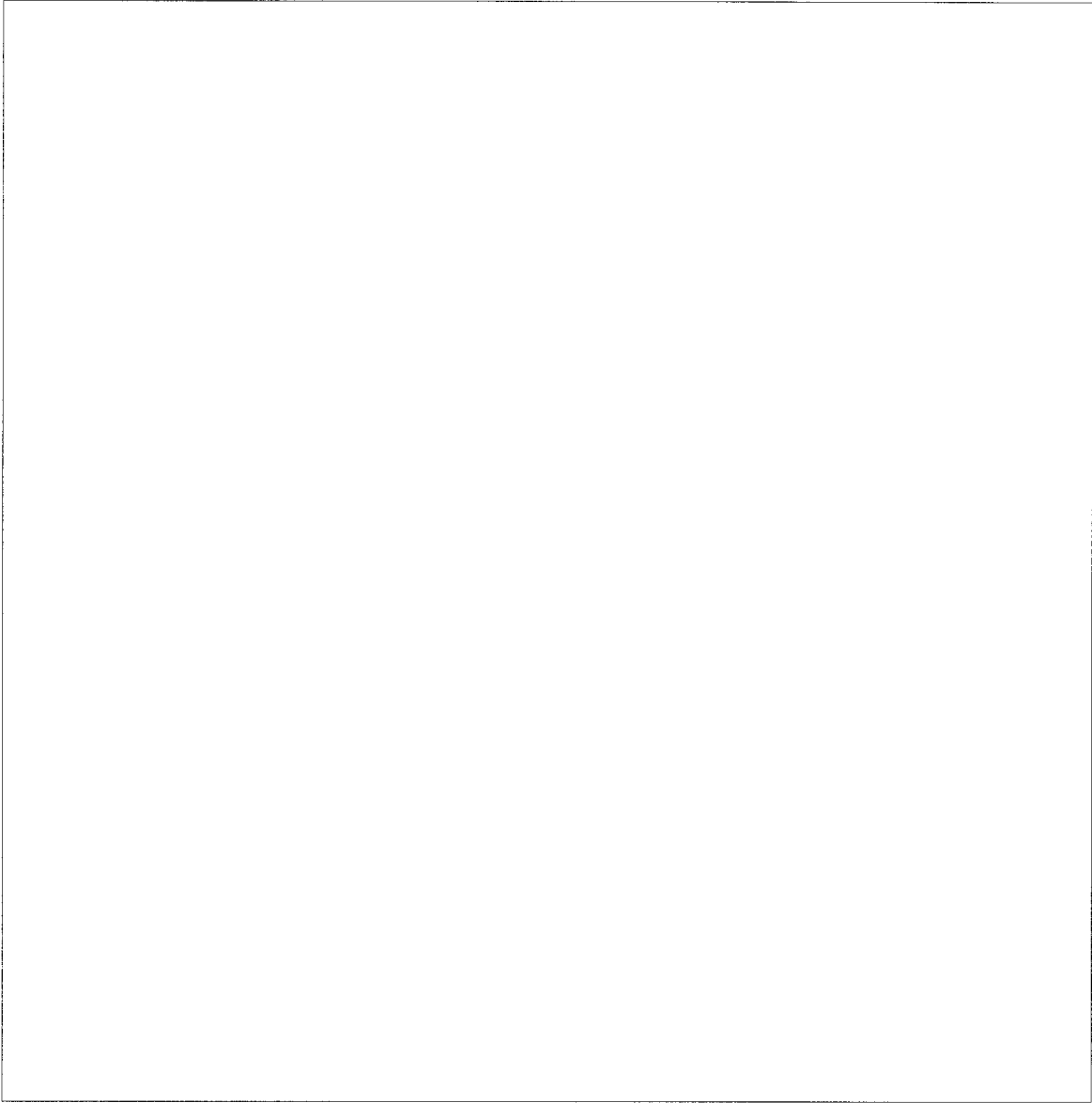
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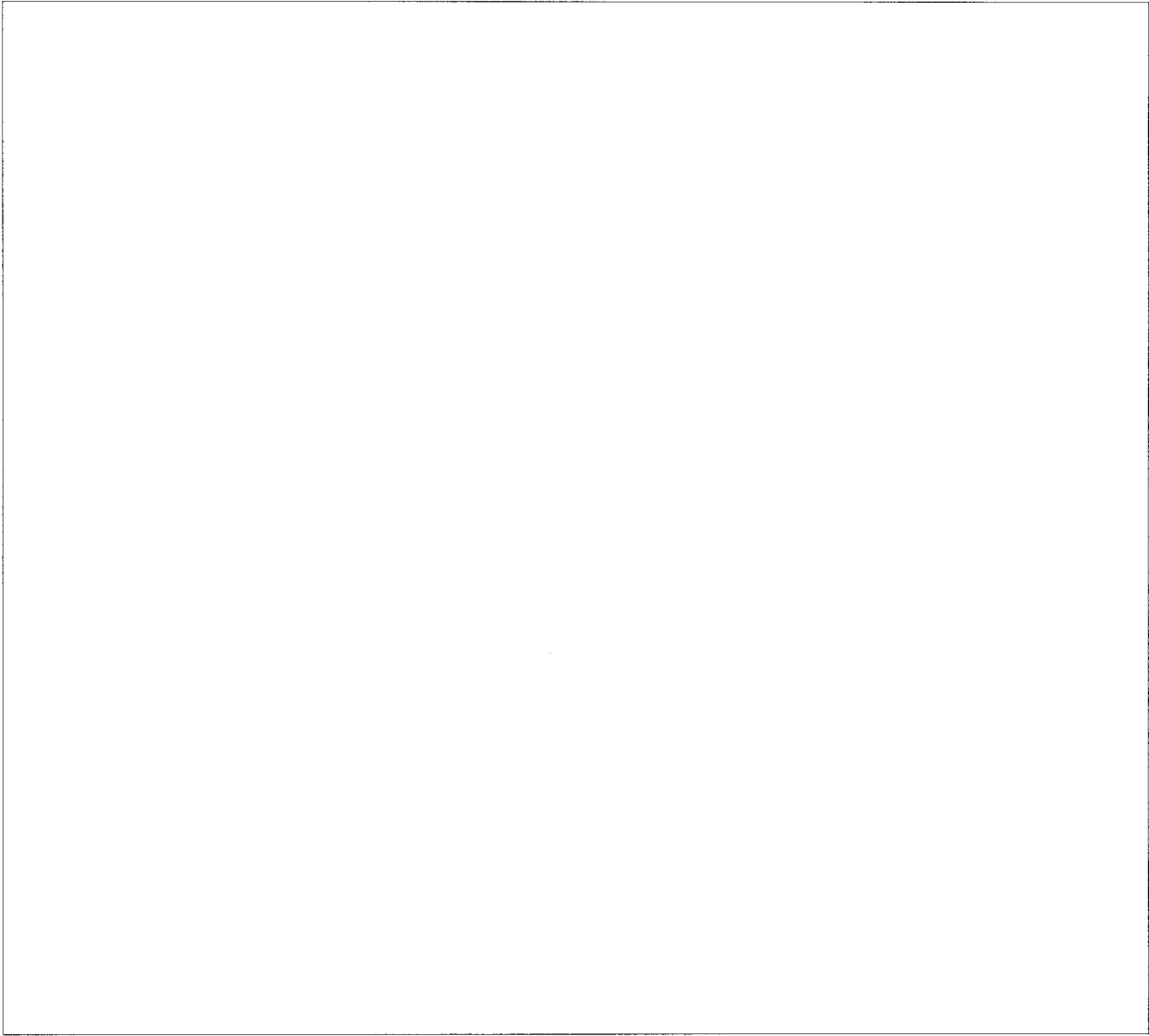
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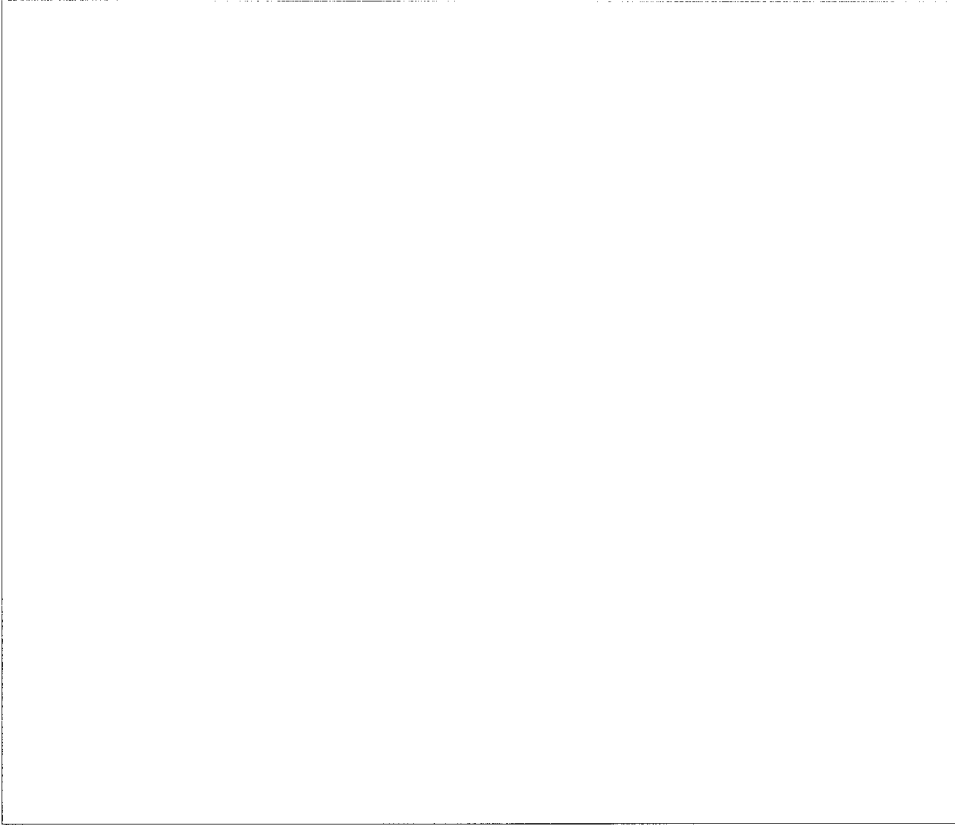
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The National Intelligence Council

The National Intelligence Council (NIC) manages the Intelligence Community's estimative process, incorporating the best available expertise inside and outside the government. It reports to the Director of Central Intelligence in his capacity as head of the US Intelligence Community and speaks authoritatively on substantive issues for the Community as a whole.



**National Security  
Information**

~~Unauthorized Disclosure  
Subject to Criminal Sanctions~~

**Information available as of May 2001 was used in  
the preparation of this National Intelligence Estimate.**

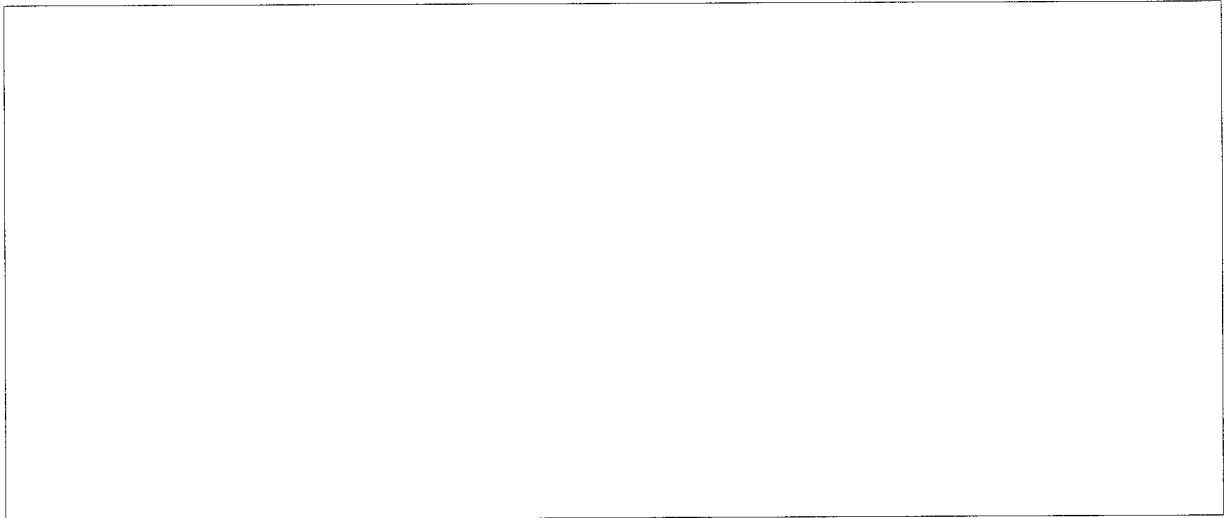
**The following intelligence organizations participated  
in the preparation of this Estimate:**

The Central Intelligence Agency  
The Defense Intelligence Agency  
The National Security Agency  
The Bureau of Intelligence and Research,  
Department of State  
The National Imagery and Mapping Agency

**also participating:**

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence,  
Department of the Army  
The Director of Naval Intelligence,  
Department of the Navy  
Director of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance,  
Department of the Air Force  
The Director of Intelligence,  
Headquarters, Marine Corps

**This Estimate was approved for publication by the  
National Foreign Intelligence Board under the authority  
of the Director of Central Intelligence.**



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