

# Taliban may poison food and blame it on U.S., officials say

By Jonathan S. Landay and Barry Shlachter  
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WASHINGTON (KRT) - Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia might be preparing to poison humanitarian food supplies and blame the United States, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

"We are going to make sure that this is as widely known as fast and as far as we can," said Rear Adm. John D. Stufflebeem, the deputy director of operations on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He indicated that U.S. aircraft may drop leaflets and broadcast radio messages warning Afghan civilians against accepting food from the Taliban.

Stufflebeem's allegations represented an unusual disclosure of top-secret intelligence and underscored the Pentagon's sensitivity to what it says are efforts by the Taliban to use deception to weaken global support for the U.S. bombing campaign. There was no way to confirm his allegations independently.

"The United States has obtained information that the Taliban might

intend to poison humanitarian food stuffs," he said at a news conference, giving no details. "There are reports that the Taliban might poison the food and try to blame the United States."

There is "no truth that we would poison" the food, Stufflebeem said. The United States is the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to the estimated 6 million people believed to be facing starvation and exposure in Afghanistan this winter.

The United States has been pursuing a major information warfare operation as part of its offensive against the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. The U.S. government accuses bin Laden of engineering the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Gen. Tommy Franks, the commander in chief of Central Command, also accused the Taliban of exaggerating civilian casualties and hampering American efforts to provide aid in Afghanistan.

As commander of the Tampa, Fla.-based Central Command, Franks holds the same position as Gen. Nor-

man Schwartzkopf did during the Persian Gulf War. Central Command has authority over U.S. forces from Pakistan, across the Middle East to North Africa.

U.S. officials are concerned that the alleged Taliban disinformation could undermine support for the U.S. anti-terrorism drive from Arab and other Muslim countries where bin Laden enjoys considerable popular support.

In an effort to counter Taliban claims, the Pentagon has owned up to a number of incidents in which it says U.S. weapons mistakenly hit civilian areas.

Franks, midway through a Persian Gulf tour to reaffirm regional support, said at a stop in Muharraq, Bahrain, on Wednesday that the U.S. military has been "absolutely open and absolutely honest about the casualties that we have caused and we will continue to do that."

(Knight Ridder Newspapers correspondents Tom Infield and Andrew Maykuth contributed to this report.) (c) 2001, Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.

## Redistricting

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munity, it's different."

The three redistricting plans have been color coded as "Indigo," "Violet" and "Green," and they would impact all eight of the current wards.

Westmoreland residents, who are a part of Ward 1 under existing boundaries, would switch to Ward 3 under the "Green" scenario. This option would move Ward 3 to the east, with Chambers Street as its eastern boundary.

Councilors kept the "Green" scenario at the end of their Wednesday work session after Councilor Gary Rayer, who was originally opposed to keeping the plan, changed his vote.

Councilors Nancy Nathanson and Gary Papé supported the "Green" option because they wished to keep the Bethel community together.

"I don't think Bethel should be divided into 3 (wards)," said Papé.

Each of the redistricting plans is designed to have equal populations within a range of 5 percent, at an average of 17,237 people per ward.

The U.S. Census lists the population for Eugene in 2000 at 137,893.

The "Violet" scenario moves Wards 1 and 2 to the north. The "Indigo" scenario follows neighborhood association boundaries, which some residents spoke in favor of at a Monday night public hearing.

"Laurel Hill fits in much better with the University area," said Tom Slocum, who was in favor of "Indigo."

While the "Indigo" scenario incorporates current neighborhood associations, it does not address the fact that two associations in West Eugene are combining into one.

"Jefferson and Westside are uniting, and all of these (plans) divide that," said Scott Meisner, the councilor for Ward 7.

The Eugene City Council will review the three scenarios on Nov. 14 and plans to decide on the final option Nov. 26. New ward boundaries have to be in place by the end of December as required by federal law.

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## Mascot

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Puddles, a live white duck, appeared at sporting events, former Athletic Director Leo Harris made an agreement with Walt Disney to have Donald Duck be the University's official mascot, Richard said.

After Disney's death, the Disney Corporation demanded to see the contract between Harris and Disney in order to continue letting the University use the Donald Duck image, Richard said. As the University archivist at the time, Richard was put in charge of finding the contract. He was not able to come up with a written agreement, but instead found a photograph of Disney, wearing a University letterman jacket, and Harris shaking hands.

"The only proof of the contract was that photo," Richard said.

The photo was enough, and to this day the University is the only organization of any kind to use Disney artwork without a fee, according to The Register-Guard's

1978 article.

The only other obstacle to Donald Duck's reign as mascot occurred in 1978. Steve Sandstrom, an Oregon Daily Emerald staff member, created Mallard Drake hoping Mallard would become the new mascot. According to an issue of the Emerald published at the time of the elections, Sandstrom and the student group "Committee to Appoint Mallard Drake as University Duck" believed Donald Duck was too well-associated with Disney and wanted something more specific to the University. However, efforts from an opposing student group, the "Retain Class in Your Bird Committee," ensured that students voted to keep the Disney character as the mascot.

Students today continue to support the duck.

"How many universities can say that their mascot can be found naturally on their campus?" sophomore theater arts major Martha Mosqueda said.

Helen Schumacher is a freelance reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald.

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