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## Transcript: VOA Interview With Taliban Leader

Compiled by Washington Post Staff  
Saturday, September 23, 2001

Washington Post staff writers listened to Voice of America's Friday interview with Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar and compiled this partial transcript:

### Why don't you expel Osama bin Laden?

**Omar:** This is not an issue of Osama bin Laden. It is an issue of Islam. Islam's prestige is at stake. So is Afghan's tradition.

### Do you know that the U.S. has announced a war on terrorism?

**Omar:** I am considering two promises. One is the promise of God. The other is that of Bush. The promise of God is that my land is vast. If you start a journey on God's path, you can reside anywhere on this earth and will be protected. . . .The promise of Bush is that there is no place on earth where you can hide that I cannot find you. We will see which one of these two promises is fulfilled.

### But aren't you afraid for the people, yourself, the Taliban, your country?

**Omar:** Almighty God. . . is helping the believers and the Muslims. God says he will never be satisfied with the infidels. In terms of worldly affairs, America is very strong. Even if it were twice as strong or twice that, it could not be strong enough to defeat us. We are confident that no one can harm us if God is with us.

### You are telling me you are not concerned, but Afghans all over the world are concerned.

**Omar:** We are also concerned. Great issues lie ahead. But we depend on God's mercy. This may appear to be a moment of certainty for us, but God's mercy is with the Muslims.

Consider our point of view: If we give Osama away today, Muslims who are now pleading to give him up would then be reviling us for giving him up. . . . The very same people would be asking: Why did you sacrifice the prestige of Islam? Why did you bring shame on Muslims? Everyone is afraid of America and wants to please it. But let me tell you something. Americans will not be able to prevent such acts like the one that has just occurred because America has taken Islam hostage. America has done that in the Islamic world and especially in the Islamic countries.

If you look at Islamic countries, the people are in despair. They are complaining that Islam is gone. Secular law has replaced Islamic law. But people remain firm in their Islamic beliefs. In their pain and frustration, some of them commit suicide acts. They feel they have nothing to lose. If the U.S. really wants to end this evil, it knows how to do it. It should end its virtual grip on Islam. It should let go. Then it would be relieved forever and the rest of the world can go about its business.

### What do you mean by saying America has taken the Islamic world hostage?

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**Omar:** America controls the governments of the Islamic countries. America keeps after them until they do its bidding, but they are very distant from their own people. The people ask to follow Islam, but the governments do not listen. The people are powerless against their governments because they are in the grip of the United States. In that way, they become corrupt and ignore the people.

If someone follows the path of Islam, the government arrests him, tortures him or kills him. This is the doing of America. If it stops supporting those governments and lets the people deal with them, then such things won't happen.

America has created the evil that is attacking it. The evil will not disappear even if I die and Osama dies and others die. This is U.S. policy. The U.S. should step back and review its policy. It should stop trying to impose its empire on the rest of the world, especially on Islamic countries.

In the name of humanitarian aid, Americans brought thousands of bibles to Afghanistan and were propagating Christianity. If they dare do that here, can you imagine what they have been doing in Arab countries? The Muslims understand that. They also know they can't do anything about it. . . .so they kill themselves in suicide attacks. They no longer want life on this earth.

**So it means you are not giving Osama bin Laden to the U.S.?**


**Omar:** No. we cannot do that. If we did, it means we are not Muslims. . . .That Islam is finished. If we were afraid of attack, we could have surrendered him the last time we were threatened and attacked, so America can hit us again, and this time we don't even have a friend.

**If you fight America with all your might, can the Taliban do that? Won't America beat you and won't your people suffer even more?**

On the surface it looks as if that is the case, but I'm very confident that it won't turn out this way. Please note this: There is nothing more we can do except depend on almighty God. If a person really depends on God, then he is assured that the Almighty will help him, have mercy on him and he will succeed.

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