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## In Afghanistan, surrender plans in the making

By Jack Kelly

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The war in Afghanistan may end this year in thinly disguised surrender.

“The Taliban per se is not our enemy,” Vice President Joe Biden said in an interview with Newsweek magazine Dec. 15. We went to war in Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime because it had sheltered al Qaida. Perhaps Mr. Biden forgot.

A story in an Indian newspaper Dec. 29 suggests the reason for the vice president’s memory lapse. The Obama administration is conducting secret negotiations with the Taliban, and has recruited Yusuf al Qaradawi, the Muslim Brotherhood’s leading jurist, to mediate them.

“Earlier this month, Mr. al-Qaradawi helped draw a road map for a deal between the Taliban and the United States, aimed at giving the superpower a face saving political settlement ahead of its planned withdrawal from Afghanistan which is due to begin in 2014,” wrote reporter Praveen Swami, citing “Indian diplomatic sources.”

Mr. al-Qaradawi, 84, seeks establishment — by force, if necessary — of a world wide caliphate ruled by Islamic law (Sharia). Picking him to broker a peace deal is like choosing Benito Mussolini to mediate secret peace talks with the Nazis.

Like other Islamists, Mr. al-Qaradawi advocates the destruction of Israel. But that’s not enough to satisfy his blood lust.

“Throughout history, Allah has imposed upon the (Jews) people who would punish them for their corruption,” Mr. al-Qaradawi said in a speech broadcast on al Jazeera in 2009. “The last punishment was carried out by Hitler. By means of all the things he did to them...he managed to put them in their place.

“This was divine punishment for them,” Mr. al Qaradawi said. “Allah willing, the next time will be at the hands of the believers...Oh Allah, count their numbers and kill them, down to the very last one.”

In 2003, he issued a fatwa calling for the killing of U.S. troops in Iraq. When the imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca opposed the killing of civilians, Mr. al-Qaradawi criticized him. Yet the Obama administration considers Mr. al-Qaradawi to be a “moderate.”

Perhaps he is, compared to Mohammed Fazl, a senior Taliban official who’s been held at Guantanamo Bay since early 2002. Mr. Fazl is alleged to have overseen the murder of thousands of Afghanistan’s minority Shiite Muslims.

The Obama administration is contemplating turning Mr. Fazl and four other Taliban terrorists over to the Afghan government as part of an exchange of “confidence-building measures,” Reuters reported Dec. 29.

The proposed handover of Mr. Fazl and the others is not popular with those who are more concerned with U.S. security than with President Obama’s re-election.

“I can tell you that the hair on the back of my neck went up when they walked in with this a month ago,” Reuters quoted a “U.S. intelligence official” as saying.

The Taliban announced Tuesday it will open a liaison office in Doha, Qatar, where Mr. al-Qaradawi is based. Afghan President Hamid Karzai gave the office his blessing, and earlier praised Vice President Biden’s statement that “the Taliban per se is not our enemy.”

The choice of Mr. al-Qaradawi as mediator suggests the Obama administration is far more interested in making a deal before the election than in what’s in it. The administration might be satisfied, it appears, with a public renunciation of al Qaida by the Taliban (they don’t have to mean it), and private assurances from their leaders that the Taliban won’t take over until after the election.

The losers would be those Afghans who don’t want to live under the thumb of a brutal reactionary theocracy, especially those who trusted us and sent their daughters to school. But they don’t vote in our elections.

Mr. Obama supported the war in Afghanistan during the 2008 campaign, but I suspect he did so only because he so vociferously opposed the war in Iraq, and didn’t want people to think he was soft on national defense. His heart was never in it.

So I wish he'd decided to bug out sooner. About two thirds of the 1,864 American servicemen and women who've been killed in Afghanistan have been killed since Barack Obama became president. They appear to have died in vain.