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WARNING: TOPIC: INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL, TERRORISM, HUMAN RIGHTS

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COUNTRY: AUSTRALIA, AFGHANISTAN, UNITED STATES

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CRITICIZED OVER ACCESS TO ALLEGED TALEBAN FIGHTER

SOURCE: MELBOURNE RADIO AUSTRALIA IN ENGLISH 0700 GMT 3 APR 02

TEXT: [FBIS TRANSCRIBED TEXT] AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CRITICIZED OVER ACCESS TO ALLEGED TALEBAN FIGHTER
TEXT OF REPORT BY RADIO AUSTRALIA ON 3 APRIL

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF NOT PROVIDING CONSULAR VISITS TO AN ALLEGED AUSTRALIAN TALEBAN FIGHTER, DAVID HICKS. MR HICKS HAS BEEN HELD IN A US MILITARY DETENTION CENTRE IN CUBA FOR THE PAST 79 DAYS. HIS LAWYER, STEPHEN KENNY, SAYS THE US GOVERNMENT HAS ALWAYS BEEN WILLING TO ALLOW CONSULAR ACCESS TO HIS CLIENT BUT THE OFFER HASN'T BEEN TAKEN UP. TEN DAYS AGO, AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER, ALEXANDER DOWNER, SAID AUSTRALIAN CONSULAR OFFICIALS WOULD VISIT THE ADELAIDE MAN, BUT MR KENNY SAYS THIS HASN'T HAPPENED. [KENNY] NO, HE IS NOT GETTING CONSULAR ACCESS. WE HAVE WRITTEN ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS TO THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL - INDEED, THE AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR IN MEXICO, WHO HAS A RESPONSIBILITY FOR CUBAN MATTERS. OUR REQUESTS HAVE BEEN IGNORED. THE FEDERAL ATTORNEY-GENERAL, DARYL WILLIAMS, HAS SPECIFICALLY STATED THAT CONSULAR ACCESS WOULD NOT BE REQUESTED. WE ARE MYSTIFIED AS TO WHY THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE SEEMS TO BE IN BREACH OF ITS OWN GUIDELINES CONCERNING THESE MATTERS.

[DESCRIPTION OF SOURCE: MELBOURNE RADIO AUSTRALIA IN ENGLISH -- GOVERNMENT-FUNDED OVERSEAS SERVICE OF THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION]

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