Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

CURRE

SPECIAL EDITION

15 September 1987 No. 1631

THIS PUBLICATION IS PREPARED BY THE AIR FORCE (SAF/AA) AS EXECUTIVE AGENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO BRING TO THE ATTENTION OF KEY DOD PERSONNEL NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST TO THEM IN THEIR OFFICIAL CAPACITIES. IT IS NOT INTENDED TO SUBSTITUTE FOR NEWSPAPERS, PERIODICALS AND BROADCASTS AS A MEANS OF KEEPING INFORMED ABOUT THE NATURE, MEANING AND IMPACT OF NEWS DEVELOPMENTS. USE OF THESE ARTICLES DOES NOT REFLECT OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT. FURTHER REPRODUCTION FOR PRIVATE USE OR GAIN IS SUBJECT TO THE ORIGINAL COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

Military Review July 1987 Pgs. 52-72

The Professional Journal of the US Army

Articles

STAT

Perspectives on Afghanistan:

2 **The Forces in Conflict**
by Captain Charles G. Wheeler, US Marine Corps

6 **The Evolution of Soviet Military Doctrine**
by First Lieutenant Kip McCormick, US Army

PERSPECTIVES ON Afghanistan

For the past seven years or so, Soviet military operations in Afghanistan have received varying degrees of notice in the Western news media. Since the initial invasion, interest only peaks during Olympic boycotts, debates over aid and the alleged Soviet use of chemical weapons—routine operations without dramatic results take a backseat to items of more immediate concern in the United States. But the fighting continues. These articles look at the forces involved and the tactical doctrines employed by these forces in Afghanistan. It appears that the fighting may continue for some time.

Herbert J. Coleman, Chief, Current News Analysis & Research Service
(SAF/AA) 695-2884

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

The Forces in Conflict

Afghanistan

Captain
Charles G. Wheeler,
US Marine Corps

SOVIET forces invaded Afghanistan at Christmastime 1979 and have been bogged down ever since. This is a result of many factors, not the least of which is the ferocious opposition by the numerous *mujahidin* groups fighting within Afghanistan. To the extent that the world, and particularly the American public, is aware of the war in Afghanistan, it is probably most cognizant of the courageous nature of the *mujahidin*.

Much of the US news coverage conveys the image of brave but poorly armed Afghan resistance members frustrating Soviet attempts to conquer and pacify their country. While this image is largely valid, it may also be misleading if it causes people to believe that the Soviets are experiencing "their Vietnam" and will ultimately withdraw. Given the composition of the forces fighting in Afghanistan and the approximate stability of other variables, the Soviets will probably achieve victory though not in the near term. An analysis of the forces in Afghanistan will show why this outcome is likely.

The composition of Soviet forces in Afghanistan has undergone an evolutionary process. The Soviets initially used poorly trained and equipped units to back up the airborne units involved in the initial takeover. However, by early 1980, these units were replaced with more standard units.[1] While it is difficult to get accurate numbers of anything relative to the situation in Afghanistan, various rough estimates are available. It has been reported that approximately 118,000 Soviet troops are in Afghanistan. Most of these are in Soviet motorized rifle divisions, but others include about 10,000 paratroops and 5,000 air assault troops. *Spetsnaz,* or special purpose forces, have been introduced to work mainly among *mujahidin* forces to spread confusion, terror and suspicion.[2]

Soviet forces in Afghanistan make considerable use of air power, particularly helicopters, of which they probably have at least 600. About 250 of these are the heavily armored *Mi-24 Hind* helicopters.[3] Various types of fixed-wing fighters, bombers and attack aircraft are also employed against the *mujahidin.* About 450 of these are stationed in Afghanistan, and roughly as many more, based in the Soviet Union, are available to fly missions in Afghanistan.[4]

Soviet soldiers are reported to serve about 18 months in Afghanistan. Living conditions are poor, with only about 20 percent of the troops being housed in permanent dwellings. Morale is low. Drug abuse and alcohol abuse appear to be rampant, and Soviet soldiers are said to sell military equipment to buy heroin and hashish.[5]

As for Soviet casualties in Afghanistan, a wide range of figures are available. While the Soviet government has publicly admitted to very few soldiers killed there since the beginning of the invasion, a likely figure is roughly 10,000 dead with 30,000 casualties.[6]

But what of the fighting ability of the Soviet troops? They have generally shown a lack of initiative and aggressiveness throughout the war.[7] The massive firepower inherent in their units and their willingness to use this firepower indiscriminately somewhat offsets what they lack in guerrilla fighting skills. John Keegan provides some insight into the crude and brutally effective way in which the Soviets employ their inherent superiority in firepower:

Effectively, what the Russians did from 1982 onward was deem the whole of rural Afghanistan a free-fire zone, with the aim of driving the country people into the cities (a million have been displaced in that direction) or out of the country altogether. But not

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

even the cities were safe. One third of Qandahar was destroyed by artillery bombardment as early as June of 1981. . . In addition, over the past two years the Soviets have instituted a severe form of economic warfare against the resistance which some observers think poses the gravest threat to its ability to continue the war. . . . Their devilishly ingenious tactics have included destroying crops outright by napalming the farmers' fields and sowing anti-personnel mines to discourage the farmer from reclaiming them, smashing the primitive but vital irrigation systems.[8]

Since the beginning of the war, the Soviets have attempted to train and use Afghan government troops in furthering Soviet ends, but they have met with considerable difficulty. Desertions are rampant, a not surprising fact given the unpopularity of the Soviet invasion. Also, considerable numbers of the Afghan forces actually spy for the *mujahidin* or otherwise assist them.[9]

Another area in which the Afghan puppet government poses a greater threat to the *mujahidin* is the *KHAD*, or secret police. Although rife with factionalism, it is able, nevertheless, to spread terror and suspicion.

The *KHAD* is patterned after the Soviet *KGB* (Committee of State Security) and receives considerable guidance and training from it.

The *KHAD* has from 15,000 to 20,000 personnel. It is suspected of such activity as arrests and torture of civil servants, teachers and others. It foments confusion and discontent in refugee camps in Pakistan and infiltrates resistance groups to aggravate existing divisions between them as well as to obtain intelligence on their activities.[10]

Another program that presents an ominous potential threat to the *mujahidin* in the future is the training young Afghans are undergoing in the Soviet Union. They are being trained to become officers or bureaucrats for the puppet government.[11] Thousands of them are receiving training at the university level.[12] Because this program will not pay off for the Soviets in the very near term, the training is a strong indication that the Soviets are in Afghanistan for the long haul.

The program also may lead to the increased appearance of legitimacy of the Afghan government as it becomes more effective with the return of these Afghans from the Soviet Union. Such an appearance could possibly lead to a decrease in foreign aid to the *mujahidin* if their cause is seen to be weaker than when they were battling a more visible Soviet presence.

As for the Afghan resistance, its members have fought the Soviets to something of a stalemate, largely through sheer courage and unwavering determination. These qualities, however, are not likely to be depleted soon, not as long as there are *mujahidin* to fight:

The Soviets can, with their economic warfare, denude Afghanistan of its people, but they can't stop most of the able-bodied male refugees from returning as Mujahidin for a time and making the occupation a misery with more and more foreign-supplied weapons. Nor can they expect the Afghan fighters to abandon the war as a lost cause—not with their history of ferocious resistance to invaders, and not when recovery of their country has become their whole raison d'être.[13]

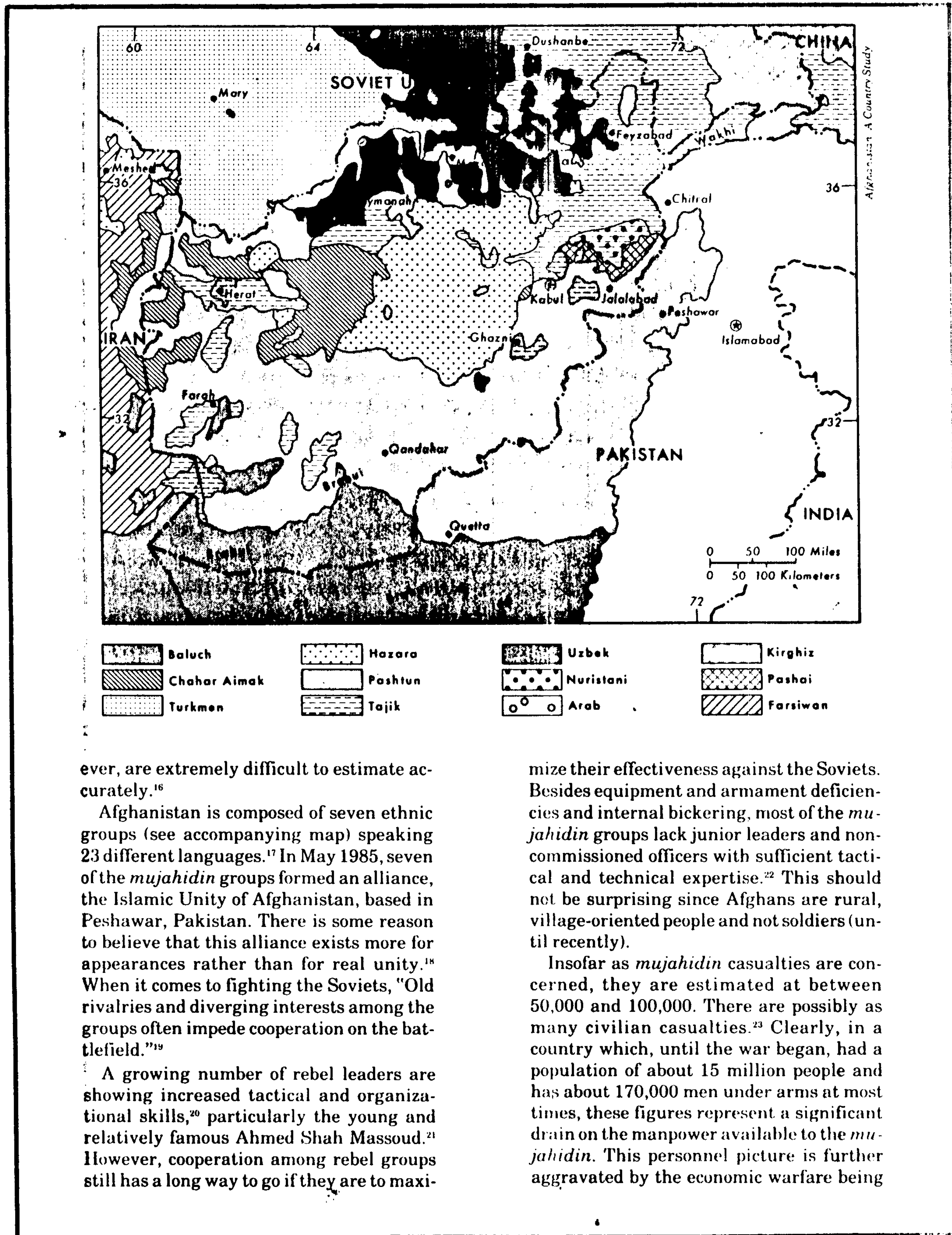
The combat effectiveness of the various *mujahidin* groups varies, to a large extent, according to their armament. It is difficult to estimate the amount of outside aid the rebels receive. However, some say the *mujahidin* have received up to $400 million in aid from the United States since 1979, with about $250 million more projected. Most of this aid is in the form of Soviet block weapons bought in the Middle East. Additionally, other nations, particularly Saudi Arabia and China, funnel roughly $100 million a year to the *mujahidin*.[14]

While many *mujahidin* carry Soviet *AK47* assault rifles, others carry obsolete weapons, such as old shotguns, or even no weapons at all until some become available, often from Soviet or Afghan army deserters or from battles.[15]

Roughly 40 different *mujahidin* groups exist within Afghanistan. These groups have about 120,000 men though this number can rise to possibly 250,000 during recruiting campaigns. These numbers, how-

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7



ever, are extremely difficult to estimate accurately.[16]

Afghanistan is composed of seven ethnic groups (see accompanying map) speaking 23 different languages.[17] In May 1985, seven of the *mujahidin* groups formed an alliance, the Islamic Unity of Afghanistan, based in Peshawar, Pakistan. There is some reason to believe that this alliance exists more for appearances rather than for real unity.[18] When it comes to fighting the Soviets, "Old rivalries and diverging interests among the groups often impede cooperation on the battlefield."[19]

A growing number of rebel leaders are showing increased tactical and organizational skills,[20] particularly the young and relatively famous Ahmed Shah Massoud.[21] However, cooperation among rebel groups still has a long way to go if they are to maximize their effectiveness against the Soviets. Besides equipment and armament deficiencies and internal bickering, most of the *mujahidin* groups lack junior leaders and noncommissioned officers with sufficient tactical and technical expertise.[22] This should not be surprising since Afghans are rural, village-oriented people and not soldiers (until recently).

Insofar as *mujahidin* casualties are concerned, they are estimated at between 50,000 and 100,000. There are possibly as many civilian casualties.[23] Clearly, in a country which, until the war began, had a population of about 15 million people and has about 170,000 men under arms at most times, these figures represent a significant drain on the manpower available to the *mujahidin*. This personnel picture is further aggravated by the economic warfare being

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

waged by the Soviets:

For this reason, resistance leaders sometimes see their manpower levels drop as the farmer/fighters put down the rifle and pick up the spade to help raise food for their families.[24]

The widespread and indiscriminate warfare being perpetrated by the Soviet Union has resulted in the formation of a huge refugee population. About one-third of the prewar population are refugees,[25] with most living in Pakistan. A sizable portion, more than one million, are living in Iran.[26] Naturally, this situation is a serious handicap to the *mujahidin* as it represents a significant loss of potential aid. The guerrillas' struggle to survive hampers their ability to fight.

It would also seem that displaced Afghans face a significant shock to their culture as they are uprooted from their familiar villages and tribes to live in refugee camps. Perhaps over time this situation will have a negative impact on the desires of these refugees to return to Afghanistan to fight for villages which no longer exist and tribes which have been scattered.

The rebels show no desire to capitulate to the Soviets in spite of a tremendous disadvantage in firepower. The *mujahidin's* aggressiveness and dedication have served them well so far. However, over the long term, the *mujahidin* face serious problems that will probably result in their defeat if unchecked. Some of the problems are a dwindling manpower pool, the debilitating effects of prolonged economic warfare on their ability to fight, a need for more and better weapons, and the inability of rebel groups to cooperate. The Soviets, on the other hand, have an almost unlimited ability to rotate fresh troops into Afghanistan for an indefinite period of time. The Soviets have shown that they are ruthless enough to use their firepower in barbaric but ultimately effective ways. And, finally:

It is important to remember that the effects of a terror campaign are cumulative. While the initial reaction may fuel the intensity of the insurgency, over the long run terror saps the most vital resource of any resistance—hope. Mechanistic slaughter unrelated to cause and effect, not just against combatants but women and children, not for days but for years or even decades, can enervate even the bravest and most committed Mujahidin. It is a method of coercion that the Soviets have elevated to an art form.[27] MR

NOTES

1 James B. Curren and Phillip A. Karber, "Afghanistan's Ordeal Puts a Region at Risk," *Armed Forces Journal International*, March 1985, p 79.

2 "That's a Russian in Disguise," *The Economist*, 26 October 1985, pp 46-48.

3 Albert A. Stahel and Paul Bucherer, *Afghanistan: Five Years of Resistance and Guerrilla Warfare*, Freedom Policy Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1984, p 8.

4 Curren and Karber, *op. cit.*, p 83

5 Stahel and Bucherer, *op. cit.*, p 11.

6 Bob Horton, "Afghanistan: A Holy-War Stalemate," *U.S. News & World Report*, 23 September 1985, p 37.

7 Stahel and Bucherer, *op. cit.*

8 John Keegan, "The Ordeal of Afghanistan," *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1985, p 103.

9 *Hidden War. The Struggle for Afghanistan*, Staff Report for Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 98th Congress, Second Session, US Government Printing Office, Washington, D C., April 1984, p 17.

10 "Afghanistan: Four Years of Occupation," *Department of State Bulletin*, US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., December 1983, p 77.

11 Lieutenant Colonel H. T. Hayden, "Antiguerrilla Warfare—Soviet Style," *Proceedings*, November 1985, p 121.

12 *Hidden War: The Struggle for Afghanistan*, *op. cit.*, p 20.

13 Keegan, *op. cit.*, p 105

14 "U.S.-Pakistan Ties Show Signs of Strain," *U.S. News & World Report*, 9 September 1985, pp 51-52.

15 Stahel and Bucherer, *op. cit.*, p 17

16 Keegan, *op. cit.*, pp 101-2

17 Curren and Karber, *op. cit.*, p 91

18 Mark Whitaker and Frank Gibney Jr., "A New Soviet Offensive," *Newsweek*, 9 September 1985, pp 40-44.

19 Horton, *op. cit.*

20 *Hidden War. The Struggle for Afghanistan*, *op. cit.*, pp 22-23

21 "The Return of a Charismatic Rebel," *Newsweek*, 23 Dec 1985, p 34

22 Stahel and Bucherer, *op. cit.*, p 20

23 Horton, *op. cit.*

24 Curren and Karber, *op. cit.*

25 *Ibid.*, p 94.

26 Stahel and Bucherer, *op. cit.*, p 22

27 Curren and Karber, *op. cit.*, p 94

Captain Charles G. Wheeler, US Marine Corps, is the repairable material section officer for Marine Aircraft Group 29, Marine Corps Air Station, New River, North Carolina. He received a B.S. from the University of North Carolina and is a graduate of the Amphibious Warfare School, Quantico, Virginia.

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

The Evolution of Soviet Military Doctrine

Afghanistan

First Lieutenant Kip McCormick, US Army

AS A CONCENTRATION of motorized rifle divisions crossed the Soviet-Afghan border at Termez and moved south toward the capital of Kabul, fixed-wing combat aircraft of the civilian airline *Aeroflot* were landing with troops and equipment at the Kabul airport. It was December 1979 and, contrary to the beliefs of Soviet military planners, the beginning of a long stay in the hostile environment of Afghanistan.

As the United States did in Korea and Vietnam, the Soviets underestimated the strength of their adversary and the unreliability of the armed forces which they were supporting. The Soviets perceived Afghanistan as another Hungary or Czechoslavakia in which conventional armor-dominated military doctrine could be used to settle unrest. They were not prepared for the type of warfare necessary to defeat the resistance in Afghanistan. Until the invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviet military had centered its military doctrine on past experiences of World War II and planned its doctrinal application to the flat plains of Europe.

Afghanistan posed a problem for Soviet tactics. The Afghan military force was and still remains unreliable—the number of desertions continues to rise with every military incursion. The Afghan terrain, with its mountains and desert climate, also posed problems—it was nothing like the European plains. The Afghan terrain has made past incursions by foreign powers costly and is a shelter for members of the local resistance. Another problem is that the *mujahidin*, or "freedom fighters," use a type of guerrilla warfare unlike the tactics employed in the conventional operations to which the Soviets are accustomed.

The Soviets failed to realize that, in guerrilla warfare, there is no such thing as a decisive battle—small units act independently with minor centralized control. So the Soviet military has been forced to adapt itself to the guerrilla tactics. This adaptation consists of three stages of Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan: a period of conventional warfare, a period of small-unit offensive sweeps and a period of special operations. Although some aspects of military doctrine in each period filter into ensuing stages, each stage has its own characteristics that distinguish it from the others.

STAGE ONE: Conventional Warfare

The first stage of involvement, roughly dating from December 1979 to fall 1980, was a period marked by conventional warfare during which the Soviets intended to break the *mujahidin* wherever they would stand and fight. To confront the resistance, the Soviets used force structures and military doctrine that did not match the situation in Afghanistan. In hopes that a show of force would break the *mujahidin* and quell the rebellion, the Soviets massed forces when conducting military operations.

But confronting a guerrilla force with division-level operations quickly proved inefficient. The Soviets learned that armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles were not the best means of combat transportation when pursuing an insur-

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

gent. Because the road network in Afghanistan is limited and quickly destroyed by tank treads, Soviet supply trucks were immobilized. Hence, the Soviets moved toward light forces,[1] using combined arms reinforced battalions and reinforced regiments as their main elements for pursuing the *mujahidin*.[2]

The move toward lighter operations incorporated the use of the air force as the prime source of mobility and maneuverability of both personnel and weaponry. The Soviets realized that, because of the complex problems caused by the Afghan terrain, only a small number of combat vehicles could be used effectively and could travel along the narrow roads and mountain passes to a position from which they would fire at the enemy.[3]

The Soviets' eventual reliance on aviation was also due to the successful *mujahidin* tactics used when engaging Soviet convoys in the mountains. When rebels would ambush Soviet convoys, they would disable the first vehicle, blocking the route for the entire column. They would then destroy the last vehicle in the column, leaving the entire convoy in the difficult position of defending itself from a lower elevation than the rebels.[4]

Another characteristic of this first stage of involvement was the use of Central Asians in the Soviet invasion force and as a combat force. The invasion force consisted of large numbers of Kazaks, Tajiks, Turkmen and Uzbeks. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, they wanted to play a limited role in the conflict by providing air cover, occupying cities, and securing lines of communication and major road networks. This limited role was easily affordable through the use of Central Asians located on the Soviet-Afghan border.

The Central Asians were located close to the military objectives. Also, because of Central Asia's isolation from European Russia, coupled with the view held by the Kremlin that Central Asians are second-class citizens, domestic opinion of develox-i,pments in Afghanistan would not play as large a role in any decisionmaking. This would make the legitimization of the war easier. Logistics played a part in the decision to use the Central Asian invading force, but the main reason the Central Asian conscripts were used was that the Soviets hoped that the Afghan population would react favorably to co-ethnics from the Soviet Union coming to the aid of their government.

The composition of the Afghan population was extremely similar to the invading Central Asian forces. Out of 20 million Afghans, there were six million Pushtuns and a majority of Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen. The Soviets felt the Central Asians would appeal to the hearts and minds of the Afghans,[5] but this required members of the same tribes to combat one another if the population did not react favorably.

Thus, instead of throwing down their weapons when they saw their Muslim brothers of the Soviet Union defending the Soviet-backed regime of Babrak Karmal, the *mujahidin* fought even more diligently.

Making the situation worse, the Soviet-Central Asians began leaving packages of weapons and ammunition for their co-ethnic Afghan tribesmen with whom they had a common bond—Islam.[6] This Islamic nationalism motivated a large number of Afghans and galvanized the opposition, thus stimulating the resistance movement.

Robert L. Canfield summarizes the Soviet-Muslim in Afghanistan when he writes:

Because of the unwillingness of the Soviet Muslim peoples to assimilate the Soviet system and the possibility of their being incited by the restive populations south of their borders, the Soviets must remain in Afghanistan until they have quelled all opposition, they cannot allow their Muslim subjects to be encouraged by mujahideen *victories.*[7]

Realizing that their military doctrine was unsuitable for Afghanistan, the Soviets initiated a second stage of small-unit offensive sweeps. This period extended from winter 1980 to spring 1983.[8] During this stage of involvement, the Soviets fully integrated the use of helicopters, heliborne assaults and chemical weapons into these small-unit offensive sweeps.

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

STAGE TWO: Small-Unit Offensive Sweeps

One of the most important characteristics of this period was the increased dependence of the Soviet occupying force on the combined arms reinforced battalion (CARB) as the core subunit of the Soviet force.[9] A CARB comprises an artillery battery, three motorized rifle companies, a tank company and a variety of specialized supporting units. Included in supporting these units is the Soviet air force. The CARB is given the task of deep offensive sweeps into suspected rebel-controlled areas, with the hopes of eliminating guerrilla activity against Soviet installations and forces.[10]

With the CARB, the Soviets are perfecting the art of combined arms warfare. The significant characteristic of this warfare is the use of the helicopter for fire support:

*As the helicopters concentrate their fire on specific point objectives, assault helicopters land specially trained air assault (*desant*) detachments on these objectives, supporting them with fire. These* desant *detachments capture choke-points and controlling heights in the rear of the enemy. They then facilitate the advance of the main forces of the CARB, and sometimes conduct a multiple pincer attack with them on main defensive or significant objectives of the enemy.*[11]

During this stage, the Soviets used fixed-wing aircraft such as *MiG21* and *MiG23* to attack with rockets and napalm, and then the *Mi-24* helicopter gunship delivered rocket and machinegun fire, which was quickly followed by troop insertion by *Mi-5* 6 helicopters. These troops conducted search-and-destroy missions and pushed the *mujahidin* back into their rocky defensive strongholds in the mountains.[12]

The reason for driving the *mujahidin* back into the Afghan mountains was to starve them into submission. The Soviets forced the *mujahidin* from the Afghan fertile valleys and strategic roads by means of aerial bombardments. The Soviets then established a security zone by depopulating the area. The intent was to force the peasants either into the cities or out of Afghanistan, allowing the Soviets to better control the population.[13]

Another characteristic of this second stage was a tactic from World War II that is still effectively being used today—the enveloping detachment. According to the Soviet definition, the enveloping detachment can vary in size from a platoon to a regiment. It is administratively self-contained, and its mission is "to envelope the enemy with the aim of striking him in the flanks and rear in order to seize his positions."[14] The Soviets specifically define the enveloping detachment as an offensive formation that lends itself to difficult terrain:

Depending on the trafficability of the terrain, the enveloping detachment is normally composed of motorized rifle platoons, companies, or battalion-size elements reinforced with portable antitank weapons, mortars, artillery and other special units such as engineer troops.[15]

The enveloping detachment is flexible to adapt to the terrain. In Afghanistan, the enveloping operations are conducted by air borne and air assault forces and by motorized rifle troops. The mountainous terrain restricts the use of tanks. Tanks are normally employed only in support of infantry platoons and companies.[16] Another problem with using tanks in the mountains is the limited gun tube elevation on Soviet tanks which prohibits their use against high-angle targets.[17]

Although the Soviet news media have never openly admitted the Soviet use of chemical warfare in Afghanistan, several publications, *Voennyi Vestnik (Military Herald)* in particular, have included an increasing amount of articles on chemical warfare doctrine in mountainous regions.[18]

Chemical troops provide support for enveloping detachments by conducting reconnaissance, protecting the flanks of Soviet troops from ambush during an advance through mountain passes and dispensing chemical agents into inaccessible areas such as caves and narrow creeks.[19]

Thus, airborne and airmobile enveloping detachments have proven themselves effective. By seizing bridges, mountain passes

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

and key chokepoints, enveloping detachments isolate the enemy until the main forces arrive.

Although certain areas of Soviet doctrine have proven effective, such as the enveloping detachment, Soviet doctrine generally has been plagued by hypercentralization. Soviet field commanders suffer from a lack of initiative, being oversupervised and using "cookbook warfare" in which Soviet battle plans are systematically applied to all situations.[20]

But, in early 1981, this began to change. Afghanistan has provided valuable experience for field commanders, junior officers and pilots. Although the use of personal initiative runs contrary to the centralized command structure of the Soviet army, the Soviets realized the need for a more flexible military command structure that would give authority to officers from battalion level to company level and sometimes platoon level.[21] The significance of this is that, 15 years from now, the platoon leader in Afghanistan will be a battalion commander with combat experience unlike that of today's Soviet battalion commanders.

Another characteristic of this stage of Soviet military involvement is the use of scorched-earth tactics. The primary purpose of this policy is to control the major cities and secure the lines of communication while forcing the rebels into the mountains, thus eliminating centers of rebel resistance.

In late 1980, the Soviet military divided Afghanistan into seven geographical zones. They were placed under the direction of a Soviet military officer and an Afghan political commissar who were given the authority to use unlimited force and adopt specific tactics to keep their zones under control.[22]

The most common of these tactics incorporated the scorched-earth policy. The Soviets presently apply this tactic by using napalm, bombs and artillery fire, mining harvested fields, destroying irrigation and buying food from peasants at higher than market prices to destroy the *mujahidin's* economic base. The Soviets also retrieve all cattle in the free-fire zone to remove the incentive for inhabitants to return to their areas and to eliminate a source of food for the resistance.[23] It has been estimated that, since this policy was initiated in 1982, agricultural production has been cut 20 to 25 percent of its preinvasion levels and has been a cause of nationwide famine across Afghanistan.[24]

The scorched-earth policy has forced the population to migrate to Iran or Pakistan, join the resistance in exile or move to the cities. It is estimated that Kabul is three times its prewar size because of this tactic.[25] Added to the doctrine of scorched earth has been the use of terror tactics which range from the use of booby-trapped toys to the leveling of villages suspected of aiding the resistance.[26]

STAGE THREE: Special Operations

The third stage of the Soviet involvement began in spring 1983 and continues today. It is distinguished by the gradual move of Soviet forces from ground warfare to a reliance on special operations, leaving the bulk of the ground warfare to Afghan armed forces and Soviet mechanized infantry troops. During this period, the Soviets have used deep-raiding special forces accompanied by helicopters and combat aircraft. This stage shows the Soviets have applied lessons learned in the early stages of the Afghan conflict and have adopted special operations as the primary means of suppressing the resistance.[27]

The Soviets have outlined these preconditions for suppressing the *mujahidin:*

Deep intelligence penetration and manipulation of the hostile population; deep raiding capabilities and the ability to conduct surgical strikes against priority objectives; and the ability to inflict massive collateral damage to the civilian infrastructure rapidly in order to erode the popular support.[28]

As mentioned, helicopters played a major role in the first two stages of military involvement. During stage three, their role has broadened to provide not only transportation of troops and weapons but also to serve as a major source of firepower. Perhaps the greatest advantage of the helicopter is that it allows deep-raiding forces to land close to, if not on, the objective. The accuracy of helicopter firepower has also been

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

a great asset. The helicopter is used also for resupply, reconnaissance, fire support, and command and control.[29]

The Soviets deploy large helicopter forces when raiding rebel strongholds. These forces need no logistic base on site and can be deployed up to a week at a time. According to Yossef Bodansky, a Soviet military analyst:

These forces are comprised of diversified helicopter regiments, an air assault battalion (including diversified BMDs and artillery pieces) and a spetsnaz (Soviet special forces) detachment.[30]

The integration of the helicopter has thus given pilots invaluable combat experience. But this experience has not come easily. As one Soviet officer described it:

Flying in the mountains and above the desert, plus the real possibility of coming under fire by anti-aircraft weapons which are making their way from Pakistan to the bandits operating on Afghan territory—this is the real training school. No wonder they say that after a month in Afghanistan helicopter pilots can be awarded the top proficiency rating without testing their piloting ability.[31]

As of 1984, the *mujahidin* have been credited with shooting down close to 300 Soviet helicopters by using small-arms and anti-tank weapons.[32]

One of the main characteristics of the shift from ground warfare to special operations was the attempt to use the Afghan army for the bulk of ground warfare. But the Soviets encountered the same problems they experienced at the beginning of their occupation in Afghanistan. The most significant problem was the unreliable Afghan army. This has forced the Soviets to use their elite airborne units and *Spetsnaz* units for deep raids and special operations while using their mechanized infantry troops to carry on ground warfare.

This has proven costly. For example, it was estimated in 1981 that the Soviet Union was spending approximately $10 million per day in Afghanistan. This figure is presently $12 million per day and is increasing.[33] The number of troops necessary to conduct special operations is less than the number needed to conduct ground warfare. The necessity to use Soviet mechanized infantry troops has, therefore, caused a need for increased expenditures in Afghanistan.

The fact that the Soviets decreased the Afghan army participation in joint military operations in 1983 reveals the lack of trust the Soviets have in the Afghan army. There exists a highly paid civilian militia in Afghanistan also, but it is just as unreliable—"nearly 3000 militiamen defected to the resistance in the fall of 1984, and resistance leaders regard the militia as one of its prime sources of weapons."[34]

Although the *mujahidin* are loosely organized, they operate from platoon to regimental strength in the field. They usually operate in groups of 30 to 40 men and, according to one Afghan army officer, prefer "to use ambushes by bridges, or in defiles. They destroy the bridge and block the road, and then open fire from the commanding heights."[35] In every case, the *mujahidin* ambush and then withdraw quickly. Although this prohibits the resistance from establishing effective control over any area, it allows them to continue harassment of the Soviet forces with minimal casualties or captures for the *mujahidin*.

A problem experienced by the *mujahidin* is that they are disunited and lack the cohesiveness of an effective military force. This disunity has been manifested by centuries of intertribal warfare. But disunity can have its advantages. The *mujahidin* are not united around one leader, and this poses a problem for the Soviet military. If they were united around one leader, eliminating that leader would weaken the resistance. But, since the *mujahidin* are organized into several different bands, eliminating one influential leader of a band would have little effect on the entire resistance.

This lack of unity also has many disadvantages, including the difficulty to conduct negotiations with the Soviets, problems with dispersing foreign military aid between resistance groups and the inability to defeat the Soviets with a large cohesive military force. Thus, the *mujahidin* are existing but they are not defeating the Soviets.

An important aspect of this third stage of Soviet military involvement in Afghani-

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

stan is the realization by the Soviet military of the importance of mountain training. But training is conducted without a concrete plan. According to one Soviet officer:

Exercises are sometimes held in a formalistic fashion, with insufficient material support. Due importance is not always attached to the psychological and physical conditioning of soldiers and sergeants, who consequently display a lack of aggressiveness and self-confidence in carrying out tasks.[36]

But, for the Soviets, no amount of mountain warfare training will allow their forces to defeat their worst enemy—the terrain. Strategic roads are few and far between, and there are few other reliable, vehicular routes, especially in the winter and during spring thaws.

During this third stage of military involvement, the Soviets have intensified their doctrine of economic warfare and scorched-earth policies in Afghanistan. Since the invasion, the Afghan population has witnessed an increase in food prices by as much as 145 percent.[37] But the Soviets welcome economic problems—they force the peasantry away from areas known to be centers of guerrilla activity in the fertile valleys and into the cities where they can be more easily controlled.

According to Alex Alexiev, a Rand Corporation scholar, economic warfare and famine are Soviet techniques for crushing resistance movements. He notes the quelling of the opposition movements to collectivization in the Ukraine in the 1930s by an induced famine that claimed six million lives. For the Soviets, therefore, destroying the economic base has proven an effective means of destroying the resistance.[38]

Within all stages of military involvement in Afghanistan, Soviet forces have been plagued with a problem typical of any force in a police action—periods of life-threatening situations interspersed with periods of extreme boredom. This has led to problems in morale and drug abuse by Soviet soldiers.

A primary reason for morale problems in Afghanistan is that Soviet troops have no clear concept of whom or what they are fighting for. According to one Soviet soldier who defected to fight on the side of the *mujahidin*:

Everything was bad at our base. We had to work all the time and did not even have a chance to wash our clothes. The dining hall was dirty and there was a bad smell. If a soldier was hurt or wounded, he was given first aid and was not sent to a hospital and put in bed. Every week, someone tried to escape. The Soviet troops can't find the mujahideen so they kill civilians. . . . Our officers said we must go into a village and kill all the people and animals, sheep, horses, even dogs and cats. But I thought it was the mujahideen who were fighting against us—not dogs and cats. No one wants to be in Afghanistan. . . . If they were told that they could leave, they would not wait for a truck or a plane, but would walk 10,000 kilometers back to their homes.[39]

Soviet commanders have experienced difficulties explaining to their troops that they are in Afghanistan as liberators. Soviet soldiers are told they will be fighting Americans, Chinese and Pakistanis. In the Soviet Union, newsreels shown on television reveal US tanks and planes in Afghanistan. When the soldiers arrive in Afghanistan and find no one but the local population, they are confused. The Soviets have decreased attempts to justify the war to their soldiers and have also decreased attempts to win over the population. But, when a military force is involved in a war and has no military, political or moral goals in which the force believes and around which the force can unite, problems evolve, and the effectiveness of the force quickly dwindles.

According to several Soviet defectors, drug abuse is a major problem of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan, one of the largest producers of opium and hashish in the world.[40] The Soviet soldier's drug problem in Afghanistan is similar to that of the US soldier's in Vietnam. Soldiers are frightened, far from home, under immense pressure and bored. Some soldiers sell gasoline, ammunition and stolen guns to support their drug habit. A Soviet Kalashnikov rifle brings the equivalent of $1,100 on the Afghan black market.[41] In Afghanistan, that amount easily supports a drug habit.

Soviet soldiers get paid in rubles which also creates a problem. To purchase hashish or

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

opium, soldiers must pay in afghanis, the Afghan currency. A Soviet private makes approximately five to eight rubles a month. Soldiers consequently sell their boots, rifle slings, sunglasses, flight jackets, transistors, razors and food in the town market to buy opium and hashish with afghanis.

Another characteristic found within all stages of military involvement in Afghanistan has been the widespread violation of human rights. Although the Soviets have banned Western news media from covering the war, reports of atrocities have leaked across the border through the continuous flow of refugees and from journalists who make frequent unauthorized trips into Afghanistan.

Several US *Department of State Bulletins* have cited the use of chemical warfare in Afghanistan. For example, a 1982 bulletin said the Soviets were using the deadly trichothecene mycotoxins or "yellow rain" in Afghanistan. These chemicals can cause a burning sensation in the mouth, vomiting and diarrhea, and then they disturb the central nervous system. The third stage of the illness involves severe hemorrhages which can result in death. Trichothecene mycotoxins thus produce a long and painful death.

The widespread use of toy bombs and antipersonnel mines, making victims of the civilian population, women and children in particular, and refusing to accept Afghan opposition members as prisoners of war but as political prisoners are further examples of the human rights problem in Afghanistan.[42]

Although world opinion is on the side of the Afghan population and the *mujahidin*, the Soviets continue to ignore and disclaim it. Human rights violations are, in a sense, intertwined within the Soviet military doctrine—there are few human rights when the end justifies the means. Thus, it is doubtful that there will be drastic changes made toward these violations until the Afghan resistance is defeated.

In future operations, the Soviets will continue to rely on special operations while maintaining control of the cities, protecting the lines of communication and driving the insurgents away from their economic base through scorched-earth tactics and economic warfare. By using special operations as a necessary strategic auxiliary to orthodox operations, the Soviets can obtain the upper hand in Afghanistan.

Guerrilla tactics are not successful unless they complement a main force, and this is where the *mujahidin* are at a disadvantage. They have no tightly organized army with which to defeat the Soviet military. But Mao Tse-tung, in his book *On Guerrilla Warfare*, wrote that no military force can emerge victorious if it is cruel to the inhabitants of the conquered areas, if it underestimates rebel strength and if it conducts operations without planning and intelligence,[41] all of which the Soviets are guilty of.

The Soviets appear to be in Afghanistan for some time to come. To completely defeat the *mujahidin*, who consider the conflict a *jihad* or holy war, the Soviets will have to occupy and control both the rural and urban areas in Afghanistan. This will consume much money and a larger occupying force. The *jihad* is a powerful weapon—one which the Soviets have yet to overcome—and this is the reason that the Soviets will never completely defeat the resistance. MR

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7

NOTES

1 James Gerstenzang, "Afghanistan Helps Soviets Rewrite Their War Textbooks," *The Kansas City Star*, 19 January 1986.
2 Yossef Bodansky, "Afghanistan: The Soviet Air War," *Defense & Foreign Affairs*, September 1985, p 12.
3 *Ibid.*, p 14.
4 *Voina v Afganistane (The War in Afghanistan)*, Posev, Frankfurt, Federal Republic of Germany, 1980, p 32.
5 *Ibid.*, p 9.
6 Major Joseph J. Collins, "The Soviet Military Experience in Afghanistan," *Military Review*, May 1985, p 22.
7 Robert L. Canfield, "Western Stakes in the Afghan War," *Central Asian Survey*, 1985, Volume 4, Number 1, p 122.
8 Bodansky, *op. cit.*, p 13.
9 *Ibid.*, p 14.
10 *Ibid.*
11 *Ibid.*
12 Edgar O'Ballance, "Soviet Tactics in Afghanistan," *Military Review*, August 1980, p 48.
13 *Ibid.*, p 50.
14 *Sovetskaya voennaya entsiklopedya (Soviet Military Encyclopedia)*, Voyenizdat, Moscow, USSR, 1978, Volume 5, p 676.
15 *Ibid.*, p 506.
16 I. Sobran, "*Strel'ba iz tankov v gorakh*" ("Difficulties of Tanks in the Mountains"), *Voyennyi Vestnik (Military Herald)*, May 1982, pp 79-80.
17 *Ibid.*, p 82.
18 For detailed accounts of mountain warfare and mountain training, see *Voyennyi Vestnik (Military Herald)*, Number 7 and Number 9, 1984, and Number 1, 1985.
19 I. Klyachin, "Khimicheskoe obespechenie v gorakh" ("Chemical Security in Mountains"), *Voyennyi Vestnik (Military Herald)*, Number 9, 1984, p 84.
20 Collins, *op. cit.*, p 23.
21 V. Spitsyn, "*Rota oboroniaetsia v gorakh*" ("A Platoon Defends in the Mountains"), *Voennyi Vestnik (Military Herald)*, Number 7, 1984, p 34.
22 Major John M. Hutcheson, "Scorched Earth Policy: Soviets in Afghanistan," *Military Review*, April 1982, p 33.
23 *Ibid.*, p 34.
24 John Keegan, "The Ordeal of Afghanistan," *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1985, p 103.
25 Joseph J. Collins, "The Soviet-Afghan War: The First Four Years," *Parameters*, Summer 1984, p 49.
26 Collins, "The Soviet Military Experience in Afghanistan," *Military Review*, *op. cit.*, p 20.
27 Bodansky, *op. cit.*, p 12.
28 *Ibid.*, p 14.
29 *Komsomal'skaia Pravda*, 4 February 1983, p 4.
30 Bodansky, *op. cit.*, p 16.
31 Collins, "The Soviet-Afghan War: The First Four Years," *Parameters*, *op. cit.*, p 52.
32 *Ibid.*
33 David K. Willis, "Soviet Union Faces Rising Costs, Uncertainties in Holding Third-World Gains," *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 February 1986, p 40.
34 Collins, "The Soviet Military Experience in Afghanistan," *Military Review*, *op. cit.*, p 18.
35 *Ibid.*, p 23.
36 *Ibid.*, p 25.
37 *Ibid.*, p 18.
38 Keegan, *op. cit.*
39 *Ibid.*, p A12.
40 Arthur Bonner, "Afghanistan's Other Front: A World of Drugs," *The New York Times*, 2 November 1985, p 1.
41 *Ibid.*
42 Felix Ermacora, "Human Rights in Afghanistan," *Survival*, July-August 1985, p 196.
43 Samuel B. Griffith, *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, Praeger Publishers, N.Y., 1961, pp 104-5.

First Lieutenant Kip McCormick is with the 501st Military Intelligence Battalion, 1st Armored Division, Katterbach, Federal Republic of Germany. He received a master's degree in Soviet and East European studies from the University of Kansas and completed the Russian-language program at Leningrad State University, USSR. His assignments include serving as the tactical operations officer, G2, 35th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Kansas Army National Guard, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1987 - 180-960 - 318/60127

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2014/01/31 : CIA-RDP05S00365R000300140001-7