

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr Borel, CIG <sup>secretariat</sup> DATE: 22 July 1947

FROM :

SUBJECT:

The enclosed two copies of a Country Study on Afghanistan are forwarded to the CIG for comment. There have been approval

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COPY NO. 1

18 July 1947

COUNTRY REPORT ON AFGHANISTAN

Report to the

SPECIAL AD HOC COMMITTEE

by the

SWNC Subcommittee for the Near and Middle East

DOCUMENT NO. 1  
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.   
 DECLASSIFIED  
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C  
NEXT REVIEW DATE:  
AUTH: HR 70-2  
DATE: 12 MAR 80 REVIEWER: 006514

Document No.
No Change in Class. <input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Declassified
Class. Changed to: TS S C
Next Review Date:
Auth: <u>365107</u>
Date: <u>11/79</u>

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for the Near and Middle EastBACKGROUNDI. ANALYSIS OF SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

1. Basic Forces. Afghanistan, with an estimated population of 12,000,000, is an area of ethnological transition between the Persian and Islamic civilizations of the West, the Sovietized Turki and Mongol forces of the North, and the politically restless Indian masses to the Southeast. Geographically, the country is of considerable strategic importance in that it possesses the best route to India from Soviet Central Asia. Practically all invasions of this region have come from the north or northwest and have been aimed at India. The great Afghan mountain ranges, depending upon who controls them, have stood as a barrier against ground movement from inner Asia southward, or the strategic passes through these mountains have afforded an open gateway to India from the north. Militarily, Afghanistan is incapable of waging modern offensive war. She is capable, however, of exerting a concerted effort on the Indian frontier and, by guerrilla tactics and with some outside encouragement, of creating some delay against Soviet penetration of her mountain barriers.

Economically, Afghanistan is barely self sufficient with respect to food alone. Most of her requirements for other necessities must come from foreign sources. As regards such basic factors as raw material, industry, transport, communications, education and technical know-how, she remains largely undeveloped. She has made great strides to improve herself in recent years, but her efforts in this respect were interrupted and set back by the war. Financially, she has built up a considerable dollar credit by the export of caracul skins to U.S. during the war, but this was possible only because her isolated

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position precluded the purchase of any but a bare minimum of essentials during this period. In the meantime, there has grown a backlog of consumer requirements, plus a demand for foreign exchange to implement her long delayed development program. Social and cultural conditions in the country remain far below the standards aimed at fifteen years ago by the Afghan Government. The educational program, organized during the middle thirties but disrupted by the loss of French and German teachers during the war, is only now getting under way. The Afghans realize that political unrest may grow from retarded development, illiteracy and social discontent, and to alleviate this they are urgently seeking foreign assistance in all these fields. They are turning largely to the U.S. for this assistance. We are the only nation except Russia who might undertake to satisfy this need, and so far the Afghans have avoided Russia.

Politically, the Afghan Government is vigorous and comparatively progressive. There is no political vacuum here. This Government is friendly to the western democracies, and Afghanistan remains one of the last peripheral countries not under Soviet influence. During the war she maintained a strict neutrality despite Axis efforts to embroil her in frontier warfare which would have engaged the British-American forces in India. Since the war she has resolutely withstood Soviet overtures, and she is now standing aloof from Indian political issues. Each of these Afghan political decisions reacted to the benefit of our own national interests by maintaining tranquillity in this critical area. The main consideration of the Afghan Government now is for a period of peace to permit internal development. Political conditions within the country, however, in addition to continued Soviet pressure on Iran and the contemplated British withdrawal from India, are such as to place high demands on the requirements of internal security. The indirect threat to security on the Soviet-Iranian frontier is external. In the event of trouble here Afghanistan's only

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recourse would be the UN. In the east the authority of the Government depends on its control of the recalcitrant Afghan tribes along the India frontier. These strong tribes, from a long feudal history, are only now in the process of being welded into the Afghan national entity and they still take issue with the Central Government on various questions of administrative authority. Important elements of these tribes reside in British India (NWFP), and other elements migrate annually across the international frontier. It is estimated that the Afghan members of these tribes collectively can muster upwards of 250,000 riflemen. Afghan Government authority throughout the country generally is backed by a military establishment of about 70,000 regular troops with a small airforce, plus 15,000 to 20,000 Gendarmerie and municipal police. Afghan Government control of the frontier tribes, therefore, rests on a delicate balance of power. This is supported by British cooperation. If these frontier tribes get out of control, as they may do if British power is withdrawn from India, Afghanistan stands in danger of being drawn into an Indian conflict and possibly broken up by the backwash of a disintegrating India. To enable the Government to remain isolated from a probable Indian conflict, and maintain its present stiff front against the Soviets, materiel assistance to her security forces as well as assistance in other fields may be required.

2. Objectives and methods of other great powers.

Afghanistan has been the subject of active Anglo-Russian rivalry for more than a century. France has maintained an increasingly active interest in Afghanistan during the past quarter century. Turkish and German interests were paramount immediately prior to the present war, but the Germans are now eliminated and Turkish influence is decreasing. Iran, Italy, China, Iraq and Egypt maintain normal diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. Active U.S. interest dates from our entry into the present war.

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U.S.S.R. - An expanding Czarist Russia began encroaching on Afghanistan in the early 19th century, and intermittent Russian pressure on the northern frontier has continued since that time. The objectives have been to bring Afghanistan within the Russian orbit, to gain possession of the strategic Afghan mountain passes to open the way for Russian entry into India, and to enlarge the Soviet "defense in depth." This was stopped by British advances from India, and the creation of Afghanistan as a buffer state under British hegemony near the end of the century. Following the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and Afghan independence in 1919, Soviet influence came directly to bear on a sovereign Afghanistan; but always there remained the fact of British power in India to be reckoned with. As this is now being withdrawn or weakened, and Afghanistan is being left isolated from any counter balance except a divided India, there is increasingly clear evidence that present Soviet policy is actively pursuing the Czarist objectives of a century ago. The Soviet method of attaining these objectives appears, at the moment, to be dependent on developments in India, and possibly Iran. If Afghanistan should be broken up by tribal war brought on by conflict in India, the Soviets may move in under the guise of protecting Afghan minorities in the north which are ethnically related to her own southern republics. If the withdrawal of British power leaves a weak divided India, Soviet policy may goad the Afghans to encroach on India, with the idea of later bringing an expanded Afghanistan into the Soviet orbit. If the Indian conflict should sever Afghanistan's economic life-line from Indian ports, the Afghans may be forced to turn to Russia for economic aid. In the meantime, the Soviets maintain the threat of incidents on the north frontier pending implementation of the border agreement; they indirectly threaten western Afghanistan by constant pressure on Iran; they direct occasional radio and press blasts from Tashkent and Moscow berating a "reactionary" Afghan Government; they are conducting small-scale infiltration of agents in the north, and maintaining

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illicit liaison with the NWF tribes; they have considerably increased their Embassy staff since before the war, and have attempted to gain supervision of the former German School in Kabul; they have protested American activities in Afghanistan as part of alleged general U.S. strategy to encircle Russia; they are believed to be sponsoring Iranian press attacks on Afghanistan, pertaining to the diversion of the Helmand River water; they have recently improved their roads approaching the Afghan border; and they are actively engaged in the economic development of the Tashkent-Samarkand area.

U.K. - After Britain forced out Russian interest near the end of the century her chief concern has been to maintain Afghanistan as a buffer between India and the North. This was accomplished by exercising control over Afghan foreign relations. After Afghan independence in 1919 Britain continued sensitive to Afghan-Soviet relations, but her policy, otherwise, became one of non-interference so long as the Afghan Government was able to maintain peace on India's N.W. Frontier. When tribal revolts occurred on this frontier the two Governments cooperated effectively to restore order. Since the beginning of World War II, British objectives in Afghanistan have been essentially identical with our own, and have recently been so described by the British authorities. Her principal aims are to support the independence of Afghanistan, to insure the stability of this critical frontier region, and to prevent a possible Soviet political penetration of India through Afghanistan. Britain's method of accomplishing these objectives has been to aid Afghanistan, through the Government of India, by facilitating the movement of goods through India to the Afghan frontier, by establishing export quotas from India for such critical commodities as cotton textiles, gasoline, oil, sugar, tires and other products; by subsidizing teachers and technicians employed by the Afghan Government to bring their salaries up to British levels; by supplying the Afghan Government with arms and military equipment for internal security when urgent need

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arose; by maintaining a British training mission in the Afghan Air Force; by training Afghan military officers in service schools of the British-Indian Army; and by maintaining effective control of the restless frontier tribal territories. Since the war, however, British energy has been largely absorbed by the unrest in India, and British policy toward Afghanistan is presently under review in the light of possible developments in India.

France - French influence in Afghanistan dates from 1921 and has been mainly cultural. Before the war, the French School was the most influential in Afghanistan, and French archeological research was well advanced. This ended during the war, but has been vigorously revived since 1945. At present the French School in Kabul is fully staffed, the archeological mission is again active, and French doctors and nurses in increasing numbers are taking positions in Kabul. French personnel of these categories are subsidized by the French Government.

## II. ANALYSIS OF ASSISTANCE ALREADY GIVEN,

1. Political and economic premises on which assistance was based. Only indirect assistance has been extended by the U.S. to Afghanistan. Such assistance has been in the interest of developing sound national character, and elements tending to respond to and create democratic institutions, which offer the firmest bases for the investment of American economic, cultural and technical aid. These bases exist in Afghanistan and should be encouraged.

2. Summary of assistance given. There has been no Lend-Lease or other direct assistance to Afghanistan from the United States aside from small grants-in-aid from the President's wartime emergency fund to supplement the salaries of several American teachers in Kabul. This has now lapsed. Since the spring of 1947 one OIC officer and one clerk have been assigned, and funds appropriated for an informational and cultural exchange



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program. Otherwise, economic assistance has been indirect, taking the form of such support as we have rendered the Afghans in their search for educational facilities, technical skills, economic development, consumer goods, and medical supplies. In these fields we have sponsored the employment by the Afghans of several American teachers and engineers, and we have encouraged the negotiation of contracts between the Afghan Government and an American engineering firm for the construction of roads and irrigation projects, now aggregating \$16,500,000 and employing about 150 American personnel. During the war we allocated to Afghanistan limited quantities of essential consumer goods, and several hundred trucks to bolster their transport system. Since the war we have released to the Afghan Army a small shipment of U.S. Army surplus hospital equipment (from India), and a small shipment of grain to supplement shortages resulting from drought. Recently our efforts have achieved improved rail transportation across India to Afghanistan. All costs of such goods and services have been paid for by the Afghans without recourse to credit - a noteworthy demonstration of the country's ability and willingness to help herself.

3. Assistance pending or contemplated.

a. Credit - The Afghan Cabinet has under consideration with the United States Minister at Kabul a proposed application for credit. A loan of \$50,000,000 has been suggested. This credit is designed to supplement the present short term development program now being actively prosecuted by a contracting American engineering firm, and to institute long-range projects of a self-liquidating character. Such a credit would be devoted to projects under the following headings, in the order of priority as listed:

- (1) Education and technical training.
- (2) Hydro-electric development
- (3) Irrigation.
- (4) Communications, including air transport, and telecommunications.

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(5) Development of mineral and petroleum resources.

(6) Light industries.

In implementing this proposed program the Afghan Government contemplates that American experts and firms would be extensively employed and that they would be paid in dollars. A new departure from Afghan economic practice would welcome the eventual participation of private American capital in productive enterprise in Afghanistan up to 50% ownership.

b. Educational and cultural services. The Afghan Ministry of Education has requested U.S. assistance in procuring a sufficient number of American educational advisors and teachers to staff three American colleges in Afghanistan. Under the Fulbright Act, local currencies acquired from the sale of surplus military property can be used for educational exchange; however, to date no Afghan currency has accrued from such sales.

4. Economic effects of assistance given. Notable economic effects from indirect American assistance are as follows: The threatened breakdown of internal transportation in 1944-1945 was averted by the arrival of several hundred American trucks, which enabled the country to maintain fuel and food distribution and to transport necessities from India. In 1946, during a mounting inflation this Government assisted in the importation of textiles and grain, thus easing a threatening situation. Pressure by this Government for increased rail facilities through India has begun the movement of heavy equipment for the American contracting firm engaged in public works projects in Afghanistan. The potential effects of the additional assistance contemplated are great. Education is an indispensable basis for an expansion of the national economy to enable the Afghans to operate and conserve their internal improvements. The development of power, mineral and oil resources, and local industries will largely free the country from the economic pressure of her neighbors and release her foreign exchange. New highways will effect a change from animal to motor transport, lower commodity costs, enable the development of mineral resources, and create a demand for many new items of trade.

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5. Political effects of assistance given. From the viewpoint of the Afghan Government, two compelling political considerations are involved in the indirect assistance which we have rendered up to now. The first is the necessity of maintaining the stability of the existing regime, and of integrating the loyalties of the tribes to the central government; and the second is avoidance of the compulsions of the Soviet economic system. Evidences of progress convince the people that the Government sincerely intends to improve living conditions. In 1946 and 1947, 16,500 tons of American grain arrived at a critical moment for the central government in its relations with outlying areas, where economic need was creating an opportunity for Soviet penetration. The distribution of this grain strengthened the influence of the central government in these areas, and reacted to the advantage of the growing American community in Afghanistan.

OBJECTIVESIII. UNITED STATES OBJECTIVES IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is of considerable strategic interest to the United States as a protective barrier to Soviet penetration of all southeastern Asia, where about 25 per cent of the world's population is now emerging in independent states, and where overpopulation, low literacy, lack of political experience and great natural wealth afford an exceptionally attractive field for Soviet action. Since the war, Afghanistan has proved to be naturally resistant to Soviet advances in this direction. Our objectives in Afghanistan are: To promote her continued independence and stability; to encourage active, more effective participation by Afghanistan in the activities of the United Nations and of the UN specialized agencies; and to insure that the Afghan Government and people understand American policies and institutions. We should extend aid to assist Afghanistan to develop an expanding economy, elevate living standards and alleviate social discontent which may lead to political unrest.

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We seek to broaden and intensify her role in international affairs as an independent state. An axiom of our policy in seeking these objectives should be that we precipitate no action that will deliberately provoke strong counter-action against Afghanistan by her neighbors.

PROGRAMIV. MEANS OF REACHING OBJECTIVES.

1. Economic. To attain our objectives the United States should assist the Afghanistan Government in obtaining the services of U.S. concerns as required to develop the natural resources of that country. We should continue to meet Afghan requests for highly qualified, technical experts to serve as government advisors. We should find the means to assign U.S. Government personnel to some positions in Afghanistan at the request of that government. We should assist Afghanistan to expand her trade with us and countries friendly to us. Due consideration should be given to Afghanistan in the priority allocation of items in short supply necessary to alleviate hardships in that country. The short treaty of friendship, commerce and navigation now being formulated should be considered at an early date. When the economic development program now undertaken by the Afghan Government, under American contracts, exceeds the country's present foreign exchange resources, the U.S. should give sympathetic consideration to Afghanistan's efforts to secure a loan from international, private or United States sources. In order to insure contact with the Western Democracies, in the event of interrupted communications through India which would force Afghanistan to turn to Russia, the feasibility of opening a new route into southwestern Afghanistan from an Iranian port on the Gulf of Oman should be explored. This might be done in connection with and as part of an over-all settlement of the Iran-Afghan Helmand question.

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2. Political. The U.S. should give its strong diplomatic support to the independence and stability of Afghanistan. It is aware that we have no such imperial designs in Asia as motivated British policies in the 19th century and are now guiding Soviet maneuvers. Nevertheless, the Afghans are subjected to virulent Soviet propaganda that our interests in Asia are imperialistic. It is essential that we counter this serious Soviet misrepresentation with the presentation of factual news.

3. United Nations. From her past experience as a small nation between two powerful rivals and her present knowledge that she is a probable target of Soviet expansion, Afghanistan has come to rely greatly on such protection as is afforded by world organizations and world opinion. She was a member of the League of Nations, and on November 19, 1946, she became the first new member of the United Nations. Her role in international affairs and her support from democratic Members of the United Nations can be strengthened by improved staffing of her mission to the United Nations and by membership in the specialized agencies. The United States can assist her in this regard and at the same time promote friendly relations between the two Governments by providing technical assistance and advice, by training Afghan personnel in U.N. activities, by supporting Afghan representation in the Councils, Commissions, etc., of international bodies, and by supporting proposals designed to extend to Afghanistan the services of these organizations. Some of these organizations can, once they enter into full operation, help to improve economic and social conditions in Afghanistan. In the event of any overt act or aggressive action by the USSR, Afghanistan's only possible recourse would be an appeal to the United Nations, where the U.S. should take a strong stand in support of such an appeal.

4. Cultural and Informational. The United States should provide, upon request, reasonable technical, informational and cultural assistance to Afghanistan, including education in the United States for promising Afghan students.

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5. Military. Afghanistan has no arms industry of practical significance, nor any local supply of other military equipment. To meet the burdensome but necessary material requirements for maintenance of internal security, she must turn to foreign sources. At present she depends mainly on the British for these requirements. We should be prepared to meet an Afghan request for this need in the event of British withdrawal of this assistance. It would be desirable at this time to obtain legislative authority to provide such aid as may be necessary to maintain internal security should the request come urgently and unexpectedly.

V. NATURE, MAGNITUDE AND TIMING OF MEASURES REQUIRED TO MEET OBJECTIVES.

1. Economic.

a. The implementation of Afghanistan's longer-range economic program now being planned, coupled with mounting costs within the country, will require foreign assistance. It is for this purpose that the Afghan Government has indicated its intention to seek a loan of \$50,000,000. It is anticipated that this will be required in part during 1947-1948.

b. Since the war the Afghan Government has been informally urging the inclusion of Afghanistan in an American operated commercial air service; and they are presently pressing for an American firm to modernize their telecommunications system. On the basis of preliminary surveys it is estimated that these projects will take years for completion. Unless undertaken this year, the Afghans will probably turn elsewhere for this assistance. Technical and possible financial assistance from ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) and possible technical assistance in telecommunications from the ITU (to be related to UN), might help Afghanistan to develop its technical facilities without promoting undue dependence on one country.

c. The establishment in Kabul during 1947-1948 of private American trading firms should be promoted.

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2. Political. We should take immediate steps to elevate the U.S. Legation at Kabul to an Embassy, and to conclude the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation now in draft. The hope of receiving a U.S. Embassy in Kabul should prove an incentive to ready Afghan acceptance of the Treaty. These steps aim at strengthening our political position in Afghanistan, enabling us to use our good offices most effectively in the adjustment of problems between Afghanistan and her neighbors, and enhancing the prestige of the Afghan Government in the growing circle of independent or autonomous Asiatic states.

3. United Nations. The United States should encourage and assist at the request of the Afghan Foreign Office the creation of an adequate United Nations Delegation. At present Afghanistan is not a member of UNESCO, FAO, Fund, Bank, WHO or IRO. The United States should encourage membership in each of these agencies, and should also encourage Afghanistan to use the United Nations and these specialized agencies for economic and social assistance.

4. Informational and Cultural. Afghan requests for approximately 50 additional American teachers and technical experts are pending and should be met by March 1, 1948. The U.S. Government should participate actively in screening and orienting American personnel engaged for service in Afghanistan.

#### VI. PROBABLE AVAILABILITY OF ECONOMIC AID.

1. Public credits from U.S. and International sources. The data available indicates that Afghanistan is not likely to be considered eligible for an Export-Import Bank loan. However, this conclusion is based upon only partial studies and omits numerous factors which point to a large future gap between earnings of foreign exchange and requirements therefor, which can only be made good by the availability of credit. It is believed, therefore, that a substantial case will be presented for a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. With the strong support of this Government such credit facilities appear to be available.

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2. Public credits from other countries. No source of direct public credit from other countries is known, with the possible exception of a credit from Soviet Russia. Bitter disillusionment with a former offer of financial assistance from Russia, plus the firmly resistant attitude of the present Government, preclude any possibility that Afghanistan would utilize this source except in the extreme event of an overthrow of the Government itself.

3. Private capital from the U.S. It is probable that the Afghan Government would welcome an active interest by private U.S. concerns in the development of Afghan resources. However, the uncertainty attending such investments might act to discourage such ventures.

4. Private capital investment by other countries. In certain cases Afghanistan might welcome investment of private capital from foreign countries other than the U.S. Should such countries, not within the Soviet orbit, prove to be available sources of capital, the U.S. should lend encouragement to their participation in Afghanistan's development. The availability of such capital is, however, regarded as less likely than in the case of the U.S. concerns.

It remains to be added that while means appear to exist for the U.K. and France to extend indirect financial aid to Afghanistan in the cultural and medical fields, there are no established means whereby the U.S. can do so either publicly or privately.

#### VII. ADDITIONAL MEASURES REQUIRED FROM THE U.S.

The fields in which American advisors to Afghanistan are employed should be broadened to include such human<sup>e</sup> activities as medicine and public health. Additional emphasis should be placed upon cultural and informational activities with greatest stress on education, insuring a flow of teachers from and students to the U.S.



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The American public should be made conscious of the international position of Afghanistan and of U.S. interest there, if our objectives are to have adequate public support. Accordingly access to information from official sources should be broadened.

In the event of possible British withdrawal from N.W. India, and of the support she has heretofore extended to Afghanistan, the Afghan Government may be forced to turn either to the United States or to Russia for arms to maintain internal law and order. In this circumstance, the present Afghan Government would probably request to purchase arms from the U.S. Legal authority should be established to comply with such requests as are clearly in our national interest.

Our Legation at Kabul should be raised to an Embassy at the earliest appropriate time.

VIII. NATURE OF ARRANGEMENTS WITH AFGHANISTAN TO ASSURE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF OUR OBJECTIVES IN TAKING SUCH MEASURES.

No specific guarantees seem to be indicated.

IX. EFFECTS UPON AFGHANISTAN AND UPON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY OF A U.S. REFUSAL TO GRANT AID.

1. Effects upon Afghanistan.

a. Economic. The following ~~alternative~~ economic effects upon the country might be expected:

(1) It would be indefinitely retarded in its economic development, and delayed in the development of sound commercial relations with India and other countries which are of paramount importance.

(2) In an economic extremity Afghanistan might be brought under the Communist economic system as the only means of survival. Afghanistan's principal resources are located in the north and she must inevitably permit their development by Russia if the western democracies do not assist her in developing them herself.

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b. Political. The following alternative political effects within the country might be anticipated:

(1) A tendency to turn for assistance to certain European nations, for example, France, Switzerland, or Sweden, none of which is sufficiently strong to contain Soviet advances in this direction.

(2) A decline in the prestige of the present ruling group and its replacement by a regime friendly to Soviet Russia.

(3) A change in political leadership which would be tempted to exploit unsettled conditions in India.

c. Strategic. If Afghanistan should be brought within the Soviet orbit an important physical barrier to Russian entry into India and southeast Asia would be removed. If Soviet military forces should occupy Afghanistan they would find themselves in strong positions which would facilitate any subsequent action against India.

2. Effects upon U.S. Foreign Policy.

a. Failure to render assistance to Afghanistan would indicate to Soviet Russia a soft spot which could be exploited, in an area where the latter's influence would be extremely difficult to dislodge.

b. Our policies in Iran and India would be weakened.

c. The influence of the U.S. would be set back by any failure to carry out such commitments as we have made.

d. The position of the United States in the United Nations would suffer. Afghanistan has tended to support our views in that body up to now, and her continued support would be desirable.

X. POSSIBLE EMERGENCY SITUATIONS TO BE ANTICIPATED AND U.S. ACTION INDICATED.

1. Possibilities of emergencies involving U.S. interest lie in the following situations:

a. The development of civil disorders in India, particularly in the northwest where Afghan tribesmen might

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become involved, and where Afghanistan's vital connections with the Western world might be severed. The U.S. should encourage the peaceful solution of such problems as they may arise on this frontier. In the event Afghanistan becomes involved in an expansionist movement toward India, United States over-all policy toward Afghanistan may necessarily have to be reviewed.

b. The question of the diversion of the water of the Helmand River, which is now being exploited in the Iranian Press partly at Soviet instigation, might become an issue between the two countries. The U.S. should continue its efforts and extend its good offices to effect a settlement between the two countries through normal diplomatic channels. The operations of the International Joint Commission, U.S. and Canada, and of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, may serve as useful models of procedure in this matter.

c. The delimitation of the Russian-Afghan boundary along the Ox<sup>us</sup> River which was subject of an agreement a year ago, may yet present difficulties involving danger to Afghanistan. If the controversy should be revived, this Government in the first instance might advise a survey by an impartial boundary commission. Otherwise, it should promote a settlement under U.N. auspices on the merits of the situation.

2. Lesser possibilities of emergencies appear in:

a. Possible tribal uprisings, elsewhere than the India border area. The U.S., in order to be of assistance in promoting close relations between the Afghan tribes and the Central Government, should take steps to inform itself of the problems in the tribal areas.

b. Food shortages. This is unlikely in the current year. However, in the event of a repetition of the 1946 drought the U.S. should repeat its support of a food allocation from international sources.

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COUNTRY REPORT ON AFGHANISTAN

SUMMARY

15 August 1947

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Next Review Date:	
Auth:	HR 70-3
Date:	6/2/79
By:	365107

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S E C R E TA P P E N D I XAFGHANISTANS U M M A R Y

Afghanistan, with an estimated population of 12,000,000, is an area of ethnological transition, (bordered on the north by the USSR, the east by China and India, the south by India, and the west by Iran). Geographically, the country is of considerable strategic importance in that it possesses the best route to India from Soviet Central Asia. Militarily, Afghanistan is incapable of waging modern offensive war. Economically, she is barely self-sufficient with respect to food alone. Financially, she has built up a considerable dollar credit during the war. Politically, the Afghan Government is vigorous and comparatively progressive. The main consideration of the Government now is for a period of peace to permit internal development.

Afghanistan has been the subject of active Anglo-Russian rivalry for more than a century. The objectives of Russian policy are to bring Afghanistan within the Soviet orbit, to gain possession of the strategic Afghan mountain passes to open the way for Russian entry into India, and to enlarge the Soviet "defense in depth". Since the beginning of World War II, British objectives have been essentially identical with our own. Her principal aims are to support the independence of Afghanistan, to insure the stability of this critical frontier region, and to prevent a possible Soviet political penetration of India through Afghanistan. United States objectives in Afghanistan are: To promote her continued independence and stability; to encourage active, more effective participation by Afghanistan in the activities of the United Nations and of the UN specialized agencies; and to insure that the Afghan Government and people understand American policies and institutions.

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Only limited, indirect assistance has been extended by the United States to Afghanistan.

To obtain our objectives the United States should give strong diplomatic support to the independence and stability of Afghanistan and encourage her to increase her activity in the UN and her use of that institution's special agencies. We should assist the Afghan Government in obtaining the services of United States concerns as required to develop the natural resources of that country. We should continue to meet Afghan requests for highly qualified technical experts and teachers. Assistance should be given in the expansion of her trade and communications, in sympathetic consideration to her efforts to obtain a loan from international, private, or United States sources in connection with her economic development program. The United States should also provide, upon request, reasonable technical, informational and cultural assistance. We should be prepared to meet an Afghan request for military equipment for the maintenance of internal security, should present British assistance of this type be withdrawn.

Should the United States refuse to grant aid to Afghanistan the economic development of the country would be indefinitely retarded with the possibility that an extremity might force her into the Soviet orbit as the only means of survival. The entry of Afghanistan into the Soviet orbit would remove an important physical barrier to Russian entry into India and southeast Asia. Failure to render assistance to Afghanistan would indicate to the USSR a soft spot for exploitation; weaken our policies in Afghanistan, India and Iran; and damage our position in the UN.

In preparation for such emergency situations as may arise, the United States should take steps now to gather fuller information on special subjects, especially on tribal questions.

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