

### Soviet Access to Warm-Water Ports From Afghanistan

The Soviet military movement into Afghanistan positions USSR armed forces little more 400 kilometers by air from the Indian Ocean, and it revives speculation concerning the century-old Russian quest for a warm-water port. Between Afghanistan and the Indian Ocean lies Baluchistan, a periodically troubled tribal territory that is divided politically between Iran and Pakistan. Although the Baluchi coastline, extending for nearly 1,000 kilometers, lacks good natural harbors, it does have several small ports currently used by local fishing boats and by sea-going dhows that serve points in the Persian Gulf.

#### Ports

The best port for development along the Baluchi coast is at Chah Bahar in the Iranian province of Sistan va Baluchistan. The former Shah had envisioned a small naval facility there from which shipping in the Gulf of Oman could be monitored and that would augment Iran's major naval base at Bandar Abas on the Strait of Hormuz. Although the naval installations and port improvements necessary for it never got beyond the planning stage, considerable work was completed on the airbase. The approximately 3,000-meter runways are operable, though only limited support facilities had been completed.

The major advantage of Chah Bahar over other ports on the Baluchi coast is that during the summer monsoon the sea approaches to Chah Bahar experience more subdued sea conditions. Nevertheless, much of the embayment at Chah Bahar is open to onshore surf, and heavy surf is typical of the northern shore of the bay. Some protection for anchorages is afforded by headlands on either side of the bay, at the small town of Chah Bahar on the east side, and at Konarak on the west side where the naval facility was to have been constructed. Depths in the bay range up to 6 fathoms.

The Baluchi ports in Pakistan, principally at Gwadar and Pasni, are less promising for development. Only small fishing settlements are located there, they lack easy good road access, and heavy sea conditions frequently preclude use during the southwest monsoon months. The ferry supply ship between Karachi and Gwadar, for example, does not operate during the summer months.

#### Access Routes

Access to the Baluchi coast from Afghanistan is limited to an eastern and western route separated by several hundred kilometers of difficult and largely uninhabited country possessing no through north-to-south roads. The eastern route from southeastern Afghanistan connects Qandahar (Kandahar), via Quetta, to Karachi; the western route leads from Herat in western Afghanistan to Mashhad in Iran, then southward to Chah Bahar. RANDS

The best road access from southeastern Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean is the paved all-weather route from Qandahar via the Chaman Pass to Quetta in Pakistan, and thence to Karachi. A railroad parallels the route within Pakistan. This is a principal route for Afghanistan's imports and exports.

The western route from Afghanistan to Chah Bahar connects Mashhad in northeastern Iran via Iranshahr and Zahedan by a good all-weather road; the road from Meshed to Herat in Afghanistan is part of the Pan-Asian highway that runs from Istanbul to Dacca in Bangladesh. Thus, all-weather roads provide a connection with the rail terminus at Kushka in the Soviet Union by a relatively direct route to the limited capacity port at Chah Bahar on the Indian Ocean overlooking the Gulf of Oman.

The section of the road between Chah Bahar and Zahedan in Baluchistan via Nikshahr, Iranshahr, and Khash--a distance of about 845 kilometers--was completed several years ago. It is a two-lane, bituminous-surfaced highway,

with a capacity of about 18,000 metric tons per day. At Zahedan, a secondary route runs a distance of about 170 kilometers to the border town of Zabol. This road was being improved; some sections have been upgraded to two-lanes, with bituminous surface, but the remainder is still under construction. In Afghanistan, the first 20 kilometers of the road between the Iran border and Dilaran is a one-lane earth track that is under improvement; the remaining 130 kilometers is also one-lane, but has been improved by bituminous surface treatment. The carrying capacity of the route in Afghanistan is low.

Between these two major routes no through north-to-south roads exist. This is the heart of Baluchistan where the terrain alternates between sandy to salt-baked clay basins and low east-west trending mountain ranges that generally parallel the coast. Lack of water and searing heat and high-velocity winds in summer added to its moonscape appearance have deterred development in spite of its location as a historic bridge between the Middle East and the subcontinent of India. There is, however, one modern east-west route. A road and a railroad traverse the region between Quetta and the Iranian border, where the road continues into the Iranian portion of Baluchistan at the transport junction at Zahedan.

The above information is Unclassified

Geography Division, OGCR

### SOVIET-AFGHAN SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ROUTES

The Soviets have several optional surface routes over which they can move personnel and freight from the interior to the USSR-Afghan border. A relatively dense transportation network exists in the Central Asian region of the USSR opposite Afghanistan. The focus of movement by surface routes is the transshipment border towns of Kushka near the tri-border junction of Iran, Afghanistan and the USSR, and Termez in the central part of the USSR-Afghan border zone. Each of these centers is served by all-weather roads and a railroad line which connect the Trans-Caspian railroad trunkline with the border. Mary, a junction on the Trans-Caspian, to Kushka is 315 kilometers and the railroad line from Samarkand to Termez is 490 kilometers.

Because there are no railroads in Afghanistan, deployment of military personnel, equipment, and supplies from the USSR into Afghanistan can be effected in only two ways: by air and by road. The option of road transport from Soviet border points to the principal cities of Afghanistan--and Kabul in particular--is restricted for practical purposes to two routes: from Termez to Sher Khan on the Amudar'ya and southward over the Hindu Kush mountains to Kabul, and, more circuitously, from Kushka via Herat

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and Qandahar to Kabul. Both roads were constructed during the 1960s; the section from Kabul to Qandahar by the US and the remainder by the USSR.

The most direct route is from Termez, the rail terminal in the USSR, by barge 160 kilometers up the Amudar'ya to the military port at Sher Khan in Afghanistan. The 398-kilometer road south of Sher Khan via Kunduz and the Salang Pass to Kabul is a well-engineered highway through mountainous terrain. It is a two-lane, 10-meters wide (including shoulders) road with a high-grade bituminous surface. Built by the Soviets as part of an aid program, the road, and the tunnel in particular, are regarded as engineering feats. The highway is adequately maintained, and cleared of snow during the winter months. Most of the general cargo from the Soviet Union destined for Kabul uses this route. Because of the extremely rugged terrain, the tunnel and the road are vulnerable to sabotage. Earlier this year the road was closed at least once for a period of up to a week to clear sabotage-caused damage.

The alternate route from the USSR to Kabul crosses the border from the rail terminal at Kushka and extends southward to Herat, from where it skirts the southern slopes of the Hindu Kush to connect the principal cities of Herat and Qandahar with the capital at Kabul. This route, although considerably longer (1,162 kilometers) lacks known physically vulnerable choke points. The countryside is generally broad and open, and even in the eastern mountainous section

from Qandahar to Kabul traverses broad valleys. This road is also a two-lane 10-meters wide road (including shoulders). It has a concrete-slab surface in the Kushka-Qandahar section, and a high-grade bituminous surface from Qandahar to Kabul. It is subject to almost certain interdiction by both guerillas and/or bandits, and is considered unsafe for buses and even small convoys. The most dangerous stretches during the past year have been in a section 48 to 80 kilometers south of Herat, and in the section north of Qandahar between Qalat and a point north of Ghazni. Normally adequately maintained--the section between Herat and Qandahar is part of the Pan-Asian Highway--maintenance during the past year probably suffered as a result of increased guerilla activity. Normal maintenance would involve clearing the roadway of wind-blown sand in the summer time, and repair of damage from frost-heave and flash flooding in winter and early spring. The only important bridge is over the perennially flowing Helmand River. Bituminous surfaced links with the international highway system extend from Herat to the Iranian border at Islam Qala, and from Qandahar to the Pakistani border at Chaman. Five of the airfields used as security-control and supply points in Afghanistan are connected to the Herat-Qandahar-Kabul Road: Herat, Shindand, Farah, Qandahar International, and Ghazni.

The above information is Unclassified.