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REPORT NO. 

50X1

COUNTRY USSR (Mary Oblast)

DATE DISTR. 17 May 1954

SUBJECT The City of Kushka

NO. OF PAGES 12

DATE OF INFORMATION 

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REFERENCES:

PLACE ACQUIRED 

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

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Physical Characteristics

## 1. a. Location

Kushka  $\sqrt{N}$  35-16, E 62-247, was called a settlement (poselok - populated place larger than a village but smaller than a town). It was inside the walls of a fortress built in the late 19th century. It was in the Takhta-Bazar Rayon (district) and the Mary Oblast (area). Kushka lay in a flat grassy valley between hills which were about 200 m. high. It was  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 km. east of the USSR-Afghanistan border and 18 km. north of the border at the deepest apex  $\sqrt{\text{see Enclosure A}}$ . The town of Kushka was approximately 1,500 m. long and 800-1,000 m. wide. The Kushka River, which ran north and west of the town, was an intermittent stream. From March to May the maximum depth was three meters and the maximum width was 200-300 m. The rest of the year the river was dry or very low (20-30 cm. deep, and 2 to 3 m. wide). There were no bridges over the river, and crossing was accomplished either by wading or fording in the dry season.

b. Buildings  $\sqrt{\text{see Enclosure B}}$ 

The natives of Kushka lived in primitive, crudely furnished one-story stone huts without plumbing or electrical facilities. The better houses were occupied by officers of the 347th Rifle Div. and their dependents. There were two or three families per room, and 10 families per house. The largest building was a schoolhouse. There were also barracks, an army hospital, a store, a post office, a bank, and a government building. All the buildings were made of stone, and lacked plumbing facilities or indoor toilets.

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## c. Parks, Squares, Monuments, and Streets [see Enclosure B]

Kushka had three streets and three side alleys. Leading in and out of town were dirt lanes and paths. There were no primary or secondary roads. The main streets were paved with a tamped-down mixture of gravel and sand. South of the town there was a cement monument, built in 1912, honoring the 300th anniversary of the rule of the Romanovs. It was not destroyed or damaged during the revolution. In front of the officers' club there was a small park. There were no street lights.

Climate and Plant and Animal Life

2. The climate was dry and arid throughout the year. In the course of Source's stay in Kushka [redacted] it 50X1 rained three times, during December and March. The rains were of very short duration. Vegetation in the area included grasses and oak, linden, maple, white willow, and pistachio nut trees. Kolkhozy, sovkhoby, (sovkhob workers were paid in money, while kolkhoz workers were paid in kind by shares), and small privately owned gardens grew watermelons, cabbages, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, and radishes. Wheat was also grown, and there were fruit orchards of various kinds.
3. Source stated that in the desert area the grass was like powder. Sparks of a car or train, a cigarette carelessly thrown away, or a campfire improperly extinguished were enough to start fires. In such cases, all kolkhozniki, sovkhozniki, Border Guard Troops, and army personnel were drafted to fight the fire by setting counter fires, beating out the fire, and digging wide ditches across which the fire could not leap. There was no water for fire fighting.
4. [redacted] four large fires in the area of the 2nd Bn., 68th Border Guard Det. The main concern of the USSR authorities was to prevent the fire from spreading into Afghanistan. The USSR had to pay in bullion to Afghanistan for all damages caused by fires originating in the USSR.
5. The hills around Kushka were breeding grounds for spiders, scorpions, mosquitoes, and poisonous snakes. There was a species of gnat, called "pindik" by the natives, whose bite caused a face rash which lasted from six months to five years. Wild animals living in the hills included sheep, goats, and boar. Furbearing Persian (karakul) lambs were bred on the kolkhozy and sovkhoby. Each group had about 20,000-25,000 sheep.

History

6. In the latter part of the 19th century, exact date unknown, the Russian Gen. KUROPATKIN was engaged in a war with the Moslem tribes (Persians, Iraqis, and Turkmen). He was ordered to conquer Kushka [N 35-00, E 62-157], but due to the mountains he could not conquer the town. So he ordered a wall and a few houses to be built at [N 35-16, E 62-247], and called the place Kushka. Then he sent a telegram to Czar NICHOLAS II that he had occupied Kushka, and was awarded a medal for his "bravery". The wall was still standing [redacted] but was in ruins. World 50X1 War II did not touch Kushka.
7. Source knew of no plans for expansion. He stated that the population was decreasing. All men, after demobilization, settled elsewhere, preferring factory work and city life to the kolkhoz and sovkhob life in Kushka. Male and female kolkhoz and sovkhob workers were forbidden to quit their jobs and seek other employment in other cities, but this did not apply to demobilized soldiers. Of the male population in Kushka there were few men in the 20-40 age class.

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Native Population

8. The population consisted of about 500 families or 2,000-2,500 people. This figure included the following:
- Employees of store, restaurants, bank, post office, electro-stations, slaughter house, and teachers and political officers - 50 families;
  - Sovkhoz Pogradichnik - 100-150 families;
  - Morgunovskiy Kolkhoz - 150-200 families;
  - Poltava Kolkhoz - 150-200 families.

The latter two kohlkozy were merged to form the Trud Kolkhoz; Source did not remember the date.

9. In addition to these people, the town garrison had about 10,000 troops of the 347th Rifle Div., and about 150 troops of the 2nd Bn. 68th Border Guard Det. There were also about 600 families of senior and staff officers of the 347th Rifle Div., and about 20 families of Border Guard Troops officers living in Kushka.
10. The sovkhos north of Kushka were not considered part of Kushka. They were the Sovkhoz Pobeda (victory), Sovkhoz Chemen-I-BID, and Sovkhoz KALA-I-MOR [see Enclosure A]. Each had about 150-200 families.
11. The native populace of Kushka was a mixture of Great Russians, Ukrainians, Turkmen, Uzbeks, and Tadzhiks. Of these, the Turkmen were the most nationalistic, and there was much friction between them and the Russians. While Turkmen males frequently married Russian women, the opposite seldom occurred. The approximate breakdown, not counting military personnel, was as follows:
- |                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Turkmen                 | 30% |
| Russians and Ukrainians | 68% |
| Uzbeks                  | 1%  |
| Tadzhiks                | 1%  |
- About 60% were females of all ages, 15% were males under 20, 20% were males over 40, and only about 5% were males from 20-40.
12. There were no churches, mosques, or courts in Kushka. Source did not recall seeing a cemetery near Kushka, and he could give no information on a burial place.
13. There were no aliens in Kushka.

Government and Administration

14. The Settlement Council of Workers' Deputies (Poselkovyy Sovet Deputatov Trudyashchikhsya) was the main official administrative body in Kushka. The mayor, TELYATOV, was an Uzbek, about 45 years old and of medium build. He was also Chief of the MVD Counterintelligence Dept., Takhta-Bazar [N 35-57, E 62-50].
15. There was no militia station. A detail of one junior lieutenant and three to four militia sergeants were assigned to guard the state bank in the town. The sergeants had a room in the bank. They also kept their rifles there. The officer had a room in the Settlement Council building. The militiamen were always in uniform. Three or four times a month, the officer rode on a bicycle to Takhta-Bazar.

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16. There were no fire departments, jails, courts, penal camps, or PW camps in Kushka. Criminals were taken to Takhta-Bazar for trial and confinement. There was a school and a post office.

#### Military Activities

17. For information on military units in Kushka, see [redacted] 50X1  
There was no military training or air raid training for the civilians of Kushka. For airfields near Kushka, see [redacted] 50X1

#### Health and Sanitation

18. Potable water was obtained from artesian wells. Kushka had no sewer system. There was an army hospital subordinate to the 347th Rifle Div. In addition to army patients it also admitted Border Guard Troops personnel. There was a reception station (clinic) for civilians. It had no cots or surgical or X-ray equipment. Civilians requiring hospital care were taken to Takhta-Bazar. There were no delousing stations or public bath houses. The general health was good in Kushka.

#### Transportation and Communications

19. There were no trolleys, taxis, or buses in Kushka. The closest local transportation was in Takhta-Bazar which had two Pobeda taxis and a bus. The 68th Border Guards Det. had its own transportation and occasionally had space available for civilian passengers.
20. Kushka was the terminus of a single track railroad which connected it with Takhta-Bazar and Mary  $\sqrt{N}$  37-36, E 61-507. One train arrived every second day at 0900 but was frequently 5 to 10 hours late. This train arrived on even numbered days, for instance, the second, fourth, and sixth of the month, and left the same day. It was scheduled to leave at 1400 hours, but left anywhere from 1500 to 2400 hours. Price of a ticket from Kushka to Takhta-Bazar was about 15 rubles and the trip took four hours. From Kushka to Mary cost about 30-40 rubles and took 20 hours. The train traveled at a speed of 20-25 km. per hour. The railroad station was unguarded, but a station-master, telephone operator and dispatcher were on duty at all times. There was a well-constructed loading platform near the station. It was large enough to serve for the unloading of equipment and personnel of an entire regiment.
21. There were no garages, railroad bridges, or tunnels in or near Kushka.
22. There were about 10 to 12 telephones in Kushka (not counting army and Border Guard Troops' phones), in the offices of the kolkhozy, sovkhkozy, electrostation, and bank. No civilians had telephones, and there were no pay-phones.

#### Economy

23. Breeding of karakul fur-bearing lambs was the main occupation of the sovkhkozy and kolkhozy in the Kushka area. [redacted] the Sovkhoz Pobeda received a premium from the Ministry of Sovkhozos of USSR for overfilling its quota in breeding of karakul lambs, and for the fine quality of the karakul furs. This premium consisted of a sedan and several thousand rubles as a bonus for the director of the sovkhkoz and about 25,000 rubles to be divided among the hardest workers of the sovkhkoz. 50X1

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24. Most of the residents of the town itself worked at the railroad station, slaughterhouse, naphtha base, department store, school, electrostations, or army officer messes.
25. The army maintained a PX (voyentorg), which could be utilized by wives of Border Guard Troops' officers if they secured special passes. The civilian department store sold tricot goods, calico cloth, dresses, suits, shoes, and household and toilet items.
26. Each day from early morning to 1200 hours there was sale of kolkhoz produce in the open market. Items purchased in this manner were quite expensive. Source recalled the following typical prices:

Item	Free Market Price in Kushka	Official Price in Stores
1 egg	2 rubles	80 kopecks
1 kg. mutton	18-20 rubles	10 rubles
1 kg. butter	30-40 rubles	10-20 rubles
1 lit. milk	3 rubles	Unknown

27. The sale price of one karakul lamb hide was 250-300 rubles. In Moscow, a good karakul coat was priced at 15,000-25,000 rubles. It was common practice for sovkhos and kolkhoz workers to embezzle karakul skins by claiming fewer births of lambs.
28. In Source's estimation, the populace of Kushka had a low standard of living. The people lived in poor, unsanitary dwellings and their dress was very shabby. The great Russians and Ukrainians wore blouse and trousers. Turkmen males wore quilted caftans and karakul hats. Turkmen women still wore the traditional Moslem veil.
29. There were no factories in the Kushka area to the best of Source's knowledge. Grain was stored in depots, but Source could give no details on this.
30. Source had no detailed knowledge of the income of sovkhos and kolkhoz workers. The average was 300-400 rubles monthly. However, the total depended on the time and energy put in by the individual and on the management of the kolkhozy, which used a system of sharecropping. As a rule, sovkhos workers earned more than kolkhoz workers.
31. A schoolteacher, depending on the time devoted to work, earned about 700 rubles monthly.

#### Utilities

32. The hydroelectric station supplied electricity to the official buildings in Kushka, to the offices of Sovkhos Pogranchnik, and to the army and Border Guard Troops installations.
33. The other kolkhozy and sovkhos had small generators, driven by wind wheels, which produced a low flickering light. Border Guard Troops units on the border had no electricity, only kerosene lamps.
34. A new electrostation was under construction.

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35. There was no gas in Kushka. Families cooked on stoves burning tree roots, wood, and a peat called by the natives "sakha-ai". There was no central heating plant. Barracks were heated in January and February.
36. There was no radio station, and none of the people owned radios.

Political Life

37. Once a month, a political or staff officer of the 347th Rifle Div. or of the Border Guard Troops gave lectures to each sovkhos and kolkhoz on the international situation, the Communist Party, and the biographies of the Party leaders, etc. Border Guard Troops officers stressed the necessity of reporting all foreigners.
38. Once every two or three months, Party headquarters in Takhta-Bazar sent lecturers on cattle breeding and agriculture.
39. [redacted] there was an election for deputies (representatives) of village, settlement, and district (rayon) councils in Turkmen. Since there was only one slate of candidates, there was little activity during the election.
40. No newspapers were published in Kushka. The local populace did not subscribe to any outside newspapers, but the army and Border Guard Troops personnel subscribed to Moscow publications, which arrived by train about one week late.

Cultural and Recreational Life

41. The movie at the officers' club was open to EM and civilians. In addition to showing films, it also had "live" shows. Admission ranged from 5 to 15 rubles. The Trud Kolkhoz had its own movie theater, and Border Guard Troops personnel were admitted, in addition to the civilians. Admission was three to five rubles.
42. A restaurant was located in the officers' club. It was for officers, their wives, EM of the 347th Rifle Div. and Border Guard Troops, and civilians.
43. There was a restaurant near the civilian store which was always crowded with civilians and soldiers. It was always dirty, and opened late. Prices were comparatively high. A glass of beer cost 2 rubles, 10 kopecks; and 100 g. of vodka cost four rubles, 50 kopecks.
44. A buffet at the railroad station was open from 0900 to 2300 hours and was very popular with the troops.
45. Officers from the 347th Rifle Div. and Border Guard Troops units could hunt in the area of one to two kilometers near the border by special permission of the border district CG. This area was off limits to all civilians.
46. The 347th Rifle Div. had a sports stadium in Kushka.

Controls and Document Checks.

47. About 1½ km. southwest of Kushka was a border control check point. Three officers and 15 EM of the 68th Border Guard Det. were posted there five days per week during the months when the Kushka River was dry and trucks crossed it. From 6-16 trucks crossed this point each day. They carried leather, hides and wool from Afghanistan.

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48. Procedure for crossing the point was as follows. The OD could check the drivers and assistants' documents and the bills of lading. He would order one NCO and one EM to mount a motorcycle and escort the trucks to warehouses in town. At the warehouses, customs officials received the goods and in exchange gave up a certain amount of naphtha and sugar which was taken back to Afghanistan. Source did not know whether this was a strict barter transaction or whether cash was also involved. After loading, the trucks were escorted back to the control point where identity documents and bills were checked and stamped. On Friday (the Moslem sabbath) and Sunday the border point was closed to traffic.
49. Source knew of no smuggling in the area. He heard that an opium market catering to the Turkmen populace was located in Mary, and that [redacted] Afghans crossed the border illegally to smuggle opium. He believed that the traffic died down in [redacted]
50. The only document necessary to cross the border was a passport with the proper stamp entries.
51. The area around the border, ranging from 1½-18 km. was off limits to all personnel except Border Guard Troops. The Trud Kolkhoz had orchards along the border, and a gang of kolkhoz workers was permitted to work there. The workers had special permits, and were at all times under observation by two or three Border Guard Troops personnel.

Miscellaneous

52. Source was asked about a canal being constructed in Turkmen. He stated that he read in the papers that a canal was under construction from Chardzhou  $\sqrt{N}$  39-08, E 63-367 to Ashchabad  $\sqrt{N}$  37-57, E 58-237, and that it was planned to have branch canals to Mary and Kerki  $\sqrt{N}$  37-52, E 65-127. However, he never saw the canal, and knew only what he read in the newspapers.
53. He was also asked about oilfields, oil pipelines, etc. He stated that benzin was brought in 30-50 tn. tank railroad cars and poured (method unknown) in the naphtha base tank in Kushka. Some was exported to Afghanistan, and some was used by the 347th Rifle Div. It was taken out in regular tank trucks, size and details unknown. He knew of no refineries in Turkmen, nor did he hear of any naphtha trusts. He was also asked about uranium beds in Turkmen, but stated that he never heard of any.

[redacted] Comment: See also [redacted] "Meteorological, Medical, and Geographical data on Kushka".

**2 Enclosures:**

- A. Pinpoint Location of Kushka
- B. [redacted] Sketch of Kushka

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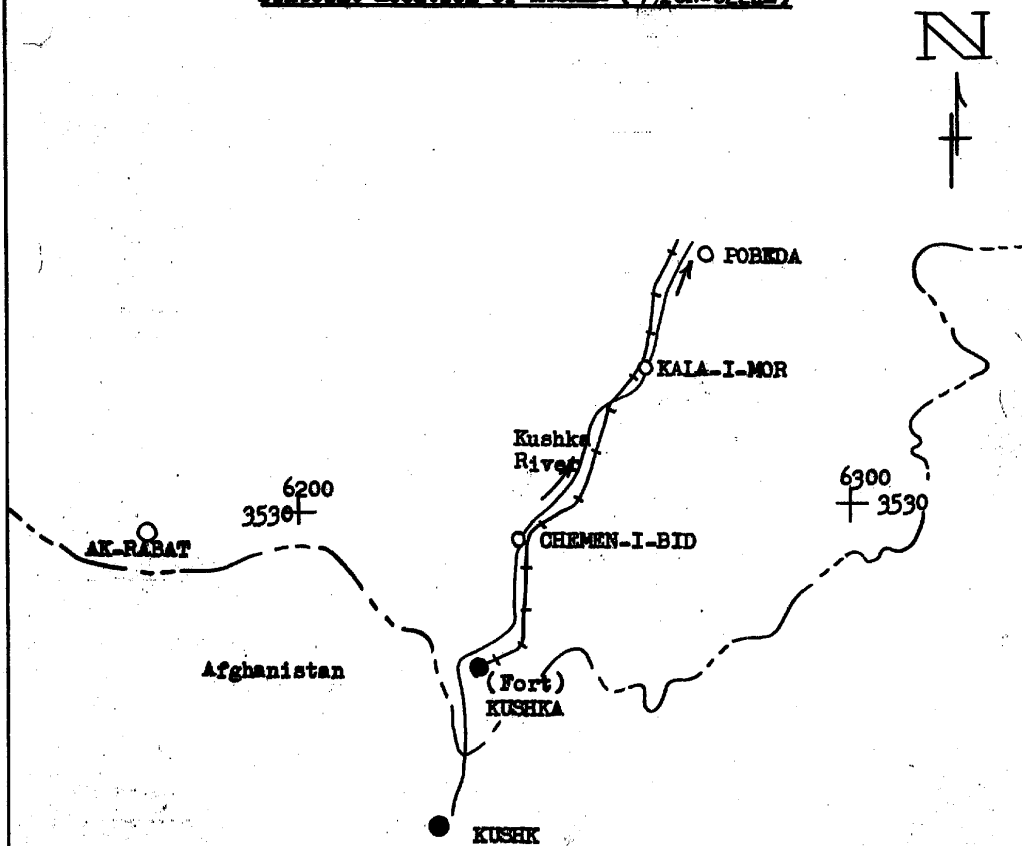
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Enclosure A

Pinpoint Location of KUSHKA (3516N-6224E)



Map Ref:

Hari River, Afghanistan  
(430), Scale, 1:1,000,000  
Second Edition, Jun '47  
World Aeronautical Chart

Date of Info:

Basis of Info:

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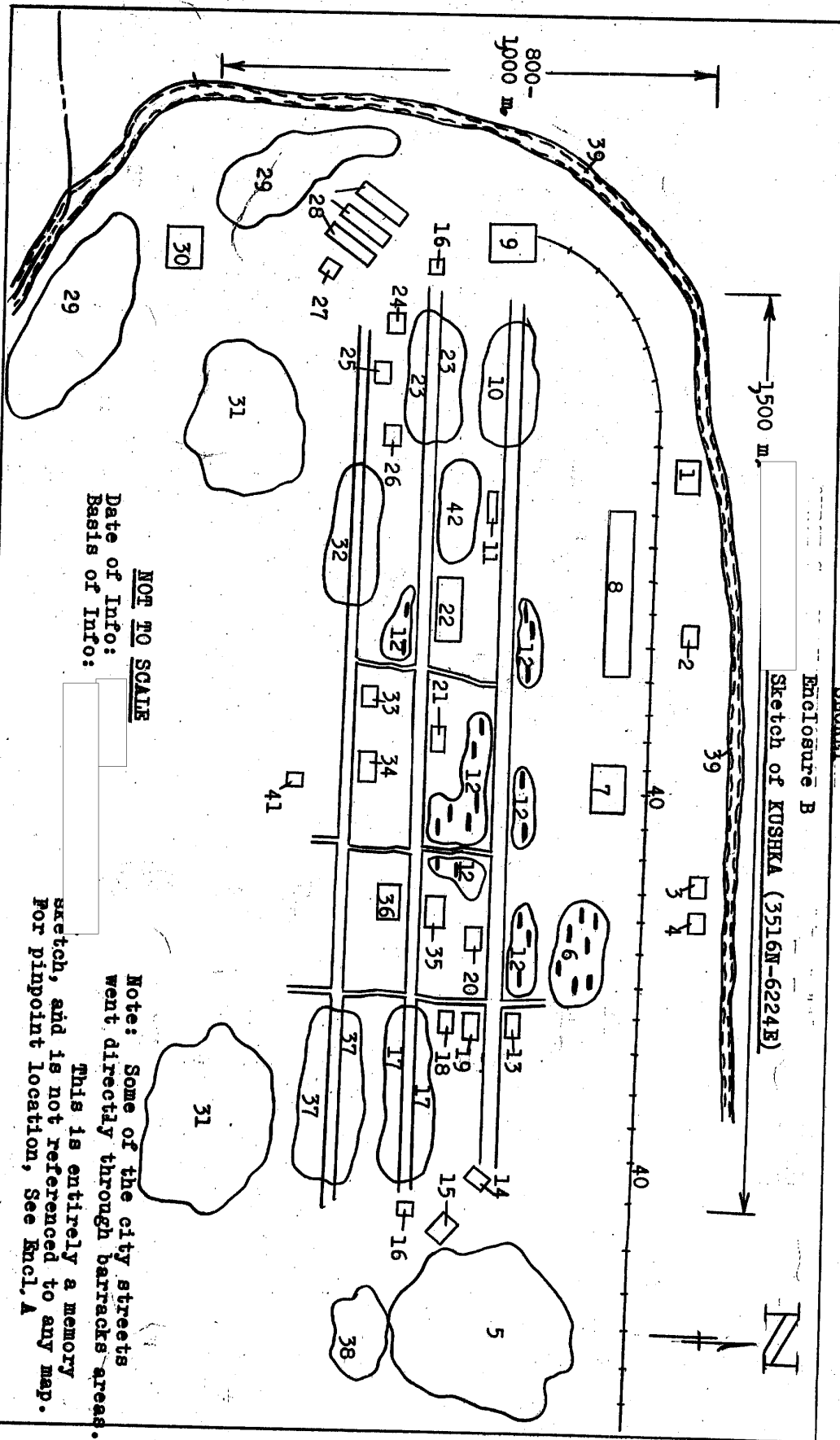
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Enclosure B

Sketch of KUSHKA (3516N-6224E)

NOT TO SCALE

Date of Info: [redacted]  
Basis of Info: [redacted]

Note: Some of the city streets went directly through barracks areas. This is entirely a memory sketch, and is not referenced to any map. For pinpoint location, See Encl. A

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Legend

- Point # 1. Electrostation: under construction; supposed to be opened the anniversary of the October Revolution. Was to supply power for army barracks, Border Guard Troops units, the town, and all sovkhozy and kolkhozy around Kushka.
- Point # 2. Office of Billeting and Furniture Unit (KECH -Kvartirno-Eksploatatsionnaya Chast), 347th Rifle Div: one-story stone building about 40 x 20 m.
- Point # 3. Reserve Co, 2nd Bn., 68th Border Guard Det: one-story stone building about 30 x 20 m., housed about 60 EM.
- Point # 4. Depot of 1st Bn., 68th Border Guard Det: one-story stone building about 20 x 20 m.; contained vegetables, fruits, hay.
- Point # 5. Morgunovskiy Kolkhoz: part of the Trud Kolkhoz.
- Point # 6. Residences of Railroad Personnel: five to six one-story stone houses, about 12 x 10 m.
- Point # 7. Railroad Station: one-story stone building about 50 x 30 m.
- Point # 8. Loading Platform: 200 x 50 m., had no cranes or any other unloading machinery.
- Point # 9. Naphtha Storage Area: one large tank, about 15 m. in height, diameter unknown to Source. Area was guarded by civilian guards. The gas was for use by 347th Rifle Div. and for export to Afghanistan.
- Point # 10. Barracks Area of an u/1 Tk. Regt. and u/1 Recon. Bn., 347th Rifle Div.: number of two-story stone buildings, each about 100 x 20 m.; capacity and number of buildings unknown to Source.
- Point # 11. Civilian Clinic and Dispensary: one-story stone building about 15 x 15 m.
- Point # 12. Civilian residences: one-story stone houses, varying in size from 20 x 15 m. to 10 x 10 m.
- Point # 13. City Komendatura for Troops of the 347th Rifle Div.: one-story stone building 40 x 20 m., contained rooms for the guards and also cells.
- Point # 14. Slaughter House: one-story stone building 70 x 25 m.; had no electric refrigeration; capacity unknown to Source; supplied the 347th Rifle Div. and Border Guard Troops units with freshly-killed beef.
- Point # 15. Hydroelectric Station: supplied electricity to the large official buildings in Kushka, to the military units, and to the offices and depot of Sovkhoz Pogranichnik.
- Point # 16. Control Points: two one-story wooden huts, 5 x 5 m.; one officer and two or three EM (army) checked identification of military and civilian personnel and vehicle trip tickets.

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- Point # 17. Barracks Area of 1188th Rifle Regt., 347th Rifle Div.: two-story stone buildings each about 100 x 20 m., number unknown to Source.
- Point # 18. Post Office: one-story stone building about 20 x 15 m.
- Point # 19. State Bank: one-story stone building, about 20 x 20 m.
- Point # 20. Department Store (Selskiy Magazin - Village Store): one-story stone building about 25 x 25 m.
- Point # 21. Border Guard Troops EM Messhall and Laundry: one-story stone building, 40 x 20 m. Capacity, 40-50 EM.
- Point # 22. School: two-story stone building, about 70 x 40 m.
- Point # 23. Barracks of u/1 Arty. units, 347th Rifle Div.: two-story stone buildings, each about 100 x 20 m.; capacity and number unknown to Source.
- Point # 24. BOQ: for army transients; two-story stone building, 30 x 30 m.
- Point # 25. 347th Rifle Div. Hospital: one-story stone building; size and capacity unknown to Source.
- Point # 26. Officers' Club (Dom Sovetskoy Armii): two-story stone building, 50 x 50 m.; contained a theater with 500-seat capacity, and a large restaurant.
- Point # 27. Customs Office: one-story stone building, about 20 x 10 m.; included office and residence of two to three custom officials.
- Point # 28. Depots: two or three one-story stone buildings, about 70 x 20 m.; stored sugar for export to Afghanistan.
- Point # 29. Kolkhoz: two areas of fields and orchards of Poltava Kolkhoz which was part of Trud Kolkhoz.
- Point # 30. Control Point: manned by Border Guard Troops who checked incoming and outgoing trucks from Afghanistan.
- Point # 31. Depot and EM Barrack Areas: two areas, each of eight bunkers dug into the mountains, with an unknown (to Source) number of two-story stone buildings, each 50 x 20 m., nearby; contents of bunkers unknown to Source.
- Point # 32. Barracks of 1190th Rifle Regt., 347th Rifle Div.: two-story stone buildings, each about 100 x 20 m.; number unknown to Source.
- Point # 33. Headquarters 2nd Bn., 68th Border Guard Det: one-story stone building, 40 x 20 m. The eight rooms, each about 6 x 6 m., were occupied by the CO, Chief of Staff, Intelligence Section, Political Officer, Party Organizer, code room, CQ, and orderly room. On the north side was a 2½-m. wall and on the south, a 2½-m. wire fence.

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- Point # 34. Club and Quarters for Border Guard Troops: one-story stone building, 50 x 25 m.; contained a switchboard, RBM, radio station, offices of supply officer, and quarters for supply company EM.
- Point # 35. Headquarters 347th Rifle Div.: one-story stone building, 70 x 40 m.
- Point # 36. Settlement Council (Poselkovyy Sovet) Building: one-story stone building, about 30 x 30 m.
- Point # 37. Barracks of AAA Regt. and service units, 347th Rifle Div.: two-story stone buildings, each about 100 x 20 m.; number unknown to Source.
- Point # 38. Headquarters Sovkhoz Pogranichnik: several one-story stone buildings, about 20 x 10 m., containing depots and offices.
- Point # 39. Kushka River
- Point # 40. Railroad
- Point # 41. Monument: square-shaped, cement, eight meters wide at bottom, tapering to two-three meters at top; four meters high.
- Point # 42. Stadium: about 120 x 70 m., for 347th Rifle Div.

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