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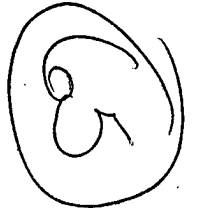
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**NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION CENTER**



imagery analysis report

**Identification of BMD M-1981/2  
Armored Personnel Carriers  
in Afghanistan (S)**



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## IDENTIFICATION OF BMD M-1981/2 ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS IN AFGHANISTAN (S)

1. (S/WN) BMD M-1981/2 airborne amphibious armored personnel carriers (APCs) have been identified in Afghanistan with airborne forces at Kabul International Airfield [redacted] and Bagram Airfield [redacted] (Figure 1) on imagery of [redacted]. This new BMD APC variant was first identified in the USSR at Riga Training Area 1 [redacted] in March 1981.<sup>1</sup> The only other identified deployment of the BMD M-1981/2 is with the air assault brigade at Vladimir Volynskiy Headquarters Guards Motorized Rifle Division/Army Barracks AL-1/TA-1 [redacted] in the Soviet Carpathian Military District. The BMD M-1981/2 was first identified at Vladimir Volynskiy in June 1981.

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2. (S/WN) Eighteen canvas-covered BMD M-1981/2s were parked in three groups of six in the 103rd Airborne Division Artillery Regiment<sup>2</sup> park at Kabul International Airfield (Figure 2). Also, two of the groups each contained two BMD M-1979 probable command variants (also a variant of the standard BMD),<sup>3</sup> and the third group contained five BMD M-1979 probable command variants. The equipment was surrounded by a small earthen berm and a visual screen. By [redacted] the canvas had been removed from most of the vehicles (Figure 3). At Bagram Airfield (Figure 4), six BMD M-1981/2s and one BMD M-1979 probable command variant were parked in the airborne regiment area and were also surrounded by a visual screen. The BMD M-1981/2s have been at Kabul and Bagram since at least [redacted] respectively.

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3. (S/WN) The BMD M-1981/2 APC is a variant of the standard BMD APC used by Soviet airborne forces. Although similar in appearance to the standard BMD, it differs in several ways: the BMD M-1981/2 has six road wheels on each side of the chassis instead of five; it has an approximately [redacted] diameter, two-man turret instead of a [redacted] diameter, one-man turret; and the chassis is [redacted] approximately [redacted] longer than the standard BMD. The turret is circular, centered on the chassis, and has two parallel hatches. The main weapon is longer and appears to be wider than the 73mm smooth-bore gun mounted on the standard BMD and the BMP APC. The gun barrel extends approximately [redacted] from the front of the turret to the muzzle, compared to the [redacted] long, 73mm smooth-bore gun on the standard BMD.

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### Imagery Analyst's Comments

4. (S/WN) The number and groupings of the BMD M-1981/2s in the airborne artillery regiment vehicle park at Kabul and the larger gun barrel on the BMD M-1981/2 suggest that the vehicle may be used in an artillery role in Afghanistan. Because the BMD M-1981/2 has been surrounded by a visual barrier, and the vehicle has not been seen widely in the USSR, it is probably in Afghanistan for testing and evaluation. Additional evidence supporting its use in an artillery role is the identification of a BMD M-1981/2 in the USSR at Krasnoarmeysk Ordnance Research and Development Facility [redacted] in May 1981, where it was seen on the firing line used for artillery testing. In addition, BMD M-1979s and/or standard BMDs were identified for the first time at Perm Armament and Missile and Research and Development Plant 172 (BE [redacted]) in early 1981. This plant is a major producer of Soviet medium- and large-caliber artillery tubes. However, the possibility that the BMD M-1981/2 is in Afghanistan for testing and evaluation as an advanced airborne APC, as opposed to an airborne artillery piece, cannot be overlooked.

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**FIGURE 1. LOCATIONS OF KABUL INTERNATIONAL AIRFIELD AND BAGRAM AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN**

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**REFERENCES**

**IMAGERY**

(S/WN) All applicable satellite imagery acquired from [redacted] was used in the preparation of this report.

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**DOCUMENTS**

1. NPIC. Z-20075/81, IAR-A094/81, *Airborne Activity at Riga, USSR (S)*, May 81 (SECRET, [redacted])

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2. DIA. DDB-1100-UR-79, *Ground Order of Battle (GOB) - USSR (U)*, Aug 79 (SECRET)

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3. US Army. RAC-24/8002/80, ATC-II-1120-088-80. *BMD-M1979 Airborne Associated General Purpose Vehicle (U)*, Oct 80 (CONFIDENTIAL, [redacted])

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(S) Comments and queries regarding this report are welcome. They may be directed to [redacted] Third World Forces Division, Imagery Exploitation Group, NPIC, [redacted]

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