

**SECRET****Strategic Warning Staff**

Washington, D.C. 20301

S-0089/SWS

31 December 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: A/NIO/W

FROM : Director, SWS 

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SUBJECT : SWS Memos on Afghanistan

1. Per your request, enclosed are copies of all the SWS memoranda on Afghanistan, through the present date. A summary of their content and purpose is given below.

2. Since one of the responsibilities of SWS is to seek to advance the science of warning analysis, we intend to do our own post mortem on the Afghanistan case, to provide further material for our "lessons learned" and "analytical principles" files. We will send our findings in a separate memo.

Memo of 10 August 1979: The Basis Thesis of SWS Perception

3. This memo was triggered by the mutiny that occurred in one of the DRA army garrisons in Kabul on 5 August. It presented the basic reason why we believed that the Soviets would introduce combat units of their own into Afghanistan. We believed that:

A. Unless the momentum of the insurgency was reversed, the Soviet client regime in Afghanistan would be overthrown. The Soviets faced the prospect of being evicted as a result of a Moslum insurgency, whether by a government installed by the insurgency itself, or by a government which took power because the Taraki-Amin regime proved unable to stem the momentum of the insurgency. The 5 August mutiny was an indicator that the DRA army, whose continued loyalty was a key to the survival of the Khalquist regime, was not reliable.

B. The prospects for a successful Soviet-engineered "political solution"--if they ever really existed-- were gone. In our view, the hypothesis that the Soviets could rig some government which would maintain the Moscow tie to the same extent as the Taraki-Amin regime and at the same time be acceptable to the rebels was at best a long shot. By August, the momentum of the insurgency had reached a point where, in our view, only the complete removal of the Soviets would have satisfied the insurgents.

C. Thus, additional military power appeared to be the only way to reverse the deterioration of the situation.

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D. The alternative to providing increased military power was to cut losses and give up the Afghanistan enterprise, and we believed that the Soviets would not be able to bring themselves to that step. This was the point on which, I believe, we disagreed most with Community analysts. We weighed all of the same pros and cons regarding Soviet military actions that were raised by various intelligence analysts at the time, but the key to our different conclusion was the conviction that in the end the Soviets would not be able to decide to cut and run. Their only alternative, therefore, was to increase the military power. (See paras 7-13--"Least bad" discussion in the 10 August memo.)

E. The only effective way to provide the additional military muscle would be to introduce Soviet combat units. Merely increasing the supply of military equipment and the number of advisors and technicians offered only a delaying capability. The DRA army was shrinking, and its effectiveness was being eroded by internal dissension. Moreover, the problem was not that the DRA forces were being defeated by the insurgents. On the contrary, the insurgents had won no major battles. There simply was not enough effective DRA army to handle the situation.

4. The events of 5 August must have been perceived by the Soviets as a signal that they needed to act soon. I believe that was the genesis of the Pavlovskiy mission, which arrived in Kabul 12 days later.

Paras 6-8 August through 26 October

5. These memos were intended to illustrate why we were convinced

A. That the "pull-out" course was not being contemplated. The actions being taken by the Soviets were not consistent with active contemplation of pulling out. On the contrary, Soviet actions were in our view clearly indicative of Moscow's readiness and in fact preparations to increase the military commitment, with the main questions being how much and in what form.

B. That the "increased dose of the old medicine" option was already being implemented--and was not working--and that the timing of this increased flow of material aid and advisors indicated that it probably preceded the Pavlovskiy mission. In hindsight we probably went too far in postulating that the Pavlovskiy group was sent to oversee implementation of a decision already made, but we believe the evidence indicates that Pavlovskiy was sent to determine what else should be done beyond increased aid, and how it should be done.

6. In reviewing these memos it seems clear to me that we did not articulate this latter point very well and this may be the reason we had little success in our initial efforts to stimulate an Alert Memorandum.

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most of the memos sent in the next several weeks were prepared on a rush basis.) More attention to a clearly articulated summary for each memo is needed.

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Memos 12-14 December. Trying to Call a Spade a Spade

7. I guess if these memos have any value, it is in documenting the fact that we continued to be isolated on the issue of Soviet action vis-a-vis Afghanistan even after the Soviets started their move. The issues here fall into the "lessons learned" category, and illustrate--I believe--that the analytical problem goes beyond "warning" and effects "estimative" intelligence.

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