



Directorate of Intelligence

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Afghanistan Situation Report



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10 May 1983

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TOP SECRET

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

CONTENTS



25X1

KABUL ASSESSES ITS POOR POSITION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE 1

The Afghan regime blames its lack of military presence.

25X1

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DIFFICULTIES 2

Disruptions caused by the insurgency continue to frustrate the government's economic planning.

25X1

IN BRIEF 3

PERSPECTIVE

THE WAR IN CENTRAL AFGHANISTAN 5

Central Afghanistan's Shia insurgent groups have not engaged in major fighting with the area's sparse Soviet forces, but some of them have been the main recipients of Iranian aid.

25X1

This document is prepared weekly by the Office of Near East/South Asia and the Office of Soviet Analysis. Questions or comments on the issues raised in the publication should be directed

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10 May 1983
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SOVA M 83-10083CX

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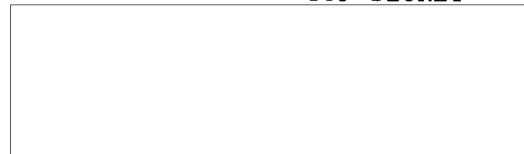
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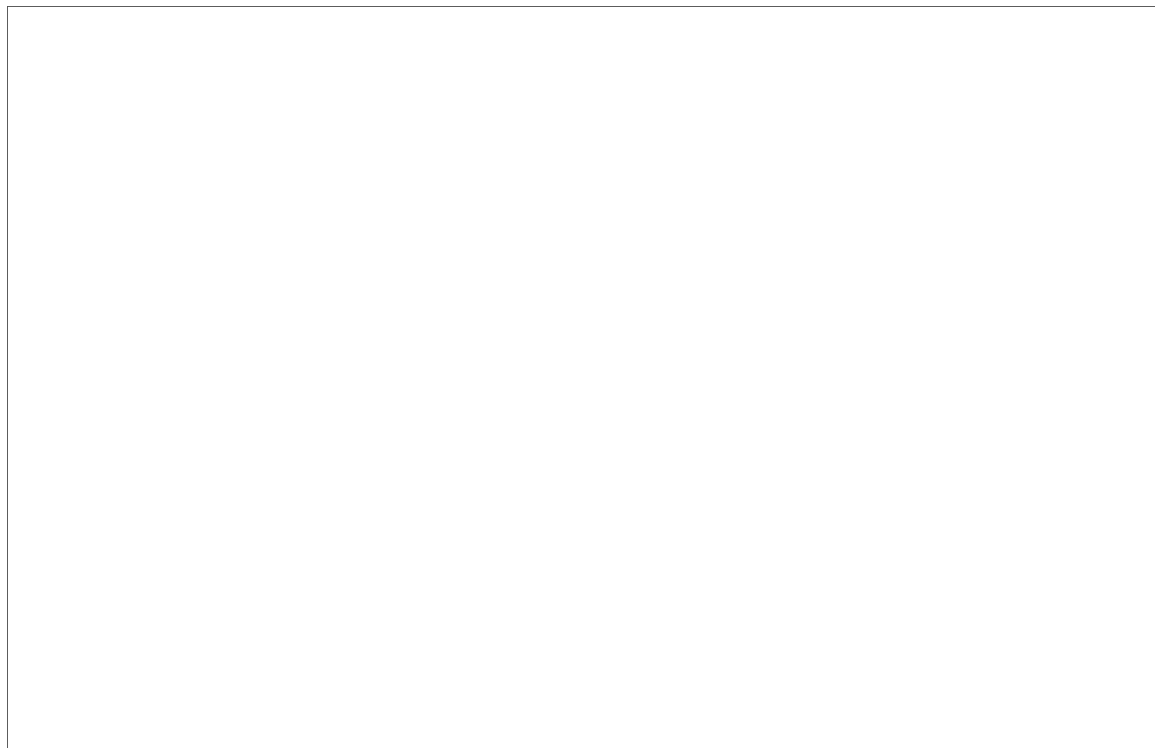
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KABUL ASSESSES ITS POOR POSITION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

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An Afghan Communist Party Politburo memorandum drafted in late January cites the "overwhelming lack of a military presence" as the main reason the regime has been unable to improve its control in rural areas. The document blames party and state cadres for allowing insurgents to regain control over some areas after armed forces have withdrawn. To improve the situation, a new plan--directed by a committee headed by President Karmal--ordered security forces to expand regime control and party and secret police to consolidate it in the countryside.

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Comment: Although recognizing the necessity of establishing military security in an area before political control can be gained, the memorandum offers no real way to achieve this security. The largely ineffective and understrength regular Afghan Army units are needed for offensive combat operations and



10 May 1983
NESA M 83-10107CX
SOVA M 83-10083CX

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cannot be spared to permanently garrison areas. Police, Defense of the Revolution, and Border Troop units as well as KHAD officers probably will now be given more responsibility to maintain control in the countryside. Kabul, however, has done little so far to improve these poorly armed, manned, trained, and motivated units. Insurgents will continue to reassert control and drive out or kill government cadres in many rural areas.



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DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DIFFICULTIES 

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Kabul has shelved its multiyear development plan and is attempting an annual one, but disruptions caused by the insurgency continue to frustrate the planning process,



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The Afghan Government has slated about 80 percent of the power budget largely for three major projects in the Kabul area: a gas turbine from a Swiss company, which is scheduled for installation north of Kabul; continuing construction of a training facility for Electricity and Power Ministry employees; and establishment of a power pole fabrication plant. Other projects are mostly grid improvements for the cities of Qandahar, Herat, Balkh, and Mazar-e Sharif.

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Comment: Although the Afghan Government has signed agreements, mostly with the Soviet Union and bloc countries, which would have provided sufficient capital for the multiyear plan, two major economic problems have hampered project implementation. First, foreign funds were misallocated because of the incompetence of Afghan civil servants. Second, internally generated revenues were well below expected levels because of the insurgency. Moreover, the completion of projects for the power sector in particular will be foiled by increasing insurgent attacks on power facilities and lines, which are already resulting in blackouts in Kabul.



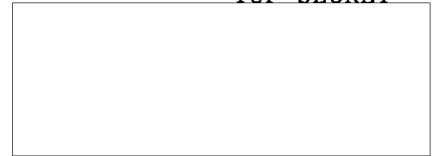
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10 May 1983
NESA M 83-10107CX
SOVA M 83-10083CX

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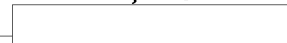
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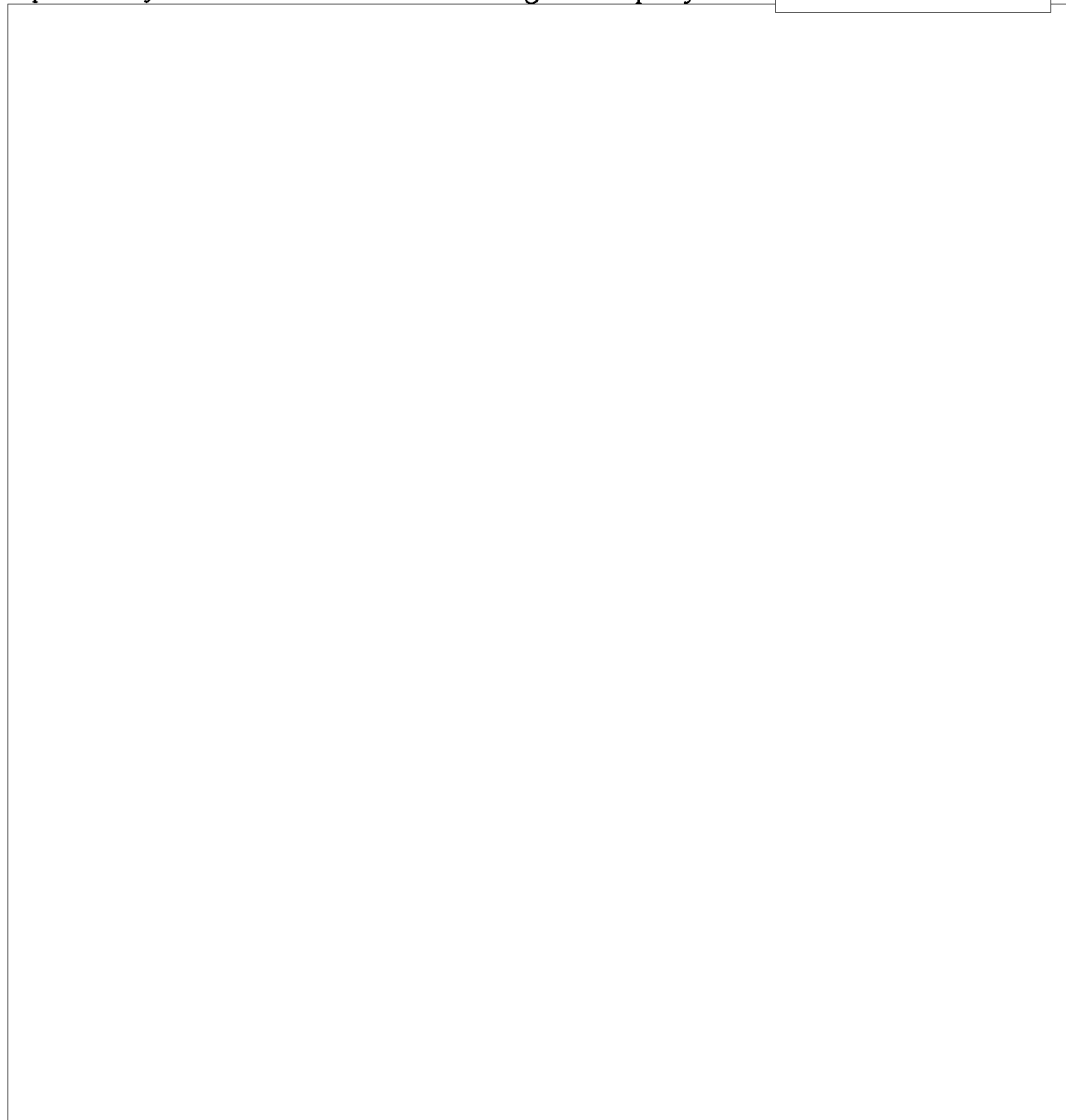
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IN BRIEF

-- Kabul has expelled a US diplomat--Second Secretary Peter Graham--for the first time; prevented three Indian employees of the US Embassy from returning to their jobs from India; and probably arrested three more Afghan employees.



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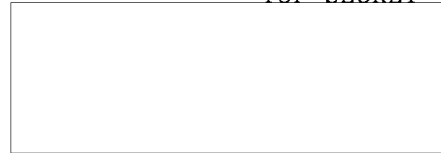


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-- Jamiat Islami chief Rabbani and Hizbi Islami chief Khalis have announced that they will be moving their headquarters to Afghanistan within the next two months, but Hizbi chief Gulbuddin says that he will remain in Pakistan. Rabbani and Khalis may have made the announcement in anticipation of Pakistani plans to restrict their activities in Peshawar, and in order to gain better control of their insurgent groups. 

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-- A US journalist who recently spent 10 days in Kabul Province reports that insurgent morale and cooperation are good and that food supplies are ample. 

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10 May 1983
NESA M 83-10107CX
SOVA M 83-10083CX

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PERSPECTIVE

THE WAR IN CENTRAL AFGHANISTAN



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Central Afghanistan has not been a major Soviet priority because of its geographic isolation and sparse population. Nonetheless, the area is important because the insurgents there are the main recipients of Iranian aid. The area also contains a de facto insurgent government--a confederation led by Ali Behishti.



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Background

Central Afghanistan, an area known as the Hazarajat, is the home of about one million Shia Hazaras and small numbers of other ethnic groups. The Hazarajat centers on Oruzgan, Ghowr, and Bamian Provinces, and includes the border areas of eight neighboring provinces. The soil in the Hazara area is poor, and traditionally food has been imported from neighboring provinces. The Hazarajat's rugged, mountainous terrain and primitive dirt roads make access difficult; even before the Communist coup in 1978, Kabul's presence was minimal.



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The Hazaras are the least prestigious ethnic group in Afghanistan because of their Shia religion and Oriental ancestry. Urban Hazaras, for example, often hold menial jobs. Traditional discrimination by the Sunni majority has reinforced the Hazaras' tendency to regard Shiite Iran favorably.



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The Soviet Strategy and Presence

Soviet/Afghan units penetrated the central Hazarajat in force during 1980 but made no serious attempt to establish their authority throughout the area, presumably believing that the insurgent movements around Kabul and along Afghanistan's borders were more important. Since then, Soviet/Afghan forces have largely limited their presence to garrisons in Bamian in Bamian Province and Chaghcharan in Ghowr Province. In Ghazni Province, they have concentrated on guarding the key Kabul-Qandahar road. The ground operations in other adjoining provinces have taken place largely in non-Hazara areas.



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10 May 1983
NESA M 83-10107CX
SOVA M 83-10083CX

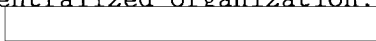
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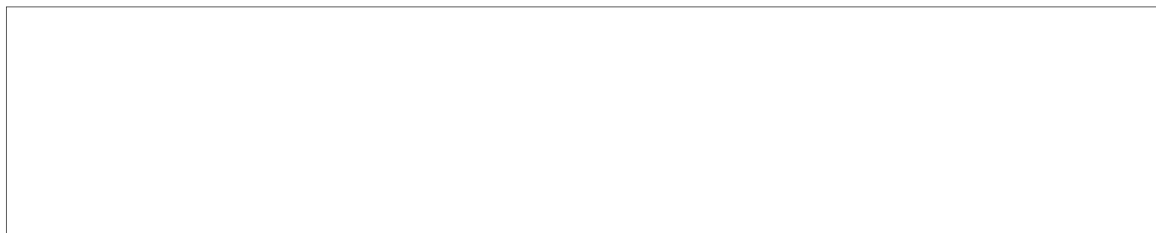
The Main Resistance Movements

The Hazarajat insurgents suffer from rivalries between groups led by traditional leaders, often from landowning families, and pro-Iranian, fundamentalist religious leaders, who are closely allied to Iran. During 1980-81, the traditional leaders held the upper hand, but in early 1982 the Revolutionary Guards began to channel Iran's modest military aid exclusively to the fundamentalist groups. The main traditionalist group is the Shora-i-Itifaq Islami (United Council of the Islamic Revolution). It is the largest insurgent group, with approximately 5,000 to 10,000 armed members. Although the Shora is a federation of more than 30 groups and not a centralized organization, it does have a recognized leader, Ali Behishti. 


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The Shora collects taxes and administers justice, a system of forced public works projects such as road building, and a military draft. Young men serve one year, and older men periodically serve during confrontations with Soviet/DRA forces and Iranian allied groups. Hazara peasants appear to find the forced labor projects to be the most burdensome duty, an indication of the low level of actual fighting. 

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Behishti's main ally is Syed Mohammad Hasan Jaglan, who is active just north of Ghazni City and who is referred to as the Shora's "Defense Minister." Jaglan has several thousand men under arms and his support of the Shora was crucial during recent armed confrontations with Iranian allied groups. 

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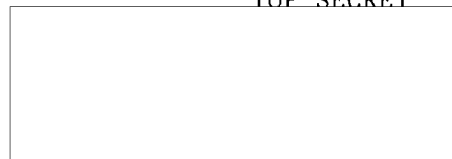
Both Behishti and Jaglan have a limited understanding of the political and military situation in the Hazarajat and the rest of Afghanistan. The two leaders believe, for example, that the Hazaras are



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10 May 1983
NESA M 83-10107CX
SOVA M 83-10083CX

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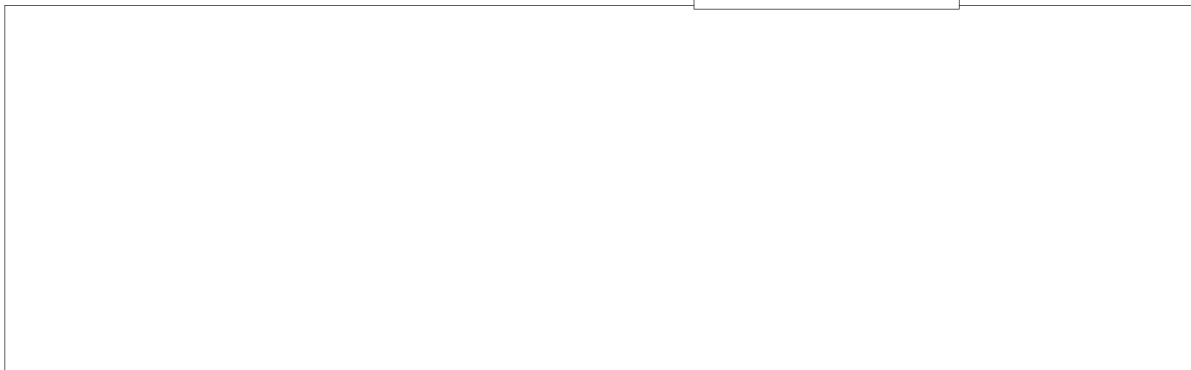


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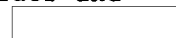
the largest ethnic group in the country. They appear not to be overly concerned about who maintains control of Kabul so long as they enjoy administrative autonomy in the Hazarajat.



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Socioeconomic factors appear to play an important part in the Nasir-Shora rivalry. Most Nasir leaders are young and do not belong to large landowning families. In contrast, most Shora leaders are older and belong to the area's wealthier and more prominent families.



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Another important Hazarajat group is Gulbuddin's Hizbi Islami.



it is the most popular and well-organized force in Ghowr Province and, like Nasir, has a large number of religious leaders. Hizbi Islami insurgents generally try to stay out of the Nasir-Shora conflict, though some have clashed with Shora members in Oruzgan Province. Most Hizbi Islami insurgents are poorly armed because of the distance from Peshawar and their low level of Iranian support. Those operating around Chaghcharan, for example, the capital of Ghowr Province, cannot attack the Soviet airfield because of a shortage of heavy machineguns and mortars. Nor can they confront Soviet tanks because of a lack of RPG-7s. Their most effective tactic is road mining, although even mines are in short supply.



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Conclusions

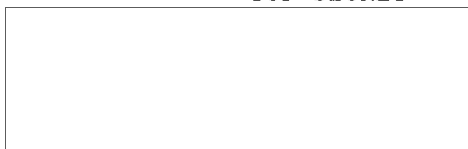
The Shia Hazaras' active participation in the resistance clearly indicates the depth of anti-Soviet/DRA feeling in Afghanistan. Cosmetic gestures such as the appointment of a Hazara, Soltan Ali Keshtmand, as Prime Minister have had little impact despite the legacy of Sunni



25X1

10 May 1983
NESA M 83-10107CX
SOVA M 83-10083CX

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discrimination. [redacted] there is still deep resentment against the Pushtuns, and that there is little active cooperation between the Hazaras and Pushtuns living on the borders of the Hazarajat. Although the two groups no longer fight each other--and the Pushtuns do not interfere with, and may even assist, Hazara arms caravans--there is no coordination of military operations or sharing of supplies. [redacted]

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The Hazaras may also have to face the threat of seriously dwindling food supplies at some point. [redacted]

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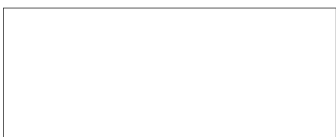
[redacted] the Hazarajat is already producing less food than in the past because of migration to Kabul, Iran, and Pakistan. Although there are no signs of malnutrition, [redacted] food supplies may be marginally inadequate. Moreover, Soviet authorities have reportedly made large sums of money available to Afghan nomads to buy grain and transport it to government-controlled areas outside of the Hazarajat. The Soviets could, in fact, limit food imports into the area as part of a more ruthless campaign against the Afghan civilian population. [redacted]

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10 May 1983
NESA M 83-10107CX
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