



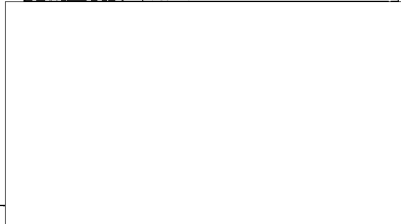
**Directorate of  
Intelligence**

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# Afghanistan Situation Report



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**17 January 1984**

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**AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT**


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Moscow marked the fourth anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan with increased press coverage reiterating standard themes but also revealing that seven more Soviets have been killed or wounded. 

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An assessment of the war from the US Embassy in Kabul indicates that the Soviets have a basis for believing things are not going badly. 

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This document is prepared weekly by the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis and the Office of Soviet Analysis. 

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**SOVIET MEDIA COVERAGE**



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**Moscow marked the fourth anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan with increased press coverage. Major themes included reiteration that Soviet security interests necessitated the intervention; that the Soviet military presence is limited and temporary; that the Soviets desire to have Afghanistan remain neutral and nonaligned; that popular support for the Babrak regime is expanding; and that the United States has been a major obstacle to a political solution. Recent coverage also revealed that seven more Soviets have been killed or wounded in Afghanistan.**



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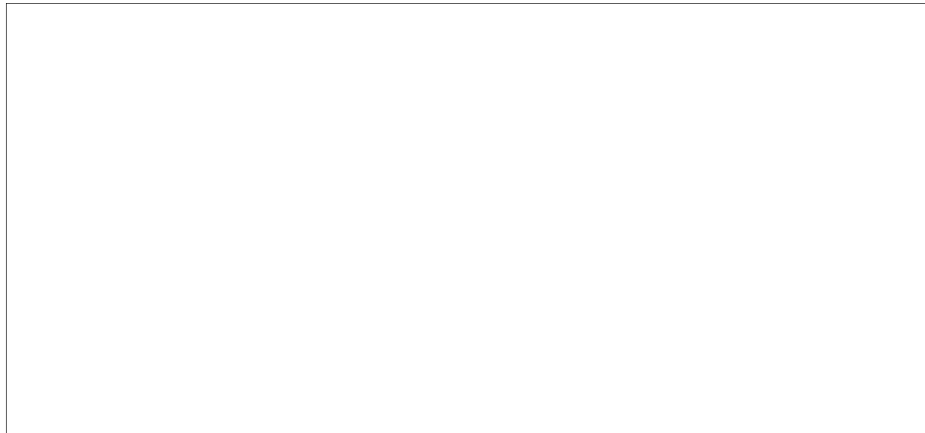
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**Comment:**


**Moscow increases media coverage each year around the time of the anniversary to counter increased Western press attention. Some recent articles also suggest that the Soviet military has been pressuring the leadership to give more attention to its efforts in Afghanistan. The mention of seven killed or wounded brings to 19 the number of Soviet casualties in Afghanistan acknowledged in Soviet media over the past four years. We estimate total Soviet casualties to be at least 17,000.** 

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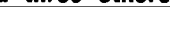
**IN BRIEF**



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**-- An insurgent who was dissatisfied with distribution of arms and ammunition held up guerrilla arms convoys into southern and western Afghanistan for two weeks, according to insurgent sources. The sources told Western media that 1,000 guerrillas dislodged the dissident and his 300 followers to reopen the road from Chaman to Qandahar.** 

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**-- According to Western embassy sources in Islamabad, an emissary of former King Zahir Shah said that the King would travel to Rabat to meet with Saudi King Fahd, who is attending the Islamic summit in Morocco. The emissary added that Hizbi leader Younus Khalis and three others who share the King's views would also go to Rabat.** 

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-- Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman has denied a Western press report that the Soviet Union in April 1983 had offered to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in an 18-month timeframe. The spokesman added that the withdrawal timetable remains "one of the most outstanding problems" to a political settlement. 

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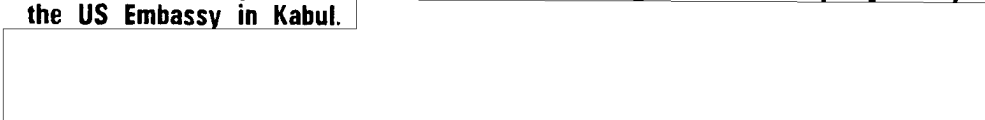
**PERSPECTIVE**

**THE VIEW FROM KABUL**



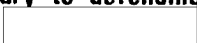
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(The following assessment of the war in Afghanistan was provided by the US Embassy in Kabul.)



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From the perspective of Kabul, it would seem that the Soviets have reason to believe that things are not going badly for them in Afghanistan. Kabul is basically secure, with mujahidin activity having only limited impact on the life of the city. The Soviets are probably willing to leave the rest of the war on the back burner. Eventual control over much of the country is probably a long-term goal but secondary to defending and consolidating what has been achieved in Kabul.



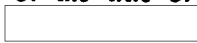
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While the resistance seemed to have made some moderate gains during recent months, the stalemate that has existed for years remained basically unchanged. From the vantage point of Kabul, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Soviets, who still have the option of trying to break the stalemate by stepping up their military effort, have chosen not to do so because they do not see things as going all that badly.



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From here it appears that, apart from holding strategically important air bases such as Shindand and Bagram, the Soviet goal in Afghanistan is to maintain its own regime in Kabul while hoping that a combination of military force and deals with resistance groups will eventually bring violence elsewhere down to a tolerable level. Complete domination of most of the country may be a more distant objective, but for the middle run, the Soviets probably view Afghanistan in terms of the title of a classic 19th-century study: The Kingdom of Caubul.



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With Kabul secure and a puppet regime in place, Afghanistan is a totally subservient client nation, acting as a mouthpiece for the USSR in the UN, the NAM, and other international forums. It is of relatively little consequence for these purposes that regime control over many parts of the country is either nonexistent or paper-thin. In

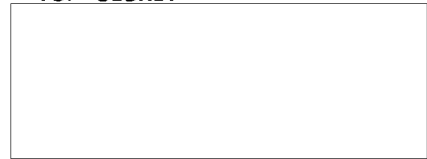
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strategic terms, a puppet regime in Kabul also guarantees that no Afghan Government will call for withdrawal of existing Soviet bases or any that Moscow may decide to establish in the future. Finally, keeping its own regime in Kabul enables Moscow to avoid the embarrassment, if not trauma, of having allowed a revolution which it has backed to the hilt to be reversed. 

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If it is indeed true that the security of Kabul and the maintenance of a facade of national government are overriding elements in Soviet thinking on Afghanistan, then Moscow must regard the situation in the city as a reasonable success, a success which compensates for any failure to crush the resistance elsewhere and which by itself is a good reason to stay militarily involved in Afghanistan. The view of most Western diplomats here is that Kabul is basically secure. Regularly recurring resistance activity has generally been confined to the farther fringes of the city, with the administrative and commercial centers remaining relatively untouched. Moreover, although it is difficult for us to observe the results of mujahidin activity around town, it appears that such activity has had only limited physical impact on the city. 

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The very tight security throughout the city is, of course, a sign not only that there is a war on but that the regime fears incidents even in central Kabul. But the other side of the coin is that the precautions are generally paying off. In this regard we note the absence of any significant resistance activity in the city during the invasion anniversary despite widespread reports that major operations were being planned. 

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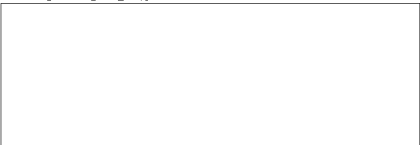
Moscow must also take some satisfaction from the fact that, outwardly at least, the vast majority of the Kabul population appears to be reacting submissively to the Soviet presence and to the regime. Except for rampant draft-dodging by draft-age men, most people seem to be doing nothing overtly to challenge the regime. There have been, for example, no reports of demonstrations in the city since February 1980, shortly after the Soviet invasion. Most people in the city seem to be going about their business, accommodating to Soviet-directed rule as they accommodated to previous regimes in order to get on with their lives. The animosity is, of course, there beneath the surface, but the important thing from the Soviet standpoint is that the animosity is generally suppressed. In this atmosphere of basic security, the Soviets

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have embarked on a program of indoctrination and of gradually expanding regime controls over economic and social life. They evidently understand that in some areas this will be a very slow process. But over the longer run they probably expect that in Kabul, as in eastern Europe, some people will begin to believe what they are told, while most of the rest will do what they are told in order to get ahead or to get along. 

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Apart from being basically secure, Kabul is a functioning city. Reported truck hijackings and road interdictions have not stopped the flow of trucks from Jalalabad and from the north. As a result, Kabul markets are filled with goods, with most of the manufactured items continuing, as before, to come in from Japan, China, Pakistan, India, and the West. Bread, the staple of the Afghan diet, is in plentiful supply, and there are no lines at the city's many small bakeries. Prices have gone up, although it is difficult to judge to what extent this results from the war. We do not have the impression that there is runaway inflation. Power outages are a major problem but, like the shortage of heating fuel, have not apparently led to any major economic standstills or caused more than resigned grumbling among the populace. Gasoline appears to be reasonably available, and taxi traffic on Kabul's main thoroughfares is traffic on Kabul's main thoroughfares is surprisingly heavy. 

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Against this backdrop of an essentially secure, functioning capital with the trappings of a national government, the Soviets may well view the fighting outside as a secondary issue. Even if the military situation in the countryside should deteriorate, it would probably have to take a drastic and sustained turn for the worse, a turn which the Soviets would consider too costly to reverse, before they would throw in the towel on what they have achieved in Kabul. The chances of the resistance changing the military picture so markedly are slim. 

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**Implications for the US**

It is difficult to say under these circumstances what we can do to contribute even in the slightest way to that withdrawal. Apart from the question of any aid to the resistance, we are already making efforts to keep the Afghan issue alive both in the media and as a subject to be raised in international forums and bilaterally with the Soviets. These efforts should, of course, be continued. 

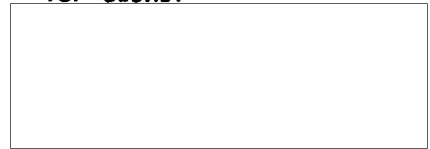
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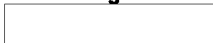
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I would suggest that we also should explore more actively whether we can do anything to nudge the resistance groups toward unity. Perhaps a first step in this direction would be some consultations on the issue with the Saudis and Pakistanis. I know that dealing with the Afghan resistance groups can be like walking through a minefield and that the prospects for unity are dim to say the least. But I have the impression that our current hands-off policy is overly cautious. We may be passing up an opportunity to add a new factor to the Afghan equation, one that has the potential of rallying political support for the resistance, improving its efforts inside Afghanistan, and shoring up the morale of the Afghan people. 

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Finally, we have indications here from some East Europeans and from the Kabul media that the Soviets are concerned about the possibility that the resistance groups might eventually achieve some degree of unity. Such concern alone would be reason enough for us to begin to explore creatively how we could help bring unity about. 

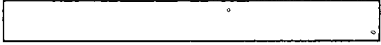
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