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26 APR 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: (See Distribution List)

FROM: [redacted] Director of Global Issues

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SUBJECT: Afghanistan: Preliminary 1985 Grain Outlook [redacted]

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1. The attached memorandum is a preliminary outlook for the 1985 Afghan grain crop. It focuses on weather conditions thus far and on water availability for the remainder of the season.

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2. Two additional crop reports will be forthcoming. The second, scheduled for August, will include a more detailed discussion of crop conditions and make some qualitative judgments about prospective crop size. The final report, to be published late this year, will provide a comprehensive look at regional crop conditions, give our best estimate of 1985 wheat output--a useful indicator of total food production--and assess Kabul's tenuous food situation.

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3. This report is based on analysis of [redacted] and meteorological data. Comments and questions are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, Agricultural Assessments Branch, OGI, [redacted]

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Attachment:

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Afghanistan: Preliminary 1985 Grain Outlook [redacted]  
GI M 85-10123, April 1985 [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted]

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SUBJECT: Afghanistan: Preliminary 1985 Grain Outlook

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OGI/SRD/AAB (April 1985)

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MEMORANDUM

Afghanistan: Preliminary 1985 Grain Outlook

Timely, widespread rains since late March have replenished Afghanistan's critically low irrigation supplies, thereby averting a major crop disaster. As a result of the rainfall, we believe that there are now sufficient amounts of water to sustain the winter wheat crop--Afghanistan's principal food grain--until harvest. Prospects for the summer crops such as corn, rice, and cotton are less promising, however, because the mountain snowpack--the main source of water for these crops--is smaller than normal this year.

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Background

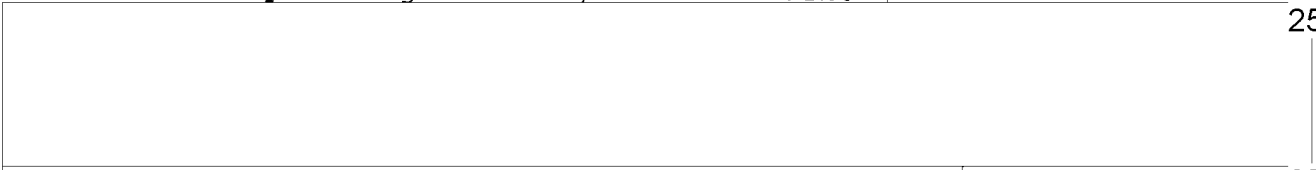
Afghanistan produces some 85 percent of its food and industrial crops on irrigated land. Water for the irrigation system comes primarily from the snow-fed rivers flowing out of the central mountain region, and is augmented by spring rains. Because little rainfall occurs after April, the rivers depend on snow melt to maintain their flow during the late spring and summer, when the demand for water is high. As a result, snow accumulation during the winter is an important factor determining crop production, especially summer crops, in Afghanistan.

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Equally vital to Kabul's crop output is the proper functioning of the country's fragile irrigation network.

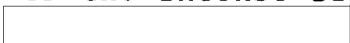
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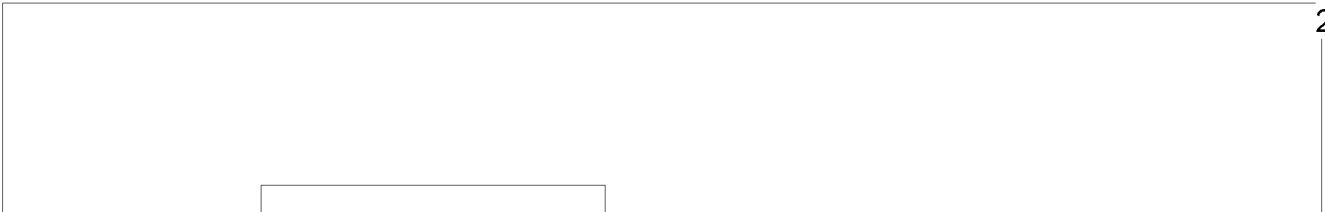
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In the province bordering Pakistan and Iran, where large numbers of farms have been abandoned because of the intense fighting, the irrigation system is non-functional.

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1985 Weather Summary

Analysis of meteorological data--although generally sparse and incomplete--indicates that average snow depth this spring in Afghanistan during the mid-March to mid-April period was as much as 40 percent less than in 1984.<sup>2</sup> The smaller snowpack coupled with generally dry weather during March caused irrigation supplies--as measured by the amount of water seen flowing in rivers and streams [redacted]--to reach critically low levels by late March. This problem was remedied, however, by widespread, abundant rainfall from 29 March to 13 April. Some areas received as much or more rain during this period than their yearly average, according to Afghan weather reports. In addition, mid-April [redacted] river flows are now good to excellent and that irrigation canals are full. [redacted]

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Preliminary Outlook for the 1985 Grain Crop

Although it is still too early in the crop season to quantitatively estimate 1985 grain production in Afghanistan, the recent rains precluded what almost certainly was shaping up to be a major harvest disaster. We believe that the irrigated winter wheat crop--about 80 percent of total wheat output--now has enough water to survive until harvesting begins in late May. The dryland winter wheat crop, grown in the northern plains region, also benefited from the rainfall. Wheat is the staple crop in the Afghan diet. [redacted]

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The outlook for Afghanistan's summer crops--mainly corn, rice, and cotton--is less favorable. Because of the smaller-than-normal mountain snowpack, we expect many of the country's rivers and streams to run dry before these crops mature. The resulting shortage of irrigation water will reduce grain yields and may prompt farmers to cut back on planted area as well. The magnitude of crop damage will depend on what stage of growth the plants are in when irrigation supplies are depleted. Crops are most vulnerable to moisture stress during flowering--the stage when maximum potential yields are determined. [redacted]

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<sup>2</sup> Snow depth in the spring is a good indicator of snowfall during the winter and of water availability for spring and summer irrigation. Snow depths were calculated by the US Air Force from snow brightness measurements taken from meteorological satellite imagery and from estimated snow accumulations based on analysis of temperature, cloud cover, and cloud type. This information was supplemented, when available, with precipitation amounts reported by Afghan weather stations. [redacted]

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FIGURE 1.  
AFGHANISTAN:

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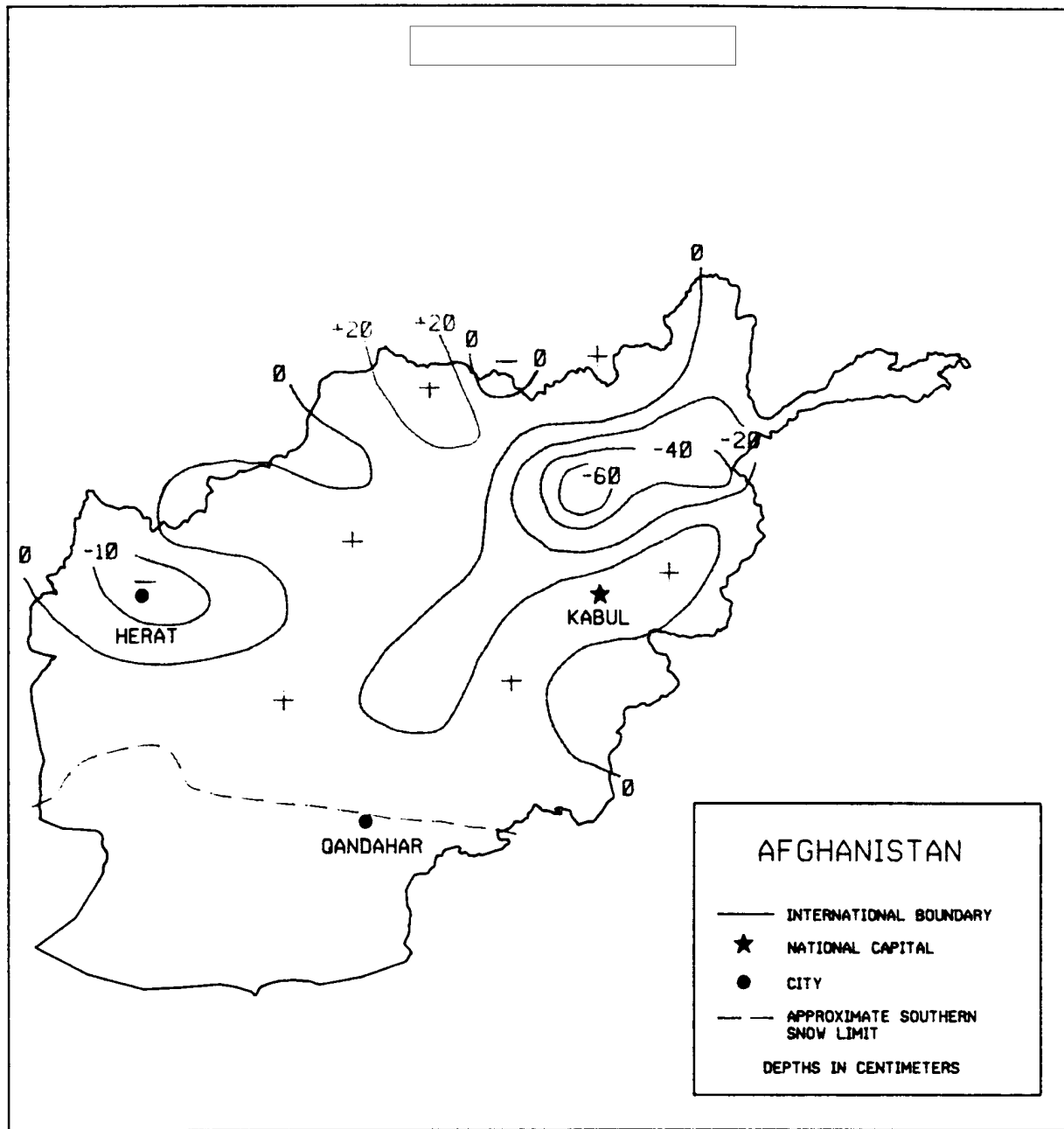


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FIGURE 2.  
AFGHANISTAN: SNOW DEPTH, MID-MARCH TO MID-APRIL  
1985 COMPARED TO 1984



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