

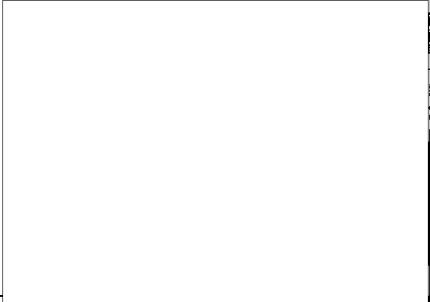


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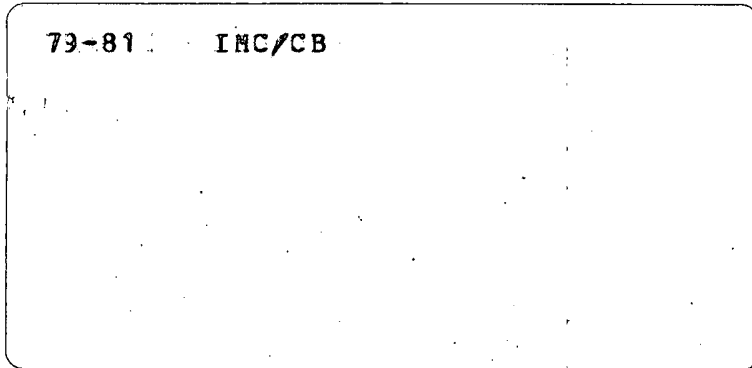
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# Afghanistan Situation Report



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12 February 1985



79-81 INC/CB

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## AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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##### AFGHANISTAN IN JANUARY

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Soviet and Afghan forces launched multibattalion operations and initiated small-unit actions in the Herat, Qandahar, and Bagram areas and along the Afghan-Pakistani border in one of the most active Januaries in recent years. 

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##### MARSHAL PETROV'S PROMOTION AND THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

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Marshal Vasilij Petrov, promoted to Defense Minister Sokolov's former position as First Deputy Minister of Defense, may be willing to experiment with military tactics and pay more attention to the political side of the war in Afghanistan, but probably will not significantly deviate from the current Soviet path.



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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. Questions or comments on the issues raised in this publication should be directed



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**PUBLICATION NOTE**

Unless major developments warrant otherwise, we will not publish the Afghanistan Situation Report next week. The next report will appear 26 February 1985.



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**IN BRIEF**

-- [redacted] major elements--including armored personnel carriers and loaded pallets--of the 104th Guards Airborne Division in convoy outside their barracks at Kirovabad in the USSR. The division probably is involved in a training exercise. Elements of the 104th temporarily deployed to Afghanistan last spring for the seventh Panjsher Valley offensive. [redacted]

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The Soviets are also scheduled to train 700 new Afghan police officers. We believe approximately 8,000 Afghans--2,000 of them military personnel--train in the Soviet Union each year. [redacted]

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-- [redacted] the new UNDP country program for Afghanistan includes projects only in Kabul. Soviet advisers wanted to include several projects outside the city, but UN officials refused, probably because of poor security. [redacted]

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-- [redacted] contrary to widespread rumors, no grand assembly will be held in Italy because of Rome's sensitivities to Arab countries which oppose the ex-King. Zahir is unlikely to be active in the months ahead in pursuing his initiative to develop resistance unity. [redacted]

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PERSPECTIVE

AFGHANISTAN IN JANUARY



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January 1985 was one of the most active Januaries in recent years in the war in Afghanistan. The Soviets and Afghans launched multibattalion operations and initiated small-unit actions in the Herat, Qandahar, and Bagram areas and in Konarha and Paktia Provinces. The insurgents maintained pressure on regime garrisons in the east and Qandahar. Fighting continued in the Panjsher Valley, and the Soviets may again be planning to assault insurgent strongholds there. Meanwhile, Tehran plans to send two F-4 aircraft to Mashhad following Soviet and Afghan violations of Iranian airspace.

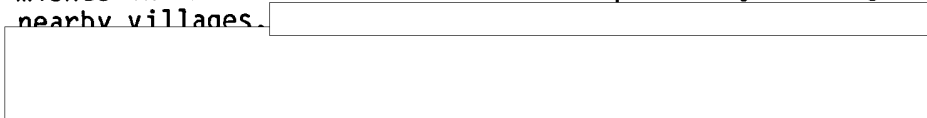
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Military Activity

Bad weather failed to significantly suppress combat in January. The Soviets continued to rely on multibattalion operations but also increased small unit actions and ambushes--some conducted by special purpose forces (Spetznaz) in support of other troops. The insurgents were active in several areas.

-- US Embassy sources report heavy fighting in the Herat area in early January, and Soviet and Afghan forces were again preparing for combat there late in the month.

-- Activity remained high in the Qandahar area with insurgent attacks against the airport, Soviet and Afghan posts, and a Soviet military convoy, and daily skirmishes in the bazaar. The Soviets responded by bombing nearby villages.



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-- [Redacted] insurgent pressure in early January prevented Soviet and Afghan troops from establishing a series of posts on main supply lines between Ali Khel and Khowst in Paktia Province. A regimental-size Afghan force arrived near Ali Khel by late January. The insurgents, however, had moved large supplies of arms into the eastern provinces from Pakistan and continued their attempts to attack as many regime garrisons as possible.

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-- US Embassy sources report that the insurgents attacked Bagram Airbase on about 16 January, taking advantage of a snowstorm that grounded Soviet aircraft and damaging some helicopters. The Soviets--most likely in response to the attack and to counter intense insurgent pressure in the Shomali area--launched a multibattalion operation which continued through late January.

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The Panjsher Valley

Soviet and Afghan forces continued to experience difficulties in maintaining forces in the Panjsher Valley. Guerrilla assaults on Soviet posts at Golbahar and Kohestan resulted in substantial Soviet casualties, according to US Embassy sources.

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[redacted] the insurgents repeatedly overran small outposts in the valley, plundering arms but occupying them only briefly; the guerrillas allow the Soviets and Afghans to recapture the posts then repeat the cycle. In mid-January, the guerrillas ignored bad weather and attacked an Afghan outpost at Khenj.

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[redacted] evidence of heavy air or artillery strikes--most likely the Soviet response to the insurgent attack--near Khenj, but guerrilla activity continued.

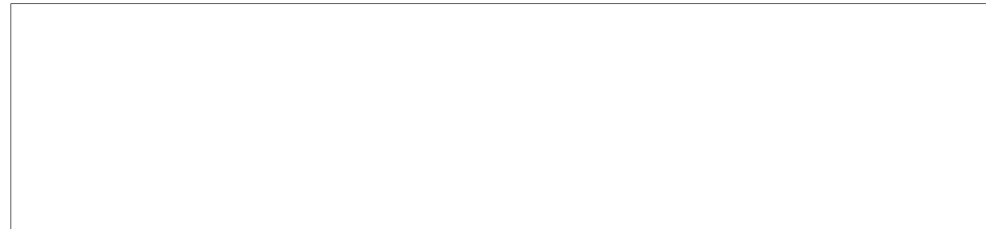
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The performance of Afghan regime troops did not improve in January. [redacted] shortly after their arrival in the Panjsher, a large number of Afghan soldiers and a high-ranking officer defected to the insurgents.

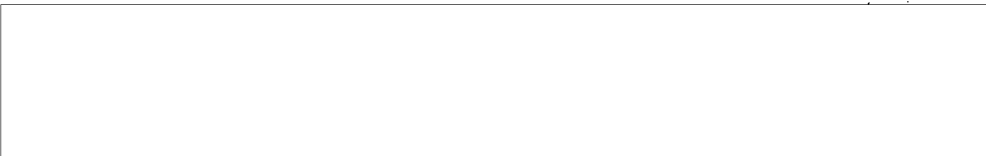
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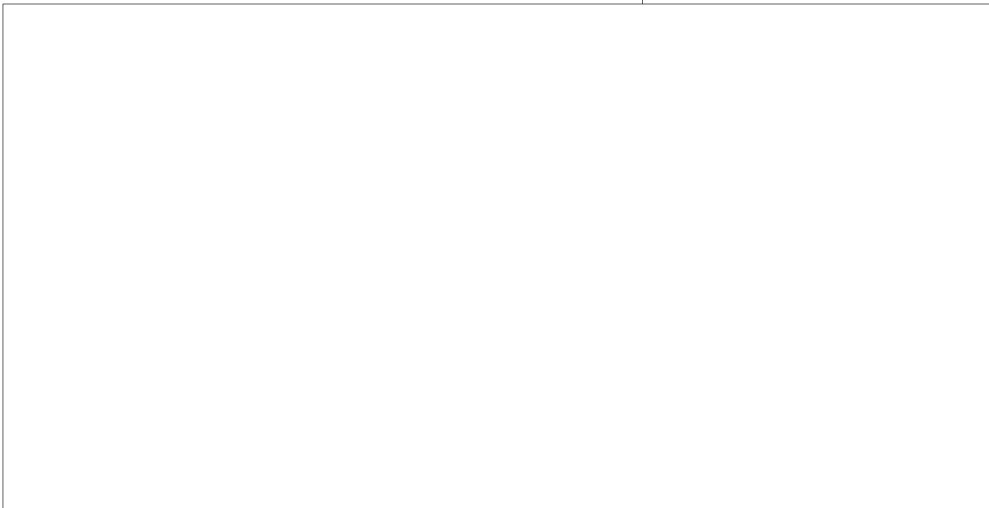
Embassy sources reported that large Soviet and Afghan convoys were moving north on the road from Kabul toward the Panjsher in late January. 

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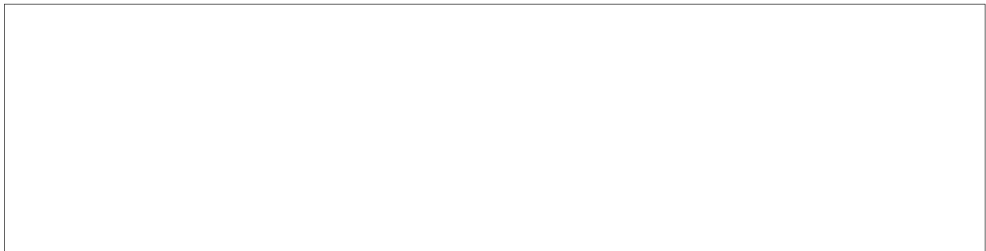
Kabul

The regime tightened security in Kabul during the first weeks of January and were able to maintain relative quiet during the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan. The increased security and bad weather probably reduced the insurgents' willingness to stage many attacks on the capital. Guerrilla activity increased slightly late in the month, according to US Embassy sources, with sporadic rocket attacks on the city, the assassination of Babrak Karmal's barber, and the bombing of the Afghan military hospital. 

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Tehran--apparently in response to the increased incursions and the bombing--decided to deploy two F-4 aircraft and one air-to-air refueling tanker to Mashhad Air Force Base in early February.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] no Iranian F-4 fighter or tanker aircraft at Mashhad. [Redacted]

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We believe most of the Soviet and Afghan aircraft probably overflew Iranian territory in the context of operations close to the Afghan border. The Soviets and Afghans are concerned that the guerrillas are receiving arms via routes through Iran and using Iran as a sanctuary after operations in western Afghanistan. The incursions--which may have been in pursuit of insurgent forces--also underscore Soviet frustration with their inability to suppress the insurgents in the Herat area more than temporarily. [Redacted]

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Outlook

We expect the level of combat to increase in spring. Insurgents who left Afghanistan last fall for camps in Pakistan are likely to return when travel becomes easier. The Soviets probably will continue their efforts to interdict insurgents and supplies from Pakistan and may increase the number of operations in the eastern provinces in expectation of renewed arms flows from Pakistan. The Soviets also appear to be preparing for increased small-unit operations and ambushes, using Spetznaz forces garrisoned at Jalalabad, Ghazni, Qandahar, and Bagram. Multibattalion operations in the eastern provinces will also continue. [Redacted]

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Bad weather in February may slow a new Soviet assault against insurgents in the Panjsher Valley. The Soviets, however, probably will be willing to put up with logistic problems in the interest of what they hope will be a surprise attack. Because they already garrison several areas in the valley, they may decide to send a smaller number of motorized rifle troops to the area than in the spring 1984 offensive while relying more heavily on medium- to low-level bombing and artillery to suppress the insurgents. We believe the Soviets--learning from small successes last spring--will also conduct a large number of heliborne assaults in hopes of finding Masood. [Redacted]

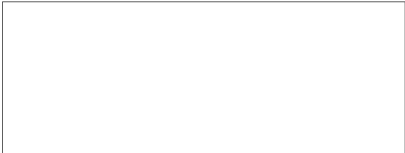
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[Redacted]

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PERSPECTIVE

MARSHAL PETROV'S PROMOTION AND THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN



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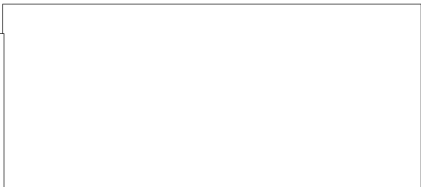
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Marshal Vasiliy Petrov, formerly Commander in Chief of the Soviet Ground Forces, has assumed Defense Minister Sokolov's old job as First Deputy Minister of Defense and may assume some of his responsibilities for the oversight of the war in Afghanistan. Petrov seems more a troop leader than Sokolov, more results-oriented, and more sensitive to the political side of the conflict.

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Petrov and Afghanistan

Petrov has been involved with Afghanistan since he became Ground Forces chief in late 1980.



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Petrov has visited Afghanistan twice since 1980 and has had at least some impact on Soviet policy there.



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The switch from large-scale planned operations to small-unit operations that was approved in June 1981 also came not long after Petrov's return to the USSR. Petrov's second trip to Afghanistan in April 1983 may have prompted the leadership to review Moscow's tactical approach to the conflict. Two months later Marshal Sokolov returned to Afghanistan and the Soviets began setting in train some of the improvements in their forces and operations that have become apparent in the last year.



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Counterinsurgency Background

Petrov directed the successful Cuban campaign to expel the Somali invaders of Ethiopia during 1977-78 and has made repeated lengthy visits to Ethiopia to oversee preparations for Ethiopian counterinsurgency operations against the Eritrean guerrillas. The terrain in Eritrea is almost as rugged as in Afghanistan and the problems the Ethiopians




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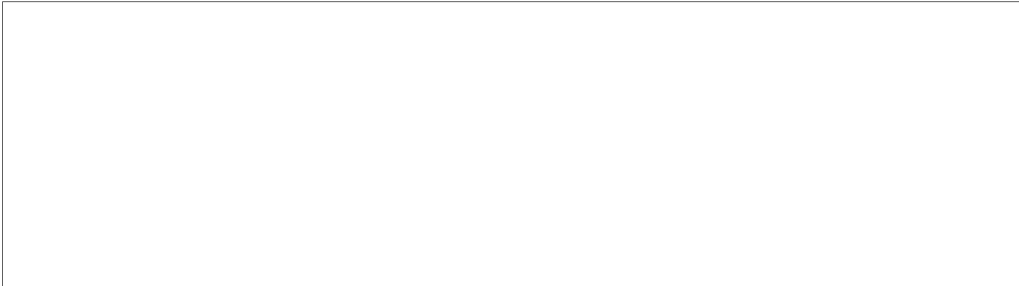
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face are similar--albeit on a smaller scale--to the problems the Soviets face in Afghanistan. 

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Outlook

It is too soon to tell whether Petrov will be allowed to have the same kind of impact on the war as his predecessor. In any event, Petrov is unlikely to deviate significantly from the current Soviet path in Afghanistan which he may have helped establish. His background in Afghanistan and Ethiopia, however suggest that he may be willing to experiment with military tactics and pay more attention to the political side of the conflict. 

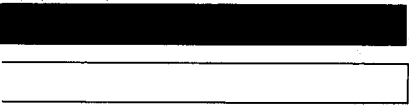
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