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Directorate of Intelligence

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Afghanistan Situation Report



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17 September 1985

79-81 IMC/CB

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

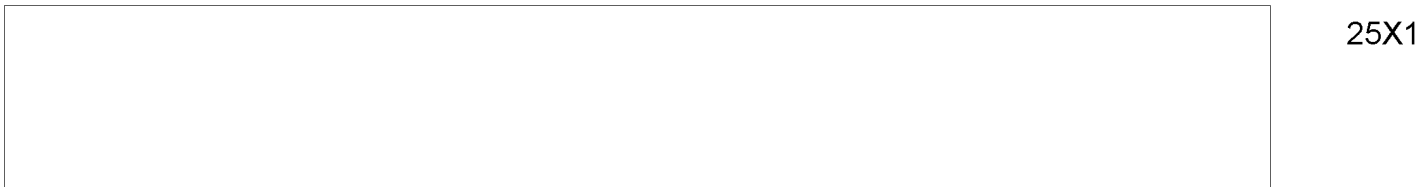
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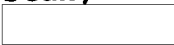
Major Soviet operations continue in Paktia Province and Qandahar.  25X1

MASOOD'S INACTIVITY  1 25X1


Some diplomats in Kabul have criticized the recent inactivity of Masood's fighters, who probably are recovering from the Panjsher offensive, which ended in late July.  25X1



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[Redacted]

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PERSPECTIVE

NEW LIFE IN HELMAND PROVINCE INSURGENCY [Redacted]

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Insurgent groups in the Helmand Valley have ended longstanding differences and have become more effective, thereby increasing both resistance and Soviet activity in the region. [Redacted]

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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 the publication should be directed to [Redacted]

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COMBAT OPERATIONS IN PAKTIA AND QANDAHAR

[Redacted]

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Recent military activity focused on Paktia Province and Qandahar, and Soviet operations north of Kabul ended.

[Redacted]

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indicates Afghan forces continued to operate near Khowst and along the Pakistani border in Paktia Province. Press reports indicate insurgent machinegun fire downed an MI-24 helicopter carrying two Afghan generals and a high ranking Soviet officer in Paktia Province on 17 September.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

the 70th Independent

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Motorized Rifle Brigade continuing a combat sweep in the Qandahar area, probably in reaction to several successful insurgent attacks in the area.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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MASOOD'S INACTIVITY

[Redacted]

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Western, Chinese, and Pakistani diplomats in Kabul have recently criticized Panjsher Valley commander Masood for his failure to open a second front while Soviet troops were occupied in the Konar and Paktia Province offensives this summer, according to the US Embassy in Kabul. The recent lack of combat in the Panjsher, coupled with reports of a Soviet truce offer to Masood, have fueled speculation among Kabul diplomats that Masood may not be initiating attacks while he considers the pact. The Embassy also reports that Masood's inactivity highlights the lack of insurgent coordination and undermines the efforts of resistance as a whole.

[Redacted]

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Comment: We believe that Masood's inactivity results largely from his need to rest and resupply his units following intense combat in the Panjsher last July.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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morale and supply levels are now good among the 5,000 insurgents under Masood's leadership. Panjsher insurgents did attack convoys along the Salang highway and attacked the garrison at Peshghowr during the Konar campaign in late May and early June.

[Redacted]

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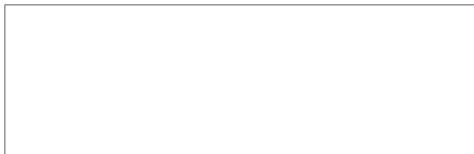
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Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Although diplomatic reporting indicates that Pakistan is interested in having a member of the insurgent alliance address the committee, Islamabad is reluctant to support formal resistance representation at the General Assembly sessions because it fears a strong Soviet reaction.



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NEW AFGHAN DIPLOMATS NAMED



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Kabul recently appointed new ambassadors to East Germany and Syria and a new charge d'affaires to Italy. The appointees to Rome and Damascus are low-level party figures but the new ambassador to East Germany, General Baba Jan, is a candidate member of the PDPA Central Committee and a former Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff (1980-84). A career military officer, Baba Jan, about 60, was "retired" for failing to prosecute the war aggressively. The Syrian appointment upgrades relations from the charge level; the Syrians do not maintain a post in Kabul.

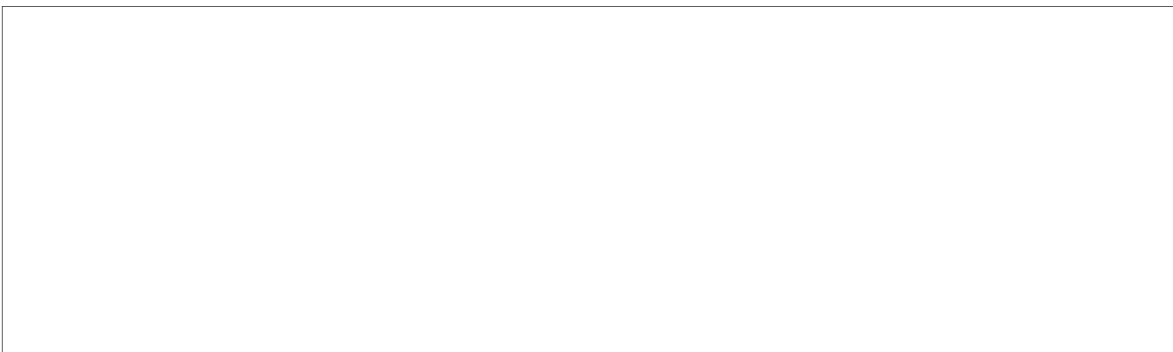


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Comment: We believe that the Syrian appointment--only the second Afghan ambassador currently assigned to an Islamic country (Iraq is the other)--is part of Afghanistan's ongoing effort to improve its international image. Kabul would like full diplomatic relations with as many nations as possible and probably sees states friendly to Moscow as the best place to start. Baba Jan's posting, however, is clearly a diplomatic exile--a frequent fate for out-of-favor party figures. Other fallen stars now stationed overseas include Khalqi leader Assadollah Sarwari (Ulan Bator) and former Finance Minister Abdul Wakil (Hanoi).



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UNITED NATIONS TO CONSIDER HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT



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The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) will give an unprecedented amount of attention to the Afghanistan question this year, considering for the first time the human rights situation in the country. In the spring of 1985, the UN Human Rights Commission issued a report that accused "foreign forces" in Afghanistan of using chemical weapons and massacring civilians. The UNGA Social and Humanitarian Committee will consider this report in November and probably issue a resolution based on it.



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In mid-November, the General Assembly plenary will also vote for the seventh time on a resolution calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. In 1984 a record 119 countries supported the resolution with only 20 countries opposed. The Afghanistan issue may also arise in the UNGA Decolonization Committee.



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Comment: The US Mission to the UN predicts that the human rights resolution would pass by at least a 5 to 1 margin; no significant change is expected in the vote totals on the resolution calling for the withdrawal of



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PERSPECTIVE

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NEW LIFE IN HELMAND PROVINCE INSURGENCY

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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Major improvements in insurgent cooperation in the upper Helmand Valley area in 1985 resulted in a high level of activity, threatening Soviet and Afghan regime control of the Kajaki Dam and security on the highway from Qandahar to Herat. For the first five years of the war, insurgents in Helmand Province, beset by internal squabbling, posed little challenge to the Soviets and the Kabul regime. [Redacted]

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Strategic Importance

The importance of Helmand Province derives from its agriculture and the segment of the highway from Qandahar to Herat. The most productive agricultural area is the Helmand River Valley. In the upper valley, the US-built Kajaki dam and a 36-mile long lake feed a network of irrigation canals; a hydroelectric station at the dam serves Gereshk--an important transfer and supply point for Soviet and Afghan Government convoys, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Gereshk is situated on the Helmand River and the road from Qandahar to Herat. [Redacted]

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The war has increased the economic importance of the upper Helmand Valley. [Redacted] since 1980 the area has replaced Qandahar as the regional economic center because of frequent Soviet and Afghan bombing of Qandahar. One Helmand village, Tambah, has grown into a major black market for items obtained from Soviet soldiers, [Redacted]

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Soviet and regime forces maintain battalion-sized garrisons at Gereshk and other forces at Lashkar Gah. The Soviets reinforced their contingent in the province this spring. Larger units are brought in from Qandahar and Shindand for major operations in the province. The rest of Helmand Province has little strategic importance. Apart from the sparsely populated Helmand River Valley and the mountainous north, the province is desert. [Redacted]

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Insurgent Discord

There were deep differences between the various insurgent groups active in Helmand until the last year or so. [redacted] much of the tension grew out of efforts by the Hizbi-Islami Gulbuddin faction to expand its influence at the expense of the more moderate Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami. Beginning in about 1980 and lasting until late 1984, Hizbi and Harakat forces fought each other. The struggle intensified when Iranian-backed Shia groups from the Hazarehjat region, eager to take revenge on the Harakat for earlier attacks on Shia groups in the eastern Hazarehjat region, entered the fighting on the side of the Hizbi, [redacted]

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In late 1984 or early 1985, mediation by a local religious leader brought an end to fighting between the Harakat and Hizbi, [redacted] and we believe that political shifts outside the region also contributed to development of accord among the groups in the upper Helmand. [redacted]

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[redacted] in late 1984 relations between Iran and Hizbi worsened; as a result, the Iranian-backed Shia groups from the Hazarehjat probably loosened their ties with Hizbi, making Hizbi accord with the Harakat possible. Moreover, [redacted] at about the same time Pakistan began pressuring Gulbuddin's organization to show more tolerance toward other Sunni groups, to facilitate the formation of the new resistance alliance. [redacted]

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Renewed Insurgency

The end to internecine fighting had dramatic effects on the insurgency in the area. Morale rose and attacks on Soviet and regime targets increased sharply in February and March 1985, producing the heaviest fighting of the war in the Helmand Valley, [redacted]

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[redacted] Harakat attacks on Gereshk resulted in heavy casualties on Soviet and regime forces, [redacted]

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[redacted] and prompted the Soviets to send reinforcements and counterattack. The insurgent attack on Gereshk, [redacted] further raised morale among Qandahar guerrillas, who believed the Soviets would have to spread their resources and thus relieve pressure on the Qandahar groups. [redacted]

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Heavy fighting continued into the spring and summer. In March, [redacted] insurgents attacked Soviet and regime positions near the Kajaki Dam. [redacted] some 5,000 insurgents participated in the attack, and [redacted] the attacks continued, with varying intensity, for more than two months. In early June, the insurgents were expecting to retreat into the northern mountains and, although the insurgents suffered heavy casualties, morale was high. In mid-June, [redacted] [redacted] insurgents destroyed the Afghan Army's 20th Brigade and killed its commander; government retaliatory strikes aimed at breaking the alliance succeeded mainly in killing large numbers of civilians. In mid-July, [redacted] [redacted] Soviet and Afghan forces broke off the offensive. [redacted]

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The insurgency in the province remains strong. [redacted] [redacted] although the guerrillas admit to heavy casualties and large arms and ammunition losses, they claim to have inflicted much heavier losses on the Soviet and Afghan forces. They were especially proud of having successfully resisted Soviet and Afghan regime efforts to take the village of Musa Qaleh. At heavy cost, insurgents aggressively attacked advancing armored vehicles, destroying many and breaking the siege. Insurgents claim, moreover, that more than 300 regime soldiers deserted to the resistance during the fighting. [redacted]

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Outlook

Prospects are good for a continuing strong insurgency in Helmand Province. Soviet and Afghan regime military pressure has often caused insurgent groups to set aside internecine quarreling and concentrate on fighting. Such pressure is likely to continue. Once begun, military cooperation among insurgent groups has tended to persist. [redacted]

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Insurgent cooperation in Helmand, however, probably will remain somewhat vulnerable to political shifts outside the region. For example, a strong effort by Iranian-backed Shiite groups to extend their influence into the Helmand Valley--though unlikely in the near term--could disrupt the current cooperation and set in motion internal bickering. [redacted]

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