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# Afghanistan Situation Report



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10 December 1985

79-81 INC/CB

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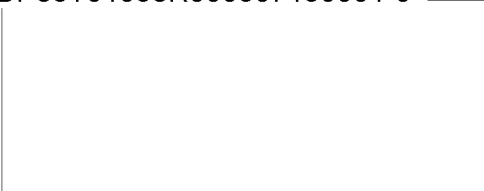
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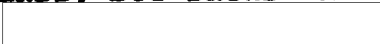
**AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT**



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**QANDAHAR OPERATION ENDS, BUT SNOWS FAIL TO HALT FIGHTING ELSEWHERE**



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Despite the onset of winter, both Soviet-Afghan forces and the insurgents were active in many areas of Afghanistan. The multibattalion Soviet-Afghan combat sweep in Qandahar, however, ended by 2 December.



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**SOVIET ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS UPGRADED**



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Soviet BTR-70 armored personnel carriers in Afghanistan have a new turret that permits a much higher angle of fire than the previous one. The change will enable the BTR-70 to operate more effectively in urban and mountainous terrain.

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**NEW ORGANIZATION TO COORDINATE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANS**



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Pakistan hopes the creation of Pakistan Welfare International--a clearing house for humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees--will lend international prestige to the resistance. It will almost certainly mean that pressures on private groups to use the Pakistan-based resistance alliance as a conduit for aid inside Afghanistan will grow.



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**SEMPRECIOS STONES FUND AFGHAN INSURGENTS**



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The mining and sale of semiprecious stones in Afghanistan--particularly lapis lazuli--reportedly provides as much as \$100,000 per year in revenues to the insurgents.

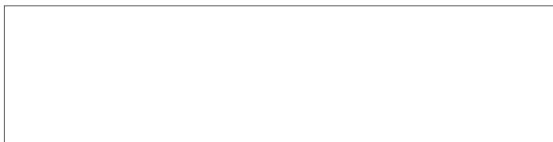


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**IN BRIEF**

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**PERSPECTIVE**

**THE WAR IN NOVEMBER**



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Several Soviet-Afghan operations in November were aimed at disrupting insurgent supply routes and bases before the onset of winter. [Redacted] troops conducted operations northwest of Qandahar

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**QANDAHAR OPERATIONS END, BUT SNOWS FAIL TO HALT FIGHTING ELSEWHERE**

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Despite the onset of snow and colder weather in much of Afghanistan, Soviet and Afghan forces were active in Konarha, Ghazni, Balkh, Parvan, and Herat Provinces,

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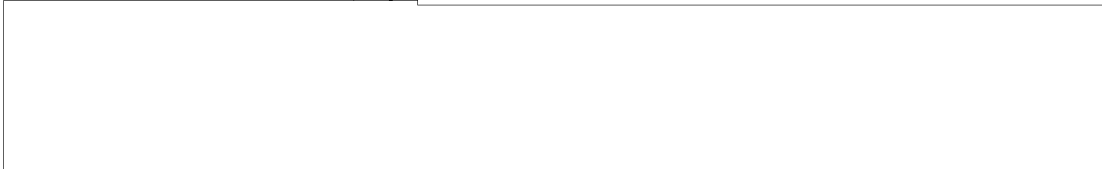
The Afghan Army reportedly suffered heavy casualties in the late November fighting around Herat, according to sources of the US Embassy in Kabul, and insurgent ambushes of Soviet and Afghan convoys resulted in the closure of the vital Salang highway from 26 November to 4 December. According to the US Embassy, fighting also forced the temporary closure of portions of the Mazar-e Sharif-Sheberghan and Ghazni-Qalat roads. Insurgent attacks in the lower Panjsher Valley destroyed a number of Afghan armored vehicles, despite increased regime air patrols and sweep operations.

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the multibattalion Soviet-Afghan combat sweep in Qandahar Province that had been underway since early November ended by 2 December, when ground forces and air units returned to their home bases.

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**SOVIET ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS UPGRADED**

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Soviet BTR-70 armored personnel carriers in Afghanistan now have a modified turret that substantially enhances the previous turret's capabilities. The modified BTR-70 turret employs new optics to enhance visibility and a barrel type mantlet (gun housing) that accommodates a 60-degree gun elevation. a single engine has replaced the twin engine arrangement on the BTR-70.

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**Comment:** The high angle of fire of the BTR-70 enables it to operate more effectively in mountainous or urban terrain and against insurgent ambushes. A diesel engine probably would provide more power--possibly to compensate for the BTR's reportedly heavier armor protection and to improve its overall performance.

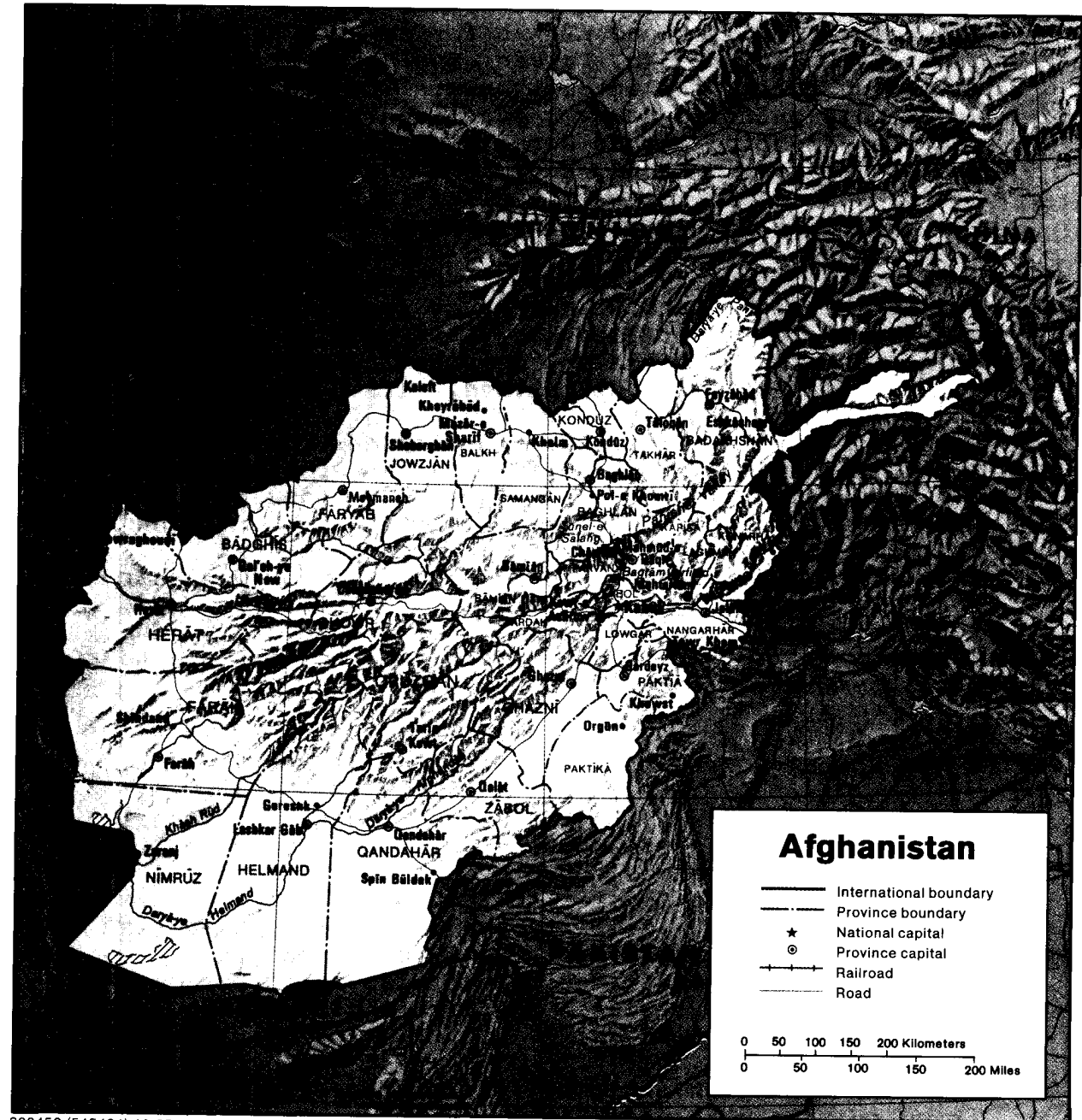
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**NEW ORGANIZATION TO COORDINATE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANS**

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Islamabad has created Pakistan Welfare International (PWI) to serve as a clearing house for humanitarian assistance inside Afghanistan. PWI, ostensibly a non-governmental organization, will be staffed by government officials and partly funded by Islamabad. The new organization will be headed by the founder of the North-West Frontier Province's refugee program, who is considered an able administrator and well versed in Afghan issues. The US Embassy reports that the Peshawar-based resistance alliance will be on PWI's advisory council and will be used as the conduit for humanitarian aid.

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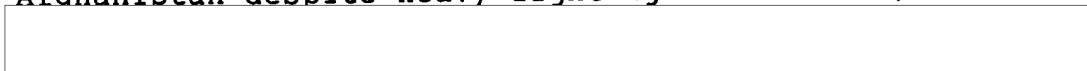
**Comment:** Islamabad probably hopes the new organization will both increase its control over humanitarian aid going into Afghanistan and give the resistance some added measure of international prestige by including it in the advisory council and using it as a conduit. Although Pakistani officials have said that PWI will not replace current private voluntary aid organizations (PVOs), Pakistan's desire to use the resistance alliance as a conduit for aid and to avoid duplication in aid programs will probably result in growing pressures by Islamabad on PVOs to funnel aid through the Peshawar-based alliance rather than through their own established distribution systems.

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**SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES FUND AFGHAN INSURGENTS**

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Mining of semiprecious stones continues in northeastern Afghanistan despite heavy fighting in the area,



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production of lapis lazuli, which accounts for the majority of output, is greater than it was before the Soviet invasion, when output was over 7.0 metric tons per year. the mine owners, who arrange for sales in Pakistan, are closely allied with the insurgents, and several insurgent commanders are members of mining families. Insurgents reportedly receive 10 percent of the estimated sale value of the stones in return for providing security for the trip to Pakistan.

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**Comment:** Based on pre-invasion prices and production levels, the sale of lapis lazuli may provide the insurgents with as much as \$100,000 per year.



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**IN BRIEF**

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a new airfield under construction near Saran Woluswali, a town some 50 kilometers southeast of Ghazni. When finished, the runway will probably support helicopter and light cargo aircraft operations



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According to sources of the US Embassy in Kabul, ex-KHAD chief Najibullah will oversee KHAD, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Defense in his new post as party secretary. The creation of the secretariat post almost certainly stems from Soviet and regime dissatisfaction with the military performance of the Afghan army, the provincial militias controlled by the Interior Ministry, and the lack of cooperation between KHAD and the Interior Ministry because of factionalism. Najibullah's elevation in this capacity is a political setback for Interior Minister Gulabzoi, head of the Khalqi faction, who is likely to resist relinquishing any real power to Najibullah, a Parchami.

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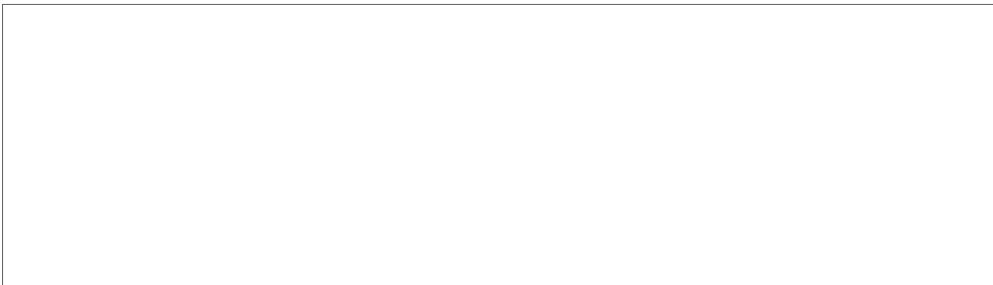
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The Kabul regime seems to be trying to bolster its relations with other Communist countries and parties in order to improve its international standing. High level People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan delegations visited Greece and North Korea last week and met with Communist Party officials. In an unusual move for an Islamic country, Afghanistan was even supposed to send a representative to the Israeli Communist Party's 20th Convention in Jerusalem, according to press reports.



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**PERSPECTIVE**

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**THE WAR IN NOVEMBER**

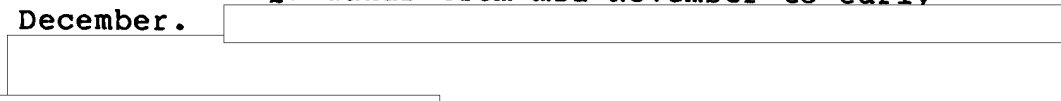
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Fighting in Afghanistan continued at a moderate level during November. There were several Soviet and Afghan operations designed to disrupt insurgent supply routes and bases before the onset of winter. A large Soviet-Afghan force conducted operations in a broad area northwest of Qandahar from mid-November to early December.

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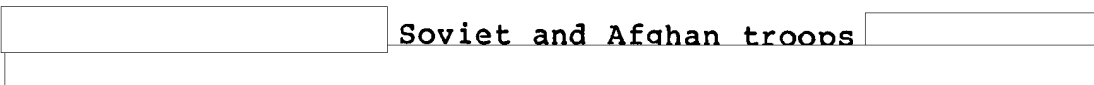
The resistance was active in Herat, Nangarhar, and Parvan Provinces.

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**The Qandahar Offensive**

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Soviet and Afghan troops

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conducted two large combat operations from late November to early December in areas 45 and 100 kilometers northwest of Qandahar City,

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fighter-bombers and helicopters deployed to Qandahar airfield to support combat operations.

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The operation included several air assaults--the largest on 19 and 20 November. By early December the operation ended, and ground air units began to return to their bases.

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**Other Soviet-Afghan Operations**

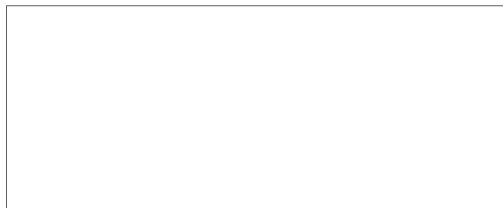
Soviet and Afghan forces conducted several other operations during November,

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25X1 -- [redacted] Soviet and Afghan troops ended a combat sweep in the Herat area and returned to garrison in the first week of November. The operation was apparently not successful, however, because several small Soviet units returned to Herat in late November to counter insurgent attacks on several regime outposts. Sources of the US Embassy in Kabul report heavy regime casualties during the operation.

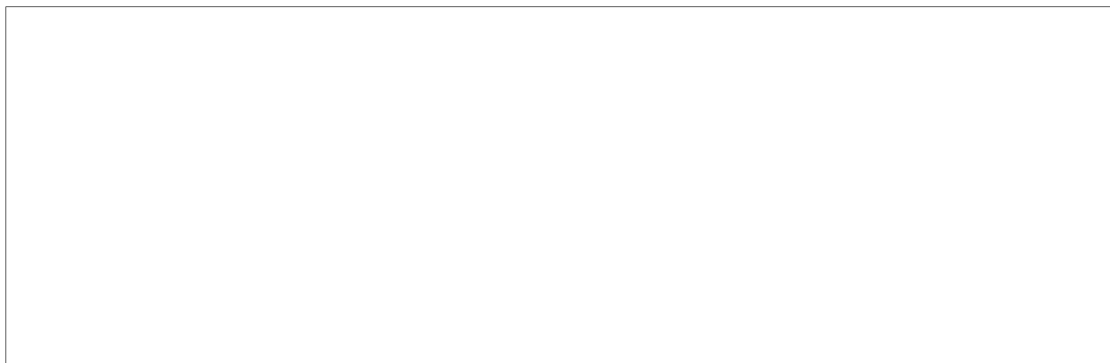
25X1 -- [redacted] Soviet and Afghan troops conducted air assaults in conjunction with blockade and sweep operations in the Jalalabad area between 11 and 27 November.

25X1 -- [redacted] Soviet troops were engaged in minor combat operations east of Bagram, stretching into the lower half of the Panjsher Valley between 19 and 27 November.

Additional small-unit operations were conducted by Soviet and Afghan forces in the Paghman area north of Kabul and in Zabol, Paktia, Lowgar, and Ghazni Provinces during November. [redacted]

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**Insurgents Remain Active**

The insurgents also remained active in Afghanistan last month, albeit at a reduced level compared to October. In addition to insurgent activity in Qandahar, Herat, and Oruzgan Provinces, several attacks were noted in

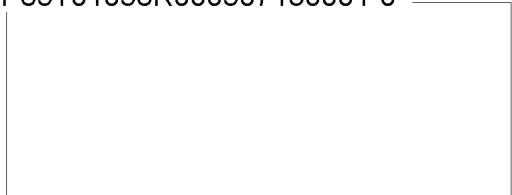
25X1 [redacted] US Embassy reporting:

-- Insurgents reportedly increased their level of activity in the Mazar-e Sharif in mid-November and killed several Soviet soldiers in night clashes.

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-- In spite of heavy snowfalls in the Panjsher Valley, insurgents attacked the Afghan garrison at Peshghowr--which probably precipitated Soviet operations in the Valley in mid- to late November and as many as nine other Soviet posts in the Panjsher.

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-- Embassy sources [redacted] report several insurgent attacks on convoys that destroyed some 20 fuel trucks in the Salang Pass; attacks on fuel pipelines north of Pol-e Khomri resulted in the loss of [redacted] fuel. [redacted]

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The insurgents shot down at least 10 Soviet and Afghan helicopters in November, according to [redacted] Embassy sources. In the Qandahar operation alone, [redacted] at least three Soviet and Afghan helicopters were shot down. [redacted]

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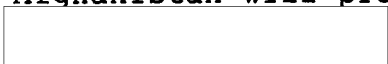
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**Outlook**

Soviet and regime operations in Qandahar, Oruzgan, and Helmand Provinces probably failed to achieve any lasting success because the Soviets lack sufficient numbers of troops to maintain garrisons in this area. As a result, the resistance will probably continue to exploit its strong position. With the onset of winter--which closes many passes, making resupply difficult--Soviet and insurgent operations in most of Afghanistan will probably be small and localized.

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