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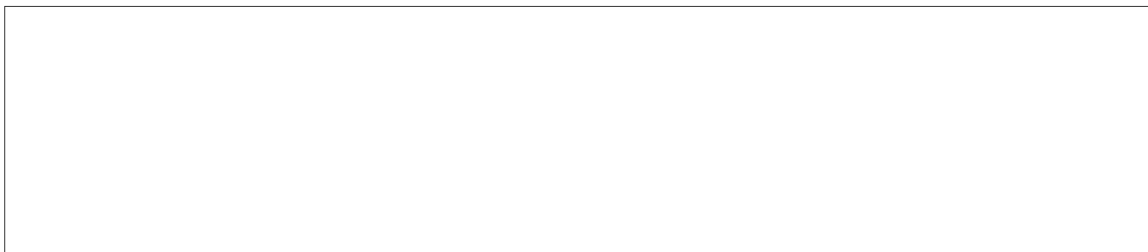
**The Soviet Offensive in Afghanistan
Talking Points for the D/DCI**

Prepared by the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis
31 May 1984

The Soviets almost certainly launched the present offensive to regain the initiative from the Afghan resistance. Their main goals are to inflict a major defeat on the Panjsher Valley guerrillas and capture their leader, Ahmad Shah Masood:

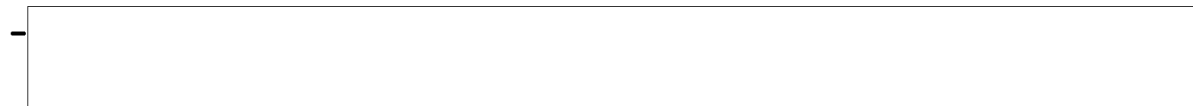
- A victory over Masood would cripple one of the most effective insurgent groups and deal a blow to the morale of the resistance throughout Afghanistan.
- It would also deny the insurgents a strategic area of Afghanistan that overlooks the main highway from the USSR to Kabul and is a major infiltration route from Pakistan.
- The Soviets may also hope to destroy the civilian base of support for the Panjsher insurgents by high-level bombing of crops and villages.

The Soviets' largest campaign of the war--involving some 20,000 troops, mostly Soviet--so far has failed to achieve their goals:



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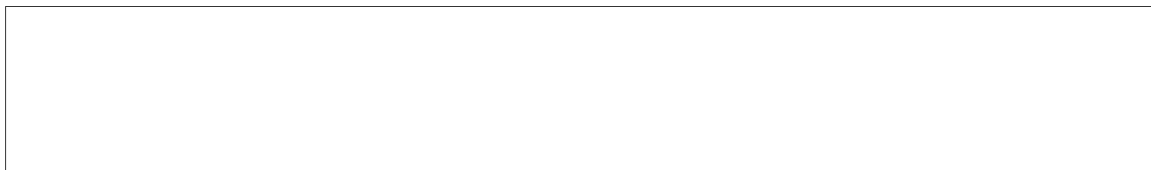
Fragmentary evidence suggests that the Soviets believe their casualties have been high, considering the low level of fighting:



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- We estimate that insurgent losses range from 300 to 500 killed and wounded.
- Afghan civilians suffered higher casualties than the insurgents.

Soviet tactics in the present campaign have been largely unsuccessful:

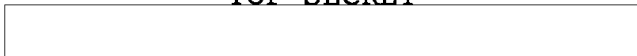


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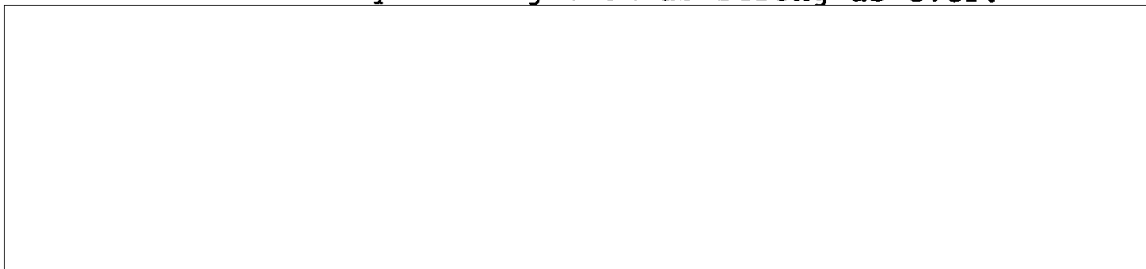
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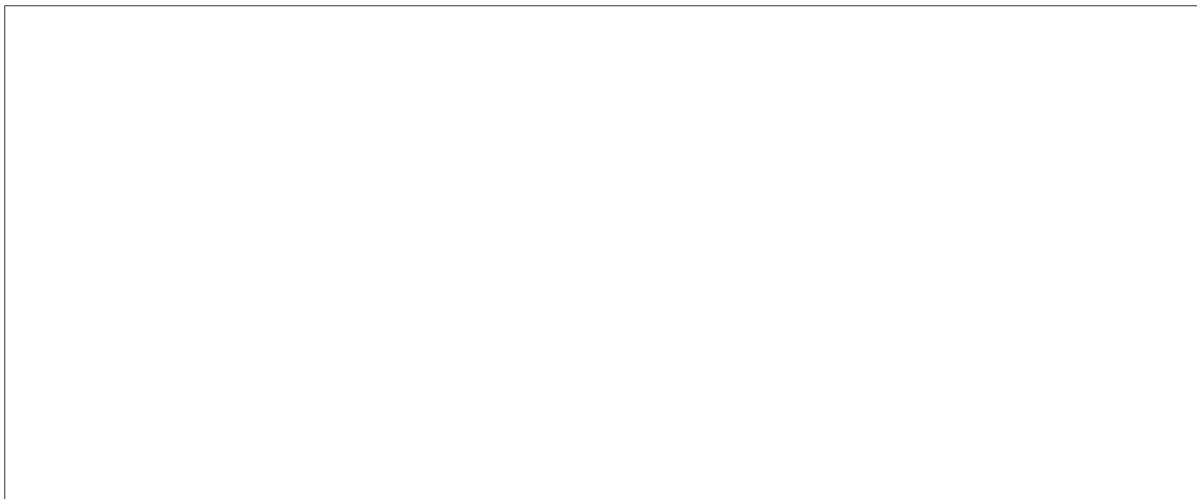
The Panjsher insurgents have not suffered serious losses in the Soviet campaign, and appear likely to emerge with a significant moral victory leaving them as strong as ever:



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-- The insurgents generally have avoided fighting except where they have the advantage of terrain.

The Soviets have been frustrated by their inability to locate and capture or kill Masood:



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The Soviets are establishing new bases and improving their defensive positions in the Panjsher Valley, indicating that they are preparing to leave a sizable force when the present offensive ends:

- They presumably hope to prevent Masood's forces from using the valley as a staging base.
- The Soviets will be able to control the valley floor, but will be vulnerable to costly harassing attacks.
- The insurgents will be able to continue attacking Soviet supply lines outside the Panjsher Valley by using their bases in the surrounding mountains and adjacent valleys.

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Failure to achieve major gains could cause Moscow to revise its strategy and tactics:

- The Soviets could decide to emphasize more mobile small unit tactics--as they did earlier in the war without great success.

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- Moscow still appears reluctant to send major troop reinforcements to Afghanistan.

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