



Directorate of Intelligence

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Afghanistan Situation Report



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30 September 1986

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT



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WIDESPREAD FIGHTING



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Insurgent forces continued to conduct attacks in Kabul last week despite concerted Soviet and Afghan regime efforts in recent weeks to inhibit such activity,



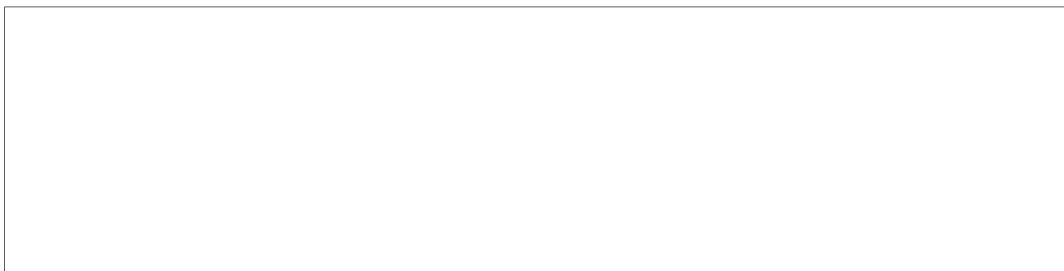
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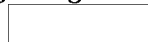
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SOVIET-AFGHAN TRADE RELATIONS



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Afghan merchants are facing growing pressure to trade with the USSR. The trade is less profitable to the merchants and is increasing Afghanistan's debt burden to the Soviet Union.



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IN BRIEF

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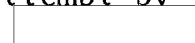
PERSPECTIVE

POINT-COUNTERPOINT: A DECEPTION OPERATION OR NOT?



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Analysts are divided in their assessment of whether the recent Soviet force augmentation in Afghanistan represent a deliberate attempt by Moscow to stage a bogus withdrawal.



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Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis and the
Office of Soviet Analysis. Questions or comments
on the issues raised in the publication should be



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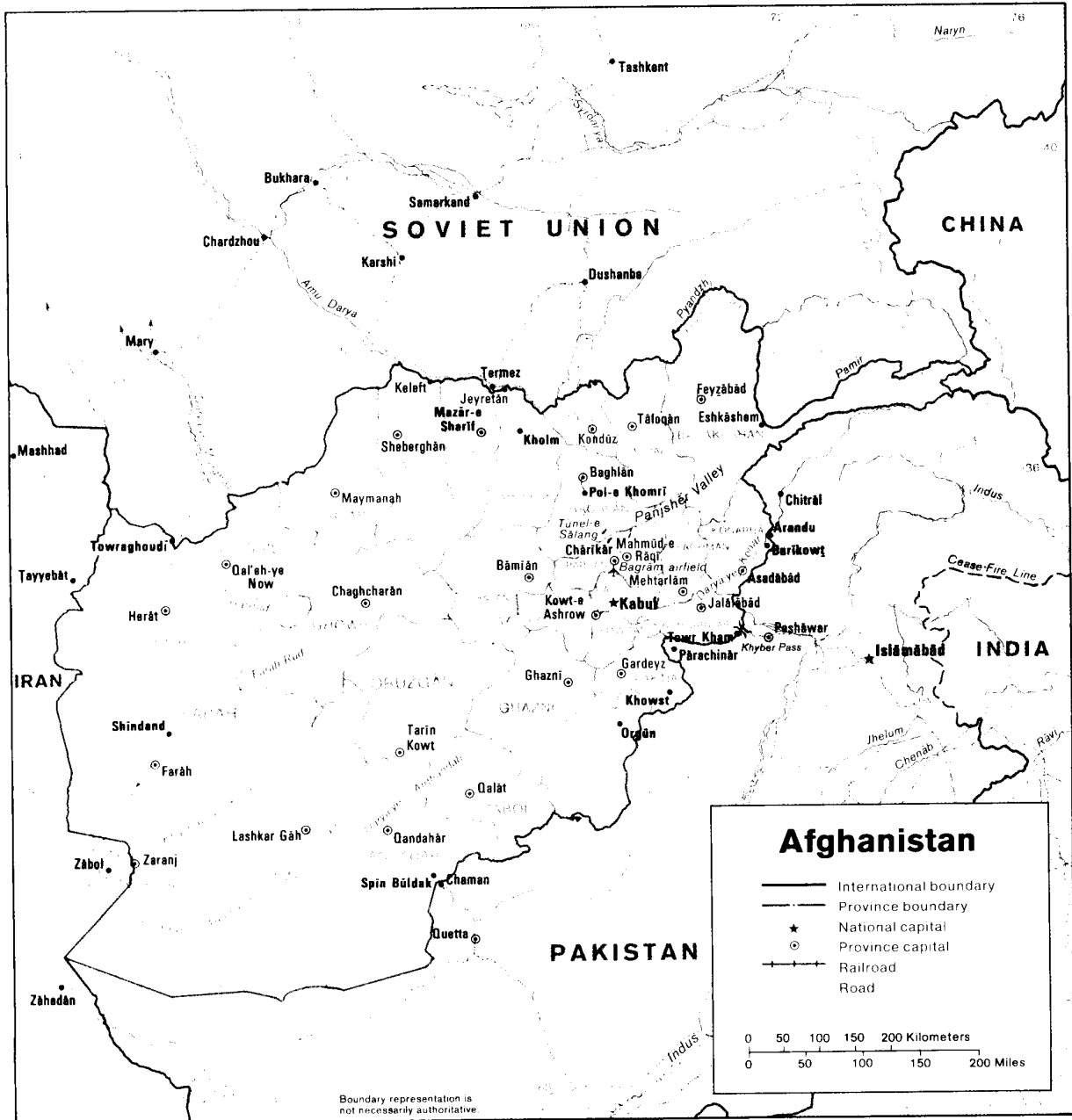


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WIDESPREAD FIGHTING

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Insurgent attacks continued in Kabul last week, despite recent Soviet and Afghan regime efforts to curb guerrilla activity in the capital area. According to the US Embassy in Kabul, a car bomb--probably planted by the insurgents--exploded on 28 September outside the Soviet Embassy, where a Soviet delegation headed by the First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers was visiting. In addition, several other explosions and rocket attacks occurred during the week. The insurgents also said they assassinated two high-ranking KHAD officials in the Kabul area. According to the US Embassy, Soviet and Afghan regime combat aircraft conducted several sorties west of the city toward Paghman, where counterinsurgent operations have occurred during the past month to stem rocket attacks on the capital, and also south of Kabul. [Redacted]

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Fighting in the Qandahar area has been heavy at times during the past month. According to the US Embassy, Soviet and Afghan regime units from Qandahar launched an operation in mid-month in the Darya-ye Arghandab and Bazar-e Panjva'i regions outside the city, probably to curb resistance infiltration.

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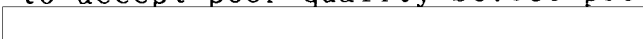
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SOVIET-AFGHAN TRADE RELATIONS



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Afghan merchants are facing growing pressure to trade with the Soviet Union, according to the US Embassy in Kabul. The merchants complain that this trade--which is conducted on a barter basis--is less profitable than their hard currency trade and they have no choice but to accept poor quality Soviet products in payment.



the Soviets are also delaying passage of Western-bound goods shipped through the Soviet Union to disrupt Afghanistan's trade with Western firms.

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Afghanistan's exports are increasingly being used to finance the regime's mounting debt to the Soviet Union, according to press reports. A Soviet diplomat recently stated that about 85 percent of Soviet aid to the regime is now on a loan basis and will eventually have to be repaid. The diversion of resources--such as natural gas and cement--from domestic use to the Soviet Union for debt repayment may also constrain Kabul's modernization and development efforts.

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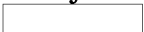


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IN BRIEF

-- The Government of Sweden has provided more than 100 million kronor--some \$14.5 million--in humanitarian aid to the Afghan resistance since 1980, according to a recent estimate by the US Embassy in Stockholm. The main channel for this aid is the Swedish Afghanistan Committee, which provides medical care to Afghans in country and in Pakistan. In addition, the US Embassy says the Swedish Red Cross is considering a children's vaccination campaign, provided it can conduct the program on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. 


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-- Saudi Arabian officials welcome the establishment of an Afghan resistance alliance office in Jeddah so long as it is an office representing all parties, according to the US Embassy in Riyadh. The Saudis do not intend to push for alliance representation at the next summit of Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), however, because Pakistan opposes such a move. Furthermore, the Saudis believe alliance representation would be impractical, given the staunch opposition from other OIC member countries--such as Syria and Libya--with strong ties to Moscow. 

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-- Pakistani Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan told US officials that Moscow had responded positively to Islamabad's suggestions on monitoring a UN-mediated peace agreement. Yaqub said Cordovez would probably resume a diplomatic shuttle between Kabul and Islamabad--probably late this year--to finalize monitoring arrangements and refocus the talks on a Soviet troop-withdrawal timetable. 

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-- Afghan resistance alliance spokesman Mojadedi told US officials last week in Islamabad that Islamabad is the "key to Afghan unity." He said that Pakistan encourages divisiveness in the resistance by favoring Gulbuddin's party because Islamabad fears that resistance political unity would result in establishment of a PLO-type organization within its borders. 

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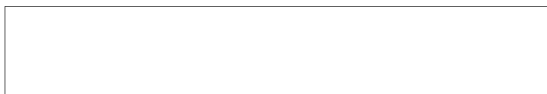
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-- Afghan resistance alliance spokesman Mojadedi told US Embassy officials in Islamabad that Kabul is offering to pay tribal groups willing to relocate away from Afghanistan's border with Pakistan. Resistance commanders, however, are effectively countering the regime's program, warning those who would cooperate that they would be punished. 

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-- The US Embassy in Kabul recently reported that separate delegations of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross visited Afghanistan in early September. The ICRC delegation--which plans to reopen an office in Kabul for a six-month trial period--apparently discussed assistance to the Afghan Red Crescent Society but not arrangements for visitation of regime-held prisoners. The ICRC has long stalled on fulfilling its promise in 1982 to allow the ICRC to visit imprisoned insurgents. The League of Red Cross officials visited health facilities in Kabul and Jalalabad and discussed the provision of orthopedics aid. 

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PERSPECTIVE

POINT-COUNTERPOINT: A SOVIET DECEPTION OPERATION OR NOT?



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In a speech at Vladivostok on 28 July, Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev announced the Soviet Union would withdraw six regiments--three antiaircraft, two motorized rifle, and one tank--from Afghanistan by yearend. Available evidence indicates that the three antiaircraft regiments he pledged to withdraw are currently preparing to leave Afghanistan. But since the speech:

- [redacted] the Soviets, [redacted] have shipped to Afghanistan arms and equipment that could constitute the major elements of two motorized rifle regiments. They do not appear to have replaced other motorized rifle regiments normally based at those two locations, although the unit that was at Konduz has not returned to garrison since combat operations in June.

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--In addition, enough tanks for two understrength tank battalions--possibly from the Soviet Union--

[redacted] at the headquarters garrison of the lone Soviet tank regiment in Afghanistan. Only one battalion of the regiment had been observed there since early 1985. [redacted]

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Analysts do not agree about Soviet intentions toward withdrawal. [redacted]

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Some analysts believe the evidence is too ambiguous to determine whether the Soviets are introducing new units solely for the purpose of being withdrawn.

--They note uncertainties about the status of the units in Konduz and Shindand. In their view, they are not certain the new arms and equipment constitute actual regiments. Moreover, because these units are equipped differently than the other 13 Soviet motorized rifle units in Afghanistan--with BTR-60/70 armored personnel carriers in one battalion and trucks in the other two battalions--and are not up to full strength, the Soviets would be concerned that these units could easily be



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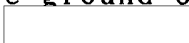


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identified as bogus regiments.

--They say that possible alternative uses for the newly detected equipment, although they all have "drawbacks", cannot be dismissed out of hand. These include bringing in new equipment to be handed over to the Afghan armed forces, preparing to use the newly arrived equipment in the withdrawal while leaving the better equipment of the motorized rifle units normally stationed at Shindand and Konduz as reserves, and using the new units to provide road security for the other units being pulled out.

--They are, above all, skeptical that the Soviets would risk undertaking a sham withdrawal that might be exposed, and jeopardize Gorbachev's credibility and political objectives.

--The military significance of a withdrawal of two motorized rifle regiments would not be great. Although withdrawing two of the 13 motorized rifle regiments in country would somewhat reduce Soviet combat capabilities, the Soviets appear to be shifting away from large-scale ground offensives that employ such regiments. 

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Other analysts believe that the Soviets have introduced new units specifically to be withdrawn.

--They estimate that the motorized rifle regiments at Konduz and Shindand are units that have enough manpower and equipment to take part in an effective staged withdrawal. In their view, the Soviets believe that the regiments would appear to the journalists brought in to cover the ceremonies to be what the Soviets are likely to claim they are, although the units are understrength by the standards of the table of organization and equipment for a regular motorized rifle regiment.

--They believe that the evidence available to date substantially reduces the likelihood of uses for the new units other than participation in a bogus withdrawal. For instance, the regiments are ill-prepared to undertake road security missions, and the units almost certainly would not be considered by the Soviets to be adequate replacements for any



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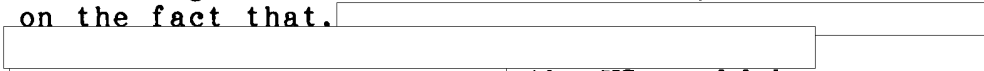
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of the motorized rifle regiments in country.

--They believe that the Soviets consider the risk of having their withdrawal deception exposed to be overshadowed by the importance of maintaining combat power in Afghanistan and by the public relations benefits of appearing to be conciliatory on the Afghan issue. The Soviets may be counting on the fact that.



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the US would have difficulty proving persuasively in public that the Soviets had orchestrated the alleged deception scheme.

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--They argue that the new units probably were introduced to offset the military impact of the promised withdrawal of two motorized rifle regiments, and that this action indicates the Soviets probably considered the potential loss in combat power to be more than marginal. Since June, for example, the Soviets, in conjunction with Afghan regime forces, have conducted a number of multiregimental operations with motorized rifle units, including at Herat, Konduz, and south of Kabul in Vardak Province.

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