

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
ROUTING SLIP**

*Memo
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TO:

	ACTION	INFO	DATE	INITIAL
1 DCI		X		
2 DDCI		X		
3 EXDIR		X		
4 D/ICS				
5 DDI		X		
6 DDA				
7 DDO		X		
8 DDS&T				
9 Chm/NIC				
10 GC				
11 IG				
12 Compt				
13 D/Pers				
14 D/OLL				
15 D/PAO				
16 SA/IA				
17 AO/DCI				
18 C/IPD/OIS				
19 NIO /USSR		X		
20 D/SOVA/DI		X		
21 D/NESA/DI		X		
22 C/NE/DO		X		
SUSPENSE		Date		

Remarks

Executive Secretary
18 Mar 85

Date

3637 (10-81)

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Washington D C 20505

Executive Registry

85- 1091

16 March 1985

The Honorable Robert C. McFarlane
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Bud,

I think this interpretation of Gorbachev's
comments on Afghanistan at the funeral, together
with Gromyko's discussions with the French Foreign
Minister and Zia's reaction to all this, may be
of interest to the President.

Yours,

/s/

William J. Casey

Enclosure



Soviet Stance on Afghanistan a la Gorbachev

- According to TASS, Gorbachev took a hard line with Zia on Afghanistan, charging aggressive acts against the DRA and stressing "most unfavorable effect" on Soviet-Pakistan relations.

- The Washington Post carries this story coupled with insinuations from Soviet officials to Dusko Doder that the Soviets might "link" Afghanistan and Nicaragua.

-- If the US goes after Nicaragua, the Soviets could, supposedly, go after Pakistan by arming the Baluch and otherwise trying to destabilize Zia's regime.

- Zia characterized the meeting publicly as "pleasant and businesslike," focused on Afghanistan, and including agreement that a "political solution" through the UN indirect talks must be found.

Further Relevant Information

- The Soviets did not raise Afghanistan with the Vice President. He alluded to it in a passing list of regional issues, but Gorbachev did not respond.

- What we have on other Gorbachev meetings with Western delegations shows little or no attention to Afghanistan.

-- Gromyko did discuss it with French Foreign Minister Dumas.

He took a "hard line," said Moscow intervened reluctantly at DRA request, and would remain until stability is restored.

- There wasn't much discussion of Afghanistan when Shcherbitskiy was here. But what there was displayed a defensive, frustrated mood.

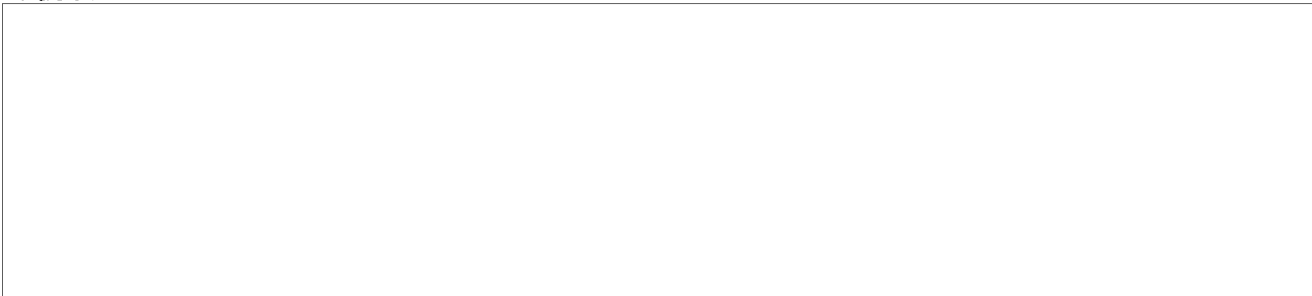
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-- In response to the President's challenge, Shcherbitskiy repeated the line that the Soviets intervened reluctantly.

-- In conjunction with Soviet charges about the US in Grenada, Shcherbitskiy said Afghanistan is a "more difficult" military problem.

-- On the margins of another discussion, General Cherov (The General Staff man on arms control) muttered that Afghanistan was the USSR's biggest post-war mistake.

- Zia's public comments on the Soviet pitch suggests he wasn't much rattled.



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Interpretation

- The Soviets have raised the rhetorical ante, but not too dramatically. The charges are familiar. Note they don't go to the point, as some diplomatic messages have, of characterizing Pak actions as attacks on the USSR and its forces.

- The most important thing is that, while just short of a public speech, Gorbachev has personally and publicly associated himself now with the Soviet strategy and policy in Afghanistan.

- This is probably the opening of a somewhat more vigorous political/propaganda effort to spook Zia and the US. Even this the Soviets want to apply cautiously, however, listening for what resonance they get before trying more.

- The "linkage" to Nicaragua is a bit surprising only in how long it's taken them to get to this point.

- But the "threat" seems somewhat hollow.

-- Arming Baluch groups and seeking to destabilize Zia are options for which the Soviets have had strong motives all along, but weak practical means of effecting and controlling. They can't just turn this on at will, although they could try harder and thereby make more trouble.

-- The real Soviet motive for destabilizing Pakistan is not Nicaragua but Afghanistan. For the Soviets, however, to say so admits how much trouble they are having.

-- The Soviets probably want the US to start thinking about some sort of a tradeoff between Afghanistan and Central America. They know that, by showing even mild interest in this, the US could pull the political rug out from under Zia and demoralize the Mujahedin, plus all other freedom fighters who look to us, without getting anything solid in Nicaragua.

- I don't see anything yet that would oblige us to change the analysis in the forthcoming SNIE on the military side (more of the same but more), although we can forecast more vigorous propaganda action now.

- The net effect of all reporting in the last week is to heighten the impression of Soviet frustration and basic unhappiness with their Afghan strategy, their interest in some better approach, but their lack of good options.