



Directorate of Intelligence

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# Developments in Afghanistan

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7 August 1987

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7 August 1987

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**Developments in Afghanistan** [Redacted]

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7 August 1987

1 Perspective—Afghanistan-USSR: Regime Cease-Fire Yields Unsettling  
Military Results [Redacted]

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The Afghan regime's military position has slipped since Kabul's unilateral cease-fire—recently extended through mid-January 1988—went into effect in January 1987, and the measure has had the unintended effect of boosting insurgent morale.

[Redacted]

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3 Briefs

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**Kabul Still Pushing National Reconciliation** [Redacted]  
[Redacted]

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Afghan leader Najib has accelerated the pace of Kabul's national reconciliation program since June, probably in an attempt to convince international opinion that Kabul and its Soviet masters have made a legitimate attempt to craft a political settlement of the war. Moscow may believe that this ultimately could help justify increased military pressure on the resistance should it decide that is needed.

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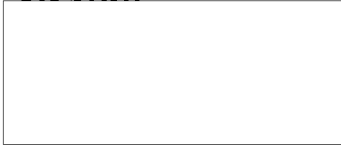
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Mine Warfare Takes a Toll



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Mine warfare has had a significant impact on military operations in Afghanistan. Advances in mine technology and more sophisticated emplacement techniques have substantially increased the difficulties of developing adequate counter-measures.



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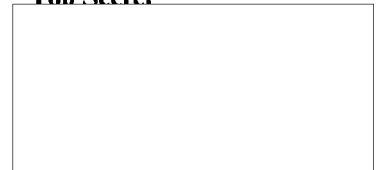
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**Developments in Afghanistan**



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7 August 1987

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**Perspective**

**Afghanistan-USSR: Regime Cease-Fire Yields Unsettling Military Results**



The Afghan regime's military position has slipped since Kabul's unilateral cease-fire—recently extended through mid-January 1988—went into effect last January. The regime has lost ground in some areas, and the morale of the Afghan military has edged even lower because of the difficulties that regime forces have had on the battlefield. Resistance morale has been buoyed by the outcome of recent fighting in Qandahar and Paktia Provinces.



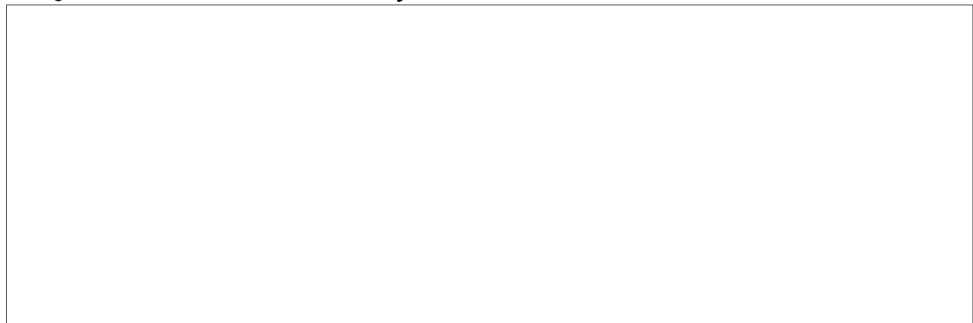
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**Big Offensives, Small Results**

The resistance's determination to discredit the regime's cease-fire and national reconciliation program has kept fighting at comparatively high levels over the past six months:

- Within two weeks of the start of the cease-fire, insurgent activity prompted the Soviets and Afghan Government to mount a counterinsurgent operation near Qandahar that lasted until early March.

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- More recently, Soviet and Afghan forces pulled back from the Paghman and Kowt-e 'Ashrow area on the outskirts of Kabul after several weeks of operations against insurgent forces that threaten the city.



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In an interview with the Soviet press in mid-June, General Imammuddin, chief of the Operation Division of the Afghan Army's General Staff, gave a candid summation of the military situation since the cease-fire. Commenting that the situation remained "tense" in southern Afghanistan and a number of central areas, he also admitted that the resistance had been conducting combat actions "practically along the length of the entire Afghan-Pakistani border."



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His remarks reflect the short-lived deterrent effect that Soviet and Afghan regime counterinsurgent operations have had on resistance activity during the cease-fire. Soon after returning to garrison following five weeks of fighting in the Qandahar area, Soviet and Afghan forces were called out to deal with resurgent guerrilla activity. According to the US Embassy in Kabul, the operations on the periphery of the capital did not succeed in routing the insurgents from the high ground overlooking the city.



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7 August 1987

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**Explaining the Results**

We believe that a more cautious use of airpower has been an important cause of the poor results for the regime in fighting this year. Concerns about the insurgents' increased air defense capabilities have caused some pilots to release aircraft ordnance from altitudes that degrade the accuracy and effectiveness of airstrikes.

[redacted] the resistance said the presence of Stinger air defense missiles had a strong inhibiting effect on Soviet bombing runs during the Paktia operations in June, thereby giving the guerrillas more tactical flexibility.

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[redacted] the fear of shootdowns by the missile had made the Soviets more reluctant to conduct heliborne assaults during the offensive.

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Morale also appears to have had a significant impact on the outcome of the fighting since January. Because of heavy casualties during some of the operations, already understrength Afghan military units have been further weakened. Moreover, there are indications that the series of combat operations has spurred an increase in desertions from the Afghan Army. [redacted] more

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than 500 government troops deserted during the offensive in Paktia, and [redacted]

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[redacted] the Afghan Army suffered a large number of desertions during the fighting in Qandahar. By contrast, the insurgents' morale appears to have been boosted by the perception that they are able to inflict serious losses on Soviet and regime forces. [redacted]

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**Outlook**

An upswing in the regime's military position is unlikely in the near term. Kabul probably will have difficulty compensating for the casualties incurred in the extensive military operations this year, both in terms of rounding up enough replacements and offsetting losses of experienced personnel. The poor results of fighting since the cease-fire began probably will increase misgivings of military personnel opposed to it, thereby exacerbating already serious factionalism within the armed forces. [redacted]

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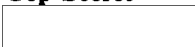
An improvement in the Afghan regime's military fortunes will now depend even more on Soviet assistance. The Soviets may consider deploying additional field artillery to increase the ground forces' fire support. Greater use of ground-based firepower, however, would be likely to bring few gains in the counterinsurgency and could not adequately substitute for aggressive combat air support. Reduced air support could also result in increased combat casualties for both Soviet and regime forces. [redacted]

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**Briefs**

**Pace of Fighting Quickens in Early Summer**



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Soviet and Afghan forces undertook large-scale operations in June and July aimed at curbing insurgent infiltration into Afghanistan's urban areas,



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By early July, the Soviets had deployed two multiple rocket launcher battalions and an artillery battalion west of Qandahar airfield,



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Soviet troops positioned an additional fire base northeast of their bivouac, while the Afghan Army deployed an artillery battalion northwest of the Soviet fire base.

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These units shelled insurgent camps in the Malajat region, but, according to the US Embassy, failed to regain control over the road west from Qandahar.



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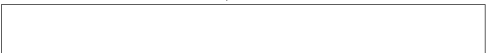
Stiff insurgent resistance caused Soviet ground forces units to reinforce the Afghan units, according to the US Embassy,



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by late June the Soviets had deployed a forward command post with a 40th Army Operations Group and major elements of a motorized rifle regiment southwest of Kabul, and an artillery fire base northeast of Band-e Qarghah.

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The US Embassy reports that the resistance blocked efforts to take Jalez and Sanglakh, important rear support areas



regime and Soviet

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forces began to return to Kabul by the second week of July.



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Afghanistan



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**Najib Visits Moscow**

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Afghan party chief Najib visited Moscow during 19-21 July without prior announcement and held discussions with General Secretary Gorbachev and other high-level Soviet officials. According to TASS and Kabul's news service, Gorbachev and Najib agreed to take political, military, and economic steps "in the interests of a speedier normalization" of the Afghan problem. The official media reports also made it clear that Soviet troops would not be withdrawn from Afghanistan until "national reconciliation" has been achieved. Gorbachev also officially invited Najib to return to Moscow to participate in the October Revolution celebrations and announced plans for Afghan participation in a future Soviet space flight.



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Najib probably was again instructed by the Soviets, as he was during a visit last December, to reduce the chronic factionalism of the Afghan Communist Party. He almost certainly was also told to strive to improve the effectiveness of the Afghan armed forces after their dismal performance this spring. Najib and Gorbachev may also have discussed the much-rumored five-party conference comprising the USSR, Kabul, the insurgents, Pakistan, and the United States—and further offers of power-sharing arrangements to the insurgents as the next stages of the Soviet-Afghan peace offensive. The official media's postvisit description of national reconciliation and the troop withdrawal as being "organically and dialectically linked" almost certainly indicates that the Soviets do not intend to leave Afghanistan until they can arrange for a Communist-dominated regime in Kabul.

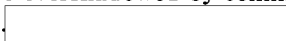


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**Afghan Trade Trends**

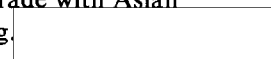
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Official Afghan trade statistics for 1986 show that the Soviet Union accounts for over 70 percent of Afghanistan's total trade, up from about one-third of Kabul's exports and imports in 1979. Despite Kabul's claims of expanding economic relations with East European nations, only Czechoslovakia is one of Afghanistan's top-10 trade partners. Trade with Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Hungary continues to be overshadowed by commerce with Western countries, including the United States.

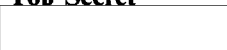


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With few exceptions, most of Kabul's trading partners maintain favorable trade balances with Afghanistan. In particular, Kabul imports a substantial volume of manufactured goods from industrialized countries for reexport to Pakistan. This "reexport trade" accounts for the Afghan regime's heavy trade with Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong.



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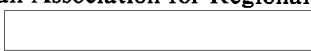


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**Kabul Still Pushing National Reconciliation**



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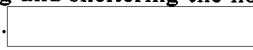
Afghan party chief Najib has accelerated the pace of Kabul's national reconciliation program since the plenum in June of the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Najib has created a new Ministry of Returnees' Affairs to address the problems of refugees expected to come home from Iran and Pakistan, issued a draft constitution for "national" debate, and promulgated a new law legalizing political parties other than the PDPA. Kabul is also using the alleged accomplishments of national reconciliation—including, according to Najib, 92,000 returned refugees and 23,000 insurgents defecting to the government—as a basis for seeking increased international recognition for Kabul. Most recently, Najib has requested that the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) reactivate Kabul's membership and has applied for membership in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). 

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Najib's efforts almost certainly are aimed at convincing the international community that Kabul and its Soviet masters have made a legitimate attempt to craft a political settlement of the war. Although national reconciliation has had almost no success, some of the domestic events staged by Kabul—such as refugees purportedly returning through checkpoints along the Pakistani border and regime-orchestrated meetings of tribal elders that issue "unanimous" proclamations supporting reconciliation— provide propaganda for worldwide distribution. Kabul's recent announcement of a new constitution and its introduction of a "multiparty" political system are also ideally suited to appeal to an international audience eager to believe that Gorbachev is sincerely attempting to resolve the Afghan war by political rather than military means. Despite pressures resulting from several recent military reversals, Kabul and Moscow are likely to keep pressing national reconciliation at least through yearend to increase international legitimacy for Najib's regime. 

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**Manufacturing a "New Look" Regime**

Attempts to make the regime presentable internationally have virtually no connection with realities inside Afghanistan. In late June Najib appointed Dr. Mohammad Hasan Sharq as Minister of Returnees' Affairs to coordinate the resettlement of a flood of refugees that has not and almost certainly will not materialize. Afghan authorities are also continuing to construct and display to the media facilities for processing and sheltering the nowhere-to-be-found returnees. 

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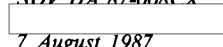
In early July, Najib also sought to refurbish and "Westernize" the regime's international image by publicly presenting the draft of a new constitution, announcing the adoption of a law legalizing political parties other than the PDPA, and declaring—in a press statement by Minister of Tribal Affairs Solayman Laeq—that Kabul would welcome former Afghan King Zahir Shah's participation in the national reconciliation process. The constitution is to be presented to all Afghans through the domestic and international media, and Kabul claims that it will elicit opinions from both its supporters and its opponents. The regime will subsequently convene a "national assembly" to amend the draft and ratify a completed document. The law on political parties also encourages the regime's opponents to return home and set up and register political parties and contest elections. Finally, during an early July visit to New Delhi, Minister Laeq told the media that if Zahir's return would aid a political settlement of the war, Kabul would "not spare any effort to accept him." 

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Najib's reconciliation efforts have not brought a peaceful settlement of the war any closer. He has not found anyone among the insurgents, the refugees, or prominent Afghan exiles who is willing to sign on to a

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7 August 1987

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reconciliation process that—Kabul’s protestations notwithstanding—will maintain the dominance of the PDPA. Nonetheless, some Western and Third World media have been treating the national reconciliation proposals—with their calls for popular elections, proliferation of political parties, and constitutionally entrenched political rights—as if they were reliable indicators of Soviet-Afghan intentions for a liberalized governing process. Some Western media accounts even favorably contrast the regime’s “progressive” attitude toward female suffrage and access to education with the “reactionary” position of the Islamic leaders of the resistance alliance.

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Kabul’s “openness” probably will allow Soviet and Afghan diplomats to argue effectively in international forums that they have gone the extra mile in seeking an equitable political settlement but have been stymied by the intransigence of the resistance and its external backers. Officials in Islamabad and several West European capitals, according to US diplomatic reporting, are worried that the Soviet-Afghan peace offensive could result in a reduced number of nations voting for Pakistan’s resolution on Afghanistan at this fall’s UN General Assembly. Moscow probably also anticipates success in reducing the anti-Afghan vote count at the UN and is likely to keep the peace initiative in high gear through yearend to allow Kabul to plead its case at the SAARC summit in November and at the OIC’s foreign ministers conference in December.

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**Behind the Serene Facade**

Despite the confident tone of Kabul’s national reconciliation announcements, the unraveling of the PDPA regime appears to continue. The US Embassy in Kabul reports that cadre nervousness over the possibility of Soviet withdrawal, as well as armed squabbles between the party’s Khalq and Parcham factions, continues unabated. Najib himself probably added to internal party distress when,

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The extremely limited span of the regime’s physical control of the country was also underlined in July when Kawiani, the secretary of the PDPA Central Committee, told Indian

officials in New Delhi that Kabul controlled only 10 of the 48 major towns and villages and two of 29 provinces in Afghanistan.

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Kawiani also noted that the regime does not fully control any of these places at night.

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Setbacks on the battlefield almost certainly also are hurting regime stability. The high casualties during the recent offensives in Qandahar probably added to the uneasiness and low morale in the capital.

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Kabul’s intensifying national reconciliation campaign—with its implicit promise of a near-term Soviet withdrawal—almost certainly has made it more difficult for Najib to cope with the negative repercussions of party factionalism and military setbacks.

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Najib was reluctant to extend the cease-fire, probably because of the destabilizing impact on the regime. There are also some indications that Najib and the Soviets were at odds over the continuation of the initiative.

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Moreover, Soviet media announced on several occasions that Zahir was welcome to return to Kabul and join the reconciliation process, but the official Afghan media have been silent on the possibility of a prominent role for Zahir. It probably is significant—and perhaps a sign of Moscow’s frustration with Najib—that it was Minister of Tribal Affairs Laeq rather than the PDPA General Secretary who seconded Moscow’s positions on the cease-fire and the King during a recent official visit to New Delhi.

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**Outlook**

Moscow and Kabul almost certainly are pleased with the degree of international success of the peace initiative to date and probably will continue it through the remainder of the year. They may even believe that they have scored enough international success not only to ensure fewer anti-Kabul votes at the UN but

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also to allow Soviet and Afghan forces scope for increasing military pressure on the resistance. Moscow probably believes that it could justify such an increase by citing the insurgents' failure to respond to Kabul's "reasonable" peace offers. Moscow may be preparing to cite the increase in the quantity and quality of US military aid to the resistance as another justification for increasing Soviet-Afghan military pressure on the guerrillas.



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**Mine Warfare  
Takes a Toll** [Redacted]

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Mine warfare has had a significant impact on military operations in Afghanistan. The extensive use of mines by Soviet, Afghan regime, and insurgent forces has caused high military and civilian casualties. Over the past few years, mine warfare in Afghanistan has become so varied and complex—because of the introduction of new mines and more sophisticated emplacement techniques—that development of reliable countermeasures has been increasingly difficult. [Redacted]

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**Dramatic Impact of Mine Warfare**

Resistance minelaying has been costly for Soviet and Afghan regime forces. Widespread mining around Herat over the past year, in particular, has resulted in numerous casualties, including Mohammad Ali Samem, the PDPA's Provincial Committee Secretary, and three Army commanders. Elsewhere, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] the mere threat of landmines has slowed movement of Soviet and regime forces and supply convoys and forced groups to be preceded by a minesweeper. The mine threat has turned a three-hour trip from Kabul to Jalalabad into a 12-hour journey. According to US Embassy sources, Soviet convoys moving between Qandahar and Herat often go off the road because of heavy mining and the threat of insurgent attacks on the main road.

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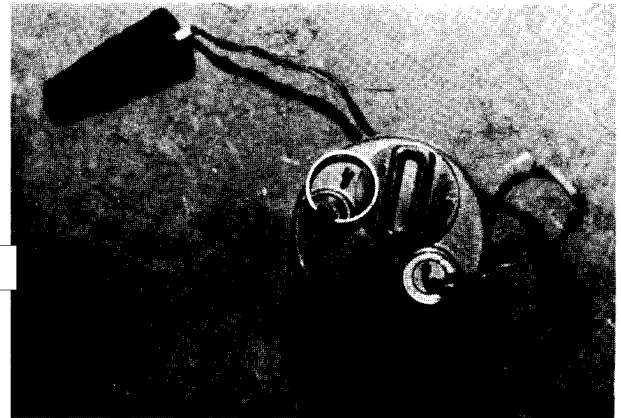
[Redacted] insurgent commanders are increasingly worried about the effectiveness of Soviet mine warfare and characterize it as a very serious problem. [Redacted] mine-induced casualties, by far the most frequent, have had a deleterious impact on resistance morale. [Redacted] the Soviets have successfully used mines to cut off resistance escape routes and to force the insurgents to use secondary infiltration and resupply routes—causing higher transportation costs and delays in delivery time. [Redacted]

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*Captured Soviet mines have been used by resistance forces.* [Redacted]

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**Soviet and Regime Forces' Improvements**

The Soviets have significantly upgraded their mine warfare capabilities in Afghanistan with the development of new mine types and delivery systems. Most of these new models are more lethal and designed to thwart insurgent disarming and countermeasure techniques:

- [Redacted] the Soviets began using seismic mines in 1985. [Redacted] the mines can be detonated selectively within a 10-kilometer range. 25X1
- Last year the Soviets introduced a new pressure-activated, blast-type antipersonnel mine. [Redacted] the mine [Redacted] is more shock resistant than its predecessor and contains a unique molded rubber cap that acts as a counter-countermeasure. 25X1

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- [redacted] the Soviets have developed a family of scatterable mines designed to be delivered by different means—such as helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and multiple rocket launcher systems—to maximize tactical flexibility and logistical simplicity.

[redacted] air- and artillery-delivered antipersonnel and antitank mines have been used extensively in route and area denial operations, especially in areas where access is difficult for mechanized forces. [redacted] at least 2 million mines had been strewn along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan by 1985. [redacted]

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- The Soviets are using a new family of fuzes for conventional landmines. The new fuzes, [redacted] probably are being used to convert standard landmines to complicated delayed-detonating or antidisturbance munitions to foil insurgent countermeasures. [redacted]

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Afghan insurgents select mine sites carefully.

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Resistance forces examining a deactivated mine.

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**Resistance Forces' Improvements**

The insurgents employ a variety of tripwired, pressure-detonated or electrically detonated plastic, metallic, and homemade mines.

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most of these mines are of Soviet, British, Italian, and Czech manufacture. Most of the Soviet models have been seized during combat operations. Many insurgent groups also build their own mines by using unexploded Soviet aerial ordnance and explosives,

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Mines are among the more popular weapons for the resistance because they offer a relatively cheap, low-risk, and efficient means to inflict casualties on Soviet and regime troops. Panjsher Valley insurgents consider them to be among the most effective weapons in their inventory,

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The guerrillas use mines primarily against Soviet and Afghan supply convoys and troop movements, as well as along avenues of approach to insurgent positions.

some guerrillas mine roads and shoulders to destroy vehicles that attempt to attack insurgent ambush positions.

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Hizbi Islami (Khalis) insurgents in the Qandahar area have become adept at

The Soviets and Afghans have made extensive use of mines to protect defensive perimeters, lines of communication, and urban areas.

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the insurgents have a healthy respect for the minefields that encircle most Soviet garrisons, airfields, and field positions because of the tripwires, booby-traps, and multiple mine types used.

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Soviet and Afghan sapper units have planted thousands of conventional antipersonnel mines in potential ambush sites and along primary highways to forestall attacks on convoys. Heavily mined defensive perimeters around Kabul, Qandahar, Herat, and Mazar-e Sharif have made it increasingly difficult, although not impossible, for guerrilla forces to move in and out of the cities.

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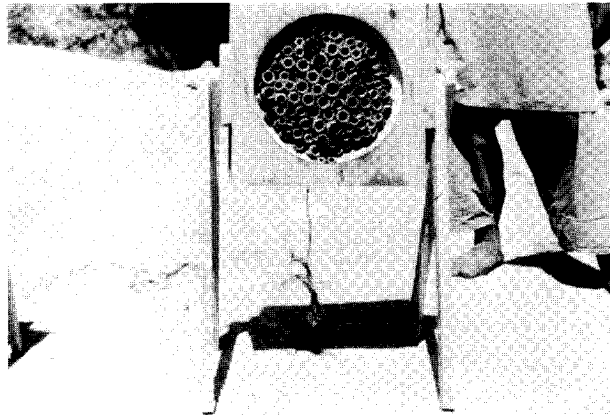
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destroying enemy armored vehicles by using interconnected antipersonnel mines to trigger antitank mines by a connecting detonator cord. In some areas—such as Herat, Baghlan, and the Panjsher Valley—insurgents also mine roads, hillsides, and primary elevations to slow the advance of enemy forces.



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**Countermeasures Inadequate To Deal With the Threat**

The Soviets and Afghans have had difficulty overcoming the insurgent mine threat because of inadequate training, insufficient manpower, and effective insurgent countermeasures. The neutralization of large quantities of insurgent landmines creates a constant drain on Soviet and Afghan engineering resources.

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*The guerrillas have used a number of homemade mines.*

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The Soviets have used a variety of equipment and techniques for mine clearing. Soviet magnetic mine detectors, mounted on trucks or armored vehicles, were used effectively during the initial months of the war but were obsolete by mid-1980 when the insurgents introduced nonmetallic mines.

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Specially trained dogs are detailed for some mine-clearing operations. The dogs are able to find non-metallic mines that electronic detectors miss but will ignore shards of metal that the detectors sense. The insurgents attempt to counter the dogs by shooting them or by dispersing red pepper or small pieces of explosives around mined areas to confuse the animals.

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Soviet and regime forces have since relied heavily on the Soviet tank-mounted KMT-5 mine plow and roller, even though the plow is unable to negotiate steep grades, tears up roads to a depth of approximately 12 inches, and slows convoys to a speed of approximately 2 to 3 kilometers per hour. The insurgents have also devised one counter to the KMT-5 by laying mines on hilltops, because the vehicle must roll over the crest with its plow raised before making contact with the ground.

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The insurgents' countermeasure techniques are comparatively rudimentary. Their methods—based on lessons learned from combat and word-of-mouth—are generally slow and extremely dangerous.

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The Soviets have deployed a new mine roller and plow that is designed to defeat pressure-detonated mines and to emit a magnetic signal that detonates magnetically fuzed mines. In addition,

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the guerrillas' most significant countermeasure problem is dealing with perimeter mine belts during attacks on Soviet and Afghan positions. Masood recently indicated

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the Soviets are testing a new mine-clearing vehicle consisting of a T-55 tank chassis with a permanently mounted KMT-5 device. The prototype vehicle, observed at Jalalabad in mid-April, may represent a shift in Soviet combat engineer vehicle development; previous Soviet practice has been to temporarily attach mine-clearing fixtures to a tank.

he and many other commanders in northern Afghanistan are often prevented from overrunning regime and Soviet outposts because of an inability to neutralize the minefields surrounding them.

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To get through minefields, resistance forces resort to several tactics. one of the more effective mine-clearing techniques is a hand-held rake. The rake is used by an

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insurgent to clear a path through a minefield. The rake scoops up shallow buried mines; the ones that are not tripwired or boobytrapped are picked up by hand. Exploding boobytrapped mines destroy the rake but usually not the operator. In other areas, the insurgents drop ladders in a series across a minefield, exploding any mines under the rails, and then use the ladder's rungs as a bridge. Some insurgents have also used animals or prisoners to clear paths through minefields. [Redacted] after the fall of a resistance base near Qandahar in late 1985, the insurgents lost over 1,500 goats and sheep in efforts to clear the minefields left by the Soviets. [Redacted]

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**Outlook**

Mine warfare in Afganistan is likely to become more complex, and casualties are likely to increase, as Soviet, regime, and insurgent forces continue to improve their mining capabilities with new mine types, delivery systems, and minelaying techniques. The Soviets and the Afghan Army are likely to use increasingly lethal mines that are difficult to detect and defuze, both along infiltration and escape routes and for defense around bases. Resistance commanders, in turn, are increasingly worried about the effectiveness of Soviet mine warfare and probably will attempt to acquire improved training and more sophisticated equipment with which to counter the Soviet-Afghan mine threat. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] hand-held electronic mine detectors have not been highly effective in Afghanistan because most of the areas where mines are encountered have been subjected to repeated air and artillery bombardment that has left metal splinters that distract the detectors. In other cases, the insurgents have been unable to properly operate the hand-held equipment because of inadequate instructions. [Redacted]

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Top Secret  
[Redacted]

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**Top Secret**