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# Afghan Rebels to Get More Missiles

## *Bigger Shipment of Stingers Intended to Pressure Soviets to Leave*

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The Reagan administration has decided to send a larger number of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to the Afghan rebels this year to increase pressure on the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, according to U.S. officials.

The decision comes after numerous reports from the field indicating that the rebels, known as mujaheddin, are successfully using the weapon, first shipped there late last spring and put into extensive use in battle last October.

U.S. officials said the decision reflects a widely held view within Congress and the administration that the Soviet Union is still not serious about withdrawing an estimated 115,000 troops from Afghanistan. Secretary of State George P. Shultz, meanwhile, has disclosed a tougher new U.S. policy concerning a speedy Soviet withdrawal. [Details, Page A29.]

Initially, the Afghan rebels reportedly had considerable difficulty learning to aim and fire the sophisticated Stinger. But beginning late last summer, the Central Intelligence Agency arranged for a group of ex-Army specialists to train the rebels in camps near the Afghan border in Pakistan.

These specialists have been giving fighters from three of the seven allied rebel groups a six- to eight-week course on the Stinger, according to a source familiar with the program.

The source said the U.S. trainers found the Afghan fighters eager to learn but noted problems in storing the Stingers and some malfunctions due to the extreme hot and cold temperatures common in the mountains of Afghanistan.

He said the rebels were averaging seven to eight hits for every 10 Stingers fired, but doubted that they were downing one aircraft per day, as the State Department reported last December.

The source said close control over the rebels was maintained by

giving each four-man attack team one launcher and one missile at a time. For any team to get another Stinger, the launcher had to be returned for verification and inspection, the source said.

U.S. specialists had hoped that Afghans trained on the Stinger would then instruct others in various resistance groups, he said. But they found that the Afghans, once trained, were unwilling to pass on their knowledge because it was such a highly valued skill.

The administration decided last March to provide Afghan and Angolan anticommunist groups with Stingers at the insistence of a group of conservative members of Congress. Army Chief of Staff Gen. John A. Wickham Jr. and some senators objected because of concern that the weapon might be obtained by terrorists and that shipments could deplete the U.S. Army's limited supply.

Congress has reportedly approved \$600 million this fiscal year for the U.S. covert military aid program to the Afghan resistance, up from \$470 million the previous year.

The administration has approved roughly \$15 million in covert military assistance to the Angolan rebels, with Stingers and light antitank weapons being the most sophisticated U.S. arms supplied. It was not immediately known whether the decision to provide the Afghan rebels with more Stingers also applies to the Angolans.

Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) unsuccessfully sought legislation last year requiring strict U.S. monitoring of Stingers sent to the Afghan and Angolan rebels. He has asked the General Accounting Office to review measures used by the resistance groups to safeguard the weapon and to determine whether Stinger shipments are hurting U.S. military preparedness.

Initially, the administration sent about 150 Stinger launchers to the Afghan rebels and 50 to the forces led by Jonas Savimbi in Angola, ac-

ording to congressional and other sources. It is not clear how many additional Stingers the administration plans to send to the Afghan rebels this year, but one U.S. official said there will be "a major increase."

Late last year, Angolan and Afghan rebels, and their U.S. supporters, were suddenly reporting a high level of success in downing enemy aircraft, even with the relatively few Stingers at their disposal. Administration officials have confirmed the rebels' success, if not always their figures.

Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) claims to have shot down 41 Angolan- or Cuban-piloted helicopters and MiG fighters between May and November of last year. As a result, pilots are flying much higher and avoiding close ground-support missions in support of troops assaulting rebel positions, according to UNITA spokesmen.

Defense Department sources would not confirm the figure of 41 downed aircraft claimed by UNITA but said the figure was "in the ballpark."

A December State Department report on Afghanistan said the mujaheddin's air defense capabilities had improved "considerably" last year. A department official said that since October, the rebels had been shooting down one aircraft per day on average.