



Directorate of
Intelligence

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Afghanistan Situation Report



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29 November 1983

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SOVA M 83-10204CX

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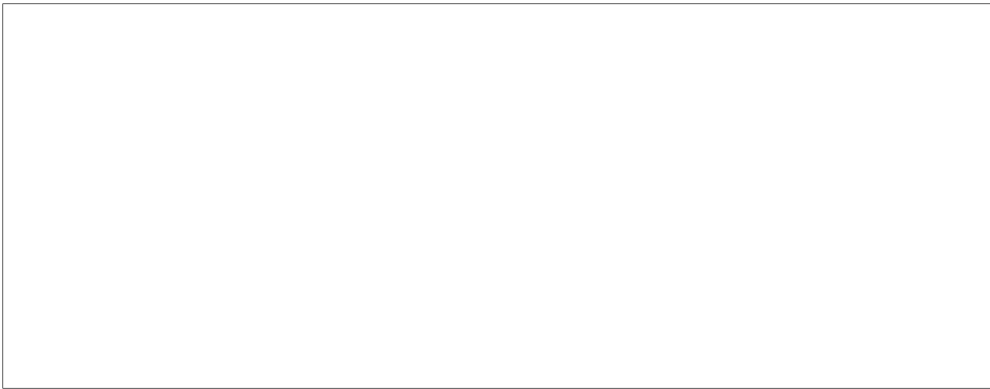
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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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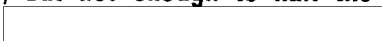
IN BRIEF

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PERSPECTIVE

AFGHAN ARMY MANPOWER

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Afghan Army strength probably increased from about 40,000 to 50,000 men during the past year, but not enough to halt the erosion of its combat capability. 

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This document is prepared weekly by the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis and the Office of Soviet Analysis. 

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PERSPECTIVE

AFGHAN ARMY MANPOWER [redacted]

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[redacted] **NESA**

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We estimate that the strength of the Afghan Army has increased from about 40,000 to at least 50,000 men during the past year--an increase substantially less than the military needed to arrest the erosion of its combat capability. The Soviets and Afghan regime will have difficulty maintaining and increasing military manpower because of continued high rates of desertion and casualties. In addition to augmenting the strength of its armed forces, the Afghan regime must also make improvements in training, combat tactics, political reliability, logistics, and weapons if it is to contain the insurgency with minimal Soviet assistance. [redacted]

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Present Strength

We believe that the overall strength of the Afghan Army has increased over the past year, although the size of some individual units may have declined (see table). [redacted] the total manpower in Afghan Army infantry and armor divisions increased by about 6,000 men between November 1982 and July 1983, for an average monthly growth of approximately 900 men. [redacted] the official, present-for-duty strength of all branches of the Afghan armed forces in mid-July was about 89,000, with about 62,000 men in the Afghan Army. [redacted]

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In our judgment, however, the official manpower figures are inflated and mask the continuing high rate of desertions and casualties. [redacted]

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[redacted] an official of the Afghan Defense Ministry noted in mid-August that the personnel strength and morale of the Afghan Army were at their lowest state since the invasion. [redacted]

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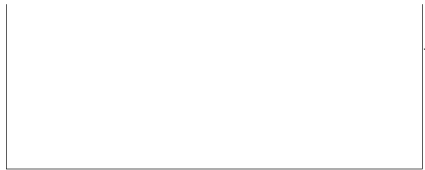
[redacted] we judge that the actual strength of the Army--not including border guards and paramilitary forces--has increased over the past year and is now over 50,000 men--and possibly as high as 60,000 men--compared to a strength of about 40,000 men in 1982. [redacted]

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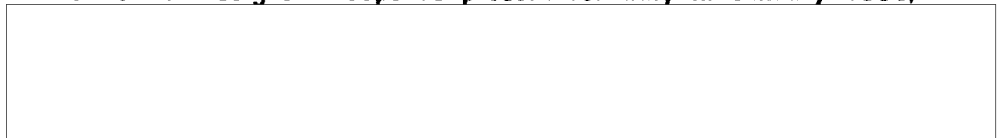
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In spite of an apparent increase in military manpower, we believe the Ministry of Defense still is desperate for additional troops to fill ranks left empty by continual desertions. We estimate that most divisions now are operating at about 50 percent or less of their established strengths. Although some units assigned to Kabul are better manned, most Afghan Army units were reporting only 40 percent or less of authorized or assigned troops as present for duty in January 1983,



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Desertions

The inability of the government to secure the loyalty of its troops and prevent large-scale desertions, in our judgment, is a primary impediment to improving force levels. We estimate that some 80,000 Afghan officers and men have deserted since the invasion.

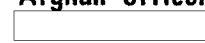
[redacted] the Central Committee of the Afghan Communist Party described high troop desertion rates and an inability to attract young men to fill empty ranks as the "most pressing problem facing the Afghan Government."

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Resentment of Soviet advisers and troops contributes to some desertions, in our judgment. [redacted] the commander of the 17th division in Herat said in July that if he ordered the "old" officers of the division to engage in operations against the insurgents they would desert or attempt to retire, in part because the Afghan officers resent being subordinate to Soviet advisers.



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Insurgent propaganda urging Afghan soldiers to defect and playing on Islamic religious convictions probably has contributed to a growing number of Afghan desertions, in our view.

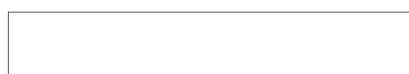
[redacted] guerrilla techniques such as the use of loudspeakers in the mountains to exhort regime troops to defect are very successful. The insurgents broadcast that they are the brothers of Afghan soldiers and want only to fight the Soviets. The insurgents tell the Afghans to move to one side so that the guerrillas have an unobstructed field of fire against the Soviets.

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We believe continued high desertions will make the Soviets more wary of the Afghan military in joint combat operations. [redacted]

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[redacted] Afghan troops, followed by Soviet troops, often are deployed on the front lines and have initial contact with the insurgents. The Soviets fire indiscriminately into the ranks of Afghans in cases of defection attempts or surrender by regime troops. [redacted]

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[redacted] there were more than 10 cases of Afghan troops firing on Soviet soldiers during the summer of 1983. [redacted]

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Casualties

Combat casualties also have decreased the strength of the Afghan military. We estimate that 700 to 1,000 Afghan troops are killed and wounded each month in operations or insurgent attacks. The regime probably has lost 40,000 to 50,000 men--killed or wounded in action--since 1979. We believe that increasing insurgent effectiveness in the use of small and heavy arms, mines, and tactics in attacking convoys will also raise Afghan casualties over the next few years. [redacted]

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Conscription and Recruitment

Earlier this year, Defense Minister Qader said the strength of the armed forces should reach and be maintained at 150,000 by mid-September 1983. [redacted] The regime has not achieved its goal, however, and, in our judgment, will be unable to increase manpower to such a level unless current conscription efforts improve considerably. We believe the armed forces are growing much more slowly than planned, and some units are declining in strength. According to US Embassy reports, Kabul is more frequently using press gangs to round up eligible men, cordoning off and searching entire sections of cities, and ignoring exemption papers and taking men between the ages of 15 and 55, [redacted]

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[redacted] in late August 1983, the regime set up seven special operational units of 300 men each to impress conscripts in Kabul City. Men taken into these special conscription units are offered high wages and training, but few have so far joined. [redacted]

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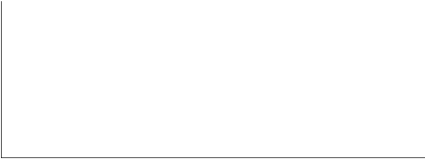
[redacted] about 50,000 active reservists and conscripts who have completed mandatory service were scheduled to have

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been discharged in early November. According to US Embassy sources, the Government may try to compensate for manpower losses by reactivating men who completed active service between 1978 and 1981. Defense Minister Qader argued for inducting as many reservists as possible. [redacted]

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[redacted] he was overruled by civilian party leaders who were concerned that a recall would have long-term detrimental effects because "some of the best minds in the country would be made into cannon fodder." The illegality of the action, pressure from families of eligible men, and the belief that many more men would leave Kabul also influenced the decision to delay a recall. [redacted]

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Prospects

We judge that the regime will eventually be forced to recall some inactive reserves to increase critically low manpower levels. It may, however, do so gradually to decrease negative reaction as much as possible. [redacted] a large conscription drive on 7 September was halted because fights broke out between commissariat soldiers and reservists who denied being subject to recall. US Embassy reports indicate that massive conscription searches in Kabul which began on 20 September were halted two days later when press gangs also attempted to draft men who were legally exempt. [redacted]

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We believe high rates of desertion and casualties, combined with the government's conscription failures, will severely limit the size of the Afghan armed forces over the next few years. In our judgment, recent increases in manpower are unlikely to be sustained and have not enhanced the military's effectiveness. A large force alone will not seriously heighten the danger to the insurgency. If, however, manpower dwindles and the regime is unable to improve the effectiveness of its military, we judge the Soviets will have to bear more of the burden of fighting in Afghanistan and augment their own forces. [redacted]

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Afghan Army Divisions: Official Personnel Strengths*

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Strength</u> <u>(July 1983)</u>	<u>Strength</u> <u>(November 1983)</u>	<u>Location</u>
4th Armor	1,200	820	Ghazni or Herat?
7th Infantry	2,228	2,980	Ghazni Province
7th Armor	917	2,712	Qandahar or Herat?
8th Infantry	5,440	1,212	Kabul Province
9th Mountain	3,215	1,780	Konarha Province
11th Infantry	4,090	3,009	Jalalabad
12th Infantry	3,019	2,840	Gardez
14th Infantry	5,712	5,712	Ghazni
15th Infantry	3,240	3,540	Qandahar Province
15th Armor	1,900	1,501	Kabul Province
17th Infantry	3,900	4,300	Herat
18th Infantry	3,190	3,154	Mazar-e Sharif
20th Infantry	2,800	3,900	Baghlan Province
25th Infantry	3,188	2,970	Khowst

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*We believe official personnel strengths, although they provide some idea of manpower levels, are inflated estimates made by the Afghan Ministry of Defense or individual unit commanders. In our judgment, figures for actual men-on-hand are much lower. We suspect even the Ministry of Defense does not know the total strength of its armed forces.

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