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SITUATION REPORT

USSR-AFGHANISTAN

The US [REDACTED] has received what seems to be the most credible evidence to date on the use of chemical warfare in Afghanistan.

[REDACTED] Afghan refugees who claim to have witnessed the attacks gave similar descriptions of gas canisters, symptoms of Afghan victims, and methods used to avoid contamination. The attacks are said to have occurred in Badakhshan, Vardak, and Takhar Provinces both before and after the Soviet invasion. The victims apparently experienced loss of control, became unconscious, or died. We have received a number of other reports of chemical warfare in Afghanistan, mainly from refugees, but these have been inconclusive and of questionable reliability.

According to press reports quoting Pakistani officials, there are now 512,000 registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan compared with 387,000 in late December. The officials and sources in the Afghan resistance claim that Paktia Province in Afghanistan is virtually depopulated.

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Government and foreign aid officials in Pakistan are preparing to care for 1 million refugees by this summer and perhaps more if Soviet and Afghan forces launch an all-out assault against the insurgents. UN officials are concerned that health and sanitation problems in the overcrowded camps could become serious during the hot summer months. To cope with permanent refugee populations, the Pakistanis are considering setting up village handicraft centers and making government land available for small-scale farming. (U) [REDACTED]