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TALKING POINTS FOR THE DCI

Current Soviet Troop Strength in Afghanistan

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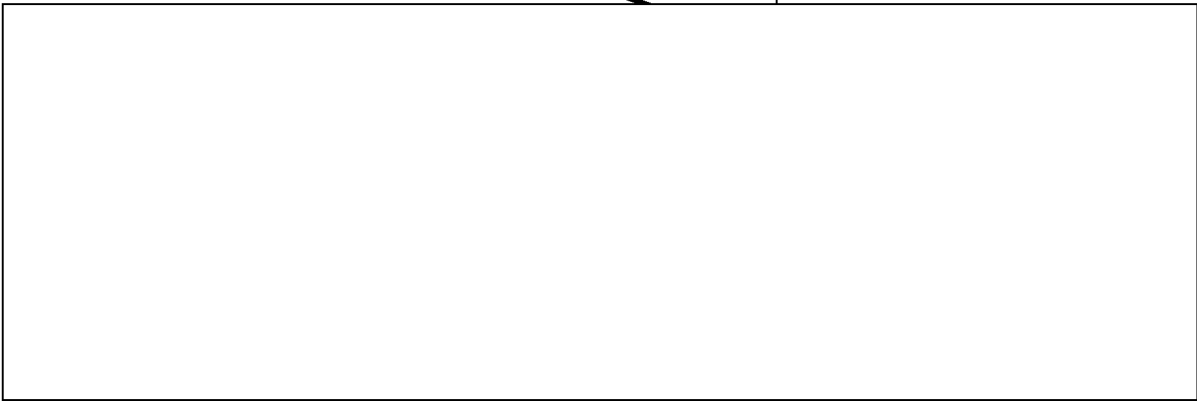
--Virtually all Soviet troops have now been withdrawn from western Afghanistan with only a small number possibly remaining near the Soviet border. [redacted]

Status of Regime and Insurgent Forces

Regime Forces. Since the beginning of the Soviet withdrawal, regime forces have abandoned border areas and consolidated around major cities and along vital lines of communication such as the roads from Kabul north to the Soviet Union and east to Pakistan.

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Insurgent Strength. Insurgent forces number some 350,000 full- and part-time fighters throughout the country. Many of these forces currently are besieging the cities of Qandahar, Herat, Konduz, and Jalalabad and are attempting to control access to Kabul. [redacted]

Prospects for Survival

The Communist regime in Afghanistan is likely to collapse politically within three to six months, although possibly the regime could hold on for up to a year.

The insurgents believe--probably correctly--that either hardliners will soon attempt a coup, precipitating a breakdown of the party, or pro-resistance army officers will open the city to the insurgents.

Moscow almost certainly will continue to provide economic and military assistance in an effort to delay the fall of the regime and to minimize the appearance of having abandoned it. The scope of its commitment will probably be limited by logistical problems, doubts about the regime's staying power, and concerns about the international and domestic reaction to any continued Soviet military involvement. [redacted]

State of Intra-Resistance Politics

The resistance remains divided over plans for a new Afghan government. A shura, or traditional legislative council, will probably meet today as scheduled, but is unlikely to form a viable government.

--Demonstrations this week by pro-Zahir Shah tribes and anti-Shia factions have strengthened the hand of delegates who want to ditch the alliance's prearranged appointments of Sibghatullah Mojadedi as transitional government president and fundamentalist Ahmad Shah as prime minister.

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- Shia delegates appear likely to support a move to replace Ahmad Shah with Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the Jamiat-i-Islami party. Traditionalists may move to bring former king Zahir Shah into the proceedings. Either move would probably prompt walkouts and might block any chance of consensus on a new government.

- Several insurgent field commanders have denounced the shura plan, claiming a new government should be created inside Afghanistan, not in Rawalpindi where Islamabad might manipulate results.

- Leading pro-resistance tribes demonstrated against an agreement that gives pro-Tehran Shia groups up to 100 of the roughly 550 shura seats. They fear the agreement will give Iran greater influence inside Afghanistan. []

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