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DATE: 1/17/01

~~Top Secret~~
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BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN: Support to Insurgents

Pakistan's military leaders are reported to have decided to continue their support to Afghan tribal rebels that began in May and to keep open the option for expanded support, depending on the rebels' fortunes in the next few months. If this report is true, the decision may have been prompted by a belief that the insurgents have a chance to topple the regime of President Taraki in the near to medium term. The Soviet Union and Afghanistan are certain to attribute any increase in rebel strength to Pakistan, which would worsen its already frayed relations with those two countries. [REDACTED]

The revised aid plan reportedly approved by Chief Martial Law Administrator General Zia calls for limited materiel support--antitank weapons, small arms, and ammunition--plus money and training. In addition, small numbers of Pakistani irregulars, who are natives of tribal areas, are to accompany Afghan insurgents on raids across the border. The Pakistanis reportedly will channel weapons through smugglers and gun dealers to try to mask their role. [REDACTED]

Islamabad's cautious approach in aiding the insurgents has been prompted primarily by concern for relations with the USSR. Soviet officials have made strong representations recently with the Pakistanis to deter them from further abetting Afghanistan's rebellious tribes. Pakistani officials continue to deny publicly and privately that they are aiding Afghan dissidents other than providing relief to the estimated 100,000 refugees in Pakistan. [REDACTED]

The Pakistanis may have come to believe, however, that they have little to lose in pursuing a policy the Soviets and Afghans already are accusing them of following. There are strong pressures on Zia for an interventionist policy in Afghanistan from the Army, conservative Islamic groups, and border tribes that are related to the Afghan insurgents. [REDACTED]