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#2 5 January 1980/1356 EST

SPOT COMMENTARY: Soviet Reaction on Afghanistan

The initial TASS commentary on the President's speech datelined Washington takes the line that the measures adopted by the US to curtail US-Soviet relations are cold-war tools which are a "flagrant violation of US commitments in relations with the USSR." TASS charges that "US ruling circles and their accomplices" are creating threats to peace by the "aggressive military essence of the foreign policy course" which they have adopted.

The TASS list of the "unilateral" measures Washington has adopted includes the decision to defer Senate consideration of SALT II, the reduction of grain imports, and the postponement of cultural and scientific and technical contacts, but it does not mention the amount of grain that will not be sold, or the curtailment of fisheries activities and the embargo on high technology exports.

The article also betrays Moscow concern about the US effort to arouse Muslim and Iranian ire over Soviet actions in Afghanistan. In an effort to curry favor with the iranians it charges that the President said nothing about Iran's "legitimate demand" for the extradition of the Shah and the return of Iranian assets now in US banks.

Today's Pravda, meanwhile, carried what probably will become the principal Soviet propaganda defense of their actions in Afghanistan. In an article signed by V. Svetlov, the Soviets accuse Washington of using a double standard when it condemns the USSR for using armed force to protect its interests. "When Washington throws tens of thousands of soldiers from one end of the world to another, it is portrayed as an act defending peace, but when a limited Soviet contingent responds to the numerous requests of the Afghan Government for support against aggressive forces it is seen as invasion."

The article makes it appear that the US is the primary source of opposition to the present Afghanistan Government--China is mentioned only once--and is relatively mild on the Pakistanis, suggesting that "it is not too late" for Pakistan to react constructively to Afghanistan's appeal for friendly relations. Another Soviet media comment on Pakistani reaction professes to see little enthusiasm in Pakistan for recent offers of US military assistance, but goes on to warn Islamabad that accepting US aid "may well prompt neighboring

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countries to doubt Pakistan's peaceful intentions and start a new spiral of the arms race in the region."

Meanwhile, [REDACTED] reports Pakistan has rejected a Soviet demarche to seal the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and move Afghan refugee camps farther into the interior of Pakistan.

Sources: FBIS 72, 95, 103, 109, 5 January 1980, UNCLASSIFIED

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Prepared by:

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