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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505



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Mr. [unclear]
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27 October 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR: Addressees

FROM:

[redacted]
National Intelligence Officer for
Near East and South Asia

SUBJECT:

NIO/NESA Regional Forecast Report
October 1995

1. NIO/NESA convened Intelligence Community analysts on 26 October to review recent developments in Afghanistan and Egypt. Those discussions are summarized below. [redacted]

Afghanistan

2. Analysts do not see progress on opposition unification efforts, which are hampered by differences over who would hold key positions that would be installed if Rabbani is ousted by the opposition. The opposition agrees that the presidency would go to Taliban, but other key positions are disputed, and other factions do not want to concede too much to Taliban. Dostam is not participating in joint military operations before the opposition cuts a deal on sharing political power; Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is staying out of the fray but probably would join if he believes he can win an advantage. [redacted]

3. Many analysts expect that stalemate will be the most likely outcome, at least in the short term. Some analysts remarked that a key factors in the fighting, in addition to the question of whether the opposition will unite, will be the morale and loyalty of pro-government forces. Taliban has succeeded by persuading commanders to change sides (often by buying off opponents), but commanders under Rabbani and Masood, who have different ethnic backgrounds (Tajik) than the Pashtun Taliban, will be harder to persuade than other commanders. [redacted]

4. Kabul. The battle for Kabul has turned into a bloody offensive with no clear indication that the government will be more flexible on negotiations with the opposition. Rabbani may hint at more flexibility as winter approaches to stretch out the [redacted]

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opposition until it can no longer maintain forces in the field. Taliban tactics, meanwhile, are focused on infantry operations. Afghan commanders typically have a difficult time integrating armor and artillery with infantry, and much of Taliban's equipment is still located in southern Afghanistan.

5. Western Afghanistan. Although the government has not foreclosed on the option of staging a counterattack in western Afghanistan, government forces in the west do not have the personnel, organization, or coordination to mount a serious attack on Taliban. Analysts agreed that Iran, which faces the United States in the Gulf and Iraq to the West, probably sees little to gain from intervening directly in Afghanistan and is not making preparations for offensive moves. Iran does not want to antagonize Pakistan by committing forces to the fight but is making diplomatic efforts to obtain backing for the Rabbani government from others, such as India and Pakistan. Taliban apparently is not interested in confronting Iran in the West;

6. Central Asia. Uzbekistan is providing assistance to Dostam to prevent Taliban gains in the North. The Uzbek Government, already faced with unrest elsewhere in Central Asia, would like to minimize the prospects of more instability flowing out of Afghanistan. The Tajiks, preoccupied with their own conflict, can facilitate the transit of supplies from Russia into Afghanistan but are unlikely to devote their own resources to the conflict. The Turkmen are susceptible to pressure from Iran and have sold food and fuel to commanders allied with the Afghan Government. Turkmen and Uzbek policies are also influenced by longterm economic concerns--in particular, the desire to create new transport routes for oil and gas; both countries have discussed pipeline routes through the region with Pakistan. The key player to watch is Russia; Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and especially Uzbekistan see the Afghan problem through a Russian prism.

7. Humanitarian Problems. Analysts see a potential humanitarian crisis in Kabul, particularly because the city's population has increased since last winter and the fighting will limit heating fuel and food shipments to the capital. A drawdown in UN assistance will sharply limit reserves of such supplies.

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