

11 July 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Intelligence Officer for Warning
SUBJECT : NIO/W's Role in Warning

1. I spent some time this week reading the NIO Monthly Warning Meeting files, the Presidential Trends, and [redacted] memos. Realizing the state of flux in which we find ourselves (SWS restaffing, Bowie leaving, your staff only recently completed), I would understand a desire on your part to make haste slowly. On the other hand, the situation in Afghanistan may provide a classic test case to answer the question "what does the NIO/W do when he feels something should be done?"

2. Analysts' opinions are divided vis a vis Soviet military intervention. The majority opinion now is that the Soviets would not use ground troops. Analysts' tendencies, quite naturally, are to emphasize the potential disadvantages to the Soviets should they intervene. They have largely ignored some obvious advantages, which Harry has pointed out very well. On the other hand, at least some analysts feel the Soviets would use troops, given the right circumstances. In anticipation of an Alert Memo, should the situation take a turn for the worse, it might be worthwhile to do some pre-analysis along the following lines:

1. Assume the worst: Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.
2. Investigate the circumstances which might cause it:
 - a. Military collapse in Kabul?
 - b. Gradual deterioration countrywide?
 - c. Other?
3. Given sufficient provocation, investigate the military options available for the Soviets, and identify the pros and cons of each:

- a. VTA/VDV
- b. Normal infantry
- c. Air strikes
- d. Border only
- e. Kabul only

4. Based on #2 above, identify indicators which would support an increasing probability of intervention generally, and each specific course of action.

5. Solicit support from CT in developing contingency collection tasking should we at some time feel the possibility of intervention was increasing.

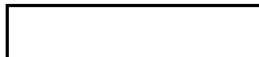
3. Care to discuss?



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Attachments

cc:



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Despite the "humiliating defeat" of the US resolution in the CAS, he said, the US retained "great capacity for maneuver." Havana's unusual statement on 19 June charging that the US was plotting "direct intervention" suggests FSLN apprehensions are shared by the Cubans.

We may be dealing here with the familiar problem of conflicting perspectives and perceptions. Our analysts assume there is virtually no chance of direct US military intervention, even if pro-Cuban elements in the FSLN seem to be on the verge of seizing supreme power. But do the embattled FSLN leaders and their Cuban backers share this assumption?

We now have a broad range of information—events, pronouncements, and intelligence reports—which could be interpreted to support a warning judgment that the Cubans may be contemplating and/or preparing a military intervention on behalf of, and at the request of, the FSLN provisional government. If such a warning is not issued, and the Cubans do undertake more conspicuous actions which could be described as "intervention," it would be awkward to explain why this contingency was not foreseen in the information available before the event.

X1 Afghanistan (excerpt from [] 28 June memo)

MESA analysts devoted over half of their meeting to this subject. Several voiced uneasiness with what they felt was the Soviet specialists' overly complacent view of the possibility of some form of Soviet military intervention to prevent the collapse and defeat of the Taraki regime. The MESA meeting explored alternatives to the present Kabul government and concluded that, apart from the present defense minister and a few Parcham exiles in Eastern Europe, Soviet prospects for installing a more effective leadership are not promising.

The USSR EE session seemed to discount the factor of Soviet commitments to support the "popular revolution" in Afghanistan. Both the NIO and analysts

saw the extent of Pakistani involvement on behalf of the insurgents as the critical variable. They concluded that the Soviets would react only if there is a significant increase in Pakistani intervention. An OPA analyst expressed the view that in the absence of conspicuous Pakistani involvement, the Soviets will allow the Taraki-Amin regime to collapse without major political or military moves to save it.

It seems to me there is some danger that Soviet specialists are edging toward a premature hardening of assumptions about Soviet interests and intentions in Afghanistan. The familiar assumption that Moscow's equities in SALT II, detente, trade and credits, etc. will deter audacious actions around the world, including Afghanistan, seems to have been a major influence in shaping analysts' views. They seem to have become more confident in this relaxed assessment of Soviet intentions as a result of the decline in Soviet allegations of foreign meddling which was apparent prior to and during the Vienna summit meeting. TASS commentator Kornilov, however, returned to the charge on 27 June, claiming the Pakistanis, aided by the Chinese, CIA, and other unnamed "reactionary regimes of the region" (Iran) are providing sanctuary and training for the rebels.

Current publications, in my view, have gone too far in seeming to minimize the chances of Soviet military intervention. The NID of 28 June, for example,

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] concluded that if reports of Soviet efforts to broaden or replace the Taraki regime are accurate, "the Soviets apparently are trying to avoid having to move more forcibly to prop up Taraki's increasingly discredited regime." [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Brezhnev's reported remarks to Prime Minister Desai, namely, that the Soviets will not allow the Afghan regime to fall and will

intervene militarily if Pakistan continues to interfere by giving aid to anti-Taraki guerrillas.

If our Soviet specialists remain reluctant to consider an Alert Memo raising the possibility of Soviet military intervention, an alternative might be to cast a memo in terms of Soviet contingency planning for various forms of increased military assistance and presence, including an eventual introduction of combat forces. I believe there is sufficient evidence to support a judgment of contingency preparations,

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To repeat: I sense some danger that Soviet analysts are becoming locked into predispositions and preconceptions about Soviet intentions and views of the stakes in Afghanistan—a mindset which may result in a jarring surprise unless the tide now flowing against the Kabul regime is reversed in the near future. I don't quarrel with the assumption that the Soviets will be reluctant to undertake a military intervention and will search for alternatives to this course of action as long as possible. However, there are uncomfortable parallels between the analysts' present views about the constraints operating against Soviet intervention and analytic judgments which preceded forceful Soviet actions in the past. (Recall, for example, the reasons against a Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia that were adduced in summer 1968). Afghanistan certainly is not another Czechoslovakia in terms of Soviet imperatives, but I would suggest that the Soviets see their geopolitical interests in Afghanistan as quite similar to their security requirements in non-Warsaw Pact contiguous states such as Finland and Mongolia. Would the Soviets acquiesce in the takeover of Finland or Mongolia by a political/military force perceived to be hostile to Soviet security needs and under the control or influence of Soviet adversaries?

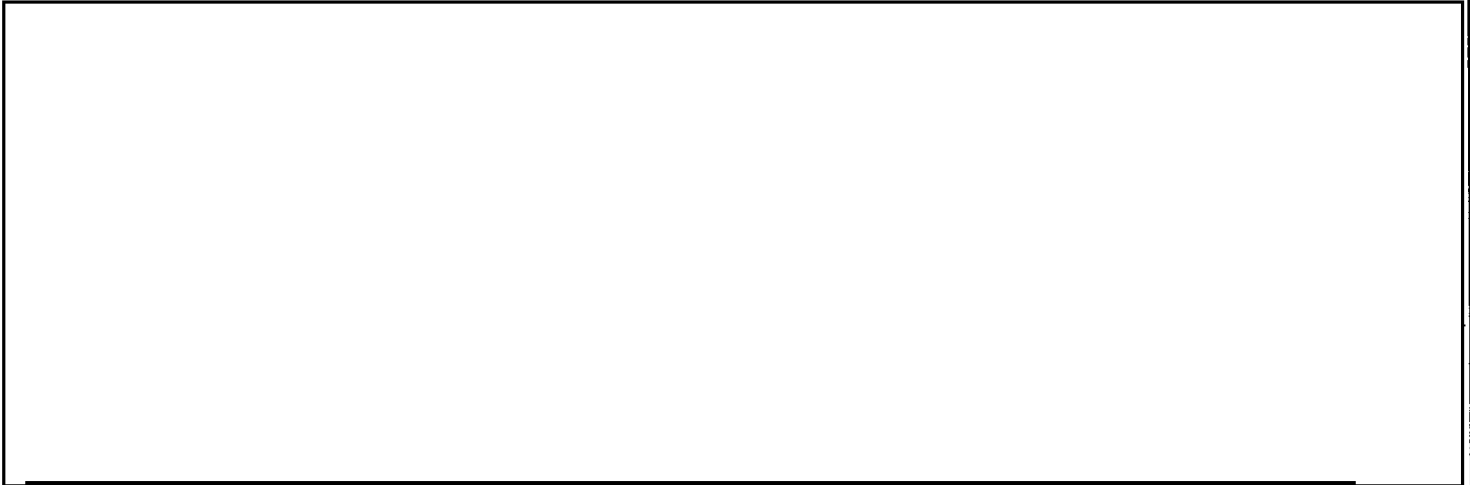
In warning analysis, more attention should be given to a government's

perceptions of interests and stakes in any given situation and less to constraints and inhibitions on assertive actions to defend these interests.

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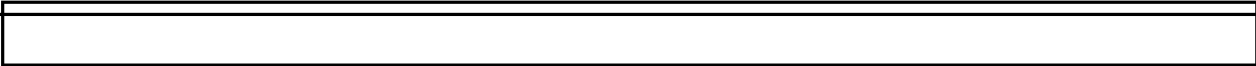
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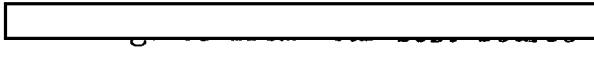
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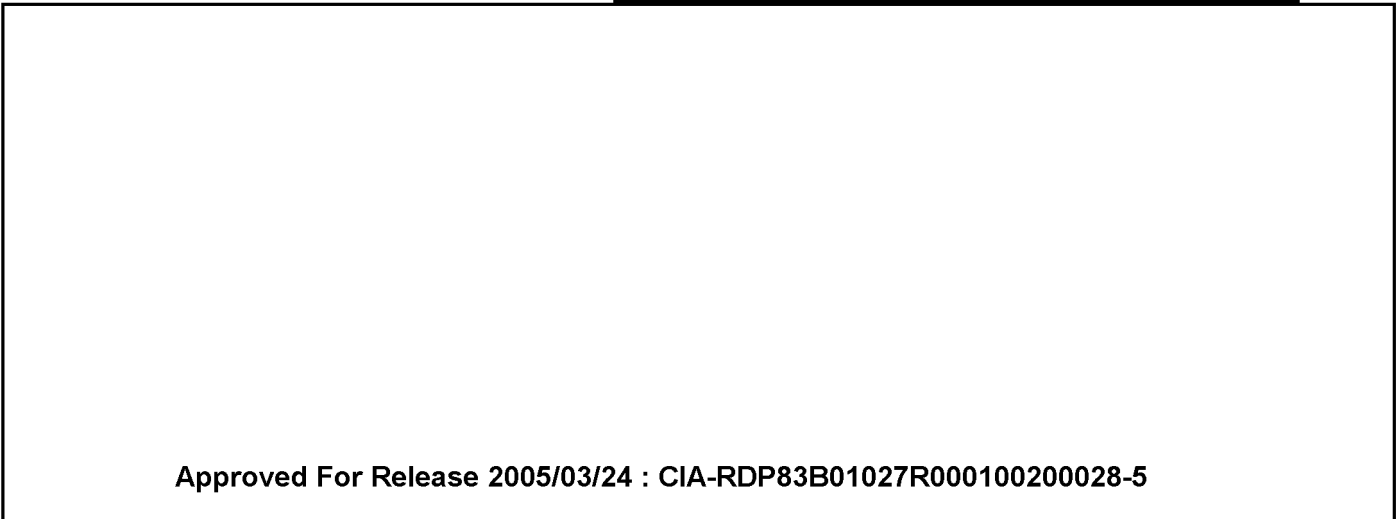
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18 June 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO for Warning

SUBJECT : Alternate Hypotheses, Questions, and Other Provocations

I. The Soviet Predicament in Afghanistan: An Alternate Hypothesis

Brezhnev's public pledge on 11 June that the USSR will "not abandon in trouble our friend—the Afghan people" should be taken at face value as a warning that Moscow will take whatever measures are necessary to protect its geopolitical interests in Afghanistan. This decision to commit Brezhnev's personal authority in the cause of defending the "Afghan revolution" undoubtedly contains a large element of bluff. As such, it is an extension of Moscow's efforts during the past three months to intimidate Pakistan and Iran and discourage external assistance to the Afghan rebels. But Brezhnev's intervention also signifies a more fundamental perception that Soviet actions in support of the Taraki regime, particularly since the conclusion of the Soviet-Afghan Treaty last December, have engaged the USSR's prestige and credibility so deeply that it now has no choice but to avert an outcome which would be viewed abroad (and at home) as a clear defeat for Soviet policy.

It is true, as Embassy Moscow notes, that the Soviets have passed up several recent opportunities to voice support for Taraki and his government and that this reflects an anxious concern to avoid as long as possible an irrevocable commitment to the Kabul regime as currently structured. But it is only a matter of prudence, under prevailing circumstances, to refrain from foreclosing the option of replacing Taraki and Amin with other leaders who could be relied upon to accept Soviet direction and protect Soviet equities. Moscow's predicament, of course, resides in the difficulty of finding



suggests that the Soviets are exploring the possibility of negotiating some kind of accommodation, however temporary, with the insurgents. However, in view of the trends in the civil war which increasingly favor the rebels, this option would seem to have minimal chances of success because, if for no other reason, the rebels have little incentive to negotiate a compromise settlement with the beleaguered and progressively weakening Taraki regime.

This hypothesis rests on the proposition that events have already passed beyond the point where the Soviets might salvage their investment in the present Kabul regime by playing the cards of a negotiated compromise settlement, deterring Pakistani support for the rebels by activating local assets in Baluchistan province, or sharpening diplomatic pressure on Pakistan. Ambassador Azimov has played his final card in the intimidation game by warning General Zia that, depending on the circumstances, the USSR would reserve the right to intervene militarily on the basis of Soviet-Afghan accords. The threat to unleash Afghan forces against Pakistan, moreover, simply lacks credibility and will not impress Gen. Zia. Large numbers of Pakistani tribesmen are crossing into Afghanistan to support fellow tribesmen.

In sum, the Soviets have already exhausted most, if not all, of their alternatives to a show of force to protect their self-created stake in the Afghan "revolution." They must now confront the consequences of a serious miscalculation with respect to the Taraki regime's strength and long-term prospects. The mystery is how the Soviets could have deluded themselves that a "people's revolution" lacking an effective party apparatus could consolidate its grip



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The fundamental factor in the Soviet Superp is saddled with a rapidly failing investment and that Moscow is both unable and unwilling to disengage or cut its losses. The pattern of Soviet behavior since General Yepishev's mission in April has been to escalate commitments in a desperate attempt to keep pace with and counter insurgent gains. The deployment of eight Military Transport Aviation AN-12s to Kabul on 13 June indicates that an end to this cycle is not in sight.

The Soviet leaders seem to have come to believe that they face an unavoidable choice between defeat and some form of military intervention. They are now building a justification for intervention, although they probably have not made final decisions with respect to the timing and scope of these operations. Brezhnev on 11 June portrayed the central issue in the contest for power in Afghanistan as foreign "covert and overt attempts at interfering in Afghan internal affairs"; Kosygin told Indian newsmen that the Soviet Union intends to "protect" Afghanistan; and TASS has charged that American, Chinese and Pakistani instructors are training Afghan rebels and providing their weapons.

The immediate requirement for warning intelligence is to assess the timing and nature of Soviet military options. The judgments in the Special Report of 5 June should be reexamined and updated. The judgment that the Soviets "probably would not send in ground forces to restore order throughout the country" remains plausible, but it seems unlikely that Moscow, under any circumstances, would contemplate what would in effect be a military occupation of the entire country. On the other hand, it is questionable that the Soviets would judge that intervention limited to the "dispatch of an airmobile combat team to hold Kabul for the Taraki regime" would be an adequate response to a situation that seems likely to confront them in the very near future.

The "political" argument that the Soviets will refrain from actions anywhere which, in their view, would jeopardize Senate approval of SALT II

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should also be reexamined: for example, the possibility that Brezhnev's

refusal to come to Washington for the summit meeting signifies more than a desire to protect his fragile health by avoiding long captivity in a Soviet airliner. Have the Soviets come to believe that the odds are strongly against Senate approval of SALT II, or that approval will be conditioned on Soviet consent to unacceptable amendments? Are they proceeding on the assumption that they can live with a situation in which both powers, following the precedent of SALT I since that agreement expired last October, will, in their own interests, tacitly observe the terms of SALT II despite its failure to be ratified? (President Carter's statement in this regard will not have escaped Soviet attention.)

Although there are impressive arguments against a Soviet decision to opt for large-scale military intervention (NID Special Analysis 16 June), the Soviets, impelled by familiar great power anxieties over prestige and the credibility of commitments in what they regard as a sensitive area, may persuade themselves that the chaotic situation in Afghanistan can be mastered by measures well short of "massive intervention," and that forceful Soviet action, at the "request" of the Kabul regime, will not only protect a highly valued geopolitical stake but remove the negative impression of Soviet resolve created by their ambiguous performance in reaction to China's invasion of Vietnam.