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Central Intelligence Agency

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Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

24 October 1985

Afghanistan-US: The Alliance at the UN

Summary

The arrival of an Afghan resistance delegation at the UN General Assembly this week represents the first significant effort by the new insurgent alliance--Ittihad Islami--to focus international attention on the Afghan issue. The delegation hopes broader international attention will enable it to challenge the official Kabul representatives and set a precedent for resistance alliance representation at other international forums. Pakistan is concerned about the impact of a highly visible resistance delegation on its ties with Moscow and will seek to limit the group's public exposure. If the delegation can operate effectively at the UN in spite of Pakistani restrictions, it will mark an important step in improving the political cohesion of the Afghan resistance, enhance resistance representation at other international organizations, and help allay Pakistan's concerns about its own equities, including the Geneva negotiations on Afghanistan. [redacted]

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This paper was prepared by [redacted] Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, South Asia Division, NESAs, [redacted]

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Delegation Strengths and Weaknesses

The resistance delegation represents the first sustained effort by the insurgents to lobby at the UN since November 1980, when an insurgent delegation split between supporters of ex-King Zahir and guerrilla leaders was denied entrance to the General Assembly. This year's delegation includes the spectrum of opinion in the resistance alliance, making it more likely that UN representatives will consider the delegation authoritative. Led by fundamentalist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the group includes a representative of each of the main groups in the Afghan resistance alliance. Because Gulbuddin is known for his anti-Western as well as anti-Communist views, the delegation is less likely to be viewed as a tool of the United States. [REDACTED]

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The insurgents' record of more than five years of increasing military pressure on the Soviets, in our view, gives them enhanced status with a number of UN delegations as a legitimate liberation movement. We believe the insurgents' credibility has been strengthened by their strong showing this summer against Soviet offensives in the Konar and Panjsher Valleys and in the recently concluded Paktia Province fighting. [REDACTED]

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The delegation members lack experience in political dealings outside the Islamic world, however, and the group is likely to be strained by its political and ethnic diversity. Political divisions between the moderates and the most radical of the fundamentalists could cause problems at the UN. Open squabbling could arise over such issues as distribution of Western aid, the extent of US influence on resistance policies, policy statements favoring Saudi or Iranian positions on any number of issues, anti-Israel rhetoric, loyalty to the resistance cause, and the course of resistance alliance policy. [REDACTED]

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Pakistani Concerns

Pakistani officials--fearing that a highly vocal resistance delegation could embarrass Islamabad and cause problems with other delegations--have stressed that they wish to prevent public contact between the delegation and US officials in New York. In our view, Pakistan's concern stems from a desire not to anger the Soviets and possibly jeopardize the Geneva talks as well as from a wish to maintain widespread support for the UN resolution on Afghanistan. Pakistani officials also want to maintain their control over the resistance alliance and fear that direct contact with US officials could erode Pakistani influence over the insurgent groups. [REDACTED]

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Outlook

The performance of the resistance delegation at the UN will be important in the success or failure of future efforts by the Afghans to attract international attention to their cause. A successful performance at the UN would, in our view, go a long

way towards convincing Arab and other Islamic countries that the insurgents ought to be represented more regularly at other international organizations, such as the Organization of Islamic Conference. Moreover, an effective resistance effort in New York probably would ease Pakistani concerns about future efforts and might encourage Islamabad to be more forthcoming in supporting insurgent attempts. A more visible international presence by the insurgents--especially if it resulted in serious challenges to the Kabul regime's credentials in various international organizations--would raise the political cost to Moscow of maintaining its occupation of Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

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An effective resistance performance at the UN also might boost insurgent unity efforts and encourage resistance leaders to look for additional ways to establish an international presence. The newly established resistance alliance would, we believe, benefit significantly if the representatives in New York demonstrate that they can work together with a minimum of friction. Gulbuddin and other resistance leaders, who have declared that a military victory is the only way to oust the Soviets, may see benefits deriving from a more active insurgent role internationally.

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SUBJECT: Afghanistan-US: The Alliance at the UN

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