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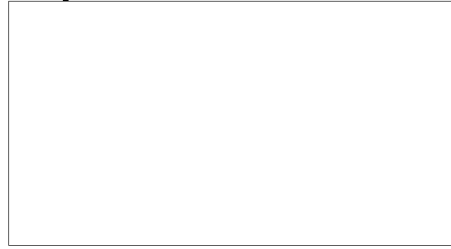
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Directorate of  
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# Afghanistan Situation Report



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19 November 1985

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**AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT**

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**FIGHTING ENDS IN HERAT**



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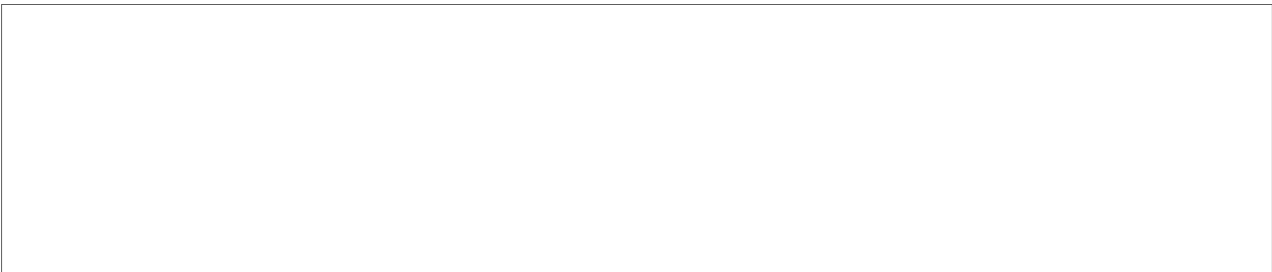
After nearly a month of heavy fighting in Herat, Soviet and regime troops have withdrawn from the city, leaving the insurgents free to resume activities.



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**WALK-IN TALKS ABOUT LIFE OF SOVIET SOLDIER IN KABUL**



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The Soviet soldier who entered the US Embassy in Kabul described his experience in Afghanistan as dismal and boring. His comments illustrate typical morale problems among Soviet troops.



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**IN BRIEF**

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**PERSPECTIVE**

**INSURGENT CONVOY ATTACKS PROVE COSTLY**



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The Afghan insurgents are making concentrated efforts to cut off Soviet supplies sent by convoy or fuel pipeline. Soviet countermeasures have been taken in an attempt to increase road security and guard the pipelines, but the resistance will probably continue to make resupply a costly matter for the Soviets.



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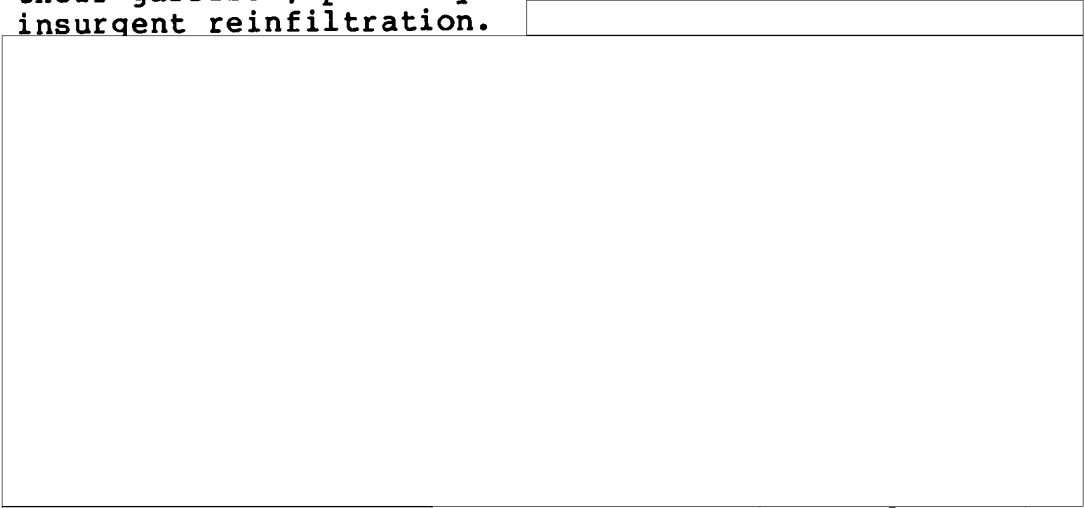
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**FIGHTING ENDS IN HERAT,**



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Combined Soviet-Afghan operations in Herat Province--  
underway since mid-October--came to an end on 11  
November. According to the US Embassy in Kabul, the  
Soviets successfully imposed a two-day curfew on Herat  
City on 9-10 November after which they withdrew to  
their garrison, probably leaving the city open to  
insurgent reinfiltration.



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The US Embassy in Kabul reports  
the virtual absence of military activity in the capital  
region and a significant decrease in regime security  
personnel in the streets.



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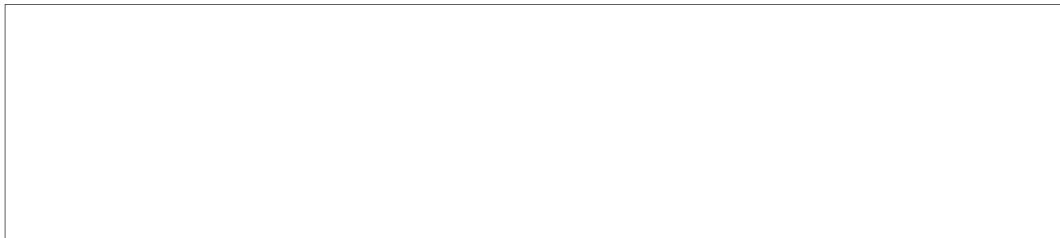
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**WALK-IN TALKS ABOUT LIFE OF SOVIET SOLDIER IN KABUL**

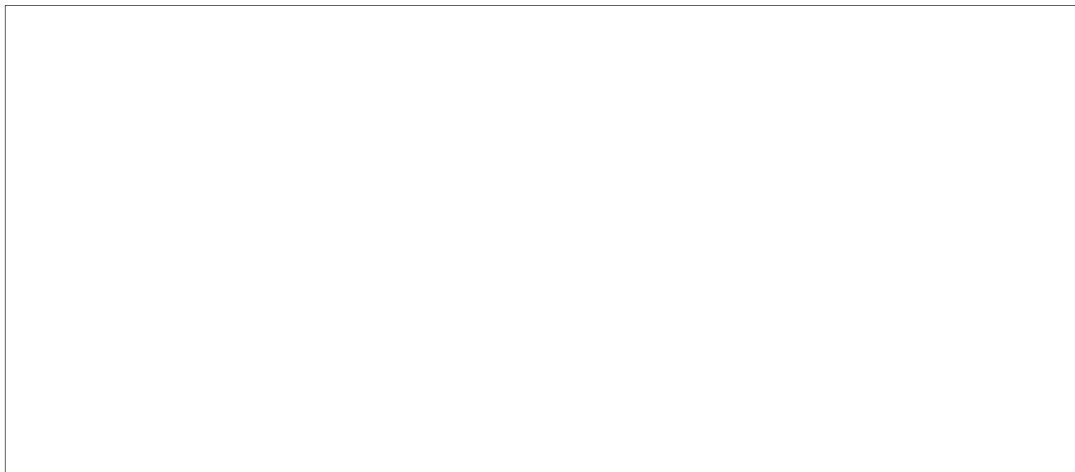
The Soviet soldier who scaled the wall of the US Embassy in Kabul on 31 October--Aleksander Valeriyevich Sukhanov, a 19-year old from the Moscow area--provided some insights into his life in Afghanistan. During his three-month assignment as a guard at Radio Afghanistan, Sukhanov did not leave the grounds of Radio Afghanistan except for occasional political indoctrination classes or administrative matters. He described life in Afghanistan as bleak and dismal--without recreational facilities, clubs or access to alcoholic drinks. He had no opportunity to return to the USSR on leave before the end of his two-year tour of duty. 

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**Comment:** The soldier's statements are further confirmation that Soviet conscripts normally serve two-year tours in Afghanistan. His comments also underscore the continuing low morale among Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan. Major complaints include poor living conditions, bullying by contemporaries and superiors, homesickness, and boredom. 

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**IN BRIEF**



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Soviet helicopters attacked an insurgent headquarters using a larger caliber rocket than the standard 57-mm rocket. The [redacted] rocket was probably an 80-mm rocket which has been used more frequently by the Soviets since late summer, when a Soviet Air Force commission recommended them.

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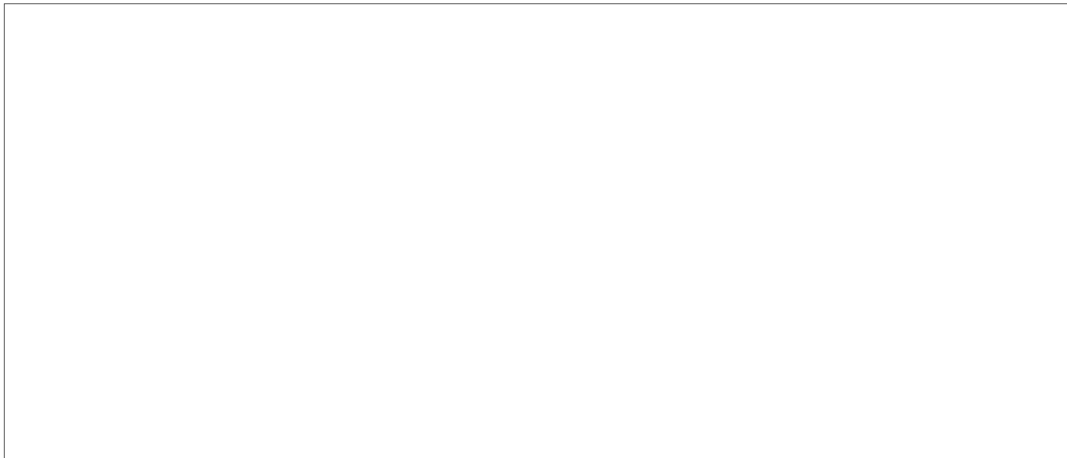
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According to the US Consulate in Peshawar, an American journalist, who returned from an eight-day trip into Afghanistan with a Hizbi Islami (Khalis) group, believes that insurgent training is improving and their intelligence is good. The journalist said the resistance used scale drawings of a Soviet Divisional Headquarters in northern Paktia Province to direct fire from mortars, ground-to-ground missiles, and recoilless rifles.



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At a 14 November press conference in Rome, officials of the Italian Independent Human Rights Commission accused the Soviets of using a UNESCO-funded literacy program to reshape Afghan society in the Russian mold. The Commission, which recently completed a nine-day tour of Afghan refugee camps for Prime Minister Craxi, will recommend that Italy stop contributing to the literacy fund. According to the press, it will also urge Craxi to provide economic and medical aid to refugees and insurgents, support UN observer status for the resistance, and establish an independent Afghan university, possibly in Pakistan.



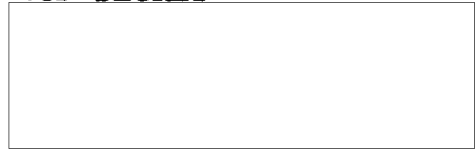
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-- According to a US Embassy officer in Moscow who recently traveled in the Eastern Ukraine, the war in Afghanistan is unpopular but accepted as necessary to secure the southern frontier. The Ukrainians interviewed indicated that young men would not shirk their "patriotic duty," despite widespread concern about the dangers, purpose, and high cost of the war. [redacted] the Soviets are offering large pay incentives to induce Soviet officers to serve a two-year tour in Afghanistan. [redacted]

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**PERSPECTIVE****INSURGENT CONVOY ATTACKS PROVE COSTLY**

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The Soviets and the Afghan regime are heavily dependent on fuel supplies and other materials shipped from the Soviet Union by convoy and, to a much lesser extent, the fuel sent through pipelines that run from Termez to Bagram Airfield in the northeast, and from Kushka (just north of Towraghondi) to Shindand Airfield in the west. The resistance is making major efforts to interdict these supplies, largely by ambushing the convoys that ship between 70 and 90 percent of all Soviet petroleum, oil, and lubricant (POL) products to Afghanistan. Although most supplies get through, frequent insurgent ambushes raise the cost of the war to Soviet and regime forces and are prompting new Soviet countermeasures.

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**Frequent Successes Against Soviet Convoys**

Because the Soviets ship the bulk of fuel by convoy, insurgents frequently target these convoys. Convoy ambushes are also designed to inflict heavy vehicular losses and to obtain other materiel and supplies. The insurgents have scored a number of recent successes against Soviet convoys:

- On 28 June, approximately 170 vehicles were destroyed during insurgent ambushes north of the Salang Tunnel, according to US Embassy sources.
- [redacted], a probable Soviet-Afghan POL truck was destroyed by an insurgent mine en route to the Panjsher Valley in July (see photo).
- On 30 July, insurgents destroyed a 45-vehicle convoy in the Salang Pass, [redacted]
- Ambushes in Lowgar and Vardak Provinces resulted in the destruction of 18 and 14 vehicles on 1 and 2 August, respectively, [redacted]

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insurgents attacked a large Soviet convoy west of Qandahar. They reportedly destroyed 18 trucks, 6 tanks, and 3 other vehicles in a two-day battle on 26 and 27 August.


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-- More recently, according to sources of the US Embassy in Kabul, the resistance mounted at least three convoy attacks along the Salang road in early November and reportedly captured 11 trucks carrying jet fuel. 

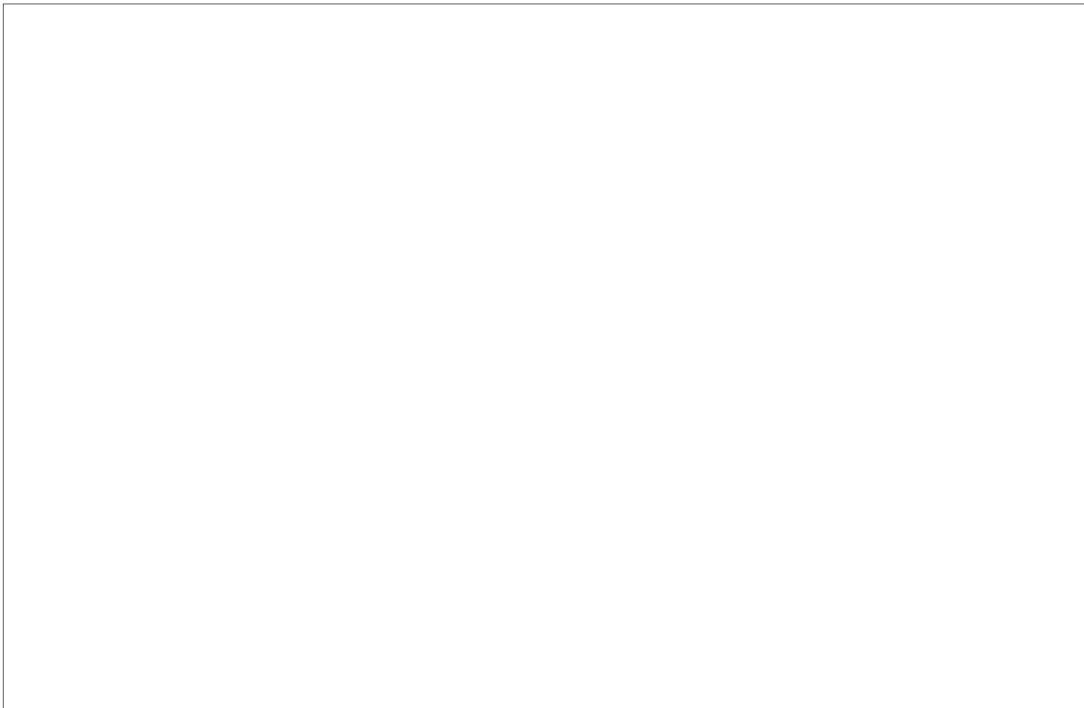
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Insurgents typically lay their ambush along a part of a road and attack any target of opportunity, including isolated sections of large convoys. They generally plant mines or fire rocket-propelled grenades at passing vehicles. The road ambush is followed by an assault or sweep during which food, weapons, ammunition, and equipment are taken, and everything else is destroyed, if possible. 

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Insurgents also disrupt Afghan civilian traffic by establishing roadblocks and "taxing" vehicles which pass through their territory. They typically siphon gas, confiscate government supplies and sell safe-conduct passes. 

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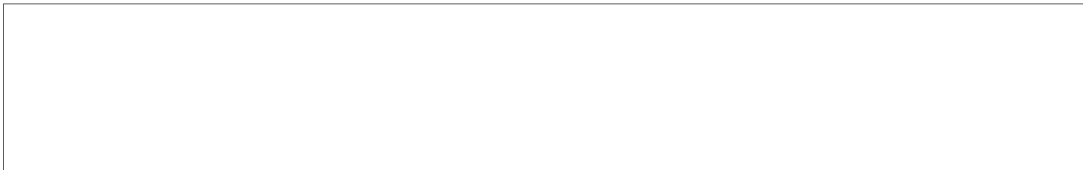


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**Impact on Kabul**

Although in general Kabul appears adequately supplied with fuel, insurgent attacks and Soviet logistic problems periodically cause fuel shortages. In the spring of 1984, for example, successful insurgent attacks against convoys caused severe fuel shortages, leading to sharp price increases and long lines for gasoline, kerosene, and diesel fuel in the capital. Electric power was also disrupted because diesel fuel is necessary to run electric power generators.



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As with fuel, there are periodic shortages of food and other goods as a result of convoy attacks. These do not appear to last long, however, and many of the goods captured by the rebels show up in the black market.



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**Soviet Countermeasures**

Soviet forces are trying to cope with insurgent ambushes by sending minesweeping vehicles to lead convoys; using tanks, armored personnel carriers, and quick reaction troops as escorts; and providing attack helicopters for added convoy security. In addition, Soviet and Afghan outposts are spaced along the highways to enhance road security, and convoy drivers reportedly are required to continue moving--even if hit--in order to minimize the rest of the convoy's vulnerability to attack. Convoy size was also increased recently; as a precautionary measure most convoys now include over 100 trucks. The Soviets and Afghans periodically launch retaliatory attacks against



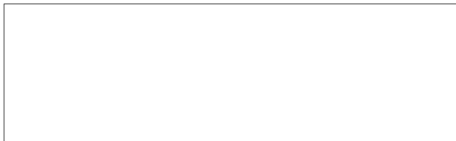
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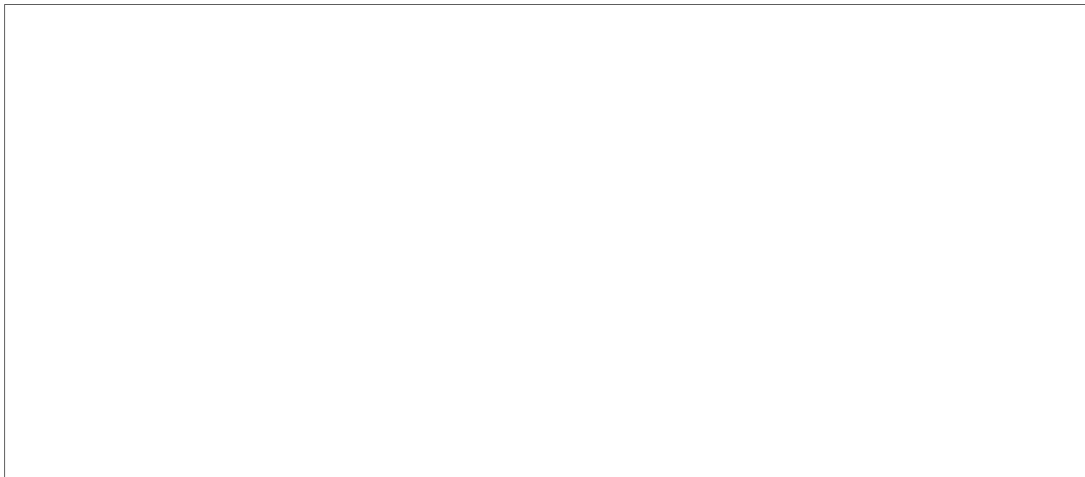


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nearby villages, forcing the insurgents to choose their ambush sites more carefully to avoid retaliation against their supporters. 

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**The Tradeoffs**

Soviet countermeasures will probably prevent the resistance from gaining as much materiel during convoy ambushes as they have in the past and will make them more cautious. The insurgents will probably adopt hit-and-run tactics on isolated sections of large convoys, rather than fight long, pitched battles--that increase the risk of retaliation--designed to obtain supplies. At the same time, large convoys preceded by minesweepers move slowly and make inviting targets. The resistance undoubtedly will continue to view the convoys as a high priority. 

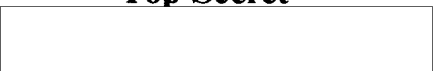
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