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CIA Afghan Aid Tilted by Saudi Priorities

The Saudi Arabian government's secret matching-funds arrangement with the Central Intelligence Agency on military aid to the Afghan freedom fighters has strings attached: Much of the \$1.5 billion the Saudis have contributed to the anti-Soviet rebels has gone to Saudi-favored guerrilla groups that are not only the least pro-Western but also the least effective.

Since U.S. aid to the Afghan Mujaheddin began, our intelligence sources say, the Saudis have matched congressional appropriations dollar for dollar. The CIA station chief in the capital city of Riyadh received Saudi money for the rebels. In addition, individual Saudis have donated millions on their own to favorite Afghan rebel leaders.

But our sources charge that the Saudi involvement in the CIA's supposedly covert arms-supply program has tilted the aid toward Mujaheddin groups that aren't doing much of the fighting and may well turn out to be anti-American.

There are seven main rebel groups that form a loose coalition. Three could be considered moderate in their politics and pro-Western in their orientation. The remaining four, favored by the Saudis, are more conservative Moslem groups seeking to make Afghanistan an Islamic state.

The Saudis' wish has been the CIA's command, despite congressional intentions in the matter.

For example, one of the four Saudi-favored Mujaheddin groups, led by Rassoul Sayaf, has received 20 percent of the CIA-Saudi arms supply—even though it has only about 2 percent of

the total guerrilla strength in the field. Sayaf's strong Saudi backing would account for the disparity. (On one occasion in May 1984, the Saudi ambassador to Pakistan delivered \$10 million to Sayaf from Prince Abdallah, deputy prime minister of Saudi Arabia.)

A disturbing connection has surfaced between Afghan aid and the Iran-contra scandal. The secret Swiss bank account into which more than \$10 million in Iran arms sales profits was channeled was a CIA account containing \$500 million intended for the Mujaheddin.

Furthermore, it is known that former national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane discussed Afghan resistance contributions—and aid to the Nicaraguan contras—on several occasions with Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan.

The clearest indication of Saudi clout with the CIA is that U.S. Stinger anti-aircraft missiles delivered last year went first to Saudi-favored Mujaheddin groups. Afghan rebel leaders who had come to Washington to plead their cause with President Reagan were initially cut out of the Stinger deliveries—almost as if in punishment for going over the CIA's head.

Footnote: We have learned that the Stinger shipments, which were halted in early January, have started up again. The Afghan rebels began receiving the first of an expected 600 Stingers in mid-April. Our sources say the Mujaheddin, trained by American experts, have achieved 60 percent effectiveness against Soviet aircraft.