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SUBJECT: Military and Political Activities in Afghanistan
21 December 1989

Qalat: Approximately 800-1,000 Republic of Afghanistan (RA) personnel remain in Qalat, Zabol Province. The RA forces are deployed at the provincial capital and three outposts. The garrison depends on helicopter resupply operations from Qandahar as all ground routes have been cut since July 1988. The regime's most pressing problem this winter is expected to be a shortage of firewood, since all orchards were cut down by the regime for fuel last winter.

Takhar: The Afghan Interim Government (AIG) press reported on 19 December that Mujahedin in Takhar Province had captured seven regime security posts in the last remaining regime stronghold of Khuwadjah Ghar. Mujahedin claimed 50 regime militia casualties, 16 injured, and a large amount of ordnance captured. In retaliation, the regime conducted air strikes against the provincial capital of Taloqan, causing civilian casualties and destruction in residential areas.

Qandahar: Combat operations in the Qandahar area continue on a steady level. The successful insurgent operation against the regime's resupply convoy at Lashkar Gah (Bost Airfield) in mid-September was instrumental in causing the present shortage of large caliber ammunition in the Qandahar area. The regime remains dependent upon aerial resupply of ordnance, fuel, and manpower.

Jalalabad: To combat continuous Mujahedin activity, the regime initiated air strikes and Scud launches in mid-December, often responding to an insurgent attack within the hour. The Afghan Air Force is reportedly dropping incendiary bombs. Prices of basic foodstuffs have risen sharply in Jalalabad and rumors of special privileges and bribery abound. In a price comparison with Kabul, the population of Jalalabad remains better off, with the possible exception of meat, which could be twice as expensive.

Herat: The regime is dependent upon a large tribal militia element to retain control in the Herat region and to keep its supply line to Towraghondi open. According to the AIG press, Mujahedin rockets destroyed an historic fort in Herat City on 13 December. The fort served as a regime military center. Mujahedin attacked several regime outposts in mid-December and reported the death of the Deputy Commander of the regime's Herat Corps during an clash on 9 December.

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Kabul: According to the AIG press, Mujahedin foiled a major RA offensive southwest of Kabul on 11 December. During the three-day attack, 49 RA troops were reported killed and 11 military vehicles destroyed. The insurgents conducted a long-range rocket attack against the 8th Infantry Division garrison at Kharga in mid-December. Mujahedin ambushed an RA military convoy along the Salang Road within ten kilometers of Kabul, destroying three trucks carrying munitions and missiles. In further actions near the Salang Road, Mujahedin captured three security posts near Jabal os Saraj, Parvan Province. The regime commander, who also served as Ministry of State Security (WAD) chief for Laghman province, was killed in action in mid-December.

Soviet Support: The Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman countered charges by Le Figaro, a French newspaper, which alleged that 20,000 Afghan children, presently in the Soviet Union, are being indoctrinated in pro-communist ideology prior to their return to their homeland. The Soviet reply states that only 1,500 children are presently in boarding schools in the Soviet Union, and are taught according to a program planned by the Afghan regime.

Soviet Press: The Soviet press recognizes that there are significant forces working against the Najibullah regime in Kabul. According to a 19 December article in Pravda, two high-ranking Kabul regime officials appeared on Kabul television to alleviate tensions and dispel rumors fostered by a recent attempt to overthrow the government. The officials acknowledged that a plot had been uncovered which involved at least three generals, numerous high-ranking army officers, and WAD personnel. The article states "This is perhaps the first time of late that the existing regime in Kabul has been threatened, if not with the danger of immediate overthrow, then at least with serious upheavals with unpredictable consequences." The journalist ends with a warning not to underestimate the damage resulting from these attempts to undermine the existing government.