

NIO/NEA

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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

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13 November 1989

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
FROM: John J. O'Donnell
National Intelligence Officer for
Near East and South Asia
SUBJECT: Afghanistan: Differences of View Within the
Intelligence Community

1. The National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for Near East and South Asia is convening the intelligence community on 15 November to prepare a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) on Afghanistan: The War in Perspective. The community will endeavor in these meetings to find common ground in their analysis of military and political prospects for Afghanistan over the last 12 months. This SNIE will be distributed to oversight committees.

2. There are differences within the community on the near term military prospects of the Mujahedin and on the possible negative effect of political elements, such as the Afghan Interim Government (AIG) and Pakistani policy generally, on the course of the struggle. But, at the same time there are considerable areas of agreement. Following is a summary:

a. The community generally agrees that:

(1) The Afghan insurgents hold the military initiative and will prevail over time; continued US support is essential to this analysis.

(2) The Mujahedin are employing the right tactics -- attacking lines of communications, airfields, and trying to mount small scale military attacks throughout the country.

(3) The war may well continue several more years; there will be no significant changes in the military balance of power through this winter.

(4) Najibullah's Kabul regime survives because of massive Soviet support. It has surprised everyone by its military performance but remains unacceptable to the vast

*AD VANTAGE
Afghanistan*

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*attempts
Assault Kabul
Pressure & US
Social status*

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majority of Afghans. It is torn by factionalism and will not extend its control outside the urban areas.

(5) Certain of the important Mujahedin commanders must become more assertively engaged, particularly those in the north such as Ahmad Shah Masoud and Ismail Khan, to bring additional pressure to bear.

(6) A US disengagement would be the worst possible alternative for US interests because this would:

- cause the levels of fighting immediately to drop off, lowering the pressure on Najibullah.
- threaten the stability of Pakistan.
- leave the Mujahedin feeling betrayed and risk an eventual anti-American government in Afghanistan.

*acceptable
of Sol.*

(7) Mujahedin military pressure has already forced extensive change and compromise on the Kabul regime. Continued pressure eventually will either defeat the regime militarily or will force so great a transformation that the Mujahedin will reach an accommodation with whatever is left in Kabul. Najibullah probably must depart under any scenario.

(8) The AIG in Peshawar is essentially irrelevant to the war, though some analysts believe the AIG reflects a pro-Pakistani bias favoring the southern commanders.

b. The DIA dissent. DIA examines the same intelligence and concludes: *after the next 12 mos.*

*intensity
adequacy
inevitability
transformative
not enough.*

(1) The ~~low-level~~ harassment tactics of the Mujahedin will not threaten the Najibullah regime in the foreseeable future. *will not force transformation*

(2) The mujahedin may prevail over the long term but will have to increase levels of activity and improve effectiveness in order to do so.

(3) Najibullah is stronger and of higher morale today than six months ago because of the surprising performance of the regime military and the dependable high levels of Soviet support.

(4) With the departure of the Soviet army the Mujahedin have lost much of their common cause and will have problems maintaining country-wide opposition to the regime.

*So that Soos will be free
to remove NASAs.*

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c. The CIA position. CIA has been more positive and optimistic than the rest of the community. The Agency argues that:

(1) The Mujahedin are following the same harassment tactics that succeeded against the Soviets. Progress is slow but steady, and sufficient pressure is being generated to force the collapse of the Najibullah regime.

(2) It is inaccurate to allege Najibullah is stronger. His regime remains totally dependent on Soviet support and completely unacceptable to the Afghan people.

(3) The regime has lost territory since the Soviet withdrawal and faces a severe manpower crisis; its armed forces have been reduced from about 160,000 to 125,000 since May 1988.

(4) CIA concurs that nothing dramatic should be expected this winter. The war could last several years.

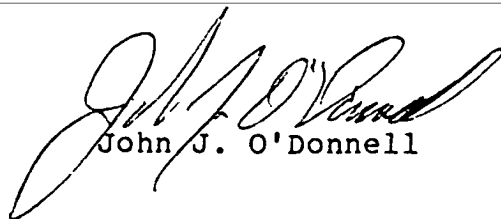
d. The State/INR view. INR puts more weight on political factors as inhibiting Mujahedin progress. They argue that:

(1) Many of the more important insurgent commanders remain on the sidelines because the AIG remains narrowly unrepresentative and unattractive as an alternative government.

(2) The Pakistanis favor certain groups, particularly the Islamic party of Ghulbedin Hikmatyar, and thus contribute to divisiveness. Pakistan is backing the wrong commanders.

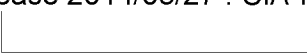


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