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Soviet Options in Afghanistan

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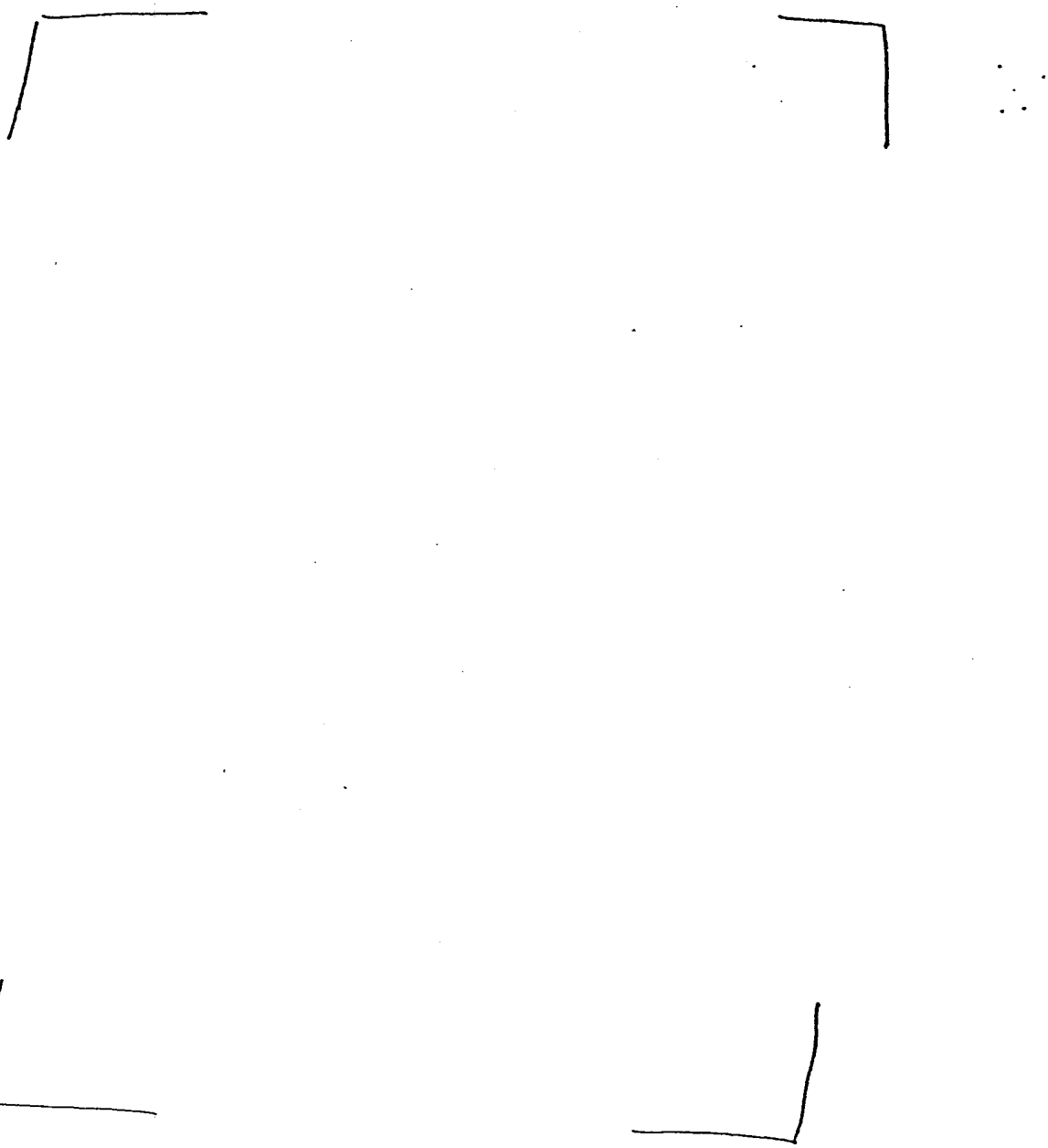

SOVIET OPTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

KEY JUDGMENTS

Moscow probably views the situation in Afghanistan as even more unstable after the fall of Taraki. While the Soviets may have previously decided to implement new military measures to support Taraki against the rebels, the uncertain tenure of Prime Minister Amin's regime makes it likely that Moscow is deferring major new initiatives to expand the counterinsurgency effort pending a decision as to whether Amin can consolidate his position.

The Soviets, however, [ ] may fear that this coup might fragment the Afghan Army and lead to a breakdown of control in Kabul. In this event, they would be likely to deploy one or more Soviet airborne divisions to the Kabul vicinity to protect Soviet citizens already there as well as to ensure continuance of some pro-Soviet regime in the capital. Although we might not receive prior warning, we believe it likely that we would promptly detect a deployment of Soviet forces on this scale once it began. We do not believe that Moscow would intend such a deployment for use in fighting against the Muslim insurgency, although, once in Afghanistan, such Soviet airborne forces could eventually be drawn into such fighting. We have not seen indications that the Soviets are at the moment preparing ground forces for large-scale military intervention in Afghanistan.

This memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for USSR and Eastern Europe, National Foreign Assessment Center. It was coordinated within the Central Intelligence Agency; with the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; with the Defense Intelligence Agency; with the National Security Agency; and with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. Information available through 27 September 1979 was used in the preparation of this memorandum.

In the months before the coup, as the insurgency in Afghanistan intensified and spread, the Soviets increased the numbers and expanded the counterinsurgency role there of what now are at least 2,500 of their military personnel, who are heavily involved in guiding combat operations. Moscow may also have permitted direct participation of Soviet helicopter pilots, and possibly some tank personnel, in combat alongside the Afghans. In addition, we believe that one lightly equipped Soviet airborne battalion has been quietly deployed in Afghanistan since early July to provide security at Bagram Air Force Base.* Meanwhile, also during the summer of 1979, the Soviets have apparently tried and failed to induce the regime to admit other political elements to the government to broaden its base. All these measures have proved inadequate to halt the deterioration of the regime's position.

Amin's seizure of sole power within the Khalqist regime in mid-September has further complicated these Soviet problems in dealing with both the regime and the insurgency. We believe that the Soviets probably did not instigate or foresee this move by Amin. Moreover, they probably also evaluated it as rendering the counterinsurgency task more difficult, at least in the short term, because it further narrowed the regime's base of support, and, in fact, threatened to divide the ruling party itself.

If Moscow, within the next few weeks, concludes that Amin has consolidated his position and that no effective challenge from within the regime and the Army is likely, we believe the Soviets will probably increase their counterinsurgency role over the next few months, albeit incrementally rather than dramatically. In this case, Moscow may further increase the number of Soviet advisers and expand their combat activities, and may gradually bring in additional special battalions or regiments to provide security in key cities. In addition, Moscow could bolster the counterinsurgency effort by providing Soviet-manned combat support and combat service support units, such as attack helicopter, logistic, and maintenance units, to enhance Afghan combat reach and effectiveness.

* The Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency believes that there is insufficient evidence to determine the role or function of the Soviet unit deployed at Bagram Air Force Base. There is no evidence that this unit is equipped with crew-served weapons.

We believe the introduction into Afghanistan of additional Soviet battalion- or regiment-size units for security purposes, like the forces already at Bagram, could be accomplished without immediate detection if this were done gradually, along with the ongoing airlift of materiel. Our ability to detect promptly the incremental introduction of Soviet combat support and combat service support units is similarly limited, although time would increase the probability of our learning that such units had entered Afghanistan.

The Soviets are probably well aware of the open-ended military and political difficulties that could flow if such limited intervention were allowed to grow into a larger and more visible commitment. They are also aware of the adverse political consequences this would entail for them in South Asia and the Middle East. On the other hand, it is clear that the Soviets' sense of their interests in Afghanistan is now more ambitious than it was before the advent of the Marxist regime in 1978. They see the maintenance of a Marxist state in Afghanistan as important to their strategic and political interests in the region. This perception has increasingly supplanted the Soviets' earlier and less ambitious goal of simply maintaining a friendly buffer state on their southern border. If they do decide to provide some additional military support to Amin, they are likely to do so in the hope of bolstering the anti-insurgent struggle sufficiently to avoid facing a decision as to whether to use Soviet combat units on a large scale.

In the event that Amin does not consolidate his position but that an acceptable and viable Marxist alternative emerges, the Soviets are likely to shift their political and military support accordingly. If no such viable leftist alternative appears, and the Khalqi regime fragments, the Soviets would promote installation of a more moderate regime willing to deal with them, rather than accept the political costs and risks of a massive Soviet invasion to fight the insurgency. Nevertheless, we can foresee contingencies under which the chances of large-scale and long-term Soviet intervention would become substantially greater:

-- Prolonged political chaos.

-- The prospect of advent of an anti-Soviet regime.

-- Foreign military intervention.

DISCUSSION

1. The threat raised by the Muslim insurgency to the survival of the Marxist government in Afghanistan appears more serious now than at any time since the government assumed power in April 1978. During the past 17 months, the government has become increasingly dependent on Soviet political, military, economic, and technical help. The Soviets have been generous but the Afghans remain unsatisfied. Meanwhile, the declining fortunes of the Khalqist* regime probably have caused Moscow to reassess what level of assistance would be needed to keep the Khalqis in power and at what point the risks and burdens associated with such assistance would outweigh the benefits of preserving the Taraki-Amin regime--and now the Amin regime.

2. Although a fairly important garrison recently surrendered to the rebels, the various insurgent groups do not yet pose an immediate military threat to government control of the major cities, and can only intermittently interdict key communications routes. But the Afghan armed forces are increasingly stretched thin in their efforts to deal with the insurgents, and their willingness to support the government has been continuously eroding.

Soviet Interests in Afghanistan

3. Until last year's Marxist coup, Moscow's interest in Afghanistan seemed to be focused on ensuring the continued primacy of Soviet influence in a state on the southern border of the USSR. Before last year, Soviet interests in Afghanistan were guaranteed by two treaties (a 1921 Friendship Treaty and a 1931 Treaty of Neutrality and Nonaggression which prohibited Afghan territory from being used for actions inimical to the USSR) and by the USSR's role as chief economic and military aid donor. To be sure, Afghanistan's foreign policy was nonaligned and Moscow's ability to influence Afghan internal affairs was limited, but the Soviets seemed satisfied with their level of influence there, and regularly cited Afghanistan as a model of how two states with differing social systems could peacefully coexist.

* The dominant faction of the People's Democratic Party (PDPA).

4. We have no convincing evidence to confirm reports that the Soviets were behind the coup which brought the Marxists to power. The USSR undoubtedly had been the chief inspirational force and financial source of support for the Afghan Communist movement since its establishment in the early 1950s. But the Soviets were always worried about the impact which support for the Afghan Communists would have on their relations with the Afghan Government and were extremely circumspect in their direct dealings with them. Indeed, Moscow has never officially acknowledged the existence of an Afghan Communist party, or permitted any Afghan Communists to attend international party meetings, even incognito.

5. The successful seizure of power by the Afghan Communists, however, dramatically changed their status in Moscow. Both the USSR's envoy in Kabul, Ambassador Puzanov, who is reported to be an ideologue with important connections in the Soviet party Central Committee, and the Soviet military, who are likely to have seen an opportunity to enhance the Soviet strategic position, probably urged Soviet leaders to take advantage of the political windfall and to create yet another Communist regime on Soviet borders. In addition, the Soviet leadership probably thought that the consolidation of Marxist rule could take place gradually and be managed in a way that would not jeopardize more important Soviet foreign policy interests.

6. It is clear that the Soviets' sense of their interests in Afghanistan is now more ambitious than it was before the advent of the Marxist regime in 1978. They see the maintenance of a Marxist state in Afghanistan as being important to their strategic and political interests in the region. This perception has increasingly supplanted the Soviets' earlier and less ambitious goal of simply maintaining a friendly buffer state on their southern border.

Evolution of Soviet Involvement

7. [

] Mindful of the narrowness of the new regime's

base of support, and anxious to help it consolidate its position, the USSR also began increasing its military advisory presence, which at the time of the coup numbered an estimated 350 persons. In July 1978, Moscow concluded a $250 million military aid agreement with the new regime.

8. As opposition to the government increased last fall and winter, the Soviets continued to augment their military advisory presence. By early this year, their presence had grown to at least five Soviet generals and an estimated 750 to 1,000 military advisers. These Soviets were initially stationed in the Kabul area, assisting newly promoted officers in running the Ministry of Defense and training Afghan recruits. As conditions in the countryside deteriorated, an increasing number of Soviet advisers were sent to the provinces to assist in the government's anti-insurgent effort.

9. The uprising in Herat last March and the subsequent visit to Kabul by the Soviet military's top political officer, General Yepishev, in early April led to a further augmentation of the Soviet military presence. In June 1979, Moscow deployed eight AN-12s to Afghanistan to assist the government in transporting men and materiel to the various battlefronts. We now estimate that there are at least 2,500 Soviet military personnel in Afghanistan.*

10. [ ] there are Soviet advisers attached to every major Afghan Army command, as well as to at least some regiment- and battalion-level units. They appear to be heavily involved in guiding Afghan combat operations, as well as in Afghan Army logistics and administration. [ ]

[

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* This figure does not include up to 3,600 additional troops which, according to unconfirmed reports, have recently been moved into Kabul to safeguard facilities there. See paragraph 39.

11. In addition, there are some reports which are not confirmed, but which we regard as fairly credible, alleging that Soviets have piloted helicopters together with Afghan pilots in strikes against insurgent positions, and have on occasion furnished tank personnel for combat operations.

12. If these latter reports are accurate, the Soviets, in addition to guiding Afghan combat operations, are themselves already participating in combat on a small scale and in certain limited ways. In general, however, they are not organized in cohesive combat units intended to conduct unilateral operations.

13. Soviet personnel also appear to be stationed in considerable numbers at Bagram Air Force Base north of Kabul, where they apparently service the airlift from the Soviet Union. In addition to the aircraft service and support contingent at Bagram, an airborne battalion--some 400 personnel--has apparently been at the airbase since early July. The unit is lightly equipped and probably has been deployed to Bagram to provide security. We have no evidence that it has been used in combat operations against the Afghan insurgents.*

* The Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency believes that there is insufficient evidence to determine the role or function of the Soviet unit deployed at Bagram Air Force Base. There is no evidence that this unit is equipped with crew-served weapons.

14. Soviet civilian involvement in Afghanistan has also grown appreciably since the coup. By the end of 1978, we estimated that the number of civilian advisers had nearly doubled to some 2,000, as the Soviets assumed top managerial and planning jobs in the government's economic ministries and became involved in changing the government's educational system. The Soviets, however, have not promised the Afghans any significant new economic assistance beyond additional debt relief (the USSR is by far Afghanistan's largest creditor) and 100,000 tons of wheat. This is because the Afghan capability to absorb substantial increases in foreign economic assistance is limited and because there is still some $300 million in unallocated credits from the $1.3 billion extended to previous regimes. The 60 economic aid agreements that were signed last year allocated only $200 million of the $500 million in credits outstanding at the time of the April 1978 coup. Nonetheless, the Afghans are said to be dissatisfied over the level of Soviet economic assistance actually being provided, and annoyed over their unsuccessful attempts to join the Soviet bloc's Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA) in hopes of loosening Soviet purse strings.

15. Moscow's political commitment to the new regime was symbolized by its willingness in December 1978 to conclude another friendship treaty with the Afghan Government. The treaty is similar to others signed with Third World countries, in that it said nothing about the Marxist-Leninist character of the new regime, paid lipservice to Afghanistan's professed foreign policy of nonalignment, and contained no explicit mutual defense commitment. Article Four of the Treaty, however, presumably could be invoked to justify Soviet combat intervention on behalf of the regime. It calls for the two sides to "consult with each other and take by mutual agreement appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence, and territorial integrity" of the two states.

16. As the prospects of the Khalqist group for consolidating its rule have declined, Moscow has become increasingly concerned that Afghanistan's neighbors, Pakistan and Iran, might be tempted to aid Afghan insurgents. [redacted] To deter such support, the Soviets have kept up heavy diplomatic and propaganda pressure on Pakistan and somewhat lesser pressure on Iran. They have also repeatedly accused the United States, China, and Egypt of training Afghan insurgents.

Recent Soviet Behavior

17. In addition to increasing their military involvement in the government's anti-insurgent effort, the Soviets have urged Taraki and Amin to seek political means for easing the situation. They convinced the government to abandon its land reform program. But they were not able to reverse some of the other social and economic reforms introduced by Taraki and Amin that have alienated deeply religious Afghan tribes who refuse to be wrenched from their near-feudal way of life.

18. Similarly, the Soviets have apparently had little success in persuading the Afghan regime to modify its hostile posture toward Pakistan in the interest of inducing Pakistan to minimize support for the Afghan insurgents. [

[redacted]

19. The apparent lack of harmony between the Soviet and Afghan leaderships lent support to the numerous indications that Moscow throughout the summer of 1979 was seeking alternatives to the Taraki-Amin regime. We have received reports that the Soviets encouraged leaders of the rival Parcham faction of the People's Democratic Party, in exile in Europe, to believe that the USSR would back their return to power and, alternatively, that the Soviets were planning a military coup. Jailed members of the Parcham faction in Kabul, who were released at Soviet urging in early July, were rearrested in August after they began circulating anti-Amin and anti-Taraki documents.

20. Moscow's desire to enlarge the Afghan ruling circle apparently was discussed directly with Taraki and Amin. Ambassador Safronchuk, the Soviets' special envoy to Kabul, told the US Charge on 24 June that Moscow had not yet been able to persuade the regime to bring new people into government. By mid-July the East German Ambassador in Kabul was claiming that the Soviets were going to replace Taraki and Amin by force if necessary. In late July, the public comments of Taraki and Amin made it clear that they were aware of the Soviet machinations and that they would

resist. Amin pointedly reminded Moscow that the prerequisite for continued close ties was Soviet "respect for our national sovereignty and independence." In the same period, there was evidence suggesting that Amin had taken steps to circumscribe the power of the Minister of Defense Watanjar, a key figure in any putative Soviet effort to induce the Afghan military to depose Amin and Taraki. On 28 July, Amin assumed effective control of the Defense Ministry and appointed Watanjar as Interior Minister.

21. Events during the latter half of August suggest that despite the difficulties in its dealings with the regime, Moscow was not prepared to halt the growth of its commitment to the Khalqis. On 19 August Soviet leaders Brezhnev and Kosygin sent an unusually warm message to the Afghan leaders in connection with Afghan independence day. A few days before, a large high-ranking Soviet military delegation led by the Commander of Soviet Ground Forces, General Pavlovskiy, had arrived in Kabul secretly to conduct a lengthy assessment of Afghan military needs.

22. In mid-September, Amin's seizure of sole power, removing both Watanjar and Taraki from the government, further complicated the Soviet problems in dealing with both the regime and the insurgency. The Soviets probably saw the Amin coup as rendering the counterinsurgency task more difficult, at least in the short term, because it further narrowed the regime's base of support and in fact threatened to divide the Khalqi party itself.

Military Options

23. On the eve of the Amin coup, in the apparent absence of viable political alternatives, the Soviets seem to have decided by late August to renew their commitment to the Afghan leadership as it was then constituted, and to focus on the scope and character of military support needed to support that commitment. The size and rank of the Pavlovskiy delegation, plus the long duration of its visit, strongly suggest that it was tasked to make that assessment of military needs. If Moscow chose to provide additional military support, its options could be divided into four categories, as discussed below.

24. Equipment and Advisers. The most obvious option is to supply more equipment and to increase the number of Soviet advisers. Because of a shortage of trained Afghan

manpower, such an increase might necessitate allowing Soviet advisers a more extensive role in combat and air support activities and in ferrying men and materiel within Afghanistan. The Soviets, for example, could assign more personnel to fly and maintain tactical ground support aircraft and helicopter gunships for operations against the insurgents.

25. Introduction of Combat Support and Combat Service Support Units. Another option, at a higher level of involvement, would be to provide the Afghan Army with Soviet-manned combat support and combat service support units--such as attack helicopter and additional logistic and maintenance units--to enhance the Afghan combat reach and effectiveness. Combat support and combat service support units could be moved to areas of the USSR adjacent to Afghanistan and incrementally introduced over a period of weeks without straining the Soviet transport system. Our ability to detect such Soviet movements and intrusions promptly is limited, although time would increase the probability of our learning that such units had entered Afghanistan.

26. Limited Intervention With Soviet Combat Units. The Soviets might consider deploying a limited number of their own units to provide security or operate in combat as separate entities. The Soviets would have to weigh whether their increased combat presence would alienate rather than bolster the Afghan forces that are now loyal to the regime. Because of this uncertainty the introduction of Soviet combat units probably would be accomplished incrementally. It might begin, for example, with a few battalions up to and including an airborne division or two to help stiffen Afghan Army resolve or provide security for key cities or critical points. As noted earlier, we believe one such battalion has already been introduced to provide security for Bagram airfield since early July.

27. The most likely airborne division to be called in is the one nearest Afghanistan, located at Fergana in the Turkestan Military District (MD). It could be brought up to its operational strength of some 7,900 men in a few hours.

28. The airlift of an airborne division into Afghanistan could be accomplished within a day or so if the transport and airborne forces were previously alerted and prepared. The Fergana division is situated about 380 nautical miles from Kabul, and the flight time between the two locations

is only about one and a half hours. With the short distance involved, the Soviets would probably elect to establish an air shuttle and deliver the division in several regiment-size increments, each requiring about 100 aircraft sorties. Some 200 additional sorties would be required for the division's support equipment. An airlift of this nature would be well within the capabilities of the Soviet military transport fleet.

29. The Soviets could also airlift to Afghanistan infantry elements up to regimental size from divisions in the Turkestan MD. Without their heavy equipment, these units would not have the firepower or mobility of airborne units but could be used for point defense or, with the commitment of substantial helicopter lift and support units, to protect communication lines or conduct anti-insurgent operations.

30. All of these limited deployments could be supported by fighter aircraft from the three tactical air force bases in the Turkestan MD. Only 45 of the approximately 120 tactical fighters at these bases have a primary role of ground attack, but other aircraft could readily be deployed to border airfields if necessary. The closest combat assault helicopter unit is in the Transcaucasus MD, 1,100 miles from the Afghan border, and other units are farther away in the Carpathian and Transbaikal MDs. Soviet transport helicopter units are located throughout the western and southwestern military districts. The Soviets probably would not consider that airstrikes by themselves would reverse a deteriorating military situation, but they might use such strikes to support Soviet combat units if they were introduced.

31. Massive Soviet Military Intervention. Anything beyond securing Kabul or some other key city and a few critical points would require the commitment of large numbers of regular ground forces in a potentially open-ended operation. An overland move to Kabul--particularly with the possibility of Afghan Army and insurgent opposition--would be a multidivisional operation exhausting the resources of the Turkestan MD. An operation of this magnitude would therefore require the redeployment of forces--and their supporting elements--from western and central military districts, in addition to those near the Soviet-Afghan border.

32. Soviet ground forces closest to Afghanistan are located in the Turkestan MD--some 45,000 men in four cadre-level motorized rifle divisions, an artillery brigade, and various MD-level support units. All of these forces are manned considerably below their intended wartime strengths. In about a week some 50,000 reservists could be mobilized to fill out the Turkestan units and an additional division could be moved in from the Central Asian MD.

33. Six other Central Asian Military District divisions would also be available for operations but would require a few weeks or longer to mobilize reservists and move to the Afghan border. The Soviets probably would be reluctant to move any substantial portion of their Central Asian forces into Afghanistan, however, for fear of weakening their position opposite China.

34. The Soviets have 12 other divisions located well over 1,000 miles from Afghanistan in the Volga, Ural, and North Caucasus MDs from which they could draw intervention forces. These units are also manned at low levels in peacetime and would require a few weeks to fill out and move to the Afghan border.

35. The terrain and lack of a modern transportation network in Afghanistan are hampering the Afghan Government's military effort against the insurgents and would seriously complicate large-scale Soviet military operations. Most of the country is hilly or mountainous--terrain that would limit the use of transport and logistic vehicles. In addition to controlling the mountainous areas, the insurgents could disrupt Soviet movement by cutting the roadways that lead from the border area to several key cities as well as those roads between major urban areas.

Prospects

36. The prospect of a successful Communist government in Afghanistan is important to Moscow for ideological reasons: such a government would provide substance to determinist claims that world "socialism" will eventually emerge victorious. The Soviets feel obligated to support such revolutions and embarrassed when they fail. The outcome assumes an added importance when the revolution occurs in a country on the USSR's border. In addition, it is conceivable that some Soviet planners have welcomed the advent of such a revolution in Afghanistan on strategic grounds, arguing that if

this revolutionary regime could be consolidated in power at acceptable cost, it could open the way for the eventual expansion of Soviet influence southward.

37. For these reasons Moscow has been determined to make the Khalqi seizure of power blossom into a workable government, and has been frustrated by the steady decline of the regime's fortunes. We have seen that as the insurgency has worsened and the regime's needs have grown, the Soviets have steadily expanded the flow of military supplies to the regime to the limits of its ability to absorb them. Similarly, they have gradually increased the number and expanded the counterinsurgency role of Soviet advisers in the country. They have placed a battalion at Bagram airfield to provide security for the airlift. As these measures have proved inadequate to halt the deterioration of the regime's position, the Soviets have explored the option of seeking a broader based Afghan leadership but, even before the Amin coup, had clearly failed in their efforts to create a coalition that might attract greater popular support while guaranteeing the government's continued pro-Soviet orientation.

38. Under these circumstances, the Soviets are likely to have begun more serious consideration of the spectrum of possibilities for direct combat intervention. The likelihood that the Soviets had been weighing the military options discussed earlier was enhanced by the arrival in mid-August of General Pavlovskiy. The delegation led by the Commander of the Soviet Ground Forces was specifically reported to be preparing, among other things, a detailed report on the Afghan insurgency and the Afghan military.

39. We cannot rule out the possibility that Pavlovskiy's visit followed a decision already made by Moscow to intervene at one of the levels discussed earlier, and that Pavlovskiy's task involved working out the modalities. One clandestine source in early September alleged that the Soviets had already moved some 3,600 Soviet combat troops into Kabul, with the purpose of protecting Soviet citizens and facilities. The Soviets might have considered such a move into Kabul prudent in view of the uprisings that have occurred in Kabul this year and the continuing possibility of violence in the capital. Sizable numbers of such troops without heavy equipment could have been brought into the city

from the USSR undetected by US intelligence if this had been done gradually and incrementally as part of the ongoing airlift of materiel for Afghanistan. We have been unable to verify this report, however, by other intelligence means.

40. It appears reasonable to conclude that the Soviet leadership has wished to avoid allowing the situation to deteriorate to a point where only large-scale intervention by Soviet troops could save the Afghan regime. Moscow would then have to calculate whether Khalqi survival was worth commitment to the grave and open-ended military task of holding down an Afghan insurgency in rugged terrain. The Soviets would also have to consider the likely prospect that they would be contending with an increasingly hostile and anti-Soviet population. The USSR would then have to consider the likelihood of an adverse reaction in the West, as well as further complications with Iran, India, and Pakistan. Moscow would also have to weigh the negative effects elsewhere in the Muslim world of a massive Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. Soviet-Iraqi relations, for example, have already soured because of Baghdad's suspicion about Soviet intentions in the Middle East following the upheavals in Iran and Afghanistan. A conspicuous use of Soviet military force against an Asian population would also provide the Chinese considerable political capital.

41. On the other hand, if worse came to worst, and the Soviets chose to abandon the Khalqis rather than accept the political costs and risks of a Soviet invasion, the effects would again be damaging to the USSR. But whatever criticism the Soviets might suffer for not defending a budding revolutionary movement to the end could be deflected by reminding detractors that the USSR had provided Kabul with large amounts of assistance and had warned Taraki and Amin that they were mismanaging the revolution. Moscow's unwillingness to acknowledge the Afghan regime publicly as a Communist government has suggested that the Soviets have wished to leave open a line of propaganda retreat in case the Khalqis collapse.

42. To avoid being confronted with an all-or-nothing decision, however, the Soviets seemed prepared before the Amin coup in mid-September to provide the regime with additional military assistance that could include some combat help but would, for the time being, probably be well short

of a major intervention (which we have defined as a multi-division ground force operation.) In short, the Soviets seemed likely to act initially on the smallest and least conspicuous scale consistent with Pavlovskiy's estimate of the regime's needs.

43. As noted earlier, Amin's seizure of sole power has further complicated the Soviet problems in dealing with both the regime and the insurgency. We believe that the Soviets probably did not instigate or foresee this move by Amin, which in fact may conceivably have been a preemptive step to forestall a Soviet plot to have Taraki remove him.

44. We believe it likely that Moscow views the situation in Kabul as extremely unstable since Taraki's fall, and that the Soviets see the uncertain tenure of Amin's regime as requiring at least a brief deferral of new Soviet military initiatives against the insurgency pending a decision as to whether Amin can consolidate his position.

45. At the same time, the Soviets have seemed ready to act decisively to preserve security in Kabul if the new situation there should rapidly deteriorate.[

] The Soviets may fear that Amin's coup might provoke fighting within the Afghan Army and a breakdown of control in Kabul. In this event, the Soviets are probably prepared to deploy one or more Soviet airborne divisions to the Kabul vicinity to protect Soviets already there as well as to ensure continuance of a pro-Soviet regime in the capital. We believe it likely that we would promptly detect a deployment of Soviet forces on this scale. We do not believe that the Soviets would intend such a deployment for use in fighting against the Muslim insurgency, although it is not impossible that, once in Afghanistan, such Soviet airborne forces could eventually be drawn into fighting.

46. If, on the other hand, the Soviets within the next few weeks conclude that Amin has consolidated his position and that no effective challenge from within the regime and the Army is likely, we believe the Soviets will probably increase their counterinsurgency role in the next few months, albeit incrementally rather than dramatically.

Any moderate increase in the Soviet role--involving expansion of the combat activities of advisers, providing some combat support and combat service support elements, and perhaps initially airlifting in additional airborne or lightly equipped battalions or regiments to provide security in key cities--would be primarily intended to buy time. Perhaps the biggest immediate threat to the prospects for a "holding action" of this type is the loyalty of the Afghan Army. Small-scale defections occur almost daily and, with four major mutinies in the past seven months, its continued allegiance is highly suspect.

47. Unless the Army completely unravels, therefore, additional Soviet advisers and a limited sprinkling of Soviet combat units would improve, but not guarantee, the staying power of the Khalqis. In expanding incrementally the level of their own involvement, however, there is a danger that the Soviets will increase their own stake in the ultimate outcome, making it increasingly likely that they will raise the level of their participation still another notch if the situation continues to deteriorate.

48. In the event Amin does not consolidate his position but an acceptable and viable Marxist alternative emerges, the Soviets are likely to shift their political and military support accordingly. If no such viable leftist alternative appears, and the Khalqi regime fragments, the Soviets would promote installation of a more moderate regime willing to deal with them, rather than accept the political costs and risks of a massive Soviet invasion to fight the insurgency. Nevertheless, we can foresee contingencies under which the chances of large-scale and long-term Soviet intervention would become substantially greater:

-- Prolonged political chaos.

-- The prospect of advent of an anti-Soviet regime.

-- Foreign military intervention.

ANNEX

Warning Considerations

1. It is difficult to assess warning time for imprecisely defined military options such as we can postulate for Afghanistan. In Europe, for example, we know the parameters of the "threat" forces and there is an extensive body of good evidence indicating how they intend, in general, to employ these forces against NATO. In Afghanistan, however, we have no evidence on Soviet military objectives or on the forces that the Soviets would consider necessary to accomplish them. Moreover, in estimating warning time in Europe we have evidence of what the Soviets would consider to be a minimum force necessary to launch a deliberate attack and have predicated our minimum warning time on the time necessary for the Warsaw Pact to prepare, and for NATO to detect, such an attack. In an intervention into Afghanistan, however, the Soviets do not face well-organized forces on their frontier to be overcome in an initial assault. Therefore, even the largest intervention, which would take weeks to fully prepare if undertaken as a coordinated assault, could be undertaken piecemeal, beginning with airborne or ground forces near the border. Such an operation could be initiated in a day or so, with little or no warning, as follow-on forces were being mobilized.

2. The options available at the lower end of the scale provide the least warning but also would likely have the least military impact. Soviet airborne troops or small ground forces units probably could be readied for an intervention in a day and it would take about that long to marshal the air transport to move them into Afghanistan in a single lift. We could not be confident that we would detect the increase in troop readiness early on, but the concurrent marshaling of transport aircraft for a major airlift probably would become apparent in a day. In addition, Soviet airborne and airlifted troops could be introduced with no warning at all if they were moved in piecemeal.

3. The larger intervention options offer more warning time, depending on the level of the Soviet commitment. Multidivisional operations to secure a few lines of communication into Afghanistan, for example, could be initiated, probably in about a week using the four divisions in the Turkestan Military District; it would take us a few days to

detect the mobilization and movement of these forces. Operations in the face of Afghan Army resistance or efforts to pacify substantial areas of the country probably would require forces from areas beyond the Turkestan Military District and would take up to a few weeks to prepare. We probably would be able to detect the mobilization and movement of divisions in these areas in a few days to a week.