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BOOK REVIEW	
Oct. A - [Signature]	transferred to O/TSBC
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233101	by L/S
Oct. C - Caption and content	retained by [Signature]
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AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON NIACT IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO NIACT IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY RABAT NIACT IMMEDIATE  
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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE  
COMMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE  
WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE BOSS  
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
CINCENR VAININGEN GE IMMEDIATE

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MILITARY ADDRESSEES TREAT AS SPECIAL EXCLUSIVE

R.O. 124051 6DS 12/28/85 (MURNBLON, MICHAEL)  
TAGS: PEPH, AF, UK, US

SUBJECT: OUR ASSESSMENT OF RECENT EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN

1. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.
2. ADDRESSEE POSTS MAY DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN BRIEFING MOST GOVERNMENTS. ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED IN SEPTEL.
3. ON DECEMBER 27, AFGHAN PRESIDENT HAFIZULLAH AMIN WAS DEPOSED AND EXECUTED IN A COUP D'ETAT CLEARLY PLANNED AND EXECUTED BY THE SOVIET UNION. DURING THE TWO DAYS PRIOR TO THE COUP A MASSIVE SOVIET AIRLIFT COMPRISING OVER 200 FLIGHTS BROUGHT MEN AND MATERIEL INTO KABUL. ALTHOUGH THE PRECISE REASON FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THESE MEN AND FORCES WAS NOT CLEAR AT THE TIME, IT IS NOW APPARENT THAT THE FIRST TASK WAS TO EFFECT A COUP AGAINST AMIN'S GOVERNMENT WHICH HAD PROVED INEFFECTIVE AND PERHAPS EMBARRASSING TO THE SOVIETS.
4. RELIABLE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS FROM KABUL INDICATE THAT SOVIET TROOPS WERE ENGAGED IN FIGHTING AFGHAN TROOPS AND OTHERS FOR CONTROL OF RADIO AFGHANISTAN. THE SOVIETS WERE SEEN TO BE TAKING AFGHAN PRISONERS AND AT LEAST THREE AFGHAN TANKS STATIONED NEAR THE RADIO BUILDING WERE DESTROYED. SOVIET CONVOYS WERE SEEN MOVING TOWARD THE CITY AND THERE WAS FIGHTING OVER A PERIOD OF HOURS IN THE VICINITY OF DURULAMAN PALACE, THE RESIDENCE OF AMIN.

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SOVIET TROOPS ARE NOW STATIONED IN KEY INTERSECTIONS AT KABUL AND IN FRONT OF MANY GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS.

5. OUR INITIAL FINDINGS INDICATE THAT THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE COUP APPEAR TO HAVE COME FROM TRANSMITTERS IN THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF, AND NOT FROM RADIO AFGHANISTAN IN KABUL. THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS WERE CLEARLY PRE-RECORDED AND WERE REPEATED CONTINUOUSLY ON SEVERAL FREQUENCIES PURPORTING TO BE RADIO AFGHANISTAN. ACCORDING TO THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS, BABRAK KARDEL HAD SUCCEEDED AMIN AND WAS NAMED PRESIDENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. BABRAK (WHICH HE IS USUALLY CALLED) WAS FOR MANY YEARS A RIVAL OF FORMER PRESIDENT TARKANI FOR LEADERSHIP OF AFGHANISTAN'S MARXIST MOVEMENT. AFTER THE APRIL 1978 COUP BABRAK WAS NAMED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER BUT WITHIN A FEW MONTHS HE WAS "EXILED" AS AMBASSADOR TO PRAGUE, A POST HE HELD FOR ONLY SIX WEEKS BEFORE BEING ORDERED BACK TO KABUL. BABRAK DID NOT RETURN TO KABUL, BUT WE BELIEVE HE REMAINED IN EASTERN EUROPE UNTIL HIS INSTALLATION BY THE SOVIETS AS THE NEW AFGHAN PRESIDENT. HE IS KNOWN TO BE A DEDICATED MARXIST WHO HAS BEEN CLOSE TO THE SOVIETS FOR YEARS, AND HE WILL PROBABLY BE THOROUGHLY AMENABLE TO SOVIET DIRECTION. GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS INSTALLATION, BABRAK WILL CLEARLY BE DEPENDENT ON MOSCOW FOR HIS SURVIVAL.

6. WE HAVE REPORTS FROM KABUL THAT THE SOVIET AIRLIFT IS CONTINUING. EARLIER IN DECEMBER, AT LEAST THE EQUIVALENT OF A COMBAT REGIMENT ARRIVED AT BAGRAM AIR FORCE BASE SOME 40 MILES NORTH OF THE CAPITAL. A VERY SUBSTANTIAL BUILDUP OF SOVIET FORCES IMMEDIATELY NORTH OF THE AFGHAN BORDER INVOLVING THE ELEMENTS OF AT LEAST FIVE DIVISIONS, SUGGESTS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE ADDITIONAL MILITARY OBJECTIVES BEYOND THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN KABUL. THIS BUILDUP

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INCLUDES LARGE NUMBERS OF COMBAT AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS.

7. THE NEW REGIME HAS ALREADY MADE SOME CONCILIATORY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE IT MORE PALATABLE TO THE AFGHAN PUBLIC AND HAS OFFERED TO NEGOTIATE WITH VARIOUS INSURGENT GROUPS. HOWEVER, WE EXPECT THAT MOST OF THE INSURGENTS WILL PROBABLY SPURN THESE APPROACHES SINCE THEY ARE LIKELY TO REGARD BABRAJ AS EVEN MORE A CREATURE OF THE SOVIET UNION THAN HIS PREDECESSOR. BABRAJ WILL DOUBTLESS GIVE LIP SERVICE TO NON-ALIGNMENT BUT WILL IN FACT BE PURSUING APRO-SOVIET POLICY AND BE SUBSERVIENT TO THE SOVIETS IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

8. THE NEW REGIME MAY HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME CO-OPTING ELEMENTS OF THE FORMER GOVERNMENT. THE AFGHAN ARMY WHICH WAS ALREADY BADLY DEMORALIZED WILL BE FURTHER SHAKEN BY THIS MOST RECENT COUP AND THERE MAY WELL BE MORE DESERTIONS. THE AFGHAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WAS ALREADY IN SHAMBLES DUE TO THE WIDESPREAD, POPULAR INSURGENCY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE. THE SOVIETS WILL FACE A DIFFICULT TASK IN REBUILDING THE AFGHAN ARMY AND RECONSTRUCTING THE ECONOMY.

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