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Joint Report by Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Soviet Ministry of Defense and KGB Representatives in Kabul, February 1988

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Summary:

Report on conversations with Afghan President Najibullah, who is optimistic about the future after the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

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REPORT FROM KABUL

(Secret)

[...] Detailed conversations conducted in recent days with Cde. Najibullah and other Afghan comrades and an analysis of the information arriving through various channels allows certain conclusions to be drawn about several features of the current military and political situation in Afghanistan.

□With the publication of the announcement by M. S. Gorbachev and Najibullah an important period in the policy of national reconciliation is ending for which, as they note here, considerably more has been done to restore peace in Afghanistan than in previous years. At the same time a qualitatively new phase in the development of the situation is beginning, [but] by no means all of its constituent elements could be discerned right now. However the main thing is clear - the point is coming when Afghans must identify and solve their problems themselves by those means which best correspond to their historical traditions. The forms of clarifying relations will be varied - in some places associated with armed struggle and in other places with negotiations - with the need for serious concessions, obviously mainly on the part of the government. But this will be an Afghan solution of an Afghan problem.

□The comrades understand that the first period after the withdrawal of Soviet troops will be the most crucial when the armed opposition, judging from everything, will try to unleash massive pressure on government forces. As Cde. Najibullah thinks, it is important to hold out for two or three months, after which the opposition will begin to dissipate and different circumstances will present themselves which will weaken it. Most likely, government forces will have to retreat in several sectors, for in the opinion of Chief of the General Staff Sh[ahnawaz] N. Tanay, [they] ought possibly to abandon in advance those places where the opposition has obvious military supremacy. This needs to be done so that the opposition can not then paint each local success as a great military victory.

□...With the withdrawal of Soviet troops the opposition is deprived of the capability of using anti-Sovietism as a unifying factor. The conflicts between the commanders of the internal counterrevolution operating in Afghanistan itself and the leaders of their own parties outside the country have a very bitter nature...

□In the opinion of Cde. Najibullah two outcomes are possible. The first: serious, prolonged battles with the counterrevolutionaries; the second - more favorable, where issues are decided not so much by military means as by various combinations, compromises, and talks using clan, ethnic, and local [zemlyacheskiye] relations.

□Cde. Najibullah himself is inclined to think that the situation will not develop according to the worst outcome. He returned repeatedly to these thoughts and every time his statements expressed optimism.

□...The situation in Afghanistan, as it seems at the present time, confirms that the election of Cde. Najibullah as President is already bringing tangible results. In particular, recently a number of important figures of the domestic opposition are trying to make contact with Cde. Najibullah. Judging from their statements, they attach much importance just to the fact that they do not have to do business with a Party leader but with a President. Such a policy is being observed in the provinces where the commanders of armed groups prefer to do business with governors.

□Of course it is not possible right now to foresee all the twists and turns of the situation. But it is very important for the Afghans to travel their own path, finally shedding attitudes of dependency and making decisions themselves. Doubtless here

there might be and even will be unavoidable miscalculations and delays. But the main thing is not to commit big political mistakes.

□ Practice has confirmed the correctness of the main thrusts of future work which were outlined during the meetings between Cde. Gorbachev and Cde. Najibullah and specified during the working visit of Cde. E. A. Shevardnadze to Kabul in January of this year...