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Memorandum, 'An Analysis of the "Islamic factor" in the Afghan Situation' by A. Belousov, Deputy Chairman of the Tajik SSR KGB

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Summary:

Analysis of US support to opposition mujaheddin forces in Afghanistan and related attempts to use Islamic ideology to destabilize the Soviet Central Asian republics.

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[...] The entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan in December 1979 against the background of the victorious conclusion of an "Islamic Revolution" in Iran was evaluated by the US and their allies as a large-scale expansion aimed at a fundamental change of the balance of forces in a strategically important region; a considerable part of the world's energy providers [ehnergonositeli] are concentrated here.

As followed from materials of the Republic of Afghanistan MGB, at the suggestion of the US CIA this country where there was already a civil war underway was selected as a proving ground for a decisive countermeasure to the "Soviet expansion"; its failure would not only bring defeat to the Soviet troops in Afghanistan and the fall of the "pro-Communist Kabul regime", but also destabilize the situation in the Central Asian republics of the USSR.

The plan of actions prepared jointly by the CIA with the special services of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia which received the codename "Program-M" was calculated at the wide use of the Islamic factor, mainly by the armed Islamic opposition in Afghanistan.

"Program-M" provided for coordinating the activity of all mujaheddin detachments, equipping them with weapons, organizing the training of guerillas at special centers, creating an agent network in the DRA and the southern regions of the USSR, and enlisting various Islamic centers and fundamentalist organizations operating in Islamic countries in carrying out planned measures.

To destabilize the situation in the republics of Central Asia the special services intended to carry out propaganda directed at these republics and, with the aid of Afghan fundamentalist organizations, create underground religious structures along the lines of Egyptian "Islamic Brotherhood" and the "Militant Wahhabi" cells in Tajikistan and other republics of the USSR.

In accordance with "Program-M" coordination to exploit the capabilities of the Afghan Islamist groups in directing a "shakeup" [raskachivaniye] of the situation in the Central Asian republics and to transfer them to the territory of "holy war" (jihad) was directly entrusted to the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence agency...

However this did not mean that the CIA withdrew from the direction and coordination of the activities of the participants in the implementation of "Program-M". American intelligence sort of pushed the Pakistani special services to the forefront for political reasons. The CIA "legal" residency, functioning under American Embassy cover in Kabul, conducted energetic activity in this direction...

According to available information special caravans have been organized on Pakistani and Afghan territory to smuggle weapons into northern border regions from where it is to be transshipped to Soviet territory in small lots. Information has also arrived that Masoud's detachments have been preparing to illegally ship a large amount of explosives and pistols to the USSR...

Great importance in "Program-M" has been devoted to the ideological influence of Muslims and nationalistic sections of the population in the republics of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus. The special services of the US, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia and also leaders of Islamic armed opposition groups in Afghanistan have participated in carrying out measures in this direction.

According to statements of American Sovietologists the revival of nationalism in the USSR was directly associated with an increase in religiousness of the population. The awakening in the part of the Soviet people who profess Islam and nationalist feelings is considered by Sovietologists as a "special mixture of political and economic

discontent and cultural and linguistic difference which could mobilize Muslims against Russian and European dominance."

Radio broadcasts were given a special role in promoting Islamic ideology in Muslim regions of the USSR. Broadcasts in the languages of the Central Asian peoples were made both by Western countries and a number of Muslim states. At that time the Afghan opposition itself had only several small radio stations on Pakistani territory broadcasting to Afghanistan and the bordering Soviet republics.

In individual cases broadcasts were made to Central Asian republics with the aid of field radios. They were at the disposal of several mujaheddin formations operating in the northern regions of Afghanistan.

Radio propaganda from Islamic groups was marked by a harsh anti-Soviet, anti-Russian orientation. It contained open calls for the unity of Muslims of all countries; transferring "jihad" to Soviet territory; splitting off the republics of Central Asia from the Soviet Union; and support for the ideas of Pan-Islamism. The leaders of the Islamic opposition and the Western special services thought that the attainment of these goals would facilitate the wide distribution of propaganda materials of a religious and anti-Soviet nature in Soviet republics. They made efforts toward the delivery and distribution in the southern republics of the USSR of various printed material, audio, and video cassettes propagandizing Islamic ideas and, in particular, "holy war against the infidels"... (from an analysis of the issues of an increase of the Islamic factor made by the USSR KGB)