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YOUR TELNO 1857: **AFGHANISTAN: SOVIET WITHDRAWALS**
SUMMARY

1. ADMINISTRATION CONCLUDE THAT THE SOVIET WITHDRAWALS WERE LARGELY A SHAM, AND PLAN TO GO PUBLIC WITH THE EVIDENCE SHORTLY.
DETAIL

2. CLARK (DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU FOR INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH, STATE) BRIEFED NATO EMBASSIES PLUS JAPAN ON 28 OCTOBER. HE WAS INTENDING TO BRIEF THE CHINESE LATER THAT DAY, AND ASEAN AND GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL EMBASSIES ON 29 OCTOBER.

3. DRAWING ON SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHY, CLARK MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- (1) GORBACHEV UNDERTOOK IN HIS VLADIVOSTOCK SPEECH TO WITHDRAW SIX REGIMENTS: ONE TANK, TWO MOTORISED RIFLE, AND THREE AIR DEFENCE;
- (11) THE US ACCEPTED THAT THE THREE AIR DEFENCE REGIMENTS WITH THEIR EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN. BUT THEY HAD NEVER BEEN IN COMBAT;
- (111) THE TANK REGIMENT CONCERNED (AT SHINDAND) HAD BEEN BELOW STRENGTH DURING THE SUMMER (20 OUT OF THE NORMAL 60 TANKS). 40 TANKS WERE BROUGHT IN FROM THE SOVIET UNION IN MID-SEPTEMBER; ALL 60 WERE THEN WITHDRAWN;
- (1V) IN THE CASE OF THE MOTORISED RIFLE REGIMENTS, THE SHAM WAS EVEN CLEARER. IN EARLY AUGUST TWO REGIMENTS WITH STANDARD EQUIPMENT LEFT THEIR GARRISONS IN SHINDAND AND KUNDUZ. THEY WERE REPLACED BY TWO REGIMENTS BROUGHT IN FROM SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA, EQUIPPED WITH OLDER BTR70 ARMoured VEHICLES, TOWED ARTILLERY AND LARGE NUMBERS OF TRUCKS. NO OTHER MOTORISED RIFLE REGIMENT IN AFGHANISTAN WAS SO EQUIPPED. THESE TWO NEW REGIMENTS PARADED BEFORE JOURNALISTS AND DEPARTED (BUT MANY OF THEIR BTR 70 VEHICLES IN FACT REMAINED IN AFGHANISTAN). RECENT PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWED THE ORIGINAL UNITS RETURNING TO THEIR GARRISONS. THE NET RESULT WAS THAT THERE WERE 12 MOTORISED RIFLE REGIMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN BEFORE VLADIVOSTOCK; AND 12 STILL REMAINED.

4. CLARK ADDED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WERE CONVINCED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO ADDITIONAL WITHDRAWALS OF MOTORISED RIFLE REGIMENTS, AND THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE THEREFORE BLATANTLY CHEATING. THE REASONS WERE UNCLEAR. THE MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION

