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AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

STUDENT REPORT

THE SOVIET'S USE OF AIRPOWER
IN A COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN

MAJOR ROBERT A. SUTLEY 87-2425

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In December, 1979 the U.S.S.R. invaded Afghanistan and has been involved in a counterinsurgency ever since. This study looks at one aspect of that conflict, Soviet airpower. Using the case study format it examines some doctrinal tenets that drive the Soviet's use of airpower and specifically how they are employing their assets in Afghanistan. By viewing their tactics and choices of weapons, Western observers can learn a great deal about the Soviet military's capabilities. The study concludes with some of the lessons that have emerged from this conflict.

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PREFACE

This case study analysis of Soviet counterinsurgent operations in Afghanistan was designed as a background reading for academic courses at the Air Force Academy. Depending upon the academic course requirements within the Professional Military Studies Department it will be used as an instructor reading or an assigned reading for Cadets. It will be reprinted either partially or in full in any format conducive to their style of presentation.

The research sources used were all unclassified. There is a multitude of information in a great variety of sources. Every attempt was made to cross-reference facts and figures to maintain the confidence of the author in their validity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Robert A. Sutley graduated from the USAF Academy in 1974 with a Bachelor's of Science degree in International Relations. He also received a Master's of Science degree from the University of Southern California in systems management. Although his primary area of specialty is as a C-5 pilot, other assignments have included T-38 Instructor Pilot, Simulator Test Manager, and most recently an academic instructor of Military Theory and Soviet Force Analysis at the USAF Academy. Major Sutley is currently attending Air Command and Staff College.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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TITLE THE SOVIET'S USE OF AIRPOWER IN A COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN

I. Purpose: To analyze the current Soviet counterinsurgent effort in Afghanistan in terms of airpower assets and missions.

II. Problem: Using Afghanistan as a case study, are there lessons to be derived for future Soviet air actions in a counterinsurgency campaign?

III. Discussion of Analysis: Afghanistan is a nation with harsh terrain, a limited transportation infrastructure and a rural-based population. There are few major cities and the government has characteristically had little sway over the daily lives of the people. These conditions are very conducive to insurgent operations, and complicate the counterinsurgent efforts. Many studies, as well as experience, have shown that in these operations only certain types of aircraft are effective. This is due to fighting against elusive forces that use mobility and small unit size to protect themselves. High speed fighter type aircraft are of minimal use. What is needed are helicopters or slower fixed-wing assets that can acquire smaller targets and react

to this style of warfare in a constrained geographical environment. The Soviets are also learning these lessons but have had to overcome some doctrinal constraints within their forces. Their ideological orientation, historical experiences, and current assessments of the threats to the Soviet Union have driven force development. These factors have led them to structure and train forces to fight against Western nations in the European environment. This is much different than the situation in Afghanistan. The initial approach used by the Soviets was different than the way nations in the West would attempt to conduct a counterinsurgency. Western nations believe in the premise of winning the hearts and minds of the people in order to separate them from the insurgents. The Soviets, on the other hand, have attempted to remove the support of the people by killing them or through the use of terror tactics. These were designed to encourage their non-involvement or emigration from the country. Their tactics have involved the massive use of helicopter gunships, chemical weapons, anti-personnel mines, contaminating water supplies, and leveling entire villages to name a few. The seven years spent in-country have taught them many valuable lessons. We have seen numerous changes in helicopter tactics as well as command and control of all airpower assets. All of these are meant to emphasize more flexible and responsive operations. They have tested a great variety of weapons and tactics. This has given them current combat experience and a wealth of identified weaknesses to improve upon. These lessons should not be overlooked by the Western nations They can learn not only how the major adversary conducts operations but what weapons may be used. Further, all nations should take note of lessons to be learned in the area of counterinsurgent operations. Conflict in the low-intensity range is predominant in our world today, and there are still no universal rules of how to defeat an insurgent force.

IV. Conclusions: The opportunity to view the Soviets in action is rare. There are many valuable lessons to be learned to help us plan for operations against them, or for fighting in Soviet supported low-intensity conflicts.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

In the decade of the 1980s low-intensity conflict has become an area of analysis of increasing importance. This is not only because it is the predominant form of warfare in the world today, but there is a painful awareness of our inability to effectively fight this style of warfare. One of the primary reasons is the two major powers have focused in the past on nuclear war, and now on major conventional operations against each other. This has led each nation to procure weapons, train forces and structure their organizations with these conflicts in mind. Neither we nor the Soviets know the "correct" way to use our assets in "small wars". This paper will focus on how the Soviets are using one aspect of their military arsenal, airpower, in an attempt to crush the Mujahiddin insurgency in Afghanistan. By using this case study we can view how our major adversary employs their airpower and can learn from their mistakes and successes in this low-intensity campaign.

In order to effectively understand any military operation one must gain some appreciation of the country involved. This includes the geographical, demographical as well as predominant cultural characteristics. These factors give the analyst some background into the unique elements that form and shape the conflict. From this beginning a discussion of some of the general uses of airpower assets in a counterinsurgency campaign is included. With some knowledge of the country and its people, and how airpower could be used, the Soviet approach will then be examined. The next chapter looks at how they view the use of airpower because it is different than the United States'. These differences can be traced to their doctrine and current experience. Keeping this in mind their approach to counterinsurgency is examined. The paper then reviews which Soviet airpower assets are being used and how they have been employed in Afghanistan. The final section proposes some of the major lessons Western observers should glean from Soviet air involvement in this conflict.

Chapter Two

GEOGRAPHY OF AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is located in Southwest Asia, with Pakistan to the south and east, Iran on the west, the Soviet Union to the north, and in the northeast there is a short border with the People's Republic of China. In land area it is about the size of Texas. The country can be divided into three distinct topographical regions. The north is a low fertile area that stretches from the Soviet Union to the Hindu Kush (the Killer of Hindus (16:4)). This mountain range with peaks rising almost to 24,000 feet dominates the central portion and effectively forms a barrier between north and south Afghanistan. The south is a desert that extends to the Arabian Sea. The climate is characteristically hot and dry in the summer and cold in the winter.

The country is economically underdeveloped. More than 90 percent of the populace relies on subsistence agriculture and herding for their livelihood. This, in a nation with only 12 percent of its land being arable. There is an extremely low level of literacy, and only about 10 percent of the people are found in the cities. Prior to the Soviet invasion they were able to export limited quantities of natural gas, fruits, nuts, and lamb pelts (1:1-2).

The map on page 4 shows there are very few cities and a very limited transportation infrastructure. This, combined with the harsh mountainous terrain, makes travel and communication throughout the country difficult. There are no rivers in the interior of the country for travel or shipping of goods.

Afghanistan, as many other countries ruled by colonial powers, was formed and boundaries were drawn by the colonial ruler's mandates. Borders between nations were established with little or no regard to cultural or ethnic divisions. The borders of today's Afghanistan bind together a variety of people who in most cases do not speak the same language and certainly don't share the same cultural heritage. We find there are ten major ethnic groups that in some cases spill over into neighboring countries (3:5). Very few of these groups, or tribal units, can live in close proximity

without fighting; traditions of which can be found dating back centuries. Besides the intertribal warfare which is part of rural life, there is a very long heritage of foreign invasion. What has evolved is a warrior spirit among the men of each tribal unit that has been taught and nurtured for many generations. For most of the people one finds their identity is only with the tribe or maybe village. There is little or no national identity. The only thing common to the Afghan people is their religion, and it is an extremely important part of their lives.

In understanding the Afghan's fight against the Soviets one must gain an appreciation for the fanatical orientation Islam gives them. Each freedom fighter is willing to fight the Soviets to the death. It is true they are fighting invaders but the real reasons lie in their faith. The religious leaders have declared a jihad, which is "a holy war of true believers against infidels" (3:159). This means it is a great religious honor to kill a Russian in battle, and if they die in battle they become a martyr. Further, Islamic law requires that if a relative is killed their death must be avenged (3:159). So the Soviets are fighting a foe with fanatical convictions, and each time one is killed there are many others who will swear to avenge that death.

When the harsh, inaccessible terrain, is combined with the rural-based population of tribal orientation and religious fanaticism, the Soviets are faced with a formidable challenge. The geographic and demographic characteristics require specialized tactics and equipment to optimize any attempt to control the people of Afghanistan. In terms of airpower past operations have shown not just any kind of aircraft can be effective in this type of environment. Specialized assets have proven to be the most effective.


KAZAKH S S R
KIRGHIZ S S R
UZBEK S S R
SOVIET UNION
CHINA
TURKMEN S S R
IRAN
PAKISTAN
INDIA
HERAT
FARYAB
GHAZNI
ZABOL
KANDAHAR
BALUCHISTAN
NORTHWEST FRONTIER
PUNJAB
Afghanistan
International boundary
Internal administrative boundary
National capital
Internal administrative capital
Railroad
Road
0 50 100 150 200 Kilometers
0 50 100 150 200 Miles

Chapter Three

AIRPOWER FOR LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

In any counterinsurgency effort there are two major challenges for airpower assets (2:127). The first is to locate the enemy. Guerrilla forces are normally small, fast moving forces whose main chance of survival lies in not being seen by the numerically superior and better armed counterinsurgents. The second challenge is to destroy the target. Air assets combine the necessary characteristics of responsiveness, speed, range and flexibility to meet these challenges. But not just any aircraft can do these effectively. For example, high speed, high altitude reconnaissance aircraft, are of little use in locating guerrillas travelling in small groups over rough terrain. What is needed is something that can operate at altitudes below 1500 feet and at speeds below 125 knots (2:127). This allows visual surveillance by humans who can immediately request destruction assets prior to the target dispersing and/or disappearing. Many of the fighter aircraft developed for conventional warfare can strike these targets, but in most cases are useless for many of the roles of airpower in small wars. Aircraft should be able to provide perimeter defense, armed surveillance and reconnaissance, convoy escort and forward air control (2:128). The best aircraft for these missions, as we found in Vietnam, seems to be the helicopter. They are uniquely suited for these roles, as well as rapid lift of forces, resupply in inaccessible areas and medical evacuation. Their use must be carefully balanced with the threat, as they are vulnerable to small arms fire and precision guided munitions (PGM). In today's world PGMs are available to almost anyone, considering their relatively low cost.

High performance aircraft can play a limited role for certain strike missions. They can be used for interdiction if the guerrillas are relying on an outside supply of arms and the cache of arms can be hit in some central area. Our experience in Vietnam showed it is almost impossible to stop the flow of supplies once they are dispersed in the logistical infrastructure. They can also be used for area bombing if those types of targets present themselves, such as large groupings of enemy forces.

The Soviets have learned these general guidelines for the use of airpower assets in a counterinsurgency. But their force structure and tactics are also driven by doctrinal tenets that are different than the United States'.

Chapter Four

SOVIET MILITARY AND THEIR VIEW OF AIRPOWER

Soviet military doctrine is essentially the Communist Party's guidance given to the military for its future in terms of political objectives. According to Marshal Grechko, a former Soviet Minister of Defense, military doctrine should answer the following questions:

1. What enemy will have to be faced in a possible war?
2. What is the nature of the war in which the state and its armed forces will have to take part; what goals and missions might they be faced with in this war?
3. What armed forces are needed to execute the assigned missions, and in what direction must military development be carried out?
4. How are preparations for war to be implemented?
5. What methods must be used to wage war? (14:6)

The answers to these questions have provided the primary focus for Soviet military force development.

The first question is politically oriented. From the Soviet's viewpoint the enemy is of course the imperialist forces, with the United States being the main enemy. This has been true since WWII and continues to the present.

The "nature of war" has been described as "a decisive armed conflict between two opposing social systems" (7:53). This implies a fight for a way of life that can end at no less than complete victory or defeat. The "goals and missions" will necessarily be survival oriented in terms of the Socialist system.

The last three questions provide guidance to the specific force mix and structure of the Soviet military.

The roots of Soviet doctrine can be found in history, which shows they have been a land-oriented military power.

The Great Patriotic War (WWII) reaffirmed the supremacy and absolute necessity of ground armies in the resolution of a military conflict. The Soviet Union, even with their emphasis in the 1960s and 1970s on the Strategic Rocket Forces, has always accorded a position of prominence to their ground forces. The technological advances in air power have not really changed that perception over the years. In 1948 the Chief of Staff of the Army Air Force said "the training of air force units is planned so that they can first of all provide direct assistance to the ground forces in all types of operations. The development of all branches of the Soviet Air Forces is carried out in accordance with this fundamental principle" (6:325). So where we see ground and air forces as interdependent, and equal, they view their air force as an auxiliary of the army.

They have developed air forces to support and defend the Soviet Army against a nuclear or conventional attack, with primary focus on operations in the European theater against the United States. Organizationally, developments have paralleled this line of thought in terms of very centralized, directed control of air assets by ground force commanders. Accordingly, their pilots have been viewed as inflexible, and incapable of initiative.

This was the military force inserted into Afghanistan in December, 1979. Their forces were "designed and trained for World War III on the plains of Europe" (9:161). They were in no way prepared for a counterinsurgency effort in mountainous terrain. Consequently, we have witnessed the evolution of a Soviet approach to this form of warfare.

Chapter Five

SOVIET'S APPROACH TO COUNTERINSURGENCY

An insurgent effort involving guerrilla forces, partisans, or freedom fighters is not a new phenomenom. Instances can be found as far back as Caesar fighting against irregulars in Gaul and Germany, almost 2000 years ago. The major problem in all those years has been finding an effective way to counter its success. Today one finds different approaches for a counterinsurgent effort that can roughly be divided by viewing it from a Western perspective or Soviet.

The Western approach to defeating an insurgent effort basically comes down to "obtaining the support of the population by any means, ... and by waging a hard war against the enemy" (13:428). This is done by controlling the villages and then extending one's influence throughout the countryside in an attempt to prevent infiltration by the guerrillas. The resistance needs the populace for support, food and supplies. The populace must be shown that the incumbent government can provide for their security and well-being. It is essential to control food supplies in order to distribute them to the villagers and deny them to the insurgents. By protecting and feeding the populace a major source of the guerrilla's ideological appeal has been removed. Once this has been accomplished, more and more manhunts can be organized to track down and capture or kill the insurgent forces.

The Soviets also realize the insurgents must have the populace on their side for supplies; however, they take a different approach. If the populace and/or all the supplies can be removed you have defeated the revolutionary effort. This appears to be the general approach the Soviets are using in Afghanistan. There has been little or no immediate effort to win over the population.

Tactics have been designed to terrorize the population and to remove all means of support for the rebels. The main thrust is not to militarily destroy all of the elusive Mujahiddin, even though there have been a limited number of major operations (15:2).

Their approach can be divided into military, political and economic instruments of power. Militarily the Soviets have attempted to keep the force levels and losses as low as possible by substituting their massive firepower assets for manpower. They have used their forces to control the major urban areas, transportation networks, and supply lines (15:2), but have made no effort to occupy other areas. Instead, by using scorched earth tactics, contaminating water supplies, killing livestock, and bombing villages into rubble there is no need for them to control the towns (3:161). They have effectively removed the sources of support for the rebels without tying up large numbers of their troops. They have also employed terror tactics in an effort to demoralize the populace and the resistance. This is done with antipersonnel mines sometimes in the form of pens, toys, watches or books causing a large number of personnel casualties, as well as livestock (1:146). A military approach such as this creates a large number of civilian casualties as there is little effort to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants. Reports received from French doctors who operate small clinics throughout the country, indicate approximately 80 percent of Soviet caused casualties are civilian (15:2). Soviet tactics have also resulted in a large number of people fleeing the country, with some estimates going as high as 20 percent of the preinvasion population being refugees (3:162). According to Mao, the strength of a guerrilla movement lies in the "fish taking to the water". The Soviets are effectively removing the water (13:427).

Other instruments of power are also being used in the Soviet fight against the Mujahiddin. The Soviet Union is pursuing a long term approach by bringing large numbers of Afghan youths to their country for education and indoctrination. Approximately 20,000 students will serve as a politically reliable cadre to properly administer the Socialist state after the resistance has died (1:146). Additionally, efforts are being made to exacerbate the intertribal conflicts that are a constant aspect of Afghan existence. This has been done by bribing selected tribal leaders, and religious appeals from pro-Soviet Moslems (4:121). In the international arena the U.S.S.R. has been pressuring Pakistan to refrain from supporting the resistance and providing sanctuary.

Economic programs have focused on curtailing food production. The tactics of destroying crops has already been mentioned. Another program has the Soviets buying surplus food from peasants at highly inflated prices. In addition, selected peasants are given seed and fertilizer at very low prices to produce food in government controlled

areas (15:3). These policies combine to make it very difficult for the resistance to procure food and encourages migration to areas controlled by the government or out of the country.

In Afghanistan the Soviets appear to be using political, military, and economic tools in an effort to remove the support base of the resistance. The most successful military tool has been the aircraft. The next chapter discusses the types of aircraft and how they are being employed.

Chapter Six

SOVIET COUNTERINSURGENT AIRPOWER

In December 1979 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. This initial invasion was not directed against the Mujahiddin who had been waging an insurgent effort for more than a year. Instead, the Soviets needed to intervene militarily to bolster the failing socialist regime under Amin. Massive conventional forces were initially used to discourage any Afghan military resistance to the "socialist assistance" being given to the lawful government (11:62).

The airpower assets initially used were divided between airlift and fighter aircraft. Transport planes were used to carry airborne divisions that captured strategic points in the capital, Kabul. These forces secured the airport, the radio station and attacked the palace. Fighter aircraft were used to cover the advance of motorized rifle divisions from the Soviet Union (10:4). By the end of January, 1980 a new president was installed, and the capital and other major population centers and major roads were under Soviet control. Their attention would now be directed toward the freedom fighters.

The initial complement of troops used in Afghanistan were in no way prepared for counterinsurgent warfare. They had been trained to fight a technologically advanced Western force in a European environment. They were not ready to face a guerrilla force in extremely rough terrain.

Soviet air assets used in Afghanistan include numerous fighters, Su-25 Frogfoots, bombers, and a large number of helicopters (1:144).

As discussed previously, high speed aircraft are of minimal value against guerrilla forces. The Soviets are mainly using these assets in an air interdiction role, in an attempt to cut off routes of supply, and attack guerrilla assembly areas. In addition, they are employing them to napalm villages and crops, drop mines, and cluster bombs on area targets (17:25).

The Su-25 Frogfoot, much like our A-10, was first seen

in Afghanistan in November 1981. This aircraft has been used extensively in the close air support role. Its maneuverability, accuracy and lethality make it an effective weapon against the Mujahiddin (17:19). It has a 30-mm gun, can carry bombs, precision guided munitions and rockets (29:2). These characteristics and capabilities enable it to strike point targets in extremely harsh terrain and in close proximity to friendly ground forces. The evolution of tactics and doctrinal developments have already been noticed in the employment of the Frogfoot. Improved accuracy at greater ranges is evident since its introduction, and it is obvious its aiming systems and pilot experience have improved (17:23).

Transport aircraft are still being used to ferry troops. In addition, they are conducting reconnaissance, serving as airborne command posts, and providing battlefield illumination for combat in night operations (17:26).

The helicopter is undoubtedly the most important air asset in the fight against the insurgents. Lt. Col. Romanov cites the following roles of helicopters in Afghanistan in Krasnaya Zrezda (29 April 1980):

lift motorized riflemen to 'high and inaccessible mountains'
provide direct fire support with rockets
heli-borne assault
aerial mine laying
delivery of BMP
lift mountain guns and mortars
provide forward air control services
conduct reconnaissance
evacuate the wounded
resupply (17:35)

Additional missions have involved airborne command and control, troop transport, fire support, patrol of lines of communication, air assault, delivery of chemical weapons, electronic warfare and convoy escort (1:147,149; 5:74; 12:683; 17:35; 11:64).

The initial tactics employed by the helicopters showed little or no appreciation for the anti-air capabilities of the Mujahiddin, as modest as they are. In gunship attacks they would hover at low altitude and deliver the machine gun and/or other munitions barrage. After losing quite a few aircraft they changed to a nap-of-the-earth profile. Flying in pairs for support, they would fly very low level popping-up to deliver their attack and quickly egress. But the crews were not trained in these tactics nor were the

airframes designed to take these kinds of structural stresses. As a result, numerous crews were lost to pilot error and many aircraft have excessive down time for maintenance (12:683). This is but one example of the evolving nature of tactics development the Soviets are having the opportunity to accomplish.

Another major learning experience has involved effective use of their airpower assets. There are many instances of ineffective integration of air and ground assets where army forces need, or request, air support but either do not receive it or it arrives too late. In an effort to solve this problem, helicopter squadrons have been assigned to army divisional commanders. But there are still episodes that exhibit an inflexible approach, or uneducated approach in the use of those assets. In counterinsurgencies it is absolutely essential to have enough decentralization of command to be able to respond to the very fluid nature of guerrilla contacts. This is still a major drawback of Soviet operations, in there is a tendency by lower level commanders to await instructions from higher command and/or apply rigid procedures that are ineffective (12:682-683).

Afghanistan gives the Soviets an excellent opportunity to test new weapons. The Su-25 Frogfoot has been in-country now for about five years. There have been chemicals delivered by helicopters and fixed wing aircraft giving their forces invaluable data and training (12:691). In addition, we have seen evidence of new scatterable mines, fuel-air explosives, and pressure-sensitive mines (1:147). These are but a few of the many innovations they have tested and there will undoubtedly be more in the future.

Combat experience is another benefit of the conflict. For many years the Soviets recognized how valuable the U.S. combat experience from Vietnam was to us. They now have that edge, and are utilizing personnel rotational policies that expose a large number of pilots to the environment. This may be the most valuable thing they are taking from Afghanistan.

Overall the Soviets find themselves in an environment to test new concepts, and weapons, develop tactics and doctrine, and gain combat experience. In many instances we too can learn from their experience. By analyzing their successes and failures we can examine our own assets and training methods.

Chapter Seven

LESSONS FOR WESTERN OBSERVERS

The manner in which military force was initially employed in Afghanistan was almost a carbon copy of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslavakia in 1968. Apparently they feel it is a tried and true formula for restoring order at the national level in the shortest amount of time. The invasion of Afghanistan further strengthened that view. Soviet troops, emphasizing the principles of war of surprise, mass, offensive and objective, quickly removed Amin from power and replaced him with Karmal. The government was immediately bolstered by the presence of a large number of Soviet troops who were there to help restore order. In terms of these immediate objectives they were very successful. There should be no reason for the Soviet leadership to assume that a different method of employing troops will work any better the next time they are faced with a similar situation.

After the initial invasion the Soviets confronted the Mujahiddin insurgency. In this area there are a number of lessons that should be recognized. The Soviet's heavy use of helicopters, and gunships in particular, for firepower and mobile support should be identified as precursors of future operations. If the United States is to support any group that may fight the Soviets, they will require massive supplies of anti-aircraft arms. If the U.S. is ever directly involved against the U.S.S.R. they must be aware that operations in Afghanistan have shown Soviet military leaders the great value of helicopters in close air support roles. Does the U.S. military currently have the equipment, doctrine, tactics, and training to adequately meet that threat?

Soviet use of chemical agents in this environment against an extremely inferior enemy should be a warning to any who have doubts that they would use them in future conflicts. This is an accepted part of their weaponry they have trained with, developed tactics for and have now operationally used.

The conflict has pointed out a number of weaknesses

inherent within their forces. These are being recognized at the highest levels and changes for the better have been occurring. Numerous articles on mountain operations, the importance of realistic training, mobile operations, helicopter support of ground forces, and decentralization of decision making and flexibility have been appearing in the Soviet military press (1:168). To Western observers these are clear signs of the amount of attention these areas are receiving, as well as some inkling of possible future directions of their forces. All articles published by military officers must be approved by high level government officials. The appearance of these articles in open sources would imply at least a "tacit approval" of the concepts and tactics contained within by leaders within the Party hierarchy (8:11).

The lessons they have learned in the area of fighter and bomber operations in a counterinsurgency reconfirm the United States' from Vietnam. They are of limited value against insurgent forces except for interdiction of supplies, at their in-country source, and if by chance you catch a large number of enemy in the open.

Soviet experiences and developments in Afghanistan merit our observation and analysis. From them we can see how our major enemy fights an insurgent force, tests its new weapons, and makes changes in tactics and organization. These lessons are not only valuable if we were to meet them, because some of their experiences will be translated to major conventional operations, but we can also learn what works and what does not when fighting a guerrilla force.

CONCLUSION

The case study method of analysis gives the reader an efficient mechanism to analyze a conflict. By using this approach, this paper has examined the characteristics unique to Afghanistan that have shaped the conflict both from the insurgent's perspective as well as the government's. The uses of airpower in a counterinsurgency were then discussed, emphasizing the different requirements of those assets in a low-intensity conflict. An analysis of the Soviet approach in Afghanistan followed, with the emphasis on doctrinal influences as well as tactics employed. Finally, and most importantly, lessons were derived that allow Western observers to evaluate their own forces in light of Soviet experiences with counterinsurgent operations.

The United States is presently involved in supporting both an insurgency and a counterinsurgency. If our commitment were to escalate, airpower could play an important part of the conflict resolution. We must be prepared for that contingency.

The Soviet involvement in Afghanistan gives us an opportunity to analyze how a major military power approaches such a conflict. Their successes and failures should not be ignored as they provide valuable lessons for the future.

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