

# Statement on the Sixth Anniversary of the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

## December 27, 1985

Today, December 27, marks the sixth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Since December 27, 1979, when a massive Soviet force crossed the Afghan frontier to support a faltering Marxist regime, the Afghan resistance has grown increasingly effective. The Soviet-supported regime in Kabul has failed to gain even a modicum of popular support or international acceptance. The Soviets and their Afghan surrogates have resorted to barbaric methods of waging war in their effort to crush this war of national liberation. Indiscriminate air and artillery bombardments against civilian areas, savage reprisals against noncombatants suspected of supporting the resistance, and the calculated destruction of crops and irrigation systems have ravaged the Afghan countryside. Thousands of young Afghans are being shipped to the Soviet Union for reeducation in summer camps, universities, and specialized institutions.

The Afghan people, however, are unswerving in their determination to resist the invader. The resistance fighters are more numerous, better armed, and more effective than ever before. Unable to trust Kabul's forces to counter the enhanced resistance, the Soviets have begun using their own troops in a more active combat role. But the effort has availed them little. Last summer, when fighting was at its peak, resistance forces repeatedly attacked Soviet lines of communication, convoys, barracks and facilities, and mounted their largest, longest, and best coordinated offensive operation of the war. The resistance has also drawn together into a political alliance, which can present Afghanistan's cause to the world in unambiguous terms and coordinate all aspects of the liberation struggle.

Since 1980 the United States has strongly advocated a negotiated political settlement, the only reasonable alternative to the bleak prospect of an open-ended military struggle. Seven United Nations resolutions passed by growing and overwhelming margins since that year show that the United States is not alone in this view. These resolutions call for the withdrawal of foreign troops, the restoration of Afghanistan's independent and nonaligned status, self-determination, and the voluntary and safe return of the refugees. The United States reiterated its support for the U.N.-sponsored talks during the November summit meetings in Geneva. We also indicated that the continued Soviet occupation of Afghanistan remains an obstacle to overall improvement in our relationship. Although we welcome any suggestion that the Soviets are prepared to back U.N.-led peace efforts, we will await positive developments on the ground and concrete evidence of Soviet willingness to agree to a timetable for withdrawal of their troops.

The victims of this war also command American attention. The United States has played, and will continue to play, a major role in the humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering of the 2 to 3 million Afghan refugees now living in Pakistan. Since 1980 we have spent over \$430 million in aid. In the face of deteriorating conditions inside Afghanistan caused largely by the increasingly widespread Soviet reprisals against civilians suspected of opposing the regime, we have allocated, in the current 2-year timeframe, almost \$25 million in assistance to the brave people who remain inside Afghanistan.

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan 6 long and bloody years ago, few in the West knew much about that distant land and its proud people. That certainly has changed, as the Afghan people, in their determination to defend their liberty, have added new chapters to the long annal of human courage in the face of tyranny. Forged in a similar crucible two centuries ago, the United States stands squarely on the side of the people of Afghanistan and will continue its support of their historic struggle in the cause of liberty.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/122785a.htm>