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## **Night Stalkers and Mean Streets: Afghan Urban Guerrillas**

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In the fall of 1996, the authors traveled to Pakistan to interview Mujahideen guerrillas about their combat in the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989). Their book, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War* will soon be published. Part of their book deals with urban guerrillas. The following are some excerpts from their book:

Urban guerrilla combat is difficult for the urban guerrilla and the regular force. Throughout the war, the Soviets and Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) forces were never able to completely control the major cities of Kandahar and Herat. Finally, the Soviets bombed 75% of Herat and virtually the entire Kandahar suburb into rubble. That still failed to stop the urban guerrillas. The DRA and Soviets had more success in controlling the capital city of Kabul--but still were unable to stop the rocket attacks and guerrilla actions. Surviving urban guerrillas are harder to find to interview than guerrillas who fought in the country. Urban guerrillas are surrounded by potential informants and government spies. They must frequently move around unarmed and the government can usually react to their actions much faster than they can in the countryside. The urban guerrilla must be anonymous and ruthless to survive. For this reason, urban guerrilla groups were usually small and fought back with short-duration actions. Many urban guerrillas lived in the countryside or suburbs and only entered the cities for combat. The Soviets and DRA devoted a great deal of effort to finding and eliminating the urban guerrilla. Many innocent civilians were victims of this hunt. The authors are grateful to the urban guerrillas who provided these candid interviews.

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### **Kidnaping a Soviet Adviser** by Commander Shahabuddin<sup>(1)</sup>

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We were in contact with an Afghan driver from Paktia Province who drove for a civilian Soviet adviser. The adviser worked with the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) mining industry. We wanted to kidnap the adviser. The driver had trained for a short time in the USSR and so the adviser trusted him. The driver agreed to help us, but we did not trust the driver and asked him to prove his loyalty. He stated "I will bring my family to stay in a Mujahideen-

controlled area as proof of my trustworthiness". The driver came to our camp with his wife and family. I sent his family to my village of Shewaki to stay while we captured the adviser.

One day the driver informed us that the adviser's wife was coming from the Soviet Union to join him. The driver would take the adviser to the airport to meet his wife. We gave the driver a small hand-held radio and told him to contact us if there were any changes. We would contact him within twenty minutes of his call. The driver called us one morning. He reported that the adviser's wife was arriving that day and that no one would accompany the adviser to the airport but the driver. We dressed one of our Mujahideen in a DRA military officer's uniform and put him in a car and sent him to wait at the bridge over the Kabul River at the micro rayon in East Kabul. He got out of the car and waited for the Soviet adviser's car. Soon, the Soviet adviser's car arrived. The driver pointed at our Mujahideen and told the adviser "That's my brother. He's going to the airport. Can we give him a ride?" The adviser agreed and they stopped to pick up "the officer". He got into the back seat behind the adviser and pulled out a pistol. He held the pistol to the adviser's back and ordered the driver to drive to Shewaki. Another car, carrying eight of our Mujahideen armed with pistols with silencers, followed the adviser's car. We had no trouble with the checkpoints since the guards saw the DRA officer's uniform, saluted and waived the car and its "security tail" right through.

We took the adviser to Shewaki and burned his car. The government launched a major search effort, so we moved the adviser again to the Abdara Valley. Government helicopters strafed Shewaki after we left and landed search detachments trying to find the adviser. We kept the adviser in the Abdara Valley for two days. Then we moved him to Tezin, near Jalalabad, for a few more days. Finally, we took him across the border to Peshawar, Pakistan, where we turned him over to one of the factions. I do not know what happened to him.

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### **Four Urban Bomb Attacks**

by Haji Mohammad Yakub<sup>(2)</sup>

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Bombing is a necessary part of being an urban guerrilla. The object is to create fear and take out selected individuals. We got our explosives from Pakistan. Commander Azizuddin and Commander Meskimyar were our contacts in Paghman District who forwarded the explosives and detonators to us. They used elderly people as our go-betweens to carry messages and explosives to us.

[1] In April 1980, we carried out an attack on the Radio Afghanistan building. This housed the central offices for Afghanistan radio and television broadcasting. Soviet advisers worked at the building where they oversaw radio and television broadcasting and edited and cleared the news before broadcast. The Soviets were our targets. We received a bomb from our contacts and gave it to a woman who worked in the radio station. She smuggled it into the station and armed it. The bomb went off at 1000 hours on a workday. The explosion killed two Afghan Party activists and two Soviets. It also wounded a DRA soldier. For some time after the blast, Afghanistan Radio and TV stopped broadcasting. After this, the security procedures for the building were greatly

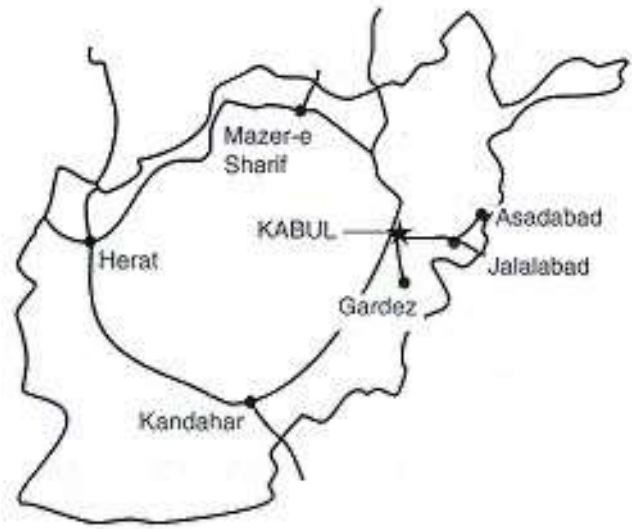
increased and everyone was carefully searched. Our lady contact later managed to get herself transferred to the payroll office of Kabul University.

[2 ] The communist regime converted Kabul University into a center for communist indoctrination. We decided to target the primary Party Organization at Kabul University in January 1981. Bombing seemed to be our best option. By this time, our lady contact at Radio Afghanistan was working in the payroll office at Kabul University. We gave her two bombs. She planted one in the University Administration building and set the timer for 1100. She set the second in the primary Party Organization building and set that timer for 1145. The theory was that, after the first bomb went off, people would mill around the site and then the key party activists would gather in the primary Party Organization building to discuss the bombing. The second bomb would attack this concentration. Our plan worked as we thought it would. Following the blast in the administration building, the party secretaries of all the various communist organizations gathered in the primary Party Organization building. The blast killed a Soviet adviser and several party secretaries. The bombs killed a total of ten and wounded an unknown number.

[3] On 6 May 1983, we bombed the Ministry of Interior building in Kabul. We had planted 27 kilograms of explosive in a room on the second floor of the building close to the office of the Minister. The bombs were hidden in four large flower pots that had been there for some time. We had a contact who was a gardener for the Ministry of the Interior. He agreed to smuggle in the explosives, plant the bombs and set them for detonation. We trained him how to do the job. He mixed the explosives with limestone and smuggled them in plastic bags over a period of time. We planned to detonate the bombs during the daytime for maximum casualties. However, our faction headquarters in Peshawar overruled us and told us to set the bombs off at night. Our faction wanted to keep Minister of the Interior Gulab Zoy alive since he was a leading member of the Khalq faction and his survival would insure that the friction between the Khalq and Parchim communist party factions continued.

The gardener set all the time pencils for 2300 hours when he went home at 1600 hours. There was no sense setting different times since the building would virtually be deserted. The time bombs went off on time and killed four duty officers and damaged the Minister's office. If we had set off the bombs during the day, we would have killed Gulab Zoy, Ghazi (his body guard), Sheruddin (his aide-de-camp) and perhaps a hundred others. The DRA closed the roads leading to the site for 24 hours and conducted an investigation. However, they thought that the blast was connected to some internal quarrel within the communist leadership and never suspected our gardener.

[4] The Soviets lived in the eastern Micro rayon region of Kabul. We decided to attack the Soviets right where they were living. There was a bus stop in the area where the Soviets would wait for their buses to work. We checked the timing of the buses. There was a daily 0745 morning bus that drew the most Soviets. We needed to establish a pattern so that we could leave a bomb without drawing attention. We got a push cart and loaded it with the best fruits and vegetables that we could get. The produce came from Parwan Province. We charged reasonable prices. The Soviets and local people got used to seeing us there and buying from us. We kept this up for several days. At night, we would work on the pushcart. We put in a false bottom in the cart so that we could put our bombs in the bottom of the cart and they would be undetected even if the cart were inspected. We attacked on the 2nd of October 1983. We loaded five bombs into the bottom of the cart. We inserted time pencil fuses in the bombs and set them for 0743. Then we put in the false bottom and loaded the cart with produce. Six Mujahideen carried out the attack. None of us carried weapons. We brought the cart to the bus stop as usual. Thirteen Soviets crowded around it to see what was on sale. We slipped away from the cart and mixed with the local people. The bombs went off at 0743 just before the bus arrived. The blast killed 13, wounded 12 and damaged a nearby store. The DRA searched the crowd but made no arrests from our group.



Map 1. Afghanistan

**Author's Commentary:** Many people find such bombing attacks morally reprehensible, yet have no qualms when much larger bombs are dropped from aircraft. Neither type of bombing attack is surgical and both types kill innocent bystanders. The only real difference is in the size of the bomb and the means of delivery. The Mujahideen lacked an air force but retained a limited bombing option. The Soviets had an air force and conducted large-scale bombing attacks throughout the war.

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**Incident at Qala-e Jabar**  
by Mohammad Humayun Shahin<sup>(3)</sup>

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During Ramadan (June) of 1981, five Mujahideen met with a Soviet soldier in Qala-e Jabar to buy some Kalashnikov magazines from him. Qala-e Jabar is some three kilometers south of the Darulaman Soviet military base. Our group leader was Alozai, who was known as Sher Khan. Hukum Khan, two others and I made up the group. We went to Qala-e Jabar and met with the Soviet soldier. He said that his name was Hasan and he showed us his merchandise. We agreed to buy the magazines and pulled out a wad of 50 Afghani notes to pay him with. The Soviet soldier was not familiar with the 50 Afghani note. He demanded that we pay in 100s. Since we

could not speak Russian, Sher Khan tried to show him that two 50 Afghani notes equaled one 100 Afghani note. He even wrote it on a scrap of paper. The Soviet, however, apparently did not understand and kept demanding 100 Afghani notes. We did not have any 100 Afghani notes.

As we tried to communicate, the Soviet got louder and louder. We were fairly close to the Soviet camp and were beginning to worry that this might be a trap and that he was signaling others. Hukum Khan grabbed the Soviet in a headlock and wrestled him to the ground while Commander Sher Khan took out his knife and stabbed the Soviet to death. Then we grabbed the rifle magazines, plus the Soviet's AK-74 assault rifle and left the area.

**Authors' Commentary:** There was a regular commerce between the Soviet soldiers and the Afghan populace. Soviet conscripts would sell fuel, ammunition, weapons, batteries and military equipment for hashish, food and Afghan money. They would use the money in the bazaars of Kabul to buy western stereos, music tapes, cigarettes and clothing. Some goods were available in the Soviet PX [*voyentorg*], but the conscript soldier had little access or cash so they tried to shop locally for items they wanted.

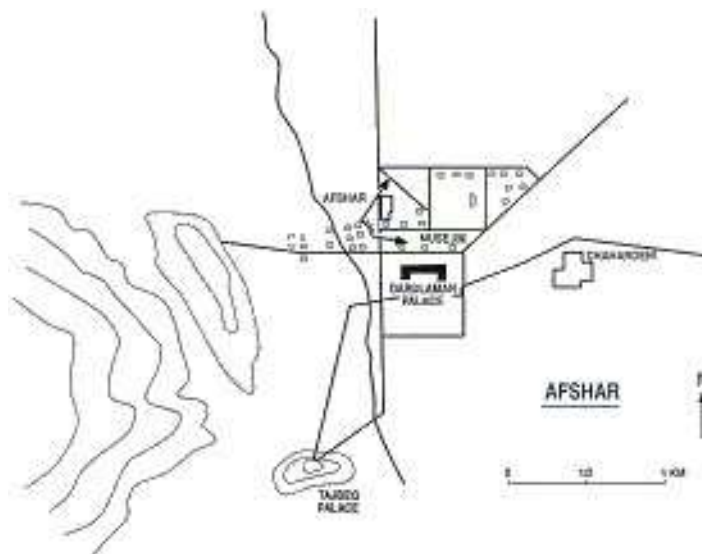
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**Afshar Ambush**  
by Commander Asil Khan<sup>(4)</sup>

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On 28 May 1982, I led a group of four Mujahideen in an ambush at the very gates of the Soviet garrison in Kabul. At that time, elements of the Soviet 103rd Airborne Division and some other units were based in Darulaman about 10 kilometers southwest of downtown Kabul. The headquarters of the Soviet 40th Army was also located there in the Tajbeg Palace.

I selected the ambush site after we spent several days in reconnaissance and surveillance of the Soviet traffic around Darulaman. During the reconnaissance, we detected a pattern in Soviet vehicular movement along the road from Kabul to the Soviet headquarters in the Tajbeg palace. Just north of the Soviet Darulaman base is the small village of Afshar. It has a typical suburban bazaar with several grocery and fresh fruit stores and stalls. Soviet soldiers frequented this bazaar and would stop their vehicles there to buy cigarettes, food and imported vodka. Afshar looked like a good ambush site. Soviet soldiers felt secure there, there was room enough to set up an ambush and site entrance and exit were fairly easy. The path to and from the ambush was mostly concealed and we could easily reach Mujahideen bases and safe houses in the Chardehi District using this path.



**Map 2. Afshar Ambush**

We spent the day of the ambush in Qala-e Bakhtiar--a village six kilometers to the west of the ambush site. We had four AK-47s and a non-Soviet manufactured light anti-tank grenade launcher. In the early evening, we moved out toward Afshar. It was the Muslim month of Ramadan when Muslims fast during the entire day. Few people were out at sunset since this is the time to break the daily fast. Since our ambush site was in the immediate vicinity of the Soviet base, I decided to conduct a very quick attack on a single Soviet vehicle and to take prisoners if possible.

We moved through a narrow street of Afshar which opened onto the main road north of the Darulaman palace. Around 1930 hours, as my leading riflemen reached the street intersection, a Soviet GAZ-66 truck approached from the east on its way to the military camp. The truck had five passengers--a driver, a soldier in the right front seat and three soldiers in the back. One of the soldiers had a back-packed radio. I told my anti-tank gunner to fire when the vehicle was in the kill zone. He fired, but he narrowly missed the truck. The truck came to a sudden halt and its occupants jumped out of the vehicle, took up positions and started firing at random.

During the brief fire fight, we killed one Soviet soldier. Two soldiers ran away to the southwest toward their camp. One soldier crawled under the truck near the rear tires. The radio-man rushed into an open grocery store and hid there. One of my Mujahideen was close to the shop behind a concrete electric pylon. I told him to follow the Soviet radio-man into the front of the shop while I went into the shop's back door and introduced myself as a "friend". The Soviet soldier was flustered at first, but when he saw the foreign light anti-tank weapon in the hands of my Mujahideen, he uttered "dushman" [enemy]. He kept quiet as we bound his hands and led him out back. I recalled my team and we quickly left the area. The whole action lasted only a few minutes.

Fearing enemy retaliation, we moved out swiftly in the dark, heading to Qala-e Bakhtiar. From there, we went on to Qala-e Bahadur Khan, Qala-e Jabar Khan and Qala-e Qazi until we reached our Front's base at Morghgiran around 2200 hours. We kept our prisoner there for three days and then transferred him to our faction headquarters in Peshawar, Pakistan.

**Authors' Commentary:** Detailed reconnaissance and knowledge of the enemy's movement and security arrangements contributed to a workable ambush right in the heart of the Soviet garrison area. The Soviets had not posted a vulnerable point adjacent to their garrison--either through overconfidence or negligence on the part of lower-level commanders.

Selection of a small group of fighters with an effective mix of weapons, and good selection of the ambush site played a significant role in the action. However, using a non-standard anti-tank weapon probably caused the gunner to miss a large target at close range. One wonders if the gunner had any training or practice with the weapon before he used it. An RPG-7 and an experienced gunner were needed.

One wonders why the Soviets stopped their truck in the middle of a kill zone once the Mujahideen rocket missed them. Since the Mujahideen rocket missed the vehicle, there was no need for the truck to stop and the soldiers could have escaped through the small-arms fire before the anti-tank gunner had a chance to reload. The Soviets failed to react effectively. Stopping in the kill zone under small-arms fire was a risky and unwise move that cost the Soviets the life of one soldier while another one was captured.

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### **Attack on the Ministry of Defense** by Mohammad Humayun Shahin

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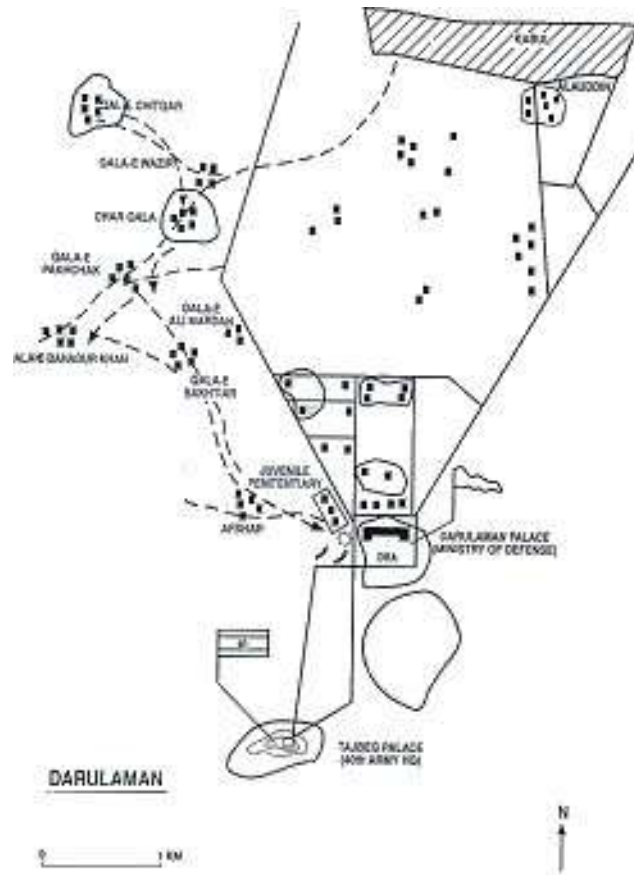
In November 1982, some 60 Mujahideen from *Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin* and Mohseni's *Harakat-e Islami* launched a night attack on the DRA Ministry of Defense located in the Darulaman Palace. The security in the area was very tight and the area between the Darulaman Palace and the Tajbeg Palace (headquarters of the Soviet 40th Army) was heavily patrolled. We decided to limit the attack to a short-range RPG attack. The Hezb group were armed with AK-47 Kalashnikovs, while the Mohseni group had British Sten guns and other weapons.<sup>(5)</sup> The Mohseni had the RPG-7 we used in the attack. Both sides provided ammunition for the RPG.

We assembled in the staging area at Char Qala in the late afternoon. Char Qala is about three kilometers north of the target. From there, we moved south in groups to the intermediate villages of Qala-e Pakhchak and Qala-e Bahadur Khan and Qala-e Bakhtiar. Our attack position was a water mill outside the Juvenile Penitentiary close to the Darulaman Palace. As we moved, we dropped off security elements. Most of the men in the group were assigned to provide security during movement to and from the target area. Security elements were positioned at key locations, which facilitated our infiltration and withdrawal. Once our forward security elements secured the firing area, the RPG-7 gunner Saadat (from the Mohseni faction) took his position. He was about 250 meters from the target. He fired two rockets at the building. The enemy response was immediate. Guards from around the palace filled the night with heavy small-arms fire. We did not return their fire. Instead, we immediately began retracing our steps and pulled out along the route held by our security detail. We then scattered into hiding places and safe houses in the villages of Chardehi. Some years later, a prison inmate who was on the DRA side during the night attack told a Mujahideen contact that about 20 people were killed or injured in our attack.



**Authors' Commentary:** The Mujahideen urban warfare tactics were low-level and fairly unsophisticated. Their actions were usually limited to a single strike followed by an immediate withdrawal to avoid decisive engagement with a better-armed and supported regular force. Survival dictated the tactics, but their impact was political and psychological rather than military. The work and risk that the urban guerrillas accepted was great and the results were often minimal or not immediately evident.

Mujahideen success in the urban areas was due primarily to the support of the population and the lack of DRA/Soviet control outside the areas that they physically controlled. The cities were under night-time curfew, but the patrols enforcing the curfew could hardly move safely off the main city roads. The Mujahideen had great freedom of action outside the main thoroughfares and in the suburbs. However, they could not fully exploit this advantage due to insufficient training, poor organizational structure, a lack of modern weapons and equipment, an ineffective command and control system and a lack of tactical cohesiveness among the various Mujahideen combatant groups. Lack of communications equipment, particularly in the early days of the war, severely hampered the Mujahideen.



**Map 3. Attack on the Ministry of Defense**

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### **Raid on Balahessar Fortress** by Commander Shahabuddin

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A Soviet regiment was garrisoned in the Balahessar Fortress in Kabul. In September or October of 1983, we decided to raid a security outpost south of Balahessar. This outpost formed part of the security belt around the fortress. I had 62 Mujahideen in my group. My armaments included eight RPG-7s and two 82mm recoilless rifles. My base was some ten kilometers south of Kabul at Yakhdara. We planned the raid in our base at Yakhdara, moved in the late afternoon to the village of Shewaki and waited until dark. We moved out at dark. On the way, there were several regime outposts. I detailed a five-man security element against each one as we passed it. The main outpost was at Akhozi and others were at Bagh-e Afzal and Qalacha. The security elements mission was to secure our return trip so that we wouldn't be ambushed by the enemy.



We reached Balahessar fortress which is surrounded by several security posts. I retained a 15-man attack group and posted the rest of my command as security elements guarding the other outposts. I divided my attack group into a five-man support group and a ten-man assault group. We crept up to the outpost, climbed the wall, got up on the roof of the outpost and then attacked it. I led the assault group. We hit the sentry with a RPG and he vaporized. We blew open the doors with RPG rockets and opened fire on the soldiers in the courtyard. We killed twelve of the DRA and captured three of their wounded. The rest escaped through a secret covered passage into Balahessar fortress. I had two KIA. One was Zabat Halim. <sup>(6)</sup> We took our dead with us. We could not carry the wounded prisoners so we left them there. We captured 16 weapons--Kalashnikovs and machine guns, a mortar and a RPG. As we left, there was a commotion in Balahessar and tanks moved out of the fortress in our direction. One tank came close to us and we destroyed it with an RPG. The other tanks then quit coming toward us--they had lost their taste for a fight. We just wanted to get out of there, so we left for our assembly area. We had a designated assembly area and, as we approached it, we were challenged and responded with the password. Once I assembled my entire group, we left. My security elements guaranteed a safe return. This raid was on the tenth day of the first month of the Islamic Lunar calendar--the Day of Ashura. This day commemorates the anniversary of the massacre of the Prophet Mohammad's grandson Hussein and his 72 followers at Karbala in Iraq. It is a day of mourning, reflection and solemn thinking for Shia and others. On this Day of Ashura, we thought of our own dead who died defending truth and righteousness. They had died appropriately on the Day of Ashura.

**Authors' Commentary:** Many of the urban guerrilla commanders maintained their main operating base within the suburbs or outlying villages where it was easier to assemble and train a group of men without government observation. The guerrilla commanders maintained a net of informers and supporters who aided their entry and passage through the urban area. Still, guerrilla groups operating within an urban area had to secure their route of entry and withdrawal which took the bulk of their force.

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### **Raid on the Kabul Metropolitan Bus Transportation Authority**

by Commander Shabuddin

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The Kabul Metropolitan Bus Transportation Authority is located on the eastern side of the city and served as the central bus terminal for 130 buses. In October 1983, I assembled 120 Mujahideen for the raid at our base at Yakh dara. We had 16 RPG-7s, three mortars, three 82mm recoilless rifles and numerous small arms. I divided the force into three 20-man teams to attack the Bagrami textile company, the police station, and our main objective, the city bus transportation authority. Sixty men constituted the security element which would secure our route of advance and withdrawal. A primary consideration of the urban guerrilla is always covering his route of retreat. We moved our force from our base and spread out into the surrounding villages. To preserve mission security, only my subcommanders and I knew the plan. Once we were in position, the commanders would brief their men and tell them what to do. The first group went to the textile mill. The second group, reinforced with a 82mm recoilless rifle, a mortar and some RPG-7s, set out to attack the police station at Kart-e Naw. I commanded the main attack against the bus authority. As we moved, we posted security elements outside all

the security outposts in the area. I sent one group of Mujahideen to the Aqbal cinema to attack the security outpost located there so that they would not interfere with our raid. As our Mujahideen were getting ready to attack the outpost, a roving jeep patrol came by. They destroyed the jeep with a rocket. The soldiers in the security outpost saw the burning jeep and ran away. The Mujahideen captured three Kalashnikovs at this site.

I led my group to the large enclosure of the bus transportation authority. When we got there, I posted a few guards to prevent anyone from surprising us. Then we attacked the security detachment at the bus park. We killed eight, captured two and torched 127 buses in the enclosure. Only three buses escaped destruction. We also captured 13-14 Kalashnikovs and 155 bayonets! We withdrew over our escape route to our base camp. I learned that the group attacking against the textile mill fired their mortar and heavy weapons and inflicted damage on the building. Kabul was without bus transportation for a good while.

**Authors' Commentary:** The urban guerrilla attacks the credibility of the government by chipping away at morale, attacking notable government targets and disrupting the daily life of the populace. The bus terminal was an optimum target since it clearly demonstrated the reach of the Mujahideen and slowed the life of the capital city considerably.

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### Night raid on a city outpost

by Ghulam Farouq<sup>(7)</sup>

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I was a high school student in Kandahar. I used my student identification to move freely around the city to support the Mujahideen. I would try to make contacts with DRA soldiers in the government outposts during the day and then the Mujahideen would use the soldiers' information to attack them at night. One day in January 1984, I made contact with a soldier who showed a willingness to cooperate with the Mujahideen in capturing his outpost. This was the Saray-e Saat-ha security outpost in Kandahar. The post was located on the second floor of a building in the Bazaar-e Shah section of the city. This is across from the road junction of Alizai street and Bazaar-e Shah. The outpost was located there since the Mujahideen used Alizai street to enter the city and the outpost controlled this path.

I took the soldier with me on my bicycle to Chardewal--some six kilometers south of the city. There, we met with my commander, Ali Yawar. We all discussed our plan and then I brought the soldier back to the city on my bicycle. That night, our group of 30 Mujahideen assembled. We entered the city on the south side near the Shekarpur gate (Rangrez-ha street). From there, we moved along Sherali Khan street near Bazaar-e Herat and from there to Wali Mohammad street. As we moved along this path, we posted security so we could withdraw safely. We had agreed with my contact that we would arrive at 2200 hours. We arrived on time and, as we approached the outpost, we signaled with a flashlight. Our contact answered our signal. We crossed the paved road and posted our men at the gate. There were 22 Mujahideen now securing the route and gate. The remaining eight of us entered the gate and climbed to the second floor. Everyone appeared to be asleep. There was one soldier who just had completed his turn as sentry and we assumed that he was asleep. He wasn't. He grabbed his Kalashnikov and fired at us, killing one.

The dead Mujahideen's brother returned fire, killing the soldier and two of his sleeping comrades. We captured four other DRA soldiers plus nine Kalashnikovs and a pistol. My contact deserted to us.

The firing alerted DRA forces and it would be hard to leave the city carrying a body, so we started to take the body to a safe house where we could leave it for the night. As we were moving down the street, one of our four captives escaped. A Mujahideen tried to fire at him, but discovered that he was out of ammunition. We knew that the escaped DRA soldier would report our whereabouts to the authorities and, since he escaped near the safe house, we could not now risk leaving the body there. So we left the body hidden near a bakery. We covered the blood trail with dirt and then withdrew along the same route we entered. We exited the city at 0200 hours.

Since the government knew that we had left our dead behind, they blocked all entrances into the city. We tried to return for our dead the next night but could not get in. On the third night, we tried a different route from the north of town through the Chawnay suburbs. We traveled from Kalacha-e Mirza to Chawnay. We got into the city and we went to the bakery. The government had not found the body, so we retrieved it and took it outside of town for a decent burial. The person who was killed was Hafizullah--a graduate of Kabul university.

**Author's Commentary:** Movement through a city is high risk unless the route is secured. In this case, over two thirds of the available force secured the route. This got the force out safely. On the other hand, prisoner security was not too good. Prisoners should be bound, gagged and roped together in small groups for firm control. If possible, they should be blindfolded so that they remain disoriented and unable to give much immediate information should they escape. Finally, a raiding force should be kept small, but the correlation of Mujahideen to DRA was almost one to one. Surprise gave the Mujahideen an advantage, but the non-sleeping soldier offset that advantage.

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### **Raid on 15 Division Garrison** by Commander Akhtarjhan<sup>(8)</sup>

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The DRA 15th Infantry Division was garrisoned in Kandahar city. We had contacts within the division. In the fall of 1987, our contacts invited us to come and seize the weapons from the division's military police company. We gathered about 100 Mujahideen for the operation. I commanded a group of 15 within the larger group. We crossed the Argandab River from our base camp at Chaharqulba to Baba Walisaheb and, from there, we went through the suburb of Chawnay. Local guerrillas secured our passage through Chawnay. We finally reached the division's main garrison. We waited until the moon set around midnight. The military police company building was at the end of the main compound. We crept to the building and saw that our contacts had placed a ladder against the wall for us. Some 50 of our group took up positions outside the compound while our raiding group of 50 climbed the ladder up onto the roof of the building. Then we climbed down from the roof inside the compound walls.

Some of our contacts were on sentry duty, so we had no troubles. Our contacts met us and led us into the barracks building. We assembled in a large empty room. Our contacts then took us to different rooms where the soldiers were sleeping--five or six soldiers per room. Their weapons were stored in the rooms. We took their weapons. Next to the barracks was a larger arms room. After disarming the sleeping soldiers, we raided the arms room and took hundreds of weapons. We then started carrying all the weapons onto the roof and passing them down to our fellows outside the compound walls. While we were doing this, the company political officer got out of bed and saw us. He started to make a noise, so we killed him with some of the bayonets. We finished getting the weapons out and left for our base camp. Our contacts deserted the DRA and came with us.

**Authors' Commentary:** The Mujahideen penetration of the DRA was essential for successful raids like this. Entering a sleeping compound is always a high-risk proposition since someone is always awake, or wakes up, besides the sentries. A secure approach and withdrawal route is essential to urban guerrillas. Having local guerrillas secure the route allowed the force to bring enough people to carry off the captured weapons without worrying about being ambushed on the way out.

The urban guerrilla's biggest concerns were security and logistics. Security demanded small groups and a supporting net of agents and informants throughout the community. Logistic support often came from their enemy through the purchase or capture of needed supplies. The urban guerrillas in Afghanistan were never strong enough to capture a city, but their constant raids and ambushes created a siege mentality among the inhabitants and diverted large numbers of soldiers from the main battle for control of the countryside.

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#### ENDNOTES:

1. Commander Shahabuddin is from Shewaki Village south of Kabul.
2. Haji Mohammad Yakub, whose nickname was Mansur (Victor), was an urban guerrilla in Kabul. He belonged to the fundamentalist *Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin* faction.
3. Mohammad Humayun Shahin joined the Mujahideen as a high school student and served as a combatant and commander in the *Hezb-e-Islami-Gulbuddin* faction urban guerrillas in the southwestern suburbs of Kabul in the Chardehi District. His high school student identification enabled him to move around Kabul until he graduated in 1981. Then, the Mujahideen provided him with forged documents showing that he had completed military service. This enabled him to stay in the city and avoid being press-ganged into the army. His group often conducted combined actions with the famed Mohseni urban guerrillas. After the collapse of the communist regime, Shahin was appointed regiment commander under the Islamic government and promoted to Brigadier General.
4. Commander Asil Khan was a famed urban guerrilla commander in Kabul. He served the moderate National Islamic Front of Afghanistan faction.

5. The British Sten gun is a 9mm World War II submachine gun. It has a 32 round magazine and fires some 540 rounds per minute.

6. Zabat Halim was a legendary urban guerrilla who had been an NCO in the Royal Afghan Army. His death was a blow to the Mujahideen.

7. Ghulam Farouq was a urban guerrilla in Kandahar. He belonged to the *Harakat-I Islami* of Ayatollah Shaikh Asef Muhseni which is a minority Shia Muslim faction. His nickname is Gulalai.

8. Commander Akhtarjhan was a *Jamiat-e-Islami* commander in Arghandab District northwest of Kandahar. He was an elementary school student when he joined the jihad at the age of twelve. At end of the war, he was 25 years old and a commander. He joined the Jihad (holy war) since he had two brothers in the Jihad and they were both killed. He took their place as family tradition dictated. He served under Mulla Naqib, the most powerful Jamiat commander in the area.