

**1999****USSR Ministry of Defense and General Staff  
Operations Groups in Afghanistan****Citation:**

"USSR Ministry of Defense and General Staff Operations Groups in Afghanistan", 1999, Wilson Center Digital Archive, A. A. Lyakhovskiy's "Plamya Afgana" ("Flame of the Afghanistan veteran")", Iskon, Moscow, 1999; Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/111782>

**Summary:**

A status report from the USSR Ministry of Defense and General Staff Operations Group, providing a summary of Soviet troops levels in Afghanistan.

**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

...During the period Soviet troops were in Afghanistan from time to time various operations groups [OG] of the Ministry of Defense [MO] and USSR Armed Forces General Staff operated there. The first, headed by a Deputy Commanding General of the Airborne Forces, General-Lieutenant N. N. Gus'kov, arrived in Bagram at the beginning of December and rebased to Kabul on 23 December 1979. From 25 to 27 December it exercised leadership of the transfer of airborne units, their housing, and operations from Bagram to Kabul during the overthrow of H. Amin's supporters.

On 3 January 1980 a USSR OG MO flew into Afghanistan from Termez headed by Marshal of the Soviet Union S. L. Sokolov (General of the Army S. F. Akhromeyev became his deputy), which was located there until November of that year. Then from time to time this group went to the DRA to coordinate the combat operations of Soviet and Afghan troops when conducting the largest operations (for example, in Panjshir) for up to six months.

Beginning with the last half of 1984 the leadership of the OG MO of the USSR and DRA was entrusted to General of the Army V. I. Varennikov, at that time a First Deputy Chief of the General Staff. At the very beginning he periodically visited Afghanistan, but beginning 2 January 1987 until the conclusion of the withdrawal of Soviet troops he was in Afghanistan continuously. The generals and officers of the USSR OG MO systematically worked in the units and formations of the 40th Army to give practical aid to their commanders and staffs in preparing and carrying out combat operations, organizing combat training considering accumulated experience, and also coordinating operations and maintaining coordination with the Afghan army. Aid was given to the advisory staff in planning combat operations, increasing the combat ability of the Afghan armed forces, and resolving various problems of combat activity. In addition, this group decided the most varied problems, both of a military, as well as of an economic, political, and social nature.

In connection with the fact that the first time the USSR OG MO was in Afghanistan was only on occasion, mainly to lead large operations, in March 1985 a group of representatives of the General Staff was sent to Kabul (five men in all), headed by the general for Afghanistan-related special assignments of the Chief of the USSR General Staff, General-Major B. V. Gromov (March 1985-May 1987) and General-Major V. S. Kudlay (May 1987-January 1989).

Operations groups were also sent to work among the [40th] Army's troops from the Turkestan Military District HQ.

With the start of the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1988 a special Operations Group of the USSR Armed Forces General Staff under the command of General-Lieutenant A. G. Gaponenko began to work in Afghanistan; it dealt with creation of a three-month emergency supply for the Afghan armed forces in key areas of the country (Kandahar, Jalalabad, Ghazni, Gardez, etc.) and at guard posts.

In the initial stage the "Afghan campaigns" of the USSR OG MO did an enormous amount of organizational work. It exercised supervision of the regrouping, mobilization, and introduction of troops onto the territory of Afghanistan, and also the implementation of measures to remove H. Amin from power and form the regime of B. Karmal. In subsequent years the largest combat operations were conducted under its supervision and also the most complex issues of a military-political nature were resolved.

[Source: A. A. Lyakhovskiy's "Plamya Afgana" ("Flame of the Afghanistan veteran")", Iskon, Moscow, 1999; Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg]