

THAIMUN VIII - 27-28th March 2021

Historical Special Operations Committee

The CIA Tibetan Program (1958-1972)

The Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989)

Chairs:

Gianna Dinwoodie, GIS, giannad@gardenbangkok.com

Anbie Lee, KIS, stanbiele@edu.kis.ac.th

Remie Sirikuthada, SHB, 2022remie.s@shrewsbury.in.th

Thomas May, thomasgjm@gmail.com

Backroom Chairs:

Mac Kiatsupaibul, KIS, stkrongtham@edu.kis.ac.th

Pat Vithawatpongsatip, RIS, norapatv22@rism.ac.th

Please contact the people mentioned above, or the secretariat, for any questions.

The CIA Tibetan Program (1958-1972)

By: Mac, Pat

Overview:

- Arising from the growing Communist influence in China, the US's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had begun a series of covert operations within Chinese, Indian and Tibetan territories in order to monitor and mitigate the expansion of the Communist regime and its influences.
 - The following are the known covert operations the CIA conducted over this time period relating to the program.
 - **ST CIRCUS**—Cover name for the training of Tibetan guerillas on the island of Saipan, and at Camp Hale in Colorado
 - **ST BARNUM**—Cover name for the airlifting of CIA agents, military supplies, and support equipment into Tibet.

Background:

- Up until 1912, Tibet was a protectorate of the Qing Dynasty led by a Buddhist monk called the Dalai Lama.
- The Dalai Lama was the religious and the government leader of Tibet
- After the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 up until the annexation by the People's Republic of China in 1951, Tibet was a de facto independent state. However, its independence was never recognized by any foreign power except Mongolia
- In 1950, the People's Liberation Army under the Mao's government invaded Tibet to incorporate it into China, claiming to liberate Tibet from its theocratic feudal system
- The invasion resulted in the Seventeen Point Agreement in 1951 (perhaps forced upon not agreed)
- Following a rumour that the Chinese government was going to abduct the Dalai Lama, crowds of people surrounded the Potala Palace.
- After a few days, the protests became violent and Dalai Lama fled the palace
- This ended in a street fighting which killed more than 80000 people. This is how the US indirectly fought against Communist China
- The USA's intention was not to protect Tibet's independence or its people but to fight against the growing communist regime. The USA and Tibet had a common enemy.

Outcomes:

- Tibet retains full autonomy over its territory and governing systems
- Tibet and China remain at a standstill, having signed a peace deal that allows Chinese troops to be stationed freely in Tibet, in return for not laying a hand in Tibetan politics and the governing of its sovereignty.
- Tibet is annexed by Communist China, its government repressed and no longer able to revolutionize.

Timeline, Major Events:

- Pre 1949 - 1950
 - **Operation Chamdo**
 - Chinese-led invasion of Tibetan Capital, Lhasa.
 - Originator of current tensions between both sovereign states.
 - Caught US interest in providing assistance.
 - **Birth of the Resistance**
 - Over the next year and a half, the resistance from the Tibetan people grew even stronger.
 - Despite partial withdrawal of cadets from Tibetan soil and postponement of socialist reforms, the resistance still pushed back
 - CIA formed contact, offered to train the Resistance in practical combat in order to fend off Chinese military oppression
 - Both parties' goals align, to keep China out of Tibet
 - **Exile of Gyalo Thondup**
 - Gyalo Thondup, the second eldest brother of the current Dalai Lama, was exiled to India some time during the late 1940s
 - It was he who contacted the Americans, who, at the time, sought to spread its anti communist program worldwide.
 - It was he who was responsible for enabling the training of Tibetan soldiers and resistance in basic combat maneuvers by the US soldiers on US soil
- 1951
 - **May 23**
 - Tibet and China signed the Sino-Tibetan agreement, enabling Chinese troops to be stationed in Tibet whilst China will not lay a hand in Tibetan politics
 - **October**
 - China sought to inject more troops, from 12,000 to 45,000 men, Tibet refused with the threat to move the Dalai Lama to India should China proceed.
 - Chinese Officers arrested over 200 Tibetans for refusing to cooperate with selling supplies while also desecrating a monastery for weapons.

- **December**
 - CIA Documents revealed plans for China to begin construction of a military camp on Tibetan soil by March 1952
- 1952
 - **May**
 - Information from Thondup pointed the CIA to the existence of Chinese Troops inside Lhasa, and the possibility of armed warfare
 - Also revealed the pro-buddhist faction's influence on the Dalai Lama's decisions regarding Chinese advances
 - **September**
 - Chinese government and its army now had a firmer grip over Tibetan affairs, prompting India's links to be severed
 - This means the US can no longer use India as a proxy to continue foreign relations with Tibet.
- 1953
 - **February**
 - China attempted to build air bases for use as refuelling stops between it and India, enabling aerial warfare on its northernmost provinces
 - Furthermore, Tibet's elevation allows for natural defenses and an altitude advantage over the opposition
 - **May**
 - Number of soldiers stationed near Chumbi Valley, Bartok, Rudog, and northern Lhasa increased to ~20,000
 - **October**
 - Chinese restrictions on trade now diverted Wool Trade westward
 - Using Tibetan labor, the Chinese now began to build its own roads in Tibet, now controlling all travel in Tibet as a result.
 - **December**
 - Chinese demands were made to India's foreign minister regarding its planned construction of fortifications near the India-Tibet and Nepal-Tibet borders, without room for objectifying.
 - Further demands for the removal of interest from Tibetan affairs were also put in place along with an oppressive stance the Indian government must take on the border people.
- 1954
 - **April**
 - Sino-Indian treaty agreed.
 - Treaty demands India withdraw all foreign interest in Tibet while keeping an outlook on the now-equal border between India and Tibet, being aware of illegal activity by those of the border tribes
 - India was to also remain silent in the face of questions in the UN or any other international council regarding the matter of Tibetan affairs

- Three Indian trade posts in Yatung, Gyantse, and Gartok, Tibet, were allowed to stand in exchange for the same status for China's trade posts in New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong
- India was also to withdraw forces from Tibetan soil while signing away its postage and telecommunication rights in Tibet.
- 1955-57
 - In 1955, small rebellious groups began plotting armed uprising against the Communist and small rebellions broke out in 1956 killing hundreds of people
 - The rebel groups continuously killed Chinese officials and cut communication lines
 - In 1956 China also established the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region to undermine Tibet's religious and political system
 - The CIA aided the rebels. They trained a total of 259 Tibetans over five years. These Tibetans lived to kill the Communist Chinese
- 1958-60
 - In 1958 two rebel fighters from the Kham region asked to see the Dalai Lama. However, the request was refused by Lord Chamberlain as it was deemed unwise. The Dalai Lama was not informed about the two fighters nor was he informed about the American's willingness to aid.
 - In 1959, the 1959 Tibetan uprising happened
 - Dalai Lama fled to India
 - From 1959-1960, CIA sent four groups of Camp Hale trainees to aid the Tibetan resistance.
 - This helped to distract China as it needed 60,000 troops and 256 tons of supplies in Tibet daily.
- 1960-1975
 - In 1972, before Mao Zedong and President Nixon met, each of the 1,500 CIA-trained rebels received 10,000 rupees to buy land in India or to open a business instead of fighting the People's Liberation Army of China
 - The US no longer trained the guerrillas after that.

Further Sources:

- <https://www.historynet.com/cias-secret-war-in-tibet.htm>

The Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989)

By: Thomas, Anbie

Overview:

- The Soviet-Afghan War was an armed conflict that saw the Mujahideen fight the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) and the Soviet Army
- The Mujahadeen mainly received support from the US, UK, China, West Germany, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia
- The Shia Mujahideen received some support from Iran
- The ISI (Pakistan's intelligence agency) mainly sent funds to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar
- The US funded the Sunni Mujahideen, due to the ties the Shia Mujahideen had with Iran, giving most of their assistance to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar
- Originally their assistance was "non-lethal", but that changed with Ronald Reagan
- The Soviet Union saw little support from Warsaw Pact countries as they had not been consulted beforehand
- Only had limited political support
- North Korea refused to help due to China's support of the Mujahadeen
- India provided humanitarian aid and opposed a UN Resolution that condemned the actions of the USSR

Background:

- The Saur Revolution was an overthrow of the government of President Mohammed Daoud Khan by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), with Nur Muhammad Taraki heading the new government
- Implemented many reforms concerning land, marriage, women's rights, and illiteracy
- Two factions formed inside of the PDPA (Khalq and Parcham), with Taraki aligned with the Khalq faction
- The Khalq faction began persecuting members of the Parcham faction
- Hafizullah Amin seized power in 1979 and killed Taraki
- The USSR had been providing aid and assistance to Afghanistan for a while, an early instance being the supply of weapons and money for the Third Anglo-Afghan War
- A 1978 treaty allowed for the PDPA to call upon the USSR for military aid
- Mohammed Dahoud Khan's attempt to annex Pashtun areas of Pakistan was opposed by both Pakistan and the non-Pashtun population of Afghanistan but two attempts were made, both failing

- Because of this, Pakistan closed their consulate in Kabul and blocked trade routes that ran across the border of the two countries, hurting Afghanistan's economy
- Daoud Khan resigned and King Zahir Shah took power, balancing relations between the West and the USSR
- Daoud Khan returned to power in a coup d'état and revived his policy of Pashtun annexation, through a proxy war against Pakistan
- In turn, Pakistan started supporting Afghans who were against Daoud Khan
- Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's Prime Minister, arranged for Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmad Shah Massoud to be brought to Pakistan as he feared Daoud Khan would execute them
- The Jamiat-e Islami Party rebelled but were defeated by government forces, and many took refuge in Pakistan
- Afghan-Pakistani relations were improved after this, and Daoud Khan started to try and lower dependence on the USSR
- A revolt started in Herat, led by Ismail Khan

Outcomes:

- Withdrawal of foreign troops
- President Jimmy Carter placed sanctions on the USSR for commodities such as grain
- A boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics, led by the US
- Considerable civilian losses
- Destruction of rural and urban areas
- Initial aid from the US, stopping during the Clinton administration
- Afghan refugees fleeing to mainly Pakistan and Iran
- Continuation of conflict, with the Afghan Civil War
- "Blowback", or unintended consequences for the US

Timeline, Major Events:

- March 1979
 - The USSR begins massive military aid to the DRA (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan) following the revolts against President Nur Mohammed Taraki's government, largely caused by his 1978 land reforms and modernization reforms. The US scales down its presence following the murder of its kidnapped ambassador. Afghan soldiers attempt a mutiny in Herat, massacring Soviet citizens, however, their rebellion is soon crushed.
- September 1979
 - President Taraki is killed and Hafizullah Amin emerges as DRA leader. Requests for large numbers of Soviet forces to combat the growing Mujahideen insurgency continue under Amin's administration. The Mujahideen insurgents emerge from both inside Afghanistan and from neighboring countries, Pakistan, Iran, and China.

- December 12, 1979
 - The Soviet politburo decides to invade Afghanistan due to fears of an Iranian-style Islamist revolution and news of Amin's secret meetings with US diplomats in Afghanistan.
- December 24, 1979
 - The Soviet defense ministry orders troops into Afghanistan. Commandos seize strategic installations in Kabul. Armored columns cross the border at Termez and Kushka heading towards Kabul and Herat respectively.
- December 29, 1979
 - Babrak Kamal is installed as the DRA's new Soviet-backed leader following the Soviet assassination of Amin and the invasion of tens of thousands of troops by ground and air.
- 1980
 - Resistance intensifies as multiple Mujahideen groups, who are supported with money and arms from the US, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, fight against Soviet forces and their DRA allies. In the first six months of the campaign, the Soviets committed more than 80,000 personnel to occupy Afghanistan.
- June 1981-August 1981
 - Two Mujahideen coalitions are formed (moderate & fundamentalist). The Mujahideen guerrilla attacks consequently become more organized and effective.
- 1982
 - The United Nations General Assembly calls for Soviet withdrawal.
- 1985
 - More than five million Afghans are now estimated to be displaced by the war, forcing many to flee neighboring countries, Iran and Pakistan. New Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev publicly states that he wants to end the war in Afghanistan. To help bring a quick victory, the resulting escalation of troops to pacify the region leads to the bloodiest year of the war.
- 1986
 - The US begins supplying Mujahideen with Stinger missiles, which allows them to shoot down Soviet helicopter gunships. Karmal is replaced by Mohammed Najibullah.
- 1988
 - The DRA, USSR, US, and Pakistan sign peace accords and the Soviets begin pulling out troops.
- February 15, 1989
 - The Soviet Union announces the departure of its last troops. Civil war continues as the Mujahideen push to overthrow Najibullah, who is eventually toppled in 1992.

(Historical) Soviet-Afghanistan War Statistics

- Soviet forces killed: 14,453
- Afghan forces killed: 18,000
- Peak strength of Soviet troops: 115,000
- Peak strength of Afghan troops: 55,000
- Peak strength of Mujahideen troops: 200,000–250,000
- Mujahideen forces killed: 75,000–90,000
- Afghan civilians killed: 850,000–1,500,000
- Afghanistan refugees that fled the country: 5 million

Further Online Sources:

- <http://publish.uwo.ca/~acopp2/historyofwar/coldwar/militaryconflicts/sovietafghanwar/index.html>
- <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/37/37>
- <https://www.britannica.com/event/Soviet-invasion-of-Afghanistan>