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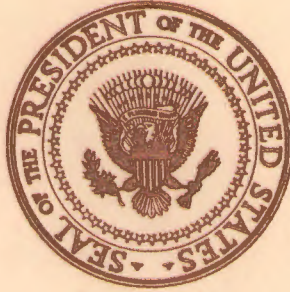
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Afghanistan Day, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The people of Afghanistan celebrate March 21 as the beginning of their new year. In ordinary times, it is an occasion of joy, renewal, and hope for a better future. March 21, 1986, however, does not mark the passage of an ordinary year, nor does it bring cause to celebrate. For the heroic Afghan people it marks the beginning of yet another year in their struggle for national liberation against the ruthless Soviet military force that seeks to conquer them.

Over six years ago, on December 27, 1979, the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan, a small, friendly, nonaligned, and deeply religious neighbor. For six long years, the Soviets have sought to obliterate Afghan culture and remold that ancient nation into a replica of their own system, causing millions of Afghan refugees to flee the country. To achieve their goals, the Soviets installed the quisling regime of Babrak Karmal, in which Soviet advisors now man the key positions. They have transported thousands of young Afghans to the Soviet Union for reeducation in summer camps, universities, and specialized institutions, and they have set up a secret police apparatus matched in brutality only by their own KGB.

These tactics hardly begin to describe the continuing horror of the Soviet attempt to subjugate Afghanistan, a violation of international law repeatedly condemned by the United Nations. Despite calculated destruction of crops, irrigation systems, and livestock, indiscriminate air and artillery bombardments of civilian areas, brutal reprisals against noncombatants, and other unspeakable atrocities, the Afghan people remain determined to defend their liberty. The resistance has in fact become more effective than ever.

The Soviet failure to quell the Afghan people is not surprising. The Afghans have a long history of resisting invasion and of defending their homes, their faith, and their culture. Since December 1979, resistance fighters have acquitted themselves well in many engagements against larger and better armed Soviet forces. The Afghan freedom fighters have shown they can render all of their country unsafe for the invader. After six years of hard, bloody fighting, the Soviets are far from achieving their military goals.

Recently the Afghan resistance has taken major steps toward achieving unity and making its presence felt on the international scene, strengthening its ability to publicize the Afghan cause. We welcome these developments. With the support of the community of civilized nations, the Afghan resistance has also increased its efforts to aid civilians remaining inside Afghanistan. This will improve the Afghan people's ability to carry on the fight and counter the deliberate Soviet attempt to drive the civilian population away from resistance-controlled areas.

Throughout the period of their brutal occupation, the Soviets have tried—but failed—to divide the international supporters of the cause of Afghan freedom. They cannot be divided. The overwhelming votes in the United Nations General Assembly, year after year, are but one expression of the ongoing commitment of the world community to this cause. For our part we reaffirm our commitment to support this just struggle until the Soviets withdraw; until the people of Afghanistan regain their liberties, their independence, and the right to self-determination; and until the refugees can return in safety to their native land. Only such a settlement can command the support of the Afghan people; a settlement that does not command their support will not end this war.

Today, we pay tribute to the brave men, women, and children of Afghanistan and remind them that their sacrifice is not and will not be forgotten.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 272, has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating March 21, 1986, as "Afghanistan Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 21, 1986, as Afghanistan Day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and tenth.

Ronald Reagan