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AFGHANISTAN DAY, 1986

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BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

The people of Afghanistan traditionally celebrate March 21 as the beginning of their new year. In ordinary times, it is an occasion for joy, a time of renewal and of 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 grim struggle for national liberation against the ruthless Soviet military force that seeks to reduce their proud nation to the status of a colony.

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 will to resist and remold that ancient nation into a replica of their own godless totalitarian system, causing millions of Afghan refugees to flee the country. To achieve their goals for Afghanistan, the Soviets installed their puppet, Babrak Karmal, at the head of a quisling regime. Soviet advisors now man the key positions in this puppet government and its armed forces. They have also 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 indiscriminate air and artillery bombardments of civilian areas, brutal reprisals against noncombatants, and calculated destruction of crops, irrigation systems, and livestock, and other unspeakable atrocities, the Afghan people remain determined to defend their liberty. Further, despite the transportation of thousands of young Afghans to the Soviet Union for reeducation in summer camps,

universities, and specialized institutions, the resistance has become more effective than ever.

To students of history, the Soviet failure to quell the Afghan people and defeat the resistance is not surprising. The Afghans have a long history of resisting invasion and of defending their homes, their faith, and their culture. In numerous engagements since December 1979, resistance fighters have acquitted themselves well even against larger and better armed Soviet forces. The Afghan freedom fighters have demonstrated an impressive ability to render all of their country unsafe for the invader. Today, after six years of hard, bloody fighting, the Soviets are far from achieving their military and political goals.

The Afghan resistance has also taken major steps toward achieving unity and making its presence felt on the international scene, thus strengthening its ability to publicize the Afghan cause. These are developments we support and encourage. With the support of the community of civilized nations, demonstrated in the overwhelming votes of the United Nations General Assembly year after year, and the assistance of many nations, including the United States, the Afghan resistance has substantially increased its efforts to aid civilians remaining inside Afghanistan. This will help counter the deliberate Soviet attempt to drive the civilian population away from resistance-controlled areas. It will also improve the Afghan people's ability to carry on the fight.

On March 21, we again pay tribute to the brave men, women, and children of Afghanistan and remind them that their sacrifice will not be forgotten. We reaffirm our commitment to support their just struggle until the Soviets withdraw; until they regain their liberties, their independence, and the

right to self-determination; and until the refugees can return in safety to their native land.

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

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this
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.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

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RONALD REAGAN

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