

**Excerpt from Statement of the Soviet Military Command in Afghanistan on
the Withdrawal of Soviet Troops, February 14, 1989**

[Source: Alexander Lyakhovskiy, *Tragedy and Valor of Afghan*, Iskcon, Moscow 1995, Appendix 11, Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya]

On April 7, 1988, USSR Defense Minister signed an order on withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. In February 1989, the Defense Ministry prepared a statement of the Soviet Military Command in Afghanistan on the issue of withdrawal of troops, which was delivered to the Head of the UN Mission in Afghanistan on February 14, 1989—the day when the last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan. The statement gave an overview of Soviet-Afghan relations before 1979, Soviet interpretation of the reasons for providing internationalist assistance to Afghanistan, and sending troops there after the repeated requests of the Afghan government. It criticized the U.S. role in arming the opposition in disregard of the Geneva agreements, and thus destabilizing the situation in the country. In an important acknowledgement that the Vietnam metaphor was used to analyze Soviet actions in Afghanistan, they military explicitly referred to “unfair and absurd” comparisons between the American actions in Vietnam and the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

It is important to note that some people are trying to create an analogy between the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan and the American actions in Vietnam. It is not only unfair but even absurd to draw such parallels. There cannot be any comparison here, because these two missions are diametrically opposite both in their objectives and tasks as well as in their content and results. Starting with the fact that nobody had invited the Americans in Vietnam, whereas the Soviet troops were sent to Afghanistan after numerous requests from the legitimate Afghan government. Completely different forms and methods were used [in Afghanistan]. We came in not with the goal to occupy and split the country, as it happened as a result of American actions, not with the goal capturing foreign territory, but with the goal of providing internationalist assistance in the defense of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. We never pursued any selfish goals or set any conditions.

Withdrawal of Soviet forces, precisely withdrawal, not flight, as was the case with the American troops in Vietnam, is carried out according to the plan, in strict accordance with the Geneva Agreements on Afghanistan, and according to the will of the Afghan and Soviet people, with the support from the world community. It demonstrated once again

that the Soviet Union is true to the principles of new political thinking, its political statements and positions. In the process of withdrawal, we transferred objects and property to the Afghan people with overall value of over 830 million rubles.

At the same time, we did everything we could not to allow the withdrawal of the last Soviet soldier from Afghanistan to become the beginning of a civil war in this country. In the future we will continue to undertake all necessary measures to help the political settlement [in Afghanistan] in the name of bringing peace and security to the Afghan people.