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– Security services in Communist Afghanistan (1978-1992)
AGSA, KAM, KhAD and WAD

Delegations will find attached a report from the Netherlands delegation on the above subject. ¹

¹ Translated into English only.
This report may be released to the public.

**Security services in Communist Afghanistan
(1978-1992)**

AGSA, KAM, KhAD and WAD

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1 Introduction

This situation report deals with the Afghan security services under the Communist Regime (1978-1992). These security services were already notorious in the 1980s because of their particularly brutal behaviour. The description focuses on the *Khadimat-e Atal'at-e Dowlati (KhAD)* and the *Wazarat-e Amaniat-e Dowlati (WAD)*. The KhAD was set up in 1980 and transformed into a ministry in 1986. This ministry, called "WAD", remained in existence until the fall of the Communist regime in 1992. This situation report concentrates on whether and if so, which former members of the Afghan security services, especially those of the KhAD and the WAD, committed human rights violations.

In order to reply to this central question this report first describes the history of the security services under presidents Taraki, Amin, Karmal and Najibullah. Next, provide the tasks, the organisational structure, the officer recruitment and training procedures, the interrogation and detention centres and the interrogation methods of the KhAD and the WAD are at separate paragraphs. On the basis of this information section 2.8 indicates which groups within the KhAD and the WAD effectively participated in the human rights violations committed at the time under the responsibility of the said service and ministry. Finally, section 2.9 describes the attitude of the *Mujahedin* and the Taliban to former KhAD and WAD members. The report concludes with a summary.

This situation report is based, inter alia, on reports from the Netherlands embassy in Islamabad. In addition, use was made of the reports by Felix Ermacora, who was the United Nations Human Rights Commission Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were also consulted. Finally, use was also made of specialist literature on Afghanistan under the Communist Regime. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the literature consulted.

Since 1994 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has on several occasions reported on the Afghan security services as part of general descriptions of the situation in Afghanistan.¹ This situation report replaces the information provided therein.

Hint for readers of this report

Afghan names used in the text are phonetic transliterations in Latin script of concept in Dari and Pashtu. Other sources may well use slightly different forms.

2 The Afghan security services (1978-1992)

2.1 Historical background

On 27 April 1978 a military coup took place in Afghanistan which became known as the "Great Saur Revolution."² The coup ushered in the rule of the Communist party, which was to last fourteen years. Besides the Soviet Union's military support, the security services of the Afghan Communist party played a crucial role in the survival of this regime, which enjoyed very little support among the population. Before examining more closely the organisational structure and working methods of the security services, a brief historical overview is given of the rise and fall of the Communist Regime.³ Because of the interdependence of the Communist party and its security services, this overview not only portrays the successive party leaders and their periods of office, but also gives an insight into the history of the security services and the political forces controlling them.

¹ See the general situation reports of 21 October with reference number DAZBA/No 58829, p. 2, of 4 March 1998 with reference number DPC/AM 67526, pp. 33 – 34, of 3 November 1998 with reference number DPC/AM 602771, p.13 and of 16 September 1999 with reference number DPC/AM-633314, pp. 53-55.

² "Saur" means April on the Afghan calendar.

³ For an overview of this period in Afghan history see for example W.B. Fisher, Ahmed Mukarram and Kevin Rafferty, Afghanistan. The Far East and Australasia 1999 (1999), pp.. 60-63 and Bradsher, Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention (Oxford, 1999).

Daoud (1973-1978)

On 17 July 1973 Lieutenant-General Mohammad Daoud 's virtually non-violent coup ended the 40-year rule of his cousin, King Zahir Shah. Daoud, who on assuming power relinquished his title of "prince" had already been Prime Minister from 1953 to 1963 and had pursued a modernisation policy during that time. While he was President of the Republic of Afghanistan, as declared by him, he was also a strong supporter of economic development in his country. Initially, Daoud received support from members of the Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), set up in 1965. However, relations cooled off when it became apparent that Daoud was seeking more and more power.

At the beginning of Daoud's rule the PDPA was unable to oppose his quest for power. An important cause of the PDPA's impotence was a separation of minds within the party which had begun as early as 1967. The separation caused the party to split into a Khalq faction led by Nur Muhammad Taraki, and a Parcham faction led by Babrak Karmal. These factions, named after their respective party publications – Khalq ("Masses") and Parcham ("Flag"), harboured different views of how Afghanistan had to be "converted" to communism. Both factions regarded themselves as PDPA's sole true successor and reviled each other.

The antagonism between the Khalq and Parcham factions derived largely from a difference in power bases. The Khalq faction recruited mainly from among the Pashtuns, who had a traditional tribal background and had only recently gained access to higher education. The supporters of the Parcham faction mostly belonged to the Dari-speaking urban élite and had a mixed ethnic background. The Khalq faction represented PDPA's radical wing and the Parcham faction its moderate wing.⁴ An attempt at conciliation on the part of the Soviet Union resulted in public reconciliation between the two factions in March 1977. However, this did not prevent the antagonism between the Khalq and Parcham factions from repeatedly re-appearing throughout the Communist period.

⁴ This also explains why Parcham supporters were initially prepared to cooperate with Daoud and were even represented in his Government. See "A Nation is Dying. Afghanistan under the Soviets, 1979-87", Jeri Laber & Barnett R. Rubin (Evanston, 1988), p. 5.

Taraki (1978-1979)

Following anti-Government demonstrations in Kabul in April 1978, Daoud had seven leaders of the PDPA arrested. At the same time he started to purge the army and the civil service of Communists. This was the immediate cause of the military coup which took place on the seventh day of the month of Saur in 1357 (27 April 1978). During that coup, which brought the PDPA to power, Daoud and the members of his family were killed. Taraki, the former leader of the Khalq faction, became the first President and Prime Minister of what was to be officially called "the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan". Babrak Karmal, leader of the Parcham faction, and Hafizullah Amin, a former Khalq confidant of Taraki, were both appointed Deputy Prime Minister.

Under Taraki's government armed insurrection directed mainly against the hastily framed land reform decrees erupted everywhere in Afghanistan. At the same time, Afghans began to flee to Pakistan and Iran. Within the PDPA the antagonism between the Khalq and Parcham factions flared up again. As early as July 1978 six leading representatives of the Parcham faction including Karmal and Najibullah, both of whom would later become President were sidelined by being appointed ambassador. Shortly afterwards Taraki and Amin began to purge the army and the administration of Parcham faction supporters. Together with the army the *Da Afghanistan da Gato da Satalo Adara* (AGSA), the security service created by Taraki, acted as the strong arm of the regime.⁵ In Pashtu AGSA stands for "Organisation for the Protection of the Interests of Afghanistan". During the short period of AGSA's existence, its members are believed to have arrested, tortured and murdered thousands of Afghans.⁶ The organisation was led by Azadullah Sawari.

⁵ The spelling of the Afghan names of the security services under the Communist regime varies. The differences in spelling are mostly due to the transcription into Latin script of words from Pashtu and Dari. This situation report uses the same spelling and transcription as Bradsher in his book "Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention".

⁶ A Nation is Dying, p. 6, and Afghanistan. The Great Game Revisited, Rosanne Klass (Edt.) (New York, 1987), pp. 336-339. See Afghanistan. Torture of Political Prisoners, Amnesty International (ASA/11/04/86, November 1986), p. 1, which refers to a report published by Amnesty International in September 1979 accusing the government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan of human rights violations.

Amin (1979)

Amin steadily increased his influence under Taraki's government. In July 1979 he was simultaneously Secretary-General of the PDPA , Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence. In September 1979 Amin staged a coup, taking over the Presidency from Taraki. Shortly afterwards Taraki was murdered on Amin's orders.

Shortly after Amin's take-over, the Ministry of the Interior, in an attempt to distance itself from Taraki's regime, published a list with the names of 12 000 persons alleged to have been killed since the Great Saur Revolution.⁷ However, this gesture did not mean that the terror exercised by the army and the security service under Amin was stopped; Amin's changes were merely cosmetic. He changed the name of the security service to *Kargarano Amniyyati Mu'assassa* (KAM) – "Workers' Intelligence Service". However, like its predecessor, the KAM was responsible for arbitrary arrests, routine torture and extrajudicial executions.⁸ The new security service was led in short succession by Sawari's cousin Aziz Ahmad Akbari and Amin's cousin Azadullah Amin.⁹

⁷ This list is used by Felix Ermacora, Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, to assess the number of political prisoners under Taraki and Amin (UN report on human rights 1985, section 73). See Torture of Political Prisoners, p 1. According to Asia Watch the number of 12 000 refers only to persons executed in the Pul-i-Charki prison in 1978 and 1979. In the countryside 100 000 persons are believed to have been killed under President Taraki and Amin. (Afghanistan. The Forgotten War. Human Rights Abuses and Violations of the Laws of War Since the Soviet Withdrawal. Asia Watch (New York, Washington, February 1991), p 11).

⁸ See UN report on human rights 1985, sections 74-77 and Torture of Political Prisoners, p. 2. The number of people murdered under Taraki and Amin runs in the ten thousands. In his 1986 report, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights writes that in February 1980, within three weeks, the Ministry of Planning had already drawn up a list of more than 25 000 people who had gone missing under Taraki and Amin. Alarmed by this large number, which kept rising, the Ministry of Planning had stopped updating this list (UN report on human rights 1986, section 46).

⁹ See Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention, p. 61.

Amin's term of office lasted only a couple of months. He was killed on 27 December 1979 in a coup staged with help from the Soviet Union. His posts as President and PDPA Secretary-General were taken over by the former leader of the Parcham faction, Babrak Karmal. The new President could count on military support from Soviet troops, consisting of many tens of thousands of men who had invaded Afghanistan on the eve of the coup. The Soviet troops, whose number increased steadily ¹⁰ were to remain in Afghanistan until 1989.

Karmal (1979-1986)

Karmal's regime was characterised by a worsening of the civil war which had already been raging in Afghanistan since the arrival of the Communists. The conflict caused famine, destroyed the country's infrastructure and forced millions of Afghans to leave the country. The Communist Government increasingly lost its hold over the country, particularly when the Islamic rebels, the so-called *Mujahedin*, gained access to modern weapons in the 80s.

Although Karmal had, on taking power, distanced himself in no uncertain terms from the terror spread among the population by Amin and had almost immediately disbanded the notorious KAM as a gesture of goodwill ¹¹, his regime too seemed able to hold its own only by using brute force. The *Khadimat-e Atal'at-e Dowlati*, meaning "State Intelligence Service" in Dari, soon came to embody the highly repressive Communist regime. ¹² The secret service became notorious and feared under its acronym "KhAD".

¹⁰ The Soviet army in Afghanistan is estimated to have consisted of between 115 000 and 120 000 troops in 1985. In addition, between 30 000 and 50 000 troops were stationed near the Afghan border in the Soviet Union. They too regularly saw active service in Afghanistan (*Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, p. 198).

¹¹ See *Torture of Political Prisoners*, p. 2 and *The Great Game Revisited*, p. 339.

¹² As early as 22 February 1980 a revolt erupted spontaneously in Kabul against Karmal's Soviet-backed regime. This revolt, which was to be known in history as "The Night of Allahu Akbar" heralded the start of a long series of demonstrations and strikes that were forcefully repressed by the KhAD. See *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan. State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, Barnett R. Rubin (Lahore, 1996), pp. 135, 137 and 138) and *The Great Game Revisited*, p. 347.

The first head of the KhAD was Dr Najibullah, one of the former leaders of the Parcham faction. Thanks also to his post as head of the KhAD, Najibullah rose rapidly in the PDPA hierarchy. In order to devote himself fully to his work for the party Najibullah, after being in charge of the KhAD for almost six years, handed over his responsibilities to his replacement Major-General Ghulam Faruq Yaqubi, in November 1985.

Najibullah (1986-1992)

At the time of Najibullah's changeover Karmal's power was on the wane. The party was being constantly plagued by internal dissension¹³, corruption and incompetence. At the same time the civil war intensified. Karmal's downfall was therefore only a matter of time. As early as May 1986 Najibullah took over Karmal's duties as Secretary-General. Shortly afterwards Karmal also relinquished the Presidency of the Revolutionary Council.¹⁴ In the meantime, on 9 January 1986, shortly after Najibullah's departure, the KhAD was transformed into a separate ministry under the name of *Wazarat-e Amani-at-e Dowlati* or "Ministry of State Security". Although the official abbreviation of the Ministry was henceforth to be WAD, the secret service continued to be popularly referred to as the KhAD.

¹³ This dissension derived largely from the old split between the Khalq and Parcham factions. Moreover, Karmal's first cabinet included supporters of both the Khalq faction and the Parcham faction. Karmal nonetheless had great difficulty in finding candidates because of a great shortage of suitable people, ideological differences, personal rivalry and general reluctance to cooperate with the Soviet administration of Afghanistan. This led to strange situations, where victim and executioner shared the same table. Thus, for instance, Karmal found Asadullah Sarwari, the former head of the AGSA and a supporter of the Khalq, prepared to become Deputy Prime Minister. The other Deputy Prime Minister post was occupied by Sultan Ali Keshtmand of the Parcham faction, who was said to have been personally tortured by his fellow Deputy Prime Minister for his part in an attempted coup in 1978. For obvious reasons, such "cooperation" was doomed to failure. As early as the summer of 1980 Sarwari went abroad to become Ambassador in Mongolia (Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention, pp. 121-137).

¹⁴ As Vice-President of the Revolutionary Council, Mohammed Chamkani succeeded Karmal in this post pending a new Constitution. Chamkani was a Pashtun from the province of Paktia and not a member of the PDPA, at least not overtly. Real power lay in the hands of Najibullah. Najibullah was, in fact, elected President of the Revolutionary Council in September 1987. On that occasion Chamkani stepped back to resume his former post as Vice-President (Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention, pp. 160 and 162).

In order to relieve the pressure on the Communist regime, Najibullah tried to pursue a policy of national reconciliation. This policy consisted, *inter alia*, in giving greater prominence to Islamic principles in the administration and, liberalising land reform, and in the possibility to create political parties. In November 1987 Afghanistan acquired a new Constitution providing for the creation of a First and Second Chamber. The country's name was changed to "Republic of Afghanistan" with Najibullah as its first President. However, these were mainly cosmetic adjustments. In actual fact the PDPA, whose leading role was enshrined in the Constitution, remained all-powerful. The Soviet troops and the WAD continued to be important pillars under the Communist regime.

One of these pillars disappeared in 1988. Following many years of negotiations, the Soviet troops started to pull out of Afghanistan in May 1988. Their pull-out was completed in February 1989. Against all expectations, Najibullah nonetheless managed to remain President until 1992. Najibullah partly owed his political survival to the continuing arms supplies from the Soviet Union and the intense mutual hostility between the various *Mujahedin* factions. However, the PDPA too was anything but a united front. Thus, in October 1988 a coup attempt involving supporters of the former President, Karmal, was foiled. Sayed Mohammed Gulabzoy, Minister of the Interior and leader of the Khalq faction, was exiled around the same time. A further coup took place in March 1990, this time under the leadership of Lieutenant-General Shahnawaz Tanai, Minister of Defence and – like Gulabzoy – a prominent member of the Khalq faction. That revolt was bloodily quashed partly by deploying the WAD's loyal troops and to the pro-Government troops of the Kabul Garrison under the leadership of Mohammed Nabi Azimi.¹⁵

¹⁵ See Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention, pp. 312-314 and 341-344, The Forgotten War, pp. 85-88 and the general situation report on Afghanistan dated 16 September 1999, p. 54, footnote 124. In his 1990 report Felix Ermacora states that the WAD arrested 127 suspects in December 1989 including eleven generals. According to the WAD these persons were involved in plotting a coup (UN report on human rights 1990, section 33). The immediate cause for Lieutenant-General Tanai's attempted coup on 6 March 1990 was probably a court case which had begun the day before against some of his allies arrested on suspicion of involvement in plotting military coups in 1989. Tanai clearly feared that the testimonies of the military concerned would incriminate him. It should be noted that from 1994 to 1997 Tanai, as military adviser, actively helped shape the Taliban's military advance in Afghanistan.

Opposition to Najibullah within PDPA also was partly due to the calling of a state of emergency and the creation of a powerful "Higher Council for the Protection of the Fatherland" in February 1989. These measures, which were taken at the time of the completion of the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, gave Najibullah an opportunity to mould the administration entirely as he wished. In May 1990, following a thorough purge of both the PDPA and the army, Najibullah decided to undo these changes. The President nevertheless continued to be an exceptionally powerful figure.

As part of the national reconciliation policy the PDPA 's Second Congress, meeting in June 1990, decided to change the party's name to Hezb-I-Watan or "Fatherland Party". Despite Najibullah's attempts to distance himself from the Communist ideology and past at least to the outside world, his position and that of the Hezb-I-Watan were ultimately untenable. On 16 April 1992 he was forced to resign by his fellow party members. Shortly afterwards, the various *Mujahedin factions* were to hold sway throughout Afghanistan.

2.2 Description of the tasks of the KhAD and the WAD

It was the task of the KhAD and of the WAD to ensure the continued short and long-term existence of the Communist regime, which had already been exposed to strong pressure shortly after the Great Saur Revolution. In practice, this meant that the KhAD and the WAD had a licence to track down and fight the regime's external and internal enemies as they saw fit.

The Communist regime in Afghanistan distinguished between external and internal enemies. The first group included political opponents from outside the PDPA such as left-wingers, Islamists, independent intellectuals and Mujahedin fighters. The second group included political opponents from within the PDPA , such as disloyal and disaffected fighters. In practice, the slightest sign of disloyalty or opposition provided a pretext for being branded an enemy.

The KhAD and the WAP identified enemies of the Communist regime with the help of the extensive network of informers they had in Afghanistan. This network also kept the KhAD and the WAD informed of, for instance, the antagonism within the PDPA between the Khalq and Parcham factions and also of military action plotted by the *Mujahedin*.

Persons branded enemies of the PDPA could be eliminated in many ways. Thus, KhAD leaders could instruct their subordinates to carry out arrest, detention, judicial sentencing, exile, torture, attempted murder and extrajudicial execution of real or alleged opponents of the Communist regime. If required, KhAD and WAD agents also attempted to murder persons outside Afghanistan, especially in Pakistan.¹⁶

Through their ruthless and mostly arbitrary behaviour the KhAD and the WAD deliberately created a climate of terror aimed at nipping any opposition among the civil population to the Communist regime in the bud.

2.3 Organisational structure of the KhAD and the WAD

Very little is known about the organisational structure of the Afghan security services under Taraki and Amin, i.e. the AGSA and the KAM. Far more is known about the organisation of the KhAD which, as already stated above, was upgraded to a Ministry and called WAD. However, neither is the information on the organisational structure of the KhAD and the WAD exhaustive. Of necessity, therefore, this paragraph only gives a general outline of the organisation of the KhAD and of its successor, the WAD.

¹⁶ The many hundreds of terrorist attacks perpetrated between 1980 and 1989 from Afghanistan in Pakistan cost 890 persons their lives; 3 201 people were injured during these attacks. Attacks reached a peak in 1987 (*Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, p. 231; *see Afghanistan. A Country Study*, Richard F. Nyrop & Donald M. Seekins (Edt.) (Washington, 1986), pp.. 330-331).

The AGSA and the KAM were directly responsible to the Minister of the Interior. Initially this also applied to the KhAD set up in January 1980. However, after a couple of months the KhAD was detached from the Ministry of the Interior and transformed into an almost completely independent directorate-general within the President's Bureau.¹⁷ Compared with its predecessor, the KhAD's staff complement was considerably increased.¹⁸

As far as is known at present, the KhAD Directorate-General was subdivided into six Directorates, called *riyasat* in Dari.. Two directorates were formed by the (domestic and foreign) intelligence service and the internal security service. The other four directorates were responsible for propaganda, coordination at provincial level, surveillance of diplomatic missions and protection of the Government and of its representatives respectively.

The KhAD enjoyed large freedom of action. Formally, it was only answerable to the President's Bureau. In real terms this meant that the President of Afghanistan and, through him, the Revolutionary Council monitored the KhAD's activities. In practice, therefore, the KhAD had a very broad margin of manoeuvre: in fact, it could act as it saw fit.

¹⁷ In this connection, several sources refer to "the President's Bureau". However, in *Nation is Dying*, p. 150, footnote 11, it is stated that before being transformed into a Ministry in 1986, the KhAD was formally responsible to the Prime Minister. KhAD offices were therefore occasionally referred to in somewhat veiled terms as "annexes to Prime Minister's ministry". In fact, upon his appointment as President on 27 December 1979 Karmal also acted as Prime Minister for some time. He was succeeded in that post by Keshtmand, who would remain Prime Minister until 1988 (*see Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan*, Ludwig W. Adamec, (London, 1991), pp.291, 295 and 304 and *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, p. 130).

¹⁸ It is impossible to state exactly how many Afghans worked for the KhAD and the WAD. However, during a visit to Kabul in 1983 a French journalist was told by a PDPA representative that the KhAD had 10 000 collaborators in the capital. In relation to the entire population of Kabul in those days, this would mean that 1 out of every 150 inhabitants of that city belonged to the KhAD agent (*ibidem*, p. 150, footnote 3) . Assessments by (western) observers put the number of persons working for the KhAD and the WAD at between 25 000 and 60 000 and even 150 000. The KhAD and the WAD were particularly well-represented in Kabul (*see the general situation report on Afghanistan dated 4 March 1998*, p. 34; *the general situation report on Afghanistan dated 3 November 1998*, p. 13, footnote 17; *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 133; *A Country Study*, p. 328).

Besides the civil KhAD there was also a separate military intelligence service, the KhAD-*e Nezami*, or "the military KhAD". Formally, this military intelligence service reportedly formed part of the Ministry of Defence.¹⁹

In 1986 the KhAD became a separate ministry under the name "Ministry of State Security" (WAD). The ministry was headed by Major-General Ghulam Faruq Yaqubi, who from then onwards started to take part in cabinet meetings in a ministerial capacity. Despite the name change, the security service continued to be popularly referred to as the KhAD. As far as is known to date both the civil and the military KhAD were incorporated into the new ministry. The Kabul Garrison, an elite unit set up because of doubts about the loyalty and determination of the Afghan government army, was also controlled by the WAD. That Garrison's specific task was to safeguard the stability of the Communist regime, to maintain law and order in Kabul and to protect senior members of the PDPA.²⁰

The WAD consisted of three Directorates-General, i.e. the Directorate-General for Security, the Directorate-General for Military Security and the Directorate-General for the Interior. The task of the Directorate-General for Security was to ensure security within the WAD. In practice, this meant that this Directorate-General was responsible for staffing policy. An important part of that policy was the permanent monitoring of WAD staff's trustworthiness. This Directorate-General had no separate directorates or departments.

¹⁹ See *Torture of Political Prisoners*, p. 6.

²⁰ From an organisational point of view, the Kabul Garrison was a WAD directorate. Besides the Kabul Garrison which came under the Ministry of State Security, there was a second Kabul Garrison. That garrison, which had virtually the same task, was the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and was led by Mohammed Nabi Azimi. In 1988 Najibullah created the *Gard-e-Khas* (later re-named *Gard-i-Milli*). This paramilitary volunteer unit mainly consisted of members of the PDPA's youth organisation, the *Sazman-I-Jawanan*. The *Gard-e-Khas* too was responsible for protecting senior officials belonging to the Communist regime. In that capacity, the unit played an important role in suppressing the coup staged by Lieutenant-General Tanai in 1989 (*see* section 2.1). See also *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, pp. 155 and 157.

The Directorate-General for Military Security was the continuation of the KhAD-*e-Nezami*, i.e. the military KhAd. The tasks of this Directorate-General were the same as those for the Directorate-General for Security, the difference being that its field of activity covered the various Afghan army services. This Directorate-General monitored, inter alia, the loyalty of the troops, countered *Mujaheddin's* infiltration attempts and tried to discourage desertion. The tasks of Directorate-General for Military Security were spread over several Directorates.

The Directorate-General for the Interior was the continuation of the civil KhAD. In line with its predecessor it was also known as the "civil WAD". This Directorate-General's task was to ensure the continued existence of the Communist regime by charting and countering anti-Government activities in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries (Pakistan). It was also responsible for spreading propaganda and for economic control and espionage. The many tasks of the Directorate-General for the Interior were spread over a large number of Directorates which, in turn, could consist of departments. The Directorates were designated by a number.²¹

Some Directorates did not fall within the above structure made up of Directorates-General. They may be termed "independent" Directorates, which were probably directly responsible to Minister Yaqubi or one of his deputies.

²¹ On pages 3 up to and including 5 of the report entitled Afghanistan Reports of Torture and Long-term detention without Trial (ASA 11/1/91), March 1991) Amnesty International gives briefly descriptions of the tasks of Directorates 1, 4, 5 and 7 *Riasat-e-Awal*, *Riasat-e-Char*, *Riasat-e-Panj* and *Riasat-e-Haft* respectively). As both the number and exact name of the Directorates may have changed, care should be taken in using such data.

The KhAD and the WAD maintained very good relations with both the general intelligence service (KGB) and the military intelligence service (GRU) of the Soviet Union. The KGB had a strong influence on the operation of the KhAD and the WAD. In fact, the KhAD and the WAD were an extension of the KGB.²² Many senior officials were assisted in their daily activities by Soviet staff. Soviet support enabled the KhAD and the WAD to develop into extremely efficient, ruthless and smoothly operating security services. Even after the last Soviet troops had pulled out of Afghanistan in February 1989, the WAD continued to receive financial and material support from the Soviet Union.

2.4 Officer recruitment and training

The KhAD and the WAD were elite components of the Communist state apparatus. They formed a state within a state in Afghanistan. The secret services' tentacles extended to the furthest nooks and crannies of society. The KhAD and WAD were the largest department in Afghanistan as regards both budget and manpower. Secret service agents were present in nearly every office and classroom in Kabul. The aim of the KhAD and the WAD was to have an informant within every family in Kabul²³. In order to achieve this goal, the KhAD and the WAD recruited informants on a large scale. The latter were deemed to provide assistance, such as the collection of information on colleagues and neighbours.

The KhAD and the WAD used very strict selection procedure to recruit collaborators, subjecting their loyalty to the PDPA to close scrutiny. This applied especially to the recruitment of officers. The KhAD and the WAD applied a very stringent recruitment policy for these functions. Only PDPA members who had been found to be very loyal and persons from pro-Government families qualified for admission as officer to the KhAD or the WAD. Before the KhAD or the WAD approached anyone to see if they were willing to join them as an officer, extensive security screening had already taken place. Such screening involved a probe not only into the antecedents of the prospective recruit but also into those of his entire family.

²² See Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention (pp. 122-124, The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, p. 33, A Country Study, pp. 328-9 and The Great Game Revisited, pp. 344-345 and 349. The KGB headquarters in Afghanistan were situated in the Darulman district in Kabul.

²³ A Nation is Dying, p. 77. See The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, p. 138 and A Country Study, p. 329.

New KhAD and WAD officer recruits received very intensive training, the so-called *Parawachi*. A successful *Parawachi* would be followed by a trial period called *Azmajchi*. During the *Azmajchi* the future officer's loyalty and fighting spirit were severely put to the test. Thus, for instance, they were required to spy on members of their family, arrest and torture friends and acquaintances, eliminate real or alleged enemies of the Communist regime or infiltrate *Mujahedin* ranks. Recruits who had already belonged to the PDPA at the beginning of their training were admitted to the select ranks of the KhAD and the WAD upon completing their trial period. Those who had not belonged to the PDPA first had to obtain membership, but this was no problem in view of their background.

The *Parawachi* and the *Azmajchi* formed part of the KhAD/WAD officer training. Such training was, therefore, not available to ordinary informants. Persons considered particularly loyal by the KhAD and the WAD could apply for a shorter training. Anyone already active within the Communist party prior to the great Saur Revolution as well as members of a select group of pro-Government families qualified for this shorter training.

The rank of officer with the KhAD or the WAD provided considerable material benefits. Thus, an officer's salary was almost ten times as high as that of an ordinary official. In addition, this salary could, with impunity, be supplemented with money obtained through blackmail and bribery. Officers of the KhAD or the WAD were also exempted from serving in the Afghan government army and had free access, if they so wished, to alcohol and prostitutes. The KhAD and the WAD also employed women – including as NCOs and officers. However, women were underrepresented in the senior officer ranks.

2.5 Interrogation and detention centres of the KhAD and the WAD

As set out in section 2.2, the KhAD and the WAD had virtually unlimited powers for tracking down enemies of the Communist regime. Since the KhAD and the WAD effectively used these powers, they were particularly feared by the Afghan population. This fear was also fostered by the very broad interpretation of the concept "enemy of the Communist regime" used by the KhAD and the WAD. Usually, a vague suspicion that someone entertained anti-Government views or engaged in anti-Government activities was sufficient for him (or her) to be arrested. ²⁴

As a rule, persons arrested by the KhAD or the WAD were first taken to one of the interrogation centres of the KhAD or the WAD. ²⁵ Detainees were questioned during their stay in one of these interrogation centres. Where a detainee was thought to withhold information during questioning, the KhAD or WAD agents would threaten him (or her) with the use of force. If that threat did not produce the desired effect, detainees were tortured in order to obtain the desired information. Torture therefore formed an integral part of the interrogation methods available to the KhAD and the WAD. They made systematic use of the possibility to extract confessions from detainees through torture. ²⁶

²⁴ Arrests were based on "evidence" provided by spies and informants or by suspects who were often tortured as part of their interrogation. Information was also obtained by means of electronic tapping (*A Nation is Dying*, p. 79). Persons could also be arrested and tortured with the sole aim of collecting incriminating information on one or more members of their family (*ibidem*, p. 80).

²⁵ See *Torture of Political Prisoners*, p. 6.

²⁶ See the general situation report on Afghanistan date 4 March 1998, p. 34. Although political prisoners were often brutally tortured under the Taraki and Amin regime, torture only became a fully integrated part of the interrogation process under the Karmal and Najibullah (*A nation is Dying*, p. 81).

The KhAD headquarters in Kabul was known as the Shashdarak centre.²⁷ Those arrested in Kabul were often first taken to Shashdarak for initial questioning. However, initial questioning could also take place in one of the local KhAD offices elsewhere in town. Following initial questioning, detainees were usually taken to Sedarat, the KhAD's central interrogation centre in Kabul.²⁸ Detainees would sometimes be kept in Sedarat for months for interrogation purposes. During this stage they would be incarcerated in particularly unhygienic cells.²⁹ During both the initial

²⁷ See Torture of Political Prisoners, pp. 6 and 8 and A Nation is Dying, pp. 83 to 84. The KhAD headquarters is named after the neighbourhood where it is situated. Shashdarak is in district 9 in the south-eastern part of Kabul. That neighbourhood lies in the same district as Microrayon, where many Communist officials live, and Pul-i-Charki, the neighbourhood with the infamous prison bearing the same name.

²⁸ Sedarat also serves as a detention centre where political prisoners were sometimes held for years without any formal charges being brought. Laber and Rubin have information to the effect that female political prisoners in particular used to be taken directly to Sedarat following their arrest (*ibidem*, p. 150, footnote 15).

²⁹ This is apparent from inter alia the reports by the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Felix Ermacora, who visited Shashdarak and Sedarat in 1987 (Situation of human rights in Afghanistan. Note by the Secretary General, UN (A42/667, 23 October 1987), sections 3, 47, 58-60). In 1989 the Special Rapporteur visited Shashdarak again. During that visit he found the hygienic conditions in the interrogation centre to have somewhat improved (UN report on human rights 1989, section 40). In fact, the abominable conditions in the KhAD/WAD interrogation and detention centres formed an integral part of the interrogation strategy, the aim being to break the prisoners' will (A Nation is Dying, p. 94). For a description of the bad prison conditions see also Reports of Torture and Long-term Detention Without Trial, pp. 2 and 5 by Amnesty International and The Forgotten War, pp. 95 to 97 by Human Rights Watch.

interrogation and the interrogation in Sedarat, detainees were systematically tortured.³⁰ Elsewhere in Afghanistan too there were also KhAD interrogation and detention centres where prisoners were tortured. Some detainees from outside the capital were taken to the central interrogation centre in Kabul immediately after their arrest.³¹

³⁰ See Torture of Political Prisoners, Reports of Torture and Long-term Detention Without Trial, The Forgotten War, pp. 93-5. This picture also emerges from the Special Rapporteur's reports. See for example, the UN report on Human Rights 1986, sections 56 and 57, which describes *inter alia* how female prisoners were tortured.

³¹ In his 1985 report, the Special Rapporteur indicated that torture was regular practice both in Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan. He mentioned in particular the Pul-i-Charki prison, military bases (especially in the province), police stations in Kabul and all provinces, the Ministry of the Interior, the KhAD headquarters and the eight KhAD detention centres in Kabul. He also stated that about two hundred houses in the Kabul area were used as KhAD detention centres (UN report on Human Rights 1985, section 87, footnote 12; Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, section 3). In his 1989 report, the Special Rapporteur specified that interrogations took place in eleven police stations in Kabul (UN report on Human Rights 1989, section 42). This is confirmed by Amnesty International (Torture of Political Prisoners, pp. 6 and 7). This organisation too states that torture in Kabul took place not only in Shashdarak and Sedarat but also in other KhAD offices. In this connection, Amnesty International refers to KhAD offices Three, Four and Five and the office in the Ahmad Shah Khan House, that in the Wazir Akbar Khan House and also that in the Howzai Barikat district. In 1987 the Special Rapporteur visited, *inter alia*, the Darlawan interrogation centre which was not named by Amnesty International. Laber and Rubin too mention other names, such as a detention centre dug into the Shahrara hill (A Nation is Dying, pp. 82-83). Reports on torture are not restricted to Kabul. Amnesty International received reports of torture in KhAD interrogation centres in Bamiyan, Ghazni, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Lashkargah and Pol-i-Khomri and also in the Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sharif prisons (Torture of Political Prisoners, p. 7). According to Amnesty's information the KhAD headquarters in Kandahar was situated in Abdul Rahim Latif's former house in the Shahr-e Nau district. However, torture in Kandahar mainly took place in the so-called "Musa Khan building". Torture also took place in the KhAD interrogation centre known as "Darwazan". Like the Special Rapporteur, Amnesty International also has indications that torture took place in army camps.

Many detainees did not survive the interrogation process in the interrogation centres. The others were taken to KhAD and WAD detention centres. Many political prisoners were detained in such detention centres without trial and legal assistance; they were not allowed any contact with the outside world. The detention centres had separate sections for political prisoners. Thus, the Pul-i-Charki prison in district 12 in the Arzan Kimat neighbourhood, at the eastern-most edge of Kabul had at least four sections, of which in particular Blocks I and II (to a lesser degree also Block IV ³²) were reserved for political prisoners. These sections were administered by the KhAD and later by the WAD, in close cooperation with the Revolutionary Public Prosecutor's Office. ³³.

³² There are indications that Block IV contained young people, pupils and students whose loyalty to the Communist regime was in doubt. The Special Rapporteur states, however, that there were no political prisoners in this section during his 1989 visit to Pul-i-Charki (UN report on Human Rights 1989, section 36).

³³ Block III, administered by the Ministry of Justice in close cooperation with the regular Public Prosecutor's office housed perpetrators of common-law offences. A report published by Amnesty International in 1988 states that Block I was reserved for former ministers and other prominent political prisoners. Persons sentenced to death and foreign prisoners were also said to be held in Block I. These prisoners were reportedly allowed to take exercise in the open air from time to time. This privilege was not granted to prisoners in Block II, which was mainly intended for political prisoners who still had to stand trial. In accordance with customary practice, prisoners in Blocks I and II were not allowed to receive visitors or write letters (Reports of Torture and Long-term Detention Without Trial, pp. 5-7). In his first report on the human rights situation in Afghanistan Felix Ermacora, who was Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at the time, writes that the Pul-i-Charki prison also had a women's section at the end of the seventies (UN report on Human Rights 1985, section 74). The Special Rapporteur visited the Pul-i-Charki prison in 1987, 1989, 1991 and 1992. During his 1989 visit he was allowed to visit the entire prison. In his report, he mentions seven sections with Block I being virtually empty and Block VI completely empty. In Block II there were over 300 political prisoners awaiting trial. According to the Special Rapporteur, Block IV housed non-political prisoners. Block VII was apparently reserved for female prisoners (UN report on Human Rights 1989, section 36).

Ill-treatment of political prisoners whose interrogation had already been concluded was a common occurrence in KhAD and WAD detention centres. However, there was no longer any systematic torture during the detention stage.³⁴ The conditions in which political prisoners were kept in the Pul-i-Charki prison and other prisons under the Communist regime were particularly shocking and degrading.³⁵ Some political prisoners were forced to serve in the Afghan army after their release; their families were not always informed of this.³⁶

³⁴ In its 1986 report Amnesty International states that although some prisoners were also tortured during detention, reports by former prisoners showed that such practices were mainly restricted to the interrogation centres (Torture of Political Prisoners, p. 7). In its 1988 report (ASA 11.2.1998, May 1988) Amnesty International describes how some prisoners, including a woman, were subjected to serious ill-treatment or tortured while they were held in Pul-i-Chomri and other prisons (Afghanistan. Unlawful Killings and Torture, pp. 6-8). The Special Rapporteur notes that the conditions in which prisoners were detained can also be seen as a form of psychological torture. He too has evidence of serious ill-treatment, particularly in the Pul-i-Charki prison (Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, sections 64 and 66; see A Nation is Dying, pp. 83-84).

³⁵ See UN report on Human Rights 1986, sections 54-55, Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, section 60, UN report on Human Rights 1989, section 43, UN report on Human Rights 1991, section 43, UN report on Human Rights 1992, sections 75-79 and The Great Game Revisited, pp. 349-350. Under the Communist regime there were repeated accusations that the Pul-i-Charki prison in particular contained far too many prisoners. The Special Rapporteur was not always able to confirm these reports. During his visits to the Pul-i-Charki prison the number of prisoners was not excessively high. It should be noted, however, that under the Communist regime the International Committee of the Red Cross received little or no permission from the Afghan authorities to visit condemned and non-condemned prisoners (see UN report on Human Rights 1987, section 34, Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, sections 59-60, UN report on Human Rights 1988, section 17, UN report on Human Rights 1989, section 44, UN report on Human Rights 1990, sections 35-36, UN report on Human Rights 1991, sections 37-38, 50, UN report on Human Rights 1992, section 75 and The Forgotten War, pp. 64, 96-97, footnote 258).

³⁶ See A Nation is Dying, pp. 48-49, The Forgotten War, pp. 38-39 and Unlawful Killings and Torture, p. 9.

2.6 Interrogation and torture methods of the KhAD and the WAD

Detainees and prisoners were systematically tortured in the interrogation and detention centres of the KhAD and the WAD. Soviet personnel were often present during these interrogations. These Soviets, probably KGB agents, led the interrogation from the background. They sometimes actively participated in the interrogation. However, they usually left physical torture to the members of the KhAD or the WAD present at interrogation. Many of these Afghan agents had learned the interrogation techniques they applied from their Communist allies, either during a three to six-month course in the Soviet Union or at a school which the Soviets had set up for that purpose near Kabul.³⁷

KhAD and WAD agents were very inventive in choosing their torture methods. The methods used by the KhAD and the WAD, which tended to be bizarre, have already been amply described by human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and by the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. In order to illustrate the great variety of cruel forms of torture to which political prisoners were subjected, an overview of these techniques is given below. This overview is not exhaustive, but provides a fair idea of how the KhAD and WAD agents went about their business.³⁸

³⁷ See Torture of Political Prisoners, p. 17 and A Nation is Dying, p. 94.

³⁸ For a description of the torture methods of the KhAD and the WAD, see inter alia UN report on Human Rights 1985, sections 74, 76, 86-87, 105-106, UN report on Human Rights 1986, sections 56-57, UN report on Human Rights 1987, section 15, UN report on Human Rights 1988, section 21, Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, sections 43-44, 54, 61-66, UN report on Human Rights 1989, sections 41-42, UN report on Human Rights 1991, sections 35-51, Torture of Political Prisoners, pp. 11-16, Unlawful Killings and Torture, pp. 6-8, Reports of Torture and Long-term Detention Without Trial, pp. 3-7, The Forgotten War, p. 93, A Nation is Dying, pp. 48-55 and pp. 81-99 and The Great Game Revisited, pp. 347-349.

Heavy punches to a suspect's body and face constituted a simple yet effective means of extracting a confession. Punches were often so heavy and lasted for so long that the suspect would lose consciousness. After coming round, the punishment would be repeated as necessary. As well as bare fists, KhAD and WAD agents would use objects such as bottles, sticks, whips, rifle butts, metal rods and electric flexes. In some instances the suspect would be suspended from a rotating fan during such punishment. Sometimes the suspect's body would be worked over with knives, pieces of glass or other sharp objects. Another method of forcing a suspect to talk was to give him the hot-iron treatment or mutilate his lips with a lighted cigarette. There were also cases in which a suspect was forced to place his penis and testicles on a table, whereupon another table would be placed upside down on top. One or more of the interrogators would then jump up and down on the table.

As part of the severe ill-treatment meted out to a suspect, KhAD or WAD agents might decide to deliberately break his fingers, toes, arms, legs, ribs or nose. In some cases they would cut off one or both of his ears. Extraction of one or more of the suspect's fingernails was another frequent form of torture practised by the KhAD and the WAD.

Many suspects were given electric shocks during their interrogations. The wires would be attached to such parts of the suspect's body as the tongue, testicles, nipples or between the toes or fingers. In some cases electric shocks would be administered with the aid of equipment specially designed for such a type of torture. Some survivors of such torture report the use of something resembling a headphone which – as its description implies – was attached to the head, while others refer to a kind of telephone booth from which the voltage could apparently be controlled.³⁹ Sometimes the effect of the electric shocks would be intensified by pouring water over the suspect. Suspects would also be forced to step into basins of water through which an electric current would be passed.

³⁹ Such equipment was probably imported from the Soviet Union and East Germany (*A Nation is Dying*, p. 89).

Another form of torture during interrogation would consist of repeatedly immersing the suspect's head in a bowl of water, thereby bringing him close to drowning again and again. In other cases a suspect's penis would be tied tightly with a length of string and he would then be forced to drink large quantities of water; he would be permitted to urinate only when he had made a confession. Other suspects were given petrol to drink. Some individuals witnessed prisoners being torn to pieces.⁴⁰ The rape of both male and female suspects was another very common form of torture. Sometimes women would be raped with their husbands present.

Political prisoners would also be tortured in their cells. One of the most common methods of torture was sleep-deprivation – a torture which might sometimes last for well over ten days. Some suspects were kept isolated in dark cells for long periods of time, while others shared their cells with many fellow prisoners. The cells would sometimes be swarming with rats and often lacked any form of sanitation or heating. Some suspects would be suspended for long periods either upright or upside down from hooks attached to the ceiling of their cells for that purpose. In some cases the corpse of a fellow prisoner would be placed in a cell containing one or more prisoners. Suspects would sometimes be deprived of food and water for long periods. They might also be forced to stand – possibly naked – in the burning sun or bitter cold for long periods. KhAD and WAD agents would also use psychological methods of torture. For example, some suspects would be told that members of their family had been murdered.

Thousands of suspects were tortured to death by KhAD and WAD agents. If the KhAD or WAD thought that a suspect was guilty, they could kill him or her without further investigation or judicial intervention. The agents concerned did not have to account for their actions in any way; the KhAD and the WAD were above the law. The Special Revolutionary Court and the Revolutionary Public Prosecutor were controlled by the KhAD and the WAD. Many suspects were sentenced to imprisonment or the death penalty on the basis of information obtained under torture. Suspects were not entitled to a lawyer, nor could they appeal against the judge's decision.

⁴⁰ For a description, see e.g. [A Nation is Dying](#), p. 84.

Under the Communist regime, neither the political leadership of Afghanistan nor the leadership of the DVPA or Hezb-i-Watan or the Afghan security forces ever attempted to put a stop to the practices described. On the contrary, they deliberately enforced and implemented such methods. All available means – however cruel – were permitted in the battle to preserve the Communist regime.

The national conciliation policy which Najibullah proclaimed after he was elected President did not have any moderating effect on the WAD's activities. As already mentioned in § 2.1, the sole aim of that policy was to give the Communist regime in Afghanistan a democratic complexion. In practice, however, there was no change in the existing system whereby the DVPA held a monopoly on power. Nor was there any change in the WAD's role in the continued existence of that system; just as in the past, the WAD continued to take ruthless action against real or imagined opponents of the Communist regime. Indeed, in the years following the withdrawal of the Soviet troops (1989-1992), Najibullah saw the WAD as an indispensable means of preserving his position of power, which was under threat from both inside and outside the country. The departure of the Soviet troops heralded a period marked by various attempted coups against Najibullah from within the ranks of the DVPA.⁴¹ The WAD thwarted those attempts and retaliated with bloody purges within the party. In addition, the various *Mujahideen* factions seized upon the departure of the Soviet troops to step up their fight against the Communist regime.⁴² The WAD continued to play an important role in the violent suppression of such resistance. Indeed, the WAD even hardened its position as a reaction to the bloody way in which government officials, including various WAD collaborators, were murdered by the *Mujahideen* – in particular by members of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf's Ittehad-i-Islami.

⁴¹ See § 2.1.

⁴² Following the departure of the Soviet troops, the Mujahideen fought heavy and protracted battles against government troops around Jalalabad (1989), Khost (1991) and Gardez (1991). Many thousands were killed in the course of those battles.

It is estimated that during the Communist regime in Afghanistan 200 000 citizens were arrested and detained by the Afghan security services (AGSA, KAM, KhAD and WAD), whereby about 50 000 Afghans lost their lives, mostly after being tortured or sentenced to death ⁴³.

2.7 Responsibility for human rights violations

The climate of terror and fear generated by the KhAD and the WAD in Afghan society also reigned within the security services themselves. The loyalty of KhAD and WAD agents was constantly being put to the test. If there was the slightest doubt about an agent's devotion to the Communist cause, he or she was automatically removed from the KhAD or WAD ranks. This usually spelled death for the agent in question. In order not to be suspected of being disloyal, KhAD and WAD agents had to prove themselves almost daily.

As a first assignment, NCOs and officers ⁴⁴ were posted to KhAD and WAD sections actively engaged in tracking down "elements that posed a threat to the State". KhAD and WAD agents regularly changed sections in order to prevent them acquiring too much power within a specific section. Sometimes agents were transferred several times a year. Anyone who had been with the KhAD or the WAD for more than a year had worked in at least two sections. An NCO or officer could only hope to be posted to a section or directorate carrying out activities of a more administrative or technical nature ⁴⁵ if he had proved his worth sufficiently during an initial assignment or assignments.

⁴³ See Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention, pp. 138 - 140 and The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, p. 137.

⁴⁴ For an overview of ranks within the KhAD and the WAD, see annex on page 32 and 33 of this situation report.

⁴⁵ E.g. the directorate dealing with foreign espionage. Such administrative and technical activities were usually very sensitive and therefore reserved only for highly loyal NCOs and officers.

As already stated in section 2.4 agents could not be promoted to officer within the KhAD or the WAD unless they had proved their unconditional loyalty to the Communist regime. This also applied to promotions available to KhAD and WAD officers after completing their training. Any officer promoted during his period of service was, therefore, involved in arrests, interrogations, torture and even executions.

Broadly speaking, KhAD and WAD NCOs carried out the same activities as officers. Like the officers, NCOs were actively involved in the torture of prisoners for the purpose of information-gathering, played an active role in threatening and intimidating citizens and were also deployed to arrest real and alleged opponents of the Communist regime or place them in custody. However, as a rule, KhAD and WAD NCOs had less independent investigative tasks than officers and mostly no commandment powers. In practice, NCOs themselves could nevertheless decide to arrest or even execute a person if they saw fit to do so. Like officers, NCOs could not function within the KhAD or the WAD if they were unwilling to take part in the systematic human rights violations by these organisations.

KhAD and WAD NCOs and officers could not resign without running the risk of being branded disloyal. They could, however, be transferred to another public service.

The above suggests that all NCOs and officers were active in the macabre sections of the KhAD and WAD and were personally involved in the arrest, interrogation, torture and even execution of suspects.

2.8 Position of former KhAD and WAD agents in Afghanistan

Despite the bad reputation of the KhAD and the WAD, former members of these security services and their close relatives in Afghanistan are not by definition at risk of persecution by the Taliban. The Taliban have on the contrary accepted many people who were working for the KhAD and the WAD within their own intelligence service, including high-ranking officers (generals, colonels, and majors). Apparently the Taliban regard the specific know-how of such former KhAD and WAD agents as more important than their political past ⁴⁶.

Not all former KhAD and WAD agents are proof against persecution by the Taliban. This applies for example to those who were unwilling (and still are unwilling) to work for the Taliban. Those who made too many enemies in the exercise of their activities are also still at risk ⁴⁷. The extent to which a former KhAD or WAD agent is still at risk of persecution by the Taliban depends on the person concerned. His current attitude towards the Taliban, together with what is known about him and the extent to which he has made enemies, carries appreciably greater weight than the position he held at the time.

Upon their return to Afghanistan, former KhAD and WAD agents who emigrated to the West run the risk of having criminal proceedings brought against them by the Taliban. Because they escaped to the West, they are suspected of belonging to the group that still holds Communist ideas or to the group that made too many personal enemies during their KhAD and WAD activities. Upon their return to Afghanistan, former KhAD and WAD members cannot expect to be given a fair trial.

⁴⁶ See general situation report on Afghanistan dated 4 March 1998, p. 34, footnote 90, general situation report on Afghanistan dated 3 November 1998, p. 13, and general situation report on Afghanistan dated 16 September 1999, pp. 54 and 55. Incidentally, such pragmatism is not new. Many former KhAD and WAD agents now working for the Taliban were active in the intelligence services of the Rabbani government and the various "*Mujaheddin*" groups in the period 1992 to 1996.

⁴⁷ Moreover, many of such ideologically enthusiastic former KhAD and WAD agents have long since left Afghanistan and are now resident in the West.

2.9. Summary

During the Communist regime the Afghan security services were notorious for their brutal methods. It is therefore inconceivable that anyone working for these services, regardless of the level at which he or she was working, was unaware of the serious human rights violations that were taking place; this was well-known both within Afghanistan and outside it. Many KhAD and WAD members took part in these human rights violations. Indeed anyone from the rank of NCO upwards took an active part in such violations.

From 1978 to 1992 Afghanistan was a dictatorship where the Communist Party ruled with a rod of iron. There was precious little support for the Communist Party among the population. This dissatisfaction led to revolts almost immediately after the Great Saur Revolution and these soon took on the proportions of large-scale armed conflict. In order to survive the Communist Party sought refuge in brute force. The Communist Party's security services were a major exponent of such force.

The first two security services, the AGSA and the KAM, were short-lived, as were the regimes of their founders, President Taraki and President Amin. These services nevertheless managed to instil fear among the population in that short time. Both the AGSA and the KAM were responsible for indiscriminate arrests, routine torture and extra-judicial executions. Because of their short and turbulent existence there is little information on the AGSA and the KAM.

On taking up office in 1980 President Karmal distanced himself in no uncertain terms from the terror sown among the population by the AGSA and the KAM. It soon became apparent that the security service, the KhAD, which he set up, also applied the same ruthless methods as those of his predecessors. Nor was there any change in this pattern under President Najibullah, who succeeded Karmal in 1986. However, the KhAD was transformed into a separate ministry, the WAD. Despite the change in name people continued to refer to the security service as the KhAD.

The KhAD and the WAD were responsible for guaranteeing the continuing existence of the Communist regime in the short and long term. In practice, this meant that the KhAD and the WAD had to track down and eliminate the enemies of the regime. In carrying out their tasks, the KhAD and the WAD had virtually unlimited powers which they exploited to the full. The slightest suspicion against a person sufficed to arrest or detain him or her. In this way the KhAD and the WAD created a climate of terror aimed at nipping any opposition among the civil population in the bud. Given their responsibilities the KhAD and the WAD formed the elite echelons of the Communist state apparatus.

The "civil" KhAD was a directorate-general of the President's Bureau. It consisted of several directorates, each with its own range of tasks. The "military" KhAD claimed to have been part of the Ministry of Defence. In 1986 the KhAD became a separate ministry. In this new ministry the civil and military KhAD formed two separate directorates-general, each with a number of directorates. In all the WAD had three directorates-general. The WAD also had a number of "independent" directorates, including that incorporating the revolutionary court. The KhAD and the WAD maintained very close relations with the Soviet Union's general intelligence service (KGB) and military intelligence service (GRU).

KhAD and WAD agents were carefully selected. This applied in particular to those seeking to become officers. Only members of the DPPA and persons from pro-Government families who had proved their loyalty were considered for the rank of officer. New officer recruits were subjected to highly intensive training followed by a trial period. New recruits' loyalty was put severely to the test during this trial period.

The KhAD and the WAD had a great number of interrogation and detention centres in Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan. Persons suspected of opposition activities were routinely tortured in these centres. KhAD and WAD agents were very inventive in their selection of methods of torture. Those who survived interrogation were moved to prisons where degrading conditions obtained.

As already mentioned, all KhAD and WAD NCOs and officers were guilty of human rights violations. However, NCOs and officers could not operate within the KhAD and the WAD unless they had given proof of their unconditional loyalty to the Communist regime. During their trial period *Azmajchi*, officers, had to pass a very severe loyalty test. As a first assignment NCOs and officers were transferred to KhAD and WAD sections actively engaged in tracking down "subversive elements". A rota system ensured that agents often switched sections. Only those who had proved their worth during an initial assignment or assignments qualified for promotion or a transfer to a section or directorate with more administrative or technical activities. In practice, this meant that all KhAD and WAD NCOs and officers took part in interrogation and torture of real and alleged opponents of the Communist regime.

After the fall of the Communist regime, many KhAD and WAD agents went to work for the new rulers' intelligence services. The Taliban intelligence service too is partly manned by former KhAD and WAD agents. Former KhAD agents and their close relatives in Afghanistan do not therefore automatically run the risk of being persecuted by the Taliban. Their current attitude towards the Taliban combined with what is known about them and the extent to which they made enemies carries far more weight than the function they occupied at the time.

3 Literature

In preparing this situation report use was made inter alia of the sources set out below. The first time reference is made to a title in a footnote, the full title description is given. A shortened version is used thereafter. An exception to this rule are the reports on the human rights situation in Afghanistan prepared over the years by the then Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights, Felix Ermacora. As emerges from this documentation list, his reports have fairly similar titles. Accordingly, for the shortened version of these titles in the footnotes the phrase "UN report on human rights" is used together with the year in which the report was published.

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Annex

NCO and officer ranks within the KhAD and the WAD

This Annex gives an overview of NCO and officer ranks within the KhAD and the WAD, starting from the lowest NCO rank. The system of ranks hardly differs from that in use in the Afghan army; the only feature of importance in the context of this situation report is that contrary to the Afghan army there is no *Lomrhe Brhes* (military academy-trained sergeant-major) within the KhAD and the WAD.

Afghan designations are given in italics. The brackets contain rank equivalents in English as stated in S. Fida Yunas's book entitled Afghanistan. Organization of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan/Watan Party, Governments and Biographical Sketches (1982-1998), Vol. 2 (Peshawar), pp. 1141-1146. Not all ranks have exact equivalents within the Dutch army.

NCOs

Dalgai Mashar (Corporal)
Brhes (Sergeant)
Lowar Brhes (Sergeant-Major)
Jag Brhes (Senior Sergeant-Major)

Officers

a. *Zabetan* (subalterns):

Dreyem Bridmam (Third Lieutenant)
Doham Bridman (Second Lieutenant)
Lomrai Bridman (Lieutenant)
Turan (Captain)
Jag Turan (Senior Captain)

b. *Aameran* (field officers):

Jagran (Major)

Dagarman (Lieutenant-Colonel)

Dagarwal (Colonel)

c. *Arkanan* (general officers):

Brid Janral (Brigadier-General)

Turan Janral (Major-General)

Dagar Janral (Lieutenant-General)

Star Janral (General)

