**The Cold War Soviet Afghanistan War**

The Soviet Afghanistan War was fought between Afghanistan rebels called the Mujahideen and the Soviet supported Afghanistan government. The United States supported the Afghanistan rebels in order to try and overthrow the communist government and to prevent the spread of communism.

**Dates:** December 24, 1979 - February 15, 1989

**Leaders:** The leaders of Afghanistan during the war included General Secretary Babrak Karmal and President Mohammad Najibullah. Soviet Union leaders included Leonid Brezhnev and Mikhail Gorbachev. Leaders from the Mujahideen included Ahmad Shah Massoud (nicknamed the Lion of Panjshir) and Abdul Haq. US Presidents during this time were Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

Mujahideen using surface-to-air missile Photo by Unknown

**Before the War**

As one of its bordering neighbors, the Soviet Union had a long history of supporting and providing aid to Afghanistan. On April 27, 1978 a Soviet supported communist government took over the country. The new government was called the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA).

Many of the Afghanistan people did not like the new communist government, primarily because many of the laws went against their Muslim religion. They began to rebel against the current government. The rebels called themselves the Mujahideen.

In September of 1979, events in Afghanistan became more unstable when Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin had the current president killed and took control of the communist government.

**The War Begins**

The leaders of the Soviet Union became concerned that President Amin was having discussions with the United States. On December 24, 1979 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. They had President Amin put to death and installed their own leader, President Babrak Karmal.

**The War Over the next several years**

The Soviet Army would battle with the Mujahideen. It was a very difficult battle. Many of the Soviet soldiers were untested in battle and their gear was not designed for the harsh environment of Afghanistan. Also, the Mujahideen soldiers were fighting for their homeland and their religion. They were fierce fighters and had many good places to hide in the mountains.

As the war continued with little success, it became a source of embarrassment for the Soviet Union. Their army no longer seemed invincible to the rest of the world. The Soviets also came under increasing international pressure. The war was condemned by the United Nations, the US pulled out of the SALT treaty talks, and the US boycotted the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow.

**The War Ends**

When Mikhail Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union he wanted the war to end. He first tried to increase Soviet troops to end the war quickly. However, this didn't work. By 1988 Gorbachev realized the war was costing Soviet troops and hurting their economy. He signed a peace treaty to end the war. The last Soviet troops departed Afghanistan on February 15, 1989.

**Facts About the Soviet Afghanistan War**

* Because the Soviet Union failed in securing Afghanistan from the rebels for such a long period of time, the war is sometimes referred to as the Soviet Union's Vietnam War.
* The United States provided the Mujahideen with Stinger missiles. These enabled them to shoot down Soviet helicopters and were a major turning point in the war.
* Around 13,000 Soviet troops were killed in the war.
* It's estimated that over 1 million Afghanis died from the war. Most of these were civilians, not soldiers.
* Around 5 million people fled the country of Afghanistan during the war. Most went to Pakistan or Iraq.
* The war destroyed much of the country's infrastructure. It became one of the poorest nations in the world after the war was over.  
    
  Read more at: <http://www.ducksters.com/history/cold_war/soviet_afghanistan_war.php>  
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**Questions**

1. Who was involved in the War?

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1. Who were the leaders of:

The Soviet Union \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Afghanistan \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The United States \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Why did the Afghanistan people not like the new communist government? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What happened in September 1979?

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1. What was the reason the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979?

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1. Why was the battle between The Soviet Army and the Mujahideen a difficult battle?

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1. What pressure did the international community put on the Soviet Union?

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1. What did Mikhail Gorbachev do to end the war? What were his reasons?

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