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## SOVIETS 'IN FORCE' CLOSE TO **PAKISTAN**

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Soviets 'in force' close to **Pakistan** ISLAMABAD (AP).\_ Soviet forces in south-eastern **Afghanistan** were reported yesterday to be moving close to the **Pakistan** frontier in what guerrilla sources described as a "'huge operation" to cut off their supply lines to the besieged city of Kandahar.

Reports of fierce fighting between Islamic rebels and Soviet troops within 45 km of the **Pakistan** border were confirmed by two resistance sources.

They said Soviet and pro-Moscow **Afghan** government troops had a set of security posts midway between Kandahar, formerly **Afghanistan's** second biggest city, and the **Pakistan** border town of Chaman.

Diplomats in Islamabad, **Pakistan's** capital and a key listening post for **Afghanistan**, said the operation appeared to be part of a wider strategy begun last year to seal the most troublesome stretch of border, which snakes around Nangarhar, Paktia and Kandahar provinces.

Landlocked **Afghanistan**, which shares a 2,496 km border with **Pakistan**, has been closed to western journalists since a communist coup in 1978 and Soviet military intervention a year later.

There are about 100,000 Soviet troops in **Afghanistan** who were sent in to put down a Moslem insurrection against the Marxist government, headed by Babrak Karmal.

One of the resistance sources, Habibullah Karzai, a former **Afghan** diplomat to the United Nations who now lives in the southwestern **Pakistan** town of Quetta, said as many as 3000 to 5000 soldiers were involved in the security operation.

"This is a very strategic route for the guerrillas," said Karzai, who has been accurate in detailing past battles. "They have cut off a major supply route. It could be very demoralising for the Mujahedeen."