

the countryside, although their loyalty to the Afghan Government remained in question. Russian and East European instructors taught Soviet-approved courses in Afghan classrooms, and over 30,000 Afghan children were sent to the Soviet Union for schooling.

The stalemate on the battlefield continued throughout 1986. Resistance efforts were plagued by the lack of adequate defences against Soviet low-level air attack. To remedy this, the Reagan Administration decided in March to supply Stinger and British-built Blowpipe shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles to the Afghan guerillas. The Mujahideen leadership initially denied receiving these weapons amid reports that Pakistan, through which arms are channelled to the resistance, had withheld the missiles, fearing Soviet reprisals and doubting the United States' commitment to its security. However, by December 1986, the Stingers were reported to have shot down many Soviet jets and helicopter-gunships, forcing the Soviet air force to fly at higher altitudes, thereby reducing its effectiveness.

Fighting flared again throughout the country in the fall of 1986 after a summer of relative calm. Thirty-three thousand Soviet and Afghan troops launched offensives north of Kabul and to the west in Herat province to blunt the largest resistance offensive mounted by the Mujahideen in three years.

Despite continued fighting, the Soviet Union proceeded in October with an 8,000-man troop withdrawal which had been announced by Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev on 28 July. Western officials described the withdrawal as a token gesture, however, noting that four of the six regiments withdrawn were anti-aircraft and anti-tank units (the Mujahideen do not have aircraft or tanks) and that over 120,000 Soviet troops still remained in Afghanistan.