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Department of State

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0687

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 09866

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E. O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, IS, LE, US
SUBJECT: ATLIT PRISONERS

REF: (A) STATE 202113, (B) STATE 200336,
-- (C) STATE 200321

1. ~~SECRET~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. WE PASSED THE FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROCEDURE FOR HANDOVER OF ATLIT DETAINEES TO NIMROD NOVIK JULY 3. BY THE TIME WE REACHED NOVIK THE RELEASE OF 300 DETAINEES THROUGH NAQURA HAD ALREADY BEEN ACCOMPLISHED, BUT WE TOLD HIM WE ASSUMED THE SUGGESTION FOR AN ALTERNATIVE ROUTE MIGHT STILL BE RELEVANT FOR FUTURE RELEASE.

3. NOVIK SAID THE FACT THAT PASSING THE DETAINEES DIRECTLY TO SYRIA THROUGH THE GOLAN WAS A LEBANESE IDEA REFLECTING SECURITY CONCERNS CHANGED THE COMPLEXION OF THE ISSUE. THE ISRAELIS PREVIOUSLY HAD ASSUMED THAT THE PURPOSE OF HANDING THE DETAINEES TO SYRIA WAS TO GIVE SYRIA A PUBLIC RELATIONS BONUS. HENCE, NEITHER RABIN NOR PERES HAD SHOWN ANY GREAT ENTHUSIASM WHEN NOVIK BROACHED

DECLASSIFIED

NLS 197-109/1 #131

BY CL NARA, DATE 2/6/03

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THE IDEA. NOVIK ADDED THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER THE ISSUE HAD BEEN RAISED AT THE CABINET MEETING JULY 1 WHICH DISCUSSED THE DETAINEE RELEASE.

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4. NOVIK WAS WILLING TO RAISE THE ISSUE WITH GOI LEADERS AGAIN WITH REFERENCE TO FUTURE RELEASES. BUT HE SAID HE WOULD ONLY DO SO (1) IF THERE WAS STILL INTEREST IN THE WAKE OF TODAY'S RELEASE, AND (2) IF WE COULD GIVE HIM FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT WHO IN THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAD ORIGINATED THE IDEA, AND WHAT THE "SECURITY CONCERNS" WERE WHICH HAD MOTIVATED IT.

5. NOVIK'S GUESS WAS THAT THE CABINET WOULD TURN DOWN THE IDEA IN ANY CASE, BUT THAT DEPENDED ON HOW STRONG A CASE COULD BE MADE. FLATEN

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