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TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PTER, EAID, LE, SY

SUBJECT: SEEKING SYRIAN AND LEBANESE COOPERATION IN
CLOSING BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

1. (~~SECRET~~ ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. AS EMBASSIES ARE AWARE, US HAS NOW LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN TO ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR CLOSING DOWN BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. EVEN ASSUMING, HOWEVER, THAT WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN PERSUADING OTHER NATIONS TO CEASE CIVIL AIR TRAFFIC BETWEEN THEIR AIRPORTS AND BIA, THE AIRSTRIPE AT BIA WILL CONTINUE TO BE USABLE BY AIRCRAFT OF VARIOUS SORTS AND PARTICULARLY AIRCRAFT UNDER THE CONTROL OF HIJACKERS. IN ORDER TO PREVENT BIA BEING USED AS A SAFEHAVEN FOR HIJACKED AIRCRAFT, IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO PHYSICALLY DISABLE THE AIRPORT IN SUCH WAY THAT PLANES WILL BE UNABLE TO LAND. THIS CAN BE DONE

DECLASSIFIED IN PART

By NSA 97-109/1 439
NARA, Date 4/6/03

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BY DESTROYING PORTIONS OF THE RUNWAY AND ESSENTIAL NAVIGATION FACILITIES, OR BY PLACING ENOUGH PHYSICAL OBSTACLES ON THE RUNWAY TO ENSURE AIRCRAFT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO USE IT.

3. IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE FOR LEBANESE AUTHORITIES TO ACT ON THEIR OWN TO SEAL OFF BIA AND RENDER IT UNAVAILABLE TO TERRORISTS. SINCE THE GOL IS PROBABLY UNABLE TO DO SO IN THE NEAR TERM, LEBANON AND SYRIA TOGETHER SHOULD CONSIDER TAKING ACTION TO DISABLE BIA RATHER THAN RESORT TO MILITARY ACTION FOR THIS PURPOSE.

[REDACTED]

YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DETERMINE MOST APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS WITH WHICH TO RAISE THIS SUBJECT. ONE SUCH OCCASION MIGHT BE WITH SYRIAN VICE PRESIDENT KHADDAM WHEN PRESENTING HE VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE. YOU MAY DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS:

-- IT IS CLEAR THAT BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT HAS LONG BEEN A CENTER FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITIES AGAINST CIVIL AVIATION. THUS FAR IN 1985 ALONE, 6 HIJACKINGS HAVE BEGUN, ENDED, OR PASSED THROUGH BIA. THERE WERE 3 IN 1984, ONE EACH IN 1982 AND 1981, AND 5 IN 1980. THERE HAVE BEEN A TOTAL OF 36 SUCH INCIDENTS GOING BACK TO 1970. THE SUCCESSFUL USE OF BIA BY THE TWA HIJACKERS REINFORCES THE LIKELIHOOD OF BIA BEING USED YET AGAIN IN THE SAME WAY IN FUTURE HIJACKINGS.

WE WOULD PREFER THAT LEBANESE AUTHORITIES, WITH SYRIAN SUPPORT, GAIN FIRM CONTRTOL OF BIA AND SEAL IT OFF FROM

THE REST OF THE CITY. WHEN THIS IS DONE, THE USG STANDS READY TO WORK WITH INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION

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AUTHORITIES TO ASSIST THE LEBANESE IN ESTABLISHING MEASURES TO PREVENT INFILTRATION INTO BIA OF TERRORIST ELEMENTS WHO WOULD SUPPORT A HIJACKING OR CARRY ON OTHER ACTIVITY INIMICAL TO AIR SAFETY.

-- UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON CAN EFFECTIVELY EXERT ITS AUTHORITY OVER THE AIRPORT AND SURROUNDING AREAS, THE ONLY EFFECTIVE PROTECTION FOR AIR TRAVELERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST REGION IN THE SHORT TERM IS FOR BIA TO BE CLOSED DOWN AND ITS RUNWAYS BE RENDERED TEMPORARILY UNUSABLE BY AIRCRAFT.

-- SUCH DISABLING COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED BY DISMOUNTING NAVIGATIONAL FACILITIES, TEMPORARILY DISMISSING AIRPORT PERSONNEL, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, PLACING NOT EASILY REMOVABLE OBSTACLES ON THE RUNWAYS.

-- MOST EFFECTIVE AND LEAST EASILY MOVABLE OBSTACLES MIGHT BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF EARTHEN BERMS ACROSS THE RUNWAYS. PLACING DISABLED TRUCKS, TANKS OR OTHER HEAVY EQUIPMENT ON RUNWAYS WOULD BE ANOTHER POSSIBILITY.

STANCHIONS ON EITHER SIDE OF RUNWAYS WITH STEEL CABLES, CEMENT TRAFFIC BUMPS WITH GLASS OR DRAGONS TEETH IMPLANTED ARE ADDITIONAL POSSIBILITIES.

-- WE HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON WILL AGREE TO TAKE SUCH ACTION

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-- WE HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA WILL ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON IN TAKING SUCH ACTION.

-- WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY ADDITIONAL IDEAS WHICH THE

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GOVERNMENTS OF LEBANON AND SYRIA MAY HAVE TO ACHIEVE THIS
OBJECTIVE.

4. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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