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As Amended  
Sec. 1.4c

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~ [REDACTED]

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NLS M02-020 #22

By smf, NARA, Date 10/14/04

MCFARLANE SCENE-SETTER

-- I think it is important to remind ourselves why we are here.

-- Some weeks ago we concluded that the cost of inaction was an ever increasing spiral of terrorism directed at Americans.

-- We agreed too that the most logical place to begin responding was in Libya. Libya has the longest record in support of terrorism -- fifteen years. Moreover, Qadhafi's terrorism is global in scope.

-- Libya, then, is not only the weightiest leg of the terrorist tripod; it was also judged to be the easiest to attack without running up against a more serious Soviet challenge.

-- Although the risk of Soviet interference should never be treated lightly, it is obvious that attacks [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] would be far more provocative. Our hope, then, was to send a signal to those other countries indirectly through a truly decisive action in Libya.

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-- All well and good. What, then, precisely do we do?  
Deciding that, of course, is the real task before us today.

-- An original thought was to take out Qadhafi's terrorist  
camps. But the more that option was examined, the less  
feasible it seemed. We saw no point in poking at a snake.  
The terrorist camps could be set up elsewhere. Qadhafi  
would remain in power. And he would probably respond by  
inviting his Soviet friends to come in to give him  
protection against future attacks.

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-- ~~ACTED~~

~~REDACTED~~

~~REDACTED~~

~~DACTED~~

-- It is at this point that we again run up against hard  
problems. Such an action requires great coordination. It  
requires success. It runs certain risks. It requires  
imaginative planning and the use of the best technology. It  
will incite grumbling among our more passive friends, and at  
best serious posturing by our enemies. And so on. Indeed,

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it is easy -- and, to a large extent, legitimate -- to identify hurdle after hurdle.

-- The basic question, though, is, are we prepared to act? And if not now and here -- then where or when?

-- Certainly, the Libya problem is not going to get any easier. Libya is procuring SA-5s now. Fencers are reportedly on order. Soviet Backfires could be based in Libya as a consequence of the new Treaty of Friendship -- creating a permanent new threat for the Sixth Fleet. Do we want to confront these unpleasant facts five months from now as we do a port-mortem on failing to act now? This, at least, is a legitimate question.

-- Won't such an action foul up the Summit? Well, that too is a legitimate question. The Nixon-Brezhnev Summit wasn't derailed by our mining of Haiphong. In fact, we went into the meeting from a stronger position. How much have circumstances changed? Second, the prospect of a Summit doesn't seem to be producing much reciprocal restraint in the Soviets, who are grinding down the Afghans and continuing to coerce others. Third, unless we have written off action altogether, will it be any better to strike immediately after a Summit -- which would equally be treated as an act of bad faith -- and at a moment when Soviet ties to Libya had formally deepened?

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-- Now the air is filled with reports of a new Soviet-Israeli rapprochement. What bearing does this have? Certainly it suggests a far more agile leadership, though not necessarily one any more interested in confronting us when we are determined. What it does signify in my view is that the Soviets want back in the region badly. Not so much to make peace as to exercise influence. Not only does it suggest they are going to do more and more with the assets they have -- Libya, Syria, etc. -- but they will try to create new positions of strength as well. Can we throw them off balance? Or is our position going to steadily erode?

-- What about the peace process? Some may be concerned that we will encounter Arab hostility, even among those who hate Qadhafi. Let's not confuse public flak with durable gains.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Second, every potential peace-maker in the region knows he is a Qadhafi target. Removing his threat can only liberate the peace process over the longer term.

-- Is the provocation equal to the crime? Can the American people be made to understand? Well, the mood on the Hill suggests that politicians are as ready to move as ever before. As for crime and punishment: shouldn't fifteen years be enough? Indeed, it is the breadth of Qadhafi's cumulative record that is impressive. Let's remember his

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specific acts are deliberately salami-like to reduce our temptation to respond to any one. Finally, what we are after is not so much punishment as pre-emption -- and we can already identify important new threats to pre-empt.

- The size of the operation and the need for deception are important considerations. The more warning the Soviets have, the more likely they are to cause mischief. The larger our forces, the more likely they are to have warning. Can we improvise in such a way as to ensure success without unduly enlarging the visibility of our preparation? Another way of looking at the problem, though, is this: if we think the Soviets are likely to get some tip-off anyway, are they more likely to stay away if they detect massive U.S. forces, rather than smaller numbers?

- Finally, there is a Catch-22 in all of this. We simply cannot answer some of these questions without [REDACTED]

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- We have tried to construct the talking points of our emissaries in a way that squares this circle -- communicating a new willingness to use force without any final decision.

- There is much to discuss. I have tried to frame the central issues as we see them and as they have been painstakingly identified by the CPPG over the last two weeks.
  
- Bill, before we begin, could you give us an overview of the intelligence picture?