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 cc Mr Goodall  
 Sent thru  
 2/5/86

UK/US ANALYSTS TALKS ON SYRIA: 20 MAY

1. FOLLOWING ARE THE MAIN POINTS OF AGREEMENT REACHED AT THE UK/US ANALYSTS MEETING ON SYRIA IN THE CIA ON 20 MAY:

(I) SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE EL AL AFFAIR WAS UNCHARACTERISTIC BUT INCONTROVERTIBLE. IT HAD CLEARLY BEEN INTENDED AS A DENIABLE TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY. THE INITIATIVE APPEARED TO HAVE COME FROM THE BOTTOM UP, BUT THE CHAIN OF CONTROL STRETCHED BACK AT LEAST AS FAR AS AL KHOULY. WHILE THERE WAS NO FIRM EVIDENCE, THERE WAS A PRESUMPTION THAT ASSAD WOULD HAVE BEEN AT LEAST GENERALLY, AND PERHAPS SPECIFICALLY, AWARE OF THE OPERATION. (II) WITH EVERY DAY THAT PASSED, ASSAD COULD FEEL SAFER ABOUT AVOIDING MILITARY RETALIATION.

US ASSURANCES IN DAMASCUS THAT ISRAEL WAS NOT PREPARING AN OFFENSIVE, TOGETHER WITH THE CONTINUING VALUE TO THE AMERICANS OF THE SYRIAN CONNECTION CONCERNING THE US HOSTAGES, WOULD PROBABLY BE CONSTRUED BY ASSAD AS INDICATIONS THAT THE US WAS UNLIKELY TO RESORT TO MILITARY MEASURES.

(III) A CLEAR DISTINCTION SHOULD BE DRAWN BETWEEN LIBYAN AND SYRIAN USE OF TERRORISM. QADHAFI'S TERRORISM SERVED A WORLDWIDE, SELF-STYLED REVOLUTIONARY PURPOSE, WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE ATTEMPT AT CONCEALMENT. SYRIAN USE OF TERRORISM WAS TRADITIONALLY FAR MORE CALCULATED AND PRECISE. IT WAS USED AS A WEAPON TO FURTHER SPECIFIC POLICY ENDS, FROM ELIMINATING DISSIDENTS TO PROSECUTING SPECIFIC INTER-ARAB QUARRELS, AND - IN THE ARAB/ISRAELI CONTEXT - AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC PARITY WITH ISRAEL.

(IV) THE FUTURE COURSE OF SYRIAN TACTICS REMAINED UNCERTAIN. ASSAD ATTACHED IMPORTANCE TO INTERNATIONAL RESPECTABILITY, AND IN THAT RESPECT WOULD BE VERY CONCERNED AT THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF THE EL AL AFFAIR. HE WOULD CERTAINLY REDOUBLE EFFORTS TO COVER HIS TRACKS, AND WOULD PROBABLY BE SHY OF ANY FURTHER SPECTACULAR TERRORIST ATTEMPTS AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING.

(V) THIS DID NOT, HOWEVER, SIGNIFY ANY BASIC CHANGE IN ASSAD'S POLICIES. HE WOULD CONTINUE TO USE TERRORISM, ESPECIALLY WITHIN THE LEBANON. HE WOULD CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR WAYS OF TESTING ISRAELI RESOLVE, WHILE AVOIDING PROVOKING THEM INTO FULL-SCALE HOSTILITIES.

(VI) THE MOST LIKELY PROGNOSIS, SUBJECT TO POINT IV ABOVE, WAS BUSINESS AS USUAL. ASSAD REMAINED SELF-CONFIDENT, AND TOUGH MINDED IN PURSUING HIS OBJECTIVES. THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST ANY THREAT TO ASSAD'S PERSONAL POSITION.

2. ANALYSTS REVIEWED BRIEFLY DEVELOPMENTS IN LIBYA. IT WAS AGREED:

(I) QADHAFI STILL SHAKEN BY THE US RAID: THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST ANY NEW CONCERTED LIBYAN-SPONSORED TERRORIST CAMPAIGN: BUT

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(III) THERE WAS NO SIGN OF ANY INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN LIBYA OF A KIND WHICH WOULD WEAKEN SUPPORT FOR QADHAFI'S USE OF STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM.

(IIIF) ASSESSMENT NOW MUCH MORE DIFFICULT WITH LESS EFFECTIVE INTELLIGENCE COVER: THE MOST LIKELY SCENARIO WAS THAT QADHAFI WOULD WAIT FOR A REDUCTION IN STATES OF ALERT BEFORE CONSIDERING ANY FURTHER INCREASE IN TERRORIST ACTIVITY.

(IV) THERE WERE SIGNS THAT THE MEASURES TAKEN BY THE EUROPEANS WERE BEGINNING TO HAVE AN IMPACT AND WERE CAUSING QADHAFI CONCERN.

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