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SUBJECT: Libyan Intentions in Sudan

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31 July 1986

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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

31 July 1986

Libyan Intentions In Sudan



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Summary

Since the fall of former Sudanese President Nimeiri in April 1985, Libya has intensified its efforts to increase the Libyan presence in Sudan at the expense of Western interests. Tripoli's ultimate objective is a pro-Libyan government in Khartoum. So far, Tripoli has established a fairly extensive infrastructure of safehouses, arms caches, and personnel that could on short notice support terrorist attacks against US, Egyptian, or Sudanese Government targets. Eventually this network also could be used to undermine the Sudanese Government, but at present Qadhafi does not have sufficient support among either the Sudanese public or military to unilaterally install a pro-Libyan regime in Sudan.



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Tripoli has acquired considerable political capital in Khartoum through its provision of timely economic and military assistance. In our view, as long as no alternative to Libyan aid is readily available, Khartoum will have little choice but to resist external pressure to move against the Libyan presence in a way that might provoke a confrontation with Tripoli. This posture also is essential if the Sudanese Government is to minimize the chances of a more active Libyan policy of aggression or subversion against Khartoum. For the moment Qadhafi appears comfortable with the Sadiq government and probably plans no dramatic shift in policy. In our view, however, should Qadhafi perceive a growing US or Egyptian role in Sudan, particularly in the military field, he probably will turn against

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Maghreb Branch, Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 31 July was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be directed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, [redacted]

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[redacted]
Sadiq. We also cannot rule out an opportunistic Libyan attempt to exploit renewed domestic unrest in Sudan or back a pro-Libyan group of military conspirators. [redacted]

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Qadhafi, in our view, considers Sudan an area vital to Libyan interests. He fears Libya's encirclement by hostile powers, and has sought the elimination of US and Egyptian influence in Khartoum. Qadhafi hopes eventually to see a compliant regime in Sudan which will sign a union agreement with Tripoli, isolate Egypt, and help him project Libyan influence into Sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, Qadhafi would like to propagate his revolutionary theories among the Sudanese. [redacted]

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Libyan perceptions of the newly elected government of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi in Sudan are at best ambivalent. On the one hand, Qadhafi's relationship with Sadiq and his Umma Party goes back at least a decade, when Qadhafi supported the exiled Sadiq against then-President Nimeiri. The US Embassy and [redacted]

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On the other hand, Qadhafi has no use for parliamentary democracy and almost certainly would prefer a compliant military regime in Khartoum. [redacted]

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Buying Influence in Sudan: A Qualified Success

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We believe Qadhafi does not feel that the new government presents a threat to Libyan interests, and that he is likely to continue to court Sudan through economic and military assistance. He could become more aggressive, though, should Khartoum challenge Libyan interests in a serious fashion or if he

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[redacted]
believes he could exploit a situation of civil or military unrest. [redacted]

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Qadhafi's greatest leverage in Khartoum comes from the southern insurgency. Once a major supporter of dissident leader John Garang, Tripoli has withheld assistance to the southern guerrillas since Nimeiri's departure, as part of its effort to curry favor with the new government in Khartoum. The Sudanese have been wary of offending Qadhafi while trying to fight the southern insurgents and isolate Garang. In our view, Khartoum will try to accommodate many Libyan interests in Sudan as long as the insurgency remains the most immediate threat to Sudanese stability. [redacted]

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Another important lever of influence is Tripoli's military aid to Khartoum. In July 1985, Khartoum's then-Defense Minister Osman Abdulla negotiated a memorandum of understanding calling for Libya to supply small amounts of ammunition, small arms, ground transport, spare parts, and other supplies to the Sudanese armed forces. The agreement also called for joint military exercises and training. Last March, Libya sent two TU-22 bombers in response to Sudanese requests for air support against southern insurgents. One of these bombers remains stationed at Wadi Seidna airbase north of Khartoum, [redacted]

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[redacted]
that the Sudanese Chief of Staff recently announced that Libya had fulfilled all the promises it had made to supply the Sudanese military, and that new supply agreements could be expected. Libyan military assistance--both supplies and air support--has not been decisive for the Sudanese war effort, but it still represents the most visible external support Khartoum has received. [redacted]

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One of Tripoli's main gestures of support following the April 1985 Sudanese military coup was the dispatch of food and humanitarian assistance. During the first year of restored relations, Tripoli supplied 300,000 metric tons of free oil worth about \$60 million, 100,000 metric tons of wheat and food, and \$30 million in humanitarian support. Tripoli also has supplied Sudan with agricultural technical assistance and some tractors. Since the elections the value and volume of Libyan aid has dropped off significantly, possibly because of Libya's own economic difficulties associated with the soft oil market. Nonetheless, in June Tripoli signed a barter agreement with Khartoum in which it would provide 100,000 metric tons of petroleum in return for Sudanese livestock and agricultural goods. [redacted]

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Qadhafi probably has not bought much popularity in Sudan with his economic and military aid. [redacted]

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[redacted] no headway in easing the general

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[Redacted]

distrust of Libya among Sudanese officers. Nonetheless, in the absence of what the Sudanese consider adequate support from alternative sources of aid, Qadhafi has bought leverage, if not dependence in Sudan.

[Redacted]

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The Libyan Subversive Network

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Qadhafi has sought to build a subversive network in Sudan for the time when relations with the Sudanese Government go sour. [Redacted] he probably has been reasonably successful in building a support infrastructure including arms caches, safehouses, infiltration routes, and means of distributing propaganda. His efforts to generate pro-Libyan loyalties among the Sudanese have been much less successful.

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[Large Redacted Area]

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Darfur: A Permanent Libyan Foothold?

Perhaps the greatest advance Qadhafi has made in expanding his position in Sudan--and the most serious potential Libyan threat to Sudanese stability--is the establishment of what may become a permanent Libyan presence in the isolated western Sudanese region of Darfur. Official Libyan delegations visited the regional capital of Darfur at Al Fashir as early as June 1985, and Libyan convoys, some carrying military equipment began arriving in the region the following August. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] in March 1986 the Libyan contingent in Darfur had grown to 1,100 personnel, mostly technicians and aid workers--although many allegedly had military training--and 160 Libyan special forces troops. [redacted] 25X1

that by May the Libyan presence had diminished [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] in mid-July indicates that an estimated 100 Libyans remain in Al Fashir. [redacted] however, 25X1

in early July there were still some 560 Libyans in Darfur province, many of them west of Al Fashir. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] the existence of a Libyan military contingent at Junaynah near the Chadian border. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] although some of the Libyans may have returned to Libya, many may simply have dispersed to other towns in western Sudan. [redacted] 25X1

Tripoli clearly recognizes a geographic advantage in its presence in western Sudan. The Libyans pose a threat to Chad, which-[redacted]-has 25X1

required Chadian President Habre to reinforce his eastern flank. [redacted] Sudanese officials 25X1

believe some Libyan convoys to Darfur are supporting cross-border operations in southern Chad, and [redacted] 25X1

the Libyans are running reconnaissance missions into Chad from Al Fashir. We believe Tripoli also may be attempting to recruit Chadian refugees in Darfur for military service in Chad. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

The Libyan contingent in Darfur also serves Libyan aims in Sudan, and Tripoli is taking steps to legitimize its presence. In April the Sudanese press reported that as a practical gesture toward Arab unity, Libya had granted Sudanese citizens the right to settle in the Libyan district of Kufrah--which adjoins Darfur--and expected a reciprocal gesture from Sudan. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] at the same time, a Libyan delegation visited Sudanese political leaders proposing the integration of Darfur and Kufrah as a first step to union between Libya and Sudan. [redacted] Libyans in 25X1

Darfur disregard Sudanese law--for example flying aircraft into Al Fashir repeatedly without Sudanese permission. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] the Libyans are difficult to control, disliked by the local population, and, most important, continue to refuse Sudanese requests to leave. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted]

In our view, Qadhafi is unlikely to relinquish voluntarily his foothold in Darfur as long as he does not control the government in Khartoum. In addition to the value of Darfur to Libyan aims in Chad, we believe Qadhafi views the Libyan foothold in Darfur as "insurance" against a sudden change in government in Khartoum that threatens Libyan interests. In particular we believe Qadhafi is suspicious of US and Egyptian motives in Sudan and probably fears the assumption of power by a pro-Western officer. Concern that an unfriendly regime would emerge in Khartoum may account for the rapid build-up of Libyan personnel in Darfur in March and April, prior to the Sudanese elections. The subsequent drawdown may indicate that, for the moment, Qadhafi's fear of a sudden change of government has subsided. [redacted]

In the meantime Tripoli probably will use its contingent in Darfur--which along with Kurdufan forms the political base of the Umma Party--to put pressure on Sadiq not to move closer to the West. [redacted] Libyans already are stirring up tribal unrest in western Sudan. The Libyans also will use their aid projects--which the Sudanese press says will be expanded--to build influence and goodwill with the local population. We believe the Libyans will be unsuccessful in this effort, however, because of their usual arrogance that the Sudanese find offensive. [redacted]

There are signs that the Libyans may have overplayed their hand in Darfur and that the Sudanese are attempting to bring them under greater control. [redacted] Sadiq recently refused a Libyan request to make regular flights to Al Fashir, and [redacted] the Sudanese have detained 94 Libyans who entered Darfur without proper identification. If this effort is sustained, Khartoum probably can curtail the more blatant Libyan abuses in Darfur. Nonetheless, as long as the Libyans maintain a presence in western Sudan--which the recent agreement to assist Sudanese agriculture would allow--they will still be able to use their projects to support intelligence and other clandestine operations. Khartoum probably will not be willing to close the Libyan projects in Darfur without a clear commitment from Washington to replace Libyan aid. [redacted]

Outlook

There is little evidence to suggest that Qadhafi, whose policy toward post-Nimeiri Sudan has proven reasonably successful, is about to make a sudden change in his approach to Khartoum. Assuming that Khartoum continues to be constrained in its ability to control Libyan mischief inside Sudan, and maintains its relative distance from Cairo and Washington, Qadhafi may well continue for some time his current policy of courting the government while building a network to support internal subversion. We cannot rule out an attempt by Qadhafi to install a more pliant government in Khartoum if civil strife, or

[redacted]

[redacted]

a pro-Libyan conspiracy within the Sudanese military, make such a move practical. At present we do not believe that Libya has the assets in Khartoum to install a pro-Libyan government on its own. It does, however, have sufficient leverage to cause considerable trouble and weaken the government, and we believe Tripoli would quickly bring this leverage to bear if it perceived Sudanese policy to be changing in a way that threatens Libyan interests. [redacted]

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In our view, Qadhafi's most important barometer of the security of his interests in Sudan is the level of Sudanese relations with Egypt and the US. Any new or highly publicized military cooperation between Sudan and Egypt or the US almost certainly will provoke a Libyan response. This may first take the form of a Libyan effort to seek a similar agreement with Khartoum and thereby ensure that its relations with Sudan are on a par with those of its main rivals for influence. Failure to obtain "equal relations" probably will cause Tripoli to bring greater pressure to bear by cutting economic and military support, and eventually, by initiating active efforts to bring down the government. In this regard, Tripoli almost certainly would use its presence at Darfur as a refuge for Sudanese dissidents and as a base for Libyan backed subversion or possibly even insurgency. [redacted]

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In our opinion, Tripoli would act against any pro-Egyptian or pro-Western regime that comes to power in Sudan. Moreover, a Libyan perception that a change in government is imminent probably would trigger a preemptive pro-Libyan coup attempt. This would be an especially difficult operation for Libya to mount, given the general anti-Libyan sentiment in the Sudanese armed forces, and the limited number of Libyan assets we believe are currently in place. Nonetheless, with both armed SRC cadre and a Libyan military presence in Sudan, Qadhafi could attempt such a coup if he believed the situation were desperate enough. [redacted]

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The present Sudanese Government also would provoke a nasty Libyan reaction if it initiates an extensive crackdown on either the SRCs or the Libyan presence in Khartoum and Al Fashir. Qadhafi has accepted--and probably will continue to accept--quiet expulsions of individual Libyan intelligence personnel that he can quickly replace with others. An order by Khartoum to significantly reduce the Libyan diplomatic community or terminate the "humanitarian" presence in Darfur would be viewed in Tripoli as an unfriendly act and probably would prompt a cut off of Libyan economic and military assistance. If Khartoum refused to backdown, Tripoli probably would initiate harassing operations. Tripoli also would be alarmed at a broad curtailment of the SRCs in Sudan, which is one of the few countries in the Middle East that allows Qadhafi's disciples to openly proselytize. [redacted]

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In our view, there are other developments that could lead to a downturn in relations and Libyan efforts to undermine the

Sudanese Government. Potential flashpoints include a repeated Sudanese rejection of Libyan efforts to sign a unity agreement and lack of Sudanese diplomatic support--especially vis-a-vis the United States--in the Arab League, the OAU, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Islamic Conference, and other multilateral fora important to Tripoli. A high-level Sudanese official visit to Washington might also provoke a violent Libyan response, unless, perhaps, it is balanced with a visit to Tripoli. [redacted]

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Finally, if the parliamentary democracy in Khartoum began making some headway in solving economic and other serious domestic problems it could prompt a reevaluation of Libyan policy in Sudan. In this case any improvement in local conditions probably would give the civilian regime greater legitimacy and strengthen its ability to deal with Tripoli. This might lead Qadhafi to conclude that he should move against the government before it feels strong enough to go after the Libyans in Sudan. In particular, an unexpected breakthrough in Khartoum's efforts to resolve the southern insurgency could threaten to deprive Tripoli of its most important source of leverage in Sudan. In an effort to keep the the war going, Qadhafi might try to resume clandestine support for the SPLA (although the use of Libyan bombers against the southerners this year may have closed this option). He might also try to stir up trouble in Darfur or Khartoum to keep the government off balance and weak. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

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Libya poses a danger to US interests in Sudan. Despite Qadhafi's present tolerance of the government in Khartoum, he dislikes parliamentary democracy and can be expected to work toward its eventual removal in favor of a radical military government. In addition, the aggressive Libyan presence in Sudan is itself a source of friction within the ruling Sudanese coalition; [redacted] both the armed forces and the Democratic Unionists are upset with Sadiq's cautious handling of the Libyans. In the as yet unlikely event that Tripoli were able to install a pro-Libyan regime in Khartoum, the US might be entirely shut out of Sudan. In such a case Egypt almost certainly would see its security as endangered--particularly if Nile River flow was threatened--and probably would turn to Washington for support if it decided to move against the Libyan clients in Khartoum. [redacted]

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The steady Libyan efforts to erode US influence in Sudan probably pose a more immediate threat to our interests. We believe Libyan economic and military aid has at least reinforced the new government's predisposition to be less responsive to US objectives, such as support for the Camp David accords and military cooperation. The risk of Libyan terrorist activity in Sudan has in part forced a reduction in US personnel in Sudan, which in turn may have increased Sudanese vulnerability to Libyan pressure. Further reductions in the US presence and programs in

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[REDACTED]

Sudan could force Khartoum into greater dependence on Tripoli for economic and military assistance.

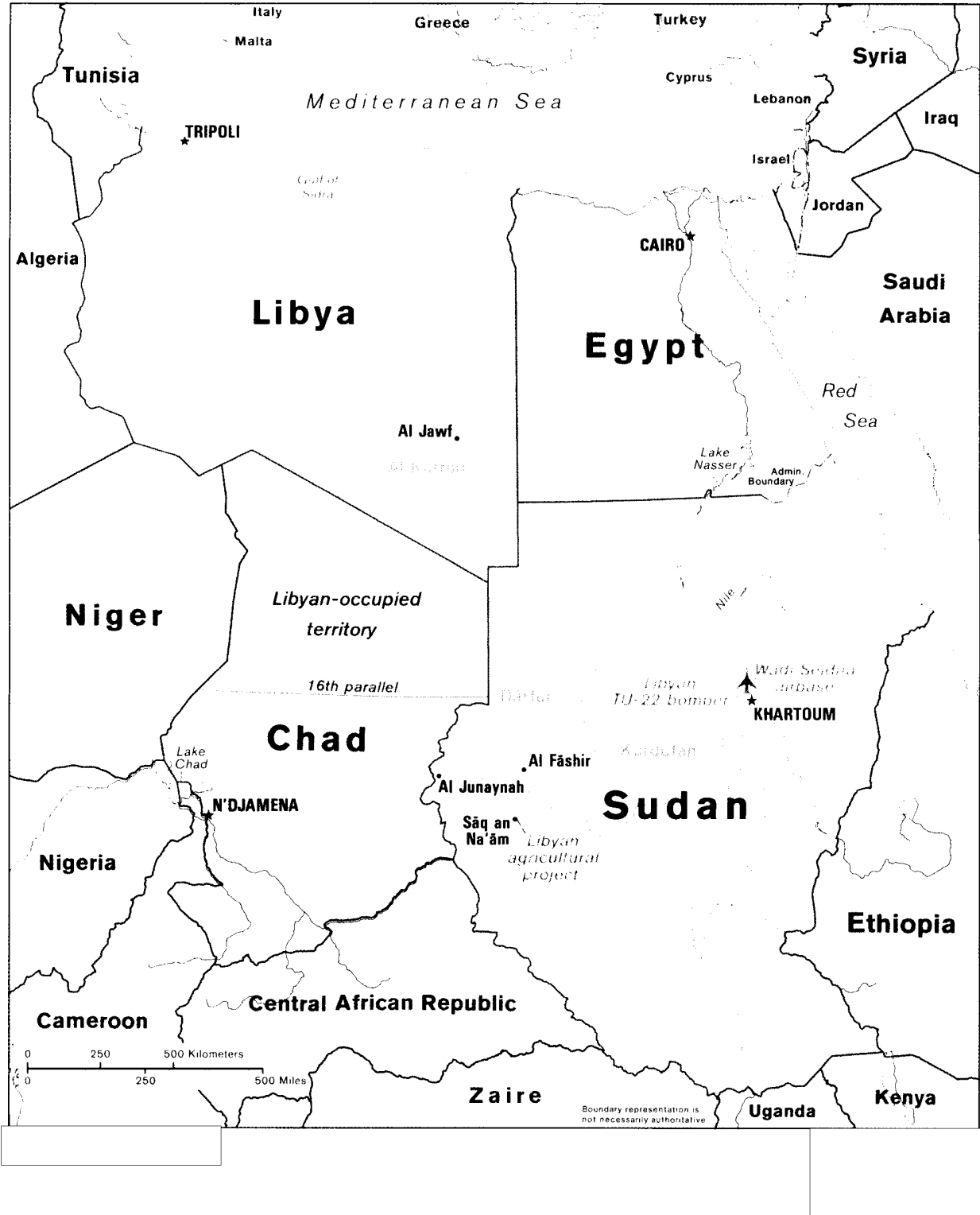
Finally, Tripoli's efforts to play an important role in Sudan serve Qadhafi's goal of projecting the image of a major Arab and African leader. To the extent that Qadhafi is able to play this role it enhances his prestige, promotes his influence elsewhere in Africa, and complicates US efforts to isolate Libya. [REDACTED]

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Libyan Presence in Sudan



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