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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

26 June 1985
0700 EDT

SPOT COMMENTARY: Status of TWA Hijacking/Hostages

[redacted] say Nabih Barri did in fact go to Syria to confer with Assad yesterday or the day before. Assad probably urged Barri to find a way to release the Americans and may have been behind Barri's announcement this morning of a new "plan" to break the current deadlock.

-- According to the press, Barri stated that he is willing to move the hostages to an unspecified Western Embassy in Beirut---or even to Syria---as long as he has assurances that they will remain there until all the Shia detainees in Israel are released.

-- This plan presumably would provide a face-saving way for Barri to relinquish control of the hostages without appearing to abandon the demands for the release of the Atlit prisoners.

We remain skeptical, however, that Barri alone can determine the disposition of the TWA passengers---especially those held by the Hizballah. [redacted] report that Barri is rapidly losing control over the hostages and the situation in general.

-- [redacted] Barri is dealing with several rebellious factions within the Shia community, many of which are not loyal to him. [redacted] does not believe Barri can unilaterally act to free the hostages.

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-- [redacted] that the hijacking was engineered by Hizballah official Isad Mughniyah, who is now angry over Amal's meddling in the operation. [redacted] that Mughniyah still holds at least four of the Americans.

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-- Mughniyah is the same Hizballah official that [redacted] claim is holding the previously-kidnapped [redacted]

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[redacted]

Americans in Lebanon. He is reportedly an extremist who has family ties to one of the Da'wa terrorists in prison in Kuwait.

A Syrian Foreign Ministry official [redacted] when Assad raised the hostage issue, Iranian Majlis Speaker Karanjani persisting in denying that Iran was involved in any way.

Representatives of the International Red Cross say they visited all of the TWA passengers yesterday. The Red Cross reports that they all remain in good health in the Beirut area.

-- Amal leaders say they plan to release one hostage who has been experiencing health problems.

Prepared by: [redacted]

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