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APPROVED FOR RELEASE - CIA INFO □ DATE: 29-Aug-2012

SYRIA-ISRAEL: Large-scale movements of Israeli and Syrian forces apparently have occurred along the Syrian front over the past few days.

[REDACTED] heavy traffic of Israeli tanks and wheeled vehicles near Al Qunaytirah on the evening of December 12. Additional movements of Israeli tanks and artillery were observed west of Syrian-held Sasa that same evening. The next night, [REDACTED] large-scale movements of Syrian vehicles opposite Al Qunaytirah and near Sasa on both sides of the Israeli salient into Syria.

Substantial Israeli and Syrian forces are already stationed in the areas of the reported movements, and it is not known whether the sightings represent a redeployment of forces there or an augmentation of them. For the past week, [REDACTED] Syria has been putting its civilian and military forces on a wartime footing. [REDACTED] significant Syrian troop movements have occurred along the Golan front and that Syrian forces there have been reinforced. The reported Israeli troop movements may be in reaction to the Syrian activity. [REDACTED]

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ISRAEL - ARAB STATES: The Israeli cabinet held an unusually long special session yesterday, presumably working on the government's negotiating strategy for the initial phase of the Geneva peace conference that opens Tuesday. No final decisions were made. A government spokesman announced that another session would be held tomorrow.

The Israeli public is skeptical about the prospects for peace

A substantial number continue to hold that the Arab goal remains the annihilation of Israel and not just the return of territory lost by the Arabs in the 1967 war. many Israelis have, nevertheless, adopted a wait-and-see attitude and appear resigned to Israel's making some concessions at Geneva.

the uncertainty about the prospects for peace is adversely affecting the morale of Israeli troops, particularly reservists. They are concerned about a possible date for their release from military service. Israeli soldiers fear that Israel will be pressured at a peace conference into giving up the fruits of victory in two wars with nothing in return. Israel's military leadership does not seek renewed warfare and views the Geneva conference as desirable.

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[redacted]
Terrorist incidents have in fact increased noticeably in the West Bank since October, and Israel has been forced to reimpose some drastic security measures there. There have been few terrorist incidents in Israel proper, [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

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SYRIA: Asad's Position on the Eve of Negotiations

As the Geneva peace talks approach, President Asad's hold on power appears to be fairly firm. The war has bolstered his popularity at home, and he can probably count at present on the backing of key supporters, in many cases hand-picked, in the armed forces, the security apparatus, and the Syrian Baath Party. Equally important to him is the continuing loyalty of an elite 10,000-man special security force commanded by his brother.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] As the peace talks drag out--as they almost certainly will--Asad is likely to have his hands full keeping a damper on Syrian jingoism, if he does not lose all patience with the Israelis himself.

[Redacted]

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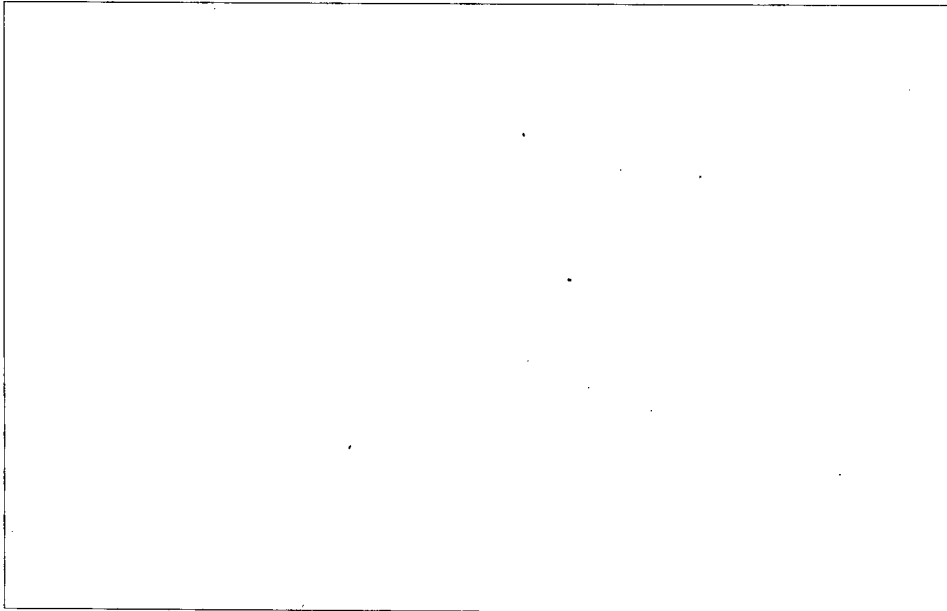
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Since taking full control of the government in 1970 Asad has had to fend against the subversive activities of conservative and leftist exiles in Beirut, right-wing Baath exiles in Baghdad, and other rival claimants to power residing in Syrian jails, all of whom have some supporters in the army or the Syrian Baath Party. Perhaps even more importantly, many members of the majority Sunni Muslim sect in Syria bitterly resent the predominant position of Asad's own much smaller Alawite sect. Although Sunnis such as the minister of defense, the foreign minister, and the minister of interior hold high positions, there is still a lot of unhappiness among Sunnis about the disproportionate number of Alawites who hold influential government posts and army commands.



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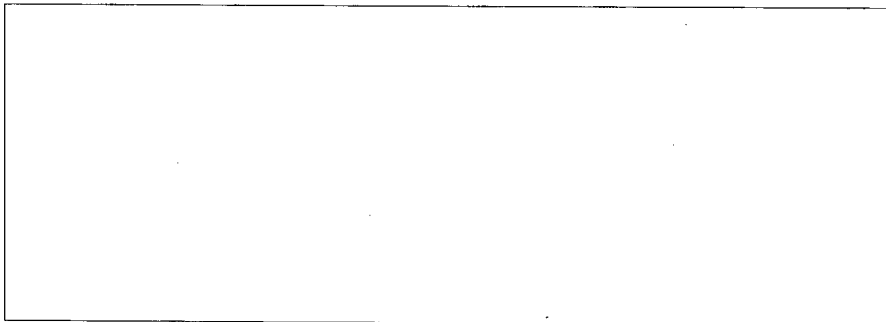
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FOR THE RECORD*

Saudi Arabia: [redacted]

[redacted] Oil Minister Yamani was [redacted] to return to Saudi Arabia from the US as soon as possible because King Faysal wants to convene a conference of Arab foreign and oil ministers at the end of December. [redacted]

Japan - South Korea : The annual ministerial conference, postponed earlier this year when Korean opposition leader Kim Tae-chung was kidnaped in Tokyo, has again been delayed. Tokyo now says the talks cannot be held until after the Diet recesses on December 26 because of domestic political considerations. [redacted]

Sudan: Khartoum University students who seized control of the campus on December 10 ended their demonstration quietly on December 13 after negotiations with university officials. The students, apparently worn down by their sit-in, during which police cordoned off the campus, capitulated to the government's face-saving terms. These included reinstatement of the politically activist Students Union that was disbanded after disorders in September, and the government's agreement to consider other student grievances. [redacted]

**These items were prepared by CIA without consultation with the Departments of State and Defense.*

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