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The Palestinians and the Fedayeen as Factors In the Middle East Situation

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**The Palestinians and the Fedayeen as Factors
In the Middle East Situation**

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
NOTE	1
CONCLUSIONS	1
DISCUSSION	3
I. THE PALESTINIANS	3
A. Who They Are	3
B. Where They Stand	4
II. THE NEW FEDAYEEN	5
A. Who They Are	5
B. How Others View Them	6
C. Their Performance Against Israel	7
D. The Fedayeen versus Jordan and Lebanon	8
III. THE PALESTINIANS AND THE FEDAYEEN AS FACTORS IN THE MIDDLE EAST	9
A. As Factors Affecting Arab-Israeli Negotiations	9
B. Factors Affecting Short-Term Tactics and Prospects	10
C. The Contingency of an Upset in Jordan	10
D. Palestinians Over the Longer Term	11
ANNEX	

SECRET

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THE PALESTINIANS AND THE FEDAYEEN AS FACTORS IN THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION

NOTE

This Estimate assesses the attitudes, composition, capabilities, and likely roles in the Middle Eastern situation of both the fedayeen—the Palestinian commandos—and the Palestinian community as a whole. Most judgments made are necessarily short term.

CONCLUSIONS

A. In 1968 and 1969, the fedayeen won international renown and wide popularity in the Arab world. Triumphs of publicity obscured, but never remedied, their major weaknesses: poor military performance against Israel and continuing dependence on Arab governments. These defects will remain serious.

B. The fedayeen appear likely to play a much diminished role in mid-eastern developments. The September 1970 civil war and subsequent events in Jordan left them defeated and demoralized. Their various organizations are rent by internal quarrels, and their relations with Arab governments are deteriorating. A severe heating up of the Arab-Israeli confrontation would create a psychological climate in the Arab world favorable to fedayeen militancy and bring some resurgence in the prestige of and support for the commandos—though not necessarily any improvement in their fighting effectiveness. The

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present Jordanian regime will almost certainly be able to keep them under control. However, the civil war has narrowed Hussein's power base and increased the polarization between Palestinians and the East Bank establishment.

C. The Palestinian people, though without leadership or agreed goals, do have a sense of identity arising from common experiences and misfortunes. No lasting mid-east settlement is possible unless it addresses Palestinian interests, particularly the problem of the refugees. One which did so, and which was endorsed and enforced by the Jordanian and Egyptian Governments, would probably receive the acquiescence of most Palestinian Arabs. The fedayeen probably could not prevent the implementation of such a settlement.

D. With or without a settlement, the Palestinians are likely to be a disturbing factor in the Middle East situation, and some form of fedayeen movement is likely to continue. In periods of tension and conflict, the fedayeen will win more support from individuals and from governments and will be more active.

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DISCUSSION

I. THE PALESTINIANS

A. Who They Are

1. There has never been a separate independent Palestinian nation. Palestine was a part of the Ottoman Empire until the end of World War I and then under British mandate until 1948. Today its territory is occupied by the state of Israel and the Israeli-held West Bank of Jordan, and the Gaza strip. The Palestinians are those Arabs who lived there prior to the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli war, and their descendants. There were nearly 1.3 million of them in 1948; as a result of the 1948-1949 conflict over 600,000 fled their homes in that part of Palestine which became Israel. One hundred fifty thousand stayed behind, while the others remained in those parts of Palestine which stayed under Arab rule. Many of those who fled wound up in Syria, Lebanon, and the East Bank of Jordan. Others became residents of refugee camps or found other housing in Gaza and the West Bank. Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, over 100,000 non-refugee Palestinians, along with some 200,000 "old refugees" fled the West Bank and later Gaza for the

eastern part of Jordan. Since 1948 the number of Palestinians has doubled; there are now roughly the same number of Palestinian Arabs as there are Israeli Jews.¹

2. About 1.4 million Palestinians are registered as refugees with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), but this statistic must be used with caution.² Of the registered refugees, some 600,000 live in refugee camps. Most of them are poor and em-

¹ See Annex for data on the Palestinians and the principal fedayeen organizations.

² UNRWA was set up after the first Arab-Israeli war. Its budget, which now runs about \$40 million a year, is met principally by the Western Powers, chiefly the US. It runs refugee camps, sponsors educational programs, and issues basic rations (worth about seven cents a day) to some 840,000 persons. Nearly all Palestinians who fled their homes registered with UNRWA, but this is no indication of economic need. Many registered refugees are comparatively well off (as are some refugee camp dwellers) but do not wish to jeopardize their legal claims for possible compensation. In addition the UNRWA rolls are inflated in size; many deaths of Palestinians are unreported so that survivors may continue to draw the rations of the deceased.

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bittered. Now, thanks to some 20 years of concentrated UN efforts, many are relatively well educated. Among the camp-dwelling refugees are the most volatile elements amongst the Palestinians. Palestinians—refugees and non-refugees alike—experience wide variations in social acceptance and economic status. They are to be found principally in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, Kuwait, and Israel. (See Annex.)

B. Where They Stand

3. Present day Palestinians remain a heterogeneous lot, cut off from one another and living in very different environments. Even so, most share a sense of a common Palestinian identity, due in large part to the experiences of their struggles with the Zionists until 1948, of the ensuing diaspora, and then of the 1967 war. They resent the injustices suffered at Israeli hands, and are hostile in varying degrees towards Israel and its backers. This sense of common misfortune has been accentuated by the ambivalent posture of other Arabs towards the Palestinians. Although they have always supported the Palestine cause in the abstract, many Arabs have discriminated socially, economically, and politically against Palestinians in their countries. Among the Arab states, only Jordan gave automatic citizenship to Palestinians living there (about half the total Palestinian population).

4. Palestinians have never agreed among themselves on specific goals. When stirred by emotion, it was usual for Palestinian leaders and their supporters in the Arab states to demand an end to Israel. It is doubtful, however, that the Palestinian community as a whole, or even a majority of its members, find this a realistic goal. Over the years since 1949, some Palestinians have privately shown a grudging willingness to accommodate to the fact of Israel's existence. Others, who have carved out a new life in Jordan, Syria, or Leba-

non have become reconciled to the loss of their former homes. They recognize, in effect, that Israel will outlast their own life span and so they entertain only a residual interest in an irredentist Palestinian cause.

5. The numbers and strengths of militants and non-militants, extremists and moderates among the Palestinians still are not known, and probably fluctuate a great deal. The young revolutionary intellectuals hold the most extreme views and the comparatively prosperous Palestinians the most moderate ones. Many Palestinians appear to wish an end to violence, but they have no spokesmen and have been generally unassertive. There are no area-wide organizations or political parties which enjoy the support of the majority of the Palestinians. These circumstances make it relatively easy for a few individuals or groups with political, financial, and propaganda support from one or more Arab states to assert themselves as Palestinian spokesmen without fear of challenge.

6. In the period from 1949 to 1967, the leaders of the principal Arab governments were the spokesmen for the Palestinian cause. They helped keep the issue alive—but usually for parochial reasons. The cause of the Palestinians has long aroused strong emotions throughout the Arab world; it was and remains susceptible to demagogic exploitation. Thus, many government leaders sought to use the Palestinian issue to assert their own uncompromising ideological purity on Palestine while imputing softness to their opponents. Though quite a few Palestinians (particularly those from leading families in the community prior to 1948) held high posts in various Arab governments, or prospered in business ventures, no effective Palestinian political leadership developed between 1949 and 1967. In 1964, an Arab Summit Conference agreed to establish the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

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with an official status as the voice for the Palestinians. But its leader, the demagogic, extremist Ahmed Shuqairi, epitomized the PLO then. He was notoriously self-seeking, subservient to Nasser, and could not be considered representative of Palestinian opinion.

7. Activities against Israel by Palestinian guerrillas (fedayeen) go back to the early 1950s, but the level of their activities varied widely in the pre-1967 era. The Egyptians sponsored raids on Israel until the 1956 Israeli-Egyptian war; the Syrians promoted guerrilla raids, mostly through Jordan, in the 1960s. The Jordanians for their part sought to suppress all raids from their territory, but were unsuccessful. The fedayeen never became a significant force in their own right in this period. Most were closely controlled by an Arab government—usually Egypt or Syria—which used them for its own purposes. In general, most pre-1967 fedayeen had little standing in the Arab world and no claims to political leadership of the Palestinian people.

II. THE NEW FEDAYEEN

A. Who They Are

8. The war of June 1967 drastically changed the situation of the fedayeen. The defeat discredited Arab chiefs of state as leaders of the fight against Israel and as spokesmen for the Palestinian cause. In the vacuum that ensued, a new group of Palestinian militants emerged claiming to represent the Palestinian people. Asserting their independence of Arab governments, they began mounting guerrilla attacks against the Israelis in the occupied territories and in Israel itself.

9. The fedayeen quickly acquired strong emotional support throughout the Arab world; they also began to get considerable material and financial backing. They have since greatly increased in number, fame, and influence. They have taken over the PLO. From the

beginning, several different fedayeen groups were in the field competing for honors and support, and new organizations have continued to appear. Recruits flocked to the fedayeen organizations in 1968-1969. Many were highly motivated and well educated in sharp contrast to most of the guerrillas of pre-1967 days. By mid-1970, the fedayeen groups may have had 10,000 or more commandos and a much larger number of members, including support personnel and hangers-on.

10. The fedayeen organizations break down into roughly three types: (a) The instruments of outside parties—usually of Arab states. These include *Saiqa*, founded and directed by the Syrian Baath Party, the Iraqi-controlled *Arab Liberation Front*, and *Al Ansar*, the instrument of established Arab Communist parties. None has been particularly active against the Israelis; *Saiqa*, the only organization of this type of any size and consequence, has concentrated on harassment of the governments of Lebanon and Jordan. (b) Ideologically-oriented groups such as *the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)* and its various offshoots. Political extremists and revolutionaries, they claim that the overthrow of conservative Arab regimes such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia is a prerequisite for the liberation of Palestine. They are also intensely hostile to the US and most Western countries. While mounting some operations into Israeli territory, these organizations have concentrated on headline grabbing activities such as attacks on airliners. (c) *Fatah* and others like it, which claim to be without political bias, to desire the friendship and cooperation of all Arab governments, and to seek only to fight a Palestinian nationalist struggle against Israel. *Fatah* is larger than all the other fedayeen groups combined.

11. *Fatah*, headed by Yasir Arafat, also controls the PLO. Its leaders take care to stay on good terms with most Arab governments.

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Arafat has claimed, for example, that he respects the sovereign rights of Arab governments and that Fatah has no wish to take control of Jordan. By virtue of his status as head of the PLO, Arafat regularly attends Arab chiefs of state meetings and summit conferences, where he is accorded official status as leader and spokesman of the Palestinian people. Fatah is the best financed of the fedayeen groups; it receives large sums from well-to-do Palestinians throughout the world and from the Arab states—conservative and radical alike. The exact amount of funding is unknown but has easily run into the tens of millions of dollars since 1967; from a financial point of view, Fatah has had fewer problems than other groups. But Fatah is a relatively loose, undisciplined confederation; its component units throughout Jordan and Lebanon often act without much concern for its central leadership.

12. Fedayeen leaders now claim to be the spokesmen for the people of Palestine. Nearly all leaders of the commando groups, though divided on many other issues, maintain that no compromise with the Israelis can be acceptable. They reject the November 1967 UN Resolution and the Rogers Plan. They state that the present Zionist state must be destroyed. Most publicly assert that they favor establishing a new secular democratic Palestinian Republic embracing Muslims, Christians, and Jews. That these goals are regarded as realistic by a significant portion of the total Palestinian community is unlikely.

B. How Others View Them

13. The fedayeen have won much publicity in the Arab states and around the world. The Palestinian cause has become far better known, and in many cases more favorably regarded than ever before. The fedayeen have also attracted the praise, interest, and verbal support of various revolutionary-minded and radi-

cal groups in Western Europe and the US. They have succeeded in making the New Left in these countries generally anti-Zionist. Such activities as airplane bombings and hijackings and attacks on Israeli-owned offices in various parts of the world, however, have made material for sensational and generally unfavorable press stories.

14. Contacts between the fedayeen and Western governments have been few. Fedayeen suspicions of the interests and motives of these states—particularly those of the US—have held them back. Western governments, for their part, have been influenced both by the fedayeen goal of eliminating Israel and by their preference for maintaining government-to-government relationships in the area. They have also been uncertain as to whether any fedayeen leader could realistically claim to speak for the Palestinians.

15. But the fedayeen have actively sought Soviet support. Moscow's attitude towards them has, since 1967, changed from one of great caution to a kind of circumspect interest, reflecting growing awareness of the importance of the fedayeen. Soviet material and political support has been limited, however. They permitted Arafat to come to the USSR, but kept him at arms length and accorded him no official status. Arms have been provided (most fedayeen weapons are of Soviet origin), but apparently through established Arab governments. Moscow has clearly been concerned to avoid damage to its relations with Arab states whose interests often clash with those of the fedayeen. The Soviets refuse to support the fedayeen objective of the elimination of Israel as a Zionist state, undertake only occasional consultations with the commando leaders, and avoid according them anything which might suggest recognition of an official status. Moscow usually refrains from direct attacks on the fedayeen. It openly espouses policies contrary to theirs and occasionally

SECRET

condemns such fedayeen activity as airline hijackings. In part, Russia's present posture has probably been brought about by the Soviets' concern over the strong open support given the commandos by China. Peking has indeed been extremely vigorous in its public statements backing the fedayeen. However, the Chinese have not become heavily involved; their material assistance to the fedayeen movement has amounted to training several hundred commandos and providing some arms.

16. Arab governments feel bound to support the movement in principle, but they are sensitive to the potential the fedayeen have to challenge their authority. Some are particularly concerned by the prospect of an effective fedayeen veto of an Arab-Israeli settlement. None feels it can openly oppose the fedayeen movement as a whole and the PLO is still accorded official status. Militant Libya and Algeria, though far from Palestine, are generous with funds and propaganda support. Algeria has been a major arms supplier. But they and others, including Egypt and the Baathi regimes in Syria and Iraq, have not hesitated to criticize or suppress specific fedayeen activity of which they disapproved, while continuing the politically necessary praise of the movement in general. The conservative states are more wary of the commandos but give them lip service and financial support, some of it through such devices as government-collected deductions from the salaries of Palestinians. Relations between the fedayeen and the Governments of Jordan and Lebanon are special cases and are discussed below.

C. Their Performance Against Israel

17. One must be careful to distinguish the fedayeen myth from the reality. Their leaders have become world famous. Their image of

dedicated, self-sacrificing fighters avenging past humiliations and liberating their homeland has had enormous appeal to Arabs and non-Arabs alike. This reputation was substantially made in 1968 and 1969 when the fedayeen often seemed to be carrying on the Arab struggle against Israel alone. They scored some initial terrorist successes within Israeli-held territory, and their prestige soared after a widely publicized battle against an Israeli raiding column at Karama, in Jordan, in March 1968. Propaganda accounts multiplied successes many times and downplayed losses. The resulting atmosphere helped to increase demonstrations of anti-Israeli militancy by Arab governments. Egypt's decision to begin the "war of attrition" in March 1969 was influenced by the fedayeen's headline grabbing and by their growing prestige.

18. Fedayeen actions against Israel have touched Israeli sensitivities. But even at the height of their activity, fedayeen achievements were limited. The fedayeen have never, to our knowledge, managed to carry out an operation of military significance in Israel or Israeli-occupied territory. Although their harassment has forced Israel to commit financial and military resources, countermeasures along the Jordanian cease-fire line including fences, patrols, and air strikes, have steadily reduced guerrilla capabilities to cross into Israeli-held territory. By late 1969, the fedayeen were reduced to such actions as firing rockets at a handful of exposed Israeli settlements. Since June 1967, nearly 2,000 guerrillas have been killed on Israeli-held territory alone and some 2,500 more captured. In turn, some 300 Israelis have died at fedayeen hands since 1967.³ As the Jordanian cease-fire line tightened up, the fedayeen began to shift attention to the

³ These are Israeli figures; Israel's statistics on its own losses are generally accurate. Statistics on fedayeen losses appear realistic.

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Lebanese-Israeli border, again with some initial success, speedily eroded by Israeli counter-measures.

D. The Fedayeen versus Jordan and Lebanon

19. In 1970, the commandos' relations with the Governments of Jordan and Lebanon worsened. The fedayeen have insisted on their right to attack Israel from bases in adjoining Arab states, but Syria has allowed very few fedayeen operations from its territory, and Egypt has forbidden them entirely. The regimes in Amman and Beirut have allowed fedayeen operations from their territory, but they have not relished Israeli reprisals which have forced up to a hundred thousand of their citizens to flee the border areas. Both governments have, in the past year or so, moved in the face of intense opposition to limit fedayeen activity in their respective countries.

20. The confrontation between the fedayeen and the Jordanian Government has been particularly severe. Jordan has the largest share of displaced Palestinians within its borders and has allowed the fedayeen more freedom of movement than any other country. As Israeli defensive measures made guerrilla activity more hazardous, the fedayeen turned their energies toward establishing a privileged position for themselves within Jordan. Relations with the Jordanian Army worsened, as commandos sought to assert their independence of any controls and even to assume a status superior to the regular forces. The latter remained strongly loyal to King Hussein, whom many fedayeen wished to topple. In these circumstances, relations between the Amman government and the commandos steadily deteriorated during 1970.

21. After serious confrontations in February and June, a dramatic showdown eventually

came in September 1970. It was basically the culmination of deep-seated mistrust between Hussein's regime and the fedayeen, although other area events were also causative factors. These included Hussein's and Nasser's acceptance of the Rogers peace initiative—a move bitterly opposed by the fedayeen leaders—and the challenge to the authority of the Jordanian regime posed by the PFLP's daring quadruple skyjacking. This 10-day conflict may prove to have been critical for the future of the fedayeen. The war proved that the commandos—even when they fought bravely and well as they did in Amman—were no match for the regular armored units of the Jordanian Army, made up mostly of bedouin troops.

22. Jordanian infantry units, which have a large percentage of Palestinians, were not used in the fight, but neither did they come to the aid of the commandos. The 740,000 civilian Palestinians, who comprise over 40 percent of the East Bank population, remained on the sidelines. The fedayeen lost several hundred men and much of their equipment and were forced to back down. The aftermath of the war has seen a further erosion of fedayeen strength in Jordan. Some commando groups, mostly small, have disappeared, fedayeen morale has declined, and individuals who previously supported the fedayeen now find it better to appear neutral or even pro-government. Guerrilla activities against Israel have virtually ceased. There is a strong faction in the army that seems to be disposed to push its advantage and to eliminate the fedayeen, once and for all, as a military force and as a political threat.

23. Fedayeen setbacks in Jordan have strengthened the Lebanese Government's disposition to limit the actions of the Palestinian guerrillas in their country. Lebanon's political system is dependent on a balance between religious communities—principally between Christians and Muslims. Most of the former

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are hostile to the fedayeen; many Muslims strongly support them. The conservative ruling establishment itself, drawn from both communities, is fearful of Israeli reprisals and wary of the fedayeen. However, it is also greatly concerned about the possibility of domestic civil strife ensuing from any open clash between Lebanese forces and the Palestinian guerrillas. Whereas previously such domestic concerns, along with fedayeen prestige and pressure from other Arab governments (principally Syria), had impelled Lebanon to permit extensive freedom of operation to the guerrillas, the latter have now cut back on most activities outside a small area near the Israeli frontier. Some fedayeen operations continue from this region and remain an irritant to the Israelis although they are not a serious security problem.

24. The setback in Jordan sowed confusion throughout the fedayeen movement. The Fatah leadership including Arafat is under attack from within the organization. The PFLP is beset by internal bickering; its leader, George Habbash, is in hiding and apparently commands few followers. The new Government of Syria, which ousted the Baath faction responsible for sending Syrian forces to the aid of guerrillas in the Jordanian civil war, has disarmed and muzzled Saiqa. All these developments leave the fedayeen movement in distinctly poor condition, and its military capabilities are likely to remain low for some time.

III. THE PALESTINIANS AND THE FEDAYEEN AS FACTORS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A. As Factors Affecting Arab-Israeli Negotiations

25. The Palestinian question will remain one of the central issues in the Arab-Israeli dispute. No settlement is likely to be lasting which does not in some way respond to Pal-

estinian interests, including Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, the status of Jerusalem, and the refugee problem. The refugee issue, which is of particular importance, would have to be addressed, probably through a plan involving resettlement and compensation, and with token repatriation to Israel. On the basis of present evidence and past experience, a settlement which appeared to be responsive to Palestinian aspirations and which was strongly endorsed and enforced by the Egyptian and Jordanian Governments would probably receive the acquiescence of most Palestinian Arabs.

26. By contrast, the fedayeen leaders would continue to refuse to associate themselves with a settlement which permits Israel to continue as a separate Zionist state. Some would strongly denounce any moves toward a negotiated agreement, as they have the Rogers Plan. But their ability to force the Arab governments to reject all such moves or to prevent the implementation of an agreed settlement, at least in the next year or two, appears limited. Egypt, for example, has been sensitive to opinion in other Arab states, but it would probably not be greatly swayed in its policy decisions on the Arab-Israeli question by fedayeen opinion. The regular forces of Israel and Jordan have demonstrated their ability to contain the commandos in open confrontation and would probably be able to do so again. Indeed, some fedayeen leaders have privately indicated their awareness of their inability to play a decisive role in the Arab-Israeli situation.

27. The creation of some kind of autonomous or independent Palestinian Arab state as part of an Arab-Israeli settlement has been frequently discussed of late. Some Arab leaders on the West Bank have pronounced favorably on the idea of a quasi-independent West Bank entity. Most Palestinians and Arab governments, however, have little enthusiasm for

SECRET

it on the grounds that either Israel or Jordan would inevitably dominate the fledgling state. Moreover, the economic liabilities of an entity comprising only the West Bank and Gaza are great. Both districts are poor and they already have more refugees than they can absorb.

28. Some Palestinians, including fedayeen leaders, have privately indicated interest in a larger Palestinian entity, including the entire East Bank. If such an entity did emerge it would probably have the support of large elements of the settled Palestinian population. Such a state would have much better economic chances of survival than the West Bank and Gaza alone—but this would mean a new Palestinian Government in place of the Jordanian monarchy. The East Bank establishment including the King and most of the Jordanian Army, would oppose such a development and could probably prevent it.

B. Factors Affecting Short-Term Tactics and Prospects

29. The principal preoccupation of the fedayeen groups for some time will be survival. They will try to reorganize, to maintain some freedom of action in Jordan, and to the extent possible will try to mount attacks on Israel. Unless present trends are reversed, they are likely to be generally ineffective.

30. This is not to say that despite their recent setbacks, the fedayeen will probably wither away. They are likely to remain popular with the Arab masses, to attract recruits, and to win the backing of some Arab governments. A severe heating up of the Arab-Israeli confrontation would create a psychological climate in the Arab world favorable to fedayeen militancy and bring some resurgence in the prestige of and support for the commandos—though not necessarily any improvement in their fighting effectiveness. If they

remain disorganized and ineffective for an extended period, however, support of all kinds is likely to taper off.

31. Some of the fedayeen may again seek public recognition through such tactics as airplane hijackings, political kidnappings, and the like. Such efforts would have to take place principally in host countries like Lebanon and Jordan, or as in the past, outside of the Middle East altogether. Launching attacks against Jordanian or Lebanese forces or officials is likely to lead to even harsher repressive measures in those countries. These could probably not crush the fedayeen entirely, but would probably force a substantial number of commandos to conform to government dictates while driving a smaller number underground in active opposition. A number of leaders, including Arafat, will probably continue to act so as to maintain their prestige and connections with important Arab leaders, even at the sacrifice of at least some political independence.

C. The Contingency of an Upset in Jordan

32. In the recent Jordanian civil war the army did indeed win all the battles. The army is now in control; there are no immediate signs of its losing its grip. The ability of the Amman regime to maintain its cohesion, and effectively run the country despite the presence of a large, embittered Palestinian minority seems reasonably good in the short term, unless King Hussein were assassinated. In such an event, Crown Prince Hassan, with the support of the army, could probably maintain the Hashemite regime.

33. But the war also triggered off developments which may sooner or later lead to major changes in that country. King Hussein, working in concert with East Bankers of various political views and with some Palestinians, had managed to rule Jordan for many years,

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although erosion of the system had been going on since the rise of the fedayeen after June 1967. The civil war drastically reduced Hussein's ability to play a conciliatory role, narrowed his power base, put hard line elements in the army leadership in a stronger position, and increased the polarization in Jordanian society between East Bankers and Palestinians.

34. If the present Jordanian regime fell, for whatever reason, the nature of its successor would depend on many factors. The military would almost certainly play an important role. It would be virtually impossible for the fedayeen in their present disorganized state to fill the vacuum created by a government collapse and take over rule of Jordan in the name of all Palestinians. At a later date, however, a militant Palestinian government could emerge from such a collapse. It has been argued that this might be desirable, that such a government of Jordan would be forced to act responsibly, would ultimately adopt the East Bank as the true Palestinian home, and forget about Israel. Though this might come to pass over the very long term, a Palestinian government in Amman would almost certainly—for the next several years at least—be dominated by the sort of extremists who now claim to speak

for the Palestinians. Under them, there would be no hope of a negotiated Arab-Israeli settlement.

D. Palestinians Over the Longer Term

35. In any event, Palestinian irredentism will continue as a factor in the Middle East. An overall Arab-Israeli settlement would satisfy many Palestinians, but it would not be accepted by all of them. The present fedayeen organizations would be very badly weakened, but would probably not disappear entirely. Some Palestinians would reject the compromises a settlement necessarily entailed and would seek to continue some form of resistance, particularly terrorist activity.

36. In the event that no Arab-Israeli accord is reached, the prospects for the Palestinian Arabs would not be bright. Over a million of them would continue to live unhappily in Israel or Israeli-occupied territory. Many of the rest would continue the life of refugees, and Palestinian irredentism would probably increase. Some fedayeen would probably become more extremist in outlook and action. Some Palestinian Arabs are likely to be sources of Near Eastern tension almost indefinitely, and to constitute a reservoir of bitterness, frustration, and hatred.

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PRINCIPAL FEDAYEEN ORGANIZATIONS PRIOR TO THE JORDANIAN CIVIL WAR OF SEPTEMBER 1970

NOTE: Accurate, detailed information on the fedayeen movement is not easy to come by. Their financing—particularly of Fatah, the most affluent—remains covert. Such available data as those on total membership and specific operations are often incomplete or unreliable. Even so, a fairly accurate but general picture of the fedayeen movement can be drawn. At the height of their activity, say mid-1970, there were some 30,000 people involved in the fedayeen movement. Of these about one-third were commandos trained and equipped to mount operations against the Israelis. The remainder were various categories of support personnel including a substantial number of armed Palestinians, sometimes called the "militia", in permanent residence in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Commando leaders give considerable lip service to the principle of fedayeen unity; most are members of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and participate in its deliberations. But fedayeen—and Palestinian—unity remains unachieved; the PLO and other organizations designed to coordinate fedayeen and Palestinian efforts are generally ineffective. The following data covers the fedayeen

and particularly the commandos as they existed prior to the September 1970 Jordanian civil war. They were badly hurt in that conflict and in ensuing battles with the Jordanian Army. Several hundred fedayeen have been killed and many more injured; some entire groups have probably disappeared and the remainder are in disarray. From one-third to one-half of the commandos appear, at least temporarily, to have abandoned fedayeen activity altogether.

1. *Al Fatah*: Largest of the Palestinian organizations. Its membership comprises at least one-half of total fedayeen organization membership, and it is responsible for about two-thirds of all activity directed against Israel. Its declared policy is to carry out operations only in Israel and the occupied territories. It denies intent to overthrow any Arab government, and has stayed on good terms with such disparate regimes as those of Libya and Saudi Arabia. In February 1969, Fatah gained control over the PLO. It is well financed, and of all fedayeen groups the most likely to endure.

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2. *Popular Liberation Forces (PLF)*: The commando arm of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA is organized and trained along conventional military lines, and its units are attached to regular Arab armies. It now may have some 8,000-9,000 men, most of whom are based in Syria. Officially controlled by the PLO, the PLA has retained considerable autonomy. Most of its fedayeen activities are carried out in Gaza.

3. *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)*: Leader George Habbash. This organization is extremely radical, perhaps Maoist. It believes that the toppling of conservative Arab regimes and the fight against Israel to be of equal priority. It has been responsible for most terrorist activity outside the Near East, particularly airplane hijackings, though it has also mounted operations in Israeli-held territory, especially Gaza. It has been a serious rival of Al Fatah as the most prestigious fedayeen group. It has received Iraqi support in the past. Badly crippled in the September 1970 civil war, its future is uncertain.

4. *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command*: Leader Ahmed Jibril. A small splinter group of the Popular Front.

5. *Arab Palestine Organization*: Headed by Ahmed Za'rur. Tiny dissident faction of Jibril's organization. Has had Egyptian backing.

6. *Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP)*: Leader Naif

Hawatma. The main faction which broke away from the PFLP in February 1969. Also extreme leftist views, but much less active in operations of any kind. Has received Syrian support.

7. *Al Saiqa*: Sponsored and controlled by the Syrian Government. Active against Israel mainly from Jordan and Lebanon rather than from Syria. Often used in the past to harass the Lebanese and Jordanian Governments. The new Syrian leaders are alleged to have promised to turn control of Saiqa over to a united Palestinian military command, though they have not as yet done so.

8. *Arab Liberation Front*: Sponsored by the Iraqi Government. Very small and ineffective to date. Relies on Iraqi troops in Jordan for funding and equipment; many members are alleged to be Iraqi nationals.

9. *Popular Struggle Front*: A small organization which was formerly a part of Fatah.

10. *Active Organization for the Liberation of Palestine*: Leader Dr. Isam Sartawi, who broke away from Al Fatah in early 1969. Pro-Egyptian. Of marginal size and significance.

11. *Al Ansar*: Set up in March 1970. Size and leaders unknown. Of interest principally because it was founded by Arab Communist parties as their fedayeen group. Has remained isolated from the other commando groups, thanks to its support of the Rogers peace initiative. As far as is known, has mounted no operations against anyone.

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PROBABLE COMMANDO STRENGTH PRIOR
TO SEPTEMBER 1970

<u>ORGANIZATIONS</u>	<u>TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMANDOS</u>
Al Fatah	7,000
Popular Liberation Forces	1,000
Al Saiqa	2,000
PFLP	1,000
PDFLP	500-700
All Others	No more than 1,000

LOCATION OF PALESTINIAN ARABS
(LATE 1970)

<u>AREA</u>	<u>TOTAL (APPROXIMATE)</u>	<u>REGISTERED REFUGEES</u>	<u>RESIDENTS OF REFUGEE CAMPS</u>
West Bank	680,000	273,000	72,000
East Bank	740,000	505,000	211,000
Gaza	360,000	312,000	199,000
Syria	170,000	158,000	43,000
Lebanon	230,000	176,000	92,000
Israel	360,000
Kuwait	85,000
Saudi Arabia	20,000
Other Arab States	28,000
Non-Arab States	37,000
Total	2,710,000	1,424,000	617,000

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Next 2 Page(s) In Document Denied