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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

7 November 1972

MEMORANDUM*

SUBJECT: A Possible Israeli Raid on Libya --
Nature and Consequences

DISCUSSION

1. In the Israeli view, recent Libyan actions amply justify an Israeli attack of some sort on Libya. The Qadhafi regime has become the major financial supporter of the fedayeen, it is providing them with training camps and other facilities in Libya, and it has sent troops to fight along with the fedayeen in Lebanon. When Israeli athletes were slaughtered in Munich during the Olympics, the Libyans were the most vociferous of all the Arab governments in their praise of the perpetrators. They gave the fedayeen killed at Munich a heroes' funeral in

* *This memorandum was discussed with other components of the CIA who are in general agreement with its judgments.*

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Tripoli. And when other fedayeen hijacked a Lufthansa plane and arranged to free the Arab survivors of Munich from their German prison, the Libyans welcomed all the fedayeen involved to Tripoli with extravagant praise.

2. In the light of these facts, it is clear that the Israelis want badly to strike at Libya -- both for revenge and for purposes of deterrence. They have a fundamental conviction that *failure* to take strong measures against those who encourage terrorism is the single course most likely to keep the fedayeen movement alive. They would recognize that a raid of limited dimensions on Libya would not necessarily hamper fedayeen activity and might even encourage it by inspiring the Libyans to increase their backing for the fedayeen. But having announced a policy of attacking the terrorists wherever they can be reached, the Israelis are strongly inclined to pursue it consistently. They might thus embark on one raid on Libya or on a series of actions with the idea of conveying a message to the world in general and the Arabs in particular, rather than in expectation of doing any particular damage to Libya or to the fedayeen.

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3. There are assorted targets in Libya for which the Israelis probably have contingency plans or are preparing them. If the Israelis wish to strike at the fedayeen themselves, the only suitable objectives in Libya are the handful of fedayeen training bases [redacted]

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[redacted] With one aerial refueling, Israeli aircraft could reach these camps and bomb them with relatively little risk of effective opposition from Arab aircraft or ground fire. Except with extraordinary luck, they would be unlikely to hurt any substantial number of fedayeen or destroy any equipment of consequence.

4. If the Israelis instead are bent on embarrassing the Libyan regime itself or on doing damage to Libyan interests, the options are a bit more varied -- and most of them are considerably more risky. An aircraft strike against the Nasser air base (formerly El Adem) would be the easiest. Air attack on more distant targets [redacted]

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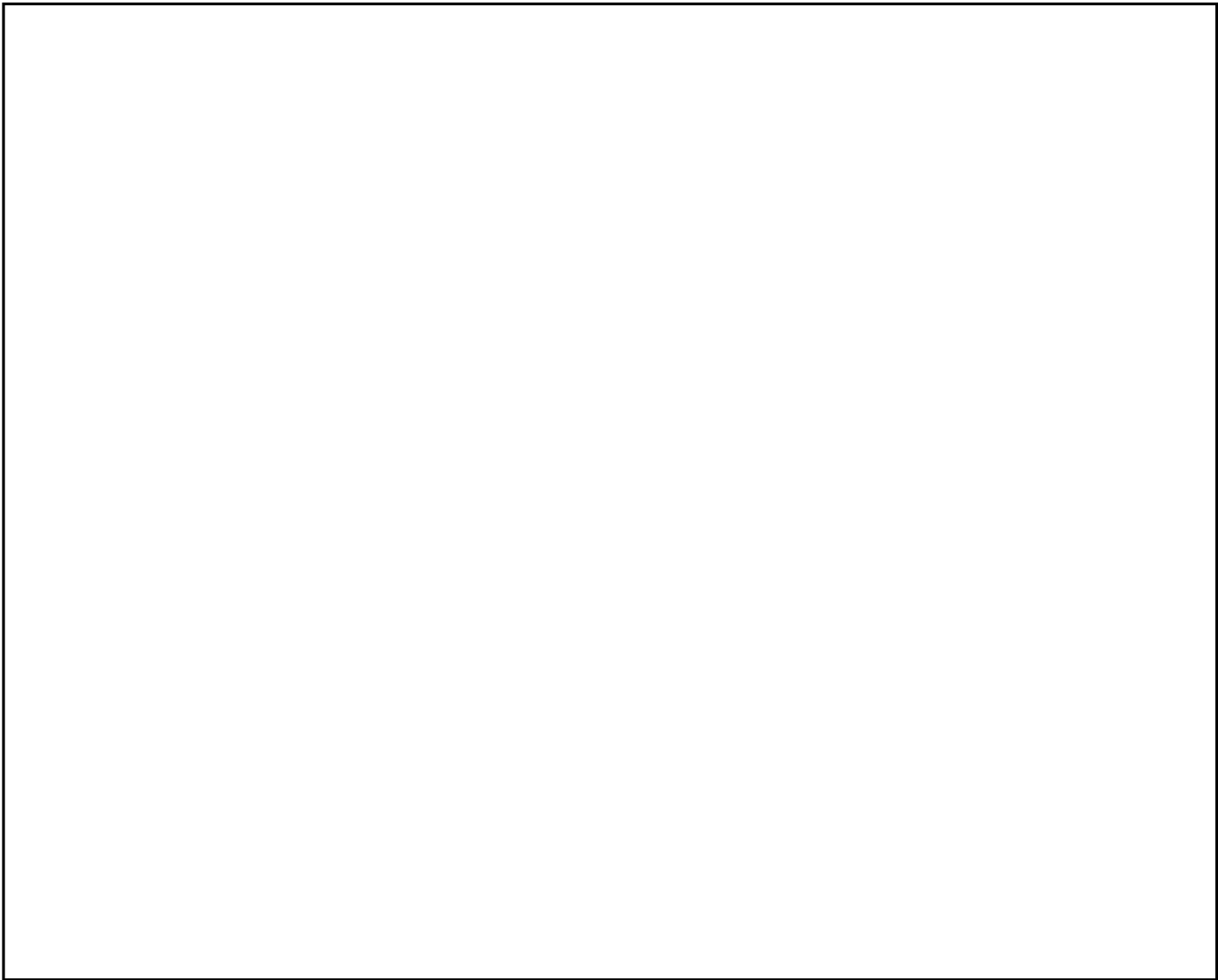
[redacted] are within Israeli capabilities, but they would require two in-flight

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refuelings to manage the round trip. Although
the Israelis probably could reach any target along the
coast, drop some bombs, and get away without sustaining
casualties, they could not expect to do great damage.

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6. An Israeli attack or raid, even of small dimension, on Libya could have very serious consequences for the US. The Libyan regime is, of course, highly emotional on all matters having to do with Israel. Qadhafi and his colleagues are also deeply resentful of the US relationship with Israel, and they are angered by the continuing refusal of the US to provide a handful of F-5 aircraft that were promised to King Idris before the revolution. An Israeli attack on Libya utilizing US-provided F-4 aircraft certainly would inflame Libyan emotions and might lead to violent or drastic reactions. There are 3000 or so US nationals in Libya, and mob action against foreigners, with or without government approval, might well occur. Anti-US actions by the government, from the expulsion of the small Embassy up to and including nationalization of some or even all US oil interests in Libya, would be possible under such circumstances. Oil nationalization, even if it resulted in total stoppage of Libyan production for

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some time, would not create a serious crisis in the world oil supply, but it would involve substantial disruptions to normal supply patterns, particularly for Europe. More important for the US would be the impact on the balance of payments or the loss of some or all of the assets that provide a substantial continuing inflow of funds (\$552 million in 1970 and \$410 million in 1971) and the upsetting effect that successful Libyan nationalization would have on established relationships in the world oil industry.*

7. In contemplating any direct action, the Israelis would have to weigh the possible side effects. Some might not be particularly unwelcome to them. From Tel Aviv's point of view, a major uproar in US-Libyan relations is not undesirable. Increased concern among oil consumers over the undependability of Arab oil supplies would have some advantages to Israel -- though this can be a double-edged threat. The Israelis would not be especially

* *The amount of financial loss would depend on many factors: the extent of the nationalization; whether Libyan oil continued to be produced and sold; whether any production that was lost in Libya was made up from US-owned sources; what compensation Libya eventually agreed to pay, etc.*

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concerned if the Libyans reacted by ordering more military hardware from any source; they have managed for years to cope with the over-equipped, under-trained, poorly organized Arab armies that have resulted from Arab conviction that military gadgets are the key to military success.

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8. There are factors -- aside from the risk of losing aircraft and personnel in an operation so far from home bases -- to give the Israelis pause. Qadhafi might be able to turn an Israeli attack on Libya into a great propaganda victory, strengthening his own position at home and in the Arab world at large. An attack that resulted in extensive civilian casualties could generate adverse sentiment in Western countries. If Qadhafi reacted to Israeli blows by striking at Western oil interests, the parties concerned might themselves react in ways injurious to Israel. Thus, major oil customers in Europe might decide to buy nationalized oil directly from Libya. The US and principal West European governments could try to force Israel toward

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a settlement falling short of Tel Aviv's requirements. All of these restraints on Israeli action are, however, debatable, and the Israelis are inclined to discount the possible long-term disadvantages stemming from acting when these are weighed against the disadvantages of failing to act.

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9. On balance,



we believe that any decision is likely to be a close thing.

Moreover, even if the Israelis elect to do nothing now, chances are that provocations from Qadhafi will continue and that Tel Aviv will become increasingly disposed to react to them.

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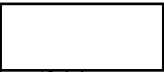
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MEMORANDUM FOR: Ray S. Cline
Director INR

Copies of the attached Memorandum have been sent
to the following: Assistant Secretary Joseph Sisco,
David Newsom, Alfred L. Atherton, James Blake.


JOHN W. HUIZENGA
Director
National Estimates

8 November 1972
(DATE)

8 November 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Huizenga

SUBJECT : Additional Distribution for Israel/Libya memorandum

Subject to your approval, we would like the following to receive this memorandum:

1-6 D/W White House: #6 to DOT (10 Nov 72)

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State:

13

Mr. Joseph Sisco
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Room 6242

14

David Newsom
Room 6234-A

State Department: (continued)

15 Alfred L. Atherton
NEA
Room 6242

16 James Blake
AF/N
Room 4513

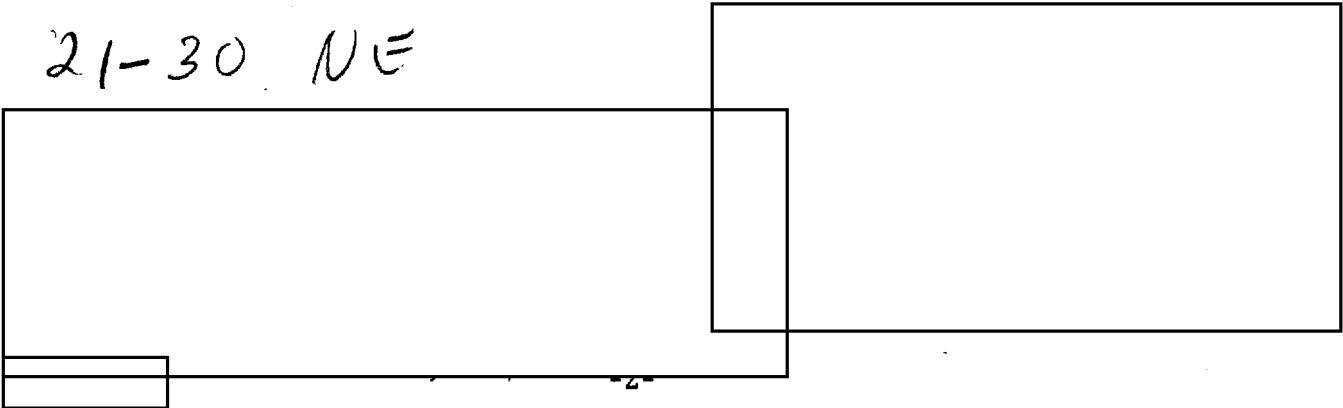
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INR/RNA/NE
Room 7533

20 Mr. Bazil Brown
INR/RAF
Room 7813

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

We have done the attached piece, not because we think an Israeli raid on Libya can be predicted as probable, but because, if it happened, it could produce a very ugly situation for the US.


JOHN HUIZENGA
Director
National Estimates


7 November 72
(DATE)

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FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

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