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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC 1277-80  
21 February 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment  
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM: Robert C. Ames  
National Intelligence Officer for Near East and South Asia

SUBJECT: Monthly Warning Assessment: Near East and South Asia

1. Lebanon/Syria/Israel. Syria's announcement that it would withdraw its peacekeeping forces from Beirut has revived the prospect of a renewed civil war between the adversaries in the 1975-1976 conflict: Christian militiamen and the coalition of Palestinian fedayeen and leftist Muslim forces. Tensions between the two sides are higher than at any time since the end of the war; each has placed its forces on alert, mobilized reserves, and made other preparations in anticipation of renewed conflict. Moreover, Syrian troop movements in the Bekaa Valley, combined with what Israeli intelligence officials believe are credible reports of Syrian planning for limited hostile action against Israel, have raised the possibility of broader conflict either by intention or miscalculation.

Tensions within Lebanon appear to hold the most imminent danger. In addition to deepening friction between Muslims and Christians, there has been sporadic and intense fighting between rival Christian factions -- the followers of former President Franjyah and Pierre Jumayil's Phalanges Party -- in north Lebanon. The Phalanges has close ties to the Israelis, while Franjyah has close personal ties with President Assad and in recent clashes with the Phalanges has received assistance from Syrian forces. The danger in continued clashes between the Christian groups is the possibility that Israel and Syria will be drawn into the feud and/or that Muslim militants will take advantage of Christian divisions.

2. Saudi Arabia. The hospitalization of King Khalid raises the possibility that Saudi Arabia may soon be facing succession. Although

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[redacted] We believe that the succession process, when it does take place, will be carried out smoothly and that the real test in the transition from Khalid to Crown Prince Fahd's leadership will rest in the character of Fahd's rule: whether he preserves the collegial nature of decision-making, improves his somewhat tarnished reputation, and displays greater skill in handling divisions within the Saud family that could fatally weaken the monarchy. In the meantime, Khalid's increasingly obvious frail health and its effects on his ability to assert leadership could increase royal and popular unease.

3. Morocco. Increasing anti-regime activity particularly within the student and labor movements in Morocco signals new inroads by leftists and underscores the mounting price King Hassan is paying as a result of the unresolved situation in Western Sahara. The drain on Morocco's resources and energies of the Sahara imbroglio has exacerbated the country's social and economic problems, which the King seems either unwilling or unable to tackle. Although many and perhaps even most Moroccans still share the King's desire to maintain Moroccan claims to Sahara, the willingness of many to set aside other concerns is clearly flagging. The ebb and flow of Morocco's fortunes in the struggle to maintain control of the territory has elicited an increasingly critical -- if not hostile -- attitude toward the King's leadership. We believe that the King's problems will continue to mount, that they are of a magnitude that threaten him and the monarchy, and that resolution of the Sahara problem is the necessary first step in retrieving the King's prospects.

*Robert C. Ames*  
Robert C. Ames

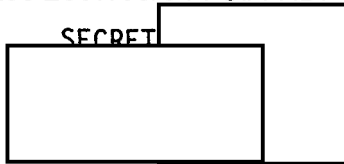
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