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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

National Foreign Assessment Center

23 December 1981

Growing Terrorist Danger for Americans

Key Judgements

The kidnapping of General Dozier by the Red Brigades along with other recent international terrorist incidents portend increased security threats--particularly to Americans--in Europe, the Americas and the Near East over the next few months. [REDACTED]

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--Terrorist groups are increasingly planning attacks against Americans: Dozier was the first American the Brigades have attacked; American installations in Guatemala appear under significant and imminent threat; and, Libyan-directed assassins remain at large. [REDACTED]

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--If anti-US operations produce positive results, terrorist groups that share the Brigades anti-US orientation--such as the Red Army Faction in West Germany--will be encouraged to attempt attacks against US nationals. [REDACTED]

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--The extradition from the United States to Israel of Abu Eain, a Palestinian terrorist, has provided radical Palestinians further incentive to attack Americans. [REDACTED]

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Innocent American passers-by--even if not deliberately attacked--appear at some risk in the United Kingdom, to which the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) again has extended its bombing operations, and in the Near East where terrorists increasingly have used mass-casualty producing car bombs. [REDACTED]

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This memorandum was prepared for the Interdepartmental Group on Terrorism by [REDACTED] of the International Terrorism Center, NFAC and contains information received by noon, 23 December 1981. Questions or comments should be directed to the Chief, International Terrorism Center, Office of Global Issues [REDACTED]

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The actions of some terrorist groups may influence future behavior of other groups, but we see no evidence of a central coordinating authority. To some extent, the RAF and the Red Brigades share similar strategic objectives, but such issues as NATO nuclear weapons deployments are not at the forefront of PIRA or Palestinian concerns. [REDACTED]

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The Libyan threat to senior US officials and the Abu Eain extradition case are not issues being stressed by West European terrorist groups. Both the Libyan campaign and Palestinian anger over Abu Eain could involve the use of radical Palestinian groups against US interests, especially in the Middle East. [REDACTED]

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The US is facing terrorist threats from several quarters which, although unconnected, will challenge the US ability to react to widely dispersed and potentially serious international terrorist attacks. [REDACTED]

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The Dozier Kidnapping: Others to Follow?

The outcome of the Dozier kidnapping by the Red Brigades is likely to determine whether the Brigades, or other terrorist groups that oppose NATO policies such as the Red Army Faction (RAF) in West Germany, attack US officials in the near term. The first Brigades communique on the Dozier kidnapping and earlier published materials suggest the Brigades are trying to tap anti-military, anti-nuclear sentiment in Italy and West Europe. They hope to embarrass NATO and the US and to erode the Italian government's policies on the Alliance and nuclear weapons deployment. By prolonging the kidnapping, the Brigades seek maximum public attention. [REDACTED]

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The communique calls for a coordinated or cooperative effort between the Brigades, and other terrorist groups, specifically the RAF, PIRA and ETA Basques in Spain. We believe RAF operatives already have begun target selection and surveillance, and preparations for operations against US targets in West Germany. If the Dozier operation seems to be achieving positive results for the Brigades, the RAF is more likely to accelerate its preparations for an attack against an American official or installation in order to advance anti-US objectives both groups share. [REDACTED]

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The Irish Republican Army and ETA Basques are less likely to target Americans at this time. Most US officials in Spain are located outside normal ETA operational areas. Anti-NATO feeling in Spain is not high. [REDACTED]

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Although anti-NATO, the PIRA values support from certain segments of American society and would risk categorical condemnation in the US should it attack American targets. There remains a threat of indiscriminate PIRA bombing in the London area, which could produce victims among American passers-by. The PIRA launched a bombing campaign in the United Kingdom this fall, and in the past, has attempted bombings in England during the holiday season. Stringent security has limited the effectiveness of such campaigns, but British authorities apparently have still not uncovered a cache of over 500 pounds of explosives believed hidden somewhere in the London area for use in a future bombing campaign.

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The Abu Eain Extradition Case

The US extradition to Israel on 13 December of accused Palestinian terrorist Ziyad Abu Eain, after a two-year battle in US courts, has heightened anti-US sentiment in the Near East and the threat to the well-being of Americans there and elsewhere. US Embassies in the region have been warned during the past two years that US interests would be attacked if Eain were extradited to Israel.

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His extradition comes at a time of increased tensions in the Near East over Israeli de facto annexation of the Golan Heights, the stalemated Palestinian autonomy talks and reinforcement of military positions along the Israeli-Lebanese border. Even moderate Arabs point to the refusal of US courts to extradite PIRA terrorists to the UK as evidence of a US double-standard on the question of extradition.

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At this juncture, we have no direct evidence of Palestinian terrorist plans to attack US interests. The major Palestinian organizations have not attacked Americans since the early 70s. We treat with reserve reports of such Palestinian intentions

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Nevertheless, the PLO has called for "decisive reprisals" against the US.

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US Embassies in Beirut, Kuwait, Damascus and Ankara have increased security measures. Even if the first wave of anti-American feeling subsides without terrorist attacks, passions will again rise when the Israelis try Abu Eain. A conviction and long sentence would almost certainly spark reprisals against US interests. The Israelis have not yet announced a trial date.

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The Libyan Threat

We continue to believe the Libyan-directed threats against US officials are serious. Qadhafi has the assets to attempt such a mission, a long record of support for international terrorism, and has attempted to assassinate foreign leaders in the past, including Sadat and Habre of Chad.

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Most Libyan attempts against world leaders have been thwarted in the planning or operational phase before the attack could take place. In many instances, tight security around the intended victim has persuaded Libyan-directed assassins to call off the attempt. Nonetheless, the Libyan campaign against US officials is without precedent, and the potential effectiveness of security, and other deterrent measures is hard to gauge.

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Other Terrorist Threats

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Mass-casualty producing car bombs have been used to some extent by the PIRA in the United Kingdom, but such attacks are mainly centered in the Near East. Statistically, there have been twice as many car bombings by international terrorist groups

-4-

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[redacted]

this year as during the same period in 1980, and resultant casualties in 1981 will be higher than for any year since 1968.

[redacted]

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Most of the recent, serious car bombings have taken place in Beirut and Syria, where there are relatively light concentrations of Americans. Unless US interests are directly targetted, the threat from car bombings to Americans in the United Kingdom and the Near East seems incidental and remote.

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New Dangers in Europe

If [redacted] Armenian terrorists have worked operationally with radical Palestinian terrorists in Europe, a more ominous terrorist threat would obtain in West Europe. The Palestinians have a well-developed support infrastructure in Europe, and the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) is among the most capable and dangerous terrorist organizations in the world.

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Americans could become targets of this potentially powerful combination if the Palestinians, in reaction to the Abu Fain case, expand their target list to include US nationals and solicit Armenian cooperation

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-5-

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Next 2 Page(s) In Document Denied