

SUBJECT: Terrorist Trends and Leadership Challenges in the  
Palestinian Movement [REDACTED]

25X1

NESA M 86-20094  
Internal Distribution

3 - DCI/DDCI/Executive Staff  
1 - Executive Registry  
1 - DDI  
1 - ADDI  
1 - NIO/NESA  
1 - NIO/Counterterrorism  
1 - D/NESA  
1 - DD/NESA  
1 - C/PPS/NESA  
2 - NESA/PS  
1 - C/PES  
1 - D/LDA  
1 - PDB Staff  
1 - NID Staff  
1 - D/OGI  
1 - C/OGI/CTC  
1 - C/OGI/CTC/TAB  
1 - C/DDO/NE/RR  
1 - C/IA/D/NESA  
1 - DC/IA/D/NESA  
1 - C/IA/I/NESA  
1 - C/AI/D/NESA  
1 - C/PG/D/NESA  
1 - C/SO/D/NESA  
1 - CPAS/ISS  
6 - CPAS/IMC/CB  
1 - NESA/IA/I Branch  
1 - NESA/IA/I/Typescript file  
DDI/NESA/IA/I/[REDACTED]

25X1

DATE

6/24/86

FILE

DOC NO

NESA M 86-20094

OCR

3

P&amp;PD

1

secure (23Jun86)

25X1

25X1

25X1



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

23 June 1986

Terrorist Trends and Leadership Challenges  
in the Palestinian Movement

25X1

Summary

We believe that the authority of the established Palestinian leaders is being undermined gradually and that this development is contributing to the indiscriminate Palestinian terrorism of recent months. The erosion of PLO Chairman Arafat's position and challenges to leaders of other Palestinian groups will encourage:

--The emergence of more aggressive, competitive Palestinian leaders impatient with complex political negotiations and more prone to seek results with terrorism.

--More splits, offshoots, and shifts in loyalty among Palestinian groups that will frustrate and reduce the influence of moderate Palestinians.

--More manipulation of Palestinian terrorist groups by state sponsors, which also may result in some attacks by "freelance" Palestinians attempting to gain notoriety or funding on their own.

-----  
This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Issues Branch, Issues and Applications Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 23 June 1986 was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be addressed to Chief, Issues and Applications Division, [redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

NESA M 86-20094

25X1

25X1

25X1

[redacted]

--More violent operations by Palestinians who have grown up in Lebanon numbed by their day-to-day experiences. [redacted]

25X1

Israel will continue to be the primary target for Palestinian terrorists, but moderate Arab states--particularly Jordan--will still be vulnerable. We believe the prospects will remain high that US interests will continue to be the target of attacks by Palestinian terrorists, encouraged by strong US ties to Israel, anti-Americanism among younger Arabs, and persistent pressure by radical Arab states. [redacted]

25X1

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Arafat's Eroding Influence

Several factors are contributing to the indiscriminate Palestinian terrorism of recent months, but we believe the major cause is Arafat's weakened leadership over the Palestinian groups. The split in the Palestine Liberation Organization that followed the Palestine National Council meeting in Amman in late 1984 formalized Arafat's declining control over the radicals. Arafat's political setbacks in late 1985 and 1986--his failure to implement the terms of the agreement signed with King Hussein and the concurrent ability of Palestinian terrorist groups, such as Abu Nidal, to discredit his political strategy--have further weakened his leadership. [redacted]

25X1

Recent Palestinian terrorism, in our view, is indicative of a growing attitude among younger Palestinians that violence is the only effective means of focusing international attention on their plight. We believe that many of them think Arafat lacks the political clout to elicit significant concessions from Hussein, and, more importantly, that the United States lacks interest in continuing to broker the peace process. [redacted]

25X1

Following the assassination of the newly appointed mayor of the West Bank town of Nablus by anti-Arafat Palestinians last March, US Embassy reports indicate that old-line West Bank Arab leaders voiced distress and frustration at their growing inability to convince younger Palestinians that political activity is the most effective means to resolve their problems. Since the assassination, a localized radical youth movement is emerging [redacted] Well-organized and anti-US, this more assertive generation of

25X1

25X1

25X1

[redacted]

leaders reportedly is using threats and violence to intimidate moderate West Bank Palestinians. [redacted]

25X1

### Leadership Challenges

Competition for leadership of the Palestinian movement probably is driving some Palestinian groups to display their prowess at terrorism. The "successes" over the past year of the Abu Nidal group, which has avoided alliances with other pro-Syrian, pro-Libyan radical Palestinians, may have set the tone for terrorism and has probably implicitly challenged other factions to prove their terrorist credentials. We believe younger Palestinians in particular, disenchanted by barren diplomatic initiatives, may be buoyed by the Abu Nidal group's sense of showmanship and action. [redacted]

25X1

We believe that a violent group requires acts of escalating violence to keep its name in the headlines. The publicity that surrounded such operations as the hijacking of TWA and Egyptair aircraft and the cruise ship Achille Lauro the attacks on the Rome and Vienna airports, and the bombing of the West Berlin disco increases the likelihood that factions will contend for status and public attention with more dramatic operations. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

The sense of competition also probably contributes to a more assertive role by second-echelon leaders. Internal differences are at least as prevalent in Palestinian terrorist groups as in any other organization, and a new generation of aggressive subordinates may be pressing the traditional leaders into more daring displays of terrorism, including operations against high-profile targets. Maverick members of established factions also may now feel more free to take advantage of the greater erosion of control by traditional leaders to conduct their own attacks. [redacted]

25X1

We believe that Fatah's ideological tilt that favors the attitudes of hardline senior subordinates to Arafat such as Salah Khalaf is indicative of the increasing influence of aggressive secondary leaders. In our view, resistance to Arafat's political strategy by the hardliners is far more prevalent than it was a year ago, when the moderates were intensely involved in negotiations with King Hussein. If this shift continues, it eventually could lead Fatah to a return to international terrorist operations similar to those in the 1970s. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

[redacted]

We believe that disappointment and anger following more than a decade of unsuccessful political efforts to create a Palestinian homeland provide strong motivation for a new generation of Fatah terrorists. Arafat's ban on PLO terrorist operations outside Israel and the Occupied Territories, implemented in 1974, has eroded over the past year or so. The attack by Fatah Force 17 operatives on three Israelis in Cyprus, the Achille Lauro operation by the Palestine Liberation Front associated with the PLO, and Fatah's apparent retaliatory operations against Syria last year suggest either that Arafat has more tolerance for a broader range of targets or that he is increasingly unable to control such operations by the Palestinian groups that still support him. [redacted]

25X1

Palestinian groups outside mainline Fatah may also be experiencing leadership challenges. Although we have no conclusive information about ongoing changes in the PFLP--the second most influential Palestinian group after Fatah--there is reason to surmise that squabbling over strategy within the PFLP leadership [redacted] may lead the PFLP to step up terrorism, with a broader set of targets. The assassination of the Palestinian mayor of Nablus last March, for which we believe the PFLP was responsible, may signal such a change. PFLP leaders now may feel more obliged or even anxious to challenge Arafat through means that go beyond just a political break. We do not believe that recent talk of PLO reconciliation--which is probably doomed from the start--will reverse this trend. [redacted]

25X6

25X1

In addition to younger subordinates assuming a more vocal role, we believe that leaders who previously have been less influential, such as Abu Musa of the Fatah dissidents and Abu Abbas of the pro-Arafat faction of the PLF, are strengthening their credibility through the use of, or claims of, terrorist operations.

--US efforts to arrest Abu Abbas have given him notoriety among some Palestinians that he lacked before the Achille Lauro operation [redacted]

25X1

[redacted] In spite of efforts by PLO officials late last year to expel Abbas from the PLO Executive Committee, Arafat reportedly believed that Abbas' expulsion would have elevated him to the status of a hero and perhaps promoted "another Abu Nidal."

25X1

--It has taken Abu Musa nearly two years to emerge as leader of the still fractured Fatah dissidents. Even

25X1

25X1

25X1

so, his leadership remains tenuous [REDACTED]

25X1

We believe that leaders such as Abu Abbas and Abu Musa lack both the political skills necessary to wield any major impact among most Palestinians and the capability to compete with operatives from Abu Nidal, the PFLP, or the reputation of Fatah's dormant Black September Organization. They will, however, appeal to some younger Palestinians who seek more involvement in terrorism. [REDACTED]

25X1

### Manipulation by State Sponsors

Palestinian terrorist groups, for the most part, long have sought to remain independent of their state sponsors. The loss of Lebanon as the PLO's main base and the subsequent political instability among its constituent groups have given radical states more opportunity for manipulation. All of the major Palestinian factions suffered heavy financial losses as well following Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Since the PLO split, the anti-Arafat Palestinians have become more financially dependent on radical states, having lost the traditional funding of the moderate Arabs. [REDACTED]

25X1

Although such major groups as the PFLP and Abu Nidal will maintain some independence by playing Syria off against Libya, needs for future funding, safehaven, and logistical support will almost certainly force weaker Palestinian groups to accept directions from their patrons. We also believe that more individual Palestinians will be willing to hire themselves out as freelance terrorists, going where the financial rewards are the greatest. [REDACTED]

25X1

### The Lebanese Impact

In addition to the leadership problems in Palestinian groups, we believe the decade-long Lebanese civil war is creating a pool of ready recruits for Palestinian organizations intent on more spectacular terrorist operations. In part, the brutalizing effect of growing up in violence-torn Lebanon undoubtedly has hardened this generation of Palestinians, described by one scholar as the "Kalashnikov kids." These Palestinians probably believe that the same terrorist tactics they see as responsible for driving the Israelis from Lebanon will work elsewhere. For this group, violent behavior is becoming ingrained and likely to be pursued as an end in itself. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

25X1

[REDACTED]

A secondary outgrowth of Lebanon is that the religious commitment of the Lebanese Shia has helped to inspire zealotry in Palestinian nationalism, although most Palestinians are unlikely to turn to martyrdom to the same degree that Shia terrorists have. This deepening commitment was apparent in the attacks at the Rome and Vienna airports, where the terrorists had little chance of escaping alive. [REDACTED]

25X1

[REDACTED]

Similarly, we believe that more young Palestinians are likely to volunteer for what will almost certainly be suicide operations. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

### Prospects

The changes that we believe are emerging in the Palestinian groups will probably persist, even in the unlikely event of Arafat's reassertion of authority over most of the Palestinian factions. Without a promising political outlet, competition among younger Palestinians with a bent for activism will hamper moderate political initiatives and increase the prospects for more indiscriminate terrorism. [REDACTED]

25X1

Although most Palestinians still prefer a peaceful solution, their frustration may cause them to tolerate more extreme behavior in the name of the Palestinian cause and the media attention that terrorism invokes. They may even conclude that such measures are temporarily necessary in order to attract more international attention to their cause. [REDACTED]

25X1

For some time to come, radical Palestinians are likely to exploit the US bombing of Libya as a justification to strike back at the United States. Although Libyan manipulation certainly raises the probability of Palestinian-sponsored retaliatory operations against US targets, most Palestinian extremists already harbor their own grievances against the United States sufficient to provoke such attacks. Strong US ties with Israel and anti-Americanism among Arabs increase the likelihood that US interests, either indirectly or directly, will be targets of future violence by Palestinian extremists. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

**SUBJECT: Terrorist Trends and Leadership Challenges in the  
Palestinian Movement**

25X1

**NESA M 86-20094**

**External Distribution:**

**Ms. Barbara Bodine  
NEA/IAI  
Department of State  
Room 6247**

**Ms. Wendy Chamberlain  
Acting Director, NEA/Regional Affairs  
Department of State, Room 5252A**

**Ms. Sandra Charles  
Director, Near East South Asia Region  
International Security Affairs  
Department of Defense, Room 4D765 Pentagon**

**Mr. Marion Creekmore  
Deputy Assistant Secretary,  
Department of State, Room 6244**

25X1

**Mr. April Glaspie  
Director, NEA/AFN  
Department of State, Room 6250**

**Mr. Donald Gregg  
Assistant to the Vice President for  
National Security Affairs  
Room 381, Executive Office Building**

**Mr. George S. Harris  
Director, Office of Analysis for  
Near East-South Asia  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research  
Department of State, Room 4643**

**Colonel Walter P. Lang  
ATTN: DIO/Middle East and South Asia Division  
Defense Intelligence Agency  
Room 2A520, Pentagon**

25X1

SUBJECT: Terrorist Trends and Leadership Challenges in the  
Palestinian Movement

25X1

NESA M 86-20094  
External Distribution (continued)

Mr. Aaron Miller  
Policy and Planning Staff  
Department of State, Room 7330

Lt. Colonel Oliver North  
Deputy Director Political-Military Affairs  
National Security Council  
Room 302, Old Executive Office Building

Mr. Robert H. Pelletreau, Jr.  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
Near Eastern and South Affairs  
OSD, Department of Defense  
Room 4D765 Pentagon

Mr. Dennis Ross  
National Security Council  
Room 351, Old Executive Office Building

General Charles F. Scanlon  
Assistant Deputy Director for Estimates  
ATTN: Middle East and South Asia Division  
Room 7860 Pentagon

Mr. Roscoe Suddarth  
Deputy Assistant Secretary, NEA  
Department of State, Room 6244

Mr. Gerald Sutton  
Chief, INR/GI/Terrorism Division  
Department of State, Room 2722

Mr. Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.  
Director, NEA/IAI  
Department of State, Room 6247

Mr. David Zweifel  
Director, NEA/AFN  
Department of State, Room 5250

25X1