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# **PLO Leadership After Arafat**



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**An Intelligence Assessment**

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*NESA 86-10006*  
*February 1986*

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# **PLO Leadership After Arafat**



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## **An Intelligence Assessment**

This paper was prepared by   
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis,  
with contributions from  Office of  
Central Reference, and   
 Office of Global Issues. It was  
coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. 

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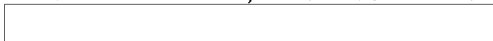
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Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
directed to the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, NESA,



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**PLO Leadership After Arafat**

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**Key Judgments**

*Information available as of 2 January 1986 was used in this report.*

PLO Chairman Arafat's dialogue with King Hussein of Jordan on peace in the Middle East makes Arafat a prime target for a coup or assassination. His demise would throw the PLO into disarray because it has no established procedure for succession and Arafat has not designated a second in command. [Redacted]

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In the event of Arafat's demise, leaders from the eight PLO factions probably would try to assert their authority over the PLO and vie for support from Arab governments. Syria would exploit the rivalries within the various groups to increase its influence over the organization and foster a leadership more sympathetic to its interests. [Redacted]

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Arafat's successor most likely would come from Fatah, the largest of the PLO component groups—in particular from within the small cadre of Fatah leaders active since the early 1960s. Arafat and his Fatah colleagues have not groomed a younger generation of Palestinians to assume leadership positions. [Redacted]

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The two main Fatah contenders for the PLO chairmanship, in our view, would be Khalil Wazir, Arafat's military commander, and Salah Khalaf, a senior security official. Both are founding members of Fatah and have close ties to Arafat, although they differ with Arafat and between themselves on relations with Syria and strategy toward resolving the Palestinian problem. [Redacted]

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Khalaf—unlike Wazir—has maintained contacts with Syria despite the estrangement between Arafat and President Assad and, in our view, would have a good chance to reunite Fatah with the Syrian-backed Palestinian groups and thereby bridge the gap between the PLO and Syria. [Redacted]

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The most likely candidates from radical Palestinian ranks would be George Habbash, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Nayif Hawatmah, head of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] Habbash and Hawatmah, as leaders of the second- and third-largest PLO factions and with ties to both Syria and the Soviet Union, would be in a strong position to work for reunification of the PLO if they combined forces, as they did in 1984 in the Democratic Alliance. [Redacted]

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We cannot rule out the possibility that radicals from the Syrian-backed Palestine National Salvation Front might successfully challenge Fatah for the PLO chairmanship. Six of the eight PLO groups are currently aligned with Syria and would have strong support from Damascus for assuming control of the organization. 


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No matter what the succession outcome, the PLO leadership after Arafat almost certainly will be even more inflexible than the current PLO chairman on how the Palestinian problem should be solved. Most PLO factions already advocate a return to armed struggle and would be likely to take advantage of the post-Arafat disarray within the organization to step up terrorist operations against Israel. These groups will be strengthened in their actions by their close ties to Syria. 

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Efforts to move the PLO toward peace negotiations with Israel after Arafat's demise thus will become even more difficult. Arafat's successor would be preoccupied with consolidating his position—not a quick or easy task. In our view, Arafat's most likely successors believe his diplomatic strategy already has failed and would prove no more successful if attempted again. 

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Barring an unlikely reversal of the 1974 Rabat Arab summit decision—recognizing the PLO as the Palestinians' "sole legitimate representative"—the PLO will retain a veto over moves toward peace negotiations. The PLO retains the support of most Palestinians because it has kept the Palestinian national spirit alive and therefore is unlikely to be threatened by West Bank leaders seeking to enter peace negotiations without PLO backing. Moreover, the terrorist capabilities of the PLO's component groups and their ability to cause regional and internal troubles for Arab regimes will ensure its survival as a major factor in the Middle East. 

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**Contents**

|   | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Key Judgments</b>                              | iii         |
| <b>The Succession Process</b>                     | 2           |
| <b>Candidates Within Fatah</b>                    | 3           |
| <b>Candidates From Palestinian Radical Groups</b> | 4           |
| <b>A New Direction for the PLO?</b>               | 5           |
| <b>The Peace Process</b>                          | 6           |
| <b>An Alternative Scenario</b>                    | 7           |
| <b>Implications for the United States</b>         | 7           |



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**Arafat's Tribulations, August 1982–November 1985**

|                      |   |                       |   |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| <i>August 1982</i>   | <i>Arafat forced to leave Beirut with his troops; refuge taken in nine Arab countries.</i>  | <i>February 1985</i>  | <i>Arafat signs PLO-Jordanian framework accord calling for joint action for entering peace negotiations.</i>  |
| <i>April 1983</i>    | <i>Arafat's most loyal deputies within moderate Fatah faction repudiate tentative agreement with King Hussein to enter peace negotiations.</i>                                    | <i>July 1985</i>      | <i>Arafat proposes seven Palestinian candidates—most of whom are clearly tied to the PLO—for US-Jordanian-Palestinian meeting.</i>  |
|                      | <i>A significant portion of Fatah in revolt against Arafat's leadership.</i>  | <i>September 1985</i> | <i>Assassination of three Israeli yachtsmen in Larnaca, Cyprus, by Fatah Force 17, Arafat's personal security guard. For the first time in over 10 years, Arafat loyalists were clearly linked to terrorist operations outside Israel and the Occupied Territories.</i> |
| <i>June 1983</i>     | <i>Arafat expelled from Damascus.</i>   |                       |   |
| <i>Fall 1983</i>     | <i>Arafat battles against dissident Palestinian forces aided by the Syrian military in Tripoli, Lebanon, and is finally forced to evacuate in December.</i>                       | <i>October 1985</i>   | <i>Israeli raid on PLO headquarters in Tunis.</i>   |
| <i>December 1983</i> | <i>Arafat faces new condemnation from Palestinian leaders, including many Fatah loyalists, for meeting with President Mubarak in Cairo after departure from Tripoli.</i>          |                       | <i>Hijacking of Achille Lauro, an Italian cruise ship, by members of the Palestine Liberation Front.</i>  |
| <i>Spring 1984</i>   | <i>Fatah fails to reconcile with the Popular and Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine, pushing the two fronts closer to Syria.</i>                                   |                       | <i>Cancellation of joint PLO-Jordanian delegation meeting with British officials because PLO representatives refuse to endorse statement explicitly accepting UN Security Council Resolution 242 and renouncing terrorism.</i>  |
| <i>November 1984</i> | <i>Arafat convenes Palestine National Council in Amman, over Syrian and radical Palestinian objections. At Council meetings, he replaces pro-Syrian officials with loyalists.</i> | <i>November 1985</i>  | <i>Arafat issues Cairo declaration renouncing PLO involvement in terrorist operations outside Israel and the Occupied Territories.</i>  |

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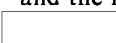
**PLO Leadership After Arafat**




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Arafat's leadership of the PLO has been severely tested since Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The PLO's expulsion from Lebanon eliminated the organization's most important base of operations against Israel and weakened Arafat's control by dispersing PLO fighters throughout the Middle East. 

The Lebanese disaster also sparked new opposition to Arafat's freewheeling leadership style and his willingness to toy with a political as well as military/terrorist approach to solving the Palestinian problem. Arafat has long faced opposition from PLO radicals to his diplomatic maneuvering, but he had not previously been confronted with a direct challenge from within Fatah. The Fatah rebellion in 1983 split the organization into pro- and anti-Arafat camps. 

Arafat nevertheless continues to demonstrate a remarkable ability to survive setbacks and to play both ends against the middle. He convened the Palestine National Council in Amman in November 1984, despite vociferous Syrian and radical Palestinian opposition. On 11 February 1985 he signed an agreement with King Hussein calling for joint action in seeking peace negotiations with Israel and has since continued his dialogue with the King despite the objections of close Fatah aides. Arafat also has tried to recoup the PLO's loss of international prestige and salvage moderate Arab backing after the Achille Lauro hijacking by publicly reaffirming the PLO's renunciation of terrorism outside Israel and the Occupied Territories. Arafat, however, carefully worded his "Cairo declaration" to allow the various PLO groups to interpret it as they see fit. In this way he hoped to appease those favoring increased terrorist operations against Israel and the United States in retaliation for the raid on PLO headquarters in Tunis and the interception of the Achille Lauro hijackers. 

Arafat  could head the PLO for an indefinite period if it were not for growing opposition to his leadership style and decisions. He is




*Arafat and King Hussein meeting in Amman.* 


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likely to be confronted with more serious challenges if he continues his dialogue with King Hussein and at some point tries to win PLO support for concessions on controversial issues, such as acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242. In our view, Arafat would then be a prime target for a coup or assassination by Palestinian radicals, who continue to advocate using armed struggle to establishing a democratic, secular state encompassing all of present-day Israel. 

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The radicals are determined to stop Arafat's political/diplomatic tack, regardless of whether he is serious or not, and will use violence to do so. 

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 pro-Syrian Palestinian operatives have attacked Arafat loyalists over the last two years. The Abu Nidal group, for example, assassinated two

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moreover, acknowledge that Arafat—who himself is certainly no “moderate”—has become the symbol of Palestinian nationalism and that he is largely responsible for the broad popular support the PLO commands in Gaza, the West Bank, and the Palestinian diaspora. We believe Arafat, for his part, wants to avoid another split within Fatah that would risk driving key figures into the Syrian camp. He has thus been careful not to make any commitments in his dialogue with Hussein that would split Fatah further.

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**The Succession Process**

Arafat’s death would leave vacant the chairmanships of both the PLO Executive and Fatah Central Committees. There is no formally designated successor in either organization.

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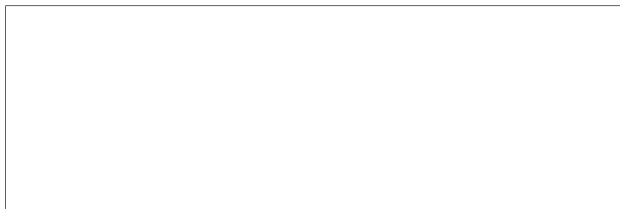


key PLO pragmatists during this period: Issam Sartawi in April 1983 and PLO Executive Committee member Fuad Qawasmah in December 1984.



The procedures for selecting a successor are poorly defined. [redacted] Shaykh Abd al-Hamid Sayih, chairman of the Palestine National Council, would assume the responsibilities of the PLO Executive Committee chairmanship until the National Council elected a new Executive Committee. The new committee in turn would elect its own chairman.

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[redacted] the decision on Arafat’s successor as Fatah Central Committee chairman would be made by the committee itself and then formally endorsed by the Fatah General Congress.

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We believe members of Arafat’s Fatah organization would be more likely to try to force him out of office than assassinate him to end his leadership. Two of his strongest opponents are Salah Khalaf, Fatah Central Committee member and head of the Unified Security Organization, and Faruq Qaddumi, the PLO’s “foreign minister” and a member of both the PLO Executive and Fatah Central Committees. These men have considerable influence in Fatah. They are founding members of Fatah along with Arafat, and they have helped Arafat build the PLO into an international force.

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[redacted] Fatah’s predominance within the PLO probably would enable the new Fatah Central Committee chairman to win election as PLO Executive Committee leader. Fatah is by far the largest of the PLO factions and is the most financially secure group despite the PLO’s current money troubles.<sup>1</sup> US Embassy officials believe Fatah leaders continue to dominate the organization’s decisionmaking process and its day-to-day operations. Fatah members provide the majority of PLO functionaries and

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For now, Arafat and Fatah hardliners like Khalaf and Qaddumi seem to have worked out a modus vivendi. We believe each recognizes that he needs the other to keep the Palestinian movement alive. The hardliners,



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### Groups Within the Palestine Liberation Organization

|  | Leader                        | Headquarters | Size                                      |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------|---|
| <b>Pro-Arafat</b>  |                               |              |   |
| Fatah loyalists  | Yasir Arafat                  | Tunis        | 6,000 to 8,000 scattered                  |
| Arab Liberation Front (ALF)                              | Abd al-Rahim Ahmad            | Baghdad      | 300 to 500 in Iraq                        |
| Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FLP) <sup>a</sup> | Muhammad Abbas (Abu al-Abbas) | Tunis        | 50 to 100                                 |
| <b>Neutral</b>   |                               |              |   |
| Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)  | Nayif Hawatmah                | Damascus     | 1,200 to 2,000 scattered                  |
| Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FLP) <sup>a</sup> | Taalat Yacub                  | Damascus     | Approximately 150                         |
| <b>Pro-Syrian</b>  |                               |              |   |
| Palestine National Salvation Front                       |                               |              |   |
| Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)     | George Habbash                | Damascus     | 1,500 to 2,000 scattered                  |
| PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC)                           | Ahmad Jibril                  | Damascus     | 800 to 1,000, mostly in Syria and Lebanon |
| Saiqa  | Issam Qadi                    | Damascus     | 500 to 1,000                              |
| Popular Struggle Front (PSF)                             | Shamir Ghawshah               |              | 200 to 300 scattered                      |
| Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FLP) <sup>a</sup> | Abd al-Fattah Ghanim          | Damascus     | Approximately 150                         |
| Fatah rebels   | Said Muragha (Abu Musa)       | Damascus     | 500, mostly in Syria and Lebanon          |

<sup>a</sup> Also known as the Palestine Liberation Front.

control the PLO's diplomatic network and its social and economic activities. [redacted]

[redacted] believes that the Fatah Central Committee would revert initially to collegial rule after Arafat's demise and that it would take some time for one individual to assert his authority. [redacted]

[redacted] until the mid-1970s Arafat was no more than one of a 10-member committee governing Fatah. A return to collegial rule is one of the main demands of the Fatah rebels and is broadly supported within the Palestinian diaspora. [redacted]

We believe Arafat's successor most likely would come from the small cadre of Fatah leaders who have been active in the Palestinian movement since the early

1960s. Arafat and his senior aides have not groomed a younger generation of Palestinians to assume control.

**Candidates Within Fatah**  
US Embassy officers [redacted] see Khalil Wazir (Abu Jihad) and Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) as the two main contenders for the leadership of Fatah. Both are founding members of the organization and have maintained close ties to Arafat over the

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years. The two men differ, however, in their views of Syria and strategy toward the Palestinian problem.

[redacted]

Wazir's main power base is the military; he heads Fatah's Western Sector Department, which oversees operations against Israel. Palestinian contacts of US Embassy officials say Wazir has been Arafat's closest adviser for the past 10 years.

[redacted] he does not have the international connections or political clout enjoyed by other senior Fatah officials, but he has gained respect within the Fatah bureaucracy as a result of his hard work and desire to stay out of the limelight. His wife also is active in political and social affairs for Palestinian women. US Embassy officers believe Wazir generally supports Arafat's efforts to work with Jordan on an approach to peace negotiations with Israel.

Salah Khalaf is best known for his leadership of the Black September Organization, a Fatah terrorist group active in the early 1970s. He currently is head of the PLO's Unified Security Organization. Khalaf is Arafat's most prominent critic within Fatah. He has been identified consistently with the radical left of Fatah and has frequently challenged the policies of Arafat and his supporters, according to US Embassy reporting. Palestinian contacts of US Embassy officials say he opposes negotiations with Israel, rejects PLO-Jordanian cooperation, and advocates a return to international terrorism.

Khalaf—unlike Wazir—has maintained contacts with Syria despite the estrangement between Arafat and President Assad and, in our view, would have a good chance to reunite Fatah with the Syrian-backed Palestinian groups and thereby bridge the gap between the PLO and Syria.

[redacted]

Other individuals within the Fatah hierarchy also might compete in the succession struggle, but we believe they are less likely to succeed. This group would include PLO notables such as Khalid Hasan and Faruq Qaddumi, two other founding members of Fatah. Hasan has long served as a senior counselor to Arafat and, in our view, is one of the strongest proponents of a diplomatic approach to the Palestinian problem. He is well known internationally, but he does not have a strong following within Fatah, according to US Embassy officers, and probably could not withstand challenges from the Fatah left. Qaddumi is a member of the PLO Executive Committee and has long served as the PLO's "foreign minister." US Embassy officials say that in recent years he has sided with Salah Khalaf in opposing Arafat's policies.

[redacted]

**Candidates From Palestinian Radical Groups**

Despite Fatah's strength within the PLO, Syrian-backed Palestinian radicals might ultimately gain control of the organization. Six of the eight PLO groups are currently aligned with Syria and probably would receive support from Damascus for taking over the organization. Two groups—the Popular and Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine—represent the largest PLO factions after Fatah, although their combined strength is less than that of Fatah.

[redacted]

The most likely candidates from among radical Palestinian ranks, in our view, are Popular Front head George Habbash and Democratic Front leader Nayif Hawatmah. Habbash was one of the founders of the Arab Nationalist Movement in the early 1950s. That organization later split because of ideological differences, and Habbash formed the Popular Front.

[redacted]

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Salah Khalaf, Nayif Hawatmah, and Khalil Wazir at Palestine National Council meeting. [redacted]

Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command. [redacted]

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Jibril as Syria's first choice among Palestinian radicals for PLO chairman. His ties to Damascus date from the 1950s when he served in the Syrian Army. Jibril is considered by many Western military observers to be the best military tactician in Palestinian ranks and has a reputation for skill and resourcefulness in sabotage operations. [redacted]

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We do not view leaders of the Fatah dissidents as potential candidates to succeed Arafat. Although rebel leaders Said Muragha (Abu Musa) and Muhammad Salih (Abu Salih) initially won broad Palestinian support, they apparently have discredited themselves since their mutiny in May 1983. [redacted]

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Although Democratic Front leader Hawatmah has aligned himself with some of the more radical PLO elements, he also has supported mainstream PLO policies, including the idea of a politically negotiated settlement to the Palestinian issue. He, however, has publicly opposed Arafat's dialogue with King Hussein. [redacted]

[redacted] Hawatmah has close ties to the USSR, and many Palestinians call him the Soviets' man in the PLO. [redacted]

In our view, Habbash and Hawatmah may conclude that the most effective way of asserting their authority over the organization is to combine forces, as they did in 1984 in the Democratic Alliance. Their cooperation has usually been short lived because of ideological differences, but they potentially could wield considerable influence over PLO policy if they set aside their differences for a time. As leaders of the second and third-largest PLO factions and with ties to both Syria and the Soviet Union, they would be in a strong position to work for reunification of the PLO. [redacted]

Another possible successor—although a less likely one, we believe—is Ahmad Jibril, head of the Popular

[redacted] a darkhorse candidate might assume the PLO chairmanship. Two possibilities, [redacted] are Khalid al-Fahum, chairman of the Syrian-backed Palestine National Salvation Front but better known for his long tenure as Palestine National Council chairman, and Ahmad Sidqi Dajani, an independent member of the Palestine National Council. [redacted]

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[redacted] such individuals could assume control only if Fatah collapsed. [redacted]

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**A New Direction for the PLO?**

Under Arafat's leadership, the PLO in recent years has pursued a two-track policy, adding diplomacy to terrorism. From the 1960s, Arafat has used terrorism against a wide range of Israeli and Western targets to gain recognition for the Palestinian cause and to consolidate his leadership.<sup>2</sup> Once international

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notoriety for his organization had been achieved, Arafat focused PLO terrorism on Israeli targets (though not exclusively) and opportunistically also began to pursue a diplomatic strategy to strengthen the PLO's international prestige. The PLO Chairman continued to give general approval for terrorist operations against Israeli targets—within Israel and Western Europe—to burnish the organization's revolutionary credentials and to mollify Palestinian hardliners. Arafat also countenanced strikes against Syrian interests, [redacted] to retaliate for Syrian attacks on PLO "moderates." [redacted]

US Embassy officials [redacted] report key figures within both Fatah and Syrian-backed Palestinian factions have long urged Arafat to abandon his diplomatic efforts in the belief that political compromise will not bring about a Palestinian state. In our view, this attitude has become more prevalent in recent years as Palestinian leaders have grown increasingly discouraged over the prospects for a negotiated settlement. Arafat's public statements over the last several months suggest that he also has come to believe the diplomatic approach is failing and that the PLO again must step up terrorist operations to demonstrate that it is still an effective national liberation movement with which Israel and the United States must reckon. [redacted]

The PLO leadership after Arafat, in our view, will be even more inflexible than the current tactically opportunistic PLO Chairman and probably will rely almost exclusively on terrorism to advance Palestinian goals. The six PLO factions in the Syrian-supported Palestine National Salvation Front already espouse a radical approach and probably would take advantage of the post-Arafat disarray within the organization to step up terrorist operations against Israel and possibly US interests. These groups undoubtedly would be strengthened by Syria, which wants to foster a PLO leadership sympathetic to Syrian aims. We believe Arafat's successor in Fatah may explore closer ties to Syria as well, particularly if he concludes that Syrian backing is vital to the survival of the PLO as an organization. [redacted]

Improved Fatah-Syrian relations probably would help reunify the various PLO factions, but some radical Palestinian splinter groups might remain obdurate and choose instead to break with Damascus. In particular, some members of the Palestine National Salvation Front—which already have established contacts with Libya—might relocate their base of operations to that country. The Abu Nidal organization—although not included in the formal PLO structure—has established closer ties to Libya during the last year. Its apparent involvement in the bombing of the El Al airline counters in Rome and Vienna last December demonstrates that the movement of Palestinian groups to Libya would significantly increase the opportunities for Libyan-sponsored terrorism in the region. [redacted]

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We believe the Soviets would welcome a Fatah-Syrian rapprochement. Moscow's influence in the region would be greatly enhanced, in our view, if it established good relations with both Damascus and Palestinians previously identified as Arafat loyalists. [redacted]

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The moderate Arab states probably would be the greatest losers in the event of a pro-Syrian reorientation within the PLO after Arafat. Jordan and Egypt might hold out hope that closer Fatah-Syrian relations would help move all parties toward peace negotiations with Israel. But they would be more likely to see the end to PLO cooperation toward broader peace talks unless they were on Syria's terms. [redacted]

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**The Peace Process**

We believe that efforts to move the PLO toward peace negotiations with Israel after Arafat's demise will become even more difficult. It will take an extended period for any successor to assert his authority over the organization and to consolidate his position with the various PLO factions and with other Arab governments. Moreover, Arafat's potential successors, in our view, will be even less receptive than the obdurate Arafat to the idea of the PLO's making concessions on key issues—including acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242 and renunciation of terrorism—to pave the way for the PLO to enter peace talks. [redacted]

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The new PLO leadership would probably insist on an independent Palestinian state rather than a state in confederation with Jordan, as Arafat agreed to in the 1985 PLO-Jordanian accord. The accord itself almost certainly would wither away if it were not formally abrogated by the PLO Executive Committee. [redacted]

Hussein also might be able over time to convince West Bank leaders that they should abandon support of the PLO and organize themselves as an alternative leadership. West Bankers have been unwilling to challenge the PLO's authority in the past, but fighting within the PLO after Arafat's demise might discredit the organization in the eyes of the West Bank population. [redacted]

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The post-Arafat PLO leadership also would be determined to prevent any other party from representing the Palestinians in peace negotiations. Arafat's successors would be most watchful of King Hussein and West Bank Palestinians, both of whom US Embassy officers say have toyed with the idea of entering negotiations without the PLO. We believe PLO leaders would not hesitate to order selective assassinations to discourage Jordanian and West Bank leaders from challenging the PLO's mandate as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." [redacted]

**Implications for the United States**

Whether Arafat is around or not, the United States will be increasingly vulnerable to terrorist attacks by the various PLO factions as they engage more frequently in armed attacks against Israeli interests. PLO leaders are likely to argue in favor of strikes against US interests as a means of getting Washington to press Israel for concessions. [redacted]

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Continued stalemate in diplomatic efforts to end the Israeli occupation is likely to encourage young Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to engage in bolder, more violent opposition to Israeli control. US Consulate officers report that West Bank activists have closely monitored the Shia resistance against the Israelis in southern Lebanon and may be persuaded to try similar measures in the West Bank. [redacted]

US citizens and facilities would be even more vulnerable if Arafat were assassinated. The PLO leader is convinced that Washington plotted with Israel to kill him during the Israeli raid on PLO headquarters in Tunis in October. Senior Arafat aides would be likely to suspect US-Israeli collusion in the event Arafat met a violent end—regardless of the evidence—and seek revenge for the loss of their leader. [redacted]

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[redacted]

Some Arab observers believe the PLO will wither and die without Arafat's leadership or at least disintegrate into several small factions without any central control. The PLO's organizational structure is likely to change after Arafat, but we believe the PLO will continue to be accepted by the Palestinians and the Arab states as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It therefore will continue to influence moves in the peace process. [redacted]

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**An Alternative Scenario.** Some Arab academics argue that the end of Arafat's leadership over the PLO would work in favor of Arab moderates who want to enter peace negotiations with Israel. In their view, King Hussein would be particularly encouraged to take advantage of the chaos within the PLO following Arafat's demise to expand Jordan's influence over the Palestinians. To this end, Hussein might seek a reversal of the 1974 Rabat Arab League summit decision that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Egyptian and other Arab moderate leaders might agree to the Palestinians being represented by Hussein since the majority of Jordan's population is Palestinian. [redacted]

The PLO's ability to be a spoiler in the Middle East will remain strong, in our judgment. Whatever the PLO's strength as a political force, the terrorist capabilities of its component groups and their ability to cause trouble for Arab regimes, independently or as agents of their patrons, will ensure that the Palestinian issue remains a key factor in Middle East politics. [redacted]

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Moreover, Palestinian nationalism will remain a major force in the Middle East after Arafat's departure from the scene. In our view, the potential for Palestinian nationalism to contribute to regional instability and to complicate US diplomacy almost certainly will increase as more Palestinians conclude that chances of establishing a homeland in the West Bank and Gaza are vanishing. Moderate Arab leaders will then face an even more difficult task in balancing their need for US aid against the possibility that the Palestinian issue, if left unresolved, will pose the most serious long-term threat to the stability of their regimes.

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