



Department of State TELEGRAM

CONFIDENTIAL 4088

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DOS REVIEWED 12-Jan-2011: NO OBJECTION TO RELEASE AS SANITIZED

42
ACTION INR-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-06 SS-14 PM-03 /029 W
..... 024826

R 291318Z OCT 74

DIA REVIEWED 06-Dec-2010: SANITIZED FOR RELEASE IN PART

FM [redacted] 25x1

REFER TO DOS

TO DIA WASHDC
SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

[redacted] 25x1

C O N F I D E N T I L NOFORN LIMDIS 2291 OCT 74.
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SUBJECT: IS WINTER WAR IMPOSSIBLE (U)?

1. (U) THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM HERE HAS ALWAYS HELD THAT WAR WAS IMPOSSIBLE ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS DURING THE WINTER MONTHS. RESTRICTED MOBILITY IN THE MORASS CAUSED BY FALL RAINS AND IN THE DEEP SNOWS OF WINTER HAVE BEEN CITED, AS HAVE THE BITTER COLD AND LACK OF NATURAL SHELTER. ON 3 OCT, E.G. THE NORTHERN COMMAND COR, [redacted] 25x1 THAT NEXT WAR WILL COME EITHER BEFORE SNOWS OR AFTER, BUT THAT FIGHTING IS IMPOSSIBLE ON GOLAN IN WINTER.

2. (CNF) AS LONG AS SYRIA AND ISRAEL BOTH BELIEVED THIS TO BE TRUE, ONE COULD RELAX A LITTLE BETWEEN NOV AND MAR. THERE HAVE BEEN RECENT INDICATIONS, THAT AT LEAST SOME ISRAELIS ARE BEGINNING TO QUESTION THIS TIME HONORED DICTUM. THE POSSIBILITY OF A WINTER WAR HAS NOT YET BEEN ADDRESSED IN ANY PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT BY GOI OR IDF OFFICIALS, BUT SOME EMBASSY AND [redacted] 25x1 HAVE RECENTLY SUGGESTED POSSIBILITY THAT SYRIA MIGHT FEEL THAT THIS CONVENTIONAL WISDOM COULD ENABLE HER TO AGAIN LAUNCH A SURPRISE ATTACK.

3. (CNF) ONE SCENARIO THAT HAS BEEN ADVANCED BY [redacted] 25x1 BASED ON SYRIAN ATTACK WITH VERY LIMITED OBJECTIVES-- AN ADVANCE BEYOND THE UNDOF ZONE IN KUNEITRA AREA, WHICH WOULD GIVE SYRIA CONTROL OF THE THREE HILLS AND RECOVER MORE OF THE AGRICULTURAL

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LAND THAT FORMERLY HELPED TO SUPPORT THE POPULACE OF KUNEITRA. HE POSTULATES THAT A WELL PLANNED ATTACK, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF WEATHER CONDITIONS THAT PROHIBIT IAF RECCE OR STRIKE OPS, COULD PERHAPS ACHIEVE THIS LIMITED OBJECTIVE BEFORE THE ISRAELI COULD REACT.

A. (CNI) ON REFLECTION, ONE CAN SEE ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGES TO THIS SCENARIO FROM THE SYRIAN POINT OF VIEW. IF ATTACK WAS DEVELOPED SUDDENLY DURING REALLY NASTY WEATHER, MOST UNDDF UN TROOPS WOULD PROBABLY BE IN SHELTER, AND THUS RELATIVELY FEW UN TROOPS WOULD BE ALONG MAIN AXIS OF ATTACK (WHICH WOULD PROBABLY BE RESTRICTED TO MAIN ROAD NETWORK). IF

SUCCESSFUL IN ACHIEVING THEIR LIMITED OBJECTIVE, THE SYRIAN ARMY COULD SIT TIGHT AND AGREE TO ACCEPT THE INEVITABLE UN CALL FOR A CEASE FIRE WHILE ISRAEL WOULD HAVE TO THINK TWICE ABOUT LAUNCHING AN ALL OUT COUNTER ATTACK IN SUCH ADVERSE CONDITIONS. CERTAINLY, SYRIA WOULD PROBABLY EXPECT THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE UNDER INTENSE DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE FROM THE WEST, TO LIMIT ITS RESPONSE, PARTICULARLY IF SYRIAN SURPRISE WAS COMPLETE AND IDF SUFFERED FEW CASUALTIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, ONE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT INTERNAL PRESSURE, CALLING FOR RETALIATION WOULD ALSO BE INTENSE. THE LONG STANDING ISRAELI POLICY (AND PRACTICE) OF EXACTING AT LEAST EQUAL PUNISHMENT FOR ANY ACTION TAKEN AGAINST HER, MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED WHEN ASSESSING POSSIBLE IDF REACTION TO THIS SCENARIO.

B. (CNI) A RELATIVE HANDFUL OF PEOPLE QUESTIONING THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM DOES NOT PRESAGE A WAR BUT IT DOES GIVE ONE PAUSE FOR THOUGHT. WE ARE ALSO SEIZED WITH THE THOUGHT THAT THE SYRIAN ARMY HAS NOT BEEN NOTED FOR IMAGINATIVE TACTICS (AT LEAST IN THE BOOKS WE READ HERE) WHILE THE ISRAELIS HAVE FREQUENTLY TURNED FAILURE INTO SUCCESS BY DOING THE UNEXPECTED AND MAKING IMPOSSIBLE APPROACHES OVER IMPASSABLE TERRAIN (SIC). THUS IT MAY BE THAT A WINTER ATTACK ON THE GOLAN WOULD BE MORE CONSISTENT WITH THE ISRAELI STYLE THAN WITH THE SYRIANS. IF YOU FACTOR IN OUR VIEW THAT AN ISRAELI ATTACK IS NOT LIKELY AS LONG AS THERE IS ANY CHANCE THAT NEGOTIATIONS MAY SUCCEED AND THAT ISRAEL IS UNLIKELY TO ATTACK THROUGH UNDOF. YOU COME BACK FULL CIRCLE AND CONCLUDE THAT MAYBE A WINTER WAR ON THE GOLAN IS, IN FACT, HIGHLY UNLIKELY. COORD WITH AMB.
GDS 31 DEC 80.

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