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**SUBJECT: Lebanese Situation**

**Distribution:**

- 10 - DCI
- 1 - DDI
- 1 - ADDI
- 1 - NIO/NESA
- 1 - D/NESA
- 1 - DD/NESA
- 1 - C/NESA/AI
- 1 - C/NESA/AI/L
- 1 - NESA/AI/L/ht
- 1 - Chrono

DI/NESA/AI/L [Redacted] (20 Sep 88)

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### Talking Points for the DCI

21 September 1988

#### Lebanese Situation

Lebanon's Christians have rejected the Syrian and US backed presidential candidate Mikhail Daher, increasing the risk of a violent crisis. We believe it is unlikely that the Lebanese will be able to elect a new President on Thursday. Even if the election is held and a pro-Syrian like Daher is elected, hard-line Christians almost certainly would try to assassinate him.

- The Christians will pull out all the stops to prevent Parliament from electing Daher on 22 September, the day before Gemayel's term of office expires. If there is no election, President Gemayel almost certainly will then appoint a transition government headed by Christians.
- Syria will not recognize a Gemayel-appointed regime but will recognize the current cabinet as the legitimate authority, leaving Lebanon with two rival governments.

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- At Syrian urging, Muslim Army brigades appear to be readying for a confrontation with the Christians.
- Well-armed Christian Army units and militias are preparing for clashes with the Muslims.

#### Implications for US Interests

Several US interests are at risk if the crisis deteriorates into partition or violence.

- First, the Christians see themselves as increasingly isolated, and their search for external assistance could expand the problem. Christian hopes of Iraqi and Israeli support--however exaggerated--will stiffen their opposition to Syria.

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- Iraq has been providing financial and military support to the Christians over the past few months. Although we believe arms deliveries have been limited. [Redacted]

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If fighting breaks out, US officials in Beirut will be at serious risk. Syrian and pro-Syrian forces will shell the Christian enclave where our Embassy is located. In addition, hard-

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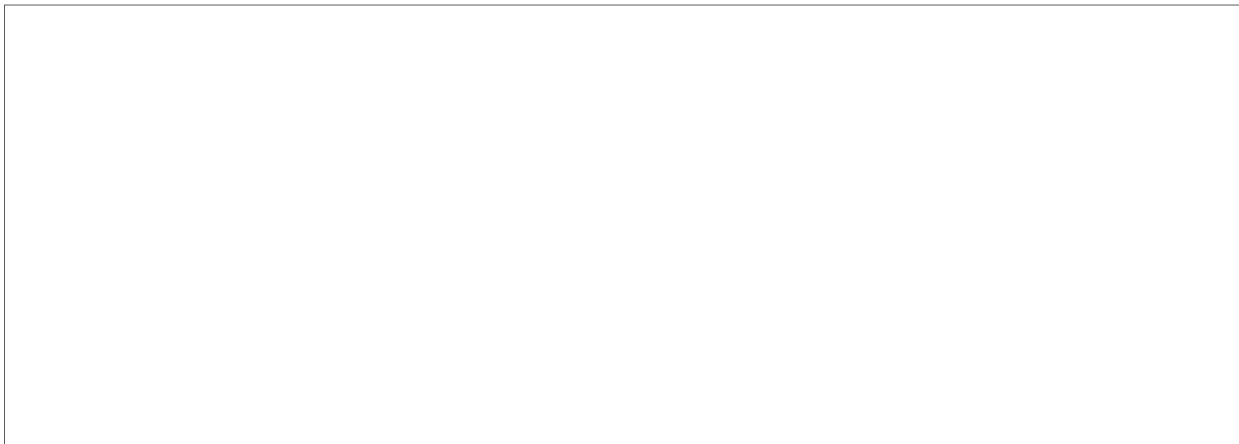


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**line Christians who privately condemn the US for "selling out" to Syria on Daher's candidacy could target the Embassy or its personnel.**



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