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TO:

CIA

ROOM NO.

BUILDING

REMARKS:

FROM:

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ROOM NO

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EXTENSION

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Talking Points for the DDI  
Luncheon at State

Arafat's Moves Following Visa Denial

01 December 1988

PLO Chairman Arafat wants to address a United Nations General Assembly session in Geneva--perhaps as early as mid-December--to build on growing international support for PLO moderation, keep PLO hardliners in check, and pressure the US to respond to PLO diplomatic moves.

--The denial of a US visa to Arafat has given PLO hardliners their first boost since Arafat's dominance of the moderate proceedings of last month's Palestine National Council in Algiers and made a diplomatic success for Arafat at the UN even more important if he is to contain internal critics of his moderate policy.

--Widespread European criticism of the US decision and aggressive Arab lobbying among UN members give Arafat a strong chance of winning support for a General Assembly session in Geneva.

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Arafat's Strategy and Risks

PLO moderation--begun at last June's Arab League summit with the release of a conciliatory-sounding statement on policy toward Israel--is designed to earn Arafat a place at an international peace conference and produce tangible political gains from the year-old Palestinian uprising.

--Arafat almost certainly believes the US rejection of his visa application will strengthen support even among US allies in Europe for a direct PLO role in future peace talks.

--Arafat, however, will probably be reluctant to give an explicit recognition of Israel or unqualified acceptance of resolutions 242 and 338 at a Geneva session to avoid fueling hardline opposition and to preserve bargaining leverage with the US.

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Implications for the US

Arafat almost certainly will continue to restrain his criticisms of the visa denial to avoid foreclosing a possible dialogue with the incoming US administration.

--He hopes such a dialogue will strengthen his position over PLO hardliners and assure his standing among Palestinians in the occupied territories.

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--Arab moderates with a major stake in a successful international peace conference--such as Egypt and Jordan--are likely to redouble their efforts to persuade Arafat to ignore pressure from PLO hardliners to backslide from the PNC's positions.



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