

This was in response to a question asked by Secretary Weinberger ("What's the Amal Movement?") on Friday morning 20 Nov after an Agency courier showed this a

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Memo was delivered to the Secretary on 21 November

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

20 November 1981

MEMORANDUM

THE AMAL MOVEMENT IN LEBANON

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Summary

Amal is the military and political wing of Lebanon's Shia community, now the country's largest single sect. It has several factions and independent militia, the largest of which is led by Nabih Barri, who is pro-US. Amal's principal foreign support comes from Syria and Iran. Its relations with the Palestinians are cool. Most Lebanese Shias have considered Libya their primary enemy since the disappearance there in 1978 of a prominent Shiite religious leader.

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Amal is the military and political wing of Lebanon's Higher Shiite Council, the religious grouping that represents most of the 950,000 Shias in Lebanon. The Shias are the largest single sect in Lebanon. Amal was founded in the early 1970s by Imam Musa Sadr, a leading proponent of Shia self-development who began to mobilize the community in the 1960s to bring it into the Lebanese mainstream and end its political impotence. The formation of Amal challenged the traditional Shia leadership and served as a basis for personal rivalries that still exist in the Shia community. Amal has at least four factions and several small, independent militia groups.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] of the ArabIsraeli Division of the Office of Near East South Asia Analysis at the request of the Secretary of Defense. Information cutoff date is 20 November 1981. Questions and comments are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division [redacted]

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The largest Amal faction, currently under the leadership of Nabih Barri, is striving to gain control over the entire Shia community, and its membership is growing rapidly. Barri is also trying to broaden Amal's appeal by claiming that it is a nonsectarian movement of the powerless and underprivileged. Amal opposes the partition of Lebanon and tries to cast itself as an Arab national movement. It currently has between 2,000 and 4,000 men under arms. [REDACTED]

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Nabih Barri

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majority control. He opposes Soviet influence in Lebanon. [REDACTED]

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Amal's Foreign Ties

Amal's principal foreign support comes from Syria and Iran. The Lebanese Shia community's special relationship with Iran predates the Iranian revolution. Musa Sadr was related to Khomeini by marriage, and during the Shah's reign several leading Iranian exiles lived in Lebanon. Individual Iranians and the Iranian Government provide political, military, and financial support to their Shia coreligionists in Lebanon. [REDACTED]

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Some factions and small independent militias have ties with Palestinian groups, but overall Amal's relationship with the Palestinians is cool. The Shias support the Palestinian cause, but they generally oppose the Palestinian presence in southern Lebanon because it attracts Israeli cross-border military operations and shellings into that primarily Shia-inhabited area. This resentment has resulted in several clashes in the south and in Beirut between Amal and Palestinian groups or rival Lebanese factions working with the Palestinians. Shia resentment against the Palestinians has prompted Lebanese Christian leaders and Lebanese military intelligence officials to seek common ground with Amal and to provide support for various Amal factions. In the south, some Shias have joined Saad Haddad's Israeli-backed Christian militia to oppose Palestinian guerrilla activities. [REDACTED]

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Amal-Libya Connection

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The unexplained disappearance and probable death of Musa Sadr in Libya more than three years ago galvanized Lebanon's Shia community against Libya and President Qadhafi. Since then, Shia groups have attacked Libyan interests and activities as well as

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[REDACTED]

Lebanese groups supported by Libya on several occasions, including a recent bombing of a Lebanese airliner returning from Libya. [REDACTED]

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Amal Terrorism

Amal clashes frequently with rival Lebanese factions. It has also been involved in a series of Iranian-backed terrorist activities against Iraqis and pro-Iraqi Lebanese and Palestinian groups. One of Amal's more obscure independent militia groups is now believed to have been responsible for the assassination in Beirut in early September of the French Ambassador to Lebanon, shortly after the escape to Paris of former President Bani Sadr. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: The Amal Movement in Lebanon [REDACTED]

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