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Middle East Situation Report #20
(as of 1100 EST, 23 January 1984)

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LEBANON/SYRIA

[redacted]
[redacted] the security situation in Beirut was relatively calm. [redacted]

TARPS missions continue to be flown--one over the weekend and another is scheduled for today--but they remain in a stand-off mode and have not drawn hostile fire. [redacted]

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Fighting at the usual confrontation points continued over the weekend. The Lebanese Army fought Shia militiamen in the southern suburbs of Beirut for the first time in nearly a month. Druze fighters engaged the Lebanese Army in the mountains around Beirut. [redacted]

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-- Druze forces shelled the presidential palace at Baabda, apparently in retaliation for Lebanese Army shelling of Druze leader Walid Junblatt's home in Mukhtarrah. Junblatt's mother is in residence there, and he told Ambassador Paganelli in Damascus that if any harm came to her, the entire Gemayel family would suffer the consequences. [redacted]

A Junblatt confidant gave the US Embassy in Damascus a communique outlining the National Salvation Front (NSF) version of recent efforts to achieve a security agreement, and accused Gemayel of bringing Lebanon to a new impasse. The communique reaffirms NSF determination to reestablish Lebanese unity, but warned that unless the atmosphere improved, the security agreement would be finished. He noted that mutual shelling, once restricted to front line areas, has become widespread.

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-- He also noted that the Druze were aware of Gemayel's preparation of two Army brigades to move into the mountains. [redacted]

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In a meeting with the US Embassy in Damascus, a Druze representative reaffirmed that they stood by the security agreement if their two conditions--back wages and promotions for Druze officers--were met. Despite this reassurance, Junblatt over the weekend escalated his vituperative comments against Gemayel, calling on Gemayel and his government to resign. In a

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[redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[Redacted]

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press interview Junblatt also denounced the MNF as hostile to a broad section of the Lebanese people, and rejected its replacement by UN forces. [Redacted]

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-- According to the US Embassy in Beirut, this is the first time Junblatt has rejected the idea of a UN presence in Beirut. [Redacted]

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PERSIAN GULF

King Fahd is likely to stall US initiatives for expanded contingency planning in the Persian Gulf, [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

-- The Saudi military is receptive to discreet US efforts to improve Saudi deficiencies but is anxious to avoid more direct US military involvement in the absence of Iranian attempts to close the Strait of Hormuz. [Redacted]

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The Kuwait Embassy believes Kuwait and possibly other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council would respond favorably to a US offer of anti-terrorist training and coordination in the wake of recent bombings in Kuwait by Iranian-backed Dawa Party. The Embassy suggests that an offer to the GCC might make the offer easier for Kuwait to accept. [Redacted]

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THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

Iraqi aircraft over the weekend struck unidentified targets near the border in northern Iran. Tehran claims to have downed one aircraft. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Nakijima completed his visit to Tehran Sunday. Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati has accepted an invitation to visit Tokyo, a key Japanese objective of the trip. [redacted]

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-- The initial report makes no mention of Japan's mediation efforts to secure a partial ceasefire that would protect Iran's Japanese-built petrochemical plant and Iraq's oil export facilities to the Persian Gulf. [redacted]

Iraq and Saudi Arabia have informed the US of reports that unidentified European middlemen are selling--with US approval--US-made weapons to Iran. Iraq called in the US Charge Sunday and alleged that Israel was in the process of supplying Iran 60 US-manufactured tanks. The Israelis would seek US approval, which allegedly has support in "some quarters of the State Department and the CIA" as a means of preventing closer Iranian ties to the USSR. The Saudi foreign ministry passed on a report Saturday that Iran had recently received US-made air-to-surface missiles for use on F-14 aircraft. [redacted]

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-- We doubt the accuracy of these reports and suspect Iraqi motives for passing them. The timing and similarity of the two reports suggest that the reports are not coincidental. Iraq may see such reports as means of spurring greater US efforts to curb arms sales to Iran. The Soviets would also value such reports as a way to derail improving US-Iraqi ties. [redacted]

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US inspection at Port Said, Egypt, yesterday (Sunday) of the Cypriot ship bound for Iran appeared to confirm Egyptian claims that the 155-mm howitzer ammunition aboard was of US origin. Cairo is all but certain not to release this cargo for onward travel. [redacted]

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[redacted] 25X1

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