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Middle East Situation Report #32  
(as of 1100 EST, 8 February 1984)

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LEBANON/SYRIA



[redacted] the military situation in West Beirut is relatively quiet, and anti-government militiamen have left the streets. In East Beirut, the Presidential Palace at Baabda and the US Ambassador's residence at Yarze are being heavily shelled. [redacted]

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-- The New Jersey is firing its 16-inch guns into the mountains east of the capital. As of 1100 EST, over 175 sixteen-inch and at least 200 five-inch shells had been fired at Syrian positions in the Matn region, reportedly destroying a Syrian command post and killing a senior Syrian military officer. [redacted]

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[redacted] President Gemayel met with US Envoy Rumsfeld and Ambassador Bartholomew today. Gemayel told them the situation with the Army is critical; Shia and Sunni soldiers in the units in West Beirut defected to the militias instead of returning to their barracks. Gemayel mentioned resigning as one of his options. He viewed naming a new prime minister as another option, but he believed no Sunni Muslim would accept the job unless the 17 May Withdrawal Accord were abrogated. Gemayel floated the idea of appointing a Christian prime minister to head an interim caretaker government. [redacted]

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-- Gemayel is probably not in a position to know exactly what has happened to the Army units in West Beirut. There are indications that General Tannous has reached an agreement with Shia Amal leader Nabih Barri to permit the 6th Brigade to continue to perform security duties in West Beirut. [redacted]

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[redacted] LAF commander Tannous is responsible for much of the current Muslim anger in the city because he has directed the indiscriminate Army shelling of Muslim neighborhoods in West Beirut and the southern suburbs. [redacted] General Tannous would like Gemayel to resign so he could take power.

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-- It is likely that Lebanese Forces Christian militia artillery has participated extensively in the shelling of the southern suburbs and West Beirut. [redacted]

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Amal leader Barri has been recognized by Druze forces as the political and combined-militia commander in West Beirut. [redacted]

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Our Embassy in Damascus reports that a delegation of Sunni Muslim leaders met yesterday with Syrian President Assad. After the meeting one of the delegates publicly announced conditions for the formation of a new government in Lebanon, including abrogation of 17 May Withdrawal Accord, evacuation of the MNF from Beirut, and a "national unity government" composed of all Lebanese parties.

-- The delegates added that dismantling of all militias must be on the agenda of a new government so that the factional war can be stopped.

-- Although the Sunni leaders so far have avoided publicly backing the Amal-National Salvation Front coalition, they probably seen no option but to support Syrian objectives in Lebanon.

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PERSIAN GULF

An anti-Khomeini demonstration is scheduled to occur in Munich this Saturday, when Vice President Bush will be there. Protest marks fifth anniversary of the Islamic revolution.



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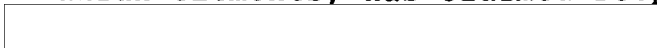
The UAE ambassador to France was shot by a lone gunman in Paris this morning. The envoy's condition is described as "very grave."



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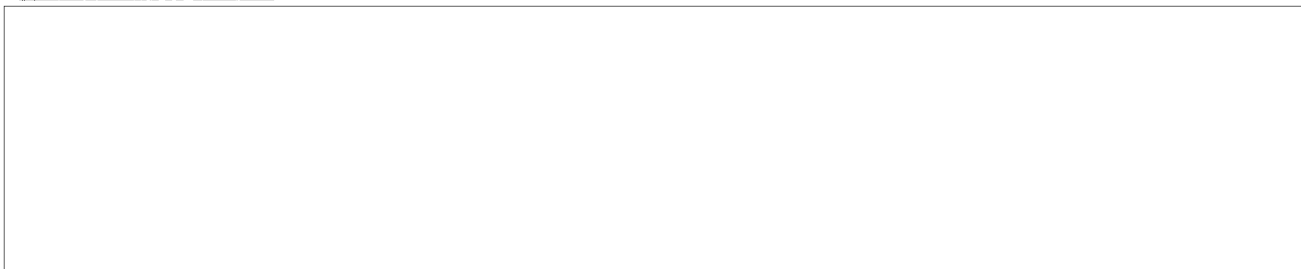
Iran has termed yesterday's murder of exiled General Oveisi a "revolutionary execution" of "the butcher of Tehran." A caller purporting to represent Islamic Jihad, a common cover name for many pro-Iranian elements, has claimed responsibility for the killing.



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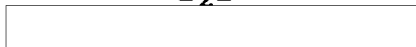
IRAN-IRAQ WAR



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[Redacted] diplomatic sources of our Interests Section in Baghdad reveal substantial Iraqi preparations to counter the expected Iranian offensive. Troop and tank deployments have produced a substantial reinforcement of the border north of the Basrah front. Iraqi officers have resumed public boasting of past successes in the Persian Gulf, including exaggerated references to strikes at the facilities on Kharg Island. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

US diplomats have informed the Japanese of the rather hostile Iraqi reaction to the lack of substantive results from Deputy Foreign Minister Nakajima's recent visit to Tehran. Our Interests Section in Baghdad suggests that a Japanese asset, such as a tanker at Kharg or the petrochemical complex under construction near Bandar-e Khomeini, could be a primary target in any Iraqi move to escalate the war in the Persian Gulf. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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(As of 1100 EST, 08 Feb 84)

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