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Middle East Situation Report #41  
(As of 1100 EST, 22 February 1984)

LEBANON/SYRIA

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[Redacted] Christian Lebanese Forces militia leaders believe that the Christian community can assure its political survival only by establishing confederated system of Christian, Shia, and Druze cantons--each with its own territorial army. The leaders envision the Christians living in a truncated, more defensible enclave allied with and protected by Israel. They feel confident Israel will use its influence to overcome any Shia or Druze resistance to the idea, and the leaders are prepared to trade Lebanese territory--Tripoli, the Akkar region, and parts of the Bekaa Valley--for Syrian agreement to the scheme.

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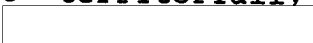
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-- We believe the Lebanese Forces leaders have unrealistic expectations of Israeli support. Although Israeli officials may see some benefit to the Christian proposals, they probably will support a Christian canton only to the extent that it does not jeopardize their ties with the Shia and Druze communities and protects their security interests on southern Lebanon. Moreover, Israel will not support the proposals if they require major military action to shore up the Gemayel government.



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-- The Druze in the past have been interested in having their own canton and may be amenable to the scheme. Shia leaders, however, are suspicious of Christian intentions and will raise objections because their community is dispersed in areas under Syrian and Israeli control. The Sunni community probably also would resist because they stand to lose--territorially and politically--in the arrangement.

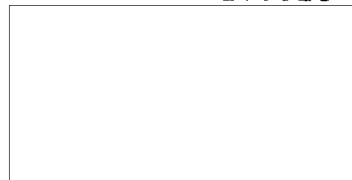


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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

IRAN-IRAQ WAR

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Iraq claims to have halted Iranian attacks Tuesday night along the northern and southern parts of the Doveyrich River Front. [Redacted]

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-- The Iranians may have recovered some occupied territory but probably have not crossed the border. The current series of attacks are a prelude to a larger offensive, which will probably focus on Al Basrah and the Central Front. [Redacted]

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Baghdad has called on Washington to condemn Iranian aggression and to pressure Iran to end the fighting. The Iraqi Foreign Ministry warned our interests section today that Baghdad will respond to the expected major Iranian offensive with all the weapons at its disposal. The US Interests Section noted that the warnings were the strongest Baghdad has issued in three years of war and believes the Iraqis are nearing the end of their patience. Iraq publicly warned Tuesday that "for every harmful insect there is an insecticide." [Redacted]

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-- We believe there is a good chance Iraq will attack Iranian oil and civilian targets. We believe they also will carry out their thinly veiled threat to use chemical warfare on a large scale if the Iranians launch their main attacks. [Redacted]

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