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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

17 June 1985
0400 EDT

SPOT COMMENTARY: Removal of TWA Passengers from Aircraft

[Redacted] the hostages may have been removed from the aircraft and taken to an undisclosed location early this morning. Observers on the heights overlooking the airport have also noted little activity around the plane since 0300 local time.

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- If this information is accurate, it may be that the hijackers moved the hostages out of the airport area because they feared a rescue attempt by American or Israeli commandos. They probably viewed the airport, which is located in a large open area adjacent to the coast, as vulnerable to attack.
- If all of the hostages are now in fact being held somewhere in West Beirut or the southern suburbs, it almost certainly will complicate efforts to secure their release. The longer they are held in these Shia neighborhoods, the greater the likelihood that even more radical Hizballah elements will attempt to seize or assassinate them.
- While Amal militiamen loyal to Nabih Barri nominally control much of the southern suburbs area, Hizballah extremists operate virtually at will in many neighborhoods.

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