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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

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Chrono*

NIC 03129-85  
18 June 1985

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller  
National Intelligence Officer for NESA

SUBJECT: The Hijacking of TWA 847--Further Thoughts

1. The events of the last 24 hours have tilted the hijacking incident strongly in the direction of the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979.

- In effect the hostages have become integrated into an internal struggle within Lebanese and--particularly Shia--internal politics. As in Tehran in 1979, it will be mostly the internal dynamics of the situation--and not the external forces--which will determine the outcome of the situation.
- The same social and political turmoil, the same revolutionary actions, the same weakness of state power, the same howling radical mobs--all exist again. The only possible good news is that Nabih Barri is probably in a stronger position than were the Iranian moderates. But moderation does not often fare well in this kind of environment.
- To state the complexity of the problem and the issues involved is not meant to paralyze the policy will to take action. It is meant to insure that the relative stakes involved are kept in mind in the debate over policy options.
- In military terms it would seem that few options exist at the moment. Retaliation is no less effective if it is delivered after the event and at a time when those we seek to punish have lowered their guard. Retaliation in any case will not rescue the hostages at this juncture.



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2. The Kissinger Thesis. I take strong exception to the Kissinger thesis as set forth on Nightline last night in which he says that Nabih Barri has now publicly established an "address" for this operation to which retaliation can be directed.

- Wisely or unwisely Nabih Barri has decided to buy into this problem. The hijacking almost certainly was carried out by more extremist Shia elements who oppose Barri and wish to challenge his leadership. But by taking over control of the majority of the hostages Barri has now placed himself in a potentially dangerous situation. He wishes to seize the center stage and deny it to his most dangerous opponents; he wishes to try to terminate the hostage process, to gain credit both for the release of Israeli Amal prisoners and for the release of American hostages. If his gamble is correct it will be a significant victory for him.
- Barri might find himself unable to arrange for the release of the Israeli prisoners or to release the American hostages, however. In principle he controls all the hostages except those with Jewish sounding names under control of the radicals, but this is not entirely certain. Should he prove incapable of delivering either group his position will be vastly weakened and he will be hard put to release the Americans.

3. In short, Barri could end up finding himself locked four-square into a position hostile to US interests. The stakes of the internal Shia struggle are very high, however. As I have mentioned in previous memos, the issue primarily is: will the Lebanese Shia turn their attentions to Beirut and the struggle for secular power in that country, or move toward an Islamic state devoted to perpetuating the struggle against Israel across Lebanese borders, and against the Western and especially US presence in Lebanon. If the Hizballah faction wins, the Shia movement in Lebanon will be increasingly international in character, working closely with Shia radicals in the Gulf and Iran and in a position to provide in effect the support of a state structure to their activities out of Lebanon.

- In short, it is very much in our interest that Nabih Barri win this struggle. The Israelis have fully grasped this reality after their disaster in south Lebanon last year. Israel is desperately hoping that Barri will prevail and that the Shia will lose interest in Israel once Israel is out of Lebanon. Barri's victory, and lack of future Shia interest in Israel, are far from certain. Israel is taking a gamble but has little other alternative. If Israeli efforts to help Amal--witness the release of Shia prisoners several weeks ago--ultimately fail, at least Israel will have gone the extra mile to try to win Amal neutrality and will have lost nothing in the process. It has no other realistic option.

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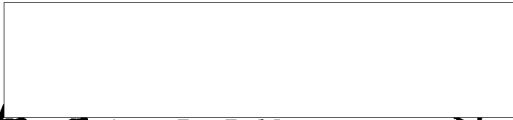
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4. This Shia soup will be served up again and again by those who wish to exploit it. This problem becomes particularly urgent in view of US aspirations for the peace process in the region. As that process grows more serious, Syria will devote major resources to stymie the process. Exploitation of Shia radicalism in Lebanon--however much a two-edge sword for Syria--will be a major vehicle for Syria in attacking and weakening the Israelis and moderate Arabs in the months ahead.

- Questions of whether Syria was or was not behind this incident are technical and somewhat irrelevant in nature. Syria basically draws benefit from the perpetuation of anti-Western, anti-peace movements in the area and will seek to preserve--and try to control--the Shia extremists. Assad may have tactically found this hijacking inconvenient in that it could invite the US into Beirut again. But he wants to protect the radical Shia tool for the future.
- Iran will support Syria in the effort to block an independent Jordanian-PLO-Israel peace. Libya will do likewise. In effect all three are involved strategically in this struggle.

5. Thus the complexity of dealing with Nabih Barri in this situation is clear. He is not at present a strategic ally of Syria or Iran. But in joining the struggle and entering this hostage game he has placed himself in a dangerous situation. If he is successful, it will be an important political accomplishment. If he is not successful, he may be swallowed up and consumed in the process--just as the more moderate elements in Iran were consumed by the radicals as the hostage crisis there spun itself out.

  
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