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WASHINGTON TIMES
29 November 1985

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The massacre at Malta

The world may never have the full facts of the carnage at Malta airport. But this much is agonizingly clear:

1. The Greek government — anti-U.S. and pro-Soviet — cannot be trusted to maintain security at the Athens international airport. The Greeks took umbrage at reports, after the TWA hijacking, that its anti-terrorist security was virtually non-existent. Yet the Malta terrorists were able to board an EgyptAir jetliner in Athens carrying arms and explosives.

How deliberate was this carelessness?

2. The terrorists carried Moroccan passports, as did those in the *Achille Lauro* piracy.

Morocco has tied itself loosely to Libya, the center of organized world terrorism. This invites some frightening conjectures.

3. The EgyptAir terrorists spoke Eastern Arabic, as opposed to the Western Arabic spoken in Libya and Morocco.

They could therefore only be Lebanese or Palestinian. As such they were under the direct discipline of either Syria or the Palestine Liberation Organization, both of which conduct their terrorist operations working to overthrow our avowed enemy and the organizer of worldwide terrorism, Muammar Qaddafi.

But in contemplating the horror of the Malta massacre, there is this to be considered. For some time, Mossad, the superb Israeli intelligence service, has been passing on information to its Egyptian counterpart and to the CIA of detailed plans by the Libya-PLO axis to extend the terrorist war by disrupting the Eastern Mediterranean. This is not the first time the Arab axis has threatened the West.

Years ago, on information supplied by Mossad, the FBI was able to thwart an Arab car-bombing in New York that would have killed thousands in the Wall Street financial area. The FBI also knocked out a PLO terrorist operation in the United States.

The FBI was rewarded by a sharp reprimand and a threat of legislative action against it by Sen. Frank Church and his Senate Intelligence Committee because it had employed "black bag" techniques in defeating this PLO invasion.

The Libyan-PLO campaign, of which the EgyptAir hijacking is a part, was in the works when PLO chieftain Yasser Arafat was promising, to some applause, that in the future he would limit terrorism to Israeli soil. And it is of shocking interest that the new Libyan-PLO onslaught was known to the CIA before President Reagan departed for the summit meeting in Geneva. Since PLO operations are guided by the KGB, it should have been incumbent on the CIA and/or the State Department to brief Mr. Reagan so that he would be prepared to answer Soviet dictator Mikhail Gorbachev when the inevitable accusations of U.S. "imperialism" in the Middle East were made.

All of this, unfortunately, is history. For the immediate future, the United States should set up an international task force to deal with the new terrorist campaign.

If the United Nations were not controlled by the Soviet and Arab blocs, such a task force would be within the area of its mandate. But the United Nations will not act, leaving it up to the United States to make multinational arrangements with the countries involved.

The terrorist front-line is rapidly moving from the Eastern Mediterranean to U.S. soil. So if the affected countries are too timid or too cynical to join the United States, this country must go it alone. Pious statements that international terrorists must have "no place to hide" are hardly enough.

Before blood begins to run on American streets, the United States must move decisively and surgically. There is no other solution.

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