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5 February 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
 THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group
 SUBJECT : Monthly Report -- Nicosia Bureau, -- January

I. GENERAL

A. Work continues apace at the new bureau site. Mild weather for most of the month has enabled the Contractor to resume work on water-proofing the roof. This should be completed by mid-February at which time we hope to begin work installing our rooftop antennas and associated cabling. As finishing work progresses within the building we will begin the task of pulling cables, installing telephone lines, and so forth to the extent we are not in the way of the Contractor's work. The Contractor has started closing the last portion of the perimeter wall, which had been left open as an equipment access. Entrance to the site will now be by the main entrance which should be completed by mid-February. The landscape architect is now on site drilling the borehole to provide water for our green areas. Please see January's weekly progress reports filed by our Headquarters engineer for more detail on construction progress.

B. Eric Bowman, general manager of the BBC Monitoring Service, visited the bureau 26-30 January. The four-day visit offered a good opportunity to discuss Bureau/BBC coordination and bureau support of BBC requirements. Mr. Bowman was most laudatory of the bureau's support of BBC coverage needs, noting at the beginning and conclusion of our business discussions that there were no major problems in the Bureau/BBC relationship. A separate report on Mr. Bowman's visit has been cabled to headquarters.

C. Nicosia was the site of three minor bomb incidents in early January, while a fourth incident occurred in Larnaca. On 3 January, police found a "time bomb" near a kiosk in Nicosia's busy Ipiros Square. The English-language newspaper CYPRUS MAIL reported the next day that the detonator went off, but failed to ignite the attached explosives. The result was merely a loud bang. On 7 January, a municipal employee contacted police to report a suspicious device found in a garden near Nicosia's City Hall. O AGON, a local pro-government paper, later reported that while there was a detonator, no explosives were attached.

On the evening of 8 January, bureau personnel alerted the Embassy's Marine guards to intensive police activity outside our building on Makarios Avenue. After contacting the police, the Marines advised that a suspected bomb had been found in front of a travel agency just down the street, and that the police intended to detonate it under controlled conditions. Later, upon receipt of a Radio Monte Carlo report filed by Jordan Bureau to the effect that a "large explosion" had taken place near the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia and that "no information about casualties" was available, the bureau telephoned the Wire to assure them that both the Embassy and we were quite safe. Subsequent reports on the incident carried by Nicosia radio were filed. Both the Embassy and the Wire expressed appreciation for the alerts.

Finally, a small quantity of dynamite placed in a drainpipe in the city of Larnaca exploded on 10 January, causing minor damage to the water tanks of an adjacent apartment building. The DISI party paper I SIMERINI reported later that a note was found near the pipe warning of "new explosions, with casualties," unless Amin Sulaymin Za'rur, who is serving a 7-year prison sentence for possessing weapons and explosives, was released within a week.

Though there have been no direct claims of responsibility for these four incidents, the independent paper O FILELEVETHEROS reports that police are "fully convinced" that the Islamic organization "the Party of God" (Hizballah) is responsible.

D. Late in January, the bureau installed BACH Version 2.1 for the computerized generation of message headers, replacing its earlier "homebrewed" PC header generation system, which had been in place for about a year. The bureau makes extensive use of its four IBM PC's and XT's for other purposes, as well. They are used to generate nearly all bureau reports to Headquarters, bureau correspondence, bureau memoranda and notices, and various personnel work schedules; and to maintain the bureau's SOP, inventories and accountable property records, the bureau's lateral services system, and local cabinet and diplomatic lists, among other things.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. The bureau remained open around the clock on the night of 25-26 January to monitor the Phalangist-affiliated Voice of Lebanon (VOL) radio, in view of the fact that the Oppressed on Earth Organization had twice contacted this station earlier in the day to claim responsibility for kidnapping four Beirut University College professors, three of whom are American, and to threaten that one of the four would be killed unless Muhammad 'Ali Hamadah, suspected hijacker of a TWA airliner being held in the FRG, were released by midnight. The radio reported no further contact from the group during the night. The bureau also kept a round-the-clock open watch on VOL, the only 24-hour Beirut station monitored, for the subsequent 2 days (an Arabic monitor on duty with editor and teletypist on call), seeking possible new reportage on the foreign hostages in Lebanon and the whereabouts of Anglican Church envoy Terry Waite, working to secure their release.

Given conflicting reports about the possible kidnapping of Waite since he left his hotel in West Beirut on 20 January to meet with the kidnapers of foreigners being held in Lebanon, and the threats leveled by a group calling itself the Islamic Jihad Organization for the Liberation of Palestine that it would "execute" the four professors it claims to have abducted if its demands are not met or if the United States undertakes any military action against Lebanon, the bureau has liberally filed all available information from Lebanese media on the hostage issue.

2. Having been alerted by AFP and Beirut Domestic Service reports on an interview given by Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammur al-Gadhafi to AL-KIFAH AL-'ARABI, a Beirut publication not on regular coverage, the bureau undertook to secure the 26 January edition of the paper, which contained the interview, and filed it on the following day.

3. The bureau assumed coverage responsibility for the 1815-1845 GMT newscast broadcast by Tripoli Voice of Greater Arab Homeland (VOGAH) at the outset of the month, given the BBC's reception difficulties. We have also responded to repeated ad hoc requests from LD/BBC this month for assistance in covering other casts from both VOGAH and Tripoli Domestic Service by initiating backstop recording procedures for two nightly Tripoli newscasts until BBC reception stabilizes.

4. Athens radio interrupted its transmission for 4 hours on 15 January in support of a work stoppage declared by the Greek General Confederation of Labor.

5. The bureau extended its operating hours on 27 January to complete processing and filing of Egyptian President Husni Mubarak's address to the ICO summit in Kuwait.

B. Lateral Services

1. The text of Egyptian President Mubarak's 27 January address at the ICO summit in Kuwait and that of the 28 January address by Lebanese President Amin al-Jumayyil, taken from a Beirut publication not on regular coverage, were filed to the U.S. Embassy in Beirut at the Embassy's request, over the minimize in effect.

2. Bureau personnel alerted Embassy officers to a report in the 15 January edition of the local paper ALITHIA, a rightwing publication not on regular coverage, alleging that a group of 15 "Arabs" were en route to Cyprus with plans to attack "mainly Syrian" targets, including the Syrian Airlines office across the street from the bureau. Appropriate Embassy officers, including the DCM, were also kept abreast of critical developments in the hostage issue and Terry Waite's mission in Lebanon, at their request.

3. On 23 January, the bureau alerted Embassy officers to a brief report in O FILELEVETHEROS noting that anti-nuclear protesters intended to march to the Embassy to deliver a resolution following a rally that afternoon. The officers expressed their appreciation of the warning, noting that it was the first indication they had received of the planned march.

III. Administration

A. Personnel

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1. [redacted] arrived PCS on 4 January to replace editor [redacted] who departed Nicosia on 18 January to take up new duties in the DRD.

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B. Visitors

1. Mr. Eric Bowman, general manager of the BBC Monitoring Service, visited the bureau 26-30 January for familiarization and discussion of bureau-BBC coordination.

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Bureau Chief
Nicosia Bureau

ATTACHMENT: Production Report