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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Monthly Report -- Nicosia Bureau

FROM:

Chief, Operations Group

EXTENSION

NO

DATE

April 1988

STAT

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

1.

C/MOD

2.

3.

C/ESG

4.

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C/Computer Operations

12.

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Retain/Destroy

FBIS-4807-88
10 May 88

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT : Monthly Report -- Nicosia Bureau -- April 1988

I. GENERAL

The new U.S. ambassador to Cyprus, William Ferrin, arrived on the island on 27 April after a wait of many months for confirmation by the Senate. The acting bureau chief and his wife represented FBIS at an Embassy reception welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Ferrin the following evening. Ambassador Ferrin is expected to visit the FBIS bureau soon.

Turkish Cypriot officials began new procedures at the Nicosia crossing point to the northern part of the island during the month, insisting on putting their administration's stamp in the passports of travelers, except those with diplomatic passports. The U.S. Embassy and the Cyprus Government have both objected to the procedures, which have continued for over three weeks now. No bureau personnel or official visitors have been affected, but some non-official visitors have turned back at the checkpoint rather than have their passports stamped.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. Bureau editors and monitors were involved from the beginning in the 15-day ordeal of a hijacked Kuwaiti airliner that was first diverted to Iran and later spent 4 days at Larnaca Airport in Cyprus. At the beginning of the hijacking the bureau covered Kuwait radio early morning programs for reports on the drama at the request of the BBC, opening the bureau early for three days. When it became apparent that Iran would allow the plane to leave, the bureau developed a contingency plan for overnight staffing in case the plane came to Beirut or some other part of our coverage area. When the plane actually wound up in Cyprus, the bureau instituted midnight shifts to watch for reports on the situation from Paris AFP and the Beirut Voice of Lebanon radio's all-night broadcasts, even though Nicosia radio observed its usual signoff time throughout the crisis. The duty editors stayed in close contact with the U.S. embassy task force established in Nicosia to monitor the situation, advising them of fast-breaking news, including the killing of two hostages. After the hijackers freed 12 passengers and the plane was allowed to leave for Algiers on 12 April, the bureau stayed open late until it was clear that the plane was not going to return to our area. The bureau's two newest trainee editors, who arrived the day after the Kuwaiti jet landed in Cyprus, got an unusual opportunity to observe field bureau crisis coverage in action during their first few days.

Bureau coverage of the hijacking elicited a message from the acting chief, Operation Group congratulating the bureau on "its initiative, creativity, and professionalism." The BBC Newsroom also expressed its thanks for Nicosia's handling of one Tehran television item on the hijacking.

2. Larnaca Airport was also the scene of a different kind of excitement on 8 April. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz stopped in Larnaca en route to Washington after a 6-day tour of the Middle East. He held meetings here with Cypriot Foreign Minister Yeoryios Iakovou and Lebanese President Amin al-Jumayyil, who had flown in from Beirut to see him. Shultz departed the same morning.

3. The bureau initiated open watch on Tehran early morning casts, opening the bureau early for the coverage for three days starting 19 April, when U.S. forces attacked two Iranian oil platforms in the Persian Gulf sparking a series of clashes. Tehran reports and comments on the events were the topic of an AG Trends piece on 27 April. The clashes also led to an embassy security alert based on reports that Iran would authorize terrorist attacks against U.S. targets in the near future.

4. Near the end of the month, Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran. The bureau caught the first report buried near the end of a Saudi Television newscast being watched primarily in response to an ad hoc request on another topic. The fast bureau handling of the report brought complimentary messages from the BBC Newsroom and from Acting Chief, Operations Group, who noted that the Nicosia Bureau report "easily beat all local media here by about an hour, and also proved to be a significant contribution to an article planned for high-level publication." Bureau efforts to monitor Saudi Television for material on the original request about new rockets and Israeli reaction to them also earned an expression of thanks from Liaison on behalf of consumers.

5. With the situation in Soviet Armenia and Azerbaijan becoming quieter again, the bureau cut back coverage of Yerevan and Baku domestic services. Deteriorating reception became too poor for continuing phone-patches of the coverage to the BBC, and productivity of coverage by Nicosia monitors had dropped sharply. We continue covering one domestic service program daily from Baku and Yerevan and are making backstop recordings of several others. With this change, the bureau was able to take back its normal coverage of Tehran Domestic Service morning casts, which the BBC had been covering while our Persian/Armenian monitor was detailed to Soviet coverage. In response to a Headquarters request, the bureau prepared two hours of Armenian-language voice recordings for training use and sent them to London by DHL courier for forwarding to Headquarters over Internet.

6. At the request of a Headquarters consumer relayed by MOD, the bureau forwarded a videotape of a news conference by Cypriot President Yeoryios Vasilioiu directly to Washington by DHL courier.

7. The bureau has begun receiving Tehran newspapers and magazines two or three times a week via an air courier company. Farsi and English papers are being forwarded to London Bureau along with our regular courier shipments of videotapes for a trial coverage period, while Nicosia bureau scans the magazines for possible processing.

8. Tehran Domestic Service has returned to a schedule of broadcasting Friday prayers at a time when the BBC's reception is still fair. This has allowed Nicosia to discontinue the regular phonepatching of the prayer broadcasts to the BBC, although we continue to backstop record them.

B. Communications

1. Bureau communications were down several times during the month. A scheduled outage on 15 April for a satellite upgrade was interrupted because of heavy communications traffic in the area due to the hijacking situation. Communications were down for 10 hours on 18 April due to satellite problems and trouble [redacted]. In addition, [redacted] initiated a scheduled downtime on 30 April that continued for 6 hours.

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2. The bureau switched over to Bach 2.1 and the new FBIS message format on 28 April, as scheduled by Headquarters. Both changes appear to have gone smoothly.

III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. Part-time secretary [redacted] began work on 4 April, overlapping with [redacted] until 20 April. [redacted] gave birth to a baby girl the following day. She is rotating out of Nicosia in June with her husband, an embassy staffer. [redacted] is also an embassy spouse.

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2. Deputy Chief [redacted] was on personal travel to the United States from 8 to 24 April.

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3. [redacted], wife of the bureau chief, departed for the United States on Medevac on 24 April.

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4. Bureau Chief [redacted] was on emergency visitation to the United States from 27 April to 8 May.

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5. Senior editor [redacted] returned from R&R to the United States on 18 April.

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IV. VISITS

1. Chief, Operations Group, [redacted] visited the bureau 12-14 April.

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2. Editor trainees [redacted] arrived on 9 April to begin the 90-day editorial training program.

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3. Regional Engineer [redacted] was on TDY to Jordan Bureau from 11-19 April.

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[Redacted signature box]

Bureau Chief
Nicosia Bureau

ATTACHMENT: Production Report