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**SUBJECT: Update on the Assassination of Former Ambassador Francis E. Meloy**

**Distribution:**

- 1 - DO/NE [redacted]
- 1 - D/NESA
- 1 - DD/NESA
- 1 - C/NESA/AI
- 2 - NESA/AI/L

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DDI/NESA/AI/L [redacted] 26 June 1986

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## Talking Points

26 June 1986

### Lebanon: Update on the Assassination of Former Ambassador Francis E. Meloy

#### Summary

The assassination of former Ambassador Francis Meloy, his economic officer, Robert Waring, and his personal driver Zuhayr Moghrabi on June 16, 1976 in a contested section of West Beirut remains unsolved, but good evidence indicates that an extreme Lebanese leftist militia connected with George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was directly responsible for the murders.

#### Moghrabi's Role

The Ambassador was likely set up by his own driver as he was crossing over into East Beirut to meet President elect Elias Sarkis.

--The driver Moghrabi, was allegedly abducted by armed militias a year earlier and was taken to the Sabra refugee Camp for interrogation. He was later released. Some reporting indicate that he may have gone to Sabra voluntarily. The US Embassy in Beirut originally reported that Moghrabi's kidnapping in May 1975 was carried out by pro-Syrian Palestinian elements of Al Saiqa.

--The No. 2 man in Yassir Arafat's al Fatah guerrilla organization, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) who led an investigation into the Ambassador's death said his driver Moghrabi was indeed involved in the operation, but was slain to insure his silence. The PLO took immediate interest in the assassination arresting and charging five individuals with the murders. Two were immediately released for lack of sufficient evidence. Two others who implicated the PFLP were handed over by Khalaf to PFLP security for "further interrogation." The PFLP subsequently announced that the two, believed to be brothers, Fawzi and Walid Qubbani, were executed. No bodies were ever produced. The US Embassy in Beirut reported that Qubbani's father was active in George Hawi's branch of the Lebanese Communist Party. Both Fatah and the PFLP were tactical allies against Syria during that period, and may have cooperated in the transfer of the accused prisoners to avoid jeopardizing their military alliance. The last of the five accused, Bassam Ferkh, was quietly released by the PFLP where he made his way to Canada. He was later deported from Canada as an undesirable alien,

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and was in the custody of Lebanese security officers until his release in 1981 for insufficient evidence.

### Motivations

The organization(s) behind the murder of Ambassador Meloy and his two other companions, had attacked US installations and personnel in Beirut and Damascus in the past. They operated outside the control and often against the interests of the major Palestinian and leftist Lebanese organizations. In 1976, these Palestinian and leftist organizations were opponents of Syria and the US, both in Lebanon and on wider Middle East issues. They were also at odds with moderate Palestinian and Lebanese elements willing to negotiate a settlement of the Lebanese crisis. The extremists were therefore eager to derail any progress or plan for ending the civil war in Lebanon. Press reports during the assassination period indicate that the real motive behind the assassination of the newly appointed US Ambassador was to create obstacles in an Arab imposed settlement in Lebanon. The Syrian troop entry into Lebanon later in 1976--which was facilitated by US negotiations with Israel--took place despite strong leftist and Palestinian opposition.

--We conclude that the principal motive for the assassination of Meloy and Waring was directly related to anti-American attitudes and was designed to induce a state of tension and chaos in Lebanon; blocking Syrian efforts to end the civil war.

### The Group Responsible

The organization probably directly responsible for planning and executing the assassination was the Socialist Revolutionary Organization, whose leader was Murshed Shibbu.

--Another version of the organization's name is the Organization of Arab Socialist Action. Shibbu's group was responsible for the kidnapping of US Army Col. Morgan in July 1975, and took part in the major Bank of America robbery in 1973. Shibbu personally participated in the attack on an El Al plane in Athens in 1970. Shibbu was arrested for his El Al attack [REDACTED]

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--Shibbu's group were inextricably linked to the Arab Communist Party--outlawed in most Arab countries for its extremist and anarchistic doctrine. On occasions, Shibbu's organization was known as the Secret Revolutionary Organization, and was linked to two other small extremist groups, the Communist Workers' Organization, and the Organization of the Young Arabs.

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