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NOFORN NOCONTRACT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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SPOT COMMENTARY: US Embassy Annex in East Beirut Bombed

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the large car bomb that exploded in front of the US Embassy annex in East Beirut this morning, destroying much of the building. Latest reports from the Embassy indicate two US military personnel and six Lebanese nationals were killed and 12 US personnel wounded, including Ambassador Bartholemew. Casualty details, however, are still sketchy. The US Embassy facility in West Beirut was evacuated after the attack. ~~(S-NE)~~

The vehicle apparently was a van that forced its way onto the compound. Embassy security guards fired at the vehicle before it exploded. ~~(C)~~

Comment: Radical Lebanese Shias almost certainly conducted this bombing. The Islamic Jihad--believed to be a cover name--used by pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon and elsewhere--threatened on 8 September to attack US interests in the Middle East in retaliation for the US veto of the UN Security Council resolution criticizing Israeli practices in southern Lebanon. On 17 September, a previously unknown group threatened to attack Ambassador Bartholemew and US interests in Lebanon, also because of the veto. Earlier, on 1 August, the Islamic Jihad threatened to strike US targets in East Beirut soon after the US Embassy annex opened there.

[Redacted]

Iran's Embassy in Damascus coordinates radical Shia activities in Lebanon. ~~(S-NE NC)~~

The successful bombing attack in East Beirut, an area controlled by Christian forces, indicates that groups hostile to the United States have a capability to strike anywhere in Lebanon. ~~(S-NE)~~

[Redacted]

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(b)(3)

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