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A/NIO/NESA
22 September 1982(b)(3)
(b)(6)Talking Points: Political Fallout from the Beirut Massacre

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1. The revelations about the Shatilla and Sabra refugee camp massacres is arousing a domestic outcry in Israel that may well challenge Prime Minister Begin's hold on power. The key threat to Begin is the development of a Watergate-style political scandal in which the government's credibility is steadily eroded by a series of ever-more-shocking and embarrassing revelations.

[redacted] Tel Aviv
knew some kind of massacre was underway on early Friday but did nothing to stop it for another 12-24 hours.

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[redacted]
[redacted] this
contradicts Israel's argument that it did not know the militia was going into the camps until after the fact.

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Begin is a proven survivor and many Israelis -- especially his Sephardic constituency -- will rally behind him out of nationalist sentiment. Nonetheless, the religious parties -- key Begin coalition partners -- seem particularly outraged by the moral dimensions of the massacre and want an independent investigation which Begin says he opposes.

-- Should the two religious parties quit Begin's Likud coalition, Labor could form a new government with them and several leftist groups.

-- Such a coalition would be very unstable, however.

The political polls showed widespread support for Begin before the massacre. Israeli opposition politicians now will eagerly await new polls to gauge shifts in opinion.

2. The massacre and Bashir Jumayyil's assassination have also highlighted the strains in the Israeli-Phalange alliance. Press reports indicate some Phalangists believe Israel had become disenchanted with Bashir before his death because Bashir would not sign a peace treaty with Tel Aviv. Some claim Israel encouraged dissident Maronites to work against Bashir and may even have had a role in his death.

-- While this seems unlikely, it points up the growing tensions between some Maronites and Israel.

These reports also underscore Amin Jumayyil's problem in gaining full control over the Maronite military organizations. The Lebanese Forces militia were Bashir's creation and their loyalty was to him, not to the Jumayyil family. Israel doubtless will use its sympathizers in the Phalange and its Haddad allies to pressure Amin to be more forthcoming on the peace treaty issue.

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ISRAEL-LEBANON: New Information on Massacre

Israel continues to draw down its forces in West Beirut. Evidence of Tel Aviv's involvement in the events surrounding the massacre at the refugee camps is mounting.



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The Israelis have withdrawn at least two additional battalions of troops from West Beirut and have turned over part of it to the Lebanese Army, but at least three brigades remain to search for weapons caches and PLO guerrillas. The remaining members of the Muslim Murabitun militia reportedly have fled or gone into hiding.



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Meanwhile, Red Cross and Lebanese volunteers continue to uncover more bodies in the camps. Initial press reports of 300 dead have now been revised upward to at least 600.



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Comment: Israel is moving slowly to relinquish control of the city to the Lebanese Army, probably to ensure that as many PLO guerrillas and arms caches as possible are found before it withdraws its own forces.



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Israeli Role in the Massacre



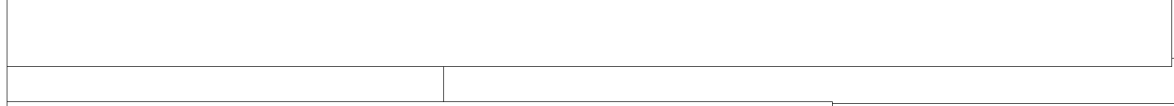
the Commander in Chief of the Christian Lebanese Forces, Fadi Frem, ordered elements of his forces, primarily Phalange, into the Sabra camp.

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Some time after these forces entered the camp,

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Christian militia leader Haddad's men were responsible for the massacres at the Shatila camp and the nearby Akka and

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Gaza hospitals. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Tel Aviv has now admitted publicly that the Phalange was encouraged to "cleanse" the camps of PLO elements, but disavows any responsibility for the massacres. The Israeli Defense Force denies that Haddad's militia was involved. [Redacted]

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Comment: Tel Aviv's denial probably stems from its desire to shift the blame away from the Israeli Defense Force, which exercises complete control over Haddad's militia. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] it is estimated that 1,000 Palestinian civilians, and perhaps more, were killed during the 36-hour period the Christian militia was in the camp. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

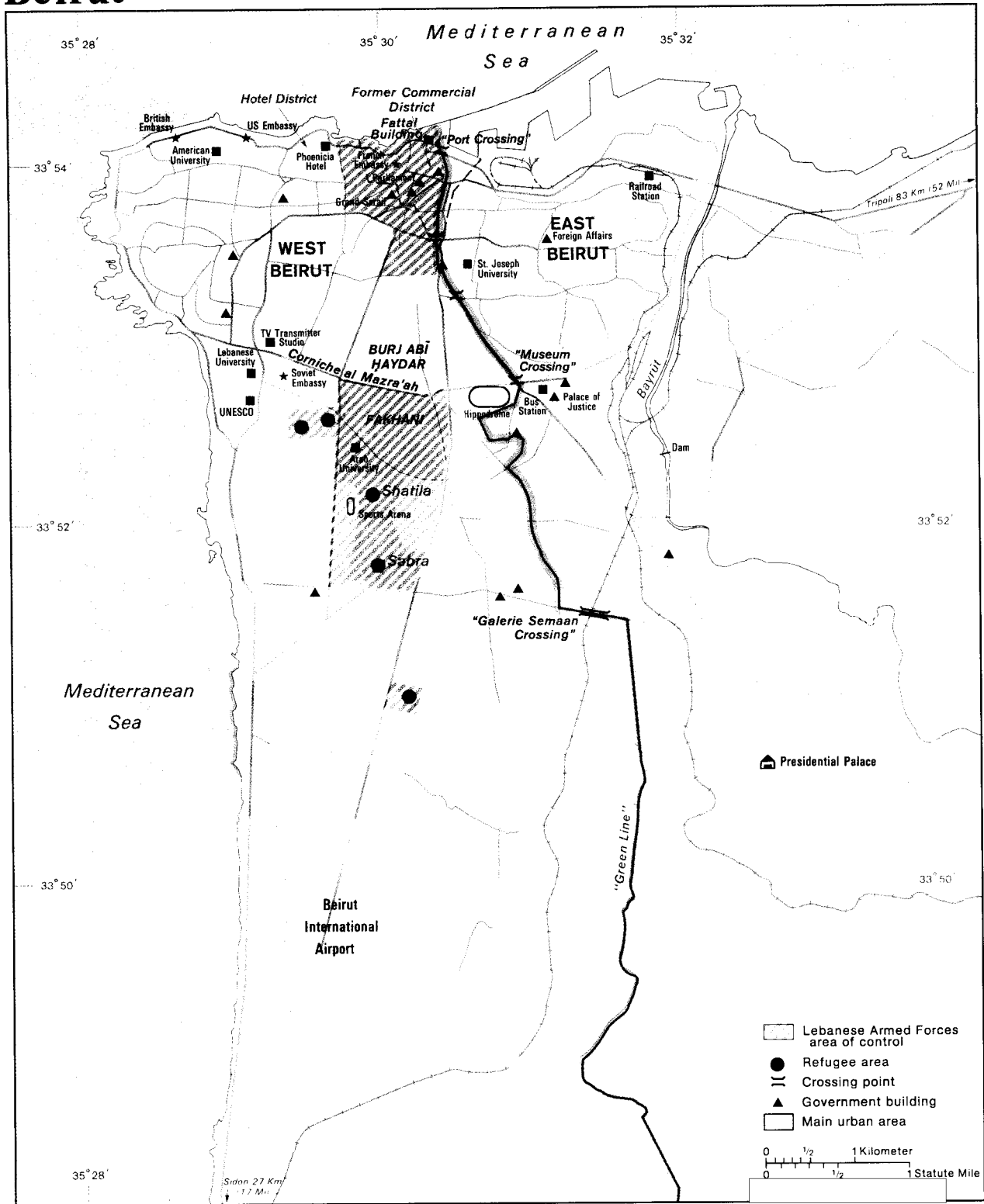
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ISRAEL: Pressure on the Government

The Labor Party will use the special session of the Knesset scheduled for today to push its demand for an independent inquiry into the massacre in Beirut and cite recent events there as proof of its contention that Prime Minister Begin's policies on Lebanon are bankrupt. [redacted]

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Comment: If Labor decides to challenge Begin's power, the party probably will encourage the two religious parties--the National Religious Party and Agudat Israel--and dissidents in the Liberal faction of Likud to desert the coalition and form a new government. The National Religious Party is increasingly disturbed over Begin's hardline stance--party members were particularly upset at the Prime Minister's rejection of their request for an independent inquiry--and might be agreeable to an appeal from Labor. [redacted]

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The Religious Party is already holding contacts with Labor, according to press accounts. If Begin offers the party an acceptable compromise on the inquiry issue, however, he probably can keep it from bolting. [redacted]

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Begin apparently has decided to maintain his combative stance and rely on the substantial support for his policies in the Sephardic community to ride out the controversy. Further revelations of the government's mishandling of the massacre and its refusal to permit some kind of inquiry could seriously threaten his hold on power, however, even if he survives the immediate threat. [redacted]

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Israeli Knesset Representation

	Seats
Coalition	64
Likud	46
Herut	24
Liberals	18
Laam	3
Akiva Nof	1
National Religious Party	6
Agudat Israel	4
TAMI	3
Tehiyya	3
Hurvitz/Ben Porat	2
Opposition	56
Labor Alignment	50
Labor	42
MAPAM	7
Citizen's Rights Movement	1
Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Communists)	4
Shinui	2