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~~(S)~~ // [ ] /NF) VISIT TO NIAMEY OF A HIGH-LEVEL LIBYAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE DELEGATION; ANTICIPATED DELAY IN START OF CONSTRUCTION ON THE TRANS-SAHARAN HIGHWAY PROJECT UNTIL APPROXIMATELY SEPTEMBER 2009

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Central Intelligence Agency

04 December 2008

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SOURCE [Redacted]

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CONTEXT [Redacted]

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~~(S)~~ // [ ] /NF) 1. [Redacted]

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~~(S)~~ // [ ] /NF) 2. In late September 2008, a high-level Libyan development assistance delegation visited Niger for several days. One purpose of the visit was to officially inaugurate several completed projects funded by Libya. These projects included the paving of the corniche road along the Niger River in Niamey that abuts the Yantala Gardens truck-gardening zone, an effort that took several years and was described on billboards along the roadway as a personal gift to the people of Niger from Libyan leader Mu'ammar abu Minyar al-((Qadhafi)). As often occurred in connection with such visits, the Libyan delegation visited with only 24-hours notice to the Nigerien government. The delegation arrived by air in Niamey without Nigerien overflight clearance, irritating their Nigerien hosts.

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~~(S//~~  /NF) 3. Another purpose of the visit was to expedite the work on the Libyan-funded Trans-Saharan Highway project, budgeted at more than 700 million euros (approximately 900 million U.S. dollars), leading from southern Libya to Agadez (16-58N, 07-59E) in north-central Niger via the Bilma oasis (18-41N, 12-56E). It now appeared that the Trans-Saharan project, which a lower-ranking previous Libyan delegation had sought to expedite in August 2008, would not begin until approximately September 2009, eight months later than previously planned. For the most part, discussions with senior Nigerien transportation and other officials were highly technical in nature.

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At the conclusion of the delegation's visit, there appeared to be little basis for expecting construction to begin as planned, even after the anticipated minimum eight-month delay.

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~~(S//~~  /NF) 4. Principal members of the delegation, which comprised a total of 12 Libyans, included:

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~~(S//~~  /NF) --Maatug Mohamed ((Maatug)), aka ((Matoug)), Libya's Minister of Manpower and Training;

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~~(S//~~  /NF) --Mohamed ((Siala)), Libya's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation;

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~~(S//~~  /NF) --Colonel Mabruq ((Zahmul)); a career Libyan Army officer in charge of Libyan infrastructural-development aid projects throughout Africa.

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~~(S//~~  /NF) 5. Maatug, who had held ministerial rank since approximately 1990, had a background with Libya's Revolutionary Committees. He was widely believed either to have carried out himself, or to have ordered others to carry out, the fusillade of automatic weapons fire that killed a British police officer, Yvonne ((Fletcher)), outside the Libyan Embassy in London on 17 April 1984, an incident that led soon afterward to Britain's severing of diplomatic relations with Libya. Qadhafi perceived Maatug's involvement in the London confrontation in favorable terms and it marked the beginning of Maatug's meteoric rise in the government.

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Page 2 of 2(b)(3)