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Weekly Situation Report
on
International Terrorism

DO WSRI 77-009

2 March 1977

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2 March 1977

ARTICLESFive Americans Currently Held by Kidnapers

Recent kidnappings of U.S. citizens have increased the number currently being held captive to a total of five. Four of the victims are businessmen and one is a U.S. government employee. All of them were abducted in Latin America; one is being held in Venezuela, three in Colombia, and one in Guatemala.

The longest-held captive is Owens-Illinois executive William F. Niehaus, who was kidnaped from his Caracas home one year ago on 27 February 1976 by a group calling itself the Revolutionary Commandos. Following several months of negotiations, Owens-Illinois met some of the kidnapers' demands over the objections of the Venezuelan government. However, the first real break in the case occurred on 21 July with the arrest of two men while they were attempting to collect a partial ransom payment. Subsequent arrests netted one of the suspected organizers of the kidnaping, Jorge Rodriguez. However, interrogation of Rodriguez was so severe he died in prison without revealing any information on Niehaus' whereabouts. On 11 August, Mrs. Donna L. Niehaus offered a ransom of \$467,000 for information leading to her husband's release. No response was received, and in the face of mounting criticism over its handling of the case, the Venezuelan government in October formed a task force to locate Niehaus. This effort has also met with a lack of success. The last letter Mrs. Niehaus received from her husband was in early July and no further proof of Niehaus' safety has come to light since that time. Tenuous reports of Niehaus' death surfaced in the Venezuelan press in January 1977, touching off extensive searches by Venezuelan police, but no reliable evidence of Niehaus' fate has so far been discovered.

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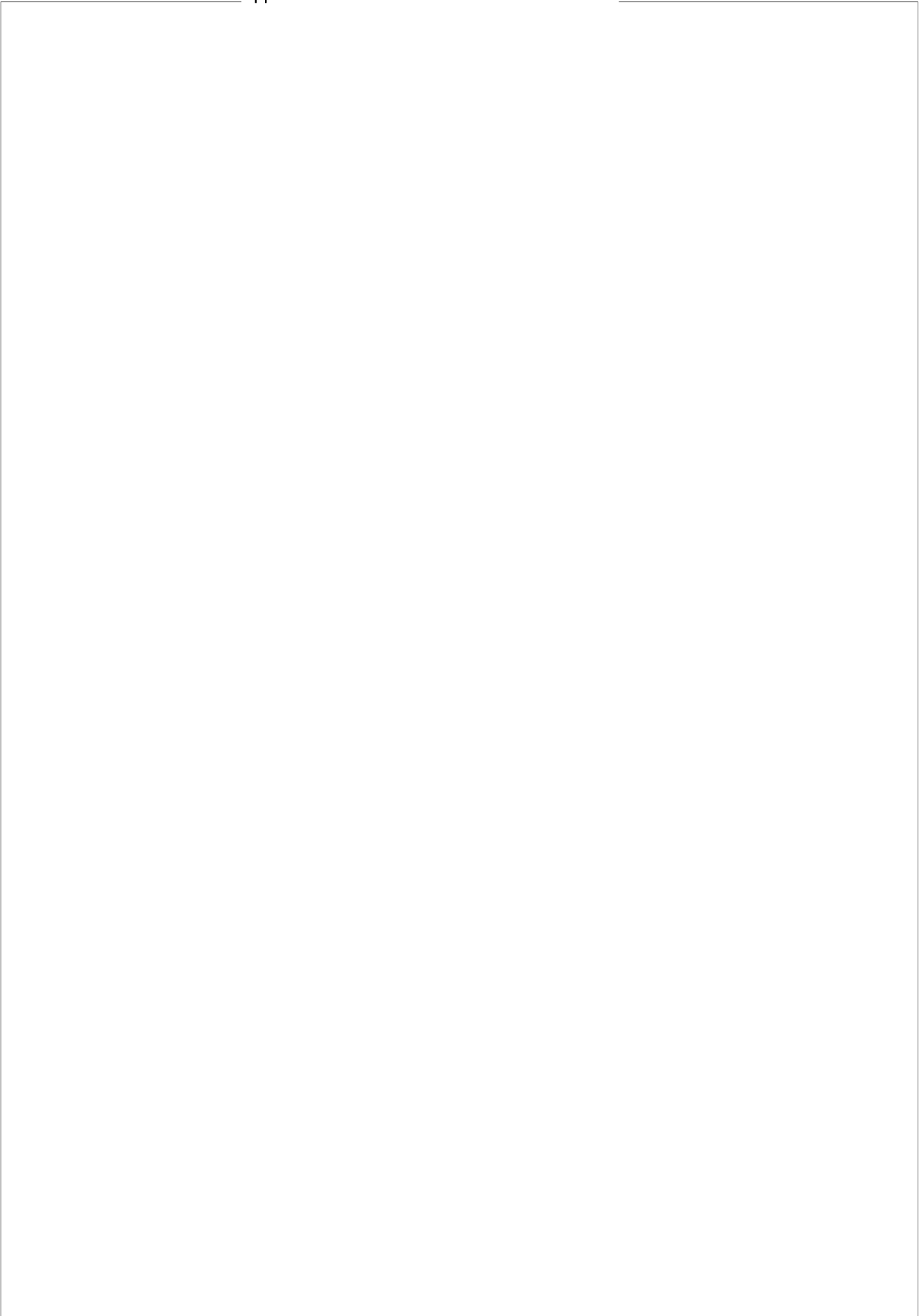
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