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1972/05/31

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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 03447 310928Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 1026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4587
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
USINT CAIRO IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

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SUBJ: TERRORIST ATTACK AT LOD AIRPORT

1. AS FAR AS IS KNOWN SO FAR, THREE JAPANESE FROM A "MAOIST" GROUP ARRIVED AT LOD EVENING MAY 30 ON AIR FRANCE PLANE, CLEARED IMMIGRATION, OBTAINED THEIR BAGGAGE, TOOK FROM BAGGAGE MACHINE GUNS AND HAND GERRADES AND PROCEEDED TO SHOOT AND THROW GRENADES AMONG CROWD, KILLING ABOUT 25 AND WOUNDING SOME SIXTY MORE. TWO TERRORISTS DEAD, ONE CAPTURED. SOME NUMBER OF AMERICAN CITIZENS APPARENTLY AMONG DEAD AND WOUNDED BUT DETAILS NOT YET AVAILABLE. RADIO REPORTS INDICATE POPULAR FRONT FOR LIBERATION OF PALESTINE (PFLP) IN BEIRUT HAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATTACK AND STATED THIS IN RETALIATION FOR DEATH OF TWO SABENA HIJACKERS AT LOD RECENTLY.
2. WE EXPECT GOI REACTION LIKEY TO BE SWIFT AND AIMED, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, AT PFLP. AFTER SABENA INCIDENT, GOI WARNED GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON THAT IT COULD NOT ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PFLP ACTIONS IN AS MUCH AS ORGANIZATION IS OPERATING OPENLY AND MAKING ITS CLAIMS FROM BEIRUT, AND TERRORISTS APPARENTLY STAGING THROUGH BEIRUT ON WAY TO EUROPE.
3. IF GOI DECIDES TO GO AFTER PFLP, IT HAS THEORETICAL DIRECT AND INDIRECT (VIA GOL) OPTIONS THAT IS, IT COULD CONCEIVABLY MOUNT SOME OPERATIONS, EITHER CLANDESTINE OR OPEN, DIRECTLY AGAINST PFLP

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Department of State

TELEGRAM

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 03447 310928Z

HEADQUARTERS OR PERSONALITIES IN BEIRUT. WHILE THIS OPTION EXISTS, IT ALSO HAS MAJOR DISADVANTAGES OF IN EFFECT LETTING GOL OFF THE HOOK AND ALSO OF POSSIBLE FAILURE TO GET INDIVIDUALS WHO COUNT.

4. OTHER OPTION FOR GOI WOULD BE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST GOL AIMED AT FORCING GOL IN TURN TO SUPPRESS PFLP. THIS WOULD ACCORD WITH GOI STATED POSITION THAT ARAB GOVERNMENTS MUST BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR ACTS FROM THEIR TERRORISTS. UNDER THIS OPTION, GOI WOULD HAVE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES FROM CALL FOR SECURITY COUNCIL OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTION TO DIRECT ATTACK ON LEBAN DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT LEBANON WILL SUFFER MORE THAN ISRAEL IF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS ARE PERMITTED TO OPERATE UNCHECKED IN BEIRUT.

5. FROM PAST EXPERIENCE, WE JUDGE THAT, IF GOI DECIDES THAT DIRECT ACTION AGAINST LEBANON IS IN ITS INTERESTS, IT WILL NOT BE DISSUADED BY REPRESENTATIONS OR ARGUMENTS. WHILE WE OBVIOUSLY ARE IN NO POSITION TO ESTIMATE WITH CERTAINTY, WE BELIEVE THAT THE ONLY THING LIKELY TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO ISRAEL AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO UNILATERAL ACTION ON ITS PART WOULD BE PRIOR ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON OR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF SUCH FORCE AND PROBABLE EFFECTIVENESS AS TO CONVINCE ISRAELIS THAT RESULT THEY DESIRE CAN REASONABLY BE EXPECTED WITHOUT DIRECT INTERVENTION ON THEIR PART. WE UNDERSTAND DIFFICULTIES THAT GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON WOULD HAVE IN TAKING ANY ACTION OF THIS MAGNITUDE AND ESPECIALLY IN TAKING IT RAPIDLY ENOUGH TO HEAD OFF ISRAELIS, BUT WE SEE NO ALTERNATIVE.

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