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NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 OC-06 PRS-01 SS-15 USIE-00
USSS-00 SY-05 FAA-00 WRD-01 VO-03 INSE-00 SCS-03
SCA-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 /06 W
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R 032024Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2647
INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY BERN
AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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E.O.11652:
TAGS: PINS
SUBJ: AIR FRANCE HIJACKING

REFS: A. BONN 11294, B. PARIS 19227,
C. PARIS 19328, D. PARIS 19871


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GROUND COVERED IN THE ACCOUNTS IN REFS B, C AND D.
THERE IS SOME CONFUSION OVER NOMENCLATURE FOR THE
THREE ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN THE HIJACKING. ALL THE
AMERICANS REFERRED TO MEMBERS OF ALL THREE AS PLO
PRESUMABLY SINCE ENGLISH SPEAKING GERMANS WITH WHOM
THEY HAD MOST CONTACT SAID THEY WORKED FOR PLO. BUT
THE ARABS ON THE GROUND WHO WERE APPARENTLY IN CHARGE
OF THE WHOLE CHE GUEVARA COMMANDO GROUP MADE THE
DISTINCTION AND SPECIFIED THEY WORKED FOR PFLP AND NOT
PLO. GERMANS PERHAPS DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE
DISTINCTION.

2. RETAINED AMERICANS. SOME OF THE AMERICANS HAD
IDENTIFIED GEORGE AND RENE KARFUNKEL AS AMERICANS AND
WERE AWARE THAT THEY HAD ONLY AMERICAN PASSPORTS AND
HAD BEEN IN ISRAEL ONLY BRIEFLY. NO ONE HAD A
SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION OF WHY THE KARFUNKELS HAD NOT
BEEN RELEASED WITH THE OTHER AMERICANS. THE KARFUNKELS
APPEARED VERY ORTHODOX, ATE ONLY KOSHER FOOD AND WERE
SEATED WITH THE ISRAELIS ABOARD THE PLANE AND REMAINED
WITH THEM EVEN ON THE GROUND BECAUSE THE COMMANDOS
PERMITTED THEM TO PREPARE KOSHER FOOD. HOWEVER, THE
COMMANDOS GENERALLY WORKED FROM THE DOCUMENTS WHICH THEY
HAD COLLECTED AND THE PRINTED CARDS (IN ARABIC) WHICH
THEY HAD EACH PASSENGER FILL OUT. THE COMMANDOS WERE
THEREFORE WELL AWARE THAT THE KARFUNKELS HAD AMERICAN
PASSPORTS ONLY. ONE AMERICAN SUGGESTED THAT THEIR
FLAUNTING OF THEIR JEWISHNESS MIGHT HAVE ALIENATED SOME
OF THE ARABS IN THE COMMANDOS. ON THE OTHER HAND,
OTHERS THOUGHT THEIR RETENTION MIGHT HAVE BEEN JUST AN
Oversight. AS FOR JANET ALMOG, NONE OF THE AMERICANS
WE HAVE QUESTIONED WERE AWARE OF HER PRESENCE. SHE WAS
PROBABLY RETAINED ON THE BASIS OF HER ISRAELI
DOCUMENTATION (AS WERE THE FRENCH/ISRAELI DUAL
NATIONALS) IN ADDITION TO HER BEING SEATED WITH THE
ISRAELIS. THE AMERICANS NOTED THAT THE DUAL NATIONALS
HAD MADE NO ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY OR DISCARD THE EVIDENCE
OF THEIR ISRAELI CITIZENSHIP ALTHOUGH OTHERS HAD
DESTROYED SOME COMPROMISING DOCUMENTATION SUCH AS PRESS
CARDS. HIJACKERS WHILE STILL ON PLANE WARNED THAT
QTE ANYONE WHO DESTROYED IDENTIFY DOCUMENTS WOULD BE
SEVERELY PUNISHED END QTE.

3. ROLE OF THE HIJACKERS. THE AMERICANS INVARIBLY
WERE OF THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE WERE TWO GERMANS
AND TWO RATHER INEXPERIENCED YOUNG ARABS WHO HAD TAKEN
OVER THE PLANE SHORTLY AFTER TAKEOFF FROM ATHENS. THE
GERMAN MAN, BASIL CODE NAME KUBESKY - AFTER GERMAN
TERRORIST KILLED 1973, WAS THE OBVIOUS LEADER OF THE
HIJACK GROUP ALTHOUGH THE WOMAN WAS OFTEN THE MOST
VIRULENT. WE REFER TO THE WOMAN AS QTE GERMAN END QTE
BECAUSE THE AMERICANS ALL DID. SHE SPEAKS ENGLISH WITH
A DECIDED GERMAN ACCENT. SOME SOURCES, HOWEVER, HAVE

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BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY HER AS TURKISH TERRORIST, BERGAS
ETURK (PARIS 19514). BASIL WAS OBVIOUSLY MORE
TECHNICALLY EXPERIENCED THAN THE YOUNG ARABS AND HELPED
THEM ASSEMBLE THE BOMBS WITH WHICH THEY THREATENED TO
BLOW UP THE AIRCRAFT. SOME AMERICANS CONSIDERED THE
GERMANS TO BE SINCERE REVOLUTIONARIES WHO WERE NOT
WORKING MERELY FOR THE ACCOUNT OF THE PFLP OR PLO, BUT
ALSO TO FREE THEIR COLLEAGUES IMPRISONED IN GERMANY
WHOM THEY APPEARED TO KNOW PERSONALLY. OTHERS THOUGHT THAT THEY MIGHT BE BASICALLY MERCENARIES AND THAT THE REAL LEADERS OF THE PFLP OR PLO WOULD NOT PUSH FOR THE RELEASE OF THEIR GERMAN FRIENDS. ON THE GROUND, THE FOUR PLO WHO MOVED IN WHEN THEY REACHED ENTEBBE ASSUMED CONFIDENTIAL PRINCIPAL COMMAND, BUT SOME CONSIDERED THAT QTE BASIL END QTE CONTINUED TO BE QTE GENERAL MANAGER END QTE OF THE GROUP AND WAS ABLE TO MAKE A MAJOR INPUT INTO THE DECISIONS AS TO WHO SHOULD BE RELEASED, FOR EXAMPLE, AT ALL EVENTS, THE GERMANS WERE VERY VOLUMINOUS IN THEIR DISCUSSION OF THE NECESSITY OF WORLD REVOLUTION, OVERTURNING WORLD IMPERIALISM AND CAPITALISM, AND PUT ON A GOOD SHOW IN SUPPORT OF THE IDEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THEIR JOINING WITH THE OPPRESSED PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

RELIEF WHEN THEY APPROACHED THE PLANE AN HOUR OR MORE
AFTER IT LANDED. IT WAS NOT CLEAR, HOWEVER, WHETHER
THEY WERE PFLP REPS WHO WERE STATIONED IN UGANDA OR HAD
COME IN FOR THE OCCASION. FOUR ARABS NEVER SEEMED TAKE
TWO YOUNG SELF-PROFESSED PALESTINIANS INTO THEIR
CONFIDENCE.

5. ROLE OF AMIN. WITHOUT EXCEPTION THE AMERICANS FOUND
AMIN REPELLENT AND DUPLICITOUS IN HIS TREATMENT OF THE
PRISONERS. HE CLAIMED CREDIT FOR EVERYTHING WHICH
BENEFITTED THE PRISONERS FROM THE FOOD AND MATTRESSES
WHICH WERE SUPPLIED TO THE MORE CONCILIATORY ACTIONS OF
THE HIJACKERS. THE PLO FIGURES ALSO WENT OUT OF THEIR
WAY TO GIVE CREDIT TO AMIN, WHAT APPEARED TO BE PART OF
THEM EFFORT TO MAINTAIN HIS SUPPORT. ALL AGREED THAT
AMIN HAD PROBABLY LEARNED THAT UGANDA WAS THE PLANE'S
DESTINATION BEFORE IT LANDED, AND SOME SPECULATED THAT
HE HAD BEEN AWARE OF THE PLOT BEFORE THE HIJACKING.
BASIS SAID WHEN THEY LEFT LIBYA FOR UGANDA THAT PERHAPS
AMIN WOULD BE AT THE AIRPORT WAITING FOR THEM. THE
PLANE TAXIED AROUND THE FIELD FOR ABOUT AN HOUR BEFORE
BASIL GOT OFF THE PLANE AND MADE JOYFUL CONTACT WITH THE
FOUR WAITING ARAB FIGURES, BUT SOME AMERICANS THOUGHT
THAT THE DELAY COULD HAVE BEEN BECAUSE THEY WERE
EXPECTED AT KAMPALA AIRPORT OR THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME
DELAY IN GETTING TOGETHER THE ARAB FIGURES AND THE
UGANDAN TROOPS. IT WAS CLEAR THAT AMIN GAVE SUPPORT TO
THE COMMANDOS SINCE THEY ACQUIRED MORE AND MORE LETHAL
WEAPONS AFTER ARRIVAL AND THE UGANDAN TROOPS WERE
CLEARLY THERE AS A BACK-UP FORCE NOT JUST QTE IMPRISONING END QTE COMMANDOS BUT ALSO HELPING IMPRISON PASSENGERS. GIVEN THE PHYSICAL SET-UP, THE GREAT NUMBER OF UGANDANS, AND THEIR CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE PLO, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN QUITE EASY, MOST THOUGHT, FOR THE UGANDANS TO HAVE DISARMED OR KILLED THE COMMANDOS HAD THEY WISHED. IN FACT, THE PASSENGERS BEGAN TO FEAR THE UGANDANS EVEN MORE THAN THE FOUR ARABS WHO HAD TAKEN OVER ON ARRIVAL, JUST AS THEY INITIALLY HAD FEARED THE FOUR ARABS MORE THAN THE ORIGINAL HIJACKERS.

6. AMIN HIMSELF MADE NO BONES ABOUT HIS SYMPATHY FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

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THE AIMS OF THE COMMANDOS. HE SAID THAT HE WAS HAPPY TO HELP THE COMMANDOS SINCE HE SHARED THEIR OPINIONS. HE TOLD THE PASSENGERS THAT IF THEIR GOVERNMENTS WISHED TO SEE THEM ALIVE, THEY MUST COOPERATE IN MEETING THE JUST DEMANDS OF THE HIJACKERS.

DEAL OF MONEY OUT OF THE HIJACKING, BOTH FROM AIR
FRANCE PAYMENTS AND THE INDIVIDUAL EXPENDITURES BY THE
PASSENGERS -- $1 FOR TOILET PAPER, FOR EXAMPLE.

8. POSSIBLE ROLE OF SOME PASSENGERS. SEVERAL AMERICANS
WERE SUSPICIOUS OF ONE OF THE JORDANIAN (SALMY) AND
EGYPTIAN PASSENGERS, BUT NOT OF THE MORROCAN. SOME
THOUGHT THAT SALMY AND THE EGYPTIAN BOTH WERE WORKING
WITH THE HIJACKERS AT LEAST AFTER THE EVENT, AND THAT
SALMY IN PARTICULAR SEEMED TO BE THE HIJACKERS SPY
AMONG THE PASSENGERS. SOME EVEN THOUGHT THAT THE
JORDANIAN MIGHT HAVE HELPPED THE HIJACKERS GET THEIR
ARMS AND EXPLOSIVES ON BOARD. ONE AMERICAN BELIEVED
THAT ONE OF THE CANADIAN PASSENGERS, MIRIAM FIELD, HAD
HELPED BRING ARMS ABOARD IN HER HEAVY HANDBAG AND HAD
PASSED THEM TO THE GERMAN WOMAN WHEN SHE WENT TO THE
LADIES' ROOM ON THE WEAK EXCUSE OF WISHING TO FRESHEN
HER MAKEUP IMMEDIATELY AFTER TAKE OFF RATHER THAN
IMMEDIATELY BEFORE LANDING IN ORDER TO BE AT HER BEST
FOR PARIS. CANADIAN EMBASSY OFFICIALS FOUND THAT
FIELD LEFT THE AIRPORT QUICKLY (WITH AN AMERICAN)
WITHOUT CHECKING IN WITH THEM AND SHE HAS NOT BEEN
STAYING AT THE HOTEL WHERE RESERVATIONS HAD BEEN MADE.
SINCE SHE WOULD BE WITHOUT DOCUMENTATION IF SHE HAD
BEEN TREATED LIKE THE OTHER PASSENGERS, CANADIANS ARE
SURPRISED THAT SHE HAS NOT BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THEM.
WE REPORT THE ABOVE AS MERELY THE IMPRESSIONS OF SOME
OF THE PASSENGERS, SPECULATION INDUCED BY THEIR
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SURPRISE THAT EVEN THE LAX SECURITY AT THE ATHENS
AIRPORT HAD PERMITTED THE INTRODUCTION OF SUBSTANTIAL
ARMS.

9. INTENTIONS OF THE HIJACKERS. THE AMERICANS
GENERALLY THOUGHT THE HIJACKERS CONSIDERED THE MOST
IMPORTANT PUBLICITY WAS AT LEAST CONSIDERABLE IF NOT
TOTAL SUCCESS IN OBTAINING THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS
IN ISRAEL, FRANCE AND GERMANY, AT LEAST. THEY
THOUGHT THAT COMMANDOS DID NOT INTEND A GENERAL KILLING
OF THE ISRAELIS OR OF THE FRENCH YOUNG PASSENGERS AND
CREW, BUT THAT THEY MIGHT START BY SHOOTING ONE OR TWO
ISRAELIS FIRST TO EMPHASIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THEIR
DEMands. THE ARABS SEEMED NOW RATHER SURE OF THEMSELVES
SINCE THEY NOW APPEARED CONVINCED OF COMPLETE BACKING
FROM AMIN. (THE GERMANS, HOWEVER, HAD APPARENTLY
COMPLETELY DISLIKED AND DISTRUSTED AMIN PERHAPS
BECAUSE HE IS NOT AN INTELLECTUAL RATHER THAN OUT OF
REAL FEAR HE MIGHT TURN ON THEM.) HE AMERICANS
THOUGHT THAT THE COMMANDOS' OPTIMISM WAS JUSTIFIED
SINCE THEY HELD ALL THE CARDS AND EVENTUALLY EVEN ISRAEL WOULD BE FORCED TO YIELD, IN PART BECAUSE OF DEMANDS FROM MANY RELATIVES OF THE ISRAELI CAPTIVES.

10. THE AMERICANS AT FIRST WERE SURPRISED AT THE ANIMOSITY SHOWN TOWARD THE FRENCH GIVEN THE RATHER PRO-ARAB GOVERNMENT POLICY, BUT THE GERMANS TOLD THEM THAT NOT ONLY HAD FRANCE HELPED ISRAEL MATERIALLY (NUCLEAR ENERGY PLANT, MIRAGES, ETC.) BUT ALSO THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAD PERMITTED ISRAELI AGENTS TO KILL 50 OF THE PALESTINIAN AGENTS IN FRANCE WITHOUT ANY EFFORT BY
THE GOF TO FIND AND PROSECUTE THE ASSASSINS. HENCE
THE DECISION TO ATTACK A FRENCH PLANE, TO HOLD
PRISONER THE FRENCH CREW AND SOME YOUNG FRENCH
PASSENGERS, AND TO MAKE HEAVY DEMANDS ON THE FRENCH
GOVERNMENT CONCERNING RELEASE OF PRISONERS.

11. SITUATION OF ISRAELI PRISONERS. THE AMERICANS
SAID THAT THE ISRAELEIS WERE WELL ORGANIZED, DISCIPLINED,
COHESIVE, BUT PASSIVE. ALTHOUGH THE FRENCH APPLAUDED
EACH TIME AMIN MADE A THEATRICAL ENTRANCE IN A
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DIFFERENT COSTUME, THE ISREALIS RESPONDED WITH SILENT
DEFIANCE. THEY APPARENTLY HAVE NEVER CONSIDERED THE
POSSIBILITY OF RESISTANCE, NO DOUBT IN PART BECAUSE
SO MANY OF THEM ARE VERY OLD. ONCE THEY WERE IN UGANDA
ALL THOUGHT OF RESISTANCE WAS UNREALISTIC SINCE THEY
ARE SURROUNDED BY HUNDREDS OF AMIN'S PARATROOPERS.
AMIN HAD SAID THAT IF THERE WERE AN ASSAULT FROM
OUTSIDE OR AN UPRISING WITHIN THE BUILDING, THE WHOLE
BUILDING WOULD BE BLOWN UP. THE AMERICANS BELIEVE
THAT THIS IS NOT TRUE, AND THAT BOXES SOME THOUGHT
MIGHT BE FILLED WITH DYNAMITE WERE REALLY DESIGNED
JUST TO BLOCK OFF A DOOR. IN ANY CASE, THE ISRAELIS
KNOW THAT THEIR CHANCES OF RESCUE OR ESCAPE ARE NIL.
THE DISTRESS HAS INCREASED AS THEY HAVE SEEN TWO
PLANELOADS OF OTHER PASSENGERS LEAVE, BUT THEY HAVE
REMAINED STOIC. A FEW MORE DAYS UNDER THESE
CIRCUMSTANCES COULD CAUSE SOME OF THE OLD AND INFIRM
TO BREAK -- JUST AS TWO OLD FRENCH WOMEN BROKE THE
NIGHT OF THEIR ARRIVAL IN UGANDA.

12. THE GERMANS HERE HAVE ALREADY EXPRESSED AN
INTEREST IN OUR REPORTS OF THE OBSERVATIONS AND
OPINIONS OF THE AMERICAN PASSENGERS. WE SUGGEST THE
DEPARTMENT DECIDE WHETHER THE ABOVE SHOULD BE
FURNISHED WHOLE OR IN PART TO CERTAIN FRIENDLY
GOVERNMENTS.

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