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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Washington, D.C. 20520

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September 28, 1969

9/28/69

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Up-dated Report on Hijacked TWA Aircraft

There is no change in the status of the hijackers. Our information is that they are still in jail in Damascus. The captain of the TWA aircraft is in Damascus, but TWA has announced that he will be replaced by two company officials. TWA has reported that the Syrian Government was most cooperative with them in reaching an agreement on the repair of the aircraft. The company expects to send as many as 60 technicians into Damascus to effect the repairs, and there are hopes that the work may be completed by December 1. In this connection, the Italian Embassy in Damascus has expressed its deep concern over the possibility of Israeli retaliatory acts while the American technicians are in Damascus, fearing that such actions would jeopardize the safety of the Americans.

The Syrian Government has shown no willingness whatsoever to release the remaining passengers. Italian Ambassador to Damascus Riccardi called on Ambassador Porter in Beirut on September 25 to review the situation. Riccardi reported that the Syrians were originally embarrassed by the hijacking. However, the situation has now developed to the stage where

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GROUP 3

~~Downgraded at 12-year intervals,
not automatically declassified~~

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 22, 2004

NEA/ARN: BH Base: *dmj* EXDIS

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they are no longer embarrassed nor do they have any fear of Israeli reprisals on any scale. Ambassador Riccardi was highly critical of the "chess game" being played by the Israeli Government and has expressed the view that the Israelis and their maneuverings are seriously jeopardizing the two Israeli passengers. In brief, Riccardi sees only long, careful negotiations with the Syrians if release of the passengers is to be realized.

Our latest move in our continuing efforts to secure the release of the passengers was a message from Secretary Rogers to Syrian President Nureddin al-Atassi. The message expresses our concern, reminds Syria of its international obligations and urges prompt release of the passengers. Assistant Secretary Sisco on September 22 in New York met with the Syrian Permanent Representative to the United Nations. The Syrian was unable to reply to Mr. Sisco's strong representations over the detention of the passengers, but said he would promptly report them to his government.

The Germans have reported that, pursuant to our request, they made a *démarche* on September 19 to the Syrians through the French who represent them in Damascus. On September 24 our *Chargé* in Moscow followed up with the Soviets, but there were no new developments to report.

The Director General of the International Air Transport Association on September 16 addressed a message to member airlines. He asked them to urge their governments to support action in the Security Council and General Assembly of the United Nations to curb hijacking and other armed interference with international civil aviation. This was timely in view of the President's address to the General Assembly in which he deplored hijacking and urged the United Nations to give high priority to the matter.

Theo. L. Eliot, Jr.
Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.
Executive Secretary
S/S
A True Copy

cc
NEA/ARN:BH Baas:dmg 9/26/69
~~SECRET/EXDTS~~
Clearances: NEA/ARN - Mr. Seelye
NEA - Mr. Davies
(RM)