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Department of State

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SECTION 1 OF 2 TRIPOLI 1849

LAGOS FOR NEWSOM

SUBJECT: TDCS DB-315/10058-72 OF NOV 30

SUMMARY: SUBJECT TDCS IS IMPORTANT AS POSSIBLE INDICATION LARG WILL TAKE STEPS SOON AGAINST AMERICAN INTERESTS IN LIBYA. WHILE THIS HAS OCCURRED BEFORE UNDER COVER OF IMPARTIAL TREATMENT APPLIED TO OTHERS TOO, NEW ELEMENT FORESHADOWED IS OVERT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST US BASED SQUARELY ON OUR SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. MY ESTIMATE IS THAT THIS IS LIKELY TO BEGIN IN FIRST HALF OF 1973. THERE IS LITTLE WE CAN DO ABOUT, BUT AT MINIMUM WE SHOULD REMOVE UNNECESSARY OBSTACLES TO USG/LARG UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER'S POSITION. END SUMMARY.

1. ATTENTION CALLED TO THIS TDCS BECAUSE OF ITS PLAUSIBILITY AS A SUMMARY OF FONMIN KIKHYA'S VIEWS AND THEIR POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO US/LIBYAN RELATIONS IF TRUE. PLAUSIBILITY SUGGESTED BY [REDACTED] PRESENCE OF SOME INCONSISTENCIES IN KIKHYA'S APPARENTLY SPONTANEOUS REMARKS -- E.G. "ARABS MUST DO THEIR BEST" TO INFLUENCE AMERICANS AND YET THE U.S. ESTABLISHMENT IS "ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO CHANGE." AS TO SIGNIFICANCE HIS REMARKS, THEY CONVEY CONVICTION THAT LARG WILL SOON ATTEMPT TO SWAY USG/ME POLICY BECAUSE ARABS CONTROL PRESSURE POINTS TO WHICH USG SHOULD BE SENSITIVE IN ITS OWN INTERESTS.

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2. I DOUBT THAT KIKHYA WAS REFERRING TO RCC DECISIONS ALREADY TAKEN WHEN HE SAID LARG WOULD SOON BE FORCED TO ADOPT A NEW POLICY TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. THAT STATEMENT IS ONLY A PREDICTION OF WHAT WOULD HAVE TO BE A DECISION BY OTHERS, NAMELY RCC. QUESTION FOR US IS WHETHER KIKHYA PREDICTED RIGHTLY OR, FOR INSTANCE, WAS MERELY VENTING LARG FRUSTRATIONS OVER FAILURE OF ARABS TO AGREE ON UNITED ACTION AS AT RECENT KUWAIT MEETING. AM SKEPTICAL THAT ANYTHING AS SPECIFIC AS FAILURE OF KUWAIT MEETING WOULD ACCOUNT FOR KIKHYA'S FORECAST. HE IS NOT THAT NEW TO THE GAME OF ARAB POLITICS. ON OTHER HAND, THE PERSISTENT PATTERN OF ARAB DISARRAY WAS ONE OF HIS EXPRESS PREMISES IN ARRIVING AT HIS CONCLUSION THAT LARG WOULD ACT AGAINST U.S. GIVEN ALL OF QADHAFI'S EXHORTATIONS TO NATIONALIZE THE BATTLE AGAINST ISRAEL, AND THEREFORE ITS MAJOR ALLY, PLUS HIS REPEATED HEAD-ON ATTACKS AGAINST OBSTACLES FRUSTRATING THE ARABS, IT SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING IF HE TOOK THE NEXT STEP AND LASHED OUT AT AMERICAN INTERESTS IN A FRANKLY POLITICAL, DISCRIMINATORY MANNER. THE NOTABLE THING NOW IS THAT KIKHYA PREDICTS THIS WILL OCCUR SOON. HE MAY NOT BE IN A POSITION TO INFLUENCE RCC DECISIONS, EXCEPT MARGINALLY, BUT HE IS IN AN EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD POSITION TO PREDICT THEM.

3. FROM LARG VIEWPOINT ITS PREVIOUS ACTIONS AFFECTING U.S. INTERESTS HERE WERE NON-DISCRIMINATORY. MOST QUESTIONABLE INSTANCE OF POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATION WAS LARG DEMAND FOR EVACUATION WHEELUS AIR BASE, BUT EVEN HERE LARG WOULD ARGUE IT INSISTED ON NATIONAL PREROGATIVES THAT APPLIED ALSO TO BRITISH AT EL-ADAM AND WOULD HAVE APPLIED TO ANY OTHER NON-ARAB BASES. IT WOULD THEREFORE BE A DEPARTURE, IN THE LARG'S OWN EYES, IF RCC DECIDED TO APPLY DISCRIMINATORY MEASURES AGAINST U.S. FOR POLITICAL REASONS.

4. IF SUCH A DECISION IS TAKEN, PROBABLY THE MEASURES ADOPTED WOULD BE SELECTIVE AT FIRST. POSSIBLE TARGETS INCLUDE OUR OIL INTERESTS HERE, OUR COMMERCIAL INTERESTS, AND OUR DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE. MEASURES MIGHT INCLUDE

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A SPECIAL TAX ON AMERICAN OIL COMPANIES IN LIBYA, A PARTIAL BOYCOTT OF AMERICAN GOODS AND SERVICES (OVER AND ABOVE WHAT MAY ALREADY EXISTS AS A PREFERENCE FOR NON-AMERICAN ITEMS, OTHER THINGS BEING EQUAL), OR A FURTHER REDUCTION OF THIS EMBASSY'S STAFF (WHICH IS STILL LARGER THAN THE LIBYAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON SO FAR AS NOTIFIED "WHITE LIST" PERSONNEL ARE CONCERNED). IF ADOPTED, SUCH MEASURES WOULD PUSH US/LIBYAN RELATIONS ONTO A SLIPPERY SLOPE. MOREOVER, WE CAN BE SURE LARG WOULD PRESS OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS TO FOLLOW SUIT AND TRY TO START A CAMPAIGN AGAINST U.S. INTERESTS IN ARAB WORLD.

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LAGOS FOR NEWSOM

SUBJECT: TDCS DB-315/10058-72 OF NOV 30

5. UNINVITING AS SUCH PROSPECTS ARE, IT SEEMS TO ME THERE IS RELATIVELY LITTLE WE CAN DO TO HEAD THEM OFF. I DO SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT WE SHOULD TRY TO ELIMINATE SOME UNNECESSARY MISUNDERSTANDINGS IN THE AREA OF ARMS SUPPLY. SOME OF KIKHYA'S REMARKS UNDERLINE ONCE AGAIN THE IMPORTANCE RCC ATTACHES TO MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIPS. THE PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF CONFUSION IS OUR DECISION TO MAKE NO DECISION ON FOLLOWING THROUGH ON THE 1969 LETTER OF OFFER FOR F-5'S. IN MY VIEW THIS POSITION, WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO BE TEMPORARY, IS NO LONGER CREDIBLE. AFTER TWO OR MORE YEARS IT IS TANTAMOUNT TO A REFUSAL TO DELIVER. I PERSONALLY STILL RECOMMEND WE DELIVER 8 F-5B'S AND THUS FULFILL THE CONTRACTS SATISFACTORILY. BUT I CANNOT SAY THIS WOULD DO MORE THAN POSSIBLY KEEP US OFF THE SLIPPERY SLOPE; NO MORE SHOULD BE EXPECTED OF IT. IF HOWEVER WE CANNOT DECIDE TO DELIVER, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD DECIDE NOT TO DELIVER AND TELL THE LARG WHY. THERE ARE ADEQUATE GROUNDS IN THE LETTER OF OFFER'S ESCAPE CLAUSE ABOUT "UNUSUAL AND COMPELLING CIRCUMSTANCES," A CLAUSE PARALLELED BY THE PURCHASER'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW ALSO. I DO NOT THINK THAT SAYING SO WOULD SURPRISE THE LARG OR PRECIPITATE ANYTHING WORSE THAN WE ARE LIKELY TO FACE ANYWAY -- AND IT WOULD BRING OUR DIALOGUE CLOSER TO REALITY.

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