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ACTION NEA-11

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 AID-00 INR-10 EUR-00 SS-00 OIC-02
CIAE-00 EB-00 DODE-00 H-01 IO-19 NSCE-00 NSAE-00
SSO-00 HA-09 L-03 TRSE-00 PM-10 PA-01 OMB-01
INRE-00 ACDA-12 USIE-00 SP-02 SNP-01 C-01 PRS-01
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O 031531Z NOV 88
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3932
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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LONDON FOR MILLIKEN, PARIS FOR WINN

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, PTER, PINS, PHUM, KPAL, ASEC, IS, JO
SUBJECT: WHITHER, HAMAS?

REFS: A) JERUSALEM 3168, B) JERUSALEM 3004

1. [REDACTED]

SUMMARY

2. THE CURRENT LULL IN THE OVERT HAMAS-PLO
COMPETITION ON THE WEST BANK IS BASED ON A
SHARED TACTICAL INTEREST IN ENDING ISRAELI
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OCCUPATION. UNDERNEATH THE CURRENT CONCORD,
HOWEVER, DIVERGENT VISIONS OF POST-OCCUPATION
PALESTINE ENSURE THE CONTINUATION OF A LONG-TERM
RIVALRY. ALTHOUGH WELL ORGANIZED, HAMAS REMAINS
TOO WEAK TO TAKE ON EITHER THE PLO OR ISRAELI
FORCES IN FRONTAL CONFRONTATIONS. NEVERTHELESS,

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IF THE UPCOMING PNC EMBARKS ON A POLITICAL PROCESS, HAMAS-PLO COMPETITION WILL LIKELY INTENSIFY.

TACTICAL RECONCILIATION

3. OCTOBER WAS A MONTH OF RELATIVE PEACE BETWEEN HAMAS AND THE PLO/UNIFIED NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE UPRISING (UNLU), AS PALESTINIANS CLOSED RANKS IN THE FACE OF ISRAELI ATTEMPTS TO DIVIDE AND RULE. REPORTS ARE CIRCULATING OF HIGH-LEVEL FATAH-HAMAS MEETINGS ABROAD TO WORK OUT A MODUS VIVENDI BETWEEN THE GROUPS. (THUS FAR, HAMAS HAS DEALT ONLY WITH FATAH. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HAMAS WOULD COUNTENANCE SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WITH THE PLO'S LEFTIST GROUPS SUCH AS THE PFLP, DFLP, AND COMMUNISTS.) RECENT LEAFLETS BY BOTH HAMAS (E.G. NUMBERS 30 AND 31) AND UNLU (27 AND 28) HAVE PLACED UNITY AT THE TOP OF THE AGENDA AND DENOUNCED FORGED LEAFLETS MEANT TO DIVIDE THE RESISTANCE. THEY HAVE ALSO DEALT WITH SIMILAR TOPICS OF PRACTICAL INTEREST TO PALESTINIANS, SUCH AS EDUCATION, TAXES, AND THE OLIVE HARVEST.

4. EARLIER IN THE INTIFADA, HAMAS CALLED STRIKE DAYS DIFFERENT FROM THOSE ORDERED BY UNLU.

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THESE WERE WIDELY INTERPRETED AS SHOWS OF INDEPENDENCE AND TESTS OF STRENGTH. HOWEVER, RECENT LEAFLETS HAVE CALLED FOR IDENTICAL STRIKE DAYS. UNLU EVEN TOOK THE UNPRECEDENTED STEP OF CHANGING ONE OF ITS STRIKE DAYS TO MATCH THE PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED HAMAS DATE, ALTHOUGH THE CHANGE IS PROBABLY MORE INDICATIVE OF DISARRAY IN THE UNLU (GETTING THE ORIGINAL DATE WRONG) THAN PERCEIVED WEAKNESS VIS-A-VIS HAMAS.

5. HAMAS AND FATAH SHARE A COMMON NATIONALIST GROUND AT THE TACTICAL LEVEL. AS THE HAMAS COVENANT (REF B) STATES, "NATIONALISM IS PART OF THE RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE." THIS SHARED INTEREST MAKES THE FATAH-DOMINATED PLO "THE NEAREST OF THE DEAR TO THE ISLAMIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT," AND PERMITS HAMAS TO COOPERATE WITH FATAH ON A TACTICAL BASIS WITHOUT ABANDONING ITS LONG TERM GOALS. THE COVENANT ASSERTS THAT HAMAS

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"SUPPORTS HIM (THE PLO) WHEN THE ENEMY ATTACKS,
AND HOPES FOR HIM HEAVENLY GUIDANCE AND COUNSEL."

6. IN ADDITION, THE WEST BANK HAMAS LEADERSHIP
REMAINS COMPOSED LARGELY OF CONSERVATIVE,
TRADITIONAL MUSLIM CLERGY. THESE NOTABLES HAVE
TRADITIONALLY OPTED FOR EDUCATION AND
PROSELYTIZING, AND CAME LATE TO THE INTIFADA.
THEY ARE IKELY TO PURSUE TACTICAL COMPROMISE TO
THE EXTENT POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO CONTINUE THEIR
PROGRAMS AMONG MUSLIMS.

FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES REMAIN

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7. DESPITE THE CURRENT LULL, HAMAS AND THE UNLU CONTINUE TO OFFER FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT VISIONS OF POST-OCCUPATION PALESTINE. IN THE HAMAS STRATEGY, ISLAM IS PARAMOUNT. AS THE COVENANT STATES, "WE CANNOT REPLACE THE PRESENT AND FUTURE ISLAMIC PALESTINE WITH SECULAR THINKING." DESPITE OCCASIONAL RUMORS TO THE CONTRARY, USUALLY CIRCULATED BY FATAH SUPPORTERS, IT IS APPARENT THAT THE HAMAS LEADERSHIP WILL NOT COUNTENANCE A TWO-STATE

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SOLUTION TO THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN QUESTION.

8. THIS UNDERLYING TENSION SURFACES WHENEVER THE POLITICAL PROCESS IS REVIVED. UNLU LEAFLETS 25 AND 26 CONTAINED A FAIRLY SOPHISTICATED POLITICAL PROGRAM TIED TO THE PNC MEETING. THE HAMAS RESPONSE, CONTAINED IN LEAFLET 30, WAS TO REAFFIRM ITS UNYIELDING REFUSAL TO "GIVE UP AN ATOM OF OUR BELOVED HOMELAND."

9. THE HAMAS-UNLU SPLIT IS ALSO APPARENT IN THE CONTEXT OF DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL. HAMAS CATEGORICALLY REJECTS THE IDEA OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE LEADING TO A TWO-STATE SOLUTION. THE COVENANT DISMISSES "THE SO-CALLED PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES." CONSEQUENTLY, HAMAS DID NOT JOIN UNLU OR THE PLO IN APPEALS TO THE ISRAELI ELECTORATE TO SUPPORT "PEACE-LOVING" PARTIES. INSTEAD, ITS ELECTION EVE LEAFLET (NO. 31) WAS FILLED WITH BITTER ANTI-JEWISH INVECTIVE.

JOCKEYING FOR POSITION

10. THE CURRENT HAMAS-UNLU PEACE CONCEALS A CONTINUING BATTLE FOR THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF PALESTINIANS. WHILE PRAISING UNITY, THE

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LEAFLETS COMPETE WITH EACH OTHER IN ADDRESSING ISSUES OF CONCERN TO PALESTINIANS SUCH AS EDUCATION AND THE OLIVE HARVEST. IN SOME AREAS, UNLU HAS BECOME MORE AGGRESSIVE IN COMBATTING HAMAS' INFLUENCE. WE HAVE REPORTS OF UNLU SUPPORTERS ENGAGING IN UNPROVOKED ATTACKS

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AGAINST HAMAS SUPPORTERS IN THE NORTHERN TOWNS OF TULKAREM AND JENIN.

11. HAMAS IS CONTINUING TO RELY ON THE MOSQUES TO PREACH, PROSELYTIZE, AND EDUCATE--THE TRADITIONAL MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD STRATEGY. JERUSALEM WAQF OFFICIAL ADNAN HUSSEINI RECENTLY COMPLAINED THAT IMAMS IN MANY MOSQUES WERE PREACHING PRO-HAMAS MESSAGES IN VIOLATION OF WAQF INSTRUCTIONS. THE HAMAS LEADERSHIP IN THE WEST BANK HAS RESISTED INCLUSION IN UNLU COMMITTEES, AND HAMAS GRAFFITI IS WIDESPREAD IN STRONGHOLDS SUCH AS THE NABLUS CASBAH.

12. THE OCTOBER 30 JERUSALEM POST, CITING "WELL-INFORMED ISRAELI SOURCES," REPORTED THAT HAMAS AND THE PFLP-GC HAD AGREED ON POLITICAL (BUT NOT MILITARY OR TERRORIST) COOPERATION TO OPPOSE FATAH IN THE TERRITORIES. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY EVIDENCE OF SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT AND BELIEVE ONE UNLIKELY GIVEN THE DIVERGENT IDEOLOGIES OF HAMAS AND THE PFLP-GC. NEVERTHELESS HAMAS, RELYING ON ITS SOLID ORGANIZATION, BELIEVES THAT IT IS MAKING INROADS AND GAINING STRENGTH AT FATAH'S EXPENSE.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

13. IF THE PLO USES THE OCCASION OF THE PNC TO EMBARK ON A POLITICAL PROCESS, IT WILL CROSS A HAMAS "RED LINE" AND SPUR INTENSIFIED HAMAS-UNLU COMPETITION. AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND/OR

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UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WOULD
MORE CLEARLY REVEAL THE HAMAS-UNLU IDEOLOGICAL
SPLIT AND MAKE FURTHER TACTICAL COOPERATION
DIFFICULT.

14. IT IS UNLIKELY, GIVEN FATAH'S SUPERIOR
STRENGTH IN THE WEST BANK, THAT SUCH A SPLIT
WOULD MANIFEST ITSELF IN MAJOR ISLAMIC VIOLENCE
AGAINST THE FATAH SECULAR NATIONALISTS, ALTHOUGH
THIS POSSIBILITY CANNOT BE RULED OUT ENTIRELY.
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GIVEN THE VULNERABILITY OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD LEADERSHIP TO ISRAELI RETALIATION, IT IS ALSO UNLIKELY THAT HAMAS WOULD ESCALATE THE VIOLENCE AGAINST ISRAELI FORCES IN THE WEST BANK. (ALTHOUGH AN INCREASING NUMBER OF HAMAS "FOOT SOLDIERS" HAVE BEEN DETAINED RECENTLY, THE LEADERSHIP HAS REMAINED ESSENTIALLY UNSCATHED DESPITE BOLD PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS BY CERTAIN KEY FIGURES WHICH WOULD HAVE LANDED SECULARIST LEADERS IN PRISON.) INSTEAD, HAMAS WOULD PROBABLY STEP UP ITS PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS--THROUGH LEAFLETS, GRAFFITI, SERMONS, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED THROUGH THE MOSQUES, AND THE CALLING OF SEPARATE STRIKE DAYS.

15. HAMAS WILL NOT SOON REPLACE FATAH AS THE DOMINANT POLITICAL FORCE IN THE WEST BANK AND IS UNLIKELY TO FORCE AN OVERT TEST OF STRENGTH. BUT, AS NOTED REF A, IF FATAH IS UNABLE TO TRANSLATE THE INTIFADA INTO POLITICAL GAINS, THE INFLUENCE OF HAMAS COULD GROW, ERODING FATAH'S LEADERSHIP AND THE COHESION OF THE UPRISING.

16. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
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