

U.S. Central Command Assessment Team



Levant and Egypt Sub-Regional Report

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Classified by: Maj Gen Robert R. Allardice,
Director, Strategy, Plans and Policy, USCENTCOM

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LEVANT AND EGYPT SUB-REGIONAL REPORT

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LEVANT AND EGYPT SUB-REGIONAL REPORT

1. (U) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(U) The Levant and Egypt sub-region is the traditional political, social, and intellectual heart of the Arab world, and historically has been the primary battleground between rival ideologies. As such, this area has always influenced political developments in other parts of the region. Currently, it is both an importer of instability from other parts of the region and an exporter of instability to them. It is a key arena for Iran's attempts to spread its influence, for example, by manipulating the Arab-Israeli conflict to its advantage and weakening pro-Western governments. The historical record reveals that the United States is vulnerable to strategic surprise in the Levant and Egypt: events there can and will interfere with U.S. goals in the region if left unattended.

(U) Countering Iranian influence is a key U.S. interest in the sub-region. Other interests include reducing the influence of violent extremist organizations, preserving stable regimes in Jordan and Egypt capable of supporting U.S. initiatives, and ensuring continued access to the Suez Canal.

(U) Iran's ability to use proxies and allies such as Hizballah, Hamas, and Syria to further its interests in the sub-region is the primary challenge to U.S. interests in the Levant. Iran's growing influence in the sub-region has empowered violent extremist organizations while at the same time reducing the relative power of our traditional allies. Iran's rise has exacerbated pre-existing problems in the sub-region that threaten our interests – such as political instability in Egypt or Jordan, the stagnant Middle East Peace Process, the fragile nature of the Lebanese state, and the rise of violent radical Islamist sects.

(U) The sub-region includes Israel and its immediate neighbors. The perception of unfair and overwhelming U.S. support to Israel's policies – including Israel's treatment of the Palestinians – weakens popular support for the United States and its policies throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. The lack of a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict has given rise to troubling regional trends and presents governments of the sub-region with unique domestic challenges that have long-term effects on stability.

(U) Though Iran is an external player to the sub-region and must overcome suspicions of the breadth of its ambitions as a non-Arab and Shia power, Iranian influence in the sub-region will become even more difficult to counter if Iran succeeds in acquiring a nuclear weapon. While Hamas and especially Hizballah are dependent upon Iranian-supplied weapons and political support, both have managed to sink deep roots into their societies and are seen by most Lebanese and Palestinians as credible political and military organizations that play a legitimate role in providing social services, representing their political constituencies, and leading the “resistance” to Israel. They will not be undermined or neutralized easily.

(U) Syria presents an even more complicated case. While Damascus' alliance with Iran is in many ways unnatural, and Syrians chafe at Iran's economic domination of their country, the relationship is long-standing and provides the al-Asad regime with important benefits and a partnership to help mitigate the consequences of isolation. President Bashar al-Asad's main objective will remain the survival of his regime, and by maintaining and cultivating relationships with varied critical actors in the sub-region, he will retain the ability to choose those policy courses he believes will best protect his

hold on power. Our lack of a clear understanding of Syrian decision-making styles, motivations, and policy priorities precludes any confident assessment of how al-Asad would respond to an opportunity to distance Syria from Iran and move closer to the West – either for robust economic assistance or a possible return of the Golan Heights. So far, al-Asad has avoided the need to make hard choices, managing to maintain close cooperation with Tehran while alleviating the effects of Syria's post-Hariri assassination isolation by entering indirect peace talks with Israel and exploiting differences between the United States and its European partners. Any efforts to move Syria away from Iran require preventing the Syrians from playing the United States and its allies against each other.

(U) Unfortunately, the United States and its key allies – namely Egypt – enjoy less influence in the Levant and Egypt sub-region than we once did. Egypt is on the wane as a regional power-broker and at some point will face a potentially difficult transition to a post-Mubarak era. Growing economic hardship and the rise of politically influential Islamist groups in the country threaten the Egyptian government's ability to co-opt and manipulate its Islamist opposition. Additionally, the U.S. decision to condition some assistance on Cairo's movement towards a more democratic system and greater respect for human rights has damaged the bilateral relationship and failed to improve the government of Egypt's attitudes towards democratization.

(U) The key challenge facing the United States, though, is how to best reduce Iranian influence in the sub-region. This report recommends a strategy to limit Iran's ability to use the Levant as a battleground for increasing its influence to prevent the spread of instability to other parts of the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) Area of Operations (AOR). Our approach focuses on diluting Iran's importance to Syria over time in order to reduce Hizballah's influence within Lebanon and help to weaken Syria's support to other malignant allies in the sub-region. Focusing on quid pro quo engagement with Syria is a critical step toward bringing Syria into a constructive relationship and diversifying Syria's strategic alliances, particularly with Iran. Other priorities include continued support for the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) – to include an Israeli-Syrian dialogue – rebuilding our relationship with Egypt, continued support for Jordan's stability, and supporting the development of effective security forces in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

(U) Many of the Levant's problems – the stagnant MEPP (now given renewed attention through the appointment of Senator George Mitchell as special envoy), a dysfunctional political and security landscape in Lebanon, fears of political unrest in Egypt, and Jordan's socioeconomic vulnerabilities – have defied solutions for decades. Chances for success in two U.S. strategic goals – distancing Syria from Iran and reducing Iran's reach into the sub-region – are perhaps less than fifty percent. Nevertheless, the United States must be prepared to exploit opportunities when they arise.

(U) All efforts in the sub-region must be supported by two pillars of particular importance: coordinated information operations and the resources – primarily human – required to succeed in each subordinate task. With respect to the former, each initiative in the region must be backed by a strategic communications plan. With respect to the latter, we are particularly concerned that we continue to lack a sizable cadre of personnel who have an understanding of the Levant sub-region's languages and cultural nuances and are capable of working within the sub-region.

(U) U.S. goals in the Levant and Egypt sub-region are mostly political – and USCENTCOM's role in them will be largely supportive. USCENTCOM is best placed to assist other proposed efforts in the

sub-region by concentrating on cultivating relationships with sub-regional militaries – many of whom play an influential domestic political role – so that they support (or at least do not obstruct) our efforts to achieve political objectives. The obvious exceptions to this rule are our continued support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, where USCENTCOM will play a primary role, and our substantial annual assistance to the Egyptian Armed Forces.

2. (U) PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

(U) PURPOSE: This report was completed over a 100 day period from November 2008 to February 2009. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the situation in the Levant and Egypt, a review of existing strategies and plans across relevant departments and organizations, and suggested actions for U.S. Central Command in the context of an illustrative plan for the integration of all instruments of national power and efforts of coalition partners in time, space, and purpose to achieve policy goals.

(U) SCOPE: This report is set within the context of a wider USCENTCOM assessment while also taking into account some events and developments in Israel and the Palestinian Territories – which themselves do not fall into USCENTCOM's area of responsibility. The Levant/Egypt sub-region is defined as Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and also includes Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories for the purposes of this report. Each country has been assessed with attention paid to its own historical, political, and cultural peculiarities, as well as the relevant linkages and key cross-cutting issues between them. This analysis stresses that any serious policy debate and successful execution of practical objectives cannot be done in a vacuum with a single focus on one particular country or issue. Moreover, the issues faced today within the Levant are not new. Their present-day manifestations have a long and complicated history which cannot be ignored in the conduct of contemporary policy development, making management rather than resolution of the challenges the preferred path for moving toward enduring stability in the Levant.

(U) METHODOLOGY: The planning process took place over five phases. Phase I was an initial assessment by a small team of U.S. government and key allies personnel with years of experience in their respective national security institutions and on the ground in the Levant. Phase II consisted of in-country visits to Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan. Phase III developed an initial situation assessment and draft report. Phase IV culminated in the completion of that draft report. Phase V included the refinement of the draft and the integration of the sub-regional report into the regional report. During Phase V, the team consulted with a variety of former policy-makers and scholars regarding specific parts of the report.

(U) This report was developed in the format of a draft illustrative plan in order to impose sufficient rigor in analysis and recommendations. By providing a comprehensive, civilian-military context for U.S. Central Command, this report is intended to mitigate the risk of over-militarization of efforts and the development of short term solutions to long term problems. This report puts forth U.S. goals, objectives, and tasks to achieve improved and enduring stability in the sub-region for timelines of 18 months and 5 years. Primary and supporting elements of power for each goal and objective have been identified and detailed within the report.

(U) This sub-regional report has a strategic focus, intended to guide operational planners at all levels. The group decided early on in the process to tackle the contemporary challenges raised by current U.S. and allied policies in the Levant and to challenge conventional planning precepts.

Disclaimer: This document does not represent the official position of U.S. Central Command, the Department of Defense or any other agency of the United States Government.

(U) Key Definitions for Analytical Clarity:

(U) **Stability:** Stability is a state of being in which events in the sub-region are not marked by an abundance of sudden and unexpected changes. Not all aspects of stability should be expected to be favorable to the United States, the key allies or their interests. Democracy and democratic institutions, for example, are not necessarily conditions for stability. With respect to individual state or non-state actors, conditions for stability include: (1) not importing or exporting terror elements; (2) not supporting trans-regional shipment of WMD – even if a state owns them itself; (3) being at relative peace with neighbors; and (4) not directly sponsoring inflammatory anti-U.S./Israel rhetoric.

(U) **MEPP (Middle East Peace Process):** In the strategic sense, the MEPP is defined as efforts to broker a comprehensive peace between Israel and all of its neighbors. Within this report, MEPP is used to denote the interactions between Israel and the Palestinian Authority unless otherwise specified.

(U) **Proxy:** Defined as an actor or nation state acting above its own interests at the behest of another; or as an agent for the interests of an external authority.

(U) **Legitimacy:** The ability of a political system or actor to convince its constituents that existing institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society and therefore they have the right to rule and make decisions of importance.

3. (U) SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION ASSESSMENT

(U) The Levant and Egypt is the traditional political, social, and intellectual heart of the Arab world, and historically has been the primary battleground between rival ideologies. As such it has always influenced political developments in other parts of the region. The sub-region has historically been both an importer and exporter of instability and is home to the Arab-Israeli conflict. As such, the area has an uncertain present and far more uncertain future – as witnessed most recently by the Gaza flare-up in January 2009. The probability for continued instability in the sub-region is real and will continue to pose significant challenges for U.S. and allied interests in the region and beyond.

(U) Iran's growing influence in the sub-region has empowered violent extremist organizations while reducing the relative power of our traditional allies. Iran's rise has exacerbated pre-existing problems that threaten our interests – such as political instability in Egypt and Jordan, the stagnant Middle East Peace Process, the fragile nature of the Lebanese state, and the rise of violent radical Islamist sects. The Iran/Hizballah/Hamas axis, for example, gives Tehran a mechanism by which it can spread its influence throughout the Arab world. Flare-ups in violence will halt any progress toward Israeli/Palestinian peace – to the detriment of U.S. influence in the region. The growth in violent religious extremism in pro-Western countries such as Egypt and Jordan and the uncertain course of

regime transition in Egypt threaten to limit the ability of both governments to serve as stabilizing influences.

(U) The United States has key interests in the sub-region. Countering malign Iranian influence is one such interest. Other interests include reducing the influence of violent extremist organizations, preserving allied regimes in Jordan and Egypt capable of supporting U.S. initiatives, and ensuring continued access to the Suez Canal.

(U) Many of the sub-region's problems appear intractable. Progress will be hard-fought and will take time. Expectations must be managed. But even if progress towards resolving these problems is limited, an activist approach might serve to negate the ability of negative political actors and violent extremist organizations to act as spoilers.

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(U) The situation in the sub-region is fluid. Near-term developments – the results of which are difficult to foresee – will affect the future trajectory of U.S. policies in the region as well as those of our key allies. Examples of such developments include the Egyptian succession, the Mubarak regime's handling of Gaza and challenges to that regime's legitimacy, upcoming Lebanese and Israeli elections, the global economic downturn, developments in Iraq, the spread of al-Qaeda, and a new U.S. administration.

(U) The sub-region is characterized by inter- and intra-state conflict. Outside actors wage proxy wars amid the growing Sunni-Shia schism, and radical Islamist voices are on the rise. Governments throughout the sub-region – seeking to preserve their power – continue to be resistant to calls for democratic reform.

(U) Key U.S. policies – such as our support for Israel and our intervention in Iraq – are extremely unpopular. Trust in U.S. beneficence is low, even with a new administration. Regardless of whether or not popular perceptions of U.S. policies reflect reality, these perceptions shape our ability to influence actors and events in the Levant – and complicate the relationship between the United States and its key allied partners within the region.

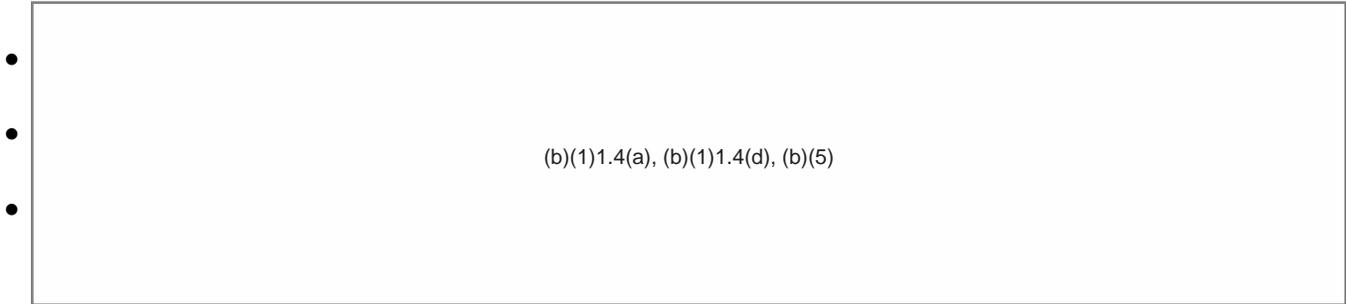
(U) The influence of the United States over regional events and actors – including our close allies – is considerably less than we often lead ourselves to believe. Designated terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hizballah are also political actors that enjoy popular indigenous support in the sub-region. Their electoral victories lend them legitimacy, while their militant activities undermine the Palestinian Authority and the Lebanese government and threaten Israel.

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4. (~~S//REL TO USA, FVEY~~) PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

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5. (U) STRATEGIC GOALS

(U) The five-year goal in the Levant/Egypt sub-region is to secure U.S. interests through improving the stability of allied regimes while undermining the influence of violent sub-national actors. In the short term (18 months), our goal is to reduce Negative Political Influences (NPI) and Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO).

(U) List of Subordinate Goals (18 months)

- The United States understands the nature, motivations, and decision-making process of the al-Asad regime.
- Syria begins to take steps to demonstrate that it is a constructive player in the region.
 - Syria improves its coordination with Iraq on border security issues and with regional states on countering flow of foreign fighters into Iraq through Syria.
 - Syria tempers its anti-Western rhetoric and reduces public statements in support of Hizballah and other groups' resistance to "occupation."
 - A Syrian ambassador takes up residence in Beirut.
 - The regime cooperates with IAEA investigations of suspect nuclear sites in Syria.
 - The regime engages in a fair *quid pro quo* exchange of conditions with Israel once indirect peace negotiations resume.
- The Lebanese security forces – including both the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces – are able to counter non-Lebanese extremists and are recognized as reliable symbols of national security.
- The government of Egypt and its influence in the region remain stable.
- Jordan remains a moderate regional ally of the United States and a positive stable influence in the region, continuing to support the training of Iraqi security forces and also working to support the embattled Palestinian leadership.
- The groundwork for comprehensive negotiations and lasting peace are laid.
- Israel is deterred from attacking Iran.
- Effects of either a nuclear Iran or an Israeli strike on Iran mitigated
- A successful information operations campaign both legitimizes U.S. policies in the sub-region and undermines the legitimacy of violent extremists.
- Civil society elements in the sub-region accept U.S. and allied assistance and guidance.

(U) List of Subordinate Goals (5 years)

- Syria's relationships with Iran and Hizballah are undermined.
- Syria has a constructive relationship with the West.

- Lebanon is a viable state with reduced Hizballah influence.¹
- U.S and key allied relationships with Egypt are stabilized.
- Jordan remains stable, supportive and a full partner in U.S. and allied efforts in the region.
- Concrete progress on final status issues achieved within the MEPP.
- Sub-regional governments – and, increasingly, the general population – support U.S. and allied foreign policy goals in the region and work with us to execute those goals.

6. (U) OVERALL CONCEPT OF INTEGRATION

(U) Based upon the strategic context of the sub-region, the United States should refocus its efforts with the overarching goal of creating enduring stability in the Levant and Egypt through actions and policies that: 1) improve the perceptions of U.S. foreign policy goals in the sub-region; 2) remove/mitigate malign Iranian influences and moderate Syrian behavior; 3) influence sub-regional actors to fully support MEPP; 4) foster the creation of a viable and sovereign Lebanese state; 5) strike a long-term balance between U.S. interests in advancing democracy and promoting stability; 6) and support an agreed and just resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflicts.

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¹ The word “viable,” as used here, describes a country in which all national decisions on foreign and domestic policies are taken by the elected leadership in Beirut and in which the state maintains a monopoly on violence.

- (U) **Lebanon:**

- Within 18 months: The development of a strategic defense review for Lebanon is seen as absolutely vital to Lebanon's ownership of its security and our continued and tangible support for Lebanon's security institutions. Such a defense review will allow the U.S. government to both better train and equip the Lebanese security forces – building them up as truly national institutions – and also to better organize and plan support to the Lebanese. USCENTCOM should work with the Lebanese government to craft such a review. Although credible Lebanese security institutions may never defeat Hizballah in open fighting, they will certainly undermine Hizballah's justifications for the continued existence of its military arm.
- Within 5 years: The U.S. government aims for Lebanon to be a more viable state with reduced Hizballah influence on the country's political and security dynamics. All critical decisions with respect to the nation's domestic and foreign policies are made in Beirut. Shia dissatisfied with Hizballah's continued militancy or political direction will seek other options for political representation.

- (U) **Egypt:**

- Within 18 months: The first aim of U.S. government policy should be to maintain stability during the post-Mubarak transition period and to preserve Egypt's influence in the region. Conditions on aid to Egypt should be eliminated. The United States should establish a joint border regime between the Sinai and Gaza to curb the flow of illegal weapons and contraband while allowing legitimate trade to take place.
- Within 5 years: U.S. and allied relationships with Egypt are improved and Egypt weathers a peaceful transition of power that preserves Egypt's internal stability and influence in the region.

- (U) **Jordan:**

- Within 18 months: We must continue our steady support to Jordan's development as a moderate regional power-broker and stabilizing influence in the region. While continuing to work closely with Jordan, we need to be cautious in overburdening our relationship with a multitude of demands and initiatives.
- Within 5 years: Jordan remains a stable and supportive partner which helps advance the interests of the United States and key allies in the region.

- (U) **MEPP:**

- Within 18 months: It is necessary to coordinate U.S. efforts ongoing in the Palestinian Territories to alleviate the intra-government competition. The United States should continue our support to the MEPP and the realization of a just, negotiated, and

comprehensive peace. The United States should support the MEPP both through high-level diplomacy and through on-the-ground initiatives. In parallel, the United States should seek to undermine Hamas and Hizballah as malign Iranian proxies.

- Within 5 years: The parties to the MEPP determine that concrete progress toward a final status agreement has been achieved. The justifications for the armaments of Hamas and Hizballah are weakened by the possibility of peace between Israel and its neighbors, including the Palestinians.
- **(U) Strategic communications**: Effective information operations underpin everything we will do in the sub-region. The United States should aim, first and foremost, to improve perceptions of U.S. foreign policy aims and to gain a better appreciation of the sub-region through a closer study and appreciation of the region’s languages and cultural nuances. We also seek to undermine the narratives put forth by malign actors through counter-messaging.
 - Within 18 months: First, the U.S. government must train new personnel in the languages and cultures of the region. All agencies and departments in the U.S. government need effective spokespersons capable of carrying our message to the populations in their indigenous languages. This allows the United States to both better explain our own policies and also to undermine the narratives offered up by violent extremist elements such as Hamas. Support for American education programs in the region should be expanded. Proven indigenous media should be utilized at the expense of U.S.-funded Arabic-language media that has proven ineffective.
 - Within 5 years: The United States and key allies are capable of delivering messages that clearly and effectively define policy objectives and ramifications for the governments and general population. Trained, experienced, and trusted personnel – fluent in regional languages – amplify these messages and programs in their on-the-ground interactions.

7. (U) LINES OF EFFORT

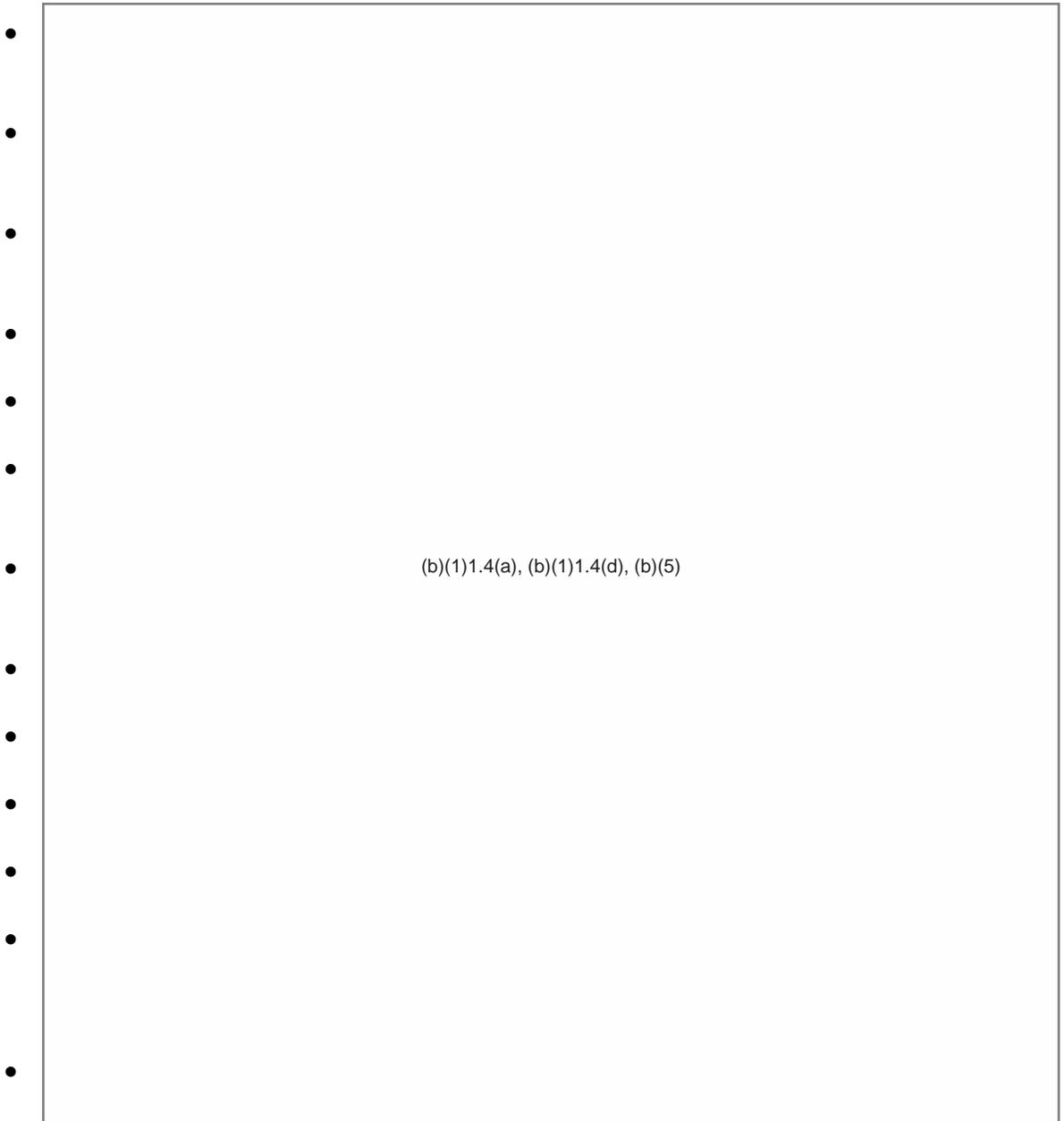
(U) Completion of the below tasks is required in order to achieve our subordinate 18-month goals:

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Tasks:

**Note that the below tasks are categorized among the four main lines of effort: Diplomatic (D); Information (I); Military (M); and Economic (E).*

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ **18 Months**



(U) Metrics for Success:

- Notably different or nuanced official government press releases towards the United States
- The Syrian regime responds favorably to talks – facilitated by the United States – between Damascus and Baghdad
- Syria re-opens American centers – such the American school and the American cultural center – closed in the aftermath of the November 2008 attacks
- Syria treats U.S. diplomats in the country with respect
- The Syrian regime demonstrably restrains the movement of Palestinian rejectionist leaders seeking refuge in Syria

- Syria constrains the kind of munitions it is willing to transfer to Hizballah in Lebanon

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Five Years

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(U) Metrics for Success:

- Talks between Syria and Israel progress
- Weapons flow to Hizballah slows
- Syria sends a “message” to Hizballah that the rules on the ground have changed
- Flow of foreign fighters into Iraq slows to a trickle
- Relations normalized with Syrian regime

(U) LEBANON. Our goals in Lebanon are to strengthen the institutions of the state and counter VEOs like Hizballah. Strong Lebanese security institutions reduce Hizballah’s ability to claim its arms are necessary for the defense of the state.

(U) 18 Months

(U) Tasks:

- Task #1 (M) – In conjunction with Lebanon’s defense establishment, conduct a 5-Year Strategic Defense Review and develop a military security and military assistance (Department of Defense)
- Task #2 (M) – Select proper trained personnel – both culturally and professionally – for the current LAF train and equip effort (USCENTCOM)
- Task #3 (D) – Identify upcoming/potential leaders within the Shia community of Lebanon who might someday provide a credible alternative to Hizballah (Intelligence Community)
- Task #4 (D/I) – Identify personnel able to pursue exploitation of theological divisions between Shia political groups and leaders (Intelligence Community)
- Task #5 (E) – Launch an economic assistance program to the government of Lebanon that will challenge the stranglehold Hizballah enjoys on many social services provided to its constituents (USAID)
- Task #6 (E) – Examine PRT-like options for southern Lebanon (Department of State/SCRS, USAID)

- Task #7 (PD) – Implement a public outreach program in Lebanon to demonstrate the good will of the American people. Reach out to American Shia communities to compliment efforts in Lebanon. (Department of State)
- Task #8 (M) – Encourage demarcation of the Lebanon-Syrian Border and encourage existing or proposed programs to monitor the frontier (Department of State)
- Task #10 (D) – Encourage NATO to support Lebanese participation in the Mediterranean Dialogue (Department of State)
- Task #11 (M) – Consider expanding 1206 authority to include Lebanon and better facilitate the arming and equipping of the Lebanese security forces (USCENTCOM, Department of Defense)

(U) Metrics for Success:

- Lebanon develops a credible strategic defense review, and further U.S. training and equipment is tied to that review
- Lebanese security forces are expanded to play a more overt role in the border regions and in support of the interests of a central government authority
- More Lebanese begin to see the Lebanese security forces as being the sole actor responsible for the nation's security

(U) Five Years

(U) Tasks:

- Task #1 (M) – Establish a naval/land joint border regime with Syria (Department of State)
- Task #2 (D) – U.S. embassy personnel capable of traveling as necessary through the country to visit with Lebanese and oversee USAID projects (Department of State)
- Task #3 (M) – Remove Hizballah's justifications for its military arm through the creation of effective and credible Lebanese security forces (Department of Defense)
- Task #4 (D) – Encourage normalized economic and political relations between Israel, Syria and Lebanon (Department of State)
- Task #5 (I) – Request an increase in funding for American research centers and student exchange programs in Lebanon (Department of State)
- Task #6 (D) – Continue to identify and cultivate serious and credible Shia alternatives to Hizballah (Intelligence Community, Department of State)

(U) Metrics for Success:

- The Lebanese Armed Forces meet United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 obligations and are fully deployed throughout Lebanon's territory and acting in the interests of the central government
- Lebanese Security Forces well-equipped and better trained under a training and equipment program tailored to meet the needs of Lebanon's strategic defense review
- Internal Security Forces are viewed by the population along the same lines as the Lebanese Armed Forces

(U) **EGYPT**. Our tasks in Egypt are designed to strengthen our ties with the current regime and the elites who we assess as likely to rule in the event of a transfer of power brought on by the death of Hosni Mubarak.

(U) **18 Months**

(U) **Tasks:**

- Task #1 (D) – Invite Mubarak, without preconditions, to be the first Arab leader to Washington for a State visit with the Obama administration (Department of State)
- Task #2 (E) – Request an elimination of conditions placed on aid to Egypt (Department of Defense)
- Task #3 (D) – Strengthen dialogue with Egyptian civil society groups to develop reform agendas that will contribute to stability in a post-Mubarak era (Department of State)
- Task #4 (D) – Encourage Egypt to bring Iraq into the regional fold through normalized relations and military exchange programs (Department of State)
- Task #5 (D) – Prepare contingency plans for the post-Mubarak transition (Department of State, Department of Defense, Intelligence Community)
- Task #6 (M) – Develop a memorandum of understanding formalizing U.S.-Egyptian military cooperation to be signed in Washington during Mubarak's visit (Department of Defense)
- Task #7 (M) – Encourage the Egyptian military to facilitate a stable transition during post-Mubarak period by promising a continuation of military assistance provided the transition goes smoothly (Department of Defense)
- Task #8 (D/M) – Work to establish a joint-border regime for Gaza to combat smuggling of weapons and contraband while allowing for legal trade to take place (Department of Defense)
- Task #9 (M) – Plan and execute an invigorated *Bright Star* exercise with Egyptian armed forces (USCENTCOM)

(U) **Metrics for Success:**

- Exchange program between United States and Egyptian militaries continues
- Rafah border crossing open under the supervision of a reinvigorated joint E.U./U.S.-Egyptian monitoring team, allowing for legal trade between Gaza and Egypt
- Memorandum of understanding signed between U.S. and Egyptian militaries
- Normalization of relations between Baghdad and Cairo continues

(U) **Five Years**

(U) **Tasks:**

- Task #1 (D) – Maintain strong diplomatic relations, including military and intelligence partnerships as well as USAID programs (Department of State, Department of Defense, USAID)

- Task #2 (E) – Reach agreement with the government of Egypt to transform U.S. aid to a partnership agreement and joint commission framework (USAID)
- Task #3 (I) – Request increased funding for American research centers and student exchange programs (Department of State)

(U) Metrics for Success:

- Closer relations between Egyptian military and militaries of the United States and key allies
- Egypt agrees to play a more stabilizing role in and around Gaza
- Egypt agrees to provide political cover for the Palestinian leadership on key concessions

(U) JORDAN. Our goal with respect to Jordan is to ensure it remains a valuable supporter of U.S. interests in the region. The following tasks are balanced between those tasks designed to strengthen the regime and those tasks in support of U.S. policy interests where Jordan can be of particular help. The United States must be careful not to overburden a loyal ally. None of the tasks below ask anything more from the Jordanian regime than it has already pledged to provide.

(U) 18 Months

(U) Tasks:

- Task #1 (D) – Work with the Jordanian and Iraqi governments and international organizations to facilitate the return of Iraqi “guests” in Jordan (Department of State)
- Task #2 (D) – Keep Jordan as a full partner in our regional efforts – specifically initiatives in Iraq and the Palestinian Territories (Department of State)
- Task #3 (E) – Support Jordan’s expanded access to potable water sources – through negotiations with Syria, the “Red to Dead” canal, and desalinization efforts (Department of State)
- Task #4 (M) – Continue support for Jordanian special operations forces and special operations training facility (USCENTCOM)
- Task #5 (M) – Support deployment of Jordanian forces to Afghanistan (USCENTCOM)

(U) Metrics for Success:

- Jordan continues to play a positive role in supporting interests of the United States and key allies
- The Jordanian regime feels more secure thanks to a return of Iraqi guests, a U.S. security umbrella, and greater economic development

(U) Five Years

(U) Tasks:

- Task #1 (E) – Support Jordan’s economic growth through support for its infrastructure – including fresh water programs (USAID, Department of State)
- Task #2 (M) – Continue to offer training and assistance to the Jordanian military (Department of Defense)
- Task #3 (D) – Continue to encourage Jordan to offer political cover for the Palestinian leadership on key concessions (Department of State)

(U) Metrics for success:

- Jordanian military remains capable of defending the kingdom from both internal and external threats
- Jordanian monarchy remains stable with no serious domestic instability
- Jordan agrees to provide political cover for the Palestinian leadership on key concessions

(U) MEPP. The most important tasks associated with the MEPP support existing initiatives on the ground in the Occupied Territories. Others are designed to support a renewed diplomatic push.

(U) 18 Months

(U) Tasks:

- Task #1 (D) – The Obama Administration adopts the Clinton parameters as the basis for Israeli –Palestinian peace efforts (Department of State)
- Task #2 (D) – The United States and key allies condition Arab nations to support a fair compromise on the most controversial Clinton parameters – particularly the status of Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees (Department of State)
- Task #3 (M) – USCENTCOM coordinates more closely with USEUCOM on MEPP issues. USCENTCOM should be prepared to lend resources to USEUCOM for on-the-ground initiatives in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to liaise with the militaries of neighboring states on behalf of efforts related to the MEPP (USCENTCOM, USEUCOM)
- Task #4 (D/M) – USCENTCOM and USEUCOM initiate discussions on the following three things: whether to include Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories into USCENTCOM area of responsibility (see Annex C); third party mechanism proposals; and the division of Israel and Palestine between the two combatant commands (Department of State, USCENTCOM, USEUCOM)

(U) Metrics for Success:

- USCENTCOM and USEUCOM resolve whether or not Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories are to become part of USCENTCOM or remain in USEUCOM’s area of responsibility.
- The regimes of neighboring Arab states lend support to the Palestinian leadership over final status issues

- Calm between Israel and Hamas and the improvement of everyday life in the West Bank allow for renewed negotiations

(U) Five Years

(U) Tasks:

- Task #1 (D) – Support the MEPP through establishment of a coordinated and unified high-level diplomatic support mechanism to inclusive of a steady budget, financial aid and on-the-ground initiatives (Department of State, Department of Defense, USEUCOM, USCENTCOM)
- Task #2 (E) - Encourage donor countries and the international community to support long-term development programs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Department of State)

(U) Metrics for Success:

- Israeli settlement-building halted and then reversed in accordance with the Clinton Parameters
- Threat of rockets from either Palestinian territory negligible
- Palestinian Authority security forces capable of ensuring law and order in the West Bank and preventing rocket attacks on Israel
- Dismantlement of security checkpoints in West Bank
- Arab neighbors provide cover for the Palestinian leadership on key concessions

(U) STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION. An effective information operations campaign is necessary to both explain our policy initiatives in the sub-region and also to undermine those of our adversaries.

(U) 18 Months

(U) Tasks:

- Task #1 (I) – Identify and train personnel capable of delivering U.S. messages via indigenous media outlets and on-the-ground interactions (USCENTCOM, Department of Defense, Department of State)
- Task #2 (I) – Support proven and credible media in the sub-region (such as the BBC’s Arabic-language service) in lieu of our own media (Department of State)
- Task #3 (I) – Counter Iranian influence in the sub-region by delivering consistent themes of “Persian colonialism” (USCENTCOM, Department of State)

(U) Metrics for Success:

- Significant increases in the number of U.S. government personnel who are fluent in native languages of the sub-region
- Anti-Iranian messages increase in the sub-regional public sphere – especially in the Arabic-language media

(U) Five Years

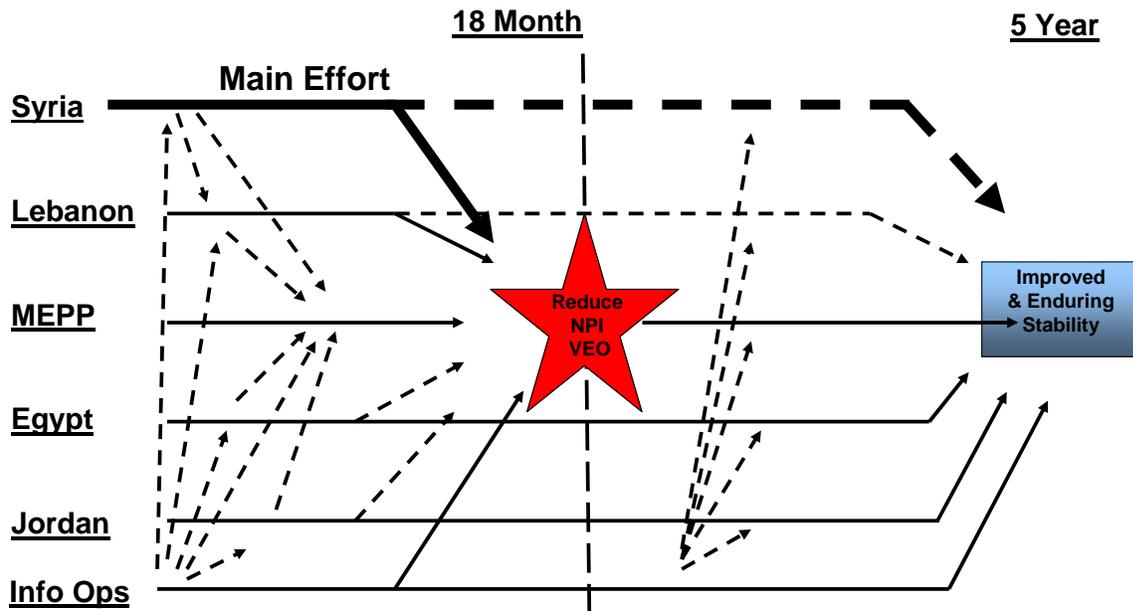
(U) Tasks:

- Task #1 (I) – Develop a corps of U.S. government employees and service members capable of delivering U.S. and allied messages on pan-Arab satellite stations and in the public discourse (Department of State, Department of Defense, USCENTCOM, Department of Treasury, Department of Justice)
- Task #2 (I) – Support cultural and educational exchange programs (Department of State)
- Task #3 (I) – Request an increase in funding for proven academic centers in the sub-region such as the American University of Beirut, the Lebanese American University, and the American University of Cairo – with special attention paid to language programs, student exchanges, and political science and governance programs (Department of State, Department of Defense)
- Task #4 (I) – Request an expansion of Title VI and Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) funding to increase the number of civil servants versed in indigenous languages (Department of State, Department of Defense)
- Task #5 (I) – Develop “contact centers” to reduce the isolation of U.S. diplomats and embassies in the sub-region (Department of State)

(U) Metrics for Success:

- U.S. government approves increased funding for more English language programs abroad
- U.S. government approves increased funding for American academic centers in the region
- U.S. government approves increased funding for contact centers in the region
- U.S. government approves increased funding for expanded cultural and exchange programs
- Polling in the region indicates the United States and its goals perceived more favorably than in 2008

8. (U) GRAPHIC: PLAN OVERVIEW



9. (U) RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

(U) Current U.S. and allied resources in the Levant and Egypt are generally sufficient to accomplish the aforementioned 18-month subordinate goals, but a number of Congressional constraints will hamper achievement of those goals. Congressional confirmation of a new U.S. Ambassador to Syria will be required. Consultation with Congress over the initiation of serious discussions with the Syrian government – geared toward encouraging Syria to become a constructive player in the region – will also be intense. In addition, maintaining current or increased levels of assistance to Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt will require Congressional approval. Consultation with Congress is also required to waive the conditionality that was placed on the FY08/09 assistance to Egypt. If there is one area in which the United States continues to suffer from a lack of resources, however, it is in human resources and the field of strategic communications. Seven years following the September 11th attacks, the United States continues to suffer from a lack of native-level speakers of regional languages capable of and comfortable with carrying the U.S. narrative onto indigenous media. The lack of personnel experienced in the region also hinders our ability to “operationalize” much of our strategy.

(U) Over the longer term (5 years), the United States will need to continue and – in some cases – expand its economic and military assistance packages for Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Israel, and potentially Syria. Assistance to Syria – negotiated on a quid pro quo basis – would provide a leverage point for encouraging Syria to advance U.S. interests and those of our key allies. This assistance to Syria will also be targeted toward supporting Syrian negotiations with Israel to achieve a lasting peace agreement between the two countries. Work with Syria and the Government of Lebanon to delineate their borders will require resources and support from the international donor community. Strengthening Lebanese security and armed forces will improve stability and support institutional development of government ministries. Such assistance will require additional resources in terms of

facilities, personnel and funding. We expect additional resources – mainly in the form of military assistance to build ties with the Egyptian military’s officer corps – will be needed to ensure Egypt’s leadership transition process will be manageable.

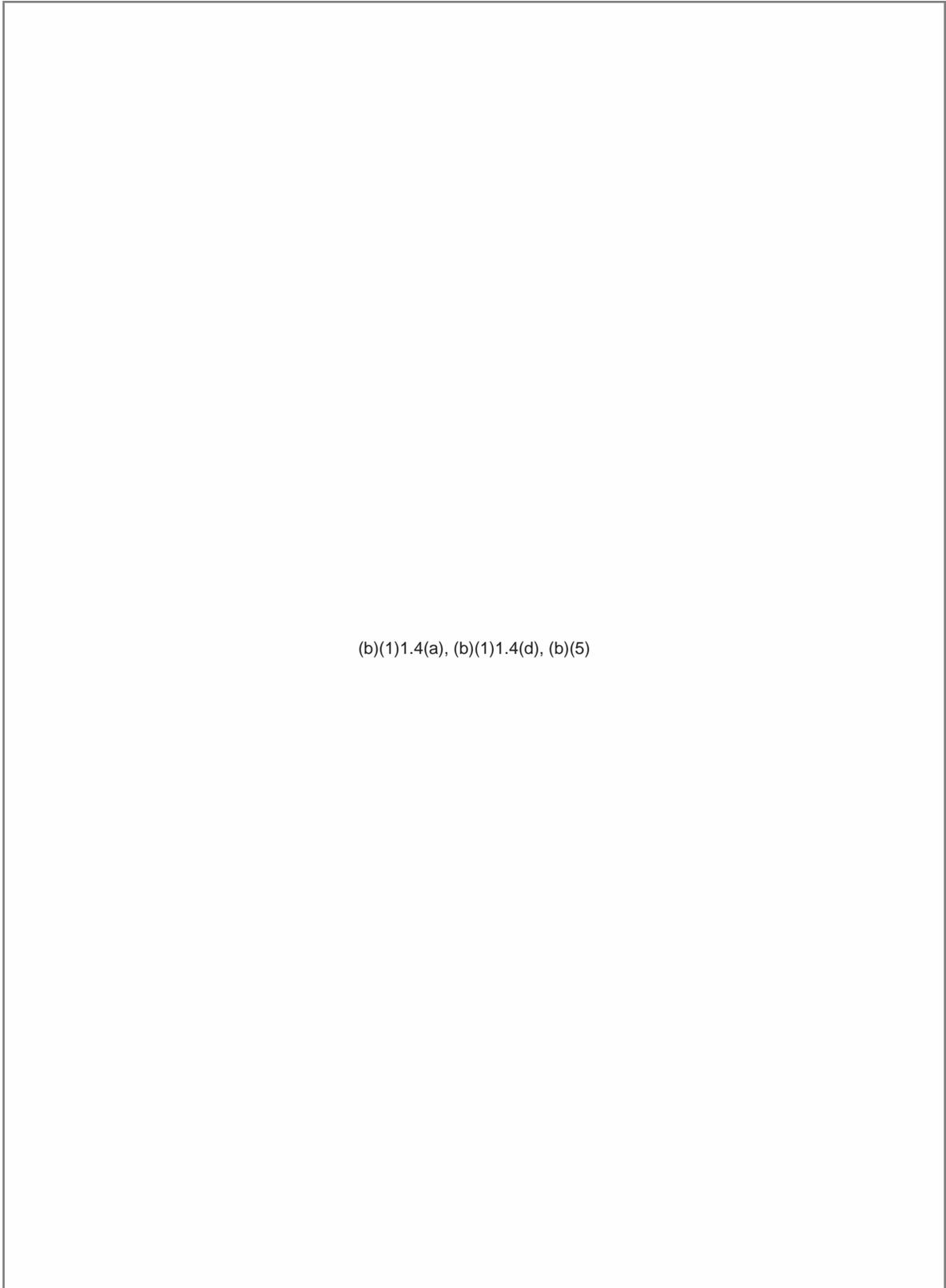
(U) At present, there are legal prohibitions on U.S. developmental assistance to Syria. Also, the United States as well as our key allies must seriously consider proposals for a long-term investment in building up Palestinian infrastructure.

(U) Close coordination among all U.S. governmental agencies and key allies that are engaged in diplomacy, defense, and development will be critical to ensure effective implementation of our objectives in the Levant sub-region. Furthermore, the successful implementation of the goals and sub-goals will require a core of professionals who are experts on the subject matter and familiar with the sub-region’s cultural nuances – and who have the linguistic ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Such resources are especially necessary for executing an effective strategic communication campaign and are covered in the Strategic Communications annex.

10. (~~S//REL TO USA, FVEY~~) RISK AND MITIGATION

Risk	Mitigation / Management
(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)	

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)



(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

11. (U) CONCLUSIONS (THIS SECTION NOT USED).

12. (U) RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to support the train and equip mission for Lebanon's security forces in conjunction with a strategic defense review
- Reestablish diplomatic relations with the Syrian regime; prepare to negotiate with Syria on issues ranging from Iraq's security to Lebanese sovereignty
- Repair relations with the Mubarak regime in Cairo and prepare for succession by strengthening ties with the Egyptian military
- Continue to support ongoing training and assistance programs in the Palestinian Territories

13. (U) ORGANIZATIONAL ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS

(U) Many of the issues confronting the Levant are politically sensitive – with a divergence of views between the United States and our closest allies. A number of regional actors have a relatively sophisticated understanding of U.S. decision making and are adept at exploiting differences in views between parts of the U.S. government. Achieving any of the goals listed above will require close coordination of diplomatic, military, and economic instruments of national power.

(U) Further, our chances of success will be maximized if we act in concert with our closest allies and prevent adversaries from driving wedges between us.

(U) In order to enable this close coordination, we should consider forming informal groups that could work on specific issues. We recommend the formation of such a group to harmonize U.S. policy on Syria with that of our allies. Such groups should include major players on a specific issue but be small enough to be effective.

(U) In general, the Department of State should have the lead on political tasks, the Department of Defense should have the lead on military tasks, and USAID should be responsible for economic tasks. That having been said, USCENTCOM could play an important role in building support among regional militaries and political elites for our political goals. Militaries in the Levant play an important political role in their nations, are universally respected as national institutions, and are often seen as the real bulwarks of the regime. USCENTCOM should thus encourage them to support our goal of sustainable stability in the region.

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15. (U) ANNEXES

ANNEX A: SITUATION ASSESSMENT

ANNEX B: ISRAEL AND IRAN'S NUCLEAR EQUATION – CALCULUS AND INFLUENCES

ANNEX C: ABSORBING ISRAEL INTO THE USCENTCOM AOR

ANNEX D: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LEVANT AND EGYPT OF A NUCLEAR ARMED IRAN

ANNEX E: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

**(U) ANNEX A: SITUATION ASSESSMENT FOR SUB-REGION TO LEVANT AND EGYPT
REGIONAL REPORT**

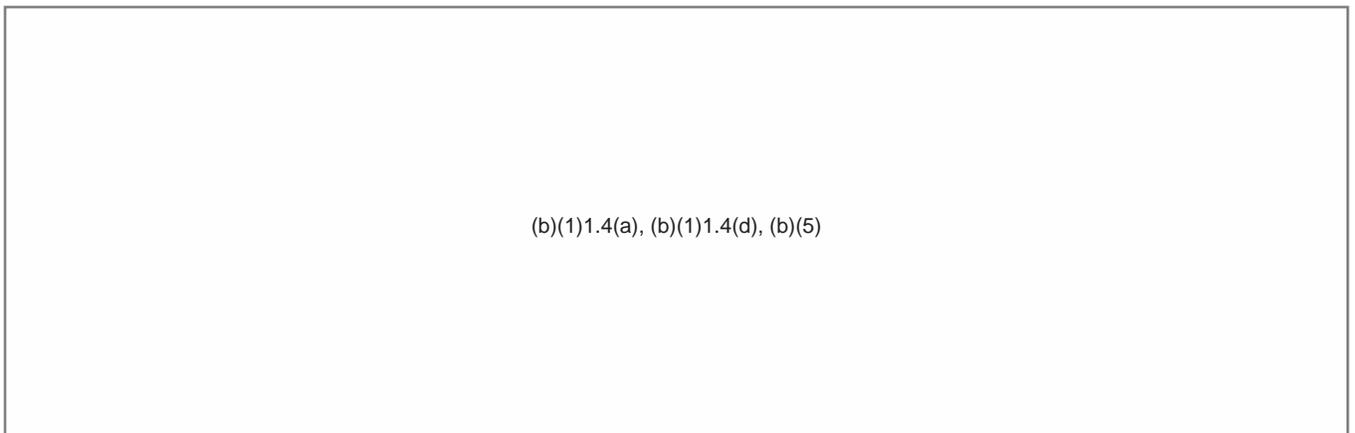
1. (U) STRATEGIC CONTEXT

(U) The Levant/Egypt sub-region is a complicated set of nation states, externally-sponsored proxies, and indigenous malign actors that sit astride a strategic transportation and commercial hub connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa. Stated simply, what happens in the Levant/Egypt sub-region has a direct impact on the efforts of the US and its key allies in the greater Middle East. While relative stability exists in the region at present, the confluence of actors and issues at play heightens the potential for violence to erupt with little notice and escalate into instability in the greater CENTCOM AOR. The recent Gaza crisis in particular highlights how forces at both the state and regional levels have the potential to plunge the sub-region—and, by extension, the CENTCOM AOR—into further instability.

(U) History demonstrates that the United States is vulnerable to strategic surprise in the Levant/Egypt sub-region: events there can and will interfere with U.S. goals in the region if left unattended. The malign influence of external actors and their proxies—coupled with the fragile stability of key sub-regional regimes—threatens the following primary U.S. interests in the Levant and Egypt: continued access to the Suez canal, reducing the influence of violent extremist organizations (VEOs), preserving Egypt’s and Jordan’s ability to support U.S. initiatives in the sub-region and greater CENTCOM AOR, and reducing Iran’s malign influence on sub-regional actors.

(U) Nature of the Problem: Iran’s growing influence in the sub-region has empowered violent extremist organizations while at the same time reduced the relative power of traditional US allies. Iran’s rise has exacerbated pre-existing problems in the sub-region that threaten US interests: political instability in Egypt or Jordan, the stagnant Middle East Peace Process, the fragile nature of the Lebanese state, and the rise of violent radical Islamist sects.

i) **(U) Common Themes:** The following themes capture key influences and destabilizing factors that challenge US interests in the sub-region:



(3) (U) The sub-region is in transition. Key events that are shaping the dynamics in the Levant and that will affect the future trajectory of US policies in the region include regime

succession in Egypt and Israel, the global economic downturn and falling oil prices, the conflict in Iraq, the role of Al Qaeda (AQ), and a new US administration.

- (4) (U) **Interstate and intrastate conflict is endemic throughout the sub-region**, and the Levant is highly susceptible to the destabilizing intervention of third-party proxies.
- (5) (U) **Governments throughout the sub-region—while primarily stable—are resistant to democratic reform and generally have short-term views on key issues** of US/ Key allies concern, such as human rights and political and economic liberalization.
- (6) (U) **US Government (USG) policies are extremely unpopular in the sub-region.** Consequently, the ability of the USG and its key allies to influence actors and events in support of our interests is disproportionate to the money and effort spent. Furthermore, the region's negative perception of the US-Israel relationship (the most important US ally in the region but outside of the CENTCOM AOR) complicates the US' relationship with its key allies and other states in the region.
- (7) (U) **Sectarian friction and conflict is a constant in the Levant.** Sunnis and Shias engage in a power struggle in the sub-region while radical and moderate Islamic voices make their voices heard and regional states fight proxy wars. An emerging **Saudi-Syrian rivalry** exacerbates these tensions in Lebanon in particular.
- (8) (U) **Hamas and Hizballah are terrorist organizations AND political actors who provide a political voice and vital social services to their respective constituents.** Their election through recognized electoral processes gives them legitimacy to proceed with their militant, anti-Israeli agendas. The 2006 Israel-Hizballah conflict and the late 2008 Gaza crisis demonstrate the destabilizing dual terrorist/political nature of these organizations.
- (9) (U) **The presence and spread of WMD in the sub-region that includes multiple malign actors** presents another threat. Iran's achievement of an armed nuclear power would significantly raise the stakes for destabilization in the sub-region and the greater CENTCOM AOR.
- (10) (U) **Islamic extremism is growing.**
- (11) (U) **The MEPP remains a priority for sub-regional governments, but it competes with other high priorities**, such as day-to-day regime survival.
- (12) (U) **The worldwide economic downturn** threatens relative economic and political stability in the Levant and Egypt because of the central role oil plays in the sub-regional economies and because the socioeconomic health of the sub-regional states depends so heavily on remittances from the Gulf.

ii) (U) Intelligence Annex:

(1) (U) **Lebanon**'s physical, political, and social geography is among the most complex in the sub-region. Since the end of the civil war in 1990 in particular, Lebanon has struggled to become a viable nation in which the central government has a monopoly of power. Attempts at unity and independence in the country are hindered by internal rivalries, poor leadership, and foreign manipulation of the political scene, and as long as the country is divided along confessional lines, major domestic players actively seek outside support and intervention (namely Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia), undermining Lebanon's sovereignty. The state security institutions still do not control the country--almost 4 years after the withdrawal of Syrian troops—and thus, to Hizballah's benefit, have been unable to reestablish the monopoly of power. Large parts of the country, including southern suburbs of Beirut, much of the south, and the Bekaa Valley, are under Hizballah control. Palestinian refugee camps also are outside Lebanese control. Syria's and Saudi Arabia's support to opposing factions—Alawis and Sunni militias, respectively--has fueled sporadic violence in the northern city of Tripoli since early summer 2008, a situation which Sunni extremists exploited by targeting the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and local Shia groups. Fueled by sectarian tensions, outside interference, and a lack of confidence in the government, the tenuous security situation in the north is likely to remain a potential flashpoint for full-scale sectarian violence in the country.

(U) Across Lebanon, political leaders still represent sectarian identities that are becoming more pronounced, and confessional and ethnic divisions have acquired greater saliency in the country since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005. The Cedar Revolution, which began a month after the assassination as a nationalist reaction against Syrian domination, failed to overcome sectarian divisions, which have only gotten deeper. The Shia in Lebanon have little confidence the state can or will meet their needs and thus are leaving for the economies of the Gulf and the West and placing greater confidence in Hizballah and Amal.

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(U) Recent events—namely the 2006 Israel-Hizballah war, Hizballah’s formal participation in the Lebanese political system, and its May 2008 takeover of West Beirut –have confirmed Hizballah’s position as the key power broker in Lebanon, to the detriment of the Lebanese government and security forces. Political stalemate that started with the resignation of Shia ministers in late 2006 and the failure to elect a presidential candidate acceptable to both anti- and pro-Syrian forces ended only with the Doha agreement in May 2008, which paved the way for the election of Michel Sleiman as President and the formation in July of a national unity government. The Doha agreement called for the national unity government to be composed of 16 majority (March 14) ministers, 11 from the Hizballah-led opposition, and three for Sleiman, giving the opposition a blocking veto on all legislation and effectively cementing Hizballah as a key political actor in the country.

(U) The UN investigation of the Hariri assassination is a far less pressing issue for the governments of the sub-region than it was when the United Nations International Independent Investigation Committee (UNIIC) in late 2005 publicly released its first interim report, which mistakenly included a listing of several senior Syrian regime officials as prime suspects. Throughout its extended mandates and changing leadership since that first report, the UNIIC has made no official mention of Syrian complicity in the assassination. Pledged contributions to both the investigation committee and forthcoming tribunal are slow to materialize. Although the Syrian regime for these reasons views the tribunal with increasingly less urgency, Damascus nonetheless recognizes the importance of securing its influence in Lebanon now as a hedge against possible future indictments.

(U) The only arm of the Lebanese government that possesses some degree of legitimacy is the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), which is viewed as a non-sectarian institution and a national symbol. In contrast, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) does not command the same respect and is derided as the “(Saad) Hariri Sunni Militia” by opponents of the pro-Western March 14 coalition. Beyond its symbolic value, the LAF has countered with some success Sunni extremists (AQ and others) in Lebanon’s Palestinian camps, yet the LAF cowered to Hizballah during violence in May 2008 and admits it does not have the ability to defeat the organization.

(U) The LAF operates alongside the United Nations Independent Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the south of the country to enforce the objectives of UNSCR 1701, which ended the 2006 Israel-Hizballah war and set up a weapons-free area south of the Litani river to the Blue Line with Israel. Established in 1978, UNIFIL was expanded from 2,500 to 13,000 members in the aftermath of the 2006 war and together with the LAF currently monitors the Blue Line, runs

patrols, and uncovers weapons caches and depots. UNIFIL is unable to extend its territorial responsibility and functional mandate beyond that specified in 1978, and is criticized for its cautious avoidance of escalation in its Hizballah-dominated AOR. One of the major problems, despite explicit language in UNSCR 1701 calling for the UN to stop weapons from entering the south of Lebanon, is that UNIFIL has no presence on the Syria-Lebanon border—which is the route Hizballah uses to transport weapons and materiel into Lebanon. As a result, the flow of arms to Hizballah continues unabated, and the organization has built a massive military infrastructure and has fully recovered and re-armed since the end of its 2006 war with Israel. UNIFIL clearly faces serious challenges. Operating under UN rules of engagement, it has not fulfilled its obligation of helping to restore Beirut's reach in the south, disarming Hizballah and other militant groups, or stopping the flow of arms. Further, it is unable to communicate securely and in a rapid fashion with the LAF and Israel. While a strengthened UNIFIL has had an effect on Hizballah dispositions, in reality it has only marginally affected Hizballah's malign activities in southern Lebanon. To date, German-led border security operations in the north of the country have largely served to prove that securing Lebanon's borders will necessitate much greater effort, including intense negotiations with Syria.

(U) (2) Syria: In its pursuit of a leading role in the sub-region, Arab world, and international community, the minority Alawite Syrian regime under Bashar al-Asad has demonstrated its ability to play both a positive and spoiler role. The forced withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in April 2005 after almost three decades diminished the regime's relative power in the Levant, but the Syrian regime under Bashar over the last 7+ years has shown its enduring power of obstructionism. Syria's objective is to be at the very least consulted on critical Middle East issues, and to this end the Al-Asad regime is adept at making Syria indispensable for any regional peace. To assert its role and ensure a Syrian seat at the table, the Syrian regime is navigating the volatile Levant environment through multiple and often apparently contradictory policies. Bashar and his closest confidants ally themselves with a wide variety of radical—and sometimes opposing—actors in the AOR in order to weaken the regime's enemies and ensure Syria is safely on the “winning side” of regional developments. For example, the Al-Asad regime politically and materially supports Hizballah, enjoys a long-standing relationship with Iran, provides safehaven to Palestinian rejectionists, and supports Sunni inclusion in Iraq.

(U) The authoritarian regime's Arab nationalist and socialist ideology is less relevant today, and it has not become more liberal, despite pledges for reform that Bashar made early in his presidency. The “Damascus Spring” that followed Bashar's rise to power in 2000 was short-lived, and reform in Syria today is limited to trying to improve administrative efficiency and economic performance. Since coming to power, Bashar has effectively consolidated power over his inner circle and through his pervasive security services keeps down Syria's weak and divided political opposition. The minority regime presides over a majority Sunni population with no immediate threats to its rule, although a growing domestic extremist threat and ailing economy present potential long-term challenges. Syria's merchant class in particular is beginning to feel the pinch from the regime's inconsistent economic policies, and poor relations with Saudi Arabia and Egypt heighten the urgency with which Damascus must deal with Syria's quickly depleting oil reserves (Syria became a net importer of oil in 2007).

(U) Syria's 300,000-strong military force is one of the largest in the region and is loyal to the Al-Asad regime. Military expenditures are approximately 6% of Syria's GDP – one of the highest in the region. With an eye toward building asymmetric capabilities to compensate for its conventional inferiority to Israel, Syria continues to develop its Special Forces, missile forces, anti-tank forces, and light infantry with equipment and technical assistance from Russia, Iran, and China.

(U) Recent positive trends in Syria's foreign policy center around Damascus' engagement in regional and international diplomacy. It is active in the Arab League and chaired an Arab League summit in Damascus in March of last year, Bashar was lauded for helping to conclude the Doha agreement to end Lebanon's political stalemate in May 2008, Damascus participates in and has chaired multiple Iraq Border Security Working Groups, and following the Doha agreement, Syria renewed high-level contacts with the EU, France, and the UK and pledged to normalize relations with Lebanon and Iraq. In mid-December 2008, Syria and the EU initialed a renewal of the EU Association Agreement that had been shelved in 2004. Syria also is participating in Turkish-mediated indirect peace talks with Israel.

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(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(3) (U) Egypt: US interests in Egypt sit astride a political, economic, and social “fault line.” The US has a strong interest in supporting a peaceful and democratic political presidential transition, but at the same time supports the increasingly regionally and domestically ineffective regime of aging Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The Mubarak regime is a mostly positive regional player—cooperation on counterterrorism and Israel/Gaza issues is strong and the mil-to-mil relationship is relatively fixed—but US-Egyptian relations have largely eroded. Against the backdrop of U.S. policy toward Egypt is a short to medium-term tension between the US’ desire on the one hand to promote human rights and democratic processes in Egypt while at the same time ensuring stability in the regime and throughout the country. Complicating internal Egyptian challenges is the erosion of US-Egyptian political relations over the last several years. The US’ conditioning of aid on Cairo’s efforts to promote democracy has resulted in Cairo’s refusal of \$200M in Economic Support Funds (ESF). Consequently, USAID developmental assistance has virtually ceased and USAID has found no willing interlocutors on critical issues within the Egyptian government. Leading Egyptian civil society groups also are spurning US Embassy contacts.

(U) The most positive aspect of US-Egyptian relations is based upon \$1.3B in annual Foreign Military Financing (FMF) earmarks, which largely forms the foundation of the bilateral relationship. The beginning of the rise of American-trained and educated Egyptian officers is a rare bright spot. Nevertheless, the Egyptian military—still dominated by Soviet-trained and educated senior officers—has progressed little since the Cold War. With its M1 Abrams MBT factory, Egypt’s armed forces are designed to fight a large, conventional battle and have failed to transform to fight wars of the 21st century. Further hindering Egypt’s military transformation, the Egyptian officer corps has only limited interest in military-to-military engagement venues. Ultimately, however, FMF funds, while important, will not counter the growing poverty rate or domestic political discontent—both of which present increasingly dangerous threats to the US’ interest in a stable Egyptian state.

(U) Egypt's historical role as the Arab regional leader is in decline. The looming challenges of a stable presidential succession add further pressure to the country's serious internal political and economic stresses. The ageing leadership presides over a dramatic and increasing gap between "have" and "have-nots" and a significant increase in extreme poverty. Meanwhile, political reform is dead and opposition groups are growing. Since 2006, Egypt has retreated from nascent democratic reforms because of its concerns over succession, the ruling National Democratic Party's (NDP) inability to dominate if it is exposed to real competition, popular resistance to economic reforms, and deteriorating regional circumstances. In light of the uncertain course of Mubarak's succession, the ailing economy, and increasing radicalism in the country, the potential for grave internal instability remains high.

(U) President Mubarak's age (80) and unconfirmed health problems suggest he most likely will be replaced at some point over the next decade, and the uncertain course of his succession presents significant challenges to the already eroding US-Egypt relationship. It is widely believed—including among the Egyptian public—that Mubarak's younger son Gamal will succeed him, but Gamal's rise is far from certain. At present, two main "democratic" threats to ensuring such a succession scenario include the potential electoral strength of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). Succession in Egypt probably will not radically alter the authoritarian nature of the regime or Egyptian policy, but at the very least it will call into question the relationship between the security establishment and civilian authorities and will have effects on the US-Egypt bilateral relationship.

(U) The Mubarak government values the primacy of the ruling NDP over all else, and it stays in power by undermining alternatives that could pose a challenge to its rule. Mubarak was alarmed by Hamas' 2006 electoral victory and saw it as an indication of how well the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) might do in Egypt. As such, the government continues to suppress the secretive and patient MB--which is expanding its base with the help of widespread political corruption—and has created constitutional ways to curtail the MB's full participation in the political process. A 2005 constitutional amendment requires independent presidential candidates to gain a threshold of endorsements from government representatives, and members of the People's Assembly and Shura Council. Such requirements eliminate "nuisance" candidates and motivate independents to seek broad support before running. In reality, the government has used the requirement to block unwanted challengers like the MB by ensuring only the NDP has sufficient representation to endorse an independent presidential candidate. The officially banned MB can only run by fielding an independent candidate who must meet the threshold requirements.

(U) As its machinations on domestic politics and its inept management of the struggling economy make clear, the Egyptian government prioritizes short-term stability over political and economic reform. Egypt's economic reform is largely unsustainable because the Egyptian government does not take ownership of nor make explanations to the Egyptian public for unpopular actions.

- High inflation is exacerbating widespread poverty. Estimates of extreme poverty run from 10-25% of the population.

- Rising food prices are driving inflation because Egypt is a net importer of several food staples, the prices of which are volatile

(U) Egypt has been a key player in trying to broker a political accommodation between Hamas and Fatah to advance the broader Arab-Israeli peace process—participation in which Cairo views as necessary for protecting its domestic security and building Egypt’s leadership of the Arab world—but has not had much success in recent years as witnessed by the events leading to Israel’s assault on the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip in January 2009. Israel complains with increasing intensity that Egypt turns a blind eye to the illegal smuggling of arms and ammunition through tunnels from the Sinai to Gaza. Egypt is perceived to be less than forthcoming in efforts to “seal” the Sinai from Gaza; as a case in point, tens of thousands of Gazans streamed into Egypt to stock up on food supplies and weapons in late January 2008 when Hamas destroyed parts of the wall separating Gaza from the Sinai. Israel claims that large quantities of rockets, anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, and materiel for rocket production were brought into Gaza as a result of this breach, and that Egypt’s failure to identify and destroy the tunnels only continues the smuggling cycle. Clearly, the continued operation of smuggling tunnels has wide-reaching consequences for the sub-region. Tunnels are the lifeblood of the Gaza economy and enable Hamas to circumvent international sanctions and build up its offensive and defensive capabilities against Israel. Shutting down the tunnels is a technically difficult and politically charged task, but Egypt’s uneven treatment of the problem—and the fact that the tunnels remain active—directly contributes to intra-Palestinian conflict: a better-supplied and stronger Hamas would be better prepared to confront Fatah in another round of violence, ensuring broader instability in the West Bank and Gaza and the wider sub-region.

(U) With regard to the tunnels, Cairo is striking a fine balance to protect Egypt’s national interests. In one sense, acting against the tunnels would present Egypt with serious internal challenges—notably with the Sinai’s indigenous bedouin population (the Sinai bedouin have been at odds with Cairo for decades, and actively and tacitly supported terror attacks against civilians and Multi-National Force and Observer Units in 2004-2006). Egypt agreed in 2006 to revise the Camp David Accords to allow for an increase of up to 750 border policemen largely along the Egyptian side of the Philadelphi Corridor. Of note, Egypt negotiated for a larger increase—up to a total of 1500—which Israel refused. Egypt has agreed to increase its technical capabilities as long as the costs are born by someone else, but opposes the stationing of any additional international forces on its soil (the Multi-national Force and Observers is already present and has an observer mission only along the border.)

(U) Tensions over Gaza reached a high point most recently in December 2008, when Hamas breached a ceasefire with the Israeli government by launching rockets from Gaza into Israel. Israel responded with a major ground invasion into Gaza strip that left 1300 Gazans and 13 Israelis dead. Fighting ended when an informal ceasefire went into effect on 18 January 2009 after Israel withdrew its troops. Neither side achieved its long-term goals in the conflict—the situation has largely returned to the pre-conflict status quo—and Cairo has assumed the burden of consolidating the tenuous calm that followed Israel’s withdrawal. Hamas at present states it is prepared to stop rocket attacks if Israel opens the Gaza border crossings, which Israel is hesitant to do out of concern that more militants and explosives could enter Gaza. The

appointment in January 2009 of former Senator George Mitchell as the US Special Envoy to the Middle East is an encouraging development in this ongoing crisis; Mitchell has adopted the establishment of a sustainable ceasefire as his first priority on the job.

(U) Hamas' supporters view the group as a legitimate resistance movement that defends Palestinians from what they see as continued brutal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. With the help of its primary external sponsor Iran—as well as charitable donations from Palestinian expatriates and private benefactors in Saudi Arabia and other Arab states—Hamas has further gained popularity by establishing extensive welfare programs, funding schools, orphanages, and healthcare clinics throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Although Hamas currently is under political, economic, and military pressure in the West Bank, it is the uncontested authority in Gaza.

(U) Hamas' primary long-term goal is the liberation of historic Palestine and the foundation of an independent state based on sharia, or Islamic law. The movement seeks legitimacy in the West and the Arab world, and seeks to end its dependence on Israel's infrastructure and economy by permanently opening crossings into the Gaza Strip, particularly the Rafah crossing into Egypt. Hamas' immediate security interest is the consolidation of its control over Gaza and the elimination of internal and external challenges to its sovereignty.

(U) Hamas used the period after Israel's August 2005 disengagement from Gaza to expand its forces to the point where it could prevail over Fatah and emerge as the only serious military and political power in Gaza. Egypt's failure to secure its side of the border during the Hamas military build-up contributed to this build-up.

(U) Hamas used the lull before the ceasefire breach in December 2008 to strengthen its military capabilities by smuggling explosives, antitank missiles, rifles, and high-tech equipment via the Egyptian border. Hamas is vulnerable outside of Gaza, with a weak military infrastructure in the West Bank that makes it difficult for the group to execute major attacks inside Israel. Hamas leaders continue to encourage and assist the group's West Bank elements in planning and executing resistance activities there. The group's political bureau enjoys safehaven in Damascus, where they coordinate with Syrian regime members and are allowed access to training with Iran. The Syrian regime views Hamas primarily as a means to pressure Israel and strengthen its negotiating position in peace talks, and is unlikely to curtail its support for the group unless assured of major Israeli concessions, particularly the full return of the Golan Heights.

(4) (U) Jordan's geopolitical position in the sub-region places it at the center of regional issues and makes it vital to US interests. The third largest recipient of US Economic Support Funds (ESF) aid in the sub-region, the country is a moderate advocate for key US strategic concerns in the wider CENTCOM region: political and economic reform, countering terrorism and extremism, supporting stability in Iraq, and promoting the Arab-Israeli peace process. Jordan plays an important role in training regional security forces and gives the US access into the region via overflights, key basing facilities, and training sites for US forces.

(U) Although Jordanian and US positions on the above-named strategic issues in the region are largely in synch, serious domestic tensions that contribute to the Kingdom's insecurity at home could hinder Jordan's ability to serve as the US "buffer" in the region and a moderate broker for US interests. Lack of progress on the MEPP, a majority Palestinian population, the growth of militant Islam, and a sizeable Iraqi refugee population expose Jordan to multiple volatile developments in the wider CENTCOM region. Further contributing to the Kingdom's domestic insecurity, King Abdullah—unlike his father—has been reluctant to distance himself from the U.S. even when regional US policies prove unpopular among Jordanians.

(U) Jordan's growing urban Palestinian majority poses an enduring--though presently manageable--threat to the reign of the Hashemite monarchy and renders the Middle East peace process a priority issue for the regime. Until the Israel-Palestinian issue is resolved, the King is reticent to determine a political distribution system that would force it to resolve the status of Jordan's Palestinian population. Complicating Jordan's demographic picture is the large number of Iraqi refugees it hosts as "guests" – estimates range from 250-500,000 – and who for Jordan represent a financial, administrative, and logistical burden that further dilutes the number of East Bankers in the country. Slow movement in the economy is exacerbated by high inflation, a lack of natural resources (Jordan is the fourth driest country in the world), 12-18% unemployment, and a youth bulge which requires the creation of 60,000 jobs annually to absorb the growing workforce. Finally, the health of the Jordanian economy is largely dependent on Gulf remittances as an income source, rendering resource-poor Jordan particularly vulnerable to an economic downturn in oil-producing states.

(U) Jordan's military and security entities are loyal to the King and enjoy a very close relationship with the US. Military expenditures total approximately 8.6% of GDP, the highest in the region. Jordan is the largest recipient of International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds, but receives relatively little Foreign Military Funds (FMF), which pale in comparison to FMF funding for Israel and Egypt. The Jordanian military, whose primary mission is protecting the country's borders and ensuring survival of the regime, is viewed as a capable regional military.

(U) Beyond the Palestinian issue, Jordan also views regional matters through the lens of spreading Iranian influence. Jordanian officials believe Iran harms Jordanian interests by promoting militancy throughout the region, undermining the Middle East peace process, and destabilizing Iraq. King Abdullah II coined the term "Shia Crescent" to describe Iran's efforts to foment trouble in Sunni states across the Middle East.

(5) (U) The Israel-Palestinian conflict remains a major preoccupation of sub-regional governments and populations throughout the CENTCOM AOR. Popular anger and a sense of humiliation over Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and their government's inability to do anything about Palestinian suffering remains a major factor for destabilization. In some cases, governments have inflamed these feelings in order to divert popular anger from domestic issues. As Israel's major supporter, the United States is widely seen as complicit in Israeli actions and polling indicates that the US-Israel alliance is a major driver of anti-American sentiment throughout the region. To stave off anti-regime violence, sub-regional governments--especially those at peace with Israel (Jordan and Egypt) or seen as close to the U.S.--are forced

to constantly balance popular perceptions of the US-Israel relationship with the necessities of cultivating their own relationships with Washington.

(U) As long as the Palestinian issue remains unresolved, active U.S. leadership of international efforts to broker an Israeli-Palestinian agreement and a willingness to criticize Israeli actions inconsistent with the peace process – notably settlement construction and attempts to alter the balance in Jerusalem – will reduce, but not eliminate, these pressures. We assess that a final Israeli/Palestinian agreement is unlikely within the next five years. While majorities on both sides say they support a two state solution, neither believes the other side is committed to the difficult steps necessary for such a solution. Palestinians cite Israeli settlement activity and Israel's failure to implement promises to eliminate checkpoints as evidence of Israeli indifference to an agreement. Israelis remain dubious that Palestinian moderates will be willing or able to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza or reign in violent elements there and in the West Bank. Moreover, Hamas' dominance in Gaza, its presence in the West Bank, and Israel's battle with extremist Fatah elements and the Palestinian Authority's security forces during the Intifada continue to reinforce both sides doubts about the other's commitment to peace. For these reasons, U.S.-led efforts to broker an agreement are unlikely to bear fruit in the near term. Popular reaction to the breakdown of the Oslo process indicates that an unsuccessful high-profile effort to resolve the conflict will only serve to damage U.S. prestige. That said, active U.S. leadership of the peace process is necessary in order to improve the image of the U.S. in the region and create an atmosphere conducive to accomplishing CENTCOM's broader regional goals.

(U) The main issues to be resolved in a comprehensive Israel-Palestinian agreement have changed little since the early 1990s. They include the borders of a Palestinian state, security arrangements for Israel, settlements, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem. Most of these issues affect only the two parties, but two of them – Jerusalem and refugees – have regional implications. While CENTCOM will have a limited role in any U.S. initiative on the peace process, it will be instrumental in conditioning regional military leaders to support compromises on the above-named issues.

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

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(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(U) The two-state solution is complicated by the weakness of the Palestinian Authority (PA). There is mistrust between the two PA factions, and the Israelis continue their settlement activity. Further, the capability of the Palestinian leadership is questionable (as is the PA's ability to control any territory it would acquire in a sustainable agreement) and the Palestinians are unable to speak to Israel with a unified voice. Surrounding states in the Levant sub-region—whose involvement is critical to supporting a renewed process—are also divided and disillusioned on the MEPP.

(6) (U) Israel: Though not a part of the CENTCOM AOR, Israel is the dominant actor in the Levant sub-region for several reasons. Primarily, Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories is an issue to which so many other sub-regional challenges—such as Hizballah, Hamas, Palestinian refugees, and the malign influences of Syria and Iran—are held hostage. Furthermore, the US' relationship with and policies toward Israel shape its relations with sub-regional governments and color their perceptions of the US' ultimate intentions in the region.

(U) Israel is highly vulnerable in its pursuit of a permanently secure regional position, and the policies and actions it takes to address threats to its national security interests have consequences that extend across the entire CENTCOM AOR. As such, while Israel is the US's closest ally in the region, US and Israeli priorities and interests are not always aligned, and

there are friction points in the relationships that require constant attention. Unsynchronized US and allied efforts hinder advancement of the MEPP, and these teams are not allowed to operate freely or engage in the environment to adequately meet mission needs. Compounding the issue are the divisive and often competing efforts of the US political missions in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

~~(7) (S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(U) The Iranian regime manipulates the Lebanese political arena in particular by showering its various allies, agents, and clients with money to buy votes and secure influence, and it also is Hizballah's primary sponsor; Tehran backs Hizballah ideologically, financially, and logistically in the latter's fight against Israel.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

2. (U) ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ During the past eight years, United States policy towards the Levant and Egypt has largely failed to advance our key policy objectives and in some cases has proven

counter-productive. To some extent this reflects the intractable nature of challenges such as building Lebanon into a fully sovereign, viable state and brokering an Israeli/Palestinian peace agreement. Nonetheless, our tendency to over-reach and overestimate our leverage in the sub-region has worked to our disadvantage. For example, we have refused to prioritize our objectives with Syria, simultaneously pursuing seven or eight loosely related goals even though we realistically had the ability to push Damascus to agree to one or two. As a result we failed to achieve any of our objectives, drove Syria and Iran closer together, and made it easier for our European allies to pursue a different course. Congress's decision to condition some assistance to Egypt on improvements in Cairo's record on democratization and human rights was a major factor in the deterioration of relations with one of our major regional allies. Our strategy of backing Lebanon's March 14th coalition to the exclusion of other parties has not translated into protection of our interests, and our support for the Lebanese Armed Forces has had limited effect because of caveats imposed by Washington. By taking a hands-off policy towards Israel/Palestinian negotiations until the last 18 months of the last administration, we played into our opponents' argument that the U.S. blindly supports Israel and is uninterested in an issue that the Arab public views as central to the region. Our reversal of course and our unrealistic efforts to make resolution of a final Israel/Palestinian peace agreement the goal for the final year of the administration was too little, too late.

3) (U) CRITICAL GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE/INTELLIGENCE

(U) Any successful approach to the Levant sub-region's complex and multi-faceted strategic context must take into account critical gaps in our knowledge and intelligence on the region.

a) ~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Critical Gaps in Knowledge:

b)

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

v)

vi)

vii)

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

Tab A, Consultations To Annex A, Situation Assessment to Egypt and Levant Regional Report

(U) Washington, DC interviews

- Ambassador Dennis Ross: Ross served eight years as the Special Middle East Coordinator under President Clinton and served four years as the director of policy planning under President George H.W. Bush.
- Rob Malley: Malley is program director for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group. He served as President Clinton's special assistant on Arab-Israeli affairs from 1998-2001.
- Peter Harling: Harling is an International Crisis Group analyst based in Damascus, Syria.
- Andrew Tabler: Tabler is a visiting scholar at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and was based in Syria from 2001 until 2008.
- Yezid Sayigh: Sayigh served as the Palestinian Liberation Organization's negotiator for the Cairo Agreement of 1994 and headed the Palestinian delegation to the Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security between 1992 and 1994. He is the author of *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (1997) and is a professor in the War Studies Department at King's College London.
- William Quandt: Quandt served as President Carter's adviser on the Middle East in the National Security Council and helped broker the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement. He is the author of *Peace Process*, the authoritative history of U.S. efforts to broker peace in the Middle East.
- Aaron David Miller: Miller served six Secretaries of State as an advisor on the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and is currently a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center.
- Marc Lynch: Lynch, an expert on Jordan and Egypt, is a professor at George Washington University and is the author of *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity* (1999) and *Voices of the New Arab Public* (2006).
- Debra Cagan: Helped plan and execute the re-armament of the Lebanese Armed Forces in 2006 and 2007.

(U) CAT visit to Amman, Jordan (3-7 December, 2008)

○ People Interviewed:

- Steve Beecroft, U.S. Ambassador, Amman, Jordan
- Larry Mandel, Deputy Chief of Mission
- Peter Gubser, Military Assistance Program
- LTC Keith Phillips, Air Attaché, Defense Attaché Office
- Andrew Schad, Director, Force Protection Detachment, Defense Attaché Office
- Phil Frayne, Public Affairs Counselor, Public Affairs Section
- Jennifer Rasamimanana, Cultural Attaché, Public Affairs Section
- Dana Mansuri, Deputy Mission Director, USAID
- John Smith-Sreen, Water Resources and Environment Director, USAID
- Steve Gonyea, Director, Office of Economic Growth, USAID
- Hugh Winn, Acting Office Director, USAID
- Sheryl Maas, Commercial Counselor, Department of Commerce

- Maria Olson, Political Section
- Raj Wadwani, Political Section
- Ben Ball, Political Section
- Natalie Brown, Economic Counselor
- Her Majesty's Ambassador Mr. James Watt, U.K. Ambassador to Jordan
- Col Chris Rider, U.K. Defence Attaché to Jordan

(U) CAT visit to Beirut, Lebanon (6-10 December 2008)

○ People Interviewed:

- Ambassador Michele J. Sison, U.S. Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- Stephen F. Herbaly, General Development Officer, USAID, U.S. Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- Denise A. Herbol, Mission Director, USAID, U.S. Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- Bridgette L. Walker, Political Officer, U.S. Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- Bill Grant, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- Virginia Ramadan, Director, International Law Enforcement Programs, Beirut, Lebanon
- LTC David "Andrew" Leinberger, Chief, Office of Defense Cooperation, U.S. Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- Jacqueline Ward, Special Assistant to the Ambassador, First Secretary, U.S. Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- Dr. Cherie J. Lenzen, Public Affairs Officers, U.S. Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- French Premier Counsellor Joseph Silva, French Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- Attaché de Défense Col Luc Batigne, French Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon
- Milos Strugar, Director of Political and Civil Affairs, UNIFIL
- Oussama Safa, General Director, The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies
- Rami Shehadeh, Political Affairs Officer, Office of the Special Coordinator for Lebanon
- Diego Zorrilla, Senior Advisor, Office of the Special Coordinator for Lebanon
- Canadian Defense Attaché to Damascus

(U) CAT visit to Cairo, Egypt (3-6 December 2008)

○ People Interviewed:

- Ambassador Margaret Scoby, U.S. Embassy, Cairo, Egypt
- William R. Stewart, Minister Counselor, Economic and Political Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Cairo, Egypt
- Bambi Arellano and Catherine Hill-Herndon, USAID
- Yael Lampert, Counter-Terror and Political Analyst, First Secretary, U.S. Embassy, Cairo, Egypt
- Gen Williams
- CDR Joe ValeCruz, USN, Naval Attaché, U.S. Embassy, Cairo, Egypt

- Col Kenneth Thompson, USAF, Defense and Air Attaché, U.S. Embassy, Cairo, Egypt
- LTC Dave D. Brenner, USA, Army Attaché, U.S. Embassy, Cairo, Egypt
- Amer M. Kayani, Counselor for Commercial Affairs
- Kieran L. Ramsey, Legal Attaché
- Jeffrey W. Cole, Department of Justice Attaché, U.S. Embassy, Cairo, Egypt
- Catherine Hill-Herndon, Counselor, Economic and Political Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Cairo, Egypt
- Melissa Cline, Second Secretary, Economic and Political Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Cairo, Egypt
- Former Egyptian Presidential Advisor Osama al Baz

ANNEX B: ISRAEL AND IRAN'S NUCLEAR EQUATION – CALCULUS AND INFLUENCES TO LEVANT AND EGYPT REGIONAL REPORT

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Bottom Line Up Front:

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(U) Historical Precedent

(U) Israel has been down this road twice before. In the heyday of the conventional Arab-Israeli conflict during the 1970s and 1980s, Israel regarded Iraq as a dangerous enemy and existential threat. Iraq was either a direct combatant or key supporter of Israel's Arab neighbors in every conflict of the era. Iraq's ground-to-ground missile inventory – including chemical and biological weapons – clearly ranged Israel's major population centers. The Osirac project might have given Iraq the additional capability of developing nuclear weapons, an unacceptable threat. But Israel's attack on Iraq aimed not only at defending the Jewish state from Saddam's weapons, but also with the expectation that in the years it would take Saddam Hussein to rebuild, something was bound to change in the environment that would affect, mitigate or nullify Iraq's nuclear weapon aspirations entirely. In the event, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, and neither he nor Iraq presented the same threat to Israel again.

(U) In September of 2007, Israel attacked Syria. There is very little reporting and intelligence available for analysis on what, exactly, Israel attacked and why. What is clear is that Israel attacked without warning and in its own interests. The elements of the decision – an assessment of Syria's contemporary military capabilities and political regime – was likely analogous to those Israel considered before making the decision to attack Iraq in 1981, with one critical and important difference: Israel did not share its intelligence assessment with U.S. and close European allies, nor did it provide any warning.

(U) The Current Dilemma

(U) In Israel's estimation, Iran is without a doubt the modern day equivalent of Iraq – but with the added punch of being the primary supporter of proven and dangerous non-state actors like Hizballah and Hamas, both in active conflict with Israel. If Iran gained entry to the elite club of nuclear nations, that Iranian nuclear threat would be compounded by the presumed emboldening of Hamas and Hizballah, who would then be freer to operate under the cover of an Iranian nuclear umbrella.

(U) In the case of the Syrian assault, Israel was clearly casting an eye towards Iran – either as a warning shot or even as an opening salvo in its war against Iranian nuclear aspirations. If it was the latter, then the countdown to an Israeli attack has already begun.

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(U) Where Does This Leave the United States and our Allies?

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(U) To mitigate this consequence, US agencies need to focus on more than just the technical aspects of Iran's progress and/or Israel's military means to attack. More focus is needed on the Israeli human dimension – including its history, its culture and its leaders. These areas of focus are sorely lacking to date because they require firsthand operational experiences from within the region – not from the distant lens of a strategic satellite.

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(U) Mitigation.

(U) The first question facing U.S. policy makers with regard to mitigating or preventing an Israeli assault is determining the following: What is most dangerous? Iran becoming a nuclear power? Or the fallout in wake of an Israeli assault?

(b)(1)1.4(a), (b)(1)1.4(d), (b)(5)

(U) ANNEX C, ABSORBING ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES INTO THE CENTCOM AOR TO LEVANT AND EGYPT REGIONAL REPORT

(U) ISRAEL

(U) Given the fundamental US interest in a peaceful and prosperous Middle East with Israel a full partner in the region, including Israel in CENTCOM's AOR could help foreshadow the eventual integration of Israel into the Arabic-speaking world at large. While integrating Israel into the CENTCOM AOR would not by itself produce peace, it might be a useful symbolic act in the absence of broader political progress.

(U) Israel might welcome the move. Certainly being part of EUCOM offers Israel real political and military advantages. Israel is now tucked under a U.S. strategic umbrella and embedded in several EUCOM defense plans. But Israel also understands that the key to its long-term existence rests in co-existence with its Arab neighbors.

(U) Arab nations, meanwhile, are of mixed opinion about the proposition. They currently enjoy the built-in distance from Israel due to Israel lying outside CENTCOM's AOR.

(U) Including Israel in the CENTCOM AOR, then, would require careful management of who gets what audience with whom – particularly in the early stages. Israel will compete with Arab governments for CENTCOM's time and attention. Second, Arab nations will expect to be consulted prior to any decision. Time and effort are required to lay the necessary groundwork for any decision. There should be no sense of urgency. Third, though the MEPP is traditionally managed from Washington, CENTCOM would find itself with primary responsibility to manage all military aspects of the MEPP rather than the mere supporting responsibility it has now. This will require an enormous commitment of time and resources, especially if the current US initiative takes hold. Finally, Israel is a nuclear power and guards that power jealously. This unacknowledged fact is very unsettling to Arab nations.

(U) Operationally, Israel's inclusion would introduce other complications. First, the multi-faceted US-Israeli relationship is unique. Almost every USG entity has a standing committee, a working MOU, or some kind of formal or informal relationship with the Israelis. This complexity defies competent engagement management, and allows Israel to split seams within the USG at will.

(U) Second, Israeli officials regularly use the direct route to Washington, bypassing designated official channels. The Israeli foreign minister routinely calls the Secretary of State (rather than the U.S. Ambassador in Israel). Israeli policy-makers ignore protocol and do not hesitate to call their counterparts in the U.S. government rather than work through official channels.

(U) Third, the Israelis have a strategic interest in ensuring and revalidating international recognition of Israel's existence. They are constantly looking for new venues to join or participate in – even as a third party. Uninvited Israeli emissaries routinely travel to Washington to chat and ferret out what is going on in the halls of power. CENTCOM can expect to host a never-ending stream of Israeli visit requests – as well as unannounced and short-notice senior visitors.

(U) Fourth, Israelis have a peculiar set of cultural and religious nuances that must be taken into account and that require a different set of skills than those required when dealing with Arabs. Israelis favor directness. This requires an additional cultural learning program for CENTCOM officials.

(U) THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

(U) The Palestinian Authority (PA) has long been an ineffective government in every respect. Israeli policies complicate matters, but the PA's shortcomings are not just limited to deficiencies in the security field; they extend to its overall ability to govern. The June 2007 upheaval in Gaza, which began with the election victory of Hamas over Fatah in January 2006 testifies to this broad inadequacy. Accordingly, CENTCOM's primary focus on military engagement with the Palestinians, could only be expected to achieve so much – and the PA's, Israel's and our own expectations would have to be managed accordingly. No amount of additional military cooperation or security assistance would buy our way out of the complicated political conundrums within the Palestinian Authority and between the PA and Israel. Moreover, managing the military and security aspects of actually implementing a two-state solutions--splitting Israel away from the Occupied Palestinian Territories--simply adds another complicated layer to the already convoluted dynamics noted above.

(U) RECOMMENDATION: A decision to modify the UCP to move Israel and the Palestinian Territories from EUCCOM to CENTCOM would have important political and management consequences and should not be made without broad interagency and regional consultation and only when the dynamics described above are fully understood. In the meantime, CENTCOM should expand its mechanism for regular engagement with EUCCOM on Gaza, smuggling and other activities affecting Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**ANNEX D: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LEVANT AND EGYPT OF A NUCLEAR-ARMED
IRAN TO LEVANT AND EGYPT REGIONAL REPORT**

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(U) Fourth, Israelis have a peculiar set of cultural and religious nuances that must be taken into account and that require a different set of skills than those required when dealing with Arabs. Israelis favor directness. This requires an additional cultural learning program for CENTCOM officials.

(U) THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

(U) The Palestinian Authority (PA) has long been an ineffective government in every respect. Israeli policies complicate matters, but the PA's shortcomings are not just limited to deficiencies in the security field; they extend to its overall ability to govern. The June 2007 upheaval in Gaza, which began with the election victory of Hamas over Fatah in January 2006 testifies to this broad inadequacy. Accordingly, CENTCOM's primary focus on military engagement with the Palestinians, could only be expected to achieve so much – and the PA's, Israel's and our own expectations would have to be managed accordingly. No amount of additional military cooperation or security assistance would buy our way out of the complicated political conundrums within the Palestinian Authority and between the PA and Israel. Moreover, managing the military and security aspects of actually implementing a two-state solutions--splitting Israel away from the Occupied Palestinian Territories--simply adds another complicated layer to the already convoluted dynamics noted above.

(U) RECOMMENDATION: A decision to modify the UCP to move Israel and the Palestinian Territories from EUCOM to CENTCOM would have important political and management consequences and should not be made without broad interagency and regional consultation and only when the dynamics described above are fully understood. In the meantime, CENTCOM should expand its mechanism for regular engagement with EUCOM on Gaza, smuggling and other activities affecting Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**(U) ANNEX E, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TO LEVANT AND EGYPT
REGIONAL REPORT**

(U) The Executive Summary

(U) Many US policies in the Levant and Egypt are deeply unpopular, and US policies in the future will likely continue to anger many in the sub-region. The biggest problem is the disparity between our actions and our words – we rightly deplore civilian deaths in Israel as a result of suicide bombs and missile strikes, but do not decry civilian Palestinian deaths. When attempting to explain our policies US has failed to explain them to the people of the sub-region in terms that emphasize the common interests and values that do exist. A combination of aggressive near-term and long-term initiatives, largely focused on empowering local and third-party voices, given our lack of credibility in the region, are needed to eliminate impediments to pursuit of our policies and, eventually, to improve the US and Allies' standing in the sub-region.

(U) The Problem Set:

- The Arab-Israeli conflict and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan provide the lens through which much of the sub-region views the US and its actions.
- US support for Israel, its relative silence on Gaza in 2009 (including abstaining from the UNSC vote) and Lebanon in 2006, and its military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan bolster the perception that the US is anti-Islam and cares little for the peoples of the sub-region compared with Israel.
- There exists no clear-cut set of objectives, priorities or targets for the USG's SC activities.
 - Who are our targets? Jihadists? The general public?
 - Is our object to delegitimize violent extremism? Is our goal to promote the US and its interests?
- Iran has a strong SC posture in the sub-region – as do its proxies.
 - The popularity of media associated with Iran (al-'Alam, PressTV) and Iran's proxies – such as Hizballah's al-Manar – has increased since 2006.
- The USG has few personnel capable of participating in open debate carried out in the languages of the sub-region.
 - US government presence on pan-Arab satellite channels has increased in recent years, but for the most part it abstains from participating in the debates over US and Ally policy carried out on such channels such as al-Jazeera.
 - The US has made ineffective use of the existing pool of credible, native speakers (diaspora communities) to convey US and Allied messages.
- The US media is believed by many in the sub-region to be under the control of American Jews and/or the US government.
- A widespread belief in often outlandish conspiracy theories pervades the sub-region.
- Uneven standards of journalism plague the sub-region.

- Local media continue to nurture the controversy surrounding US justification for launching a preemptive war on Iraq and cast similar doubts on the motivations behind other US policies.
- Widely publicized scandals involving torture and alleged torture – such as at Abu Ghraib – as well as international condemnation of continued detention without trial of terror suspects at Guantanamo undermine influence of US values and the esteem in which they are held.
- Security concerns have served to isolate US embassies and embassy personnel from the local populations.
- US and Allies are perceived as ‘careless’ about civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Outlets in the CENTCOM AOR, especially Iraqi, report often on the condition of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, Syria and Egypt. The US and Allies are blamed for displacing these people. For example, the announcement that the US plans to accept 7000 Iraqi refugees in 2007 and 20,000 in 2008 was portrayed in regional press as pathetic given our involvement in the conditions that caused their fleeing Iraq.

(U) Assessment of the Current SC Effort:

(U) Coordination of deeds with words is lacking in the US Government. There is no overall narrative or objective that allows commanders to balance long-term effects against tactical gains. Without a clear objective, commanders default to actions that make tactical sense and the US government either goes into reactive, damage control mode or simply goes silent, as seen during the January 2009 fighting in Gaza.

(U) US efforts rely too heavily on one-way communications (messaging) without the complementary engagement/relationship building and capacity building. Although the messaging needs to be increased, the biggest increase in effort should come in two-way engagement and building the local capacity to develop and carry messages.

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(U) Media outlets that are directly supported by the US, however, have had little impact and are considered US propaganda. Statements by US politicians and military personnel are viewed with suspicion and distrust. Conspiracy theories abound, and the gap between US words and deeds makes criticism of the US and Allies easy. Complicating the landscape for the US and Allies is the fragmented and often sectarian make-up of media in the region – especially in Lebanon. US SC relies too much on its own outlets such as al-Hurra and Voice of America. al-Hurra, although effective in Iraq, has few viewers in the sub-region and cannot be relied upon to get messages out. Efforts to develop indigenous voices are likewise insufficient or otherwise ineffective.

(U) The US government currently had little presence in the “blogosphere” where it can target youths and elites, although much has changed over the past 12 months with DoS and CENTCOM engaging in this medium. As Internet access and mobile technologies expand across the sub-region, these technologies will expand the ability of the US and Allies to promote their messages to the people of the sub-region – especially those under 30 (by far, the largest demographic group in the sub-region). US and Allies are developing their efforts in these media, but much more work remains to be done.

(U) Our success in stabilizing Iraq after 2006 surprised many in the region. That success now provides a brief opportunity to discredit extremists and improve US and Allies influence. Our failure to adequately counter Iranian SC, however, is of concern. Iranian proxies within the sub region amplify Iran's messages at our expense.

(U) **Objectives**

(U) **18-24 Months:**

(U) Regional environment hostile to violent extremism and proliferation of WMD.

- Arab and Muslim public opinion perceive concrete, public actions have been taken to advance the MEPP
- Syrians desire alternatives to their current isolation in the region by distancing themselves from Iran, while improve ties with the US and seeking a peace treaty with Israel.

(U) Governmental and Civil society institutions capable of creating local capacity to devalue violent extremism

- Terrorism and violence devalued through engagement and capacity building of indigenous voices and institutions.
- Local academic and civil society institutions are strengthened to become agents for peaceful political and economic reform.

(U) Common operating picture for Strategic Communication with improved interagency coordination

- POTUS appoints senior SC leader to coordinate interagency process for SC activities addressing national security issues.
- Strategic Communications coordination enhanced at the sub-regional level through field-based State-led coordination teams in partnership with CENTCOM.

• (U) **5 Years:** Perception of stability in the AOR, where citizens reject violent extremism and proliferation of WMD.

- Syria pursues a multilateral foreign policy to maximize its own prestige and prosperity
- The Arab world sees the US is making honest efforts to reach two state solution for Palestinian/Israeli conflict
- Iraq is perceived in sub-region as having succeeded in establishing a representative, effective government
- US perceived as a force for stability rather than one of occupation and dominance as we achieve significant progress on MEPP and stability in Iraq, Pakistan & Afghanistan.
- Indigenous NGOs and other civil society institutions become advocates for pluralistic societies, good governance and global economic ties.
- Polling and focus group work will show that a majority of citizens begin to reject violent extremism as a tool for political change.
- Pool of potential recruits to violent extremist organizations is reduced with a growing sense of defeat within extremist groups.

- US/West actions are not perceived as anti-Islamic.
- (U) **10-25 years:** Effective governance, rule of law, broad-based economies and flourishing civil society.
 - Regional Governments and majorities of citizens reject violent extremist organizations.
 - Governments and citizens have increasingly positive perceptions of US intentions with MEPP in final phase of resolution; the Taliban and AQ marginalized.
 - Governments continue to support strong bilateral relationships with the US and with neighbors.
 - Governments and citizens of the region reject proliferation of WMD.

(U) **Key Recommendations:**

(U) Coordination

- Train all commanders entering the AOR on the operational integration of actions and messages so that they understand that the two are interrelated. With proper sensitivity to the issue, commanders will be able to integrate words and actions. This is currently neglected in most military training courses.

(U) Messaging:

- USG and Allies encourage and amplify indigenous voices who oppose violent extremism while avoiding tainting them with the US finger print.
- CENTCOM capture the “excesses” of violent extremists – especially those which result in the deaths of indigenous women and children – proactively publicizing them as events occur to discredit terrorists
- DoS/CENTCOM explore ways to make use of mobile device technology as a means of messaging the large youth population not currently served by US broadcasting.
- CENTCOM/DoS working through indigenous or international NGOs expand professional commercially developed programs which rely on local creative talent to develop credible/relevant messages to target audiences. Provide forums where “creative commons” content can be easily accessed and broadcast by small, indigenous outlets.
- CENTCOM routinely facilitate the early release of combat camera video, Electronic News Gathering (ENG) team evidence and operational reporting to CENTCOM and State Embassy PA officers to pro-actively defeat VEO propaganda.
- DoS/CENTCOM SC strategies re-enforce the perception of failure of violent extremism by integrating examples of the physical, social and economic effects of extremism in all regional and global messaging activities.
- CENTCOM exploit the NATIVE ECHO program.
- CENTCOM fund youth de-radicalization programs in the sub-region partnered with host governments.

(U) Engagement:

- US and Allies integrate all actions in the sub-region with an IO/SC strategy and the resources – mainly personnel – required to operationalize that strategy.
- US and Allies invest further in “American Corner”-type (and corresponding Allies) programs to engage the populations of the sub-region for the long-term.
- USG engage all media in the sub-region that have established reputations tailoring the engagement to our objectives but maintaining consistency with the key overall narrative.
- Increase travel by DoS Officials to meet with counterparts and encourage CODELS to meet with sub-regional leaders when traveling to/from the combat areas.
- US and Allies develop and deploy a corps of USG and Allies employees capable of carrying US and Ally message on pan-Arab satellite stations and in public discourse.
 - This includes an expanded speaker program, sports team exchanges, and popular culture exchanges.
 - USG indirectly fund Arab cultural events through university programs that fit US objectives but are not necessarily pro-US.

(U) Capacity building:

- US and Allies work through NGOs to develop and train indigenous media.
- US and Allies encourage (and fund) key allies and partners to develop their own SC programs where appropriate.
- CENTCOM should fund de-radicalization, education, and indigenous media capacity-building organizations.
- CENTCOM should train a cadre of civilians and officers capable of carrying the message on the Arabic-language media in Arabic. Native speakers should be especially recruited.
- US vastly increase educational exchanges from and to the sub-region.
- Increased funding for proven academic centers in the sub-region such as the American University of Beirut, the American University of Cairo, and the Lebanese American University has resulted in exchange programs between university students as well as a new generation of Western-educated technocrats capable of both providing effective government and communicating with Western audiences and officials.
- Support/fund new regional communication networks (new media blogging; social networks; cell phone) that provide alternatives to established satellite TV and print media.
- DoS and USAID, working through American NGOs, host country talent in television and movie industry to create films and TV serials that develop themes and narratives supporting US objectives in the region.