

LT2S 2000
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FM WASHINGTON
TO ROUTINE FCO
TELNO 1350

OF 192340Z MAY 86

INFO ROUTINE DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, BEIRUT, AMMAN, CAIRO, RIYADH

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OUR TELNO 1327: US/SYRIA: ASAD INTERVIEW

1. THE WASHINGTON POST OF 18 MAY CARRIED A LONG INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT ASAD (FULL TEXT FOLLOWS BY BAG - NOT TO ALL).
2. ABOUT ISRAEL, ASAD SAID: QUOTE NEITHER SYRIA NOR ISRAEL HAS UNDERTAKEN ANY UNUSUAL TROOP MOVEMENTS ON THE GROUND IN RECENT DAYS DESPITE REPORTS OF GROWING TENSIONS. THE TENSIONS NOW SEEM TO BE LESSENING UNQUOTE. STATE TELL US THEY FIND THIS ENCOURAGING: WITH PERES' RECENT REMARKS IN THE SAME VEIN IT SHOULD REDUCE SPECULATION ABOUT AN IMMINENT SYRIAN/ISRAELI CLASH.
3. ON THE OTHER HAND, ASAD REFUSED ONCE AGAIN TO ACKNOWLEDGE ABU NIDHAL ACTIVITIES IN SYRIA: QUOTE ABU NIDHAL IS NOT IN SYRIA ... HE DOES NOT OPERATE ANYTHING IN SYRIA. THERE IS AN OFFICE DOING CULTURAL AND POLITICAL WORK AMONG THE PALESTINIANS, BUT THOSE WHO ARE IN SYRIA HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH TERRORIST ACTS UNQUOTE. STATE SAY THEY HAD HOPED THAT RECENT PRESSURES MIGHT HAVE PERSUADED ASAD IN SOME MEASURE TO ACCOMMODATE WESTERN CONCERNS ABOUT THE ABU NIDHAL PRESENCE IN DAMASCUS. THEY WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS SYRIA HARD ON THIS ISSUE.
4. ASAD DENIED THAT SYRIA HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE ATTEMPTED EL AL BOMBING AT HEATHROW: QUOTE ALTHOUGH WE WISH ALL KINDS OF DISASTERS TO BEFALL ISRAEL, SINCE WE ARE ENEMIES AND IN A STATE OF WAR FOR 38 YEARS - AND THE ISRAELIS WISH THE SAME FOR US - WE REFUSE TO CARRY OUT SUCH ACTS AGAINST CIVIL AVIATION. WE CONDEMN THE HIJACKING OR EXPLODING OF CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT. SUCH ACTS ARE COWARDLY UNQUOTE. HE ALSO SAID THAT SYRIA WOULD CONTINUE TO DO ALL IT COULD FOR THE RELEASE OF HOSTAGES IN LEBANON.

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MR SLATER

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MR LONG

MR MACINNES

MR BARRINGTON

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