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FM DAMASCUS

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TELNO 046

OF 110730Z FEBRUARY 86

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SYRIA/JORDAN: VISIT OF JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER

SUMMARY

1. ZAID RIFAI VISITED DAMASCUS ON 9 FEBRUARY. LOCAL MEDIA HAVE NOT COMMENTED ON THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS TALKS WITH PRESIDENT ASAD BUT THE VISIT IS ASSUMED TO HAVE BEEN PREPARATORY TO THE SYRIAN PRESIDENT VISITING JORDAN.

DETAIL

2. AS FORECAST IN TUR, ZAID RIFAI VISITED DAMASCUS FOR A FEW HOURS ON 9 FEBRUARY ACCOMPANIED BY MARWAN QASSIM. THE SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTED THE VISIT PROMINENTLY BUT WITHOUT COMMENT ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE DISCUSSIONS OR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SYRIAN/JORDANIAN RELATIONS GENERALLY. THE LEBANESE PRESS AS READ HERE SEES THE VISIT AS ENABLING THE JORDANIANS TO BRIEF ASAD ON THE OUTCOME OF THEIR LATEST DEALINGS WITH ARAFAT AND TO PREPARE FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT BY PRESIDENT ASAD TO AMMAN. THIS IS THE GENERAL ASSUMPTION: WHEN I ASKED THE HEAD OF WESTERN EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT ON 10 FEBRUARY WHETHER A DATE HAD BEEN FIXED HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT (OR PERHAPS WOULD NOT) TELL ME BUT HE CLEARLY REGARDED AN EARLY VISIT AS ON THE CARDS.

COMMENT

3. NO DOUBT AN AUTHORITATIVE JORDANIAN ACCOUNT WILL BE FORTHCOMING. MY EXPECTATION IS THAT PRESIDENT ASAD, WHO NEED NOT HURRY TO AMMAN, WILL TRY TO EXTRACT FROM THE JORDANIANS SOME COMMITMENT IN ADVANCE PERHAPS TO A JOINT STATEMENT ON AN INTERNATIONAL PEACE CONFERENCE EFFECTIVELY ENDING THE AMMAN AGREEMENT.

TOMKYS

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