

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTION GROUP MEETING
9 SEPTEMBER 1970

CONTINGENCIES FOR HIJACKING CRISIS

The Department of Defense has taken initial military steps for possible contingencies related to PFLP hijackings. Six USAF C-130 aircraft are prepositioned (as of 0800 EDT) at Incirlik AFB. Flying time from Incirlik AFB to Dawson Field is one hour and thirty minutes. In addition, the USS Independence is moving to a position 100 nautical miles from the Israeli Lebanon coast; four destroyers and one oiler accompany the carrier and will be joined by two more destroyers. No alert to ground troops or tactical air support units has been given. Urgent efforts have been undertaken to establish better communications between Jordanian Army General Headquarters and the DAO and Washington by stationing a DAO representative at the Headquarters to use whatever means of communication are available to him.

This paper deals with further ^{political} military options which may be open to the U.S. under the present contingency where hostages are still alive at Dawson Field and other passengers are in Amman. In addition, other contingencies are discussed.

1. Further Possible Military Moves Under the Present Contingency
 - a. Special rescue plan (being studied in DOD).
 - b. Increased readiness posture for possible contingency operations in Jordan.

2. If the Fedayeen Blow Up the Aircraft with Passengers Aboard.

Presumably we could overlook the lesser offense of blowing up the aircraft while releasing the passengers. The massacre of innocent travellers would, however, mark a new low in respect for international law and have far-reaching implications. The U.S. would be forced to take some kind of action to prevent a rash of such hijackings. Our options would range from diplomatic to military and from purely national to concerted international action

a. Take action in concert with other major powers to cut civil air links with countries given haven to hijackers and obtain worldwide ratification for an international convention specifying the obligations of all sovereign states. This would have the effect of punishing the worst offenders (Cuba, Syria, Algeria) and creating a uniform international system to limit air piracy. But it could become bogged down over questions of political sanctuary and alleged violations by minor offenders. It could also work to alienate further the Arab countries from the West, assuming the Soviets did not go along with the effort. If the effort were truly international, however, this impact would be reduced. It would not necessarily prevent hijackings to Jordan as long as the Fedayeen remains in control of major areas of that country, but it might help to convince the King and/or the JAA of the vital need to bring the Fedayeen under control.

b. Organize an International Punitive Expedition Against the PFLP. It is doubtful that such an effort would obtain broad international support any more than the various efforts to organize a Suez Canal users organization in 1956, or a concert of the maritime powers in 1967. Any punitive expedition would inevitably be branded as U.S.-Israeli backed "neo-

mixed reactions even in Europe. Moreover, as an international effort, there would inevitably be clashes of interest, delays and difficulties of coordination. It is doubtful that any such effort would ever get off the ground. Even if it were never executed, the very concept would be a godsend to the communists -- a cause celebre they could exploit for years to come. Finally, even if it succeeded, it is doubtful that the Jordanian Government would be able to survive such an effort, and thus longer-term consequences would likely be unfavorable to U.S. interests.

c. Undertake a Swift U.S. Punitive Mission. This would have the virtue of quick and decisive action unhampered by the need for consultation and coordination with other powers. Under the best of circumstances, the PFLP would be rounded up quickly and turned over to the Jordanian authorities for punishment. Under the worst of circumstances, the PFLP would simply melt away while U.S. troops remained in semi-occupation duties. In either case, the Jordanian authorities would find the U.S. presence extremely embarrassing. The net effect would probably be to destroy what would remain of Hussein's prestige and insure his ultimate downfall. It could not be assumed, in any case, that the offending PFLP would long remain in custody.

d. Undertake efforts to evacuate all American citizens, as well as passengers in Amman by force if necessary. This operation will probably be necessary if the hostages are murdered at Dawson airstrip. Contingency plans already exist for this, including increased readiness postures for USCINCEUR and CINCSTRIKE.

e. U.S. demands that GOJ act against the Fedayeen. This could take several channels: strong diplomatic initiatives, cut-off of future arms deliveries, cut-off of U.S. civil air traffic, etc. If it succeeded, it would move us to Option 3 (covered at Tab A). This move would risk precipitating

the complete collapse of the GOJ, but under present circumstances the risk may be even greater if the Jordanian Government does nothing.

3. A Full-Scale Jordanian-Fedayeen Confrontation. (This contingency is covered in a separate paper, Tab A.)

4. Hostages are Released Without an Agreement with the PFLP. It is hypothetically possible that, after the failure of negotiations, the PFLP would simply release the prisoners without obtaining satisfaction on some or all of its demands. The PFLP would simply have backed down from its threat and could conceivably then be punished by the Jordanian authorities. It is doubtful, however, that the Jordanian Government could isolate the PFLP from the other Fedayeen under such circumstances and would have then to be prepared for a full-scale confrontation. Should the Jordanians succeed in executing a quick surgical action in disposing of the PFLP, they would still face adverse reaction in the Arab world, though there might be some secret support for the move, given the PFLP's doctrinaire Marxist philosophy. They would of course still have the other Fedayeen to deal with.

5. Extension of Time Beyond 72 Hours. Continue present efforts, with more emphasis on emergency rescue/evacuation