

RELEASE IN PART B5

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, October 17, 2011 3:04 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: Damascus SITREP 10/17/2011

FYI

From: Mills, Cheryl D
Sent: Monday, October 17, 2011 3:04 PM
To: Kennedy, Patrick F
Cc: Walles, Jacob; Sherman, Wendy R; Boswell, Eric J
Subject: RE: Damascus SITREP 10/17/2011

[Redacted]

B5

cdm

From: Kennedy, Patrick F
Sent: Monday, October 17, 2011 3:01 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Cc: Walles, Jacob; Sherman, Wendy R; Boswell, Eric J
Subject: FW: Damascus SITREP 10/17/2011

Cheryl

[Redacted]

Regards

pat

Damascus SitRep 10/17/2011

(SBU) Yesterday (10/16/2011) state-run newspaper *Al-Thawra* printed a front page article stating: "Ford was in charge of death squads in Iraq and is trying to apply his experience in Syria." The article claims, falsely, that Ambassador Ford was responsible for death squads organized by the Salvadoran government in Iraq some years ago, when Ford served under then Ambassador John Negroponte. The *Al-Thawra* article goes on to make the ludicrous claim that Ambassador Ford "started applying the experience he gained in Iraq in Syria," citing the death of 130 SARG security officers in Jisr al-Shughour shortly after the Ambassador's visit to the embattled city of Hama. RSO Damascus is concerned that such flagrant misinformation on the front page of a state-run newspaper is tantamount to incitement and may result in even greater anti-American sentiment and attacks directed at the Ambassador.

(U) In a press conference held on Saturday (10/15/2011), Qadri Jamil, a member of The Popular Front for Change and Liberation in Syria, denied that his organization had any contact with the U.S. Ambassador to Syria, saying: "contacting

the enemy is a national betrayal." Jamil urged the Syrian government to expel Ambassador Ford, claiming that Ford has "encroached upon all diplomatic norms." RSO Damascus notes that this is yet another instance of mounting anti-American sentiment directed at Ambassador Ford.

(U) Tonight marks the third and final night of condolences for Mohammad Ibrahim Shayban, a young child that was killed by SARG forces during last Friday's demonstrations in the Damascus neighborhood of Midan. The funeral and condolence ceremonies have drawn large crowds and resulted in clashes with SARG security forces.

(U) The Syrian economy has been deteriorating since the beginning of the unrest in March. However, one opposition website claims that: "prices for electrical appliances went up by 30%, furniture by 50%, clothing by 30%, autos by 30%. What makes it worse is the accompanying rise in food/agricultural products and basic materials, as prices for canned food went up by 20%, fish by 60%, cooking oil by 20%, dairy products by 20%, and baby milk by 10%. The economic conditions continue to worsen despite Assad government's overturn of the import suspension ruling which only contributed to negative market speculations." RSO Damascus notes that it is likely for crime in Syria to increase as the economy continues its downward spiral.

(U) The embassy's Main CAC, which was closed due to damage sustained during the July 11 attack against the embassy, was re-opened today.

(U) TDY ARSO Nadim Abdus-Shahid departed post yesterday, en-route back to Amman. RSO Damascus is now at minimal staffing with RSO and one ARSO.

(SBU) Both RSO Damascus and the MSG Detachment remain on a heightened security status.

J.R. Kulik
Asst. Regional Security Officer
American Embassy Damascus, Syria
Tel: (963-11) 3391-3302
Fax: (963-11) 332-1456
IVG: 8-68-737-3302
Time Zone = GMT +3
Work week = Sun-Thurs

Confidentiality Notice: This e-mail is for the sole use of the intended recipient and may contain confidential, privileged or law enforcement sensitive information. If you are not the intended recipient, you must not review, re-transmit, copy, use, distribute or disseminate this information in any manner, including oral and electronic communication methods. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure or distribution is prohibited. This e-mail is UNCLASSIFIED based on the definitions in E.O. 12958.

SBU
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.