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Subject: SPOT REPORT No. 1 08/18/III (SBU)

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
 Operations Center

SPOT REPORT No. 1

Reaction to the President's Statement on Syria

Thursday, August 18, 2011
 1635 EDT

INTERNATIONAL REACTION

- (SBU) EU High Representative Ashton said Syrian President Asad's "promises of reform have lost all credibility" and noted the "complete loss of [his] legitimacy in the eyes of the Syrian people and the necessity for him to step aside." Ashton also called for a Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on Syria. The EU desk comments the EU Political and Security Committee will discuss further sanctions on August 19. Ashton is seeking consensus on sanctions targeting the petroleum and telecommunication sectors, but not all member states are in agreement. *(Ops/EU desk telcon)*
- (SBU) French President Sarkozy, German Chancellor Merkel, and British Prime Minister Cameron issued a joint statement declaring Asad "can no longer claim to lead" and calling on him to "step aside." The statement also supported stronger EU sanctions and demanded an immediate halt to violence. *(Ops/France desk e-mail, Ops/UK desk e-mail, AP)*
- (SBU) Embassy Ankara reports Prime Minister Erdogan may not make a statement on Syria. The Turkish NSC issued a statement calling for a halt to violence, a democratic political transformation, and freedom of expression, but did not call for Asad to relinquish power. *(Ops/Embassy Ankara e-mail)*
- (U) Jordanian Foreign Minister Judeh said Jordan is "angered" and "extremely worried about this continuing escalation, the violence, the killing [of civilians] and the continuation of military operations." Judeh said Syrian officials must understand that "dialogue has to be the order of the day and not violence...reforms must be implemented...and military operations must stop." *(AP)*
- (SBU) The UN HRC released a fact-finding mission report highlighting crimes against humanity in Syria between March and July, according to press. HRC Commissioner Pillay will brief the Security Council on the situation August 18. USUN comments the report is a positive development, but discussions at the UNSC are not expected to yield a new statement or resolution on Syria. *(Ops/USUN New York telcon, Reuters)*
- (SBU) Canadian Prime Minister Harper condemned the ongoing "campaign of terror" and called on Asad to "relinquish power and step down immediately," media report. Harper said the regime has lost all legitimacy, and the Syrian people have the right to determine their future. The Canada desk comments Canada has been eager to call for Asad's departure, and notes although Canada does not have extensive equities in Syria, it will explore additional sanctions. *(Ops/Canada desk e-mail, AP)*

- (U) In advance of President Obama's statement, Switzerland recalled its ambassador to Syria August 18, according to press. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs issued a statement condemning the violence. *(Reuters)*
- (SBU) The Netherlands desk comments Dutch Foreign Minister Rosenthal called for Asad to step down, adding the Netherlands will support the EU effort to tighten sanctions against the regime. *(Ops/Netherlands desk e-mail)*
- (SBU) The Denmark desk comments Danish Foreign Minister Espersen said "time has run out for Asad and his empty promises" and said he looked forward to the EU tightening sanctions against the Asad regime, specifically in the energy sector. *(Ops/Denmark desk e-mail)*
- (SBU) The Germany desk comments Foreign Minister Westerwelle issued a statement noting Asad "has completely lost legitimacy to lead Syria into the future," and welcoming "the clear statement of the U.S. President and of my colleague Hillary Clinton."
(Ops/Germany desk e-mail)
- (SBU) The Brazil desk comments Acting Foreign Minister Nogueira privately expressed interest in the details related to U.S. sanctions in the banking, trade, and energy sectors to determine where Brazil might be able to contribute. He said Brazil is committed to the goals of the UNSC presidential statement and to implementing the Syrian government's recent promises regarding reform. *(Ops/Brazil desk e-mail)*

SYRIAN REACTION

- (U) The Syrian Ministry of Information accused the United States and Europe of stoking violence in Syria rather than "offering a helping hand to implement its program of reforms." *(AFP)*
- (U) The Syrian Foreign Ministry denied Jordanian Foreign Minister Judeh expressed discontent over events in Syria in an August 17 phone call and expressed wonder that the Jordanian FM could make such a statement contrary to the truth, media report.
(Syrian Arab News Agency)
- (SBU) Embassy Damascus confirmed Asad met with Baath party members and representatives of public organizations on August 17. Asad said reform in Syria will come from the conviction of the Syrians, and not in response to foreign pressure.
(Ops/Embassy Damascus telcon)

SECURITY SITUATION

- (SBU) Embassy Damascus comments the security situation is currently calm in Damascus, noting there have been no pro-government rallies or activities.
(DSCC/Embassy Damascus telcon, Ops/DSCC telcon)
- (SBU) Embassy Damascus reports Local Coordination Committees note a heavy presence of regime troops in Hama, despite the government's claim troops have been withdrawn. The Embassy has reports of shooting in Idlib province and of armed pro-government militias moving into Ramel refugee camp in Latakia. Arrests continue in Deir al-Zour and Damascus, and anti-government demonstrations continue in Homs. *(Ops/Embassy Damascus telcon and e-mail)*

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