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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

#65

CM-522-83
3 December 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Strike Options (U)

DECLASSIFIED IN PART
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: MAY 16 2019

1. (U) At approximately 0730Z on 3 December 1983, two U.S. Navy F-14s conducting reconnaissance over the northern Shuf and Metn regions were fired on by Syrian anti-aircraft artillery (14.5mm, 23mm, 57mm AAA fire) and as many as 10 SA-7 SAMs from the 62nd Infantry Brigade and an unidentified element.

[REDACTED]

after-action report indicates as many as 748 AAA rounds were fired at two F-14s.

OSD 3.3(b)(1)

2. (U) Earlier on 3 December 1983, at approximately 0600Z, at least 14 Israeli Air Force aircraft conducted air strikes against Sowfar and Bhamdum. The Israeli aircraft were fired upon by AAA elements of the 62nd Infantry Brigade and 226th AAA Battalion, which are distributed over a wide area. No damage was inflicted on the Israeli aircraft. The flight path of the U.S. reconnaissance aircraft was six miles north of the Israeli strike.

3. (U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff, having met in special session on 3 December 1983, unanimously recommend a swift and decisive strike on Syrian AAA positions in Lebanon associated with the firing on our F-14 aircraft, followed by a demarche to Syria. Specifically, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend:

- Direct USCINCEUR to conduct an strike on 4 December 1983 against the areas from which our TARPS flights took fire.

- After completion of the mission, the Department of State would present a demarche to Syria indicating that the strike was a response to the 3 December 1983 attacks on our aircraft, and that reconnaissance flights are conducted for the defense of our forces, would continue to be flown and would be aggressively defended.

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS +5 U.S.C 5552
Date: 16 May 2019 Authority: EO 13526
Declassify: _____ Deny in Full: _____
Declassify in Part: X
Reason: 3.3(b)(1)
MDR: 18 -M- 1348

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Lawrence Sanders
Date: 3-3-1984
Classified by: [REDACTED]

330-86-0069, bx 1, Lebanon

See Def Cent Hr.

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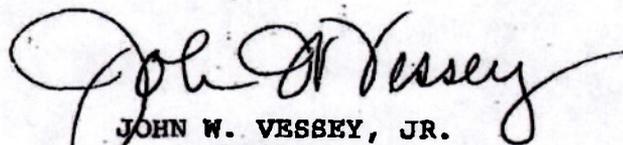
4. (U) If a decision cannot be made in time to conduct the strike on 4 December 1983, and thus clearly connect the strike to the attacks on U.S. reconnaissance flights, then the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend the following option:

- Direct the Department of State to present a demarche to Syria stating that our TARPS flights are for purely defensive purposes, attacks on these aircraft are inexcusable, and any future attacks on U.S. aircraft will bring swift retaliation.
- USCINCEUR should then be directed to be prepared to respond to attacks on TARPS missions with immediate strikes on the hostile AA positions.

5. (U) A decision to strike Syrian AA batteries in Lebanon represents a significant escalation in U.S. response, and, once taken, all subsequent TARPS flights will have to be protected. We are unable to predict the Syrian reaction to a strike on their AA positions; such a strike may deter future Syrian firings, and that is our goal. However, striking AA batteries could lead to increased Syrian responses, for which we must be prepared. Should Syrian missile sites or aircraft attack U.S. aircraft or ships, we must be prepared to respond. Any such response must anticipate defending our aircraft from missiles fired from within Syria.

6. (U) As strikes against Syria will increase the risk to the MNF, it is clear that our MNF allies should be warned.

7. (U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the National Command Authority should address these considerations before making a decision to conduct the recommended strikes.



JOHN W. VESSEY, JR.
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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