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E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)

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~~SECRET~~/SENSITIVE

25X6, E.O. 13526

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Record of Secure Voice Conversation Between John Dean, Beirut,
and Hal Saunders in Washington, 1730, Friday, November 16

John Dean delivered our response to the PLO message dated 14 November, 2310 hours, at 1930 hours Beirut time today (Friday). At 2330 hours Beirut time, he received the following message from his contact:

"Message received at 2000 hours November 16, 1979 from the PLO representative in Tehran:

'It is expected that a decision will be taken today to release the women, the Blacks, and the non-Americans. The Iman Khomeini informed me that he has taken this step because as far as the women hostages are concerned, their release is consonant with mercy and compassion which characterize Islam. Whereas as far as the Blacks are concerned their release is on the grounds that they are underdogs in US and sympathetic supporters of the PLO.

'It is expected that the number of hostages to be released will be as follows: four women, six Blacks, 3 non-Americans.'

COMMENT: It is obvious that this action is one that has been in the works in Tehran for a couple of days in response to our earlier suggestion that they release at least a small number of hostages as an initial step. No word has been sent to Dean about the mechanics of this release--how the released hostages would be released from the compound, to whom they would be turned over and where they would be sent.

Harold H. Saunders

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