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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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[Redacted]

April 23, 1974

To: M - Ambassador Brown

From: S/CCT - Lewis Hoffacker

Subject: Proposal to Modify Operation Boulder

Background

One of the first measures recommended by the Working Group of the President's Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism was to screen Arab visa applicants. This was done under Operation Boulder which was instituted in September, 1972 and which has, with certain modifications, been in operation ever since.

Current Status

In light of the obvious and continuing threat from potential Arab terrorists, particularly Palestinians, none of the agencies in the Working Group wishes to eliminate Operation Boulder at this time. However, the Visa Office, based on its own experience and on several reports from the field, - e.g. - Kuwait 1168 (Tab A), would now like to modify Operation Boulder to give visa issuing posts more latitude in waiving Operation Boulder requirements. The Visa Office believes the proposed new procedures would relieve pressures on the posts and cut down somewhat on the voluminous paperwork in Washington; and at the same time would maintain the security screen at approximately its same effectiveness. The proposal is attached (Tab B).

Reactions

Among concerned agencies, State (NEA), CIA and INS accept the Visa Office proposal. The FBI, the Secret

[Redacted]

GDS

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Service and State (SY) are opposed. This opposition is cogently expressed by the FBI and SY in the attached memorandums (Tab C). We have gone over the position carefully with senior representatives of the FBI and have found the FBI to be unshakeable in its belief that Operation Boulder should be maintained in its present form.

Comment

There is a clear-cut decision to be made. On the side of easing the current procedures the arguments are: (1) the new procedures will be almost as effective; (2) a considerable work-load at posts will be eliminated; and (3) posts' day-to-day relations with Arab countries will be improved at a time when an improvement would be particularly beneficial. The arguments for maintaining Boulder in its current form are: (1) the danger to the U.S. from Arab terrorism is demonstrably as great if not greater than it was when Boulder was instituted; and (2) the proposed modification would result in unacceptable gaps in our security screen. Although I would like to find some way to modify the Boulder program to satisfy the Visa Office and our posts abroad, I find it difficult to recommend against the position of the FBI, the agency in this country primarily responsible for internal security.

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Options

- (1) To continue Operation Boulder as is:

Approve DB Apr 24

- (2) To approve the attached telegram (Tab D) amending Boulder:

Approve \_\_\_\_\_

Attachments:

- Tab A - Kuwait 1168  
Tab B - Visa Office Proposal  
Tab C - FBI and SY Memos  
Tab D - Proposed telegram