38. LIBYA

Background

Although the extent to which the Government of Libya is responsible for
Middle Eastern terrorism is unclear, there is little doubt that since 1969
Libya has given material support and sanctuary to certain groups using
terrorist tactics in Europe, in the Middle East and in North Africa. Such
support for terrorism, in addition to Libya's military incursions into
Chad, has increased tensions between Tripoli and governments in the West.

Tensions with the United States have been particularly acute since the
Reagan Administration took office and challenged the unilateral Libyan
claim to the Gulf of Sidra as territorial waters. On 19 August 1981 Libyan
fighters fired on US interceptors in the Gulf and US forces shot down two
Libyan planes in response. When Libyan troops moved into Chad in 1983, the
United States and France jointly provided military support to Chad
Government forces. The shooting of a policewoman by a Libyan diplomat
outside the Libyan Mission in London, on 8 May 1984, led Britain to break
off diplomatic relations with Tripoli. The wave of terrorist activities
following the formation of the Pan-Arab Command in March 1985 (composed of
Libya, Iran and Syria), particularly the 23 November 1985 highjacking of an
Egyptair jetliner and the attacks on El Al counters at the Rome and Vienna
airports on 27 December 1985, further exacerbated tense relations between
Libya and the West.

On 24 March 1986, the United States reported that Libyan forces had fired
six surface-to-air missiles on US forces carrying out exercises in the Gulf
of Sidra. US forces responded by disabling two Libyan naval vessels and by
attacking ground missile facilities on the coast.

On 5 April a bomb exploded in a West Berlin discotheque frequented by US
servicemen. American officials claimed to have conclusive evidence showing