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To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - George C. Denney, Jr. *g.c.d.l*
Subject: UAR-LEBANON: The Lebanese Merry-Go-Round -- Can Nasser Catch the Brass Ring?

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The UAR announcement on October 29 that it would undertake to "mediate" the confrontation between the Lebanese government and the fedayeen represented the culmination of cautious Egyptian initiatives designed to assure Cairo a central role in the dispute. Less clear, but potentially more significant, than the fact of Egypt's involvement are the Nasser regime's motives and expectations. Actor Rather Than Playwright. Nasser faces, in this case, a problem wrought by other Arabs, and it is perhaps a measure of the decline in his influence in the Arab world over the last few years that he is unable to call a halt. While he retains sufficient influence to exacerbate the conflict within Lebanon--a course which he has not chosen to pursue--he can improve the situation there only by seeking to bring the disputants together. Nasser may not be the ideal mediator from either the Lebanese or the fedayeen point of view, but he is the only Arab leader acceptable to both sides and undoubtedly hopes to capitalize on this asset.

Mainsprings of Nasser's Ambivalence. Nasser's attitude on most contentious issues in this dispute and his hesitant approach to the problem probably reflect his uncertainty about the shape of the accommodation he would prefer and the complex and often competing considerations which motivate him.

To the extent that Nasser seeks to maintain and enhance his influence and prestige throughout the Arab world, the Lebanese crisis presents a challenge which

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