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SUBJECT: SYRIAN MEDIA SAYS BASHAR CONTINUES HAFIZ AL-
ASAD'S LEGACY, HIGHLIGHTS SAUDI STAMP OF
APPROVAL

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¶1. (C) SUMMARY. SYRIAN PRESS JUNE 14-15 EMPHASIZED UNIFIED SUPPORT FOR BASHAR AL-ASAD UNDER THE BANNER OF CONTINUING HIS FATHER'S LEGACY. PRINT FEATURES INCLUDED FAVORABLE COMMENTS BY THE SYRIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY AND FOREIGN DELEGATIONS. PARTICULAR ATTENTION WAS GIVEN TO COMMENTS BY ARAB LEADERS, NOTABLY SAUDI CROWN PRINCE ABDALLAH BIN ABDUL AZIZ, INDICATING A DESIRE FOR AN EARLY ARAB STAMP OF APPROVAL FOR HEIR APPARENT DR. BASHAR. END SUMMARY.

"LEAD US, O BASHAR, WE ARE ALL BEHIND YOU"

¶2. (U) SYRIAN PRESS ON JUNE 14-15 WAS UNITED IN ITS SUPPORT FOR BASHAR. AN EDITORIAL IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED DAILY TISHRIN JUNE 14 EMPHASIZED THAT A "BIG TRUST" WAS PLACED IN THE HANDS OF BASHAR, TO WHOM "WE PLEDGED OUR ALLEGIANCE A LONG TIME AGO". THE EDITORIAL EMPASIZED BASHAR'S DESIRE TO BOTH BUILD A MODERN SYRIA CAPABLE OF PARTICIPATING IN THE "SCIENTIFIC AND INFORMATION RENAISSANCE" AND TO CONTINUE THE "UNIQUE STRUGGLE MARCH" FOR ARAB RIGHTS BEGUN BY HIS FATHER. THE PIECE CONCLUDED BY URGING THE HEIR APPARENT TO "LEAD US, O BASHAR, WE ARE ALL BEHIND YOU". A JUNE 15 EDITORIAL IN THE SAME PUBLICATION SIMILARLY STRESSED THAT "THE CONSENSUS OF THE SYRIANS ON THEIR PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO GENERAL DR. BASHAR AL-ASAD AS PRESIDENT OF THE COUNTRY . IS A CLEAR INDICATION OF THEIR ADHERENCE TO THE CORRECTIONIST COURSE, THE COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION, LIBERATION, STEADFASTNESS AND JOINT ARAB ACTION".

THE LION AND THE CUB: BASHAR AND HIS FATHER'S LEGACY

¶3. (U) THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED DAILY AL-BA'TH REPORTED ON JUNE 14 THAT THE SYRIAN PEOPLE WERE LOYAL ONLY TO THE LATE, GREAT FIGHTER WHO "ACHIEVED MIRACLES IN A RECORD RACE WITH TIME" (LATE PRESIDENT ASAD) AND TO THE "LION CUB (BASHAR)" REARED UNDER HIS FATHER'S TUTELAGE, WHO WILL CARRY ON HIS LEGACY. THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SYRIA TIMES ECHOED THE THEME OF CONTINUITY IN AN EDITORIAL THAT PROCLAIMED THAT BASHAR AL-ASAD WILL "SUSTAIN HIS FATHER'S RICH LEGACY AND CONTINUE ENHANCING THE COUNTRY'S MARCH OF STEADFASTNESS AND ALL-OUT DEVELOPMENT UNTIL THE NATION'S RIGHTS AND LANDS ARE TOTALLY RETURNED, ITS DIGNITY AND PRIDE ARE FULLY SAFEGUARDED AND A DECENT PLACE UNDER THE SUN IS PRESERVED".

¶4. (U) THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED DAILY AL-BA'TH REPORTED THAT MEMBERS OF THE SYRIAN AL-MUSAWIYAH (JEWISH) COMMUNITY HELD A SPECIAL SERVICE TO HONOR THE LATE PRESIDENT ASAD. KHADR AL-KABARITI, WHO LED THE SERVICE, PRAISED THE LATE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO GRANT MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY EQUAL RIGHTS. HE FURTHER STATED THAT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY SUPPORTS THE NOMINATION OF BASHAR TO THE SYRIAN PRESIDENCY AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT HE WOULD "BE A GREAT LEADER, LIKE HIS FATHER, AND BE THE BEST SUCCESSOR TO A GREAT LEADER".

GRIEF AND OPTIMISM AMONG ARAB LEADERS

15. (U) GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED DAILY TISHRIN STATED ON JUNE 14 THAT MILLIONS OF SYRIAN CITIZENS AND A VERY LARGE NUMBER OF WORLD DELEGATIONS MOURNED THE LATE PRESIDENT, AND THAT PEOPLE FROM ALL ARAB COUNTRIES TOOK PART IN THE FUNERAL PROCESSION. SIGNIFICANT COVERAGE WAS DEDICATED TO THE STATEMENTS OF CONDOLENCE MADE BY VARIOUS FOREIGN DELEGATIONS. PARTICULAR ATTENTION WAS PAID TO THE STATEMENT CABLED BY SAUDI CROWN PRINCE ABDALLAH BIN ABD AL-AZIZ TO BASHAR. THE CABLE FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN LOCAL ARABIC-LANGUAGE PRESS AND IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY SYRIA TIMES. ABDALLAH EXPRESSED HIS DEEP REGRET OVER THE TRAGIC LOSS OF LATE PRESIDENT ASAD, BUT EMPHASIZED THAT HIS DELEGATION LEFT SYRIA WITH "COMPLETE OPTIMISM AND CONFIDENCE THAT SYRIA WILL BY THE WILL OF GOD BE IN SAFE AND SKILLFUL HANDS OF ONE WHO HAS GROWN UP WITH FAITH IN GOD, PRIDE IN THE NATION'S HERITAGE, VALUES, SOLIDARITY IN RIGHT, DEPTH IN THINKING, AND FAR-SIGHTEDNESS". THE CROWN PRINCE FURTHER STRESSED SAUDI ARABIA'S FULL SUPPORT FOR SYRIA IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AS AN ISLAMIC AND MORAL DUTY. HE CONCLUDED BY EXTENDING BEST WISHES TO BASHAR IN LEADING THE COUNTRY.

16. (C) COMMENT. THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED SYRIAN PRESS HAS COME DOWN SQUARELY BEHIND BASHAR, STRESSING THE THEME OF CONTINUITY AND PERPETUATION OF HIS FATHER'S LEGACY. WHILE SYRIAN MEDIA HAS ACCORDED FULL ATTENTION TO PRESIDENT ASAD'S PASSING, IT HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE COUNTRY NOW STANDS UNITED BEHIND THE HEIR APPARENT. THE PROMINENT COVERAGE OF THE COMMENTS OF FOREIGN DELEGATES, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF SAUDI CROWN PRINCE ABDALLAH, SUGGEST THE IMPORTANCE THE NEW REGIME ACCORDS TO AN EARLY ARAB STAMP OF APPROVAL FOR BASHAR.

CROCKER