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FM WASHINGTON 052320Z AUG 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2674 OF 5 AUGUST

INFO IMMEDIATE UKMIS NEW YORK TEL AVIV BEIRUT

ROUTINE TUNIS AMMAN CAIRO DAMASCUS PARIS JEDDA

MY TELNO 2660: LEBANON

1. IN A BRIEFING FOR WESTERN DIPLOMATS TODAY, CLUVERIUS REFUSED TO BE DRAWN ON THE PRECISE TERMS OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S MESSAGE TO BEGIN AND WHETHER, AS TODAY'S PRESS SPECULATES, IT HINTED AT THE POSSIBILITY OF US SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL. HE SAID HOWEVER, THAT THE MESSAGE LEFT THE ISRAELIS IN NO DOUBT OF THE AMERICAN VIEWS OF THEIR RECENT ACTION IN BEIRUT AND OF WHAT NOW NEEDED TO BE DONE.

2. CLUVERIUS SAID THAT THE PHRASE QUOTE CEASEFIRE IN PLACE UNQUOTE MEANT THAT THE ISRAELIS SHOULD WITHDRAW TO THE POSITIONS THEY HELD ON 1 AUGUST (IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCR 517) AND THAT THE ISRAELIS KNEW THAT THIS WAS THE AMERICAN POSITION. (THE STATE DEPARTMENT MADE THIS CLEAR PUBLICLY TODAY BUT WOULD NOT SAY WHAT THE US RESPONSE WOULD BE IF ISRAEL DID NOT COMPLY) THE PRESENT ISRAELI AND PLO POSITIONS WERE TOO CLOSE FOR A MANAGEABLE CEASEFIRE. BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT NOT TO BE DISTRACTED INTO A WRANGLE OVER WHETHER THE ISRAELIS SHOULD WITHDRAW TO THE POSITIONS OF 1 AUGUST OR SOME EARLIER DATE. THE PRIORITIES WERE A CEASEFIRE AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE PLO FROM BEIRUT, THEN THE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI AND PLO FORCES FROM LEBANON, FOLLOWED ULTIMATELY BY THE SYRIANS.

3. CLUVERIUS SAID THAT HABIB'S NEGOTIATIONS HAD MADE SOME PROGRESS DESPITE THE ISRAELI BOMBARDMENT OF WEST BEIRUT WHICH IMPEDED WAZZAN'S MOVEMENTS AND HENCE THE TRANSMISSION OF MESSAGES. THE PRINCIPLE OF PLO WITHDRAWAL FROM BEIRUT WAS AGREED AND HABIB WAS ENGAGED IN A SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF THE MODALITIES, COVERING THE STEPS TO BE TAKEN ON EACH DAY OF THE WITHDRAWAL, WHICH ARMS SHOULD BE SURRENDERED BY THE PLO AND WHERE THEY WOULD BE STORED, AND THE TIMING AND SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS OF THE PROPOSED MULTINATIONAL FORCE. CLUVERIUS SAID THAT IT NOW LOOKED MUCH LESS LIKELY THAT THE PLO WOULD STAGE TEMPORARILY TO ANOTHER PART OF LEBANON, BUT HE ADMITTED THAT THEIR FINAL DESTINATIONS WERE STILL NOT AGREED AND THAT THIS REMAINED A DIFFICULT PROBLEM.



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CLUVERIUS ADDED THAT THE MOST OPTIMISTIC TIMETABLE WOULD BE ANOTHER FOUR OR FIVE DAYS TO REACH AGREEMENT AND TWO TO THREE WEEKS THEREAFTER FOR THE PLO TO LEAVE. BUT HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE CHANCES OF ACHIEVING THIS WERE SLIM.

4. THE NORWEGIAN REPRESENTATIVE ASKED FOR AMERICAN VIEWS OF THE FUTURE OF UNIFIL GIVEN THAT ITS MANDATE EXPIRES ON 19 AUGUST. CLUVERIUS SAID THAT THE AMERICANS FAVOURED UNIFIL'S CONTINUATION, ALTHOUGH IT WAS TOO EARLY TO SEE HOW IT MIGHT PLAY A ROLE IN SOUTH LEBANON. THERE WAS NO THOUGHT OF USING UNIFIL IN BEIRUT.

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