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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

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FROM PS/MR HURD

LEBANON

1. DURING SEPARATE MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON TODAY WITH WEINBURGER AND DAM, MR HURD WAS ASKED WHETHER HMG WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE TO A MULTINATIONAL FORCE (MNF) IN LEBANON. BOTH WEINBURGER AND DAM MADE IT CLEAR THAT THIS WAS AN INFORMAL REQUEST AT THIS STAGE. SOUNDINGS WOULD ALSO BE TAKEN SHORTLY OF OTHER POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS: A FINAL LIST WAS STILL TO BE PUT TOGETHER, WHICH WAS LIKELY TO RANGE MORE WIDELY THAN THE EUROPEANS WHO HAD BEEN APPROACHED ON THE SINAI MFO AND INCLUDE ONE OR MORE NORTH AFRICAN STATES. WEINBURGER SAID THAT ALL THOSE WHO DID EVENTUALLY CONTRIBUTE WOULD HAVE TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE LEBANESE.
2. BOTH MEN SAID THAT THE MNF HAD AN ESSENTIAL ROLE TO PLAY IN FACILITATING DISENGAGEMENT AND THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES IN THE LEBANON. UNTIL THIS WAS ACHIEVED, THE REAGAN PLAN FOR THE ARAB-ISRAEL DISPUTE COULD NOT BE CARRIED FORWARD SUCCESSFULLY. WEINBURGER STRESSED THAT THE PRESIDENT, WHO WAS NOW DEEPLY AND PASSIONATELY INVOLVED ON A DAILY BASIS IN THE SEARCH FOR A LASTING MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT, FELT STRONGLY ABOUT THESE PROBLEMS.
3. THE FIRST TASK WAS TO SECURE THE FULL WITHDRAWAL OF THE PLO FROM LEBANON. THIS WOULD EASE THE SUBSEQUENT WITHDRAWAL OF THE SYRIANS AND THE ISRAELIS. DRAPER WOULD FROM TODAY BE NEGOTIATING IN THE AREA WITH THESE OBJECTIVES. ALTHOUGH SIMULTANEOUS WITHDRAWAL WAS THE IDEAL, IT WAS MORE LIKELY THAT THIS WOULD HAVE TO COME ABOUT IN POSSIBLY TWO STAGES. THE AMERICANS WANTED INITIALLY TO BE ABLE TO DEPLOY THE MNF ALONG THE BEIRUT/DAMASCUS ROAD TO FACILITATE DISENGAGEMENT. THEY COULD NOT YET ESTIMATE HOW MANY ADDITIONAL TROOPS WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR THIS. THEREAFTER, IN THE FIRST STAGE OF WITHDRAWAL, THE ISRAELIS MIGHT WITHDRAW TO THEIR SECURITY ZONE FORTY KILOMETRES NORTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL FRONTIER, AND THE SYRIANS FROM MOUNT LEBANON TO SHTAURA. IN THE SECOND STAGE, WHICH COULD FOLLOW ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, BOTH SIDES WOULD WITHDRAW TOGETHER. THE LEBANESE COULD NOT ACHIEVE THIS ON THEIR OWN. THE US GOVERNMENT WAS READY TO ASK CONGRESS FOR A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO LEBANON'S EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING NEEDS. BUT IT LOOKED TO US TO CONTRIBUTE TO A LARGER MNF. WEINGBURGER STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT: WITHOUT IT, CONGRESS MIGHT FALL PREY TO TRADITIONAL AMERICAN ISOLATIONISM. IF THIS EXERCISE WAS NOT TAKEN FORWARD,

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THE MOMENTUM OF THE PEACE PROCESS COULD BE LOST. THE LARGER THE INITIAL CONTRIBUTION TO AN MNF, THE SHORTER THE TIME FOR WHICH TROOPS WOULD NEED TO BE DEPLOYED.

4. WEINBURGER SAID THAT THE US WOULD NOT BE HAPPY ABOUT INVOLVING THE UN TOO DEEPLY IN THIS EXERCISE. UN OBSERVERS MIGHT BE ATTACHED TO THE MNF, BUT TO GIVE RESPONSIBILITIES TO UNIFIL AND PLACE THE QUESTION IN THE HANDS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL WOULD ONLY PROVIDE AN UNWELCOME OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SOVIET UNION TO INTERFERE.

5. MR HURD SAID THAT WE WELL UNDERSTOOD THE THINKING BEHIND THIS INFORMAL APPROACH. THIS WAS NOT AN EASY MATTER FOR US. WE HAD BEEN HOPING THAT WE WOULD NOT BE ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE. THERE WAS LITTLE NATURAL OR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN BRITAIN OF LEBANON'S PROBLEMS; AND OUR RESOURCES WERE PRESENTLY STRETCHED. BUT WE WOULD LOOK CAREFULLY AT THESE SUGGESTIONS. IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR US TO HELP ON TRAINING. DAM SAID THAT A MILITARY MISSION, LED BY GENERAL BARTLETT, HAD RECENTLY RETURNED FROM LEBANON AND WOULD BE PRODUCING A REPORT ON TRAINING NEEDS: THIS COULD BE MADE AVAILABE TO US. MR HURD WELCOMED THIS.

6. SEE MIFT (NOT TO ALL).

THOMSON

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