

OUT TELEGRAM

Classification and Caveats
CONFIDENTIAL

Precedence/Deskby
IMMEDIATE

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6 FM FCO 090915Z DECEMBER 1982

7 TO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT

8 TELEGRAM NUMBER

9 REPEATED FOR INFO PRIORITY DAMASCUS, AMMAN, TEL AVIV, JERUSALEM,
10 CAIRO, TUNIS, JEDDA, ^(SAVING) PARIS, ROME, BRUSSELS, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW,
11 UKMIS NEW YORK, UKDEL NATO

12 VISIT OF LEBANESE FOREIGN MINISTER

13 1. I had an hour's talk with Dr Salem before lunch today,
14 8 December. Following were main points.

15 2. Salem gave an impressive account of Lebanon's plight. He
16 said he had not come to plead the general cause of Middle East
17 peace but to discuss what concrete steps could be taken to
18 help Lebanon. Lebanon could no longer bear the burden of all
19 the Middle East's problems. She was tired ~~of~~ being kidnapped,
20 first by the PLO, now by Sharon. The present situation was very
21 dangerous. The government could do nothing in the way of
22 reconstruction and building up security forces until foreign
23 forces had first withdrawn. Both the Israelis and Syrians
24 thought they could manipulate sectarian divisions within
25 Lebanon. They were mistaken and were playing with dynamite.

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2 There was a real danger of renewed civil war which would affect
 3 the whole region and wipe out chances of all progress with the
 4 Reagan initiative.

5 3. Salem said that Israel was imposing impossible conditions
 6 for withdrawal negotiations. Lebanon was ready to meet her
 7 legitimate security concerns. She accepted that a price had to
 8 be paid for Israeli withdrawal. But she was not prepared to make
 9 concessions eg on a peace treaty which would damage the
 10 internal consensus, relations with the Arab world or Lebanese
 11 sovereignty. Syria would withdraw once the Israelis had moved.
 12 The PLO would be forced to follow; and in any case posed less
 13 of a problem. Habib was convinced that the Israelis did not
 14 really want to negotiate. Sharon had the upper hand. The issue
 15 of Jerusalem as a venue for negotiations had come out of the
 16 blue. There was no way the Lebanese could accept it.

17 4. Salem said that the Lebanese Government was well pleased
 18 with Britain's general reaction to events in Lebanon, but
 19 needed to know what concrete help Britain could give.
 20 Participation in the MNF was less important in a military sense
 21 but of the highest importance politically. At present Lebanon's
 22 existence depended on symbolic gestures of support. She was
 23 counting on other democracies to help. There was not much time.
 24 Help given to Lebanon would also sustain the Reagan initiative.
 25 The Lebanese were fully aware of British commitments elsewhere.
 26 But a refusal by Britain to help would be devastating blow.
 27 In any case British participation would help forward her
 28 policies in the Middle East.

29 5. I told Salem that we had greatly admired the government's
 30 efforts to re-establish democracy and would give every support
 31 we could. We agreed that the first priority was the withdrawal
 32 of all forces. I had always thought this difficult to achieve
 33 and that the Israelis and Syrians would both find reasons for
 34 not going. The Lebanese request for British participation in the

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2 MNF was still being carefully considered. As Salem knew we had
3 military commitments stretching from South Atlantic to Hong
4 Kong. Other problems might arise in the coming year. We could
5 not afford to be over-stretched. But we well understood
6 Salem's point about the importance of a symbolic presence. What
7 did he have in mind? Salem said that to be useful a
8 British contribution would have to be a visible part of the MNF
9 (not UNIFIL). It could take the form of a symbolic force of men
10 or ancillary support such as Sweden's medical contingent in
11 UNIFIL or major logistical support. I said we would inform the
12 Lebanese Government as soon as we had reached a decision.

13 6. I told Salem we agreed that time was short. With tensions
14 elsewhere eg Israel's policies on the West Bank, there was a
15 difficult period ahead in the Middle East. A long delay in
16 achieving the withdrawal of forces from Lebanon would greatly
17 undermine US credibility. We were using what influence we had
18 both with the United States and direct with Israel. I would
19 discuss the problem again with Shultz in meetings this week and
20 next. The Danish Foreign Minister had recently been in Israel
21 on behalf of the Ten.

22 7. Salem said he was fearful of Israel's intentions in Southern
23 Lebanon. The international community should be alert to Israeli
24 attempts to create new facts eg settlements. He wondered whether
25 the UK together with the United States and France would consider
26 issuing a declaration that under no conditions would they
27 countenance annexation of any part of Lebanon or other attempts
28 to threaten Lebanon's security and independence. I said there was
29 some merit in this thought but doubted whether it was a useful
30 idea to pursue now. It would have little effect on Israel. But
31 we fully appreciated Lebanese anxiety about Israeli aims. We
32 would regard any attempt eg to establish settlements in
33 Southern Lebanon as a very serious step.

34 8. I asked about PLO fighters and Palestinian civilians.

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2 ~~remaining in Lebanon. Where would the fighters go? Were~~
3 ~~remaining Palestinian civilians a great problem for the~~
4 ~~government?~~ 8. Salem said that negotiations had not yet reached the
5 stage of discussing destinations for PLO fighters. But they
6 would have to go. Lebanon would never again allow itself to
7 be a base for military activity against Israel or anyone else.
8 According to the Moroccans, the Jordanians were prepared to
9 take 5,000 fighters. Syria and Iraq might take the rest. As a
10 last resort the government might agree to disarming them and
11 allowing them to stay as civilians. Both Lebanese and Palestinian
12 civilian refugees posed a huge humanitarian problem. Lebanese
13 policy was clear. They supported the legitimate Palestinian
14 rights including their right to an independent state. They were
15 fully committed to those Palestinians legally residing in
16 Lebanon (238,000) but a large number were there illegally or
17 with forged papers. Accounts in the Western press of mistreat-
18 ment of Palestinians were greatly exaggerated. Of 1000 people
19 under arrest, only 300 were Palestinians.
20 9. Salem said that Lebanon was prepared to meet the Israeli
21 demand that Haddad's forces should be reintegrated into
22 the Lebanese Army. Haddad himself would have to be sent away
23 as an Ambassador somewhere. As for UNIFIL, it was important
24 as a symbol of the Lebanese Government's legitimacy in the
25 South. But in the face of Israeli intransigence it was useless
26 in operational terms and therefore highly demoralized. UNIFIL
27 and MNF should cooperate in maintaining peace as foreign forces
28 withdrew.
29 10. Finally Salem drew attention to the danger of Soviet in-
30 fluence regaining the upper hand in Lebanon. From 1975-1982
31 the Soviet Union had made considerable inroads. The Communist
32 Party had grown and Marxist Parties had proliferated. For the
33 time being they had been greatly weakened and the Soviet Union's
34 reputation in Lebanon was low. Whatever they said in public

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2 the National Movement was urging the government to keep Lebanon
 3 in the Western camp. But if this failed to produce results
 4 there would be ^{an} irresistible wave of popular feeling in the
 5 opposite direction. This could take two forms; either radical
 6 Marxism or Khomeini-style revivalism. Either would pose great
 7 risks to the Middle East. That was why action was so urgent.

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