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**IMMEDIATE**

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CABINET OFFICE D10

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PS/MR HURD  
RS/PUS  
~~SIR J LEAHY~~  
MR EGERTON  
SIR J BULLARD  
HD/NENAD  
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FM BEIRUT 301130Z MAR 83  
TO IMMEDIATE F.C.O.  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 161 OF 30 MARCH 1983.

*mt*

FOLLOWING FROM MINISTER OF STATE.

MY TELNO 157 OF 29 MARCH:

**BRITISH CONTINGENT IN MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE.**

1. PRESIDENT GEMAYEL TODAY REPEATED TO ME THE REQUEST MADE YESTERDAY BY HIS FOREIGN MINISTER.



2. HAVING VISITED OUR FORCE AND DISCUSSED ITS WORK WITH HM AMBASSADOR AND COLONEL COCHRANE, I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THEY ARE DOING A VALUABLE JOB OUT OF PROPORTION TO THEIR NUMBER. THEIR PATROLS DETER TROUBLEMAKERS AND GIVE THE LEBANESE FORCES THE ENCOURAGEMENT THEY NEED TO ASSERT THEIR OWN AUTHORITY. THE VERY VISIBLE AND WELCOME BRITISH PRESENCE GIVES US A POLITICAL POSITION HERE CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT WHICH IS VALUABLE IN ITSELF AND COULD HAVE A COMMERCIAL BENEFIT LATER. CONVERSELY, A DECISION TO WITHDRAW IN MAY WOULD BE HARD TO EXPLAIN AND MIGHT MAKE US LOOK SLIGHTLY RIDICULOUS UNLESS THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN TROOPS WAS BY THEN GOING SMOOTHLY, WHICH SEEMS UNLIKELY.

3. I HOPE THEREFORE THAT WE WILL AGREE TO KEEP THE EXISTING NUMBER OF MEN HERE FOR A FURTHER THREE MONTHS FROM MAY, OR UNTIL THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, WHICHEVER IS THE EARLIER. ONCE WE HAVE BEEN HERE SIX MONTHS WE WILL HAVE MADE AN APPRECIABLE CONTRIBUTION TO RESTORING THE SECURITY OF LEBANON AND COULD REASONABLY CALL IT A DAY.

ROBERTS

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