

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES 76 21

Mufaxed to
Chequers 10/9

PS (6)
PS/MR LUCE
PS/PUS

SIR J LEAHY
MR EBERTON.

~~SIR J BULLARD~~ MR JAMES.

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NO 10 DOWNING STREET

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RESIDENT CLERK

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FM BEIRUT 101315Z SEP 83

TO IMMEDIATE F.C.O.

TELEGRAM NUMBER 499 OF 10 SEPTEMBER 1983

INFO IMMEDIATE UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, DAMASCUS, MODUK,
BRITFORLEB

PRIORITY AMMAN, CAIRO, JEDDA, TEL AVIV, PARIS, ROME, MOSCOW.

UKMIS NEW YORK TELNOS 799, 800 AND 801: LEBANON.

1. AS SEEN FROM HERE, THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND DOES NOT
(REPEAT NOT) SEEM TO BE DETERIORATING FAST (CF PARA 8 OF THIRD TUR).

2. THERE IS A NOTE OF SLIGHT OPTIMISM IN TODAY'S (10 SEPTEMBER)
LOCAL PRESS REPORTING OF THE PRESENT SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY BETWEEN
BEIRUT, CYPRUS AND DAMASCUS.

3. AS THE ADA'S REPORTING OVER THE LAST TWO DAYS HAS SUGGESTED,
THE BATTLE LINES IN THE SHOUF HAVE BECOME MORE CLEARLY DRAWN.
IN THE FIGHTING BETWEEN THE LEBANESE FORCES (KATA'IB) AND THE
DRUZE, THE LATTER HAVE THE UPPER HAND. THE LEBANESE FORCES ARE
MAKING SOME PROGRESS ONLY IN THE SECTOR KFARMATTA, ABEY AND
QABB SHAMOUN. ON OTHER MAIN FRONTS THEY HAVE EITHER STAGNATED

IN THE FIGHTING BETWEEN THE LEBANESE FORCES (KATAIB) AND THE DRUZE, THE LATTER HAVE THE UPPER HAND. THE LEBANESE FORCES ARE MAKING SOME PROGRESS ONLY IN THE SECTOR KFARMATTA, ABEY AND QABR SHAMOUN. ON OTHER MAIN FRONTS THEY HAVE EITHER EVACUATED OR BEEN OVERRUN.

4. THE LEBANESE ARMY HAVE DEPLOYED INTO POSITIONS IN THE FOOTHILLS SURROUNDING BEIRUT FROM WHICH IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE PSP AND THEIR ALLIES TO DISLODGE THEM. THEY COULD MOVE, I THINK, WITH EASE FURTHER INTO THE HILLS IN THE VICINITY OF ARAMOUN/QABR SHAMOUN, BUT THEY APPEAR CURRENTLY NOT TO BE ENTERING DRUZE VILLAGES AS A MATTER OF POLICY.

5. THE WELL-PUBLICISED PRONOUNCEMENT ON 9 SEPTEMBER BY WALID JUMBLATT FROM DAMASCUS THAT THE REFUGEES IN DEIR AL QAMR WILL NOT BE BOMBARDED AND THE NEWS THAT AN ICRC CONVOY HAS REACHED THE BELEAGUED TOWN HAVE BROUGHT SOME RELIEF IN THAT SECTOR.

6. ON THE MILITARY FRONT, THINGS SEEM TO BE MOVING TOWARDS A STALEMATE, AT LEAST SO FAR AS THE LAF AND THE PSP (AND ALLIES) ARE CONCERNED. GIVEN CURRENT ACTIVITY ON THE NEGOTIATING FRONT, THE POLITICAL SITUATION APPEARS TO BE CATCHING UP WITH THE MILITARY. IF THERE IS A CEASEFIRE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, MY GUESS IS THAT IT WILL BE BECAUSE THE SYRIANS AND THEIR ALLIES HAVE CALCULATED THAT THEY HAVE MORE TO GAIN AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE THAN ON THE BATTLE FIELD. I BELIEVE THAT THE PRESENCE OF CARRIER-BORNE FORCES OFF THE LEBANESE COAST, AND THE THREAT BY MNF CONTRIBUTORS TO USE AERIAL BOMBARDMENT AGAINST THEIR POSITIONS IF ATTACKED, ARE HAVING SOME EFFECT. THE PROSPECTS FOR A CEASEFIRE LOOK SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN THEY DID ONLY TWO DAYS AGO.

PALMER

BT

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