



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Prime Minister

London SW1A 2AH

A. J. C.  $\frac{12}{9}$ 

12 September 1983

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Dear Sir,

Lebanon

As the Prime Minister will be aware, Mr McFarlane reported on 11 September in alarming terms on the military situation around the village of Suq al-Gharb, which is a Druze village on the western edge of the Druze stronghold in the Shouf mountains East and South of Beirut. He recommended that immediate US military action was needed if the village was not to fall to a combination of Palestinian, Iranian and Libyan forces backed by Syria; in that case there was a possibility that these forces would stream down into Beirut and overrun the Lebanese President's Palace and the US Embassy.

We obtained assessments urgently from our Embassy and the British contingent in the MNF. These were less alarming. It is clear that there was a fierce battle on Saturday night, but the Lebanese 8th brigade fought back and recovered positions they had lost, then and during a further round of fighting on Sunday night. The Lebanese brigade might of course still be overrun but this is not imminent; nor would it in our view have the military and political consequences originally suggested by Mr McFarlane. (Mr McFarlane himself has now passed on to us the Lebanese Chief of Staff's view that the Lebanese Army can hold the position at least for another round or two of fighting.) Beirut telno 505 enclosed.

On receipt of Mr McFarlane's report, the Americans again asked us to delay the naval task force with HMS Invincible in the Eastern Mediterranean for a while. They also proposed that we should alter the rules of engagement of the MNF to permit supporting action around Suq al-Gharb. They told us that the President had decided that in certain circumstances (set out in Washington telno 2553 enclosed) US forces would act to support the Lebanese. In reply Washington have been instructed to say that we are not prepared to detain the Invincible.

We have not been pressed further today on the question of rules of engagement, but if necessary the Embassy will draw on Athens telno 428, also enclosed, which makes clear that neither Sir G Howe nor his Italian and French colleagues see grounds to broaden the mandate in present circumstances. We have been in close touch with the Ministry of Defence today. We are agreed

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that there is at present no requirement to amend BRITFORLEB's orders or rules of engagement. We shall be considering tomorrow the terms of the formal reply we need to give to the Americans.

Mr Luce leaves on 13 September for Cyprus and will be in Beirut on 14 September. This will give him an opportunity to see the situation on the ground and to discuss it with the Lebanese authorities. He will be urging them to make every effort to clinch a political deal which could lead to a ceasefire. On this the latest situation as reported to us by Mr McFarlane is that negotiations between the Arab and Lebanese parties continue, though the chances of success are obscure. Mr McFarlane himself was due to make another visit to Jedda and Damascus this afternoon.

There have been informal consultations today in the Security Council, where the Lebanese mission are working for a resolution calling for a ceasefire, humanitarian action with the ICRC to deal with some of the urgent problems of civilian populations caught up in the fighting, the introduction of UN observers into the Shouf, and the extension to the Shouf of the activities of a UN force. We regard the last point as unrealistic, at least in present circumstances, but should be able to support a resolution containing the other points, if one emerges.

I am copying this letter to Nick Evans (MOD) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever*

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

*John Holmes*

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street



*GC*

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

13 September 1983

LEBANON

Thank you for your letter of 12 September, the contents of which have been noted by the Prime Minister.

I am copying this letter to Nick Evans (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

A. J. COLE

John Holmes Esq  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office



suggests that shortage of ammunition and morale are a serious problem for the defenders. None of these points are corroborated from our own reporting and most are contradicted.

- c) The suggestion that no Lebanese were involved in the attacking force is linked with reports that 'the battle was savage and included axe fighting and brutal hand to hand combat'. Unfortunately those familiar with Lebanon recognise only too easily the characteristics of Lebanese fighting methods.
  - d) The telegram suggests that we may be at a turning point, leading in a matter of days to 'a Syrian take-over of this country North of the Awali'. This ignores the very considerable forces of the Christians and others opposed to Syrian influence, which have registered military successes as well as set-backs in the last few days.
  - e) Finally, the detailed information in the Flash situation report in Beirut telno 500, which concluded that the cohesion of the Lebanese brigade at Suq al-Gharb and of the Lebanese Army in general was not in jeopardy, was provided to our Assistant Defence Attaché by his US colleague. (The same impressions were subsequently confirmed by Colonel Roberts of BRITFORLEB, when he had visited the Lebanese Commander in Chief and the Bridge Headquarters.)
6. Comment: the situation in Lebanon is dangerous and fast moving and I do not think we should underestimate the difficulty of making sensible reports and recommendations. Nevertheless taken with the other reports from MacFarlane which I have seen in the last week or so, the second of these two telegrams does suggest that he is allowing himself to become flapped.

(dictated by Mr Miles  
and signed in his  
absence)



R O Miles

SUBJECT: MCFARLANE/FAIRBANKS MISSION: REVISED  
- AGREEMENTS PROPOSAL CARRIED TO DAMASCUS

REF: (WA) DAMASCUS 7151 NOTAL; (B) DAMASCUS 7152 NOTAL;  
- (C) DAMASCUS 7154 NOTAL

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1. (SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. RAFIO HARIRI, WHO BROUGHT THE LATEST SYRIAN/SAUDI VERSION OF THE AGREEMENT PROPOSAL TO BEIRUT THIS AFTERNOON, HAS JUST DEPARTED FOR DAMASCUS VIA LARNACA CARRYING A REDRAFT OF THE AGREEMENT APPROVED BY PRESIDENT GEMAYEL AND HIS ADVISERS FOLLOWING EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS AMONG THEMSELVES AND WITH AMES, MCFARLANE AND FAIRBANKS.

3. HARIRI LEFT FOR LARNACA VIA U.S. HELICOPTER AT 2000Z SEPTEMBER 10 AND WILL PROCEED TO DAMASCUS ON HIS OWN AIRCRAFT. HE WILL ARRIVE IN DOWNTOWN DAMASCUS ABOUT 2230Z (0130 DAMASCUS TIME SEPTEMBER 11), CONTACT AMP. PAGANELLI, AND ATTEMPT TO SEE KHADDAM AND JUMBLATT TO OBTAIN THEIR APPROVAL OF THE LEBANESE REDRAFT. IF HE IS SUCCESSFUL IN SEEING KHADDAM AND JUMBLATT AT THAT HOUR AND CAN OBTAIN THEIR APPROVAL, WE COULD HAVE A

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CEASE-FIRE DECLARED AS OF 0500Z SEPTEMBER 11. IF HE CANNOT  
SEE THEM UNJ L MORNING, THIS WILL PRODUCE A CORRESPONDING  
DELAY IN THE CEASE-FIRE.

4. FOR AMB. PAGANELLI: PER REPTEL C, WE ASSUME THAT  
HARIRI AND BANDAR WILL GET THROUGH IN LAFNACA TO  
COORDINATE POSITIONS AND RETURN TO DAMASCUS SEPARATELY  
OR TOGETHER. PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH KHADDAM AND  
JUMBLATT TO ALERT THEM TO THE RETURN OF HARIRI AND BANDAR  
WITH THE LEBANESE REPOSE TO THE SYRIAN/SAUDI AGREEMENT  
PROPOSAL. IN DOING SO, YOU SHOULD FOR ASS THAT THE USG IS  
CONVINCED THAT THE PACKAGE MERITS THE URGENT AGREEMNT OF  
BOTH THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT AND OF JUMBLADT. THE USG WILL  
DEENVOTE ITS BEST EFFORTS TO HELPING OBTAIN THE CONTEMPLATED  
INTERNATIONARUCTIONS (SEPTTEL NCTAL).

5. FYI, THE TEXT OF THE LEBANESE REDRAFT FOLLOWS (BANDAR  
AND HARIRI SHOULD BE THE ONE TO COMMUNICATE IT TO THE SYRIANS

BEGIN TEXT

BASED ON TALKS AND CONTACTS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE ARAB  
CAPITALS BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, AND RIYADH CONCERNING THE  
CREATION OF A COMMON CONCEPT TO SEEK THE MOST APPROPRIATE  
SOLUTION TO SAVE THE DETERIORATING SITUATION ON THE  
LEBANESE SCENE,

AND BEING KEEN TO STEM THE BLOODSHED, STOP THE FIGHTING,  
AND CONSIDERPEACE THROUGHOUT THE LEBANESE REPUBLIC  
AS A PRELIMINARY STEP TOWARD ACHIEVEMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE  
NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WHICH WOULD BE THE PERMANENT BASIS  
FOR AMICAL CO-EXISTENCE AMONG THE LEBANESE PEOPLE IN A  
STRONG, COHERENT RELATIONSHIP AND WOULD BE A GUARANTEE FOR  
THE EXTENSION OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE GOVERNMENT OVER ALL THE  
TERRITORY OF LEBANON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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THE FOLLOWING HAS BEEN DECIDED:

1.) AN IMMEDIATE CEASE-FIRE THROUGHOUT LEBANESE TERRITORY AND ON ALL AXES AND POINTS OF CONTACT; NEUTRAL OBSERVERS TO SUPERVISE THE CEASE-FIRE IN THE AREAS OF FIGHTING; THE RETURN OF THE LEBANESE REFUGEES FROM 1975 TO THE PRESENT TO THEIR HOMES TO BE GUARANTEED, AS WILL BE ARRANGEMENTS FOR RELIEF OPERATIONS.

2.) A COMMITTEE WILL BE FORMED IMMEDIATELY TO SET ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ENTRY OF THE FORCES OF THE LEGAL AUTHORITY SUPPORTED BY THE U.N. AND/OLLTHE MNF TO REPLACE ALL THE FORCES THAT ARE PRESENT ON THE SCENE IN SUCH A WAY AS TO ASSURE THE SECURITY OF ALL THE CITIZENS OF ALL DENOMINATIONS, AS WELL AS THEIR PROPERTY.

3.) THE PRESIDENT OF LEBANON TO CALL FOR AN URGENT, COMPREHENSIVE MEETING TO BEGIN THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE IMMEDIATELY; EACH OF THE FOLLOWING WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE MEETING:

-- SPEAKER KAMIL AL-AS'AD, PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

-- THE NATIONAL SALVATION FRONT (MESSRS. FRANJIYYA, KARAMI, JUMBLATT).

--THE LEBANESE FRONT (MESSRS. SHAM'UN, PIERRE GEMAYEL)

-- THE AMAL ORGANIZATION (MR. NABIH BARRI)

-- LIKewise, MESSRS. SA'IB SALAM, GHASSAN TUENI, AND JOSEPH SKAFF.

4.) A DELEGATION FROM BOTH FRATERNAL SYRIA AND FRATERNAL SAUDI ARABIA TO ATTEND.

END TEXT.

6. PLEASE NOTE: THE FOLLOWING IS AN INFORMAL, INELEGANT TRANSLATION THAT HAS GONE THROUGH SEVERAL VERSIONS. IT SHOULD NOT RUMET BECOME DEFINITIVE. WE WILL TRANSMIT A PROPER TRANSLATION ONCE THE FINAL ARABIC TEXT IS AGREED. DILLON



SUBJECT: MCFARLANE/FAIRBANKS MISSION: STRATEGIC ESCALATION  
OF THE BATTLE

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. THIS IS AN ACTION MESSAGE.
3. ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE OF INTENSE EFFORTS BEING MADE TO ACHIEVE CEASEFIRE AND SUBSEQUENT NATIONAL DIALOGUE TOWARD POLITICAL SOLUTION IN LEBANON. OTHER REPORTING HAS DISCUSSED THE EXTENT TO WHICH THESE EFFORTS INVOLVE GOOD FAITH EFFORT OR SIMPLY A DELAYING TACTIC BY SYRIA WHILE IT IMPROVES ITS POSITION THROUGH SURROGATES ON THE GROUND. EVENTS ON THE BATTLEFIELD DURING NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 10 GIVE FIRM EVIDENCE OF THE LATTER AND MORE IMPORTANTLY HAVE CONSTITUTED SERIOUS THREAT OF DECISIVE MILITARY DEFEAT OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON, WHICH COULD INVOLVE THE FALL OF THE GOVERNMENT WITHIN 24 HOURS. LET US BE CLEAR: LAST NIGHT'S BATTLE WAS WAGED (AT SUQ-AL-GHARB) WITHIN FIVE KILOMETERS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE (AND OUR RESIDENCE IN YARZE). FOR THOSE AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT, THIS WOULD CORRESPOND TO THE ENEMY BEING ON THE ATTACK ON CAPITOL HILL. A SECOND ATTACK AGAINST THE SAME LAF UNIT IS EXPECTED THIS EVENING. LOSSES SUFFERED LAST EVENING IN PERSONNEL, AMMUNITION (WE BELIEVE THEY ARE DOWN TO A DAY AND A HALF OF REMAINING 155MM AMMUNITION) AND MORALE RAISE SERIOUS POSSIBILITY THAT EMENY BRIGADE, WHICH ENJOYS GREATER STRENGTH, RESUPPLY CAPABILITY, AND UNLIMITED FIRE SUPPORT COULD BREAK THROUGH AND PENETRATE THE BEIRUT PERIMETER. IN SHORT, TONIGHT WE COULD BE BEHIND ENEMY LINES.
4. FACED WITH THIS THREAT WHICH PROBABLY CANNOT BE CONTAINED

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BY THE LEBANESE ARMY FOR MUCH LONGER WE MUST DECIDE WHETHER THE US WILL, BY WITHHOLDING DIRECT SUPPORT, ALLOW THE FALL OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE NEW ELEMENT WHICH SHOULD BE SERIOUSLY ADDRESSED IN OUR CALCULUS IS THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME THE THREAT APPEARS TO BE UNAMBIGUOUSLY FOREIGN. SPECIFICALLY, THE ATTACK LAST EVENING IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED BY A PLA BRIGADE. IT IS COMPRISED OF PALESTINIAN SOLDIERS COMMANDED BY SYRIAN OFFICERS AND DIRECTLY CONTROLLED BY THE SARG. IN SHORT IF TRUE THIS REPRESENTS FOREIGN AGGRESSION AGAINST LEBANON.

5. OUR RULES OF ENGAGEMENT AS AMPLIFIED BY NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION DIRECTIVE APPROVED SEPTEMBER 10 ALLOW THE USE OF US MILITARY FORCE ONLY IN SELF-DEFENSE. IN CONSIDERING THE THREAT NOW POSED TO AMERICANS (THE MNF, OTHER US MILITARY PERSONNEL IN BEIRUT AND THE US DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE), WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT TO WAIT UNTIL AN ATTACK IS AT OUR DOORSTEP BEFORE RESPONDING WOULD BE TOO LATE. THIS REQUIRES A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF JUDGMENT ON THE SCENE TO BE ABLE TO DEAL IN A TIMELY FASHION WITH A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER. IN MY JUDGMENT THAT DANGER TO AMERICANS WOULD EXIST IF SYRIAN-SUPPORTED FORCES

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CAPTURE SUQ-AL-GHARB. CONSEQUENTLY, IT IS WITHIN OUR CURRENT RULES OF ENGAGEMENT, IN MY JUDGMENT, TO TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT SUCH A LOSS FROM OCCURRING. TO STATE CLEARLY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT I AM SAYING, I AM RECOMMENDING THAT US FORCES SUPPORT THE LAF IN ITS DEFENSE OF SUQ-AL-GHARB WITH FIRE SUPPORT TO INCLUDE TAC AIR. OTHER MNF FORCES WOULD BE MOST WELCOME IF THE US DECISION IS TAKEN, BUT NOT AT THE COST OF DELAY PAST TONIGHT.

5. IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND, AS WE HAVE STRESSED IN RECENT WEEKS, THAT THIS IS NOT A PURELY CIVIL CONFLICT. THIS REALITY WAS UNDERSCORED IN LAST NIGHT'S ACTION BY THE FACT THAT THERE WERE APPARENTLY NO LEBANESE INVOLVED IN THE ATTACKING GROUND FORCES. THE FORCE IS REPORTED TO BE COMPRISED OF A PLA BRIGADE AND IRANIAN ELEMENTS. THE BATTLE WAS SAVAGE AND INCLUDED AXE FIGHTING AND BRUTAL HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT. I DO NOT SAY THIS TO BE MELODRAMATIC BUT TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE GOL MAY BE THREATENED WITH IMPENDING TAKEOVER BY SURROGATE FOREIGN FORCES. I AM VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE DIFFICULTY OF TAKING SUCH A DECISION IN A CLIMATE OF PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL IGNORANCE SUCH AS EXISTS IN THE US TODAY. THE FACT IS, HOWEVER, THAT WE MAY WELL BE AT A TURNING POINT WHICH WILL LEAD IN A MATTER OF DAYS TO A SYRIAN TAKEOVER OF THIS COUNTRY NORTH OF THE AWALI. IT IS REQUESTED THAT THIS SITUATION BE CONSIDERED BY THE NSC AND GUIDANCE PROVIDED WITHIN THE NEXT FOUR HOURS SO AS TO FACILITATE THE NECESSARY PLANNING AND COORDINATION IF NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT ARE APPROVED. NEEDLESS TO SAY, IF WE DO NOT ACHIEVE A CEASEFIRE AND THE ATTACK TAKES PLACE, WE MUST BE READY TO CARRY OUT AN IMMEDIATE EVACUATION. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT TONIGHT'S ATTACK WILL BE CONTAINED, THAT SYRIA WILL DISCONTINUE ITS SUPPORT AND THAT A CEASEFIRE CAN BE ESTABLISHED. THAT SEEMS UNLIKELY TO ME. EVEN IF WE GET BY TONIGHT, UNLESS WE SEE A CHANGE IN SYRIAN POLICY THE SURVIVAL OF THIS GOVERNMENT IS MEASURED IN DAYS. I SEND THIS CABLE WITH THE EMBARRASSMENT BORNE OF DEALING WITH PEOPLE WHO EXAGGERATE. THE INTELLIGENCE CONCERNING LAST NIGHT'S BATTLE MAY BE INFLATED AND THUS NOTHING MAY HAPPEN TONIGHT. STILL IT IS OUR COLLECTIVE JUDGMENT (MCFARLANE/FAIRBANKS/DILLON/                    ) THAT THE BALANCE OF FORCES (TAKING INTO ACCOUNT SYRIAN SURROGATES AND SYRIAN SUPPLIES) IS LOPSIDELY AGAINST THE GOL AND THAT ABSENT A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, THE GOL CANNOT PREVAIL ALONE. THE USE OF U.S. TAC AIR AND FIRE SUPPORT WOULD NOT "WIN THE WAR", BUT COULD PROVIDE THE MUSCLE NEEDED TO GET THE SYRIANS TO BARGAIN SERIOUSLY. BECAUSE THE FORCES EMPLOYED ARE STILL SURROGATES AND NOT DIRECT SARG ARMY, THEY HAVE RETAINED A MEASURE OF DENIABILITY AND HENCE CAN STILL AGREE POLITICALLY WITHOUT A TOTAL LOSS OF FACE. AS YOU KNOW, I AM NOT GIVEN TO HAND WRINGING AND I AM FULLY CONSCIOUS THAT THE COMPETING DEMANDS IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND ELSEWHERE MAY HAVE LED US TO A DECISION TO CUT OUR LOSSES. IF SO, I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THAT, SO AS TO DEAL IN GOOD FAITH WITH THE GOL AND PLAN FOR THE PROTECTION OF AMERICANS. DILLON

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