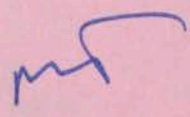


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TO FLASH WASHINGTON

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1497 OF 13 SEPTEMBER,

INFO FLASH TROOPS DHEKELIA (FOR PS/MR LUCE), BUDAPEST (FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY), IMMEDIATE BEIRUT, PRIORITY DAMASCUS, ROME, PARIS AND BRITFORLEB.

MY TELNO 1483 AND YOUR TELNO 2568(NOT TO ALL): LEBANON/MNF

1. THERE IS NO CHANGE IN MINISTERS' POSITION ON BRITFORLEB'S RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (ROE) OR THOSE OF THE BUCCANEER STRIKE AIRCRAFT ON STANDBY AT CYPRUS TO PROTECT OUR FORCE. ACCORDINGLY, IF EAGLEBURGER REVERTS TO HIS REQUEST, YOU SHOULD SAY THAT WE ARE UNWILLING TO CHANGE THE ROE. IN ANY CASE, WE NOTE FROM WHAT MCFARLANE SAID ON 12 SEPTEMBER (BEIRUT TELNO 505) THAT HE SEEMS NO LONGER TO BE ASKING FOR THIS, AT LEAST AT PRESENT.
2. WE APPRECIATE THE ADVICE IN PARA 3 OF YOUR TUR, BUT WE ARE JUST AS CONCERNED AS THE FRENCH ARE AT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW US POSITION.
3. FOR YOUR OWN INFORMATION OUR CONCERN IS INCREASED BY THE TONE OF MCFARLANE'S REPORT OF 11 SEPTEMBER, WHICH THE US EMBASSY HAVE SHOWN US IN CONFIDENCE (PLEASE PROTECT). THE DETAILS GIVEN IN HIS REPORT WERE FACTUALLY UNSOUND AND THE ARGUMENTS OVER DRAWN. THE PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATION WAS FOR UNILATERAL MILITARY ACTION BY THE US, AND THIS, IT IS SOME RELIEF TO NOTE, WAS REJECTED. BUT HE SUCCEEDED IN BOUNCING WASHINGTON ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON INTO TAKING AN EXAGGERATED VIEW OF THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SUQ AL-GHARB, WHICH IS REFLECTED IN THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION REPORTED IN YOUR TELNO 2553. AFTER ALL, SUQ AL-GHARB WAS ONLY TAKEN FROM THE DRUZE BY THE LAF LAST WEEK.
4. SIMILAR SITUATIONS MAY RECUR AND MINISTERS HERE COULD COME UNDER PRESSURE AT HIGH-LEVEL FROM THE AMERICANS TO TAKE FAR-REACHING DECISIONS, AT NO NOTICE AND WITHOUT INDEPENDENT INFORMATION, WHICH WE WOULD REGARD AS POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY UNWISE, BUT WHERE IT WILL BE VERY UNCOMFORTABLE TO REFUSE AN URGENT AND PRESSING REQUEST.

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5. ONE WAY TO GET OUR CONCERN ACROSS MAY BE BY A FURTHER MINISTERIAL (OR PRIME MINISTERIAL) MESSAGE. THIS COULD FOLLOW THE REPLY TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S MESSAGE OF 10 SEPTEMBER (MY TELNO 1478), OR COULD BE CONSEQUENTIAL TO MR LUCE'S REPORT OF HIS VISIT TO BEIRUT ON 14 SEPTEMBER. WE HAVE TOLD THE US EMBASSY HERE THAT MR LUCE IS VERY KEEN TO MEET MCFARLANE AND HOPE THIS WILL BE POSSIBLE, IF NOT IN BEIRUT, THEN IN CYPRUS OR EVEN AT SEA.

6. SOME OF THE POINTS WHICH CONCERN US IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE MUST ALSO BE OF CONCERN TO THE AMERICANS, AND WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO EXPLORE THEM. FOR EXAMPLE:

- A) IF THE UK WERE TO TAKE PART IN AIRSTRIKES ON THE LINES PROPOSED ON 11 SEPTEMBER, THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH CONTINGENT IN THE MNF WOULD BE CHANGED, AND IT COULD BE MUCH MORE VULNERABLE TO ATTACK. PRESENT THINKING IS THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE NECESSARY, FOR PURELY MILITARY REASONS, EITHER TO WITHDRAW IT OR (AS NO DOUBT THE US WISH) TO REINFORCE IT. ITS ROLE AS A NON-PARTICIPANT IN THE FIGHTING WOULD NO LONGER BE POSSIBLE. THE POSITION OF THE US AND OTHER COUNTINGENTS IS QUALITATIVELY DIFFERENT, IN THAT THEY ARE LARGE ENOUGH TO CONSTITUTE A CREDIBLE MILITARY FORCE, BUT WE WONDER IF THE NSC AND WHITE HOUSE HAVE THOUGHT THROUGH THE IMPLICATION EVEN FOR THEM (AS OPPOSED TO STATE DEPT AT DESK LEVEL).
- B) WE SEE A CONSIDERABLE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ROLE OF THE MNF (WHICH IS TO SUPPORT THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT) AND A ROLE WHICH WOULD INVOLVE THEM IN GIVING ACTIVE MILITARY SUPPORT. FOR EXAMPLE, ONCE THE GEMAYEL GOVERNMENT HAS MILITARY SUPPORT, WHAT IS THE INCENTIVE FOR IT TO COMPROMISE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT?
- C) HOW WOULD THE MNF FOLLOW UP ACTION AS RECOMMENDED BY MCFARLANE ON 11 SEPTEMBER? ONCE THE ACTION AT SUQ AL-GHARB WAS COMPLETE, WHAT WOULD BE THE NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT AND THEIR POLITICAL RATIONALE? IN SHORT, WHAT IS THE POLITICAL OBJECTIVE BEYOND PREVENTING A COLLAPSE OF A PARTICULAR POSITION DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THE MNF?

- D) THE CONCERN ABOUT POLARISATION OF THE ARAB WORLD MENTIONED IN THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S MESSAGE APPLIES EVEN MORE STRONGLY TO HIGHER-PROFILE MILITARY ACTION BY THE MNF. POLARISATION AT THE ARAB/INTERNATIONAL LEVEL WOULD CAUSE THE POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS TO DEADLOCK. SYRIA WOULD THEN BE FAVOURABLY PLACED TO AWAIT THE COLLAPSE OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT.
- E) THAT SITUATION WOULD BE THE END OF WHAT WE SEE AS THE BEST HOPE FOR AN END TO THE CRISIS, AN ARAB/LEBANESE POLITICAL SOLUTION WHICH WOULD OFFER SOMETHING TO EVERYONE BUT DEMAND PAINFUL CONCESSIONS (NO VICTOR AND NO VANQUISHED). WE SEE NO ALTERNATIVE IF LEBANON IS TO SURVIVE. (WE EXCLUDE AS POINTLESS THE SURVIVAL OF A PUPPET CHRISTIAN REGIME IN THE GREATER BEIRUT AREA PROPPED UP BY THE US).
- F) MCFARLANE'S LATEST REQUEST FOR 'MUTUAL SUPPORT' (BEIRUT TELNO 505) ALSO RAISES PROBLEMS IN THE NEW SITUATION. IT WOULD MEAN THAT WE WOULD BE COMMITTED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO SUPPORTING THE US CONTINGENT IF THEY CAME UNDER FIRE FOLLOWING ACTION UNDER THE MODIFIED ROE. IN EFFECT, WE WOULD BE INVOLVED IN ACTION UNDER THE MODIFIED ROE OURSELVES, THUS NEGATING THE TERMS OF OUR CLEARLY DEFINED AND LIMITED PRESENT RULES.
7. WE SHOULD ALSO BE GLAD TO KNOW WHETHER THE AMERICANS SEE ANY USEFUL CONTRIBUTION WHICH WE COULD MAKE AT PRESENT ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT. MR LUCE WILL OF COURSE BE TALKING TO PRESIDENT GEMAYEL, BUT WE HAVE ALSO BEEN CONSIDERING WHETHER WE COULD DO ANYTHING TO ENCOURAGE THE SAUDIS OR OTHER MODERATE ARABS TOWARDS A POLITICAL SOLUTION. WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER ANOTHER APPROACH TO THE SYRAINS, THOUGH WE SEE LITTLE SCOPE AT PRESENT. WE ARE AS USUAL NOT WELL PLACED TO SPEAK TO THE ISRAELIS, BUT HAVE BEEN WONDERING KWHETHER THERE IS ANY WAY TO PERSUADE THEM
- A) TO MOVE FURTHER TOWARDS FULL WITHDRAWAL
- B) TO URGE POLITICAL RESTRAINT ON THEIR FRIENDS IN THE PHALANGE.
8. THE SECRETARY OF STATE MAY WISH TO COMMENT FROM BUDAPEST. WE UNDERSTAND THAT WASHINGTON HAVE MEETINGS DURING THE DAY (US TIME) WHICH WOULD BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACT ON THE ABOVE.

HOWE.

MIDDLE EAST

STANDARD

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 MED ESSD  
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 SAD ESID  
 UND CONS D  
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 ECD MR EGERTON  
 WED MR THOMAS  
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