

CONFIDENTIAL

GRS 780

CONFIDENTIAL

FM WASHINGTON 151704Z SEP 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2611 OF 15 SEPTEMBER

INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK (FOR PS/S OF S), NICOSIA (FOR PS/MR LUCE)
AND BEIRUT

head in full.

LEBANON/MNF

1. NOW THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE HAS VISITED WASHINGTON AND MR LUCE BEIRUT, YOU WILL NO DOUBT BE TAKING STOCK OF THE SITUATION.

mt

2. WHILE IN WASHINGTON, MR HESELTINE DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM WITH BOTH WEINBERGER AND SHULTZ AND WITH BOTH THE SENATE AND HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEES. HE WAS ABLE THEREFORE TO OBTAIN A PRETTY COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF THE OVERALL MOOD IN THIS CITY OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR HANDLING THE SITUATION. I BELIEVE HE WILL HAVE FOUND IT REASONABLY REASSURING. SHULTZ IS NOT A MAN TO HOLD ALARMIST VIEWS OR TAKE UNCONSIDERED ACTION. HAVING SHUTTLED IN HIS TIME IN THE MIDDLE EAST HE HAS A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF THE PROBLEM AND A PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE MAIN ACTORS. HE HAS NO ILLUSIONS BUT A JUST SENSE OF THE AMERICAN AND WESTERN INTEREST. WEINBERGER, THOUGH APT TO BE HAWKISH WHERE THE RUSSIANS AND AMERICAN DEFENCES ARE CONCERNED, WAS ANYTHING BUT HAWKISH ON THE LEBANON/MNF. AS REPORTED IN MY TELNO 2581, HE SPECIFICALLY RULED OUT DEEPER INVOLVEMENT IMPLIED IN ANY SUGGESTION THAT THE MNF SHOULD TEAM UP WITH THE LAF TO TAKE ON THE PLO AND SYRIANS. BOTH THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE ARE BY AND LARGE SUPPORTIVE OF THE LIMITED ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE LEBANON AND OF THE MARINES IN THE MNF, BUT DESIROUS OF GETTING A HOLD ON THE WHITE HOUSE THROUGH THE WAR POWERS ACT. THE ISRAELIS ARE SEEN, TO BE AT PRESENT IN LIMBO, BUT UNPREDICTABLE AS TO THE FUTURE.

3. IT IS ALSO RELEVANT THAT IN HIS REACTION TO THE FIRST ACUTE CRISIS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION, THE KOREAN AIRLINE SHOOTDOWN, THE PRESIDENT, DESPITE HIS REPUTATION FOR HAWKISH RHETORIC, PROVED IN ACTION TO BE FIRM, RESTRAINED AND PROPORTIONATE AND CONTINUES TO BE SO DESPITE THE ANGER OF HIS NATURAL CONSTITUENCY. HE HAS LEARNED A GREAT DEAL WHILE IN OFFICE, NOT LEAST ABOUT THE LIMITATIONS OF U S POWER. HE IS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC CONCERNS THAT U S FORCES SHOULD NOT BE SUCKED INTO SITUATIONS WHERE THEY ARE PROPPING UP WEAK FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS OVER WHICH THE U S HAS NO CONTROL.

4. MOREOVER WHILE THE U S IS THE ONLY COUNTRY WHICH HAS BOTH THE CLOUT AND THE POLITICAL WILL TO TRY TO LEAD THE EFFORT TO STABILISE THE LEBANON, IT DOES NOT HAVE A MONOPOLY OF WISDOM OR INFORMATION AND RECOGNISES THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE SUCH A MONOPOLY.

CONFIDENTIAL

/ AS DEMONSTRATED

CONFIDENTIAL

AS DEMONSTRATED BY ITS ACTIONS OVER THIS PAST WEEKEND, IT BOTH SEEKS ADVICE AND ACTS ON IT. IT IS TRUE THAT AMERICANS TEND TO OVERDRAW AND OVERREACT: IT IS IN THEIR NATURE AND WE MUST NOT EXPECT THEM TO ACT OUT OF CHARACTER. LIVING AMONG THEM AS I DO, I ADD THE APPROPRIATE DISCOUNTS TO THE ADVICE I OFFER YOU. IN THIS CASE, THEY WERE REACTING TO A PROPOSAL FROM THE FIELD: MCFARLANE, UNDER STRESS, ASKED FOR MORE THAN THE PRESIDENT WAS PREPARED TO GRANT. THE RELAXATION OF THE U S RULES OF ENGAGEMENT WAS LIMITED TO THE DEFENCE OF A POSITION THE AMERICANS REGARD AS CRUCIAL TO THE SECURITY OF THEIR OWN MNF CONTINGENT, AS WELL AS TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE LEBANESE ARMY. IT WAS TO MEET YOUR POINT THAT THE MODIFICATION OF THE ROES WAS LIMITED TO AIR AND SEA AND DID NOT AFFECT THE LAND. IT IS REASSURING THAT THOSE ON THE GROUND IN BEIRUT SHOULD NOW BE CLEARLY AWARE THAT THE REACTION IN WASHINGTON WAS CAUTIOUS AND THAT THERE IS REAL RELUCTANCE HERE, IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES ON THE GROUND IN LEBANON, TO SEE ANY GENERAL EXTENSION OF THE ROLE OF THE MNF.

5. SUBJECT OF COURSE TO THE VIEWS OF MR HESELTINE AND MR LUCE, I SEE NO NEED FOR ANOTHER MESSAGE FROM YOU TO SHULTZ AT THIS STAGE. YOUR PREOCCUPATIONS HAVE BEEN REGISTERED. YOUR ADVICE OVER THE WEEKEND WAS ACCEPTED. I AM, OF COURSE, AVAILABLE TO FEED IN ANY FRESH IDEAS OR INSIGHTS ON YOUR INSTRUCTIONS AT ANY TIME.

WRIGHT

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING STREET]

MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

LIMITED

NENAD
MED
DEFENCE D
PUSD
NEWS D
UND
NAD
WED
FINANCE D
SED

PS
PS/LADY YOUNG
PS/MR LUCE
PS/PUS
SIR J BULLARD
SIR J LEAHY
MR WRIGHT
MR CARTLEDGE
MR EGERTON
MR STREETON

COPIES TO

SIR R ARMSTRONG)
MR GOODALL) CABINET OFFICE

MOD DS 11

²
CONFIDENTIAL