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TO IMMEDIATE DESKBY FCO

TELEGRAM NO 203 OF 15 SEPTEMBER 83.

AND IMMEDIATE BUDAPEST (FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY) AND WASHINGTON.

INFO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT, PARIS, ROME, UKMIS NEW YORK, DAMASCUS,
MODUK.

INFO PRIORITY CAIRO, JEDDA, TEL AVIV AND TUNIS.

FROM PS/MR LUCE.

MR LUCE'S VISIT TO LEBANON : MEETING WITH MACFARLANE. (CORRECTED
VERSION).

1. MR LUCE HAD AN HOUR THIS MORNING WITH MACFARLANE. FAIRBANKS
WAS ALSO PRESENT. MACFARLANE WAS TIRED BUT LEVEL HEADED. HIS
ANALYSIS WAS REFRESHINGLY CLOSE TO OURS. HIS SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY
CONTINUES, BUT WITHOUT GREAT EXPECTATION OF SUCCESS.

DETAIL.

2. MEDIATION. MACFARLANE WAS PREOCCUPIED BY SAUDI MEDIATION
EFFORTS, WHICH HE THOUGHT WOULD COME TO A HEAD WITHIN THE NEXT
COUPLE OF DAYS. HE DESCRIBED THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF THE
PACKAGE AS A CEASEFIRE, AND THE SETTING UP OF A LEBANESE
CONFERENCE OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. THE SYRIANS HAD ADDED
A THIRD ELEMENT : THAT THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES (LAF) SHOULD
NOT BE DEPLOYED IN THE CHOUF AND SHOULD REMAIN NEUTRAL BETWEEN
GEMAYEL'S GOVERNMENT AND THE WAGING FACTIONS. THIS WAS A
STICKING POINT FOR THE LEBANESE. HE WOULD BE TRAVELLING TO
DAMASCUS LATER TODAY TO CLARIFY THE US POSITION AND TO SEE IF
HE COULD RIDE THE SYRIANS OFF THIS POSITION. HE WAS NOT
OPTIMISTIC.

3. SAUDI ROLE.

MACFARLANE SAID THAT THE SAUDIS HAD PLAYED A MOST HELPFUL ROLE.
HOWEVER THEY WERE INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED AT THE LACK OF PROGRESS,
AND WERE THREATENING TO BREAK OFF THEIR MEDIATION EFFORT AND LAY
THE BLAME PUBLICLY AT SYRIA'S DOOR UNLESS THE SYRIANS SHOWED
GREATER FLEXIBILITY. THEY DID NOT WANT TO LET SYRIA'S CLAIM
TO LEADERSHIP OF THE ARAB WORLD GO UNCHALLENGED. THEY HAD
BEEN STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE OF GEMAYEL.

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/4. SYRIA

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4. SYRIA MACFARLANE SAID THAT SYRIA WOULD DRIVE THE HARDEST POSSIBLE BARGAIN WITH THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. THEIR OBJECTIVE REMAINED TO REACH A SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD GIVE THEM A DOMINANT VOICE IN THE FUTURE OF LEBANESE AFFAIRS. THEIR ORIGINAL PLAN TO IMPOSE THEIR AUTHORITY BY MILITARY MEANS HAD APPARENTLY BEEN MODIFIED IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, PERHAPS BECAUSE OF A GOOD PERFORMANCE BY THE LAF AND INCREASED MNF ACTIVITY. A FURTHER OFFENSIVE AGAINST SUQAL GHARB WAS PROBABLY IMMINENT, BUT IF THIS FAILED THEY MIGHT BE WILLING TO SETTLE FOR A CEASEFIRE PACKAGE (THOUGH THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY A SUBVERSIVE ROLE). THE U.S. WISHED TO PROMOTE A CONSTRUCTION DIALOGUE WITH THE SYRIANS, AND HAD MADE CLEAR TO ASSAD THAT THEY RECOGNISED THAT SYRIA HAD LEGITIMATE SECURITY CONCERNS IN LEBANON. THEY HAD HAD SOME USEFUL EXCHANGES WITH ASSAD. (FAIRBANKS, HOWEVER INJECTED A PLEA THAT WE SHOULD HELP THE WORLD TO SEE THAT SYRIA WAS NOT THE ONLY VOICE IN THE ARAB WORLD : HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE SYRIA ISOLATED).

5. MNF.

MACFARLANE REFERRED TO EARLIER DISCUSSIONS ABOUT POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE ROLE OF THE MNF. HE DREW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE AMERICANS UNILATERAL DECISION TO WIDEN THEIR DEFINITION OF SELF DEFENCE TO INCLUDE THE DEFENCE OF SUQ AL GHARB, OVER WHICH SUPPORT OF THE OTHER MNF CONTRIBUTORS WOULD BE WELCOME BUT WAS NOT EXPECTED, AND THE DESIRABILITY OF ALL CONTRIBUTORS BEING READY TO DEFEND OTHER MNF PARTIES WHO CAME UNDER DIRECT ATTACK. MR LUCE MADE CLEAR THAT WE HAD VERY GREAT RESERVATIONS ABOUT WIDENING THE ROLE OF THE MNF, WHICH COULD PROVE TO BE A DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENT. THE QUESTION OF SUPPORT IN THE EVENT OF A DIRECT ATTACK, HOWEVER, WAS DIFFERENT. ANY REQUEST WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED ON ITS MERITS, BUT IN PRINCIPLE WE WOULD TAKE A FAVOURABLE APPROACH. HE WARNED STRONGLY AGAINST THE DANGERS OF ALLOWING OURSELVES TO BECOME SUCKED INTO A CONFLICT WHICH COULD THEN BE PROTRAYED BY THE SYRIANS AND THEIR ALLIES AS THE WEST FIGHTING THE ARABS. MACFARLANE APPEARED TO ACCEPT THIS.

6. OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.

MACFARLANE SAID THAT THE WILLINGNESS OF OTHER ARABS TO BECOME INVOLVED DEPENDED CRUCIALLY ON THE SAUDI ATTITUDE. THE JORDANIANS IN PARTICULAR WERE MOVING TOWARDS CLOSER INVOLVEMENT. THE ISRAELIS WERE UNPREDICTABLE AND THEREFORE DANGEROUS. THEY NOW HAD A WEAK GOVERNMENT AND DECISIONS WERE LIKELY TO BE TAKEN ON THE BASIS OF NARROW DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS RATHER THAN THEIR WIDER SECURITY INTEREST. MACFARLANE BELIEVED THEY COULD BE PERSUADED TO WITHDRAW FURTHER. THE UN ROLE WAS LIKELY TO BE LIMITED TO DESPATCHING AN OBSERVER FORCE. A CHANGE IN UNIFIL'S MANDATE, THOUGH IN PRINCIPLE DESIRABLE, WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE. A SUGGESTION BY KLIMBI FOR THE ARAB LEAGUE TO PROMOTE A SAUDI/ALGERIAN DETERRENT FORCE MIGHT BE WORTH PURSUING, THOUGH THE LEBANESE AND SAUDIS WERE VERY COOL ABOUT THE IDEA AND IT WOULD CONTRAVENE THE TERMS OF THE ISRAEL/ LEBANON AGREEMENT.

7. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT.
 WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THE SITUATION. THEY HAD NO FIRM STRATEGY YET FOR DIALOGUE OR RECONCILIATION. MACFLARLANE SAID HE HAD STRESSED TO GEMAYEL THE NEED TO BE SERIOUS ABOUT CONSTRUCTION OF A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY. HE BELIEVED THAT SUSTAINED WESTERN PRESSURE WOULD BE NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THIS. HE THOUGHT THAT GEMAYEL HIMSELF WAS COMMITTED TO A SETTLEMENT, BUT HE WAS NOT A STRONG PERSONALITY AND THOSE AROUND HIM (ESPECIALLY HIS FATHER AND HIS WIFE) WERE OPPOSED TO ANY COMPROMISE.

8. COMMENT.
 MACFARLANE APPEARS TO HAVE MOVED AWAY FROM SOME OF THE WILDER IDEAS. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCE, MR LUCE IS NOT ALTOGETHER CONVINCED THAT WE NEED SEND A FURTHER FORMAL MESSAGE TO THE AMERICANS AT THIS STAGE. HE WOULD LIKE TO CONSIDER FURTHER ON HIS RETURN TO LONDON. HE BELIEVES IT WOULD HOWEVER BE HELPFUL IF THE DEFENCE SECRETARY COULD USE HIS CALLS IN WASHINGTON TO STRESS TO THE AMERICANS THE DANGERS WE SEE IN BEING DRAWN INTO A CONFLICT WHICH COULD BE PROTRAYED AS THE WEST FIGHTING THE ARABS.

WILBERFORCE.
 BT

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MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

LIMITED.

NENAD	PS
MED	PS/LADY YOUNG
DEFENCE D	PS/MR LUCE
PUSD	PS/PUS
NEWS D	SIR J BULLARD
UND	SIR J LEAHY
NAD	MR WRIGHT
WED	MR CARTLEDGE
FINANCE D	MR EGERTON
SED	MR STREETON

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