



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 September 1983

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Prime Minister

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Dear Richard,  
Cyprus and Lebanon

Mr Heseltine's minute of 16 September to Sir Geoffrey Howe about Italian use of Akrotiri (already dealt with separately) referred also to a request from the Lebanese to move aircraft to the SBAs.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary agrees with the response to the Lebanese request proposed by Mr Heseltine. It would be extremely difficult to restrict the Lebanese to "parking" their aircraft at Akrotiri without their becoming involved in operational missions. We have no interest in the Sovereign Base Areas being drawn more deeply into the Lebanese conflict than is absolutely necessary. In addition, to accede to the Lebanese request might increase the risk of direct retaliation by the Druze and their allies against BRITFORLEB.

We propose therefore that you should tell the Lebanese that, whilst Akrotiri remains available in case of genuine emergency, they should not look to it merely because the security of their own airstrips is threatened. We cannot allow Akrotiri to become more directly involved in the fighting than it already is in support of elements of the Multi National Force. To do so would be to associate the Bases with the conflict in a manner which would cause us great difficulty with other governments because we would be regarded as providing direct operational support to the Lebanese Air Force. It could also call into question the role of our contingent in the MNF and reduce the effectiveness of our contribution to the search for a negotiated solution.

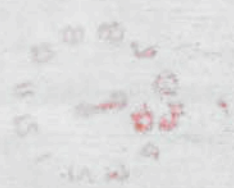
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I am copying this letter to John Coles (No 10) and  
to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).



*Yours ever*

*J E Holmes*

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

Richard Mottram Esq  
Ministry of Defence

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LEBANON : Int Ext

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