

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES 16



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FM WASHINGTON 231958Z SEPT 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 2740 OF 23 SEPT 83

INFO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT MODUK UKMIS NEW YORK PARIS ROME

GOVERNOR HONG KONG (FOR PS/MR LUCE)

PRIORITY DAMASCUS AMMAN JEDDA TEL AVIV CAIRO.

MY TELNO 2719 : LEBANON

1. THE STATE DEPARTMENT TOLD US AT 231800Z THAT FURTHER PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN THE CEASEFIRE NEGOTIATIONS BUT THAT A NEW SYRIAN DEMAND IS NOW BLOCKING AGREEMENT.

2. BOTH THE LEBANESE AND SYRIANS HAVE NOW AGREED THAT THE NATIONAL UNITY TALKS SHOULD COMPRISE THOSE LISTED IN PARAGRAPH 5 (III) OF MY TUR WITH THE ADDITION OF ADEL OSSEIRAN AND MOUNIR ABU FADIL. THE FORMER WAS ADDED BY THE LEBANESE, THE LATTER BY THE SYRIANS.

3. THE VENUE FOR THESE TALKS HAS NOT BEEN SETTLED. BUT IT HAS

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BEEN AGREED THAT THERE SHOULD BE A PREPARATORY COMMITTEE, COMPRISING REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL THE PARTICIPANTS, TO DETERMINE THE AGENDA FOR THE TALKS AND MADE THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEM TO BE HELD. IT SEEMS THAT PRINCE BANDAR WILL HAVE SOME ROLE IN ORGANISING THIS PREPARATORY COMMITTEE.

4. THE SYRIANS HAVE, HOWEVER, JUST PRODUCED A NEW REQUIREMENT THAT GEMAYEL'S STATEMENT ANNOUNCING THE TALKS SHOULD INCLUDE A WRITTEN COMMITMENT IN ADVANCE, ON BEHALF OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, TO ACCEPT WHATEVER MAY BE DECIDED AT THEM. THE LEBANESE HAVE REJECTED THIS, PARTLY BECAUSE IT IS A NEW DEMAND AND PARTLY BECAUSE THEY THINK IT UNCONSTITUTIONAL. IT IS NOT SUGGESTED THAT OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN THE TALKS MAKE A SIMILAR COMMITMENT. MCFARLANE IS NOT AT PRESENT DISPOSED TO PRESS THE LEBANESE TO CONCEDE THIS POINT. HARIRI IS TRYING TO PERSUADE THE SYRIANS TO DROP IT. MCFARLANE IS IN BEIRUT AND BANDAR IN JEDDA.

5. THE STATE DEPARTMENT POINT OUT THAT THE SYRIAN REQUIREMENT WOULD HAVE LITTLE PRACTICAL EFFECT SINCE DECISIONS AT THE NATIONAL UNITY TALKS WILL PRESUMABLY HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY CONSENSUS AND GEMAYEL HIMSELF AND THE LEBANESE FORCES REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE ABLE TO BLOCK ANY PROPOSALS TOO FAVOURABLE TO THE SYRIANS. EVEN IF THIS POINT CAN BE RESOLVED, THEY ARE NOT CONFIDENT THAT A CEASEFIRE WILL BE AGREED. THEY NOTE THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE SEEMED EQUALLY CLOSE TO SUCCESS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN THE LAST WEEK OR SO ONLY TO BE FRUSTRATED BY A NEW DEMAND FROM ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER OR THE REOPENING OF A POINT PREVIOUSLY AGREED. BUT THEY HOPE THAT THE CONTINUED MILITARY STALEMATE AT SUQ EL GHARB WILL DISCOURAGE BOTH SIDES FROM PROLONGING THE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE HOPE OF MAKING MILITARY GAINS.

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