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FM WASHINGTON 282207Z OCT 83
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NO 3190 OF 28 OCT
INFO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT TEL AVIV

LEBANON: MNF

1. ADMIRAL HOWE TOLD MINISTER THIS AFTERNOON THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD BE MADE HERE LATER TODAY THAT A REINFORCED US RIFLE COMPANY IS TO BE SENT TO BEIRUT TO JOIN THE US ELEMENT OF THE MNF. THIS WILL RAISE THE TOTAL COMPLEMENT FROM 1600 TO 1800. PART OF THE INTENTION IS TO COMPLETE THE REPLACEMENT OF US MARINES KILLED IN LAST SUNDAY'S BOMBING AND PART IS TO BOOST MORALE AFTER THE SHOCKS OF THE LAST WEEK. IT ALSO FOLLOWED FROM THE CONCLUSIONS OF GENERAL KELLY'S SURVEY OF SECURITY (WHICH IMPLIES THAT ONE OF THE AIMS IS TO DEAL WITH SNIPERS) ADMIRAL HOWE SAID THAT THE REINFORCED RIFLE COMPANY WOULD REMAIN THERE UNTIL THE REGULAR REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVED. THESE WERE THE US MARINES WHO HAD BEEN DIVERTED TO GRENADA AND THEY WOULD BE EXPECTED IN LEBANON WITHIN A FEW WEEKS.

2. GIVEN THIS RATHER CONVOLUTED EXPLANATION, THOMAS TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE WITH HOWE THE RUMOURS DOING THE ROUNDS AMONG THE WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS YESTERDAY AND TODAY ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF EARLY RETALIATION BY THE US. THIS SPECULATION HAD EVIDENTLY BEEN SPARKED OFF BY A BACKGROUND BRIEFING FOR JOURNALISTS WHICH SHULTZ HAD GIVEN EARLIER THIS WEEK AND BY THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE NATION LAST NIGHT. COULD WE ASSUME THAT THE DESPATCH OF THE REINFORCED RIFLE COMPANY TO BEIRUT WAS UNRELATED TO THESE RUMOURS? HOWE ASSURED THOMAS THAT WE COULD. HE HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF ANY PLAN FOR RETALIATION. HE SAID THAT OPTIONS WERE OBVIOUSLY BEING DISCUSSED BUT TO THE BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE NO DECISIONS HAD BEEN TAKEN. AT PRESENT THEY WERE CONCENTRATING RATHER ON WORKING ON INTELLIGENCE LEADS.

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/s. THOMAS

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3. THOMAS SAID THAT HE COULD NOT EMPHASISE TOO STRONGLY THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER CONSULTATION WITH US IF THE AMERICANS REACHED THE POINT OF SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING RETALIATION. THE UK FORCE IN THE MNF WAS A SMALL ONE BUT IT WOULD BE AS EXPOSED AS ANY OTHER IN THE EVENT OF AN AMERICAN MILITARY ACT OF REPRISAL IN LEBANON OR SYRIA, IF THIS WAS WHAT THEY WERE CONTEMPLATING. EQUALLY OUR INTERESTS COULD BE AFFECTED IF THEIR POTENTIAL TARGET WAS ELSEWHERE. A REPETITION OF THE EXPERIENCE OVER GRENADA WOULD HAVE THE GRAVEST CONSEQUENCES.

4. THE SAME POINTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO SEITZ (SHULTZ'S EXECUTIVE SECRETARY).

WRIGHT

MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

LIMITED
NENAD
MED
DEFENCE DEPT
PUSD
NEWS DEPT
UND
NAD
WED
SED
ECD(E)
FINANCE DEPT
PROTOCOL DEPT
PS

PS/LADY YOUNG
PS/MR LUCE
PS/PUS
SIR J BULLARD
SIR J LEAHY
MR WRIGHT
MR CARTLEDGE
MR MACINNES
MR ADAMS
MR JAMES

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