

(F) WE HAVE HAD MANY OUTRAGES IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND OVER ONE THOUSAND DEATHS TO OUR FORCES THERE - BUT WE HAVE ALWAYS CONCENTRATED ON HUNTING OUT THOSE CRIMINALS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE, AVOIDING WIDER RETALIATORY ACTION.

(G) WE WERE GLAD TO BE TOLD [REDACTED] THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT BE ASSOCIATED WITH YOU IN ANY STEP. I AM ALSO GLAD TO SEE FROM YOUR MESSAGE THAT DIRECT ACTION AGAINST SYRIA OR IRAN IS RULED OUT. ACTION WHICH INVOLVED THEM EVEN INDIRECTLY WOULD BE VERY DANGEROUS.

(H) WE DO NOT WISH TO GIVE ANYONE, AND SYRIA IN PARTICULAR, ANY EXCUSE FOR WITHDRAWING FROM THE CONCILIATION PROCESS.

(I) AS THE FRENCH AND ITALIANS HAVE BIGGER CONTINGENTS IN THE MNF THAN WE, I ASSUME THAT YOU ARE CONSULTING THEM.

I FULLY UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFICULT YOUR DECISION WILL BE. IT IS MY WISH TO AVOID FURTHER TRAGEDY IN THE LEBANON FOR THE UNITED STATES, FOR THE MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE, AND FOR OTHERS THAT MAKES ME PUT THESE POINTS TO YOU.

WITH BEST WISHES
YOURS EVER
MARGARET

BT

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DEVS 200

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TO THE WHITE HOUSE
1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
WASHINGTON, DC 20503

JOHN BUCHANAN
DIRECTOR

1184183

06
cc: [unclear]



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

Per M. Ham
Draft 13B Fall
J. Lewis-Jones
approx 1430

Dear Ron,

Thank you for your message of 14 November about the Lebanon.

You face a very difficult decision, and I can well understand all the pressures upon you to take action. In such circumstances leaders find themselves in a lonely position, and I want to let you have my frank views as ~~a friend~~ *someone who has been in a similar situation.*

The decision must be yours. We do not know what options you are considering. Only you are able to assess the risks to the people who would carry out any operation, to the civilians who may get caught up in it, to the troops of all contingents in the multi-national force and to the Lebanon more widely.

The following are the points I must ask you to consider most carefully:-

- (a) for an action to have any chance of appearing justifiable ~~it~~ ^{to world} it would have to be clearly limited to legitimate self-defence.
- (b) if we were considering such an action we would be thinking in terms of a small group of specialised troops dealing with the people who could publicly be proved to be the terrorists who mounted the outrageous assault on your troops. Our intelligence advice has not yet been able to pinpoint the guilty people with sufficient accuracy.

/ (c)

TOP SECRET
2

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- (c) precision would be necessary both to ensure the avoidance of civilian casualties and to minimise the opportunities for hostile propaganda after the event.
- (d) I am sure you are aware that a range of possible targets has been publicly discussed by the ~~European~~ media for days past. It seems unlikely that any element of surprise can be achieved.
- (e) you would be dealing with fanatical people who have no concern for the lives of others and who appear to glory in the prospect of their own death. They have deliberately set out to provoke you into retaliatory action. Any action against them is surely certain to provoke further terrorist outrages on their part. New dangers for the multi-national force and all others in the area would be inevitable. *We should be ^{under} very heavy pressure to reconsider the future of our contingents.*
- (f) we have had many outrages in Northern Ireland and over one thousand deaths to our forces there - but we have always concentrated on hunting out those criminals directly responsible, avoiding wider retaliatory action.
- ~~(g) if you decided to go ahead, depending on the action you were envisaging, I should have to consider very urgently the safety of our troops in the multi-national force and the people in our Beirut Embassy.~~
- (h) we were glad to be told [redacted] that Israel would not be associated with you in any step.

I am also glad to see from your message that direct action against Syria or Iran is ruled out. Action which involved them even indirectly would be very dangerous

(k) we do not wish to give anyone, and Syria in particular, any excuse ~~from~~^{for} withdrawing from the conciliation process.

(j) as the French and Italians have bigger contingents ~~than~~ⁱⁿ the MNF than we, I assure ~~that~~^{that} you ~~we~~ are consulting them.

I fully understand how difficult your decision will be. It is my wish to avoid further tragedy ^{in the Lebanon} for the United States, for the multi-national force, and for others that makes me put these points to you. ~~I do believe that action in the immediate aftermath of the attack on your troops would have been easier to defend than action now.~~

I hope you will now consider these points very carefully and not let yourself be pressurised into action which we might all regret.

With best wishes

Your son

Raymond.

The President of the United States of America

Lebanon.



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister. *Ames*

You will probably think that we ought to have a meeting soon to consider this.

2. The best time for the Foreign and Defense Secretaries will be 11.15. We would try to get Lord Whitelaw at the same time.

3. I would ask the F./C.O. to provide a draft r.d.g. for discussion.

4. Agree to meet at 11.15?

A.S.C. $\frac{16}{11}$

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

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.....In Confidence

LEBANON: MNF: DRAFT MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN

CAVEAT.....

Thank you for your message of 14 November. I appreciate the opportunity to comment further on the action you are contemplating in Lebanon.

①

I am frankly apprehensive about the retaliatory action you propose. Firstly it seems to us very doubtful that, however carefully targetted, an attack of this sort will have the deterrent effect you are seeking. We are dealing with terrorists who have demonstrated their fanatasicm only too clearly. Rather than deter would not an attack provoke further violence against the MNF? An attack on our contingent ^{which could be portrayed} as a direct result of US retaliation would place me in a very difficult position.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

Secondly, military action now would give the Syrians and others who may want to work against the reconciliatio process a strong incentive to be less accommodating

in the talks which we hope will resume before long in Geneva. That too would have unwelcome consequences for all MNF contributors, and would give the Syrians, not to mention the Russians, a propaganda field-day.

I do not under-estimate how difficult this decision must be for you. I believe that retaliation in the immediate aftermath of an attack on the MNF would ~~in some ways~~ ^{have been} ~~be~~ easier to defend than retaliation now. I ask you to weigh most carefully the consequences before taking a final decision.

FILE



COPY NO 4 OF 4

COPIES

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 November, 1983

*Dear Peter,*LEBANON

I enclose a copy of a message which the Prime Minister has just received from President Reagan.

The Prime Minister will chair a meeting at 1115 here this morning to consider her reply. You have kindly agreed to provide a draft.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Janet Lewis-Jones (Lord President's Office).

*Yours ever**John Major*

P. Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

TOP SECRET - PERSONAL

cc MARGEN
ops

US Declassified

USA.P

10

2013/5/2

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FM THE WHITE HOUSE
TO CABINET OFFICE
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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T183183

T O P S E C R E T VIA CABINET OFFICE CHANNELS SENSITIVE WHO8748

NOVEMBER 14, 1983

DEAR MARGARET:

I HAVE CONTINUED TO WEIGH MOST CAREFULLY THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE U.S. AND OUR MNF PARTNERS OF BOTH ACTION AND INACTION IN VIEW OF THE EVIDENCE NOW IN HAND WHICH CLEARLY IDENTIFIES THE LEBANESE TERRORISTS OF THE SO CALLED +HUSAYNI SUICIDE COMMANDOS+ OF THE SPLINTER ISLAMIC AMAL MOVEMENT. IN CONSIDERING THIS DIFFICULT DECISION, I HAVE, AS ALWAYS, GREATLY APPRECIATED YOUR COUNSEL.

ALTHOUGH I HAVE NOT YET MADE A FINAL DECISION, MY CURRENT INCLINATION IS TO TAKE DECISIVE BUT CAREFULLY LIMITED MILITARY ACTION IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE. WHILE CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO AVOID A CYCLE OF VIOLENCE, MY GREATEST CONCERN IS THAT ALLOWING THIS CRIME TO GO WITHOUT ANY RESPONSE WOULD ENCOURAGE FURTHER ATROCITIES AGAINST THE MNF. THE GROWING NUMBER OF INTELLIGENCE REPORTS ON PLANNING FOR OTHER TERRORIST ACTS AGAINST THE MNF IS DISTURBING. MY PURPOSE IS TO TRY TO DETER ANY SUCH ATTACKS= IN SHORT, ACTING NOW IS THE BEST MEANS OF PREVENTING FUTURE VIOLENCE. THE ACTION CONTEMPLATED WOULD BE AGAINST A DISCRETE TARGET IN LEBANON AND WOULD NOT INVOLVE DIRECT ACTION AGAINST SYRIA OR IRAN.

* ~ * THE EVIDENCE IS BEING REEVALUATED NOW= WE WOULD ONLY ACT IF THE TARGET IS RECONFIRMED WITH HIGH CONFIDENCE AND IF IT CAN BE ATTACKED WITHOUT UNDUE RISKS TO NON-COMBATANTS.

BEFORE MAKING A FINAL DECISION, I WOULD APPRECIATE ANY ADDITIONAL ADVICE YOU MIGHT WISH TO PROVIDE, I WOULD, OF COURSE, BE IN FURTHER TOUCH IN ADVANCE OF ANY ACTION.

BECAUSE OF THE NEED FOR ABSOLUTE SECRECY, KNOWLEDGE OF MY CURRENT THINKING IS BEING SEVERELY LIMITED WITHIN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

SINCERELY,

RON

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£8748

* ~ * Passage deleted and retained
under Section 3(4)

NNNN

Wayland

10 April 2014