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FM BEIRUT 171130Z NOV 83

TO PRIORITY F.C.O.

TELEGRAM NUMBER 647 OF 17 NOVEMBER 1983

INFO PRIORITY DAMASCUS, JEDDA, TEL AVIV, PARIS, ROME, WASHINGTON,
UKMIS GENEVA, UKMIS NEW YORK, MODUK, CBFC

SAVING BRITFORLEB

MY TELNO 643: LEBANON - RECONCILIATION

1. THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PAID A ONE-DAY VISIT TO BEIRUT ON 16 NOVEMBER. HE HAD OFFICIAL TALKS WITH PRESIDENT GEMAYEL, FOLLOWED BY LUNCH TO WHICH PRIME MINISTER WAZZAN WAS ALSO INVITED. THE VISIT HAD APPARENTLY BEEN ADVANCED BY ONE DAY BECAUSE OF THE DETERIORATING STATE OF SECURITY IN LEBANON.
2. SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TOLD COUNSELLOR THAT THE MEETING WAS A SUCCESS. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS GOOD. KHADDAM'S MAIN MESSAGE HAD BEEN TO REASSURE GEMAYEL THAT ASSAD WANTED THE SUMMIT IN DAMASCUS TO TAKE PLACE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND THAT IN ANY CASE IT SHOULD PRECEDE GEMAYEL'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. THERE MIGHT THEN BE A FURTHER MEETING WHEN GEMAYEL RETURNED FROM THE UNITED STATES. ACCORDING TO TURK, BOTH THE LEBANESE AND SYRIANS REGARD THE MEETING AS OPENING A NEW CHAPTER IN LEBANESE/SYRIAN RELATIONS.
3. GEMAYEL AND KHADDAM AGREED THAT THE CEASEFIRE ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED TO ARREST THE CURRENT DETERIORATION. AS A CONSEQUENCE THE HEAD OF THE LEBANESE ARMY'S DEUXIEME BUREAU AND THE ARMY'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE CEASEFIRE ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE HAVE GONE TO DAMASCUS TODAY (17 NOVEMBER) FOR TALKS WITH THEIR SYRIAN COUNTERPARTS. THEY ARE ALSO TO MEET JUMBLATT.
4. ON THE LEBANON/ISRAEL AGREEMENT, KHADDAM HAD MADE CLEAR THAT SYRIA'S MAIN OBJECTION WAS CURRENTLY THE ISRAELI SIDE-LETTER STIPULATING THAT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL WAS CONDITIONAL ON A PRIOR SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL. HOW TO BRING ABOUT AN UNCONDITIONAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON WOULD BE THE MAIN TOPIC OF DISCUSSION BETWEEN GEMAYEL AND ASSAD. TURK WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER OR NOT KHADDAM HAD MAINTAINED THAT LEBANESE AGREEMENT TO CANCEL THE AGREEMENT (OR SOMETHING AKIN TO IT) WAS A PRE-CONDITION FOR PROGRESS TOWARDS RECONCILIATION.

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5. TURK CONFIRMED THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WANTED A FURTHER ROUND OF RECONCILIATION TALKS AT GENEVA BEFORE A NEW GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY WAS FORMED. THIS WAS ALSO THE VIEW OF KHADDAM.

6. THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENT OF THIS MEETING WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE IMPROVEMENT IN ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN LEBANESE AND SYRIAN LEADERS. THE LOCAL PRESS, NO DOUBT REFLECTING SOME OFFICIAL BRIEFING, HAVE PUT AN ENCOURAGING GLOSS ON THEIR REPORTING OF THE TALKS.

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ADVANCED

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