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Prime Minister.

A.S.C. 48/11.

MO 3/7/4

*Thankyou MF*

PRIME MINISTERLEBANON

Following our meeting last night, you will wish to be aware of the steps I have put in hand to enhance the security of our force in Lebanon:

a. road blocks were set up last night using Ferret scout cars on the main road past HQ BRITFORLEB. Urgent action is now being taken to make these more effective. Earth mounds are also already erected to give some additional protection against truck bombs.

b. HMS Glamorgan and HMS Brazen, currently at Gibraltar en route to take up duties as the Armilla Patrol, are being despatched today to the Eastern Mediterranean; they should be off the Lebanon by 23rd November. HMS Fearless will be sailing from Portland as soon as possible to take over this role arriving by about 26th November. Since the news of these movements may well become public, a press statement will be issued (copy attached) to try to prevent undue speculation about the purpose of the deployment;

c. Major General Langley, CBF Cyprus, is today in Beirut to study any further possible enhancement of BRITFORLEB's security. He has examined in particular the possibilities for temporary overnight withdrawal of off-duty personnel (perhaps about 40) plus some personnel on a permanent basis



(about 20) to RN ships off-shore. Whether it would be wise to adopt this course of action on a regular basis or simply have it as an option, depends crucially on the assessment of the vulnerability of the helicopters to surface to air missiles and other weapons;

d. a further examination of possible alternative sites in the present area for BRITFORLEB which would be less vulnerable to suicide truck bombs has confirmed that there is no suitable alternative which would not involve greatly increased risks to other forms of attack. Once HMS Fearless is there, it may well be possible to accommodate virtually the whole force at sea each night, leaving the scout cars in a guarded compound in the dock area. We are looking at the possibilities of this and I shall report further on it.

2. I am sending a copy of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

3. In my absence in Birmingham, I have asked John Stanley to clear the text of the press statement and to sign this letter.

*JAS.*

Ministry of Defence  
18th November 1983

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

In order to provide improved logistical support for the British Contingent in Beirut, an RN ship is being placed off Beirut for the time being.

The programme of HMS GLAMORGAN, which has HMS BRAZEN in company, and is currently en route to take up duties in the Indian Ocean, is accordingly being amended to allow both ships to be off the Lebanon from early next week. They will be replaced in this role by HMS FEARLESS at the end of the month. The RN presence standing off the Lebanese coast will provide the Commander of the British Force in the Lebanon with additional logistical support, and will provide additional recreational and off-duty facilities for the members of the British Contingent.

DEFENSIVE SUPPLEMENTARIES

- Q. Does this mean we are preparing to pull out/reinforce our force?
- A. No. There is no change in BRITFORLEB's role or size.
- Q. Are you planning any retaliatory action following the US and French bombings?
- A. None whatsoever. FEARLESS does not have any weapons to provide Naval gunfire support.
- Q. What are the additional logistical and recreational facilities that FEARLESS can offer?
- A. Fuels, substantial food stocks, spare parts, NAAFI facilities, keep fit facilities.
- Q. Why can't you get these from Cyprus?
- A. It will be more convenient and administratively simpler to have these easily at hand offshore.
- Q. How long will FEARLESS stay?
- A. As long as necessary.
- Q. Are Royal Marines embarked?
- A. A Marine Commando is not embarked. The only Marine detachment is the normal Marine element of the ships company who are engaged in routine ship duties.
- Q. How many Marines are there?
- A. About 90.
- Q. Does this mean that you consider the security situation is worsening?
- A. There are clearly risks to all the MNF Contingents and the Government has the security of our own Contingent constantly in mind.

SECRET



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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

21 November, 1983.

Lebanon

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of 18 November describing the steps which he had put in hand to improve the security of the British contingent in the Multi-national Force.

A. J. COLES

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET

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