

LUK 838/28

IMMEDIATE

*Prime Minister*

*A.S.C. 29*

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OO NEW DELHI  
GR 535  
CONFIDENTIAL  
FM F C O 281224Z NOV 83  
TO IMMEDIATE NEW DELHI  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 924 OF 28 NOVEMBER  
FOR COLES

CONFIDENTIAL

RECEIVED BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION NEW DELHI CHANCERY REGISTRY 29 NOV 1983 DUPLICATES OF LETTER..... OF ENCLOSURES..... LOCATION.....
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FOLLOWING TELEGRAM NOW REPEATED TO YOU AT REQUEST OF PS/PM  
WAS SENT TO ROME TELEGRAM NUMBER 352 OF 25 NOVEMBER:  
BEGINS:

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON PARIS, BEIRUT  
INFO PRIORITY OTHER EC POSTS, DAMASCUS, UKMIS NEW YORK

MY TELNO 351: COORDINATION BETWEEN MNF CONTRIBUTORS.

1. MINISTER AT ITALIAN EMBASSY CALLED ON BULLARD AND EGERTON ON 25 NOVEMBER, ON INSTRUCTIONS. VATTANI EXPLAINED THIS HIS GOVERNMENT WAS CONCERNED 'AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL' ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THEIR MNF CONTINGENT. HE HANDED OVER A COPY OF THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AFTER THE SUPREME DEFENCE COUNCIL'S MEETING IN ROME ON 23 NOVEMBER ON THIS SUBJECT, THE CRUX OF WHICH STATES THAT THE ITALIAN CONTINGENT WILL LEAVE BEIRUT AS SOON AS THE GENEVA RECONCILIATION TALKS END, WHATEVER THEIR RESULT. VATTANI STRESSED THAT IT WAS UNUSUAL FOR THE SUPREME DEFENCE COUNCIL TO ISSUE A COMMUNIQUE. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT SR. ANDREOTTI WAS ANXIOUS TO COMPARE NOTES WITH HIS MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR THE MNF AND SUGGESTED THAT THIS SHOULD BE DONE IN THE MARGINS OF THE NATO MINISTERIAL MEETINGS ON 8/9 DECEMBER, OR EARLIER IF THE SITUATION IN LEBANON SEEMED TO WARRANT IT.
2. BULLARD SAID HE FELT HE COULD ASSURE THE ITALIANS THAT I WOULD WELCOME SUCH A MEETING. HE COULD NOT SAY WHETHER I WOULD BE ABLE TO ATTEND ONE EARLIER THAN 8/9 DECEMBER, THOUGH OF COURSE THE THREE EUROPEAN MNF FOREIGN MINISTERS WOULD BE ABLE TO COMPARE NOTES IN THE MARGINS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, AS NECESSARY.
3. VATTANI EXPLAINED FURTHER THAT THE ITALIANS WERE ANXIOUS TO THIN DOWN THEIR CONTINGENT EVEN IF ITS REMOVAL WAS NOT AN EARLY PROSPECT. THEY WERE DISSATISFIED WITH PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE MNF CONTINGENTS. AS REGARDS BULLARD'S SUGGESTION TO BOTTAI IN BRUSSELS ON 22 NOVEMBER, THAT THE ITALIANS SHOULD CALL FOR INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN OFFICIALS OF MNF STATES, THIS WAS DIFFICULT GIVEN THE COLDNESS BETWEEN THE ITALIANS AND THE FRENCH RESULTING FROM THEIR RECENT BILATERAL TALKS IN VENICE, AT WHICH NEWS OF THE FRENCH RETALIATION IN THE BEKAA HAD HIT ITALIAN MINISTER -S LIKE A BOMBSHELL.
4. EGERTON EXPLAINED THAT WE TOO INCREASINGLY FELT THE LACK OF ANY MACHINERY TO ENABLE MNF CONTRIBUTORS TO REVIEW PROGRESS AGAINST OBJECTIVES (SHORT, MEDIUM AND LONGER TERM), AND TO SERVE AS A CLEARING HOUSE FOR INFORMATION ON THREATS TO SECURITY, THE INTENTIONS OF LEBANON'S NEIGHBOURS, PROSPECTS FOR RECONCILIATION ETC. WE BELIEVED THAT MEETINGS OF OFFICIALS IN A CONTACT GROUP, IDEALLY IN ROME, WOULD PREPARE THE GROUND FOR MINISTERIAL DISCUSSIONS AND MIGHT DIMINISH OUR SENSE OF SIMPLY REACTING TO EVENTS WHICH WE COULD NEITHER FORESEE NOR ADEQUATELY GUARD AGAINST. IF THE ITALIANS AGREED SUCH A CONTACT GROUP MIGHT GROW OUT OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING IN THE MARGINS OF NATO. VATTANI SAID HE THOUGHT FRENCH OBJECTIONS WOULD BE LESS IF SUCH A GROUP WAS TOTALLY INFORMAL, AND MET IN LONDON. BUT HE WOULD REPORT OUR THINKING TO ANDREOTTI, WHO COULD THEN DISCUSS IT FURTHER WITH ME IN THE MARGINS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL. VATTANI DID NOT EXPECT OBJECTIONS FROM THE US TO THE IDEA OF A CONTACT GROUP: THE PROBLEM WAS HOW TO SELL THE IDEA TO THE FRENCH.

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