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TO FLASH ATHENS

TELERGAM NUMBER 557 OF 04 DECEMBER 1983

INFO FLASH DAMASCUS, WASHINGTON, BEIRUT,
IMMEDIATE ROME, PARIS, TEL AVIV, MODUK, UKMIS NEW YORK.
FOR SECRETARY OF STATES PARTY

FOLLOWING FOR PRIME MINISTER FROM HESELTINE.

BEGINS,

I AM TRYING AS AN IMMEDIATE STEP TO FIND OUT FROM CAP WEINBERGER THE PRECISE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AMERICAN ACTION. I HAVE ALSO BEEN IN TOUCH WITH RICHARD LUCE IN DAMASCUS, WHO WAS NOT FULLY AWARE OF EVENTS. I BRIEFED HIM APPROPRIATELY AND HE IS TO SEE THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SHORTLY AND WILL REPORT. HIS IMMEDIATE REACTION WAS THE NEED TO CONTACT AMERICANS AT HIGHEST LEVEL TO URGE RESTRAINT.

I AGREE WITH THIS. WE NEED TO PERSUADE THE AMERICANS THAT THERE SHOULD BE A PAUSE FOR URGENT CONSULTATIONS BEFORE ANY FURTHER ACTION IS TAKEN WHICH WOULD GIVE ANOTHER TWIST TO THE SPIRAL. I HAVE ARRANGED TO TALK TO WEINBERGER ON A SECURE LINK THROUGH THE U S EMBASSY AT 1415Z. GEOFFREY HOWE WILL NO DOUBT WANT TO TELEPHONE SHULTZ AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY AND IF FEASIBLE FIX UP A MEETING WITH HIM EITHER BILATERALY OR WITH OTHER MNF FOREIGN MINISTERS. YOU YOURSELF MAY WISH TO TALK TO THE PRESIDENT. A COMPLICATING FEATURE FOR ALL OF US WITH THIS IS THE FRONT PAGE STORIES IN THE SUNDAY TIMES AND OBSERVER SUGGESTING JOINT US ISREAL PLANS TO DRIVE SYRIA OUT OF LEBANON. WE ARE ONCE AGAIN IN THE POSITION OF APPEARING TO BE SUCKED INTO A DANGEROUS SITUATION OVER WHICH WE DO NOT HAVE CONTROL. I AM CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED NOT TO EXACERBATE UNDULY THE ALREADY RUFFLED STATE OF ANGLO AMERICAN RELATIONS BUT IN ONE M WAY OR ANOTHER WE MUST INSIST ON THE AMERICANS TELLING US FRANKLY WHAT THEIR INTENTIONS ARE. YOU ARE AWARE WE WERE INFORMED OF ATTAACK ONLY MINUTES BEFORE IT TOOK PLACE.

A KEY JUDGEMENT HINGES ON THE U S

JUSTIFICATION FOR RETALIATION. SO FAR

INTELLIGENCE SUPPRTS THE VIEW THAT ONLY LIMITED U S RECCE FLIGHTS TOOK PLACE ON SATURDAY. I AM TRYING TO CONFIRM THIS FROM OUR OWN SOURCES. THESE U S FLIGHTS ATTRACTED ATTACKS BY 10 SAM MISSILES AND 500 ARTILLERY ROUNDS BUT NO U S AIRCRAFT WAS HIT. U S TODAY ATTACKED TARGETS 10 MILES EAST OF BEIRUT AT HAMMAN AND NOT IN THE BEQAA. 24 CARRIER BASED AIRCRAFT ARE REPORTED TO HAVE TAKEN PART OF WHICH TWO WERE DESTROYED : ONE AMERICAN PILOT IS IN SYRIAN HANDS.

WE SHALL REPORT WITH LATER INFORMATIONM AS APPRIPIATE
PARLIAMETARY INTEREST TOMORROW IS CERTAIN
BRITFORLEB REPORTS THAZT BEIRUT IS RELATIVELY QUIET.

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 William C. McCahill, Jr.

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34A handed in* on 5/12.
+ seen by AOC. No
further action taken.

UNITED STATES AIRSTRIKES ON SYRIAN POSITIONS IN LEBANON

* at Athens

AT 0900 ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, TWO U.S. F-14 AIRCRAFT ON A ROUTINE RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHT OVER LEBANESE TERRITORY WERE FIRED UPON BY ANTI-AIRCRAFT EMPLACEMENTS (SOME 500 ROUNDS) AND SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES (AT LEAST TEN SA-7S) FROM A NUMBER OF POSITIONS CLEARLY BEHIND SYRIAN LINES IN LEBANON.

DURING THE EARLY DAYLIGHT HOURS OF SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, U.S. NAVY AIRCRAFT FROM THE SIXTH FLEET CARRIED OUT AIR STRIKES AGAINST SYRIAN ARMY ANTI-AIRCRAFT CONCENTRATIONS, WHICH HAD BEEN THE SOURCE OF THE ATTACKS AGAINST OUR AIRCRAFT, IN THE NORTHERN METN EAST OF BEIRUT. APPROXIMATELY, 28 U.S. AIRCRAFT WERE INVOLVED.

THE MISSION WAS CARRIED OUT SUCCESSFULLY DESPITE THE FACT THAT SOME 40 SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES AND THOUSANDS OF ROUNDS OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT ORDINANCE WERE FIRED AT OUR PLANES.

TWO U.S. AIRCRAFT WERE HIT. THE PILOT OF ONE AIRCRAFT HAS BEEN RECOVERED SAFELY. WE HAVE INFORMATION THAT THE TWO-MAN CREW OF THE OTHER AIRCRAFT EJECTED SAFELY OVER SYRIAN-CONTROLLED AREAS. WE HAVE ASKED THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT THAT THEY BE PROMPTLY HANDED OVER TO U.S. AUTHORITIES.

PURPOSES OF AND AUTHORITY FOR U.S. ACTIONS:

THIS ACTION WAS A DISCRETE SELF-DEFENSE MEASURE TAKEN IN DIRECT RESPONSE TO SYRIA'S UNPROVOKED ATTACK ON THE U.S. RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS. WE HAVE NO DESIRE OR INTENTION OF ESCALATING THE LEVEL OF TENSION. WE HAVE INFORMED THE SYRIANS THAT OUR RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS WILL CONTINUE AND IF THEY ARE AGAIN FIRED UPON WE WILL TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION. BUT SO LONG AS SYRIA REFRAINS FROM FURTHER ATTACKS, THEY HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE U.S.

THE PRESENCE OF U.S. FORCES IN LEBANON -- LIKE THAT OF EACH OF THE MNF PARTNERS -- IS AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON UNDER AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT ENTERED INTO IN SEPTEMBER 1982. THAT AGREEMENT EXPRESSLY PROVIDES FOR MNF FORCES TO TAKE MEASURES IN SELF DEFENSE.

THE CONDUCT OF RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS OVER LEBANESE TERRITORY WAS AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON. THESE ROUTINE FLIGHTS ARE DESIGNED AS PRUDENT MEASURES TO PROTECT MNF FORCES, AND THREATEN NO ONE.

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THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA WAS NOTIFIED LESS THAN A MONTH AGO OF THE DEFENSIVE AND NON-THREATENING NATURE OF THESE ROUTINE FLIGHTS AND WAS WARNED OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF FIRING ON OUR AIRCRAFT.

WE ARE CONFIDENT THE SYRIAN MILITARY KNEW THAT THEY WERE FIRING ON U.S. AIRCRAFT ON DECEMBER 3. THE FIRE WAS EXTREMELY HEAVY. THE ACTION WE HAVE TAKEN IN RESPONSE IS LIMITED AND PROPORTIONATE TO THE SYRIAN ATTACK AND IS DESIGNED TO PREVENT REPETITION OF SUCH ATTACKS.

SPECULATION THAT THIS ACTION WAS THE CONSEQUENCE OF AGREEMENTS REACHED BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL DURING PRIME MINISTER SHAMIR'S RECENT VISIT OR WITH PRESIDENT GEMAYEL DURING HIS VISIT IS INCORRECT. THE ACTION WAS DECIDED UPON BY THE USG AS A DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO YESTERDAY'S ATTACKS ON OUR RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT AND IS INTENDED TO DETER FUTURE ATTACKS. IT HAS NO BROADER PURPOSE.

AS LIMITED, PROPORTIONATE AND TIMELY RESPONSE TO AN ARMED ATTACK AGAINST U.S. FORCES, THE U.S. ACTION FALLS SQUARELY WITHIN THE INHERENT RIGHT OF SELF-DEFENSE RECOGNIZED IN ARTICLE 51 OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR MISUNDERSTANDING ON THE PART OF SYRIA. THEY WERE WELL AWARE OF THE NON-HOSTILE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF OUR RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS. THEY CANNOT CREDIBLY CLAIM THAT THEY WERE ENTITLED TO FIRE AT OUR AIRCRAFT NOR CAN THEY ASSERT THAT THE U.S. HAS VIOLATED INTERNATIONAL LAW IN EXERCISING ITS RIGHT OF SELF-DEFENSE AGAINST SUCH ATTACKS.

LIKewise, THE BASIS FOR RESOLUTION OF THIS INCIDENT IS CLEAR. SYRIA SHOULD IMMEDIATELY RETURN OUR PILOTS, REFRAIN FROM FURTHER ATTACKS, AND COOPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON IN PURSUING PEACEFUL MEANS OF RESOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF LEBANON.

Dictated to party 5/12

CB1

Head of NENAD

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

For ORAL ANSWER on 5 December 1983

Please submit :-
a draft Answer
& background
& supplementary notes
to Parliamentary Unit
before 1pm TODAY
MONDAY 5 DECEMBER

Text of Question

BY PRIVATE NOTICE

*La

Mr Denis Healey (Leeds East): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on the situation in Lebanon.

1. On 3 December anti-aircraft guns fired at US reconnaissance aircraft over Lebanon. Early on 4 December US aircraft bombed Syrian military targets in Lebanon. 2 US aircraft were shot down. Last night 8 US marines were killed by shell fire.
2. We are in close contact with other contributors to the MNF. We share the objective of helping the Lebanese Government restore stability and create conditions in which the Lebanese people can themselves sort out their differences free from outside interference.
3. All the parties welcome the role of the British contingent, which has the vital task of guarding the meetings of the Ceasefire Commission. The safety of our men is kept under constant review.
4. It is vital that all parties in Lebanon show restraint and work together to make further progress towards national reconciliation. We shall continue to urge this on President Gemayel.

NOT YET APPROVED BY A
MINISTER



MOD have now confirmed via No. 10 that eight American marines have been killed and two injured. Attack took place at 2300 Beirut time. At 2400 US Fleet responded, 86 salvos were fired at the Shouf Mountains. As at 0100 all reported to be quiet. At 0800 a car bomb exploded in South West Beirut - some distance from British forces. It is reported that there were 20 casualties, all believed to be Lebanese civilians.

4/12