

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES 16

PS  
PS/MR LUCE  
PS/FUS  
SIR J LEAHY  
MR EBERTON  
SIR J BULLARD  
ED/RENAD  
ED/ED  
ED/UND

~~NO 10 DOWNING STREET~~  
CABINET OFFICE D10

ED/... *[Handwritten signature]* ...

ED/CONSULAR DEPT  
... *Defence D.* ...

IMMEDIATE

ADVANCE COPY

FUSD (2)  
NEWS D  
RESIDENT CLERK

WE ROME

GRS 260  
CONFIDENTIAL  
FM DAMASCUS 051145Z DEC 83  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELNO 393 OF 5 DECEMBER  
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BEIRUT, TEL AVIV KUWAIT (FOR PS/MR LUCE)  
ATHENS (FOR S OF S PARTY)  
INFO ROUTINE AMMAN, CAIRO, JEDDA, PARIS AND ROME

US/SYRIA

1. AT THE AIRPORT IMMEDIATELY BEFORE MR LUCE'S DEPARTURE, THE SYRIAN MINISTER OF STATE SAID THAT THE MOST WORRYING ASPECT OF THE AMERICAN STRIKES ON SYRIAN POSITIONS ON 4 DECEMBER WAS THE AMERICANS' JUSTIFICATION FOR THEM. CLAIMING THAT THEIR ACTION WAS IN SELF-DEFENCE IMPLIED THAT THE AMERICAN CRITERIA FOR EXERCISING THIS RIGHT WAS NOW THE SAME AS THE ISRAELIS'S
2. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE MR LUCE WAS ASKED BY THE SYRIAN NEWSAGENCY CORRESPONDENT WHAT THE BRITISH STANCE WAS TOWARDS THE AMERICAN ATTACKS. MR LUCE REPLIED THAT THE OVERRIDING NEED IN LEBANON WAS FOR EVERYONE TO EXERCISE THE MAXIMUM RESTRAINT IN ORDER TO BREAK THE SPIRAL OF VIOLENCE SEMI CLN THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WOULD BE A WELCOME AND MUCH NEEDED STEP TO REDUCE TENSION AND TO SOLIDIFY THE CURRENT VERY FRAGILE CEASEFIRE.
3. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION SHARA' QUESTIONED MR LUCE ABOUT THE FCO SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT IN ATHENS ABOUT THE RIGHT OF MNF CONTRIBUTORS TO ACT IN SELF DEFENCE. HE THOUGHT THIS AMOUNTED TO JUSTIFICATION OF THE AMERICAN ACTION. MR LUCE REPLIED THAT THE COMMENT SHOULD BE SEEN IN A BROADER CONTEXT.

LUCAS