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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

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INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON ROME PARIS BEIRUT PRIORITY MODUK
 ABU DHABI ADEN ALGIERS AMMAN BAGHDAD BAHRAIN BEIRUT CAIRO
 DAMASCUS DOHA DUBAI JEDDA JERUSALEM KHARTOUM KUWAIT
 MUSCAT RABTA SANAA TEL AVIV TRIPOLI TUNIS UKMIS GENEVA
 UKMIS NEW YORK

LEBANON: MNF FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING, 8 DECEMBER

SUMMARY

1. A SCRAPPY MEETING, DEMONSTRATING CONSIDERABLE EUROPEAN ANXIETY. IT WAS AGREED TO KEEP IN TOUCH ON POLITICAL MATTERS MORE FREQUENTLY THAN IN THE PAST, WITH RUMSFELD'S PARTICIPATION AS CONVENIENT. IT WAS ACCEPTED THAT SUCH CONSULTATION COULD NOT BE ON OPERATIONAL MILITARY MATTERS. LEBANESE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION SHOULD BE A MAIN PRIORITY AND WE SHOULD URGE THE NEED FOR THIS MORE STRONGLY ON GEMAYYEL AND THE LEADERS OF THE OTHER FACTIONS. ON THE OTHER MAIN PRIORITY, WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES, SHULTZ STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT PICKING OUT THE MORE AGREEABLE ELEMENTS OF THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT, OR ABANDONING IT AS A WHOLE. AGREED THAT WE SHOULD WORK TOWARDS THE REPLACEMENT OF THE MNF BY SOME SORT OF UN PRESENCE BUT THAT THIS COULD NOT BE DONE IMMEDIATELY. CHEYSSON'S SUGGESTION THAT ELEMENTS OF INDIVIDUAL MNF CONTINGENTS SHOULD BE THINNED OUT, BY AGREEMENT WITH THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, WAS SEIZED ON EAGERLY BY ANDREOTTI.
2. OPENING THE MEETING, SHULTZ SAID THAT RECENTLY THERE HAD BEEN ANXIETY ABOUT THE MNF, ESPECIALLY AMONGST THOSE CONTRIBUTORS WHO HAD SUFFERED CASUALTIES. THE NEXUS OF PROBLEMS IN LEBANON WAS A DIFFICULT ONE, BUT ALL CONTRIBUTORS HAD VAST INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND TO SOME EXTENT THE REGION'S PROBLEMS NOW CENTRED ON LEBANON. PRESIDENT REAGAN HAD EVERY INTENTION OF SEEING US POLICY IN LEBANON THROUGH. TO ALLAY ANXIETIES IT MIGHT BE DESIRABLE TO CREATE AN INTERMEDIATE TIER OF CONSULTATION, PERHAPS AT POLITICAL DIRECTOR LEVEL, THOUGH CONSULTATION ON THE GROUND IN BEIRUT AND AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL WAS GOOD. RUMSFELD INTENDED TO SPEND MUCH OF HIS TIME IN THE REGION OR IN EUROPE BETWEEN VISITS TO WASHINGTON, AND COULD STAY IN MORE REGULAR TOUCH WITH CONTRIBUTORS IF THIS WOULD HELP.
3. AS REGARDS THE INTENTIONS OF PARTIES IN THE AREA, AFTER SHAMIR'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON THE US FELT THAT THERE WAS MORE AWARENESS IN ISRAEL OF ITS STAKE IN THE EMERGENCE OF A STRONG CENTRAL LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, AND OF THE NEED TO WORK ACTIVELY TOWARDS ONE. ISRAEL HAD NOW AGREED TO HELP THE US TO MOVE TOWARDS ITS OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON. GEMAYYEL NEEDED TO WORK HARD TO BROADEN THE BASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT, BUT THAT WAS EASIER SAID THAN DONE, SINCE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS WERE SYRIAN SURROGATES AND PERIODICALLY QUOTE RAISED CAIN UNQUOTE. HOWEVER THE US

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Believed.

BELIEVED THERE WAS ROOM FOR PROGRESS TOWARDS COMMON OBJECTIVES, WHICH SHULTZ DEFINED AS WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES, ESTABLISHMENT OF A BROADER-BASED LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND STEPS TO STABILISE THE SITUATION IN GREATER BEIRUT. ALL THIS MEANT THAT THE GEMAYYEL GOVERNMENT NEEDED THE FULL SUPPORT OF ALL MNF MEMBERS AND SHOULD NOT BE UNDERMINED. PATIENCE AND GREATER COORDINATION WERE CALLED FOR.

4. AS TO SYRIA, SHULTZ SAID THAT A STRONG US DIALOGUE WITH DAMASCUS EXISTED. THE US AIR STRIKE OF 4 DECEMBER HAD NOT BEEN AGAINST SYRIA, BUT AGAINST THOSE WHO HAD FIRED AT US RECONNAISSANCE PLANES ON TASKS WHICH HAD BEEN AUTHORISED BY THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT SINCE SEPTEMBER. THE US HAD EVIDENCE THAT THEY KNEW THEY WERE FIRING ON US AIRCRAFT ON 3 DECEMBER: IT WAS THAT KNOWLEDGE WHICH HAD OCCASIONED THE NEXT DAY'S RESPONSE. THE US INTENDED TO CONTINUE TAKING MILITARY ACTION WHICH WAS AUTHORISED AND EXPECTED. AS TO SELF-DEFENCE, THE MARINES IN THEIR COMPOUND HAD HITHERTO DEFENDED THEMSELVES FROM A POSITION OF QUOTE LEANING BACK UNQUOTE. NOW THEY HAD BEEN AUTHORISED TO QUOTE LEAN FORWARD UNQUOTE, AND THINGS HAD SETTLED DOWN. THE PARADOX WAS THAT THE MNF AND US TASK WAS TO TRY AND ACHIEVE PEACE AND STABILITY IN LEBANON: BUT WHEN ITS TROOPS WERE FIRED ON, THE US WOULD OF COURSE RESPOND. THE CONTRADICTION WAS MORE APPARENT THAN REAL.

5. CHEYSSON SAID THE SITUATION OF THE FRENCH FORCES WAS WORRYING. THEY WERE LIKE SITTING DUCKS WAITING TO BE SHOT AT. THEY NOW HAD AN OFFSHORE WORRY. VERY RECENTLY A SUBMARINE HAD BEEN DETECTED RECONNOITRING THE FRENCH AIRCRAFT CARRIER. SO ON 7 DECEMBER THE FRENCH HAD WARNED GADAFI THAT IF THIS HAPPENED AGAIN THE FRENCH WOULD STRIKE PRE-EMPTIVELY. AS REGARDS SELF DEFENCE IN GENERAL, IF FRENCH FORCES WERE FIRED UPON THEY WOULD STRIKE BACK. SINCE SUCH STRIKES WERE RISKY OPERATIONS, HE REGRETTED THAT PARTNERS COULD NOT (NOT) BE INFORMED IN ADVANCE, FOR OPERATIONAL REASONS.

6. CHEYSSON MAINTAINED THAT THE MISSION OF THE FRENCH FORCES UNDER THE ORIGINAL EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WAS NOW FULFILLED. THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES WERE NOW STRONG ENOUGH TO CONTROL THE SITUATION IN THE BEIRUT AREA. FRANCE WOULD MAINTAIN A TOKEN MILITARY PRESENCE AS LONG AS NECESSARY. BUT FRANCE WAS CONSIDERING THINNING OUT NUMBERS, AND CENTRING HER CONTINGENT FOR EXAMPLE ON THE EMBASSY. IN OTHER WORDS FRANCE WOULD LIKE TO RE-DEPLOY THE GREATER PART OF ITS FORCES EITHER OFFSHORE ON NAVAL VESSELS, OR AT HOME ON VERY SHORT STANDBY. THIS WOULD NOT MEAN ANY CHANGE IN THE MANDATE, WHICH WOULD REMAIN AS REAFFIRMED AT LA CELLE ST-CLOUD ON 27 OCTOBER.

7. CHEYSSON AGREED WITH SHULTZ'S DEFINITION OF CONTRIBUTORS' OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON. ON SYRIA, WITH WHOM THE FRENCH REMAINED IN CLOSEST TOUCH, THE PROBLEM WHICH MIGHT HAVE ARISEN HAD ASAD BEEN SERIOUSLY INCAPACITATED NOW SEEMED LESS. AS TO THE PLO, HE EXPLAINED THAT THE FRENCH HAD INTERVENED A NUMBER OF TIMES ON BEHALF OF ARAFAT IN TRIPOLI BECAUSE THE WORLD NEEDED A MODERATE SPOKESMAN FOR THE PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS: BECAUSE SUCH ACTION EMBARRASSED SYRIA: AND BECAUSE THE PLO WOULD ONE DAY BE NEEDED AT OR NEAR THE NEGOTIATING TABLE IN THE MAIN PALESTINE NEGOTIATIONS. SO FRANCE WOULD SUPPORT CURRENT PLANS TO EVACUATE UP TO 4000 PALESTINIANS FROM TRIPOLI.

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8. ON UN ASPECTS, CHEYSSON INVITED VIEWS ON THE SURPRISING SOVIET ACCEPTANCE OF TWO RECENT MOVES IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL: THE CEASE FIRE RESOLUTION COVERING THE TRIPOLI AREA (WHICH THE RUSSIANS WOULD UNTIL RECENTLY HAVE ARGUED WAS AN INTERNAL QUESTION), AND THE SG'S PROPOSAL TO FLY THE UN FLAG ON THE EVACUATING SHIPS. CHEYSSON WONDERED WHETHER THIS COULD PRESAGE AN EVENTUAL SOFTENING IN THE SOVIET LINE TOWARDS UNIFIL, WHICH FRANCE AND OTHERS MAINTAINED SHOULD HAVE A WIDER MANDATE IN LEBANON. IF THE RUSSIANS COULD BE BROUGHT TO ACCEPT THE NEED FOR UN OBSERVERS IN DIFFICULT AREAS OF LEBANON, OR AN EXPANSION OF THE UNIFIL MANDATE TO TAKE IN AT LEAST THE SABRA AND SHATILA REFUGEE CAMPS, THE MNF'S PRESENCE COULD INDEED BECOME TOKEN. FRANCE WAS READY EITHER TO TRANSFER HER CONTINGENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE UN OR TO WITHDRAW COMPLETELY. FINALLY, CHEYSSON POINTED TO THE MISLEADING IMPRESSIONS CONVEYED BY THE MEDIA ABOUT THE UPSHOT OF SHAMIR'S RECENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON, WHICH MANY HAD PRESENTED AS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW US-ISRAELI MILITARY ALLIANCE. FRANCE KNEW FROM OFFICIAL BRIEFING THAT THIS WAS NOT TRUE, BUT THE IMPRESSION WAS UNFORTUNATE.

9. FOR THE UK, YOU RECALLED THE BASIS OF ALL MNF CONTRIBUTORS' PRESENCE IN THE LEBANON. WE ALL HAD A COMMON INTEREST IN STABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AS A WHOLE, AND THE LEBANESE OPERATION WAS A PART OF THIS. THE MNF WAS ONLY CREDIBLE IF IT WAS FULFILLING ITS ORIGINAL MISSION AS DEFINED IN THE EXCHANGES OF LETTERS. ALTHOUGH THE UK WAS THE SMALLEST CONTRIBUTOR AND THEREFORE SPOKE WITH SOME DIFFIDENCE, PUBLIC AND PARLIAMENTARY INTEREST IN BRITAIN WAS VERY GREAT AND WAS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED THAT THE LEBANESE EXERCISE MIGHT BE GOING OFF COURSE. YOU STRONGLY AGREED WITH THE NEED TO SET UP A MORE REGULAR SYSTEM OF CONSULTATIONS: NOT TO EXCHANGE MILITARY INFORMATION OR PLANS BUT TO REVIEW PROGRESS TOWARDS POLITICAL OBJECTIVES, AND CONTRIBUTORS' TACTICAL POSTURE. (I INSTANCED WHAT SHULTZ HAD SAID ABOUT THE US HAVING MADE IT CLEAR TO THE SYRIANS WHAT THEIR RESPONSE WOULD BE IF THEY SHOT AT US RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT. IF CLOSE CONSULTATIONS COULD ELICIT THIS SORT OF BRIEFING, OTHER CONTRIBUTORS WOULD UNDERSTAND THE REASONS FOR US ACTIONS BETTER, AND PERHAPS QUESTION THEM LESS).

10. YOU AGREED THAT WE MUST ALL PRESS GEMAYYEL TO GET ON WITH NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. TO DATE, NONE OF US HAD PRESSED HIM STRONGLY ENOUGH. NOR HAD WE PERHAPS HELPED HIM ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH SYRIAN SURROGATES, SINCE THESE FACTIONS WOULD HAVE TO COOPERATE IN SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. WE WOULD DISCUSS THESE POINTS WITH GEMAYYEL ON HIS VISIT TO LONDON ON 14 DECEMBER.

11. AS TO WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES, YOU SAID IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT HAD NOT BEEN REGARDED AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AS CONTRIBUTING TO RECONCILIATION. SHULTZ HAD SAID ON 27 OCTOBER THAT THE AGREEMENT SHOULD BE PASSED OVER IN SILENCE. YOU FELT STRONGLY THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO BE AN OBSTACLE TO THE PROCESS OF RE-ESTABLISHING NATIONAL UNITY.

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12. YOU EXPRESSED ANXIETY ABOUT PERCEPTIONS IN THE ARAB WORLD OF THE NEWLY STRENGTHENED US/ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP. IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO POSE AS AN INDEPENDENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THE RESTORATION OF PEACE IN LEBANON IF MODERATE ARABS (FOR EXAMPLE EGYPT) PERCEIVED THE US TO BE ADOPTING A STRONGER RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE OF THE MAIN PARTIES. THIS WAS WHY YOU WERE ANXIOUS ABOUT SHULTZ'S MENTION OF A FIRMER POLICY TOWARDS SYRIA, SINCE WHETHER OR NOT THE NEW DIRECTION IN US POLICY WAS CONFIRMED, IT COULD SLOW DOWN PROGRESS TOWARDS RECONCILIATION, THEREBY UNDERMINING THE MNF'S WIDER PURPOSE.

13. ON SELF-DEFENCE YOU SAID THAT EACH CONTRIBUTOR HAD TO TAKE ITS OWN DECISIONS. YOU RECALLED THAT WHEN YOU SAW RUMSFELD ON 7 DECEMBER YOU HAD TOLD HIM THAT BECAUSE OF BRITAIN'S EXPERIENCE OF EX-COLONIAL SITUATIONS, WE HAD COME TO KNOW THE NEED TO SHOW ABSOLUTE PATIENCE AND SELF-RESTRAINT IN A PEACEKEEPING ROLE, EVEN UNDER THE SEVEREST PROVOCATION. SO SHULTZ'S REMARKS ABOUT NEW INSTRUCTIONS TO US MARINES IN BEIRUT GAVE YOU CAUSE FOR ALARM.

14. YOU ADDED THAT WHEN MR LUCE HAD MET KHADDAM IN DAMASCUS ON 4 DECEMBER, HE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THE IMPACT OF THE US DEFENSIVE STRIKE THAT DAY HAD BEEN WHOLLY HELPFUL TO SYRIA, SINCE MANY MODERATE ARAB GOVERNMENTS HAD IN CONSEQUENCE RALLIED TO SYRIA'S SUPPORT. YOU COUNSELLED AGAINST ANY CHANGE IN THE MNF'S ROLE AS ORIGINALLY DEFINED, SINCE THIS WOULD LEAD TO ITS WITHDRAWAL BECOMING MORE DIFFICULT. YOU AGREED THAT IDEALLY THE SUBSTITUTION OF A U.N. PRESENCE FOR THE MNF WAS DESIRABLE, BUT PROBABLY SOME WAY OFF. WE SHOULD CONSIDER SERIOUSLY WHETHER WE WOULD REALLY BE HELPING GEMAYYEL BY ALLOWING THE MNF'S ROLE TO CHANGE, HOWEVER INADVERTENTLY: WE MUST NEVER FORGET FIRST PRINCIPLES.

15. ANDREOTTI, IN A CONFUSED INTERVENTION, SAID THAT LITTLE HAD CHANGED SINCE CHEYSSON HAD SUMMARISED CONTRIBUTOR'S ACTIONS AND OBJECTIVES AT THE 27 OCTOBER MINISTERIAL MEETING (PARIS TELNO 971). THAT STATEMENT HAD PROVED EFFECTIVE IN OVERCOMING SOME INITIAL DIFFICULTIES AT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. MINISTERS SHOULD REAFFIRM ITS CONTENT TODAY. SYRIA COULD DAMAGE PROGRESS TOWARDS LEBANESE RECONCILIATION AND WE SHOULD THEREFORE NOT (NOT) ADOPT AN AGGRESSIVE POLICY TOWARDS SYRIA. AS REGARDS A UN FORCE, ITALY WOULD WELCOME UNIFIL OR ANY OTHER FORCE TAKING OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SABRA AND SHATILA CAMPS, BUT IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT THE MNF CAME INTO EXISTENCE BECAUSE A UN PRESENCE IN BEIRUT IN 1982 COULD NOT BE ARRANGED. ANDREOTTI ALSO AGREED ON THE NEED FOR MORE COORDINATION BETWEEN MNF MEMBERS, BUT SAID IT SHOULD BE PURELY POLITICAL AND FOCUSED FOR EXAMPLE ON HOW TO ADVANCE RESUMPTION OF TALKS AT GENEVA AND MONITOR THEIR PROGRESS. IT WAS RIGHT TO REAFFIRM EACH CONTRIBUTOR'S RIGHT TO SELF DEFENCE, BUT IT WAS NOT HELPFUL IF REPRISALS WERE CARRIED OUT AFTER MUCH DELAY (HE MENTIONED A PERIOD OF 20 DAYS).

16. ON PALESTINE, ANDREOTTI SAID WE MIGHT BE WITNESSING A LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE WITHIN THE PLO. IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO SEE WHETHER AN ALTERNATIVE PALESTINIAN VOICE COULD BE FOUND AMONGST LEADING PALESTINIAN PERSONALITIES ON THE WEST BANK, WHO COULD THEN HELP KING HUSSEIN TO LAUNCH SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATIONS. US PRESSURE OVER ISRAEL TO SLOW DOWN OR HALT HER PROGRAMME OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WOULD HELP GREATLY TOWARDS RE-ESTABLISHING STABILITY IN THE AREA. **CONFIDENTIAL**

17. IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION, SHULTZ STRESSED THAT SOVIET DISLIKE OF THE MNF WOULD BE DECISIVE IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS UNIFIL. THOUGH THE SUBSTITUTION OF A UN FORCE FOR MNF WAS A DESIRABLE STRATEGIC AIM FOR ALL FOUR CONTRIBUTORS, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE PRECEDED BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STRONGER AND MORE BROADLY BASED LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS A GENUINE PROSPECT OF WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES. FURTHERMORE THE MANDATE OF SUCH A UN FORCE SHOULD HAVE A QUOTE LONG LEASE UNQUOTE, NOT JUST THREE OR SIX MONTHS, SO AS TO PRE-EMPT A SOVIET CHANGE OF MIND AS SOON AS THE MNF HAD DEPARTED. IN SHORT, SUCH A SUBSTITUTION WOULD NOT WORK UNLESS THE MNF'S MANDATE WAS FULLY COMPLETED. SHULTZ STRESSED THAT THE US STOOD BY THE 17 MAY ISRAEL-LEBANON AGREEMENT: IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO EXPECT A TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL UNDER ITS PROVISIONS WHILE THROWING AWAY ITS OTHER CONTENTS ON E.G. NORMALISATION. IT WOULD BE TRAGIC IF ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION, WHICH NOW FAVOURED TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON IN DUE COURSE, WERE TO CHANGE BACK TO ITS EARLIER VIEW. SO WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO TALK ABOUT WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES AS AN AIM, WHILE PUTTING THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT ON THE SIDE FOR THE TIME BEING. BOTH THE ISRAELIS AND THE US WOULD BE TOTALLY AGAINST ITS FORMAL ABROGATION.

18. ANDREOTTI MISUNDERSTOOD THE PURPOSE OF CHEYSSON'S REMARKS ABOUT THINNING DOWN THE FRENCH MNF PRESENCE ON THE GROUNDS THAT ITS MANDATE HAD NOW BEEN LARGELY ACHIEVED. HE WONDERED WHETHER, BY THE SAME LOGIC, THE ITALIAN CONTINGENT MIGHT SOMEHOW BE WITHDRAWN. SHULTZ AND CHEYSSON BOTH SAID THAT ONLY REDEPLOYMENT WAS INTENDED, AND IN ANY CASE ANY THINNING DOWN WOULD HAVE TO BE AGREED WITH THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT.

19. YOU SUGGESTED THAT IN ANY STATEMENT TO THE PRESS WE SHOULD MAKE CLEAR OUR VIEW THAT THE MNFS MISSION WAS A PEACEFUL ONE, AIMED AT HELPING TO RESTORE STABILITY AND CREATE CONDITIONS IN WHICH THE LEBANESE COULD SETTLE THEIR DIFFERENCE PEACEFULLY. FURTHERMORE WE SHOULD AGREE THAT THE TWO MAIN PRIORITIES WERE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES. THE NEED FOR MORE FREQUENT CONSULTATIONS REMAINED. CHEYSSON SAID THAT HE COULD NOT AGREE TO ANY SUGGESTION THAT WE WERE SETTING UP A NEW CONSULTATIVE CAUCUS ON MIDDLE EAST MATTERS GENERALLY. AS A COMPROMISE, IT WAS AGREED THAT THE FOUR WOULD STAY CLOSELY IN TOUCH, USING RUMSFELD'S TRAVELS TO AND FROM THE REGION TO STRENGTHEN THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS.

20. A BRIEF PRESS LINE WAS AGREED AND SUBSEQUENTLY USED HERE. IT HAS BEEN TRANSMITTED SEPARATELY.

GRAHAM

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MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

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5
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