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FM BEIRUT 121350Z DEC 83
TO IMMEDIATE F C O
TELEGRAM NUMBER 713 OF 12 DECEMBER 1983
INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK, WASHINGTON, PARIS, ROME, DAMASCUS, AMMAN,
JEDDA, TEL AVIV AND CBFC
INFO SAVING COMMANDER BRITFORLEB

LEBANON: PRESIDENT GEMAYEL'S VISIT

SUMMARY

1. EXTERNALLY, PRESIDENT GEMAYEL IS CAUGHT BETWEEN THE SYPIANS AND THE ISRAELIS; INTERNALLY HE CONTROLS ONLY ABOUT 10 PER CENT OF THE NATIONAL TERRITORY AND IS THE VICTIM OF RELENTLESS SELFISH PRESSURES FROM LEBANON'S WARRING FACTIONS. NEVERTHELESS HE AND FOREIGN MINISTER SALEM PERHAPS HAVE SOME CONSTRUCTIVE IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO PLAY THEIR TRUMPLESS HAND. IF WE PROPOSE TO KEEP BRITFORLEB HERE WE SHOULD GIVE THEM BROAD ENCOURAGEMENT DURING THEIR FORTHCOMING VISIT.

VISIT.

DETAIL

2. PRESIDENT GEMAYEL'S CURRENT STRATEGY SEEMS TO BE

- (A) TO SQUEEZE BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND SYRIANS OVER IMPLEMENTATION/ABROGATION OF THE 17 MAY ACCORD BY SEEKING A FORM OF WORDS THAT AVOIDS THE ISSUE WHILE OFFERING TO RESPECT THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONCERNS OF EACH INTRANSIGENT NEIGHBOUR.
- (B) TO PURSUE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION BY PERSUADING THE SYRIANS TO LIFT THEIR VETO ON JUMBLATT AND KARAME ATTENDING GENEVA II AND PRESSING AHEAD WITH DISCUSSIONS FOR FORMING A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY IN WHICH ALL TRENDS WOULD BE REPRESENTED. (PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS AND KEY FIGURES ARE BEING KEENLY LOBBIED NOW.)
- (C) TO DO A DEAL WITH THE KATAEB, PSP AND AMAL OVER SECURITY WITHIN THE NON-OCCUPIED AREAS, UNDER WHICH THE WEAK BUT POLITICALLY NON-CONTROVERSIAL INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE WOULD BE INTRODUCED INSTEAD OF THE ARMY INTO SENSITIVE AREAS IN THE SHOUF AND THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS. THIS WOULD PROVIDE NOMINAL GOVERNMENTAL CONTROL OF THESE AREAS WITHOUT THE NEED TO TRY (YET) TO DISARM THE MILITIAS ACTUALLY IN CHARGE.

2. ON (C) THE PRESS THINKS SALEM HAD FRUITFUL DISCUSSIONS IN DAMASCUS LAST WEEK WITH PSP AND AMAL REPRESENTATIVES. THE CEASEFIRE HAS BEEN OBSERVED BETTER IN RECENT DAYS. COLONELS MASSIF AND KASSIS (LEBANESE ARMY REPRESENTATIVES) ARE SUPPOSED TO BE RETURNING TO DAMASCUS FOR MORE TALKS SOON. BERRI IS FAVOURABLE IF OUTSTANDING DEMANDS CAN BE MET. BUT JUMBLATT APPEARS SCEPTICAL (DAMASCUS TELNO 403). THE ISF CARRY NO CLOUT AND DISSIDENTS IN THE SENSITIVE AREAS MAY WRECK THE PLAN. BERRI HAS MEAGRE AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS. MEANWHILE THE AIRPORT, AND SCHOOLS IN EAST BEIRUT, REMAIN SHUT AND VIOLENCE PROLIFERATES. THE CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE AT THE BANK HAS NOT MANAGED TO MEET NOW FOR 10 DAYS.

3. ON (A) AND (B) THE PRESS REPORT A GENERALLY FAVOURABLE ATTITUDE BY SYRIA. KHADDAM IS REPORTED TO HAVE RESTATED SYRIA'S DEMAND FOR THE ABROGATION OF THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT, BUT TO HAVE BEEN PLEASED BY SALEM'S READINESS TO CRITICISE US MILITARY ACTIONS WHILE CONCEDING SYRIA PRIVILEGED RELATIONS AS A NEIGHBOUR. I MAY LEARN MORE WHEN SALEM RETURNS FROM DAMASCUS.

~~SYRIA PRIVILEGES RELATIONS AS A NEIGHBOUR~~ I MAY LEARN MORE WHEN SALEM RETURNS FROM DAMASCUS VIA RIYADH TODAY. FROM WHAT BERRI TOLD ME ON FRIDAY THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE HOPING THAT THE FORMULA AT (C) ABOVE WILL IN DUE COURSE BE SUSCEPTIBLE OF APPLICATION IN THE SOUTH IN A WAY THAT WILL AVOID PROVOKING SHIA DISSIDENTS INTO CHALLENGING GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY.

4. THE CHANCES OF ALL THIS GOING AS PLANNED SEEM REMOTE. BUT (C) REPRESENTS A BETTER WAY FORWARD THAN TRYING NOW TO CLEAR THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS OR THE SHOUF WITH THE LEBANESE ARMY (MY TELNO 709): WE OUGHT TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO MOLLIFY THE SYRIANS AND TO MAKE PROGRESS ON NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. (WE MUST NOT HOWEVER ALLOW THEM TO THINK THAT THE EASY OPTION OF DISCUSSING THE COMPOSITION OF A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY - THE LEBANESE REVEL IN SUCH WHEELING AND DEALING - CAN BE SUBSTITUTED FOR THE HARD BUSINESS OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IMPLICIT IN GENEVA II.) IN GENERAL THERE SEEMS LITTLE ALTERNATIVE FOR GEMAYEL TO THE STRATEGY IN PARA 1.

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MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

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PUSD

NEWS DEPT

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NAD

WED

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ECD(E)

FINANCE DEPT

PROTOCOL DEPT

PS

PS/LADY YOUNG

PS/MR LUCE

PS/PUS

SIR J BULLARD

SIR J LEAHY

MR WRIGHT

MR CARTLEDGE

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MR ADAMS

MR EGERTON

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