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FROM WASHINGTON 282255Z DEC 83.

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 3882 OF 28 DECEMBER

INFO PRIORITY BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, TEL AV.IV, PARIS, ROME, UKMIS NEW YORK, ROUTINE AMMAN, JEDDA, CAIRO, THE HAGUE.

LEBANON

SUMMARY

1. RUMSFELD MADE LITTLE PROGRESS IN DAMASCUS THOUGH KHADDAM AGREED TO CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE. NO CHANGE LIKELY IN BROAD LINES OF US POLICY.

DETAIL

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2. PELLETREAU TOLD US TODAY THAT RUMSFELD HELD TWO MEETINGS EACH LASTING MORE THAN TWO HOURS, WITH KHADDAM DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO DAMASCUS. THE ATMOSPHERE HAD BEEN CORDIAL AND THEY HAD HAD A USEFUL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. VERY LITTLE PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE, BUT RUMSFELD HAD LAID A SOUND FOUNDATION FOR FURTHER TALKS. KHADDAM HAD AGREED TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE GOING, IMPLICITLY RECOGNISING THAT IT WAS ONLY THE AMERICANS WHO TALKED TO THE ISRAELIS. HE HAD ADMITTED, INCIDENTALLY, THAT ASAD HAD SUFFERED A HEART ATTACK BUT HAD BRUSHED ASIDE RUMSFELD'S OFFER OF MEDICAL HELP.

3. KHADDAM HAD INSISTED THAT SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT. RUMSFELD HAD REFUSED TO BE DRAWN INTO DETAILED DEBATE ON ITS PROVISIONS AND HAD TRIED TO FOCUS DISCUSSION ON MECHANISMS FOR WITHDRAWAL. KHADDAM HAD BEEN NON-COMMITTAL BUT HAD SHOWN SOME INTEREST IN 'DISENGAGEMENT'. PELLETREAU REPEATED THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD NOT AGREE TO THE ABROGATION OF THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT, OR, EXPLICITLY, TO LAYING IT ON THE SHELF. BUT THE MECHANISMS FOR WITHDRAWAL FORMULA COULD CERTAINLY INCLUDE THE SECURITY PROVISIONS OF THE AGREEMENT. HE DID NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE ISRAELIS COULD BE BROUGHT TO AGREE TO SOME MODIFICATION OF THEM AS PART OF A PACKAGE UNDER WHICH THE SYRIANS ALSO WITHDREW, BUT THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY THAT THEY WOULD MAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS. SHAMIR MEANWHILE WAS STICKING TO THE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT. RUMSFELD HAD LEFT WITH KHADDAM A LIST OF QUESTIONS ON WITHDRAWAL DESIGNED TO ESTABLISHED WHAT SYRIAN OBJECTIVES WERE. IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN WHETHER ANSWERS WOULD BE FORTHCOMING AT THEIR NEXT MEETING.

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4. KHADDAM HAD STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF TRYING TO MAINTAIN THE CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON, AND THAT THE SYRIANS WISHED TO BE HELPFUL OVER THIS. ON NATIONAL RECONCILIATION HE HAD WELCOMED THE GENEVA TALKS, BUT MAINTAINED THAT GEMAYEL HAD NOT CARRIED OUT HIS ''INSTRUCTIONS''. RUMSFELD HAD STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND BROADENING THE BASE OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT,

5. PELLETREAU SAID THAT RUMSFELD HAD PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT THE AGREEMENT TO LIFT THE SEIGE OF DEIR EL QAMAR - BY PERSUADING GEMAYEL TO DROP SOME OF HIS DEMANDS, BY GETTING JUMBLATT (IN AMMAN OUTSIDE THE SYRIANS' CLUCHES) TO ISSUE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS FOLLOWERS AND BY BRINGING ABOUT A LEBANESE/ISRAELI MEETING TO DISCUSS THE ISRAELI ROLE. HE HAD ALSO TRIED TO INJECT MORE LIFE INTO THE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION PROCESS. IN SEPARATE TALKS WITH PIERRE GEMAYEL AND CHAMOUN HE HAD DISCOURAGED THEIR IDEA OF A PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT AND SAID THAT REPRESENTATIVE SHIA AND DRUZE LEADERS HAD TO BE INCLUDED. HE HAD ALSO CALLED ON NABIH BERRI WHOSE PRINCIPAL CONCERN APPEARED TO BE ISRAELI RECRUITMENT OF SHIAS INTO LOCAL MILITIAS IN THE SOUTH. RUMSFELD HAD ARGUED THAT A MORE VIGOROUS ASSERTION OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTH, WITH SHIA SUPPORT, COULD HELP TO DIMINISH THE INFLUENCE OF THE ISRAELIS. BERRI HAD BEEN RECEPTIVE.

6. AS TO THE NEXT STEPS PELLETREAU SAID THAT RUMSFELD HAD NOT YET DECIDED HIS COURSE OF ACTION BUT WOULD PROBABLY RETURN TO THE MIDDLE EAST EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR. HE DID NOT EXPECT ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN THE BROAD LINES OF US POLICY. THE MARINES' SECURITY PRECAUTIONS HAD BEEN GREATLY IMPROVED AND PELLETREAU DID NOT EXPECT THEM TO BE REDEPLOYED UNLESS THEY WERE GIVEN SOME SPECIFIC NEW TASK. THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF US POLICY WOULD THEREFORE CONTINUE TO BE TO ENCOURAGE POLITICAL RECONCILIATION AND THE FORMATION OF A MORE BROADLY-BASED GOVERNMENT: TO PROMOTE LEBANESE/ISRAELI CONTACTS WITH A VIEW TO EXTENDING LEBANESE CIVILIAN AUTHORITY TO THE SOUTH: TO ENCOURAGE EFFORTS TO BUILD ON THE DEIR EL QAMAR AGREEMENT, INITIALLY TO SECURE THE WITHDRAWAL OF LF PERSONNEL FROM THE KHARROUB: TO CONTINUE TO BUILD UP THE LAF: AND TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE ON THE SYRIANS. THE US HAD FIRMLY DISCOURAGED IDEAS OF THE LAF ADVANCING UNDER MNF COVER: THE LAF WAS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO IMPOSE ITSELF ON THE CHOUF WITHOUT A PRIOR POLITICAL AGREEMENT. PELLETREAU EMPHASISED THAT THE US WOULD CONTINUE TO TALK TO THE SYRIANS: THE POLITICAL ROUTE OFFERED THE ONLY FEASIBLE OPTION. BUT IT WAS HELPFUL TO MAINTAIN THE ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY AND, IF POSSIBLE, TO TIGHTEN THE PRESSURE ON DAMASCUS, THOUGH HE PERSONALLY HAD NO GREAT HOPES THAT THE SAUDIS WOULD PLAY THEIR PART IN THIS.

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7. WE ASKED ABOUT A POSSIBLE ROLE FOR UN FORCES OR OBSERVERS PELLETREAU SAID THAT THE US HAD NO OBJECTION TO SOUNDINGS BEING TAKEN WITH THE SYRIANS OR RUSSIANS, BUT DID NOT WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THEM, LEST THIS BE TAKEN AS A SIGN OF EAGERNESS TO WITHDRAW THE MARINES. THEY WERE UNLIKELY TO BE PRODUCTIVE AT PRESENT, NOT LEAST BECAUSE NOBODY HAD YET DEFINED A PRECISE TASK FOR THE UN. UNIFIL CONTRIBUTORS DID NOT SEEM INTERESTED IN TAKING ON A WIDER ROLE IN LEBANON. BUT THE AMERICANS HAD SUGGESTED TO THE DUTCH THAT, AS AN INITIAL STEP, THEY EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF DEPLOYING A UN PEACE KEEPING FORCE OR OBSERVERS TO TRIPOLI, PRIMARILY TO PROTECT THE REMAINING PALESTINIANS THERE.

WRIGHT

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MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

LIMITED
NENAD
MED
DEFENCE DEPT
PUSD
NEWS DEPT
UND
NAD
WED
SED
ECD(E)
FINANCE DEPT
PROTOCOL DEPT
PS

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