

Prime Minister

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FM WASHINGTON 282252Z

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 3881 OF 28 DECEMBER 1983

INFO BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, AMMAN, TEL AVIV, CAIRO, JEDDA, UKMIS NEW YORK, PARIS, ROME.

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Per
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LEBANON: BEIRUT BOMBINGS

1. PRESIDENT REAGAN ISSUED A STATEMENT ON 27 DECEMBER (TEXT BY BAG) ON THE REPORT OF THE LONG COMMISSION'S INVESTIGATION OF THE 23 OCTOBER ATTACK ON THE MARINES' HEADQUARTERS IN BEIRUT.

2. THE PRESIDENT AGREED WITH THE REPORT'S CONCLUSION THAT THE US AND ITS MILITARY INSTITUTIONS WERE BY TRADITION AND TRAINING INADEQUATELY EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH THE FUNDAMENTALLY NEW PHENOMENON OF STATE-SUPPORTED TERRORISM. QUOTE THE PROBLEM OF TERRORISM WILL NOT DISAPPEAR IF WE RUN FROM IT. UNQUOTE. CIVILIZED COUNTRIES SHOULD BEGIN A NEW EFFORT TO WORK TOGETHER TO SHARE INTELLIGENCE, TO IMPROVE TRAINING, SECURITY AND THEIR FORCES TO DENY A HAVEN OR LEGAL PROTECTION FOR TERRORIST GROUPS AND, MOST IMPORTANT, TO HOLD ACCOUNTABLE THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH SPONSORED TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD. THE US WOULD BE IN THE FOREFRONT OF THIS EFFORT.

3. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT ACTION WAS BEING TAKEN URGENTLY TO ENSURE THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE SECURITY OF US FORCES IN LEBANON. THE MARINES' MISSION WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT, BUT HE BELIEVED THAT WE WERE ON THE VERGE OF PROGRESS TOWARDS NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES. HE HAD CONSIDERED THE COMMISSION'S FINDINGS ABOUT THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES. BUT THE COMMANDERS ON THE GROUND SHOULD NOT BE PUNISHED FOR NOT FULLY COMPREHENDING THE NATURE OF TODAY'S TERRORIST THREAT. IF THERE WERE TO BE BLAME, IT PROPERLY RESTED WITH THE PRESIDENT QUOTE I ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BAD AS WELL AS THE GOOD UNQUOTE.

COMMENT

4. THE DECISION HIMSELF TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY IS VERY MUCH IN THE REAGAN STYLE. ONE OF HIS ACHIEVEMENTS AS PRESIDENT HAS BEEN TO DO MUCH TO IMPROVE THE MORALE OF THE US ARMED FORCES AND THEIR STANDING WITH THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. IT IS ALSO A SHREWD POLITICAL MOVE. NO-ONE IS GOING TO HOLD THE PRESIDENT RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT CLEARLY WERE ERRORS OF OMISSION ON THE GROUND. BUT THE PRESIDENT HAS INHIBITED THE SEARCH FOR SCAPEGOATS AMONG THE MILITARY. ADDITIONAL SECURITY MEASURES RECOMMENDED BY THE LONG COMMISSION HAVE ALREADY BEEN TAKEN.

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5. THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT WAS ALSO DESIGNED TO DEAL WITH CRITICISM FROM CONGRESS, WHERE A HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE CONCLUDED LAST WEEK THAT THERE HAD BEEN SERIOUS ERRORS OF JUDGEMENT BY OFFICERS ON THE GROUND AND UP THROUGH THE ENTIRE CHAIN OF COMMAND. PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN ABOUT THE MARINES ROLE IN THE LEBANON, HOWEVER, IS INCREASING AND WILL BECOME MORE SHARPLY FOCUSED IF THERE IS NO PROGRESS BY THE TIME CONGRESS REASSEMBLES IN LATE JANUARY.

WRIGHT

MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

LIMITED
NENAD
MED
DEFENCE DEPT
PUSD
NEWS DEPT
UND
NAD
WED
SED
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
MR MACINNES
MR ADAMS
MR EGERTON
MR JENKINS

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MR GOODALL) CABINET
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