

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES 17

ADVANCE COPY

DBY 300900Z

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2289 OF 29 JUNE

INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS TEL AVIV UKMIS NEW YORK JEDDA

INFO PRIORITY DAMASCUS AMMAN CAIRO TUNIS

LEBANON.

1. HAIG, WHO IS STILL IN CHARGE OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT TOLD ME THIS EVENING THAT HE WAS VERY WORRIED AT THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND, IN PARTICULAR, AT THE ATTITUDE OF THE PLO. HAIG DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE ISRAELIS WERE GOING TO DO BUT FEARED THAT THEY WOULD GO ON INTO BEIRUT. HAIG ADDED THAT THE OTHER ARABS WERE WILLING TO SEE THE PLO DISARMED PROVIDED THAT IT WERE DONE HONOURABLY. THE LEBANESE WOULD ALLOW THE PLO TO REMAIN IN THE COUNTRY ONCE THEY WERE DISARMED. THE PLO LEADERSHIP DID NOT WANT TO MOVE TO SYRIA AND THE JORDANIANS WOULD NOT ACCEPT THEM; IN HAIG'S VIEW THEY MIGHT GO TO LIBYA.

2. CLARK TOLD ME OVER LUNCH THAT THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY OF A BREAKTHROUGH WITHIN THE NEXT 24 HOURS INVOLVING A SETTLEMENT IN WHICH PLO CIVILIANS STAYED BEHIND IN BEIRUT. BUT HE GAVE NO DETAILS NOR DID HE EXPLAIN WHAT LAY BEHIND THIS ASSESSMENT.

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3. EAGLEBURGER TOLD US SEPARATELY AT LUNCH TIME THAT HE HAD JUST SPOKEN TO HABIB IN BEIRUT. THE ISRAELIS WERE STRAINING AT THE LEASH. SHARON WANTED TO GO IN AND FINISH OFF THE PLO. THE ISRAELIS COULD NOT MAINTAIN THEIR PRESENT FORCE LEVELS IN LEBANON FOR VERY LONG AND WERE LIKELY TO TAKE ACTION VERY SOON UNLESS THE PLO AGREED TO DISARM. THE PLO SEEMED PARTIALLY TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE POSITION WAS HOPELESS BUT WERE HAGGLING ABOUT THE TERMS. THE AMERICANS HAD NO DOUBT THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT BE HELD OFF UNLESS THE PLO ARMED FORCES WITHDREW COMPLETELY FROM LEBANON (IT WAS HOPELESS TO SEND THEM TO TRIPOLI OR ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE COUNTRY). THEY COULD GO TO SYRIA IF THE SYRIANS WOULD HAVE THEM OR EG TO EGYPT, BUT THEY MUST BE DISARMED (EAGLEBURGER SEEMED TO SUGGEST THAT SOME COMPROMISE MIGHT BE POSSIBLE OVER PERSONAL ARMS). THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION OF THEIR QUOTE WITHDRAWING UNQUOTE TO THE REFUGEE CAMPS (AS THE FRENCH HAD BEEN SUGGESTING); THIS WOULD IN FACT MEAN THEIR ADVANCING TO POSITIONS FROM WHICH THE ISRAELIS HAD ALREADY LARGELY CLEARED THEM AND WOULD PRECIPITATE A BATTLE.

4. EAGLEBURGER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT NONE OF THIS WOULD SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, AND THAT A STRONG LEBANESE CENTRAL AUTHORITY WAS PROBABLY A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS. HE EMPHASISED, HOWEVER, THAT UNLESS THE PLO ARMED FORCES WERE REMOVED FROM BEIRUT AND LEBANON THROUGH HABIB'S EFFORTS, THE ISRAELIS WOULD REMOVE THEM BY THEIR OWN MEANS. THE SYRIANS AND SYRIAN BACKED PALESTINIAN MILITIA MUST ALSO LEAVE BEIRUT.

5. EAGLEBURGER SAID THAT THE AMERICANS HAD BEEN IN DAILY TOUCH WITH THE FRENCH, BUT WAS SCATHING ABOUT THEIR EFFORTS. THE FRENCH OBJECTIVE WAS CLEARLY TO PRESERVE THE PLO. THERE HAD BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF DEVIOUSNESS IN THE MESSAGES THEY HAD BEEN RELAYING, RESPECTIVELY TO THE PLO AND THE AMERICANS. THEIR PERFORMANCE IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAD BEEN LAMENTABLE. EAGLEBURGER ADDED THAT THE SOVIET REACTION CONTINUED TO BE SURPRISINGLY MUTED. AMONG THE ARABS ONLY THE EGYPTIANS WERE AT PRESENT MAKING A TREMENDOUS FUSS WITH THE AMERICANS ON BEHALF OF THE PLO, (HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD ALSO BEEN SAUDI INTERVENTION ON THE LINES REPORTED IN MY TELNO 2271).

6. YOUR TELNO 1246. THE AMERICANS CLAIM ALREADY TO BE DOING THEIR UTMOST TO AVOID AN ISRAELI ATTACK ON WEST BEIRUT, BUT THAT THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT OF DOING SO UNLESS THE PLO AGREE TO DISARM AND WITHDRAW FROM LEBANON.

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7. YOUR TELNO 1246, PARAGRAPH 4. THE POSITION IS AS EXPLAINED IN MY TELSNOs 2257 AND 2263 (NOT TO ALL). CLARK CONFIRMED TO ME TODAY THAT THE MIDDLE EAST WAS NOT A PRIME REASON FOR HAIG'S DEPARTURE, ALTHOUGH HE THOUGHT HAIG HAD GONE TOO FAR OUT ON A LIMB WITH HIS PRO-ISRAELI POLICY. FOLLOWING A CALL BY THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR ON CLARK LAST WEEK, THE SAUDIS GAVE THE PLO THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY COULD OBTAIN ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT WITHOUT AGREEING TO DISARM. HAIG MAY NOT HAVE BELIEVED CLARK'S DENIAL THAT HE GAVE ANY SUCH INDICATION. US OFFICIALS ADMIT THAT THE MISUNDERSTANDING, HOWEVER CAUSED, SET BACK THE NEGOTIATIONS IN BEIRUT BY SEVERAL DAYS, BUT, IN BRIEFING THE PRESS ARE NOW TRYING TO PLAY DOWN ITS IMPORTANCE.

HENDERSON

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