



FCS/82/86

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCEWR  
11/6

Lebanon: Arrangements for the Possible Evacuation of UK Passport Holders and other Commonwealth Citizens

1. Following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, our officials have been looking at the need to set in hand evacuation plans on a contingency basis for the UK and Commonwealth citizens from Lebanon.
2. The British Community have already been advised (on 9 June) by the Ambassador in Beirut to move to East Beirut, which is Christian controlled and reported to be calm. He has discretion to advise them to move further north into the Christian enclave if the situation deteriorates.
3. Meanwhile a unilateral Israeli announcement of a ceasefire at 1000 GMT today has been accepted by Syria. There is some doubt about the position of the PLO, but the fighting appears to have stopped for the time being. Although the situation in West Beirut may deteriorate further as refugees flood in from the south, I do not believe that there is yet a need to evacuate civilians from Lebanon.
4. The exact number of persons who may need to be evacuated is very difficult for our Embassy to assess. We believe there are some 1800 British passport holders in the Lebanon and, from figures supplied by the Indian, Bangladesh, Sri Lankan and Cypriot High Commissions, that there are 2,500 of their nationals in Lebanon. We do not of course know how accurate any of the latter figures are, nor how many people may in the event wish to leave Lebanon. Contingency plans will remain under review. For the time I am content that the following contingency arrangements, agreed by officials, all based on an evacuation from Lebanon to

/the Sovereign





the Sovereign Base areas in Cyprus, should stand:

- (a) The Department of Trade should continue with contingency planning for the possible Charter of one or more of the British-owned ships now in the Eastern Mediterranean which might be used to evacuate people from Jounieh (in the Christian enclave), should the position deteriorate.
- (b) That one Hercules aircraft at Lyneham should remain on 12 hours' standby.
- (c) That Akrotiri should remain ready to open at 12 hours' notice.
- (d) That HMS Leander, already instructed to sail for the Eastern Mediterranean (ETA 14 June), should proceed. Her duties are likely to be those of an escort, though she could carry up to 200 evacuees.
- (e) We shall make enquiries with airlines operating from Cyprus about the movement of evacuees from Cyprus to their own countries.
- (f) If an evacuation should become imminent, we shall contact the BBC to ask them to make the necessary announcement on their World Service.

5. A breakdown in the ceasefire, which could occur within days in the absence of any Israeli move to withdraw, would make it necessary to review these arrangements urgently. But in my view only a breakdown of law and order in the Christian-controlled enclave would make a full-scale evacuation necessary.

6. We are liaising with the American and French Governments with a view to co-operating with them if that should prove sensible.

7. I am sending a copy of this minute to my OD colleagues.

  
(FRANCIS PYM)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
11 June 1982