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FM BEIRUT 041135Z MAR

TO PRIORITY F.C.O.

TELEGRAM NUMBER 79 OF 4 MARCH 1982

INFO DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, JERUSALEM

INFO SAVING AMMAN, CAIRO, PARIS, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK,

UKREP BRUSSELS

FOR MILES NENAD. msMY TELNO 78 (NOT TO ALL): CONTACTS WITH THE PLO.

1. WHEN I CALLED ON ABU YAHYA OF THE PLO POLITICAL OFFICE ON 4 MARCH, HE RAISED THE QUESTION OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO ISRAEL. HE SAID THAT THE PLO UNDERSTOOD THE REASONS FOR LORD CARRINGTON'S GOING THERE. THEY WERE NOT AGAINST IT IN THE WAY IN WHICH THEY WERE AGAINST PRESIDENT MITTERRAND'S CURRENT STATE VISIT.

2. ABU YAHYA SAID THAT THE PLO ATTACH GREAT WEIGHT TO WHAT LORD CARRINGTON SAYS ABOUT THE ARAB/ISRAEL PROBLEM BECAUSE, UNLIKE M. CHEYSSON, HE DOES NOT TRIM HIS WORDS TO SUIT HIS AUDIENCE. THE PLO VERY MUCH HOPED THAT LORD CARRINGTON WOULD NOT TRIM DURING HIS VISIT TO ISRAEL. HE THEN SAID (ADDING THAT THIS WAS A PURELY PERSONAL SUGGESTION AND DID NOT REPRESENT OFFICIAL PLO POLICY) THAT IT WOULD "FOR THE FUTURE" BE HELPFUL IF THE SECRETARY OF STATE WERE TO STATE PUBLICLY IN ISRAEL THAT HE (AND HIS EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES IF HE WISHED TO INCLUDE THEM) WOULD LIKE TO HELP TO FIND SOME WAY WHEREBY THE ISRAELIS AND THE PLO (REPEAT PLO) COULD MOVE TOWARDS SOME FORM OF MUTUAL RECOGNITION. SUCH A STATEMENT WOULD, HE ACCEPTED, UPSET THE ISRAELIS AND WOULD UPSET SOME IN THE PLO TOO. THEY, LIKE THE ISRAELIS, INITIALLY WOULD HAVE PUBLICLY TO OBJECT TO IT. BUT PRIVATELY THE PLO WOULD RECOGNISE SUCH A STATEMENT AS BEING HELPFUL, NOT LEAST BECAUSE IT WOULD INDICATE CLEARLY THAT EUROPEAN INTEREST IN THE PROBLEM HAD NOT DIMINISHED DESPITE FRENCH ATTEMPTS, AS THE PLO SEE IT, TO PERSUADE THEIR EUROPEAN PARTNERS TO WASH THEIR HANDS OF IT. ALL THIS WOULD BE HELPFUL TO ARAFAT IN THE COMING MONTHS UN HIS EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN HIS MODERATE POSITION AND COUNTER THE OPPOSITION TO IT FROM HARDLINE ELEMENTS.

3. IF THE SECRETARY OF STATE WERE TO SAY ANYTHING PUBLICLY ABOUT OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE MFO THE PLO HOPED THAT HE WOULD MATCH IT WITH SOME REFERENCE TO THE PASSAGE IN THE VENICE DECLARATION WHERE THE EUROPEANS EXPRESS WILLINGNESS TO TAKE PART IN ANY PEACE-KEEPING EFFORTS WHICH MAY BE SET UP AS PART OF A SETTLEMENT OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA.

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/ 4. I SAID

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4. I SAID THAT I HAD NO IDEA WHAT LORD CARRINGTON WAS PROPOSING TO SAY DURING HIS VISIT TO ISRAEL. I WAS CONFIDENT THAT HE WOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT OUR POLICY, I.E. SUPPORT FOR THE FRAMEWORK OFFERED BY THE VENICE DECLARATION, HAD NOT CHANGED. BUT I WAS NOT SURE WHETHER HE WOULD WANT TO SAY ANYTHING TOO CONTROVERSIAL OR TOO OFFENSIVE TO HIS ISRAELI HOSTS. NONETHELESS I UNDERTOOK TO CONVEY HIS THOUGHTS TO YOU.

5. I AM NOT SURE WHAT TO MAKE OF ALL THIS. ABU YAHYA IS A MODERATE. IT IS HIS JOB TO ESTABLISH GOOD CONTACTS WITH THE WESTERN EUROPEANS. AND I THINK HE GENUINELY BELIEVES THAT VENICE STILL OFFERS A WAY, AND PERHAPS THE BEST WAY, FORWARD. I CANNOT JUDGE WHETHER HIS PERSONAL SUGGESTION HAS THE BLESSING OF ARAFAT OR NOT. HE PRESENTED IT AS A PERSONAL INITIATIVE, BUT I DO NOT THINK THAT HE WOULD HAVE DONE SO UNLESS HE JUDGED THAT THE IMPACT ON ARAFAT WOULD BE AS DESCRIBED IN PARA.2 ABOVE. I THEREFORE HOPE THAT IT CAN BE GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

6. I AM REPORTING SEPARATELY BY TELELETTER THE OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST WHICH ABU YAHYA AND SHAFIQ AL HUT MADE. ABU YAHYA WAS PARTICULARLY BITTER ABOUT THE FRENCH.

7. FCO PLEASE PASS TO ALL SAVING ADDRESSEES.

PALMER

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

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