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FM THE WHITE HOUSE
TO CABINET OFFICE
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OPS - MASTER

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T 28/84

SUBJECT FILED ON:
LEBANON: Int Sit
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T O P S E C R E T VIA CABINET OFFICE CHANNELS SENSITIVE WHO1203

FEBRUARY 8, 1984

DEAR MARGARET,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON SAYING THAT YOU WILL REDEPLOY YOUR MNF CONTINGENT TO SHIPS IN THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. IN SPITE OF MY EARLIER MESSAGE TO YOU I HAD TO GO PUBLIC WITH OUR OWN PLANS LAST NIGHT, IN PART TO PREEMPT A NEWS LEAK ON THE PLAN WHICH ALL THE NETWORKS WOULD HAVE CARRIED IN THE EVENING NEWS.

I DO UNDERSTAND WHY YOU FELT YOU HAD TO MAKE YOUR DECISION ON REDEPLOYMENT BUT I HOPE THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DEFER AN ANNOUNCEMENT ON A PERMANENT WITHDRAWAL UNTIL WE HAVE ALL HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DIGEST THE EVENTS OF THE PAST 72 HOURS AND CONSULT FUTHER ABOUT OUR MUTUAL PLANS.

TODAY THE SITUATION REMAINS VERY TENSE. SYRIAN CONTROLLED ARTILLERY AND ROCKETS HAVE CONTINUED TO SHELL THROUGHOUT THE DAY, INCLUDING ONE DIRECT HIT ON OUR AMBASSADORS RESIDENCE AND OVER 20 122MM ROCKETS LANDING WITHIN 100-200 METERS. WE HAVE RETURNED FIRE AGAINST SYRIAN CONTROLLED AREAS AND THE NEW JERSEY HAS BEEN IN ACTION. WE HAVE ASKED OUR AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS TO EXPLAIN OUR NEW POLICY TO THE SYRIANS AND TELL THEM TO STOP FIRING INTO EAST BEIRUT FROM THE METN.

THESE HAVE NOT BEEN EASY DECISIONS FOR ME TO MAKE SINCE I HAVE A DEEP DISTRUST OF THE SYRIANS IN ALL THIS BUSINESS. HOWEVER, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT WE DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO GIVE LEBANON A CHANCE TO REMAIN A SOVEREIGN, INDEPENDENT STATE. FOR THIS END WE MUST BE PREPARED TO BE RESOLUTE BUT REASONABLE IN CONSIDERING THE INEVITABLE COMPROMISES WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE MADE.

ON A MORE OPTIMISTIC NOTE, KING HUSSEIN AND PRESIDENT MUBARAK WILL BOTH BE IN WASHINGTON AT THE SAME TIME NEXT WEEK. BOTH HAVE ACCEPTED AN INVITATION TO A JOINT MEETING AND LUNCHEON WITH ME. THIS WILL BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS MANY ISSUES BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO HELP BUILD UP THE MODERATE ARAB COALITION SO NECESSARY TO CHALLENGE SYRIA, LIBYA AND IRAN.

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