

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES 16

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GR 140J
CONFIDENTIAL
FM WASHINGTON 130322Z JAN 84
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 135 OF 13 JANUARY

IMMEDIATE

MIPT: YOUR MEETING WITH SHULTZ: MIDDLE EAST

1. OVER LEBANON THE ADMINISTRATION ARE WELL AWARE THAT THE DOMESTIC PRESSURES FOR WITHDRAWAL OF US LAND FORCES ARE LIKELY TO GROW STRONGLY IN AN ELECTION YEAR. BUT THEY ARE VERY CONCERNED THAT IF THE SYRIANS THINK THEY ARE NOW LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT, THIS WILL ONLY ENCOURAGE SYRIAN INTRANSIGENCE, RENDERING IT MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE CONDITIONS IN WHICH THE ROLE OF THE MNF COULD IN FACT BE TRANSFORMED. THEY HAVE FOUND OUT THE HARD WAY THE COMPLEXITIES, THE DIFFICULTIES OF MAKING PROGRESS, THE AWKWARDNESS OF THE PREDICAMENT IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES AND THE INCREASING RESTIVENESS OF THE EUROPEAN CONTRIBUTORS. BUT WHATEVER THE PRESSURES THE PRESIDENT, SHULTZ AND MCFARLANE ARE DETERMINED NOT SIMPLY TO CUT AND RUN. THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO CREATE THE IMPRESSION THAT 260 MARINES HAVE BEEN KILLED FOR NOTHING. THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT PRECIPITATE WITHDRAWAL OF THE MNF WOULD LEAD TO CHAOS AND THE TAKEOVER OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT BY ELEMENTS HOSTILE TO WESTERN INTERESTS; AND WOULD PUT A FINAL NAIL IN THE COFFIN OF THE REPUTATION OF THE US IN THE REGION AS A RELIABLE ALLY. THEY CONTINUE TO GIVE A GREAT DEAL OF WEIGHT, THEREFORE, TO THE ADVICE FROM THE MODERATE ARABS, PARTICULARLY THE SAUDIS, THAT FOR THE PRESENT THE MNF MUST STAY. THEY HAVE BEEN WORKING HARD TO RALLY SUPPORT ON THE REPUBLICAN SIDE IN CONGRESS; BUT THE DEMOCRATS ARE INCREASINGLY OPPOSED TO CONTINUED U.S. INVOLVEMENT AND BELIEVE THAT IN THIS THEY HAVE FOUND AN ELECTION ISSUE THAT WILL HURT THE PRESIDENT.

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2. THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD LIKE TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, PROVIDED THIS TIME IT TOOK PLACE IN CONDITIONS WHERE THE LEBANESE ARMY COULD FILL THE VACUUM. THEY DO NOT ACCEPT THE ARAB VIEW THAT IF THE ISRAELIS WITHDREW COMPLETELY, THE SYRIANS WOULD DO LIKEWISE. THEY HOLD THE SYRIANS PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PRESENT IMPASSE. THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THERE WILL HAVE TO BE A DEAL WITH ASSAD IF THERE IS TO BE ANY PROGRESS. THE DIFFICULTY IS IN CUTTING SUCH A DEAL.

3. SHULTZ HAS A PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT, SINCE HE NEGOTIATED IT. HE REGARDS IT AS VALID IN ITSELF AND, AS ONE OF THE FEW TANGIBLE AGREEMENTS TO HAVE BEEN REACHED SO FAR, NOT LIGHTLY TO BE SET ASIDE. THE AMERICANS, HOWEVER, PROBABLY WOULD ACQUIESCE IN SETTING IT ASIDE AS PART OF A PACKAGE. THEY WILL NOT BE PREPARED TO OFFER UP ITS ABRIGATION IN ADVANCE OF ANY OF THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF AN AGREEMENT. RUMSFELD'S OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE GEMAYEL AND THE LEBANESE OPPOSITION TO REACH AGREEMENT ON NEW SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AND A MORE BROADLY-BASED GOVERNMENT. HE WILL BE TRYING TO PERSUADE THE SYRIANS TO DISCUSS MECHANISMS FOR WITHDRAWAL; AND HE WILL NEGOTIATE A FURTHER WITHDRAWAL OF THE ISRAELIS TOO IF HE CAN. THE US INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY REMAIN SCEPTICAL OF GEMAYEL'S WILLINGNESS TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CONCESSIONS. BUT THE POLICY-MAKERS SEE JUMBLATT AND OTHERS, SO LONG AS THE SYRIANS ARE BEHIND THEM, AS MUCH MORE OF A PROBLEM IN THAT REGARD.

4. SHULTZ WOULD NOT ENDORSE IN QUITE THOSE TERMS THE VIEW THAT OUR FIRST PRIORITY SHOULD BE TO DEVISE ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS TO ENABLE THE MNF TO WITHDRAW. THE STATE DEPARTMENT AGREE THAT AN EXPANDED UNIFIL OR UN OBSERVERS COULD PLAY A USEFUL ROLE AT SOME STAGE. A GOOD MANY HERE WOULD WELCOME IT IF WE COULD FIND ANY WAY OF OVERCOMING SOVIET AND SYRIAN RESISTANCE TO AN EXPANDED UN ROLE. BUT THE AMERICANS DO NOT THEMSELVES WANT TO BE SEEN TO BE PRESSING TOO EAGERLY FOR THIS AT THIS POINT, AS THEY BELIEVE THIS WOULD ENCOURAGE THE SYRIANS TO THINK THAT THEY CAN AFFORD TO AVOID REAL NEGOTIATIONS IN THE EXPECTATION THAT THE MNF CAN BE EASED OUT ANYWAY.

5. THE AMERICANS HAVE BEEN TALKING TO THE RUSSIANS, AND SHULTZ WILL BE TALKING TO GROMYKO, ABOUT THE LEBANON AND THE MIDDLE EAST GENERALLY. THEY DO NOT FIND THESE DISCUSSIONS VERY PRODUCTIVE, THOUGH THE RUSSIANS HAVE CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN URGING SOME RESTRAINT ON THE SYRIANS. THE AMERICANS CAN SEE NO ADVANTAGE IN A WIDER CONFERENCE, WHICH WOULD SIMPLY BE A PROPAGANDA FORUM AND WHICH THE ISRAELIS ANYWAY WOULD REFUSE TO ATTEND. THEY CAN SEE NO ADVANTAGE EITHER IN TRYING TO CUT THE SOVIET UNION INTO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE ONLY WAY OF OVERCOMING SOVIET RESISTANCE TO AN EXPANDED UN ROLE WILL BE THROUGH A DEAL WITH THE SYRIANS. THE DIFFICULTY REMAINS THAT OF PERSUADING THE SYRIANS TO AGREE TO ANYTHING THAT WOULD OFFER THE US AND OTHERS A REASONABLY ELEGANT WAY OUT, OR WHICH IT WOULD BE REASONABLE TO PRESSURE THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT.

6. THERE IS NO GREAT OPTIMISM HERE ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF FINDING A SOLUTION; BUT IT DOES NOT COME EASILY TO THE AMERICAN MIND THAT

~~6. THERE IS NO GREAT OPTIMISM HERE ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF FINDING A SOLUTION. BUT~~ IT DOES NOT COME EASILY TO THE AMERICAN MIND THAT SOME PROBLEMS ^{can} ONLY BE MANAGED, THEY CAN'T NECESSARILY BE SOLVED, LEAST OF ALL IN A WAY IN WHICH SOMEONE IS LEFT A CLEAR WINNER. THERE ARE DEEP WORRIES ABOUT THE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS IN THE U.S. IF THE PRESENT SITUATION SHOULD REMAIN SUBSTANTIALLY UNCHANGED FOR MUCH LONGER. THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF BLUFF IN THE MANNER IN WHICH THE AMERICANS ARE TRYING TO DEAL WITH THE SYRIANS. BUT IT REMAINS FUNDAMENTAL TO THEIR JUDGEMENT THAT THE SYRIANS MUST ENCOUNTER SOME RESISTANCE IF THERE IS TO BE ANY HOPE OF PERSUADING THEM, AS MCFARLANE HAS PUT IT, TO SETTLE FOR HALF A LOAF, RATHER THAN THE WHOLE LOAF (OR WHATEVER PART THEREOF DOES NOT REMAIN CONSUMED BY THE ISRAELIS). MOREOVER THEY ARE ON A KNIFE-EDGE OF RISK. IF US FORCES ARE ATTACKED OR US PLANES ARE FIRED ON, THE US WILL RETALIATE; AND THERE WOULD BE NO DOMESTIC SUPPORT HERE FOR THE PROPOSITION THAT THEY SHOULD NOT. AT THE SAME TIME THEY MUST AT ALL COSTS AVOID GETTING SUCKED FURTHER IN TO THE LEBANESE QUICKSAND. THEIR DILEMMA IS NO LESS REAL FOR BEING IRRATIONAL.

7. THE AMERICANS, HAVE NOT HELPED THEMSELVES, OR ANYONE ELSE, BY THE SONG AND DANCE MADE HERE ABOUT "STRATEGIC COOPERATION" WITH ISRAEL. THAT ALL HAD OBVIOUS DOMESTIC POLITICAL ATTRACTIONS COMING UP TO AN ELECTION YEAR AND WITH MONDALE TRYING TO OUT BID ALL OTHER CONTENDERS HERE IN HIS PROTESTATIONS OF SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. BUT THE MOVE ITSELF AND THE U.S. FAILURE TO GET ANYTHING IN RETURN FOR IT INFURIATED AND DISMAYED HUSSEIN, MUBARAK AND THE SAUDIS, WITH NO REAL ADVANTAGE TO THE UNITED STATES. TYPICALLY, HOWEVER, THE MODERATE ARABS HAVE BEEN EXPRESSING THEIR DISMAY MORE VIGOROUSLY TO US THAN THEY HAVE DIRECT TO THE AMERICANS.

8. ON THE ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE, NOTHING HAS CHANGED. REAGAN WILL NOT PUT ANY PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS OVER THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES UNLESS KING HUSSEIN IS READY TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL. THE STATE DEPARTMENT WELCOMED PUBLICLY THE MUBARAK/ARAFAT MEETING AS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. THE AMERICANS HAVE NO FAITH IN ARAFAT'S ABILITY TO TAKE THE HARD DECISIONS REQUIRED FROM THE PLO TO ENABLE NEGOTIATIONS TO BE ENGAGED ON THE WEST BANK. BUT THEY THINK THAT THE NEXT STEP MUST BE THE RESUMPTION OF HIS DIALOGUE WITH HUSSEIN. THEY WOULD NOT WELCOME THE REVIVAL OF THE FRANCO/EGYPTIAN INITIATIVE OR ANY OTHER EC INITIATIVE WHICH COULD LEAD ARAFAT TO THINK THAT HE HAS OTHER OPTIONS.

9. THE AMERICANS REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE GULF. THEY HOPE THAT THE WAR WILL NOT TAKE A TURN WHICH WOULD POSE SO SERIOUS A THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE GULF STATES THAT THEY WOULD REQUEST ACTIVE WESTERN MILITARY HELP. THE AMERICANS WOULD NOT INVOLVE THEMSELVES UNLESS THERE WAS A PRESSING REQUEST FROM THE ARABS. BUT THEY WOULD THEN REGARD IT AS ESSENTIAL TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE WESTERN POSITION TO RESPOND. THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF HAVE BEEN EXPRESSING SATISFACTION AT THE CONSULTATIONS WITH US ABOUT CONTINGENCIES IN THE GULF. IF THERE WERE ARAB REQUESTS FOR HELP, THE AMERICANS HOPE THAT WE WOULD ALSO RESPOND, GIVEN OUR TRADITIONAL POSITION AND INTERESTS IN THE AREA. THEY WILL CONTINUE TO CONSULT CLOSELY WITH US; BUT THAT CONSULTATION IS BASED ON THE SUPPOSITION

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THAT, IF PUSH CAME TO SHOVE, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO HELP.~~

10. F.C.O. PLEASE PASS TO NO 10 DOWNING ST.

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