

From: Private Secretary/Minister of State

*file pse*

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

10 August 1982

Private Secretary  
Number 10, Downing Street

*Dear Tim.*

LEBANON

1. There are press reports that the Israeli Cabinet have accepted in principle, though with some reservations, the Habib plan for the Palestinians to leave Beirut. The Prime Minister may like to have an idea of where this stands.

2. Our information, mostly from American sources, is not complete but we understand that a plan had been agreed with the Palestinians and the Lebanese on the following lines: the Palestinian fighters, but not their dependents and other civilians (the fighters number about 8,000) would leave Beirut partly by land, partly by sea and air for a number of Arab countries, principally Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq. Habib has been conducting detailed negotiations on three main points: the international force which would supervise the operation, the method of departure and the destination.

#### International Force

3. The Americans say that it is agreed in principle that this should consist of 800 US Marines, 800 French Paratroopers and 400 Italian Bersaglieri. French and Italian officers are already working on the details in Lebanon. The outline is that the French would move in on 'D-day', and the others on about D-day + 6; evacuation would be complete by D-day + 14 when the Force would leave. Among problems which have arisen, and which we do not know to have been resolved are:

- a) The French have made various conditions for their participation, including some form of UN cover. This seems unlikely to be available (the Russians would not sanction US troops under the UN flag in Lebanon).
- b) Sharon has adhered to the original Israeli position that no international troops should enter Lebanon until all the Palestinians have gone. He has sought to control every potential landing point to forestall French intervention without his agreement. Begin 'apparently accepts' that deployment could begin when there are only 2,500 or so PLO left in Beirut. The PLO have demanded, on the

/contrary

*Prime Minister:  
You may like to  
see this summary of  
the present position  
JF 10/8.*



contrary, that the Force should come in before they begin to move; they do not trust the Israelis or the Lebanese, and of course they have good reason.

#### Means of Departure

4. When Habib was in London last month he was working on the basis that all would leave overland, i.e. to Syria in the first place. He had Israeli agreement that the Palestinian departure would not be under Israeli guns and that they would not be humiliated. Later the Israelis reneged on these arrangements. They also pointed out that they could not vouch for Lebanese behaviour towards the Palestinians.

5. The Americans are now apparently envisaging that the main body would leave by sea to ports in Syria, Jordan and Egypt, and they have been negotiating arrangements with the ICRC.

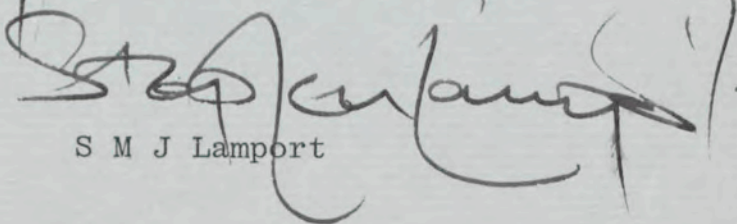
#### Destination

5. Habib's working principle has been that those Palestinians (probably the majority) who entered Lebanon as formed military units from other Arab countries should return to those countries. When he was in London he spoke of having found destinations for perhaps three-quarters of the total, but clearly there were strings attached to the agreement of some Governments.

6. Only the Jordanians have stated publicly that they would welcome some PLO from Beirut: they would take Jordanian passport holders, subject to some important reservations about those with a criminal record in Jordan. Egypt has insisted that, though they are prepared to take a share, they will only do so if withdrawal from Beirut is linked to a comprehensive settlement of the Palestine problem. The Syrians are said by the Americans and the PLO to have agreed to take a large share; in public they continue to deny this absolutely.

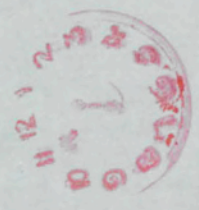
#### Conclusion

7. On the basis of incomplete information, we consider that a good deal has still to be done before Habib's plan could be put into effect. It has taken shape quite quickly in the last day or two, but the momentum could be lost if the Israelis overdo the military pressure, as seems all too likely.

*Yours ever*  
  
 S M J Lamport



10 AUG 1965



10 AUG 1965

CONFIDENTIAL



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 August 1982

RT 17/8-

Dear Tim,

Israel/Lebanon

Stephen Lamport's letter of 10 August described what we then knew of the Habib plan. The Prime Minister may like to have an account of recent developments.

Situation on the Ground

Habib's plan is now clearer, and with Syria's recent change of heart about accepting as many PLO as the PLO wish to send, has at last started to look realistic. It has already been accepted by the PLO and the Lebanese Government, and Israeli reservations about allowing any part of the International Force to be deployed until the evacuation of the PLO was well under way have been overcome in exchange for a commitment that the Force will withdraw if the PLO change their minds about leaving. Habib, now back in Beirut, is hoping to iron out remaining minor difficulties in time for the 15-day operation to begin on 21 August. The plan provides for the PLO to be evacuated mostly by sea to Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Tunis, the two Yemens, Sudan and perhaps Algeria. Egypt has continued to insist on a link with a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, but may not want to be left out in the end.

A ceasefire established late on 12 August has generally held after days of heavy Israeli bombing and shelling of West Beirut resulting in an unknown number of mostly civilian casualties. The Israelis claimed unconvincingly that it was necessary to keep up the military pressure. The heaviest bombardment of the war, on 12 August, elicited a tough statement by President Reagan. Meanwhile Israeli forces have deployed on the coast well to the north of Beirut, possibly in preparation for a second phase of operations against Syrian and PLO forces in Tripoli and the Bekaa Valley.

/The Lebanese

CONFIDENTIAL



The Lebanese Speaker is formally convening the Chamber of Deputies on 19 August to elect a new President, despite doubts as to whether an election is possible in present circumstances. Bechir Gemayel, leader of the Phalange, is still the only candidate. The Speaker has invited the French, Germans and ourselves to send observers. Mr David Watkins MP is hoping to lead a small delegation which will have no official status but which will go with HMG's blessing.

UNIFIL is still sitting helplessly in Southern Lebanon. Its mandate will be renewed by the UN Security Council on 17 August for a further short interim period.

*Yours ever*  
*J E Holmes*

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

T Flesher Esq  
10 Downing Street



16 FEB 21 1932

16 FEB 21 1932

