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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1747 OF 27 OCTOBER

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, BEIRUT.

MY IPT: LEBANON

FOLLOWING FROM MINISTER OF STATE

1. THIS IS AWKWARD BUT NOT UNEXPECTED. AFTER THESE CONVERSATIONS VELIOTES AND HABIB URGED PRIVATELY THAT WE SHOULD NOT RETURN A PLAIN NO OR DISMISS THE IDEA OF UK PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC. WE WOULD NOT BE ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE A LARGE CONTINGENT, NOR WOULD IT BE FOR A LONG TIME. THE EXACT FORM OF THE FORMAL REQUEST WOULD DEPEND ON HOW DRAPER GOT ON.

2. I TOO HOPE THAT WE CAN KEEP THE POSITION OPEN AS REGARDS A UK CONTRIBUTION TO THE MNF. THERE ARE STILL MANY QUESTION MARKS. BUT WE ARE BACK ON CLOSE TERMS WITH THE AMERICANS OVER THE MIDDLE EAST, AND OUR STANDING WITH THE ARABS DEPENDS IN PART ON THEIR

EAST, AND OUR STANDING WITH THE ARABS DEPENDS IN PART ON THEIR BELIEF IN OUR INFLUENCE OVER AMERICAN POLICY. IT WOULD BE A PITY TO PUT THIS AT RISK BY REFUSING IN PRINCIPLE TO HELP WITH AN OPERATION WHICH THE PRESIDENT REGARDS AS CRUCIAL.

3. THERE IS NO NEED FOR AN IMMEDIATE REPLY AND I SUGGEST THAT WE PROBE FOR FURTHER DETAILS NEXT WEEK AND AT THE SAME TIME REPLY AS POSITIVELY AS WE CAN ON TRAINING. THE FIRST STEP ON TRAINING SHOULD PRESUMABLY BE FOR HH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON TO ESTABLISH WHAT THE AMERICANS THEMSELVES PROPOSE TO DO, AND THEN FOR US TO SEND SOMEONE TO BEIRUT.

4. I SHOULD WELCOME THE CHANCE TO DISCUSS ALL THIS WITH YOU NEXT WEEK.

THOMSON

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