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LEBANON

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FM BEIRUT 301145Z NOV 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 805 OF 30 NOVEMBER.

INFO PRIORITY AMMAN, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, JEDDA, TEL AVIV, PARIS, ROME, WASHINGTON, UKHIS NEW YORK AND NODUK.

LEBANON: MULTI - NATIONAL FORCE.

1. THE UNITED STATES DCM CONFIRMED TO ME ON 30 NOVEMBER PRESS REPORTS THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAD ASKED THE THREE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE FORCE TO DOUBLE THE SIZE OF THEIR CONTINGENTS.

2. PUGH SAID THAT IN PRINCIPLE THIS PRESENTED NO PROBLEM TO HIS GOVERNMENT. NOR WOULD IT CAUSE DIFFICULTY FOR THE FRENCH AND ITALIANS. ALL HAD AT VARIOUS TIMES INDICATED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF THEIR CONTINGENTS WHEN THEY SAW THE NECESSITY TO DO SO. HOWEVER, THERE WAS NO IMMEDIATE NEED FOR AN INCREASE (SEE PARA 4 BELOW) AND THE AMERICANS HAD NOT DECIDED HOW THEY WOULD RESPOND. PUGH SPECULATED THAT THEY MIGHT ANNOUNCE PUBLICLY THEIR DECISION IN PRINCIPLE TO DO SO. HE JUDGED THAT PRESIDENT GEMAYEL'S MAIN MOTIVE IN MAKING THIS REQUEST NOW WAS TO CONVEY TO THE LEBANESE THE IMPRESSION OF CONTINUING ACITIVITY AND PROGRESS ON THE WITHDRAWAL FRONT WHEN THERE WAS IN FACT VERY LITTLE.

3. VPUGH TOLD ME THAT HABIB HAD NOT SUCCEDED IN RESOLVING THE PROCEDURAL DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN THE LEBANESE AND THE ISRAELIS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE TALKS ON WITHDRAWAL TO GET UNDER WAY. THE STICKING POINT WAS ISRAELI INSISTENCE ON HOLDING EVERY OTHER MEETING IN JERUSALEM. THIS THE LEBANESE WOULD NOT ACCEPT, AND INDEED COULD NOT WITHOUT SEVERE DAMAGE TO THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD (THE EGYPTIAN CHARGE, WHOM I SAW ON 29 NOVEMBER, SAID THE SAME). THE AMERICANS WERE CURRENTLY REASSESSING THE POSITION. DRAPER DID NOT KNOW WHERE TO GO FROM HERE. HABIB IS NOT EXPECTED TO RETURN TO BEIRUT BEFORE REGAINING WASHINGTON.

4. AS FOR THE SUBSTANCE OF THE LEBANESE/ISRAELI TALKS , IF THEY EVER GOT GOING, PUGH CONFIRMED THAT DRAPER AS A FIRST STAGE WAS LOOKING FOR A DISENGAGEMENT OF SYRIAN/PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI FORCES IN CAZA ALEY, THE CHOUF AND THE HIGH METN. THE MNF WOULD THEN DEPLOY ALONG THE BEIRUT/DAMASCUS ROAD, FILLING THE VACUUM THUS CREATED. IT WOULD BE LEFT TO THE LEBANESE ARMY TO ESTABLISH CONTROL IN THE AREAS TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH VACATED BY THE SYRIANS AND ISRAELIS RESPECTIVELY. THE PRESENCE OF THE MNF ON THE ROAD WAS DISIGNED TO REASSURE EACH OF THE SYRIANS AND ISRAELIS THAT THE OTHER COULD NOT REGAIN CONTROL OF THE ROAD. REINFORCEMENTS TO THE MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE WOULD NOT BE REQUIRED UNTIL THE DISENGAGEMENT STARTED. AT THAT STAGE THE ENLARGED MNF WOULD REQUIRE A PROPER COMMAND STRUCTURE, ORBAT ETC.

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5. PUGH AND I AGREED THAT THIS PROSPECT NOW LOOKED MORE DISTANT
THAN EVEN 10 DAYS AGO.

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ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE

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