

Lebanon

CONFIDENTIAL

PS TO NO 10 DOWNING STREET.

GR 500

Prime Minister

He is coming to see you on 10 December.

A. & C. 6/12

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DESKBY 060930Z

FM BEIRUT 060700Z DEC 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 814 OF 6 DECEMBER

INFO AMMAN, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, JERUSALEM, JEDDA, TUNIS, PARIS, ROME, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK.

INFO SAVING OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS, BRUSSELS, THE HAGUE, OSLO, VIENNA AND SEOUL.

YOUR TELNO 537: BRITISH PARTICIPATION TO THE MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON.

mt

1. I SAW THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON 4 DECEMBER. I SPOKE AS INSTRUCTED IN PARAGRAPH 2 OF TUR.
2. DR SALEM SAID THAT HE KNEW THAT THE CHANCES OF SENDING COMBAT TROOPS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MNF WERE SLIM. NONETHELESS HE HOPED THAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO MAKE A TOKEN CONTRIBUTION. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WANTED BRITAIN VISIBLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE MNF. HE MENTIONED OUR LOGISTIC SUPPORT FROM CYPRUS TO UNIFIL AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT HE HAD IN MIND.
3. DR SALEM WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEGATIVE DECISION DURING HIS VISIT TO LONDON. HE SAID IT WOULD BE A BIT OF A SLAP IN THE FACE AND BAD FOR LEBANESE MORALE. MOREOVER, THE LEBANESE HAD JUST ASKED BRAZIL, PORTUGAL AND COLOMBIA TO SEND TROOPS TO THE MNF. AN ANNOUNCEMENT MIGHT HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE DECISION OF THOSE COUNTRIES. HE WONDERED WHETHER THERE NEEDED TO BE ANY ANNOUNCEMENT AT ALL. I SAID THAT MINISTERS WERE LIKELY TO BE PRESSED EVENTUALLY TO DECLARE THEIR POSITION EG THROUGH QUESTIONS IN THE HOUSE. IN THAT CASE, SAID DR SALEM, COULD NOT A DECENT INTERVAL ELAPSE BETWEEN HIS VISIT AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT.
4. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR SPOKE TO ME IN SIMILAR TERMS AT A SOCIAL OCCASION ON 5 DECEMBER. HE SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR EUROPE TO BE SEEN TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE MNF. IN PRACTICE, THAT MEANT US. HE CITED MINE DETECTION AND TRAINING IN EXPLOSIVE ORDINANCE DISPOSAL AS EXAMPLES OF A SYMBOLIC PRESENCE. I MENTIONED TRAINING THE ISF. HE SAID THAT THIS MIGHT PASS MUSTER - JUST. HE SAID THAT THE FRENCH MIGHT THEMSELVES PROVIDE "SYMBOLIC" TRAINING FOR ISF OFFICERS IN FRANCE, BUT HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE FRENCH DID NOT REGARD THE ISF AS THEIR "CHASSE GARDEE".

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/ 5. MY

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5. MY CONCLUSIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

(A) THE LEBANESE HAVE SUBSTANTIALLY LOWERED THEIR SIGHTS. I WONDER IF, IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THERE IS A CHANCE OF MINISTERS AGREEING TO MAKE A SYMBOLIC CONTRIBUTION.

(B) I HOPE THAT AT LEAST WE CAN MEET DR SALEM'S REQUEST FOR DELAYING ANY ANNOUNCEMENT UNTIL SOME TIME AFTER HIS VISIT.

(C) IF ALL WE CAN OFFER IS A TRAINING PACKAGE FOR THE ISF, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE TEAM SHOULD BE LED BY A HIGH RANKING OFFICER. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR TOLD ME THAT IF WE PARTICIPATED, HOWEVER, SYMBOLICALLY, IN THE MULTI NATIONAL FORCE, WE COULD CLAIM A SEAT ON THE COMMITTEE WHICH DECIDES WHAT IT IS TO DO AND WHICH IS CHAIRED BY THE LEBANESE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER.

6. I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF THIS TELEGRAM COULD BE SHOWN TO MR ROBERTS.

FCO PASS ALL SAVING ADDRESSEES

PALMER

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

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