

TO PRIORITY FCO
TELNO 227 OF 12 SEPT 83

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INFO PRIORITY BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK.
INFO PARIS AND ROME.

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TEL AVIV TEL NO 222 : ISRAEL/LEBANON

1. IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THEIR WITHDRAWAL TO THE AWALI, THE ISRAELIS WERE INCLINED TO TAKE THE VIEW THAT THEY COULD NOW OBSERVE EVENTS NORTH OF THEIR DEFENSIVE LINE WITH SOME DETACHMENT. BUT THEIR CONCERN HAS GROWN WITH THE INCREASING EVIDENCE OF SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN INVOLVEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE DRUZE. IN RESPONSE, THE IDF IS NOW MAKING LIMITED PATROLS NORTH OF THE AWALI RIVER.

2. THE ISRAELIS ARE PARTICULARLY WORRIED AT THE POSSIBLE RETURN OF PLO AND SYRIAN FORCES TO THE AREAS VACATED BY THE IDF, AND PERHAPS EVEN TO BEIRUT, ON THE BACKS OF THE DRUZE AND SHIA MILITIAS. SUCH A RETURN WOULD BE VERY EMBARRASSING TO AN ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WHICH FOUGHT SO HARD TO ACHIEVE THEIR REMOVAL. BUT DESPITE EARLIER STATEMENTS THAT A RETURN WOULD MEET A FIRM RESPONSE, THE ISRAELIS ARE ANXIOUS TO AVOID BECOMING INVOLVED AGAIN IN THE FIGHTING NORTH OF THE AWALI. (THEY ARE ALSO INHIBITED BY THE NEED TO PRESERVE THE SUPPORT OF THEIR OWN DRUZE POPULATION). IN SEVERAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS, THE ISRAELIS HAVE STRESSED THAT THEY HAVE NOT SET ANY "RED LINES" IN THE CHOUF, AND IT MAY BE SIGNIFICANT THAT, WHILE CLAIMING TO HAVE RECEIVED DRUZE ASSURANCES THAT THE PLO WILL BE KEPT OUT OF THE CHOUF, THERE IS NOW TALK HERE OF A "WORST CASE" WHEREBY THE IDF WOULD BE ONCE AGAIN IN DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE PLO BUT THE SECURITY OF NORTHERN ISRAEL WOULD BE PRESERVED BY THE SOUTHERN LEBANON BUFFER. ALTHOUGH IT IS STRESSED THAT THIS SCENARIO HAS YET TO BE REACHED, ISRAELI POLICY IS LOOKING MORE AND MORE LIKE A DAMAGE-LIMITATION EXERCISE.

3. THE PRESENT FIGHTING WILL HAVE DONE NOTHING TO ENCOURAGE THE ISRAELIS TO MAKE FURTHER WITHDRAWALS. IN HIS MORE FLEXIBLE RECENT STATEMENTS, ARENS LINKED SUCH MOVES NOT WITH SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL BUT WITH THE ABILITY OF THE LEBANESE ARMY TO PREVENT HOSTILE FORCES FROM ENTERING THE VACATED AREAS. THE VIEW HERE IS THAT THE LAF HAVE YET TO PROVE THEIR ABILITY, QUITE APART FROM NOT BEING LEFT TO FILL ANY VACATED AREA BY THEMSELVES.

MOBERLY

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STANDARD

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