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Prime Minutes

GR 310
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FM DAMASCUS 131040Z SEP 83
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 252 OF 13 SEPTEMBER
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BEIRUT, MODUK (DI4B), BRITFORLEB.
INFO PRIORITY UKMIS NEWYORK, PARIS, ROME, JEDDA, CAIRO, AMMAN,
TEL AVIV.

To note. This article may be a
Syrian warning to us.

A.J.C. 14/9.

LEBANON: SYRIAN COMMENT ON BRITISH INVOLVEMENT

1. THE SYRIAN NEWSPAPER TISHREEN, IN A FRONT PAGE NEWS ARTICLE ON 13 SEPTEMBER, DISCUSSED THE BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON. THE ARTICLE TALKED OF EXTENSIVE ANGLO/AMERICAN CO-ORDINATION, CITING THE VISIT BY THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO WASHINGTON AND MR LUCE'S TO BEIRUT IN EVIDENCE. THE LATTER WAS SEEN BY TISHREEN AS "PERHAPS" BEING DESIGNED IN ORDER "TO GIVE THE BRITISH CONTINGENT OF THE MNF INSTRUCTIONS TO SUPPORT THE KATAEB ARMY IN ITS CRIMINAL WAR AGAINST THE LEBANESE NATIONAL FORCES".

2. THE ARTICLE GOES ON TO REPORT THAT UNNAMED OBSERVERS IN BEIRUT "DO NOT RULE OUT FURTHER BRITISH INTERVENTION AND INCREASING EMBROILMENT IN THE BLOODY EVENTS IN LEBANON". THE OVERFLIGHT OF THE BUCCANEERS WAS "IN ORDER TO RECONNOITRE NATIONALIST POSITIONS IN THE MOUNTAIN AND THE CHOUF AND TO PASS THE INFORMATION TO THE KATAEB ARMY".

COMMENT

3. IN SYRIAN PARLANCE, THE "KATAEB ARMY" IMPLIES THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES, RATHER THAN THE KATAEB MILITIA. BUT WHATEVER THE EFFECTS IN BEIRUT, THE DEMONSTRATION BY THE BUCCANEERS HAS RAISED THE PROFILE OF BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON IN SYRIAN EYES. THE ARTICLE WAS PROBABLY OFFICIALLY INSPIRED AND COULD WELL REFLECT A MOVE TOWARDS AN OFFICIAL SYRIAN INTERPRETATION THAT THE BRITISH CONTINGENT IN THE MNF SHOULD NOW BE

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CONSIDERED IN THE SAME WAY AS THE AMERICAN CONTINGENT. A SIGNAL THAT THIS POINT HAD BEEN REACHED WOULD BE A DIRECT IDENTIFICATION WITH THE PHALANGE AND ISRAEL. IN SUCH A CASE, WHICH MIGHT RESULT FROM FURTHER DEMONSTRATIONS, IT WOULD NOT EXCLUDE SYRIAN ACQUESCENCE EITHER IN SHELLING OF BRITISH POSITIONS BY THE OPPOSITION FORCES OR EVEN IN DIRECT ATTACK.

4. ALREADY MUCH PROMINENCE IS BEING GIVEN TO STATEMENTS BY NSF SPOKESMEN SUGGESTING THAT THE MNF HAS OUTLIVED ITS WELCOME.

CCN: PARA 3 LINE 12 FIRST WORD ACQUESCENCE
MARSHALL
BT

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MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)
LIMITED

NENAD
MED
DEFENCE D
PUSD
NEWS D
UND
NAD
WED
FINANCE D
SED

PS
PS/LADY YOUNG
PS/MR LUCE
PS/PUS
SIR J BULLARD
SIR J LEAHY
MR WRIGHT
MR CARTLEDGE
MR EGERTON
MR STREETON

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