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PS/TO, NO. 10, DOWNING STREET.

BT

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SIC

DESKBY BUDAPEST 0830 LOCAL (FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY)

DESKBY WASHINGTON 142200Z (FOR PS/MR HESELTINE)

FROM PS/MR LUCE, MR LUCE'S VISIT TO LEBANON

1. MR LUCE HAD MEETINGS THIS MORNING WITH PRESIDENT GEMAYEL, THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER. HE ALSO HAD AN HOUR WITH MACFARLANE AND FAIRBANKS (SEE MIFT), VISITED THE UK MNF CONTINGENT, AND MET REPRESENTATIVES OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS.
2. THE LEBANESE WERE CLEARLY DELIGHTED WITH THE VISIT AND GRATEFUL FOR WHAT WE ARE DOING. BUT THEY ARE NOT YET PERSUADED OF THE NEED TO DO A DEAL WITH THE SYRIANS AND THEIR LEBANESE ALLIES, AND TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK FOR INCREASED UN INVOLVEMENT IN THE MNF. MR LUCE WAS ROBUST ON THE LATTER DETAIL.
3. ALL MR LUCE'S LEBANESE INTERLOCUTORS MADE CLEAR THEIR PLEASURE AT HIS VISIT. THEY EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE THAT THEY ATTACHED TO CONTINUING BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN THE MNF, WHICH THEY DESCRIBED AS IMPORTANT AS MUCH FOR THE POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL GESTURE IT PROVIDED AS FOR ITS POSITION ON THE GROUND. IT WAS NOT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENTS INTENTION THAT THE MNF SHOULD BECOME INVOLVED IN THE FIGHTING, WHICH WAS BETTER LEFT TO THE LAF. PRESIDENT GEMAYEL ASKED HOWEVER WHETHER WE WOULD BE WILLING TO WIDEN THE ROLE OF OUR CONTINGENT, BOTH BY INCREASING ITS SIZE AND WIDENING THE SCOPE OF ITS DEPLOYMENT.
4. MR LUCE SAID THAT WE WERE GLAD TO BE ABLE TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE MNF, WHICH WE WOULD MAINTAIN AS LONG AS IT HAD A USEFUL ROLE TO PLAY. THE BUCCANEERS FURTHER EMPHASISED OUR COMMITMENT. HOWEVER, OUR RESOURCES WERE LIMITED AND IT WOULD NOT BE EASY FOR US TO DO MORE. WE WOULD KEEP PATROLLING AREAS UNDER REVIEW: SMALL CHANGES MIGHT BE POSSIBLE, BUT SUBSTANTIAL ALTERATION IN THE PRESENT PATTERN OF PATROLLING WAS NOT BEING CONSIDERED. PRESIDENT GEMAYEL ACCEPTED THAT THERE WERE LIMITS TO WHAT WE COULD DO.
5. PRESIDENT GEMAYEL AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER BOTH STRESSED THAT THEY BELIEVED THE PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE TO PEACE IN THE LEBANON WAS

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INTERFERENCE BY OUTSIDE FORCES. THEY ACCEPTED THAT CHANGES TO THE WAY IN WHICH LEBANON HAD TRADITIONALLY BEEN GOVERNED WERE NECESSARY: BUT THE VARIOUS LEBANESE COMMUNITIES, LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES, WOULD SOON BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH A MODUS VIVENDI. THE SYRIANS AND THE ISRAELIS (PRESIDENT GEMAYEL WAS EQUALLY SCATHING ABOUT BOTH) CONSPIRED IN THEIR DIFFERENT WAYS TO EXACERBATE DIVISIONS AND KEEP LEBANON WEAK. PRESIDENT GEMAYER HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF REBUILDING CONSENSUS IN A COUNTRY IN WHICH HE ONLY CONTROLLED 10 PER CENT OF THE TERRITORY. HE BELIEVED SYRIA'S AIM WAS TO REDUCE LEBANON TO VASSAL STATUS. HE COULD NEVER AGREE TO THIS. HE WOULD BE KILLED IF HE DID.

6. IN ADDITION TO ASKING THAT BRITAIN EXTEND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE MNF, PRESIDENT GEMAYEL ASKED MR LUCE TO HELP THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE CONFLICT IN LEBANON WAS NOT AN INTERNAL AFFAIR (HE TOOK STRONG EXCEPTION TO RECENT FRENCH REFERENCES TO A 'CIVIL WAR'); AND TO HELP BRING PRESSURE FOR A WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES. HE HAD WRITTEN TO PRESIDENT ASSAD FORMALLY ASKING THE SYRIANS TO LEAVE. THEIR RESPONSE HAD BEEN TO STEP UP THE BATTLE IN THE CHOUF. STRONG WESTERN PRESSURE WAS NEEDED TO BACK UP THE SUPPORT THEY WERE ALREADY RECEIVING FROM MODERATE ARABS (ESPECIALLY THE SAUDIS). MR LUCE SAID WE WOULD DO WHAT WE COULD. PRESIDENT GEMAYEL WOULD HAVE NOTICED THE RECENT STATEMENT BY THE TEN. BUT OUR INFLUENCE WAS LIMITED.

7. MR LUCE LEFT HIS INTERLOCUTORS IN NO DOUBT OF OUR SUPPORT FOR A STRONG AND INDEPENDENT LEBANON. BUT HE ALSO EMPHASISED THE NEED FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. HE RECEIVED NO DIRECT RESPONSE ON THE LATTER. THE GENERAL TENOR OF THE DISCUSSIONS LEFT LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE LEBANESE RECOGNISED THAT SOME HARD CHOICES WOULD HAVE TO BE FACED. BUT IT WAS FAR FROM CLEAR THAT PRESIDENT GEMAYEL, WHO WAS LOOKING TENSE AND SHOWING SIGNS OF STRAIN, WAS YET READY TO MAKE ANY FIRM MOVES.

8. THE MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT ENDED WITH GEMAYEL ASKING MR LUCE TO PASS A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO MRS THATCHER, THANKING HER FOR HER CLOSE INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LEBANON WHICH WAS NOW BATTLING TO UPHOLD THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY AGAINST LONG ODDS

BT

MIDDLE EAST

STANDARD

NENAD MAED
MED ESSD
NAD ERD
SAD ESID
UND CONS D
EESD CONS EM UNIT
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