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FM WASHINGTON 200300Z OCT 83
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 3039 OF 19 OCTOBER
INFO IMMEDIATE TEL AVIV, BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, AMMAN, PRIORITY
UKMIS NEW YORK, PARIS, ROME, JEDDA AND CAIRO

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S PRESS CONFERENCE : LEBANON.

1. AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE ON 19 OCTOBER PRESIDENT REAGAN WAS QUESTIONED PERSISTENTLY ABOUT U S OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON, THE ROLE OF THE MARINES AND MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO PROTECT THEM
2. HE SAID THAT U S OBJECTIVES REMAINED THE SAME. THE HAZARDS HAD BEEN KNOWN WHEN THE U S JOINED THE MNF AND HE DEEPLY REGRETTED THE LOSS OF AMERICAN LIVES. EVERYTHING POSSIBLE WAS BEING DONE TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THE MARINES. RECENT CASUALTIES HAD BEEN THE VICTIMS OF SNIPER FIRE BY RADICAL ELEMENTS FROM RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS WHICH COULD NOT BE SHELLED. THE U S HAD RESPONDED TO SHELLING

~~OF UNPRECEDENTED BY NATIONS... WHICH COULD NOT BE SHELLED. THE U S HAD RESPONDED TO SHELLING FROM THE HILLS WITH NAVAL GUNFIRE. THE MARINES WOULD CONTINUE TO CARRY OUT THEIR MISSION.~~

3. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT GREAT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN LEBANON. BEIRUT WAS NO LONGER BEING SHELLED, THERE WAS A CEASEFIRE, A GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN CREATED AND REPRESENTATIVES ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT (SIC), THE ISRAELIS HAD WITHDRAWN TO THE AWALI AND ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION OF PERMANENTLY WITHDRAWING. THE MNF HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED TO TRY TO BRING SOME STABILITY TO LEBANON. THE LEBANESE ARMY, CREATED BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT, WITH U S HELP IN SUPPLIES AND TRAINING, WAS A FINE ARMY. THE MISSION WAS TO HELP THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND ITS FORCES TAKE OVER ITS OWN COUNTRY AND SECURE THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES. EARLIER SOME 10,000 PLO PERSONNEL HAD SUCCESSFULLY BEEN OUSTED FROM THE COUNTRY.

4. THE PRESIDENT STOOD BY THE GOALS OF HIS INITIATIVE LAST YEAR. IT AIMED AT STRAIGHTENING OUT THE LEBANESE SITUATION WHICH BEGAN WITH THE NORTHERN BORDER OF ISRAEL BEING VIOLATED BY TERRORIST GROUPS AND INNOCENT PEOPLE BEING KILLED. NOW THERE WAS A LEBANON/ISRAEL AGREEMENT. THE U S WAS DOING ALL IT COULD TO PERSUADE SYRIA NOT TO BE A ROADBLOCK. THEIR AIM WAS TO WORK WITH MODERATE ARABS TO BRING ABOUT THE KIND OF PEACE WITH ISRAEL WHICH SADAT HAD MADE, FOLLOWING THE LEAD OF CAMP DAVID AND SCR 242 AND 338. BUT IT ALL HINGED ON THE RESOLUTION OF LEBANON.

5. IN REPLY TO FURTHER QUESTIONS THE PRESIDENT ACCUSED THE SYRIANS, AIDED BY 7000 SOVIET ADVISERS AND TECHNICIANS, OF CONTRIBUTING TO DISORDER AND TROUBLE IN LEBANON IN PURSUIT OF THEIR GOAL OF A GREATER SYRIA. IF THEY HOPED TO WEAR HIM DOWN THEY WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED. THE U S WOULD CONTINUE ITS DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS WITH ARAB SUPPORT. THEY WOULD NOT ALLOW THE SYRIANS TO DESTROY PEACE AND ORDER IN THAT TROUBLED COUNTRY.

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