

SECRET

FM PARIS 081810Z NOV 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1000 OF 8 NOVEMBER

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BONN (FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY)  
INFO PRIORITY ROME, BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV



No. 10.

IMMEDIATE

3

YOUR TELNO 563 : LEBANON : US RETALIATION

*Resonance*  
*mf*

1. THE QUAI SECRETARY-GENERAL BEING UNAVAILABLE I TOOK ACTION THIS EVENING WITH THE DIRECTOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST.

2. BONNEFOUS DID NOT SEEM PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS. HE CONSIDERED AMERICAN ACTION POSSIBLE BUT NOT PROBABLE, AND AT ALL EVENTS UNLIKELY TO HAPPEN BEFORE PRESIDENT REAGAN'S RETURN FROM TOKYO AND SEOUL. HE ALSO WONDERED WHETHER THE ISRAELIS WOULD BE WILLING TO LET THEMSELVES BE USED SO TRANSPARENTLY BY THE AMERICANS.

3. BONNEFOUS MADE NO BONES HOWEVER ABOUT THE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES WHICH U S ACTION COULD HAVE. HE COMMENTED THAT A JOINT US - ISRAELI OPERATION WOULD STIR THE GHOST OF SUEZ IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WITH OBVIOUS COMPLICATIONS FOR FRANCE AND BRITAIN.

4. BONNEFOUS AGREED THAT IT WAS IN THE FRENCH AND BRITISH INTEREST TO COUNSEL CAUTION IN WASHINGTON. HE EXPECTED THAT THE FRENCH WOULD SPEAK ACCORDINGLY TO THE AMERICANS. HE HAD DOUBTS HOWEVER ABOUT JOINTLY SQUARING UP TO THE U S (I HAD NOT SUGGESTED THIS) AND THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BEST FOR THE UK TO TAKE THE LEAD, GIVEN OUR CLOSE RELATIONS WITH WASHINGTON. HE AGREED THAT REPRESENTATIONS MIGHT SUCCEED IN MAKING THE AMERICANS LIMIT THEIR ACTION. IN MAKING ANY APPROACH HOWEVER IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT NOT TO HINT AT ACQUIESCENCE IN A LIMITED ACTION. THE AMERICANS MIGHT TAKE THAT AS THE GREEN LIGHT.

5. BONNEFOUS WAS AT FIRST RELUCTANT TO SPECULATE ABOUT HOW THE FRENCH MIGHT REACT TO AN AMERICAN MILITARY MOVE. AFTER SOME PROMPTING HE SUGGESTED THAT IT MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE TO ISSUE AN IMMEDIATE STATEMENT EXPRESSING SURPRISE AND PERHAPS VOICING THE HOPE THAT THE ACTION WOULD NOT HAVE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CIVILIAN POLULATION OR PERTURB THE PEACE PROCESS IN LEBANON. AT NO POINT DID BONNEFOUS SUGGEST THAT FRANCE WOULD OPENLY CRITICISE U S RETALIATION.

6. COMMENT. MEMORIES OF THE BOMB ATTACK AGAINST FRENCH SOLDIERS ARE TOO FRESH HERE FOR THE FRENCH TO WORRY GREATLY AT THE PROSPECT OF POSITIVE ACTION, TELEVISION AND THE PRESS HAVE ENGRAVED THE 58 COFFINS ON THE MIND OF THE PUBLIC. ACCORDING TO THE US EMBASSY THE FRENCH DEFENCE MINISTER IS TAKING A HAWKISH LINE ON RETALIATION. THERE WOULD ALSO BE FEW REGRETS IF THE SYRIANS WERE TO TAKE A FEW BLOWS (MY TELEGRAM NUMBER 999). THE FRENCH ARE QUITE WILLING FOR THE UK TO BEARD THE AMERICANS BUT THEY ARE NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT TAKING A FIRM LINE THEMSELVES. BONNEFOUS SAID THAT THE MIDDLE EAST HAD HARDLY BEEN DISCUSSED WITH DAM WHEN HE CAME HERE YESTERDAY.

FRETWELL

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SENT AT 081932Z JW