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PS TO PM. 10. DOWNING STREET.

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FM DAMASCUS 041845Z DEC 83

TO FLASH FCO

TELNO 390 OF 4 DECEMBER

INFO FLASH ATHENS (PRIVATE SECRETARY) AND WASHINGTON
INFO IMMEDIATE ROME, AMMAN, TEL AVIV, BEIRUT AND MODUK

FROM PS/MR LUCE

MIPT: MR LUCE'S CALL ON SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

1. MR LUCE'S DISCUSSION WITH KHADDAM FOCUSED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY

ON THE LEBANON, REACTIONS TO THE US BOMBING RAID ON SYRIAN POSITIONS ARE RECORDED IN MIPT, FOR REST, KHADDAM REPEATEDLY STRESSED SYRIA'S DETERMINATION TO SEE THE RECONCILIATION TALKS RESUME, AND PEACE RETURN TO LEBANON. SYRIA HAD NO TERRITORIAL DESIGNS ON ITS NEIGHBOURS. INDEED, A STABLE AND INDEPENDENT LEBANON WAS, HE SAID, A CENTRAL SYRIAN INTEREST

2. KHADDAM SAID THAT SYRIA HAD NO INTENTION OF WITHDRAWING ITS TROOPS FROM LEBANON IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. PRECONDITIONS FOR A SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL

WERE:

I. THAT A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY SHOULD BE IN PLACE FOLLOWING THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE RECONCILIATION TALKS
SEMI CLN

II. THAT ISRAELI FORCES SHOULD HAVE WITHDRAWN UNCONDITIONALLY AND WITHOUT 'GAINING ANY BENEFITS FROM THEIR PERIOD OF OCCUPATION'
SEMI CLN

III. MNF FORCES SHOULD ALSO HAVE WITHDRAWN.

AT THIS POINT, SYRIAN TROOPS WOULD NO LONGER BE NECESSARY AND THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO LEAVE 'BY THE DOOR THROUGH WHICH THEY CAME' KHADDAM STRESSED THAT THE ISRAELIS AND SYRIANS WERE IN LEBANON ON A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT BASIS AND THAT THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION OF WITHDRAWAL OF THE TWO FORCES TAKING PLACE SIMULTANEOUSLY, THOUGH IN ANSWER TO A DIRECT QUESTION FROM MR LUCE HE APPEARED TO RECOGNISE THAT SOME ALTERNATIVE MEANS WOULD HAVE TO BE FOUND OF MEETING ISRAELI SECURITY CONCERNS ON THEIR NORTHERN BORDER

3. KHADDAM SHOWED HIMSELF OBSESSED THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION BY THE UNITED STATES. HE READ MR LUCE A LECTURE AT SOME LENGTH ON THE DAMAGE THEY WERE DOING THROUGH THEIR POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (SEE MIPT) WHILE EMPHASISING THAT THE DOOR REMAINED OPEN TO A BETTER RELATIONSHIP IF THE AMERICANS WERE WILLING TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE. THE FRENCH WERE ALSO THE SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE OBLOQUY. BY CONTRAST THE BRITISH AND ITALIAN ROLE WAS WARMLY PRAISED. KHADDAM SAID THAT, WHILE BRITAIN AND SYRIA DISAGREED ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES, THE SYRIANS RECOGNISED THAT UK POLICY IN THE LEBANON AND IN THE REGION AS A WHOLE WAS GENERALLY CONSTRUCTIVE. THEY APPRECIATED THIS.

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4. KHADDAM MADE CLEAR THAT THE SYRIANS ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED BY THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST OF THE US-ISRAEL STRATEGIC AGREEMENT. THE SYRIANS SAW THE LATEST SPATE OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE ISRAELIS AND THE AMERICANS AS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE OF THIS NEW RELATIONSHIP. HE ALSO UNDERLINED SYRIAN CONCERN ABOUT THE AMERICAN DETERMINATION TO UPHOLD THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND LEBANON WHICH HE INDICATED WAS QUITE INCOMPATIBLE WITH SYRIA'S CENTRAL LSECURITY INTERESTS

SYRIA'S CENTRAL SECURITY INTERESTS (ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT WOULD GIVE THE ISRAELIS AUTOMATIC RIGHT OF ACCESS TO WITHIN 23 KILLOMETRES OF DAMASCUS). HE SAID THE SIMPLE FACT WAS, THAT US INSISTENCE ON THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT BEING HONOURABLE WAS UNDERMINING THE PEACE PROCESS AND A BARRIER TO MOVEMENT AT GENEVA

COMMENT

5. THE MEETING ENDED WITH A SHORT EXCHANGE ON THE SITUATION IN THE GULF. KHADDAM SAID HE WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS

COMMENT

6. EVEN IF SYRIA'S MOTIVES ARE LESS PURE THAN KHADDAM WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE, THEIR CONCEN ABOUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IS PATENT ENOUGH. MR LUCE BELIEVES THAT THE SYRIAN ATTITUDES HE HAS ENCOUNTERED HERE FURTHER UNDERLINE THE NEED TO INCLUDE A SENSIBLE AND CONSTRUCTIVE PASSAGE ON THE LEBANON SETTING OUT OUR OWN VIEWS IN THE ATHENS COMMUNIQUE. HE BELIEVS THAT, NOTWITHSTANDING AMERICAN MISGIVINGS, WE SHOULD PRESS STRONGLY FOR THIS.

LUCAS

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TO FLASH FCO
TELNO 389 OF 4 DECEMBER
AND TO FLASH MOD (FOR MR HESELTINE)
INFO FLASH ATHENS (PRIVATE SECRETARY) WASHINGTON
INFO IMMEDIATE ROME AMMAN TEL AVIV BEIRUT PARIS UKMIS NEW YORK

FROM PS/MR LUCE
MY TELNO 388: AMERICAN RAID ON SYRIAN POSITIONS IN LEBANON

1. MR LUCE HAS NOW BEEN OVER THE GROUND WITH THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
2. KHADDAM'S REACTION WAS ONE OF SORROW MORE THAN ANGER. HE SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD APPEARED SET ON ESCALATION EVER SINCE THE ATTACK ON THEIR MARINES. THE SYRIANS DID NOT WISH TO PROVOKE CONFRONTATION BUT HAD WARNED THE UNITED STATES ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS THAT THEY WOULD BE BOUND TO RESPOND IF US AIRCRAFT OVERFLEW THEIR POSITIONS. THIS HAD DULY HAPPENED. HE REPEATED THAT THE SYRIANS WERE NOT SEEKING TO ESCALATE THE CONFLICT BUT THAT THEY WOULD REACT PRECISELY THE SAME WAY AGAIN IF THE AMERICANS ATTEMPTED TO REPEAT THEIR PERFORMANCE.
3. OVERALL, KHADDAM SAID THAT THE US ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST WAS SERVING ONLY SOVIET DESIGNS ('MY TWO BEST FRIENDS ARE REAGAN AND ANDROPOV. REAGAN PROVIDES THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND ANDROPOV THE AMMUNITION'). SYRIA WANTED BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND WOULD MATCH ANY POSITIVE MOVES STEP FOR STEP. THE CONVERSE, HE WARNED, WAS ALSO TRUE.
4. MR LUCE BELIEVES THAT THIS CONVERSATION, WHILE ON THE FACE OF IT REASSURING, UNDERLINES THE NEED TO URGE CAUTION ON THE AMERICANS. INCIDENTS LIKE THIS MORNUTGS WILL NOT DRIVE THE SYRIANS OUT OF LEBANON. ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS LIKELY TO LEAD THEM TO DIG IN, AND TO PUT THEM IN A POSITION WHERE THEY CAN APPEAR AS HEROES IN THE ARAB WORLD, ABLE TO COMMAND THE SYMPATHY OF GOVTS WHO HAS LITTLE TIME FOR SYRIAN ATTITUDES GENERALLY. THE AMERICANS SHOULD THEREFORE CONSIDER VERY SERIOUSLY THE EFFECT, ON THE SAFETY AND COHESION OF THE MNF AND ALSO ON THE ATTITUDES OF MODERATE ARAB GOVERNMENTS OF FURTHER INCIDENTS OF THIS SORT
5. SEE ALSO MIFT.
LUCAS
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(6)
PS/MR LUCE
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MR EBERTON
SIR J BULLARD
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FROM DAMASCUS 041402Z DEC

TO FLASH FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 388 OF 4 DECEMBER 1983

AND TO FLASH MOD (FOR PS MR HESELTINE), ATHENS (FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY).

IMMEDIATE BEIPUT AMMAN TELAVIV

FROM PS/MR LUCE.

AMERICAN RAID ON SYRIAN POSITIONS IN LEBANON.

1. FOLLOWING HIS TELEX CONVERSATION THIS MORNING WITH MR HESELTINE, MR LUCE HAS SPOKEN TO THE SYRIAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, SHAPA TO ESTABLISH SYRIAN REACTIONS AND TO COUNSEL RESTRAINT.

2. SHARA REACTED CALMLY . HE TOOK THE LINE THAT THIS MORNING'S RAID WAS SIMPLY THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF US AND ISRAELI PROVOCATIONS . HE CLAIMED THAT A NUMBER OF US AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN SHOT AT OR SHOT DOWN IN RECENT DAYS. THE SYRIAN AIM THROUGHOUT WAS TO AVOID ESCALATION. THIS HAD NOT CHANGED THOUGH THERE WERE QUOTE LIMITS TO OUR PATIENCE UNQUOTE. HE SAID THAT THE AMERICANS HAD LOST THREE (THREE) AIRCRAFT IN THIS MORNING'S RAID . SYRIANS LOSSES HAD INCLUDED 2 DEAD, 10 SERIOUSLY WOUNDED AND ONE POSITION KNOCKED OUT.

3. SHARA IS EVIDENTLY NOT A CENTRAL PLAYER. BUT HE HAS SAID THAT THIS WILL FORM A CENTRAL POINT FOR DISCUSSION WHEN MR LUCE SEES THE FOREIGN MINISTER, KHADDAM, AT 1500Z THIS AFTERNOON.

LUCAS

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