

SECRET

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SECRET

FROM F C O 051612Z DEC 83
TO IMMEDIATE ATHENS
TELEGRAM NUMBER 576 OF 5 DECEMBER

FOLLOWING PERSONAL FOR COLES PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY, FROM PARSONS:

LEBANON

AS THE PRIME MINISTER KNOWS, MY MAIN WORRY HAS FOR SOME WEEKS BEEN THAT THE AMERICANS AND THE ISRAELIS ARE PLANNING SOME ACTION TO QUOTE CUT THE SYRIANS DOWN TO SIZE UNQUOTE. I HAVE SEEN WHAT THE AMERICANS HAVE TOLD US ABOUT THE EVENTS OF THE WEEKEND. THIS HAS NOT ALLAYED MY ANXIETIES. IT CANNOT BE A COINCIDENCE THAT THE SUNDAY TIMES AND THE OBSERVER CARRIED IDENTICAL STORIES ABOUT AMERICAN/ISRAELI INTENTIONS. IT IS ON THE CARDS THAT THESE STORIES ORIGINATED IN AMERICAN BRIEFING GIVEN BY SOMEONE IN THE ADMINISTRATION WHO IS OPPOSED TO SUCH ACTION.

2. IF HOSTILITIES ESCALATE BETWEEN THE AMERICANS AND THE SYRIANS, WITH OR WITHOUT ISRAELI PARTICIPATION, I CANNOT SEE HOW WE CAN CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THAT OUR CONTINGENT IN LEBANON FORMS PART OF A QUOTE PEACEKEEPING FORCE UNQUOTE. I HAVE BEEN FIRMLY OPPOSED TO A UNILATERAL BRITISH WITHDRAWAL BUT, IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, OUR PARTICIPATION COULD BECOME DIFFICULT IN TERMS OF OUR OWN PUBLIC OPINION. I WOULD NOT LIKE TO PREDICT FRENCH REACTIONS BUT THE ITALIANS ARE OBVIOUSLY LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT. THE MNF COULD BECOME AN AMERICAN OR A FRANCO-AMERICAN INTERVENTION FORCE. NEITHER WOULD BE DESIRABLE. THIS IS QUITE APART FROM THE WIDER DANGERS INHERENT IN THE PRESENT SITUATION.

3. OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS OR SO, THE AMERICANS AND OURSELVES HAVE ISSUED COUNTLESS STATEMENTS AND VOTED FOR COUNTLESS RESOLUTIONS IN THE UN CONDEMNING QUOTE CYCLES OF VIOLENCE UNQUOTE ALL OVER THE

WORLD, PARTICULARLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA. ON EVERY OCCASION, EACH SIDE HAS BLAMED THE OTHER FOR STARTING AND INTENSIFYING THE CYCLE, BE IT ISRAELIS, ARABS, SOUTH AFRICANS, RHODESIANS, ANGOLANS ETC. DO THE AMERICANS NOT REALISE THAT THEY ARE NOW PARTICIPATING IN PRECISELY SUCH A CYCLE?

BOTH OF US HAVE CONSISTENTLY TAKEN THE VIEW THAT IT IS UP TO THE MORE RESPONSIBLE AND LEAST INSECURE PARTY TO BREAK THE CYCLE. WE HAVE URGED THIS TIME AND AGAIN ON EG THE SOUTH AFRICANS. SHOULD THE AMERICANS NOT LEARN THEIR OWN LESSON? SHOULD THEY NOT CONSIDER A HIGH LEVEL TALK WITH THE SYRIANS DESIGNED TO COOL THINGS DOWN?

4. I KNOW THAT THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AND DEFENCE SECRETARY ARE IN TOUCH WITH SHULTZ AND WEINBERGER RESPECTIVELY, AND THAT RUMSFELD WILL BE IN LONDON ON WEDNESDAY. BUT EVENTS ARE MOVING SO QUICKLY THAT I WONDER IF THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD NOT SEND A MESSAGE TO REAGAN FROM ATHENS.

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File No.

OUTWARD

Security Classification
CONFIDENTIAL

Department

TELEGRAM

Precedence

Drafted by

IMMEDIATE

(Block Capitals)

Tel. Extn.

DESKBYZ

FOR
COMMS. DEPT.
USE

Despatched (Date)
(Time)Z

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PREAMBLE

(Time of Origin) Z (G.M.T.) (Restrictive Prefix)

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO LONDON Tel. No. of
(precedence) (post)

AND TO (precedence/post)

File 10

AND SAVING TO

REPEATED TO (for info)

SAVING TO (for info)

Distribution:-

[TEXT]

FOLLOWING FOR SIR ANTHONY PARSONS; NO. 10 DOWNING STREET; FROM COLES

Thank you for the message contained in FCO tel no 576. This was considered at a meeting here last night. While the Prime Minister is of course concerned about developments in the Lebanon her present inclination is to avoid public criticism of US actions. She was not ^{repeat not} disposed to send a message to President Reagan about the Lebanon, partly because she is concerned that the currency of these messages is becoming somewhat devalued. But it was agreed that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary should send a message to Shultz which you will see in a separate telegram.

Copies to:-

A. S. C. 6/12

6 December 1983

File No.

OUTWARD

Security Classification
SECRET

Department

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(Block Capitals)

TELEGRAM

Precedence
Immediate

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TO..... *ATHENS IMMEDIATE ATHENS*
(precedence) (post)

Tel. No. *576* of *5 DEC*

AND TO (precedence/post).....

AND TO SAVING.....

INFO.....

INFO SAVING.....

Distribution:-

[TEXT]

Personal PRIME MINISTER'S PART-1,

Following for Coles from Parsons:

LEBANON

has for some weeks been

No 10 DS.

As the Prime Minister knows, my ~~most~~ ^{main} immediate worry is that the Americans and the Israelis are planning some action to "cut the Syrians down to size". I have seen what the Americans have told us about the events of the weekend, but this has not allayed my anxieties. It cannot be a coincidence that the Sunday Times and the Observer carried ^{identical} similar stories about American/Israeli intentions. ^{IC is on the cards} The likelihood is that these stories originated in American briefing given by someone who is opposed to such action.

Copies to:-

in the Administration

2. If ~~serious~~ ^{escalate} hostilities break out between the Americans and the Syrians, with or without Israeli participation, I cannot see how we ^{can} ~~could~~ continue to maintain that our contingent in Lebanon ^{forms ed} ~~form~~ part of a "peacekeeping force".

/I have been

I have been ~~consistently~~ ^{firmly} opposed to a unilateral British withdrawal but, in such circumstances, our ~~continued~~ participation could become ~~untenable~~ ^{difficult} in terms of our own public opinion. I would not like to predict French reactions but the Italians are obviously looking for a way out. The MNF could become an American or a Franco-American intervention force. Neither would be desirable. This is quite apart from the wider dangers inherent in the ~~outbreak~~ ^{present} of ~~serious hostilities~~ ^{situation}.

3. Over the past 20 years or so, the Americans and ourselves have issued countless statements and voted for countless resolutions in the UN condemning "cycles of violence" all over the world, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. On every occasion, each side has blamed the other for ~~intensifying~~ ^{starting and} the cycle, be it Israelis, Arabs, South Africans, Rhodesians, Angolans etc. Do the Americans not realise that they are now participating in precisely ~~this~~ ^{such a} ~~process~~ ^{cycle}? Both of us have consistently taken the view that it is up to the more responsible and least insecure party to break the cycle. We have urged this time and again on eg the South Africans. Should the Americans not ~~draw~~ ^{learn} ~~the~~ ^(own) ~~right~~ ^{lessons}? ~~in the present situation?~~ ^{Should they not consider a high level talk with the Syrians designed to cool things down?}

4. I know that the Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary are in touch with Shultz and Weinberger respectively, and that Rumsfeld will be in London on Wednesday. But events are moving so quickly that I wonder if the Prime Minister should not send a message to Reagan from Athens.

AD 5/12.

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN