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TO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT
TELEGRAM NUMBER 526 OF 8 DECEMBER
INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL NATO (FOR SEC OF STATE'S PARTY),
WASHINGTON, PARIS, ROME

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LEBANON/MNF

CALL AT FCO BY US SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE, 7 DECEMBER.

1. SUMMARY. AN HOUR'S DISCUSSION GAVE ME AND MR LUCE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SET OUT OUR CONCERNS ABOUT US POLICY. WE STRESSED THE NEED FOR CONSIDERABLE RESTRAINT EVEN IN LEGITIMATE SELF-DEFENCE. THE PERCEIVED SHIFT IN US/ISRAELI RELATIONS HAD DAMAGED THE AMERICANS' NEUTRAL STANCE AND BY EXTENSION THAT OF THE OTHER MNF CONTRIBUTORS. RUMSFELD'S REPLIES WERE NOT (NOT) ENTIRELY REASSURING ON EITHER POINT. BUT HE WILL HAVE TAKEN THE MESSAGE. WE AGREED ON THE NEED FOR CLOSER CONSULTATION AMONG MNF PARTNERS.

DETAIL.

2. RUMSFELD ACCOMPANIED BY PELLETREAU (STATE DEPT) AND PRICE (US AMBASSADOR) CALLED ON MR LUCE BRIEFLY AND ALL THEN JOINED ME FOR AN HOUR. FOLLOWING WERE MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED.

3. RUMSFELD'S ITINERARY. RUMSFELD SAID THAT AFTER A BRIEF STOP IN PARIS HE WOULD REACH BEIRUT ON 8 DECEMBER. HIS PLANS AFTER THAT WOULD INCLUDE ISRAEL AND SYRIA. MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER THE RUMOURED RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA RECONCILIATION TALKS COME TRUE.

4. US/ISRAEL. MR LUCE SAID THAT IN SYRIA, KUWAIT AND BAHRAIN HE HAD MET WIDESPREAD CONCERN AT THE APPARENT US SHIFT TOWARDS AN EVEN CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL. TO THE ARABS THIS LOOKED ONE-SIDED, PARTICULARLY SINCE ISRAEL HAD GIVEN NOTHING IN RETURN. RUMSFELD REPLIED THAT CLOSE US/ISRAEL RELATIONS WERE NOT NEW. THEY HAD DETERIORATED DURING 1982, AND RECENT

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CONTACTS CULMINATING IN SHAMIR'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO GET THINGS BACK TO NORMAL. STRATEGIC COOPERATION WAS A MISLEADING EXPRESSION. NO QUID PRO QUO HAD BEEN SOUGHT. ARAB REACTIONS WERE NOT SURPRISING. PRESIDENT MUBARAK HAD BEEN WORRIED, BUT AFTER A MEETING IN WASHINGTON WITH AL-BAZ THE EGYPTIANS HAD CALMED DOWN. HEAT GENERATED IN OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES BY PRESS REPORTS WOULD SOON PASS. NOTHING IN THE SHAMIR VISIT OUGHT TO WORRY AMERICA'S ARAB FRIENDS. IT WAS IN THEIR INTERESTS AS WELL THAT THE US SHOULD RESTORE ITS NORMAL STABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL.

5. MNF. I STRESSED OUR CONCERN IN ALL ISSUES OF COMMON INTEREST TO MAKE SURE THAT WE UNDERSTOOD AND WHERE POSSIBLE AGREED WITH EACH OTHER. WE HAD GONE INTO THE MNF WITH AGREED OBJECTIVES. THERE WAS NOW INCREASING ANXIETY IN BRITAIN ABOUT IT. WE NEEDED TO IDENTIFY THE SOURCES OF ANXIETY AND ACT TO CORRECT THEM. IF WE FAILED WE SHOULD INEVITABLY HAVE TO RECONSIDER THE MNF'S ROLE.

6. RUMSPELD REAFFIRMED THE US VIEW OF THE MNF AS A PEACE-KEEPING FORCE SUPPORTING THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND A FACTOR FOR STABILITY. THE AMERICANS WOULD CONTINUE TO URGE GEMAYEL TO FORM A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY, AND HOPED WE WOULD DO THE SAME. THE ENVIRONMENT WAS DIFFICULT GIVEN THE NUMBER OF MILITIAS AND SYRIAN PRESSURE ON KEY PLAYERS NOT TO HELP. GEMAYEL MUST MAKE 'POLITICAL DEALS' IF THE LEBANESE ARMY WAS TO BE DEPLOYED MORE WIDELY. THE FIRST ROUND OF RECONCILIATION TALKS AT GENEVA HAD LEFT LOOSE ENDS. GEMAYEL COULD EITHER REPORT BACK TO A SECOND SESSION OR GET POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS UNDERWAY WITH INDIVIDUAL FACTIONS. IN WASHINGTON GEMAYEL HAD BEGUN BY VOLUNTEERING IN PUBLIC HIS SUPPORT FOR THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT, AND HAD THEY TALKED ABOUT MECHANISMS FOR ISRAELI AND SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL. THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT WAS THE BEST WAY TO GET THE ISRAELIS OUT. WITHDRAWAL OF FORCES AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM HAD TO BE PURSUED TOGETHER.

7. I SAID THAT THE MNF COULD ONLY BE JUSTIFIED ON THE BASIS THAT IT WAS HELPING TO ENABLE THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO PURSUE RECONCILIATION. THE NEED FOR PROGRESS IN THIS COULD NOT BE

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STRESSED TOO STRONGLY, (RUMSFELD AGREED). THE QUESTION WAS WHETHER OUR ACTIONS CONTRIBUTED TO THAT PROCESS. THREE MAJOR QUESTIONS NEEDED TO BE RESOLVED:

(A) 17 MAY AGREEMENT. THIS HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO BRING ABOUT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. AT THE MEETING OF MNF CONTRIBUTORS IN PARIS ON 27 OCTOBER SHULTZ HAD AGREED WITH ME THAT IT MUST NOT BECOME AN OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS OF RECONCILIATION, BUT COULD BE 'PASSED OVER IN SILENCE'. THE FORMULA AGREED AT GENEVA HAD BEEN TO LEAVE IT ON ONE SIDE FOR THE SAKE OF PURSUING RECONCILIATION. RUMSFELD SAID THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO ABROGATE OR REJECT IT. WE SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON BRINGING ABOUT WITHDRAWAL OF FORCES IN PRACTICE. I SAID THAT IT WAS A MATTER OF EMPHASIS AND TO CONTINUE EVEN TO TALK ABOUT THE AGREEMENT TOO MUCH SEEMED COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE:

(B) RELATIONS WITH SYRIA. RECONCILIATION NEEDED SYRIA'S COOPERATION. PUSHING SYRIA INTO HOSTILITY AGAINST US MADE IT HARDER. IT WAS CRUCIAL TO GO ON TRYING TO PERSUADE SYRIA TO PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE. US POLICY SEEMED SET ON DEALING WITH SYRIA IN A WAY WHICH MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HER TO TAKE A CONSTRUCTIVE PART:

(C) ROLE OF THE MNF. THE TOP PRIORITY WAS TO REDUCE TENSION AND TURN BACK THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE. LEGITIMATE SELF-DEFENCE MUST NOT SPILL OVER INTO SOMETHING ELSE. LONG BRITISH EXPERIENCE OF HOLDING THE RING IN SUCH SITUATIONS SHOWED THAT IMMENSE EVEN SUPERHUMAN SELF-RESTRAINT WAS REQUIRED, TO AVOID SUSPICIONS THAT PEACEKEEPERS WERE DEPARTING FROM THAT ROLE, WITHOUT SUCH RESTRAINT THE WHOLE PROCESS WOULD BE AT RISK.

7. RUMSFELD AGREED THAT THE MNF WAS A PEACEKEEPING FORCE (WITH THE RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENCE). IT WAS NO PART OF US INTENTIONS TO BECOME A PROTAGONIST, BUT TO CONTRIBUTE, THROUGH THE MNF, AND THROUGH DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT, TO AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH GEMAYEL COULD PURSUE RECONCILIATION. GEMAYEL COULD NOT RECONQUER LEBANESE TERRITORY BY FORCE AND NO ONE COULD HELP HIM DO SO. THE MNF MUST BE MEASURED AND STEADY AND NOT 'FLAP' ABOUT WITHDRAWAL. EC STATEMENT CRITICAL OF THE MNF OR AIMED AT DISTANCING THE TEN FROM THE US IN ARAB EYES WOULD NOT HELP.

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THE MNF MUST NOT ALLOW SYRIA TO DISRUPT THE PROCESS WE ALL WISHED TO SUPPORT. IT WOULD BE NOTABLY UNHELPFUL IF ANY MEMBER OF THE MNF SUDDENLY ALTERED ITS POSITION. SYRIA WOULD SEE THAT ALL SHE NEED DO WAS TO WAIT. I MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE TEN HAD NO (NO) WISH TO CUT ACROSS US POLICY, BUT NOTED THE CLEAR UNHAPPINESS (FOR EXAMPLE) IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AT THE PERCEIVED DIVERGENCE BETWEEN THE PURPOSE OF THE MNF AND US ACTIONS.

8. MNF CONSULTATIONS. I SAID WE REGRETTED THE ABSENCE OF CONSULTATION. THE AMERICANS HAD WARNED THE SYRIANS THAT ATTACKS ON RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT WOULD PRODUCE A US RESPONSE: BUT THEY HAD NOT TOLD US OR OTHER MNF PARTNERS OF THIS WARNING, DESPITE ITS POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR US ALL. WE DID NOT EXPECT CONSULTATION OVER IMMEDIATE RESPONSES TO PARTICULAR INCIDENTS. BUT WE MUST ALL EXERCISE THE UTMOST RESTRAINT IN DECIDING THE SCALE OF OUR REACTIONS. BOMBING AND SHELLING WERE BLANKET RESPONSES. RUMSFELD ARGUED THAT THE US ACTION HAS BEEN 'MODEST' AND USEFUL. HE AGREED ON THE NEED FOR CLOSER CONSULTATION.

9. RELATIONS WITH SYRIA. MR LUCE REMARKED THAT WE BOTH ACKNOWLEDGED SYRIA'S KEY ROLE AND THE NEED FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE SYRIAN CONTRIBUTION. BUT HIS TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM HAD SHOWN THAT THE US ACTION HAD PLAYED INTO SYRIAN HANDS BY RALLYING MODERATE ARABS UNTIL RECENTLY CRITICAL OF SYRIAN POLICY. KHADDAM HAD SAID THAT ANDROPOV AND REAGAN WERE HIS TWO BEST FRIENDS: REAGAN SUPPLIED THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND ANDROPOV THE AMMUNITION. THE SYRIANS HAD BEEN REASONABLY CONSTRUCTIVE AT GENEVA. MILITARY ACTION AGAINST SYRIA RISKED BEING COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. WE SHOULD SEEK DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL WAYS OF PERSUADING SYRIA TO CONTINUE TO BE HELPFUL.

10. RUMSFELD AGREED ON THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE WITH SYRIA AND SAID IT HAD BEEN HELPFUL THAT KHADDAM SHOULD HAVE VISITED BEIRUT RECENTLY. SYRIAN RESTRAINT ON LEBANESE FACTIONS DEMONSTRATED THE CONTROL THEY COULD EXERCISE WHEN THEY CHOSE. BUT THE MNF MUST BE QUOTE STEADFAST UNQUOTE. ITS PRESENCE MIGHT BE USEFUL IN BRINGING ABOUT THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES: ITS DEPAR-

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TURE WAS A SYRIAN AND SOVIET INTEREST.

11. FURTHER DISCUSSION AGAIN STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING ACTIONS WHICH UNDERMINED THE MNF'S CREDIBILITY AS A PEACEKEEPING FORCE BY APPEARING TO TAKE SIDES. WE NEEDED TO AGREE NOT ONLY ON OBJECTIVES BUT ON HOW TO ACHIEVE THEM. AMBASSADOR PRICE ASKED WHETHER WE THOUGHT THE US ACTION OF 4 DECEMBER HAD BEEN SEEN AS ESCALATION BEYOND THE NEEDS OF SELF-DEFENCE. MR LUCE SAID THAT THIS WAS INDEED HOW IT WAS SEEN IN THE ARAB WORLD. IT LOOKED AS IF THE US HAD BEEN TAKING SIDES BY GETTING INTO DIRECT CONFLICT WITH THE SYRIANS. RUMSFELD ASSERTED THAT GEMAYEL BELIEVED THAT THE PRESENT POSTURE OF THE MNF, INCLUDING THE RECENT US ACTION, WAS HELPFUL TO HIM. THE MODERATE ARABS HAD NEVER PUT EFFECTIVE PRESSURE ON SYRIA. SAUDI ARABIA HAD PAID FOR SYRIA'S ARMS FROM THE SOVIET UNION OUT OF FEAR.

12. SUMMING UP, I SAID THAT IF THE FOUR CONTRIBUTORS TO THE MNF WERE TO REMAIN THERE WAS A CLEAR NEED FOR A MORE CONTINUOUS PATTERN OF CONSULTATION. IT WAS OF OVERRIDING IMPORTANCE TO JUDGE EVERY ACTION BY THE EFFECT IT MIGHT HAVE ON LOWERING OR RAISING THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE. WE NEEDED TO EXERCISE MASSIVE RESTRAINT IN ANY ACTS OF SELF-DEFENCE. UNLESS WE AGREED ON HOW TO ACHIEVE OUR SHARED OBJECTIVES THE FUTURE OF THE MNF WOULD INEVITABLY BE IN JEOPARDY.

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MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

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DEFENCE DEPT

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NEWS DEPT

UND

NAD

WED

SED

ECD(E)

FINANCE DEPT

PROTOCOL DEPT

PS

PS/LADY YOUNG

PS/MR LUCE

PS/PUS

SIR J BULLARD

SIR J LEAHY

MR WRIGHT

MR CARTLEDGE

MR MACINNES

MR ADAMS

MR EGERTON

MR JENKINS

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SECRETARY OF STATE

Lebanon

We agreed to meet after the Prime Minister's briefing meeting tomorrow morning to discuss a possible message to / Shultz about the MNF. I attach a short draft to serve as a basis for discussion.

L. Fall

(B J P Fall)

5 December 1983

cc: Sir J Bullard
Mr Coles

SECRET

DRAFT MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO MR SHULTZ

Thank you for your message of 3 December about the Lebanon, which gave me a helpful summary of your views before the meeting of the European Council. Since then, of course, the headline news has been your response to the attacks on your reconnaissance aircraft and ^{the} subsequent developments. I am sure that your people will have reported to you the public line which we have taken: ~~in sum~~, that it has long been the position that each contributor to the MNF has the right to act in self-defence and that, in a fast-moving situation, the immediate measures to be taken must be for each contributor to decide.

At the same time, it is clear that there is very real disquiet in Britain at the way things are going in the Lebanon and increasing doubts are expressed about the purpose and value of the MNF. It was noticeable that, when Malcolm Rifkind was called upon to defend both the MNF and the British contribution to it in Parliament yesterday, he came under critical cross-examination from both sides of the House and received no support from our back benchers.

/As you

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As you will recall from our meeting at La Selle St Cloud, I would very much like to see closer and more effective political consultation between the four contributors to the MNF. This is particularly important in a situation where the actions of one have direct implications for the position of other contingents. And I continue to think that we must make it clear to Gemayel that our support for him is not unconditional and that we expect him to pursue vigorously and with flexibility the search for national reconciliation.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss all this with you and with our French and Italian colleagues in Brussels on Thursday morning. Margaret Thatcher, who shares my concern about aspects of the present situation, has asked me to report to her in the light of our meeting.