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FM UKDEL NATO 090130Z DEC 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 354 OF 9 DECEMBER

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON ROME PARIS BEIRUT MODUK

FOLLOWING FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY

MY TEL NO344: LEBANON MNF

1. CHEYSSON SPOKE TO SECRETARY OF STATE IN PRIVATE THIS EVENING AND BRIEFED HIM ON A PROPOSAL WHICH HE HAD ALREADY MADE TO ANDREOTTI BUT WHICH HE DID NOT (REPEAT NOT) PROPOSE TO INFORM SHULTZ OF UNTIL MONDAY OR TUESDAY.
2. GUTMAN, WHO IS OFF TO BEIRUT TOMORROW (9 DECEMBER), HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SAY TO GEMAYEL THAT THE SITUATION OF THE MNF CONTINGENTS IS NOW SUCH THAT ONE MORE SERIOUS INCIDENT COULD LEAD TO THEIR PRECIPITATE WITHDRAWAL. HE WILL THEREFORE PUT IT TO GEMAYEL THAT IT MIGHT BE BEST FOR HIM TO SUGGEST A CHANGE, NOT IN THE MANDATE BUT IN THE STRUCTURE AND SIZE OF THE MNF, AND TO PROPOSE REDUCTIONS WHICH WOULD AMOUNT, IN THE CASE OF THE FRENCH, TO KEEPING A PRESENCE IN SABRA AND CHATILA, TRANSFERRING 500 MEN TO UNIFIL, HAVING THE REST OF THE CONTINGENT ACCOMMODATED AFLOAT OR RETURNED TO FRANCE ON 24 HOUR RECALL, AND MAINTAINING A RESIDUAL PRESENCE IN AND AROUND THE EMBASSY. CHEYSSON SAID THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF PRESENTING GEMAYEL WITH AN ULTIMATUM: THE PURPOSE WAS MERELY TO EXPLAIN THE REALITIES AND THE RISKS TO HIM AND TO INVITE HIM TO CONSIDER AND MAKE PROPOSALS.
3. CHEYSSON UNDERTOOK TO REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE WHEN GUTMAN HAD REPORTED TO HIM ON GEMAYEL'S RESPONSE. HE ASKED THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO SPEAK ON THE SAME LINES TO GEMAYEL WHEN HE VISITED LONDON AND TO REPORT THE REACTION TO CHEYSSON. ANDREOTTI'S RESPONSE HAD BEEN VERY FORTHCOMING. (CHEYSSON ADDED THAT ANDREOTTI WAS JUST WAITING FOR AN INCIDENT WHICH WOULD GIVE HIM A PRETEXT TO WITHDRAW).
4. SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT HE WOULD REFLECT ON THE MATTER BUT WAS CAREFUL TO MAKE NO COMMITMENT. HE ASKED HOW GEMAYEL COULD BE EXPECTED TO FULFIL THE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR RECONCILIATION PLACED ON HIM IF EUROPEAN CONTINGENTS WITHDREW AND THE AMERICANS WERE LEFT ALONE FACING THE SYRIANS. CHEYSSON SAID THAT THERE WAS NO DANGER OF THE UNITED STATES GOING TO WAR AGAINST SYRIA: THE ISRAELIS WOULDN'T LET THEM.

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5. ON A SEPARATE POINT, CHEYSSON SAID THAT THE FRENCH HAD PROMISED TO GIVE NAVAL COVER FOR THE EVACUATION OF THE PLO. THE PROMISE WOULD BE KEPT. IT WAS HOWEVER AN EMBARRASSING MATTER: THE ISRAELIS MIGHT NOT LIKE IT, AND THERE WAS A DANGER OF A FRENCH ESCORT SHIP BEING FIRED UPON BY THE ISRAELIS OR EVEN THE AMERICANS.

GRAHAM

MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

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