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43. Bre

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 December 1983

Your Secretary of State and Mr. Luce spoke to Mr. Jumblatt this afternoon at 1415 hours.

Your Secretary of State said that he was ringing Mr. Jumblatt personally because he had been informed that four rounds of shells had landed near the Headquarters of Britforleb at 9.45 local time this morning. The view was that the shells must have come from Druze positions six kilometres away. This was a matter of the greatest concern to the British Government. Your Secretary of State asked for Mr. Jumblatt's assurance that he would do all that he could to stop the shelling.

Mr. Jumblatt said that although he was speaking from Jordan he would check out the position and call back within two hours. He agreed that there was no justification for shelling the British Headquarters and he said that he would "try to fix it." He added that the situation on the ground in Lebanon was becoming more dangerous and loose and that classic military rules were not being followed.

Mr. Luce recalled that Mr. Jumblatt had offered to look into a previous incident involving Britforleb, and he asked him to do all that he could to put a stop to this latest shelling. He asked Mr. Jumblatt what would be the best way of restoring the ceasefire. Mr. Jumblatt replied that it would be helpful if President Gemayel could send his Chief of Intelligence to Damascus to follow up last week's discussion. Mr. Luce undertook to put this proposal to the President immediately. Mr. Jumblatt added that there would be a need for observers. Mr. Luce enquired whether he referred to the Italians and the Greeks - Mr. Jumblatt confirmed this but said that he personally would have no objection to others. Finally Mr. Luce reiterated his request that Mr. Jumblatt should do all that he could to bring an end to the shelling near Britforleb.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Peter Ricketts (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

(David Barclay)

Nick Evans, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence

Robin Butler.

MR. HESELTINE'S PHONE CALL TO MR. JUMBLATT

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's World at One today, Thursday 15 December, Mr. Heseltine denied that he had made the phone call public. Asked whether his independent action was unorthodox, he said that in the light of reports of shells landing near British troops he had to make a judgement about the safety of them and had asked someone to get Mr. Jumblatt on the phone quickly to stop the threat to the contingent and to seek an assurance for their safety.

He agreed that he had ignored protocol by phoning direct, but was concerned about the safety of the troops.

The Druse leader had given Mr. Heseltine an assurance over further firing which seems to have been observed.

Asked whether he warned Mr. Jumblatt about the consequences of shell firing on the British troops, Mr. Heseltine said Mr. Jumblatt was well aware of the seriousness of the situation.

Asked whether the troops could deal with retaliation, Mr. Heseltine replied that "we don't want to get into that language, we are there to ensure the maximum commitment to a peace-keeping role. Of course we are in a position to defend ourselves if we have to. Their role is respected".

Asked whether the Prime Minister had given prior approval for the phone call, he said that he was standing with her when the reports of firing were received and he had said he would immediately make the call and she had approved that action. She did not join in the conversation. The phone call was made at No.10. The Foreign Secretary was not present - a Minister of State was - but was subsequently informed.

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