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FM UKREP BRUSSELS 191440Z DEC 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 4543 OF 19 DECEMBER

INFO IMMEDIATE ROME WASHINGTON BEIRUT PRIORITY MOSCOW

FOLLOWING FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY

DISCUSSIONS WITH CHEYSSON ON THE LEBANON/MNF

1. THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAD A WORD WITH CHEYSSON IN PRIVATE IN THE MARGINS OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL.
2. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT HE HAD VERY LITTLE TO ADD TO THE MESSAGE HE HAD SENT CHEYSSON ON 16 DECEMBER ABOUT GEMAYEL'S VISIT TO LONDON. GEMAYEL HAD SOUNDED OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE, BUT IT HAD NOT BEEN VERY CONVINCING. WE HAD PRESSED HIM HARD TO PUSH AHEAD WITH THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS. IT WAS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT. CHEYSSON SAID THAT HE HAD NOTHING TO ADD TO THE REPORT WE HAD RECEIVED OF GUTMANN'S VISIT TO BEIRUT. SO FAR AS THE FRENCH MNF CONTINGENCY WAS CONCERNED, CHEYSSON THOUGHT IT WAS NOW TIME TO 'START RESHUFFLING'. THE FRENCH FORCE NUMBERED 2,000: THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT NOW WANTED THAT CONSIDERABLY REDUCED. AS A FIRST STEP, FRANCE PROPOSED TO RETURN 480 SOLDIERS TO UNIFIL, FROM WHICH THEY HAD BEEN BORROWED. THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL HAD ALREADY BEEN SO INFORMED. IT WAS TOO EARLY TO SAY WHEN THAT WOULD HAPPEN. PRESIDENT MITTERRAND WAS HOLDING A MEETING ON THIS POINT IN PARIS THIS AFTERNOON.
3. CHEYSSON SAID THAT THE MOST URGENT QUESTION WAS THE POSSIBILITY OF A UNIFIL PRESENCE ON THE GROUND IN BEIRUT: IN SABRA AND CHATILA. HIS IMPRESSION WAS THAT SHULTZ HAD NOT OBJECTED TO THE IDEA OF A UN PRESENCE IN BEIRUT. THE FRENCH THEREFORE THOUGHT IT WAS NOW TIME TO APPROACH THE RUSSIANS ON THIS POINT. THERE WOULD BE A MEETING WITH KOVALYEV IN PARIS IN TWO DAYS TIME. CHEYSSON SAID THAT THE FRENCH HAD HAD FREQUENT CONTACT WITH THE RUSSIANS ABOUT THE LEBANON. THE SECRETARY OF STATE ASKED HOW, IN CHEYSSON'S VIEW, THE RUSSIANS WOULD REACT. CHEYSSON SAID THAT A MONTH AGO THEY WOULD NOT HAVE ACCEPTED A UNIFIL PRESENCE. BUT HE SUSPECTED THEY MIGHT NOW BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER IT. THEY HAD RECENTLY SHOWN SIGNS OF A MORE RESPONSIBLE APPROACH EG VOTING FOR THE CEASEFIRE IN TRIPOLI, AND IN NOT OBJECTING TO THE USE OF THE UN FLAG FOR GREEK SHIP INVOLVED IN THE EVACUATION OPERATIONS. CHEYSSON WAS SURE THE APPROACH TO THE RUSSIANS WAS WORTH A TRY. IF IT WORKED, THEN THE FRENCH WOULD FORMALLY APPROACH BOTH US AND THE AMERICANS. CHEYSSON ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT GEMAYEL MIGHT ALSO CONSIDER THIS IN HIS OWN INTERESTS. THE SECRETARY OF STATE ASKED WHETHER CHEYSSON HAD DISCUSSED THIS

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WITH SHULTZ. CHEYSSON SAID THAT HE HAD NOT. HE DID NOT WISH TO BE SEEN TO BE TOO CLOSE TO THE U S.

4. CHEYSSON ASKED WHAT OUR INTENTIONS WERE CONCERNING THE UK MNF CONTINGENT. HE COMMENTED THAT THE ITALIAN CONTINGENT WERE KEEPING A VERY LOW PROFILE, SPENDING BY FAR THE GREATER AMOUNT OF ITS TIME WITHIN BARRACKS. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE ALL FOUR MNF CONTRIBUTORS TAKING THE SAME LINE, HENCE OUR ANXIETY ABOUT THE SCALE OF U S ACTIVITY. THAT WAS WHY WE HAD WANTED AN EARLY MEETING INVOLVING SHULTZ. OUR FEELING HAD BEEN THAT THE MEETING WITH SHULTZ IN BRUSSELS HAD NOT REALLY ELICITED A CONSIDERED REACTION TO FRENCH, ITALIAN AND UK COMMENTS. CHEYSSON SAID HE THOUGHT THERE WAS LITTLE POINT IN HAVING A THIRD MEETING JUST FOR THE SAKE OF IT. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT HE HAD ALSO CONSIDERED THE IDEA OF AN EARLY MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS IF A MINISTERIAL MEETING WAS NOT POSSIBLE. IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT CHEYSSON HAD SAID, PERHAPS THE BEST WAY FORWARD WOULD BE TO WAIT FOR THE SOVIET RESPONSE TO THE FRENCH APPROACH, AND FOR GEMAYELS REACTION AND THEN CONSIDER WHETHER RUMSFELD'S PRESENCE IN EUROPE MIGHT BE EXPLOITED FOR A MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS LATER THIS WEEK. CHEYSSON SEEMED INTERESTED IN THIS, BUT DID NOT DIRECTLY COMMIT HIMSELF.

5. NENAD: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE FURTHER AS NECESSARY.

FCO ADVANCE TO:
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[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING ST]

MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

LIMITED

NENAD

MED

DEFENCE DEPT

FUSD

NEWS DEPT

UND

NAD

WED

SED

ECD(E)

FINANCE DEPT

PROTOCOL DEPT

PS

PS/LADY YOUNG

PS/MR LUCE

PS/FUS

SIR J BULLARD

SIR J LEAHY

MR WRIGHT

MR CARTLEDGE

MR MACINNES

MR ADAMS

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