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TO IMMEDIATE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1714 OF 22 DECEMBER

INFO WASHINGTON PARIS ROME BEIRUT DAMASCUS MOSCOW THE HAGUE

TEL AVIV *CAIRO*

TELECON NIXON/HUMFREY: LEBANON: SECRETARY GENERAL'S REMARKS.

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S REMARKS ON LEBANON IN THE COURSE OF HIS END OF YEAR PRESS CONFERENCE ON 21 DECEMBER.

2. IN HIS OPENING STATEMENT HE SAID:

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF VIOLENCE AND REPRISAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND IN LEBANON IN PARTICULAR NEEDS TO BE ENDED URGENTLY. THEREAFTER A PALPABLE NECESSITY TO GET TO THE ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM AND WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL CONCERNED, TO INSTITUTE A NEGOTIATING PROCESS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A COMPREHENSIVE, JUST AND LASTING SETTLEMENT. ONLY SUCH A SETTLEMENT CAN BRING CO-EXISTENCE AND PEACE TO THIS VITAL PART OF THE WORLD AND AVERT A CONFLICT WHICH MIGHT BE FAR MORE FUNDAMENTAL AND DESTRUCTIVE THAN WHAT THE REGION HAS SUFFERED SO FAR.

3. SUBSEQUENTLY, HE REPLIED TO TWO QUESTIONS ON THE SUBJECT AS FOLLOWS:

QUESTION: IS AN EXPANDED UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING ROLE IN LEBANON MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE PARTIES NOW THAN WAS THE CASE A YEAR AGO: AND HOW DO YOU GAUGE THE PROSPECTS IN THE COMING YEAR FOR THE UNIFIL TROOPS REPLACING MULTINATIONAL TROOPS IN THE BEIRUT AREA?

THE SECRETARY GENERAL: THAT IS A VERY INTERESTING AND TIMELY QUESTION.

I CANNOT PASS JUDGEMENT ON THE BASIS OF WHAT I HAVE LEARNED FROM THE PAPERS, WHICH SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT ALL PARTIES CONCERNED ARE AGAIN THINKING OF THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A UNITED NATIONS PRESENCE IN LEBANON INSTEAD OF THE MULTINATIONAL FORCES. OF COURSE IT IS NOT FOR ME TO PASS ANY JUDGEMENT ON THE MULTINATIONAL FORCES. I REGRET THE LOSSES THEY HAVE HAD, BUT I CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THAT THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES ARE PERHAPS THE BEST WAY OF PRESERVING PEACE IN THE LEBANON AREA - AND NOT ONLY IN LEBANON BUT IN THE WHOLE MIDDLE EAST AREA. WHY? BECAUSE THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES OPERATE UNDER SOME CONDITIONS WHICH ARE IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANY OTHER GROUP OF COUNTRIES TO MEET. FOR INSTANCE, THEY HAVE A BROAD BASE BY VIRTUE OF THE SIMPLE FACT THAT THEY NEED THE SUPPORT OF THE 15 MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL. SECONDLY, THEY HAVE A UNIFIED COMMAND. THIRDLY, THEY CAN EMBARK ON HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES. ALSO THEY CAN ACT ONLY IN SELF-DEFENCE AND HAVE ONLY

/LIGHT.

LIGHT ARMS. THEN THE POSSIBILITY OF PASSING THROUGH WHAT THE MULTINATIONAL FORCES HAVE ENDURED IS ALMOST NON-EXISTENT. AS YOU KNOW, IN THE 13 OPERATIONS THAT THE UNITED NATIONS HAS MOUNTED SINCE ITS EXISTENCE WE HAVE HAD ONLY A FEW LOSSES AS COMPARED WITH THE HEAVY LOSSES THAT THE AMERICAN AND FRENCH SOLDIERS HAVE HAD. THAT IS WHY I THINK THE UNITED NATIONS IS IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE LEBANON WITH THE NECESSARY ASSISTANCE.

BUT OF COURSE THIS IS SOMETHING WE CANNOT DECIDE BY OURSELVES. WE NEED, FIRST OF ALL, A REQUEST FROM THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT: SECONDLY, WE NEED THE APPROVAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL: THIRDLY WE NEED THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COUNTRIES TO OUR PEACE-KEEPING FORCE OPERATION: AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF THE INTERESTED COUNTRIES.

IF ALL THESE CONDITIONS ARE MET, WE ARE ALWAYS PREPARED TO HELP. DO NOT FORGET THAT THE UNITED NATIONS ALWAYS HAS CONTINGENCY PLANS. IF WE ARE ASKED TO HELP, EVEN FOR HELPING THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN TROOPS FROM LEBANON OR FOR ANY OTHER EXERCISE, WE ARE ALWAYS PREPARED WITH CONTINGENCY PLANS.

QUESTION: ABOUT THE REPLACEMENT OF THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE BY UNITED NATIONS FORCES IN LEBANON: YOU SAID EARLIER THAT YOU HAD HEARD ABOUT THIS IN THE PAPERS. DO YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT THIS WAS NEVER RAISED WITH YOU BY ANY OF THE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE? SECONDLY, IN THAT CASE, HOW CAN THE CONTINGENCY PLANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS POSSIBLY BE REALISTIC IN THE LIGHT OF THE MOVEMENT ON THE GROUND BY THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE? CAN YOU EXPLAIN THAT?

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: WELL, FIRST OF ALL, I HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED ANY OFFICIAL, CONCRETE REQUEST FROM ANY OF THE FOUR PARTICIPANTS IN THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE, AND SECONDLY, WE ARE RATHER USED TO THIS KIND OF EXERCISE AND WE THINK THAT THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND RIGHT NOW DOES NOT AFFECT OUR PLANS. WE HAVE OUR CONTINGENCY PLANS, WHICH ARE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE THE SITUATION IF WE ARE EVER ASKED TO REPLACE THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE.

THOMSON

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CABINET, 22 NOVEMBER: LEBANON/MNF

Additional Points

1. Two bomb attacks in West Beirut, 21 December: lorry loaded with explosives detonated near French MNF HQ (one French soldier and 15 civilians killed, 17 wounded). Second bomb detonated in Pickwick Bar, often used by US Marines and Europeans (3 killed, several wounded). British Embassy have reported no British casualties.
2. UN Secretary-General reported to have advocated replacing MNF by a UN force. In line with proposal which French due to discuss yesterday with Russians.