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TO IMMEDIATE F.C.O.

TELEGRAM NUMBER 742 OF 28 DECEMBER 1983

INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK, WASHINGTON, PARIS, ROME

SAVING BRITFORLES

YOUR TELNO 552; LEBANON - CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE

1. THE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS IN YOUR PARAGRAPH 3 ARE AS FOLLOWS:

(A) THE CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE FORESAW THE NEED SOME WEEKS AGO FOR A VIOLATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE WHICH WOULD PROVIDE A PERMANENT MECHANISM BY WHICH INCIDENTS AND VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASEFIRE COULD BE RESPONDED TO ON THE SPOT. HENCE THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE SUB-COMMITTEE SHOULD FUNCTION ROUND THE CLOCK. THIS PROMPTED THE LEBANESE REQUEST TO US AND THE ITALIANS IN OCTOBER/NOVEMBER TO SHARE THE TASK OF GUARDING THE TRAD BANK 24 HOURS A DAY. THE NEED FOR A VIOLATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE ON THIS BASIS HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED FOLLOWING THE RE-DEFINITION OF THE ROLE OF THE MAIN CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE AT THE DAMASCUS MEETING ON 16 DECEMBER (PARA 2 OF MY TELNO SIC 19E OF 24 DECEMBER).

(B) AT PRESENT, WHEN INCIDENTS OCCUR OUT OF MEETING HOURS, THE MEMBERS OF THE CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE TRY TO COPE WITH THEM BY TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION WITHOUT ANY CENTRAL FOCAL POINT. THE VIOLATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE IN A FIXED LOCATION IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE THIS.

(C) THE CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE'S FIRST CHOICE FOR LOCATING THE VIOLATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE REMAINS THE TRAD BANK. HOWEVER, SINCE WE AND THE ITALIANS ARE NOT ABLE (OR WILLING) TO PROVIDE GUARDING AT THE BUILDING TO ENABLE THE SUB-COMMITTEE TO FUNCTION THERE ROUND THE CLOCK, SITING IT AT AL HADATH SEEMS TO THE COMMITTEE THE NEXT BEST OPTION. OTHER LOCATIONS, EG THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, THE AIRPORT AND THE OLD MINISTRY OF HEALTH BUILDING NEAR THE MUSEUM (WHERE THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR GENEVA MET IN OCTOBER) HAVE BEEN REJECTED AS UNACCEPTABLE BY ONE OR OTHER OF THE PARTIES. IN

BEEN REJECTED AS UNACCEPTABLE BY ONE OR OTHER OF THE PARTIES. IN ANY CASE 24 HOUR GUARDING BY THE MNF WOULD STILL BE REQUIRED.

(D) SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS HAVE NOT (NOT) YET BEEN FULLY WORKED OUT. COMMANDER BRITFORLEB ENVISAGES ALLOCATING A PART OF HIS BASE (SEE (E) BELOW) EQUIPPED WITH COMMUNICATIONS, WASHING AND COOKING FACILITIES TO ENABLE THE MEMEBERS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE (EIGHT - TWO PER FACTION) TO OPERATE 24 HOUR SHIFTS. BRITFORLEB WOULD ROTATE THESE SHIFTS DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS BY ESCORTING EACH GROUP OF 8 TO AND FROM THE TRAD BANK. (THEY WOULD THEREFORE HAVE REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL FOUR FACTIONS ON BOARD AT ANY ONE TIME AS HOSTAGES FOR THEIR SECURITY.) THE SUB-COMMITTEE ARE NOT EXPECTED TO RECEIVE VISITORS (OTHER THAN PERHAPS CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE MEMBERS). THEY EXPECT TO DO THEIR WORK BY TELEPHONE/RADIO. THE REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE PARKING FACILITIES SHOULD NOT THEREFORE ARISE AND "UNEXPECTED VEHICLES" WOULD BE DEALT WITH IN THE SAME WAY AS ANY OTHER "UNEXPECTED VEHICLES".

(E) FERGUSON PROPOSES TO ALLOCATE TO THE SUB-COMMITTEE AN UNOCCUPIED ROOM ON THE FOURTH FLOOR OF HIS BASE IN THE WING USED BY HIS LEBANESE LIAISON OFFICERS. THE SUB-COMMITTEE WILL THUS NOT BE TAKING UP SPACE WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE BY USED BY BRITFORLEB FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES.

2. FERGUSON HAS ALREADY PUT THE SUGGESTIONS IN (D) AND (E) ABOVE INFORMALLY TO THE CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE, WHO HAVE BROADLY ACCEPTED THEM. HE HAS ALSO DISCUSSED IN GENERAL TERMS THE PROPOSAL WITH HIS SUCCESSOR, BUT WILL BRIEF HIM MORE FULLY ON ARRIVAL.

3. IF THIS PROPOSAL PRESENTS YOU WITH TOO MANY DIFFICULTIES, AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY WOULD BE TO PERSUADE THE ITALIANS TO BE MORE COOPERATIVE OVER GUARDING THE TRAD BANK ON A 24 HOUR BASIS. THE LEBANESE UNDERSTAND THAT BRITFORLEB ARE NOT EQUIPPED FOR NIGHT GUARDING DUTIES. THE ITALIANS APPEAR NOT TO. BOTH THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR AND FORCE COMMANDER TELL US THAT THE ISSUE IS CURRENTLY VERY DIFFICULT FOR THEIR GOVERNMENT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PURSUE THIS COURSE, I RECOMMEND THAT ACTION WITH THE ITALIANS BE TAKEN IN ROME OR LONDON RATHER THAN HERE.

4. ON TIMING, THE LEBANESE ARE NOT READY TO PUT A PROPOSAL TO US BECAUSE THE PSP HAVE NOT YET ASSENTED TO IT. I SUSPECT THAT THE EVENTS OF 24-26 DECEMBER WILL HAVE MADE AGREEMENT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THEM. IF THEY TURN IT DOWN, AMAL ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW SUIT. NONETHELESS, I CONSIDER THAT IT WOULD STILL BE RIGHT TO HAVE AN ANSWER READY IN THE EVENT THAT THE LEBANESE DO PUT A FORMAL REQUEST TO US.

PALMER
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