

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES 16

PS  
PS/MR WCE  
PS/FUS  
SIR J LEAHY  
MR SPERTON  
SIR J BULLARD

NO 10 DOWNING STREET

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Dms  
30/12

CABINET OFFICE D10

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Prime Minister

To See paras 4-6 overleaf.

Jack  
29/12

ED/CONSULAR DEPT

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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 746 OF 29 DECEMBER 1983

INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK

INFO PRIORITY DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, PARIS, ROME, WASHINGTON AND CBFC

INFO SAVING BRITFORLEB

MY TELNO 737: LEBANON

1. AMAL AND LEFT-WING MUSLIM LEADERS HAVE PREDICTABLY CONDEMNED THE OPERATIONS DESCRIBED IN PARAS 2 AND 3 OF TUR. THEIR CRITICISMS HAVE SINCE BEEN WIDELY REPORTED IN THE LOCAL PRESS. THE FOREIGN AND INFORMATION MINISTERS CALLED A PRESS CONFERENCE ON 27 DECEMBER TO DENY THAT THE OPERATIONS WERE PART OF A GOVERNMENT PLAN TO 'INVADE' THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS. WAZZAN IS REPORTED TO BE SATISFIED, FOLLOWING A TALK WITH TANNOUS, THAT THE ARMY HAVE NO INTENTION OF ENTERING THE NO GO AREAS AND HAS REASSURED THE SHI'ITE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ACCORDINGLY.



RELIGIOUS LEADERS ACCORDINGLY.

2. MEANWHILE, BEHIND THE SCENES PREPARATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE NEW SECURITY MEASURES - NOW CALLED THE "SECURITY PLAN" - AGREED IN DAMASCUS ON 16 DECEMBER (MY TELNO 732) CONTINUE. SINCE THEY MAINLY AFFECT AREAS OUTSIDE BEIRUT, PROGRESS/TOWARDS THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IS THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE EVEN IF THE STATE OF SECURITY IN THE CITY CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE. HOWEVER, AMAL'S ASSENT TO THEM (BY VIRTUE OF THEIR PRESENCE ON THE CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE) WILL BE NECESSARY AND THAT ASSENT MUST FOR THE TIME BEING BE IN DOUBT FOLLOWING AMAL'S RECENT CONFRONTATION WITH THE ARMY. MOREOVER, I NOTE FROM TODAY'S PRESS THAT JUMBLATT IS REPORTED FROM DAMASCUS AS HAVING DECLARED THAT RECONCILIATION WITH THE GEMAYEL GOVERNMENT WAS IMPOSSIBLE.

3. BEIRUT ITSELF REMAINS TENSE, ALTHOUGH THE CEASEFIRE GENERALLY IS HOLDING. LAST NIGHT'S SERIES OF BOMB ATTACKS AGAINST SHOPS (ONE WAS A SUPERMARKET KNOWN TO BE PATRONISED EXTENSIVELY BY FOREIGNERS) WILL BE KEEPING PEOPLE INDOORS.

4. MANY PEOPLE FEAR THAT THE ARMY WILL ATTEMPT TO ENTER THE NO GO AREAS, THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH WOULD BE UNPREDICTABLE, BUT PROBABLY DISASTROUS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOVERNMENT ARE PROBABLY RIGHT IN THEIR ASSESSMENT THAT IF THE GUNMEN IN THE NO GO AREAS ARE NOT CONTAINED WITHIN THEM, THEY COULD PROGRESSIVELY EXTEND THEIR AREA OF CONTROL TO EMBRACE MUCH OF WEST BEIRUT. I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A DANGER THAT THE AMERICANS (WHO ARE UNDERSTANDABLY IMPATIENT AT CURRENT LACK OF PROGRESS) WILL PUSH THE GOVERNMENT INTO TOUGHER MEASURES AGAINST THE MILITANT SHI'A.

5. ALL MNF CONTINGENTS ARE TAKING SERIOUSLY THE THREAT FROM "ISLAMIC JIHAD" THAT IF THE FRENCH AND AMERICANS DO NOT WITHDRAW THEIR CONTINGENTS BY THE END OF THE YEAR, THEY CAN EXPECT SERIOUS TROUBLE. THE FRENCH AND THE ITALIANS CAN BE SEEN AROUND THE CITY DIGGING THEMSELVES IN BEHIND EVEN GREATER EARTHWORKS, AND THE AMERICANS ARE INVISIBLE OUTSIDE THEIR AIRPORT FORTRESS. BRITFORLEB ARE TAKING ALL NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS, AND SO ARE WE.

6. THERE WILL BE NO "FEUX DE JOIE" HERE TO USHER IN 1984.

PALMER

BT