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Prime Minister.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

A progress report. The Foreign Secretary will doubtless report to Cabinet on Thursday.

9 January 1983

A. & C. 7/1

John Thomson

MB

Lebanon

Thank you for your letter of 6 January with the text of the Prime Minister's message to the UN Secretary General. You might find it useful at this stage to have a brief round up of where we now stand on the various Lebanon and MNF issues. We shall of course be reporting further in the light of Sir Geoffrey Howe's talks in Cairo, Riyadh and Damascus this week.

We have given further thought to possible forms of more extensive UN involvement in Lebanon. Some options are set out in the enclosed telegram to UKMIS New York. We have asked Sir J Thomson to discuss these informally with the UN Secretariat and to let us have his comments. Mr Brian Urquhart (UN Secretariat) is due to discuss the same subject with the US State Department next week. UKMIS New York were in touch with Urquhart on this on 5 January.

You will have seen from FCO telegram No 4 to UKMIS New York (copy enclosed) that we do not favour a separate initiative by European MNF contributors at this stage, as this might cut across our efforts to bring the Americans along at a time when there is a fair degree of consensus among the four MNF contributors in favour of greater UN involvement in Lebanon. We have sounded out the Italians on their idea of a UN presence in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut, as a first step towards greater UN involvement in the Beirut area, and the French on whether they would be prepared to help with a concerted approach to the parties concerned.

The UN aspects were also discussed again in a further meeting which Sir J Leahy held with MNF representatives here on 6 January. The French representative confirmed that his government favoured the idea of a UN presence in Palestinian refugee camps despite the risk of a Soviet veto. The Americans have suggested that MNF Foreign Ministers discuss UN aspects at the meeting which we hope to arrange in the margins of the Conference on Disarmament in Europe in Stockholm on 16 January. In preparation for this, we shall

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/circulate

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circulate some notes on the various possibilities when we brief MNF representatives on Arab, especially Syrian, reactions after Sir Geoffrey Howe's visit to the Middle East this week. By then we may be in a position to agree the next steps: an approach to the Lebanese Government, who will have to make a formal proposal for wider UN involvement; and our best tactics in overcoming likely Soviet and Syrian opposition (we shall, for example, try to spot discrepancies between their attitudes).

It is clear from the discussions with MNF representatives here and from reports from capitals that public anxiety remains high in other MNF contributing countries about the risks to their contingents in Beirut. Domestic criticism in the United States has risen sharply following publication of the Congressional and Pentagon reports on the 23 October bomb attacks. Mr Mondale is trying to exploit this, with his call for the withdrawal of the US marines within 45 days. Republican concern has prompted Senator John Tower, Republican Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee to set off on a tour of the Middle East. The US Administration's aim is to secure some progress in Lebanon before Congress re-assembles on 23 January.

It is not surprising, therefore, that none of the other MNF contributors is enthusiastic to redeploy its contingent in accordance with President Gemayel's recent request, details of which you will have seen in the telegrams from Beirut. The immediate steps which the Lebanese are seeking are that the Italians should take over from the French in some parts of West Beirut while the Lebanese Army try to seal West Beirut off from the Southern suburbs. The Lebanese are also trying to persuade the Americans to help prevent infiltration into the Southern suburbs from the Shouf. President Gemayel has also requested deployment of the three other MNF contingents outside Beirut at a later stage. But it is clear that for the moment these "second phase" proposals are cosmetic, and that no early decisions by MNF contributors are required.

The British contingent is not directly affected by either set of proposals. But we may be faced before long with a request that a sub-committee of the Cease fire Committee should meet at the Haddath HQ on a 24-hour basis. We shall consult you again if and when we receive a request.

Meanwhile there is much activity in Beirut aimed at the next step towards national reconciliation. A lot will depend on the meeting of Lebanese, Saudi and Syrian Foreign Ministers in Riyadh on 8 January. The status of the 17 May Israel/Lebanon agreement is still a problem but latest reports from the Americans suggest that this meeting could conceivably

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agree to leave the agreement on one side, to allow the second round of reconciliation talks to take place, which might in turn lead to the formation of a government of national unity. But the Lebanese have been consistently over-optimistic in the past.

We are urgently considering the implication for British participation of the possible establishment of a UN force and will be writing to you shortly in the light of further advice from UKMis New York.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

For [unclear]
(R B Bone) *[Signature]*
Private Secretary

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File

BTC



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

10 January 1984

The Prime Minister was grateful for your letter of 9 January and has noted your account of where we now stand on the various Lebanon and MNF issues. The Prime Minister will look forward to a further report in the light of the Foreign Secretary's talks in Cairo, Riyadh and Damascus this week and I hope that you can arrange to let me have this before the end of the week.

BF

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

on Middle East Sit pt

"Foreign Sec's visit to

ME 13-1-84

A. J. COLEN

R.B. Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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OO UKMIS NEW YORK

OO WASHINGTON

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TO IMMEDIATE UKMIS NEW YORK

TELEGRAM NUMBER 004 OF 5 JANUARY

AND TO IMMEDIATE PARIS, ROME, WASHINGTON

INFO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT, TEL AVIV, DAMASCUS, MODUK

INFO PRIORITY MOSCOW, CAIRO, THE HAGUE

FCO TELNO 14 TO WASHINGTON: LEBANON

1. WE HAVE SOME DOUBTS ABOUT PURSUING A SEPARATE EUROPEAN INITIATIVE AT A TIME WHEN WE ARE ALSO TRYING TO IMPROVE MNF CONSULTATIONS. I SHARE SIR O WRIGHT'S VIEW (WASHINGTON TELNO 19) THAT WE SHOULD INVOLVE THE AMERICANS FULLY AT EVERY STAGE. THE INDICATIONS ARE THAT THEY WOULD WELCOME, BUT NOT WISH TO BE TOO CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH, AN INITIATIVE AIMED AT EXPLORING THE UN OPTIONS FURTHER. BUT WE DO NOT WISH TO CUT ACROSS RUMSFELD'S ACTIVITIES AND FULLY REALISE THE DANGERS OF GIVING THE RUSSIANS AND SYRIANS A VETO BY APPEARING TOO ANXIOUS TO GET OUT. NEGOTIATION OF AGREEMENTS FOR ISRAEL/SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL IS A PART OF THE PACKAGE WHICH CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY AMERICAN MUSCLE.

2. OUR PRIORITY THROUGHOUT IS TO SECURE AGREEMENT TO AN EXTENDED ROLE FOR UN FORCES WHICH WOULD ALLOW THE MNF TO WITHDRAW WITH HONOUR. WE ARE THEREFORE ATTRACTED BY THE IDEA FLOATED BY VATTANI ON 4 JANUARY THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE SYRIANS AND RUSSIANS TO OBJECT TO A UN FLAG OVER THE SABRA AND CHATILA REFUGEE CAMPS. SUCH A FIRST STEP COULD BE THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE. IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF ROME COULD TAKE SOUNDINGS AS TO WHETHER THE ITALIANS HAVE SERIOUSLY STUDIED THIS POSSIBILITY. WE SHOULD ALSO WELCOME COMMENTS FROM UKMIS NEW YORK. IN PARTICULAR DOES THE RECENT AGREEMENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL TO ALLOW THE VESSELS USED TO EVACUATE THE PLO FROM TRIPOLI TO FLY THE UN FLAG CREATE A USEFUL PRECEDENT? WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO OUTFLANK SOVIET OBJECTIONS BY WORKING FOR A PRESIDENCY STATEMENT

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10572 - 1

WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION?

3. WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO THE FRENCH SOUNDING OUT THE PARTIES ON SECURING GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF UN FORCES. WE SHALL WISH TO GIVE FURTHER THOUGHT TO THE MODALITIES IN THE LIGHT OF COMMENTS FROM OUR MNF PARTNERS TOMORROW. WE SHALL ALSO NEED TO STUDY IN MORE DETAIL, AS SIR J THOMSON SUGGESTS, THE VARIOUS POSSIBILITIES FOR GREATER UN INVOLVEMENT IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF LEBANON. THE DEPARTMENT HAVE WORK IN HAND. PARIS SHOULD SOUND OUT THE FRENCH ATTITUDE TO THE IDEA OF A CONCERTED APPROACH TO THE PARTIES.

4. WASHINGTON SHOULD TELL THE STATE DEPARTMENT THAT I WOULD GREATLY VALUE BEFORE SETTING OFF FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AN ACCOUNT OF RUMSFELD'S LATEST VISIT TO BEIRUT. I HOPE THAT THE AMERICANS CAN ARRANGE FOR ME TO BE KEPT INFORMED OF HIS DISCUSSIONS IN THE COURSE OF MY TOUR.

HOWE

[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/PUS

SIR J BULLARD

SIR J LEAHY

MR WRIGHT

MR CARTLEDGE

MR MACINNES

MR ADAMS

MR EGERTON

MR JENKINS

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SIR P MOORE
BUCKINGHAM PALACE

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9 JAN 1984

