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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 122 OF 1 FEBRUARY

INFO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT, WASHINGTON, ROME, DAMASCUS

KUWAIT (FOR PS/MR HESELTINE), MODUK

PRIORITY TEL AVIV, UKMIS NEW YORK

YOUR TELNO 193 TO WASHINGTON: LEBANON: SHUWEIFAT GAP

1. MORE SENIOR OFFICIALS BEING UNAVAILABLE, FIRST SECRETARY (CHANCERY) TOOK ACTION THIS MORNING WITH PAVEC, HEAD OF NEAR EAST DEPARTMENT AT THE QUAI, EXPLAINING THAT THE APPROACH WOULD HAVE BEEN MADE AT A HIGHER LEVEL IF POSSIBLE. FORD SAID THAT YOU WERE DISTURBED AT THE APPARENT LIKELIHOOD OF LAF ACTION TO CLOSE THE SHUWEIFAT GAP, IF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WENT AHEAD WITHOUT CONSULTATION THE UK WOULD HAVE TO RECONSIDER ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE MNF. WE WERE PRESSING THE LEBANESE TO DESIST, AND URGED THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO MAKE SIMILAR REPRESENTATIONS.

2. PAVEC, ASKING NOT TO BE QUOTED, SAID THAT THE US EMBASSY HAD EARLIER IN THE MORNING SOUGHT THE QUAI'S VIEWS ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF A LAF ATTACK IN THE ALEY AREA (CF WASHINGTON TELNO 353) AND ASKED IF THE FRENCH INTENDED TO LEND ASSISTANCE. BONNEFOUS, THE QUAI MIDDLE EAST DIRECTOR, HAD TOLD THE US EMBASSY THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF THE FRENCH LENDING ASSISTANCE FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKELY TO BE A DANGEROUS ENTERPRISE. PAVEC ADDED THAT THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN BEIRUT WHILE HAVING NO PRECISE INFORMATION ABOUT LAF INTENTIONS HAD REPORTED THAT IF THE OPERATION WENT AHEAD IT WAS UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED.

3. PAVEC UNDERTOOK TO REPORT THE UK APPROACH IMMEDIATELY TO HIS SUPERIORS. HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE FRENCH BEING WILLING TO TAKE PARALLEL ACTION TO THE UK IN BEIRUT.

FRETWELL

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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

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MY TELNO. 122: SHUWEIFAT GAP.

1. MINISTER SUBSEQUENTLY SPOKE TO BONNEFOUS (DIRECTOR, MIDDLE EAST) WHO SAID THAT THE FRENCH HAD INSTRUCTED THEIR EMBASSY IN BEIRUT TO SPEAK TO THE LEBANESE ALONG THE SAME LINES AS THE UK.

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PUSD
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