

Lebanon

on B/ing

Mr. Fleisher

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CONFIDENTIAL
BUDAPEST DESKBY 030700Z
FM WASHINGTON 022340Z
TO IMMEDIATE FCO

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TELEGRAM NUMBER 375 OF 2 FEBRUARY 1984
✓ INFO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT, PARIS, ROME, MODUK, DAMASCUS, BUDAPEST,
(FOR PS/PRIME MINISTER DESKBY 030700Z)
PRIORITY TEL AVIV, UKMIS NEW YORK.

MY TELNO 356 AND TELECON LONG/GOULTY: SHUWEIFAT GAP

1. I CALLED ON DAM (ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE IN SHULTZ'S ABSENCE) THIS AFTERNOON TO UNDERLINE YOUR CONCERN CONTINUED AFTER DISCUSSION WITH YOUR COLEAGUES THIS MORNING AT THE DANGERS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION.

2. I SAID THAT WE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE US ASSESSMENT WAS THAT LEBANESE ACTION TO CLOSE THE SHUWEIFAT GAP WAS NOT IMMINENT, (DAM NODDED ASSENT). BUT WE HAD INDICATIONS FROM BEIRUT THAT PREPARATIONS FOR SUCH A MOVE WERE CONTINUING. IF THE LAF DID ATTEMPT TO CLOSE THE GAP, THE MNF WOULD INEVITABLY BE DRAWN IN. AS THE PRIME MINISTER HAD MADE CLEAR TO BOTH SHULTZ AND RUMSFELD RECENTLY, THE UK WOULD NOT WITHDRAW ITS CONTINGENT UNILATERALLY AND HAD MADE THAT COMMITMENT PUBLIC. BUT IN THE UK AS IN OTHER MNF CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES, PUBLIC OPINION WAS FRAGILE AND THE TASK OF MAINTAINING SUPPORT FOR THE MNF CONSIDERABLE. I WAS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS THEREFORE TO REQUEST THEREFORE THAT THE US AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO TAKE ACTION NOW WITH THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO DISSUADE THEM FROM ATTEMPTING TO CLOSE THE GAP.

3. DAM SAID THAT THE US VIEW WAS THAT, AT LEAST IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, AN ATTEMPT BY THE LAF TO CLOSE THE SHUWEIFAT GAP WOULD NOT BE A GOOD IDEA. THE CLOSURE OF THE GAP WAS NOT REPEAT NOT U.S. POLICY. HE AGREED THAT LEBANESE CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND PREPARATIONS HAD GONE FORWARD. BUT OVER THE LAST 36 HOURS THE US HAD GAINED THE DISTNCT IMPRESSION THAT ACTION WAS NOT IMMINENT. THERE WAS A QUOTE DOWN SIDE UNQUOTE TO ADVISING AN INDEPENDENT SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENT NOT TO DO SOMETHING, WHICH IT MIGHT NOT BE INTENDING TO DO, RELATED TO ITW OWN INTERNAL SECURITY. BARTHOLEMWAS WAS IN CONSTANT CONTACT WITH THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES AND WOULD CERTAINLY REMIND THEM OF US VIEWS IF IT SEEMED THAT THEY WERE ABOUT TO ACT. BUT THE AMERICANS DID NOT THINK IT LIKELY THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE SUCH ACTION WITHOUT INFORMING THEM. THEY HAD MADE IT CLEAR TO THE LEBANESE THAT THEY WANTED NO SURPRISES.

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4. I SAID THAT THIS WAS ONLY PARTLY REASSURING. WE WOULD MUCH PREFER BARTHOLEMW TO BE INSTRUCTED TO APPROACH THE LEBANESE NOW. DAM SAID THAT IF WE HAD INTELLIGENCE ABOUT LEBANESE INTENTIONS, AS OPPOSED TO CONTINGENCY PLANNING, WE SHOULD SHARE IT WITH THE AMERICANS. MEANWHILE THEY WOULD TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE PROBLEM AND CONSULT BARTHOLEMW AGAIN. WE COULD BE ASSURED THAT THEY WOULD CONSIDER OUR VIEWS VERY SERIOUSLY. AS I WAS LEAVING I STRESSED PRIVATELY TO DAM THE NEED TO AVOID ANY MORE SURPRISES IN OUR RELATIONSHIP AS WELL: HE TOOK THE POINT.

5. RAPHEL CONFIRMED TO US SEPARATELY THAT SHULTZ AND RUMSFELD WERE AWARE OF OUR APPROACH ON 31 JANUARY AND THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN BRIEFED ABOUT IT YESTERDAY.

WRIGHT

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