

MO 3/7/4

Prime Minute.

For discussion at

8.30 a.m. on Tuesday.

A.J.C.  $\frac{6}{2}$ .PRIME MINISTERLEBANON: THE NEXT STEPS

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary copied to me his minute to you of 2nd February, on the next steps in the Lebanon. The analysis in his paper is a cogent one and the package he puts forward would provide a worthwhile way forward. I have to say, however, that the events of the last few days do not offer much hope that there is a rational, diplomatic solution to present difficulties in the Lebanon.

2. The reality is that the security situation has deteriorated rapidly and the country seems to be on the point of disintegration. While they have to remain in the Lebanon, BRITFORLEB are probably safer in their present base than anywhere else but the risks we are running have clearly increased. In terms of domestic opinion there is little or no support that I can discern for perpetuating the present exposed position of our contingent. Against this, I recognise the importance of taking full account of the international implications of any move we make and of seeking to keep in step with some or all of our MNF partners.

3. I have myself come to the conclusion that, should anything go wrong, we should find it very difficult to justify having kept our people there unless there are genuine grounds for believing that there is a prospect of contributing to political reconciliation within a realistic timetable. The judgements involved are extremely difficult. I believe that we should meet to discuss these issues as soon as you can manage.

4. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Ministry of Defence  
6th February 1984



 FEB 1964

