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OO WASHINGTON

OO UKMIS NEW YORK

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TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

TELEGRAM NUMBER 259 OF 8 FEBRUARY

INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS, ROME, BEIRUT, UKMIS NEW YORK  
AND TO PRIORITY DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, AMMAN, JEDDA, CAIRO, MOSCOW  
YOUR TELNO 429: LEBANON.

1. IT IS CLEAR THAT AS A RESULT OF THE FIGHTING OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS, THE RESIGNATIO OF GEMAYEL'S CABINET AND THE INCAPACITY OF THE LEBANESE ARMY, GEMAYEL'S AUTHORITY HAS BECOME GRAVELY WEAKENED. THE POINTS MADE BY GEMAYEL IN HIS SPEECH OF 5 FEBRUARY CONTAINED NO REAL CONCESSIONS AND HAVE CLEARLY HAD NO IMPACT IN ATTRACTING THE SUPPORT OF THE MIDDLE GROUND. HAVING LOST MUSLIM SUPPORT AND WITHOUT A CREDIBLE MILITARY FORCE HE IS UNLIKELY TO RETAIN HIS CLAIM TO SPEAK FOR ANYTHING MORE THAN HIS MARONITE CONSTITUENCY UNLESS HE CAN MAKE AN IMAGINATIVE POLITICAL GESTURE SOON. THE NEXT FEW DAYS OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY TO INJECT NEW IDEAS. IF THIS CHANCE IS NOT SEIZED QUICKLY BY THE AMERICANS IT WILL PROBABLY DISAPPEAR.
2. AS EGERTON INDICATED TO REPRESENTATIVES OF MNF EMBASSIES ON 6 FEBRUARY (MY TELNO 247) THE ONLY WAY GEMAYEL CAN HOPE TO ATTRACT STRONG MUSLIMS BACK INTO HIS TEAM IS BY PUBLIC ABANDONMENT OF THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT. HE WILL ALSO NEED TO TAKE OTHER MEASURES TO SHOW THAT GENUINE CONCESSIONS ARE ON OFFER. WE HOPE, THEREFORE, THAT IN RECONSIDERING US POLICY FOLLOWING REDEPLOYMENT THE AMERICANS WLL CONSIDER ENCOURAGING GEMAYEL TO TAKE THIS STEP. IN OUR VIEW THE 17 MY AGREEMENT IS ALREADY A DEAD LETTER AND AT THIS STAGE THERE IS NOTHING TO BE LOST BY ADMITTING IT. IT WOULD BE A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR RETAINING GEMAYEL IN THE PRESIDENCY WHO HAS A BETTER CHANCE OF HOLDING LEBANON TOGETHER THAN ANY ALTERNATIVE CANDIDATE.
3. WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR GEMAYEL'S

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SURVIVAL WILL BE HARMED RATHER THAN ENHANCED IF HE IS SEEN TO BE MAINTAINED IN OFFICE SOLELY BY AMERICAN FIREPOWER. DIRECT US INVOLVEMENT WILL ONLY ENCOURAGE SYRIAN RETALIATION AND INTRANSIGENCE AND COULD LEAD TO A DANGEROUS ESCALATION. WE THEREFORE HOPE THAT THE AMERICANS WILL REFRAIN FROM DIRECT MILITARY ACTION. WHAT IT NEEDED IS A POLITICAL PROGRAMME NOT (NOT) FURTHER MILITARY ACTIONS.

4. WE SHALL BE SPEAKING ON THESE LINES TO MURPHY WHEN HE ARRIVES IN LONDON THIS EVENING. PLEASE TAKE APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES TO GET THESE POINTS ACROSS TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT.

HOWE

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  
SIR W HARDING  
MR WRIGHT  
MR CARTLEDGE  
MR MACINNES  
MR ADAMS  
MR JENKINS  
MR EGERTON

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MOD DS11  
MR GOODALL )CABINET  
SIR R ARMSTRONG)OFFICE  
  
SIR P MOORE  
BUCKINGHAM PALACE

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