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TO DESKBY 081800Z FCO

TELNO 080 OF 8 FEB

INFO PRIORITY BEIRUT PARIS WASHINGTON UKMIS NEW YORK

MY TELNO 077: LEBANON

1. FOLLOWING IS OUR SUMMARY OF THE MAIN POINTS FROM SPADOLINI'S STATEMENT TODAY TO THE SENATE DEFENCE COMMISSION.
2. PRAISE FOR THE ITALIAN TROOPS IN LEBANON, WHOSE SACRIFICES HAVE NOT BEEN IN VAIN. ITALIAN POLITICAL AND MORAL CREDIBILITY IS NOW HIGH, BOTH IN BEIRUT AND ELSEWHERE. THE ITALIAN ROLE HAS BEEN AND STILL IS APPRECIATED BY ALL THE PARTIES IN LEBANON.
3. THE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES OF THE MNF HAVE NOT REPEAT NOT BEEN ACHIEVED. THERE ARE NO VICTORS IN LEBANON NOW, ONLY LOSERS. BUT THE OTHER REASON FOR ITALY'S PRESENCE, PROTECTION OF THE CAMPS, REMAINS VALID.
4. NO ITALIANS POSITION HAS BEEN ABANDONED, AND THE ITALIAN CONTINGENT IS CONTROLLING THE AREAS ASSIGNED TO IT. ONLY ITALIAN MILITARY VEHICLES ARE CIRCULATING WITHOUT INTERFERENCE IN WEST BEIRUT. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND IT IS POSSIBLE TO TAKE THE MEASURES NOW NECESSARY CALMLY. THERE ARE THREE ESSENTIAL POINTS:
 - A. GIVEN THE U S AND BRITISH DECISION TO REDEPLOY, IT HAS BECOME LOGICALLY AND POLITICALLY UNTHINKABLE FOR THE ITALIAN PRESENCE IN THE CITY OF BEIRUT TO BE PROLONGED. THE ROLE OF THE PEACE FORCE ONLY MADE SENSE BECAUSE OF ITS MULTINATIONAL CHARACTER. EVEN IF ACCOMPANIED BY FRANCE (WHOSE DECISION IS NOT YET KNOWN) AN ITALIAN PRESENCE COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED.
 - B. WE CONTINUE TO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS AND OUR SITUATION IS THEREFORE MORE DIFFICULT THAN THAT OF OUR ALLIES, WHO HAVE NO PRECISE GUARDING TASKS AND CAN THEREFORE REDEPLOY MORE FREELY. WE CANNOT CREATE A VACUUM: WE MUST SEEK TO BRING THE UN TO SABRA AND CHATILA WITHOUT LOSS OF CONTINUITY. THERE ARE ALREADY UN FORCES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON: THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT ASKS THAT PART OF THEM SHOULD SOON BE RELOCATED TO PROTECT THE TWO CAMPS. IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE, WE MUST SEEK OTHER GUARANTEES TO LEAVE THE CAMPS SECURE.
 - C. THE DEPARTURE FROM BEIRUT OF MNG CONTINGENTS SHOULD BE PRECEDED, ACCOMPANIED AND FOLLOWED BY DIPLOMATIC ACTION AT THE UN.
5. THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE ITALIAN CONTINGENT ALREADY CARRIED OUT WAS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:
 - A) A GUARANTEE THAT OUR TASK COULD BE CARRIED OUT, PARTICULARLY PROTECTION OF CHATILA AND BORG EL BARAJNE WHICH CONTAIN RESPECTIVELY 5,000 - 6,000 AND 9,000 - 10,000 PALESTINIANS
 - B) A GUARANTEE THAT OUR PERSONNEL WOULD BE SECURE
 - C) CONCENTRATION OF FORCES, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, TO REDUCE THE LOGISTIC BURDEN

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- D) AVOIDANCE OF ANY COMMITMENT TO INCREASE PERSONNEL BECAUSE OF NEW TASKS; WE THEREFORE DID NOT AGREE TO GEMAYEL'S REQUEST TO BROADEN OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO TWO NEW AREAS IN BEIRUT.
6. OUR PRESENT CONTINGENT, AFTER 5 SUCCESSIVE REDUCTIONS, IS NOW 2/3RD OF ITS ORIGINAL SIZE AND BETTER STRUCTURED.
7. ITALY IS ASSESSING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN DECISION, AND WILL TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS TO GUARANTEE THE SECURITY OF THE ITALIAN TROOPS. WE CANNOT ANTICIPATE THE TECHNICAL CONCLUSIONS WHICH THE CHIEFS OF STAFF WILL REACH. BUT WE SHALL PREPARE THE NECESSARY MEASURES, COORDINATED BETWEEN LAND AND SEA FORCES, FOR A GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL, MEANWHILE GUARANTEEING THE CONTINUATION OF OUR HUMANITARIAN TASK OF GUARDING THE PALESTINIAN CAMPS.
8. THE FIRST PART OF THE ITALIAN MISSION IN LEBANON CAN NOW BE CONSIDERED OVER IN ITS OPERATIONAL PHASE OF SEPARATION AND CONTROL IN THE CITY OF BEIRUT. WE ARE PREPARING TO CLOSE THAT PART WITH NATIONAL DIGNITY AND BY AGREEMENT WITH OUR ALLIES. BUT OUR COMMITMENT TO PEACE IN LEBANON IS UNCHANGED.
9. COMMENT. WE CONCLUDE THAT THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IS STILL UNWILLING TO REACH ITS DECISION UNTIL MORE IS KNOWN ABOUT THE FRENCH POSITION. ANDREOTTI'S ABSENCE IN BELGRADE MAY HAVE BEEN A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR.

BRIDGES

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