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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 75 OF 9 FEBRUARY 1984
INFO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT, WASHINGTON
INFO PRIORITY PARIS, ROME, TEL AVIV, MOSCOW, UKMIS NEW YORK
INFO ROUTINE OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS.

YOUR TELNO 45 (NOT TO ALL): LEBANON

SUMMARY.

1. SYRIANS INFORMED AND APPROVE OF REDEPLOYMENT OF BRITFORLEB, REPRESENTATIONS MADE TO THEM AND TO PSP ABOUT SAFETY OF BRITISH EMBASSY AND COMMUNITY IN BEIRUT. THE DOOR STILL OPEN TO THE AMERICANS, AND GEMAYEL SUPPORTED, BUT ABRIGATION OF 17 MAY AGREEMENT REMAINS THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP IN SYRIAN EYES. SYRIANS URGING COMPROMISE ON ALL FACTIONS AND HAVE NO OBJECTION IN PRINCIPLE TO STATIONING OF UN OBSERVERS IN LEBANON.

DETAIL

2. I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE PROMPT RESPONSE IN TUR. UNFORTUNATELY I WAS UNABLE TO ACT ON IT UNTIL MIDDAY 9 FEBRUARY, AND THEN ONLY WITH THE DIRECTOR OF THE WEST EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT SINCE THE MINISTER OF STATE WAS OBLIGED TO CANCEL AT SHORT NOTICE AN APPOINTMENT MADE FOR THE PREVIOUS EVENING.

BRITISH IN BEIRUT.

3. I SPOKE TO HADDAD ABOUT THE REDEPLOYMENT OF BRITFORLEB IN THE TERMS OF PARAGRAPH 2 OF MY TELNO 72 AS AMENDED BY PARAGRAPH 2 OF YOUR TUR, AND LEFT A PIECE OF PAPER EMBODYING THE LATTER AS APPROPRIATE. HADDAD INDICATED THAT IN THE SYRIAN VIEW WE HAD DONE THE RIGHT THING.

4. I MADE A PARTICULAR POINT OF ASKING FOR ANY HELP THE SYRIAN AUTHORITIES MIGHT BE ABLE TO GIVE IN THE GENERAL PROTECTION OF OUR EMBASSY AND OUR COMMUNITY, AND REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO THE EVACUATION PLANNED FOR TOMORROW (BEIRUT TELNO 12 TO ME). HADDAD REPLIED THAT WHILE THE SYRIANS THEMSELVES WERE NOT, OF COURSE, INVOLVED, THEY WOULD REINFORCE OUR REPRESENTATIONS IN THIS CONNECTION WITH THE PSP. WHEN I HAD SPOKEN EARLIER TO HAMADE, HE READILY AGREED TO HAVE A MESSAGE CONVEYED TO THE PSP MILITIA BUT ADDED POINTEDLY THAT SO FAR AS SHELLING WAS CONCERNED 'OTHER PARTIES' WERE INVOLVED.

THE WIDER ISSUES

5. ON THE BROADER ISSUES, HADDAD SHOWED NO DISPOSITION TO CROW ABOUT THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT HAVING DEVELOPED ALONG THE LINES FORECAST EARLIER BY THE SYRIANS. THE OUTLOOK WAS BLEAK HE THOUGHT THAT THE DIVISION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT MIGHT WELL

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CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME. THE AMERICANS APPEARED TO BE WORKING FOR PARTITION OF LEBANON. THEIR SHELLING OF THE MOUNTAIN AREAS WAS DEPLORABLE, BUT SO FAR AS SYRIA WAS CONCERNED THE DOOR REMAINED OPEN.

6. I ASKED ABOUT THE CURRENT SYRIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS GEMAYEL. HADDAD REAFFIRMED THAT THE SYRIANS DID NOT WANT HIM TO GO. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY WERE CRITICAL OF HIM FOR HAVING ANNOUNCED UNILATERALLY A DATE FOR RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WITHOUT HAVING CONSULTED THE OTHER PARTIES CONCERNED. IF ONLY HE WOULD ANNOUNCE THE ABROGATION OF THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT HIS POSITION WOULD BE TRANSFORMED. THIS REMAINED THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP WHICH NEEDED TO BE TAKEN.

7. I ASKED ABOUT CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE TALKS WITH VARIOUS VISITORS TO DAMASCUS. HADDAD SAID THAT THE SYRIANS HAD EMPHASISED TO THE SUNNI LEADERS THAT THEY SHOULD MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH ALL THE OTHER FACTIONS, INCLUDING THE MARONITES, IN THE INTERESTS OF A COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT. SYRIA DID NOT VIEW THE LEBANESE PROBLEMS FROM A RELIGIOUS ANGLE. WHEN I SOUGHT HIS COMMENT ON REPORTS THAT THERE HAD BEEN ATTACKS BY SHIA ELEMENTS IN WEST BEIRUT ON BARS, HOTELS AND OTHER ALCOHOL-DISPENSING INSTITUTIONS, AND WHETHER THIS DID NOT REINFORCE THE POINT WHICH YOU HAD MADE TO KHADDAM ABOUT RELIGIOUS EXTREMISTS, HADDAD CLAIMED THAT THE SYRIANS HAD NO FIRM INFORMATION. HE CONFIRMED THAT ALIYEV WAS DUE IN DAMASCUS TOMORROW.

8. HADDAD VOLUNTEERED THAT GUTMANN HAD, ON HIS RECENT VISIT, CONVEYED MESSAGES FROM MITTERRAND AND CHEYSSON SUGGESTING THE EARLY REPLACEMENT OF THE MNF BY A UN FORCE. THE SYRIANS HAD REPLIED THAT THEY HAD NO OBJECTION IN PRINCIPLE, PROVIDED THAT THE ROLE OF SUCH A FORCE WAS CONFINED TO THAT OF OBSERVERS, AND THAT IT DID NOT REPEAT NOT INCLUDE TROOPS FROM ANY OF THE STATES PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

COMMENT

9. ALTHOUGH IT LOOKS AS IF THE FAST-MOVING DEVELOPMENTS OF RECENT DAYS HAVE SURPRISED THE SYRIANS AS MUCH AS EVERYBODY ELSE, THEIR

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IMMEDIATE RESPONSE HAS BEEN TO STICK TO THEIR POSITION THAT PROGRESS CAN ONLY BE MADE ON THE BASIS OF THE ABROGATION OF THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT. THEIR CONTINUED, IF QUALIFIED, SUPPORT FOR GEMAYEL IS PROBABLY GENUINE: THEY PREFER ANY PRESIDENT TO NO PRESIDENT, AND FEEL THAT GEMAYEL WILL BE EASIER TO SQUEEZE THAN ANY SUCCESSOR TRYING TO ESTABLISH HIMSELF. A SIGNED EDITORIAL IN AL THAWRA ON 8 FEBRUARY SPOKE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF "MENS

NG BRIDGES", IMPLYING THAT, AS HADDAD TOLD ME, HIS POSITION WOULD BE GREATLY STRENGTHENED IF HE MADE THE CONCESSIONS WHICH THE LEBANESE OPPOSITION HAVE DEMANDED ALL ALONG.

LUCAS

MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)
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