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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 January 1984

Dear John,

Lebanon/MNF: Prime Minister's Meeting
with Mr Rumsfeld, 20 January.

Since my letter of 13 January, Sir Geoffrey Howe and the Prime Minister have discussed the situation in Lebanon with Mr Shultz. You will also have seen reports on Sir Geoffrey Howe's conversations on Lebanon in Stockholm with Signor Andreotti, M Cheysson and Mr Gromyko. You will want a report of where things now stand in preparation for the meeting with Mr Rumsfeld on 20 January, for which I enclose a brief.

Mr Shultz appeared confident that the pendulum of opinion in the United States was swinging back, away from an early withdrawal of the MNF. He also claimed that the Syrians only became intransigent when the resolve of MNF contributors was seen to be weakening. Rumsfeld will no doubt repeat the line that MNF contributors should stand firm and that ideas for amending or replacing the 17 May Israel/Lebanon agreement in the hope of inducing Syrian flexibility are misguided. At a later meeting with Sir Geoffrey in Stockholm Mr Shultz was, however, more receptive to the idea of finding a way round the difficulties presented by the 17 May agreement. But the tactical line he suggested (talking about withdrawal without mentioning the agreement) may not be enough to get round the obstacle.

Sir Geoffrey Howe's conversation with Signor Andreotti (Stockholm telegram No 13) revealed a close identity on views on the way ahead in Lebanon. He was opposed to unilateral action by MNF contributors. He agreed that the Americans needed to show more flexibility on the 17 May agreement, if the Syrians were to be persuaded to allow progress with national reconciliation. He was attracted by the idea of a package, with an agreed timetable for the withdrawal of forces, and favoured somehow "integrating" the 17 May agreement into new proposals of this sort, without abrogating it. Andreotti undertook to discuss Lebanon in his meetings with Shultz and Gromyko. He made a point of thanking us for our efforts to improve consultation among MNF representatives in London.

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/M Cheysson



M Cheysson (FCO telegram No 48 to Paris) described the May 17 agreement as a "blunder" but did not think the US would agree to set it aside in the immediate future. Meanwhile he thought it best to concentrate on the extension of UNIFIL's mandate, which the French have been pursuing in contacts with the Soviet Union. The accounts of M Cheysson's meeting with Gromyko are encouraging (he has proved over optimistic in his assessment of the Soviet position in the past, although on this occasion his account is in part borne out by what Gromyko said to Sir Geoffrey - see below). The main Soviet concern is that wider deployment of UN forces should not be authorised by the Security Council without withdrawal of the MNF. Once reassured on this point, Gromyko suggested that the French should speak to the Syrians and appeared ready to tell the Syrians that the Soviet Union favoured the proposal. The French plan to follow this up in Damascus. Cheysson has undertaken to report the outcome. We shall see.

A In his meeting with Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr Gromyko took much the same line as with Cheysson (UKDel CDE telegram No 22 enclosed). Although he stressed that the MNF should be withdrawn, he did not take issue with the suggestion that the UNIFIL role should be expanded, saying that this was a question for the Syrians and the Lebanese.

B Meeting with Mr Rumsfeld

As you will see from the enclosed brief, we believe the main points to stress to Mr Rumsfeld are that

- (A) We will not (not) withdraw precipitately from Beirut. But we see the MNF as a wasting asset. It cannot stay indefinitely and we have said so publicly. We must make progress towards replacing it as soon as this can reasonably be envisaged. We should not (not) underestimate the pressures on the MNF contributors to withdraw following another bomb attack with heavy casualties.
- (B) Being tough with the Syrians (including retaliation for attack on MNF) will not (not) persuade them to be flexible. They need to be given the right incentives, notably a signal of US willingness to put the 17 May agreement on one side. Agree MNF should show solidarity.
- (C) UN role. Our objective should be to replace the MNF with a UN force. We agree that this cannot be done in the immediate future. We need to avoid giving the Russians a tactical advantage by appearing to be in too much of a rush.



Next Steps

Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr Luce will be taking the opportunity during meetings with the Lebanese Foreign Minister, Dr Salem, to impress on him the need for President Gemayel to give clear evidence of his readiness to make necessary concessions, notably over the latest Security plan and thereafter to show his willingness to discuss major constitutional reforms to allow the national reconciliation process to move forward (with Syrian acquiescence).

We also hope that Mr Rumsfeld or his colleagues will let us have detailed US reactions to our paper on UN options. A further meeting of officials to discuss comments in our paper will be held on 23 January.

Action by the Ten

Sir Geoffrey Howe will be seeing colleagues in the Ten in Brussels on 23 January. We will aim to ensure that the Ten review the situation, and that they maintain a generally helpful line. There may be some discussion of a possible further statement. The fact that the Ten have ideas of their own may of course help to induce the Americans to keep in closer touch with their MNF colleagues.

Arab/Israel

C Although Mr Rumsfeld has hitherto devoted nearly all his attention to Lebanon his responsibilities cover the whole Middle East. The Prime Minister may wish to tell him of our concern about the dangers of a prolonged stalemate in the peace process for the moderate Arab regimes, and especially Jordan. The Prime Minister wrote to President Reagan about this on 22 December but has not yet had a reply.

This letter and the points we propose the Prime Minister should make reflect discussion with Sir Geoffrey Howe, although he has not seen the final text. I shall be showing him a copy on his return.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

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PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR RUMSFELD, 20 JANUARY: LEBANON/MNF

Points to MakeMNF

1. We are firmly not arguing for precipitate withdrawal. Determined to avoid a vacuum. But MNF is essentially temporary. Have made both points clear publicly. Public anxiety here, as in other MNF countries, remains strong and any major incident would require action.

Security Situation

2. Very sorry to hear of murder of President of American University in Beirut. Rumsfeld's assessment of chances of implementation of Security Plan?

How to Tackle the Syrians

3. Welcome account of Rumsfeld's talks, especially with Syrians. Syria holds key. Clearly very confident that MNF (and Israelis) are on their way home, without need for Syrian concessions. Agree on need for resolve to correct that impression. But cannot expect to use departure of MNF as a lever to get Syrians out of Lebanon.

4. Tough stance, including retaliation for attacks on MNF forces, will not work on its own. A way round the 17 May Agreement has to be found. Syria more likely to cooperate if she receives clear signal of US willingness to set agreement aside and discuss other ways of achieving Israeli withdrawal, in return for satisfactory security arrangements. If that obstacle can be surmounted, some hope of Syrian flexibility on withdrawal of their forces, provided that proposals do not put them on same basis as Israelis. Timetable of phased withdrawals, with added incentive of MNF withdrawal, would be the ideal.

6. We can see no other basis for constructive dialogue with Syria. Willing to help eg in pursuing discussions with Foreign Minister Khaddam.

UN Options

7. We intend to pursue options for alternatives to MNF. Essential

to have replacement ready in case MNF withdrawal becomes necessary. US reactions to UK paper? Need to agree on best way of tackling this: approach to Lebanese Government and Soviet Union needed before Secretary General can act.

Lebanese Government

8. Also need to keep up pressure on President Gemayel to signal willingness to make genuine concessions Have stressed this to Foreign Minister Salem today (20 January).

Action by Ten

9. Will continue discussions within Ten to see whether we can take any helpful action.

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PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR RUMSFELD, 20 JANUARY 1984

Essential Facts

1. Mr Rumsfeld is on his way back to Washington after over two weeks shuttling between Lebanon, Syria and Israel and Saudi Arabia, with an additional visit to Algeria. He has not secured any progress which the US Administration can use to stave off pressure from Congress (due to reassemble on 23 January). But the Americans now think that domestic pressure for withdrawal of the US Marines will be manageable, after Senator Tower's visit to the Middle East and clear signals from moderate Arabs that the MNF should stay put.
2. The State Department have told us of Mr Rumsfeld's view that the presence of the MNF in Beirut is a "valuable bargaining chip" with the Russians and Syrians, who should be made to 'pay a high price' for its withdrawal. This seems to us optimistic, given Syrian confidence that the MNF (and the Israelis) will soon withdraw without the need for Syrian concessions. The Americans still believe that the only way of softening Syrian intransigence is for MNF contributors to stand firm and for US forces to respond in 'robust self-defence' (ie naval/air bombardment) to any attacks on their forces. But in a meeting in Stockholm Mr Shultz appeared a little more receptive to the suggestion that a way had to be found round the 17 May Israel/Lebanon agreement.

Security Situation

3. Although the ceasefire has generally held in the sense of freezing movement of ground forces, there has been a marked deterioration recently. US warships responded to Druze attacks on US Marines on 15 January. There have been heavy exchanges of fire between Druze and Christian militias and heavy shelling of East Beirut by the Druze, who have threatened to retaliate in this fashion whenever they are bombarded by US forces.
4. In Beirut, Islamic Jihad (assumed to be Lebanese Shia extremists operating with Iranian support) have claimed responsibility for the assassination of the President of the American University of Beirut, Mr Kerr on 18 January and the kidnapping of the Saudi Consul (they

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also claimed responsibility for the October 1983 bomb attacks on French and US contingents). There have been a number of other recent attacks on "soft" targets: hit and run shootings of a French Embassy driver and the wife of French Cultural Attaché.

Multinational Force

5. Reductions in Italian (2200 to 1500) and French (1750 to 1250 with the balance returning to UNIFIL) contingents are due to be completed this month. Attacks on French and US contingents continue: attack on US helicopter deep inside LAF-controlled West Beirut. Systematic attacks on French positions: one French paratrooper killed and one wounded in attack on 9 January.

National Reconciliation

6. We have had no report yet of the meeting of Saudi, Syrian and Lebanese Foreign Ministers in the margins of the Casablanca Islamic Conference this week, which was supposed to follow up the meeting in Riyadh on 8 January. Implementation of the security plan is still held up, with the Druze leader Jumblatt (according to Lebanese government) now insisting on abrogation of the 17 May agreement before the plan can be implemented. This may be tactical. In any case, early implementation of any security arrangements allowing the Lebanese army to deploy more widely, now appears unlikely. The Syrian veto *on any* progress on national reconciliation without abrogation of the 17 May agreement remains.

UN Forces

7. Rumsfeld may have some detailed comments to offer on the UK paper on UN options. The Americans agree in principle with the idea of replacing the MNF by a UN force eventually, but do not want MNF contributors to push for this now, which will in their view only encourage Syrian/Soviet intransigence.

Near East and North Africa Dept

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