



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

31 January 1984

Dear John,

*Thank you for the  
swift action. MF*

The Prime Minister may have seen Beirut telegram number U2G of 31 January to MODUK (copy enclosed) reporting indications that the Lebanese Armed Forces might launch an operation to close the Shuweifat Gap from tonight, 31 January, at only a few hours' notice. The Current Intelligence Group met this afternoon to consider this telegram and other evidence: their report, which will be available to the Prime Minister this evening, suggests that some action by the Lebanese Armed Forces is imminent. We must assume that President Gemayel is counting on US artillery support at some stage in the operation.

The Prime Minister will wish to know that we have sent a telegram to Washington and Beirut instructing both posts to restate our view that such action would destroy the chances of reinforcing the ceasefire and the prospects for reconciliation, completely change the environment in which the MNF was operating, and make it necessary for us to reconsider our contribution to the MNF. We have reminded the Americans of Rumsfeld's discussions with the Prime Minister and Sir Geoffrey Howe on 20 January, and asked them to join us in urging the Lebanese not (not) to make such an attempt.

Our people in Beirut, both in the MNF and the Embassy, have been instructed to take all appropriate security precautions.

I am sending a copy of this letter to PS/Mr Stanley, in Mr Heseltine's absence in Kuwait. The telegram has been copied to Kuwait for Mr Heseltine.

*Yours ever,*

*Peter Ricketts*

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street





10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

1 February, 1984

Lebanon

Thank you for your letter of 31 January about indications that the Lebanese Armed Forces might launch an operation to close the Shuweifat Gap.

The Prime Minister saw your letter and its enclosure last night (together with the JIC's assessment of 31 January) and has said that she is grateful for the swift action taken by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

P. F. Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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# CONFIDENTIAL

GR 500  
CONFIDENTIAL  
DESKBY 311100Z JAN 84  
FM BEIRUT 311000Z  
TO IMMEDIATE MODUK  
TELNO U2G OF 31 JANUARY  
INFO IMMEDIATE DAMASCUS  
PRIORITY TEL AVIV, FCO (NENAD), CABINET OFFICE, WASHINGTON.

FOR D4B FROM ADA. DAMASCUS AND TEL AVIV FOR DA

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LEBANON SINTREP

FCO TELNO 25 OF 23 JANUARY 84: POSSIBLE LAF OPERATION

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INSTRUCTIONS IN TUR WE HAVE BEEN KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON THE SITUATION.

2. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN NO INDICATIONS ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, THE CURRENT LEBANESE MILITARY DEPLOYMENT NOW INDICATES THAT THE LEBANESE COULD LAUNCH AN OPERATION TO CLOSE THE SHWAYFAT GAP FROM TONIGHT, 31 JAN. WE ARE CONTINUING TO WATCH THE UNITS INVOLVED VERY CAREFULLY AND TO MAKE ALL POSSIBLE EFFORTS TO GAIN WARNING OF THE OPERATION BUT THE DISTANCES ARE SO SHORT THAT IT COULD HAPPEN AT ONLY A FEW HOURS' NOTICE.

3. CURRENT UNIT MOVES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- A. 73 BN HAS RELIEVED 52 BN ON THE ALEY FRONT AT ARRAYA YC 4046.
- B. AN LAF STAFF OFFICER AT THE BEIRUT OPS CENTRE TOLD USMA ON 30 JAN THAT 71 AND 72 BN WILL RELIEVE 51 AND 53 BN IN BEIRUT ON 31 JAN 84.

4. IF TRUE (AND WE BELIEVE IT IS) THIS MEANS THAT 5 BDE WOULD BE UNCOMMITTED AND FREE FOR OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENT FROM PM ON 31 JAN. THE THREE HELIBORNE BNS OF 10 BDE ARE ALSO MAINLY UNCOMMITTED.

5. COMMENT

5 BDE IS, NEXT TO 8 BDE, THE MOST RELIABLE BDE IN THE ARMY. IT IS NORMALLY BASED AT ARBA CAMP NEAR JOUNIEH AND IS THOUGHT TO BE PREDOMINANTLY CHRISTIAN. THE THREE HELIBORNE BNS OF 10 BDE ARE SPECIALLY SELECTED, WELL TRAINED AND ALSO THOUGHT TO HAVE A STRONG CHRISTIAN BIAS. IT IS NOT KNOWN IF THE LEBANESE WOULD RISK USING HELICOPTERS IN THE OPERATION. THE CONSIDERABLE AIR THREAT HAS PERSUADED THEM NOT TO DO SO IN THE PAST.

6 COMMENT CONTINUED.

WE SPECULATE THAT THE THREE HELIBORNE BNS WOULD BE USED FOR THE SHWAYFAT GAP OPERATION. THE 5 BDE WOULD BE KEPT IN RESERVE TO TACKLE ANY PROBLEM WHICH MIGHT BREAK OUT IN BEIRUT. PART OF

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/ 5 BDE



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5 BDE COULD ALSO BE USED TO MAKE A LIMITED ADVANCE EASTWARDS FROM ARRAYA. THIS WOULD BE AQBBCSAXJQQZSJONARY TACTIC WITH THE ADDED BONUS THAT THEY MIGHT SECURE SOME HIGH GROUND IMPROVING THEIR PRESENT POOR POSITION AND EVEN DOMINATING ALEY. THE OPERATION COULD BE LAUNCHED AT NIGHT.

7. FOR DA DAMASCUS.

WE WOULD EXPECT THE AMERICANS TO SUPPORT THE OPERATION BY ENGAGING TARGETS IN THE METN. YOUR ROUTE OVER WOULD BE DANGEROUS AND YOU MIGHT ALSO HAVE DIFFICULTY IN RETURNING TO DAMASCUS. IF LAUNCHED TONIGHT WE WOULD EXPECT THE NEWS TO BREAK ON THE BBC BY DAWN 1 FEB.

WEATHER.

IF SAY ROADS ARE OPEN BUT PATRICK COCKBURN HAS JUST TOLD ME THAT IT IS ONLY ONE LANE AS YOU APPROACH DOVER SHOULDER. ONLY EASTWARD TRAFFIC IS ALLOWED UP TO 1300 LOCAL AND WESTWARD AFTER THAT.

8. IF YOU DO COME OVER WE HAVE A US REQUEST WHICH WE AM SENDING BY SEPERATE DESKBY TELEGRAM.

MIERS

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING ST]

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

MR WRIGHT

MR MACINNES

MR ADAMS

MR EGERTON

MR JENKINS

COPIES TO:

MOD DS11

MR GOODALL )CABINET


SIR R ARMSTRONG)OFFICE

SIR P MOORE  
BUCKINGHAM PALACE

2  
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OUT TELEGRAM

	Classification and Caveats	Precedence/Deskby
	CONFIDENTIAL	IMMEDIATE <i>DESKBY 2100Z</i>

ZCZC	1	ZCZC
GRS	2	GRS
CLASS	3	CONFIDENTIAL
CAVEATS	4	
DESKBY	5	
FM FCO	6	FM FCO 311700Z JAN 84
PRE/ADD	7	TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON <i>DESKBY 2100Z</i>
TEL NO	8	TELEGRAM NUMBER
	9	AND TO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT <i>PARIS, ROME, MODUK, Kuwait (for Mr Hoxethia)</i>
	10	INFO IMMEDIATE DAMASCUS <i>PRIORITY TEL AVIV, URMIS NEW YORK</i>
	11	MY TEL NO 25 TO BEIRUT AND BEIRUT TEL NO U2G OF 31 JANUARY
	12	TO MODUK: ACTION BY LAF TO CLOSE THE SHUWEIFAT GAP
	13	1. I am disturbed at the Beirut report that the LAF may launch
	14	an operation for this purpose any time from this evening
	15	(31 January). You should take action at an appropriate level
	16	in US/Lebanese government to say that we remain firmly of the
	17	view that such a step would amount to a grave departure from
	18	the process of reconciliation, would be seriously divisive and
	19	could precipitate in the short term bitter fighting in which MNF
	20	contingents would be exposed to grave risks.
	21	2. (For Beirut) Please emphasise again my remarks to Salem
///	22	(para 6 of my tel no 26 to Beirut) that such action would
//	23	completely change the environment in which the MNF, as a peace-
/	24	keeping body, is operating and would make it necessary for HMG
	25	to reconsider our contribution to the MNF. If the Lebanese

NNNN ends telegram	BLANK	Catchword  revert to
File number	Dept NENAD	<i>LEBANON   MNF</i>
Drafted by (Block capitals) C W LONG		
Telephone number 233 6048		
Authorised for despatch <i>P. H. Hoxethia</i>		
Comcen reference	Time of despatch	



OUT TELEGRAM (CONT)

Classification and Caveats

CONFIDENTIAL

Page

2

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1 <<<<  
 2 revert to the argument used with you by Haddad (para 2 of your  
 3 tel no 43), you should point out that MNF support for the  
 4 Lebanese government is aimed at giving it enough timing for  
 5 genuine attempts at national reconciliation, not (not) to  
 6 increase its ability to take military action against mainly  
 7 domestic opponents. If the government's survival is at stake,  
 8 it seems foolhardy to destroy the remaining vestiges of the  
 9 September ceasefire agreement.  
 10 3. (For Washington) You should remind the Americans of the  
 11 conversation between Rumsfeld, the Prime Minister and myself  
 12 of 20 January on closure of the Shuweifat Gap. The Prime  
 13 Minister said that Gemayel must consult closely with us if he  
 14 planned to take this serious step. Salem admitted the same day  
 15 that such action would ruin the ceasefire and alter the position  
 16 of the MNF if it became involved, adding that any move to close  
 17 the Gap was "a long way down the road". There has been no (no)  
 18 consultation and it seems that LAF action is imminent. We hope  
 19 that Rumsfeld will be instructed to dissuade Gemayel from this  
 20 course. If it goes ahead without consultation, we shall have to  
 21 reconsider our contribution to the MNF, given BRITFORLEB's  
 22 proximity to the scene of operations and the substantially  
 23 enhanced threat to our men, *that would result.*

24 4. (For Paris, Rome) Please inform <sup>host</sup> governments of line we are  
 25 HOWE taking and urge them to make <sup>(similar)</sup> representations to Lebanese.  
 26 NNNN

/// 31  
 // 32  
 / 33  
 34

NNNN ends telegram	BLANK	Catchword
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