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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 63 OF 6 FEBRUARY 1984

INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK, WASHINGTON, ROME, PARIS, UKMIS-NEW YORK,
DAMASCUS

INFO PRIORITY TEL AVIV, CAIRO, JEDDA, AMMAN, CBFC

NY TELNO 55: LEBANON

1. SUMMARY: THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAS RESIGNED. SYRIA HAS A STRANGLEHOLD OVER THE FORMATION OF A NEW ONE. THERE HAVE BEEN SHIA DESERTIONS FROM THE ARMY. THE PRESIDENT'S BROADCAST TO THE NATION CONTAINED NOTHING NEW. RUMSFELD IS PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE. BRITFORLEB HAS NOT BEEN TARGETTED. SUMMARY ENDS.

2. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT RESIGNED YESTERDAY. THE PRESIDENT LAST NIGHT CONSULTED WITH MOST OF THE EX-PRIME MINISTERS ABOUT THE FORMATION OF A NEW ONE. EARLIER, BEFORE WAZZAN'S RESIGNATION, THE EX-PRIME MINISTERS (EXCEPT FOR SAEB SALAAM AND KAPANE, WHO IS ALREADY IN SYRIA'S POCKET) WERE INVITED TO DAMASCUS. SEVERAL OF THEM, INCLUDING SALIM AL HOSS WHO DID NOT GO TO SEE THE PRESIDENT LAST NIGHT, ARE TRAVELLING TO DAMASCUS TODAY. THIS UNDERLINES SYRIA'S STRANGLEHOLD, WHICH HAS BEEN EVIDENT SINCE SHE IMPOSED HER JANUARY VETO ON THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT UNLESS THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT WAS ABROGATED.

~~HE VETOED A JANUARY VETO ON THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT UNLESS THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT WAS ADOPTED.~~

3. THE RESIGNATIONS BECAME INEVITABLE YESTERDAY FOLLOWING MEETINGS BETWEEN WAZZAN AND THE 3 REMAINING MOSLEM MINISTERS IN HIS CABINET. THEY WERE UNABLE TO RESIST PRESSURE TO RESIGN CREATED BY THE FIGHTING BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE SHIA MILITIA AND BY BERRI'S PRESS CONFERENCE ON 3 FEB (MUCH OF IT CENSORED) WHICH A) CALLED ON THEM TO STAND DOWN AND B) APPEALED TO SHIA SOLDIERS TO REFUSE TO FIGHT THEIR CORELIGIONISTS. BERRI MADE THIS APPEAL AFTER A DELEGATION OF ARMY OFFICERS CALLED ON HIM.

4. YESTERDAY AND LAST NIGHT THERE WAS LESS FIGHTING BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE SHIA AND LESS SHELLING OF CHRISTIAN AREAS THAN ON THE TWO PRECEDING DAYS, WHEN IT WAS VERY BAD. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THIS SLACKENING OF THE TEMPO IS DUE TO THE COMBATANTS WISHING TO WAIT UPON EVENTS FOLLOWING THE RESIGNATIONS. SOME SHIA DESERTIONS HAVE CLEARLY OCCURRED. CERTAIN CHECKPOINTS NEAR THE AIRPORT ARE NOW MANNED JOINTLY BY ARMY AND AMAL MILITIA. GENERAL TANNOUS IS CLAIMING THAT ONLY 150 SOLDIERS WHOSE FAMILIES ARE UNDER THREAT HAVE DESERTED. BUT IT IS ALMOST CERTAINLY WORSE THAN THIS. SALEM (WITH WHOM I DISCUSSED THE CRISIS YESTERDAY) SAYS THAT IF THE DESERTIONS CANNOT BE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL THE POSITION OF THE ARMY COULD BE ERODED VERY SWIFTLY. BERRI'S STANCE ON THIS WAS VERY DANGEROUS: IT WAS THE MOST DAMAGING THING HE COULD HAVE DONE.

5. PRESIDENT GEMAYEL BROADCAST TO THE NATION LATE LAST NIGHT. HE CALLED FOR A RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ON 27 FEBRUARY: EVERYTHING, EXCEPT THE UNITY OF THE COUNTRY, WAS NEGOTIABLE. THE CEASEFIRE MUST BE PROTECTED, WITH IMPROVED MACHINERY. LEBANESE-SYRIAN CONTACTS MUST BE INTENSIFIED. THE 17 MAY ACCORD HAD NOT BEEN RATIFIED: GEMAYEL WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK FOR A FORMULA GUARANTEEING WITHDRAWAL. ON THE MNF HE SAID ONLY THAT ITS FORMATION WAS THE 'LIVING MANIFESTATION OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AROUND LEBANON'.

6. THERE WAS NOTHING NEW IN THIS. ACCORDING TO SALEM, GEMAYEL'S INTENTION WAS TO SET OUT HIS POSITION FOR THE LEBANESE PEOPLE, BUT IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE FLEXIBILITY SHOWN ON KEY POINTS, NOTABLY OF COURSE THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT, WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO MOLLIFY SYRIA AND FORM A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY.

7. SALEM ALSO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD STAY AT THEIR DESKS UNTIL A NEW ONE WAS FORMED. SO HE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE FOREIGN MINISTER FOR THE TIME BEING. BUT THE MINISTERS WOULD ONLY PERFORM ROUTINE TASKS AND WOULD NOT MEET COLLECTIVELY AS THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. HE WOULD BE SUPRISED IF THE PRESIDENT GOT AGREEMENT IMMEDIATELY ON THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT. HE WANTED TO GO STRAIGHT TO A FULLY FLEDGED GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION (HE NO DALLYING WITH A HALF-WAY HOUSE AS ENVISAGED AT ONE STAGE). CONTACT WITH THE SYRIANS WOULD BE MADE VIA THE PRIME MINISTERS WHO WERE TRAVELLING TO DAMASCUS. THE PRESIDENT MIGHT MAKE DIRECT CONTACT LATER BUT NEEDED TO TREAD VERY CAREFULLY.

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8. I HAVE ALSO SPOKEN TO BARTHOLOMEW. HE HAS PROMISED TO BRIEF ME ON THE US ROLE BUT HAS NOT YET DONE SO. I ASSUME IT TO BE CENTRAL, SINCE HE AND RUMSFELD HAVE BEEN LOCKED IN CONCLAVE AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE FOR MUCH OF THE LAST TWO DAYS. THE PRESS HERE HAS PICKED UP A STORY FROM RIYADH TO THE EFFECT THAT THE AMERICANS ARE WORKING ON A CONFERENCE BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA, SYRIA, THE US, LEBANON AND THE LEBANESE OPPOSITION. BUT SALEM SAYS THAT WHEN ASKED ABOUT THIS RUMSFELD DENIED ALL KNOWLEDGE. SALEM HOWEVER CLEARLY SUSPECTS A PLOT AMONG THE MNF CONTRIBUTORS (HE MENTIONED THE US AND FRANCE) TO SETTLE LEBANON'S FUTURE OVER LEBANON'S HEAD.

9. SALEM SAID THAT THE PLAN TO INTRODUCE THE LEBANESE ARMY INTO AREAS EVACUATED BY A FURTHER ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL WAS STILL BEING PURSUED BUT THIS WAS VERY DELICATE. THIS WAS ONE OF THE SPECIFIC THINGS OVER WHICH THE LEBANESE HAD ASKED FOR AMERICAN HELP WITH ISRAEL. THE AMERICANS HAD SAID THAT THE ISRAELI ATTITUDE WAS 'BETTER THAN LEBANON FEARED': BUT PRESSURE COULD ONLY BE EXERCISED ON ISRAEL VERY GENTLY.

10. THE UPHEAVAL OF THE LAST THREE DAYS HAS NOT YET AFFECTED THE MNF OR BRITFORLEB SIGNIFICANTLY. STRAY SHOTS, INCLUDING ONE 122MM ROCKET, HAVE LANDED ON BRITFORLEB: BUT HIS HAS NOT BEEN DELIBERATELY TARGETTED. THERE WERE HOSTILE GESTURES RECENTLY TOWARDS BRITFORLEB PATROLS IN CERTAIN AREAS (NOW NO LONGER VISITED). ON THE OTHER HAND THE JOINT AMAL/ARMY DEFECTOR CHECKPOINTS (PARA 3) HAVE BEEN FRIENDLY. ONE SOLDIER FROM BRITFORLEB RECEIVED A MINOR SHRAPNEL WOUND TO HIS ARM YESTERDAY. HE WAS TAKEN TO THE USMC DOCTOR FOR TREATMENT ALONG WITH A BBC CAMERAMAN GASHED BY A SPLINTER WHILE PHOTOGRAPHING FROM A DANGEROUS POSITION SOME WAY FROM BRITFORLEB'S BASE. UNFORTUNATELY THE BBC ANNOUNCED THE SOLDIER'S INJURY PREMATURELY BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLICITY ABOUT THE CAMERAMAN SINCE THE BBC THEMSELVES DO NOT WANT IT.

11. FOR COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS SEE MIFT.

MIERS

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*Copy given
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GEMAYEL ACCEPTS CABINET'S RESIGNATION
BEIRUT, SUNDAY - PRESIDENT AMIN GEMAYEL THIS AFTERNOON ACCEPTED THE RESIGNATION OF PRIME MINISTER SHAFIQ AL-WAZZAN'S CABINET, A PRESIDENTIAL PALACE STATEMENT SAID.
WAZZAN SUBMITTED THE RESIGNATION OF HIS NINE-MAN TECHNOCRATIC CABINET TO PAVE THE WAY FOR A NEW GOVERNMENT GROUPING RIVAL FACTIONS, GOVERNMENT SOURCES SAID.
THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE SAID WAZZAN'S CABINET WOULD ACT IN A CARETAKER CAPACITY UNTIL A NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED. STATE-RUN BEIRUT RADIO SAID THE PRESIDENT WOULD BEGIN IMMEDIATE CONSULTATIONS TO DISCUSS ITS FORMATION.

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NEW FRENCH TROOPS ARRIVE TO JOIN U.N. FORCE
BEIRUT, SUNDAY -- FRENCH TROOPS BEGAN LANDING ON A BEACH IN SOUTHERN LEBANON THIS MORNING TO BOOST THE FRENCH BATTALION OF THE UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON (UNFIL), A U.N. SPOKESMAN SAID.
UNIFIL SPOKESMAN TIMUR GOKSEL SAID 400 FRENCH TROOPS AND THEIR EQUIPMENT WERE TRANSFERRED FROM FRENCH NAVAL VESSELS TO LANDING CRAFT OFF THE COAST NEAR THE SOUTHERN PORT OF TYRE.
THE NEW ARRIVALS WILL BRING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF THE FRENCH BATTALION TO ITS ORIGINAL FORCE OF 1,392.

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