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PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN

In my message of this morning I gave you my reaction to your decision to begin a phased deployment of the Marines in Beirut.

I should now like to let you have my thoughts on the public presentation of your decision, in particular, in the public statement which I understand you are to make later today.

The safety of our contingents in Beirut, including the French and the Italians, must, of course, be of paramount concern at this difficult time of redeployment. I am very concerned that in your public statement you should not give the impression that US forces might undertake military action which was anything more than strictly self-defensive. If the view gained ground in the region that your forces were ^{likely} ~~actively~~ to ~~intervene~~ by providing naval gunfire and air support against units in Syrian-controlled territory, this would, in my view, dangerously increase the threat to the MNF contingents in Beirut. It follows that if your forces were actually to undertake such action, the threat to all the ^{MNF} ~~troops~~ in Beirut would be even greater.

I therefore hope that you will bear this point very much in mind in putting the finishing touches to your statement today. I must tell you that if this statement did envisage US military action which went beyond self-defence, I should come under very heavy pressure in

Parliament here to dissociate myself from this aspect of your policy. I am convinced that this is a time for the MNF contributors to speak as far as possible with one voice, and therefore wanted to tell you frankly of my concerns.