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TELEGRAM NUMBER 70 OF 7 FEBRUARY 1984

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, PARIS, ROME, CBFC
BRITFORLEB

YOUR TELNO 049: LEBANON.

1. THE US DECISION IS LIKELY TO EASE THE DANGERS HERE. BUT WHETHER OR NOT THE MARINES WITHDRAW FROM THE AIRPORT WE COULD SOON HAVE MILITANT SHIA EGGED ON BY IRANIAN AND PALESTINIAN EXTREMISTS UP AGAINST THE MARINES GUARDING THE UK/US CHANCERY BUILDING. IF THE AMERICAN FLEET WAS AT THE SAME TIME RESPONDING TO GEMAYEL'S REQUEST FOR NAVAL GUNFIRE, A TENSE SITUATION COULD DEVELOP WITH THIS BUILDING A TARGET FOR SHELLING. I MIGHT HAVE TO RECOMMEND AND THEN TRY TO CO-ORDINATE EVACUATION BY WHATEVER MEANS POSSIBLE OF THE BRITISH COMMUNITY (PERHAPS 200-300 PERSONS IN WEST BEIRUT ALONE. THERE ARE MORE IN THE EAST, BUT NOT ALL WOULD TRAVEL) AND OF MOST OF THE EMBASSY STAFF. THE ABOVE IS THE WORSE CASE SCENARIO BUT ONE I CANNOT IGNORE IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

2. THEREFORE:

(A) NO REDUCTION NOW. I MAY NEED ALL HANDS TO ASSIST WITH EVACUATION - AND SOME WOULD THEMSELVES TRAVEL WITH THE EVACUEES.

(B) I DO NOT THINK IT NECESSARY TO PLAN FOR THIS. MIXING UK AND US SOLDIERS IN A TIGHT PERIMETER WOULD CAUSE CONFUSION. THIS CHANCERY IS NOT DEFENSIBLE, IN THE CONDITIONS DESCRIBED IN PARA 1. WE SHOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO SEEK SAFETY IN NEGOTIATING WITH THE ATTACKERS - AND PERHAPS MOVING AWAY FROM THE AMERICANS EG TO MY RESIDENCE (IF WE COULD: IF WE COULDN'T I DOUBT IF ANY BRITFORLEB DETACHEMENT WOULD ADD TO OUR SECURITY).

(C) WE SHOULD SAY THAT BRITFORLEB IS HERE TO DO A PEACE KEEPING ROLE. SO LONG AS THERE IS NO PEACE TO KEEP WE DO NOT WISH TO LEAVE IT EXPOSED AT HADATH. WE ARE THEREFORE WITHDRAWING IT TO HM SHIPS (OR CYPRUS). WHEN THERE IS A ROLE FOR IT AGAIN WE CAN CONSIDER ITS RETURN.

MERS

BT