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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 71 OF 7 FEBRUARY.

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

MY TELNO 70: LEBANON.

1. I HAVE DISCUSSED THE SITUATION FURTHER WITH MURPHY. THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OMITTS ANYTHING ALREADY COVERED IN WASHINGTON TELNO 417 (JUST RECEIVED).
2. HE SAID THAT THE AMERICANS WERE EXTREMELY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO GET THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO THE SYRIANS; NAMELY THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS NOT "BUGGING OUT". HENCE THE EMPHASIS ON PHASED REDEPLOYMENT, CONTINUING WITH EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING ASSISTANCE FOR THE LAF, AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE LAF COUNTER-BATTERY CAPABILITY.
3. I ASKED HIM WHETHER THE PACKAGE WOULD ALSO INCLUDE SOMETHING ON THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT. HE REFERRED AGAIN TO THE FORMULA USED BY GEMAYEL IN HIS 5 FEBRUARY BROADCAST. HE THEN REVERTED TO THE PROBLEMS OF GEMAYEL'S STANDING WITH THE ISRAELIS IF THE AGREEMENT WAS ABROGATED; AND OF THE ISRAELI'S LEGALISTIC APPROACH TO A DOCUMENT WHICH THE LEBANESE HAD SIGNED. I ASKED WHETHER GEMAYEL MIGHT NOT REASONABLY CLAIM TO THE ISRAELIS THAT HE COULD NOT RATIFY EXCEPT ON THE ADVICE OF HIS MINISTERS (THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD PRESUMABLY TAKE OFFICE ON A PLATFORM OF A MODIFIED, IF NOT ABROGATED, AGREEMENT); AND THEN THE PREMISE ON WHICH THE AGREEMENT HAD BEEN NEGOTIATED NAMELY THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD SOMEHOW ALSO BE INDUCED TO WITHDRAW, HAD PROVED FALSE. MURPHY SAID THAT IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT GEMAYEL COULD JUST AS WELL SAY TO THE ISRAELIS THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS "NOT WORKING IN THE FORM IN WHICH IT HAD BEEN CAST". HE THEN REVERTED TO THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT JERKING THE RUG FROM UNDER GEMAYEL.
4. I ASKED HIM WHETHER THE AMERICANS ENVISAGED A SITUATION IN WHICH THE SIXTH FLEET WOULD BE FIRING, AT GEMAYEL'S REQUEST, DURING THE PERIOD OF MARINE REDEPLOYMENT. IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THIS COULD MAKE AN IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE TO WHETHER THE PACKAGE PROVED WELCOME TO GEMAYEL'S OPPONENTS, PARTICULARLY BERRI; OR WHETHER IT WOULD PROVE TOO LITTLE TOO LATE. MURPHY READ ME THE TEXT OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER, WHICH HE SAID

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