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DESKBY 081815Z

FROM DAMASCUS 081800Z FEB 84

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 73 OF 8 FEBRUARY

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

INFO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT AND MODUK

INFO PRIORITY PARIS, ROME AND TEL AVIV

LEBANON

1. MARWAN HAMADE ASKED ME TO SEE HIM AT SHORT NOTICE THIS EVENING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM WALID JUMBLATT. HAMADE SAID THAT, SINCE 1330 LOCAL TIME, WITHOUT ANY PREVIOUS BREACH OF THE CEASEFIRE, THE DRUZE HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO CONTINUOUS, SYSTEMATIC AND DESTRUCTIVE SHELLING FROM THE AMERICAN FLEET. IT WAS NOT ONLY GUN ENPLACEMENTS THAT WERE BEING ATTACKED BUT CIVILIAN ROADS AND VILLAGES. ONE VILLAGE, TEBIYAT IN THE METN, HAD BEEN ENTIRELY DESTROYED AND 35 CIVILIANS KILLED. A FURTHER 20 TO 30 CIVILIANS HAD BEEN KILLED BY THE AMERICAN SHELLING ELSEWHERE. HAMADE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS SHELLING HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE BRITISH, FRENCH OR ITALIAN CONTINGENTS OF THE MNF BUT SAID THAT IT WAS DEPLORABLE THAT THE MNF SHOULD DEPART ON THIS NOTE OF DESTRUCTION. HE COULD EXPLAIN IT ONLY AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTION BY PRESIDENT REAGAN TO BEING OBLIGED TO REDEPLOY THE US MARINES.

3. THERE WERE TWO SPECIFIC DANGERS. FIRSTLY AS LONG AS THE MNF REMAINED ON THE GROUND THEY WOULD BE A TARGET AND THE PSP WOULD STRIKE BACK AGAINST THEM IN RESPONSE TO ATTACKS ON THEIR POSITIONS. SECONDLY THERE WAS THE DANGER OF AN UNCONTROLLABLE POPULAR REACTION AGAINST THE SHELLING WHICH COULD BE VERY DANGEROUS TO AMERICA'S REMAINING INTERESTS IN LEBANON AND COULD ENDANGER INNOCENT AMERICAN LIVES.

4. HAMADE DREW ATTENTION TO THE RELATIVELY FEW INCIDENTS INVOLVING FOREIGNERS DURING THE TAKEOVER OF WEST BEIRUT BUT COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT THAT WOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE CASE IF THE AMERICANS CONTINUED THIS BOMBARDMENT, THE PSP WOULD SPARE NOTHING IN EAST BEIRUT.

5. HE EXPRESSED REGRET AT THE LOSS OF CIVILIAN LIFE AND THE FACT THAT THE RELATIVE CALM THAT HAD PREVAILED IN BEIRUT EARLIER TODAY SEEMED TO BE COMING TO AN END. HE URGED HAMADE TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO AVOID ANY DAMAGE TO BRITISH INTERESTS AND SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THAT THE BRITISH EMBASSY SHOULD NOT BE A PSP TARGET ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT HOUSED US EMBASSY PERSONNEL. HAMADE ASSURED ME THAT THE BRITISH EMBASSY WOULD NOT BE A TARGET BUT REPEATED THAT AN UNCONTROLLED POPULAR REACTION COULD LEAD TO UNPREDICTABLE DEVELOPMENTS.

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6. THE MAIN NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES TO THE DISPUTE APPEAR NOW TO BE TAKING PLACE IN DAMASCUS (THE NSF AND JEAN OBEID ARE ALL IN THE OFFING). WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO REPORT MORE FULLY IN THE COMING TWO DAYS BUT MEANWHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO DISPUTE HAMADE'S CLAIM THAT THE CONTINUED SHELLING BY THE US FLEET OF DRUZE POSITIONS IN THE CHOUF AND THE METN WILL JEOPARDISE THE CHANCES OF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT.

LUCAS

BT

MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

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PS/PUS

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