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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

10 February 1984

Lebanon

The Prime Minister held a meeting at 0900 hours today to consider the present and future situation in the Lebanon.

The discussion was fairly general in nature and I record here only the firm decisions taken and the points for action.

The Defence Secretary said that he proposed to authorise OC BRITFORLEB to keep about 50 fighting soldiers on RAF Reliant but send his support staff to Cyprus. A sufficient number of those vehicles at present on board Reliant would be removed to Cyprus to create adequate space on Reliant for evacuation facilities.

The question of whether the British contingent should be presented as remaining part of the Multi-National Force was discussed. It was agreed that, where necessary, we should simply refer to our earlier statement that the contingent had been re-deployed until the situation became clearer. We should avoid positive statements either in public, or to other governments, to the effect that it remained part of the MNF. The matter might be reviewed after the visit to Britain this weekend by Vice President Bush.

The Prime Minister expressed concern about the impression which may have been created in public that France was making the running in advocating UN action on the Lebanon and in particular that it was taking credit for the idea of a UN force to replace the MNF. It was agreed that action should be taken to make it clear publicly that we had been working on these ideas for many months. I have briefed our Press Office accordingly.

In this connection, it was agreed that we should pursue various ideas for practical UN activity in the Lebanon such as the suggestion of H.M. Ambassador, Beirut that the UN should become involved in the control of crossing points on the Green Line in Beirut.

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I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Mottram
(Ministry of Defence).

A. J. COLES

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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