



PM/84/29

PRIME MINISTERLebanon

1. Following the redeployment of our MNF contingent on 8 February, the question has arisen of attendance by a BRITFORLEB officer at the MNF Coordination Committee. The Commander of BRITFORLEB was unable at short notice to send an officer to the meeting in Beirut on 14 February.
2. We agreed at our meeting on 10 February that we should avoid positive statements to the effect that we remained part of the MNF. I have taken the line that although the force has been redeployed, it remains close at hand. I believe however that so long as we remain formally part of the Multi-National force, a BRITFORLEB Liaison Officer should be based at the Embassy and should attend meetings whenever possible. We need a BRITFORLEB representative on shore as visible evidence of our continued participation in the MNF. For this reason attendance at meetings of the Coordination Committee by the ADA who is based in Beirut would not achieve our objective. The presence of a BRITFORLEB officer (plus a driver and clerk) might attract some public attention and be criticised as a move back towards re-engagement of our forces onshore. But I believe it is important that we should make this gesture if we are to maintain a credible position as MNF participants. Furthermore, having a BRITFORLEB representative in Beirut will make it easier to justify moving the remainder of the contingent to Cyprus, rather than leaving them in some danger and much discomfort on board RFA Reliant.
4. I am sending a copy of this minute to the Defence Secretary. Provided you and he agree I hope the Ministry of Defence can arrange for a BRITFORLEB officer to be transferred from RFA Reliant to Beirut on attachment soon.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

16 February, 1984

Prime Minister.

Agree that a BRITFORLEB representative should attend MNF meetings until further notice?

A.F.C. 16/2

Yes not

J.P.C. ①



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

17 February, 1984.

Lebanon

The Prime Minister has seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute of 16 February about the question of attendance by a BRITFORLEB officer at the MNF Coordination Committee.

Mrs. Thatcher agrees that a BRITFORLEB representative should attend MNF meetings until further notice.

I am sure that Mrs. Thatcher would accept the point in paragraph 3 of Mr. Stanley's minute of 16 February - namely that we leave the precise timing of the return to Beirut of the British Officer and his party to the discretion of the Commanding Officer of BRITFORLEB in the light of the security situation on the ground.

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

A. J. COLES

P.F. Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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