

GR 493

CONFIDENTIAL

FM BEIRUT 200930Z FEB 84

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 138 OF 20 FEBRUARY

INFO PRIORITY MODUK

ROUTINE WASHINGTON, DAMASCUS, JEDDA, TEL AVIV, UKRIS NEW YORK, PARIS, ROME, AMMAN, CAIRO, THE HAGUE, TRIPOLI, MOSCOW.

MY TELNO 134: LEBANON

1. THERE IS MUCH PUBLICITY HERE FOR ISRAELI AIR ATTACKS ON ALLEGEDLY PALESTINIAN TARGETS NEAR BHUMDOUN AND DAMOUR YESTERDAY.

2. THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIANS RETURNING TO BEIRUT IN THE WAKE OF THE PSP AND AMAL VICTORIES OVER THE ARMY IS OF COURSE VERY SENSITIVE HERE. NOTE THAT THE IDF THINKS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A CONSIDERABLE INFUX (TEL AVIV 170955Z TO MODUK). SO DO THE AMERICAN MNF INTELLIGENCE EXPERTS. THIS IS PRESUMABLY DEPENDENT AT LEAST IN PART ON THE LEBANESE DEUXIEME BUREAU, WHO HAVE BEEN PLAYING THIS UP CONSISTENTLY OVER RECENT MONTHS. AMAL, ON THE OTHER HAND, PLAY IT DOWN. THEY TOLD US YESTERDAY THAT THERE WERE NO ARMED PALESTINIAN FORMATIONS IN BEIRUT AND THAT THEY HAD TURNED BACK ABU MUSA THREE TIMES AT THE AMAL CHECKPOINT BETWEEN SHUWEYFAT AND THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS. IF PALESTINIANS HAVE RETURNED THEY HAVE DONE SO WITHOUT PUBLICITY SO FAR. FOR INSTANCE THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC "REOCCUPATION" OF SABRA AND SHATILA IN THE NAME OF THE PALESTINIANS AS WAS ONCE FEARED FOLLOWING AMAL'S DEFEAT OF THE ARMY IN WEST BEIRUT (CF ARAFAT'S VISIT TO TEHRAN AT THE INVITATION OF EXTREMISTS ON THE MORROW OF THE DEFEAT OF THE SHAH'S ARMY).

3. AS FOR THE ALEY AND SHOUF AREAS WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY DRUZE CONTACTS (NOT SPECIFICALLY CONNECTED WITH THE PSP) THAT PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS ARE PRESENT, BUT NOT IN VERY LARGE NUMBERS. MANY ARE THOUGHT TO BE FROM THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS OF BEIRUT RATHER THAN INFILTRATORS. THE SUBURBS CONTAIN SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS OF GUN-BEARING AGE (WHO MUST BE PRESUMED TO HAVE UNDERGONE SOME TRAINING) WHO WERE NOT EVACUATED WITH ARAFAT IN AUGUST 1982 AND WHO ARE NOW OPENLY CARRYING GUNS. BOTH OUR DRUZE CONTACTS AND DANY CHAMOUN HAVE TOLD US THAT THERE IS PROBABLY AN UNWRITTEN UNDERSTANDING THAT THESE PALESTINIANS DO NOT OPERATE SOUTH OF THE DAMOUR RIVER. (WE HAVE JUST SEEN TEL AVIV TELNO 42).

CONFIDENTIAL

4. WE SHALL OF COURSE KEEP AS SHARP AN EYE OPEN AS WE CAN FOR SIGNS OF PALESTINIAN ACTIVITY AND ENCOURAGE THE MEDIA TO DO THE SAME. THIS IS THE ONE THING WHICH, AS SEEN FROM HERE, COULD BRING ABOUT ISRAELI INTERVENTION TO REVERSE THE PSP/AMAL VICTORIES. MOREOVER THE MARONITES ARE NOW DESPERATELY HOPING FOR THIS - SOME EVEN URGING GEMAYEL TO RATIFY THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT AND CALL ON THE ISRAELIS IN RETURN TO RESTORE ORDER IN THE ENSUING CHAOS: AND WITH IT OF COURSE THE MARONITE ASCENDANCY.

MERS
BT

MIDDLE EAST
STANDARD DISTRIBUTION

NENAD	SEC D
MED	MAED
NAD	ES & SD
SAD	ERD
UND	ESID
EED	CONS D
SOV D	CONS EM UNIT
ECD	MR EGERTON
WED	MR J THOMAS
RID	CABINET OFFICE

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION
ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE

THIS TELEGRAM
WAS NOT
ADVANCED

2

CONFIDENTIAL