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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1717 OF 22 DECEMBER 1983

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, PARIS, ROME

PRIORITY MOSCOW, TEL AVIV, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, BEIRUT, THE HAGUE.

YOUR TELNO 923 (NOT TO THE HAGUE): LEBANON: ROLE OF UN FORCES

1. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL IS ENORMOUSLY BUSY (WITH THE EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AMONGST OTHERS) BUT AT MY URGENT REQUEST HE GAVE ME 20 MINUTES THIS EVENING (22 DECEMBER).
2. I TOLD HIM THAT I HAD INSTRUCTIONS FROM MY MINISTERS TO PROBE THE THINKING BEHIND HIS REMARKS TO THE PRESS YESTERDAY (THE TEXT OF WHICH I SENT TO YOU EARLIER TODAY AS MY TELNO 1714).
3. PEREZ DE CUELLAR SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD NOTHING OFFICIAL OR CONCRETE FROM ANY OF THE MNF CONTRIBUTORS ON THEIR INTEREST IN UN INVOLVEMENT ADDITIONAL TO THE OBSERVER GROUP IN BEIRUT. HE HAD READ OF ITALIAN INTENTIONS IN THE NEWSPAPERS AND HAD HAD AN INFORMAL APPROACH FROM MY FRENCH COLLEAGUE. BUT THESE WERE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR A FORMAL REQUEST FROM THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND THE APPROVAL OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL, THE TROOP CONTRIBUTORS AND THE PARTIES. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SYRIANS.
4. I ASKED WHETHER HE HAD HEARD ANYTHING MORE POSITIVE RECENTLY FROM THE RUSSIANS AND THE SYRIANS. HE SAID NOT. THE ONLY HOPEFUL SIGN WAS THAT, ACCORDING TO MY LIBYAN COLLEAGUE (WHOM HE ALSO SAW THIS AFTERNOON ON ANOTHER MATTER) GEMAYAL HAD HAD A GOOD MEETING WITH QADDAFI WHICH MIGHT IMPROVE THINGS WITH THE SYRIANS.
5. I SAID THAT IN THAT CASE THE SITUATION SEEMED VERY SIMILAR TO WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER SAW HIM ON 30 SEPTEMBER AND EXPLAINED OUR POSITION (MY TELNO 982, NOT TO ALL). TO DRAW HIM OUT I SAID THAT MY PERSONAL VIEW WAS THAT A GREATER UN INVOLVEMENT IN PEACEKEEPING IN LEBANON WOULD HAVE TO FORM PART OF A PACKAGE. IT WAS NOT OVERLY IMPORTANT WHETHER THE INCREASED UN INVOLVEMENT TOOK THE FORM OF MORE OBSERVERS OR UNIFIL UNDER A DIFFERENT MANDATE. IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO MIX THE TWO. PEREZ DE CUELLAR REPLIED THAT FROM THE UN POINT OF VIEW OBSERVERS WOULD BE ADEQUATE BUT HE WAS FLEXIBLE AND WOULD BE READY TO HELP WITH ANY FORMULA WHICH WAS ACCEPTABLE TO ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED. HE NOTED THAT FORMALLY SPEAKING THERE WERE SOME SOVIET OFFICERS IN THE U.N. OBSERVER GROUP FOR THE LEBANON BUT IN PRACTICE THEY WERE ALL IN CAIRO OR DAMASCUS. THE LEBANESE DID NOT WANT THEM IN LEBANON BUT HE WONDERED WHETHER THIS ATTITUDE MIGHT BE CHANGING AND IF SO WHETHER IT WOULD HELP. IN TURN I WONDERED WHETHER THE PRESENCE OF A FEW SOVIET OFFICERS WOULD MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE TO THE SYRIANS. AS I LEFT, PEREZ DE CUELLAR APOLOGISED FOR NOT HAVING BEEN MORE INFORMATIVE AND REMARKED THAT THE REAL PROBLEM WAS WHETHER THE RUSSIANS WOULD BE PREPARED TO HELP THE AMERICANS OUT OF LEBANON IN THE PRESENT SUPERPOWER CLIMATE. HE DID NOT THINK THEY WOULD.

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6. THE QUESTION OF LEBANON IS VERY MUCH IN PEOPLE'S MINDS HERE. I HAVE HAD FRAGMENTARY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT IT WITH MY ITALIAN COLLEAGUE AND AMBASSADOR LICHENSTEIN (US) AND AM DUE TO SEE MY NETHERLANDS COLLEAGUE TOMORROW MORNING (23 DECEMBER) IN HIS CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL. HE HAS SEEN MY SYRIAN, LEBANESE AND RUSSIAN COLLEAGUES: AN ACCOUNT OF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH THEM IS IN MIFT. I SHALL REPORT FURTHER WHEN I HAVE SEEN HIM BUT HE HAS ALREADY WARNED ME THAT HIS CONCLUSION FROM HIS SOUNDINGS IS THAT THERE IS NO REASON TO BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT A POSSIBLE BREAKTHROUGH ON THE QUESTION OF UN INVOLVEMENT AND THAT HE DOES NOT INTEND TO TAKE THE MATTER ANY FURTHER DURING THE REMAINDER OF HIS PRESIDENCY.

7. I DO NOT HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SECRETARY GENERAL IS ENGAGED IN SOME SECRET NEGOTIATION ON THE LEBANON AS HE HAS BEEN ON CYPRUS. HE IS OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS AND WOULD LIKE TO BE HELPFUL. BUT HE REMAINS VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED FOR A SECURITY COUNCIL MANDATE AND OF THE DIFFICULTY OF SECURING ONE. AFTER SPEAKING WITH THE NETHERLANDS AMBASSADOR I WILL ATTEMPT AN ASSESSMENT OF HOW WE MIGHT BUILD ON THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REMARKS.

8. SEE MIFT.

THOMSON

MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)

LIMITED

NENAD

MED

DEFENCE DEPT

FUSD

NEWS DEPT

UND

NAD

WED

SED

ECD(E)

FINANCE DEPT

PROTOCOL DEPT

PS

PS/LADY YOUNG

PS/MR LUCE

PS/FUS

SIR J BULLARD

SIR J LEAHY

MR WRIGHT

MR CARTLEDGE

MR MACINNES

MR ADAMS

MR EGERTON

MR JENKINS

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MOD DS11

MR GOODALL) CABINET
SIR R ARMSTRONG) OFFICE

SIR P MOORE
BUCKINGHAM PALACE

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CYPRUS: POSSIBLE WITHDRAWAL OF SOME TURKISH TROOPS AND MR DENKTASH'S
STATEMENT OF 2 JANUARYLine to Take

{For use only if raised}

Welcome any steps to lower tension in Cyprus. Have been in close contact with the parties concerned over the past few weeks. Remain ready to assist the UN Secretary General's efforts in whatever way he considers appropriate.

Carefully studying Mr Denktash's statement and the proposals contained in it. Would not want to comment in detail at this stage.

Background

1. On 3 January the Turkish Foreign Ministry announced the intention of withdrawing 1500 Turkish troops from northern Cyprus over the next two months 'as a goodwill gesture'.
2. On 2 January the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr Denktash, issued a statement containing proposals:
 - (a) for the handing over to UN administration of the deserted township of Varosha, currently held by the Turkish Cypriots;
 - (b) for the opening up of Nicosia airport;
 - (c) for the resumption of intercommunal talks.

Original on unsuitable paper