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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1268 OF 8 NOV

INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO, AMMAN, BEIRUT, DAMASCUS,
TEL AVIV, JEDDA, CAIRO, UKMIS GENEVA, BONN (FOR S OF S'S
PARTY), PARIS, ROME

Richard M. ...

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MY TEL NO 1264 : MIDDLE EAST : SOVIET COMMENT.

SUMMARY

1. RECENT COMMENT BY THE SOVIET PRESS ON EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAS BEEN MARKED BY RETICENCE ABOUT THE P.L.O. CIVIL WAR AND OMINOUS WARNINGS ABOUT U.S. INTENTIONS TOWARDS SYRIA AND THE LEBANON. THE LEBANESE CONFERENCE IN GENEVA HAS RECEIVED A POSITIVE PLUG.

DETAIL.

2. PRAVDA OF 5 NOVEMBER HAS PROVIDED SO FAR THE ONLY REPORT IN THE CENTRAL PRESS OF THE FIGHTING BETWEEN PLO FACTIONS AROUND TRIPOLI. THIS QUOTED BEIRUT RADIO TO THE EFFECT THAT SERIOUS CLASHES HAD AGAIN BROKEN OUT AMONG VARIOUS PALESTINIAN GROUPS AND THAT "ARMED FORMATIONS LINKED TO OPPOSITION GROUPS IN FATAH AND LED BY ABU MUSA, WITH ARTILLERY AND TANK SUPPORT, WERE ATTACKING THE POSITIONS OF SUPPORTERS OF ARAFAT, THE PLO'S CHAIRMAN." PRAVDA ALSO REPORTED APPEALS FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ARAB LEAGUE AND THE ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY FOR AN END TO THE FIGHTING WHICH, BOTH WERE QUOTED AS SAYING, WOULD DAMAGE THE PALESTINIAN AND ARAB CAUSE. THE FACT THAT THE APPEALS WERE GIVEN PUBLICITY HERE SUGGESTS THAT THEY BROADLY REFLECT THE SOVIET VIEW OF THE FIGHTING, THE SYRIAN ROLE IN WHICH WAS STRIKINGLY ABSENT FROM PRAVDA'S REPORT.

3. PRAVDA OF 6 NOVEMBER AGAIN RAISED (MY TUR) THE POSSIBILITY OF AN "ACT OF RETRIBUTION" BY THE U.S. AND ISRAEL FOR THE RESPECTIVE BOMB ATTACKS AGAINST THEIR FORCES IN THE LEBANON. SYRIA COULD BE THE TARGET. PRAVDA OF 6, 7, AND 8 NOVEMBER DREW ATTENTION TO THE CONCENTRATION OF U.S. NAVAL FORCES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND TO LEBANESE PRESS REPORTS THAT THE U.S. WAS PREPARING LARGE SCALE OPERATIONS ON LEBANESE TERRITORY.

14. MEANWHILE

4. MEANWHILE, IZVESTIA OF 6 NOVEMBER REPORTED THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE LEBANESE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION CONFERENCE IN GENEVA. GEMAYEL WOULD VISIT ARAB COUNTRIES AND THE U.S. TO REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE, THE RESULTS OF WHICH HAD CONFIRMED THE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI TROOPS AS THE PRIORITY PROBLEM. IZVESTIA ALSO REPORTED THE FORMATION OF A SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO PREPARE CONCRETE PROPOSALS FOR THE RESUMED CONFERENCE WHICH WOULD DISCUSS A CEASE-FIRE AND THE CREATION OF A REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. BEHIND-THE-SCENES ACTIVITY IN GENEVA OF U.S. AND ISRAELI REPRESENTATIVES SHOWED CONTINUING ATTEMPTS TO DIVIDE AND RULE AND UNDERMINE A LEBANON SETTLEMENT.

SUTHERLAND

MIDDLE EAST

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