

Subject
Lebanon Int Sit f

IMMEDIATE 091610Z FEBRUARY 84

FROM CABINET OFFICE
TO WHITEHOUSE

BT

T O P S E C R E T

MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN

PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T29184

DEAR RON,
THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE ABOUT THE LEBANON RECEIVED
EARLY THIS MORNING.

IT WAS IN AN EFFORT TO MEET YOUR CONCERNS THAT WE
MADE CLEAR IN PUBLIC THAT WE WERE REDEPLOYING OUR CONTINGENT
TO RFA RELIANT UNTIL THE SITUATION BECAME CLEARER. BUT THE
LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS OF KEEPING OUR TROOPS THERE FOR ANY
LENGTH OF TIME ARE SEVERE, NOT LEAST BECAUSE WE MAY NEED
SPACE ON BOARD THIS SHIP FOR BRITISH CITIZENS WHO ARE
EVACUATED FROM BEIRUT. IT IS THEREFORE POSSIBLE THAT WE SHALL
HAVE TO REDEPLOY THE BULK OF OUR MNF CONTINGENT FURTHER
AFIELD TO CYPRUS. BUT IF WE DO THIS WE EXPECT TO
LEAVE SOME OF THE CONTINGENT ON BOARD. WE WILL MAKE NO
ANNOUNCEMENT OF PERMANENT WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT FURTHER
CONSULTATIONS WITH YOU.

WE UNDERSTAND THE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT SITUATION WITH
WHICH YOU ARE NOW FACED. IN PARTICULAR, I CAN SEE WHY YOU
HAVE HAD TO GIVE YOUR MILITARY COMMANDERS DISCRETION TO
RETURN FIRE AGAINST SYRIAN CONTROLLED AREAS. BUT I BELIEVE
THAT ANY FORCE USED BY OUR COUNTRIES IN THE
LEBANON SHOULD BE CLEARLY LIMITED TO THE NEEDS OF SELF-
DEFENCE. ANY REPETITION OF THE PATTERN AND SCALE OF SHELLING
BY THE NEW JERSEY THAT OCCURRED YESTERDAY COULD I FEAR INCREASE
THE VIOLENCE WHICH GRIPS BEIRUT. IT WOULD PUT AT RISK CURRENT
PLANS TO EVACUATE WESTERN NATIONALS AND INCREASE THE THREAT
TO THE REMAINING MNF CONTINGENTS AND TO BRITISH AND
AMERICAN STAFF WORKING IN THE BRITISH EMBASSY. DRUZE
LEADERS HAVE ALREADY APPROACHED US TO POINT OUT THE
CONSEQUENCES WHICH MIGHT FOLLOW IF CASUALTIES CONTINUE
TO BE INFLICTED ON THEIR PEOPLE. THEY WOULD FIND IT MUCH
MORE DIFFICULT TO RESTRAIN THEIR FOLLOWERS FROM ATTACKING
WESTERN TARGETS IN BEIRUT WHICH HAVE SO FAR BEEN LEFT RELATIVELY
UNSCATHED IN THE RECENT FIGHTING. THE POLITICAL EFFECTS ON
GAMAYEL'S ALREADY WEAKENED POSITION AND HENCE ON THE PROSPECTS
FOR AVOIDING THE PARTITION OF LEBANON COULD ALSO BE SERIOUS. I
HOPE, THEREFORE, THAT YOU WILL URGENTLY CONSIDER ORDERING
YOUR COMMANDERS TO USE THEIR DISCRETION WITH THE UTMOST
RESTRAINT.

WITH BEST WISHES
YOURS EVER
MARGARET

BT