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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

#64

22 NOV 1983

*And.*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL  
SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Security in Lebanon (U)

(U) This memorandum responds to your request of 17 November for comments from the Department of Defense on the draft NSDD, "Security in Lebanon."

(U) The Department believes that American interests in Lebanon continue to be served by the visible presence of a MNF in Beirut. We concur with the President's assessment that this presence should be maintained while making every effort to reduce the vulnerability of the USMNF ashore. As a consequence of recent events, such as the September conflict at Suq al Gharb, the 23 October bombing attacks against the US and French MNF contingents, and the subsequent French and Israeli air strikes in Lebanon, the US contingent is increasingly being targeted by hostile elements. These circumstances, which are a substantive change from the conditions existing in September 1982 when the MNF went in, dictate the need to state more clearly the USMNF mission.

(U) Accordingly, we recommend the following mission be assigned to USCINCEUR to govern the activity of the USMNF:

- Occupy and defend portions of the Beirut International Airport (BIA) and thereby provide a visible demonstration of support for the Government of Lebanon while deterring hostilities and contributing to the security of BIA.
- Provide sufficient air and naval gunfire support to insure protection of units ashore.
- Provide intelligence support and such other support as required for the physical protection of forces ashore to minimize danger from sniper fire and other terrorist attacks.
- Coordinate with other friendly forces, other forces of the MNF and Lebanese Armed Forces for intelligence exchange and mutual support.

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(U) The ROE for the USMNF must also be clearly understood, such that US forces know what we want them to do, what force they can use to protect themselves and the limit of their responsibilities. The existing ROE authorize the use of whatever force is available if required for self defense. No change to this provision is proposed. If, however, the situation in Beirut deteriorates to the point that combat support must be provided to hold key positions whose loss could jeopardize the survival of a broadened Government of Lebanon which includes all factions and thereby threaten the safety of the MNF, then that support should be a separate, discrete mission, to be carried out when directed by the NCA. Therefore, the Department recommends that the existing ROE not be changed; rather, USCINCEUR should be assigned a mission to, "Be prepared to provide combat support, to include air and naval gunfire support, for any expansion of the current mission if and when directed by the NCA."

(U) The twin goals of increased visibility and increased security for the USMNF are difficult to achieve, since, under present circumstances greater exposure entails greater risk to our forces. The Department believes that presently our security concerns can be best served by keeping some USMNF ground forces aboard ship and rotating them periodically from ship to shore in support of a two- or three-company presence at BIA. Additional training of LAF units as a totally separate activity by U.S. Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) could increase our visibility and compensate for a reduced on-shore level of US forces.

(U) The foregoing recommendations are intended to lessen the vulnerability of US forces and thus enhance the UNMNF role in support of American diplomacy in the Middle East. Military considerations dictate either reducing the exposure of US forces or, alternatively, actively suppressing the sources of threat to the USMNF in the areas surrounding BIA. The Department suggests, however, that the threat might best be addressed through diplomatic approaches. Fundamentalists Shias in South Beirut and the Bekaa Valley increasingly view the USMNF as an adversary. This is due to the perception that the US supports Israel's continued occupation of Southern Lebanon and the GOL's reluctance to grant political participation commensurate with the Shias' numbers in Lebanon. If American military force is directed against the Shia community in supporting the LAF or otherwise, the result could be a quantum increase in the level of radical hostility aimed at US forces. At some point, USMNF presence ashore could become unsafe as well as counterproductive for American diplomatic efforts. As an alternative approach, the Department recommends the following political objectives aimed at mitigating the hostility of those elements which presently constitute a threat to the USMNF:

- In coordination with the GOL, a major public relations effort to show US sympathy for long-standing factional political grievances and firm intention to support reasonable positions of some of the many factions in the reconciliation process.

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- Press GOL to make reasonable concessions with all non-Christian Lebanese communities in the national reconciliation talks.
- Press GOL to sever all relations with Iran and expel, now, all Iranian diplomatic personnel.
- With Israeli Ministers Shamir and Arens, candid presentations on Israeli activity in southern Lebanon, to include pressing the GOI for:
  - More support for and cooperation with GOL and LAF in the south, allowing the LAF to establish a viable presence there.
  - Redirecting Israeli influence among Christians and Druze to support the central government; termination of Israeli support to factional militias.
  - Open-minded consideration of some modification or suspension of the 17 May Lebanese-Israeli agreement if arrangements can be worked out amongst the parties that can advance the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon.
- With Syria, indicate that we have no interest in fighting Syria in Lebanon, but wish instead to pursue a settlement which is fair to Lebanon, Syria and Israel. Tell Assad that our forces will not undertake actions to provoke tensions. However, we would inform Syria in no uncertain terms that we would hold Syria responsible for any further threats emanating from the territory it controls, and indicate that our naval, air and covert assets--not our Marines--will take appropriate actions if Syria chooses to provoke us further.

(1) Conditions in Lebanon have changed substantially over the recent past and remain highly volatile, with a tenuous ceasefire and continuing factional differences. At the same time, however, the prospects for political movement appear to have improved. Gemayel seems stronger after Geneva, and the LF may be allowed to atrophy. Also, there are indications of flexibility on the part of some factional leaders, and Khaddam, during his recent visit to Beirut, talked of modification of the 17 May Agreement, not its abrogation. Given these developments, we may well be at a critical juncture in terms of achieving U.S. objectives in Lebanon, and it is, therefore, essential that we move forward

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diplomatically to capitalize on what appears to be a window of opportunity. Moving forward diplomatically while taking the military and diplomatic steps outlined in the previous paragraphs will ensure that the USMNF mission in Lebanon does not lose its validity.

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