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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

October 21, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: US Policy in Lebanon and the Middle East

Based on Wednesday's NSPG meeting on the Middle East, this memorandum sets forth our views on the State paper that was prepared for the NSPG.

In our Lebanon policy, we must seek to use US influence, and that of Israel, to draw Druze support away from Syria and toward the central government. Likewise, Israel's influence with the Christian community should be directed toward support for the central government. This would improve the prospects for an effective political compromise within Lebanon. In the broader context, we should not assume that Syria will be a long-term adversary of the United States. Rather, our long-term goal should be to wean the Syrians away from Soviet influence. Such a policy requires firmness of purpose combined with a readiness to reciprocate if Syria takes some concrete steps supportive of US objectives.

The fragility of the current situation in Lebanon may not, for the near-term, permit significant change in status of the Multinational Force (MNF), but we should keep the options for alternate employment of the MNF open because of the changing situation in Lebanon. The static position of the Marines ashore presents an extremely difficult defensive situation, and the ongoing sniper fire against the Marines indicates the MNF may be being targeted by factional elements. We should continue pressuring the GOL and all involved factions to stop the sniping. We should also resume our aerial reconnaissance flights over Lebanon. Ultimately, however, additional defensive actions by US forces may be required, or, it might be necessary and desirable to reduce or eliminate US ground presence in Beirut and keep our forces offshore, perhaps bolstered by additional naval gunfire support. Thus, we would not be weakening our commitment to help secure peace in the Mid East, but would actually strengthen it in terms of fire power. Any expansion in the employment of the MNF or their Rules of Engagement at this stage would be premature, could undermine the ceasefire and reconciliation process, and could be misinterpreted by Gemayel as a sign that he need not show flexibility in the current national talks.

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Because of the movement toward national reconciliation, the continuing improvement in the LAF and the pending arrival of neutral observers, there may also be an opportunity and a basis for changing either the deployment or employment of the MNF. Whatever course of action is decided, we should act in full concert with our MNF partners. Briefing charts on the political-military situation in Lebanon, to include our security assistance program, are attached at Tab A.

In our relations with Israel, more reciprocity and balance is needed, as presented on the chart General Vessey used in the NSPG meeting.

On a number of current issues between the US and Israel, it should be noted that DoD has been very forthcoming. On the LAVI program, DoD has approved over 30 license requests even though the last thing the Israeli economy needs now is a huge expenditure to develop and build a new fighter plane admittedly inferior to the US planes sold to them. No further LAVI requests are currently pending. In addition, our domestic producers strongly object to our subsidizing the LAVI with funds designed to improve the Israeli military capability. The question of limiting offset purchases by US contractors on FMS sales is on hold by mutual agreement of NSC, State, DoD, OMB and Treasury pending review of comparable requests from many countries. Regarding joint cooperation in military development and production, the Israeli Government is reportedly pleased with the latest DoD draft, and talks are on-going. Our bilateral intelligence relationship was addressed in early September by Major General Tixier, DASD(NESA), who met in Israel with the Director of Military Intelligence; DoD is still awaiting a draft document from the Israeli Government that would upgrade this relationship. General Vessey is planning a visit to Israel in early January, and we understand that the Israelis are satisfied with the arrangements thus far.

However, DoD opposes the use of FMS funds in the US, Israel or anywhere for development of the LAVI aircraft since we should not be in the position of creating foreign competition to the US aircraft industry, or the use of US funds intended to improve Israeli military strength, to build a plane inferior to available US candidates. DoD continues to question the viability of the LAVI fighter aircraft as a cost-effective weapons system to meet future Israeli defense concerns.

We agree with State that Israel's opposition to the Jordan Logistics Planning program is unwarranted and unacceptable. The USG must continue to press Israel to withdraw its opposition to the program with the Congress. Occasionally favorable Israeli action should be secured without compensation over and above our current large payments to Israel. We also find Israel's support

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of elements opposing the central government to be counterproductive to US efforts to stabilize Lebanon. On the other hand, we should encourage Israel to convey a posture of firmness toward Syria and support Israel in opposing further Syrian or PLO advances that undermine Lebanon's integrity and independence.

The transition from Prime Minister Begin may offer an opportunity to restore the US-Israel relationship to a solid basis of fair reciprocity and balance in our cooperation. The Shamir government must understand that flexibility on key issues -- such as the West Bank -- will be required if it is to enjoy full US support. A strategic dialogue can serve both countries' interests, provided our negotiators pledge US actions only when reciprocal Israeli actions are forthcoming, and provided we keep in mind the limitations of Israeli capabilities in the event of a US-Soviet war in the region. We should not rush into major new negotiations with Israel, since the Israeli government may now be too weak to make concessions to us. Yet Israel's settlements policy on the West Bank must soon be addressed again; it is contrary to long-standing US policy and harmful to our interests in the region. It is also very costly for Israel; hence, this may be an opportune moment to enlist those Israeli leaders who are concerned with their economic crisis to force a change in the settlements policy.

We believe our policy of neutrality toward the Iran-Iraq War should be changed to move toward Iraq without, of course, giving the appearance to Iran of becoming a co-belligerent of Iraq. We should approve the Italian sale of frigates with US engines to Iraq, in part, because it would help our very supportive friends in Rome. Prime Minister Craxi's visit has provided an excellent occasion to give the good news to the Italians. We also agree that we should make a renewed effort -- in line with our long-standing policy -- to halt any sales of arms to Iran by Israel or South Korea. Such a modification in our policy of neutrality would help with our Arab friends. Broader aspects of the Iran-Iraq War and possible US military options to maintain freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz should be treated as a new NSC issue.

Attachment

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WHERE ARE WE NOW

- U.S. HAS SUBSTANTIAL GROUND AND SEA FORCES COMMITTED TO LEBANON.
 - USMNF IS IN POOR DEFENSIVE POSITION.
 - CEASEFIRE IS HOLDING BUT TENUOUS.
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- UN AND OTHER MNF CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE SIZABLE FORCE COMMITMENTS IN LEBANON.
 - GREECE AND TURKEY ON VERGE OF SENDING OBSERVERS.
 - FAILURE TO BROADEN CURRENT LEBANESE GOVERNMENT COULD RESULT IN RENEWED FIGHTING.
 - U.S. HAS COMMITTED OVER \$550 MILLION IN SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO LAF.

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WHAT WE HAVE DONE

WITHIN THE PAST 14 MONTHS, WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THE FOLLOWING IN LEBANON:

- CEASEFIRE BETWEEN ISRAEL, SYRIA, AND PLO
- WITHDRAWAL OF PLO BRIGADES (10,000 FIGHTERS)
- ELECTION OF A PRESIDENT AND REPRESENTATIVES
- AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND LEBANON
- ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL TO ANALII RIVER
- ORGANIZED, EQUIPPED, AND TRAINED A MULTI-CONFESSIONAL LEBANESE ARMED FORCES (LAF); LAF PERFORMED WELL IN COMBAT
- CEASEFIRE BETWEEN GOL, FACTIONS, AND SURROGATES; SYRIA AND ISRAEL DID NOT INTERVENE DIRECTLY;
- SECURITY COMMITTEE MEETS REGULARLY; POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETS THIS WEEK.

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WHERE DO WE GO IN LEBANON

GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON

- INSIST ON NATIONAL RECONCILIATION
- SET TIMETABLE

LAF

- MUST BE MULTI - CONFESSIONAL
- CONTINUE TO UPGRADE, MODERNIZE, AND TRAIN, DEPLOY THROUGHOUT LEBANON

FACTIONS

- RIGHTFUL ROLE IN GOVERNMENT
- INCORPORATE MILITIAS INTO LAF

ISRAEL

- SUPPORT GOL AND LAF IN SOUTH LEBANON
- RECOGNIZE ISRAELI NEED FOR INFLUENCE IN LEBANON
- ANNOUNCE TIME OF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL

SYRIA

- SEPARATE FACTIONS FROM SYRIA, SYRIA FROM SOVIETS
- RECOGNIZE SYRIAN NEED FOR INFLUENCE IN LEBANON
- ANNOUNCE TIME OF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL

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LEBANESE ARMED FORCES

- MULTI-CONFESSIONAL (50% SHIA/SUNNI MOSLEM, 40% CHRISTIAN, 8% DRUZE, 2% OTHER)
- FOUGHT WELL IN WEST BEIRUT AND SUQ-AL-GHARB
- NEARLY DOUBLED ITS COMBAT POWER IN PAST 2 WEEKS, IS GETTING STRONGER
- SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN AMMUNITION SUPPLIES
- IS NOW STRONGER THAN ANY FACTION

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WHERE DO WE GO (CONTINUED)

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- ESTABLISH ROLE FOR UN OBSERVERS AND HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS
- USE UN FORUMS TO ASSIST GOL

USMNF OPTIONS

- CONTINUE PRESENT DEPLOYMENT
- REDUCE VULNERABILITY THRU REDUCED EXPOSURE ASHORE
- WITHDRAW TO SHIPS AND PROVIDE FIRE SUPPORT ONLY.
- ESTABLISH INTERPOSITION FORCE BETWEEN SYRIANS, LEBANESE, AND ISRAELIS

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