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SYSTEM II
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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

December 1, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR ROBERT C. McFARLANE

FROM: GEOFFREY KEMP *GK*

SUBJECT: NSPG Meeting

HAS SECS

If the NSPG this morning enters into a predictably indecisive phase one way to get at least some action would be to put aside issues of long-term strategy and focus on the immediate problem this week. Namely, are we going to respond to increasing attacks on our positions with illumination rounds or heavy weapons? I personally believe that the next time a shell lands at the airport we should take out a couple of Syrian batteries in the Bekka come what may and then send strong warnings to Syria, the Druze and the Shia. I think you would get consensus to do this especially if couched in terms that we seem to be weak and unable to respond to any threat to our forces. It is preferable to get a one-time decision such as this than to get nothing. I have a hunch that unless things go remarkably well, the group is going to obfuscate on the longer term questions when in reality we need a decision today to agree to do something even though it may be less than what we all would like.

DECLASSIFIED / RELEASED

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BY amf, NARA, DATE 3/9/06

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BY KML NARA DATE 10/8/10

NATIONAL SECURITY PLANNING GROUP MEETING

December 1, 1983

TALKING POINTS FOR ROBERT MCFARLANE

-- MR. PRESIDENT, WE HAVE ASKED FOR THIS MEETING ON LEBANON BEFORE YOUR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT GEMAYEL. WE HAVE CERTAIN INDICATIONS THAT GEMAYEL IS GOING TO ASK FOR YOUR HELP WITH THE BASIC DILEMMA HE CONFRONTS.

WHERE ARE WE IN LEBANON

-- GEMAYEL IS UNDER GREAT PRESSURE TO PERSUADE US TO GO ALONG WITH A DELAY AND CERTAIN MODIFICATIONS IN IMPLEMENTING THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT IN ORDER TO GET SUPPORT FROM THE OPPOSITION GROUP. THIS IS THE SAUDI AND, FOR THE MOMENT, THE SYRIAN POSITION.

-- THE SYRIANS APPEAR TO BE IN A WEAKER POSITION TODAY: ASSAD'S POOR HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT BY COMMITTEE, RECENT INDICATIONS OF LIMITATIONS ON SOVIET SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN ACTION IN LEBANON AND TIMIDITY IN FACE OF FRENCH AND ISRAELI REPRISALS.

-- WE ARE COMMITTED TO NO CHANGE IN THE STATUS OF THE AGREEMENT. YOU REAFFIRMED THIS POLICY ON TUESDAY IN YOUR DEPARTURE STATEMENT WITH PRIME MINISTER SHAMIR.

- FROM THE SHAMIR VISIT WE HAVE LEARNED THE ISRAELIS ARE PREPARED TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE AND MAY BE PREPARED UNDER THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES TO CONSIDER FURTHER UNILATERAL WITHDRAWALS.
- THE ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD BE MORE ASSERTIVE IN OUR USE OF FORCE AGAINST THE SYRIANS AND SYRIAN-SUPPORTED DRUZE AND WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE LAF TO CRACK DOWN ON SHIA RADICALS IN WEST BEIRUT. THEY WOULD HELP TAKE CARE OF THE SYRIANS AND HANDLE THE PLO. THEY ARGUE THAT IF WE ALL PRESENT A TOUGHER POSTURE, GEMAYEL WILL FIND IT EASIER TO DO A DEAL WITH THE SHIA AND DRUZE MODERATES.
- THE ISRAELIS BELIEVE (AND WE CONCUR) THAT IF GEMAYEL EXTENDS HIS AUTHORITY FIRST OVER ALL OF BEIRUT AND THE SHUF, AND THEN THE SOUTH, THEY WILL BE IN A POSITION TO UNDERTAKE FURTHER WITHDRAWALS EVEN IF THE AGREEMENT IS NOT IMPLEMENTED AND THE SYRIANS STAY PUT.
- THE PROBLEM IS WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TELL GEMAYEL, IN VERY CLEAR TERMS, WHAT WE WANT HIM TO DO AND WHAT WE ARE PREPARED TO DO TO SUPPORT HIM.

-- IF WE AGREE WE CANNOT CHANGE THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT, WE ARE LEFT WITH EITHER:

- DOING MORE OF THE SAME AND MAKING NO PROGRESS,
- BEING MORE ASSERTIVE IN BOTH OUR DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY MOVES, OR
- QUITTING.

-- I THINK ITS FAIR TO SAY THAT YOUR ADVISORS HAVE A BASIC DISAGREEMENT ON HOW WE SHOULD USE OUR MILITARY POWER IN LEBANON AND OFF-SHORE IN SUPPORT OF OUR PREFERRED DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY.

-- OUR MILITARY POSTURE AT PRESENT MAY NOT BE ADEQUATE TO SUPPORT THE KIND OF DIPLOMACY IT WILL TAKE TO RESOLVE THE ISSUES. PUT SIMPLY, OUR MILITARY FORCES ARE NOT HAVING MUCH POLITICAL IMPACT, DUG-IN AS WE ARE AT THE AIRPORT, AND WE INCUR SIGNIFICANT RISKS--POLITICAL AND HUMAN--IF WE TAKE ANOTHER TOLL OF CASUALTIES.

-- THERE ARE, I BELIEVE, THREE RATHER STARK CHOICES FROM HERE:

- FIRST, WE CAN GRADUALLY WITHDRAW FROM OUR VULNERABLE POSITIONS IN BEIRUT AND MOVE OFF-SHORE RELYING ALMOST ENTIRELY ON DIPLOMACY WITH LESS AMBITIOUS OBJECTIVES. WHETHER OUR MNF PARTNERS WILL STAY IS PROBLEMATIC.

- SECOND, TO COMPLEMENT OUR PROPOSED HARD-NOSED DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES, WE CAN TAKE A MORE AGGRESSIVE AND ASSERTIVE STANCE AND USE MEASURED MILITARY FORCE TO CONVINCING THE SYRIANS AND THEIR SURROGATES THAT FORCE WILL BE MET WITH FORCE, IF NECESSARY. THIS WILL REASSURE GEMAYEL OF OUR COMMITMENT TO GOL SECURITY AS HE TAKES CLEAR RISKS AT OUR INSISTENCE IN MAKING SOME TOUGH POLITICAL DECISIONS. HERE AGAIN, SOME OF OUR MNF PARTNERS MAY BOLT WITH THIS AGGRESSIVE POLITICAL-MILITARY SOLUTION.

-OR-

-- THIRD, WE CAN RELY MUCH MORE HEAVILY ON OUR OWN MILITARY POWER TOGETHER WITH THE ISRAELIS AND TRY TO FORCE THE SYRIANS OUT OF LEBANON IN A MILITARY SOLUTION.

OBVIOUSLY THERE ARE SHADES OF GRAY, BUT I PUT THE CHOICES STARKLY BECAUSE IF WE WANT TO MAKE PROGRESS IN LEBANON TOWARD THE OBJECTIVES YOU HAVE SET AND IF WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT, AS YOU REAFFIRMED TWO DAYS AGO, THE STATUS QUO WON'T DO IT.

IN PREVIOUS NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION DIRECTIVES, YOU HAVE ALREADY DIRECTED THAT WE EXPAND THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT AT SUK AL GHARB TO COVER THE REMAINING STRATEGIC ARTERIES WHICH LEAD INTO BEIRUT. IN SEVERAL NSDDs, YOU HAVE DIRECTED THAT THE MNF UNDERTAKE AN AGGRESSIVE SELF-DEFENSE OF U.S. AND OTHER MNF CONTINGENTS. FINALLY, IN A PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT, YOU WERE ALSO INCLINED TO HAVE US MOVE OUT OF THE AIRPORT AND UNDERTAKE A MORE ACTIVE PRESENCE IN THE GREATER BEIRUT AREA.

-- THERE REMAIN DIFFERENCES ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD INTERPRET YOUR DECISIONS AND DIRECTION.

-- SOME BELIEVE THAT THE COMBINATION OF SUPPORT FOR THE LAF IN DEFENDING KEY ARTERIES TO BEIRUT, A VERY AGGRESSIVE SELF-DEFENSE, AND A MORE VISIBLE PRESENCE IN GREATER BEIRUT WOULD PROVIDE THE ESSENTIAL MILITARY POWER TO SUPPORT THE HARD-NOSED DIPLOMACY. GEORGE, DON RUMSFELD, AND BILL CASEY RECOMMEND.

-- CAP AND JACK VESSEY, ON THE OTHER HAND, INTERPRET YOUR DECISIONS DIFFERENTLY AND I WANT TO DEFER TO THEM IN PRESENTING THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE ENHANCED PRESENCE AND MORE ASSERTIVE RULES OF ENGAGEMENTS.

-- BEFORE WE OPEN THE DISCUSSION I THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO QUOTE FROM THE ORIGINAL MANDATE FOR THE MNF THAT WE AGREED ON WITH GOL.

...THE MANDATE OF THE MNF WILL BE TO PROVIDE AN INTERPOSITION FORCE AT AGREED LOCATIONS AND THEREBY PROVIDE THE MULTINATIONAL PRESENCE REQUESTED BY THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO ASSIST IT AND THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES (LAF) IN THE BEIRUT AREA. THIS PRESENCE WILL FACILITATE THE RESTORATION OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT SOVEREIGNTY AND AUTHORITY OVER THE BEIRUT AREA, AND THEREBY FURTHER EFFORTS OF MY GOVERNMENT TO ASSURE THE SAFETY OF PERSONS IN THE AREA AND BRING TO AN END THE VIOLENCE WHICH HAS TRAGICALLY RECURRED. THE MNF MAY UNDERTAKE OTHER FUNCTIONS ONLY BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT...

-- I SUGGEST THAT WE BEGIN WITH BRIEF STATEMENTS BY GEORGE, CAP, AND JACK.