

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



30 December 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Next Steps in Lebanon (U)

~~(TS)~~ The attached paper represents the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the situation in Lebanon. I am in basic agreement with their recommendations. The paper is responsive to the Long Commission Report, which recommended, among other things, a reexamination of alternative means of achieving US objectives in Lebanon, and also recommended that the JCS develop alternative military options for accomplishing the mission of the USMNF while reducing the risk to the force. It also responds to my request to the Chiefs to provide their views. I recommend that we plan to implement this concept, with the exact date for movement to the ships to be determined by the local situation but, in any event, by February. This is consistent with the view that I have expressed in the past. Placing our forces offshore would allow us to fulfill our commitment and support our basic objectives, and at the same time maintain public and Congressional support for the job we are doing in Lebanon.

~~(TS)~~ It should be noted that the tremendous effort of filling out the LAF to ten brigades is an expensive one. We estimate the cost at around \$1 billion, not counting the Lebanese request for aircraft. There will be the need for a supplemental security assistance request to the Congress. The funding issue should be addressed in concert with the other MNF contributors.

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, DC 20315



JCSM-323-83

29 December 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Next Steps in Lebanon (U)

1. (S) On 19 November the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported to you that the situation in Lebanon is at critical juncture in terms of achieving US objectives. We cited positive developments on the political front and urged Ambassador Rumsfeld to get vigorously involved in the negotiations. Six weeks later it appears that Ambassador Rumsfeld's recent trip to the Middle East, coupled with continued military pressure, has established a framework for future negotiation and that there are prospects for political movement. The JCS have concluded that it is now time to reevaluate our military posture in and around Lebanon to see if there are changes which could be made to improve the opportunities of achieving US objectives in Lebanon and the region.

2. (TS) In early December Syrian firing on US TARPS mission resulted in US responses with naval air and naval gunfire to include the 16" guns of the Battleship New Jersey. The reaction by the Syrians has been relatively restrained. Clearly they know we mean to protect our reconnaissance flights, and recent flights have received only light AA fire and no SAMs. The Syrians probably see a widening US military role in the Middle East as not in their national interests. This attitude has been conveyed in the meetings with Ambassador Rumsfeld, messages from [redacted] and private meetings [redacted]

3. (S) There are other indicators that our efforts to date may be paying dividends. We believe that Israel now wants to conduct another phased withdrawal and tripartite talks have begun. The Gemayel government is stronger and gained in stature as a result of Geneva. The Phalange influence in the government and in the military has diminished. To demonstrate his self-confidence Gemayel has traveled to the capitals of Europe, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Damascus, Morocco and even Libya in the pursuit of peace. While much more needs to be done in the area of national reconciliation, Amin Gemayel has established himself as the President of Lebanon. The most significant improvement has been the restoration and performance of the multi-confessional LAF. In the year since its rebuilding began, the LAF has demonstrated the ability to assimilate large amounts of sophisticated weaponry quickly and to fight well on the battlefield. Over the past weekend the LAF successfully relieved the French MNF of several positions in West Beirut. This area is more stable and secure now than it was under French MNF presence. The LAF arrested 100 Palestinians/Syrians and 15

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Iranian armed trouble makers, and inflicted serious casualties on armed insurgents who opposed the government. The LAF now appears to be capable of extending control over metropolitan Beirut. It is clear that the LAF, as the only truly multiconfessional organization in Lebanon, is emerging as the single strong guarantor of Lebanese sovereignty. It is important, therefore, that we enhance and strengthen its capability to perform that role, and not inhibit it through the presence of an MNF which by its charter cannot carry out the difficult security tasks required to control the armed factions in Beirut.

4. (TS) All of the other MNF partners have recently reviewed their commitment in Lebanon and have decided to continue to support Lebanon and maintain forces in the area; however, all are clearly concerned about the value of their contributions in Beirut. As we approach 1984, we can expect reduced French and Italian contingents and a tenuous British presence. All three have indicated willingness to work with us closely as we strive toward common objectives. The other MNF contributors also see the changed situation in Lebanon, and most probably would like to restructure their posture as soon as the objectives which required their presence are achieved.

5. (TS) In reexamining our military posture in and around Lebanon the principal question is how to bring the totality of US military force in the area to bear in support of the GOL in the most effective way? The GOL must, through both negotiation and political accommodation, extend its control throughout all of Lebanon. The instrument and symbol of that territorial sovereignty is the LAF. Hence, at some juncture, the LAF must be capable, and be seen as being capable, of imposing its authority unilaterally. Beirut, the capital, is the symbol of the GOL's ability to govern. Therefore, as the LAF capability increases, it is apparent that the presence of US and other MNF forces in Beirut may be more of a liability to the GOL than a help. This is true not only for reasons of perception, but also because the MNF presence ashore inhibits military flexibility and freedom of action for the LAF. In a similar vein, we are nearing the point now where US military force can be brought to bear in a more effective way if all US forces, including the Marine amphibious unit, are off shore. It would reduce the vulnerability of the USMNF, relieve the LAF of concerns for MNF safety, and give both the LAF and US forces increased flexibility. We will need to keep naval air and gunfire support in the area and continue to remind the Syrians that we can and will intervene to support the GOL if necessary. Having the amphibious forces aboard ship will give us the opportunity

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to threaten intervention at time and place of our choosing and would deny the Syrian surrogates one of their easy targets. At the same time the prospect of facing the much improved LAF instead of the relatively benign MNF may well find the factions in Beirut much more willing to negotiate with the Gemayel government. The Gemayel government faced with the prospect of Beirut without the MNF may find itself more willing to negotiate with the factions.

6. (TS) We now need to force events by placing into action a scenario which will force the key players--the GOL, the factions, the Israelis, and the Syrians--to take the next important steps. We will need to work with our MNF partners to orchestrate a series of events which support our larger political strategy: greater accommodation on the part of the Gemayel government, time-phased withdrawal of the IDF and withdrawal of the Syrians. Certainly at first blush, many may well look at the moving of the MNF from Beirut as undercutting the Gemayel government. Such is not the case, and it need not be perceived as the case. What we do militarily must be coordinated with Ambassador Rumsfeld's negotiations and the JCS believe that the suggested change in the military posture can fit in with and support those negotiations.

7. (TS) We should undertake the following steps:

a. In coordination with our MNF partners and the GOL, reach an understanding on the ability of GOL/LAF to control Beirut and environs, and agreement that MNF is no longer needed on ground and that phased turnover to LAF should continue.

b. At same time tell Gemayel (and the world) that we will support the plan to strengthen the LAF by ongoing modernization of LAF combat capabilities and by increasing the LAF to ten brigades to enable it to control remainder of country as foreign forces withdraw. We should work to get other MNF partners to offer support to LAF.

c. In conjunction with all MNF partners announce continued military support for GOL (peace in Lebanon) through intentions of keeping military force in area. Get French and Italians to agree to keep naval forces with troops embarked in area.

d. Have GOL invite international observers (ICRC or UNTSO now in Beirut) to look over GOL/LAF control of Palestinian camps in Beirut.

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e. Visibly accelerate deliveries of equipment to LAF.

f. Move US MNF aboard amphibious ships.

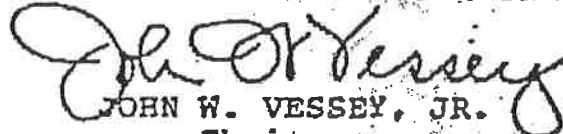
8. (TS) Implementing the concept requires early discussions with the GOL and MNF co-contributors to develop an integrated plan. Timing is important, but certainly we should plan to have all MNF positions turned over to the LAF by late February or early March 1984.

9. (S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend:

a. Your approval of the general concept of action for the USMNF as outlined in paragraph 7 above.

b. That this approach form the basis of the DoD response to the NSC "non-paper" of 20 Dec 83, and the DoD position for next steps in Lebanon.

FOR THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF:



JOHN W. VESSEY, JR.  
Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff