MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ROBERT C. McFARLANE

SUBJECT: Talking Points for NSPG on the Next Steps in Lebanon, Tuesday, January 3, 1984, 11:00 a.m., Situation Room

Attached to Tab A, are suggested talking points for you to use at today's NSPG meeting on the question of press leaks about Lebanon. They express your strong wish that such leaks stop as of this meeting. It is suggested, however, that we issue a statement on our current policy possibly as early as 12:30 p.m., today. There is some urgency to get a statement out in view of Rumsfeld's return to the area this evening.

Recommendation
That you use talking points at Tab A.

Approve        Disapprove

Attachment
Tab A Talking Points

Prepared by:
Geoffrey Kemp

DECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, August 26, 1997
By: NARA, Date: 8/19/00
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TALKING POINTS

- I know that we have a lot of difficult decisions to discuss here and that I know that there are strong feelings on the topic. But I have to say I am pretty mad about the way we have been backed into a situation so that we are reduced to considering redeployment of our forces in Lebanon in response to a public debate stimulated by leaks from within our government.

- Let me give you two recent examples: There were detailed stories in the press about the contents of the long commission report before I'd ever seen it and today the press has details of the JCS proposals on the redeployment of the Marines which we are meant to be considering at this meeting.

- I'm very upset about these and other leaks. I want them to stop and to start with this meeting. Aside from our press statements on this meeting, I want no discussions about our deliberations and no confirmation of what we have, or have not, decided and I include in this premature briefings with the Congress which infer that we have made decisions before, in fact, we have.

- Now I know we have to say something today particularly in view of Don Rumsfeld's departure this evening so I suggest we make one statement as early as 12:30 P.M. and let's leave it at that.

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Issues for Discussion/Decision at NSPG

- May 17 Agreement. Should we--and can we--just "ignore it" (as State recommends) as we seek to reconvene Geneva II and get Israeli flexibility on future withdrawals? Alternatively, does the formula in the Nonpaper make sense, if the issue cannot be ignored?

- Lebanese Reconciliation. Are we satisfied that progress is likely following recent Tripartite meeting and apparent Jumblatt/Barri acceptance of GOL proposals for southern suburbs, Shouf and lower Shouf?

- A more secure deployment for the USMNF. Are the choices really limited to FIA or the assault shipping? Is Damur still an option? Can we consider a mobile presence and training mission south of Beirut?

- Syrian withdrawal process. Is there any formula under consideration to encourage, induce, or pressure the SARG to demonstrate its good faith in a first step withdrawal? Do our RECCE flights provide a lever to induce withdrawal of Syrian artillery within range of Beirut?

- Pressuring Syria if SARG Will not modify Maximalist partition. Have we discussed means and methods we have to pressure SARG? Can the Turkish threat be energized on the basis of a common (GOT/USG) revulsion with state-sponsored terrorism? The Turks are already alarmed over Armenian terrorists staging out of Syria and have in fact begun to retaliate by curtailing irrigation waters from the Euphrates into Syria. Apparently the Turkish General Staff may have more serious pressure under consideration. How can we better help to turn this dynamic to our advantage? How much intelligence are we sharing with Turkey? Could we not get the Saudis to give Turkey a "green light" for such activity? Is a campaign to complicate and interrupt communications between Syria and Lebanon feasible? What are the prospects for a Baghdad-Cairo axis to weaken Syria's grip on moderate Arab position?

- Role for UNIFIL. What should we be doing to adjust UNIFIL's mandate? Should a revised mandate include protection of Palestinian camps in Lebanon? Specifically, what should we do about Sabra and Shatila (after the MNF)?
MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ROBERT C. MC FARLANE

SUBJECT: NSPG Meeting on Next Steps in Lebanon, Tuesday, 11:00 a.m., January 3, 1984, White House Situation Room

Issue

To discuss next steps in Lebanon and agree on milestones to be reached before Congress reassembles on January 23.

Discussion:

The publication of the Long Commission Report has intensified the domestic debate on our Lebanon policy. Tip O'Neill has announced that he is reconsidering his support for the 18-month limit for Marine deployment to Beirut. We can expect a growing crescendo of criticism from both liberals and conservatives when Congress reassembles on January 23. The growth in domestic opposition comes at a time when the situation on the ground in Lebanon has not deteriorated significantly even though major fighting and more terrorism could erupt at any time. Don Rumsfeld plans to return to the region later this week, and it is important that before he departs we fully review our options and reach decisions on next steps, including specific milestones to be achieved by January 23.

The agenda for Tuesday's meeting (Tab I) is structured so as to focus discussion on the immediate problem we face, including whether or not we should readjust our objectives in Lebanon to more manageable goals and what we should do about the deployment of the Marines. We also need to develop a legislative strategy for dealing with the Congress.

In view of the fact that there are likely to be differences of opinion among your key advisors on some of these issues—most notably how and when to redeploy the Marines and the appropriateness of the incremental use of U.S. military power.
-- it is probably best to use the session on Tuesday to discuss the various options with a view to your making a final decision later in the week. No papers will be circulated for the meeting. However, I suggest you review the NSC Non-Paper on Lebanon options with State and DOD comments, which I attach at Tab II.

Recommendation

OK No

☑ That you review the paper at Tab II before the NSPG on Tuesday, January 3.

Attachments

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Prepared by:
Geoffrey Kemp
Between the return of Don Rumsfeld later this week and the reassembly of Congress on January 23, we need to look open-mindedly at our Lebanon policy with a view toward demonstrating fresh progress and the emergence of milestones of success. Time is short. Ironically, we find our domestic support unraveling, and the social fabric in Lebanon in turmoil, at the very moment certain conditions on the ground begin to improve—e.g., Soviets urging caution on Syria, uncertainty about internal Syrian leadership and capacity for initiative, the strengthening of U.S.-Israeli ties, and the sobering impact of U.S. military action on affected Lebanese factions.

Setting: The public understands our basic goals, but finds them unrealistic and abstract. It sees no time horizon for U.S. involvement, and no specific game plan for getting from where we are to where we want to be. Virtually all of the serious press has turned against us—some because they seek quick withdrawal; others because they argue we are not pressing Syria hard enough. Further casualties to the MNF will only accelerate demands in the Congress and the European capitals to bring home the MNF. This, in turn, could trigger a collapse of the Gemayel government, giving Syria the gains it seeks without any significant compromises.

On the other hand, escalating military engagements with Syria could lead to further more direct Syrian action against the MNF or our naval forces off-shore followed by a new cycle of violence with no assurance that it will induce more Syrian flexibility. This would have dangerous consequences for our relations with the moderate Arabs, the Europeans, and the Congress, and would strengthen arguments that we have no strategy, that we are falling further into the "quagmire," and that our military responses are not likely to bring about results. A parallel, exploding crisis in the Persian Gulf will only compound our problem; and, indeed, a stalemate in Lebanon may undercut public support for needed military action to protect Saudi oil facilities and keep open the Straits of Hormuz. It would indeed be perverse if the situation in Lebanon—which we have correctly argued is of long-range importance to our policy for the entire region—impeded our ability to restore stability to the Persian Gulf.

Our strategy for the near term must therefore be keyed to certain operational realities. The first is the need to test Syrian's propensity and will to negotiate an agreement for troop disengagements in Lebanon and support for the national reconciliation process which may be reconvened in Geneva soon.
Put bluntly, this means a strategy which combines incentives and disincentives. The obvious incentives are further phased Israeli withdrawals and a formula to handle May 17; the possible forms of pressure are U.S. military activities and other regionally coordinated pressure and propaganda designed to play upon Assad's internal concerns. Ideally, additional military pressure should be coordinated with the MNF partners but is more likely to be co-incidental with military actions by the IDF, which has its own agenda in Lebanon. The ultimate incentive for Syria (and the Soviet Union) would be an agreement that removed the MNF from Lebanon by a date certain. We sometimes underestimate the fears that the Soviet Union must have because of the very large U.S. military buildup in the Eastern Mediterranean and their own vulnerabilities in the context of a Syrian war.

The second reality is that the Israelis will not cooperate on further withdrawal unless they are convinced that whatever force replaces them is capable of doing the job. If it is doubted that the LAF can do this in the next few weeks, one option would be to consider further MNF redeployment to assist the LAF with security in the south, leaving the security of Greater Beirut to the LAF and the other MNF partners.

The third, and perhaps the most pressing reality, is that unless and until Gemayel can exercise full control over Greater Beirut, his credibility to extend his power further south will be zero. Given the current situation of near anarchy in West Beirut, time is not on his side. Hence the reality is he must strike a deal with the Druze and the Shia groups quickly to permit the extension of his authority. In many ways, this is the linchpin to success in Lebanon and it must be a matter of priority to assure that Gemayel gives it his best efforts.

Key Assumptions: The Syrian "red-line" in Lebanon is the May 17 Agreement. Simply put, the Syrians will not willingly leave Lebanon until they are sure that the Lebanese Government is constituted so as to ensure the foreclosure of any Lebanon-Israel agreement which concedes normalized relations, at least until Syria sets the terms.

Syria has broad support from the moderate Arabs on the above issue, a "fig-leaf" which Syria uses to legitimize its continued occupation and intervention in Lebanese affairs.

The physical proximity of the Syrian Army deployed in the Metn, Baabda, and Aley, especially heavy artillery, and its logistical support for the PSP militias allows the SARG to put a "half-Nelson" on the Druze, and to impose even more serious sanctions against the Government of Lebanon in Beirut.
With the evacuation of the LF from Dayr al Kmar, Jumblatt has realized virtually all of his goals for Aley and the Shuf and he appears increasingly anxious to deal with Gemayel to consolidate his gains (e.g., the Abu plan). Syria will block such a deal if it can.

Israel is under enormous pressure to leave Lebanon and there is slim support for continued occupation. While public support for the May 17 Agreement may be more substantial, it is not overriding: IDF casualties are.

Continued IDF presence in Lebanon has not served to pressure Syria or induce the Syrians to be flexible, especially since the Syrians perceive that further Israeli withdrawals are virtually certain to occur. It is likely that Israeli airstrikes have had more effect than their presence in inducing Syrian restraint.

The actual security threat to Israel's northern settlements from Lebanon is not serious at present. Radical PLO elements are holed up largely in Tripoli and loyal Patah fighters are about to leave. In short, interim security arrangements that do not include residual Israeli military presence could be devised to provide adequate security for Israel's border.

The Core Problems:

To recognize that the May 17 Agreement is, for now, a dead letter. The "best" possible outcome is to put the Agreement on hold until it can be discussed and dealt with by a future, more representative Government of National Unity. After all, we cannot be seen as being more insistent on the implementation of this Agreement than a more representative, and confessionally balanced Lebanese Government created at our insistence.

To persuade the Israelis of the above (perhaps with a secret commitment from Gemayel and the U.S. to ensure that it receives another hearing with full U.S. support).

To obtain a commitment from the Israelis for further withdrawals by an early date certain. The only valid conditions for further withdrawals are adequate interim security arrangements in the zone currently occupied by the IDF. In short, we have to ensure that the inevitable Israeli withdrawals are paced to our schedule and made to appear as a sign of U.S. strength and influence rather than a further indicator of Israeli weariness.
To conclude a deal with the Druze which recognizes the status quo, keeps the LF out of the Shuf, and provides long-sought economic and political concessions. To complete another deal with the responsible Shia leadership which would provide for the gradual reestablishment of Lebanese (Shia) civil authority in the South.

To reduce the spiral of escalating hostilities with the Syrians and reduce the risk Syrian forces pose to Beirut (and the MNF).

To provide a more secure deployment for the USMNF and a well-defined target date for its withdrawal.

We have three vital near term needs: (1) actions that remove our forces from immediate danger and buy time for the implementation of our broader plan; (2) a describable near term strategy with concrete and realistic milestones for restoring Congressional and public confidence; and (3) a more imaginative combination of regional and propagandistic pressures to signal Assad that we can compete with him without running the risk of public demoralization.

A Plan with Milestones:

The Lebanese Dimension:

Gemayel concludes an agreement with Jumblatt. ISF units deploy into Aley and Shuf to restore GOL authority and supervise reclamation of property, reconstruction, and restoration of public services (1 month).

Gemayel concludes an agreement with Nabih Berri. A prominent Amal leader joins the government and the GOL assumes increased responsibility for civil administration in the South. Following further Israeli withdrawals, properly constituted LAF units assume security responsibility in the zone vacated by the IDF (3 months).

Gemayel reconvenes Geneva II circumventing basic obstacle by committing to resubmitting May 17 Agreement to a GNU and the Parliament (1 month).

The Israeli Dimension:

U.S. approaches Israel on the need for flexibility in handling the Lebanon-Israel Agreement. U.S. will maintain position of support for the eventual implementation of the Agreement, recognizing that, as a practical matter, the ultimate disposition of the Agreement is subject to the approval of a more representative Lebanese Government (1 month).
GOL obtains agreement for further Israeli withdrawal to the Zahrani line. Tripartite Commission draws up appropriate security arrangements (withdrawal by February 1, 1984). Israel commits to further phased withdrawals in eastern Lebanon and to the international border if adequate security is demonstrated following first withdrawal.

The Syrian Dimension:

Syria is approached— as a separate matter—to phase a withdrawal from the Metn region (withdrawal by February 1, 1984). The removal of heavy artillery is to commence immediately. Further Syrian withdrawals are contingent on continued Israeli movement.

U.S. agrees to discontinue immediately aerial surveillance of Syrian military positions in central Lebanon on the assurance of Syrian action described above.

The MNF Dimension:

To reassure Israel and to change perceptions of indefinite, hunkered-down role in Beirut, USMNF redeploy from BIA south and undertakes to train LAF units in surveillance, counter-infiltration tactics in the zone between Awwali-Zahrani Rivers. USMC unit could be replaced by Special Forces, Rangers, and helicopter company drawn from USAREUR (six month mandate expiring June 1, 1984). French MNF might undertake similar mission in Shuf, Metn region with six month mandate. Italians and British units remain in Beirut.

Additional Components:

Candidate contributors would work to develop a politically astute, well-endowed plan for economic reconstruction of Lebanon following the outline of the Craxi Plan (1 month).

Moderate Arabs would be squeezed hard to make good on commitment to pressure Syrians for further withdrawals from Lebanon in light of above formula for the May 17 Agreement and Israeli commitment to further withdrawal.

UNIFIL contributors are approached to consider modifying present mandate to emphasize security of refugee camps in Southern Lebanon and Greater Beirut (1 month).
Testing and Pressuring: Despite the mutually appealing features of such a plan, the Syrians may not bite—or at least not quickly. In part, they may calculate our public support cannot be reconstituted; in part, their own internal problems may militate against quick settlement, particularly if the incentives—though good—seem less than compelling. The key then is to be able to quickly and decisively concentrate our assets for additional follow-up pressure; such pressures should be designed to cover unavoidable weaknesses, i.e., Israeli withdrawals; to signal our staying power; and to build incentives for grabbing a reasonable deal before things get worse.

Applying pressure is never easy. But our stakes in the outcome of this ongoing Lebanese drama are too high to casually abandon the search for new forms of leverage on Syria. The successful formulation and application of new pressure may require special efforts with key Allies and relevant regional parties. We may have to provide concrete material incentives to gain their support, and we may have to run some additional risks ourselves—particularly in sponsoring covert programs.

It may be, as recent vulnerability analyses suggest, that no one card exists which will fundamentally threaten or unnerve Assad. But it is pressure at the margin we should be concerned with; pressure which, if added at the right moment on top of ongoing military action and the prospect of a reasonable deal, could be decisive.

Among the things we should urgently and actively consider are:

The possibility of coordinated Turkish and Iraqi activity on Syria's northern and eastern flanks. The Turks are already furious over Armenian terrorists which are allowed to stage out of Syria; and Turkey and Iraq are fearful of Syrian-Iranian assaults on the pipeline. Additional noise on both flanks—even if it is unlikely to be translated into real military pressure—could be useful, e.g., bellicose Turkish warnings, rumors of Turkish-Iraqi military consultation, reconnaissance, etc. The moderate Arabs could help to encourage the Turks to take such action; and our help in expediting Iraq's expanded pipeline could provide an incentive as well.
In general the paper presents a realistic assessment of the Lebanese situation and the short time remaining in which to firm up deteriorating domestic support in the United States for our policy. That said, however, it should give greater emphasis to the also weakening support of our MNF partners and the need to continue our efforts with the moderate Arabs.

Although the "Assumptions" section is accurate and well-balanced, there are other implicit assumptions in the opening paragraph which are questionable. There is uncertainty about internal Syrian leadership, but Assad's incapacity would be as likely to produce a high level of risk-taking among aspirants to power, who would need a military success to further their ambitions, as it would be to produce caution. If Assad appears to be recovering, on the other hand, no interim Syrian leadership is likely to deviate from his standfast policies. There is also no real evidence that U.S. military actions have had anything more than a transitory sobering impact on the Lebanese factions.

Perhaps most important, the paper recognizes that the linchpin to success in Lebanon is that Gemayel, Jumblatt and Barri must strike a deal. If the Lebanese politicians can join together in common cause as Lebanese, they can deal from a position of not inconsiderable strength.

We believe the sections dealing with the setting, assumptions and core problems of our policy in Lebanon are essentially on target. We think, however, it would be a mistake if we were to start suggesting our readiness to modify the May 17 Agreement. Our posture should remain that of trying to bring about withdrawal without implementation of the Agreement. This strategy holds the most promise for the future Israeli/Lebanese relationship.

In sum, we should continue to put the stress on achieving withdrawal and not talk about the agreement per se. We therefore suggest revising those sections of the paper suggesting renewed discussion of the May 17 Agreement.

We also have reservations about some of the "Milestones" set forth in the paper, in addition to those dealing with the May 17 Agreement. In particular: