

THE WHITE HOUSE
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December 21, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ROBERT C. McFARLANE *RCM*

SUBJECT: Putting the Marines Back Aboard Ship

In the attached memo, Secretary Weinberger recommends that you direct the redeployment of the Marines back aboard ship for reasons of safety. He asked that this go directly to you. You have discussed this before in NSPG meetings. Secretary Shultz feels strongly that to do this would provide a pretext for the other MNF countries to reduce or withdraw their contingents. All of us are conscious of the need to show progress in the next thirty days. The question is how to minimize the vulnerability of the Marines until the political climate justifies their withdrawal. As you consider this issue, I recommend that you solicit Secretary Shultz' views (he will have received Don Rumsfeld's report and will be able to provide recommendations on how to proceed with an action plan).

As a separate but related matter, I believe it would be very useful, if it wouldn't disrupt your plans excessively, for you to talk to George while in Palm Springs. He refers often to your meeting last year as extremely worthwhile. Similarly, but for a different agenda, I think it would be useful for you to talk to Cap, who will be in Palm Springs as well. Mike Deaver and Jim prefer to wait until your return out of deference to your privacy. They are right. Still I hope that it will be possible for you to spend time soon in a "long look ahead" so that your national security advisors gain a sense of your priorities and move out smartly to achieve success in the two or three major agenda items before us. I would be glad to lay out my own thoughts on where and how we can tackle these issues if you wish.

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BY RW NARA DATE 12/11/10

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

December 20, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Repositioning of U.S. Forces in Lebanon

On September 29, 1982, 1,200 U.S. Marines deployed to Lebanon to participate in a Multinational Force (MNF). Operating in close coordination with the French and Italian elements of the MNF, our forces were directed to establish a presence which would facilitate the restoration of Lebanese Government sovereignty and authority, and thereby further the efforts of the Government of Lebanon to assure the safety of persons in the area and bring to an end the violence which had recurred. As you told the Congress in your War Powers report at that time, our agreement with the Government of Lebanon expressly ruled out any combat responsibilities. All armed elements in the area had given assurances that they would refrain from hostilities and would not interfere with the activities of the MNF.

The presence of U.S., French, Italian, and later, British forces in Lebanon brought about a constructive change in the atmosphere and enabled negotiations to proceed with a reasonable expectation of achieving the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon. In helping to stabilize the Lebanon situation, the MNF has probably saved many lives which would otherwise have been lost had the tragic cycle of violence continued unabated in Lebanon. However, the hoped-for withdrawal of Syrian, PLO, and Israeli forces from Lebanon has not occurred. Events have intervened to frustrate the process of establishing Lebanese sovereignty over the nation's territory.

As a result, today, the United States element of the Multinational Force cannot do what you sent it to do in Lebanon. The MNF is unable to patrol the streets of Beirut showing the multinational flags to the populace without serious risks of daily losses of men. The 1982 pledges from Lebanese armed elements that they would not attack the MNF can no longer be accepted as trustworthy. Beirut has been infiltrated by hostile, alienated radicals, Lebanese and foreign, all armed, and whose activities directly threaten the safety of the MNF, as has been tragically demonstrated.

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The mission of U.S. forces in Lebanon has evolved from simple presence into a more aggressive security posture in and around Beirut, with expanded Rules of Engagement. Indeed our only real mission now is to try and protect our men who are stationed in static positions. Our vigorous self-defense policy has led to the frequent employment of U.S. firepower in Lebanon. Understandably, many armed groups in Lebanon no longer view the U.S. forces as neutral peacekeepers. I understand that both Admiral Long's Commission and the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Investigations will be very critical, in their forthcoming reports, of this unpublicized but substantial change in the mission of U.S. forces.

Therefore, I again propose that we reposition American forces in Lebanon on our ships offshore. The Italian contingent of the MNF is being drawn down by nearly half, to 1,100, which is the original level committed to the Lebanese Government by Italy. The French are pulling back their forces from advanced guardposts to more centrally-defended locations, near the beaches, after their recent losses.

If our own forces were afloat, we would not be leaving Lebanon or abandoning our role. We would simply be recognizing that the mission originally given to the force cannot be carried out until Syria and Israel do in fact agree to leave, and do leave. If the non-combat presence mission again becomes possible, and progress toward withdrawal were made, our forces could again go on shore to perform the mission they were sent to carry out in Lebanon. Meanwhile, protection of the airport could be taken over by the U.S. trained and equipped L.A.F. They could return to the airport area or another location. Meanwhile, with the forces afloat, we could still employ naval and air power in support of our policies in Lebanon. Ambassador Rumsfeld's strategy of "leaning forward" with the Syrians and their proxies would not be undermined, if you determined that is the best policy to follow.

On the contrary, I believe that our posture in Lebanon would be strengthened by the repositioning of U.S. forces offshore. We would retain the ability to deter hostilities with our naval guns and air power, while making it far more difficult and dangerous for the radical extremists to reach our existing easily targetable ground presence.

The Congress and American people would be asked to support only that which they have supported from the beginning. The Lebanese Government would still enjoy the strong, visible support of the United States. The Lebanese Armed Forces would continue to enjoy the support and training of the United States. After

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the process of political negotiation went forward, and the Lebanese Army disarmed the extremists in Beirut, the United States could again return to the ground in Lebanon and help with the actual withdrawal of the Syrians and Israelis, all in support of freedom and sovereignty for the Lebanese people.

Finally, and not the least important, you would, by a single stroke, vastly improve the safety and security of our Marines, who will always be at serious risk in their present positions; and you would also remove about the only telling arguments the Democrats and your other opponents have available now.

If you wish, we could develop a complete plan for the movement from shore to ship for your comments.

If you would like any further information about this, or wish to discuss it, I will of course be glad to help in any way I can.

Sap -

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