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U.S. efforts in Lebanon are focussed now on negotiations to achieve the rapid withdrawal of all external forces--Israeli, Syrian and Palestinian--from Lebanon. We have the following policy objectives:

- The speedy withdrawal of all external forces from Lebanon;
- A sovereign Lebanon under a strong central authority able to exercise control throughout its territory; and,
- Security for Israel from threats emanating from Lebanese territory.

After considerable wrangling over procedure, formal and direct talks are now underway between Lebanon and Israel. While substantive issues are being discussed, progress has been quite slow. In particular, there are wide differences over a framework for future relations between Lebanon and Israel. Israel is pressing hard for normalization of relations with Lebanon; concerned for its internal consensus and relations with the Arabs, Lebanon is resisting. Already, the question has generated considerable pressure on President Gemayel from Lebanon's Muslim community.

The continued presence of foreign troops in Lebanon threatens to hold up progress in the broader peace process, as well as to exacerbate confessional tensions inside Lebanon, where considerable fighting has been occurring. To inject greater urgency and to stress his personal concern for rapid progress in removing external forces from Lebanon, the President asked Ambassador Philip Habib to return to the region to help expedite the negotiations as we move forward in our broader efforts to achieve a workable peace in the area.

We envisage a negotiated solution which will ultimately treat as a package the key issues of Israeli withdrawal, security arrangements to protect northern Israel, and a framework for the evolution of relations between Lebanon and Israel. We believe that the negotiations should focus primarily on withdrawal and security arrangements, and that

January 20, 1983

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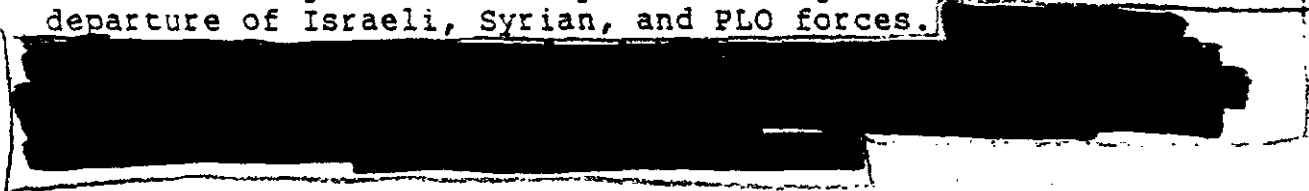
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Lebanon will have to be the judge of how far it is capable of going in the area of normalization. We understand the political requirements of a still weak Lebanese government and the necessity to maintain the support of moderate Arabs. However, we must also recognize that it will be necessary to begin an evolutionary process in relations between Lebanon and Israel in order to achieve Israeli withdrawal. A balance will have to be struck between reasonable Israeli demands and what Lebanon is capable of bearing.

The Lebanese have also begun discussions with Syria and the PLO on the withdrawal of their forces. However, it is difficult to move far in these negotiations without progress in the talks with Israel. Our effort is to create a process whereby U.S. diplomacy could combine results in these concurrent negotiations to produce an agreed context for the departure of Israeli, Syrian, and PLO forces.



After the departure of external forces from Lebanon, the Lebanese Armed Forces will no doubt require international assistance in meeting their security responsibilities. The Lebanese government has requested an expansion of the Multinational Force (MNF), and the U.S., supported by France and Italy, is seeking contributions of troops and funds to meet this request. The British have already pledged a 120-man unit. We do not, however, view an expanded MNF as a substitute for UNIFIL, which we hope will continue to provide a sizable peacekeeping operation in Lebanon. The U.S. will consider the Lebanese request positively, but we do not believe there is sufficient progress yet in the negotiations to require a decision on expanded U.S. participation in an MNF.

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