

MINUTES

President Reagan welcomed President Gemayel to the Cabinet Room. He said that he was very pleased that the US had helped stop the fighting in Lebanon and was working to accomplish peace. The US was prepared to do all it could to help Lebanon. President Reagan then turned to Secretary Shultz.

Secretary Shultz said that there were four subjects that needed to be discussed in the morning session: withdrawal of all foreign forces; Lebanon's relationship with Israel; the assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces; and reconstruction and rebuilding of Lebanon.

President Gemayel said that he brought a message of gratitude from the Lebanese people: that the US had brought Lebanon hope after eight years of despair and tragedy. We do not want this hope to fail. You are a hero. After eight years this is the first time that we see a light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you for risking the lives of the American Marines. I know and appreciate what that risk is. I intend to repay this debt fully with a reciprocal commitment to U.S. goals. Lebanon is ready to become part of your strategic system in the Middle East. It is the wish of the Lebanese people to have such relations. We want to reinforce these relations. Every family in Lebanon has relatives in the United States. There are very close family ties and the same human values. These are freedom, democracy and human rights. Lebanon is the only Arab country with a democratic system, free elections, and free enterprise. Lebanon is close to America and we want to further improve ties and establish close cooperation between the Lebanese Government and the American Government. This is an expression of the wishes of the Lebanese people. The first problem we must deal with is the foreign forces that are in Lebanon without having been invited. We must work together to obtain their full withdrawal. We need their withdrawal to preserve our sovereignty, to rebuild our country and to play our proper role in the Middle East. The uniqueness and specificity of the Lebanese system has allowed Lebanon to always play this role but it is very difficult to protect our sovereignty and the entity of Lebanon due to the presence of foreign forces. We also seek peace in the Middle East. It is very important. We look at your plan as a new venture, as a new possibility for peace in the Middle East. But there is also a new policy at Fez. All the Arabs accepted it and they are promoting a new policy for the future of the Middle East. Lebanon can help bring peace. Lebanon is working for peace. We have paid much for the lack of peace. We want peace with Israel. We want to end the state of war. Lebanon can

play a real role to help reach this peace. It is possible. Perhaps we need a new Camp David or some other initiative. Most important is peace sponsored by America. But, whatever is embarked upon should not destroy our national consensus. Lebanon must respect its Arab ties. We cannot hurt them but we have to promote peace in the area and not undermine the U.S. initiative. Every initiative should take this aspect into account but in the meantime we should start negotiations immediately for the withdrawal of all foreign forces. I also want to express my appreciation for the efforts of Phil Habib, Morris Draper and Bob Dillon. We owe them our deepest thanks. Active U.S. participation is necessary in order for us to begin discussions with the IDF to bring about their withdrawal. These discussions should include an agenda and framework for the near future. Perhaps we could get an immediate good will withdrawal from the Israelis around the Presidential palace. Maybe we can use this exploratory committee for withdrawal and other preliminary discussions. This should involve you personally and directly.

Turning next to the Multinational Force we have to protect this process. The presence of the Multinational Force is more important for symbolic purposes rather than military purposes. I hope that the MNF will stay until the withdrawal of all foreign forces is complete and the rebuilding of the Lebanese Armed Forces is complete. I also hope that we can expand the number of the MNF as well as the countries involved. Regarding military assistance I appreciate the help provided by the U.S. Government survey team. The Lebanese Armed Forces should soon be the only army responsible for the protection of Lebanon. A U.S.-Lebanon military commission is also something that I would like to propose. Such a body could help solve other problems and coordinate our relations in the military area. The details could be discussed with the Secretary of Defense. We need your complete support and backing in this activity. We are trying to build a professional Presidential office. We need your assistance for organization and experience. American experience at the White House is good and it would help us manage our affairs. Perhaps we could obtain your help. Meanwhile, we are reviewing the needs of our people for reconstruction and development. Perhaps we could obtain more economic assistance from the USG. Regarding reconstruction your help is very important. U.S. leadership could encourage others to participate. Lebanon needs your support especially in the beginning. We estimate that we need a package of approximately 1 billion dollars per year. After several years the need for assistance will decline. We will not need such assistance permanently. If we compare this with others, Lebanon gets almost nothing. We need your complete support. We could restore the economy very quickly and we could be self-sufficient if your aid comes in the form of concessional aid and grant. Aid will cover the deficit, budget support, reconstruction and military support.