

Subject: Middle East:
situation Pt II

cc Master

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MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN

PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T12183

President Mubarak called on me in London on 2 February. I know that you have also just talked with him in Washington. I was struck by the force with which he made a number of points about the Middle East. Since these bear directly on American policy I thought that you should have an account of what he said to me.

President Mubarak was worried that America's friends in the region had lost confidence in the United States' ability to achieve a solution of the pressing problems which confront us all there. In his view this pessimism had gained ground in recent months for two main reasons. First, the slow pace of negotiations over the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon. President Mubarak was concerned that, if withdrawal was not achieved soon, the resulting frustration would prove fertile ground for the Soviet Union. Secondly, confidence had been undermined by the lack of any demonstrable progress towards an Arab/Israeli settlement, and in particular by the continuing lack of response by Israel to your call for a settlements freeze.

I remain convinced that the proposals in your speech of 1 September offer the most realistic way forward. They will continue to have my strong support. But I share President Mubarak's concern that Arab confidence in the negotiation route is being seriously eroded by the lack of progress, both in the Lebanon negotiations and in the search for a wider peace settlement. The Egyptians left me in no doubt that Arab confidence would continue to wane unless there is early agreement on the withdrawal of foreign forces from the Lebanon and unless (even more important in their eyes) the spread of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza is checked.

None of this will be new to you. But I thought it right to get in touch with you because the strength of Arab concern is impressive, because it would be a tragedy if the opportunity for progress presented by your proposals is lost and because I fear

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that that could happen unless there are early, positive steps to restore confidence in the peace process. Only the United States can achieve this but we shall try to support you to the best of our ability, both nationally and through the European Community.

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