

SECRET

Message from President Reagan:

"Dear Margaret

Thank you for your message of November 4. I was pleased by George Shultz's report of his talks with Geoffrey Howe and our other MNF partners in Paris last week. It is this kind of consultation effort that I particularly value and which is so important if we are to remain in step on the challenging issues we must confront together.

As you know, in my address to the American people during the week of the tragedy, I said that those responsible would be dealt justice. In the discussions in Paris, George Shultz was careful to explain that this is not a matter of revenge, but of self-defense. Those who committed this atrocity cannot be allowed to strike again if it is in our power to prevent them. At this point we are concluding our collection and assessment of the facts and we probably know as much as we can about the event and its perpetrators. The picture is reasonably clear. Decisions on the appropriate US response will give careful thought to the consequences of any actions we might consider. I intend to meet with my advisors tomorrow to review their tentative findings and will be back in touch with you after that meeting.

It was heartening indeed to hear of your efforts to press the Geneva participants in the direction of the more representative government that Lebanon so clearly needs. The ten day recess will give all of us further opportunity to pursue this course. I remain convinced that a broadly based government is key to a peaceful and stable future in Lebanon, a future in which the Lebanese no longer have a need for the presence of multinational

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forces. However, at this fragile moment, with the Lebanese nation building effort barely begun, I believe our steadfast support evidenced by military presence is essential.

I welcome your suggestion that we keep long term considerations for the MNF in sight, despite the necessary focus of all of us on the shorter term. I have, therefore, asked George Shultz to try to arrange consultations with British officials before the NATO ministerial meetings. I know George personally looks forward to talking further with Geoffrey Howe at the ministerial on an issue that has become one of central concern to my administration, to Congress, and to the American people. In the interim, I am sending Ken Dam to keep you abreast of our thinking on Lebanon and several other issues.

Sincerely,

Ron