



THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OFFICIAL-INFORMAL

American Embassy
Beirut, Lebanon
July 8, 1964

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Phillips,

I hope you will forgive my adding a short semi-personal note to the volume of official correspondence that has passed between us. I am doing this because we have reached a very critical stage in Lebanon, and I want to impress on you personally the enormous importance I attach to a satisfactory solution.

I would like to give you, very briefly, my opinion on the present phase of the election campaign here, and to follow up my letter of June 12th by outlining some further considerations which might influence our actions in this respect. In my view, renewed efforts are necessary, for reasons which I shall now give you.

So far, all our attempts to create a favourable situation for our nominees, Soleiman Frangie and Raymond Ede, have met with serious obstacles. The most important of these is that General Chehab is playing a double game. On the one hand, he states in public that he has no intention of remaining President. On the other hand, he is using every possible means of getting the Constitution changed, so that he can serve a second term. These means include manipulation of the machinery of administration, over which he has a firm grip, and, above all, the army in which he still enjoys great influence through the exercise of nepotism on a grand scale. At present, the General makes little attempt to conceal his dislike for us. This also jeopardises the situation. There seems to be no way of settling the Lebanese problem without such complications as we hoped earlier to avoid.

I hope that the Department has not changed its opinion about Lebanon, as there is no other country in the Arab Middle East in which we could so freely exploit a position of influence.

Although I am

The Honorable Phillips Talbot,
Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern
and South Asian Affairs,
Department of State,
Washington 25, D.C.

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Although I am most gratified to hear from you that increased funds are being put at our disposal for judicious distribution during the election campaign, I think that more spectacular action is also necessary to demonstrate our lively interest in the situation and thus to modify it in our favor. With this in mind, I feel I must earnestly suggest that the annual courtesy visit of the Sixth Fleet to Lebanese waters should be timed for the proper moment. The weight of such a demonstration would be greatly enhanced by the conspicuous attachment of shock commando units to the visiting ships and by the staging of limited but ostentatious maneuvers within sight of the Lebanese coast.

You can of course rely on me and my staff to ensure that the significance of such units and such maneuvers would be leaked to suitably chosen newspapermen, including perhaps one or two of the Lebanese journalists who are committed -- for the usual reasons -- to our interest.

I am firmly persuaded that the effect of such measures would be beneficial and helpful to our Lebanese friends, who otherwise stand in danger of being outwitted by the subtle Chehab.

Sincerely yours,

Armin H. Meyer
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