

HABIB PONDER'S RETURN

WASH. (WNS) -- While there remained talk in the State Department of the eventual return of President Reagan's special envoy to the Mideast, Philip Habib, a Department spokesman said that no date has been set. Department spokesman Dean Fischer said Habib will most likely return to the Middle East by the end of November. He said that if the U.S. thought there was an "urgency" which required his departure sooner, he would leave earlier. Fischer stressed that the U.S. "is monitoring the situation very closely" in Lebanon but said there was no urgency there now. Habib was sent to the Mideast by Reagan last May to calm tensions in Lebanon by Syria's placement of SAM-6 missiles and Israel's threat to move them by force. In July, after Habib helped establish a cease fire across the Lebanese

border his mission was expanded to include the entire situation in Lebanon. Israeli Premier Menachem Begin said recently that while Israel supported the Habib mission it was promised by the envoy in Reagan's name that the missiles would be removed from Lebanon. Yasir Arafat, chief of the Palestine Liberation Organization, reportedly said in a speech that Israel was expected to attack his terrorist forces in Lebanon soon. Arafat also rejected proposals by the United Nations to increase the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) from 6,000 troops to 7,200 and that the PLO forces remove its artillery from the Tyre area. Fischer said he knew nothing more than the press reports but stressed the need for the continuation of the cease fire across the Israel-Lebanon border.

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