

WHAT LED UP TO HABIB'S EFFORT TO EVACUATE PLO

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- The Cabinet approved the plan presented by special U.S. envoy Philip Habib for the evacuation of the PLO and other terrorist forces from Lebanon, thus paving the way for the departure of some 15,000 troops which began late last month.

The government of Lebanon, which approved the plan, followed Israel's Cabinet approval by officially inviting the U.S., France and Italy to send their contingents into Lebanon to supervise the evacuation. Lebanese officials said the U.S. and France would each contribute 800 soldiers to the international force. Italy will send 400 men, and there will be a Lebanese army contingent of some 3,000.

In Washington, the Reagan Administration said "We are of course extremely gratified by the Israeli Cabinet approval of the plan, which is a tribute to the remarkable diplomatic achievement of the President's special emissary, Ambassador Philip Habib. It sets the stage for the implementation of the plan which we expect to start as early as this weekend.

The Israeli Cabinet decision came after days of reported optimism that an agreement was at hand. Israel's last demand requesting the release of Air Force pilot Aharon Achiaz who was captured in the early days of fighting and release of the bodies of nine Israeli soldiers who had been killed in Lebanon, had to be met before approval. Also included in this demand was the return of an Israeli soldier who was kidnapped by PLO forces.

During the Cabinet session, the ministers received an elaborate 14 point plan for the evacuation of Lebanon. According to the schedule, the evacuation would last two weeks and the international force would remain in Lebanon for 30 days. It was understood that the first batch of PLO fighters would leave Beirut by sea, on the way to Aqaba. Later, groups will probably leave for Syria by the Beirut Damascus highway. From there they would be dispersed to Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Al-

geria and South Yemen. The total number of terrorists and their families is estimated at 7,100. Other evacuees include 1,000 non-Arab volunteers of various nationalities serving with the PLO; 3,500 men serving with the PLO, 3,500 men serving with the Palestine Liberation Army; and about 3,000 Syrian soldiers.

According to the authoritative Beirut newspaper An-Nahar, the 14 point plan for the evacuation of PLO and Syrian forces from West Beirut includes: A complete cease-fire; a peaceful departure by timetable from Beirut; non-combatant Palestinians who remain in Lebanon will be subject to Lebanese laws; the International Red Cross will help in the evacuation; the evacuation will be complete in 15 days, it will take place in daylight, and the fighters will take with them their pistols and rifles; heavy weapons will be handed over to the Lebanese army; the international force will have a mandate of one month, and the Lebanese government may extend the mandate if it sees fit; if any cause of the plan proves impossible, the mandate will be considered to have lapsed.

Following the Cabinet session, Cabinet

Secretary Dan Meridor issued the following statements: "The government of Israel approved the draft arrangement concerning the evacuation from Beirut and Lebanon of all the terrorists, including their organizations, leadership, members, commands, and offices -- a draft which was presented to the Cabinet by Ambassador Philip Habib. The government, suggested several amendments to the draft and those were accepted by Ambassador Habib."

Prior to the Cabinet session, Premier Menachem Begin conferred with Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir. The three decided to request several amendments to the draft. They asked for the elimination of a passage which stated that United Nations observers who were stationed in the past in West Beirut would remain there according to a recent UN Security Council resolution which called for observers to monitor the evacuation. By eliminating that passage, the status of the observers will be that they remain in Beirut but will not play any role in the actual implementation of the evacuation plan. Israel was also promised that efforts would be made, in

cooperation with the International Red Cross, to locate the bodies of five soldiers killed in Lebanon during the Litani Operation five years ago.

Sharon reportedly told the Cabinet that Israel was facing one of its greatest achievements, "a basic change in the Middle East." He enumerated them as the uprooting of the terrorists from Beirut, the evacuation of foreign forces from Lebanon, security arrangements on Israel's border, the establishments of a

stable government in Lebanon, and the removal of Soviet influence in the region. that Israel would hit back if terrorist operations would continue from behind Syrian lines.


The Defense Minister said a sharp warning had been sent to Damascus

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