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LEBANON: Further outbreaks of fighting in southeastern Lebanon late on 4 May and again the following day have led to a third cease-fire agreement, to which both sides have generally adhered. Beirut has been quiet since an earlier truce was agreed to at dawn on 4 May. The capital has received a steady flow of mediators from other Arab states to assist in working out a new government-fedayeen modus vivendi.

The conflict has highlighted a dilemma for each side. The government, although reluctant to face a full confrontation with the fedayeen, is unwilling to allow armed fedayeen the run of its cities. It will probably press for tighter controls over the commandos, even though it will be under pressure from the other Arab states to ease its policy toward the Palestinians. The fedayeen, on the other hand, are apparently divided on their strategy. Fatah leader Yasir Arafat's actions have indicated that he wants to avoid provoking a confrontation, apparently because he fears his control over the fedayeen movement might be weakened and because he hopes that a forthcoming attitude on his part will dissuade the Lebanese from imposing new restrictions on the fedayeen. Others in the movement, however, are pressing for a return to the arrangement of 1969, which allowed the fedayeen relative freedom of movement throughout the country.

The negotiations are therefore likely to continue for some time. Although the violence appears to have abated, the differences among the fedayeen and between them and the government are such that lasting accommodation is unlikely.

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7 May 73

Central Intelligence Bulletin

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