



LEBANON: Status of Cease-Fire

*Syrian forces mounted attacks over the weekend on Phalange positions in the hills surrounding Zahlah, although the cease-fire in Zahlah itself and in Beirut apparently held.* ■

The Syrians used helicopter assault operations and artillery against positions on the ridges overlooking Zahlah and the Bekaa Valley in an effort to cut off Phalange resupply routes. The Christians apparently still hold positions in the hills around Zahlah, ■

Zahlah itself was relatively quiet over the weekend, and Lebanese internal security forces reportedly began limited patrols in the town on Saturday. ■

The Sarkis government has reacted negatively to press accounts of a French proposal for a wider UN peacekeeping role in the Lebanese crisis. ■

The government is unwilling to request a UN or international force to intervene because doing so would be seen as siding with the Christians, who have called for foreign intervention since 1975. It also would implicitly criticize the Syrians, for whom there is no available alternative. ■

Syria would oppose any UN action that threatens to undermine its Arab League peacekeeping mandate in Lebanon. If Syria's current mandate were revoked, Damascus probably would try to force the Lebanese Government to sign a bilateral security agreement--something Sarkis has long sought to avoid. ■