

~~Top Secret~~  
[redacted]**USSR-US-LEBANON-SYRIA: Warning to US**

Moscow's warning to the US against military action in Lebanon in an official TASS statement yesterday appears designed to reassure Syria of Soviet support without committing the USSR to a particular response. [redacted]

The statement claims that remarks by the President and the Secretaries of State and Defense indicate the US is planning a large-scale military operation against "patriotic forces" in Lebanon. It asserts that these alleged plans, plus the US action in Grenada, prove that the US has elevated international terrorism to the level of state policy. The statement concludes by noting that the "leading circles" of the USSR warn the US "with all seriousness" that US military action in Lebanon would have "grave consequences." [redacted]

Syrian media began claiming last week that the US and Israel are preparing a strike against Syrian targets. Meanwhile, TASS announced yesterday that Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam will visit Moscow during the first half of November. [redacted]

**Comment:** The statement puts Soviet opposition to any US military action in Lebanon on record, but Moscow probably does not expect an effect on Washington's calculations. The Soviets failed to threaten specific countermeasures and did not say that their vital interests are at stake. A TASS "statement" indicates a higher-level sanction than regular media commentary but carries less weight than a government statement. [redacted]

The Soviet statement is unlikely to impress Damascus. It follows similar Syrian claims by more than a week, and it refers only to US preparations to hit Lebanese, not Syrian, forces. Moscow displayed the same caution about taking a public stand on US-Syrian frictions during the fighting in and around Beirut in September. [redacted]

Khaddam probably will brief the Soviets on the Lebanese reconciliation talks in Geneva, which the TASS statement ignored. He may attempt to smooth over any differences with Moscow over Syria's dispute with PLO leader Arafat. [redacted]

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