



Security Council

Distr.  
GENERAL

S/16197  
4 December 1983

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

---

LETTER DATED 4 DECEMBER 1983 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED  
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Pursuant to Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, my government has asked me to report to you on the circumstances surrounding action taken in Lebanon by the United States in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defense on 4 December 1983.

At 0900 on Saturday, 3 December two U.S. F-14 aircraft on a routine reconnaissance flight over Lebanese territory were fired upon by anti-aircraft emplacements (some 500 rounds) and surface-to-air missiles (at least ten SA-7S) from a number of Syrian positions in Lebanon.

During the early daylight hours of Sunday, 4 December U.S. Navy aircraft from the Sixth Fleet carried out air strikes against the Syrian army anti-aircraft concentrations which had been the source of the attacks against our aircraft in the northern Metn, east of Beirut. During the operation two U.S. aircraft were shot down. The pilot of one aircraft has been recovered safely. We have information that the two-man crew of the other aircraft ejected safely over Syrian-controlled areas. We have asked the Syrian Government that they be promptly handed over to U.S. authorities. We expect Syria to comply fully with its international obligations concerning our airmen.

The presence of U.S. forces in Lebanon - like that of each of the Multinational Force partners - is authorized by the Government of Lebanon under an international agreement entered into on 25 September 1982. That agreement expressly provides for Multinational Force forces to take measures in self-defense. The conduct of reconnaissance flights over Lebanese territory was authorized by the Government of Lebanon.

The U.S. action was a discrete self-defense measure taken in direct response to Syria's unprovoked, armed attack on the U.S. reconnaissance flights and was designed to prevent further attacks. We have no desire or intention of escalating the level of tension. We have informed the Syrians that so long as Syria refrains from further attacks, they have nothing to fear from the U.S.

S/16197

English

Page 2

The Government of Syria was notified less than a month ago of the defensive and non-threatening nature of these routine flights. We have no doubt that the Syrian military knew they were firing on U.S. aircraft on 3 December. The action we have taken in response to the armed attacks on our reconnaissance flights was solely a U.S. decision, was limited and proportionate to the Syrian attack and was designed to prevent repetition of such attacks. It had no broader purpose.

As a limited, proportionate and timely response to an armed attack against U.S. forces, the U.S. action falls squarely within the inherent right of self-defense recognized in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The basis for a resolution of this incident is clear. Syria should immediately return our airmen, refrain from further attacks, and cooperate with the Government of Lebanon in pursuing peaceful means of resolving the problems of Lebanon.

My government respectfully requests that this letter be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jeane J. KIRKPATRICK

-----