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Beirut Evacuation Completed Ahead of Schedule

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Arafat Arrives in Greece

The last of nearly 15,000 Palestinian and **Syrian** fighters left west Beirut Sept. 1, two days ahead of schedule. Yasir Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, arrived the same day in Greece, having left Beirut by ship Aug. 30. [See 1982 [PLO Evacuation from Beirut Goes Forward; Rightist Elected Lebanon President](#)]

The last phase of the evacuation proceeded speedily and apparently without the delays that had posed some dangers in the first days of the pullout. With the start of overland evacuations Aug. 27, the tempo of the withdrawal picked up. The final contingent, numbering about 700 guerrillas, departed by ship for **Syria**.

Syrian army troops, who had entered Beirut in 1976, were among the last to leave. The troops--2,700 by the Lebanese count, over 3,500 by the **Israeli** count--left by truck convoy Aug. 30 and 31. They reportedly took up positions with other **Syrian** units in Lebanon's Bekaa valley, where they faced what was thought to be a larger **Israeli** force.

The Palestinians left Beirut for a number of different countries, but **Syria** took by far the largest number of them. According to figures reported Sept. 2 by the New York Times, about 8,100 guerrillas went to **Syria** by the Lebanese count; the **Israeli** count was closer to 7,400. Tunisia accepted around 1,000 guerrillas (by both counts), and that was the second-largest contingent. According to the Lebanese count, 700 guerrillas left for Southern Yemen; the **Israelis** put the figure at 518. Between 550 and 600 guerrillas went to Algeria, and lesser number went to the Sudan, Yemen, Jordan, Iraq, Greece and Cyprus.

The Lebanese count, which included several hundred civilian women and children, totaled 14,656, according to the Times; the **Israeli** count came to 14,614. Both figures included **Syrian** troops as well as guerrillas.

In general, the arrival of the guerrillas in their host countries was an occasion for celebration and warm welcomes. However, there were reports that at least two of the countries--**Syria** and Tunisia--were taking considerable precautions in connection with their new guests. Tunisia, according to reports datelined Aug. 29 and 31, was housing the guerrillas in a camp in a remote part of the country. It was not clear whether the guerrillas were being allowed to retain their arms. **Syria**, likewise, according to an Aug. 27 report, was housing some of the guerrillas in a tent camp in the desert. Another camp was said to have been prepared near Damascus, and a third near the Jordanian border.

Arafat Vows Continued Struggle

At his departure from Beirut Aug. 30, Arafat promised to "continue the struggle so we can win the war" against **Israel**. When he arrived in Greece Sept. 1, the PLO leader denied that the withdrawal from Beirut represented a defeat.

"I am with the people, and the people cannot be defeated," Arafat said, adding that he was proud to have "prevented these barbarian, savage **Israeli** troops from invading Beirut."

A spokesman for the PLO said Sept. 1 that Arafat had chosen to come to Greece first on leaving Lebanon to signify his appreciation of the support received from the Greek government and also to show his displeasure at the lack of Arab support for the PLO.

Arafat was warmly welcomed by Greek Premier Andreas Papandreou, who said he was "deeply moved at receiving in our country this great fighter for the freedom of his people, Yasir Arafat." Papandreou said the Greek people would always support the Palestinians in "their holy struggle," adding, "We are certain that with such faith, zeal and determination shown by the Palestinian people, victory will be theirs, and quickly."

PLO Gives Heavy Arms to Militia

The PLO was turning over its heavy arms--tanks, artillery, mortars and other materiel--to left-wing Moslem militias, the Washington Post reported Aug. 27.

The withdrawal accord negotiated by U.S. special envoy Philip Habib had required the PLO to leave its heavy arms in the hands of the Lebanese army. However, the PLO objected to this because it considered the Lebanese army to be under the control of right-wing Christian forces.

Many of the PLO's heavy weapons were reportedly going to the leftist Mourabitoun militia. This had raised concern in **Israel**, which viewed the Mourabitoun as a PLO ally.

Conflicting statements from **Israeli** officials made it unclear what **Israel** wanted and was prepared to do about the situation. Some officials indicated Aug. 29 and 30 that they thought the Mourabitoun should leave Beirut, but an aide to Premier Menachem Begin said **Israel** would not demand the group's departure if it turned over its heavy weapons.

Weinberger Visits Beirut

U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger paid a brief visit to Beirut Sept. 1 before going on to **Israel**, The defense chief, relaying a message from President Reagan, said, "We are now on the eve of achieving what we set forth to accomplish: an end to the bloodshed in Beirut and the re-establishment of Lebanese government sovereignty over their capital."

Weinberger also said that the 800 U.S. Marines who had landed in Beirut to help monitor the evacuation had "pretty well completed" their job and would leave the country in "a few days."

French and Italian troops were also helping ensure that the evacuation was carried out peacefully. Weinberger said the governments of those countries would decide when to withdraw their troops, adding, "I don't know of any particular duty that would required anybody to stay more than a few days."

Lebanese Press Normalization

The Lebanese government, according to a report datelined Sept. 1, had ordered the removal of all barricades from the streets of Beirut and banned militiamen from carrying arms or wearing uniforms.

The government also called for an end to the so-called "green line," the barrier zone dividing the city into Christian and Moslem sections. Traffic should be permitted to move freely through all intersections connecting the two halves of the city, the government said.

According to the report, the Moslem Mourabitoun militia was ordering its members to comply with the government directives. The militia reportedly issued a statement saying, "All security functions for Mourabitoun forces have henceforth ended."

Israel Downs Syrian Jet

Israel announced Aug. 31 that it had shot down a **Syrian** MiG-25 jet on a reconnaissance flight in the Beirut area. At the same time, **Israel** announced that no **Syrian** planes would be permitted to fly over **Israeli**-controlled portions of Lebanon.

According to an **Israeli** military spokesman, the incident was the first time since June 24 that a **Syrian** plane had been downed.

Deaths Put at 17,800

The Lebanese paper An Nahar estimated the total number of deaths since the invasion--excluding those of **Israelis**--at 17,825, according to a report datelined Sept. 1.

That figure, which included guerrillas, Palestinian and Lebanese civilians and **Syrian** troops, was arrived at by using information from hospital and interior ministry sources, the paper said. The total wounded was put at 30,103.

Many relief officials, however, said it would be virtually impossible to compile an accurate accounting of the dead. [See 1982 [Beirut Siege, Talks on Fate of PLO in Lebanon Continue; Palestinians Negotiate Departure Terms](#)]

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