

The seizure of the Iranian Embassy in
Kensington, and the taking of hostages
by the Iranian Separatists.

SECURITY

April 1980

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
15.80							
15.81							
26.80							
13.80							
13.5.80							
16.2.81							
2.11.82							
4.2.83							

PREM 19/1137



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 February 1983

Thank you for your letter of 16 February to the Prime Minister, enclosing a copy of a letter you had written to the Home Secretary, in which you refer to the delay that has occurred in the Home Office replying substantively to your earlier correspondence seeking compensation for your clients for damage suffered as a consequence of the action taken to end the occupation of the Iranian Embassy.

I have asked the Home Office what is the current position with regard to the claims for compensation. They have the matter under urgent consideration and they hope to be able to write to you substantively within the next three weeks. They regret not yet having been able to send a substantive reply but point out that the issues raised by your letter of 18 October 1982 are by no means straightforward and have necessarily required detailed consideration and consultation with other parties.

A. J. COLES

Messrs. Lawrance, Messer & Co.

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

Please type letter

*A.J.C. 24
/ 2.*

23 FEB 1960

Dear Sir,

THE IRANIAN EMBASSY SIEGE: CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION

Thank you for your letter of 17th February with which you enclosed copy correspondence from Lawrance, Messer and Company, a firm of solicitors seeking compensation for their clients for damage suffered as a result of the action taken to end the occupation of the Iranian Embassy. You asked what the current position is.

We have consulted our Legal Advisers who in turn consulted Treasury Solicitors. Their advice is, essentially, that the claimants should be reimbursed for the damage caused and that the payments should be made at the earliest opportunity. We still have to resolve the questions of the amount of the payments and who should meet the cost. In connection with the second point we will have to consult the Treasury and it may also be necessary for the Metropolitan Police and the Ministry of Defence to be involved.

I regret that this issue has not yet been resolved, but it is not for the lack of effort. We are doing all we can to resolve this matter quickly and we hope to be able to write substantively to Lawrance, Messer and Company within the next three weeks.

... I enclose a draft letter which you may wish to send to Lawrance, Messer and Company.

Yours sincerely,


Lesley Pallett.

MRS. L. PALLETT

J. Coles Esq.,

DRAFT LETTER

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE

TO	ENCLOSURES	COPIES TO BE SENT TO
Messrs Lawrance, Messer and Company 16 Coleman Street LONDON EC2R 5AB (FULL POSTAL ADDRESS)		PS/Home Secretary (FULL ADDRESSES, IF NECESSARY)



LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY Mr Coles
 (NAME OF SIGNATORY)

~~THE IRANIAN EMBASSY SIEGE~~

Thank you for your letter of 16 February to the Prime Minister, enclosing a copy of a letter you had written to the Home Secretary, in which you refer to the delay that has occurred in the Home Office replying substantively to your earlier correspondence seeking compensation for your clients for damage suffered as a consequence of the action taken to end the occupation of the Iranian Embassy.

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A.J.C. ²⁴/₂

Security, Apr
80. Tran air
Embassy Serge

10/10/80



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

17 February 1983

THE IRANIAN EMBASSY SIEGE

Correspondence about the approach made by Lawrance, Messer and Company for compensation ended with Jane Ridley's letter to me of 11 November. I wrote to the firm on 15 November.

The Prime Minister has now received another letter from Lawrance, Messer and Company expressing concern at the delay that has occurred in obtaining a substantive response from the Home Office to their enquiries. I enclose a copy of this letter.

I should like to write, on the Prime Minister's behalf, to the firm by Wednesday 23 February at the latest, and should be most grateful to know by then what the current position is. Could you kindly supply a draft for my reply.

A. J. COLES

Mrs. Lesley Pallett,
Home Office.

2

H. CHINNERY
N. T. LEVISON
D. COSGROVE
G. R. PRESTON

N. A. WARD-JONES
G. H. TINDLE
P. R. DAVIES
R. H. JACKSON
SARAH E. STOWELL

R. J. M. HERBERT
A. C. FEAR
R. A. BUTTLE

CONSULTANT
SIR CLEMENT PENRUDDOCK, C.B.E.

ASSOCIATES
JANET FLUTTER
R. T. HOGG
L. P. KEHOE

LAWRANCE, MESSER & CO.

16, COLEMAN STREET, LONDON EC2R 5AB
TEL: 01-606 7691 TLX: 887344 C.D.E. BOX NO. 654

261, RUE SAINT-HONORE, 75001, PARIS

YOUR REF

OUR REF

INS/LPK/L1540-03/S4710-03

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

16th February 1983

Rt. Honourable Margaret Thatcher PM
10 Downing Street
London
SW1

R17

Dear Madam

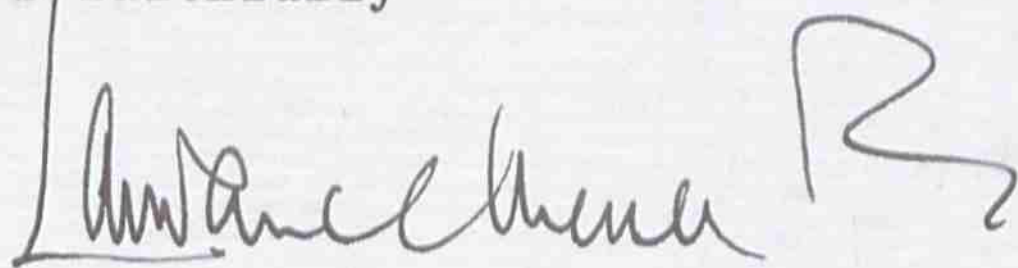
Re: The Iranian Embassy Seige

We enclose a copy of yet another letter written to the Home Secretary which is self-explanatory. We are disturbed at the delay that has occurred and would again ask you to use some influence in bringing forth a substantive response from that Ministry.

We look forward to hearing from you or them and would thank you in anticipation.

As an aside when replying we would ask that the above reference be quoted.

Yours faithfully



Enc

H. CHINNERY
N. T. LEVISON
D. COSGROVE
G. R. PRESTON

N. A. WARD-JONES

G. H. TINDLE
P. R. DAVIES
R. H. JACKSON
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YOUR REF QPE/80 11/5/20

OUR REF INS/LPK/L1540-03/S4710-03

Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AT

16th February 1983

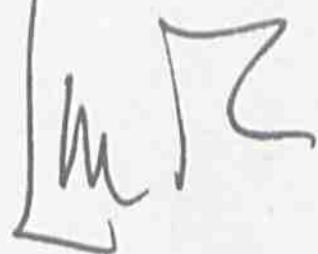
Dear Sirs

Re: 14 and 15 Princes Gate, London SW7

Frankly, other than acknowledgments from you on the 1st of November and 23rd December 1982 and the Ministry of Defence on the 16th December, we have had no substantive response to the very important matters raised in our letter of the 18th October. This is by no means satisfactory.

Accordingly we ask that this matter be given the consideration it clearly requires and let us have your substantive response.

Yours faithfully



Security,
Apr 80, Iranian Embassy
Seizure



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 November 1982

You wrote to the Prime Minister on 18 October enclosing copies of letters you had written to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence seeking compensation for your clients for damage suffered as a consequence of the action taken to end the occupation of the Iranian Embassy.

The points you raised are currently being investigated as a matter of urgency by the Home Office in consultation with the Ministry of Defence. I understand you have already received an acknowledgement to your letter from the Home Office and they will send you a more substantive reply on behalf of the Government as soon as the enquiries are completed.

E. J. COLES

Messrs. Lawrance, Messer & Co.



MO 11/10/22

C.F. PP. SP
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~830 7622~~ 218 2111/3

11th November 1982

Dear John,

Type letter p.

MR 13

THE IRANIAN EMBASSY SIEGE

You wrote on 22nd October about the approach for compensation from Lawrance, Messer and Co to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Defence Secretary.

This is a complicated matter which is going to take some time to sort out - the Home Office tell us that it has proved necessary to seek some further information from the Metropolitan Police on which they will need to seek legal advice before a substantive reply is sent to the solicitors. We have agreed with the Home Office that they should take the lead in further correspondence, consulting the MOD as necessary.

I understand that Leslie Pallett wrote to you on 4th November saying that we would let you have a suggested reply for the solicitors. This is attached. Since the draft makes it clear that the Home Office will eventually reply on behalf of the Government I would not propose to send an acknowledgement from this office.

I am copying this and the attachment to Leslie Pallett (Home Office).

Yours ever,

Jane Ridley

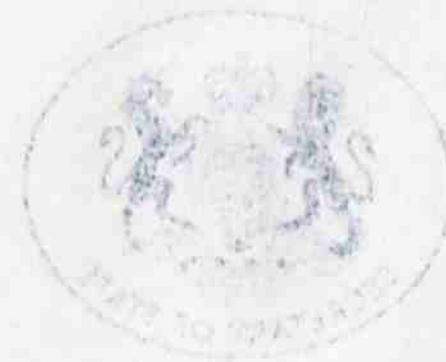
(J E RIDLEY) (MISS)

A J Coles Esq

SECURITY : IRANIAN EMBASSY

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
APRIL 1980
MAIN BUILDING WHITE HALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-896 7033



DRAFT REPLY TO LAWRENCE, MESSER & CO FROM THE PS/PRIME MINISTER

18 0 18

You wrote to the Prime Minister on ~~7~~ ~~No 10 please insert~~
~~date~~ 7 enclosing copies of letters you had written to the Home
Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence seeking
compensation for your clients for damage suffered as a consequence
of the action taken to end the occupation of the Iranian Embassy.

The points you raised are currently being investigated as
a matter of urgency by the Home Office in consultation with the
Ministry of Defence. I understand you have already received an
acknowledgement to your letter from the Home Office and they will
send you a more substantive reply on behalf of the Government
as soon as the enquiries are completed.

WJ
15.
u

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

Security
A lot of file
CR?



HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

5/11

LAWRANCE, Messer
L Co.

4 NOV 1982

Dear John,

THE IRANIAN EMBASSY SIEGE

Handwritten mark resembling a stylized 'R' or 'A' with an arrow pointing left, and 'S/11' written below it.

X Thank you for copying to us your letter of 22nd October to Nick Evans, M.O.D., about correspondence the Prime Minister has received from Lawrance Messer and Co., seeking compensation for their clients for damage suffered as a result of the action taken to end the occupation of the Iranian Embassy.

We will do all we can to take this matter forward quickly, but it is likely to take some time to resolve. It will for example, be necessary to obtain details from the Metropolitan Police of their correspondence with Lawrance Messer and Co. and to seek legal advice. Interim replies have been sent to the letters that we have received from Lawrance Messer and Co. and to Mrs. Senley of 15 Princes Gate who has written separately to the Home Secretary. Officials here have been in touch with their counterparts in M.O.D. with whom further, more detailed, discussions will be required. We understand that M.O.D. are also sending an interim reply to Lawrance Messer and Co. and that they will let you have a draft reply that you may care to send to that company.

Handwritten notes: 'R/F' and circled numbers '2' and '1'.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Pallett.

MRS. L. PALLETT

A. J. Coles, Esq.



huz

Messrs. LAWRANCE, Messrs + Co
S/11
RW

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

22 October, 1982

THE IRANIAN EMBASSY SIEGE

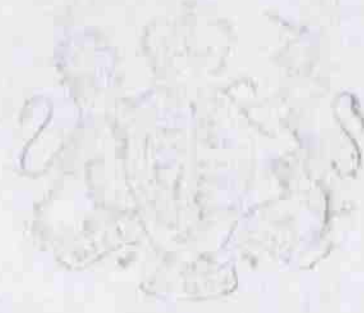
The Prime Minister has received a letter from Lawrance, Messer & Co. enclosing copies of letters written to the Secretary of State for Defence and the Home Secretary both of which seek compensation for their clients for damage suffered as a consequence of the action taken to end the occupation of the Iranian Embassy.

BF | I should be grateful if you could let me know how you propose to reply to the letter to your Secretary of State, so that I can advise the Prime Minister how to reply to the letter that she has received (which contains nothing of substance). I should also be grateful if Colin Walters could similarly let me know how the Home Office will be replying. A copy of this letter is being sent to Colin Walters.

A. J. COLES

N.H.R. Evans, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence

RW



FUE

EM

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

22 October, 1982

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to acknowledge your letter of 18 October. This is receiving attention and a reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

A. J. COLES

Messrs. Lawrance, Messer and
Co.,

H. CHINNERY
N. T. LEVISON
D. COSGROVE
G. R. PRESTON

N. A. WARD-JONES
G. H. TINDLE
P. R. DAVIES
R. H. JACKSON
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TEL: 01-606 7691 TLX: 887344 C.D.E. BOX NO. 654

261, RUE SAINT-HONORE, 75001, PARIS

YOUR REF

OUR REF

INS/LPK/L1540-03/S4710-03

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

18th October 1982

Rt Honourable John Nott, PC, MP.
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1

Dear Sir

Re: 14 and 15 Princes Gate, London SW7

We act for the various insurance interests in respect of the above properties, which suffered severe damage as a consequence of the action taken to end the occupation of the Iranian Embassy (No. 16) by terrorists.

Claims to the Receiver of the Metropolitan Police pursuant to the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 seeking compensation have been rejected on the basis that the incident did not fall within the provisions of the Act. Attempts at discussion with the Iranian Consulate have proved fruitless.

Our clients' outlays in respect of No. 15 were £78,342. This takes no account of uninsured losses suffered by the owner, Mr Senley. Outlays in respect of No. 14 were £3,024. The Insured, The Royal College of General Practitioners, had the amount of their claim defrayed by £3,000 which was paid by the Receiver for "services rendered" to the Police during the incident.

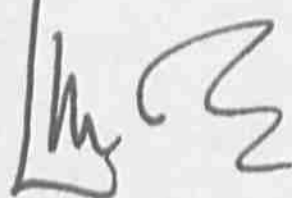
We are aware, pursuant to a notice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that the occupiers of No. 17, the Ethiopian Consulate, were compensated in full by Her Majesty's government for damage suffered as a result of the incident.

Accordingly our purpose in writing to you is to seek confirmation that your Ministry, in conjunction with others if applicable, will compensate our clients for the damage suffered by their Insured. Alternatively please let us have full details of why compensation will not be paid, so that we can advise our clients on how to proceed.

Because of the parties involved, i.e., the S.A.S. and the Police, in ending the occupation we have also written to the Home Office (with copies to the Prime Minister).

Please let us hear from you shortly.

Yours faithfully



H. CHINNERY
N. T. LEVISON
D. COSGROVE
G. R. PRESTON

N. A. WARD-JONES

G. H. TINDLE
P. R. DAVIES
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YOUR REF

OUR REF INS/LPK/L1540-03/S4710-03

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

18th October 1982

Rt. Honourable William Whitelaw, PC, MP.
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1

Dear Sir

Re: 14 and 15 Princes Gate, London SW7

We act for the various insurance interests in respect of the above properties, which suffered severe damage as a consequence of the action taken to end the occupation of the Iranian Embassy (No. 16) by terrorists in May 1980.

Claims to the Receiver of the Metropolitan Police pursuant to the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 seeking compensation have been rejected on the basis that the incident did not fall within the provisions of the Act. Attempts at discussion with the Iranian Consulate have proved fruitless.

Our clients' outlays in respect of No. 15 were £78,342. This takes no account of uninsured losses suffered by the owner, Mr Senley. Outlays in respect of No. 14 were £3,024. The Insured, The Royal College of General Practitioners, had the amount of their claim defrayed by £3,000 which was paid by the Receiver for "services rendered" to the Police during the incident.

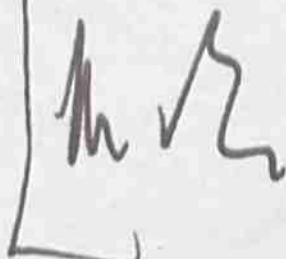
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Accordingly our purpose in writing to you is to seek confirmation that your Ministry, in conjunction with others if applicable, will compensate our clients for the damage suffered by their Insured. Alternatively please let us have full details of why compensation will not be paid, so that we can advise our clients on how to proceed.

Because of the parties involved, i.e., the S.A.S. and Police, in ending the occupation we have also written to the Ministry of Defence (with copies to the Prime Minister).

Please let us hear from you shortly.

Yours faithfully



cc Press Office.
(CPM has agreed)

Security

MAD

16/2.

DRAFT LETTER FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO SEND TO THE TIMES

Mr. Bruce Harris (16 February) expresses concern about the conduct of the SAS at the end of the Iranian Embassy siege but he has his facts wrong. May I deal with some of the more serious mistakes.

He says that it is curious that no members of the SAS team gave evidence at the inquest although he refers to your reports of 4 and 5 February, the earlier of which clearly describes how two members of the SAS appeared in civilian dress when they gave evidence.

He is puzzled about comments of Prosecuting Counsel at the end of the trial of the surviving terrorist when your report makes it clear that the defendant's change of plea to guilty came before the Prosecution had called all its witnesses. Clearly Counsel was seeking to correct the impression, which others may share with Mr. Harris, that the witnesses who had given evidence had said all that there was to be said about the events of that day.

Mr. Harris says that the statement by a soldier that a terrorist "made some movement with his hand which I considered a direct threat" is vague in the extreme. In your report of his evidence the soldier, in fact, said "in his hand was a pistol and ammunition and he made some movement of his hand . . .". I regret that Mr. Harris gives the impression of being so selective in his choice of facts.

/ Your

Your Parliamentary report (9 February) or the headline "Embassy rescue: SAS not given immunity" reports me accurately as saying "the evidence was reviewed by the DPP and by me. There was no evidence upon which proceedings in relation to the deaths of these terrorists could be justified". I can assure Mr. Harris that the Director and myself in considering whether to institute criminal proceedings against members of the SAS applied the same criteria which we apply generally and that there was no question of special rules for the SAS.

Finally, since Mr. Harris says that I failed to give a categorical answer to the Parliamentary Question, I can assure him that neither the Home Secretary nor I approved "any immunity from prosecution or any order for summary execution" in this attack on the terrorists holding the hostages in the Embassy.

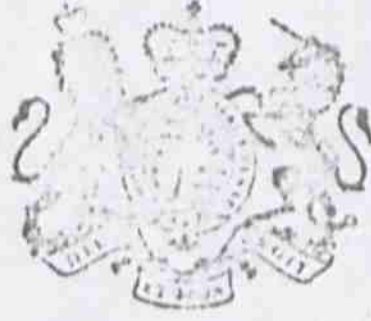
FILE

cc FCO

HS

Security

CF. to [unclear] *Originaly*
LB/K



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

13 May, 1980

Dear Mr Faruqi,

Thank you for your telegram following the siege at the Iranian Embassy. I agree with you that the work of the police and the SAS deserves the highest praise, and I am relieved that the situation came to an end with the majority of the hostages safe and well.

Yours sincerely
Robert Carr

Mr. Mohammed Hashem Faruqi

(a hostage)

RH.

CONFIDENTIAL

GR 185
CONFIDENTIAL
FM TEHRAN 120430Z MAY
TO ROUTINE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 479 OF 12 MAY 80.

MS.

MY TELNO 475 : IRANIAN EMBASSY, LONDON.

1. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POINTS WHICH COULD TURN SOUR ON US:
THE COST OF REBUILDING THE IRANIAN EMBASSY, THE DESIRE
(EXPRESSED BY THE IRP) TO EXTRADITE THE REMAINING TERRORISTS
(BUT SEE THE REPORT OF MY MEETING WITH QOTBZADEH), A SUSPICION
THAT WE ARE HOLDING INFORMATION BACK ABOUT THE GROUP AND SO ON.
THERE IS NOT SURPRISINGLY CONSIDERABLE INTEREST AMONG THE
AUTHORITIES HERE IN THE WHOLE MATTER AND THE REVELATIONS IN
THE SUNDAY TIMES WILL FEED THIS. I HOPE THAT THE DEPARTMENT
CAN BEAR THIS IN MIND AND LET US HAVE AS MUCH MATERIAL AS THEY
CAN, PREFERABLY IN ADVANCE OF PUBLICITY.
2. I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT HOW TO HANDLE THE MATTER OF
A CLAIM FROM THE IRANIANS FOR THE DAMAGE TO THEIR EMBASSY.
PERHAPS THE BEST WAY TO HEAD OFF TROUBLE WOULD BE TO SPEAK
UNILATERALLY AND SOON TO THE IRANIANS, BEFORE WE OR THEY
HAVE HAD TIME TO ASSESS THE LIKELY BILL FOR THE IRANIAN
EMBASSY IN LONDON SAYING THAT WE ARE WITHDRAWING OUR CLAIM
FOR COMPENSATION AND SUGGESTING THAT THE TWO GOVERNMENTS SHOULD
CARRY THEIR OWN LOSSES IN THESE UNFORTUNATE EVENTS.

GRAHAM

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING STREET]
[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]

DEPARTMENTAL DISTRIBUTION

MED
NAD
NEWS D
CONS D
DEFENCE D
MAED
NENAD

CONFIDENTIAL

Why the siege tactics had to be switched

THIS TIME last week the British public was confident that the siege at the Iranian embassy was going to end quietly. All the textbooks said so. All the newspapers said so. Any siege which lasts more than a couple of days, according to the conventional wisdom, is likely to end with the peaceful surrender of the gunmen.

The signs certainly pointed that way. One hostage had been released because of an upset stomach, another because she was pregnant. The police described their talks with the gunmen as 'affable'. There had even been complaints about the quality of the food sent in.

And yet, by Monday evening, with five terrorists and two hostages dead, it was clear that the textbooks would have to be rewritten. When political fanatics are involved, the conventional wisdom no longer applies.

What went wrong? Even to raise the question in the national (not to say international) mood of post-siege euphoria at a Great British success may seem strange, even perverse. But something remarkable must have happened to explode the general expectation of a happy ending. The police were either wrong at the start or wrong at the end about the gunmen. Or did something unexpected occur to explain the change in the gunmen? If so, what was it?

As the jigsaw of those six tension-filled days at Princes Gate is pieced together, one over-riding fact emerges: by Monday morning, the gunmen and the police had run out of things to talk about. By that time there was just one demand from the gunmen—safe conduct out of the country—and that was something the British Government had no intention of granting. The result was stalemate leading on to bloodshed.

If the conventional wisdom had been right, the gunmen would have decided at this point to throw in the towel and come out of the embassy with their hands up. Instead, they killed a hostage. It was this chilling reality which left the authorities with no alternative but to send in the SAS and end the siege by force.

On the afternoon of Friday 2 May, the third day of the siege, Mr William Whitelaw, the Home Secretary, went to Downing Street to obtain the Prime Minister's agreement on two crucial points: there was to be no accession to the gunmen's demands for medication by Arab ambassadors, and there was to be no guarantee of safe conduct. Mrs Thatcher agreed without hesitation.

From then on, there was little to do but hope. The Home Secretary left London to spend the weekend in the country, remaining in close contact via radio link with the crisis committee known as COBRA, which was meeting in permanent session in a basement room beneath the Cabinet Office in Whitehall.

COBRA had swung into action from the very first moments of the siege. It was chaired by Mr Whitelaw, and included Mr Douglas Hurd from the Foreign Office, Mr

going through their 'softly, softly' routine, plans were being laid behind the scenes, from the very beginning, for a possible storming of the embassy. Gas Board men were brought in to dig useless holes in the road to cover the sounds of SAS men next door painstakingly removing the bricks from a common wall so as to leave only a thin coating of plaster between them and the gunmen.

Sophisticated audio and visual surveillance apparatus was attached to the walls, giving the police at least a partial picture of what was happening inside the besieged embassy building. Gas Board drills, which were in action throughout Friday night, would have also helped prevent the gunmen sleeping, a useful way of wearing down their resistance.

By Friday morning, the gunmen were already unhappy at the way the police were treating them. They were especially upset that the police had not published their demand that three Arab ambassadors be brought in to talk to them. Why, they asked BBC sound recordist Sim Harris, isn't the radio reporting this? He suggested they ask the BBC directly, and just before 9.00 am police rang BBC Television Centre to say that Harris was asking to speak to John Exelby, BBC TV Home News Editor.

Exelby wasn't there; he had taken his car to the garage that morning and wasn't expected in until later. So Tony Crabb, Managing Editor of TV News, stepped into the breach. He was whisked by police car to Princes Gate.

'Sim came to the ground floor window with an Arab journalist hostage and a gunman standing behind him,' Crabb recalled last week. 'He told me the gunmen were concerned that some of the things they had been telling the police weren't being publicised. He said it wasn't like the Spaghetti House or Balcombe Street sieges—these gunmen were intelligent, university-educated, and sincere in what they believed. They wanted a fair statement of their aims publicised and wanted it to be known that they wished no harm to come to their hostages.'

At this stage, therefore, it was already clear that the gunman had begun to mistrust the police. Perhaps more important, they had also become deeply suspicious of noises they had heard from the adjoining building. 'Sim told me that if the police were responsible, I should ask them to stop,' said Crabb.

He went back to the embassy the following afternoon, again at Sim Harris's request, to discover that tension was high. The gunmen were still unhappy that their demand for three ambassadors had not been broadcast and, at Crabb's suggestion, dictated a statement to him which they wanted transmitted on radio and television.

Crabb told them that if the police were to agree to this, they would expect a 'good-will gesture' in return. The statement was broadcast, and the gunmen duly released

two hostages later that night. Over the weekend, Foreign Office Minister Douglas Hurd held a series of meetings with Arab ambassadors in London. He told them it might be useful if they were to talk to the gunmen, not as mediators, but simply in an attempt to persuade them to surrender. The diplomats replied that they saw little point merely in talking, and would agree to approach the gunmen only on two conditions: that the British authorities gave them an assurance that there would be no storming of the embassy and that they could offer the gunmen safe conduct out of the country.

Mr Hurd undertook to relay their views to COBRA and report back. On Monday afternoon, only hours before the SAS moved in, he reported that there was to be no safe conduct guarantee. It was stalemate.

By this time, the gunmen were clearly losing patience. According to one of the hostages, an air of fatalism hung over the embassy, a feeling that the end was near and there was nothing more to be done. As Muslims, both the gunman and most of the hostages were aware of the concept of martyrdom. It was Abbas Lauasani the young Iranian Press attache, who had been in London for only six months, who became the first 'martyr'. Upset at the gunmen's derogatory references to Ayatollah Khomeini, he offered himself as their victim. The gunmen obliged.

As the shots rang out, the police's listening devices picked up every sound. The Home Secretary, still in Berkshire, was summoned back to London—and 18 minutes later, after what, by all accounts, was a terrifying

'Who dares wins': SAS were ordered in within hours of the first

car-ride involving a dash to the airport. It was only time the police were alerted that they were about their intention.

The SAS attack works, interrupting the flow of world news on all television channels. A John Wakefield and a John Wakefield on another. As Mr Hashit Faruqi reveals, the Prime Minister's own account of those few minutes one was killed by the gunman. Six gunmen were shot.

The sole surviving news was taken away, as that night, when they went to the mortuary to identify the bodies, and in what had happened.

The Observer, Sunday 11 May 1980

Siege ended

ing through their 'softly, softly' routine, plans were laid behind the scenes, from the very beginning, for a possible storming of the embassy. Gas Board men were brought in to dig useless holes in the road to cover the minds of SAS men next door in a stinking removing the cks from a common wall so to leave only a thin coating of plaster between them and the gunmen.

sophisticated audio and al surveillance apparatus attached to the walls, giving the police at least a picture of what was happening inside the besieged gassy building. Gas Board ls, which were in action throughout Friday night, id have also helped prevent the gunmen sleeping, a ul way of wearing down r resistance.

Friday morning, the men were already un-ny at the way the police treating them. They especially upset that e had not published demand that three Arab assadors be brought in to them. Why, they asked sound recordist Sim is, isn't the radio report- his? He suggested they he BBC directly, and just e 9.00 am police rang Television Centre to say Harris was asking to to John Exelby, BBC ome News Editor.

elby wasn't there; he taken his car to the e that morning and t expected in until later. ony Crabb, Managing r of TV News, stepped the breach. He was ed by police car to s Gate.

came to the ground window with an Arab list hostage and a gun- standing behind him, recalled last week. 'He ne the gunmen were ned that some of the they had been telling lice weren't being pub-

said it wasn't like the tti House or Balcombe sieges—these gunmen ntelligent, university- ed, and sincere in what lieved. They wanted a tement of their aims sed and wanted it to be that they wished no o come to their hos-

is stage, therefore, it ready clear that the t had begun to mis- he police. Perhaps portant, they had also deeply suspicious of they had heard from ining building. 'Sim e that if the police ponsible, I should ask stop,' said Crabb. ent back to the em- he following after- gain at Sim Harris's to discover that fen- s high. The gunmen ll unhappy that their for three ambassa- l not been broadcast Crabb's suggestion, a statement to him ey wanted transmit- idio and television. told them that if the ere to agree to this, ald expect a 'good- ure' in return. The t was broadcast, and men duly released

The gunmen cried 'Surrender'—then the SAS burst in

SHORTLY after seven o'clock on Monday evening, while I was saying my evening prayers, I could hear the police talking to the terrorists about their transport to the plane and coach, how big a coach they would need. The leader said probably for 28 people—then he corrected himself and said: 'No, no, 36.' He realised he mustn't give the exact figure.

We didn't know what was happening outside, except that we could hear some funny sounds like low-flying planes. I realise now that this was probably to cover the noise of SAS preparations.

Then the police asked for the field telephone to be given to the terrorist leader again. They told him everything was available, and that he should go to ask the Charge d'Affaires whether he was willing to come along. This was very cleverly timed. For it meant that he left Sim Harris and Constable Lock unattended. He was half-way up the stairs—not with us and not with them—when it all started. It saved the lives not only of the Englishmen, Sim and Trevor, but also helped us. If he had reached our room, we would have been facing an additional terrorist.

All the hostages were still on the second floor. The men were in the telex room at the front, the women in the small room. There was one terrorist at the door and three outside. I became aware of a sort of rustling noise and I looked at the terrorist sitting by the door. He immediately started to fire towards the centre of the room where the Iranian hostages were concentrated. One Iranian hostage was killed and two were wounded.

After that, there were bangs and one could hear shouting by the terrorists. Within 20 seconds they started to surrender, saying 'Tasleem, Tasleem' (Surrender, surrender).

The front window of the room was blown out and we were on the floor. After they had started to shout 'Tasleem, Tasleem', I realised that as far as these men were concerned, we were safe. The next phase would be the arrival of the commandos.

There were now three

MUHAMMAD H A S H FARUQI, a British Pakistani national, a Muslim politician, a magazine published in London. When the gunmen burst into the Iranian Embassy, Charge d'Affaires, Dr Ghazem-Ali Afrouz. Both were held hostage for six days. Here, he describes the first moments of the siege and the storming of the Embassy the SAS.

terrorists and 17 hostages the room. By that time, I had stood up and some of the Iranians had as well. We saw the commandos coming through the door, wearing their masks, and people were saying: 'We're hostage we're hostages', and 'I'm British, I'm British.'

Then one of the commandos opened his mask and asked which ones were the terrorists. By that time, the terrorists were huddled together in the corner among the Iranian hostages and trying to take shelter behind some desks and cabinets.

I think somebody pointed at them, and it was at that stage that they were shot by the SAS. I am not sure if the terrorists were huddling to weapons at that stage, but the commandos would not know that, of course. They didn't know whether the terrorists were still armed or not.

One of the terrorists was sitting on the floor, and when he was pointed out by the Iranians, the commando asked him to stand up, and then he was shot. It was a war situation. They killed two terrorists and the third went down to the garden with the hostages.

The gunmen had shot three hostages, killing one, as the commandos burst in. But within 10 seconds or so they lost heart and gave up. If they'd been determined people, they could have killed us all. They didn't spare us for any moral reason, but for the simple reason that they felt cornered and confused. It was not lack of will, it was lack of morale.

by Robin Lustig, George Brock, Robert Parker, Laurence Marks, Adam Raphael and Robert Stephens.



'Who dares wins': SAS were ordered in within hours of the first alert.

er-ride involving a dash down Constitution Hill the wrong way with police sirens blaring, Mr Whitelaw was back in the capital.

Until Luasni's body was ceremoniously dumped on the pavement outside the embassy, police were unsure whether the shots had signalled a death or merely a warning. But the sight of the diplomat's dead body left no doubts. Whitelaw contacted the Prime Minister and advised that the SAS should be ordered in. Mrs Thatcher replied with one word: 'Yes.'

Within 30 minutes, the attack was launched. Until the very last moment, police had been stalling for time by seeming to discuss with the gunmen the detailed arrange-

two hostages later, that night. Over the weekend, Foreign Office Minister Douglas Hurd held a series of meetings with Arab ambassadors in London. He told them it might be useful if they were to talk to the gunmen, not as mediators, but simply in an attempt to persuade them to surrender.

The diplomats replied that they saw little point merely in talking, and would agree to approach the gunmen only on two conditions: that the British authorities gave them an assurance that there would be no storming of the embassy and that they could offer the gunmen safe conduct out of the country.

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PRIME MINISTER

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THE HONOURABLE MARGARET THATCHER
PRIME MINISTER OF ENGLAND
10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON

DEAR PRIME MINISTER I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS THE GRATITUDE AND THE
CONGRATULATIONS OF THE PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO TO THE PEOPLE
AND GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM FOR THE COURAGEOUS ACTION OF
BRITISH FORCES YESTERDAY IN LIBERATING HOSTAGES

COL 10

ID380 THE HONOURABLE PAGE 2/72/69

FROM THE EMBASSY OF IRAN. THIS SINGULARLY BRILLIANT OPERATION WAS A
CLEAR STATEMENT THAT A FREE AND CIVILIZED PEOPLE ABHOR TERRORISM AND
ITS COWARDLY DEPRIVATION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS IN HOSTAGE
TAKING INCIDENTS. WE IN ONTARIO CANADA, SHARE THAT VIEW AND BELIEVE
THE FREE WORLD OWES BRITIAN A DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR DEMONSTRATING
SUCH BRAVE RESOLVE IN DEALING WITH THE SITUATION SINCERELY
WILLIAM G DAVIS PREMIER OF ONTARIO

BW

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FILE

VLB

7 May 1980

In the Prime Minister's absence in Belgrade, I am writing to acknowledge your letter to her of 6 May. I will, of course, bring this to her attention immediately she returns.

M A PATTISON

His Excellency Mr. Shridath Ramphal,
Kt., C.M.G., Q.C.

OFFICE OF THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL
MARLBOROUGH HOUSE · PALL MALL · LONDON SW1Y 5HX

Ack'd
MAR

(2)

PRIME MINISTER.

May 6, 1980

MAR 7/5.

ms.

My dear Prime Minister,

Please allow me to convey to you and your colleagues in the Government, congratulations on the effective action that has ended the siege on the Iranian Embassy in London. It has rightly won the admiration of the international community; I trust it will likewise contribute to ending the threats which such outrages currently hold for diplomatic activity the world over, and contribute in particular to the release of the American hostages in Tehran.

With deep respect,



Shridath S. Ramphal

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON

P.O. INTERNATIONAL
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6 MAY 1980

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RIGHT HONORABLE MARGARET THATCHER

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1

THE SUPERB DEMONSTRATION OF BRITISH GUTS AND BRITISH EFFICIENCY BY
YOUR COMMANDO OPERATION IS AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE TO FREE PEOPLE
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES FOR THE FUTURE

RICHARD NIXON

COL 10

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THE PRIME MINISTER MRS MARGARET THATCHER 10 DOWNING ST
SW1

HEART FELT CONGRATULATIONS FOR THE SPLENDID RESCUE OPERATION
OF YOUR SECURITY FORCES
CONSTANTINE R

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1222 Ext 2068

PRIME MINISTER
10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1

PERSONAL FOR MRS THATCHER FROM LORD CHALFONT STOP
CONGRATULATIONS ON MARKING YOUR FIRST YEAR OF
GOVERNMENT WITH MAGNIFICENT OPERATION AT IRANIAN
EMBASSY STOP YOU ARE RIGHT IT AGAIN MEANS
SOMETHING TO BE A BRITISH CITIZEN ABROAD STOP

ALUN CHALFONT

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Subject

Security

GR 150

UNCLASSIFIED
DESKBY 070500Z
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TO IMMEDIATE TEHRAN
TELEGRAM NUMBER 280 OF 6 MAY.

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T106/80

PLEASE PASS FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BANI SADR FROM THE
PRIME MINISTER

BEGINS:

YOUR EXCELLENCY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE WHICH I AM CONVEYING TO THE POLICE
AND TO THE UNIT OF THE BRITISH ARMY WHO WERE INVOLVED. THE BRITISH
PEOPLE WATCHED ANXIOUSLY WITH YOUR OWN DURING THE ORDEAL OF THE
STAFF OF YOUR EMBASSY IN LONDON AND JOIN WITH YOU IN GIVING THANKS
THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR SAFE RELEASE.

I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD CONVEY TO THE FAMILIES OF THE
TWO HOSTAGES WHO DIED THE CONDOLENCES OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND
PEOPLE AND OF MYSELF IN THEIR MOST TRAGIC LOSS.

WITH REGARDS,

ENDS:

CARRINGTON
DEPARTMENTAL DISTN
MEI

COPIES SENT TO
No. 10 DOWNING STREET

6 May 1980

Thank you for your letter of today's date about the incident at the Iranian Embassy. I have of course brought Mr. Fraser's message to the Prime Minister's immediate attention.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

His Excellency Sir James Plimsoll, AC, CBE.

which does not devote such a large proportion of its budget to agriculture. However, we must accept and admit that the work of the Community, particularly in co-operation over foreign affairs, has been excellent and is not hindered in any way by a number of disagreements about internal matters.

IRANIAN EMBASSY, LONDON

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. William Whitelaw): Mr. Speaker, I will, with permission, make a further statement about the taking of hostages by armed gunman at the Iranian embassy.

As the House is aware, this incident was brought to a conclusion yesterday evening following an assault by members of the Special Air Service Regiment. I regret that it proved necessary to resort to the use of force, but there was in the end no alternative. The terrorists killed two hostages. The outcome of the assault, I believe, speaks for itself. Of the 19 hostages known to be alive when the assault took place, all were rescued. Sixteen have already been discharged from hospital. Three remain there. Four gunman are believed to have been killed in the assault and another is in police custody. None escaped. There were no police or SAS casualties.

Throughout five days of the siege, the Metropolitan Police patiently sought to negotiate towards a peaceful conclusion. As a result of their efforts, five hostages were, progressively, released. On behalf of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and myself I made it clear to the Commissioner that Her Majesty's Government were not prepared to give in to the terrorists' demands for a safe conduct out of this country. Subject to that overriding consideration, we did everything in our power to persuade the terrorists peacefully to surrender and free the hostages. It was in the light of that policy that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office sought the assistance of some ambassadors from certain Middle East countries but help from that source was not possible. The Commissioner of Police underlined the approach that his officers were taking in a personal written message that was delivered into the Iranian Embassy yesterday. The help of a Muslim imam was also sought. He spoke personally to the gunman in an attempt to persuade them not to take action that would be damaging both to their hostages and to themselves.

As yesterday progressed it became increasingly clear, however, that the days of patient negotiation and of personal

Mr. Meacher : Will the right hon. Lady take time to reflect on the fact that, contrary to what she keeps saying, a comparison between the growth of the money supply and the rate of inflation shows no relationship at all in Britain over the last five years? Equally, there is no association visible between the two in France, Germany, the United States or Japan over the same period. If she still stubbornly clings to this idea, will she provide the evidence to enable hon. Members to see whether the foundations of her economic policy are built on wishful thinking?

The Prime Minister : No. I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's contention. The factor he has left out of account regarding money supply in those countries is that those countries have grown considerably year after year. When that is taken into account, with the money supply, the hon. Gentleman will find that the figures bear a relationship one to another.

Mr. John Carlisle : Is my right hon. Friend aware that several holidaymakers last weekend had their weekends ruined by mobs of skinheads and so-called yobs in seaside resorts? Will she urge her right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to increase the number of police and urge on magistrates the need to impose stronger sentences upon these people?

The Prime Minister : My right hon. Friend will take every possible step to increase the strength of the police and to see that the law is upheld in this country.

Mr. Freeson : Will the right hon. Lady take action to remove the threat to residents in this country who hail from Libya? Will she give instructions for the closing down of the Libyan embassy which is harbouring, it seems, a gang of thugs, bent on shooting and killing people in this country?

The Prime Minister : There have been two cases of murder of Libyan citizens in this country. People are held and being charged with murder at the moment. No one, of course, is guilty of murder until proved guilty. As the matter is sub judice I think it best to go no further.

Mr. Adley : While everyone in the House will welcome the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has joined my

right hon. Friend in commenting upon recent events at the Iranian embassy, will not my right hon. Friend agree that it would be extremely helpful if the House knew precisely where the Leader of the Opposition and his party stand on the question of the 14 May strike? Will she agree that leadership is demanded not only from our Prime Minister but also, occasionally, from the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister : I trust that the Opposition Front Bench, as well as the Government, are against strikes for political purposes. Such strikes are wholly contrary to the law in this country.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (LEISURE ACTIVITIES)

Q5. Mr. Gwilym Roberts asked the Prime Minister if she will seek to place on the agenda at the next European Council meeting the question of leisure activities in the Community.

The Prime Minister : No, Sir.

Mr. Roberts : Does not the right hon. Lady agree that there is a need for the Community to look at leisure activities, in view of the fact that enforced leisure is the fastest growing sector in the Community? Does she not feel that Britain should give a lead in view of the fact that we face not only technological unemployment but the unemployment created by the policies of her Government?

The Prime Minister : With due respect, I think that at the moment the Community has even more important questions to examine and resolve, and that will be so for some time.

Mr. Dykes : In view of my right hon. Friend's strong reiteration last week of the importance of our membership of the Community—in spite of the EEC budget problems—does she agree that the House should dismiss the rather destructive comments of the right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) in the *Sunday Express* and, therefore, invite him to take extra leisure?

The Prime Minister : I am firmly behind our membership of the European Economic Community. We are trying to turn it into the kind of Community

direct appeals were not going to achieve their objectives. From the start of the siege the gunman regularly threatened to kill hostages if demands were not met. As soon as it became clear that they had begun to carry out those threats, I authorised, at the Commissioner's request, the commitment of the SAS.

I know that the House will wish to join with me in congratulating the Metropolitan Police on an operation that they carried out with skill, care and determination. Their conduct throughout was an example of the highest standards of the British police. The success of the final assault and rescue is an outstanding tribute to the professionalism and bravery of the SAS. I am sure that the House, and, indeed, the country, will wish to join the Government in giving thanks to all those involved—police, military or civilian. Our sympathy goes to the families and friends of those hostages who have been killed or injured.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would simply add this: the way in which this incident was conducted and resolved demonstrates conclusively the determination of the British Government and people not to allow terrorist blackmail to succeed.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Is the Home Secretary aware that the Opposition believe that he was right, as the Secretary of State in charge of the operation in the last six days, to take time for negotiations and discussion before deciding to act in the way that we saw last evening on television? Is he aware that we believe that the overall operation was well carried out and that it shows the merit of the procedures built up for operational control at two levels—ministerially and with the police? On behalf of hon. Members on both sides of the House, may I ask him to convey our tribute to the bravery shown by many of those involved—the police, the SAS, and other individuals? We echo his sympathy to the relatives of those who were killed.

Is the Home Secretary aware that we believe that he was right to bring in the SAS at an early stage, just in case they needed to be used? Is he aware that we believe that the right note was struck a moment ago by the Secretary of State and by the Commissioner last night, which is to the credit of all concerned? There is a feeling that all has gone well and that we

have won something, but it was not expressed in that way. Last night it was said that it was a matter of deep regret that the siege had to be ended by violence. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that I believe that that is the right approach to such a matter?

Is the Home Secretary further aware that we believe that the Government were right to make it clear that in no way will any British Government be prepared to offer safe conduct to those who commit criminal acts? Does he agree that lessons are to be drawn from the events of the last six days, operationally and in general?

May I ask the Home Secretary a number of questions, which should be asked now that the events are over? Given the spread of Middle East terrorism to this country, will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Foreign Secretary to impress on Middle East embassies that passports should not be given under any pretext to people who are not their nationals? Will he remind them that the carriage of arms under diplomatic protection is an unfriendly act?

What is going on in the Libyan embassy? Are the people working there officially accredited to this country? I bring to the Home Secretary's notice what the Americans have done in that respect.

What steps are being taken to deal with Colonel Gaddafi's threat to liquidate Libyan nationals in Britain unless they return home? That threat has been made, and steps must be taken to ensure that it does not happen.

We accept students from all parts of the world who come to our universities and polytechnics. Long may that continue. It is an important part of our life. However, why is it so easy for Iranians to come here to follow courses that have sprung up in institutions in different parts of the country when Asians and West Indians who want to come here to study are forbidden to do so? Will the Home Secretary examine the ease with which Iranian students can come here for that purpose?

Mr. Whitelaw: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his generous tribute to all those involved in the operation. As he and the Leader of the Opposition will appreciate, planning in advance of such operations has

[Mr. Whitelaw.]
 been conducted by successive Governments and was most important when it came to the moment of carrying out the operation. I pay tribute to all the planning that has been done in the past. It was extremely important.

I shall certainly draw the attention of the Foreign Secretary to the points that the right hon. Gentleman made about Middle East terrorism, passports, and the carriage of arms. As to the Libyan embassy position, we have made it clear that we expect the law in our country to be carried out. I note the right hon. Gentleman's question and shall consider carefully what he said.

Concerning the last point I would, of course, point out that under the amended immigration rules that I introduced recently the regulations to deal with those who might be described as bogus students were greatly tightened up. Nevertheless, I think that the right hon. Gentleman makes a broader point, which is taken by many people in this country, and I undertake to look into that as well.

Mr. David Steel: Is the Home Secretary aware that my colleagues and I would wish to be associated with the tributes to the patience and courage of the police and the SAS and, in particular, to the high standard of competence shown in this operation?

Mr. Skinner: He wants a share of the action.

Mr. Steel: Will the right hon. Gentleman also accept that we wish to be associated with the remarks by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition about the lesson that the Iranian Government should learn from this episode? May I ask the hon. Gentleman whether he will—without necessarily giving details to the House—undertake to review the standard of protection that we offer to politically sensitive embassies in London?

Mr. Whitelaw: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for what he said and I am glad that he and his colleagues wish to be associated with the tributes to those concerned in the operation. Of course, it is our duty to afford protection to the various embassies, but I would add that the embassies themselves have a considerable duty to organise their own protection,

and many of them do that. All embassies should carefully consider that issue but I take the right hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Churchill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the heroic actions of 5 May command the admiration not only of the nation but of the world? Does he further agree that, by contrast, they make the TUC's politically motivated day of inaction on 14 May appear all the more petty and futile?

Mr. Whitelaw: I think, perhaps, that I would be wise to confine my remarks to my responsibilities as Home Secretary. They seem to have been quite sufficient in themselves in recent days.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Will the Home Secretary confirm the understanding that the reference at the end of his statement to the determination of the British Government and people applies equally to all parts of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Whitelaw: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Buck: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the whole House wishes to be associated with the congratulations to the SAS and the police force? We should also like to congratulate him for taking the bold decision to send in the SAS. Was their action not further acknowledgment of the sheer professionalism of our forces? Will my right hon. Friend seek to mark, in some way, the marvellous success of this operation, if not by the striking of a medal, at least in a manner that demonstrates how we appreciate what has been done on this occasion?

Mr. Whitelaw: I am grateful for what my hon. and learned Friend said about all who took part in the operation, and I am also grateful to him for his personal reference to me. I can only say that such was the care with which all the operations were planned that the final decision had to be taken by the Home Secretary. Of course, if things go right it is good; if things do not go right the situation can indeed be very difficult. However, that decision is one of the easier actions to take in the final event. I appreciate that I might not be standing here saying that today had events turned out differently.

Mr. Mellish: Speaking as a Londoner, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to convey to the Commissioner of Police

of the Metropolis the deep appreciation of all Londoners for the magnificent job that the police did during the siege? Will the Home Secretary also convey to the Commissioner the fact that the vast majority of Londoners respect and admire the police force and wish them well?

Mr. Whitelaw: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I will certainly pass on that message to the Commissioner. I think that it would be appropriate for me to say, having been in close contact with the Commissioner over all these days, that I greatly admired his personal courage and steadfastness during an extremely difficult operation. I should like this House to know that. I shall be pleased to pass on to him the congratulations offered not only to him but to all the members of his force. Such congratulations are extremely well deserved.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I propose to call two more hon. Gentlemen only from either side.

Sir William Clark: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as has already been said, not only the whole House but the whole world will congratulate the SAS and the Metropolitan Police on the way in which this matter was handled? Does he agree that it is time that some action was taken to prevent non-British people demonstrating in this country, thus putting our police forces at risk? Is it not time that we considered telling foreigners that if they wish to demonstrate they should demonstrate in their own countries?

Mr. Whitelaw: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said in support of all those who carried out the operation. Concerning demonstrators, we have recently published a Green Paper on public order, which raises many questions, including the one referred to by my hon. Friend. It is important that we should consider these questions together. They raise difficult issues about freedom in a democratic society, which we in this House would do well to ponder carefully.

Mr. Ogden: Was any request made by the Home Secretary or the Commissioner to radio, television and news reporters to be cautious in their reporting

in order to deny to those inside the embassy information that might have hindered security operations? Has the Home Secretary any information on the reason why the attitude of the terrorists, who at one time were showing a degree of humanity by releasing hostages, suddenly changed to murdering them? Will he accept that the important question is not how successful we were in getting people out but how they came to be in that situation in the first place?

Mr. Whitelaw: Inevitably, events such as this are a matter of major public concern. They are, therefore, bound to be covered by TV and radio. Had there been a moment when it was felt necessary to ask the authorities concerned to exercise restraint, that restraint would have been asked for, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that such an occasion did not, in the final event, arise.

As to the hon. Gentleman's other point, I would prefer to go no further into the details of the operation. I think that I would be wise not to do so.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: Has not this event—like many others—underlined that the first social service that any Government owes to its people is the maintenance of the Queen's peace? Will my right hon. Friend therefore dismiss all those calls that have been heard recently in this House for the abolition of the Special Patrol Group, for the standing down of the Special Air Service, for the reduction of powers under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, for the reduction of MI5 and the security services, and for the control by the borough of Lewisham of the operations of the Metropolitan Police?

Mr. Whitelaw: It is well known that I believe that the maintenance of the services that look after and protect our citizens is of vital importance. I believe that those services must be preserved and encouraged in all their forms. I have never disguised from the House my view on that. The way in which we employ the British police service is of enormous importance.

What pleases me about this operation is that we brought it to a successful conclusion while, at the same time, preserving the highest standards of the British police service and demonstrating that we have a community police service in this country.

Mr. Edward Lyons : While I share in the general satisfaction, may I ask the Home Secretary about the surviving gunman? Bearing in mind that the alleged killings took place within the Iranian embassy, is this man to be repatriated to Iran or is he to be tried in the courts of this country?

Mr. Whitelaw : I understand, on advice, that he is to be subject to the due process of law in this country.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

Mr. Dalyell : On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, of which I have given you notice, arising out of your statement on Thursday, reported in col. 1641 of *Hansard*. As one who has been plaguing Prime Ministers since 15 December 1970 on questions about the Diego Garcia base, may I ask for your protection in relation to the ruling by the Prime Minister? It seems to many of us that Downing Street has ruled out these questions because they are inconvenient to the Prime Minister.

May I ask a direct question, even if it be a bit hypothetical? If we are not to be allowed to put questions on movements through allied bases, does it mean that, for example, we cannot ask questions about movements of food aid to Kampuchea? Indeed, would you rule on the whole issue of questions that are blocked suddenly and rather uncharacteristically by the Prime Ministers in this way?

Mr. Speaker : I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice this morning that he would raise this matter this afternoon. It gave me an opportunity to prepare a considered statement in reply to his point of order.

There is long-standing rule of the House that a question may not be tabled if it is already fully covered by an answer or by a refusal to answer. In 1972 the House relaxed the rule, which previously applied for a whole Session, so that information refused in answer to a question may now be asked for again in three months' time.

The Prime Minister has refused to confirm or deny movements through allied bases. Any question on this subject must therefore, be tested against that refusal by the Table Office and, if the question is referred to me, by myself. Obviously I cannot rule on particular questions

until I have considered them, and I am sure that the House would not expect me to comment on any hypothetical questions that hon. Members might have in mind.

MEMBERS' CONSTITUENCY INTERESTS

Mr. Russell Johnston : On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On 24 July last, in response to a point of order from the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) complaining about a question by the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman), you gave a ruling to which, in your own words, you gave particular stress. You said:

"I first want to give a ruling on a very important question. The wider constituencies belonging to the Assembly of Europe have no bearing at all upon us here. I treat every hon. Member as a Member for the constituency for which he or she was elected to this House."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1979; Vol. 971, c. 349-50.]

That was a ruling which, with respect to you, Mr. Speaker, was still somewhat open to interpretation. Indeed, the following day the parliamentary correspondent of *The Guardian* made his interpretation—an interpretation with which I felt I agreed, but hon. Members may differ—and said:

"The Speaker of the Commons yesterday ruled that a Euro MP could not raise constituency problems of another Westminster MP simply because they come within his or her Euro boundaries."

That interpretation, so far as I know, has neither been confirmed nor denied by anybody. *The Guardian* correspondent on that occasion interpreted your words, Mr. Speaker—

"I treat every hon. Member here as a Member for the constituency for which he or she was elected to this House"—

as meaning that the rights of Euro MP's extended

"only to constituencies for which they were elected to this House."

If that interpretation is correct, it must have clear implications also in regard to what is to be regarded as proper behaviour for a Member elected only to this House vis-a-vis another Member's constituency, not least because the hon. Member for Lancaster is a Member of this House. Certainly this view is widely held.

90
SUBJECT.

T104/80



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION · LONDON

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T 104/80.

cc: [unclear] [unclear]
[unclear]

6 May 1980

Prime Minister

(2)

4 messages about the siege.

Dear Mr Alexander,

I have been asked by the Australian Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Malcolm Fraser, to convey the following personal message to your Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. Margaret Thatcher.

'Our congratulations on the resolute action of the British authorities in dealing with the act of terrorism at the Iranian Embassy.

Malcolm Fraser'

Yours sincerely,

J. Plimsoll

(J. Plimsoll)

Mr Michael Alexander,
Private Secretary (Overseas Affairs),
to the Prime Minister,
Prime Minister's Office,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON, SW1.

[Handwritten signature]

[Handwritten signature]

6 MAY 1980

HOME SECRETARY'S STATEMENT, IRANIAN EMBASSY, LONDON

TO BE CHECKED
AGAINST DELIVERY

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Mr. Speaker I will, with permission, make a further statement about the taking of hostages by armed gunmen at the Iranian Embassy.

As the House is aware, this incident was brought to a conclusion yesterday evening following an assault by members of the Special Air Service Regiment. I regret that it proved necessary to resort to the use of force, but there was in the end no alternative. The terrorists killed two hostages. The outcome of the assault, I believe, speaks for itself. Of the 19 hostages known to be alive when the assault took place all were rescued. 16 have already been discharged from hospital. 3 remain there. At least 3 gunmen were killed in the assault and another is in police custody; none escaped. There were no police or SAS casualties.

Throughout five days of the siege, the Metropolitan Police patiently sought to negotiate towards a peaceful conclusion. As a result of their efforts, five hostages were, progressively, released. On behalf of my rt. hon. Friend the Prime Minister and myself I made it clear to the Commissioner that

/Her Majesty's Government...

Her Majesty's Government were not prepared to give in to the terrorists' demands for a safe conduct out of this country. Subject to that overriding consideration, we did everything in our power to persuade the terrorists peacefully to surrender and free the hostages. It was in the light of that policy that my hon. Friend, the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office sought the assistance of some Ambassadors from certain Middle Eastern countries; but help from that source was not possible. The Commissioner of Police underlined the approach his officers were taking in a personal written message that was delivered into the Iranian Embassy yesterday. The help of a Muslim Imam was also sought. He spoke personally to the gunmen in an attempt to persuade them not to take action which would be damaging both to their hostages and to themselves.

As yesterday progressed it became increasingly clear, however, that the days of patient negotiation and of personal direct appeals were not going to achieve their objectives. From the start of the siege, the gunmen had regularly threatened to kill hostages if demands were not met. As soon as it became clear that they had begun to carry out those threats,

/I authorised

I authorised, at the Commissioner's request, the commitment of the SAS.

I know that the House will wish to join with me in congratulating the Metropolitan Police on an operation which they carried out with skill, care and determination. Their conduct throughout was an example of the highest standards of the British police. The success of the final assault and rescue is an outstanding tribute to the professionalism and bravery of the SAS. I am sure the House, and indeed the country, will wish to join the Government in giving its thanks to all those involved, police, military or civilian. Our sympathy goes to the families and friends of those hostages who have been killed or injured.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would simply add this. The way in which this incident was conducted and resolved demonstrates conclusively the determination of the British Government and people not to allow terrorist blackmail to succeed.

Security

file

DS



cc Mr. Ingham

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

6 May 1980

Iranian Embassy Siege

The Prime Minister has asked me to let you have the following message for the Home Secretary:-

"I should be grateful if you would pass on to the Metropolitan Police and the Special Air Service Regiment my warm congratulations on their splendid performance in bringing the incident at the Iranian Embassy to a conclusion. This is a proud moment for our country."

Bernard Ingham will be releasing this message from here early this afternoon.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence).

C. A. WHITMORE

John Chilcot, Esq.,
Home Office.

T 103/80

Message telephoned from the British Embassy, Tehran - Message from Iranian President to the Prime Minister.

Excellency Mrs Margaret Thatcher the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

I should like to express my gratitude for the persevering action of your police force that proved its competence during the unjust hostage - taking event at the Iranian Embassy in London, and the lives of all but one of our very dear children were saved in this event.

With regards

the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
ABUL HASSAN BANI SADR

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T103/80

5/5/80.

RECORD OF A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER
AND THE HOME SECRETARY AT 2355 HOURS ON SATURDAY 3 MAY 1980

HS: Just to say one or two things. We've just finished a meeting which I am glad to say we had the help and assistance of John Graham.

PM: Oh good. I saw he had come back.

HS: He is back and came in and talked to us. First of all I had a meeting before I came here with the Commissioner. I also saw Delo, who has been doing all the work and today, I think, has been by any standards a pretty successful day.

PM: I agree. I was very pleased.

HS: And I think we've got so far and the woman who has come out has been extremely helpful. The man on the other hand has not. The Pakistani has not. Whether he was let out on the basis that he wasn't going to be helpful or not I don't know, but he hasn't been. However, the police have taken both of them to the hospital at Hendon so they're going to jolly well keep them there and if he is going to be difficult he will have trouble in being difficult for some time. And so so far I think that's all right. We are now in the situation that we are going to move tomorrow to the next stage which, of course, they want the Ambassadors. Now the Ambassadors is a pretty difficult operation. Because on the whole there is only really one which we are wholly prepared to accept and that's the Kuwaiti, with the possible addition of the Syrian, but the others, categorically, no, and therefore the police are being told that the others are not acceptable. We've got the Red Cross lined up to this extent that Douglas has just spoken to Evelyn Shuckburgh and he is prepared for people from the British Red Cross to appear and to receive a message. But not, of course, to mediate or negotiate. We are very sensitive to the fact that if we get even an Ambassador who is satisfactory he might easily start coming along and saying that of course he has an idea of how it should be done and if only we, the

mit

/British

British Government, would do it that would be very good. Now the one thing we can't have is an Ambassador who says that.

PM: Well, yes, that's exactly - his objectives aren't the same as ours.

HS: That's the trouble.... they may be. However we think - Douglas thinks - I think he and possibly Johnny Graham will go after our meeting tomorrow morning to see the Kuwaiti and see his form and find out, because Douglas knows him very well, he has just been there with him and he thinks that he can at least find out. He doesn't think we will ever be able quite to quite guarantee it. So we are telling the police to play the Ambassadors pretty cool.

PM: I would have thought the Syrian would have done just exactly what you suggested.

HS: This is what I think.

PM: Because he is that sort of person.

HS: And I am very reluctant to see him on that course. And I don't think we shall have to. But, I think, we have got enough to go along with tomorrow. All the information is coming in quite well and on the whole the people inside, I better not be too specific, are in fact being pretty helpful. And so so far all right. On Johnny Graham's judgment I think these are people who he thinks may not be all that solid but this is only, he is not quite sure because he isn't quite sure of their exact parentage as you might say.

PM: They are getting actually quite a lot of publicity aren't they Willie. That's there objective.

HS: As that's their objective it may be that they will at some stage decide that that's all they going to get. But the difficulty of how to get that across to them is going to be the next problem. But I think that probably isn't tomorrow's problem but it may be Monday's or Tuesday's problem. Well I think we can only say the police have done frightfully well.

PM: So far, very good indeed.

HS: But I think we are probably getting up against a more difficult time. But everything else is organised and ready and everything else is in hand. And we are now in a much better position for obvious reasons than we were before. I think that's really all that I can say.

PM: Willie, I think that's absolutely first class.

HS: Well I'm very grateful.

PM: I'm sorry you're all having to be there all over the weekend.

HS: Well I think we are seeing how we go and I've got down to a meeting in the morning and a meeting late at night for the moment. But I shall see how we go tomorrow.

PM: Well very well done Willie

HS: Well thank you very much. The police really have done awfully well.

PM: And you too. Goodbye.

SECRET



10 DOWNING STREET

2 May 1980

From the Principal Private Secretary

Dear John,

Incident at the Iranian Embassy

The Prime Minister and the Home Secretary met this afternoon to discuss the incident at the Iranian Embassy. Mr Wade Gery was also present.

The Home Secretary said that Sir David McNee wanted to know what view the Government took of the way in which the incident might end. There were a number of options. The best outcome was that the present strategy of exercising patience was rewarded with the surrender of the terrorists and the safe release of the hostages. This was the course we were following now and we should not move from it unless we were compelled to do so. The worst outcome was one where the terrorists began to maim or kill the hostages. In the event of a hostage being deliberately wounded he thought that we should probably not mount an assault on the Embassy. But if one hostage was killed, we would probably have to conduct an assault, and we should certainly have to act in the event of two deaths.

There was a third possible outcome. We might reach the point where although the terrorists did not kill or wound any of the hostages, all negotiations came to an end and patience was exhausted. In that event, we could either let the terrorists go with all the hostages; or let them go with some of the hostages; or let them go with no hostages; or mount a planned assault. He believed that it was unthinkable to let the terrorists go with some or all of the hostages. There were, however, attractions in letting them go with no hostages: this course would get the terrorists out of the United Kingdom with no loss of life and without long term problems that would arise if they were tried and imprisoned here. But there were substantial disadvantages. We should be strongly criticised by our friends and allies and we should be seen to be displaying weakness in the face of terrorism. There would be criticism that the Government had let the terrorists go when the police would not have done. He had, therefore, concluded on grounds of both foreign and home policy that we should not let the terrorists go with no hostages, and FCO Ministers shared his view. This meant that if the strategy of patience did not work, we should be ready to undertake a planned shoot-out. The SAS

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assessed that if they had to carry out an assault today, they had a 60% chance of getting the hostages out alive. With each day that passed our intelligence would increase and the likelihood of success would grow. But he had to warn the Prime Minister that even with the best planning and the best intelligence there was bound to be a risk that an assault would end with casualties.

The Home Secretary added that he would continue to keep the Prime Minister informed of developments. If major decisions had to be taken, he would consult the Prime Minister if there was time. But in an extreme emergency he would have to authorise himself whatever action was necessary. Once the decision to mount an attack on the Embassy was taken, it was important to let the SAS decide how it should be done.

The Prime Minister said that she agreed completely with the Home Secretary's assessment. If it became necessary to mount an assault, it was doubly important, following the failure of the American attempt to rescue their hostages in Teheran, that we were successful.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever,

Eric Whitmore.

E. A. WHITMORE

John A Chilcot, Esq
Home Office

SECRET

Ref: B05946

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JMU.

HOME SECRETARY

At your 2.45 pm meeting you may like to show the Prime Minister a note on Outcomes and Options, as follows.

- A. Best Outcome = terrorists surrender.
This is the aim of our present strategy.
- B. Worst Outcome - emergency shoot-out.
This would mean sending in the SAS because the terrorists had started killing people. The SAS could do it at any time, but casualties might be heavy.
- C. Intermediate Outcomes (if A proves impossible and B is not forced on us) -
- i. Let terrorists go, with all hostages.
 - ii. Let them go, with some hostages.
 - iii. Let them go, with no hostages.
 - iv. Planned shoot-out, at a moment of our choosing.

2. Strong arguments of home policy (law and order, defeat of terrorism) and foreign policy (United Nations Convention, international criticism, danger to our staff in Tehran) suggest that i. and ii. are out of the question and that on balance iii. should also be ruled out. The background to the Tehran argument is that the Iranians are already saying that this episode is a CIA/SIS set up; outcome iii. would look like confirmation.

3. That would leave only iv, if we get to the point that the Commissioner is certain that A will not succeed and that continuing with it will only lead to B. We would then be opting for planned shoot-out rather than emergency shoot-out, which would plainly make both military and political sense.

4. This note covers only policy, not tactics. We would, for example, want to persuade the terrorists that we were going for i, ii or iii if we were in fact preparing for iv.

5. The SAS are clear that if we go for iv. it should be a shoot-out at the Embassy, rather than in transit (coach, airport, plane).

2nd May 1980

R L WADE-GERY

R L WADE-GERY

Confidential

telegram number 167 of 2 May

Flash to Kuwait and Tehran
CFOR Cabinet Office

Siege of Iranian Embassy

Following from Sindall

1. In the absence of the Ambassador, who is out of town, I have spoken with the Jordanian Prime Minister, Abdel Hamid Sharaf.
2. Sharaf was aware of this development and told me that the Jordanian Government had earlier this evening sent instructions to their Charge that he could not (repeat not) be authorised to respond to our request. Sharaf explained that Jordan had a long-standing firm and publicly stated principle of not (not) conducting any form of dialogue or negotiations with terrorists. For the Jordanian Charge to act as we asked would undermine this principle; Sharaf very much regretted that on these grounds the Jordanian Government could not (not) agree to the Charge undertaking the role we sought. Sharaf asked me to convey to you that this decision did not imply any lack of readiness on Jordan's part to co-operate fully with Britain on all matters of mutual interest. If there was any other way in which Jordan could help over the siege she would do what she could; but she could not become directly involved or have any personal contact with terrorists. Sharaf suggested that the Arab League representative or an Ambassador such as the Algerian; whose Government was "closer to the parties" might be a better choice at the siege.
3. Sharaf was genuinely apologetic but totally firm. There is clearly no prospect of the Jordanians being open to persuasion on what is for them an immutable question of principle.



Has seen ⁽¹⁾

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

Mr Hunt (in the temporary absence of the Foreign Secretary) thinks that there would be advantage in getting off a rapid message to Pres Bahi Sadr. The rationale would be partly to show how a hostage problem should be handled & partly to help safeguard the position of our own mission in Teheran. No publicity would be given - at least by us - ~~how~~ to deliver the message.

The message ought to go this evening. The Duty Clerk will - if you are content - arrange for its despatch

Amul

TEXT OF A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT BANI SADR

I should like you to know of my deep personal concern about the situation at the Iranian Embassy in London. This intrusion constitutes an act of terrorism and an infringement of the immunity of diplomatic staff which the British Government finds totally repugnant and is acting firmly to counter. I hope that this incident will be resolved speedily and I can assure you that the safety of the lives at stake will be a paramount consideration. I shall be taking a very close personal interest in the situation, and wish to assure you that we shall be keeping in constant touch with you and your government.

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T100A/80

TEXT OF A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT BANI SADR

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1/5/80

TEXT OF A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT BANI SADR

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The Home Sec. has not been in charge of us yet.
and ~~I shall be taking a very close personal interest in the situation,~~
~~I myself~~ *am taking a very close personal interest.*
~~and wish to~~ assure you that we shall be keeping in constant touch with you and your government.

7 1980

Iranian Embassy, London 1628

IRANIAN EMBASSY, LONDON

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. William Whitelaw): Mr. Speaker, I will, with permission, make a further statement about the events at the Iranian embassy. I undertook yesterday to keep the House informed of developments and it may be convenient if I summarise what has happened so far.

As right hon. and hon. Members will know, yesterday morning at about 11.30 am three armed men forced their way into the Iranian embassy at Princes Gate, Knightsbridge. A police constable who was on duty at the embassy was forced inside at gunpoint as a hostage. Two people who work for the BBC were in the embassy at the time and they, too, were taken hostage, together with a locally engaged member of staff and some of the Iranians who work there. In all about 20 people are being held. One woman hostage, an Iranian, was released yesterday and one British hostage was released this morning. Despite reports of injuries to the hostages, I understand that no one has been seriously injured. The terrorists said this morning that the British hostages would not be harmed.

Since the incident first occurred the building has been surrounded by the police, who have cordoned off the area. They have maintained communication with the terrorists and their aim, as in all such cases, is, if it all possible, to bring this incident to a peaceful conclusion without loss of life.

The terrorists have identified themselves as Iranians. They claim to belong to a dissident organisation calling itself "The Group of the Martyr". They have addressed certain demands to the Government of Iran, including the freeing of 91 people currently imprisoned there. They have also asked the Iranian Government to recognise the rights of the Iranian peoples.

I am naturally keeping in continuous contact with the direction of events by the police. I had a discussion a short time ago with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. I will continue to keep the House informed of developments.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Is the Home Secretary aware that we understand that for

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British Steel

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24 hours he will have been in constant involvement in this incident through his overall operational control, that we understand his absence from Question Time, and that we appreciate his statement, limited as it has to be, today? Hon. Members on both sides of the House wish him and the Commissioner well in this difficult, developing situation.

In view of the discussions that are taking place within the embassy—we all realise the difficulties of that—the less said the better at this stage. However, in view of what the media reported about a direct contact from the Iranian Government, I wonder what that is. May not it be salutary for the Iranian Government to realise that we take seriously the need to protect those in diplomatic missions?

There are a number of questions on the law and other matters that I feel inclined to ask, but I shall not do so. I believe that it is best to leave the questioning until later on.

Mr. Whitelaw: I am naturally grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for what he has said. I apologise to the House for not having been here at Question Time, but I thought that my duty lay elsewhere at that time. I hope that the House appreciates it.

On the problem of saying very little at this stage, again I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. It is so easy for anyone to say something which could make the task of the police, in their negotiations, more difficult. I am sure that everyone in the House appreciates that point.

As to the messages to the Iranian Government, our ambassador in Tehran has been in touch with the Foreign Minister of the Iranian Government, who is out of Iran at the moment. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sent a message to the President of Iran, making clear our determination to deal with this matter and to bring the trouble to an end without loss of life.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. It may be the will of the House that we move on at this stage.

PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT

TO BE CHECKED
AGAINST DELIVERY

IRANIAN EMBASSY: LONDON

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Since the incident first occurred the building has been surrounded by the police, who have cordoned off the area. They have maintained communication with the terrorists and their aim, as in all such cases is, if at all possible, to bring this incident to a peaceful conclusion without loss of life.

The terrorists have identified themselves as Iranians. They claim to belong to a dissident organisation calling itself the

/Group of the Martyr" ..

"The Group of the Martyr". They have addressed certain demands to the Government of Iran, including the freeing of 91 people currently imprisoned there. They have also asked the Iranian Government to recognise the rights of the peoples of Khuzestan, which they call "Arabistan".

Hon. Members will understand the need for all of us in this House to exercise restraint in what we say this afternoon, since innocent lives may be at risk. I will naturally keep the House fully informed.

(From: Ministry)

Lukka unit is near here.

MR WHITMOREAKH
30w.Terrorist Incident at Iranian Embassy, London

The facts of today's incident are as follows-

a. At 11.30 am today, three armed men forced their way into the Iranian Embassy at Princes Gate, Knightsbridge taking hostage a policeman, who was on duty outside the Embassy.

b. All those already in the Embassy and the policeman were taken hostage, a total of about 20 comprising:

- (i) 1 policeman
- (ii) Iranian Embassy staff
- (iii) 1 BBC journalist
- (iv) 1 British member of Embassy staff
- (v) 1 Lebanese journalist

One Iranian hostage (female) was released at an early stage.

c. The terrorists have presented their demands in writing, in Arabic and English. See attached note.

2. The terrorists, who style themselves the Group of Martyrs, are Iranian Arabs from Arabistan. They are Iraqi trained and have links with the PFLP. They belong to a group which has recently been blowing up pipelines in Western Iran. It was to be assumed therefore that they are capable of using explosives, as threatened.

3. The police on the spot, under Deputy Assistant Commissioner Dellow, have set up a Forward Control Centre at 25 Princes Gate (the Embassy is at number 16). Adjacent buildings have been evacuated and the area cordoned off.

SECRET

4. The Cabinet Office Briefing Room was opened at 3.00 pm. The Home Secretary took the chair at 5.45 pm and again at 6.30 pm. The following decisions have been made or action taken -

a. Since the Home Secretary had made a non-committal holding statement in the House earlier in the afternoon there was no requirement to make a further statement in the House until tomorrow. But a factual Press ^{release} was required and was made at 6.25 pm (copy attached).

b. The SAS Command Group was authorised to make a covert reconnaissance of the Embassy. This is in hand.

c. The SAS team should be moved covertly from Hereford to Knightsbridge Barracks.

d. Sir John Graham has been instructed to stand by to act as a channel of communication should the Iranian authorities in Tehran wish to make suggestions on the handling of the incident. He is not to invite such suggestions.

5. There has been a late unconfirmed report that one of the hostages has been killed. It is also now clear that the Iranian Charge is inside the Embassy and not outside, as reported earlier.

6. The Cabinet Office Briefing Room remains open. The Home Secretary will return for a resumed discussion at 10.15 pm.

C H O'D Alexander

C H O'D ALEXANDER

*NOV Agent's
Cath Barracks,
as the Home
Secretary told you.
Knightsbridge Barracks
are of course close
to the Embassy.*

30 April 1980

Incident at Iranian Embassy

The demands are from the Group of the Martyr. MUHI EIDEN AL NASSIR.

These are the demands (more or less).

- (1) Set free 91 prisoners of our friends who are imprisoned by Kohomeni and whose names are listed. (The police have the list of names). These prisoners are exposed to savage means of torture, terrorism, liquidation at the hands of the new "Savak" system agents.
- (2) Iranian's recognition of the legitimate national rights of the Iranian peoples halting the liquidation campaigns and the daily mass extermination to which our people are exposed.
- (3) Providing a special plane for carrying the group of hostages outside England following the achievement of Kohomeni's agreement to the first above mentioned Article 24 hours after the distribution of this statement.
- (4) We also warn against any action aiming at ending this operation without carrying out its goals. Otherwise we would kill the hostages and explode the building and group as well. We hope you would co-operate with us so as not to disfigure the human ends of the operation.

Glory and eternity for A'RABSTAN Martyrs. Long life A'RABSTAN as an Arabian free Region.

Some speculation they might be aligned with PLFP.

The following statement was issued to the Press Association at 18.25 pm.

The following statement was issued by the Home Office today:

At 11.30 today three armed men forced their way into the Iranian Embassy at Princes Gate, Knightsbridge, taking hostage a policeman, who was on duty outside the Embassy. There were at that time about 20 people inside the Embassy, most of whom were Iranian staff. Three at least, including the police officer are British. One woman hostage, an Iranian, has been released. The rest are still held hostage within the Embassy. The building is surrounded by the police who are in communication with the three men concerned. Those responsible for this hostage taking have issued a statement identifying themselves as members of the dissident Iranian Group of the Martyr. They have made certain demands which include calling on the Iranian authorities to release a number of prisoners held in Iran and to recognise the rights of dissident people in that country.

The aim of the Police and Her Majesty's Government is to bring this incident to a peaceful conclusion without loss of life.

IRAN: ADVANCE COPIES 43

FLASH

PS
 PS/SIR I. GILMOUR
 PS/MR HURD
 PS/PUS
 SIR D MAITLAND
 MR J C MOBERLY
 LORD BRIDGES
 LORD N G LENNOX
 MR EVANS
 MISS BROWN
 HD/MED
 HD/FRD
 HD/NENAD
 HD/UND (2)
 HD/OID
 HD/DEF DEPT
 HD/N AM D
 HD/ES & SD (2)
 HD/PUSD (2)
 HD/NEWS DEPT
 HD/ECD (E)
 HD/CONS DEPT
 RESIDENT CLERK

WD (MAED)

45

WRC

PS NO 10 DOWNING ST
 SIR R ARMSTRONG)
 ASSESSMENTS STAFF)
 MR R WADE GERY) CABINET
 MR LE CHEMINANT) OFFICE
 MR W N WENBAN SMITH)
 DIO)
 PS/CHANCELLOR)
 MR F R BARRATT) TREASURY
 MR R G LAVELLE)
 MR C W McMAHON) BANK OF
 MR P B EDGLEY) ENGLAND
 MR R WILLIAMS CRE5 DOT
 MR W KNIGHTON DEPT OF TRADE
 MR C BENJAMIN DOI
 MR D LE B JONES) DEPT OF
 MR C LUCAS) ENERGY

PP WASHINGTON

GR 200

CONFIDENTIAL

FM ABU DHABI 301937Z APR 80

TO FLASH FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 143 OF 30 APRIL

INFO FLASH TEHRAN

FLASH BAGHDAD

IMMEDIATE DUBAI

PRIORITY DOHA BAHRAIN KUWAIT AND WASHINGTON

MY TELNO 142 OF 30 APRIL (NOT TO ALL).

IRANIAN EMBASSY

1. I SAW THE IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AT 2300 HOURS LOCAL TIME TODAY. I SPOKE AS INSTRUCTED AND LEFT HIM A LETTER CONSISTING ESSENTIALLY OF PARAGRAPH 1 OF YOUR TEL NO 262 AND PARAGRAPHS 2 AND 3 OF YOUR TELEGRAM NO 263.

2. QUOTBZADEH ASKED ME TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN AND TO SAY

FLASH

2. QOTBZADEH ASKED ME TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN AND TO SAY THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT YOU AND HMG WOULD "FACE THIS MATTER WITH DETERMINATION". AS FOR THE TERRORISTS DEMANDS THEY WOULD NOT YIELD TO ANY OF THEM. THEY WOULD NOT ACCEPT THEM IF THEY STAYED IN THE EMBASSY 20 YEARS.

3. AT THIS POINT I SAID THAT IT WAS NOT IN MY INSTRUCTIONS BUT I HAD HEARD ON THE BBC A REPORT OF AN ULTIMATUM THREATENING TO KILL THE HOSTAGES AND BLOW UP THE EMBASSY IF DEMANDS WERE NOT MET BY MIDDAY TOMORROW. HE SAID "LET THEM".

4. QOTBZADEH WAS CALM AND INDEED AFFABLE THROUGHOUT. HE WILL APPARENTLY BE SHUTTLING BETWEEN ABU DHABI AND DUBAI ON 1 MAY, GO TO BAHRAIN ON 2 MAY, AND RETURN TO TEHRAN ON 3 MAY.

ROBERTS

FLASH

NNNN

TO: [illegible]

FROM: [illegible]

INFO: [illegible]

CLASS: [illegible]

DATE: [illegible]

TIME: [illegible]

FLASH

URGENT



EMBASSY OF THE
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

London

No. 2256/D.

Date: 30.4.1980

Note Verbale
MOST URGENT

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran presents its compliments to His Excellency the Foreign Secretary and has the honor to draw His Excellency's attention to the incidence at this Embassy today in which lives of twenty odd Diplomats and staff including Charge d'Affairs and several women is under constant threat of death.

It is requested that His Excellency the Foreign Secretary will appreciate the severity of the threat and will order the security forces to take all possible measures to safeguard their lives.

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran avails itself of this opportunity to renew to His Excellency the Foreign Secretary the assurance of its highest consideration.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
London.

IRANIAN EMBASSY, LONDON

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. William Whitelaw): With permission, Mr. Speaker, before I make my statement on prisons I would like briefly to refer to events at the Iranian embassy of which right hon. and hon. Members will be aware. A few hours ago there was a hostage-taking incident there. I will keep the House informed. In the meantime, all appropriate steps are being taken.

Later—

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raise this point in the presence of the Home Secretary and the Leader of the House. It is quite precise. It is, of course, within the knowledge of the House that one of our fellow citizens, a police officer—I think his name is Trevor Locke—is at present being held hostage in the Iranian embassy in London. I ask two things of you, Sir. First, have you received any request from a Minister to intervene in our affairs in order to make a statement? Secondly, in the event that such a statement is made, could you give us indication now as to what time it might be, so that we can make the necessary arrangements?

Mr. Whitelaw: Perhaps I should repeat to my hon. Friend what I said to the House at the beginning of my statement on the May committee's report. I made a brief reference, as I thought the House would wish, to events at the Iranian embassy, of which hon. Members will be aware. A few hours ago there was a hostage-taking incident there. I shall keep the House informed, as appropriate. In the meantime, I assure my hon. Friend that all appropriate steps are being taken.

PRISONS

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. William Whitelaw): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the present situation in the prison system in England and Wales and about the action that I am taking on the main recommendations of the report of the committee of inquiry into the United Kingdom prison services—the May committee. We shall also within the next few weeks publish a detailed reply to the 15th report from the Expenditure Committee for Session 1977-78, and we shall publish proposals for changes in the powers of the courts in relation to young offenders later in the summer.

As the May committee made clear in its report, this country has for many years paid too little attention to its prisons. The result is that our prisons are chronically overcrowded and the prison service operates under severe strain. In the period since the report was published last October, the prison population in England and Wales has risen from 42,500 to a total of 44,000 on 18 April. The figure continues to fluctuate, but the present level is dangerously high. Exceptional measures by way of legislation or administrative action would be unpalatable and frustrating to those whose task it is to administer justice, but they cannot be ruled out if the situation demands them. Our primary task must, however, be to prevent such a situation from developing.

The following action is being taken. First, we must ensure that the prison estate is adequate for the job that it has to do. We have every sympathy with the May committee's recommendation that the building programme should be increased. The present programme, together with a considerable maintenance commitment, is substantial. Work already in progress will produce about 3,400 new or refurbished places by 1985, including a major new dispersal prison, which should come into use next year. Firm plans are being made to start two new major projects in both 1981-82 and 1982-83, which will provide 1,500 further places by the later 1980s. I hope to continue the programme on that basis in 1983-84, and preliminary planning is now proceeding.

[Mr. Whitelaw.]

Secondly, we shall continue our efforts to develop alternatives to imprisonment. The Government believe that the outside community must play an increasing part, whether through statutory or voluntary agencies, in the treatment and containment of offenders, particularly those who have not committed violent offences. We shall give full support to non-custodial methods, and we recognise the major contribution that the probation and after-care service must make to them.

The mentally disordered offender presents particularly difficult problems. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and I accept that it is undesirable to detain in prison persons whose mental disorder permits them to be detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act. We shall continue our efforts to have such persons transferred to hospitals with the appropriate levels of security. My right hon. Friend will continue to give priority to the establishment of regional secure units. The programme that has been planned will make a valuable contribution to the provision for these offenders.

A new development is that we are making public funds available to enable voluntary organisations to make a start in providing simple overnight shelter for people who would otherwise be charged with offences of drunkenness.

Measures of this kind may not individually achieve a substantial reduction in the prison population, but taken together they can have a significant impact.

Thirdly, the Advisory Council on the Penal System, the Expenditure Committee and the May committee have all emphasised the need for shorter sentences. I have already said that the Government would welcome shorter sentences for non-violent offenders, and it should be possible to bring about a significant reduction in the general level of sentences without sacrificing the protection that the public is entitled to expect. I believe that such a reduction can be achieved by the exercise of judicial discretion, and recent judgments have suggested that there is an increasing awareness among judges that the less serious type of non-violent offence can properly be met by a shorter term of imprisonment than has been imposed previously.

I turn now to the May committee's vitally important recommendations on prison reorganisation. Like the committee, I fully support the principle of preserving direct ministerial responsibility for the prison service and for the treatment of individual prisoners. Subject to that, I endorse the May committee's objective of a structure which will give the prison services a greater corporate sense and enable those in charge to be more directly responsible for its own affairs. I am, therefore, instituting a major change in the prison department's position in the Home Office and in its internal organisation. The prison department will be given wide delegated authority within the Home Office for the management of its staff and for the control of its finance. Special attention will be paid to improving the system of financial information and control.

The present director general will remain in his post. A new post of deputy director general will be created and the membership of the Prisons Board will be expanded to include the four regional directors and two outside non-executive members whose appointments I shall announce shortly.

I accept the May committee's crucial recommendations for an inspectorate separate from the prison department, and for the publication of its reports. A new Crown appointment of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons will be announced as soon as possible. He will inspect and report to the Home Secretary on prison establishments in England and Wales, conducting regular inspections of individual establishments and investigating particular incidents or situations on the Home Secretary's directions. He will submit an annual report, which will be published, and other reports, which will be made publicly available as appropriate.

I endorse the May committee's objective of a reconstructed regional organisation, which will enable regional directors to concentrate more closely on the supervision of individual establishments, reporting directly to the deputy director general. As the committee recommended, most specialist functions will be concentrated at headquarters.

I will, with permission, circulate further details of these organisational changes in