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FM TEHRAN 221115Z DEC

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1381 OF 22 DEC 79

INFO IMMEDIATE CABINET OFFICE (DIO), MODUK (DI1 AND DSS11),

CRE 5, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK, BAHRAIN

INFO PRIORITY ABU DHABI, ANKARA, BAGHDAD, DOHA, DUBAI,

ISLAMABAD, JEDDA, KABUL, KUWAIT, MOSCOW, TOKYO, MUSCAT,

NEW DELHI AND EEC POSTS.

MY TELNO 1374 : SITUATION IN IRAN.

1. HOSTAGES. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE MOVEMENT ON THIS ISSUE.  
TEHRAN RADIO PROGRAMMES WERE INTERRUPTED LAST NIGHT FOR THE RELEASE OF A STATEMENT BY KHOMEINI INSTRUCTING THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL TO PERMIT CHRISTIAN MINISTERS TO VISIT THE HOSTAGES ON CHRISTMAS DAY. KHOMEINI SAID THAT PREFERENCE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO BLACK CLERGYMEN IN VIEW OF THEIR STANCE ON "AMERICAN CRIMES". THERE HAS BEEN NO MORE WORD OF OBVERSERS BEING GIVEN ACCESS TO THE HOSTAGES BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND NO WORD TO THE LOCAL CHRISTIAN CLERGY, ALTHOUGH I LEARN THAT A NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS FROM THE US HAVE COME FORWARD.
2. IN ZAHEDAN, LOCAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAVE BEEN MEDIATING IN AN ATTEMPT TO STOP THE FIGHTING IN WHICH AT LEAST SIX PEOPLE HAVE BEEN KILLED SINCE THURSDAY. THE FIGHTING APPEARS TO BE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT FORCES, INCLUDING PASDARAN, AND BALUCHI TRIBESMEN. YESTERDAY AFTERNOON IT WAS REPORTED THAT A CEASEFIRE HAD BEEN AGREED.
3. THERE ARE STILL NO OFFICIAL CANDIDATES FOR THE JANUARY 25 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, NOMINATIONS FOR WHICH ARE DUE BY 29 DECEMBER, ALTHOUGH ADMIRAL MADANI HAS INDICATED THAT HE WILL STAND. AYATOLLAR BEHESHTI WHO IS ALSO WIDELY FANCIED, HAS BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING THAT HE HAS NO INTEREST IN NOMINATING HIMSELF AS A CANDIDATE, BUT WOULD RUN FOR ELECTION IF "RELIGIOUSLY DIRECTED" TO DO SO. OTHER POSSIBLE

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/ CONTENDERS

CONTENDERS ARE ABOL HASSAN BANI SADR, MEHDI BAZARGAN, EBRAHIM YAZDI, SADEGH TABATABAI AND AYATOLLAH KHALKHALI. ONCE THE 29 DECEMBER DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS HAS PASSED, THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR WILL SUBMIT THE LIST OF CANDIDATES TO KHOMEINI FOR APPROVAL. WHEN THIS HAS BEEN GIVEN, THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR WILL ANNOUNCE THE FINAL LIST OF CANDIDATES.

4. THE IRANIAN PRESS AND NEWSAGENCIES REPORT THE WITHDRAWAL OF IRANIAN DIPLOMATIC STAFF FROM MOROCCO AS A PRELUDE TO A BREAK IN RELATIONS.

5. NEXT SITREP WILL BE SENT ON 24 DECEMBER.

GRAHAM

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