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FM GUATEMALA CITY 10/2015Z FEB 81

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

DESKBY 11/0900Z

TELEGRAM NUMBER 063 OF 10 FEBRUARY

R F I : PRIORITY UKMIS NEWYORK

(FOR PAYNE ON ARRIVAL)

R F I : ROUTINE BELMOPAN (PERSONAL) WASHINGTON

BELIZE/GUATEMALA : NEGOTIATIONS

1. ON THE MORNING OF 10 FEBRUARY I SAW RODRIGUEZ AND, BRIEFLY, SKINNER-KLEE. THEY RETURNED TO GUATEMALA ON 08 FEBRUARY AND REPORTED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND PRESIDENT LUCAS ON THE MORNING OF 09 FEBRUARY. THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD FEARED THAT A SETTLEMENT WITHOUT CESSION OF TERRITORY MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO SELL POLITICALLY, BUT THE PRESIDENT HAD SEEMED CONFIDENT THAT A SETTLEMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE OUTLINE DISCUSSED ON 5/6 FEBRUARY WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. HE WISHED THE GUATEMALAN TEAM GOOD LUCK AND TOLD THEM TO CARRY ON AND PRODUCE A SETTLEMENT QUICKLY.
2. RODRIGUEZ AND SKINNER-KLEE ASKED IF I HAD ANY NEWS FROM LONDON OR BELMOPAN. I SAID THAT I HAD NONE. I ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH I RECOGNISED THAT THE GUATEMALANS HAD MADE CONSIDERABLE CONCESSIONS FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW I STILL FEARED THAT THEY WERE POSSIBLY ASKING MORE THAN THE BELIZE GOVERNMENT WOULD FEEL ABLE TO DELIVER. THEY BOTH ASSURED ME THAT THE GUATEMALAN TEAM WAS NEGOTIATING VERY SERIOUSLY AND REALLY WANTED A SETTLEMENT, BUT THAT THEY HAD MOVED AS FAR AS THEY POSSIBLY COULD. SKINNER-KLEE SAID THAT IF BELIZE WAS UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE IDEAS DISCUSSED ON 5/6 FEBRUARY THEN THE GUATEMALAN TEAM WOULD HAVE NO OPTION BUT 'TO PICK UP THEIR MARBLES AND GO HOME''. HE SAID THAT IT WOULD THEN BE UP TO THE AMERICANS TO KNOCK EVERYBODY'S HEADS TOGETHER AND HE HOPED THAT IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES THEY WOULD KNOCK PREMIER PRICE'S HEAD HARDEST.
3. SKINNER-KLEE EXPRESSED SOME SURPRISE THAT INSTEAD OF WELCOMING WITH OPEN ARMS THE IDEA OF THE PUNTA GORDA ROAD INSTEAD OF MAINLAND TERRITORY WE HAD QUIBBLED OVER THE EXTENT OF THE ROAD FOR WHICH WE WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE. I SAID THAT HE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT HMG HAD AVAILABLE FOR SUCH PROJECTS WAS NOT UNLIMITED.
4. I THINK THAT PREMIER PRICE IS WRONG IN HIS SUSPICION THAT THE GUATEMALANS ARE NOT NEGOTIATING SERIOUSLY. I ALSO THINK THAT IT WOULD BE WRONG TO OVER-ESTIMATE THEIR LEEWAY FOR FURTHER CONCESSION SEMI-COLON I HAVE THE STRONG IMPRESSION THAT THEY HAVE GONE JUST ABOUT AS FAR AS THEY CAN GO. I SUSPECT THAT SKINNER-KLEE WAS SERIOUS

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IN SUGGESTING THAT IF WE QUIBBLE OR BARGAIN TOO HARD AT THIS STAGE THEY WILL SIMPLY PACK UP AND HOPE THAT THE AMERICANS WILL INTERVENE BEFORE THE GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT FEEL THAT THEY HAVE TO ADOPT THE HARSHER POLICY OUTLINED BY SKINNER-KLEE IN HIS OPENING STATEMENT ON 05 FEBRUARY.

WILMSHURST

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