

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

Security

From the Private Secretary

Mr. Wright

Stansted Hijack

The Prime Minister has seen Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 28 April A08254. She was grateful for this report, which she has endorsed.

I am sending a copy of this minute to John Halliday (Home Office).

W. P. S. RICKETT

29 April, 1982.

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

Ref. A08254

PRIME MINISTER

Sir Robert Armstrong has identified a number of ways in which our procedures for handling incidents of this kind can be improved. Content to endorse his report?

Stansted HijackLM
28/4

You will remember the events that followed the hijacking of an internal flight of Tanzanian Airlines by a small group of opponents of President Nyerere on the evening of Friday 26th February. It was flown first to Nairobi, but the Kenyans allowed the aircraft to be refuelled, and it proceeded via Jeddah to Athens. After further refuelling it took off and headed westwards and later northwards, entering British air space at about 2 pm on Saturday 27th February and being directed to Stansted, where it landed at about 2.30 pm. The hijack ended peacefully about 4.30 pm the following day with the surrender of the hijackers. There were no casualties other than to the co-pilot who had been shot and wounded before the aircraft reached Athens. Five Tanzanian citizens are in custody in the UK facing hijacking charges.

2. You expressed some concern about our speed of response when it seemed likely that the aircraft was heading for this country,

The Cabinet Office, the Home Office and other Departments concerned have carried out a post-mortem, so as to learn the lessons to be drawn from this and other aspects of the handling of the incident. Some points are still being followed up, but you and the Home Secretary may like to have now this preliminary account of our conclusions.

3. This was the first hijack affecting British territory for nearly seven years. Despite our well-known policy of firmness towards hijacking, the United Kingdom became the destination for what began as a domestic flight in Tanzania. The hijackers had no quarrel with us, only with their own Government. The fact that they came here probably resulted from the presence in this country of President Nyerere's former colleague and now opponent Mr Oscar Kambona, and more generally from our former role as the colonial power. There was no firm indication until

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the aircraft was reported as flying in a northerly direction east of Paris that the United Kingdom might be its destination. Nevertheless, as a precaution the Cabinet Office alerted the Home Office and the Department of Trade early on the morning of Saturday 27th February. The Department of Trade alerted Air Traffic Control so that, if it came in our direction and persisted in seeking to land here, instructions could be given to direct it to Stansted, one of the preferred destinations for hijacked aircraft in this country. The Essex Police and the police forces at Heathrow and Gatwick airports were also warned.

4. Up to the time when a decision was taken to activate the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR), the necessary consultations had involved the Duty Officers in the various Ministries and the appropriate officials who could be contacted at their homes. The full operation of the COBR was achieved in slightly more than the one hour on which our plans are based, but a number of officials were at several hours distance from Whitehall and did not arrive until later. Fortunately you happened to be in 10 Downing Street and were thus able to take charge before the arrival of the Home Secretary from Cirencester. Your office was not informed as early as it should have been, and steps are being taken to ensure that in future you are informed as soon as there is reason to believe that a hijacked aircraft may be heading for this country.

5. I have considered whether the Alert Procedures need revising in the light of this incident. My conclusion is that in general they worked well, but that more specific instructions are required for certain Duty Officers, and there would be advantage in certain staff having with them at home procedural instructions to supplement the existing list of telephone contacts which they keep. Certain junior staff are already, on a rota basis, on permanent standby for such incidents; they are paid an allowance for this. The number of senior staff trained and experienced in dealing with incidents of this sort is small; many of them live some way from central London, particularly at the weekend. Though senior staff notify Duty Officers of their whereabouts outside working hours, they will not always be near a telephone nor within range of paging devices. They will be out of contact during the time it takes to travel to Whitehall from their homes.

There may well be times when it makes sense for them to remain at home in telephone contact rather than leave to join other staff in the COBR. Finally, the operation of the COBR outside working hours is dependent, at all levels, on volunteers. I am glad to be able to report that there was no difficulty in obtaining volunteers on this occasion, and I have no reason to foresee such difficulty in future.

6. The incident also showed that we need to have in the COBR facilities for monitoring radio broadcasts. These are being provided.

7. The standing arrangements with the Metropolitan Police for the provision of food broke down on this occasion. We are looking into alternatives; but the Metropolitan/^{Police}remains the cheapest solution and our first thought is to see whether supplies from that source can be guaranteed.

8. At the Stansted end, some matters are still being followed up. It appears that our contingency plan for dealing with incidents of this kind is sound. The chief officer's coordinating group, the intelligence group, the technical support and negotiator arrangements all worked well. Refinements to the plan will be needed to cover such issues as improved reception arrangements for the military and other agencies attending the scene, and improved post-incident procedures. As you know, the media gave rise to a number of problems.

Discussions are planned to try to draw up guidelines on the coverage, by the media, of continuing acts of terrorism to supplement those which already exist in relation to kidnappings. Steps are also to be taken to remind the media that it is an offence under the Wireless Telegraphy Act to publish the content of transmissions over the air traffic control network.

9. Finally, the incident showed the immense value of the anti-terrorist exercises which we have regularly conducted. Although they had not had the Metropolitan Police's previous experience of counter-terrorist operations, the Essex Police conducted themselves with great efficiency: together with the Home Office and the Security Service they had carried out an exercise to

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test the Stansted contingency plan only a month previously, and many of those involved in the COBR had taken part in a counter-terrorist exercise last October.

10. I am sending a copy of this report to the Home Secretary.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'R' and 'A' in a stylized, cursive font.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

28th April 1982