

GR 290
CONFIDENTIAL
FM HARARE 281450Z OCT 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 610 OF 28 OCTOBER.
INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, CANBERRA.

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MS

MY TELNO 606 : KIDNAPPED TOURISTS.

1. REUTERS HERE HAVE PICKED UP REPORTS FROM MATABELELAND THAT VARYING NUMBERS OF WHITES, ASSUMED TO BE THE HOSTAGES, WERE SEEN ON 4 CONSECUTIVE DAYS LAST WEEK IN THE LUPANE AND NKAYI AREAS. THE WHITES WERE SAID TO HAVE BEEN SEEN WITH DISSIDENTS, TO HAVE HAD THEIR FACES SLACKED, AND TO HAVE BEEN CARRYING WEAPONS. THE SOURCE APPEARS TO BE SOMEONE IN THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION IN THE AREA.
2. WE KNOW FROM YESTERDAY'S BRIEFING BY STANNARD THAT THEIR STORY IS A VERSION OF THE REPORTS IN PARA 5 OF MY TELNO 576, WITH SOME INACCURACIES, NOTABLY AS TO TIMING.
3. WE HAVE NOT CONFIRMED THESE REPORTS BUT HAVE INDICATED IN CONFIDENCE (REUTERS HERE ARE RELIABLE) THAT WE BELIEVE THEY ARE ECHOES OF EARLIER ONES ABOUT WHICH WE HAD BEEN BRIEFED, AND TO WHICH THE AMERICAN RELATIVE BALDWIN WAS PRESUMABLY ALLUDING WHEN HE SPOKE TO THE PRESS IN WASHINGTON RECENTLY.
4. REUTERS ARE STILL UNDECIDED WHETHER TO RUN THE STORY, BUT ARE INCLINED NOT TO. HOWEVER, WITH SO MANY OTHER JOURNALISTS IN TOWN COVERING PRINCESS ANNE'S VISIT, THE STORY MAY LEAK ELSEWHERE. YOU MAY THEREFORE WISH TO WARN THE BRITISH FAMILIES SO AS TO AVOID UNDUE HOPES. WE HAVE ALERTED THE AMERICAN AND AUSTRALIAN MISSIONS HERE.
5. STANNARD HAD NOTHING NEW TO OFFER AT YESTERDAY'S BRIEFING WHICH THEREFORE CONCENTRATED ON THE QUESTION OF HOW TO HANDLE THE CONTROL RISKS ISSUE. ON THAT WE BELIEVE WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CALM LOCAL MISGIVINGS AND ENSURE THAT CONTROL RISKS GET ENOUGH INFORMATION TO BE ABLE TO REASSURE THE FAMILIES AND A FRIENDLY ENOUGH HEARING TO BE ABLE TO MAKE ANY POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION OF WHICH THEY MAY BE CAPABLE.

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