

DECLASSIFIED

NLS

F97-045 / 2 #5

~~SECRET~~

OUTGOING

BY

CAS

NARA, DATE

3/17/01

WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

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SIT475

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~~FM THE WHITE HOUSE~~

TO THE CABINET OFFICE

~~SECRET~~ VIA CABINET OFFICE CHANNELS WH00469

~~EYES ONLY FOR SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG FROM ROBERT C. MCFARLANE~~

SUBJECT: TERRORIST SEIZURE OF ACHILLE LAURO

1. ~~SECRET~~ ENTIRE TEXT

2. ~~PLEASE PASS THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FOR PRIME MINISTER THATCHER FROM PRESIDENT REAGAN. TEXT AS FOLLOWS:~~

DEAR MARGARET:

I WAS MOST DISTRESSED TO LEARN THIS EVENING THAT TERRORISTS HAD SEIZED THE CRUISE SHIP ACHILLE LAURO, APPARENTLY WITH AMERICAN CITIZENS AND BRITISH SUBJECTS ABOARD. I HAVE ORDERED U.S. RESCUE FORCES ALERTED IN THE EVENT THAT THOSE WHO HAVE SEIZED THE SHIP CARRY OUT THEIR THREATS TO KILL AMERICAN CITIZENS. I INTEND TO DEPLOY CERTAIN OF THESE FORCES TO U.S. FACILITIES AND SHIPS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. WE WILL OF COURSE BE

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COORDINATING ANY ACTION ANTICIPATED WITH THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT.

IN THAT BRITISH SUBJECTS MAY ALSO BE AT RISK FROM THIS TERRORIST GROUP I WANT TO OFFER FULL COOPERATION AND COORDINATION WITH HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT. PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF ACTING PRECIPITOUSLY OR IN A WAY WHICH WOULD UNNECESSARILY ENDANGER THE LIVES OF ANY PASSENGER OR CREW MEMBERS ABOARD THE VESSEL. ~~I MUST NOTE HOWEVER, THAT THIS ACT CANNOT BECOME ANOTHER PROTRACTED HOSTAGE SITUATION.~~

I HAVE DIRECTED THAT THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF COORDINATE DIRECTLY WITH YOUR MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AS WE HAVE IN THE PAST ON SIMILAR INCIDENTS. I HAVE ALSO ORDERED THAT WE RENDER ANY ASSISTANCE NECESSARY TO HMG IN SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVING THIS TERRORIST ACT.

WITH WARMEST REGARDS,

RON

3. WOULD VERY MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR NORMALLY DISCREET HANDLING OF THIS MATTER. PLEASE ADVISE VIA THIS CHANNEL ANY RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ABOVE. U. S. MILITARY POINT OF CONTACT FOR COORDINATION, AS BEFORE, WILL BE VICE ADMIRAL ARTHUR J. MOREAU, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF. TELEPHONE: SECURE KY-3 2278; OPEN AREA CODE 202-697-9124.

WARM REGARDS, BUD

BT
0371

SECRET