

PS/10. DOWNING STREET.

CONFIDENTIAL

GRS 310

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FM MADRID 301507Z JUNE 83

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 390 OF 30 JUNE

INFO GOVERNOR GIBRALTAR(PERSONAL)

GIBRALTAR

1. DURING A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH THE KING RECENTLY AT A PARTY GIVEN AT THE PALACE, HE ADVISED ME THAT, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, BRITISH SHIPS SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED FROM ANCHORING IN THE WATERS TO THE EAST OF GIBRALTAR. WITHOUT BEING SPECIFIC, HE SEEMED TO BE CONCERNED THAT THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT MIGHT HAVE IT IN MIND TO PROTEST OR OTHERWISE CAUSE AN INCIDENT TO REAFFIRM THEIR STANCE ON SPANISH SOVEREIGNTY OVER THESE WATERS.

2. COMMENT. THIS WAS A FRIENDLY WARNING GIVEN IN THE HOPE OF AVOIDING FRICTION. YOU WILL RECALL THAT AT THE TIME OF THE SPRINGTRAIN EXERCISE THE MFA WERE KEEN THAT WATERS TO THE EAST OF THE ROCK SHOULD NOT BE USED (MADRID TELNO 241) AND THEY MADE A FUSS OVER THE FACT THAT HMS SPLENDID HAD ALLEGEDLY ANCHORED THERE (MADRID TELNOS 246 AND 260). BEFORE THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN INCIDENT INVOLVING A SPANISH PATROL VESSEL AND MERCHANT SHIPS ANCHORED IN THE AREA (MADRID TELNO 209). SPANISH SENSITIVITY OVER THESE WATERS SPRINGS FROM THEIR VIEW THAT THEY WERE NEVER CEDED TO THE UK UNDER THE TREATY OF UTRECHT. THEY HAVE PROTESTED ABOUT OUR USE OF THEM IN THE PAST AND THE KING'S INFORMAL COMMENT SUGGESTS THAT WE COULD BE IN FOR A PERIOD OF FURTHER PROTESTS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW AT THIS STAGE WHETHER THESE WILL MERELY BE FOR THE RECORD TO PROTECT THE SPANISH LEGAL POSITION (AS WITH THEIR RECENT NOTE ON SELF-DETERMINATION) OR SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS. AS COMMANDER IN CHIEF, THE KING IS WELL PLACED TO JUDGE OPINION WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES, INCLUDING THE SPANISH NAVY.

PARSONS

GIBRALTAR

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