

CONFIDENTIAL

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 79 OF 01 FEBRUARY

INFO PRIORITY MIDDLE EAST POSTS, WASHINGTON, PARIS,
UKMIS NEW YORK.

ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION

1. AS I HAVE ALREADY REPORTED BY TELEPHONE TO MR MILES, BOUCETTA SUMMONED ME THIS MORNING TO SAY THAT THE KING FELT COMPELLED TO POSTPONE THE ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION VISIT TO LONDON. THE REASON WAS THE DEATH OF GENERAL DLIMI (MY TELNO 56). THE KING HAD TO REMAIN IN MOROCCO FOR THE NEXT TWO OR THREE WEEKS TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT INTERNAL SECURITY AND THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR IN THE SAHARA WERE PROCEEDING SATISFACTORILY IN THE HANDS OF DLIMI'S SUCCESSORS.
2. BOUCETTA SAID THE KING HAD ASKED HIM TO FLY AT ONCE TO LONDON WITH A MESSAGE FOR MRS THATCHER. HE HOPED IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR MRS THATCHER TO GIVE HIM A FEW MINUTES OF HER TIME TOMORROW AFTERNOON, 2 FEBRUARY. FAILING THAT, ON THURSDAY 3 FEB. HE WOULD ALSO HOPE TO CALL ON YOU. BOUCETTA EXPLAINED THAT THE KING VERY MUCH WANTED THE VISIT TO GO AHEAD, AND HE STILL LOOKED FORWARD MOST POSITIVELY TO HIS MEETING WITH MRS THATCHER. BUT HE HAD HAD TO ACCEPT A DELAY NOW IN VIEW OF DLIMI'S DEATH.
3. I SAID THAT THERE WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE DISAPPOINTMENT IN LONDON OVER THE POSTPONEMENT OF THIS VISIT FOR WHICH WE AND THE MOROCCANS HAD BOTH WORKED SO HARD. HOWEVER I COULD UNDERSTAND THE KING'S REASONS. (BUT SEE PARA 6 BELOW). I UNDERTOOK TO GIVE BOUCETTA A REPLY LATER TODAY ABOUT WHETHER AND WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND YOURSELF COULD RECEIVE HIM. I REMINDED BOUCETTA THAT I HAD EARLIER ON EXPLAINED THAT THE QUEEN WOULD BE TRAVELLING ABROAD LATER THIS MONTH. SHE MIGHT NOT BE BACK IN TIME FOR A LATER VISIT BY THE DELEGATION. BOUCETTA SAID THAT THE KING WOULD REGRET THAT, BUT HE WOULD NOT WANT TO MAKE IT A REASON FOR DELAYING THE VISIT ANY FURTHER. HE COULD ALWAYS RETURN LATER ON BY HIMSELF TO PAY HIS RESPECTS TO THE QUEEN.

4. I ASKED WHETHER BOUCETTA COULD GIVE ME ANY CLARIFICATION YET ABOUT HOW THE PALESTINIANS WERE TO BE REPRESENTED ON THE DELEGATION. AGAIN HE WAS EVASIVE. HE SAID HE HAD THIS MORNING RECEIVED A NOTE FROM THE PLO ABOUT WHICH HE WOULD GIVE ME FURTHER INFORMATION LATER TODAY. HE SAID IT MENTIONED KHALED AL HASSAN. I SAID I THOUGHT HIS INCLUSION IN THE DELEGATION WOULD PRESENT US WITH THE SAME DIFFICULTIES WE HAD FACED LAST NOVEMBER.

5. I HOPE TO TELEGRAPH FURTHER ABOUT THIS POINT LATER TODAY WHEN BOUCETTA SEES ME AGAIN, AND ABOUT HOW THE MOROCCANS PROPOSE TO ANNOUNCE THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE VISIT.

6. COMMENT. I HAVE ALREADY REPORTED (MY TELNO 71) THAT THE SUCCESSION TO DLIMI SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE SMOOTHLY. WE HAVE SINCE HAD CONFIRMATION, REPORTED THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS, THAT THERE IS NO (NO) REAL EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT RUMOURS THAT HE WAS IN FACT MURDERED. I SUSPECT, THEREFORE, THAT THE KING IS USING DLIMI'S DEATH AS A PRETEXT TO PUT OFF THE VISIT. THIS INDICATES THAT HE IS STILL HAVING TROUBLE IN GETTING ARAFAT'S AGREEMENT.

7. EXASPERATING AS THIS LATEST HITCH UNDOUBTEDLY IS, I HOPE YOU AND MRS THATCHER WILL AGREE TO GIVE BOUCETTA A HEARING. I AM CONVINCED THAT KING HASSAN GENUINELY WANTS TO FIND A WAY THROUGH THE COMPLICATIONS WHICH HAVE ARISEN OVER THIS ARAB LEAGUE VISIT, AND TO BUILD UP A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH US.

8. SEE MY I.F.T. (FCO ONLY)

CAMBRIDGE

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SENT/RECD AT 01/1425Z SEA/DD