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Zimbabwe

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 December 1982

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter of 23 December about the sale of Hunter aircraft to Zimbabwe, which the Prime Minister has now seen. Mrs. Thatcher has agreed to the proposed message for Mr. Onslow to take to Mr. Mugabe during his planned visit, subject to a number of amendments. I attach the amended form of the message which I am copying to Richard Mottram (MOD) and John Rhodes (Department of Trade).

Yours ever
T. F.

Timothy Flesher

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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SUGGESTED MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO MR MUGABE

1. I have received and greatly welcome the message which you asked General Shortis to transmit about the Air Force officers awaiting trial. As Mr Nott explained to you, the allegations about torture were bound to cause domestic problems for us, as I know they have for you.

2. ~~We are determined to do all we can to help you to bring stability to Zimbabwe after so many troubled years. It remains~~^s our firm resolve to support you in maintaining the rule of law and in making a success of your ~~courageous~~ policy of reconciliation so vital for Zimbabwe and for all of southern Africa.

3. As you know, we recently increased the number of our personnel serving with BMATT. This was, I feel, a useful opportunity for us to demonstrate our desire to sustain the momentum of our relations with Zimbabwe.

4. We are also ready to proceed with arrangements for the sale of Hunter aircraft and ground equipment in order to help restore the damage done to the Zimbabwe Air Force by the act of sabotage at the Thornhill Air Base. I have asked Mr Cranley Onslow, Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office responsible for Africa, to take the opportunity of his visit to Harare to explore with you how we might best proceed together, and in particular to discuss the question of timing.

MT as
amended.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

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OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

23 December 1982

*Prime Minister**Cartier with this**line?**John Deane**R**23/12*

Zimbabwe: Sale of Hunter Aircraft

In your letter of 16 December you asked for advice on how the proposed message about the Hunter aircraft (and presumably ground equipment) should be delivered to the Zimbabwe Government.

Mr Pym believes that the best way to proceed would be for Mr Onslow to take the matter up with Mr Mugabe during his planned visit to Zimbabwe on 5 - 8 January, and to take with him for this purpose a message from the Prime Minister to Mugabe. The timing would be right. Mr Mugabe will not now be available until after the Christmas break. And the fact that a message from the Prime Minister was being delivered personally by a member of the Government would have the right political impact.

On content, Mr Pym believes that, without prejudice to the wider review of our relations with Zimbabwe, there are areas in which we can and should reaffirm our support (eg over the policy of reconciliation). He also believes that we should keep firmly in view our essential strategic and commercial interests in Zimbabwe, which could be gravely damaged by any apparent equivocation. Lord Cockfield has already pointed out the danger of jeopardising our worthwhile trading relationships because of the uncertainties over the sale of the six aircraft.

Mr Pym therefore believes that Mr Onslow should be given as positive a message as possible to deliver. He recommends that it might both confirm our readiness in principle to proceed with the sale and contain a general expression of our continuing support for the policy of reconciliation and rule of law in Zimbabwe. As for timing, Mr Mugabe is said to be pressing the Minister of Justice to hold the trial of

/the detained



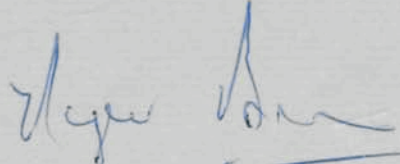
the detained Air Force officers as soon as possible. If a decision in principle to supply the aircraft were taken and conveyed to the Zimbabweans, we understand there would be scope to adjust the timetable for the actual delivery to the pace of events.

Mr Pym is convinced that any suggestion of explicit political conditions in our message would be taken badly by Mr Mugabe. The publicity given to Mr Ian Smith's recent attacks on the Zimbabwean Government has already caused considerable offence in Harare, amongst the white community as well as the black. There is a substantial body of evidence to suggest that moderate politicians and businessmen believe that Mr Mugabe may soon take action to deal with the hotheads and extremists in his administration. For all these reasons it is particularly important that we should not give Mr Mugabe cause to doubt our support at this crucial moment.

I attach a draft message which is intended to open the way to an oral explanation of the difficulty of supplying the aircraft before the trial of the Air Force detainees and an enquiry as to whether the trial could be brought forward. Its impact would clearly be greatest if the Prime Minister were to sign a personal letter which Mr Onslow could then deliver. Alternatively, Mr Onslow could convey it orally, either as a message from the Prime Minister or as a description of HMG's position.

I shall write separately about the report that the North Koreans are to train Mugabe's body-guard.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD) and John Rhodes (Department of Trade).

Yours sincerely,


(R B Bone)
 Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
 10 Downing Street

ZIMBABWE: UK/ZIMBABWE RELATIONS: PT 3



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