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FM FCO 211200Z FEBRUARY 83

TO IMMEDIATE HARARE

TELEGRAM NUMBER 77 OF 21 FEBRUARY

YOUR TELNO 146 AND WASHINGTON TELNO 410: MATABELELAND

1. WE AGREE THAT THE BEST NEXT STEP WOULD BE FOR GENERAL SHORTIS TO SPEAK TO MUGABE. WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF HE COULD DO THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ON THE LINES SUGGESTED IN PARAGRAPH 5 OF YOUR TEL UNDER REFERENCE. HE SHOULD MAKE VERY CLEAR OUR CONCERN AT REPORTS OF EXCESSES BY THE FIFTH BRIGADE. WE SHOULD LIKE YOU TO TAKE AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THE SAME POINTS TO THE ZIMBABWEAN AUTHORITIES.

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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 147 OF 18 FEBRUARY

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON AND MODUK (DI4)

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NY TELNO 146: MATABELELAND

1. SINCE DESPATCH OF T U R, WE HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS OF THE BEHAVIOUR OF 5 BRIGADE IN MATABELELAND FROM A MISSION DOCTOR, WHO HAS LIVED IN MATABELELAND FOR 14 YEARS AND WAS VISITING MISSIONS UP TO 16 FEBRUARY. HE HAS NOW RETURNED TO BRITAIN AND MAY WELL MAKE PUBLIC HIS EVIDENCE.

2. HIS REPORTS, BOTH WRITTEN AND VERBAL (COPIES OF WRITTEN REPORTS FOLLOW BY BAG) SUBSTANTIATE ALLEGATIONS OF WIDESPREAD ACTS OF BRUTALITY THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNAL LANDS WHERE 5 BRIGADE ARE DEPLOYED. HE HAS PERSONALLY WITNESSED MANY OF THESE ACTS, AND MOST SEEM WELL-AUTHENTICATED. THEY RANGE FROM MURDER TO TORTURE, RAPE AND BEATINGS. MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE BEEN VICTIMS, OFTEN SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT PROVE THEY HAD NOT ASSISTED DISSIDENTS.

3. 5 BRIGADE SOLDIERS APPEAR TO BE OBEYING ORDERS AND TO BE GENERALLY UNDER THE CONTROL OF THEIR OFFICERS. ALTHOUGH THEY MAY BE BEHAVING MORE VICIOUSLY THAN THE GOVERNMENT INTEND, THE BRUTALITY SEEMS SYSTEMATIC AND IS INDISCRIMINATELY DIRECTED AGAINST VILLAGERS, TO WHOM THEY ARE REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT "ALL NDEBELE ARE DISSIDENTS". THE REPORTS SUGGEST THAT THE NUMBER KILLED SINCE 5 BRIGADE WAS DEPLOYED MAY WELL BE SUBSTANTIALLY MORE THAN THE COUPLE OF HUNDRED I POSTULATED IN T U R.

4. I FEAR THAT THESE DISTURBING REPORTS ARE RELIABLE. I HOPE WE MAY GET IN THE COURSE OF THE NEXT FEW DAYS SOME INDICATION WHETHER SEKERAMAYI'S STATEMENT TO SHORT IS THAT EXCESSES WILL BE CURBED, AND PERHAPS MUGABE'S REACTION TO THE DOSSIER MENTIONED IN T U R, ARE IN FACT LEADING TO AN IMPROVEMENT.

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 146 OF 17 FEBRUARY.

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON.

YOUR TELNO 073 : MATABELELAND.

1. IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO GET A REALLY ACCURATE PICTURE OF THE EXTENT OF FIFTH BRIGADE BRUTALITY.

YOU WILL NOW HAVE SEEN GENERAL SHORTIS'S REPORT (HIS SIGNAL ACA/13D OF 17 FEBRUARY, NOW REPEATED TO WASHINGTON) OF HIS VISIT TO THE AREA LAST WEEKEND. MY HEAD OF CHANCERY IS CURRENTLY IN BULAWAYO RETURNING AT THE WEEKEND AND I WILL REPORT HIS IMPRESSIONS NEXT WEEK. I HAVE CONSULTED MY US COLLEAGUE. HE SAYS THAT TODD HAD NO PRECISE FIGURES: SPECIFICALLY HE DID NOT SPEAK OF 500 DEAD, THAT FIGURE COMES FROM NEWSWEEK, OR OF 'MASS' AS DISTINCT FROM PUBLIC RAPINGS. I HAVE NOT SEEN THE NEWSWEEK ARTICLE BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT ITS AUTHOR, JENSEN, HAS A REPUTATION FOR SENSATIONAL REPORTING. HE CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN TO A NUMBER OF 'OPERATIONAL' AREAS IN MATABELAND AND RECEIVED FIRST HAND REPORTS. HOWEVER, HE IS BASED IN JOHANNESBURG AND JOURNALISTS BASED THERE HABITUALLY OVER-COLOUR REPORTS FROM ZIMBABWE. NEVERTHELESS, A FIGURE OF 500 KILLED COULD BE CORRECT IF ONE COUNTS FROM THE ORIGINAL DEPLOYMENT OF THE TASK FORCE LAST JULY. I SUSPECT THAT A COUPLE OF HUNDRED MAY BE NEARER THE CORRECT SCORE FOR THE FIFTH BRIGADE OVER THE LAST MONTH. A DOCTOR FROM A MISSION HOSPITAL NEAR LUPANE WHO ACCOMPANIED TODD ON HIS VISIT TO KEELEY REPORTED HAVING TREATED SOMETHING IN THE REGION OF A HUNDRED PEOPLE WITH GUNSHOT OR BEATING INJURIES IN A SEVEN DAY PERIOD RECENTLY AND THAT THESE PEOPLE REPORTED A TOTAL OF 78 RELATIVES KILLED (BUT NO INDICATION OVER WHAT PERIOD).

2. TODD ALSO SAW MUZENDA (DEPUTY PM) AND GAVE HIM A DOSSIER OF CASES. KEELEY HAS SINCE HEARD THAT MUZENDA WAS SHOCKED BY THIS AND PASSED IT TO MUGABE (REACTION NOT KNOWN).

3. THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE FIFTH BRIGADE HAS CERTAINLY BEEN BRUTAL BUT IT IS SHORTIS'S IMPRESSION THAT THEY ARE NOT OUT OF CONTROL, SO THAT THE CURRENT ATTEMPT TO CURB EXCESSES (PARA 5 OF HIS SIGNAL OF 17 FEBRUARY) HAS A REASONABLE CHANCE OF HAVING SOME EFFECT. SHORTIS AND I SUSPECT THAT THE WORST BEHAVIOUR HAS BEEN IN THE COMMUNAL LANDS IN THE NKAYI AND LUPANE AREAS WHERE THE BRIGADE ARE WELL AWAY FROM THE PUBLIC EYE, RATHER THAN IN NYAMANDLOVU WHERE THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL WHITE FARMING COMMUNITY.

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4. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN IS THAT THE WHITE FARMING COMMUNITY (A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF WHICH IS BRITISH OR DUAL) ARE BEING TREATED SCRUPULOUSLY CORRECTLY BY THE FIFTH BRIGADE AND, WHILE THEY DISLIKE THE METHODS BEING USED, ARE RELIEVED THAT THEIR OWN SECURITY HAS IMPROVED VERY CONSIDERABLY AS A RESULT OF FIFTH BRIGADE DEPLOYMENT. SIR HUMPHREY GIBBS' SON TOLD ME LAST NIGHT BY TELEPHONE THAT PEOPLE IN HIS AREA NOW FELT SAFER THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST 9 MONTHS. SHORTIS HAD THE SAME MESSAGE FROM OTHER FARMERS THERE. THIS IS CLEARLY AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW.

5. THE QUESTION WHAT ACTION WE OR THE AMERICANS MIGHT EFFECTIVELY TAKE IS DIFFICULT. ANY REPRESENTATIONS MUST TOUCH ON THE MOST SENSITIVE DOMESTIC ISSUE IN ZIMBABWE: THE SHONE/MATABELE RELATIONSHIP. LECTURING COULD VERY EASILY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. IF ADVICE IS TO HAVE EFFECT IT NEEDS TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE RATHER THAN CRITICAL. AS REPORTED BRIEFLY IN MY TELNO 87, I HAVE ALREADY MADE CLEAR TO SEKERAMAYI MY CONCERN THAT THE 'HARSH' POLICY, WHICH HE WARNED MR ONSLOW IN JANUARY WOULD HAVE TO BE ADOPTED, CAN ONLY MAKE THE LONG TERM PROBLEM WORSE. I URGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PRESS AHEAD IN PARALLEL WITH EFFORTS TO FIND A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF THE ALIENATION OF THE POPULATION IN CENTRAL MATABELELAND. SEKERAMAYI SAID THAT HE ACCEPTED THAT. GENERAL SHORTIS, IN HIS DISCUSSIONS THIS WEEK AND LAST WITH SEKERAMAYI, NHONGO AND GENERAL GAVA, HAS BEEN URGING THAT THE POLICY OF MILITARY REPRESSION HAS DANGERS AND REQUIRES CAREFUL HANDLING TO AVOID EXCESSES. HE HOPES TO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK MATTERS OVER WITH MUGABE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. SO FAR HIS AUDIENCE HAS BEEN RECEPTIVE TO HIS VIEWS. IF THEY GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT OUR MAIN CONCERN WAS OUR OWN PUBLIC OPINION, RATHER THAN HELPING THEM TO TACKLE CONSTRUCTIVELY WHAT IS A MAJOR DOMESTIC SECURITY THREAT, THEY WOULD ALL TOO EASILY STOP PAYING ATTENTION.

6. IN TERMS OF ACHIEVING THE RIGHT RESULT, THEREFORE I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT OUR BEST COURSE IS TO CONTINUE AS WE HAVE BEEN DOING, PROFFERING 'SYMPATHETIC' ADVICE IN OUR WORKING CONTACTS RATHER THAN MAKING A SPECIFIC FORMAL DEMARCHE.

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