



Not sure. I think the F-5. The point
 should look at them. Foreign and Commonwealth Office
 are in the wrong order and our representatives
 are not sure about what would be involved in
 targets to Zimbabwe. Let's see what Justice
 MI.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
 London SW1A 2AH

25 August 1983

Dear Tim,

Prime Minister:
 are these messages
 on the right lines?

Zimbabwe: Air Force Officers' Trial

JF 25/8.

In my letter of 5 August, I warned that, once the verdict had been announced, we might need to submit urgently a recommendation that the Prime Minister should send a message to Mr Mugabe.

The verdict is now expected on 31 August. No new light has been shed on the likely outcome. The most probable is that some, perhaps all, will be acquitted and that some of these will be redetained, at least temporarily. Some or all may be asked to leave Zimbabwe.

// As part of our contingency planning we have prepared two possible alternative texts for a message from the Prime Minister. I enclose these together with an explanatory note. We shall probably have to amend them to take account of the verdict and subsequent developments. However it would be helpful to have an initial view on whether the drafts are on the right lines, before 31 August if at all possible. I should perhaps make clear that Mr Rifkind has seen these drafts but Sir Geoffrey Howe has not done so yet.

Yours ever
 J E Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

Tim Flesher Esq
 10 Downing Street



DRAFT MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER

1. Two alternative drafts are attached. The first covers two possible scenarios: either all acquitted with all or some detained; or some acquitted and redetained, with a satisfactory ruling on torture and light sentences on those found guilty. The second draft covers the possible scenario of some being acquitted and redetained, with heavy prison or death sentences on those found guilty. After the trial the more appropriate text can be amended as necessary. Speed will be important.

2. No message at this stage would be appropriate solely about sentences, ie if none were acquitted and redetained. It is standard practice not to consider interventions in such cases whilst legal processes continue. We should therefore await exhaustion of the appeal process. While from the strictly legal viewpoint representations on redetention should preferably await the outcome of the Review Tribunal which sits within 30 days (but whose findings can take much longer to emerge), the political arguments in favour of swift representations are clearly overriding.

3. An oblique reference to death or heavy prison sentences can be included, if necessary, in a message about redetention as in the second draft text; but there are some arguments against this. We would need to consider pros and cons carefully should this scenario develop.

4. The texts take account of the need to keep the temperature low during this period when Mugabe is likely to be deciding on what to do with the officers.

DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Reference

Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

Mr Mugabe

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

- i) All acquitted: All or some redetained or
- ii) Some acquitted and redetained: satisfactory ruling on torture, light sentences on those found guilty

CAVEAT.....

When I had the pleasure of meeting you here in June we discussed among other things the question of the trial of those accused of involvement with the sabotage of Zimbabwe Air Force aircraft at Thornhill Air Base in July last year. I remember well that you told me you would have to consider all the evidence available to you before agreeing to the release of the accused as you believed it would be wrong to set free anyone who had had a role in the sabotage. You also told me that Zimbabwe did not detailⁿ people arbitrarily and that the accused would be treated as fairly as possible. I know, therefore, that you must be thinking carefully about what you should now do.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

It goes without saying that the trial, verdict and subsequent developments are entirely a matter for Zimbabwe - and when we spoke of this matter in June we did so on a personal and informal basis. It is in the same spirit that

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I raise the subject with you again. Particularly since a number of the defendants hold British (in addition to Zimbabwean) nationality, the trial has attracted considerable public interest in Britain. We have noted with approval the scrupulously fair way in which the trial was conducted and the highest standards of the Commonwealth system of justice maintained. However I feel I must ask you to bear in mind the damage that a prolonged redetention of [some of] these men will do to Zimbabwe's justifiably high reputation in this field. I fear that this might have quite disproportionate consequences, in other countries as well as here.

May I therefore, for the sake of our shared interests, which I believe are profound, express the hope that after considering all the implications you will feel able to release those presently in detention.

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DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:
Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

Mr Mugabe

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

Some acquitted and redetained: Heavy sentences on those found guilty

CAVEAT.....

When I had the pleasure of meeting you here in June we discussed among other things the question of the trial of those accused of involvement with the sabotage of Zimbabwe Air Force aircraft at Thornhill Air Base in July last year. I remember you told me that you would have to consider all the evidence available to you before reaching a final decision, and that the accused would be treated as fairly as possible. I know therefore that you must be thinking carefully about what you should now do.

It goes without saying that the trial, verdict and subsequent developments are entirely a matter for Zimbabwe - and when we spoke of this matter in June we did so on a personal and informal basis. It is in the same spirit that I raise the subject with you again.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

Particularly since a number of the defendants hold British (in addition to Zimbabwean) nationality, the

/trial

Zimbabwe
Relations
P+3

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trial has attracted considerable public interest in Britain. I do not question the impartiality of the trial hearings. However I feel I must ask you to bear in mind the damage that could be inflicted on Zimbabwe's justifiably high reputation in this field should matters be left as they are now. I fear that this might have quite disproportionate consequences, in other countries as well as here.

It would be wrong for me to comment further on the sentence(s) at this stage. However, for the sake of our shared interests, which I believe are profound, may I express the hope that after considering all the implications you will feel able to exercise clemency and as a first step agree to the early release of those who have been acquitted and redetained.

25 AUG 1983

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

30 August, 1983

Thank you for your letter of 25 August with which you enclosed draft messages for the Prime Minister to send to the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe in the light of the possible outcomes of the air force officers' trial. As you know, the Prime Minister spoke to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary about these messages at the weekend but, for the records, the Prime Minister felt that the messages were not quite right. She thought that the points were in the wrong order and that our representations were not quite strong enough. Mrs. Thatcher would like the messages to make the point that the redetention of the officers would not only damage Zimbabwe but would also be a miscarriage of justice.

TIMOTHY FLESHER

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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