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FM FCO 021200Z MAR 84

TO IMMEDIATE LUANDA

TELEGRAM NUMBER 281 OF 02 MARCH 1984

INFO ROUTINE CAPE TOWN WASHINGTON LUSAKA KINSHASA

MIPT: (NOT TO ALL) RELEASE OF BRITISH PRISONERS

MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT DOS SANTOS

1. I AM GRATEFUL TO YOUR EXCELLENCY FOR YOUR HUMANITARIAN ACT IN RELEASING THE 7 BRITISH PRISONERS. THEIR RELEASE AT THIS TIME IS A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF THE CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS.

2. MAY I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY ALSO TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO YOUR EXCELLENCY FOR YOUR GOVERNMENT'S ASSISTANCE OVER THE BRITISH AND OTHER HOSTAGES SEIZED BY THE REBELS IN THE NORTH OF ANGOLA. I VALUE YOUR GOVERNMENT'S ASSURANCE THAT THEY WILL TAKE NO ACTION WHICH MIGHT ENDANGER THE SAFETY OF THE HOSTAGES. I AM, OF COURSE, MUCH CONCERNED FOR THEIR SAFETY.

3. I SHOULD LIKE TO STRESS OUR READINESS TO HELP IN ANY WE CAN IN THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE REGION. WE HAVE FOLLOWED, WITH GROWING SATISFACTION, THE MOVES IN WHICH YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE TO CONSOLIDATE THE WITHDRAWAL OF SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES FROM SOUTHERN ANGOLA. WE HAVE LONG REGARDED THIS AS AN ESSENTIAL STEP TOWARDS WIDER STABILITY AND CONFIDENCE. SIR GEOFFREY HOWE RECENTLY MET MR NUJOMA AND URGED RESTRAINT AT THIS CRITICAL TIME, POINTING OUT WHAT IS AT STAKE FOR SWAPO. I RECOGNISE THAT ALL THOSE INVOLVED STILL FACE DIFFICULT DECISIONS BUT I HOPE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO BUILD ON THE NEW OPPORTUNITY WHICH NOW SEEMS TO EXIST FOR PROGRESS TOWARDS A NAMIBIA SETTLEMENT.

HOWE

LIMITED

CAFD

NEWS D

CONS D

PS/MR RIFKIND

PS/MR WHITNEY

PS/LADY YOUNG

PS/PUS

SIR J LEAHY

MR SQUIRE

LORD N GORDON-LENNOX

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T 36 A / 84

(136)

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2 March 1984

ANGOLA: RELEASE OF BRITISH MERCENARY PRISONERS

Thank you for your letter of 1 March.

As I told you on the telephone, the Prime Minister agrees that the message from herself to President Dos Santos should be despatched (we also agreed on the telephone that the second paragraph should end with the words "much concerned for their safety").

APPROVED

Roger Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

RM

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10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

Please can you agree the attached
draft message to President
Dos Santos?

[Handwritten signature]

Duty Clerk

1 March 1984

CONFIDENTIAL



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 March, 1984

Don't know

Open draft

[Handwritten initials]

Angola: Release of British Mercenary Prisoners

The arrangements for the release of the seven British ex-mercenaries from Luanda have on the whole gone well. So far as the media and Parliament are concerned, HMG have emerged with some credit, and there has so far been little or no criticism of the Angolan Government.

The Prime Minister sent a letter of thanks to President Dos Santos on 25 January after first learning of his decision to release the men by the end of February. However, given the time that has elapsed since then, it would seem appropriate for a further short message to be sent now that the release has taken place. Our Ambassador in Luanda has recommended that such a message would be well received. This would also provide an opportunity for an expression of concern at the highest level about the fate of the British hostages seized by UNITA, as well as a further word of encouragement over the negotiations on Namibia and Cuban withdrawal.

In delivering the Prime Minister's message we would instruct our Ambassador to make sure that President Dos Santos realises we kept to our various undertakings as regards the arrangements for receiving the prisoners. Angolan Ministers have expressed disappointment that there has been so much publicity. As you know, the Angolans are highly sensitive on this point: Sr Do Nascimento raised the matter with the Prime Minister in December. In fact, partly owing to the newspaper strike, there has been much less coverage than we expected. Our Ambassador has largely been able to satisfy Angolan Ministers of our good faith over this. However, the influential Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs has said that he assumes that HM Government would be sending a message of thanks to President Dos Santos and recommended that Mr Goulding should deliver it personally in order to explain the steps taken to limit adverse publicity. Our Ambassador will be instructed to make clear that we consider the Angolans have nothing to complain about in this respect.

I should be grateful to know whether the Prime Minister would be content for a message to be conveyed. I enclose a draft, which I shall be showing in parallel to Sir Geoffrey Howe in tonight's box.

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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[Handwritten signature]

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

DRAFT MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT DOS SANTOS

CAVEAT.....

I am grateful to Your Excellency for your humanitarian act in releasing the 7 British prisoners. Their release at this time is a clear demonstration of the constructive relationship which exists between our two governments.

May I take this opportunity also to express my gratitude to Your Excellency for your Government's assistance over the British and other hostages seized by the rebels in the north of Angola. I value your Government's assurance that they will take no action which might endanger the safety of the hostages. I am, of course, much concerned ^{to} ~~about~~ their ~~safety~~.

I should like to stress our readiness to help in any way we can in the search for a solution to the problems of the region. We have followed, with growing satisfaction, the moves in which your Government has played a central rôle to consolidate the withdrawal of South African forces from southern Angola. We have long

Enclosures—flag(s).....

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regarded this as an essential step towards wider stability and confidence. Sir Geoffrey Howe recently met ~~with~~ Mr Nujoma and urged restraint at this critical time, pointing out what is at stake for SWAPO. I recognise that all those involved still face difficult decisions but I hope that it will be possible to build on the new opportunity which now seems to exist for progress towards a Namibia settlement.





FUE

67

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

27 February, 1984

ANGOLA:BRITISH PRISONERS

The Prime Minister saw over the weekend your letter of 24 February.

Mrs. Thatcher has approved, on a contingency basis, the message from herself to President dos Santos. But I take it that you have concluded that such a message is not essential. Perhaps we can be in touch again if you do see a need for it.

A. J. COLES

P. Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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JK



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

Please agree the draft contingency message to President Dos Santos at Flag A.

Thank you.

Yes

Duty clerk

Duty Clerk

25 February, 1984.

John

Message not sent.

Duty Clerk

Letter B.F./C.O.

*27.
2*

f.a.

26.2.84



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 February 1984

✓
Dear John,

Angola: British Prisoners

UNITA have claimed that they have taken 16 British personnel hostage during an attack yesterday on one of the diamond mines. The Angolan authorities seem convinced that this is the case. I enclose a summary prepared by the Department here of the action which we are taking to establish the facts and to attempt to secure the safety both of any Britons who have been seized by UNITA and the remaining British mining personnel in the region.

I also enclose copies of HM Ambassador Luanda's telegram nos 253 and 263. As you will see, the Angolans do not seem to have made a connexion as yet between the taking of these hostages and the release of the British prisoners which is due to take place on 27 February. If they did make such a connexion, the prisoners' release could be jeopardised. In that case, we might wish to recommend at short notice that the Prime Minister send a message to President Dos Santos.

I enclose a draft message on a contingency basis; we will be in touch over the weekend if the Ambassador considers that such a message is essential.

We have also considered whether we should urgently approach Savimbi. However, there is no prospect of our persuading him to free his hostages in time to remove any threat which may develop to the early release of the ex-mercenaries. Indeed, if Dos Santos learned of an approach by us to Savimbi, the early release of our ex-mercenaries would be further jeopardised. We have, therefore, concluded that it would be right to accord top priority to persuading Dos Santos to go ahead with the early release of the ex-mercenaries if this seemed to be in danger. As soon as that is achieved, we can consider whether we should make an approach to Savimbi (direct or indirect) over his hostages. It is unlikely, meanwhile, that Savimbi would deliberately seek to harm his Western prisoners.

As the F.C.S knows

/Copies

hours are in touch

with Savimbi - if difficulties

arise, perhaps

should contact

Edwards and de la Cruz. We can have a word next week. not

COVERING SECRET



Copies of these papers are being submitted in parallel to the Foreign Secretary.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

COVERING SECRET

ANGOLA: BRITISH PRISONERS

The following action has already been taken or is in hand:

Action by DTC

1. There are about 200 British personnel in the diamond mining area. DTC have a staged evacuation plan, and the necessary logistics for it. They are activating the first two phases as soon as possible: evacuation of all women from the region to Luanda (there are no children), and concentration of personnel from out-lying mines into Andrade and Dundo (several hundred kms from the place of attack). Mr Dawe, senior Director DTC, is likely to go to Luanda early next week.
2. DTC are informing all next of kin.

Action by Angolans

3. Angolan forces are assisting in the most urgent evacuation of expatriates. They are planning to retake the mine and pursue the UNITA forces.

Action by HMG

4.
 - i) Our Embassy in Luanda has been in touch with the Minister of State Security who appears to be doing his best to keep them informed (though his information is incomplete). The Embassy formally asked that no military action be taken which might threaten the lives or safety of the British hostages and received a positive assurance. Our Embassy will urge the Angolan authorities to take whatever additional measures are necessary to ensure the safety of the remaining British citizens in the region.
 - ii) Our Consul is going to Dundo this afternoon.
 - iii) In London FCO officials are in regular contact with DTC and the other British firms: we all seem to be pulling in the same direction.
 - iv) Our friends have been in covert contact with the UNITA representative in London to try to establish the facts
 - v) UKMIS Geneva is being instructed to approach the ICRC to ask their help (as we did in the case of the British missionaries).

.....

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ADVANCE COPY

~~HI/CAS~~
HI/SAS

CONFIDENTIAL
FM LUANDA 240815Z FEB 84
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 253 OF 24 FEBRUARY
INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS

(X1)

MY TELMO 227 : RELEASE OF BRITISH PRISONERS

1. IF IT IS TRUE THAT UNITA HAVE TAKEN BRITISH HOSTAGES AT CAFUNFO (MY TELNOS 249 AND 252 - NOT TO PARIS) AND IF THEY ANNOUNCE THEIR READINESS TO EXCHANGE THEM FOR THE MERCENARIES (BOTH OF WHICH, I FEAR, ARE LIKELY) THERE IS A DANGER THAT DOS SANTOS WILL CHANGE HIS MIND ABOUT RELEASING OUR PRISONERS ON 27 FEBRUARY.
2. VENANCIO DA MOURA PROMISED TO TELEPHONE ME YESTERDAY AS SOON AS HE RECEIVED CONFIRMATION OF THAT DATE FROM THE PRESIDENT. HE DID NOT DO SO. I SHALL PURSUE HIM TODAY AND, IF IT TURNS OUT THAT THE PRESIDENT IS HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS, I SHALL TRY TO SEE DOS SANTOS HIMSELF TO PERSUADE HIM THAT IT IS IN ANGOLA'S OWN INTERESTS TO GET OUR PRISONERS OUT QUICKLY AND NOT TO ALLOW UNITA TO DICTATE ITS POLICY.

FCO PSE PASS

GOULDING

NNNN

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copy

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DESKBY 241730Z

FM LUANDA 241415Z FEB 84

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 263 OF 24 FEBRUARY

INFO IMMEDIATE DESKBY 241730 PARIS

YOUR TELNO 217: RELEASE OF BRITISH PRISONERS

1. YOU WILL NOW HAVE SEEN MY TELNO 253. VENANCIO DA MOURA SAID THIS AFTERNOON THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD STILL NOT CONFIRMED RELEASE ON 27 FEBRUARY. HE HOPED TO GET A DECISION FROM HIM TOMORROW MORNING (SATURDAY) AND WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD ACCEPT. DA MOURA DID NOT SEEM AWARE OF DEVELOPMENTS AT CAFUNFO AND HE DID NOT OF COURSE MENTION THEM.
2. AS REGARDS INFORMING THE FAMILIES AND THE MPS, I ASSUME THAT YOU WILL BE FOLLOWING THE PROCEDURE PROPOSED BY DA MOURA ON 2 FEBRUARY (MY TELNO 141, PARA 6) AND THAT WHAT THE FAMILIES RECEIVE ON MONDAY MORNING WILL BE AN INITIAL WARNING THAT IT LOOKS AS THOUGH RELEASE IS IMMINENT, BUT THAT IN ORDER TO AVOID LAST MINUTE HITCHES THEY MUST SAY NOTHING TO THE PRESS, AND THAT THEY WILL NOT BE TOLD DEFINITELY THAT THE MEN HAVE BEEN RELEASED UNTIL TUESDAY MORNING.
3. I WILL REPORT BY IMMEDIATE TELEGRAM AFTER I HAVE BEEN TO THE PRISON. BUT I WILL NOT BE SURPRISED IF, IN THE EVENT, A SUNDAY VISIT PROVES TOO DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE AND I DO NOT SEE THE MEN UNTIL MONDAY MORNING.
4. THERE HAS BEEN A REGRETTABLE MIX-UP OVER THE TICKETS. DA MOURA IS BUYING TICKETS FOR THE LUANDA-PARIS LEG ONLY. COULD PARIS THEREFORE OBTAIN TICKETS AND MAKE BOOKINGS FOR THE PARIS-LONDON LEG?
FCO PSE PASS

GOULDING

NNNL G--8357'

DRAFT CONTINGENCY MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER TO
PRESIDENT DOS SANTOS

I am most concerned to hear that the rebel forces have attacked the diamond mine at Cafunfo and seized a number of hostages, including some British prisoners. Please accept my sympathy for the loss of life which the Angolan forces have suffered in this attack. I am grateful to Your Excellency's Government for all they are doing, and I am sure will continue to do, to protect the British citizens in the region.

I very much hope that this unfortunate development will not in any way delay the release of the British prisoners held by the Angolan Government, which I understand was planned within the next few days. Indeed their earliest release would be the clearest demonstration to the world of the constructive relationship which exists between our two Governments in the face of the many difficulties confronting us. I give Your Excellency my assurance that the British Government will, if Your Excellency so wishes, state publicly that the decision by the Angolan Government to exercise clemency and release the prisoners arises out of the development of our bilateral relations; and that it was taken and conveyed to us some time before the attack on the diamond mine.