

GCPC  
①

PM/84/47

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister  
Are you content with the line  
to me with backbenchers?

I think it has A.S.C. 2/3.  
a no. of inconsistencies - but tent.  
not

Angola: UNITA's British Hostages

1. This problem is likely to drag on for a considerable time. The hostages may well be force-marched for some 1,000 kms before reaching a UNITA safe area, and the rainy season will make the going slow. Experience suggests that we may have very little firm news during that period. The ICRC have told us that release may take 3 - 6 months to achieve.

2. Once they arrive in a safe area, UNITA may seek to impose conditions for release. A spokesman has already called for the withdrawal of all British personnel from the diamond mines. I am considering carefully how we can best play our hand within our general policy of not acceding to demands from hostage-takers. We shall also have to weigh our wish to free the hostages as soon as possible against the wider interests we have at stake in Angola, especially in the export field, and in the negotiations for Cuban troop withdrawal and a Namibia settlement.

3. There is likely to be a good deal of Parliamentary and public pressure to secure speedy release. I have prepared the attached draft note which the Chief Whip might use to deal with any enquiries he receives from back-benchers. I should be grateful for your comments on it.

/4. I am



CONFIDENTIAL



4. I am copying this minute to colleagues on OD and to the Chief Whip.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
9 March 1984

CONFIDENTIAL



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: Angola: UNITA's British Hostages

.....In Confidence

Background

CAVEAT.....

(i) This could well be a long saga. In accordance with their usual practice, UNITA are likely to <sup>take</sup> ~~pro-~~ march the hostages (17 Britons including a Portuguese-born woman) to UNITA's southern base, roughly 1,000 kms away. The march will take many weeks.

(ii) In previous cases affecting hostages from other Western countries, it has usually not been possible to obtain firm news about them until their arrival at the safe base.

(iii) Although UNITA are likely to take reasonable care of the hostages, the conditions will be hard and sometimes dangerous. (there were casualties among the Czechoslovakians). However, we have heard from a reliable source that all are in good health at present.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

(iv) We have had some indications that, once the hostages have arrived at the UNITA base, UNITA will try to impose conditions for their release. A Lisbon spokesman for UNITA has said, for example, that they will demand the removal of British technicians from



the diamond mines. We have the impression UNITA have not reached a final decision on their demands.

Action by the Government

(v) The Government's established policy in cases of hostage-taking is to do everything possible to resolve the problem without loss of innocent life, but not to bargain for their release or give away to the captors' demands. We have ratified and passed into British law the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages 1980.

(vi) The Government have asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to confirm the identity of the hostages and seek their early release. This has been the standard procedure with UNITA's previous Western hostages. We have sought and obtained assurances from the Angolan Government that they will do nothing to put the safety of the hostages in jeopardy.

(vii) The Government are actively considering what further steps to take. At this early stage we are concentrating on bringing home to UNITA that the Government have a firm policy of not bargaining for hostages, and that the taking of British hostages is having a harmful effect on Savimbi's standing with Parliamentary and public opinion in this country.

Action by MPs

(viii) It would be helpful if those MPs with their own lines to Savimbi could impress these points on him. He

*The implication  
being that this  
is high. In  
some instances it is -  
very high*



should be made to realise that his action has been linked in the public mind with instances of hostage-taking both in Britain and in other parts of the world which have aroused the deepest emotions; that the image of his movement in this country is being badly tarnished; and that it is all the more important to reverse this unfavourable trend at the present significant juncture in developments affecting the security of Angola and southern Africa generally (South African disengagement and intensification of negotiations for Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola and Namibian independence).

Supplementary Points

(i) Why only use the ICRC as a channel?

This is an established channel between Western Governments and UNITA in hostage situations. It has proved effective in the past. Neither Ministers nor FCO officials have direct contact with UNITA. However there are a number of additional channels (including South Africa) which we shall make use of if we think necessary. *and the U.S.?*

(ii) Parallel between contact with UNITA and SWAPO.

For some years we have been willing to have contact with representatives of all the parties involved in Namibia, not only SWAPO but others, too. In the case of Namibia, we are dealing with a country which has no recognised Government. In the case of Angola, there is a Government with which we have diplomatic relations.

*He does  
seem to, usually  
are we going to  
make him or  
improve his image?*





Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 March, 1984

*John MacLean,*

*A.S.C. 16/3*

Angola: UNITA's British Hostages

*f-a.*

I enclose a revised version of the note for use by the Chief Whip in dealing with any enquiries he receives from back-benchers. It has been amended to reflect the comments in John Coles's letter of 12 March as well as the two comments by the Chief Whip passed by telephone. The Prime Minister's question about future policy towards UNITA is one on which the Foreign Secretary had in any case commissioned urgent study, and Sir Geoffrey may wish to minute separately in due course. Meanwhile, the line in the revised supplementaries would seem right.

I am copying this to John Coles and to the Private Secretaries to other members of OD.

*[Handwritten signature]*  
 (R B Bone)  
Private Secretary

Murdo MacLean Esq  
 Chief Whip's Office

## ANGOLA: UNITA'S BRITISH HOSTAGES

Background

1. This could well be a long saga. In accordance with their usual practice, UNITA are likely to force march the hostages (17 Britons, though UNITA may be counting a wife as a Portuguese) to UNITA's southern base, roughly 1,000 kms away. The march will take many weeks.
2. In previous cases affecting hostages from other Western countries, it has usually not been possible to obtain firm news about them until their arrival at the safe base.
3. Although UNITA are likely to take reasonable care of the hostages, the conditions will be hard and sometimes dangerous (there were casualties among the Czechoslovakians). However, we have heard from a reliable source that all are in good health at present.
4. We have had some indications that, once the hostages have arrived at the UNITA base, UNITA will try to impose conditions for their release. A Lisbon spokesman for UNITA has said, for example, that they will demand the removal of British technicians from the diamond mines. We have the impression UNITA have not reached a final decision on their demands.

Action by the Government

5. The Government's established policy in cases of hostage-taking is to do everything possible to resolve the problem without loss of innocent life, but not to bargain for their release or give way to the captors' demands. We have ratified and passed into British law the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages 1980.



6. The Government have asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to confirm the identity of the hostages and seek their early release. This has been the standard procedure with UNITA's previous Western hostages. We have sought and obtained assurances from the Angolan Government that they will do nothing to put the safety of the hostages in jeopardy.

7. The Government are actively considering what further steps to take. At this early stage we are concentrating on bringing home to UNITA that the Government have a firm policy of not bargaining for hostages, and that the taking of British hostages is having a harmful effect on Savimbi's standing even among those who would otherwise sympathise with his goals.

#### Action by MPs

8. It would be helpful if those MPs with their own lines to Savimbi could impress these points on him. He should be made to realise that his action has been linked in the public mind with instances of hostage-taking both in Britain and in other parts of the world which have aroused the deepest emotions; that the image of his movement in this country, even among his sympathisers, is being badly tarnished; and that it is all the more important to reverse this unfavourable trend at the present significant juncture in developments affecting the security of Angola and southern Africa generally (South African disengagement and intensification of negotiations for Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola and Namibian independence).

#### Supplementary Points

9. Why only use the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a channel?

This is an established channel between Western Governments and UNITA in hostage situations. It has proved effective in the past. Neither Ministers nor FCO officials have direct contact with UNITA. However there are a number of additional channels (including South Africa) which we shall make use of if we



think necessary.

10. If Savimbi releases hostages unconditionally will HMG give him greater public support?

If Savimbi wishes to restore what support he previously had among sympathisers in this country and build on that in the future, then he should release as soon as possible and without conditions. (On contact with UNITA see 9 above).

[If pressed]

11. HMG cannot support insurgency against a government we recognise. Also quite wrong to "'reward'" hostage-taker.



Angora: Int. Sit 10/79

11 6 1984

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1984





10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

cc: Ld Chanc.  
 AMT  
 LPS  
 Ld Pres.  
 MOD  
 Ch/Secretary of Home.  
 12 March 1984  
 DTI  
 CO  
 Chief Whip

cc: Sir P. Craddock

See Loger,

ANGOLA: UNITA's BRITISH HOSTAGES

The Prime Minister has seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute of 9 March and the enclosed draft note for use by the Chief Whip to deal with any enquiries which he receives from Backbenchers.

While she is generally content with the note, the Prime Minister has commented on one or two specific points. Paragraph (vii) implies that Savimbi's standing with Parliamentary and public opinion in this country is high (but that it is being damaged). The implication of paragraph (viii) is that if Savimbi releases the hostages the image of his movement in the United Kingdom will be restored. Would not those MPs who had spoken to him in this sense then expect HMG to give more public support to Savimbi than they have hitherto done? And would we be inclined to give such support?

You may care to reflect on these points and perhaps adjust the note before the Chief Whip makes use of it.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of other members of OD and the Chief Whip.

Your own

for [unclear]

Roger Bone, Esq.,  
 Foreign and Commonwealth Office